

A GUIDE TO FASTING AND PRAYING

For The Lenten Season

Bethel AME Church



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As we step into Lent in 2022, may we remember how quickly things changed for Jesus after His entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday-where He would be arrested, crucified, and then resurrected on Easter Day! What a mix of emotions the followers of Jesus must have experienced. What uncertainty!

Consider others in the midst of their season of change during these uncertain times. We are still currently in the throes of the Coronavirus Pandemic, many lost jobs, homes, many lives were loss, countless other issues including health and so much more that all of us have been challenged with.

Yet, Lent invites us into a deeper reflection on the unique and wonderfully made humans God has made them to be and what that means for their calling in the world.

Though we are made in the image of God, our world is full of voices vying for our attention and seeking to shape us towards their aims. Lent offers us an opportunity to repent of our sins and turn back to our truest selves in Christ. Often repentance makes us feel bad about ourselves, but it is really just the practice of turning towards that which is good in us – what brings us life rather than diminishes our spirit.

Across these 40 days, we have a chance to reflect and be renewed, as we mark the Holy Season of Lent and prepare for Easter.

How can we make this Lenten Season matter? Bethel A.M.E. Church invites us to pray, fast and commit ourselves to reading God's Word during these next 40 days together.

What is Lent?

Lent is a season of transformation and self-examination, when we ask God for forgiveness while creating space to talk about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Learn how these 40 days can lead us into closer unity with God, and how Bethel will observe the season.

What is Your Role?

During Lent, we come together as a church community to Fast/Prayer. attend Sunday School, Bible Study (11 am or 5 pm), Prayer Meeting and

Worship, walking through the Lenten Season as a church community. Begin by attending Prayer Meeting (via Vast Conference (313) 209-3070 code 532391) on Ash Wednesday March 2, 2022 6:15 pm where our own Rev. Sophia Johnson-Parks will focus on Ash Wednesday), then make a personal commitment to one or more spiritual practices.

What is Holy Week?

The forty days of Lent prepare us for Holy Week, a special week where everything we do during this Season allows us to journey with Jesus through the events leading to His death on the cross. Whatever we do this week, make sure it is devoted to the nature of the Season and encourage self-denial, intentional worship, and attending to needs of others.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR LENT

Spiritual disciplines are part of Christian life year-round, but they also enhance our Lenten spiritual journey. Here are some suggestions:

- **DAILY PRAYER:** Begin or end the day with Morning or Evening Prayer, found in **DEVOTIONALS:** Establish a set time during Lent to read and then sit in silence or prayer. (This guide will provide Scriptures and Readings; however feel free to use your own or the internet)
- **FASTING & REFLECTION:** Fasting is a spiritual discipline that Jesus practiced. Hunger pains can remind you to pray for others and enter into self-reflection. If you have health concerns, please consult a doctor before a fast.
- **SELF-DENIAL:** Giving up favorite foods, drinks, or bad habits is an alternative to fasting that forces you to be mindful of the hunger of others each time you crave that item or revert to a certain behavior. [For example limit your time using Social Media, or watching TV]
- **GIVING TO OTHERS:** How do Lenten sacrifices bring you closer to God? Consider giving the money you would have spent on those items/habits to one of Bethel's ministries or adopt a family that is in need.
- **ATTEND SUNDAY SCHOOL:** If you have not attended Sunday School make a commitment to attend during the Lenten Season.
- **BIBLE STUDY:** In person at Wednesday' 11 am or 5 pm on Vast Conferencing (313) 209-3070 Code 532391
- **PRAYER MEETING:** Vast Conference Wednesday's 6:15 pm (313) 209-3070 code
- **LECTIO DIVINA:** Encounter God in scripture using Lectio Divina, a Latin phrase meaning divine or sacred reading. This unique approach

features slower and more reflective reading of the Scriptures. (if interested I have outline)

- **PERSONAL CONFESSION:** A practice for Christians to seek Christ's healing power through self-reflection, admission of sins, and reconciliation with God through forgiveness.

[Doing this with your prayer partner could also be an option to hold each other accountable.]

THEME: Retreating into the Wilderness with Jesus

Dates: Lent is the 40-day period before Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday. We skip Sundays when we count the forty days, because Sunday's commemorate the Resurrection.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 2 and ends on April 17, 2022, which is the Saturday before Easter.

IMPORTANT LENTEN EVENTS

Dates	Event	Time
March 2	Ash Wednesday/ Prayer Meeting Lenten Scripture Focus Rev. Sophia Johnson-Parks	6:15 pm
April 10	Palm Sunday	11:00 am
April 14	Holy Thursday – Maundy Thursday	
April 15	Good Friday Service	
April 16	Holy Saturday	
April 17	EASTER SUNDAY	11:00 am

40 LENT BIBLE VERSES TO HELP YOU REFLECT

This collection of Lent Scriptures remind us that when we seek God, we find Him.

Lent is the 40 day period where we draw closer to God in the lead up to Easter. These 40 Lent Bible verses have been chosen to help us reflect at this special time of repentance and reflection.

*"Lent is an amazing time to reflect and get closer to God.
One of my favorite Lent verses is Psalm 27:14 (Wait patiently for the LORD.*

Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the LORD. *NLT*). *It helps me to focus on the incredible love Jesus has shown me.*"

Lent Scriptures to Encourage You

These Bible verses for Lent are focused on fasting and waiting on God. They remind us that when we wait on our Heavenly Father and seek Him, we will find Him.

- **1 Peter 5:6** Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.
- **Isaiah 58:6-7** Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
- **Psalms 42:2** My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?
- **Joel 2: 12-14** "Even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing—grain offerings and drink offerings for the Lord your God."
- **Matthew 6:21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
- **Lamentations 3:25** The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him;
- **Isaiah 30:18** Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!
- **Psalms 27:14** Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.
- **Matthew 6:16-18** When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength
Isaiah 40:31

- **Isaiah 40:31** But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.
- **Psalms 33:20-22** We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you.
- **Psalms 130:5-6** I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning.
- **Micah 7:7** But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me.
- **Romans 12:12** Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.
- **Hosea 12:6** But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always.
- **Matthew 6:33** But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.
- **1 Peter 5:6-7** Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.
- **Galatians 5:5** For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope.
- **Jeremiah 29:12** Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.
- **Psalms 33:20-22** We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you.
- **Psalms 62:5** For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him.
- **Psalms 25:4-5** Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.

All of these Lent Bible verses are taken from the NIV version of the Bible.

Lent in the Bible

'Is Lent in the Bible?' is a common question. There are so many Lent Bible verses here, but interestingly, the Bible doesn't record the disciples or the early church observing Lent. Lent is a more recent tradition inspired by Jesus' 40 days and 40 nights praying and fasting in the wilderness. Jesus' 40 days in the desert is recorded in these Lent Bible verses in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke:

- **Mark 1:12-15** At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted[a] by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him. After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"
- **Matthew 4: 1-11** Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Ways to Reflect this Lent

For some of us the prospect of 40 days of giving up something can be daunting. This year I'd like to encourage you to take something up instead and form a new habit. That's why I suggest you use a prayer journal to help keep you focused and to encourage you in your faith walk.

In this season of reflection and waiting, also you can take the opportunity to call and check on someone who's living alone and need encouragement or send cards to let others know that they are not alone. You can take this 40

day journey reaching **inward** and **outward** not only giving yourself the chance to hear about how much God loves you, but showing others your concern and care for them as well.

Bible Readings for Lent

These Lenten readings can help us focus on God's grace. The Lent Bible verses celebrate the victory Jesus made over death when He died on the cross.

- **Philippians 3:10-11** I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.
- **John 10:10** The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.
- **John 16:33** I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.
- **Zephaniah 3:17** The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”

*Nothing in all creation, will be able to separate us
from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Romans 8:39

- **John 3:14-18** Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.
- **Micah 5:4** He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.
- **Joel 2: 1-2** Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming. It is close at hand— a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and

mighty army comes, such as never was in ancient times nor ever will be in ages to come.

Holy Week Readings

These Lent Bible Scriptures follow the events of Holy week as Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey, shared the last supper with his disciples and died and rose again on the cross.

- **Zechariah 9:9** Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
- **Luke 19:28-42** After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it.’” Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” They replied, “The Lord needs it.” They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!” “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.” As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.
- **Luke 22:14-23** When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.” After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. But

the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed. But woe to that man who betrays him!" They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this.

- **Luke 22: 44-46** It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.
- **Luke 23:50-56** Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.
- **Luke 24: 1-6 24** On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!"

A GUIDE TO FASTING / PRAYING

About Fasting for the Lenten Season AT Bethel AME Church - Type of Fast

Normal Fast: To go without food for a stated period of time. To consume only liquids (steamed distilled water, boiled water, water with lemon juice, raw juice, vegetable broth, herbal tea or herbal broth).

Our fast will begin Wednesday, March 2 and go until Holy Saturday, April 17, 2022. Fasting should begin on Wednesday at Sunrise and end on Saturday at Sunrise. During your fast, you should pray continuously.

If you cannot fast from food, make sure to give up something; TV, Social Media, Sweets, Snacks, Soda, etc.

THE EZRA FAST

The Purpose: "To undo heavy burdens," (Isa 58:6) – To problem-solve by inviting the Holy Spirit's aid in lifting loads and overcoming barriers that keep ourselves and loved ones from walking joyfully with the Lord. You can fast and pray for answers. **Bring Forth Victory!**

Companion Scripture: (Ezra 8:23), "So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayers." This fast is used to seek a miracle or expect major results from God.

- State the problem(s) and what needs to be accomplished
- Select a time that works best for you to begin your fast. Select times throughout the day to get alone with God and pray.

For the fast to be powerful and meaningful, we must pray around the clock continuously as a whole church. When we observe this fast it will be amazing how God will move on our behalf. This is an opportunity to receive spiritual breakthroughs as never before.

PRAYING

Weekly Prayers As We Fast: (these are only suggestions)

Pray these prayers of petition listed below each week:

Week 1: As an individual and as a church, we pray that we will be obedient

to the will of God.

Week 2: As an individual and as a church, we pray that we will maximize the Word of God. As we intercede for the release and renewal from the Coronavirus Pandemic, sickness, disease, etc.

Week 3: As an individual and as a church, we pray that God will give us the ability to foster relationships that are harmonious and peace filled.

Week 4: As an individual and as a church body, we pray that we will constantly be in fellowship with God by praying faithfully, watchfully, thankfully and purposefully.

Week 5: As an individual and as a church, we pray that we will be bold in our witness to the lost around us and seek to bring them into God's family.

Week 6: As an individual and as a church, we pray that we will bind all things in love in order to increase our spiritual maturity.

FASTING SCHEDULE (March 2 – April 17, 2022)

(As a Church Family let's try to select one of the times in the morning, in the afternoon, and in the evening so we will all be fasting/praying together according to the schedule below)

MORNINGS

6 am – 11 am – Monday's – Saturday's

AFTERNOON

12 pm – 3 pm – Monday's – Saturday's

EVENINGS

4 pm – 11 pm – Monday's – Saturday's

It is during these times that you are fasting; you can pray, read and mediate on Scripture. At the end of this document is a list of books you can read during that I believe will enhance your spiritual journey.

Or Optional Fasting Schedule

Sunup 6 am – to Sundown 6 pm for Fasting some people prefer this schedule. (Or you give up whatever you select for the full 40 days. For example I give up select foods; no sugar, no pork (aww no bacon or

sausage) or beef – only chicken or fish once per day; Social Media etc., for the entire 40 days) If you ever have any questions do not hesitate to contact me via email bachspirit@aol.com or (231) 343-9360

More Scriptures: 2 Chron 7:14; Ps. 51; Ps. 91; Ps. 130;5-6; Ezekiel 18:21; Joel 2:12-14; Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-15; Luke 13:3; John 12; John 17:17; Gal. 5:5;

Reading List (These are just some of the books from my library that I have read and re-read over the years; that have impacted my spiritual growth)

Barton, Ruth Haley. (2006). Sacred Rhythms. Spiritual Transformation. IVP Books, Downers Grove, ILL

Batterson, Mark. (2011). The Circle Maker. Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI

Bloomer, George. (2014). A Devotional Journal: Living By The Word. Banner Publishing, New Kingston, PA

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. (1937). The Cost of Discipleship. Touchstone Publishing New York, NY

Bound, E. M. (1990). The Complete Works On Prayer. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI

Bound, E. M. (1997). Prayer. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI

Brazelton, Katie. (2005). Pathway to Purpose for Women. Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI

Femrita, Tommi. (2011). Invading The Seven Mountains With Intercession. Creation House Publishing, Lake Mary, FL

Foster, Richard. (1978,1988, 1998). Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth. HarperCollins Publishing, New York, NY

Foster, Richard & Kathryn Yanni. (2001). Streams of Living Water. HarperCollins, Publishing, New York, NY

Gemignani, Michael. (2002). Spiritual Formation. Judson Press, Valley Forge, PA

- Munroe, Myles. (2002). Understanding the Purpose and Power of Prayer. Whitaker House Publishing, New Kensington, PA
- Munroe, Myles. (2006). Kingdom Principles. Destiny Imagine Publishing, Co., Shippensburg, PA
- Omartian, Stormie. (2002). The Power of A Praying Woman. Published by Harvest House, Eugene, Oregon
- Omartian, Stormie. (2014). The Power of A Praying Husband. Published by Harvest House, Eugene, Oregon
- Sproul, R.C., (1990). The Mystery of The Holy Spirit. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Carol Stream, ILL
- Stanley, Charles. (1992). The Wonderful Spirit-Filled Life. Thomas Nelson Publishing, Nashville, TN
- Stanley, Charles. (2005). Living The Extraordinary Life. Thomas Nelson Publishing, Nashville, TN
- Sumrill, Lester. (2005). The Gifts and Ministries of the Holy Spirit. Whitaker House Publishing, New Kingston, PA
- Wardle, Terry. (2003). The Transforming Path. Leafwood Publishing. Abilene, TX