

HIGH PRIESTS QUORUM

Joint Conference
of Restoration Branches

Independence, Missouri, August 15, 2011

As brothers called to serve the Lord in the office of High Priest, we recognize a responsibility of helping to provide spiritual guidance to the body of Christ. It is in the bonds of charity and humility that we come to you at this time, offering what we believe is inspired counsel – a call to a specific season of fasting, prayer and study for the purpose of thanksgiving, repentance, and preparation.

Beginning Sunday, August 28, 2011 through Thursday, October 6, 2011, we invite you to join us in a 40-day fast before the Lord. We have planned the fast to be structured in three parts as follows (please refer to the included *Fasting Guidelines* for more details):

Part One – Thanksgiving and Praise (10 days, August 28 – September 6)

Part Two – Forgiveness and Repentance (20 days, September 7 – September 26)

Part Three – Consecration and Preparation (10 days, September 27 – October 6)

Please at least fast the evening meal each Wednesday during these 40 days and dedicate some devotional time with the Lord each day in prayer and scripture study.

Why are we calling for a fast? We see the signs of the end times upon us and we recognize accordingly that the Lord requires an extraordinary response from His people to meet the end-time challenges and fulfill His purposes before the Lord's return. Several separate groups and individuals have been inspired with light and counsel that share this common theme, and we feel the Lord is guiding us all to humble ourselves and prepare for the days ahead. This call to fasting is in response to that guidance.

Who is included in the call to fast? We invite all the Saints of the everlasting covenant that was restored in 1830, regardless of affiliation. Whether or not you recognize our priesthood authority as High Priests or Elders to call the Saints to such a fast as this, we ask that you recognize our common brotherhood in the Restoration as fellow Saints, or at least recognize the signs of the end times and the need for all of the Lord's people to fast and repent and prepare for the work ahead. In that spirit, we humbly ask in the bonds of peace and in the pure love of Christ that you join us in this fast.

We want you to know that this is something we will be doing in our own lives. We invite all the members of the body of Christ, wherever they may be, to join with us in this endeavor.

To conclude the fast, we will be inviting the pastors, priesthood, and leaders of as many churches and groups of the Restoration Movement as we can contact to join us in coordinating special services in the Center Place of Zion (Independence, MO) as well as other locations. Details for this will be forthcoming.

Along with the Fasting Guidelines, a series of *Questions and Answers* and Words of Counsel are included on the following pages. We hope these will address any questions you may have regarding this period of fasting.

On behalf of the High Priests Quorum, and in Gospel bonds,

Brad Gault
Secretary

Introduction

As the High Priests met in quorum at the 2011 Seventy Missionary Family Reunion at Graceland University in Lamoni, Iowa, Chuck Perry (president of the quorum) presented the letter below from Brother Kerry Lancaster to the quorum for prayerful consideration.

It was agreed in the quorum that the letter contains wise counsel, and a committee was formed to plan the means for following through with the counsel given. This call to fast to all the saints of the Restoration Movement is the result of these efforts. While we recognize there are many who will not regard the following as inspired or wise counsel from the Lord, we include it here as a means of further explanation.

While you may not agree with parts or all of this counsel, we hope you will understand and accept that we feel bound and obligated to diligently follow what we feel is the call of the Lord at this time for fasting and repentance, and forgiveness of our brothers and sisters, our families and friends, our enemies and strangers, and turn to the Lord for mercy.

Words of Counsel, given to the High Priests Quorum July 1, 2011

Dear Brother Chuck,

In a burning and sober manner it has been heavily impressed upon me, more than I can bear, that it is time for the Saints to be on our knees in humble supplication to the Lord in repentance, seeking forgiveness and mercy. The conditions of the world today are rife with the signs we have studied and preached for generations – wars and rumors of wars, tumult in the nations, the Middle East in unrest and chaos, societies breaking down across the world, record droughts, record fires destroying the land, record floods as rivers burst their banks and levies, record tornadoes and hurricanes, record earthquakes and tsunamis, economic collapse and ruin, immoral and corrupt leaders in all the nations including ours, unemployment, huge institutions and businesses failing... the earth is groaning under the rampant sin and oppression covering her face.

And many are asking: “Where is the Lord?”

But the Lord responds: “Where are My Saints, where is My storehouse, where is My Zion?”

As a church, we have suffered for decades in the wilderness as scattered and lost sheep. We have taken refuge in our own self-perceived righteousness by shunning the apostasy of the leadership of the RLDS / Community of Christ and casting ourselves off from their errs and deceptions. We rebuked and rejected the sons of Joseph because they stumbled and spoke falsely.

Yet look at us. We are scattered. We are beaten down. We are trodden underfoot in the world. We are weak. We have no voice to warn the world and prepare for the Lord’s return. And we have not asked ourselves what the Lord now asks us to examine and understand: if we are the righteous of the Church, then why did the Lord allow wicked servants to bring us to this captive state, in effectual bondage?

We have somewhat sought to forgive those who have done this to us (as individuals, but not corporately), but we have not examined ourselves to look to our own culpability.

“Thou shalt have no other gods before Me” declared the Lord. Yet we did raise up a god before Him... a god we thought was holy and good and worthy of being worshipped. Over the years, the RLDS had come to worship the Church, instead of the Lord. We worshipped its history, its structure, its holy places in Kirtland and Independence and Nauvoo, its quorums, its conferences, its councils, its stakes and districts and offices and missions.

The Church became our god, and the Lord took it from us to turn us back to Him. And we have been asking the Lord to give us back the Church, and give us a Prophet again. Yet the Lord asks: “Will you accept and hear My true prophets, or will you stone them and rend them in the courtyard like the children of Israel did?”

The Lord would have us humble ourselves and prepare ourselves to hear Him before we can receive and accept what He has to say.

“Sanctify a fast before Me,” says the Lord, “and turn from your pride, and humble yourselves. Yea, declare a fast, and forgive all who have wronged you, before seeking mercy and forgiveness from Me. Yea, seek to know and understand your own sins and transgressions which have led you to this state such that you can truly repent, and be forgiven. Uphold the sons of Joseph to Me in mighty prayer, that the covenant I swore in My righteousness to their father Joseph, and that was appointed unto and inherited therein by his son Joseph, and as was inherited in righteousness and truth also by his sons Frederick Madison, and Israel Alexander, and William Wallace, yea, and as was inherited therein also, because of My Covenant, with his son Wallace Bunnell, yea, uphold them to Me that the covenant I made with Joseph may be restored and fulfilled, even as I swore to him in My righteousness.”

“Yea, uphold the sons of Joseph in mighty prayer to Me, with much love and compassion and mercy and forgiveness, yea, even that same love and compassion and mercy and forgiveness that ye seek from Me, or I shall turn My face from you and reject your prayers for yourselves, as you bleat about aimlessly for safe pastures and the comfort of the Shepherd’s rod and staff.”

“Humble yourselves before Me, and cast off your pride and your righteousness, for it is as filthy rags before Me, and lest ye humble yourselves and repent, ye shall fade before Me as a dry leaf, and your iniquities, which I can no longer bear, shall take you away like the wind.”

“And seek earnestly to be reconciled one with another, for if ye are not one, even as I have commanded that ye be one, ye are not Mine, saith the Lord. Contend with no brother, but come together in prayer and fasting. Invite all to fast and pray before Me – even those who will not meet with you in conference, or even at the Lamb’s table. Your divisions and separations from each other over matters of organization are a stench to Me. It is the work of the adversary, and behold, he sifts you as he desires, for you have given yourselves over to him. Seek your brothers in prayer and fasting, and invite them all to pray and fast. Those who have My Spirit will hear My call to fast and pray, to repent, and to forgive. It is necessary that the Saints come together as My people in unity and single purpose of heart and mind, or I can in no wise minister unto you, or receive you unto Myself.”

“The time is at hand, saith the Lord, that My people come out of Babylon! Look! The signs are before you, and ye seek that I should redeem you before the end! How can ye be redeemed if ye repent not, if ye forgive not, if ye unite not as one? How can ye hear Me, if ye hear not My servants? If ye reject them, ye reject Me, and ye shall remain a hiss and a byword – salt that has lost its savor and is trodden under foot – spewed lukewarm from My mouth.”

“Repent! Declare a fast! Pray for the sons of Joseph, and for the sheep who remain scattered! Call everyone who will hear to repentance and humility. I speak this concerning all the Saints who love Me, yea, all the children of the work that was restored through My servant Joseph in 1830, for there are many who will hear and who will respond. Come together in prayer and fasting, in humility and meekness, in charity one for another, esteeming each other above yourselves. This is My word and My will. Ye who will hear, see that ye do. Amen.”

Humbly and respectfully submitted,
Kerry Lancaster

Introduction

We ask that you review and consider these guidelines along with the following *Questions and Answers* as you prepare to join us in this fast. It is our hope and expectation that we can be united in this effort as we seek to grow closer to God and each other during this season of fasting and prayer and study.

In the outline below, some scripture passages are recommended for special study during this fast. Because we are inviting all the Saints of the divergent paths of the Restoration Movement to participate, scripture references will include chapter and verse indicators for common passages that we share from the following where applicable:

Bible

- KJV = King James Version
- IV = Inspired Version of the Holy Scriptures
[KJV / IV indicated only where chapter/verse numbers differ]

Book of Mormon

- LBM = LDS Book of Mormon (1981 edition)
- RBM = RLDS / Community of Christ Book of Mormon (1908 Authorized Version)

Doctrine and Covenants

- LDC = LDS Doctrine and Covenants
- RDC = RLDS / Community of Christ Doctrine and Covenants
- BC = Book of Commandments

Please note: If you have any medical conditions or special nutritional requirements or considerations please consult a physician before entering into any dietary fast.

Part One – Thanksgiving and Praise (10 days, August 28 – September 6)

During this first period of the fast, we wish to spend time with the Lord for no other purpose than that of praising His name and expressing our heartfelt thanks for the wonderful things He has done for us through the ages. Please bring no petition to the Lord in prayer during this time. Rather, offer prayers of gratitude and thanksgiving for the gift of His Son, the plan of Salvation, and all the gifts and blessings He shed forth on the whole world at the time of the Restoration of the gospel in 1830. These gifts and blessings include knowledge of lost scriptures and covenants, the fullness of the gospel and its ordinances, the restored priesthood, the restoration of spiritual gifts, the continuing light of on-going revelation, and the call as partners with the Lord in bringing forth the cause of Zion. Let us with gladness and praise set aside the first ten days of fasting and prayer as a period of reflective gratitude and constant thanksgiving to God for these precious gifts.

Suggested scripture study (this is just a starting point, please explore further!):

II Samuel 22; I Chronicles 16:7-36; 29:10-20; Job 26, 36, 37, 38
Psalm 8, 19, 23, 24, 29, 31, 33, 34, 46, 47, 48, 50, 63, 65, 66, 68, 84, 86, 87, 90, 92, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99,
100, 103, 104, 113, 119, 132, 136, 145, 147, 148, 149, 150
Isaiah 11, 12, 53, 58; Joel 2:1, 11, 15-16; Micah 7:18-20; Revelation 5:11-13
RDC 17:4a, b / LDC 20:17-19 / BC 24:13-14;
RDC 108:7a-c / LDC 133:36-40

Part Two – Forgiveness and Repentance (20 days, September 7 – September 26)

During this twenty day period of the fast, let us seek to fully forgive everyone without reservation before we seek the Lord's forgiveness for our own failings and transgressions. Set aside the first ten days of this period as a time of forgiving others. For too long, many of us have allowed the hurt and offenses we have felt in the past to bind the present and the future. We feel that we all need to specifically take time to search our hearts for the offenses and hurts that we have not forgiven and take action.

We must follow the Lord's commandment that before we come to the altar, we first reconcile with our brothers and sisters (Matthew 5:23-24 KJV / 5:25-26 IV). According to Isaiah chapter 58, a fast includes righteous action in our lives, not just a prayerful period of going without food.

Then please dedicate the second ten days of this period for repentance for squandering the gifts the Lord has given us, for fracturing into many folds, and for allowing differences to separate us when He has clearly said “I say unto you, Be one; and if ye are not one, ye are not Mine” (RDC 38:6a; LDC 36:27; BC 40:22) and “Let nothing separate you from each other and the work whereunto you have been called;” (RDC 122:17b).

Also, during this period let us all repent for failing to fulfill the tasks He gave us to accomplish, including becoming the people of Zion, restoring the tribes of Israel to a knowledge of the covenants and the Messiah, and failure to uphold the seed of Joseph Smith, Jr. in constant prayer.

Suggested scripture study (these suggestions are just to help get you started):

Psalm 32, 39, 85
Matthew 5:23-26 IV / 5:21-24 KJV; Matthew 21:26-34 IV / 21:28-32 KJV
Matthew 6:14-15 KJV / 6:13-16 IV; Matthew 18:21-22
Mark 11:25-26 KJV / 11:27-28 IV; Luke 17:3-3; Luke 19:8-10 IV; II Corinthians 2:5-11
Isaiah 43:25; Jeremiah 31:34; Micah 7:18-19; Philippians 2:1-11; Hebrews 8:12; 10:17
RDC 58:9c / LDC 58:42 / BC 59:53; RDC 81:1a / LDC 82:1
RDC 64:2b-2g / LDC 64:7-13 / BC 65:9-15; RDC 95:7a-g / LDC 98:39-48
Mosiah 11:137-141 RBM / Mosiah 26:29-32 LBM
Psalm 51, 60, 137; Isaiah 64; John 8:3-11; Luke 19:2-10;
Matthew 4:16 IV / 4:17 KJV; 7:1-9 IV / 7:1-6 KJV; II Corinthians 7:9-11
II Nephi 13:13-17 RBM / II Nephi 31:10-13 LBM; Helaman 2:93-97 RBM / Helaman 5:29-32 LBM
III Nephi 4:41-43, 58 RBM / III Nephi 9:13-14; 10:6 LBM
III Nephi 12:32 RBM / III Nephi 27:19 LBM

Part Three – Consecration and Preparation (10 days, September 27 – October 6)

During this third period of the fast, we suggest a ten day period of re-dedication to the tasks that lie before us now at this last hour. In order to carry out these tasks, we will need the power and the light to do so. If we truly seek that power and that light, we must be willing to be transformed into a dedicated and consecrated people and priesthood, we must be a people who are willing and able to come out of Babylon to execute the work of God at the hour of the coming of the Bridegroom ... a willingness to put on the whole armor of God and be “armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.” (1 Nephi 3:231 RBM / 1 Nephi 14:14 LBM)

Suggested scripture study (again, these suggestions are just to help get you started):

Exodus 3:1-8; Joshua 24:15; I Samuel 3:8-11; 12:10
Nehemiah 9; Isaiah 2, 5, 6, 25, 26, 27, 35, 40; Malachi 3:16-18; Hebrews 10:19-25
I Nephi 3:26-32 RBM / I Nephi 10:17-19 LBM
RDC 140:5c-d; RDC 38:5c-6a / LDC 38:23-27 / BC 40:19-22
RDC 1:1a-8c / LDC 1:1-39 / BC 1:1-7
RDC 2:1a-2b / LDC 3:1-4 / BC 2:1-2
RDC 4:1a-2b / LDC 4:1-7 / BC 3:1-2
RDC 6:1a-4b / LDC 6:1-9 / BC 5:1-4
RDC 28:1a-g / LDC 29:1-11 / BC 29:1-13

Additional Notes

Pastors are encouraged to explore additional opportunities for study, fasting and prayer within their branches and congregations as the Spirit may lead them. The Aaronic priesthood is encouraged to visit the homes of each member during these 40 days. The Melchisedec priesthood is encouraged to enjoin the powers of heaven and lead the Saints by example in this period of spiritual preparation. This will require the demonstration of a greater spiritual authority than has been manifest in the priesthood for several generations. In order to fulfill this task and magnify our callings, we must cleanse our temples and be righteous vessels of the Lord.

We all are falling short of the glory of God in many ways in all our lives. We believe we need this 40-day period of fasting, prayer and action to commit our lives to gospel living. This is a necessary first step in being ready to heed the Lord’s call to respond to greater work and ministry in each of our lives as individuals, and collectively as the body of Christ.

Q & A

Q: What is the goal of this fast?

A: The goals are to draw closer to God at this critical time in human history, to draw closer to each other in better unity, to forgive each other of all past hurts, to seek God's forgiveness for our individual and corporate failings, and to prepare ourselves for fully living the gospel in Zion conditions as the Lord intends for us.

Q: Who will be participating?

A: We are inviting as many Saints as possible of the various churches with common origins in the Restoration Movement of 1830 who have demonstrated willingness to work together in the past at various levels.

Q: What if no one else participates with you in this fast but me?

A: There is no way to anticipate who will or who won't respond to this invitation to fast and pray. But even if you are the only soul who responds, we will joyously praise the Lord for your humble and willing response.

Q: I learned of this call to fasting late, or after it started – can I still participate?

A: Yes! Please join us at any time during this period. As the word spreads, we hope more and more Saints throughout the world will join in this fast.

Q: I have diabetes or other medical or nutritional requirements or considerations – should I participate?

A: Anyone who has any health concerns should consult a physician before entering into a fast. As much as may be safe and practicable, please join with us as best as possible without endangering your health.

Q: Why fast only Wednesday evenings?

A: We hope everyone who participates in this fast will find a time each day to spend in prayer and study and devotion with the Lord. The fast of the Wednesday evening meal is being set aside as a special time when we can all be assured we are united in fasting and prayer together.

Q: How should I fast?

A: It has become somewhat popular in modern culture to substitute abstaining from other activities rather than abstaining from meals or foods. Scripturally speaking, a fast refers to abstaining from food for a period of time for spiritual purposes. To deny ourselves food is to deny our natural physical needs for nourishment in favor of the spiritual nourishment provided through communion with the Lord. The scriptures tell us that the natural man is an enemy to God, thus, to deny our nature is to die to self and rely on the Lord.

However, additional counsel is given in Isaiah chapter 58 regarding a true fast before the Lord: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, to break every yoke of bondage, to share our bread with the hungry, to invite the poor into our houses, and to clothe the naked. Additionally, Christ taught us in Matthew chapter 6 that we are to fast before the Lord, not to be seen of others.

Spend the empty eating time in righteous pursuits: prayer, study, praise, helping others. Be worshipful throughout each day, praying often. Separate yourself from distractions of the world as much as possible. And above all, submit yourself to God and seek His will for you. And remember, fasting is not just a supplement to prayer, it is a form of worship in itself.

Q: Should I give up all foods as I fast or just some foods?

A: This matter should be decided between you and your health care or nutritional provider if you have special dietary needs, or between you and the Lord as you examine yourself and your own condition. We welcome your participation in a partial fast if this makes it possible for you to participate. No one will be able to fully fast all meals every day during the 40 day period, so find and follow an appropriate and meaningful fast.

Q: What is a partial fast?

A: A partial fast is where certain foods are sacrificed for the fast, such as one meal a day, one meal a week, half portions, no meats, no desserts, or other combinations.

Q: Can't I fast by giving up an activity, like watching television, instead of giving up meals or some foods?

A: Please do consider giving up television during this fast at least during Wednesday evenings, and more if possible. But just giving up television or sports or entertainment or other activities is not a true fast.

Q: Isn't fasting a personal choice? Why call a corporate fast?

A: Yes fasting is a personal choice, and so is prayer. Yet we come together often in prayer services to pray together. There are many scriptural precedents of corporate fasts. Most examples are found in the Old Testament among ancient Israel and even the Ninevites. References to corporate fasts are also found in the Book of Mormon in the books of Helaman and Moroni.

Q: Why divide the fast into three different parts?

A: We feel it is important to first spend time in praise and thanksgiving to God for His goodness and mercy, for His longsuffering, for the marvelous gift of His Son, for the knowledge of the fullness of the gospel, and for the many gifts and blessings He has generously poured out on us. This attitude of thanksgiving and worship and praise should continue throughout the fast, but we wish to dedicate time for this alone, for God is greatly to be praised, and worthy of our worship.

If we are to “cleanse our temples” and prepare ourselves for the work and challenges ahead as part of this fast, we cannot fully enlist in that endeavor without first fully repenting of our sins, individually and collectively. And we know we cannot ask the Lord’s mercy and forgiveness for our own sins if there are those whom we have not yet fully forgiven. Thus, we feel it is imperative to set aside a time for forgiveness of others and reconciliation, followed by repentance and seeking forgiveness of the Lord. If we thus forgive others and repent before the Lord, we can then approach Him with faith to seek His blessing in order to prepare us for the trials ahead and the work of the kingdom yet undone before the Lord’s return.

Q: What if there is no Divine outpouring of blessings or miracles or spiritual gifts or manifestations as a result of this fast?

A: When King David fasted before the Lord after David sinned and his son became sick (II Samuel 12), the Lord did not grant David’s request to spare his son. David’s son died. Was it right that David fasted? Yes it was. We do not fast to bend the Lord to our will, but rather to yield ourselves to His will.

Q: Why invite so many diverse groups of different Restoration faiths?

A: We have felt especially compelled and directed to do this, through many recent testimonies and experiences.

Q: I don't agree with your doctrine nor do I accept your priesthood authority – why should I participate with you in this fast?

A: If you agree that the Lord is good and holy and righteous and worthy of our worship, if you agree that the Lord commanded in all the scriptures that we fast and pray often, if you agree that we are all sinners and we all fall short of the glory of God, if you agree with the Lord when He said we should all repent of our sins, if you agree with the Lord when He said we must forgive others, then please consider praying and fasting before the Lord during this time on that basis.

Q: What if I reject or have doubts about the divinity or authority or wisdom or timeliness or appropriateness of the counsel given in the document you included in this invitation - should I still consider participating?

A: Please refer to the answer to the previous question and consider participating on those grounds.

Q: Does my church leadership or pastor or presiding elder/officer or bishop know about this invitation to fast?

A: We are attempting to make this invitation known to everyone equally. Our contact information may not be current or up to date in all cases, but we plan to ensure members and leaders are informed alike.

Q: Does my church leadership or pastor or presiding elder/officer or bishop need to approve and agree to this invitation to fast before I decide if I should participate?

A: We can't make decisions such as these for anyone. Pray to the Lord about this and do as He leads you as best as possible. That is all we ask.

Q: Should branches or congregations or missions or wards observe this fast together as a group, or is the fast based on individual response and participation?

A: We are hoping the Saints will participate together in your various congregations, but it takes individuals to form a group so individual response will obviously be necessary.

Q: What should branches or congregations or missions or wards do differently during this fast?

A: Reminders in bulletins or periodicals or newsletters or during announcements at gatherings would be helpful, and special prayer services would surely be appropriate if possible.

Q: Are there any special church service or worship guidelines available for branches or congregations or missions or wards that choose to participate?

A: We are asking everyone to proceed along these lines as you feel led by the Lord. No special programs or outlines or activities have been prepared or outlined for all participants.

Q: What kind of worship services are planned to conclude the fast?

A: This is yet to be determined. We are making this a matter of earnest prayer and would welcome your prayers in this regard as well. More information will be distributed during the fast as planning progresses.

Q: Where will these concluding services be held?

A: Not everyone who participates in the fast will be able to travel to come together to a single location for concluding services. We hope to be able to assist in coordinating many different concluding service activities in different regions of the world. But we do especially want to provide for a joint service in the Center Place of Zion (Independence, MO, USA) for as many as can travel or attend.

Q: How can I help facilitate or organize these services?

A: Much help will be needed so your assistance would be appreciated. More information will be forthcoming as plans and needs become better known in the days ahead.

Q: How can I help spread the word about this fast?

A: Telephone, email, Facebook, newsletters, bulletins, word of mouth – whatever means available to you!

Q: Who can I contact for more information or to offer my assistance?

A: High Priest Chuck Perry. eMail: frtss@comcast.net