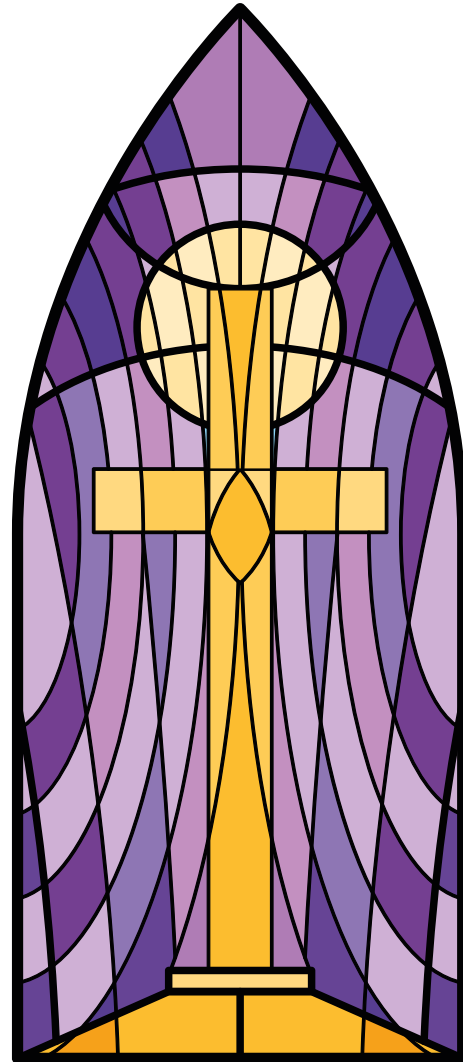


True Fasting: turning to God and loving our neighbours

'Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?' (Isaiah 58: 5)

You'll need:

- Blank postcards with enough space for writing. Make your own or download our template.
- A cross, pin-board or other item to display your postcards.



Opening words

In this time of reflection we will renew our commitment to respond to the need around us, just as Jesus did.



Scripture Reading: Isaiah 58:6-9

Reflection

For many Christians, Lent is a time to reflect on Jesus' journey through the wilderness, suffering and into new life. It is a time of fasting in order to align our priorities with God's priorities.

However, many people across our country are not choosing to go without – the cost-of-living crisis is forcing them to make impossible decisions between basic needs like heating and clothing, and eating.

In this reading from Isaiah, we hear words from God to His people during a time when they were fasting from food but ignoring the

suffering and injustice around them.

God says, I have not called you to merely go through religious rituals, but to love and care for the people around you.

This reading reminds us that true fasting means returning to God. It is a call to refrain not merely from food, but from indifference and injustice. And it is a reminder that to stop engaging in oppression is not enough.

To respond to God's call, we must be actively engaged in reform and respond faithfully and lovingly to the needs around us.



Questions for reflection (as a group or for individual reflection)



- What are the most pressing needs in your local community? Reflect on how these needs have changed over the past three years.
- What does it look like for our church community to care for people with urgent physical and spiritual needs?
- How can we use our voices, influence, skills and time to 'loose the chains of injustice'?

Spend some time praying for your community

- Take a postcard and use it to write a personal commitment to help create a more just and loving world. It can be a small or large action, or even a prayer asking for God's help.
- Spend a few moments in prayer or reflecting on your commitment. If you are taking part as a group, attach your commitment to a cross or other display.

Closing prayer



We pray to the Lord for courage to give up other things and to give ourselves to Him this Lent.

We pray for forgiveness for the times when we have turned away from suffering and been indifferent to injustice.

We pray for compassion so that we might give ourselves to meet the needs of others in loving service.

We pray for perseverance for all who are working to support their communities through these difficult times.

We pray for healing for the sick, shelter for the homeless, freedom for the oppressed and food for the hungry.

God of justice and mercy, hear our prayers and give us your grace as we answer your call to love and care for those around us. Amen

