

This is just a guide, you can ignore it if you wish, my hope is that some will participate in a time of fasting, whether that be food, a drink, technology, so that we can dedicate ourselves to God and commit ourselves to the cause. Please feel free to do your own thing.

Fasting and prayer

Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land. My eyes will be open and my ears attentive to every prayer made in this place. For I have chosen this Temple and set it apart to be holy—a place where my name will be honoured forever. I will always watch over it, for it is dear to my heart.

Psalms 91 Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty. ² This I declare about the Lord: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; he is my God, and I trust him. ³ For he will rescue you from every trap and protect you from deadly disease. ⁴ He will cover you with his feathers. He will shelter you with his wings. His faithful promises are your armour and protection.

The world is full of fear and anxiety right now as people struggle to make sense of the potential threats to their physical and economic wellbeing. The best comfort secular governments can offer is an assurance that they are working on the problem and an encouragement to remain calm, rational and kind to one another. Yet, human nature being what it is, people are too easily consumed by self-preservation.

WE come to you Lord:

With belief — the prerequisite for calling on God (Romans 10:14) •

With humility — in weakness, confessing our need of God and sins that separates us (Isaiah 59:1-2) •

With desperation — earnest prayer is powerful in its effects (James 5:16) •

With expectation — that God will hear and rescue (Micah 7:7; Zechariah 10:6) •

With confidence — that God will hear and respond positively (1 John 5:14) •

With awareness — that we are not alone, but part of “all the saints” (Ephesians 6:18 for example) •

With gratitude — alert and thankful for the goodness of the Lord (Colossians 4:2) •

With peace — not anxious for anything, but trusting God in all things (Philippians 4:6-7)

As we commence this dedicated time of prayer and fasting for God’s intervention in the COVID19 pandemic, let us come in faith and hope. Let us hold fast to the promise of God to servant Israel, “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10). This is true for us because he has chosen us in Christ Jesus and will not reject us (1 Thessalonians 1:4)

Confession - Loving Father, all the fancy words in the world, expressed in eloquent prose, decorated with emotion, spoken with conviction, cannot compete with a heartfelt 'sorry' when all other words fail.

There are times when we are all too aware of our limitations, conscious of sin and the distance it creates between us. Sometimes 'sorry' is all the heart can bear to say aloud. It is only you who can read and understand the language of our hearts. Only you who can translate our 'sorry' into the prayer we would have prayed if we had the words within us. Then you forgive, and having forgiven, surround us in an embrace of love, drawing us close to your heart as it was always meant to be. Thank you, Loving Father, that you listen to hearts as well as voices. Thank you.

Christmas has meant there are far higher expectations than normal and people are disappointed and maybe desperate, pray for your church families, Christmas hasn’t been cancelled, just the way we celebrate has, the child came and brings with him hope for the whole world, let’s not lose sight of that.

Prayers of praise and thanksgiving as you feel led.

Mark 12 - “The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. ³⁰ And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all

your strength.^[g] ³¹ The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’^[h] No other commandment is greater than these.”

Pray for your neighbours, physically those who live next door to you and round your street, maybe you live close to a school or shops, or the hospital or some other building, pray for the people who work there, as they deal with all the new restrictions related to Covid. Pray for their safety and that they might find faith, remember you might be the answer to your own prayers.

Job 17:9 - The righteous keep moving forward, and those with clean hands become stronger and stronger. That is a bit tongue in cheek really because we have to wash our hands so often. Wash your hands with soap, slowly lathering them (if you want to) as you do that or not, ask God to intercede forgive our sins and intervene and halt the spread of the COVID19 virus internationally. Rinse your hands of the lather, thanking God for love and compassion that is new every morning.

2 Corinthians 12 - 8 Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. ⁹ Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. ¹⁰ That’s why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Pray for God’s loving kindness on the infected population. That they would seek him and find him even though he is not far from them Pray That God’s power would work wonders in their weakness. That they would know a supernatural sense of grace and peace in their time of trial. Pray for healing, restoration and peace as well, in the chaos that is hospitals at this time. The inpatient numbers are raising and there must be anxiety among staff as they prepare to deal with whatever comes through the doors Pray for those who are mourning the loss of loved ones, grief at this time isn’t normal either because you cannot give people the send off that people feel their loved ones deserve. People don’t know how they feel about anything and so grief is, in my opinion, being put on hold. Pray for the mental health of the nation.

Malachi 4 - 2 “But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings.^[b] And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture. This picture from scripture is one of joy in so many ways It was how I imagine we felt when the vaccine was found. Pray for the scientists and the drug companies producing these vaccines. Ask for wisdom for the virologists and epidemiologists as they work on vaccines and other potential remedies. Pray for perseverance as we wait our turn to receive it, give thanks for those who have received it. Pray for deliverance from this disease, in the hope that a new day will dawn bringing healing with it.

Psalms 68:5 - Father to the fatherless, defender of widows— this is God, whose dwelling is holy. Pray for your own families, pray protection over them, pray for the isolated and the lonely - Pray for those whose family is the source of abuse. Forced isolation can cause great anxiety. Pray that God will be their defender and deliverer. Pray for people within your known network who might feel cut off from community. Many will experience financial hardship, basic food supplies may be scarce. Pray for emergency relief agencies as they mobilize to meet needs in places where the virus is in a growth phase among those with limited healthcare resources. Pray for those ones in high density living conditions with low access to adequate health care and subsistence standards of living. I am also thinking of the international situation.

1 Timothy 2 1-4 - I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. 2 Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. 3 This is good and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth. - Pray wisdom for our local and national government and those around the world as they carry their responsibilities justly. Pray that their work will enable us to continue living peaceful and quiet lives. Pray a blessing over our local leaders (regardless of what you think of their politics).

Pray for health care professionals- Imagine spending 12-16 hours a day behind a face mask, gloves and protective clothing tending to the sick and dying. Imagine the frustration when there is not enough equipment. Praise God for people willing to help in this way. Who pay careful attention to their work, seeking satisfaction

for a job well done, a person healed. Pray for refreshment for all health professionals. WE are frustrated that normal service has not been resumed in so many ways, pray for all those who have had their treatment postponed due to covid and the frustration that has caused throughout the population.

Psalm 37 - Don't worry about the wicked or envy those who do wrong. ² For like grass, they soon fade away. Like spring flowers, they soon wither. ³ Trust in the Lord and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper. ⁴ Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desires. ⁵ Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you ⁶ He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn, and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun. ⁷ Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for him to act. Don't worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes.

Thank God that you are more valuable than birds and flowers. Commit to seeking first God's kingdom and living right, according to Jesus' teaching. Pray for the global economy: — for those who have lost jobs because of the COVID19 restrictions — for those who have lost wealth in stock market crashes — for those who have lost homes because of mortgage defaults — I'm sure there is more that I haven't thought of.

Pray for those known to you who need a touch today.

Conclude by praying as the Lord led us to pray and tradition has shaped it: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.