

## ***2017 Lenten Devotion & Fasting Exercise***

Dear Sisters & Brothers in Christ:

According to the Gospels, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness and tested by the devil for forty days. During this time Jesus proved his love for God was stronger than everything else. Our love for Jesus leads us to want to draw closer to Him during Lent, and to overcome anything in our lives that keeps us apart from Him.

Lent is popularly known as a season for individual self-examination, penitence, and “giving something up” as a spiritual discipline. It seems, in this popular view, to be primarily inwardly, and perhaps largely negatively focused. It’s commonly seen as being about what’s wrong with me, as an individual, and what I’m willing to do to improve myself.

In reality, while self-examination and some individual work are part of the work of Lent, the early church developed Lent to be very much “other-focused.” Lent was created as the “final leg” of intense preparation and support for people who have chosen to learn to live the way of Jesus among us. It was, we might say, a kind of finishing school for those preparing for baptism and lifelong Christian discipleship. For those of us who are already believers, Lent is a good opportunity to do the work of self-examination as if we were becoming baptized for the first time.

We invite you to join us in our Lenten devotion and fasting exercise. Fasting is a spiritual discipline that helps us to focus on the Lord and to bring our bodies, minds, souls and spirits on one accord with the Holy Spirit as we unite in prayer. **We will start on Ash Wednesday, March 1<sup>st</sup> and end on Saturday, April 15<sup>th</sup>.** As with the 40 days of Lent, we will not fast on Sundays.

We will be observing a gradual fast where each week we add another item or category of food or technology to the fasting list, e.g. abstain from secular radio. The fast is accompanied by scripture readings, meditations, prayers, and writing or journaling as outlined in the book “***Devotions for Lent (Holy Bible Mosaic)***” by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. The church is providing this book to you at no charge.

Most people can manage this kind of fast. However, if you have not participated in a food fast before, it is suggested that you begin slowly by gradually decreasing food intake or by participating in a partial fast only. You may also elect to fast only from certain types of foods (i.e. sweets or deserts) or, if you cannot fast from food, fast something other than food (e.g. television or other types of entertainment). Although this guideline is designed for a daily fast, you may shorten the time to only one meal a day or one or two days per week.

The following instructions serve only as a **guideline** for the next six weeks and are intended to help you develop the spiritual discipline of fasting and prayer at regular intervals during this time of preparation. *This guideline is not intended to be legalistic and it is not mandatory for participation in any church activities.*

**If you take medications that require that you eat, please continue to follow your doctor's instructions. Please DO NOT discontinue taking any prescribed medications without your doctor's permission.**

Remember the purpose of fasting and prayer is to help you to set aside time to focus on the Lord, to pray, and to open yourself up for direction and encouragement from God. This time is your time with God, a divine appointment – don't miss it! You may also want to begin to journal your prayer requests and thoughts during your meditation time. These notes will prove helpful whenever you decide to look back and reflect on what the Lord revealed to you during the fast.

Finally, if you have any questions regarding the fast, please email me at: [pastor@laplata-ame.org](mailto:pastor@laplata-ame.org).

Blessings to you,

Rev. Aisha C. Johnson

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## 2017 Lenten Devotion & Fasting Exercise

### How to begin:

1. **Get** your copy of “Devotions for Lent” from the church.
2. **Read Isaiah 58.** Note that it doesn't matter how much food you fast -- if your heart and attitude are not right you are no closer to God. Isaiah 58 reminds us that a true fast involves how we treat others, and our sincerity before God. Pray and confess any attitudes of the heart that are not right in God's sight – look to Him through the Scriptures for correction and be obedient. There is always a blessing for obedience.
3. **Set a time for Prayer and Meditation Daily.**
4. **Forgive yourself and others if you miss time, forget or get interrupted during your set aside time.** This will happen in the beginning, however, don't let this be a discouragement – keep trying and pray that God will help you honor your commitment and remove the distractions. Don't let anger or unforgiveness hinder your focus on the Lord.

### Lent Week 1 – Identifying Discontent - March 1<sup>st</sup> (Ash Wednesday) through March 11<sup>th</sup>

#### Scripture Readings:

Wednesday: Deuteronomy 8:3  
Thursday: Genesis 2:4-14  
Friday: Genesis 2: 18-25  
Saturday: Genesis 2:15-17  
Sunday: Genesis 3:1-7 (*do not fast this day*)  
Monday: Genesis 3:8-13  
Tuesday: Genesis 3:14–19  
Wednesday: Genesis 3:20-24  
Thursday: Psalm 51  
Friday: 1 Peter 3:13-22  
Saturday: Matthew 4:1-11

**Eat** 3 complete and well-balanced meals at regular intervals (fruits, vegetables, meats of your choice, whole grain breads, etc.). Drink plenty of water throughout the fast and include non-citrus fruits & juices.

**Fast:** This week fast caffeine, sodas. Remember Isaiah 58 – ask the Lord to help you to keep your conversation pure.

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**Lent Week 2 – Dependence - March 12<sup>th</sup> through March 18<sup>th</sup>**

**Scripture Readings:**

Sunday: Genesis 12:1-9 (*do not fast this day*)  
Monday: Psalm 121:1-8  
Tuesday: Philippians 3:12-16  
Wednesday: Philippians 3:17-4:12  
Thursday: Mark 8:31-38  
Friday: Romans 4:1-12  
Saturday: Romans 4:13-25

**Eat** 3 complete and well-balanced meals at regular intervals (fruits, vegetables, meats of your choice, whole grain breads, etc.). Drink plenty of water throughout the fast and include non-citrus fruits & juices.

**Fast:** This week fast caffeine, sodas, sweets, red meat and pork. Remember Isaiah 58 – ask the Lord to help you to keep your conversation pure.

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**Lent Week 3 – God’s Holiness and Grace - March 19<sup>th</sup> through March 25<sup>th</sup>**

**Scripture Readings:**

Sunday: Exodus 17:1-7 (*do not fast this day*)  
Monday: Psalm 95  
Tuesday: Romans 5:1-21  
Wednesday: John 4:5-27  
Thursday: John 4:28-42  
Friday: Psalm 11  
Saturday: Psalm 93; Isaiah 6:3

**Eat** 3 complete and well-balanced meals at regular intervals (fruits, vegetables, meats of your choice, whole grain breads, etc.). Drink plenty of water throughout the fast and include non-citrus fruits & juices.

**Fast:** This week fast caffeine, sodas, sweets, red meat, pork and fried foods. Remember Isaiah 58 – ask the Lord to help you to keep your conversation pure. Abstain from television programs that include crass humor or vulgarity.

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**Lent Week 4 – Sin and Death - March 26<sup>th</sup> through April 1st**

**Scripture Readings:**

Sunday: Numbers 21:4-9 (*do not fast this day*)  
Monday: Psalm 32:1-5  
Tuesday: Psalm 32:6-11  
Wednesday: Ephesians 2:1-10  
Thursday: John 3:14-21  
Friday: Luke 15:1-10  
Saturday: Luke 15:11-32

**Eat** 3 complete and well-balanced meals at regular intervals (fruits, vegetables, light pasta, baked fish or whole grain breads). Drink plenty of water throughout the fast and include non-citrus fruits & juices.

**Fast:** This week fast caffeine, sodas, sweets, red meat, pork, fried foods, and heavy pastas. Remember Isaiah 58 – ask the Lord to help you to keep your conversation pure. Abstain from television & secular radio.

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**Lent Week 5 – Fasting - April 2<sup>nd</sup> through April 8<sup>th</sup>**

**Scripture Readings:**

Sunday: Exodus 34:28 (*do not fast this day*)  
Monday: Isaiah 58:1-9a  
Tuesday: Isaiah 58:9b-14  
Wednesday: Psalm 130  
Thursday: Romans 8:6-11  
Friday: Matthew 6:1-4  
Saturday: Matthew 6:5-21

**Eat** 3 meals of non-citrus fruits, vegetables and baked/broiled fish at regular intervals – include non-citrus juices and drink plenty of water.

**Fast:** This week fast caffeine, sodas, sweets, meats, fried foods, heavy starches (potatoes, pasta, etc.), and breads. Remember Isaiah 58 – ask the Lord to help you to keep your conversation pure. Abstain from television, secular radio, and video/internet games.

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**Lent Week 6 –Hope: Passion Week - April 9<sup>th</sup> through April 15<sup>th</sup>**

**Scripture Readings:**

Sunday: Luke 19:28-40 (*do not fast this day*)  
Monday: Isaiah 52:13- 53:12  
Tuesday: Psalm 22  
Wednesday: Mark 14:1-11  
Thursday: Mark 14:12-72  
Friday: Mark 15  
Saturday: Philippians 2:5-11

**Eat** 3 meals of non-citrus fruits and green vegetables at regular intervals – include non-citrus juices and drink plenty of water.

**Fast:** This week fast caffeine, sodas, sweets, all meats, fish, fried foods, heavy starches (potatoes, pasta, etc.), and breads. Remember Isaiah 58 – ask the Lord to help you to keep your conversation pure. Abstain from television, secular radio, video/internet games, and social media.

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**Resurrection Sunday Morning – April 16<sup>th</sup> – He is Risen!**

**Scripture Readings:** Read aloud Psalm 118 and John 20:1-18

**Continue to Fast until lunch** -- Eat meals of non-citrus fruits and green vegetables at regular intervals – include non-citrus juices and drink plenty of water. Fast caffeine, sodas, sweets, all meats, fish, fried foods, heavy starches (potatoes, pasta, etc.), and breads. Remember Isaiah 58 – ask the Lord to help you to keep your conversation pure. Abstain from television, secular radio, video/internet games, and social media.

Hallelujah! – You’ve kept the fast. God bless you!