

2025 Emory Grove UMC CHOSEN Lenten Fast

Introduction to the Lenten Fast:

- **Theme:** "The Fast We Choose" – A call to reflect on our role in seeking justice, both in personal life and in the world around us.
- **Purpose:** The fast will focus on prayer, fasting, and acts of justice, encouraging participants to move beyond individual sacrifice and into collective action for the good of the community and the world.
- **Scriptural Focus:** "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?" — Isaiah 58:6, KJV (Please read Isaiah 58 in full)

Week 1: *Justice Begins with the Self* (March 5 - 15)

Focus: Personal Reflection on Justice

- **Scripture:** Micah 6:8, James 1:19
- **Activity/Reflection:** Dedicate time to self-examination and prayer, asking God to open your heart to ways you can be more just in your personal lives.
 1. Take 30 minutes each morning to reflect on your own attitudes toward justice, particularly in how you treat others in your daily life.
 2. Join the prayer line at 6:00 am on Thursday mornings. [NEED INFO]
- **Challenge:**
 1. Eat nothing and drink only water before noon and intentionally extend your devotion time, reflecting on the above scriptures, and any others that focus on justice.
 2. Fast from any activity or habit that perpetuates injustice in your personal relationships (e.g., gossip, judgment, selfishness).
- **Optional Group Activity:** Have a meal with other members and discuss how we can foster personal justice in our families, workplaces, and communities.

Week 2: *Justice in Our Community* (March 17 - 22)

Focus: Advocacy for the least, the last, the left out and the lost

- **Scripture:** Isaiah 58:6-7, Matthew 25:35-40
- **Activity/Reflection:**
 - As you go through the community, just notice who you don't normally see. The young people who are not a part of your life. The ones chopping the vegetables in your favorite restaurant. The ones from another country. The ones who might not have a home.
 - Reflect on the needs of the marginalized and oppressed in our community, and pray specifically for them each day.
 - **Challenge:**
 1. Fasting from comfort (e.g., dining out, luxury items), give what you would have spent to the church's outreach and recovery ministry.
 2. Take the chance to just have a conversation with someone whom you think might be on the margin whom you don't know.
 - **Optional Group Activity:** Get together with a few others to organize a community outreach project, such as preparing meals for the homeless, volunteering at a local shelter, gathering donations for a local food bank, etc.

Week 3: *Justice in Our Country* (March 24 – 29)

Focus: National Equity and Advocacy

- **Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 7:14, Proverbs 31:8-9, Isaiah 1:17
- **Activity/Reflection:**
 - Focus and reflect on national justice issues, such as poverty, immigration, racism, human rights, and hate.
 - **Challenge:**
 1. Fast from purchases that contribute to unjust practices (e.g., clothing from sweatshops, products from companies with unethical labor practices).
 2. Pray every day:
 - That our elected leaders in federal, state and local government would lead according to God's will.
 - Pray against the spirit of selfishness, greed, hate and fear in our nation.
 3. Pray for God's shalom to overwhelm our nation.
 4. Eat nothing between 11 AM and 6 PM and drink only water.
 5. News and social media blackout
 - **Optional Group Activity:** Get together with at least 1 other person and watch at least 2 of the suggested documentaries this week.

Week 4: Justice Through Reconciliation (March 31 – April 5)

Focus: Restorative Justice and Peacemaking

- **Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 5:18-19, Matthew 5:9
- **Activity/Reflection:**
 - Focus on the role of reconciliation in justice, particularly in relationships within the your families , the church and the broader community.
 - **Challenge:**
 1. Fast from any form of unforgiveness or hostility, and engage in an act of reconciliation, whether it be with a family member, friend, or coworker.
 2. Eat nothing between 11 AM and 6 PM and drink only water.
 3. Pray daily for someone with whom you need to reconcile, and for the courage to apologize either to God or to them or both.
 - **Optional Group Activity:** Get together with others and plan a reconciliation process in the congregation, such as a prayer service for healing or a facilitated conversation about conflict resolution

Week 5: Intercession and Justice (April 7 – 12)

Focus: Intercessory Prayer and Justice

- **Scripture:** Acts 12:1-11, Philippians 4:6-9, James 5:13-16
- **Activity/Reflection:**
 - Reflect on how prayer has changed things in your life, and how powerful your prayers are in bringing about justice in the world.
 - Talk with one or two others about what keeps you from praying for justice.
 - **Challenge:**
 1. Eat nothing between 11 AM and 6 PM and drink only water.
 2. Spend 15-30 minutes every day interceding for 1 person you know and one leader in federal, state or local government.
 - **Optional Group Activity:** Organize a Saturday dinner with others where the focus is first on standing in the gap together in prayer, and then on the fellowship where you testify about how you've seen prayer work.

Week 6: Justice through Sacrifice and Solidarity (April 14 – 19)

Focus: Christ's Sacrifice and Our Call to Build Bridges Across Divides

- **Scripture:** Galatians 3:28, Colossians 3:11, John 19:30, Luke 23:44-46, Romans 5:1-11
- **Activity/Reflection:**
 - Reflect on the unity of all people in Christ, transcending racial, social, and cultural divides.
 - Spend 15 – 30 minutes each day focusing on one of the scriptures above.
 - **Challenge:**
 - Eat only between Noon and 6 PM, and drink only water.
 - Fast from judging and excluding people and actively seek to build bridges with those who are different from you, in race, culture, language or socioeconomic status.
 - Intentionally have at least one conversation with someone who is not like you and tell them why you want to enter into dialogue with them. Hint: this is a good week to have lunch with someone at work!
 - Attend each Holy Week Cluster worship experience.
 - Pray for a fresh and powerful resurrection of Jesus in your heart.
 - **Optional Group Activity:** With others, organize an interfaith or interracial dialogue to promote understanding and unity, or engage in a shared service project with a group from a different background or community