

**An Analysis of Lenten Fasting Practices in Two Congregations of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa,
South Eastern Diocese,
Umnengi Circuit**

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Christians of all denominations, churchleaders as well as congregants, who affirm that our highest calling is not to preach about God, but to reveal Him in their fasting.

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Declaration

I, Mudau Ratshilunela Samuel, declare that this dissertation is my own work and that the use of other sources of information has been consistently and fully acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Master in Theology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics. It has not been submitted before for any qualification in any other institute

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Date.....

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Abstract

The thesis describes the results of an investigation of fasting based on a literature review and interviews with twenty fasting Christians. The researcher attempts to determine the attitude of Lutheran and Pentecostal congregants towards fasting using a snowball sample drawn from two Lutheran and two Pentecostal congregations and involving five members of each. The theoretical framework applied is the tri-polar approach based on text, context and appropriation. A thematic analysis is presented of answers given to questions posed in individual interviews. The researcher found that fasting has potentially three broad benefits, namely spiritual, social and physical. Using four congregations as his pool of sources the researcher has compared Lutheran Lenten fasting and Pentecostal January fasting as regards both text and context. It turned out that those Lutheran congregants who fast by abstaining from food (food fasting) do so under the influence of their Pentecostal counterparts. However, the majority of Lutheran participants do not practise food fasting and neither do the authorities involved encourage it. The implication is that these Lutheran authorities may not be meeting the needs of their congregants. The researcher proposes that they reconsider their attitude towards fasting in the Lenten season and, subsequently, if they reintroduce the practice, encourage congregations in their entirety to take up food fasting. In this way, Lenten fasting may become meaningful and effective. Finally, various recommendations are made about implementing Lenten fasting in the Lutheran church.

CHAPTER ONE:

Introduction and Background to Study

1.1 Motivation for the study

During my undergraduate studies, I learnt about Lent but I noticed that most Lutherans did not practise food fasting in their observance of Lent. This was the case in my parish, the Lutheran seminaries of Maphumulo and Marang, and the Lutheran Theological Institute. However, congregants interested in fasting were visiting Pentecostal churches to find out more about the practice and on their return to their own churches they would organize fasting days. I observed that these congregants were not fasting at the initiative of their pastors nor were they concerned with whether their pastors were fasting. This situation moved me to start teaching other Lutherans about Lenten fasting and to engage in fasting myself. After being criticized for doing so I tried to explain myself, but I found that I lacked sufficient knowledge of the practice and of the reasons for fasting to be convincing. Having encountered criticism of my wish to fast I decided to undertake a study of fasting so as to be able to make a stronger case for the practice and for implementing it more effectively among Lutheran congregants.

1.2 Background

I have noticed that, while Lutheran churches observe Lent and emphasize Lenten rituals, they ignore food fasting. Mphahlele (2007:10) states that, unlike many Orthodox Christians, Catholics and Anglicans, the Methodists do not fast at all.¹ Indeed, fasting in most of the mainline churches seems to have become theory rather than practice. Currently only the Pentecostal churches, the African Independent churches, and the Ethiopian churches actively practise fasting, albeit outside the Lenten season. Pentecostals consider fasting, accompanied by prayer and worship, as a pivotal spiritual practice (Erricker & Erricker 2001:186).

Like Lutheran congregants, members of other mainline churches have noticed that fasting is currently the most common spiritual discipline practised among Pentecostals. As their own leadership is almost silent on the subject, they visit Pentecostal churches to obtain

¹John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church, considered fasting as a requisite for ordination (The Wesley fast, n.d. Johnson 2012: Bright)

information on the teaching and practising of fasting². On returning to their churches they mobilize others to fast. The leadership of their church simply gets to hear that a particular group (e.g. women or youths) in the congregation will be fasting and praying on a particular day (sometimes days). Even in cases where the leadership opposes fasting, some congregants insist on pursuing the practice and attempt to popularize it within their congregation.

1.3 Definition of fasting

It appears that the word ‘fasting’ has two separate but related meanings. The first definition is the one used by most, if not all, people who are aware of the concept, namely that it is a restriction on the consumption of food in one way or another. This is known as food fasting. The second meaning relates to the ‘theological’ or broader sense of a more general restriction, usually termed withdrawal fasting or ‘retreat’. In this form of fasting, people withdraw or abstain from various pleasurable activities with food restriction being an optional part of their practice.

The Oxford Dictionary defines ‘fasting’ as “to eat little or no food for a period of time, especially for religious or health reasons” (2010). This definition seems to confirm the commonly held concept of fasting as food restriction. However, as this research shows, the term has often been used in the wider sense of withdrawal. To further complicate matters, the concepts are sometimes used interchangeably. In this dissertation, in order to avoid confusion, the terms ‘food fasting’ and ‘withdrawal fasting’ will be used to distinguish between the two aspects of generalized ‘fasting’.

It appears that the current emphasis in the Lutheran church is on withdrawal fasting with no emphasis on food restriction. By contrast, Pentecostals (and their Lutheran friends who like to fast) focus on food fasting along with withdrawal fasting. This will become clear as the study unfolds and is mentioned here to emphasize the importance of the distinction.

Generally, fasting can be described as a voluntary abstinence for a specific purpose from food, drink and/or other pleasurable and social practices. This concurs with the way in which

²During data collection I encountered a pastor’s widow who confessed that she started fasting only when she associated with Pentecostals after her husband’s death, as the pastor himself was neither fasting nor teaching his family and his congregation about the practice

Baab (2011:442), McKnight (2009:16) and TEEC (2004:15) understand fasting, namely as retiring or withdrawing from anything that is likely to keep people away from God.

Fasting is the deliberate temporary setting aside of usual routines in order to create opportunities for moving closer to God (TEEC 2004:15). This is echoed by Baab (2011:442) who states that “Christian fasting is the voluntary denial of something for a specific time for a spiritual purpose by an individual, family, community or nation”.

1.4 Hypothesis

It is the hypothesis of this study that, by examining the theological and biblical tenets underpinning the practice of fasting and by becoming aware of its benefits, Lutherans may be motivated to re-engage with fasting which could be potentially of benefit for individuals, church bodies and communities, spiritually, socially and physically. Currently the church is reluctant to accept, or at least does not encourage, fasting. If the Lutheran church authorities would promote Lenten fasting, while stipulating its various possible spiritual, social and physical benefits, then Lutheran congregants in general might embrace Lenten fasting with some enthusiasm. In the meantime the church could be seen as being out of step with those among its membership who, under influence of Pentecostals, have taken up fasting. It is suggested that if, in general, Lutherans and, perhaps, other believers were to re-engage with the ancient practice of fasting, it could entail the following benefits:

- A deepened personal spirituality;
- A unified congregation of which members embrace one another in reality, not just in theory;
- A true compassion for the marginalized and the poor;
- An improvement in physical well-being.

The researcher suggests that the church should encourage such a re-engagement and point out the potential benefits of fasting.

At the heart of the present study is Willard’s (1988:xi) plea that Christians need to “remove the disciplines from the category of historical curiosities and place them at the center of the new life in Christ”.

1.5 Context of the study

In terms of the tri-polar approach (Draper 2001:156-157, 2002:17-18), the study is based at the Umngeni Circuit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA). This circuit covers the geographic area of the Msunduzi municipality which includes the city of Pietermaritzburg where the research is conducted. The Msunduzi population numbers over 500 000 (Piper 2010:2). The demographics of the Pietermaritzburg area are as follows. Nearly 80 per cent of the population is black 90 per cent of which is isiZulu speaking. Indian South Africans make up 12 per cent of the population, while Whites and Coloureds constitute 8 and 3 per cent respectively (Piper 2010:3). The various wards of Pietermaritzburg reflect its demographics and the areas where the two ELCSA parishes are located are described as follows. Vulindlela - “historically black African, rural, poorest communities [with] very little business or industry”; Edendale and Machibisa - “historically black African, urban townships, working class and unemployed poor communities [with] some business and industry”; Woodlands and Eastwood - “historically coloured areas, mostly residential, some industrial”, and the “northern areas”- “historically Indian areas, mostly residential, some business” (Piper 2010:3). In economic terms, the average income level (according to the 2001 census) in the Msunduzi municipality falls between the “poor” and “low” categories, i.e. R6000 to R50 000 per annum (Piper 2010:4) while many white persons, active in business and industry, are affluent (Piper 2010:3).

The study focuses on two congregations in ELCSA’s Umngeni Circuit, namely Machibisa and Sobantu. These parishes have a membership of 300 and 350 respectively. In these congregations, middle-class, numerous poverty-stricken and otherwise marginalized members worship side-by-side. As indicated, I will compare the fasting practices of Machibisa and Sobantu Lutheran parishes with those in two Pentecostal churches in the same area, namely the Threshing Floor Bible Church and the Redeemed Christian Church of God. These churches are located in Pietermaritzburg and have a membership of 400 and 120 respectively.

1.6 The biblical and theological background of fasting

As the second part of the tri-polar framework, I will consult literature on the theological understanding of the Lenten season with a particular emphasis on fasting. Key biblical passages and associated doctrines underpinning the practice of fasting are examined. Hebrew Testament and Christian Testament fasting are considered as well as fasting in the

early and medieval churches, followed by a discussion of Lutheran and Pentecostal approaches.

1.7 Dialogue between context and text

In this study it is argued that Lenten observations and fasting are not empty rituals. Rather, they are shown as being able to play an important role in Christian life, spiritually, politically, socially and economically. It is argued that Lent celebration assists Christians in complying with the scriptural requirements of penitence, caring for others and bringing a degree of transformation to communities.

As part of the primary research, I investigate the practice of fasting and the experience thereof among the laity and local church leadership in the two Lutheran congregations, comparing these with the selected two Pentecostal congregations in the same geographical, and hence socio-economically similar, location. With regard to the secondary research, I examine fasting as it is discussed in literature, focusing on its spiritual, social and physical benefits for Christian life. The results thereof are considered in relation to my findings on the practice of fasting in the above mentioned congregations. Thus, the context and the biblical texts/theologies concerning fasting are brought into a dialogue, in fulfilment of the third leg of the tri-polar approach, namely appropriation.

1.8 Focus of the research problem

The key elements of the research are to ascertain what fasting is based on from a biblical and theological perspective, to investigate the willingness or reluctance of congregants to fast and abstain from overindulgence in food, and to examine the spiritual, social and physical benefits of fasting as perceived in the congregations concerned.

1.9 Main research question

What are the spiritual, physical and social benefits of Lenten fasting and how can fasting be used to foster congregational solidarity as well as solidarity with the disadvantaged and, furthermore, to create a deepened personal spirituality and, therefore, a closer relationship with God?

The question entails the need for an investigation of a wide range of aspects of fasting and of ways to reconnect with the biblical and theological significance of the practice. On the

basis of such an investigation the research question considers whether the Lutheran church should promote the practice of fasting in the selected (and other) congregations.

1.9.1 Sub-questions

- i. What is fasting and what are its benefits?
- ii. What is the biblical and theological basis for fasting?
- iii. How is fasting practised in the congregations specified and why?
- iv. How can Lenten fasting be promoted among Lutherans so that it fosters solidarity within the congregation and with the disadvantaged, and creates a deepened personal spirituality and a closer relationship with God?

1.10 Objectives of the study

- i. To define fasting and determine its benefits.
- ii. To determine the biblical and theological basis for fasting.
- iii. To investigate how fasting is practised in the congregations specified and why this is the case.
- iv. To make recommendations regarding the promotion of Lenten fasting among Lutherans and the realization of the benefits listed above so that it advances congregational solidarity, inspires congregants to stand with the disadvantaged, creates deepened personal spirituality and a closer relationship with God.

1.11 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework underpinning this research is the tri-polar approach (elucidated below under A, B, and C) which involves a concern for the context of the study, allowing the relevant biblical and/or theological texts to speak for themselves and bringing the context and text/s into dialogue.

While the Pentecostal fasting practices are based on their appropriation of biblical and theological texts, the Lutheran congregations' notions of fasting are currently based on the Pentecostal understanding and practices. However, the study posits that Lutheran churches can by appropriating the texts for themselves come to a formulation of a Lutheran approach to fasting at Lent.

- (A) The context involves the specific location of the community under study (the Umngeni Circuit of ELCSA South Eastern Diocese) in terms of its socio-economic and cultural make-up (see Draper 2001:157; 1.5). However, the context is also taken to include the community's current thinking about, and practice of, Lenten fasting and its potential year-round effects.
- (B) The text. There are biblical and theological texts that underpin fasting as a Christian praxis. These will be examined within their own "historical, social, cultural and economic context [...] addressing its [that context's] own questions and relating to its needs" (Draper 2001:155-156). In the tri-polar approach this phase is known as distantiation, since "the goal is always the reconstruction of the text in its own right in opposition to us in our context and our needs" (Draper 2001:156), thus creating a "critical distance" (Draper 2002:17).
- (C) Context and text are then brought into dialogue in the appropriation phase, during which a new interpretation leads to a new praxis, resulting "in changed behaviour, in action in and through the community of faith in society" (Draper 2002:18). The present study argues that this new praxis involves spiritual growth at an individual and congregational level as it results from the development of a deepened personal spirituality and a more compassionate and cohesive congregation.

The researcher has also taken the practical theological interpretive model developed by R.R. Osmer (2008) into account. The model is based on Osmer's experiences in his ministry and involves four tasks, namely a descriptive-empirical task asking: "What is going on?", an interpretive task that is concerned with: "Why is it going on?", a normative task that asks: "What ought to be going on?" and a pragmatic task that deals with: "How should we respond?" The interpreter is expected to move between tasks, listening, applying his knowledge and prophetic insight, so that a kind of interpretive spiral results. To enhance the academic understanding of a project the model focuses on its purpose, strategies of inquiry, a research plan and a reflection on metatheoretical assumptions.

The application of this model to the current thesis is reflected in the discussion of the division that characterizes present Lenten fasting practice and the matter of church authorities not falling in with the wishes of some Lutheran congregants. The thesis focuses on uniformity in an effective observance of the Lenten season and argues for the desirability to revisit Lenten practice in the light of scriptures and tradition.

1.12 Research design and methodology

1.12.1 Literature study

I have consulted a variety of scholarly works concerning fasting in general and Lenten fasting in particular with the purpose of becoming acquainted with the topic and with previous relevant research. The practices and theories of fasting are examined in order to determine the benefits thereof.

1.12.2 Sampling of practitioners

The term ‘practitioners’ refers to people who practise fasting in general and to those who observe the Lenten fast in particular - people, in other words, who have relevant knowledge and experience of fasting. I visited a number of churches in the designated area to determine which churches had members who were actively fasting and who could therefore be included in my research.³ I identified two Pentecostal churches and two Lutheran churches as fit for the purpose. I used snowball sampling to select five members in each church for interviews concerning their understanding and practice of fasting. I preferred snowballing to random sampling in order to locate practitioners who were eager to participate in the study.

1.12.3 Methodology of data collection and analysis

As stated above, I visited various Pentecostal and Lutheran churches in the designated area to determine which could be used for the purposes of my study. The information gathered assisted me in planning an interview schedule and in determining which aspects of the topic I would focus on in the interviews. I constructed an individual interview schedule (Appendix 1) in which open- and closed-ended questions were used. The aim of conducting individual interviews was to obtain honest answers about the sensitive and personal nature of fasting. Closed-ended questions were used to obtain specific answers while open-ended questions offered opportunities for elaboration.

Once I had obtained permission from the relevant church authorities, snowball sampling served to identify five practitioners in each of the four churches. I conducted an individual

³ I conducted a preliminary exploratory study by visiting Pentecostal churches during their general fasting period in January and Lutheran congregations during the Lenten fast. Pentecostals fast in January with the understanding that a year must begin with seeking God’s will. Their fast lasts for 40 days imitating Moses, the law giver, Elijah, the great prophet, and Jesus, the Savior. I studied the relevant theories and partook in practices of fasting in these churches with the purpose of gaining insight into Pentecostal as well as Lutheran views on fasting and Lenten fasting and to understand how and why fasting is practised or not practised. I specifically explored the perceived benefits and liabilities of fasting

interview with each practitioner, transcribing the information they provided. The data gained from the interviews was analysed thematically according to the nature of the perceived three main benefits of fasting identified as spiritual, social and physical. Finally, the data gained from Pentecostal practitioners was compared with data gained from their Lutheran counterparts.

1.13 Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant university authorities (Appendix 3). Once the practitioners had been identified, I explained to them the purpose of the study and of their participation in it. Having done so, I requested them to sign the informed consent form (see Appendix 2).

The study did not include people in sensitive categories such as children, the mentally impaired and, generally, minors and adults living in traumatic or stressful circumstances, including HIV/AIDS infected and affected people, persons highly dependent on medical care and prisoners. Data collection did not involve the accessing of confidential information that might cause the providers shame, embarrassment or that they might regret sharing. There were no questions that could upset or traumatize participants. The autonomy of interviewees was protected by the use of the informed consent form which specifies the nature and purpose of the research, the identity and institutional association of the researcher, the supervisors and their contact details. Practitioners' autonomy was also safeguarded by the following. Participation was voluntary, responses were treated in a confidential manner, participants were allowed to express their opinions freely and they were free to withdraw from the research at all times without any negative or undesirable consequences for themselves.

To obtain informed permission for the research from the appropriate authorities, a letter requesting permission bearing the researcher's particulars, the research topic, the university authority's signature and official stamp was prepared and sent to the gatekeepers, namely the local church leadership of the congregations involved in the study. Permission was granted (see Appendix 3).

The research data was kept at a place known only to the researcher and his supervisors. No one else has access to the data that will be disposed of five years after the completion of the research.

To ensure anonymity and confidentiality in the subsequent dissemination of the research findings (in the form of the finished thesis, oral presentations and publication) pseudonyms are used.

This research is not supported by any funding that is likely to in any way inform, or impact on, its design, outcome and dissemination.

1.14 Limitations of the study

The study is confined to the area around Pietermaritzburg and focuses on the experience of and thinking about Lenten fasting within the Lutheran congregations of Machibisa and Sobantu and two Pentecostal churches. As the congregations involved have a numerous membership, sampling had to be employed.

1.15 Outline of the study

The structure of the dissertation is outlined below.

Chapter One. General Introduction

This introductory chapter includes the motivation for the study and the hypothesis that gave rise to the formulation of the research question as well as the purpose and goal of the research, its context, the research methodology and the theoretical framework. Various meanings of the word ‘fasting’ are also discussed.

Chapter Two. Literature Review: Background and Historical Development of Christian fasting

Chapter Two discusses fasting in terms of its definition, the Jewish and Lenten concepts of fasting, early and medieval fasting traditions and Martin Luther’s thinking on fasting. The researcher examines biblical texts on fasting and its purposes and benefits (spiritual, social and physical).

Chapter Three. Survey Results and Analysis of the Survey Results

This chapter presents the fieldwork results and compares results from the two Pentecostal congregations with those from the two Lutheran churches. It also analyses the results thematically in terms of the perceived spiritual, social and physical benefits of fasting.

Chapter Four. Appropriation of Text and Context

Chapter Four brings the text and context into dialogue with the aim of establishing a new praxis of fasting within the Lutheran church.

Chapter Five. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter Five presents an overview of the study as a whole and formulates the conclusions drawn in relation to the research question. It makes recommendations with regard to the way forward.

CHAPTER TWO:

Literature Review on Background to and Historical Development of Christian Fasting

Fasting could be understood as the body talking about that which “the spirit yearns for, what the soul longs for and what the mind knows to be true”. It is the body talking, not just talking for the spirit, for the mind or for the soul in some symbolic way, but it is the body enabling the person to express her- or himself completely: fasting is one way in which one can express one’s entire being. The Bible, because it advocates clearly that the person embodies the unity of heart, soul, spirit and mind, assumes that fasting as ‘body talk’ is inevitable (McKnight 2009:11). Jesus commends fasting as a private act of humility and devotion to God. Referring to fasting, almsgiving and prayer Jesus uses the words “when you...”, and not “if you...” (Matthew 6:16, 9:14-15). In other words, Jesus expects fasting to be part of Christian practice. As fasting is scriptural, not fasting means contradicting a pillar of the Lutheran faith: *sola scriptura*. Fasting is recommended in the Augsburg Confession xxiv:33-39 and in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession vi Augsburg Confession xii, 139,143. In this chapter, I provide an explanation of Lenten fasting from a historical perspective and I present key biblical and theological texts on fasting. Lutheran and Pentecostal approaches to fasting are discussed, as well as the Christian doctrines that support the practice. Finally, I consider the spiritual, social and physical benefits of fasting.

2.1 The season for fasting: Lenten fasting

Fasting is associated with the Lenten season of the Lutheran church calendar as explained in section 2.1.2. The Lenten season starts with Ash Wednesday and continues for 40 days. It includes the Holy week of Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. During Lent Christians direct themselves, body and soul, toward the revelation remembered, celebrated and anticipated at Easter. Though the bodily observances – fasting, perhaps limiting oneself to simpler clothes, food and less distracting entertainment - contribute to the Lenten disposition, they do so only to the extent to which they facilitate the preparation of the hearts of Christians (Connell 1998:9-10). Lenten observances are not an end in themselves but the means to an end, i.e. Christians’ confession and repentance.

2.1.1 The evolution of Ash Wednesday as the first day of Lent

Ash Wednesday inaugurates the annual season of Lenten fasting. Unlike the Pentecostals who simply announce the commencement of a fasting period, Lutherans announce Lent with the symbolic gesture of placing ash in the form of a cross on penitents' foreheads. This raises two serious theological questions. First, Christ warned that, while fasting, one should not disfigure one's face. Second, is it not hypocrisy to make the gesture of fasting but not doing so? Ash as a symbol has a long history. In antiquity ash was in the context of religion and ritual equated with grief, mourning, destruction and death, and with humiliation, shame and penitence (Sweeney 2010:28). Ash was a readily accessible substance, recognized and used by people of all socio-cultural backgrounds. It is a product of the hearth, remnant of fires associated with the preparation of meals. Ash results when fields are burned in readiness for a new crop. It is also the last that remains of human life (Sweeney 2010:83). Masters identified their slaves and soldiers by marking them with ash on hands or foreheads (Sweeney 2010:50). By the fourth century AD the church stressed the complete ownership of its members by using ash to mark potential initiates with the sign of the cross on the forehead, the "home of shame" that reveals one's shame to others. The mark served as a reminder that one must never be ashamed of the cross of Christ (cf. Romans 1:6). The same cross would be traced and sealed on the day of baptism and later in the Ash Wednesday rites. So as to distinguish themselves from Jews who fast on Tuesdays and Thursdays, Christians chose to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays (McKnight 2009:88). These had also been days for fasting in the early church and continue to be so in Orthodox and Roman-Catholic churches. This means that during Lent Christians fast on Friday and in the Easter week on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday whereas on the other days they may abstain from specific food groups such as sweets, fats, eggs or meat (2009:8). As regards present-day Pentecostals, all the days of the week are considered right for fasting.

In the thirteenth century a tradition developed that ash for Ash Wednesday should be made from the palm branches blessed on the previous year's Palm Sunday (Sweeney 2010:96). The 1549 Anglican Prayer Book suggests that there existed a long-established popular practice of describing the first Wednesday of Lent as Ash Wednesday.

Connell notes (1998:9) that the following scriptural passages are read in both Catholic and Protestant churches as part of the liturgy of Ash Wednesday: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; 11 Corinthians 5:20-6:10; and Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21. These texts are all about fasting, even though currently

Lutherans do in general not seem to practise food fasting during Lent. This is surprising seeing that Transfiguration Sunday preceding Ash Wednesday focuses on Elijah, Moses and Jesus who each fasted for 40 days. The first Sunday in Lent is actually known as *Reminiscere* in Latin and it focuses on gospels that narrate Jesus' fasting in the desert. Today, among Lutherans, fasting remains a theoretical possibility, a part of reading and preaching that is however not put into practice.

2.1.2 Evolution of the Lenten season

One of the reasons that the Lenten season lasts 40 days is that Moses, Elijah and Jesus fasted for 40 days. St. Augustine (McKnight 2009:93) also emphasized this in his teaching which indicates that fasting, particularly in relation to Lenten, is a thoroughly biblically based concept. The prophet Joel's message, used at the beginning of the 40 days leading up to Easter, reminds Christians that, while food fasting and withdrawal fasting are part of their outward religious observance, Lenten should first of all effect their inner being. "Rend your hearts," says the prophet Joel, "not your garments". To comply with Joel 2:12-17, all twelve spiritual disciplines are encompassed in the light of 11 Chronicles 7:14 (Bright 1995). Warren (1998:4) states that of all spiritual disciplines, fasting is least implemented. Nevertheless, Bright (1995:17) sees it as the only discipline that meets all the requirements set out in 11 Chronicles 7:14: He who fasts "humbles himself, he has more time to pray, more time to seek God's face, and certainly he would turn away from all known sins." In Warren's opinion (1998:64,65) fasting is in particular associated with the disciplines of prayer and worship. These include celebration (Christian festivals), confession, fasting, guidance (discipline, mentoring, counseling), meditation, prayer, service (*diakonia*), simplicity, solitude, study (of the Bible and related literature), submission/obedience (humility, honesty, transparency and reconciliation) and worship (Ketchum 2005:91-106).

The reading of 6:1-6 (16-18) from the gospel of Matthew takes the message of the prophet Joel further, emphasizing that religious preparations should be interior and not for public show: "Beware of practising your piety before others". "When you give alms, do not sound a trumpet." These readings stimulate Christians to enter the season of Lent with a proper mindset for practising prayer, fasting and almsgiving, accentuating that these are not an end in themselves but rather an aid to prepare for the great mysteries of Easter (Connell 1998:10). Almsgiving and fasting are the wings of prayer and this may be the reason why Christ

presented almsgiving, prayer and fasting in this particular order with prayer in the center rather than the other way around.

As noted by Fakes (1994:35), Easter represents the highpoint of the church year since, without the resurrection of Christ, “the faith we hold would be barren and without hope”. The Lenten season - the 40 days leading up to Easter - is a time to contemplate at the deepest possible level Christ’s death and resurrection (1994:35). Warren (1998:17-18) emphasizes the need for silence and solitude in this context while Ketchum adds simplicity. In my perception Lutherans are simply given rules, for example that not any type of festivity is allowed during Lent. These rules are given without any profound explanations. As regards the need for solitude Kerchum (2005:102) quotes Bonhoeffer: “Let him who cannot be alone beware of community [...] let him who is not in community beware of being alone [...] each by itself has profound pitfalls and perils. One who wants fellowship without solitude plunges into the void of words and feeling, and one who seeks solitude without fellowship perishes in the abyss of vanity, self-infatuation and despair”.

Lenten fasting thus has a long history and is based firmly on church practice and teaching which underpin its contemporary use and provide theological justification for its continued relevance (Fakes 1994:35). With regard to the present study this understanding of the early beginnings of the fasting period foregrounds the requirement that Christians experience with heart, mind and body the meaning of Christ’s example of humility, repentance and compassion. For such to be the impact of Lenten fasting, believers need to undergo an internal transformation.

Weitzel suggests that one reason for associating fasting with Lent may be that it is the season when nature is renewed, inspiring Christians to turn their minds to spiritual renewal (n.d.:5). However, the rebirth of nature in the southern hemisphere occurs not during Lent but in autumn. Yet, the global south also refers to the weeks before Easter as ‘Lent’, meaning spring (in German *Fastenzeit*, or ‘fasting time’), using the word Lent in the sense of a spiritual spring cleaning. “In the Lenten discipline we focus our lives on Christ’s self sacrificing passion, death and resurrection [...]. We fast in honour of Christ who recommended fasting [...] as it is designed to strengthen the spiritual life by weakening one’s attraction to pleasures of the senses” (Weitzel n.d.:8).

According to Sweeney (2010:26) the Lenten season starting with Ash Wednesday is prompted by three factors:

1. A need to respond to the presence of sin in the body of Christ and particularly to provide a means for the reconciliation of community members who have grievously sinned (cf. the Jewish Annual Atonement Day in Leviticus 23:27).
2. A need to prepare catechumens for baptism (in the early church people were baptized only at Easter time). However, in the Lutheran church today this cannot play a role as baptism of adults is rare and most baptisms are of infants.
3. A desire to imitate Christ's 40-day wilderness experience. Beside the 40 days corresponding to the wilderness years of Israel, St Augustine observed that Moses the law giver and Elijah the prophet also fasted 40 days so that the Bible as a whole testifies to a 40 day fast (Sweeney 2010:94).

In defence of the Lenten season McKnight argues that, just as God prescribed the calendar for Israel, so the church should continue to uphold an annual programme. To the critics who see modern practice as an escape from empty ritual McKnight says: "That erasure brings the heavy depression that comes from cutting out three-quarters of the history of the church from our memory" (2009:84). The point is not to "play early church", but to make the exciting discovery of humility, poverty, nakedness and the utter seriousness of our life in God.

These views of McKnight (2013:30) allow us to consider a point made by Spohn (2001), namely that the spiritual disciplines (including fasting) are practices that are transformative in nature but not a technique or method applied to get something out of it for oneself. In the Hebrew Testament fasting is almost always focused on "a grievous condition" and it is thus a response to that condition rather than a means to some other personal end. This "grievous condition" is associated with death or the threat thereof and it is usually linked to war, to a tragedy, a calamity or capture. However, Spohn appears to contradict himself. In the present thesis the researcher argues that – as Spohn mentions but subsequently ignores – not only may one's nature be transformed by fasting, which in itself could prove profoundly beneficial, but among the many other potential benefits 'for oneself' are greater spirituality, deeper social awareness and, perhaps, better health.

McKnight refers to the works of Abraham Joshua Heschel (1962, 1951) who writes about the 'notion of the divine pathos'. This divine pathos is the condition of a prophet who catches a glimpse of the divine disposition toward Israel or some leader in Israel. The prophet's

calling is to enter into the divine pathos – wrath, grief, sorrow, threat, promise, healing, love, or grace – to embody it.

In McKnight’s opinion (2013:31) the practice of Lenten fasting should be seen “as a response to sins and the prospect of death in our culture, our nation, our church and our own life, and that we should also learn to see fasting as entering into the divine pathos about sin and death”. Lent reminds people that, although they bear the image of God, “we have sinned against God in thought, word and deed, in what we have done and in what we have left undone, in not loving God and our neighbors as ourselves”. Lent makes one remember to turn to God for mercy and reminds one that:

”Christ died *with* us – in that he completely identified with us in our humanity all the way to our death (Philippians 2:5-11), that Christ died *instead* of us in that he took upon himself the guilt and punishment and death of our sins (11 Corinthians 5:21), and *for* us in that his death brings us the forgiveness of sins (Romans 4:25). We fast and afflict ourselves, or deny ourselves, in response to our life of sin and sinning. We then embody our conviction that our sins entangle us in death” (McKnight 2013:33).

The Lenten season, or the preparation for Easter, has come to be equated with fasting in order to deepen one’s identification with Christ in his suffering on the way to Calvary and to stimulate one’s engagement in self-examination and in recognizing one’s own sinfulness (Sweeney 2010:60). St Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, wrote in 334 about fasting, linking it to the 40 years wilderness wanderings of the Israelites:

But as Israel, when going up to Jerusalem, was first purified in the wilderness, being trained to forget the customs of Egypt, the Word by typifying this to us the holy fast of forty days, let us first be purified and freed from defilement, so when we depart hence, having been careful of fasting, we may be able to ascend to the upper chamber with the Lord, to sup with Him; and may be partakers of the joy which is in heaven. In no other manner is it possible to go to Jerusalem, and to eat the Passover, except by observing the fast of forty days (in McKnight 2009:93).

St Augustine too emphasized that Moses, Elijah and Jesus fasted for 40 days (McKnight 2009:93).

The formula supporting the imposition of ash appears for the first time in the Roman Germanic Pontifical around 950 CE with reference to Genesis 3:19, preceded by the imperative “remember”: “Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return” (2009:91). Benedict added the words: “Turn away from evil and do good” (2009:89). By the tenth

century the imposition of ash was acknowledged throughout Christendom as the sign of entering into penitence. It was Pope Urban II who ordered the imposition of ash on Ash Wednesday during the Benevento Council in 1091 (Sweeney 2010:100). The fourth Lateran Council in 1215 legalized that those who took part in the annual confession would also take part in the Easter communion 2010:63). Liturgical drama was also introduced with dramas being acted out by and for the community. The Holy week of Easter includes Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, an Easter vigil by candlelight and a procession to the cemetery on Easter morning 2010:63).

2.2 The biblical and theological basis for fasting

This section presents the Christian foundation that underpins the practice of fasting in the church. It briefly examines fasting in the Hebrew and Christian Testaments, the early church and the Middle Ages.

It is essential to engage with Hebrew and Christian Testament texts as these form the basis for present-day fasting, certainly in the Pentecostal churches that widely practise fasting. As Warren argues, spiritual disciplines of which fasting is one, should find their basis in the scriptures and the great doctrines. It is the study of these scriptures and doctrines which gives pertinence to the spiritual discipline of fasting. One's theological assertions about a discipline should determine the value of the discipline in life (1998:53).

2.2.1 Fasting in the Hebrew Testament⁴

The guidelines for Lenten as developed by the church and by theologians do not differ markedly from the rules for fasting found in the biblical texts (e.g. Isaiah 58 in which God calls for believers who fast to support the cause of the poor).

According to Shenouda (1990:9-11), "fasting is the earliest commandment", because Adam was forbidden to eat the fruit of a certain tree (Gen. 2:16,17) which set up a food limit and which emphasized the need for self-control. The Israelites depended on their Levitical calendar to fast. Collective fasts are mentioned in 11 Chronicles 20:3, Jeremiah 36:9, Joel 2:12, and Zechariah 8:19. Nehemiah also fasted with the Israelites, sorrowing over his people's sins when he heard that Jerusalem had been sacked (Neh. 9:1), and Ezra fasted and

⁴There are many texts in the Hebrew Testament that deal with the subject of fasting. Because of limitations of time and space I am not able to discuss them all. I have chosen to present those texts that seem key texts to me. The same applies to Christian Testament texts on fasting in 2.2.2

called on the whole population to fast in humility to God (Ezr. 8:21,23). Wimmer (1982:8) argues that, when the Israelites fasted in response to some calamity, they did so to express both penitence and supplication, confessing their sinfulness (1 Sam. 7:6, Neh. 9:1-3, Jon. 3:8) on the one hand, while appealing for mercy on the other (see Ezr. 8:21, Neh. 1:4, 10f).

In Psalm 35, David's fasting over the sickness of his now enemies is "an expression of the depth of his grief over the threat of death" (McKnight 2013:32). John Goldingray (in McKnight 2009:xv) says of David's lament in Psalms 35:13-14: "The Psalm assumes that merely to feel sadness is not enough; because we are physical creatures and not just minds and spirits, it would be odd not to express sorrow in (e.g.) abstention from food and then afflicting one's spirit and one's self."

Fasting was sometimes done on command, sometimes voluntarily, sometimes as a ritual, but always linked to themes of disruption and restoration. "Through repentance and prayer, fasting can signify the centering of the self in humility, the renewal of the relationship to God's sustaining force. As such, fasting takes on a dual significance of mourning and hope" (Berghuis 2007:1). Isaiah 58 does not reject fasting but emphasizes that, unless fasting is accompanied by actions of love of neighbor, it remains an empty ritual. For the Israelites fasting had to indicate repentance or a turning back to God. "A distinctive mark of Israelite (i.e. covenant) religion was that turning to God was inseparable from turning in love to one's neighbor" (Berghuis 2007:24).

Fasting, if it is genuine, brings us into a communal spirituality because it is a response to the lack of justice in the community [...] if private spirituality overwhelms the communal, a person's fasting vaporizes [...]. Fasting is body poverty – self-impoverishment as a response to the impoverishment of others [...]. For Isaiah [fasting] involves undoing injustice; releasing the oppressed; feeding the hungry; providing sanctuary for the homeless (McKnight 2009:103).

Daniel's prayers (Dan. 9:3) were answered and he received visions through "his communion with God prepared for by fasting" (2009:118). Moses fasted for 40 days and nights in response to a sacred moment when he was in the presence of God (Ex. 34:28). The connection between fasting and God's presence is highlighted by the fact that Jews recite the "thirteen attributes of God" (Ex. 34:6-9) on fast days (2009:117). According to Lambert (2003:497), the central thrust of Moses' action is not penitential and Moses is not expressing

internal contrition for the sins of the Israelites. Instead, his action is supplicatory and dialogical in nature.

Indeed, the phrase “I threw myself down before the Lord” is liturgical, and the Lord responds by “giving heed to” (literally ‘hearing’) Moses’ plea. Moses’ despondent posture is made all the more powerful by its duration and by the fact that Moses surrenders an exalted position to assume that posture (Lambert 2003:497).

The Israelites have a calendar to remind them of important theological moments and historical events. On the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:27), all in Israel would gather in Jerusalem to repent of their sins. On this day “Israel confessed sin, God covered the sins of Israel (‘covered’ is a translation of ‘atoned’), the temple was purified, and Israel and God were again reconciled” (McKnight 2009:26). Israel was to “deny” itself, from evening to evening (Leviticus 23:32). Here we find references to the grievous moment of confessing sin, the response to the sacredness of the moment by abstaining from food and other comforts and the act of repenting for the committed sin (McKnight 2009:28-29).

According to Towns, in Hebrew Testament times deep grief led to not eating as a matter of cause-and-effect. In deep grief people cried out to God for an answer. In later times, whenever people needed answers from God, they would turn to the effect (namely not eating, i.e. fasting), “so that they could afflict their souls to the place where they would pray with all of their heart (the cause)” (1996:146).

2.2.2 Fasting in the Christian Testament

In the Christian Testament, fasting is often linked with Jesus. Berghuis writes:

In this age, the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount governs the way his disciples should fast—not hypocritically (like the Pharisee in Luke 18:12) or ostentatiously, but humbly before God, who will reward them (Matt 6:16-18). In the New Covenant community, the early Christians fast and pray, seeking the presence and guiding of their Lord, and his Holy Spirit leads them to build up his church (Acts 13:1-3, 14:23). Now, in the messianic age since Christ has returned to his Father in heaven, fasting can become a way of both remembering him and anticipating his presence (2007:76).

Mitchell (1990:455) notes that the first mention of fasting in the Christian Testament is linked to the presentation of the infant Jesus at the Temple. Anna’s devotion and service to God in answer to her strong sense that the Messiah had come are in Luke 2:37 specifically described as “fasting and prayers”. Hence, fasting was an essential element of Anna’s

behaviour as a devotional woman. It should be noted that both Simeon and Anna were already of a mature age. As regards today's elderly people who practise fasting, they should be on their guard against harming their health, especially if they suffer from conditions such as hyperglycemia and hypoglycemia. In view of the fact that Anna was a widow for most of her life, she could have been fasting continuously in support of her endeavour to maintain her purity and a high morality in terms of chastity, as there was no husband whose wishes she had to take into account.

In Matthew 6:1-18, Jesus instructs that fasting should not be undertaken for outward show as done by "the hypocrites" (scribes and Pharisees), but rather in secret for the purpose of true spiritual growth. Acts of piety, such as almsgiving, prayer and fasting, must be performed exclusively for "your Father who is in secret" (Wimmer 1982:64). Thus it is obvious that the intention or the inner motive for fasting had to be purely aimed at gaining a closer union with God (Wimmer 1982:77).

Luke 18:9-14 contrasts the prayer of the Pharisee with that of the tax collector. The prayer of the Pharisee (a figure of supposed extreme virtue) is "a caricature of common religious practices that would be quickly recognized by the hearer" (Wimmer 1982:81). "I fast twice a week, and I give a tenth of my entire income" (Luke 18:12). The Pharisee is thus revealed as being a self-righteous hypocrite, disdainful of others (Wimmer 1982:81). By contrast, the tax collector turns out to be truly repenting. Jesus states: "I tell you, this man, rather than the other one, went down to his home justified, because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the person who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:14). When speaking these words Jesus was not condemning fasting, but "he was against the arrogant self-righteousness of a man who did the right things but whose heart remained pompous before God" (McKnight 2009:71).

John the Baptist's disciples asked why Jesus' disciples did not fast (Math. 9:14-17, Mark 2:18-22, Luke 5:33-39). Jesus answered: "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day" (Mark 2:19). It follows then that Jesus' disciples would fast in his absence, a fact that is confirmed in the book of Acts.

The Book of Acts contains a number of references to fasting: After his conversion on the road to Damascus, Saul was blinded for three days and "neither ate nor drank" (Acts 9:9).

“In a time of crisis, in a time of felt need, Saul voluntarily fasted” (Mitchell 1990:463). In Acts 13:1-3, the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch who had gathered for “ministering” (Acts 13:2) engaged in prayer and fasting. The Holy Spirit then instructed them to “set apart for me, Barnabas and Saul” as missionaries (Acts 13:3). Fasting also took place at the ordination of elders of each church established by Paul and Barnabas during their visits to ensure that proper leadership was in place (Acts 14:23). “In connection with the ordination of elders in each church Paul and Barnabas, having prayed with fasting [...] commended them to the Lord” (Acts 14:23) (Mitchell 1990:464-465). From these words it is clear that Jesus’ disciples fasted in the absence of the bridegroom as Jesus had predicted. Also in his teaching on the mountain Jesus expected his followers to give alms, to pray and fast. Hence he used the conjunction ‘when’ or ‘*ote*’, and not ‘if’ or ‘*eite*’.

The above quotations indicate that fasting has deep biblical foundations and that fasting has always been part of Christian tradition. However, it also raises the question why fasting appears to be less emphasized in the modern Lutheran church.

In relation to Jesus’ fasting Wimmer (1982) mentions several relevant incidents: Jesus’ fasting in the desert (Matthew 4:1-4, Luke 4:1-4), the practice of almsgiving, prayer and fasting (Matthew 6:1-18), Jesus’ criticism of hypocrisy in the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14), the question posed to Jesus about fasting (Mark 2:18-22), and the comparison between Jesus as a “glutton and a drunkard” and John (Matthew 11:16-19, Luke 7:31-35).

Concerning Jesus’ fasting in the desert and resisting the devil’s temptations, Wimmer (1982:35) argues that Jesus is the new representative of Israel and, thus, his 40-day fast in the desert is a direct echo in the Christian Testament of the Israelites’ 40 years wandering in the desert: Jesus is “undoing, by his obedience the sins committed by the ancients in the desert”. This argument is based largely on the many points of contact between Dt. 8:2-5 and Mt. 4:1-4/Lk 4:1-4 (Wimmer 1982:38). The people of Israel hungered and were humbled by God (Dt. 29:5) for “man does not live by bread alone, but by everything that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord” (Dt. 8:3). However, their suffering led them to doubt God’s presence and to disobey His commandments (Nm 18:34). In contrast, Jesus refuses to be tempted and when the devil mockingly invites him to turn stones into bread, Jesus “manifests his unshaken conviction that the Lord God would take care of him” (Wimmer 1982:41). Jesus’ response mirrors Dt 8:3: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds

from the mouth of God.” Mitchell (1990:456) writes that Jesus fasted as the Hebrew Testament prophets fasted, namely “when faced with a time of intense spiritual need.”

Mark 11:16-19 and Luke 7:31-35 compare Jesus and John the Baptist where the former is called a “glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners” whereas the latter is described as “neither eating nor drinking” (Mt) or “eating no bread and drinking no wine” (Lk) (Wimmer 1982:102). Without the charges being denied, the whole passage indicts those who level such criticisms “for not having recognized the meaning of the action of John as an ascetical sign of repentance and the joy of the Messianic invitation of the Son of Man who shares the table with the outcasts of Israel’s society, bringing them the eschatological joy of a wedding” (1982:104).

McKnight (2009:69-70) mentions two instances of Paul referring to fasting as a form of bodily discipline. First, 11 Corinthians 6:4-5 reads: “As servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonment, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger.” Second, 11 Corinthians 11:27 reads: “In toil and hardship, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked.” According to Mitchell (1990:466) however, these references do not point to fasting in a religious sense but rather indicate that on occasion Paul went hungry. Mitchell argues that the practice of fasting was perhaps “not considered significant in the church as long as the Apostles were alive”. Still, even if Paul’s statement did not directly refer to fasting per se, it could have played a role in promoting ascetic life.

2.2.3 Fasting in the early church

Other Christian Testament references to fasting occur in Matthew 17:21, Mark 9:29, Acts 10:30 and 1 Corinthians 7:5. However, the earliest Greek manuscripts of these texts do not mention fasting. The word ‘fasting’ seems to have been added some two to three centuries later. It may therefore be assumed that fasting was an important practice in the early church (Baab 2006:147-148, Pink 1974:121-142) as otherwise the word would not have been added to the passages.

Many of the early church Fathers mention fasting. St. Athanasius, for instance, understood fasting as mourning over sin and feasting, and as a celebration of God’s grace. According to Athanasius the church should maintain a balance between fasting and festival days

(McKnight 2009:xvii). John Chrysostom emphasized pious “stationery fasting”⁵ on Wednesdays and Fridays, during Lent, and prior to the Eucharist (Shaw 1998:8).

Further, Chrysostom exhorted those engaged in fasting to take pity on the poor, to reconcile with enemies, and to be pleased for, rather than envious of, others who are successful. He could see no point in fasting if no good works were performed. Fasting would be of benefit to those who fast in a spirit of consideration for others. Such fasting results in an ability to restrain oneself and adopt high moral standards, and to live a life that is free of crime and corruption and that promotes equality and justice.

Bishops Basil of Ancyra and Gregory of Nyssa called for a fasting regimen to keep the body’s functions at a healthy level, controlled in such a manner that physical desires could not override the needs of the soul (Shaw 1998:8). In the context of good health, medical science advises lipid fasting and intermittent fasting. The ascetic lifestyle of the monks involved the renunciation of the needs of the body and the adherence to contemplative disciplines. Monks made a vow of sexual chastity, poverty and fasting with meditation and study as contemplative disciplines. Asceticism aimed at “self-conquest, ruling the impulse of the flesh by the power of the mind or spirit” (Shaw 1998:5-6). The lifestyle of monks and virgins (nuns) who devoted their lives to prayer, included fasting which was believed to fight “demons and evil thoughts, and [to be] an aid to a discipline of prayer and penitence” (1998:9). The monks Poemen and Anthony advocated the simplicity of eating bread with salt and drinking water. One meal per day was encouraged (1998:12). Saint Paula lived on bread which she ate in the evenings, Saint Makarius ate only once during Lent, Abba Nofer ate dates from palm trees, Saint Moses ate weeds and drank dew (Sherouda 1990:22) in a practice that is known as ‘wet fasting’ as against ‘dry fasting’. Various records state that monks and nuns only ate during the weekend for, traditionally, the Sabbath (aside from the Holy Sabbath/Saturday following Good Friday, when the Lord was “under the earth”) and the Lord’s Day are for feasting according to the Egyptian Desert Fathers. This is because “the former is the memorial of the creation and the latter of the resurrection” (Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, in McKnight 2009:89). It may be due to this understanding that feasting, conferences and other festivals are held over weekends in the Lenten season. Halleluyahs, however, are not said or sung during services held during Lent, including weekends. Fasting was perceived as increasing control over the body and its passions such

⁵ McKnight explains that the word ‘station’ comes from the Latin *statio*, “a military term for cohort, suggesting a communal commitment or resolve not to eat. The essence of this fast then, is that it is a group fast” (2009:85).

as appetites for food and sex. Hence, “gluttony [is connected here] to the physical moment of desire and fasting to their suppression” (Shaw 1998:17). Living an ascetic life as the monks did was seen as similar to fasting.

The net result of the formalization of fast days in the patristic era was that fasting practices became ritualized as part of the seasonal cycle of the church calendar. Various fast days were practised throughout the church year before baptism or ordination, “but the most universal and binding fast was the paschal fast on the Friday before Easter. This fast in preparation for Easter, along with the days of Lent that preceded it, emerged definitively as the central Christian fast” (Berghuis 2007:118).

The discussion above indicates that the early church had a fundamental belief in the practice of fasting based on biblical teaching.

Regarding the Lenten fast, Chrysostom said:

It is common for everyone to ask in Lent, how many weeks each has fasted; and some may be heard saying that they have fasted two, others three, and others that they have fasted the whole of the weeks. But what advantage is it, if we have gone through the fast devoid of works? If another says “I have fasted the whole of Lent”, you should say, “I had an enemy, but I was reconciled; I had a custom of evil speaking but I put a stop to it; I had a custom of swearing, but I have broken out of this evil practice” (in McKnight 2009:109).

He encouraged:

Do not let just your mouth fast, but also the eye and the ear and the feet and the hands and all the members of our bodies. Let the hands fast by being pure from theft and avarice. Let the feet fast by ceasing from running to the unlawful spectacles... Let the mouth fast as well from disgraceful speeches and railing (in McKnight 2009:109).

“In the Apophthegmata, fasting is described as helping to fight against evil thoughts, sin, and the enemy. It consumes the body, expresses the fear of God, and distinguishes the ascetic from the world based on his or her paltry diet” (in Shaw 1998:16). According to Apophthegmata and the Letters of Antony, bodily movements can be “natural and without passion” with passion being “caused by eating too much food (which warms the blood and spurs the body to work); and caused by jealous demons” (in Shaw 1998:16).

According to the *Didache*, the church chose Wednesdays and Fridays for fasting in order to differentiate itself from the Jewish fast on Mondays and Thursdays. Theologically the reason was that Judas had betrayed Jesus on a Wednesday, leading to Jesus’ arrest on Thursday and

his crucifixion on Friday (Baab 2006:54). Lent was viewed as a period for cleansing and preparation for commemorating Jesus' death and resurrection. Also, the baptizer and the baptized were required to fast before the baptism. As baptism took place at Easter, this underpinned the practice of fasting during Lent (Baab 2000:54). Initially fasting occurred over the two days before Easter. In the third century the Holy week in its entirety (6 days) was set aside for fasting so that the faithful could share with Christ in his Passion (Baab 2000:54). In the fourth century, fasting was extended to include the whole Lenten season (40 days). Wine and meat were avoided during that period (Baab 2000:54). Grumett refers to Booth who stated that going without meat does not compromise human health or strength. Abandoning meat saves money and represents a simple way of life that implies a less worldly focus (Grumett and Muers 2010:65). Grumett also mentions Cheyne who suggests that, because until the Fall meat was not consumed in Eden, God was aware of its negative effects on the length of the human life span (2010:60). To comply with Isaiah 58, the early church thought that the savings resulting from fasting should benefit the poor. The needy and poor, including widows and orphans, would fill their own souls from the gifts of Christian humility (Baab 2000:55).

Thus the early church established themes for fasting such as:

1. Helping the poor.
2. Longing for paradise where the first people ate a limited diet of fruits and vegetables. The failure to adhere to this diet led to their expulsion from Eden.
3. To get closer to God with a pure and open heart. This was especially relevant in the preparation for Eucharist and baptisms. In John Chrysostom's words: "As bodily food fattens the body, so fasting strengthens the soul [...] [and] makes [it] able to ascend on high to contemplate holy things and to put the heavenly higher than the pleasant and pleasurable things of life."
4. To gain control of the sinful body through fasting, sleep deprivation, self-flagellation and sexual abstinence.
5. To learn discipline and to connect with God's heart of compassion (Baab 2000:56-57).

In the early church the link between fasting and the Passion in terms of the imperative to remember Christ's suffering and turn to good revealed to congregants that fasting is not

merely a legalistic ritual in the mold of Leviticus. Christians fasted to prepare for baptism, to mourn and commemorate Jesus' death. Many fasted routinely only as a ritual act of lamentation. Further, they fasted "to better resist temptation, to obtain revelation, as part of their observance of stations, in response to persecution, and to care for the poor and address community needs and support community goals" (Berghuis 2007:77).

Gradually a more settled understanding emerged of the Christian experience as a pilgrimage toward its final fulfilment in the return of Christ and as a personal journeying to God. This perception "perhaps at least partly explains the growing tendency toward asceticism in the church from the early centuries through the medieval period" (Berghuis 2007:78).

The Lutheran World Federation describes its perception of fasting as a continuation of the early church practice of fasting, aimed at discerning the way ahead for leaders and their communities (Acts 13:21, 14:23). In the words of the LWF, his fast of forty days and nights "helped Jesus to discern the Spirit and to trust in the ways that God set out". Fasting gave Jesus the strength to resist powerful temptations. The present researcher would like to remark that, if the early church fasted (Acts 13:2-3;14:23), can the twenty-first century excuse itself for ignoring Jesus' command?

2.2.4 Fasting in the Middle Ages

In the Middle Ages both Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure wrote on fasting. According to Bonaventure, a balanced Christian existence should be contemplative or reflective as well as active. Prayer is contemplative and giving is active, while fasting helps Christians to abide by the principle of contemplation and reflection (Baab 2006:58).

In the medieval period fasting was often seen as the most painful form of renunciation. Fasting could reach extreme forms, especially in the context of widespread famines. "Self-starvation [...] seemed to people the most basic kind of asceticism, requiring the kind of courage [...] that marked the saints" (Bynum 1987:2).

With the institutionalization and omnipotence of the medieval church Christian practice became bound by a myriad regulations and requirements linked with concepts of penance and absolution for sins through suffering. Eventually these concepts gave rise to a growing questioning of the true value of practices such as fasting (Albala 2011:43-44) as they were seen as attempts to use works for the justification of sins. The Reformation in the early

sixteenth century was a protest against this notion. The Reformers believed that true faith alone could justify and provide the forgiveness of sins.

Thus, in the Middle Ages, fasting continued as a special form of self-discipline in the church. It was generally practised from the position of recognized sinfulness which was the focus of the medieval church.

The passage in Mathew 16:24, “if any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me”, was interpreted in the sense of working for salvation by self-denial. The rich paid for indulgences and for exemption from such self-denials and this was one of the features of the church objected to by Martin Luther during the Reformation (Baab 2000:59).

Eating was understood to signify communion with fellow humanity and with God as exemplified in the Eucharist. “To eat God in the Eucharist [...] was a becoming of the flesh that, in its agony, fed and saved the world. Thus [...] renouncing ordinary food prepared the way for consuming (i.e. becoming) Christ in Eucharist and mystical union” (Bynum 1987:3). The great amount of attention paid to fasting can thus be linked to the fact that “by the thirteenth century, the Eucharist, once a communal meal that bound Christians together and fed them with the comfort of heaven, became a subject of adoration” (Bynum 1987:53). The meaning of food and hunger in the context of fasting had thus changed since the patristic period when “hunger meant human vulnerability, which God comforted with food, or it meant human self-control, adopted in an effort to keep God’s commandments. [By] the High Middle Ages however, the food on the altar was the God who became man; it was bleeding and broken flesh [...] To eat God, therefore, was finally to become suffering flesh; it was to imitate the cross” (Bynum 1987:54).

2.2.5 Lutheran fasting

Lutheran fasting is a product of the Reformed understanding of fasting. It is interesting that Luther, who insisted on the separation of the secular from the spiritual realm, makes an exception by acknowledging that civil society may proclaim a fast if a community has adopted an immoderate life style (Luther’s Works, vol. 21:159). According to Martin Luther,

It is right to fast frequently in order to subdue and control the body. For when the stomach is full, the body does not serve for preaching, for praying, for studying or for doing anything else that is good. Under such circumstances,

God's word cannot remain. But one should not fast with the view to meriting something by it as good work (in Baab 2000:60).

Following the same line of thought, the Lutheran World Federation has recommended fasting stating that: "Fasting is both an intensive bodily, i.e. physical, and spiritual experience. Fasting is embedded in, and accompanied by, prayer. The deep meaning of fasting is to turn our attention towards God, to let our hearts and minds be touched by God's presence and thereby to let go of wrongdoings and return to God".

Clearly, Luther strongly objected to fasting in a legalistic way (for Luther's view on fasting see also the quotation in section 5.3.5 and footnote 25). Commenting on Matthew 6 where those who fast for the wrong reasons are called hypocrites, Luther says that he has never seen real fasting. In other words, while fasting one may continue to be a sinner. Fasting in itself doesn't bestow holiness. However, this view didn't make Luther abandon the discipline. For increased spirituality he advised to spread one's fast over the year, fasting before Easter, on Pentecost and before Christmas. He emphasized that fasting should not be handled as an act of worship meriting reconciliation with God. From this it is clear that Luther considered fasting beneficial for one's spiritual growth, but not for one's salvation as salvation is in Christ's power only. In Luther's understanding one doesn't fast to obtain God's mercy, but one fasts because of His mercy (the LWF relates this view of Luther to the text of Joel 2:13 which is read in church on Ash Wednesdays). Fasting was a means of withdrawing from the world. In Luther's words: "You see, what I call the real fasting of Christians means that you punish your whole body and compel it, as well as all five senses, to forsake and do without whatever makes life comfortable" (Luther's Works, vol.21:162). This implies that even in cases of communal fasting, the experience must be a personal one for each individual participant. Luther recognized that, as there are festive seasons on the church calendar, these should be balanced by times of fasting.

Lutherans became responsible for preventing the abuse of fasting for selfish reasons, while retaining the practice for those who could not do good works without the stimulation of fasting.⁶ According to Prange (1977), Luther's followers fasted during Lent whereby they focused on disciplining physical lusts. In Luther's words, "this fasting is directed only against the lust and the passion of the flesh, not against nature itself". He thought that fasting

⁶As indicated in 2.4, one of the main purposes of fasting is to assist the spirit to overcome the flesh. Some practitioners feel that they cannot do good works or live righteously without challenging the flesh through fasting, while others are able to discipline themselves and do good works or lead a righteous life without the aid of fasting.

helped people to look after themselves, to care for their neighbour and to value God's gracious presence (1977).

It seems that Luther's emphasis on salvation by grace alone, through faith and not through works (including the various Christian disciplines, among them fasting (Baab 2000:60)) may have contributed to the gradual disappearance of the practice among many Lutherans and other mainline Protestants (Albala 2011:48). As Spohn (2001:280) states, contemporary Lutherans tend to be suspicious of fasting, viewing it as a form of "works".

2.2.6 Pentecostal fasting

Even though Pentecostals have a relatively brief history and tradition (just over a hundred years), their spread, especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America, has been exponential (Miller 2007:435). According to Baab (2000:62-63), Pentecostal-charismatic notions, particularly their focusing on the work and gifts of the Holy Spirit, have during the 1960s and 1970s penetrated many mainline churches.

By the 1980s many Pentecostal-charismatic churches had adopted the Pentecostal understanding that walking in the power of the Holy Spirit should involve fasting. Miracles and healing were attributed to fasting, giving reference to Matthew 17:21 and Mark 9:29: "This kind goes not out but by prayers and fasting". The emphasis in Pentecostal churches is thus above all "on the work of the Holy Spirit within the life of the believer [...] Spirituality for Pentecostals and charismatics centers on a continual quest to recapture a person's original reception of the Spirit" (McMahan 2002:336). Their worship and spirituality is highly experiential and "most practise periods of fasting and prolonged prayer" (Miller 2007:443). It appears therefore that fasting is by Pentecostals given the same weight as worship. Their long fast is in January for reasons mentioned in Chapter One, footnote 2.

Pentecostal fasting practices are to a large degree influenced by John Wesley's holiness movement. Wesley belonged originally to the Anglican church and his holiness movement knew no universal fasting (Lee Roy Martin 2015:2,3). Hence, if the Methodist followers of John Wesley do not fast at all, as Mphahlele (2007) claims, it means that they have omitted his fasting theology. However, Lee states that the Revival movement at Azusa Street mission in Los Angeles (1906-1931), considered to be the cradle of worldwide Pentecostalism, is a direct product of prayer and fasting (1906:3). Although the Pentecostals have no firmly established fasting days, as many of their members come from traditional churches, a few

traditions of mainline churches have crept into the Pentecostal practice and some of their churches observe a fast during Holy week, on Pentecost and Ascension day, as well as in preparation for sacraments and ordinations. In addition, fasting one day each week is common among Pentecostals (Lee 2015:3). It is possible that the habit of a weekly fast stems from the Orthodox and Roman-Catholic churches to which Pentecostals may have belonged originally and where, as in the early church, Wednesdays and Fridays are designated for fasting.

Among the Pentecostals prayer is meant to accompany fasting. They believe that who doesn't fast much, doesn't pray much either (2015:5). There is also a belief that fasting unifies congregations, protecting them from divisions which are common in Pentecostal churches (2015:6). Possibly this is why Pentecostal churchleaders engage their followers more in fasting than in, for example, religious teaching. Pentecostals fast for the repentance and conversion of non-Christians and for the renewed religious fervour of nominal Christians. Before Pentecostals embark on founding a new ministry they fast in order to determine God's will. But, according to Lee, occurrences of divine guidance and revelations take place, even when congregations are fasting and praying for other purposes (2015:7). Their supposed supernatural power is by Pentecostals ascribed to fasting and to the Holy Spirit manifesting itself, resulting in such worship phenomena as healing, spirit baptisms and glossolia (2015:8). Quoting Vian, Lee writes: "The Holy Ghost did wonderfully quicken and strengthen physically all those who thus fasted and waited upon him. Some men and women each fell under the power about the first night and came through speaking in tongues. I never heard such soul agony for sin, self-life, backsliding, etc., and soul travail lost and perishing, mighty intercessions, visions of the cross, blood, throne, and deep whole souled shouts of glory and praise, all testifying 'Jesus is coming soon'" (2015:8).

There is no doubt that the Pentecostal-charismatic churches and their Revival meetings in Africa draw large crowds. Fasting also takes place for sanctification and in preparation for sacraments such as Holy Communion, ordination and feet-washing during the Holy week. Good Friday may be spent in church, praying in anticipation of Easter Holy Communion (2015:8, 9). Lee quotes Batman's testimony: "I fasted and prayed for about three days and during that time I put off the old man Adam in the form of inbred sin and God came in and destroyed the devil's workshop by casting his tools on the outside. Praise God I got real evidence that I was sanctified and the blood applied. After that I received the baptism with

the Holy Ghost and fire” (2015:8, 9). On the basis of quotations such as these, Lee comments that, in the opinion of Pentecostals, fasting leads to followers being “jaded from fasting and chastened in mind”. They experience spiritual upliftment and fasting is an “occasion for consecration, soul searching and self-denial that intensifies the seekers’ prayers and directs their affections toward God” while they got rid of their “carnal mind” (2015:9).

It is interesting that, whereas the Lutherans, interpreting texts such as Ephesians 2:8-10 stress that one doesn’t get saved by doing good works, the Pentecostals emphasize the opposite, namely : “saved for good works“ (as in Romans 6:1ff). However, Luther did say that, while good works don’t make from a bad man a good one, a good man can turn bad things into good things. Luther also spoke of “putting off the old man Adam” and “putting on the new man Christ”. In addition he endorsed Paul’s words (compare Romans 6:6 and Ephesians 4:24).

Another goal of Pentecostal fasting is to achieve baptism with the Holy Spirit through complete self-abnegation and leaving behind all worldly glitter (2015:9-13). In the case of such a baptism it is clear that, considering the presence of the Holy Spirit, no evil spirits can attend (compare Ephesians 4:30 and Matthew 12:28, 43:45).

Pentecostal fasting may also be aimed at divine healing. Lee refers to the “Pentecostal five-fold prayer”, declaring that Jesus is “saviour, sanctifier, Spirit baptizer, healer, and coming king”. Praying and fasting are perceived as resulting in “healings, self-examination, repentance and other spiritual phenomena” (2015:14,15). Fasting is thus by Pentecostals seen as a way to strengthen and deepen one’s prayers and as a “means to access God’s throne” (2015:14).

Lee found in his study of Pentecostalism that adherents do not practise fasting as a form of punishment or to subjugate physical desires. As all their bodily desires are directed towards God, they expect fasting to help them in repentance and sanctification. Fasting is also never associated with the past, with memorizing events, for example the crucifixion. Pentecostals always look forward, hence the importance of fasting in preparation for sacraments and ordinances of the church. In addition, Pentecostals fast as a means of self-examination and deepening spiritual awareness, especially in the light of the imminent return of Jesus (Lee 2015:16).

Also P.E. Matshidze stresses the Pentecostal preoccupation with intensive fasting (2005:43). The more one fasts, the better one's access to the divine (2005:42). The individual is responsible for his or her own life and has to ensure being filled by the Holy Spirit. Evil spirits "use people as rented houses", but the Holy Spirit will drive them out. Sickness, material ruin and a lack of decency in one's life are ascribed to evil spirits (Meyer in Matshidze 2005:42). Such problems are solved by being in constant communication with God which can be achieved through fasting. "Denial of bodily needs such as food and drink brings people closer to God and makes the Holy Spirit more accessible". Leaving behind bodily desires leads to increased spirituality which is a necessary condition for fighting evil forces (2005:43).

2.3 Christian doctrines and fasting

The foundational doctrines of the Christian faith are associated with fasting. These are the doctrines of man, sin, eschatology, salvation, the church, and special revelation (Warren 1998:54).

Warren sees fasting as linked to the doctrine of man because it requires discipline of the flesh. It reminds people that "man cannot live by bread alone" (Luke 4:4) and warns them not to be like those "whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things" (Philip 3:19).

Warren associates the doctrine of sin with fasting in view of the sacrifices offered to God in the Hebrew Testament in the form of prayers and fasting in atonement for wrongdoing (1998:54).

David Smith writes:

Fasting has often been undertaken as a means by which unbelieving men have averted God's wrath. In a similar way, believers have taken to fasting – after having fallen into sin – in order to rediscover God's pardon. Penitence is an essential ingredient of biblical fasting, so it is natural for Christians to seek God through self-denial if they become aware of an unsatisfied need for divine pardon (in Warren 1998:57).

Although fasting in itself cannot gain forgiveness, it can lead one to reach a state of true humility, to repent and to ask God for forgiveness. The prophetic voice of Joel says: "Return to me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning" (Joel 2:12).

Another doctrine associated with fasting is that of eschatology (1998:58) which refers to the coming of judgment day as per Joel 1:15. Matthew 9:14-15, Mark 2:18-20 and Luke 5:33-35 also deal with fasting and eschatology. Wallis (in Warren 1998:59) argues that Matthew 9:15 is evidence that fasting was at the time of Jesus regarded as a regular practice to be engaged with from the moment of his Ascension until the Second Coming. Thus, as McKnight (2009:130) explains, “Christ has come so we can feast; Christ is yet to come so we must fast”.

Also the doctrine of sanctification is by Warren linked with fasting: “Christians throughout the ages have discovered that the spiritual disciplines promote spiritual growth” (1998:60). Fasting is one of these spiritual disciplines.

Similarly, the doctrine of the church is in his opinion (1998:62) associated with fasting. Fasting has played a crucial role in the life of the church in terms of decision-making. For instance, the church in Antioch instructed Paul and Barnabas to embark on the first missionary journey following prayer and fasting (Acts 13:2-3). The appointment of elders (officers of the church) was also preceded by fasting (Acts 14:23). Jesus’ view on fasting as found in Matthew 6 indicates that fasting is not commanded but recommended.

Another doctrine linked with fasting is that of special revelation. Warren argues that, through their fasting, God reveals himself to Christians because the process of fasting heightens their focus on and experience of God. Human beings know God because God has revealed himself. Although fasting does not stand as a doctrine on its own, it is very much a part of all doctrines 1998:62).

Having discussed the biblical and theological basis of fasting I now turn to the spiritual, social and physical benefits of the practice as identified in relevant literature. These benefits are discussed and examined through the lens of *kenosis* (see 2.5 to 3.3.3).

2.4 The purpose and benefits of fasting

Fasting has spiritual, physical and social benefits. McKnight notes that in the Hebrew and Christian Testaments various terms point to the perception of “the fundamental unity of body and soul, and to the deep value of both (not just the latter) in one’s spiritual journey” (2009:4). This perception, in turn, “creates a spirituality that includes the body” and all other facets of human existence. This is why the spiritual discipline of fasting can be said to have spiritual, physical and social benefits as will be discussed below. Weitzel justifies fasting

from the Lutheran perspective as strengthening Christians in the war against sin. As it is sin that separates one from God, fasting can function as a corrective, helped by prayerful repentance and works of love (n.d.:3). Fasting – a “spiritual spring cleaning” – represents a loving response to God (in McNight 2009:6).

2.4.1 The spiritual benefits of fasting

a. Fighting temptation

Fighting temptation is often seen as one of the main purposes of fasting. Fasting trains one in asceticism and this in turn may lead one to renounce the world and, if need be, become a martyr (Shenouda 1990:24). Shenouda notes that a person who can control his/her lust for food can control other lusts as well (1990:104). Basil of Caesarea saw fasting as “the nourishment of prayer, the restraint of lusts, the wings of soul, the diet of angels, the instrument of humanity and self-denial, the purification of the Spirit and the paleness and meagerness of visage” (in Grumett and Muers 2010:57). Fasting helped Jesus to defeat Satan who offered him personal, religious and political temptations: food, worship and power (Clance 2003:42).

Towns employs the image of the growth rings of a tree to describe how fasting “develops inner character to wrestle with the outer character” (1996:40). Thus God reveals hidden sin during fasting peeling back outer layers in a process that takes time and effort until the “core” of the matter is reached. Furthermore, Towns notes that, only when the prodigal son was hungry, did he return home to his father. Physical hunger kindles the spiritual soul (1996:68-69). Just as bad habits cannot be overcome in a day, so the achieving of spiritual discipline takes time. Whatever lies at the heart of a sin, fighting it will require continuous spiritual discipline and fighting sin has to be made into an integral part of our being. The starting point is faith which gives rise to a vision of the goal. From that point onward the individual moves from “attitude to actions, to habits and finally to character” (1996:90-91). We fast to challenge and cater for the mind, not the body (Baab 2011:109). Fasting can lead to permanently changed habits and inner attitudes (2011:111). Maxwell Maltz’ findings are that it takes not less than 21 days to form new habits: “An old mental image dissolves and a new one gels” (Clear n.d). This justifies fasting for 40 days (almost twice 21 days) to give new behaviors and habits a chance to take root and become a continuous process rather than a single occurrence.

Luther too viewed fasting as a tool for disciplining bodily lusts:

Fasting consists of disciplining and restraining of your body which pertains not only to eating, drinking and sleeping but also to your leisure, your pleasure and to everything that may delight your body or that you do not provide for it and take care of it. To fast means to hold back from all such things and to do so only as a means of curbing and humbling the flesh. This is how Scripture enjoins fasting, calling it afflicting the soul (Lev, 16:29), afflicting the body in order for it to refrain from indulging in pleasures (in Prange 1977).

Irenaeus stated that fasting had helped Jesus not to be dissuaded by Satan from anticipating heavenly provision, whereas Adam erred by feasting on forbidden fruit (Wimmer 1982:31).

As noted above, fasting can add strength to the fight against temptations and to repentance, but it “is not to be used for a temporary cure for sinfulness” as God calls upon human beings to repent their sins every day and not only during fasting. On the contrary, the true aim of fasting is to enable believers to develop a regular, habitual enjoyment of the opportunity offered by this discipline to be with God (Baab 2011:116). Wimmer (1982:39), commenting on Genesis 18:8, Exodus 19:3, 33:11 and 34:28, advises: When in Rome do like the Romans. Likewise, when human beings find themselves in the spiritual realm (the angels’ home) they do not eat. Conversely when angels come to earth (the humans’ home) they eat.

b. Intercession, petition and repentance

A number of biblical passages refer to the benefit of fasting for intercession, petition and repentance. For example, the passage dealing with the abuse, rape and murder of the Levite’s concubine wife portrays the Israelites as so shocked and horrified by the crime that they can’t eat. Instead they fast and offer sacrifices, pleading with God for justice (McKnight 2009:40).

Intercessory prayer for health (one’s own or that of others) is in the Bible also usually accompanied by prayer. Berghuis (2001:93) sums it up neatly: biblical characters often fasted while in intercessory prayer for others. Examples are Nehemiah interceding for others, Daniel praying for his own needs and leaders such as Esther praying at the time of battle and during famine.

Fasting and doing evil or committing crime are rivals. Therefore, fasting can be used as training for repenting from sins. In Shenouda’s words, fasting is a period of penitence and purity of heart (1990:91). Repentance must go together with fasting. Without repentance, fasting is meaningless.

While fasting, one's body abstains from food and one's soul abstains from worldly lust, every worldly lust and all lusts that pertain to the body. Thus, through repentance one approaches God (Shenouda 1990:93). According to Oknzansi (30 January 2015), pastor Sithembiso Zondo resolved to fast for 21 days after his adultery had been exposed.

c. Going through mourning⁷

When someone dies, people fast because “any kind of pleasure desecralizes the respect and pain” felt in regard of the deceased (McKnight 2009:52). It is also an act of empathy with the bereaved family, a way of sharing their hurt. For McKnight, the body's expression of grief (abstaining from food for reasons of sorrow) “is at the foundation of all fasting practices and if we learn to think of fasting as a response to a grievous sacred moment it all falls into place” (2009:52).

A biblical example of this viewpoint is found in I Samuel 20:34. Jonathan fasted when he realized that Saul wanted to kill David. Later the Israelites fasted for 7 days at the death of Saul and the Philistines' disgrace of his body (1 Sam. 31:13). To express his grief at the death of Saul and his sons, especially Jonathan, David fasted (11 Samuel 12:16).

Berghuis confirms that fasting is often undertaken as a sign of sorrow:

When tragic events occurred in biblical times, fasting was often a natural response. These events include losses in battle (Judg. 20:26), the death of a king or leader (1 Sam. 31:13 = 1 Chron. 10:12; 11 Sam. 1:12, 3:35), news of the Jews' death edict (Esth. 4:3), drought (Jer. 14:1-12), and locust plagues (Joel 1:14, 2:12-15). Fasting was also occasionally part of personal sorrow or suffering as seen in Hannah, Job, David, and other psalmists (1 Sam. 1:7-8, 20:34; Job 3:24; Pss. 42:3, 102:4; 107:17-18) (2001:92).

Fink (1974:84) quotes Barton who notes that there is a strong link between emotions and appetite. Anger, fear, pain, grief, absorbing interests, all these as well as other emotional states may seriously influence one's desire for food and drink. Hence, abstinence under such conditions may not be planned at all but simply come about naturally.

McKnight (2009:19) defines fasting as the avoidance of food and drink for a particular period, because a particular moment in time is perceived to be so sacred that partaking of food and drink would detract from its seriousness. The occurrence of death, threats to life, sin, war, famine, disease and rejection may be experienced as so profoundly and decisively

⁷The Nazarene Baptist church, known as the Shembe church, observes the days on which their previous leaders died by fasting.

meaningful that they absorb people's full attention, making food and drink pale into insignificance. However, McKnight asserts that the motivation for fasting cannot be some crisis in one's life but has to consist purely in responding to "sacred moments". Fasting is not a tool we produce when we are in desperate need of some specific result. Even if divine intervention can bring about such a desired result, the only acceptable motivation for fasting lies in the longing for total immersion in the sacred moment itself. As explained by McKnight (2009:52), fasting frees us from indulgence in food as a distraction and allows us to focus clearly on a particular experience in life.

When we are deeply sad the everyday joys of life feel unnatural and inappropriate. Fasting makes one feel uncomfortable with playing music, wearing jewelry, engaging in entertainment and other everyday pleasures (Baab 2011:136). Fasting declares that the practitioner is engaged with the more elevated aspects of human existence. During fasting we yearn for restoration. It links us with the difficult realities of life. "Fasting lightens the load by yoking us with Christ in new and unexpected ways [...] and engages us experientially in the mystery of God's love and power" (Baab 2011:141). In fasting and celebrating Sabbath we turn our concentration away from frenetic activity, desires and wants toward heaven (Baab 2011:138). Baab calls fasting and Sabbath observance "countercultural" as these practices affirm that we can for a time do without daily routine and needs such as food, entertainment and luxuries (Baab 2011:140).

d. Eschatology

Eschatology plays a role in fasting since the Jewish practice of fasting is in anticipation of the kingdom of God. Jesus also said that, while he was present, fasting would be suspended, but after his return to his Father it would resume (Luke 5:35) (McKnight 2009:59). "Jesus did not fast for the future kingdom because he believed the future was present" (McKnight 2009:125).

e. Spiritual renewal and sanctification

One of the main purposes of fasting is spiritual renewal. Shenouda (1990:90) states that fasting is a time of concentrated spirituality geared towards spiritual energy and renewal. Fasting declares that people do not depend on resources such as food, but rather on the source of everything, on God who will provide. However, people have to struggle against temptations and prevent the devil from coming between them and God's provision (Wimmer

1982:44). Fasting and sin are rivals. Committing sin during fasting would defeat the purpose of fasting, meaning that one would simply be starving oneself but not truly fasting. Fasting liberates people from their narrow focus on earthly things (Wimmer 1982:44). Those who fast are affirming their bond with Jesus: “Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?” (Mat 6:25) and “Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Mat 6:33) (Baab 2011:108). Cassian advocates fasting as the path to the “main object, i.e. purity of heart” and to “perfection” so that the “soul may cleave to God and to heavenly things” (in McKnight 2009:115).

Fasting is thus a countercultural act, a deeply humble practice embodying the vision that being with God is of greater importance than possessions or entertainments (Baab 2011:116). Fasting is submitting oneself deliberately to affliction for the sake of spiritual growth (Baab 2011:128). It helps people to identify sacred entities and to grasp the meaning of what God is saying, because fasting elevates the spiritual over the physical (Baab 2011:129).

Moses, Daniel, Elijah and Paul all had visions and were known for rigorous fasting. Exodus (19:3 and 33:11) describes how Moses conversed with God after fasting: “He was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments” (34:28). The all-surpassing holiness of God is what leads to the fast; and so, on fast days, the Jews recite the “thirteen attributes of God” (found in Exodus 34:6-9) (McKnight 2009:116-117). McKnight notes that after Elijah’s fast, he encountered God on the mountain (1 Kings 19). Daniel also received visions and answers to his prayers (Daniel 9:3), when he “turned to the Lord God, to seek an answer by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes”. Paul was often weakened by fasting but thereafter he was lifted from earth into “the third heaven (11 Corinthians 6:4-5, 11:27) (McKnight 2009:117-119). Jesus too fasted to demonstrate his reliance on God the Father at his time of temptation in the desert. He said that “man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4), meaning that “God’s Word sustains life at its deepest levels” (Berghuis 2001:94). Matthew 9:14-15 considered fasting as expressing the loss of Jesus’ physical presence once he had gone.

Maybe this view of fasting explains why the leaders of churches that are strong on fasting seem to have some supernatural powers so that, for example, people fall down when they present themselves to be prayed for.

Fasting is supposed to detach us from the earthly, the physical, to some degree and to strengthen our focus on God's kingdom. Such fasting is a battle against obstacles that prevent our full devotion in prayer (Towns 1996:211). It lets us reach a meditative state that in turn brings us into the spiritual realm (Baab 2011:10). Regular fasting creates order in our spiritual lives: there are times for plenty and times for leanness. By fasting we keep temptation in its right place in our lives and we avoid indulgence. Habits are put aside and new experiences are encountered. The ultimate aim is to get closer to God's truth and grace. When we put aside physical necessities such as food we are nourished spiritually and become alert to God's presence (2011:13, 105, 16, 33).

Towns (1996:200) lists motives for fasting as a desire to, first, mortify personal lusts (see 1 Corinthians 9:27), second, express personal repentance (see John 3:5-10) and, third, strengthen personal prayer (see Acts 10:30).

In sum, concerning its spiritual effects Baab (2011:442) points out that fasting is closely associated with intimacy with God and concern with God's purposes. Thus, in the Hebrew Testament, fasting is linked with mourning and repentance while both the Christian and Hebrew Testaments connect fasting with intercessionary prayer. The ultimate point of fasting is the exciting discovery of humility, poverty, nakedness and the utter seriousness of our life in God.

f. To pray for ministry

A further aspect of spiritual life to which fasting contributes is that of the ministry. Here, the focus is communal rather than individual or personal, as it concerns the body of the church that is affected by the practice of fasting. As indicated, one of the reasons for fasting is that Jesus Christ himself fasted and so did Moses the law-giver and Elijah the prophet. Their ministries were rendered more successful through their engagement in fasting.

Towns (1996:200) writes that the results of fasting are felt in several areas of ministry: increased spiritual authority, receiving divine affirmation of ministry, obtaining new direction for ministry, gaining new insights during Bible study that offer fundamental truths for ministry, an enhanced desire to pray, new power for spiritual warfare, guidance for

workers in ministry, assurance of divine protection, an increased sense of God's presence, countering attitudes and policies that hinder progress in new ministry and an increased power in praying and intercession. This possibly is why churches that practise fasting demonstrate considerable spiritual stamina, holding long services several times a week. Piper calls on ministers to ask themselves: If the spirit of God drew Jesus to the wilderness for fasting, would not we who are not divine need fasting all the more? "Can we really enter ministry, headless of the battle we may have to fight?" (1997:51). Jesus conquered the devil and attained our redemption by fasting (1997:54). Jesus' meekness and compliance is mirrored in the way he persisted in fasting for our salvation (1997:55). Piper contends that we have to march with Jesus in the wilderness and fast to master our master's path in response to his words: "As the Father has sent me, I also send you" (John 20:21) (1997:51). There are several ways in which Jesus fought the devil to win our salvation. Indeed, he had to fast to defeat him. So, "we owe our salvation to his fasting" (P). In fact, Jesus sent his followers to their closets to pray and fast in secret (Mathew 6:18) and thereafter he sent them out for mission (Mathew 28:19 and John 20:21).

Both faith and works are requirements of the ministry and, as Towns says, we need a balance of the two. "Just as revival will need prayers and fasting, it will also need meetings, programs, planning, human resources and material resources". As God's fellow workers (1 Corinthians 3:9) we need to engage in both prayer and fasting as well as in works (1996:78).

Towns explains the power of fasting in terms of the broader Christian congregation, using the analogy of crosses on church buildings or necklaces (1976:79). These crosses have no power and don't bring about blessings but they are symbols. "We pray for God to work in our buildings, then we put crosses on our building to tell the world that this is where God is living and works [...] When we have the blessings of God upon our lives, we will want to show it by displaying the cross". Samuel's fasting, like ours, "is a symbol not of our own power to move God by abstaining from food, but of our own faith in his power to bring revival" (1976:79). Ceremonial corporate fasting in the Hebrew Testament is described by Berghuis as a form of public worship and he notes that, "while the Law did not require these fasts, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther initiated them and God blessed the people [and] even when the prophets offered their critiques of fasting, they were attacking not the ceremony itself, but the hypocritical spirit that accompanied it" (2001:94). Berghuis stresses that 27 out of the 59 references to fasting in the Bible are concerned with corporate as opposed to individual fasting.

The above mentioned remarks on fasting can be applied to ministry and are valid for individual as well as corporate fasting. Towns takes lessons from John the Baptist who fasted by abstaining from wine and strong drink (Luke 1:15) and chose to rather be filled with the Spirit. John the Baptist fasted “often” (Matthew 9:14) and wore his hair long to indicate that he was a Nazarite, a dedicated or consecrated man (Towns 1996:147,150). John the Baptist practised simple living as required by the Nazarite vow in order to be “great in the sight of the Lord” (Luke 1:15).

Engaging in the John the Baptist fast is of influence on the community. During the time of the Baptist the Israelites were in the grip of Rome, bound by Roman legalism and in a spiritual crisis. John the Baptist was called on to set an example, helping the Israelites to adopt a new approach. Although the Nazarene vow was usually taken for a month and “initiated by stress or trouble”, John the Baptist took a life-time vow with the aim of inspiring the entire nation (1996:130). Towns argues that “locusts” consumed by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:4) were not “lotus plants” as claimed by some who consider him to be a vegetarian. Locusts, according to Leviticus 11:22, were by the Jews seen as clean food (1996:152). It is obvious anyway that John was living a pure, frugal life as reflected also in his clothing.

From the Bible it is clear that God’s messengers fasted often: Moses, David, Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel, Elijah, Hannah, Jesus, Paul, John and his disciples, and Anna, they all practise fasting. From church history it is evident that Luther, Calvin, Wesley and Knox considered fasting as an essential tool for increased nearness to God (Towns 1996:185). Fasting should lead to the service of God and, after fasting, one should partake of food to build sufficient energy to do God’s work. Whether one eats or drinks, or anything else one does, it ought all to be to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31) (1996:189). Commitment to fasting should bear fruits in the form of commitment to God’s service, from sacrificial abstinence to sacrificial giving to God and neighbor. From fasting the faithful move on to giving testimony and to the winning of souls: “You should witness to me” (Acts 1:8) (1996:189).

It is important to note that, speaking about influencing people, we assume that our role is that of a servant - not of someone in a superior position. Christians exercise influence through holiness of character, gentle behavior, setting appropriate examples and clear

leadership (TEEC 2004:8.1). When people see that the gospel makes a difference in life, they will want to share in the experience (2004:92).

In addition, fasting can bring about church revival. Warren (1993:69) states that great revivals have often been accompanied by prayer and fasting, for example the Kentucky Revival of 1800 and the Prayer Revival of 1857. Similarly, there were revivals in the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. Towns remarks:

Prayer was often accompanied by fasting ... [in the] worldwide awakening in 1906. Billy Graham reported fasting and praying during his voyage to England to conduct his British crusades in the early '50s. The response in his meetings at the time has been described as one of the greatest revivals of our time (1996:27). Maybe this is the reason why churches that are strong in fasting are keeping on growing to the extent of winning hearts of some of the traditional churches that they desert them for Pentecostal 'fasting' churches .

2.4.2 The physical benefits of fasting

The body needs nourishment at regular intervals and therefore fasting is an anomaly in daily life. Even so, moderate and regular fasting (henceforth, fasting) may offer several physical benefits.

Towns is of the opinion that our bodies can do with a temporary break from food so as to function better (1996:24). Second, he argues that high cholesterol and overweight problems may benefit from some fasting. Third, he describes rest, feverishness and fasting due to a lack of appetite as natural responses to illness and infections. By extension, he argues, the body gets a chance to rest during fasting and rejuvenate itself.

Fasting and losing weight may lead to increased physical activity. Abstaining, even temporarily, from meat, oil, dairy, etc. may help detoxicate the body (1996:25). Allergic reactions can obviously be avoided by abstaining from certain foods (1996:180) and arthritis may be relieved.

Another possible benefit of fasting is, according to Towns, that it helps to fight addiction to, for example, salt, sugar, caffeine and fatty foods which are common problems that can be countered by frequent short periods of fasting although longer fasts may be needed to clear the system completely (1996:182). Health practitioners may encourage intermittent fasting, provided one guards against possible side-effects such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia. In Towns' view, as disease develops as a process, similarly a diet that includes partial fasting

takes time to produce effects (1996:40). He believes the body cures itself using internal mechanisms and one is duty-bound to look after body, mind and soul.

Yousria El-Arnaoty has studied the possible benefits of Ramadan fasting. She mentions increased self-restraint, self-discipline and self-purification as positive effects, bringing spiritual, social and physical benefits. The physical results can be of a therapeutic nature and an important point is weight loss (1991:8). El-Arnaoty elaborates that, during fasting, “the body mobilizes its fuel store of glycogen, fats and protein” (1991.:9). “The changes in hormone levels during fasting favour catabolic and glyconcogetic changes such as glycogen, catecholamines, glucocorticoids and growth hormone while insulin levels decrease” (1991:9). According to Harrison and Hardy prolonged fasting is more effective when dealing with serious overweight (in El-Arnaoty 1991:10). Hence, a forty days Lenten fast could be more effective than the 28 to 30 days Ramadan fast. Merkel *et al* state that within one week of fasting HDL-cholesterol levels come down by 22 % (in El-Arnaoty 1991:16). This affirms that fasting can help in dealing with problems of high cholesterol. Anderson *et al* found that positive changes including weight loss and lowering of blood pressure occur already after two days of fasting (in El-Arnaoty 1991:18). This claim is confirmed by Dabl who speculates that this result is partly due to “water loss from tissue and plasma or to the decreased sodium intake accompanying weight loss” (in El-Arnaoty 1991:18). Tuck (in El-Arnaoty 1991:18), points out the wellknown fact that one way to manage high blood pressure is by controlling one’s weight. Hence, medical practitioners do generally caution patients to watch their weight in order to avoid health problems.

The listed health benefits of fasting are in line with the recommendations of medical men for healthy eating. However, fasting must be done in moderation. Overzealous fasting can be dangerous and even cause death. The *Witness* newspaper reported two deaths within a week as a result of excessive fasting. On 22 January 2011 Purity Nelisiwe Majozi (43), a student at the Union Bible Institute in Pietermaritzburg died and on 26 January 2011 B. Mthiyane, a devotee of the Assemblies of God in Durban. Those under sixteen or above 65 years of age should be exempted from fasting (Weitzel n.d.:9) as should pregnant women, persons on certain medications and travellers

2.4.3 Social benefits: to show compassion and solidarity

How can fasting help to foster congregational solidarity and awake people's conscience to the cause of the disadvantaged? Fasting is meaningless unless it is linked to God's priorities as indicated in Isaiah 58:6-7:

Is this not 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? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

Shenouda notes that a person who fasts feels sympathy for the hungry and Matthew 5:7 states: “Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.” In addition, the early church taught that those who fast should offer the food they don't eat to the poor (1990:107,108).

Baab mentions that fasting involves a concern for justice. In the early church food and money for the poor were freed up by fasting. Similarly, more recently, “Christian relief and development agencies have promoted fasting as a way to pray for the poor with energy and compassion and to release resources to give to the poor” (2011:443). The understanding is that money saved by fasting should benefit the poor and not be stored for one's own use after the fast. Fasting in order to meet the needs of the poor is known as the ‘widow's fast’, referring to the widow of Zarephat who, poor as she was, fed Elijah by sacrificing her own meal (1 Kings 17:8-16), and to the widow in Luke 21:1-4 who sacrificed her last two mites. Also the Macedonian Christians could not use their poverty as an excuse for failing to give to the needy (11 Cor. 8:1-5). Towns comments that, although fasting is not mentioned specifically, these incidents provided models for fasting in the light of providing for others (1996:102). Thus, by fasting Christians identify with the unfortunate and suffering members of their communities (Shenouda 1990:116).

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Congregations that Pray is of the opinion that fasting makes us move beyond our self-centeredness: “When we stop satisfying every craving and desire, we can more easily open ourselves to God and to the needs of others” (Praying Church, n.d.).

Having briefly examined the spiritual, physical and social benefits of fasting I now turn to fasting as *kenosis* (self-emptying) which is the concept that underpins all forms of fasting.

Isaiah fasts in response to the condition of the poor and the presence of injustice in his community. In fasting he “embodies God’s disposition to the poor” so that “fasting is body poverty in response to injustice in our world” (McKnight 2009:101). Isaiah explains, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Maintain justice, and to do what is right, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance will be revealed’” (Isaiah 56:1). McKnight summarizes: “When God’s people look around and fail to see justice and salvation and deliverance, and instead they see poverty and injustice, God’s people should respond in body poverty”, suggesting that fasting delivers human beings into communal spirituality (2009:102). It also means that solidarity-fasting is a prophetic action expressing theology, hope and protest. He continues:

Food joins humans to other humans because we share meals together. Whenever we give up food intentionally, we refrain from relationships. When a group protests by fasting, they both negate one relationship – with the haves – and they affirm another relationship – with the have-nots. And since the structures of power always have sufficient food, fasting is not only refusing relationship, but it is also protesting the power structures that exist (2009:106).

The post-Apostolic Church designated Wednesdays and Fridays as days for fasting to help the monks who themselves had nothing to offer to the poor and hungry. Those in need thus benefited from what was saved by fasting (Towns 1996:104). Fasting was also a means of fundraising for mission work: Resources were made available to take the gospel to distant regions. In the sixth century, Irish monks led by St Columba evangelized Britain and North Europe. They were financially supported by Christians who had fasted, cutting down on sumptuous meals and modifying extravagant lifestyles (1996:104). St Augustine cautioned that it would be greedy to consume what one had saved through fasting (Wimmer 1982:52). According to St Peter Chrysologus, “prayer, helping the needy, fasting - these three things are really one, fasting is the soul of prayer and helping the needy is the life-blood of fasting” (1982:52). The Moravians engaged in mission work, using the same means, and John Wesley’s Evangelical Revival was financed by Christians who fasted and lived simple lives. The proceeds from fasting were also used for “humanitarian projects for widows, orphans, liberated slaves and prison reform” (Towns 1996:104). These days the women in the poverty stricken state of Mizoram in India have adopted the lifestyle of Zarephat and, prior to cooking their daily pot of rice, they remove one cup to give to the church which sells the rice to raise funds for mission work (1996:105).

If fasting is effectively directing one’s focus away from self-preoccupation, this will become manifest in mercy and compassion shown towards one’s surroundings. One will be moved

to give to others what one receives from God [...]. One's life will be characterized by responding concretely to the needs of others. Fasting must deal with reality without skirting any issues. It is not an escape mechanism. The fast God has chosen prepares one for being used to bring about change so that inner liberation spills over into outward acts of caring. Fasting is directly related to social responsibility (Ryan 1981:119).

2.5 Fasting as *kenosis*

According to Colyer,

Kenosis signifies emptying, from the Greek word κενωω and its cognates, meaning 'empty' or 'to empty' or 'to pour out'. The theological sense of *kenosis* derives from a single occurrence in Philippians 2.7: "Christ [...] emptied himself (ἐαυτον εκενωσεν), taking the form of a slave [...]" *Kenosis* understood theologically is not merely emptying, but self-emptying (ἐαυτον, himself). This verse is the source of the name of 'kenotic' theology, based upon the theme of Christ having "emptied himself" (2013:6).

Such self-emptying is at the heart of the spiritual disciplines and the benefits of fasting should not be allowed to overshadow the principle of self-emptying or *kenosis* which is the central aspect of fasting. As noted in 2.5 above, Foster (1978:1) refers to the disciplines of abstinence as inward disciplines whereas he defines those of engagement as outward disciplines (Ketchum 2005:85). One could regard the practice of fasting as an inward discipline but its effects are both internal (greater spirituality) and external (increased compassion for others).

In emptying ourselves by abstaining from food, we retreat from outward life so as to experience greater intimacy with God (Baab 2006:47,48). In doing so we reach a level of worship that involves the giving of oneself and a focus away from the self, directed towards God and others. Self-emptying allows us to control physical desires; to pray and intercede without distraction; to endure loss and grief; to acknowledge and ask for forgiveness for sins; to hear the word of God anew and deepen the work of ministry in the church.

Kenosis is thus a means to develop compassion, expressing love for God and others. There is no love for God that is, in itself, not already love for neighbor. And love for God only comes to fruition through its fulfilment in love for neighbor. Only who loves his or her neighbor can know God in actuality and only one who ultimately loves God (whether being aware of it or not) can manage to unconditionally abandon him- or herself to another person without making of the other the means for self assertion (Rahner 1969:241)

The self-emptying nature of fasting involves not only physically sharing in the suffering of others like God through Christ shared in the suffering of humankind, but also “motivates merciful action [...] since compassion is not merely private sentimentality but also has a public dimension” (Kwa 2013:364-365). This may be why in the Lutheran mid-week Lenten services the readings are taken from the Passion narratives of the gospel of Mark and the book of Job.

Towns points out that fasting is expected to transform one “in ways that have social and personal impacts” (1996:17,18). Warren notes that, while fasting, one is enabled “to minister to people in need [as well as] to return to focus on God” (1998:66). This confirms that fasting leads both to spiritual growth and the development of compassion for others. In addition, since fasting is a spiritual discipline, it is associated with a form of self-emptying (Thompson 1995 in Baab 2006:144).

According to Williams (2004:627), a recent *kenotic* approach followed by a number of Lutheran theologians understands God in terms of the experience of Christ’s *kenosis* – his self-emptying on the cross. For example, Moltmann (1981) and Bonhoeffer (1967) view God from the perspective of God’s incarnation in Christ whose death on the cross represents complete *kenosis* for the sake of humanity’s salvation. “God then suffers with, and therefore for his creation” (Williams 2004:628).

Kenosis should be seen in the context of its eschatological reversal when all suffering and pain is seen to have been worthwhile. John’s illustration of the attitude of the total joy of a woman who has come through the pain of childbirth into the joy of a new life (John 16:21) is very apt and applicable (Williams 2004:937).

Demarest (2011:558) explains that living a life of *kenosis* involves “sharing in [Christ’s] sufferings, becoming like him in death” (Philippians 3:10) and following his example of taking on “the very nature of a servant” (Philippians 2:7).

That *kenosis* is fundamental to fasting is inherent in it being a spiritual discipline and the spiritual disciplines entail self-emptying. The elements of spiritual growth to which fasting can contribute are mentioned above: Resisting temptation, seeking intercession, going through mourning, seeking repentance, spiritual renewal and enhancing ministry. It is the self-emptying that makes it possible to get closer to God. The practice of fasting eliminates all extraneous concerns, enabling one to attain a level of worship that is based on full concentration on God. This in turn allows one to control one’s physical desires and to pray

for intercession without any distraction, to endure loss and grief, to acknowledge sin and ask for forgiveness, to hear the word of God anew and deepen ministry in the church.

Warren (1998:4) mentions that fasting is the least implemented of the spiritual disciplines. Nevertheless, for Bright (1995:17) it is the only discipline that meets all the requirements set out in 11 Chronicles 7:14: When fasting “he humbles himself, he has more time to pray, more time to seek God’s face, and certainly he would turn away from all known sins.” In Warren’s view (1998:64,65), fasting is in particular associated with the disciplines of prayer and worship. He points out that fasting was central in the prayer life of many biblical figures such as Moses (Exodus 34:28), Hannah (1 Samuel 1:7-8), David (11 Samuel 12:15-17), Jehoshaphat (11 Chronicles 20:3), Esther (4:15-16), Daniel (Daniel 10:3), Jesus (Matthew 4:1-2), Anna (Luke 2:36-37) and Paul (Acts 9:9). Moses fasted and prayed for forgiveness from God of Israel over the issue of the golden calf. David fasted and prayed that God would save his child (1 Samuel 12:16-23). Paul prayed and fasted prior to appointing elders in churches (Acts 14:23). Warren (1998:64, referring to Sanders 1977:129), says: “Prayer and fasting are linked together both in the scriptures and in the life-patterns of many saints of God.” As regards the discipline of worship Warren (1998:66) quotes Towns (1996:17,18) who states that “fasting is not an end in itself; it is a means by which we can worship the Lord and submit ourselves in humility to him” and, furthermore, that (as indicated in Isaiah 58), “the purpose of all worship, including fasting, is to change the worshiper in ways that have social and personal impacts.” Warren concludes that “true fasting can lead the one who fasts to minister to people in needs [as well as] to return to focus on God.”

Fasting is one of the spiritual disciplines because it involves self-emptying (Thompson 1995 in Baab 2006:144). While fasting believers suspend normal activities and make the burden easy by yoking with Christ who summons and empowers them to pray. What matters in fasting is not abstinence whereby eating is replaced with something else, for example watching television or shopping. The point of fasting is to engage in a disciplined retreat to experience intimacy with God (Baab 2006:47,48,141).

Willard (1998:108) views fasting as a practice which “is an indispensable application of what Jesus called the cross. In the simplest of terms, the cross means not doing or getting what you want”. Instead of the anger that usually comes with such an experience, through fasting “we learn to remain calm, strong and serene when we are deprived”, and also, “God meets our needs in his own ways”. There are “words of God” other than “bread” or physical

food, and these words are capable of directly sustaining our bodies and the totality of our being (Deut.8:3-5; Matt. 4:4, John 4:32-34). “Fasting liberates us, on the basis of experience, into the abundance of God” (Willard 1998:108).

For Grumett and Muers (2010:vii-x), food is found at the interconnection of the physical and the spiritual worlds so that the way in which one consumes food has theological as well as physical implications. Shenouda describes fasting as “the body[’s] expression of its abstinence from materialism and the material things and its longing for a life with God” (1990:53-54). Further, the body may be deprived of sustenance but the soul is nourished with prayer, meditation, Bible reading, and worship (1990:79). Shenouda associates such complete devotion to God with the Eucharist liturgy where the pastor asks: “Where are your minds?” and the congregation answers: “They are with God” (1990:75). When the body is deprived of food and drink, the outcome is “an experience of rising above the level of physical body and above matter and materialism” (1990:9).

2.6 Summary

Chapter Two discusses the benefits of fasting, focusing on its spiritual, physical and social aspects. The spiritual benefits entail various means of attaining closeness to God, whether by repenting from sin, by engaging in profound prayer and worship or by a strengthened ministry. The social benefits include an enhanced compassion for people who are suffering, not only by sharing in their plight but by merciful action to alleviate it. Among the potential physical benefits are detoxing, lowering high blood pressure and, generally, dealing with bad habits.

Looking at these benefits through a *kenotic* lens, it becomes clear that they fundamentally are based on self-emptying and, hence, they imitate at both a material and a spiritual level the incarnation and the willing servanthood of God in Christ. In emphasizing the benefits of fasting, the fundamental role of *kenosis* or self-emptying should not be overlooked.

CHAPTER THREE:

Survey Results

This chapter discusses the data gained from interviews conducted with ten Lutheran and ten Pentecostal church members, five each from the Machibisa Lutheran Church, the Sobantu Lutheran Church, the Redeemed Christian Church of God and the Threshing Floor Bible Church. The researcher asked each participant the same 25 questions (see Appendix 1) and took notes during the interviews. As all participants were practitioners, the answer to question 1. 'Do you fast?' was positive in all cases.

In Chapter Three, I will briefly outline the survey and discuss the results. Responses to the survey results will be reported on topically (3.1) and thereafter analysed (3.2).

3.1 Responses to the questionnaire

3.1.1 Reasons for and practices of personal/individual fasting (Qs⁸ 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 17)

- Q2:** The majority of interviewees - Lutherans 90% and Pentecostals 100% - engage in fasting primarily for its spiritual benefits. 50% of Lutherans versus 20% of Pentecostals indicated that they fast for physical benefits while an equal number from both groups (30%) fasts for social benefits.
- Q3:** The most popular form of fasting among Lutherans (70%) and Pentecostals (90%) is dry fasting. Comparatively similar numbers of Lutherans (60%) and Pentecostals (80%) engage in water fasting. 70% of Pentecostals use the Daniel fast versus 40% of Lutherans.
- Q4:** 50% of Lutheran participants in the study fast during Lent with the same number fasting beyond the Lenten period. 70% of Pentecostals fast in January with the same percentage fasting beyond this stipulated fasting period.⁹ By contrast 20% of Lutherans fast in January and no (0%) Pentecostals in Lent. 40% of Lutherans and 30% of Pentecostals indicated that they fast at times other than the January and Lent fasting periods.
- Q5:** 60% of Lutheran and 60% of Pentecostal participants stated that they had fasted for 40 days and the same percentage of Pentecostals fasted for 7 days and 100 days. By contrast, 20% of Lutherans fasted for 7 days with no Lutherans (0%) fasting for 100 days. 50% of Lutherans and Pentecostals had fasted for 12 hours with 20% of each group having fasted for 24 hours. 50% of Lutherans versus 10% of Pentecostals had fasted for 1 day, while 10% of Lutherans and no Pentecostals (0%) fasted for a half day. 40% of Pentecostals and 20% of Lutherans indicated that they had fasted for 2 days, while 30% of Lutherans and 20% of Pentecostals had fasted for 3 days. 30% of

⁸ Q/s = question/s.

⁹The Pentecostals' calendar is not a church- but a secular calendar as they celebrate no Lent or Advent.

Pentecostals and 20% Lutherans had practised a 21-day fast. Finally, 20% of Lutherans versus 0% Pentecostals had fasted longer than was corporately agreed.

- Q7:** In terms of withdrawal during fasting, 70% of Lutheran and Pentecostal participants stated that they withdraw from physical pleasures, e.g. sexual relations. This was the most popular form of withdrawal amongst Lutherans whereas among Pentecostals 90% withdrew from social entertainment, e.g. parties. 60% of Lutherans refrained from partaking in social entertainment during fasting. 20% of Lutherans gave up on physically demanding activities such as going to the gym, versus 10% of Pentecostals. 10% of Lutherans against 0% Pentecostals withdrew from physical habits, for example watching television, and kept noise levels low. Similarly, 20% of Lutherans and 0% of Pentecostals indicated that they consciously avoided unkind acts such as losing their temper with others. By contrast, 10% of Pentecostals and 0% of Lutherans stated that they refrained from acting in unchristian ways (e.g. committing a sin) during fasting.
- Q8:** Spiritual activities such as prayer were most commonly undertaken during the fasting season by 70 % of Lutherans and 100% of Pentecostals. 30% of Lutherans against 20% of Pentecostals engaged in ascetic practices, for example sleeping on the floor. 20% of Pentecostals and 10% of Lutherans focused on acts of kindness, such as helping others. 30% of Pentecostals engaged in unavoidable activities, for example routine household chores, while 10% engaged in more social activities, such as worship with others. By contrast, 0% of Lutherans engaged in unavoidable tasks and in social activities.
- Q9:** 90% of Lutherans and 100% of Pentecostals while fasting petitioned God on behalf of themselves. 80% of Lutherans and 90% of Pentecostals interceded for others. A small percentage of Lutherans (10%) versus 0% of Pentecostals fasted for penitential reasons. The results with regard to petition and intercession dovetail with answers to Q2 which indicate that the majority of Lutherans (90%) and Pentecostals (100%) engage in fasting primarily for its spiritual benefits.
- Q17:** 70% of Lutherans stated that they had commenced fasting under the influence of Pentecostal friends while 20% began fasting at the time they “got saved being a Lutheran”.¹⁰ A further 10% of Lutherans began fasting before they had joined the Lutheran church. By contrast 80% of Pentecostals took up the required fasting after joining a Pentecostal church. 20% of Pentecostals and 0% of Lutherans began fasting at an early age influenced by their families.

3.1.2 Corporate fasting practices and motivating others to fast (Qs 6, 10, 10.1, 11, 12, 15, 18, 23, 24, 25)

- Q6:** All Lutherans interviewed as well as 90% of the Pentecostals intended to use the spiritual benefits of fasting to encourage others to fast. 80% of Pentecostals versus 50% of Lutherans would do so by expounding the physical benefits of fasting. 70% of

¹⁰ This means that they were no longer going to church as a traditional routine or to meet public expectation, but because they had encountered Jesus Christ as their Savior. Having encountered Christ, they remained in the Lutheran church. The encounter had a bearing on their daily lives, both private and public.

Pentecostals versus 30% of Lutherans would adduce social benefits to encourage others to fast.

Q10: The majority of Lutherans (70%) engaged in personal fasting versus 0% of Pentecostals. By contrast, 100% of Pentecostals engaged in corporate fasting versus 50% of Lutherans. In other words, Lutherans fasted personally and corporately, whereas Pentecostals fasted only corporately. Lutherans fast on their own initiative as the church knows no organized corporate fasting.

Q10.1: 100% of respondents was of the opinion that corporate fasting could be helpful as it binds them to the task of fasting (50% of Pentecostals, 40% of Lutherans) and the group lends support to its individual members (40% of Pentecostals, 10% of Lutherans) while as a group participants attain more effective prayer (20% of Lutherans and Pentecostals). Other positive aspects of corporate fasting are that it unifies congregations (50% of Pentecostals, 10% of Lutherans), it may make participants feel part of a team (10% of Pentecostal, 0 % of Lutherans) and lead to stronger Christian faith (50% of Pentecostals, 20% Lutherans). 20% of Lutherans and 10% of Pentecostals indicated that they did not know why corporate fasting would be beneficial.¹¹

Q11: 90% of Pentecostals versus 10% of Lutherans said that corporate fasting takes place in January. 30% Lutherans and 0% Pentecostals were of the opinion that Lent was the right time while 50% of Pentecostals and 0% of Lutherans stated that corporate fasting takes place on a quarterly basis. 50% of Lutherans versus 20% of Pentecostals thought that corporate fasting is directed by the Holy Spirit whereas 40% of Lutherans and 10% of Pentecostals ascribed it to a need they felt (“as the need arises”). A further 40% of Pentecostals and 10% of Lutherans considered corporate fasting as a weekly practice and 40% of Lutherans versus 0% of Pentecostals indicated that they knew no form of corporate fasting in their congregation.

Q12: 50% of Lutherans and Pentecostals stated that corporate fasting takes place under the guidance of the Spirit or as the need arises. 70% of Pentecostals versus 30% of Lutherans associated corporate fasting with stipulated dates and 40% of Lutherans declared that corporate fasting is not applicable to the Lutheran church.

Q15: 80% of Lutherans found that the Lenten season helps them to fast versus 0% of Pentecostals. 20% of Lutherans and 10% of Pentecostals responded that the Lenten season was not necessarily helpful to them. 80% of Pentecostals declared to know nothing about Lent versus 0% of Lutherans.

Q18: 100% of Lutherans and 80% of Pentecostals did think that not everyone in their congregation fasted while a further 20% of Pentecostals and 0% of Lutherans declared not to know whether everyone fasted.

Q23: According to 90% of Lutherans their church authorities disrupt fasting by organizing activities that are not in accordance with the Lenten traditions. By contrast, 100% of Pentecostals stated that Pentecostal church authorities take the lead in, and don't

¹¹ This means that they believe that fasting is beneficial but could not specify reasons. They did however have confidence in their spiritual role models who fast.

interfere with, corporate fasting. 10% of Lutherans indicated that the question is not applicable to the Lutheran church which knows no corporate fasting. Lutherans fast on their own initiative. 0% of Pentecostals regarded the question as not applicable to their church context.

Q24: 100 % of Lutherans and 90% of Pentecostals responded that no charity activities were undertaken during Lent. 90% of Pentecostals and 0% of Lutherans stated that there are no charity activities during the January fasting period. 10% of Pentecostals and 0% of Lutherans said that they did not know whether charity activities took place during corporate fasting.

Q25: According to 90% of Lutherans (Lenten fasting) against 60% of Pentecostals (Pentecostal fasting), physical pleasures must be avoided during corporate fasting, 90% of both groups indicated that social entertainment restrictions are maintained during corporate fasting whereas 10% of Lutherans (Lenten fasting) spoke of spiritual restrictions against 0% of Pentecostals (Pentecostal fasting).¹²

3.1.3 General beliefs about fasting (Qs 13, 14, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22)

Q13: 100% of Pentecostals and 80% of Lutherans believed that not fasting weakens one spiritually, whereas 30% of Pentecostals and 20% of Lutherans thought that not fasting weakens one socially. 10% of Lutherans and Pentecostals mentioned that not fasting weakens one physically.

Q14: 90% of Pentecostals and 80% of Lutherans stated that fasting guarantees results, i.e. answers to prayer. By contrast, 20% of Lutherans and 10% of Pentecostals believe that fasting does not necessarily guarantee results.

Q16: 70 % of Pentecostals and 60% of Lutherans were of the opinion that people do not fast for health reasons. 30 % of Lutherans and 0% of Pentecostals mentioned that people avoid fasting on account of their sexual partners. Among other possible reasons for not fasting is a lack of belief in fasting (50% of Lutherans and 30% of Pentecostals). 20% of Lutherans and 10% of Pentecostals declared they were unaware of any reasons not to fast. 50% of Pentecostals and 20% of Lutherans pointed out that fasting is difficult while 20% of Pentecostals and 10% of Lutherans mentioned that some church members simply have a negative attitude towards fasting and see it as a time-consuming activity (10% of Pentecostals and 0% of Lutherans) with an anti-social character (10% of Lutherans and 0% of Pentecostals).

Q19: 90% of Lutherans and 20% of Pentecostals believed that the maturity of one's faith determines when people should start fasting. By contrast 90% of Pentecostals and 10% of Lutherans stated that people should start fasting as young as possible.

Q20: 50% of Pentecostals and 30% of Lutherans accepted that people with health problems should be exempted from fasting. 30% of Lutherans and 0% of Pentecostals stated that those who don't believe in fasting should be exempted as well. 10% of Pentecostals

¹² Spiritual restrictions include not singing hallelujahs, Gloria in Excelsis and other joyous celebration songs. Rather, the service should be conducted in a somber (penitential) mood in accordance with the nature of Lent when Christ's Passion and crucifixion are commemorated.

and 0% of Lutherans indicated that also the newly married must be exempted from fasting. 10% of Pentecostals and 0% of Lutherans stated that they did not know on what grounds people should be exempted while 50% of Lutheran participants in this study and 40% of Pentecostals found that no one should be exempted from fasting.

Q21: According to 50% of Lutherans and 30% of Pentecostals fasting has no negative effects. However, 50% of Pentecostals and 40% of Lutherans thought that fasting may harm one's health. A lesser percentage, namely 30% of Pentecostals and 10% of Lutherans, was of the opinion that fasting has negative spiritual effects and an even smaller percentage, namely 10% of Pentecostals and 0% of Lutherans, said that fasting has negative social effects.¹³

Q22: 50% of Pentecostals and Lutherans believed that fasting has positive physical effects as opposed to 60% of Pentecostals and 40% of Lutherans who thought that fasting has negative physical effects. 60% of Lutherans and 50% of Pentecostals were positive about the social effects of fasting. By contrast, 20% of Lutherans and Pentecostals believed that fasting has negative social effects.¹⁴

3.2 Framing observations

I would like to make the following observations before analysing the responses in greater depth. These observations will help to frame the ensuing discussion.

- Pentecostal authorities strongly emphasize fasting whereas the Lutheran church leadership doesn't. As Lutheran congregants cannot depend on their pastors to teach them about fasting and to organize fasting in practice, they depend on what their Pentecostal friends learn in their church. Hence, a point that comes through quite significantly is that Lutherans are learning from Pentecostals about fasting.
- Pentecostal authorities expect people to withdraw from the world in the fasting season. They are helped to do so by food restrictions. Even Lutheran authorities expect congregants to withdraw to some extent from the world during Lent but not necessarily with restrictions on food. For Lutheran authorities the main motivation for this withdrawal lies in the nature of Lent.
- Lastly, both Lutheran and Pentecostal participants in this study have identified lengthy periods during which believers are expected to withdraw from the world for their spiritual advancement. The Lutherans observe such a period during Lent and the Pentecostals in January. However, for the Pentecostals once a year is not enough

¹³Physically fasting may result in anorexia and bulimia. If not done for the right spiritual reasons fasting can result in a hunger strike or a slimming ritual. Further, if one's prayers during fasting are not answered it may result in a diminished faith. Fasting may be perceived as anti-social.

¹⁴ Positive physical effects may include detoxing, reducing cholesterol and hypertension and improved complexion. Possible negative physical effects entail a lack of productivity at work, indigestion and constipation. Socially positive effects entail being able to relate better to others by becoming attuned to their pain and caring for them in humility. Negatively, fasting could be anti-social as the practitioner withdraws from social activities, minimizes social interaction and could experience isolation and loneliness.

and they organize a number of shorter fasting periods throughout the year. Lutherans who fast follow suit.

3.3 Analysis of survey results

This section synthesizes the responses of participants in the study and draws conclusions along the lines of the three main aspects of fasting, namely the possible spiritual, social and physical effects.

3.3.1 Spiritual aspects

The responses to Q2 and Q8 show that spiritual reasons are the main motivation for fasting by Lutherans and Pentecostals with both groups placing a high value on spirituality. This is confirmed by answers to questions 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 19 and 25 where spirituality appears as the main focus of fasting. In terms of semantics, the words ‘ascetic’ (my own interpretation), ‘petitions’, ‘intercessions’, ‘penitence’, ‘unchristian’, ‘weaken spiritually’ and ‘formation’ are all related to spiritual issues and hardly refer to social and physical aspects.

Respondents seemed to consider fasting as concerned with spiritual growth. For instance, some mentioned that they started fasting at the time they became ‘born again’ (Q 17). Similarly, Pentecostals indicated that they did not fast when they belonged to a mainline church and started doing so only after joining Pentecostals (Q 17). Along the same lines, Lutherans who fast said they took up the practice after becoming acquainted with Pentecostals. As a result, they called themselves ‘born again’, although they did not leave the Lutheran church (Q 17).

3.3.2 Social aspects

Overall, the social benefits of fasting did not figure prominently. Very few people from both church groups who responded to questions 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 10.1, 13, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25 mentioned social aspects as a reason for fasting. However, when comparing the two groups, the Pentecostals seemed to place more emphasis on the social aspects (Qs 10 and 10.1) than the Lutherans. In addition, some Pentecostals mentioned withdrawal from social activities during fasting (Q 7).

There are two sides to the social aspects of fasting, namely social benefits and the withdrawal from social activities. The responses to Qs 2, 6, 9, 10.1, 11, 15, 17 and 22 deal with the social benefits of fasting, whereas the responses to Qs 7, 20 and 25 are concerned with withdrawal. Perhaps corporate fasting with its social dimension could be seen as a compensation for the

withdrawal from other social activities during fasting. The responses to Q 10 show that corporate fasting is more prevalent among Pentecostals. See the responses to Qs 7, 20 and 25 on withdrawal and to Qs 7, 20 as well as Qs 2, 6, 9, 10.1, 11, 15, 17 and 22 on benefits. Benefits include the improving of social relations, for example by being kind and interceding for others. It is important to distinguish social benefits from social activities which should in fact be either reduced or prohibited during fasting (Qs 7 and 25). Corporate withdrawal may have social benefits. However, one needs to prevent corporate fasting from becoming a social activity which is what participants in fasting should be withdrawing from (i.e. that the social nature of corporate fasting is prioritized above the goal of fasting).

3.3.3 Physical aspects

The physical aspects of fasting are of the least importance to respondents from both churches. As with the social aspect, there are two sides to the physical impact of fasting, namely withdrawal and benefits. Withdrawal is indicated in responses to Qs 3, 5, 7 and 25, while the benefits are discussed in the responses to Qs 2, 6, 9 and 22. Respondents who fast did not seem very concerned about the negative physical effects of reduced food intake, perhaps because dry fasting is not the only type of fasting adhered to. Daniel fasting and water fasting are also practised, especially during longer fasting periods.¹⁵ This means that nutritional needs are not ignored. Participants were generally aware that long-term dry fasting might lead to physical problems. Hence, the physical aspect is important but respondents do not seem to see it in that light (see responses to Q 3).

3.4 Synthesis of the three aspects

Participants in the study tended to withdraw from physical and social activities during fasting (Qs 3, 5, 7 and 25), avoiding anything that might distract them from spiritual activities. This conclusion arises from the outspoken responses to Q 8 and the more subdued ones to Q 2, implying that spiritual aspects are of paramount importance followed by social, and lastly, physical aspects.

There is some confusion about the meaning of the term ‘fasting’. As noted in Chapter One, the dictionary defines fasting from the physical perspective of food restriction and this would appear to be the most common interpretation. On the other hand, respondents tended to

¹⁵ Great God Who Never Fails Church members who are on medication embark on Daniel fasting eating vegetables and fruits only not bound to fasting eating hours and if tea has to be drunk it should be without milk

define fasting from a spiritual perspective as an opportunity to grow spiritually. Restricted food intake and activities are only a means to this end. Physical and social aspects belong in the category of worldly things as opposed to spiritual aspects which are considered to be more Godly. Although respondents say that fasting has social and physical benefits, these appear to be no more than steps leading to spiritual growth. Social or corporate practices of fasting are in the end meant to stimulate the individual's spirituality. However, if the Lutheran church were to promote Lenten fasting, it should not overlook the possible social and physical benefits as these are valued by respondents according to their replies to Qs 2, 6, 9, 10.1, 13 and 22.

Whereas the dictionary defines fasting as a restriction on food, answers to Qs 2, 6, 7, 8, 13, 25 show that respondents understand fasting first of all as a withdrawal from the world helped by food restriction (Q 2). The responses to Qs 8 and 13 emphasize that practitioners should be more spiritual during fasting. Answers to question 13 suggest that not fasting is considered as weakening one spiritually.

Being considerate of other people and withdrawing from certain social activities are related because to withdraw from social life decreases the likelihood of being inconsiderate.

Corporate fasting is both spiritual and social. The Pentecostal practices of fasting seem to synthesize the three types of benefits: first there is the physical benefit of restriction on food, second the social benefit of fasting as a congregation and, third, the overall benefit of greater spirituality. By comparison, the Lutherans have no restrictions on food which eliminates the physical aspects and they do not fast as a congregation which downplays the social aspects. Thus, for Lutherans only the spiritual aspects of fasting remain. Social aspects can only be discerned when some Lutheran practitioners fast in small groups, usually without the church's knowledge, although not secretly (responses to Qs 10, 11, 12 and 17).

I now turn to the appropriation phase of my study in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR: Towards Appropriation

Chapter Four brings together text and context to establish the third pole of the tripolar approach which is appropriation. As discussed in Chapter Three, participants in the study specified their opinions on three broad themes in fasting, namely spiritual, social and physical effects. In relation to these themes the following sub-themes were emphasized.

1. Prayer and spiritual growth
2. Dealing with sin
3. Christian character building
4. Health aspects
5. Charity, solidarity and compassion
6. Withdrawal
7. Decision making

The appropriation will be dealt with by a) marrying the results of the literature review (text) with those of the fieldwork (context) linking them to the sub-themes, and b) outlining how, in my view, fasting would benefit the Lutheran church, were it to encourage fasting as a corporate activity.

4.1 Marrying text and context in relation to the most important sub-themes emerging from the fieldwork

4.1.1 Prayer and spiritual growth

The literature review indicates that prayer is generally considered as integral to the practice of fasting (see 2.3.1.-2.3.4.). For example, Berghuis (2007:77, 2.3.2) notes that biblical characters often fasted in intercessory prayer for others. The respondents also emphasized the importance of prayer (supplication and intercession) during fasting (see responses to Qs 9 and 10.1). Both Lutherans and Pentecostals organize extra church services during their

fasting seasons that provide opportunities for further prayer sessions, individually and corporately. This emerged from the data captured for Qs 25 and 15.¹⁶

4.1.2 Dealing with sins

Dealing with sin is another important aspect of fasting. In the Middle Ages in particular, fasting was associated with penitence and absolution (see 2.3.4). Warren (1998:57) cites Smith, stating that “believers have taken to fasting after having fallen into sin”. Similarly, Warren (1998:54) associates fasting particularly with the doctrine of sin in terms of atonement for wrong-doing (see 2.4). In addition fighting temptation is one of the main purposes of fasting as shown by Shenouda (1990:104) who posits that one who can control lust for food can master all other lusts too (see 2.5.1.1). Luther too viewed fasting as a tool for disciplining bodily lusts (Prange 1977).

As we have seen, the modern practitioners who participated in the present research also associate fasting with sin and several attempt to avoid anything un-Christian during fasting (see responses to Q 7). Some respondents emphasized the necessity of doing penitence for sin (responses to Q 9) while others noted that fasting helps them to withdraw from the world and its temptations (responses to Q 8). A number of participants indicated that fasting helped them to abstain from or reduce sexual activity.¹⁷ While sex in itself is not a sin (as long as biblical/Christian principles are adhered to) a reduction of sexual activity may be seen as a way of curbing bodily lusts. On the other hand some respondents named sexual activity as a reason for not engaging in fasting, i.e. they were worried that fasting would reduce their sexual appetite (see responses to questions 16 and 20). This underscores the perceived relation between reducing general bodily lusts and sexual activities.

4.1.3 Christian character building

Within the church context character building should be based on Christian values. For instance, Warren (1990:54) links the Doctrine of Man (see 2.9) to fasting because fasting requires disciplining the flesh. The doctrine warns believers not to be like those “whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and glory is their shame, who set their minds on earthly things” (Philippians 3:19). Avoiding these and other sins would assist one in building

¹⁶With regard to extra church services, see the answers of respondents 4, 7, 15 and 16 to Q 25 and those of respondents 8, 10 and 19 to Q 15. Those who fast weekly seem to prefer the midweek services of their respective churches (see respondents’ 2, 3, 7, 9, 13 responses to Q 4. Compare further the answers of respondents 1 and 2 to Q 25 and the answer of respondent 23 to Q 15).

¹⁷Answers on physical withdrawal in Qs 7 and 25 included withdrawal from sexual relations.

a Christian character. As noted, fasting assists one to deal with sin and with curbing passions and may be seen as Christian character building (see subsection 2). Towns (1996:40) concurs, submitting that fasting strengthens the more spiritually inclined inner character so that it can resist the more worldly outer character. Thus the upright character comes into being that helps one to follow fasting practices. He adds that fasting helps the individual to move from attitude to action, for action to become habit and, finally, to establish character (1996:91).

Similarly, according to respondents, fasting helps to be kinder and refrain from hurting others, in other words to curb un-Christian behavior (see responses to Qs 7 and 8). Interestingly, responses categorized as ‘spiritual’ and ‘social’ tended to overlap with responses concerning dealing with sin. Responses to Q 13 further indicate that not fasting weakens one socially. Therefore, fasting could be seen as an effective way of building Christian character.

While both the literature review and the interview results refer to character building based on Christian values, the literature emphasizes the suppression of physical inclinations such as passion and lusts. By contrast, the respondents accentuated the social aspects of promoting Christian values.

4.1.4 Health aspects

According to Towns (1996:80-182; 2.4.2), fasting has at least six potential health benefits, among them combating addictions, lowering cholesterol and losing fat. Biblically this is confirmed by Daniel (1:8-17) who was healthier than those in his surroundings who did not fast. Towns mentions an experiment of Dr. Richard Weindruch, University of California (LA) who found that mice who were only fed vegetables and fruit stayed healthier and lived longer than mice who were normally fed (1996:191). Respondents were of similar view with one mentioning that fasting can lower the intake of carbohydrates and another stating that it helps in fighting addictions. A number found that fasting helped them lose weight.

4.1.5 Charity, solidarity and compassion

The spiritual, physical and social benefits of fasting overlap when it comes to considering the plight of others and how best to help them. As discussed above (2.3), Isaiah 58 asks rhetorically: “Is it [fasting] not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter [...]?” (See 2.3.4 on the early church’s understanding of almsgiving

and 2.3.3 on Chrysostom regarding charity). Similarly, Berghuis (2007:24) and McKnight (2003:103; 2.2.1) see fasting as aiding charity. Luther, however, objected to the idea that fasting was necessary in order to do good works. He commented on fasting in line with Jesus' statement in Mathew 6, that the practice should not be abused by using it to show off good works, thus overshadowing grace (see 2.3.5). In line with most of the literature consulted, participants believed that they ought to be involved in charity, particularly during fasting, but acknowledged that they had failed in that respect. However, both the Lutheran and Pentecostal churches practise charity on occasions other than Lenten fasting and Pentecostal fasting (see responses to Q 24).

Therefore, both text and context agree in principle regarding the importance of charitable works, but respondents did not link charity with the actual practice of fasting.

4.1.6 Withdrawal

The one aspect of fasting that is more pervasive than food restriction is withdrawal. In a sense, food restriction is a form of withdrawal. In Chapter One of this study a distinction is drawn between food fasting and withdrawal fasting. As opposed to the common perception that fasting consists only in food restriction, it has been pointed out that withdrawal from physical pleasures and avoiding indulgence in social activities are other prevalent forms of fasting.

The relevant literature uses the expressions 'contemplative' and 'meditation disciplines' which in relation to withdrawal imply silence and solitude. The interviewees in this study made many references to withdrawal (2.3.3) (see for example responses to Qs 7 and 25). Literature and participants seemed to accentuate that they would excuse themselves from friends and social activities for the sake of withdrawal. Both the Lutheran and Pentecostal congregations were aware of the need for withdrawal as was apparent from responses to Qs 7 and 25 and would avoid social activities such as weddings and other parties. Interestingly, one of the reasons given for not fasting was the very need to withdraw from social activities (see responses to Q 16). While the numerous prayer meetings organized by both churches could be seen as social activities, their function is spiritual. There is an important contradictory element in the fact that during Lent Lutherans organize various events that are

festive by nature, such as conferences, ordinations and the consecration of bishops. The Pentecostals do not do this.¹⁸

It would seem as though withdrawal is fundamental to Lent. However, this entails a withdrawal from social events and not necessary from food. The distinction between social withdrawal and food restriction is not always clear in discussions of fasting. Generally, people seem to think of fasting as a restriction of food more than anything else.

Withdrawing from physical and social activities with their attendant pleasures aims to stimulate spiritual growth so that the mind can prevail over natural carnal tendencies of the body. Carnal desires stand in the way of one's discipleship and necessarily affect all three main themes of fasting which are its spiritual, social and physical benefits.

Archbishop Thabo Makhoba of the Anglican church in his address at the graduation ceremony of the College of Transfiguration in Grahamstown on March 19 2014 proposed that in future graduations should not be held during Lent (Makgoba 2014).

Reverend Gert Landman during his tenure as the chaplain of Lutheran House of Studies (LUTHOS), since then renamed Lutheran Theological Institute (LTI), reminds believers that students were not released to go home for Good Friday and Easter vacations because these days were set aside for Holy Week Retreat. Landman saw this as both a spiritual discipline and as part of ministerial training.

4.1.7 Decision-making

According to the literature fasting aids in decision-making in ministry (see 3.1.5) and also intensifies ministry. ((See further the fact that fasting preceded the conversion of Paul (Acts 9: 9) and the ordination of others in Acts 14:23)). Similarly, respondents indicated that they fast when faced with making a challenging decision such as the choice of a life-partner or a divorce. Likewise, ordinations are currently preceded by retreats as was the case in the early

¹⁸Churches that feast together should also fast together. Cornerstone Assemblies of God, His People Church and One Life Church, all in Pietermaritzburg, break their fast by eating together. As fasting ends usually in the evening it means that breakfast is eaten at night. According to Towns, food in the morning is called breakfast because throughout the night people naturally fast, being asleep (1996:176). One Life Church refers to the breakfast eaten at night as 'House Party'.

church, although here decision-making plays no role as the decisions have already been made.

4.2 The potential benefits of fasting for the Lutheran church as a whole

4.2.1 Building up/edifying the church

The present study has strengthened the researcher in his view that promotion of fasting in the Lutheran church could help edifying the church in various ways, for example in its dealing with sin. As discussed above, respondents believe that fasting helps them in their approach to sin (responses to Qs 2, 7, 8, 9, 13, 15 and 25), stating that it provides them with a strong basis for spiritual and moral as well as general character development. Dealing with sin involves most, if not all, of the seven sub-themes listed in 3.1. Therefore, were the Lutheran church to call for fasting, it would be helping congregants to deal with sin and to personally grow and develop. This in turn could lead to building up the church as a whole. This edification would be of quantitative and qualitative value. Non-members would be drawn to the church by the perceived increased purity (or quality) of its congregants and therefore the church would improve in both quality and quantity of members.¹⁹

In addition, the fieldwork for this study makes clear that some Lutheran (and other mainline) church members have been attracted by the Pentecostals' practice of fasting and emphasis on purity of life. Others chose to remain in the Lutheran church following, what they describe as, a spiritual conversion (becoming 'saved' or 'born again'). As we have seen, the latter group, while faithful to their Lutheran congregations, has adopted the Pentecostal practice of fasting. Encouraging corporate fasting during Lenten among its members could help the Lutheran church to retain those members who might sooner or later join a Pentecostal church in search of the benefits of fasting. It may also encourage Pentecostals to observe the Lenten season which is not their current practice. The practice could even appeal to the secular world as a way of combating consumerism instead of the "no-buying day" that has in some countries been introduced.

Church edification of necessity includes the following two aspects: unifying the congregation as well as the church as a whole (3.2.2) and enhancing church mission (3.2.3).

¹⁹An example of one church member's impurity is found in the *Mail and Guardian* report on the abduction, rape and murder of 7 year old Mamokgethi Malebana by 31 year old Daniel Mabote, who was a staunch church member and a 'born again' (*Mail & Guardian*, 14 August, 1998).

4.2.2 Unifying the congregation and the church as a whole

Corporately engaging in an activity tends to unify the participants. Based on responses to Qs 23, 17, 12, 11, 10.1, 10, it would seem that not calling for corporate fasting has the potential of dividing the congregation with some members fasting while others don't. More unity would contribute significantly to building up the church.

Responses to Qs 23, 17 and 15 indicate that current practices during Lent (e.g. organizing conferences and other functions) do not reinforce the Lenten tradition. Calling for fasting might help Lutheran authorities to strengthen Lenten as a tradition and as a belief or doctrine of the church. While conferences and other functions may well lead to a measure of unification and therefore to church edification, such events can be held at any other time. Promoting fasting during Lent could also intensify congregants' focus on the Passion of Christ and its implications for believers personally and socially. In addition organized corporate fasting during Lent may increase cohesion between church authorities and those faithful who participate in fasting.

Unifying the congregation and the church as a whole is related to character building and may benefit from the social aspects of fasting such as charity, solidarity and compassion. As mentioned previously, the more one prays and deals with sin, the more one develops a Christian character, including compassion for others. If such a development could occur it would mean a church that has been strengthened both qualitatively and quantitatively.

4.2.3 Enhancing the church's mission

As stated before, some Lutherans have left the church for Pentecostal churches, while others follow at least the Pentecostal example of fasting. If the Lutheran church were to fully implement fasting, particularly corporate fasting, it could perhaps retain members all of whom might be of potential assistance to the church, increasing its effectiveness in its mission of being the light to the world. On the basis of responses to Qs 11, 12 and 17 it seems possible there exists no corporate fasting in the Lutheran church as a whole. (4.3 and 5.3). Were it to institute corporate Lenten fasting, the Lutherans could possibly influence the wider world by demonstrating the goodness of genuine Lenten fasting.

4.3. Summary

This chapter identifies seven sub-themes that are referred to both in the relevant literature and the participants' responses. The chapter briefly outlines how the Lutheran church can

benefit from instituting corporate Lenten fasting and, in doing so, the study completes its tri-polar approach by securing the third pole, namely appropriation.

The next chapter summarizes and concludes the study. It presents a number of recommendations for a possible implementation by the Lutheran church of Lenten fasting and for further studies.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Summary

Chapter One discusses the motivation for the study and the hypothesis on which it is based as well as the research questions. It stresses the limitations posed by the number of churches and congregants involved in the research and it describes the research methodology followed, the study's theoretical framework and the meaning of the word fasting. Chapter Two traces the history of fasting in general, from the Jewish tradition and Lenten fasting in particular in the early church and the church in the medieval era to Martin Luther's understanding of fasting. It investigates the purpose of fasting and the potential spiritual, social and physical benefits of this Christian discipline as described in academic literature. Chapter Three presents the empirical work to test the hypothesis that, in the two congregations involved in the study, Lutheran authorities appear to ignore the wishes of some of their congregants to practise fasting. The chapter argues that, if the leadership were to promote Lenten fasting and expound its spiritual, social and physical benefits, many congregants might take up the practice and benefit from it. The findings from each interview question are commented on and thematically analysed in terms of the spiritual, social and physical advantages. Chapter Four brings together text and context to establish the third pole in terms of the tri-polar theoretical framework, namely appropriation. In this chapter, the findings from the textual (literature review) and contextual (empirical study) analyses are combined, yielding seven sub-themes related to fasting. Finally, three potential benefits of fasting are established of a spiritual, social and physical nature. The current chapter concludes the study and makes recommendations for ways in which Lutheran authorities could revise their attitudes towards Lenten fasting as well as those of their congregants.

5.2 Conclusions

The outcome of this study would appear to support its original hypothesis, namely that the Lutheran church could possibly benefit from an eventual full implementation of Lenten fasting, involving both food- and withdrawal fasting. The analysis suggests that reviving the tradition

of Lenten fasting could go some way towards addressing the spiritual, social and physical needs of some congregants, thus aligning the church's ministry to the prevailing context.

Christians observe Lenten fasting for the following reasons: a) to deepen their religious experience, purify their hearts from sin and get closer to their Savior, b) the repentance and humiliation inherent in fasting and the Lenten season are essential for Christians' growth in grace, and c) these duties of discipleship are often neglected or forgotten unless some special time is set apart for their observance. The Lutheran church understands Lent as a time when many Christians purposefully dedicate themselves to simplifying their lifestyle. It is a significant period inspiring Christians to modify their eating patterns and avoid indulgence for the sake of solidarity with the poor but sometimes also hoping to improve their health. Lent fasting offers one the opportunity to experience simplicity, humility and sharing, which are all Christian principles. Fasting also offers a way to counter the tendency of people to, even unconsciously, "shift away from values of community, spirituality and integrity [...] towards competition, materialism and disconnection" (Abdur-Rahman 2010:n.d.) because, in Hall's words, "Happiness is conflated with materialism and quality" (n.d.:9).

When re-introducing Lenten fasting, church authorities would have to lead by example and the organization of functions during Lent has to be avoided. The leadership should announce their plans for, and expectations of, Lenten fasting well beforehand, explaining potential spiritual, social and physical benefits of fasting, whether on an individual or corporate basis, for the congregants personally and for the church as a whole.

By pointing to the advantages of corporate fasting authorities could encourage a group activity that results in a more unified congregation and greater spiritual awareness of members.. In doing so the church may well find that at least some of the congregants will embrace the initiative to fast as has been stated by a number of participants in the present study. If Lutheran church authorities were to take the lead, initiating and supporting fasting in the church, the need for a number of Lutheran congregants to emulate Pentecostal examples or join Pentecostal churches would fall away.

Where the difference between literature concerned with fasting (text) and current practice in the discussed congregations (context) is most striking, is in the aspect of charity and of acting in the defence of justice. Cornerstone Assembly of God in Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg, uses its

practice of January fasting to raise funds for mission and benevolence. In the literature, there is a strong emphasis on charity. While charity is practised as one of several general church responsibilities, it is not an important part of Lutheran and Pentecostal fasting practices.

It has been argued throughout this study that the physical benefits of fasting are not commonly emphasized although they are relevant in the modern world where overeating and lack of exercise or physical labour may cause problems. By advocating fasting the Lutheran church might be able to make some contribution to the alleviation of such problems. During Lent could also a beginning be made with encouraging the longer-term avoidance of alcohol consumption and smoking. Other health benefits could result for instance, from following the Daniel fast which consists in cutting down on meat and eating at times only fruit and vegetables which is generally advocated by health authorities. Besides, practitioners of Water/Wet fasting do the right thing by drinking more water and juices. That abstaining from sexual activities during fasting by single and married persons could contribute to a reduction in the spread of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS as has been suggested is extremely unlikely. On the other hand, if the church were to introduce fasting as part of a strong moral tradition accentuating the value of faithfulness – at least of caring sufficiently to practise safe sex – it could lead to a decrease in STD infections. Similarly, introducing fasting to its teenage members might, if successful, strengthen their resistance to the pressures of puberty. Practitioners of fasting have, after all, some experience in dealing with the choice of giving in to, or resisting, physical desires.

The above mentioned physical benefits may appear to be short-term, lasting for the duration of the fast. However, if other aspects of fasting - confession of sins and repentance – are adhered to, benefits may be long-term. For instance, the married person who has confessed and repented from adultery would, provided he/she has been sincere, try his/her hardest not to repeat sins.

This leads to the final conclusion that fasting and morality are connected. When fasting, one is supposed to be moral. On that basis, one has to confess and repent of sins committed. From that point onwards the penitent will strive not to fall back into immoral behaviour. There is a potential for Lenten fasters to become transformed human beings. Thus the reintroduction of fasting could lead to increased spirituality and a stronger moral character of congregants.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study it is recommended that Lutheran church authorities reconsider their attitude towards Lenten fasting. If they would decide to revive the tradition the following should be taken into account.

5.3.1 Announcing

The date for Ash Wednesday should be announced well in advance so that parishioners can prepare for both food and withdrawal fasting by not scheduling activities that contradict the Lenten spirit. At the same time congregants should be invited to the mid-week services.

5.3.2 Promoting the full implementation of fasting

In order to promote the full implementation of Lenten fasting Lutheran authorities could offer teachings and Bible study sessions focusing on:

- What fasting is and what it entails;
- The distinction between food fasting and withdrawal fasting;
- The biblical basis of Lenten fasting;
- The spiritual, social and physical benefits of fasting.

a. Distinguishing between food fasting and withdrawal fasting

As those Lutherans who follow the Pentecostal example of fasting appear to be eager to implement food fasting, the Lutheran church authorities may emphasize the importance of this kind of fasting.

It is worthwhile to devote teachings to the distinction between food restriction and withdrawal fasting. If Lutheran authorities understand this distinction, they may see that promoting food restriction fasting could help with the withdrawal aspect of Lent. The connection between the two types has been stressed by many of the interviewees participating in this study.

b. Teaching programmes

A further recommendation is that the Lutheran church organize teaching programmes on Lenten fasting so that the Lenten requirements are not merely imposed without the congregants understanding their rationale or benefits.

5.3.3 Understanding fully what fasting is and what it means

The church could adopt and advocate all aspects of Lenten fasting, making clear that the principles of all are based on biblical fasting.

5.3.4 Organizing Lenten focus themes

The Lutheran church could organize a theme for each Lenten season so that every year the fast focuses on a specific theme. For instance, if ‘charity’ was chosen as theme for a particular year, it would help to address the paucity of attention given to charity. Other themes could be aspects of health, morality (e.g. domestic violence), character building, decision-making about ministry and corporate issues, individual decision-making (e.g. to stop drinking and smoking) and living simply (e.g. avoiding lavish funerals).^{20 21 22}

5.3.5 Further study

Further study could be done on, for example, Advent fasting which is another traditional fasting period that seems to have been forgotten. Also fasting in preparation for Holy Communion should be investigated as it would introduce congregants who regularly celebrate the Eucharist to once a month or week fasting. Such fasting programmes will help to meet the needs of those Lutherans who at the moment turn to Pentecostal fasting practices. The fasting should be done in the spirit of 1 Corinthians 11: 27-34 in order to make congregants critically aware of their attitudes and behaviors so that they may feel worthy of partaking of the Eucharist. Another area to research concerns the reasons why fasting is largely neglected in the Lutheran church²³. Also general Lenten

²⁰“If you say “I will fast when God lays it on me”, you never will [...] Take the yoke upon you (Durigut Z. Moody in Towns 1996:221)

²¹An example of one church member’s impurity is found in the *Mail and Guardian* report on the abduction, rape and murder of 7 year old Mamokgethi Malebana by 31 year old Daniel Mabote, who was a staunch church member and a ‘born again’ (*Mail & Guardian*, 14 August, 1998)

²²admiring Apostolic powers but not living the Apostolic disciplines like fasting is a contradiction (Warren 1998:20)

²³Theologically it can be argued that we are never worthy and we should rather aim to be ‘less unworthy’.

Compare: “Lord I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word, and I shall be healed” from Mathew 8: 8 and Mathew 15: 27 which texts are used by some denominations at the time of receiving the Eucharist.

season rituals or traditions offer scope for research.²⁴ Finally, a thorough investigation and literature review regarding Martin Luther's attitude and his comments on fasting would be of interest. This could include an examination of reasons why some Lutherans do not fast before Holy Communion in contravention of Martin Luther's recommendation as per Article vi of his Small Catechism:

Question: who then receives such sacraments worthily?

Answer: Fasting and bodily preparation is indeed a fine outward training, but he is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: given and shed for you, for the remission of sins (Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism, Article vi: The sacraments of the altar, in T.G. Tappert 1959:352; Kolb & Wengert 2000:363).²⁵

²⁴Imposing of ash on penitential foreheads on Ash Wednesday, parading along streets holding palm branches on Palm Sunday, feet washing and stripping of clergy's vestments and altar linens to leave the altar bare until late Saturday night on Maundy Thursday, prostration, veneration of the cross, Stations of the Cross and Tenebrae (shadows), last seven words, via dolorosa on Good Friday, candle light on Easter Vigil and sunrise service at a graveside on the Sunday morning of Easter.

²⁵ Luther's words provide all the guidance needed for the church leadership if it would re-establish the tradition. Various Pentecostal churches practise fasting before the Eucharist, even though they do not follow Luther's catechism. The Glory of Holiest Church fasts prior to Holy Communion Sunday commencing on Thursday through to Sunday after the Holy Communion service. Similarly, Gibsons Gale Apostolic Faith Mission Church commences fasting for Holy Communion on Friday and adjourns on Sunday after the Holy Communion service. Confession to God Ministry Church also fast from Friday to Sunday during the monthly week of the Eucharist. Christ Embassy Church celebrates Holy Communion on Sunday evening from 18h00 to 21h00. As a result, they fast the whole of Sunday. Piper (1997: 83-84) and Krylov (2013) recommend fasting for holy communion. May be this is the reason why in Lutheran Altar books printed in indigenous languages by missionaries, each liturgy of service of word, confession and Holy Communion are in three different chapters or sections, whereas in latest ELCSA altar book they all compose one chapter as are all conducted in one service. See 1.3 for definition of fasting. During the missionaries confession was preceded by one on one confession during the week or on Saturday, service of the word on Sunday morning and Holy Communion Sunday afternoon; which should have been sort of withdrawal or retreat fasting opposed to food fasting (see 1.3 on definition of fasting). According to Geneske (2015:3) in as early as 500AD before children were excluded from partaking in Holy Communion they had to be denied sucking before, until after Holy Communion as fasting for Holy Communion on their level (compare Joel 2v16 wherein babies, children and newly married couples are not exempted from fasting).

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²⁶ No place of publication provided.

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Participant 1 05.06.14. Pietermaritzburg, cited 1

Participant 2 15.06.2014, Pietermaritzburg, cited 2

Participant 3 5.06.2014, Pietermaritzburg, cited 3.

Participant 4 17.06.2014, Pietermaritzburg, cited 4

Participant 5 16.06.2014, Pietermaritzburg, cited 5

Participant 6 21.06.2014, Pietermaritzburg, consulted 1

Participant 7 22.06.2014, Pietermaritzburg, cited 6

Participant 8 23.06.2014, Pietermaritzburg, cited 7

Participant 9 23.06.2014, Pietermaritzburg, cited 8

Participant 10 24.06.201, Pietermaritzburg, cited 9

Participant 11 24.06.2014, Pietermaritzburg, consulted 2

Participant 12 24.06.2014, Pietermaritzburg, cited 10

Participant 13 24.06.2014, Pietermaritzburg, cited 11

Participant 14 24.06.2014, Pietermaritzburg, consulted 3

Participant 15 27.06.2014, Pietermaritzburg, cited 12

Participant 16 02.07.2014, Pietermaritzburg, cited 13

Participant 17 07.07.2014, Pietermaritzburg, cited 14

²⁷ Interviewees' names are not disclosed as part of my confidentiality agreement with them.

Participant 18 07.07.2014, Pietermaritzburg, consulted 4
Participant 19 01.07.2014, Pietermaritzburg, consulted 5
Participant 20 11.07.2014, Pietermaritzburg, consulted 6
Participant 21 09.10.2014, Pietermaritzburg, consulted 7
Participant 22 17.08.2014, Pietermaritzburg, consulted 8
Participant 23 11.07.2014, Pietermaritzburg, cited 15
Participant 24 27.08.2014, Pietermaritzburg, cited 16
Participant 25 15.09.2014, Pietermaritzburg, consulted 9
Participant 26 17.07.2014, Pietermaritzburg, consulted 10
Participant 27 09.08.2014, Pietermaritzburg, cited 17
Participant 28 16.08.2014, Pietermaritzburg, cited 18
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Participant 30 26.08.2014, Pietermaritzburg, cited 19
Participant 31 29.08.2014, Pietermaritzburg, consulted 12
Participant 32 15.10.2014, Pietermaritzburg, cited 20

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

1. Do you fast?
2. If Yes or No why?
3. How do you fast?
4. When do you fast?
5. For how long do you fast?
6. How can you encourage or motivate others to fast?
7. Are there daily activities/routines you withdraw from?
8. What are the activities or practices that you normally undertake during the fasting season?
9. What do you normally fast for?
10. Do you engage yourself only in personal fasting or also in corporate/ congregational fasting?
 - 10.1 Does congregational/corporate fasting help? If Yes how?
11. When does corporate/congregational fasting takes place?
12. What normally necessitates the call/announcement of the congregational or corporate fasting?
13. What do you think are the effects of not fasting on the non-fasting person, churchleader (pastor) and congregation?
14. Does fasting guarantee results?
15. Is Lenten season of any help to you?
16. What are the reasons/excuses from those who do not want to fast?
17. When and how it came that you start fasting?
18. Do you think everybody in the congregation is fasting?
19. From which age should people start fasting?
20. Are there some people that are justified or exempted from fasting?
21. Are there any negative effects on fasting?
22. Are there any physical and social effects from fasting?
23. Does the church/congregation arrange any activities during corporate fasting that tempt people to break their fasting?
24. What are Lenten season or fasting period charity activities, if any?
25. Are there any expectations or restrictions to be observed during Lent and or fasting session?

APPENDIX 2



THE THRESHING FLOOR BIBLE CHURCH 40 DAY FAST

Monday 06 January 2014 to Friday 14
February 2014

MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

Welcome to 2014, the third year of a new and exciting decade. This is a decade of Establishment fulfilled Prophecy and accelerated growth in every area of your life!

This is the will of God for you: 3 *John 1: 2* -, Beloved, I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers". For us to experience God's will in this decade, let us take a resolute decision to seek Him even through this time of Prayer and Fasting.

Based on *Isaiah 58*, Charles Surgeon shares the following Benefits of Fasting: He says during fasting these things happen:

- Bonds of wickedness are broken.
- Heavy burdens are broken.
- The oppressed go free.
- Health springs forth speedily.
- The glory of God covers and protects us.
- The Lord guides us continually.

The following are some reasons why we should fast:

- Deliverance from demonic oppression - *Matthew 17:21*.
- To be able to Hear God as in Daniel's case - *Daniel 10:2-14*.
- For Gods intervention in our situation as Queen Esther did when she called her people to a 3 day fast - *Esther 4:16*.

Finally note the following:

- Prayer and Fasting is a major deliverance and healing weapon.
- It is a way of sowing to the Spirit for Spiritual Growth: *Matthew 9:15*, and it allows ustotune in to God's wavelength.
- Anointing flows from Fasting - the Ministry of Jesus and Paul started after Prayer and Fasting; *Matthew 4:2 &17, Acts 9:8-15*

***May you choose to join us in this Exciting time of Prayer and Fasting!
Challenge yourself to do something you have never done before.***

THE THRESHING FLOOR BIBLE CHURCH 40 DAY FAST

WEEK TWO : Monday 13 January to Sunday 19 January 2014

FACILITATORS :

THEME : I DO NOT WANT TO ABIDE ALONE. I WANT TO MULTIPLY
John 12:24, Isaiah 60:22

DATE	TYPE OF FAST	SUGGESTED PRAYER POINTS	SCRIPTURES TO MEDITATE UPON
We suggest you should keep a Prayer Journal and have your own personal prayer points over and above these			
Day 8 13/01/14	Fruit & un-salted Vegetables or diluted soup & Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pray for your community: Peace & Prosperity •Pray for TFBC: The fear of the LORD 	<i>Jeremiah 29; Psalm 6:6; Psalm 24</i>
Day 9 14/01/14		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pray for all Leaders •Pray for TFBC: Pray for all Leaders 	<i>1 Timothy 2: 1-2; Psalm 7;7 Psalm 25</i>
Day10 15/01/14		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pray for yourself: Physical Needs •Pray for TFBC: Find out why God has placed you in TFBC 	<i>Psalm 118; Psalm 103 Psalm 8:6-8; Psalm 26</i>
Day 11 16/01/14		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pray for your family: Unity •Pray for TFBC: Pray for the different Ministries 	<i>Psalm 68; Psalm 9:9; Psalm 27</i>
Day 12 17/01/14		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pray for the Body of Christ •Pray for TFBC: Pray for the Senior Pastor 	<i>1 Corinthians 12 & 13; Psalm 10:10; Psalm 28</i>
Day 13 18/01/14		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pray for all people who do not know God to come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and to Salvation •Pray for TFBC: The grace to Love all God's people 	<i>Romans 3 & 12;10-14 Psalm 68; Psalm 11;1; Psalm 29</i>
Day 14 19/01/14		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pray for KZN •Pray for TFBC existence to have Impact to the nation 	<i>Deuteronomy 28:1; Psalm 12;2; Psalm 30</i>

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THE THRESHING FLOOR BIBLE CHURCH 40 DAY FAST

WEEK THREE : Monday 20 January to Sunday 26 January 2014

FACILITATORS :

THEME : LORD ANOINT ME
Exodus 30:30; 40:13; Psalm 23; 1Corinthians 12, 13 & 14

DATE	TYPE OF FAST	SUGGESTED PRAYER POINTS	SCRIPTURES TO MEDITATE UPON
We suggest you should keep a Prayer Journal and have your own personal prayer points over and above these			
Day 15 20/01/14	Fruit & un-salted Vegetables or diluted soups & Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pray for yourself: Economic Goals •Pray for TFBC 	<i>Psalm 1; Psalm 13:3; Psalm 31</i>
Day 16 21/01/14		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pray for your family: Rebuke sibling rivalry and Failure of Marriages •Pray for TFBC: Commitment of the saints 	<i>Psalm 68; Psalm 14:4; Psalm 1</i>
Day 17 22/01/14	Water, Juice & un-salted Soup	•Pray for the Community where your local church is	<i>Jeremiah 29, psalm 15;5; Psalm 2</i>
Day 18 23/01/14		•Pray for TFBC: To be the light of the world and the salt of the Earth	<i>Matthew 5:13; Psalm 16;6; Psalm3</i>
Day 19 24/01/14		•Pray for our government	<i>1 Timothy 1; Psalm17;7; Psalm 4</i>
Day 20 25/01/14		•Pray for yourself: Spiritual Growth	<i>Colossians 1; Psalm 18;8; Psalm 5</i>
Day 21 26/01/14		•Pray for your Family: name them one by one	<i>Psalm 68; Psalm19;9; Psalm 6</i>

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THE THRESHING FLOOR BIBLE CHURCH 40 DAY FAST

WEEK FOUR : Monday 27 January to Sunday 2 February 2014

FACILITATORS :

THEME : LET ME HAVE AN IMPACT AND BE EFFECTIVE
Isaiah 58 & Romans 12, 13 & 14

DATE	TYPE OF FAST	SUGGESTED PRAYER POINTS	SCRIPTURES TO MEDITATE UPON
We suggest you should keep a Prayer Journal and have your own personal prayer points over and above these			
Day 22 27/01/14	Water, Juice & un-salted Soup	•Pray for TFBC Leadership: Name them one by one; Pray that they would not be like the prophets in Jeremiah 23 but be like Luke 4:1-20	<i>Jeremiah 23; Luke 4;1-20; Psalm 20;2; Psalm 7</i>
Day 23 28/01/14		•Pray for Your local Leadership: Political, Church & the Body of Christ.	<i>Romans 12;8; Psalm 21;21; Psalm 8</i>
Day 24 29/01/14		•Pray for the Leaders of the Country - •The President, His Cabinet, Ministers, Premiers and MEC's	<i>Romans 13:17; Psalm 22:2; Psalm 9</i>
Day 25 30/01/14		•Pray for Global Leaders: Spiritual and Political	<i>Jeremiah 23; Psalm 23;3; Psalm 10</i>
Day 26 31/01/14		•Ask God for the Realisation of church properties and auditoriums in 2013	<i>Exodus 26; Psalm 24:4; Psalm 11</i>
Day 27 01/02/14		•Thank God for the Realisation of church properties and auditoriums in 2013	<i>Psalm 27, Psalm 25;5; Psalm 12</i>
Day 28 02/02/14		•Ask God to show you how you can Contribute towards the full realization of church properties in 2013	<i>Exodus 28 to 30, Psalm 26;6; Psalm 13</i>

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THE THRESHING FLOOR BIBLE CHURCH 40 DAY FAST

WEEK FIVE : Monday 03 February to Sunday 09 February

FACILITATORS :

THEME : LORD MAKE ME REALISE MY PURPOSE
Isaiah 49:1-3 & Zachariah 3

DATE	TYPE OF FAST	SUGGESTED PRAYER POINTS	SCRIPTURES TO MEDITATE UPON
We suggest you should keep a Prayer Journal and have your own personal prayer points over and above these			
Day 29 03/02/14	Water, Juice & un-salted Soup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Present your desires to the Lord •Pray for the Pure Love of God (Agape) among the saints. 	<i>Deuteronomy 28:2-14; Psalm 27:7; Psalm 14</i>
Day 30 04/02/14		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ASK God for a Plan toward the realization of your Plans 	<i>Psalm 37:5; Psalm 28:8; Psalm 15</i>
Day 31 05/02/14	Water, Juice only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Commit to the Plan: what steps are you going to take by when? 	<i>Psalm 20:4 & Proverbs 15:22; Psalm 29:9; Psalm 16</i>
Day 32 06/02/14		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pray for your Place of work / Business / School, that you currently are in or want to be in. 	<i>Jeremiah 29; Psalm30:3; Psalm 17</i>
Day 33 07/02/14		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pray for TFBC: God to bring it into a new Dispensation •Pray for the Unity of the Body of Christ 	<i>Isaiah 60:1 & 43:18; Psalm 31:1; Psalm 18</i>
Day 34 08/02/14		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pray for the sanctuaries building projects" provision •Pray for the church Workers to be strengthened 	<i>Psalm 23 & 103 Psalm 32:2; Psalm 19</i>
Day 35 09/02/14		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pray for our Local Government •Pray for the revival in the City of Durban and spiritual awakening in South Africa 	<i>Daniel 2:21; Psalm 33:3; Psalm 20</i>

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THE THRESHING FLOOR BIBLE CHURCH 40 DAY FAST

WEEK SIX : Monday 10 February to Friday 14 February 2013

FACILITATORS :

THEME : THANK YOU, I AM WHO YOU SAY I AM
Isaiah 45 & Psalm 25

DATE	TYPE OF FAST	SUGGESTED PRAYER POINTS	SCRIPTURES TO MEDITATE UPON
We suggest you should keep a Prayer Journal and have your own personal prayer points over and above these			
Day 36 10/02/14	Water, Juice only	<input type="checkbox"/> Pray for the body of Christ: Love; Unity & Maturity	<i>Ephesians 4:25; Psalm 34:4; Psalm 21</i>
Day 37 11/02/14		<input type="checkbox"/> Pray for the Senior Pastor & his Family <input type="checkbox"/> Pray that He may fulfill his mandate according to God's will	<i>Zechariah 13:7; Psalm 35:5; Psalm 22</i>
Day 38 12/02/14		<input type="checkbox"/> Pray for all the TFBC families for God's Will to prevail.	<i>Zechariah 13:7; Psalm 36:6; Psalm 23</i>
Day 39 13/02/14		<input type="checkbox"/> Pray for your family to be established in God	<i>Deuteronomy 7 & 8; Psalm 39:9; Psalm 26</i>
Day 40 14/02/14		<input type="checkbox"/> Thanksgiving: Thank God for all the things you prayed for and Receive them from HIM <input type="checkbox"/> Go through your Journal and declare to each of the things: "it is done, in Jesus' Name. Thank you Father. Amen"	<i>Deuteronomy 6:10-12; Psalm 40:1; Psalm 27</i>

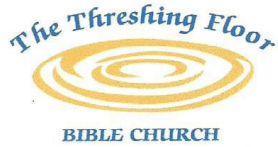
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10 TIPS TO SUCCESSFUL FASTING

1. **Set a goal:** How long do I want to do this fast? What do I want to gain from this Fast?
2. **Diarise/Journal** your experiences every day.
3. **Study the word of God everyday** (especially the scriptures suggested in this booklet) God speaks to us through His word most of the time: Train your Ear to hear God during the fast.
4. **Find time and space to pray:** there are prayer meetings daily 18h00 to 19h00 @ your local church during this fast, plan to attend the prayer meetings. Moreover, wake up an hour earlier than your usual time and spend it in studying the word and praying. Do pray without ceasing also.
5. **Drink at least 8 glasses of Water** a day to avoid headaches and weakness and to cleanse your body. Be careful however not to drink too much water, it can make you nauseous and you can get over hydration which is just as bad as dehydration.
6. If you break your fast in the evenings, **DO NOT eat Meat.** Daniel and his friends became vegetarians during their fast.
7. **Avoid sugars,** fizzy drinks, sugar and salt, luxurious items like ice cream and coffees.
8. **If you eat,** make your meals vegetables, salads, fruits, grains and water: keep your diet simple. Avoid highly processed foods in favour of simply prepared or raw foods.
9. Understand that **fasting is a very personal matter** between you and God. Do not compare yourself with others and do not copy what they do.
10. **Take as long to break the fast as the time you fasted.** If you fast for the 6 weeks – 40 days, break your fast over 6 weeks: start by eating small frequent meals of soft fruit and vegetables, followed by starches in the third week and Meat only in the 4th or 5th week. Do not forget to drink water. If you do not feel well after eating (dizziness, tiredness, headache or cramps) it means your system is not coping. Correct the situation by drinking water and reducing the amount of food or changing the type of food next time you eat.

Isaiah 60:19-22 “the Lord shall be unto you an everlasting light, and your God, your Glory! Your sun shall no more go down; neither shall your moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be your everlasting light and the days of Mourning shall be ended. Your people also shall be righteous; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one amongst you shall be a thousand, and a small one a strong Nation: I the Lord will hasten it in its time. Everlasting Joy, shall be run upon the way...”

APPENDIX 3



THE THRESHING FLOOR BIBLE CHURCH

164 Oribi Rd Bisley Park, Pmb, 3201
Tel: 033 386 3247, Fax: 086556 8580
E-mail: tfbc@telkomsa.net

That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this,
and the Holy One of Israel hath created it. **Isa 41:20**

The Reseacher
29 Golf Road
SCOTTSVILLE
3209

Dear Sir

GRANTING A PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEACH INTERVIEWS

In response to your letter dated the 29th of May 2014, would firstly appreciate the eager to conduct a research in our institution. This will surely be of great help to the leadership of the church. I would also appreciate if the results of the research will be communicated to the church if that would be fine with you.

The leadership of The Threshing Floor bible church gladly permit you Mr. Mudau R. S. to conduct a research as it has been stated in the communicate referred to above.

Wishing you The Lord God Almighty's blessings as you further your studies.

Yours faithfully
Pastor S. C Maduna
(The Threshing Floor Bible Church Senior Pastor)

Signature

Date

OUR VISION: We desire to reach as many people for Christ as possible and desire to help them become as spiritually mature as possible without compromising the word of God and our mission.

APPENDIX 4

THE REDEEMED CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF GOD

(DUNAMIS FAITH ASSEMBLY)

16 Clough Street off Victoria Road

To Whom It May Concern

The authority of the above named church have given consent to **Mr Mudua Ratshilumela Samuel** to interview the members of this church for the masters work he is embarking at the university of KwaZulu – natal. Our prayer is that God will give him the strength to perfect and finish his thesis in Jesus name.

Yours Sincerely

David .O. Olorunda

Pastor – In-Charge

**The Redeemed Christian
Church of God
(Dunamis Faith Assembly)
16 Clough Street,
off Victoria Junction
by Kay Makan Junction
Pietermaritzburg, 3201 South Africa
Tel: 0783542803**

APPENDIX 5

100 Days Fast for RCCG Church Members Worldwide

Pastor Adeboye announces a 100 days Fast for RCCG Church Members Worldwide

Happy New Year to you and yours, this year has been declared a better year than the last by Almighty God through the **General Overseer of [The Redeemed Christian Church of God](#)**.

[Pastor Enoch Adeboye](#) of the **Redeemed Christian Church of God** has announced a **100-days fasting** period for its members starting from **January 2nd to April 11, 2014** to kick-start the New Year.

The announcement came as **Pastor E.A Adeboye** released prophecies for the New Year, during a crossover service held in **Nigeria** on **January 1st** that declaring that *“2014 will be the year of OVERFLOWING BLESSINGS” and “the destinies of many people will be determined this year.”*

Join other RCCG members worldwide in this fasting pursuit of God to kick start the new year. You can break at 6pm daily with regular food. Or if you can fast dry (liquid: fresh juices, smoothie) for 30 days which is equal to 100 days breaking at 6pm. Those whom are exempted are newlyweds, those who are pregnant or nursing babies and elders above 70yrs.

RCCG, Choices For Completing 100-Day Fast For RCCG Members Worldwide Beginning 2nd January 2014:

1. Fast For 100 Days & Break Daily At 6pm
2. Take Only Liquid While Fasting For 30 Days (This Is Equivalent To The Complete 100-Day Fast)
3. Take Only Liquid While Fasting For 21 Days (This Is Equivalent To 63 Days Of The 100-Day Fast)
4. Take Only Liquid While Fasting For 14 Days (This Is Equivalent To One [1] Month Of The 100-Day Fast)
5. Take Only Liquid While Fasting For 7 Days (This Is Equivalent To 14 Days Of The 100-Day Fast).

EXEMPTIONS:

1. Newly wed couples and elders over 70 years old.
2. Nursing mothers and pregnant women are also exempted.

- You can drink water during fast
- You can drink tea if you are overseas and it is cold.
- If you miss a day, you must substitute it for 2 days.

Why Fast? 2 Kings 13:15-19

“And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows. And he said to the king of Israel; Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand upon it: and Elisha put his hands upon the king’s hands. And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the Lord’s deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them. And he said, Take the arrows. And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice.” (KJV)

The ‘*bow and arrows*’ in the days of Elisha could be seen today as ‘*fasting and prayers*’. Like the Syrians in Aphek, there are enemies in our land, in our family, in the Church and even in our lives that must be smitten. The siege is inevitable if they are not totally destroyed.

As we take our bow and arrows, we will not shoot for awhile and stop like the king of Israel erroneously acted. But we will shoot again and again “*till every foe is vanquished and Christ is Lord indeed.*”

These One Hundred Days of fasting and prayers are days of the arrow of the Lord’s deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from our enemies: we shalt smite the enemies around us till we have consumed them.

Just as Elisha was sent to the king, God has sent our father-in- the- Lord, **Daddy E. A. Adeboye**, to the Church to take the arrows and shoot. Let’s take our bow and arrows and shoot continuously to experience VICTORIOUS OVERFLOW over our enemies, this New Year.

Happy New Year – happy overflow.

The fasting prayer points can be found here
<http://www.rccguk.org/news/rccg-100-day-fast>

<http://jesushouse.org.uk/100-days-fast-rccg-church-members-worldwide>

APPENDIX 6



EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN SOUTHERN AFRICA
SOUTH EASTERN DIOCESE
UMNGENI CIRCUIT

P.O. BOX 327 PLESSISLAER 3216, Tele-fax: +27 33 398 2248,
mobile: +27 83 364 8652, email:elcumngeni@telkomsa.net

16.12.2013

Attention: Rev R.S. Mudau
29 Golf Road
Scottsville
PIETERMARITZBURG
3201

Dear Sir

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS WITHIN OUR CIRCUIT

Your letter of request, and our telephonic conversation refers. I hereby grant you permission to conduct interviews within our circuit, in accordance with your request and our conversations. Feel free to make arrangements with pastors and lay people as per your proposal, request, and stated conditions. Although I am willing to assist where possible, I am not in a position to commit myself to be part of the interviews at the moment.

I trust that your interviews will go well and that your studies will be successful and benefit both you and the church.

Yours truly

Rev N.M. Myaka (Dean of Umngeni Circuit)

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN
SOUTHERN AFRICA S.E.D.
PIETERMARITZBURG SOUTH PARISH

APPENDIX 7

29 Golf Road
Scottsville
Pietermaritzburg
3201

Dear Sir / Madam

RE: Request for permission to conduct research interview

I, MUDAU Ratshilumela Samuel, hereby ask for permission to conduct interviews towards my thesis research. I am a registered Masters Student at the University of Kwazulu Natal, at the college of Humanity, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics.

My research topic is: From Jewish Fasting to Christian fasting; Effects of Lenten Fasting in the Umngeni circuit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa – ELCSA South Eastern Diocese.

I kindly ask for permission to conduct interviews from your church / congregation and/or to interview you.

The aim of the study is to investigate the willingness or reluctance to fast and abstain from overindulgence in food; and to examine the perceived individual and congregational benefits of fasting.

The research will be qualitative and require at least 2 local church leaders (pastors) and 5 lay people (congregants) those who do fast.

I would also like to inform you of the following:

1. Each interview will be conducted during suitable times for each participant. The estimated period is plus minus 30 minutes. Usually it will take 1 occasion / duration, unless if thereafter the need of a follow-up may arise.
2. The aim of the study will be explained to each participant.
3. The participation is completely voluntarily.
4. Participants will have a right to withdraw from the study at any time / stage and for any reason.
5. You may be assured of complete confidentiality or anonymity as appropriate.
6. The participants are not promised any benefits as payment for participation. (Neither monetary nor in kind)

The results will provide useful and accurate information on the Lenten Fasting i.e. the what, why and how.


1. To build a deep knowledge of the Lenten Fast – the what?
2. To uncover the reasons for the Lenten Fast- the why?
3. To establish ways in which Lenten Fasting can contribute to congregational spirituality –the why?

The research data will be kept at the place that is only known and can only be accessed by the researcher (myself) . After the completion of the studies / research the data will be destroyed .

The results of the research (thesis) will be made available to the University of Kwazulu Natal and Lutheran Theological Institute libraries and may be on line , and any library can ask for the copy . If necessary it may be published as the book.

Your contribution in extremely significant to this study to be successful .

Yours sincerely



Date

29-05-2013

Mudau R . S .

Student

Should you have any further queries feel free to con tact us at :

Researcher Student

Mudau R . S

0829530373

mudausr@gmail.com

Supervisor

Rev.Gertrud Tonsing

0837809354

Gertrud.tonsing@googlemail.com

INFORMED CONSENT

DECLARATION

I.....

(Full names of participant)

Hereby confirm that I have read and understood the contents of the above explanatory document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project .

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time , should I so desire

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT .

DATE.

.....

.....

APPENDIX 8



23 April 2014

Rev Ratshilumela Samuel Mudau (210554309)
School of Religion, Philosophy & Classics
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/1455/013M
Project title: From Jewish fasting to Christian Lent: Effects of Lenten fasting in the Umgengi Circuit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa – ELCSA South Eastern Diocese

Dear Rev Mudau,

Full Approval – Expedited

In response to your application dated 15 April 2013, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/interview Schedule, informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shamila Naidoo (Deputy Chair)

/ms

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