



Lenten Fast

During the season of Lent, we are asking UALC members and friends to consider one day a week as a time of church-wide fasting and prayer, beginning on the week of February 11. Here are some answers to frequently asked questions you might have about fasting.

Q: Why should I fast when I already pray every day?

A: Fasting is about eliminating distractions in order to focus on our relationship with God. When we fast we empty ourselves so that God can fill us with His presence, His desires, and the power of the Holy Spirit. You may not realize this, but the first Tuesday of each month, our Council takes time to fast and pray, seeking God and His guidance.

Q: What is the purpose of the Lenten fast at UALC?

A: Your church leadership believes it is time to invite the congregation to join together in an intentional deliberate fast as we seek God, and during this time, we are asking the congregation to specifically pray for the Call Committee as they continue the search process for our next Senior Pastor, as well as guidance for the staff and Council as they lead.

Q: What does the Bible teach about fasting?

A: Almost every great person in Scripture fasted (Jesus, Moses, Paul). When we fast, we're following their example. Jesus expected His disciples to fast as part of their spiritual discipline. Some Scriptures that address fasting are: Psalm 35:13; Nehemiah 9:1-3; Matthew 6:16-18; Matthew 9:14-15; Luke 18:9-14; and Acts 27:33-37.

Q: How should I use my time when I'm fasting?

A: Typically, a person spends a minimum of one hour every day engaged in eating. When that is taken away, the time can be used to devote oneself to prayer and Scripture reading—either all at once, or in smaller segments.

Q: How do I fast and pray “in secret” (see Matthew 6:16) when the entire congregation is participating?

A: When Jesus says we are to fast for our Father in secret, the point has to do with not drawing attention to yourself. If you let everyone know how much you've been fasting and how hard it has been, that is drawing attention to yourself. Jesus says to act normally, as though you were not fasting.

Q: Does fasting mean not eating?

A: To fast means to abstain from something, usually food. There are several different types of fasting.

Complete fast: Drink only liquids, typically water, with light

juices or sports drinks as an option.

Selective fast: Remove certain elements from your diet. One example of a selective fast is the Daniel Fast, during which you remove meat, sweets or bread from your diet.

Partial fast: Sometimes called the Jewish fast, in which you abstain from any type of food for a period of time, such as 6:00 am to 3:00 pm, or from sunup to sundown.

Q: What kind of fast are we doing as a church during Lent?

A: Everyone is encouraged to try a complete 24-hour fast that gives up two main meals (those with special circumstances or limitations might try a partial or selective fast). We then encourage you to break your fast in community. For instance, one possibility could be to begin your fast on Tuesday evening following dinner, and continue to fast until Wednesday evening. Then you could attend midweek Lenten services at Mill Run and break your fast by receiving Communion. On Holy Week, you might consider instead joining some of the staff for a three-day fast from Maundy Thursday to Holy Saturday (March 29-31) in preparation for Easter Sunday.

Q: What if I have a medical condition that prevents me from going without food?

A: It is always a good idea to consult your physician before beginning a fast. Women who are pregnant and people with conditions such as diabetes or eating disorders should completely avoid fasting from food. However, you might consider a selective fast in conjunction with abstaining from technology, such as TV, personal email, or social media. Or, you might consider fasting from a vice such as smoking, gambling, drinking, or even coffee (as hard as it may be)!

Q: How do I break a fast?

A: If you participate in the 24-hour fast, let your first meal be a little smaller than normal, filled with fruits and vegetables, and avoiding foods with a lot of saturated fat. We encourage you to break your fast in community with others as a way to reflect and share what God is teaching you. Our Midweek Lenten Meditation Services (Wednesdays at 6:30pm at Mill Run; Thursdays at 12:00pm at Lytham Road) are great opportunities for this. There's even a light lunch following the Thursday services.

Q: Are there any more resources on fasting?

A: Yes! You can follow along with helpful guidance in our Lenten Meditation Journal, but a great resource as you discover fasting is Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline*.

More information on the Lenten season and fasting can be found online at ualc.org/lent.

