Allen Chapel A.M.E.Church

2233 Main Street

Hartford, CT 06120

Rev. Kahlil G. James, Pastor

**Lent 2015**



**Fasting and Prayer:**

**A Journey to the Heart of God**

 **Fasting**

*Prayer needs fasting for its full growth. Prayer is the one hand with which we grasp the invisible. Fasting is the other hand, the one with which we let go of the visible.*

– Andrew Murray

Fasting is abstaining from food with a spiritual purpose in mind. Jesus teaches us that fasting and prayer are a powerful combination. While fasting is not explicitly commanded by Jesus in the Gospels, it seems that it is assumed that fasting would be a part of the life of the believer:  “And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Matthew 6:16-18).

Remember, the Fast should change your routine. If you are going about your regular routine merely with a change in diet, you are not fasting, you are on a diet! Fasting *must* change our routine. The Fast is to refocus us on the things of God. We should expect to be different when this time of fasting is over and not just physically…

* By the time the fast is over, we should have created an atmosphere in our lives, our homes, our churches in which God is pleased to dwell.
* By the time the Fast is over, we should have created such an atmosphere in prayer that miracles become daily events in our lives.
* By the time the Fast is over, we should have prayed the yoke of bondage off of our sisters and brothers.

Yes, by the time a Fast concludes, we should have walked through the doorway of Kingdom Living! All this is accomplished through prayer and fasting. So, commit to a fast and do not grow weary nor take lightly the fast you commit to God. Divine opportunities are waiting all around for us to seize them in fasting and in prayer. God moves in powerful ways during sincere fasts (see 2 Chronicles 20:1-23).

Remember, the fast is to the Lord. The fast should cause us to redirect our focus, our attention. It should more regularly direct us to our prayer closets because fasting and prayer go hand in hand. Prayer is our Priority! And not just during the course of this Lenten fast, but in life. We’ve got to make every effort to ensure we add more and more time with God in prayer and meditation each and every day for this is where we find LOVE, JOY and PEACE! God honors it when we deny the flesh and sow to the spirit. This is consistent with what we learn in Galatians 5:16-25 and in Colossians 3:1-17. Fasting is to honor the life of our spirits. Be assured, to nurture and to refine the spirit-life has eternal significance.

Remember, fasting is to abstain from food with spiritual purposes in mind. Our purposes are many:

* we are seeking to grow even closer to God
* to see the Gifts of the Holy Spirit fully operating in the Body of Christ
* to experience the Fruit of the Holy Spirit being borne out in the lives of the people of God
* to break the power of the enemy over our lives and the lives of those around us
* to scatter the plans of the enemy
* to gain more spiritual power
* to wrestle ourselves away from unhealthy attachments
* to see the Kingdom of God grow exponentially
* to experience good physical, mental and spiritual health
* to walk in miracles
* to transform our minds
* ultimately, to live our lives in ways pleasing to God

All our purposes will be fulfilled by the Power of God through fasting and prayer! Don’t waiver in unbelief. God is true to His Word! AND DON’T STOP PRAYING BECAUSE YOU HAVEN’T SEEN THE ANSWER OR BECAUSE YOU DON’T FEEL ANYTHING. God moves in God’s time. And, be assured, whether you feel anything or not, God is listening!

The promise of God in Christ Jesus is this: “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (John 15:7 - but read the whole passage). This is an amazing promise, but what is “abiding”?

* Abiding is to dwell constantly in the secret place of the Most High (Psalm 91:1).
* Abiding is to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
* Abiding is to have a song in your heart to God at all times (Ephesians 5:19)
* Abiding is to write the Word of God on the tablet of your heart (Proverbs 7:2-3; Psalm 119:16)
* Abiding is learning and strengthening ourselves through fasting and prayer.

The Fast is not to be an event that will pass, nor an experience that we will merely have; but, it is an entrance into a life of continual abiding in God, a pathway into the deeper things of God, a seat in the Presence of God.

**PRAYER**

Prayer is the life’s work of the Christian. All that we do must flow out of prayer. When we study the life of Jesus, we see that Jesus did not pray between his periods of work and ministry, Jesus worked and ministered between His times of prayer. Prayer must be the first priority for the Christian. It is through prayer that we strengthen our relationship with God and access the power of God for our living.

*O what peace we often forfeit*

*O what needless pains we bear*

*All because we do not carry*

*Everything to God in prayer.*

We’ve got to pray openly and honestly. Admit to God when you don’t feel like it or when the tv or someone is pulling you in another direction. Hey, we all have that wandering inclination and God is big enough to handle it. Just ask for more strength and discipline to be constant in prayer.

Remember, this is a practice. Just because it is the right thing to do doesn’t mean that it will happen for us overnight. Just keep being committed to the practice of prayer.

God’s faithfulness to us is our shield and armor! (Psalm 91:4) God knows we can be wishy-washy. That’s what grace is for!

So, take it easy on yourself. God loves you and wants you to reach where you’re trying to go… in Him.

**STUDY**

Study leads to the Renewing of the Mind. Studying is the way to true *repentance*. This is what *repentance* is: to change your mind. To change your mind, you must Study the Holy Scripture. Read the Scriptural passage. What does it say?

Richard Foster in his *Celebration of Discipline*, suggests four important aspects of Study:

1. **Repetition**. Read and reread.
2. **Concentration**. This means that you have to give what you are reading your attention. You have to stick with what you are reading and bring your mind back to it should your mind wander. Commit! Read out loud if you have to.
3. **Comprehension**. Take the time to get the meaning, the understanding of what you are reading. What does the passage say? What is the content of the passage?
4. **Reflection**. Eugene Peterson says that you should “chew” on the Word. Take your time and think about what you have read. Ask questions. Live with it. Meditate on it. What is God saying to you in this passage?

Through the process of Study your mind becomes renewed and your actions are transformed.

**First Episcopal District**

**African Methodist Episcopal Church**

**Fasting: The Pathway to Wholeness**

**Lenten Consecration 2015**

**Scriptural Foundation:**

 **Isaiah 58:1-8**

 **Matthew 17:14-21**

We are asking each member of the First Episcopal District to participate in our Lenten Consecration. However, if your local church has prepared one, then we encourage you to adhere to its guidelines.

1. **Spiritual Consecration**
2. **Spend a minimum of 30 minutes of quiet time each day**. These moments should include journal writing, reading scriptures and recommended books (see list) and prayer.
3. **Fast every Tuesday**. The fast consists of refraining from the eating of any solid foods either from Monday at 6 p.m. until Tuesday at 6 p.m. (24 hours) or Tuesday from 6 a.m. till Tuesday at 6 p.m. **This is a liquid fast. You must also avoid any form of caffeine and soft drinks.**
4. For the entire Lenten Season including **Saturdays and Sundays.**
5. Refrain from eating the following
	1. Fried foods
	2. Beef and pork
	3. Desserts (including pastries and muffins)
6. Limit intake to one starch a per meal.
7. Decrease caffeine intake
8. Read daily scriptures from our prayer calendar.
9. **Physical Consecration**
10. Engage in a minimum of 30 minutes of exercise each day.
11. Avoid sitting for more than 30 minutes at a time - get up and move.
12. **Financial Consecration**
13. Tithe to your church.
14. Put aside $1 a day during the Lenten Season and give to your church on Easter Sunday morning.
15. Use your credit cards only in the case of emergencies.

**Water: Drink 8 glasses of water daily throughout the fast. This is very important.**

**Side effects: You may experience moderate to severe headaches for the first day or two as your body rids itself of caffeine, salt, sugar, and various impurities. You may need to take Advil, aspirin.**

* During the time of fasting, you will face temptations; resist them in the name of Jesus Christ.
* When you have finished fasting, eat light meals and slowly build back up to your normal diet.

**Important exceptions: Anyone with a medical condition related to eating or under the treatment of a physician must consult their doctor. Children, especially small children, will have special needs that must be considered. Under these conditions, find some sacrifice in the area of food that can be made without endangering health. Also, if you have extreme difficulty with the fast, such as impairment of your ability to work at your job, you will have to make adjustments. This is not a failure of will but is wisdom. Seek the Lord and discuss it with other Christians involved in the fast to find alternatives.**

**God’s Promises to You Concerning Your Health**

Exodus 15:26 - *I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee.*

2 Chronicles 16:9 *For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.*

Psalm 84:11 *For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*

Psalm 91:1&16 *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High will abide under the shadow of the Almighty… “With long life I will satisfy him and show him My salvation.”*

Psalm 107:19-20 *Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble; He saved them out of their distresses. He sent His Word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.*

Isaiah 53:5 *He was wounded for our rebellious acts. He was crushed for our sins. He was punished so that we could have peace, and we received healing from his wounds.*

Jeremiah 29:11 *For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.*

Matthew 9:35 *Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*

Mark 16:17-18 *And these signs shall follow those who believe: in My Name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.*

Luke 6:17-19 *…and a great throng of people… who had come to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured. And all the multitude were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing them all.*

John 10:10 …*I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly.*

John 14:12 *Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me, the works I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father.*

2 Corinthians 4:7 *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves.*

James 5:13-18 *If any of you are having trouble, pray. If you are happy, sing psalms. If you are sick, call for the church leaders. Have them pray for you and anoint you with olive oil in the name of the Lord. (Prayers offered in faith will save those who are sick, and the Lord will cure them.) If you have sinned, you will be forgiven. So admit your sins to each other, and pray for each other so that you will be healed. Prayers offered by those who have God's approval are effective. Elijah was human like us. Yet, when he prayed that it wouldn't rain, no rain fell on the ground for three-and-a-half years. Then he prayed again. It rained, and the ground produced crops.*

**Scriptures to Build You Up in the Faith**

Mark 11:22-24 *Jesus said to them, "Have faith in God! I can guarantee this truth: This is what will be done for someone who doesn't doubt but believes what he says will happen: He can say to this mountain, 'Be uprooted and thrown into the sea,' and it will be done for him. That's why I tell you to have faith that you have already received whatever you pray for, and it will be yours.*

Matthew 17:20 *And he saith unto them, Because of your little faith: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.*

James 1:6-8 *When you ask for something, don't have any doubts. A person who has doubts is like a wave that is blown by the wind and tossed by the sea. A person who has doubts shouldn't expect to receive anything from the Lord. A person who has doubts is thinking about two different things at the same time and can't make up his mind about anything.*

Romans 4:17-21 *Abraham believed when he stood in the presence of the God who gives life to dead people and calls into existence nations that don't even exist. When there was nothing left to hope for, Abraham still hoped and believed. As a result, he became a father of many nations, as he had been told: "That is how many descendants you will have." Abraham didn't weaken. Through faith he regarded the facts: His body was already as good as dead now that he was about a hundred years old, and Sarah was unable to have children. He didn't doubt God's promise out of a lack of faith (*did not stagger in unbelief)*. Instead, giving honor to God for the promise, he became strong because of faith and was absolutely confident that God would do what he promised.*

Mark 13:58 *And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.*

*Only believe. Only believe. All things are possible only believe.*

**Weekly Readings**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| [**Ash Wednesday**](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=23)February 18, 2015 | [Joel 2:1-2, 12-17](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=23)[*Isaiah 58:1-12*](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=23) | [Psalm 51:1-17](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=23) | [2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=23) | [Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=23) |
| [**First Sunday in Lent**](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=24)February 22, 2015 | [Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=24) | [Psalm 32](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=24) | [Romans 5:12-19](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=24) | [Matthew 4:1-11](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=24) |
| [**Second Sunday in Lent**](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=25)March 1, 2015 | [Genesis 12:1-4a](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=25) | [Psalm 121](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=25) | [Romans 4:1-5, 13-17](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=25) | [John 3:1-17](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=25)[*Matthew 17:1-9*](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=25) |
| [**Third Sunday in Lent**](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=26)March 8, 2015 | [Exodus 17:1-7](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=26) | [Psalm 95](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=26) | [Romans 5:1-11](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=26) | [John 4:5-42](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=26) |
| [**Annunciation of the Lord**](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=328)  | [Isaiah 7:10-14](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=328) | [Psalm 45](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=328)[*Psalm 40:5-10*](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=328) | [Hebrews 10:4-10](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=328) | [Luke 1:26-38](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=328) |
| [**Fourth Sunday in Lent**](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=27)March 15, 2015 | [1 Samuel 16:1-13](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=27) | [Psalm 23](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=27) | [Ephesians 5:8-14](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=27) | [John 9:1-41](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=27) |
| [**Fifth Sunday in Lent**](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=28)March 22, 2015[*ART*](http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-processquery.pl?code=ACT&SortOrder=Title&LectionaryLink=ALent05) *--* [*PRAYER*](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/prayers.php?id=28) | [Ezekiel 37:1-14](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=28) | [Psalm 130](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=28) | [Romans 8:6-11](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=28) | [John 11:1-45](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=28) |
| [**Liturgy of the Palms**](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=29)March 29, 2015*Sixth Sunday in Lent* |  | [Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=29) | [Matthew 21:1-11](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=29) |  |
| [**Liturgy of the Passion**](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=30)April 5, 2015*Sixth Sunday in Lent* | [Isaiah 50:4-9a](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=30) | [Psalm 31:9-16](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=30) | [Philippians 2:5-11](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=30) | [Matthew 26:14-27:66](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=30)[*Matthew 27:11-54*](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=30) |

**18 Things to Give Up for Lent**

Listening to gossip

Swearing

Texting and driving

Not exercising

Alcohol

Wasting money

Television

Music with sexual or violent lyrics

Arguing

Disobeying parents

Buying new clothes

Soda

Being in a hurry

Procrastination

Fried foods

Ungratefulness

Meanness

Chocolate