

hillsborough

PARISH CHURCH

DAY of PRAYER and FASTING

FASTING: if people choose to fast, they should fast consistent with their health and age. Thus while some may observe a complete fast of all food for the day, others may just miss one meal while others may not be able to do without some form of regular food. So perhaps they could instead fast from TV.

We do not fast to earn God's approval but as a sign of our desire during a special time of prayer to concentrate on the Lord alone and so do without what we normally regard as essential for our maintenance. Secondly we choose to fast to help identify with the global poor for whom everyday is a struggle for food.

PRAYER POINTS

Firstly, as you pause to pray, take time to be still. Close your eyes, breathe deeply and slowly say the Lord's Prayer. Repeat the Lord's Prayer and the second time, select one line from it to then use as an opening prayer as you draw intentionally into the presence of God.

THANKSGIVING

"But God demonstrated His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

Give THANKS to God for His love in choosing to reach out to us (who have messed up in life) and draw us into a personal relationship with Him.

Give THANKS for God's willingness to give Jesus Christ as a sacrifice on the Cross for our forgiveness and to provide the means of our rescue.

Give THANKS to God the Father for accepting you, through faith in Christ, as one of His children and promising that He will never leave nor forsake you.

Take a few moments to think over things you enjoy (or have enjoyed) in this life: be that family, work, good health, or friendships. Or it might even be the ordinary things we take as part of everyday life: running water, food, clothes, home and a bed to sleep in. Now select three of these blessings and prayerfully thank God for His goodness to you.

REFLECTION & CONFESSION

Prayerfully reflect upon: *"Therefore I urge you in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will."* (Romans 12:1-2)

Are you being changed by God's grace in your outlook OR do you just go along with the values of this world?

Are you making decisions in your daily life which place God at the centre and seek to honour Him in all aspects of your life, including your work, your family life and your social life?

Are you concerned about the things of God and the advance of His kingdom OR are you just focused on your own aspirations?

If you recognise that you have been failing to honour God, then prayerfully SEEK His forgiveness and ASK God to renew your faith and strengthen your desire to be transformed by His grace.

CHURCH LIFE

Jesus said: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35)

Give THANKS to God for preserving Hillsborough Parish as a light in our community and for its witness;

for being a Church which wants to welcome visitors and to care for its members;

for the willingness of so many members to serve in a variety of ways and so enable effective ministry and mission;

for growth in numbers attending our Church and for a growing number of people coming to new faith in Christ or being strengthened in their existing faith;

for a concern for those beyond our Church walls in the wider community;

and

for some aspect of our Church which has been a blessing to you.

ASK God to bless:

the Rector, Ministry Team and Select Vestry with wisdom, discernment and courage as they seek to lead us forward;

our weekly Sunday Services so that they would be faithful to Scripture, engage with contemporary society and connect with different generations;

our pastoral ministry to housebound members so that they would feel valued and strengthened in their faith;

our counseling of those parishioners who are ill or struggling – physically, emotionally or spiritually;

our ministry to young people through Sunday School, Youth Church, Youth Fellowship and other midweek activities;

for a growing sense of community & love among members and a greater desire for reaching out into our local community;

for our mission partners serving among those in material and spiritual poverty; and

you at your point of deepest need: spiritual, physical or relational.

THE WIDER COMMUNITY

Give THANKS to God for the freedom we as a people enjoy. Also give THANKS – despite the challenges and pressures on them – for the various public services which we enjoy and for those who serve so diligently within them.

As we give THANKS for the recent formation of a Northern Ireland Executive, we ASK for wisdom, discernment and humility among the different Ministers as they prepare for the new NI Budget.

PRAY for those in our society who are lonely, broken or in despair. May they experience practical help & care and know the love of God.

PRAY for a country in the world undergoing conflict, famine or other disaster for whom you feel a special concern.