

Sixth Episcopal District CME Church's Focus on Lenten Revival

Thomas Louis Brown, Sr., Bishop

On February 5, 2023, the *Atlantic Magazine* published an article by Timothy Keller entitled “*American Christianity Is Due for A Revival*.” Keller argues that given the continuous numerical decline and influence of Christianity in America, there is the hope that we can be revived again. In this regard, he listed the following proposals that can possibly help stir a revival among us:

- **We must learn how to speak compellingly to persons who are non-Christian informed by Paul’s perspective offered in 1 Corinthians 1:22-44.** Everyone has noble aspirations and ambitions. But we avoid choosing inadequate ways in pursuit of these.
- **We must learn to keep a healthy tension between our righteousness and our call to be for justice.** On the one hand, we should unapologetically declare that Jesus Christ is the answer to our ultimate questions, while on the other hand upholding our belief in the authority of the Holy Scriptures which call us to a life of faithful obedience and service in the name of Jesus Christ.
- **We must reclaim that Jesus Christ’s mission for us is global and multiethnic in witness.** In a word, our Christianity must never be relegated to just our local environs nor with our own people. Like John Wesley we need a vision that declares – “**the world is my parish**”.
- **We must strive to keep a healthy balance between “innovation and conservation.”** We have historic and biblical teachings which we should adamantly propagate while also being committed to implementing innovative strategies hoping to better serve our present age.
- We must refuse to give into a culture that makes individuals and their so-called freedoms top priority above our God given call to be Godfearing followers of Jesus Christ who believe there are indeed absolutes – truths that are not to be given up for a modern culture that make the amoral claim that nothing is absolute but one’s individual opinion and freedom. We are summoned and obligated to be our brothers and sisters’ keepers.

The Lenten season recalls the times of ancient Israel’s wilderness and wandering from their enslavement, exodus towards their promised Divine destiny. Lent also invites us to remember the earthly temptation Jesus faced in the desert wilderness. In essence, the Lenten season reminds us that God is forever calling us from our places of comfort into uncomfortable places and assignments of witness and service for Christ. As a journey of grace Lent demands us to take up our cross of self-denial rather than remain obsessed with our self-indulgences. The spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting and study of scripture are critical to our spiritual formation as individuals and the Body of Christ. Therefore, I invite us to come on a spiritual journey praying that God, through the saving grace of Jesus Christ and the transforming agency of the Holy spirit, will revive us both as individuals and churches.

The Following is our invitation to a serious time of prayer, study and fasting:

First Week

- A. Ash Wednesday, February 22** – Join in with the Facebook live 10-minute prayer time at 7 AM PST, 10 AM EST. We are to focus **on Isaiah 55:6-7** as we ask God to transform within us a new identity which differs from the old.
- B. Thursday, February 23** – Pray, study and fast on **Psalms 121** as we trust God to keep us on our journey of faith.
- C. Friday, February 24** – Pray, fast and study **on Matthew 6:27** as we pray God will give us faith to overcome our tendency to worry and be anxious about our liveliness.
- D. Saturday, February 25** – Pray, study and fast **on Luke 4:1-2f** as we seek God’s voice in our wilderness.

- E. **Sunday, February 26** – Pray, fast and study on **Isaiah 55:1-2af** as we seek to overcome the temptation to think that bigger, faster and more are better.
- F. **Monday, February 27** – Pray, fast and study **1 Corinthians 1:27-29** to overcome habits that make us unhappy.
- G. **Tuesday, February 28** – Pray, fast and study **Exodus 33:19** that God will help us to adhere to a higher call than our own.

Second Week

- H. **Wednesday, March 1** – Pray, fast and study **Genesis 9:12-15** seeking to be faithful to God’s covenant as we remember God’s promise to us.
- I. **Thursday, March 2** – Pray, fast and study **Matthew 15:28** as we bring before God’s healing the needs of our family and neighbors.
- J. **Friday, March 3** – Pray, fast and study **Luke 6:21b-25b** as we trust that our weeping will turn by God’s help into gladness.
- K. **Saturday, March 4** – Pray, fast and study **Isaiah 6:1-3** seeking God’s discomfiting vision for our ministry.
- L. **Sunday, March 5** – Pray, fast and study **1 Samuel 3:10** opening our ears to hear God’s calling us much like a thief coming in the night.
- M. **Monday, March 6** – Pray, fast and study **John 9:25b** as we testify with certainty how God has opened our eyes that we might see.
- N. **Tuesday, March 7** – Pray, fast and study **Mark 8:34-36** as we learn the meaning and purpose of true self-denial for Christ.

Third Week

- O. **Wednesday, March 8** – Pray, fast and study **Isaiah 58:6** as we remember that true fasting is always justice focused for the cause of the poor, marginalized and the oppressed.
- P. **Thursday, March 9** – Pray, fast and study **Psalms 23:6** as we reflect on the power of knowing that God’s goodness and mercy are pursuing us rather than following us.
- Q. **Friday, March 10** – Pray, fast and study **John 3:1-2** pondering on the necessity of our rebirth (reborn) from above in response to God’s amazing love for us (the world).
- R. **Saturday, March 11** – Pray, fast and study **1 Kings 17:2-4** pondering on the ways God provides us in the most unlikely situations much like ravens feeding the prophet Elijah.
- S. **Sunday, March 12** – Pray, fast and study **Isaiah 42:15-16** bathing ourselves in the marvelous truth that God prevails over mountains, deserts and darkness.
- T. **Monday, March 13** – Pray, fast and study **Luke 24:35** reflecting on the times when God has caught up with us walking in the snares of our disappointments and doubts revealing that we really are not alone nor defeated.
- U. **Tuesday, March 14** – Pray, fast and study **Isaiah 55:8-9** as we learn that God always has another way other than our own.

Fourth Week

- V. **Wednesday, March 15** – Read, fast, and pray **Romans 10:9** being reminded of the transformative power of our confession that Jesus is Lord!
- W. **Thursday, March 16** – Pray, fast and read **Genesis 17:4-6** ingesting God’s promised destiny for us now for the future.
- X. **Friday, March 17** – Pray, fast and study **Luke 6:20** feasting on the power of God to bless us such that our present situation is a pathway towards something much greater and more satisfying.

- Y. **Saturday, March 18** – Pray, fast and study **Mark 6:41-42** believing that God can create through plenty even in the midst of scarcity.
- Z. **Sunday, March 19** – Pray, fast and study **Jeremiah 30:15-16** coming to the realization that with God our pain can be transformed into victory.
- 1. **Monday, March 20** – Pray, fast and study **Isaiah 54:7-9** keeping before us that our memory of God’s Promises can lead us to an enduring hope.
- 2. **Tuesday, March 21** – pray, fast and read **Exodus 8:16-18** remembering that if God can use the gnats in God’s delivering so God can use us to offer deliverance to others who are oppressed.

Fifth Week

- 3. **Wednesday, March 22** – Pray, fast and study **Isaiah 40:31** reminding ourselves that there is always great promise and renewal awaiting us when we wait for the Lord – mounting up like eagles!
- 4. **Thursday, March 23** – Pray, fast and study **Isaiah 43:1f** being reassured that God does not call us to a life of fear, but faith in God’s redemptive and justifying grace.
- 5. **Friday, March 24** – Pray, fast and study **Genesis 17:17** as we become convinced that God can empower us with an imagination to believe the unbelievable – only God can limit Godself!
- 6. **Saturday, March 25** – Pray, fast and study **2 Corinthians 3:18** excited that God, through Jesus, is reforming and transforming us degree by degree into a glorious image that is Divine.
- 7. **Sunday, March 26** – Read, fast and Pray **Psalms 73:15-17; Luke 15:17** realizing that from time to time God has wake us up to a reality that is far greater than the one we are now living with.
- 8. **Monday, March 27** – Pray, fast and read **1 Corinthians 1:26-29** being reminded that God is always searching for and calling those of us who are distorted and feel that we are unworthy to be in the family and service of our God.
- 9. **Tuesday, March 28** – Pray, fast and read **Jeremiah 31:34** realizing that God gifts us with new chances by forgiving and washing away our sins, failures and past – a new day is dawning for us.

Sixth Week

- 10. **Wednesday, March 29** – Pray, fast and read **Jeremiah 31:31** being convinced that God does indeed bring new life out of death – establishes a new covenant with us and our future.
- 11. **Thursday, March 30** – Study, fast and read **Daniel 1:19b-20** believing that when we follow God’s guidelines and denying ourselves of the diet of our oppressors, God is able to make us look far better than those who desire to enslave us.
- 12. **Friday, March 31** – Pray, fast and read **Luke 10:23-24** thanking God that God has given us eyes to see what we see and ears to hear what we hear!
- 13. **Saturday, April 1** – Pray, fast and read **Exodus 17:7** reminding that when caught between the wilderness and the promise land, we need to remember that God has not abandoned us.
- 14. **Palm Sunday, April 2** – Pray, fast and read **John 2:19-21** remembering that too often we become obsessed with the wrong temple. Christ holds the right temple for us. It is a temple that bears an old rugged cross and death, but eventually becomes The Resurrection!

Holy Week

15. **Monday of Holy Week, April 3** – Pray, fast and read **Philippians 2:4-8** being assured that, like Jesus, choosing the path of vulnerability is scary, but leads to being exalted.
16. **Tuesday of Holy Week, April 4** – Pray, fast and read **Romans 15:13** remembering that just as Jesus and Martin Luther King, Jr. chose the alternative course of nonviolence, we also can “abound in hope” made possible by the ‘power of the Holy Spirit’.
17. **Wednesday of Holy Week, April 5** – Pray, fast and ready **John 12:31-32** being reminded that the powers of this world will eventually give way to an eternal power as we keep lifting up the name of Jesus Christ for the world we abide in.
18. **Maundy Thursday, April 6** – pray, fast and study **John 13:14-15** committed to practice the same hospitality Jesus offered His disciples to our neighbors assuring them that we all belong.
19. **Good Friday, April 7** – Pray, fast and read **Psalms 69:30-33** as we marvel over the mystery of Jesus’ lynching on our behalf thereby helping us to reread the empire messages of power, politics, capitalism, militarism, sexism and racism knowing that God is the God of the powerless!
20. **Holy Saturday, April 8** – Pray, fast and read **John 20:1af** expecting that God always has a surprised interruption in the midst of the most violent and tragic situations. Learn to live with tiptoe faith!
21. **Easter Sunday, April 9** – Pray, fast and read **John 20:19** remembering that Easter declares that there is a contradiction between the powers of this world and the Resurrection power of our God – graves must open – death must give way to life – sin must die to amazing grace of God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ! Hallelujah! Amen!

Resources:

1. Walter Bruggemann, *Devotions for Lent: A Way Other Than Our Own*.
2. Beverly A. Thompson and George B. Thompson, Jr. *Grace for the Journey: Practices and Possibilities for in-between Times*.
3. Henri J. M. Nouwen. *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*.