I'm ready to help you right now. Deliverance is not a long-range plan. Salvation isn't on hold. I'm putting salvation to work in Zion now, and glory in Israel.

Isaiah 46:13 (MSG)

Lenten Observance Guide

2017

Ray of Hope
Christian Church
Transforming Your World
Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Hale, Senior Pastor
My precious brothers and sisters! These are serious times which we are living in. Our nation and world are in turmoil; the political landscape is in flux. We don’t know what is going to happen from one day to the next. We may not know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future. Our God is the sovereign Lord of the universe.

It is important that we connect and stay connected with him in a vital and intimate way. Our God is the one who can see us through anything and everything. Being connected to him is insuring that our lives are in line with his perfect will: spiritually, physically, emotionally, financially and relationally. If there are areas of your life that are out of step with the Spirit of God, “Now is the Time” to get it in order.

There is no better time than during the season of Lent to re-examine our lives and our relationship with God to insure that we are where we need to be in him. The way that we bring our lives into perfect alignment with God’s will is to practice the spiritual disciplines of worship, study, prayer and fasting, giving and serving.

Lent is the 40-day period when we prepare for the celebration of Easter as Christians. Lent is the time when we observe a period of repentance and death to self through the spiritual disciplines.

Lent is a time of self-examination and self-reflection, even as Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness preparing himself for his ministry on earth. We were chosen before the foundation of the world, redeemed and forgiven of our sins. We are made one with Christ, so that we might be conformed to his image, becoming all that he was as he walked the earth.

Each of us struggle with emotional hang-ups, attitudes, habits and actions that keep us from being fully conformed to Christ’s image and live like him from day to day. The 40 days of Lent give us a dedicated time to confront these attitudes and habits, addressing the ways that they bind us and keep us from being holy, healthy and whole in Christ. It is through the self-denial of fasting and practicing the spiritual disciplines that we diminish the influence of these hang ups and habits and gain the power that we need to defeat them.

We began this year participating in the Daniel fast as a way of bringing our bodies into conformity. We will continue to fast in a myriad of ways as we journey to Calvary to die to self and then be raised to newness of life with Christ. We want to experience all the awesome things God wants to do in us and through us, individually and collectively.

VISION OF THE RAY: To be a City of Hope where people will
1. **Study of the Word** (Matthew 4:1 - 11) - Read, study, and meditate each day. It is important that you not simply study the Word, but apply it to your daily living.

   a. **Lenten Reading** - we will read the book, “Share Jesus Without Fear” by William Fay.

   b. **Lenten Revival** - Join us every Tuesday in March at 7:00 p.m. for our Lenten Revival.

   c. **Lenten Sunday School** - March 5, 2017 through April 2, 2017, 8:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. Three practical classes will be offered to help you study the Word and apply it to your life: Making Your Mark, Bouncing Back, and Bible Journey.

2. **Prayer** (Matthew 6:5 - 14) - When prayer is coupled with the Word, you have a divine hook-up with God. When we pray, we talk to God. As we read the Word, God speaks to us and reveals his will for our lives. Establishing a devotional time to read the Word and pray daily is not an option; it is essential for victorious living.

3. **Giving** - Giving, specifically tithing, is a spiritual discipline in that it indicates where you are in your relationship with God; as well as the level of faith you have in God to provide for your every need. When God is the love of your life, giving him a tenth of your income is the least you can do.

   Each year, we invite you to trust and honor God with your finances at another level through firstfruit giving. In the Old Testament, the firstfruit represents the best and the initial offerings from the harvest God has promised. The people gave in anticipation of the abundance that would come. The firstfruit given to God was an investment in their future harvest. Nowhere do we find this more powerfully illustrated than in the death and resurrection of Jesus; the firstfruit of many brothers and sisters (you and I), who would be saved and receive eternal life (I Corinthians 15:20 - 28).

   When we give the firstfruit of our abundance, we give knowing that it will be multiplied 30, 60, 100 fold. On Easter Sunday, we invite you to give your firstfruit as a sacrificial gift to God for all he has done. The firstfruit offering should be the equivalent of one week’s salary or your best gift.
4. Serving - Now is the time to be the change you want to see. Sharing your God-given talents and love of Christ with others can help to bring about the change we want to see in our communities. This season we will focus on our schools. You are encouraged to volunteer at your child’s school or other local schools for the next forty days and see the difference God will make through you.

5. Fasting - The discipline of fasting is an act of self-denial, so that we might yield and consecrate ourselves to God (Matthew 6:16-18).

We will fast from negativity.
Our actions, attitudes and our words are all a reflection of our thoughts; the things we harbor, meditate on, and allow to run amuck in our hearts and minds. When we don’t take control of our negative thoughts, they will manifest themselves in negative attitudes, words, and actions towards God and others. What keeps many of us from walking into all God has for us is our thoughts and our words. As a person thinks in his/her heart so is he/she (Proverbs 23:7). It is time for us to take captive every thought and the words that proceed from them.

Fasting from negativity will mean that we will:

• Refuse to think negatively or listen to negative conversation about others.
  Refrain from gossiping, circulating rumors and anything injurious about our family, friends, colleagues, classmates, brothers and sisters in Christ, and other associates. Avoid or leave conversations that are negative; where gossip, non-constructive criticism, and rumors are taking place.

• Think Positively.
  Philippians 4:8 says, we are to “think about whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise.”

• Speak life to and about others as well as ourselves.
  We will speak about ourselves in positive, life affirming ways. When speaking about others, we must ask ourselves, if what we are saying can be repeated in their presence. When speaking to others, we will speak life to them, saying only what is edifying, encouraging, and will build them up. Even correction should be spoken in a positive way.
We will fast from the media.
Monday through Friday, we will refrain from the television, the telephone, and the computer after 6:00 p.m. to spend quality time in study and prayer as a family or individually.

We will fast from spending.
We will also give up unnecessary spending. When we refrain from unnecessary spending, then we are developing what Richard Foster calls, the spiritual discipline of a “simplistic lifestyle.” Developing a simplistic lifestyle is key to not letting possessions possess you and laying up for yourselves treasure in heaven (Matthew 6:19 - 24).

We will fast from food.
Throughout the forty days of Lent, we invite you to observe a season of progressive sacrifice as listed below:

**LENTEN FAST SCHEDULE**

**March 1 - March 11**
No sweets/No eating after 6:00 p.m.

**March 12 - March 22**
Miss one meal a day

**March 23 - April 2**
Miss two meals a day

**April 3 - April 13**
Liquid fast/No solid food

You also have the option of doing the Daniel Fast for 40 days (consisting of water, fruits, grains, legumes and vegetables) or a 21 day liquid fast starting March 24, 2017. Fasting is a personal matter, so fast at whatever level you feel comfortable.
THE DANIEL FAST

One of the great things about the Daniel Fast is that you are not limited to any specific amount of food, but rather to the kinds of food you can eat.

**Foods to include in your diet during the Daniel Fast**

- All fruits
- All vegetables
- All whole grains
- All nuts and seeds
- All legumes
- All quality oils

**Beverages:** spring water, distilled water or other pure waters.
**Other:** tofu, soy products, vinegar, seasonings, salt, herbs and spices.

**Foods to avoid on the Daniel Fast**

- All meat and animal products
- All dairy products
- All sweeteners
- All leavened bread
- All refined/processed food products
- All deep fried foods
- All solid fats

**Beverages:** including but not limited to coffee, tea, herbal teas, energy drinks, carbonated beverages, and alcohol.

For more information go to [http://daniel-fast.com](http://daniel-fast.com)
Colors of the Season
Ash Wednesday - Gray
Lent - Purple
Easter Sunday - White

Imposition of Ashes Service
Wednesday, March 1, 2017
7:00 p.m. - Main Sanctuary

Lenten Revival
March 7, 14, 21, and 28, 2017
(every Tuesday in March)
7:00 p.m. - Main Sanctuary

Palm Sunday/Easter Play
Sunday, April 9, 2017
10:00 a.m. - Main Sanctuary
(One Service)

Good Friday Service
Sunday, April 14, 2017
7:00 p.m. - Main Sanctuary

Easter Sunday Service
Sunday, April 16, 2017
7:30 a.m. - Main Sanctuary
9:15 a.m. - Breaking of the Fast in the Family Life Center
10:00 a.m. - Main Sanctuary
CHURCH SCHEDULE

SUNDAYS

7:20 a.m. ................................................................. Corporate Prayer
7:30 a.m. ................................................................. Worship Service
9:50 a.m. ................................................................. Corporate Prayer
10:00 a.m. ................................................................. Worship Service
10:00 a.m. ................................................................. Children’s Church in the CE Building
                                 2767 Snapfinger Road, Decatur, GA
10:00 a.m. ................................................................. Youth “iFlow” Teen Worship Service
                           in the Chapel (2nd & 3rd Sundays)

TUESDAYS

10:50 a.m. ................................................................. Corporate Prayer
11:00 a.m. ................................................................. The Gathering/Small Groups
6:50 p.m. ................................................................. Corporate Prayer
7:00 p.m. ................................................................. The Gathering/Small Groups

SATURDAYS

7:00 a.m. ................................................................. Men’s Intercessory Prayer in the Sanctuary
7:00 a.m. ................................................................. Women’s Intercessory Prayer in the Chapel

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Sunday ................................................................. 7:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Monday - Wednesday ............................................. 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Thursday - Saturday ............................................. Church Office Closed

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