



A CONNEXIONAL DAY OF FASTING: FRIDAY 1 MARCH 2024



Rev David Turtle
President 23/24

As part of our Lenten journey, the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, is inviting us to join with him on a **Connexional Day of Fasting**. Fasting is a spiritual discipline that is taught to us in Scripture and modelled by Jesus. Through fasting, we can experience the grace of what God has done for us in Christ, to forgive our sins, and we can become more fully open to what God does in us by the Holy Spirit, to help us become more like Jesus.

From as early as August 1739, John Wesley encouraged the early Methodists into the practice of fasting. Wesley himself, throughout his ministry, fasted each Friday (and, for a period of time, on both Wednesdays and Fridays). This fast usually began at sundown on Thursday and typically ended at 3.00pm on Friday. There was nothing particularly special about a Friday, it was simply that Wesley and others followed this as a regular pattern of discipline. In the traditional Christian sense, fasting is abstaining from food (normally not liquids) as a spiritual discipline for a limited period of time. In recent times, the practice of fasting has not been limited to food but has included a fast from activities that consume much of our time. Fasting is therefore an opportunity to lay down an appetite whether that be for food, social media, TV, mobile phone etc. in order that we might pick up a passionate pursuit of God.

The purpose of fasting is to focus our prayers, taking the time we normally spend on our 'appetites' as time in prayer for what God wants to do among us. Many find that fasting intensifies our prayers and that in denying our physical hunger for time, our spiritual sensitivity is heightened. Fasting is not some magical way to manipulate God into doing our will or be an accomplice in our plans, rather, while we are fasting, we offer God the time and attentiveness we might otherwise give to other activities. Through self-denial we begin to recognise what controls us, and fasting helps retrain us away from dependence on earthly things towards a reliance on an almighty God.

For this **Connexional Day of Fasting**, we are encouraging you to follow the Wesleyan model, **beginning your fast at sundown on Thursday and fasting through to 3:00pm on Friday**. Prayerfully consider what 'appetite' you want to lay down during this time, and when you feel the pull toward that 'appetite' offer this prayer:

*Loving and Unfailing God, we seek your face.
Renew your Church. Strengthen our faith.
May your Kingdom come. Amen.*