**Fasting & Feasting during Lent**

This year at Advent we are going to try rotating weekly **community** fasts along with a weekly community feast on the book of 1 Peter in addition to the feast at the heart of our common life, Holy Communion.

Each week we will fast from something different as we prepare our hearts, minds, and bodies for Easter Sunday. Why? Fasting does not earn God’s love which is already ours in Christ. Rather, it is a voluntary discipline that powerfully reminds us that God is our true nourishment. It is an embodied way of embracing exile: This world, and all its worldly goods, is not our home. We long for the heavenly city and the heavenly feast.

Fasting quickly teaches us about ourselves, our distractions, and our desires. When we intentionally deny ourselves normal and legitimate desires, like food, we become acutely aware of our weakness and how easily we let good (and bad) things distract us from the One who is Good. When we fast, we open ourselves to better see God’s work in our lives and in the world; we see that we are more than our cravings, impulses, and desires; and we push back against the impulse to consume that is so dominant in our society. As one author puts it, “Fasting confirms our utter dependence upon God by finding in him a source of sustenance beyond food.”

As you fast each week, take time to notice: notice which of the fasts is most difficult for you, notice where they force you to adjust your attention and schedule, and notice what desires bubble up within you as you deny yourself something. As you notice, ask God to meet you there, and reflect on this experience with your family, friends, gospel friendship groups, or small groups, and take some practical steps to realign your desires toward God. Ultimately, this discipline prepares us for the feast of Easter by helping us grow hungrier for God’s true nourishment.

To that end, we will replace the time we would otherwise spend on food, media, shopping, etc. with prayerful reading of the book of 1 Peter, which will serve as one of the primary texts for our Lenten sermon series, “Flourishing in Exile.” You are invited to read 1 Peter (five chapters) from beginning to end one time every week of Lent and Holy Week.

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| **Week** | **Fast** | **Feast** |
| Ash Weds | Meals | Holy Communion |
| Lent 1 | TV/Music/Media | 1 Peter (1st read) + Holy Communion |
| Lent 2 | Sweets and Treats | 1 Peter (2nd read) +  Holy Communion |
| Lent 3 | Spending | 1 Peter (3rd read) +  Holy Communion |
| Lent 4 | Internet & Social Media | 1 Peter (4th read) +  Holy Communion |
| Lent 5 | Coffee and Drinks | 1 Peter (5th read) +  Holy Communion |
| Holy Week | Choice/meals | 1 Peter (6th read) +  Holy Communion |

**February 17 – Ash Wednesday: Meals**

Traditionally, the church fasts from all food on Ash Wednesday. Throughout the day, let your physical hunger remind you of your weakness and point you to your greater hunger for and dependence upon God for life. If you are unable to fast the entire day, consider fasting from lunch or another meal.

**February 22-27 – Lent 1: TV / Music / Media**

This week, don’t watch your usual shows, listen to your normal audio entertainment, and get information from paper or digital news sources. Turn off the TV, fast from Netflix, Hulu, Disney+, YouTube and other visual entertainment altogether. Create space by driving without the radio, podcasts, or audio books and by leaving your headphones off. Let the silence and separation from the constant stream of entertainment lead you to pay attention to where God is at work in your life and spend the time listening for the voice of God (1 Kings 19.12-13). What is it like to increase the silence/decrease the media inputs in your life?

**March 1-6 – Lent 2: Sweets and Treats**

Resolve to deny yourself any type of sweets or dessert this week. This could range from lattes in the morning to a snack at work or chocolate in the evening. As you do so, note what happens inside when you deny yourself something you really want or crave.

**March 8-13 – Lent 3: Spending & Alms**

This week fast from spending on anything that is not absolutely necessary. Buy as little as possible. Don’t rent a movie or buy coffee. Eat cheaply and save. Consider this: in what ways have the things you own ended up owning you? **Alms:** Look for ways to give away the money you have saved to someone in need.

**March 15-20 – Lent 4: Internet & Social Media**

Turn off Twitter, Instagram, blogs, and your internet news. Try to limit your use of email for personal and non-work use. What is it like to unplug, to not obsessively check email/social media?

**March 22-27 – Lent 5: Coffee and Drinks**

Choose to refrain from coffee, alcohol, and all drinks but water this week. Pay attention to what happens when you deny yourself something you routinely enjoy. Seek to pray when you have the desire for the thing from which you are refraining.

**March 29-April 3 – Holy Week: Your Choice/Meals**

Pick something significant in your life, a comfort or something you depend on and fast from it for the week or pick a meal (like breakfast or lunch) to skip on a daily basis. If you skip meals, spend that extra time in prayer, reading Scripture, or serving others.

**Sundays throughout Lent:** Feast! Celebrate and remember God’s goodness.

**Conversation Starters for Small Groups, Gospel friendship Groups, and Families**

What did you notice this week because of your fast?

What was most difficult about the fast?

What was your greatest temptation during the week?

Did you fail? Did you notice God’s presence in your weakness?

Did you experience a heightened sense of God’s nourishment this week?

How did this week’s fast compare to last week’s?

What new rhythms are you going to incorporate into your life?

What habits (healthy or unhealthy) did your fast reveal?

Is there anything you would do differently? Why?