



RAY OF HOPE
CHRISTIAN CHURCH
TRANSFORMING YOUR WORLD
Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Hale, Senior Pastor

Lenten OBSERVANCE 2026



FORTIFIED

Strengthened • Secured • Sustained by God
Deuteronomy 2:7



MESSAGE FROM PASTOR HALE

My precious sons and daughters in Christ,

The time has come for us to enter another Lenten Season. Lent is the 40-day season leading up to the commemoration of the crucifixion of Christ and celebration of his resurrection on Sunday, April 5.

As followers of Christ, it is God's desire for us to become conformed to his image and be all that he is. It is during the season of Lent that we intentionally work on that through practicing the spiritual disciplines.

This is a particularly troubling time in our lives, given the chaos that is happening in our nation and world. It would be easy for us to become distracted or discouraged by what we see and feel. But we must remember that we are **Fortified: Strengthened, Secured, and Sustained by God.** God's got us! But we must stay grounded in Christ and focus on being faithful in the life we live in Him! It is those same spiritual disciplines that help us stay grounded. Donald S. Whitney says,

Spiritual Disciplines are those practices in scripture that promote spiritual growth, stability, and commitment in the followers of Jesus Christ.

Once again, I invite you to join me as we practice the spiritual disciplines of Prayer, Fasting, Study of the Word, Service, and Giving. There are a few bonus practices of fasting added to help us let go of those things that tarnish our witness and love for ourselves and others, such as negativity, etc. To help you in this regard, we are reading the devotional titled "Leaning In, Letting Go" by Nicole Massie Martin.

Each year, I look forward to the season of Lent; to spending intentional time with the Lord and allowing him to help me work out my salvation in a concentrated way, as he works in me both to will and to act to fulfill his good purpose in my life. (Philippians 2:13)

Thanks for joining me on the journey!

Much love,

Pastor

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

- 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** - the suggested reading for Lent is the book *Leaning In, Letting Go: A Lenten Devotional* by Nicole Massie Martin.
 - b. Lenten Revival** - Join us Tuesday, March 3, 10, 17, and 24 at 7:30 p.m. for our Lenten Revival.
 - c. Sunday S.U.R.G.E: The Lenten Edition** – Sundays, February 22 – March 29 - after worship service. Register for this class at www.rayofhope.org.
- 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. Join us for prayer each Wednesday at 7:14 a.m. at (605) 313-5142 / Passcode: 958664#.
- 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. You are encouraged to volunteer at a school, community organization, or cause for the next forty days and see the difference God will make through you. See below for several organizations that have volunteer opportunities.
 - Books for Africa** - <https://www.booksforafrica.org/getting-involved/volunteer.html> – Books For Africa remains the largest shipper of donated text and library books to the African continent, shipping over 64 million books to all 55 countries on the African continent since 1988.

- **Med Share International** - <https://www.medshare.org> – Med Share is dedicated to improving people's quality of life through recovering unused medical supplies and equipment and redistributing them to those most in need.
- **Atlanta Community Food Bank** - <https://www.acfb.org/volunteer/> – The Atlanta Community Food Bank provides food to the community through sorting and packing of food donations from various sites around the city.
- **Open Hand Atlanta (Meal Packing for Seniors and Chronically III)** - <https://www.openhandatlanta.org/get-involved/volunteer/> – Open Hand offers home-delivered meals and nutrition education to people with critical, chronic, or terminal diseases, as well as homebound seniors.

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.

LENTEN FAST SCHEDULE

February 18 - 28

No sweets/No eating after 6:00 p.m.

March 1 - 11

Miss one meal a day

March 12 - 22

Miss two meals a day

March 23 - April 4

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 15, 2026**. Fasting is a personal matter, so fast at whatever level you feel comfortable.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FASTING

Prepare Yourself Physically: Fasting requires reasonable precautions. Consult your physician first, especially if you are pregnant, taking prescription medication, or have a chronic ailment. Some persons should never fast without professional supervision.

While you fast:

- Avoid drugs, even natural herbal drugs and homeopathic remedies. Medication should be withdrawn only with physician's supervision.
- Limit your activity.
- Exercise only moderately. Walk one to three miles each day if convenient and comfortable.
- Rest as much as your schedule will permit.
- Prepare yourself for temporary mental discomforts, such as impatience, crankiness, and anxiety.
- Expect some physical discomforts, especially on the second day. You may have fleeting hunger pains, dizziness, or the "blahs." Withdrawal from caffeine and sugar may cause headaches. Physical annoyances may also include weakness, tiredness, or sleeplessness.

The first two or three days are usually the most difficult. As you continue to fast, you will likely experience a sense of well-being both physically and spiritually. However, should you feel hunger pains, increase your liquid intake.

Put Yourself on a Schedule: For maximum spiritual benefit, set aside ample time to be alone with the Lord. Listen for His leading. The more time you spend with Him, the more meaningful your fast will be. Invite God to use you. Ask Him to show you how to influence your world, your family, your church, your community, your country, and beyond. Pray for His vision for your life and empowerment to do His will.

Tips on Juice Fasting: Drinking fruit juice will decrease your hunger pains and give you some natural sugar energy. The taste and lift will motivate and strengthen you to continue. The best juices are made from fresh watermelon, lemons, grapes, apples, cabbage, beets, carrots, celery, or leafy green vegetables. In cold weather, you may enjoy warm vegetable broth. Mix acidic juices (orange, tomato) with water for your stomach's sake. Avoid caffeinated drinks. Be aware that chewing gum or mints stimulate digestive action in your stomach and may make you hungrier.

Breaking Your Fast: End your fast gradually. Do not eat solid foods immediately after your fast. Suddenly reintroducing solid foods to your stomach and digestive tract will likely have negative, even dangerous consequences. Try several smaller meals or snacks daily.

If you end your fast gradually, the beneficial physical and spiritual effects will result in continued good health.

LENTEN SCHEDULE

Colors of the Season

Ash Wednesday – Gray | Lent - Purple | Easter Sunday – White

Prayer Call

Dial (605) 313-5142 / Passcode: 958664#
Wednesdays at 7:14 a.m.

Ash Wednesday Service

Wednesday, February 18
7:30 p.m. - Chapel

Lenten Revival

Tuesdays - March 3, 10, 17, 24
7:30 p.m. – Chapel

Palm Sunday

Sunday, March 29
10:00 a.m.

Lead Me To Calvary Holy Week Prayer Call

Watch via www.rayofhope.org, Facebook Live, YouTube
Monday, March 30 – Thursday, April 2
7:00 p.m.

Good Friday/ Seven Last Words Service

Friday, April 3
7:30 p.m.

Resurrection/Easter Sunday

Sunday, April 5
10:00 a.m.

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