

To Fast, To Pray, To Engage

“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.”
(1 Timothy 2:1–2)

From the earliest days of God’s covenant with God’s people, fasting and prayer have marked times of national crisis, repentance, and the seeking of divine intervention. The prophet Joel proclaimed: *“Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly”* (Joel 2:15). King Jehoshaphat, when confronted by overwhelming enemies, *“proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah”* (2 Chronicles 20:3). The people of Nineveh, from the greatest to the least, fasted and prayed at Jonah’s preaching, and God relented from the disaster He had threatened (Jonah 3:5–10).

This pattern appears again and again throughout the Old Testament: when God’s people faced division, external threats, or spiritual crisis, they turned to fasting and prayer as humble supplication before Almighty God. These were not merely private disciplines, but corporate acts of an entire people seeking God’s mercy and guidance for their nation.

The Church has continued this biblical tradition throughout its history. From the early Church’s regular fast days to the medieval Church’s special fasts in times of plague or war, Christians have consistently recognized that extraordinary times call for extraordinary devotion.

Our **1979 Book of Common Prayer** wisely designates Fridays as “days of special devotion,” particularly suited for prayer, fasting, and works of charity. This follows the ancient Christian tradition of Friday as a day of penance and remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ’s Passion and Death, making it especially fitting for humble supplication before God.

The Prayer Book’s provision acknowledges that there are seasons when the Church must call upon God with urgency, seeking God’s mercy upon our land and people. Now is such a season.

In this time of deep political division, violence, and national discord, we invite the people of The Diocese of West Missouri to observe Fridays as days of fasting and prayer for our nation. This call involves three actions:

1. **To Fast** – Whether by abstaining from food for a meal or for the entire day (as health permits), or by other forms of self-denial that turn our hearts toward God rather than earthly comforts.
2. **To Pray** – For wisdom for our leaders, for healing of divisions in our communities, for justice and mercy to flow through our land, and for the peace that only God can give.

3. **To Engage in Works of Mercy** – Let our fasting be joined with acts of charity and compassion toward our neighbors, especially those who are suffering, marginalized, or in need.

These actions do not arise from despair, but from hope. God still hears the prayers of God's people. God can still soften hearts hardened by animosity. God can still heal wounds that seem beyond human remedy.

Let us therefore consecrate our Fridays to this holy purpose, that our nation may know the healing that comes only from the hand of Almighty God.

- *The Rev. Canon Charles 'Chas' Marks*