

FAST for CHANGE



CONFESSION & ASSURANCE

An Act of Confession – Based on Isaiah 58:5-7

Call to Confession

We often think of sin only in personal terms—
whom we hurt, the relationship we didn't treasure,
the brokenness of our spirit.
The sins of omission are less prominent—
whom we failed to help,
whom we left out,
the prayers we neglected to say.
But rarely do we consider sin as something to do with the hungry,
with our shopping,
with the way our societies treat those without a job.
Today we listen to God's word through the prophet Isaiah,
who gives the concept of repentance a much larger dimension.

Scripture Reading:

*Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself?
Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?
Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?
Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?*

So we confess our sin.

(Silence)

Prayer of Confession

God of mercy
we confess to You our faulty fast.
Instead of setting the oppressed free
we buy cheap without asking who pays with poor wages and abuse.
Instead of inviting the homeless poor into our houses
we erect fences and gates to keep them out.
Instead of breaking the yoke,

we continue consuming until the earth cries out its pain.
Forgive us when we humble ourselves as an alternative to actually changing.
Forgive us when our spiritual disciplines turn us in on ourselves
and away from our neighbours both near and far.
Forgive us when we hide ourselves from our kin,
the hungry, the naked, the poor, our sisters and brothers in Christ.
Forgive us and turn us to the fast You desire through Jesus Christ. Amen.

—Rev. Terry Mac Arther, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Geneva, from an Ash Wednesday Liturgy (2011) written for the **Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance**. <http://www.e-alliance.ch/>