

WORLD YWCA AND WORLD YMCA

WEEK OF PRAYER AND WORLD FELLOWSHIP

8-14 NOVEMBER, 2020

RAYS OF HOPE

CREATING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES THROUGH PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

Bible Reading Plan 2020-2021

WorldYWCA

WORLD YMCA

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A JOINT MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENTS OF WORLD YWCA AND WORLD YMCA

Blessed readers,

Early this year, the COVID-19 pandemic changed our world immeasurably and impacted individuals and entire communities in devastating ways and at multiple levels. Lockdowns, whether partial or full, forced many to pause and question assumptions deeply ingrained and practice resilience.

COVID-19 has highlighted that while pandemics do not necessarily differentiate, the impact on the most vulnerable in our society, clubbed with the injustices of the world, is extremely different. While the world grapples with emerging and existing challenges, faith and spirituality have proved to be central to resilience, hope and a sense of global community.

The YWCA and YMCA movements have traveled through history, interweaving components of faith, spirituality, and humanity deep in the heart of communities across the globe. COVID-19 reminds us of the power of our shared symbol of the triangle, representing a balance between mind, body and spirit.

It has been truly inspiring to see leaders, especially young people within our movements, come out and not just raise awareness on the impacts of the pandemic, but also showcase their leadership to support and strengthen communities in distress. The pandemic has united our movements even closer to transformation for the better, pushing back against fear and isolation.

The theme for this year's World YWCA and World YMCA Week of Prayer and World Fellowship, is an invitation to journey as one, and reflect on how we move from an individual calling to collective transformation, creating resilient communities through practical spirituality. Hope tells us that despite the graveness of a situation, good can happen.

People have acted to transform realities in their community - tackling misinformation, providing physical, financial, mental and spiritual support in innovative ways, while spreading kindness and reaching out to those in need. Everyone has a role to play, everyone must have access to support, every one matters.

This is a call to governments, organisations and institutions to rebuild a world that promotes justice, love and peace in our communities, providing support to all members - especially marginalised, vulnerable and those facing disadvantage. And so, while we acknowledge the institutional pain, familial and community trauma, and individual anxieties the pandemic has caused, we reinforce the power of leaders and movements, in building resilient communities - ones which shine during crisis as a true symbol of hope.

This booklet is an extended invitation for communities to use biblical text to link to lived experiences and local realities through the Week of Prayer and beyond. Amidst the pain that we continue to endure, we find comfort in the stories of hope and solidarity, and recognize encouraging lessons that are emerging for our post-COVID world. #WeShallOvercome



Mira Rizeq
President, World YWCA



Patricia Pelton
President, World YMCA



DAY 1

BREATHING TOGETHER IN SOLIDARITY

By: Elaine Neuenfeldt, Act Alliance Gender Programme Manager

"At times of catastrophes and calamities it is difficult to breathe. Catastrophes are not affecting everyone equally – they tend to intensify inequalities and exacerbate injustices."

The current pandemic is taking away of breathing capacity, as well as our analytical capacity to understand and explain the changes the world is going through. Our words and concepts are not broad enough, are not fitting in this new reality, the "new normal" we are facing. We need to find how to breathe and how to live in this new reality where social distance, loneliness and fear seems to rule relations. We need to find ways to flourish relationships that are framed in solidarity and love, in the midst of this unjust world, and to transform this world for the better. To find words that help us to breathe through this pandemic – as the *Latin* term suggests - *cons-pirar (conspirāre)* – to breathe with, to breathe together. To breathe in communities that are rays of hope, helping each other to shine, in resilience and in resistance.

BIBLICAL INSPIRATION

In the Old Testament story, there is this story of the widows of the famine, the widow of drought, in the book of Kings Chapter 17. The story is telling us that there was no rain in the land; in times of calamities, like draught, it is so common that women, especially widows and children are the most affected. The widow of this biblical story has only one son and to increase the drama, he dies. She cries out questioning the prophet. In her understanding, the death of her son is because of her sin. She feels guilty - which is a very common feeling for women, especially mothers, and even more, after the death of a child. What have I done wrong? I should have done this better.... I could... now is too late...

The prophet, going against the purity law that prohibits touching corpses, with the risk of becoming impure, took the death body in his arms, and laid it down; then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried out to the Lord. The Lord listened to the voice of the prophet and the life of the child came into him again, and he revived!

Bringing this son back to life is crucial that this family group will be restored in their social context. For a widow, to be alone, would be a path to more suffering and loneliness, hungry and increased poverty.

The prophetic task here, is to restore life and restore family relations, by bringing back a son for a widow. This is a religious experience that enters into houses, deals with concrete issues of daily life: drought, empty pots of food, ill bodies. It is a religious practice that goes beyond the temple, the sanctuary and its traditional rituals and ceremonies formatted in the officially instituted spaces. The prophet also seems desperate. He demands of God: have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I am staying, by killing her son?

Death and suffering question our faith. Who has not gone through moments of doubt, disbelief, skepticism, especially when facing difficulties, like death and loss? Who has not felt the limit of faith and hope in experiences of suffering? It is like this. The woman cried and wept. The prophet, alone with the death child, in desperation cried to help.

It is in touching death, in the encounter with the suffering where life is restored. The prophecy here happens in embracing, in touching body with body, in a kind of ritual that warms up life, warms up hope and reconnects relationships. The text is saying that the breath came back to him, he started breathing again and his life was restored.

Faith is not a mere abstract reflection about God. A faith experience is interwoven with daily life – and life is not always easy is not predictable or simple.

Prophecy is the courage to act restoring life to a dead body. Is the brave gesture of touching death to reestablish relations – because life comes first. Faith experiences in the margin of life, when life is at the limit, can restore breathing. And then life comes back because relationships are restored.

Because sometimes we are losing our breath... sometimes we are losing our faith... sometimes we are losing our relations... with God, with others, with ourselves. Sometimes there are moments that impede us to breath. And it feels like life is going away...

But there is the prophetical announcement that God is not restricted to geographic limitations, ethnic borders, or limited to officially constituted spaces and rooms. This prophetical announcement is crying out that the love and compassion of God will enter in our homes, our pots, our tables and beds... and will touch us, will touch the body, breaking down any notion of impurity, untouchability – and life will be restored, breath will come back. Bodies are going to feel the warm breath of life again. This is a spiritual practice that shines like rays of hope, creating resilient communities.

It is so interesting that touching and carrying the suffering in the arms is recognized as a prophetic gesture from these biblical texts. In times when is so difficult to look in the eyes, and see the suffering, it is much needed to stay in solidarity, take diaconal responsibility with whom is next, the stranger, the one who is alone, who is in trouble.

Faith moves us to experience life coming back, being restored... to touch and to be touched by the Spirit of love, compassion and solidarity – being in the arms of God, embraced by the love of God, life is inspiring life, is dwelling life in the midst of our lives.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- What makes us feel the warm and tender touch of life back to our body?
- Where the compassionate touch of love that nurtures our faith and hope can be experienced in today's world, where individualism, loneliness, and indifference for human suffering are a daily reality. How can we, as individuals and as community/ congregation of faith work as a space where the touches of compassion, that bring back life can be felt?
- How can we do all this "touching" when physical distance is required as part of sanitary measures in times of the pandemic?

BLESSING

Breathe in this blessing; consider how you might influence ONE life.

As you breathe out, speak a blessing on those around you.

God bless our world, our habitat.

Enable us to respect and treat our earth with the dignity it deserves.

Empower us to preserve its resources to provide for all people.

Enable us to protect our people, especially the vulnerable: women and children.

Enable us to do what is good, resist evil and to protect each other from evil.

Enable our men to transform themselves from beneficiaries of patriarchy to contributors of human dignity.

Inspire our leaders to be transformed for the good of all people.

Enable us to be transformed into Servant Leaders.

Enable us to be open to restore your image in us.

Inspire us to have healing relationships.

Enable us to live with dignity.

Empower us to heal our communities and give us your peace.

Amen.



DAY 2

SPIRITUAL AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT THROUGH CRISES

By: Nicole Ashwood, Programme Executive, Just Community of Women and Men World Council of Churches & Nirmala Gurung, Coordinating Asia region for World YWCA's Initiative on Young Women Changing Narratives on SRHR and Mental Health

Habakkuk 2:1-3

"I will stand at my watch post, and station myself on the rampart;
I will keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what he[a]
will answer concerning my complaint. 2Then the Lord answered
me and said: "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that
a runner may read it. 3For there is still a vision for the appointed
time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry,
wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay."

"Creation" is a Nepali Christian youth group involved in social transformation and fellowship. In 2012, a group of church leaders had a vision for the church to be more engaged with the community. During the holidays, Creation members would travel across provinces to fellowship or work in teams to improve life conditions; such as river cleanings, awareness programmes in schools and churches. When COVID-19 and physical distancing protocols were introduced, it resulted in a sense of hopelessness among many members, who were affected by the inability to meet in person and from the loss of income that resulted from businesses and schools being closed. Reductions in support for the churches from overseas and lack of access to resources during the lockdown put pastors and their families at risk of starvation.

Creation group leader Nirmala was weighed down by the concerns of her colleagues during lockdown. She correctly interpreted the despair and hopelessness facing Nepalese people (e.g. 2000+ suicide in two months) and she cried out to God. One solution was a collaboration with a new colleague from the World Council of Churches, whom she met at the World YWCA World Council 2019. Creation members met virtually to hear the concerns and prayerfully devise the way forward. The group began meeting weekly for reflection and prayer during the period of physical distancing. This Bible study reflects on their process of community engagement for development in times of crisis.

For more details on what Creation has been doing since April, please visit our Facebook page.

BIBLICAL INSPIRATION

Habakkuk the prophet tried to make sense of the problems around him in his country. Although it was not a threat of disease, the upcoming crisis sent Habakkuk calling to God for wisdom and guidance. Like Habakkuk, Creation also wanted comfort and assurance from God, and many asked the questions, 'Why?' and 'How Long?' The "why" question is very important, for often we find that "we are often perplexed by how God governs the world."

As a prophet, whatever Habakkuk experienced in his wrestling sessions with God directed his response to a worried nation. We see from the introduction that Nirmala has done the same. She understands faith as being critical to her role as a group leader of Creation.

- Read Habakkuk 2:1. From whom do you seek counsel as a leader? And what has that experience been like since the spread of COVID-19? Can you see yourself wrestling with God for answers when life isn't going as it should?

Habakkuk's questions and God's responses trace a pattern of relationship that encourages those searching for answers in difficult times. The ability to take refuge in scripture and faith in these times is about recognizing that faith in God sustains when the going gets tough. In tracing God's goodness, Habakkuk found strength to continue as he realised that God's work is best demonstrated when God operates in collaboration with humanity. Many people have attempted to make sense of Covid-19 since it was declared a pandemic. Some have come to the same conclusion - finding strength in their faith; others have found refuge in other sources. Creation members sought God, examining scriptures through the lens of their experiences, seeking to find their way to peace during lockdown.

Because group members were already close-knit, the team cast a vision to pull each person out of hopelessness and unemployment, into collaborative sufficiency. They dreamt, then clarified and identified steps essential for transforming hope into action. The team started rooftop kitchen gardening, chicken rearing, and meat sales. Word about their revived hope spread. Creation shared what they learned each week online, with other people in Pakistan and Sri Lanka and in Nepal with local pastors of Shalom Fellowship. From the little that they had, they are seeing fruits of hope and renewal for life in Creation.

Since that first bible study in April, the lockdown has lightened, and several Creation members have returned to work. Trauma however remains, and the group now uses the time for trauma transformation and healing sessions. May our trust in God be as firm and unmovable in light of life's perplexities as we confess with Habakkuk: "Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the [... globe worries about this pandemic ...]; yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation." (Habakkuk 3:17-19)."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- In Habakkuk 2: 2-3, God instructs Habakkuk to write his vision clearly. What is your vision for a transformed community in your context?
- Are there special gifts or skills needed to bring the vision to life?
- How can you partner with pre-existing community organizations to make a difference in the lives of others?

BLESSING

Loving God,

You are our hope, our strength and our courage. You never leave us alone. There are the days where you seem far from us... when we feel you have abandoned us... You embrace us in your loving arms and make us realise how great is your love for us.

Thank you for restoring faith in community and helping us find peace in your presence. For those whose hopes are shaken, faith is scattered, remind us: You are with us. Help us to rebuild ourselves, to believe in YOU. Guide each YWCA/YMCA to share the hope we find in you.

Amen.



DAY 3

ADDRESSING SOCIAL INJUSTICES IN OUR COMMUNITIES: A CALL TO ACTION

By Rosângela S. Oliveira, Executive Director of World Day of Prayer International Committee

John 5:1-9a

"After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me." Jesus said to him, "Stand up, take your mat and walk." At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk."

BIBLICAL INSPIRATION

When we first got together to reflect on the story of Jesus at the Sheep Gate, we were impressed by the encounter of Jesus and the ones lying down by the pool. I was with women and young women from World Day of Prayer (WDP) Zimbabwe preparing the collaborative writing process for the WDP worship service to be held in 2020. Our common day of prayer is the first Friday of March, so on March 6th 2020, communities in more than 140 countries listened to the stories and prayed with the people of Zimbabwe. However, by March 11th the World Health Organization had declared the COVID-19 pandemic, and the activities prepared for a later date could not be held.

"Rise! Take Your Mat and Walk" is the WDP theme based on the story of John 5:1-9a for the 2020 activities. As I started to learn from the WDP committees about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in their local context, it came to my mind the comment of a sister from Zimbabwe about how powerless that man felt to answer Jesus' question: "Do you want to be made well?" (John 5:6-7).

He could not say YES to Jesus' question. His response sounded as powerless as ours in the first moment of the pandemic.

After months of uncertainties, the action-oriented words of Jesus continued to resonate with me. Jesus was a good reader of context. He knew how to read it and would tweet his take on the situation. My perception of the Bible story shifted; I started to see how this narrative could tell our story of today.

So, by the Sheep Gate, there was a community of 'blind, lame and paralyzed' (v.4). It was a vulnerable community. They knew the social exclusion in their own bodies. However, the pool of Beth-zatha held the promise for healing, so there they persisted. They were looking for healing in the public space, and the source of their resilience was their hope. Jesus may have felt their hope in the air and addressed one of them. He was a man sick for 38 years, who deposited his hope in others that would pass him, yet nobody had come to him until that moment when Jesus asked the question that tricked the man to act on his hope.

During the pandemic, healing became the urge of our daily lives. It became clear that the communities disproportionately affected by the coronavirus were already battling unjust structural systems. In the USA, for example, the Native Americans, black and latinx people, mostly in low income neighbourhoods, were fighting the COVID-19 under systemic health and racial inequality. Fear of deportation prevented undocumented migrants access health care. Children and parents languishing in the federal immigration detention facilities lacked frequent access to hand-washing stations. Women were confined to their homes with their aggressors. Workers in the farms or meat-packing facilities were deemed essential however underpaid and at greater risk to contract the coronavirus. Hunger spread beyond neighborhoods. Money to pay rent was gone together with the job. White supremacists raged freely in the streets. Police brutality against people of color was continuously flagged. Almost every month, the protests crying for Black Lives Matter had a new name added to the long list.

The pandemic revealed what we already know in our daily lives – that we fight the intersectional vulnerabilities with a community of hope. The healing, that comes from Jesus' word - "Stand up, take your mat and walk" (v.8), has the power to move us to action. Many new initiatives, like **rays of hope**, radiated from local food pantries to global #BlackLivesMatter peaceful protests; or from the gratitude for the essential workers to the petitions to cancel the rent. The voices of many against the violation of human rights and for dismantling the systemic racism ingrained in public policies advocated for radical changes in our societies and governments. Silence was recognized as complicity and walking together in the streets affirmed the urgency of the time. The hopeful communities are resilient and deeply rooted in the struggle for peace with justice. They know that solidarity can disrupt social isolation, and that we can chant our hope in the public space.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- What do you want "to be made well" in your community?
- What are the initiatives that can make your community "stand up, take the mat and walk"?
- What are your words of hope?

BLESSING

Peaceful protests before or during the pandemic are animated by meaningful chants to voice the claim for justice. The chants are like words of hope and advocacy for new policies. Just to name a few of those chants: Whose streets? Our streets!; No justice, no peace!; Say her name! Say his name!; What matters? #BlackLivesMatter!

For this prayer exercise, let's breathe in and breathe out those words of hope. Before starting the exercise, spend few seconds breathing in and out, and choose the words that are meaningful to you, words that are meant to be rays of hope.

Breathe in: Do you want to be made well?

Breathe out: Stand up take your mat and walk.

Breathe in: No justice, No peace!

Breathe out: Make me a channel of your peace.

Breathe in: Say her name!

Breathe out: Breonna Taylor (or somebody else that you want to claim justice for)
Continue the prayer exercise with your words of hope until you are ready to conclude:

Holy Spirit, Breath of God, Veni Come, send us into the world like rays of hope.

Amen.

*End the prayer with the song "Veni Sancte Spiritus" by the Taize virtual choir.



DAY 4

KEEPING HOPE ALIVE; FINDING PEACE AND SHARING KINDNESS

By: Winelle Kirton-Roberts, Moravian Church Pastor in French-speaking Switzerland

Genesis 16:7,8, 13a, b.

"The angel of the Lord found Hagar beside a spring of water in the wilderness along the road to Shur[1]. The angel said to her, "Hagar, Sarai's servant, where have you come from, and where are you going?"... Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the LORD who had spoken to her. She said, "you are the God who sees me!"

"Stolen future"

"Pandemic generation"

"'Never-ending isolation"

These are some of the self-descriptive terms that young people have used to express their views on the COVID-19 pandemic. As countries grappled with the health and economic fallout of COVID-19, young people have been faced with unexpected hardships, uncertain futures, and unbearable misery. The youth have been negatively impacted physically, socially, and mentally. Specifically, the 16-24 year-old youth, who would have experienced years of normal education and social life, have felt stalled and robbed by the measures taken to control the spread of the virus.

Restricted in-person classes, hybrid teaching, and virtual learnings have replaced the hub of activity associated with educational institutions across the world. For millions of students in the developing world, the school is not only a facility for learning, but it is a secure space, a place for physical nourish-

1 Sur in Hebrew is "wall", "a boundary place". According to Easton Bible Dictionary, Shur is probably a region on the northeast border of Egypt, which gives its name to a desert that stretches from Egypt towards Philistia (Genesis 16: 7; 20: 1; 25:18; Exodus 15: 22). NdT

ment, a birthplace of dreams, and a nurturing community. How does one keep hope alive in the face of intense loneliness, fear, insecurity, and disappointment?

BIBLICAL INSPIRATION

It was in the deepest moment of doubt, rejection, and abandonment that the angel of God appeared to Hagar and asked: where are you coming from and where are you going? This was a challenge for reflection for this Egyptian woman, who for ten years, was a faithful servant in the household of the affluent Hebrew family of Abraham. Having complied with the common request to be a surrogate mother, Hagar was forced to flee twice during and after pregnancy (Genesis16:6, 21:14) to the wilderness of uncertainty.

Hagar dared to feel that she was entitled to the blessings and joys of motherhood as her mistress, Sarah. Hagar misjudged the fact that her access to certain privileges did not change her social status as a marginalized and impoverished servant woman. The difficult conditions that she lived under had become intolerable and unbearable. It was to a place of isolation that she found herself helpless and hopeless.

The good news is that it was in that uncomfortable place, along the road to Shur, that the angel of the Lord found Hagar. The presence of the angel gave Hagar hope. Hagar found peace. Hagar received kindness.

In times of COVID-19, God's angelic presence brings hope to the young people who have been dislocated by the virus. Where am I coming from and where am I going are not questions that are easily answered. What was life before and will there be life after the pandemic are certainly thoughts that can lead to giving up on life.

God brings to you hope. Your life may have been slowed but not stopped, your goals may have been adjusted but not derailed, your achievements may have been deferred but not denied. God has a plan to use this generation to improve the life and well-being of this and the next generation. From the emerging geologists in Venezuela, to the agriculturalists in South Sudan, to the engineers in Moldova, to the political leaders in Yemen.... Do not lose hope.

Like Hagar, you are not alone, in your struggle. Wherever you are, however you may feel, whatever your circumstance, God finds you. The Psalmist gives the timely reminder that "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry. Psalm 34:15

Like Hagar, the angel of God is pursuing you to engage you in meaningful conversation, offering instructions and calming your anxieties.

God seeks to engage in therapeutic dialogue. Come unto me all you who are weary... Matthew 11:28.

God issues guidelines that can be trusted. Trust the Lord with all your heart...God will make straight your paths. Proverbs 3: 5,6

God's incomprehensible peace quietens yours spirits. Do not worry about anything ...and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds. Philippians 4: 6,7.

"You are the God who sees me" was Hagar's acknowledgement of the peace she received through God's kindness. Yes, Abraham had extended some kindness to Hagar and his son, Ishmael. Yet, that faded in comparison to God's promised blessings of a prosperous future to Hagar.

The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped the present but it will not take away your future. God has promise to provide strength and build resilience among the youth. God's priority has always been the youth. I write to you, young people because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you and you have overcome the evil one. I John 2:14

God's promised is not only for the present but purposeful future.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- What are the ways to connect with international students to facilitate conversations on fear, disappointment, and neglect?
- How might the thought of Psalm 91: 11-12 be shared with international students?
- Is there an opportunity to be strengthened in faith during this season?

BLESSING

Gracious God, we pray for the millions of students that have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Grant wisdom to the leaders of governments and institutions of learning, as they create and implement plans to reposition countries and schools. Visit the international students with your angelic presence and may they have hope in you. Grant them your peace through unusual acts of kindness.

Amen.

*End the prayer with the song "Lean on me" by Bill Withers, version by Playing For Change.



DAY 5

WEAVING FABRICS OF SUPPORT

By: Rebecca Daniel, Indian Theologian Based in Geneva, working for the Lutheran World Federation & Nicole Ashwood, World Council of Churches Programme Executive, Just Community of Women and Men

Exodus 1:15 – 16, 19 -22; 2:1-9A, 10B; 3:9A, 10B, 12B

15 "The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, 16 "When you act as mid-wives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live." 19 The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them." 20 So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. 21 And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. 22 Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every boy that is born to the Hebrews[a] you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live."

2 1Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. 2 The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him three months. 3 When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. 4 His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him.

5 The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. 7 Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" 8 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. 9 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages." 10 … She named him Moses,[b] "because," she said, "I drew him out[c] of the water." 3 9 The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I … will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." "I will be with you; and … you shall worship God on this mountain."

All over the world, women and girls; men and boys are screaming, crying out, demanding for safety and protection from violence for their sons and daughters.

Systemic structural gender-based power inequalities and gender-based discriminations have a direct negative impact on the lives of women and girls. It also affects men and boys and is one aspect of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). GBV is a violation of Human rights.

As we reflect collectively about breaking the culture of silence towards GBV, this bible study invites each one of us to imagine the role that we can play in confronting violence at various levels.

BIBLICAL INSPIRATION

This bible study takes the form of an imaginary dialogue between six women responsible for saving Moses' (Moshe) namely: Jochebed (Moses's mother), Miriam (Moses's sister), Shiphrah and Puah (two Hebrew midwives who outsmarted the pharaoh) Bithiah (Pharaoh's daughter/ Moses's adopted mother), and Amah (Bithiah's maid). The dialogue provides the women 'equal' status in this informal context, as they reminisce on their joint, but individual efforts to protect Moses.

As you work through this study, ask yourself questions about the characters (you represent), such as why they chose to save Moses.

[The six women are sitting and engaged in conversation.]

Jochebed: I hear that our son is back and that he is going to meet Pharaoh and seek the freedom of our Hebrew people.

Bithiah: Oh yes. I am so proud of him. We have raised him well, with a passion for justice; haven't we?

Shiphrah: Yes we did ... Remember when pharaoh ordered the death of all Hebrew male babies?

Puah: I do remember. We had to convince him to believe that Hebrew women were strong enough to deliver their babies before we could help.

Bithiah: Women, that was brilliant! I really wanted to help more, but the political tension surrounding the Hebrew genocide was too much to combat publicly. I had to act behind the scenes.

Miriam: We believe you. When you sent Amah to rescue Moshe from the river Nile, I was surprised that you would adopt him, even though we knew that was God's plan for Moshe. Then you sent him back for us to wean him, I realised that Shiphrah and Puah were right –you were on our side. You are truly committed to help our people.

Puah: So glad you made that discovery for yourself Miriam. We know Bithiah personally. After we agreed on what to tell pharaoh about the Hebrew babies, Bithiah convinced Pharaoh to believe us.

Amah: Well they say, "It takes village to raise a child". When I saw Moshe in the river, I realised that he was Adonai's choice to rescue this village. Who could imagine that he would come back and take up this task of demanding freedom after being away for so long?

Jochebed: Moshe is a good son. God told me that he was a special child who would liberate us, ever since he was conceived.

Bithiah: Every liberation movement requires a partnership between those in power and those who are oppressed to challenge unjust power structures. Yes, we are Egyptians but we are also women – women who are partners in creating and recreating life.

Miriam: Women with passion for life and compassion!

Shiphrah: As a midwife and a mother, my calling is to bring forth healing and life, regardless of race, class or gender. Pharaoh's decree birthed death and destruction. Change was necessary, and I knew the change must begin with me.

Puah: The cries of the babies being slaughtered... the look on the faces of their mothers... still haunt me. I vowed that I wouldn't allow any child: boy or girl, to die on my watch!

Amah: Princess Bithiah, what do you think about your brother's reaction when he discovers Moshe has returned to challenge his oppression of the Hebrews and secure freedom from Pharaoh's abuse and oppressive rules?

Jochebed: That brother of yours has a serious temper. I am afraid that Moshe will have a tough time to convince him to let our people go.

Bithiah: That's true. My brother won't readily set anyone free. There will be more oppression against your people. Warn the women - don't travel alone. There's safety in numbers. Tell your men to expect that the working conditions will get worse.

Jochebed: I'll tell them. Remember, we live this daily. But, we will be careful. Will you also warn Moshe?

Bithiah: I will speak to him tonight and assure him of my support. Jochebed; our son will be ok. The fact that he has returned after forty years is proof that Moshe is ready. He is coming with power and confidence to talk to the Pharaoh. We have trained him well. In any case, remember that Adonai is his guide. I am looking forward to supporting him tomorrow.

Miriam: Adonai is his guide and Adonai will save us.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- The dialogue takes place between women of difference classes and ethnicities all collaborating to break the cycle of violence in their context. Has this happened in your context?
- In Exodus 3:10; God instructs Moses to overturn injustice. Moses' protectors were also instructed by God to combat GBV. Is God instructing you to do likewise? Who are the persons who influenced you toward combatting GBV?
- What can you do to make a difference now, and with whom might you collaborate?

BLESSING

God of the downtrodden, you intervened in the history of your enslaved people and liberated them from the bondage of oppression using women from different walks of life. Today we ask for your liberating power on all those who struggle against sexual and gender based violence. We especially remember those who risk their lives while taking upon themselves the responsibility to protect those who lives are under threat from abuse and neglect. As we express our solidarity and advocate for the rights and dignity of all those vulnerable to the ongoing cycles of violence and trauma based on their gender, grant us the wisdom and strength to act with courage and compassion.

WEAVING FABRICS OF SUPPORT IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Through social media, women have a new space to speak up and be heard. With its power to encourage solidarity and collect shared experiences, social media has become a new frontier for women's rights activists to organize and allies to join the fight for equality and justice. Here are a few hashtags that we encourage you to browse upon to learn more about GBV campaigns:

#WeekWithoutViolence2020

World YWCA Week Without Violence is an annual global campaign to end the scourge of violence against women, young women and girls. Throughout the week, activities focus on raising awareness, promoting attitude change and enabling individuals and organizations to begin positive actions towards ending violence in their communities.

Every year during the third week of October, YWCAs from all over the world promote and encourage Week Without Violence – a week-long series of community events promoting diverse approaches to creating a world free of violence.

Click here to access this year's toolkit!

#ThursdaysinBlack

Thursdays in Black it's a campaign that grew out of the World Council of Churches (WCC). The campaign is simple but profound. Wear black on Thursdays. Wear a pin to declare you are part of the global movement resisting attitudes and practices that permit rape and violence. Show your respect for women who are resilient in the face of injustice and violence. Encourage others to join you.

Share your Thursdays in Black campaign photos on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, using hashtags #ThursdaysinBlack and #WCC!

#MeToo

Tarana Burke founded the #MeToo movement to create a platform for girls with similar experiences to connect with one another in a safe space. In 2017, a tweet from actress Alyssa Milano sparked a global deluge of disclosures and solidarity from women who had been silent about their experiences of sexual assault. Since then, #MeToo has spread across the globe and crossed racial, economic and other boundaries.

#dalitwomenfight

Dalit Women Fight is a community-led digital project to amplify the voices of Dalit women for justice and effectively challenge, tackle, and solve caste-based violence and discrimination; and the culture of impunity.

#UnViloladorEnTuCamino (A rapist in your way)

Chilean feminist collective called Las Tesis carried out a massive performance in Santiago de Chile, in the Plaza de Armas. For more than a year, this group of four women began to spread knowledge about feminism through the performing arts and music so that it would be more remembered in the public and thus the song "A rapist in your way" was born.

Blindfolded they sang "and it was not my fault, nor where I was, nor how I dressed, the rapist is you", part of the song with which they exposed the state violence against women.

The cry from Chile echoed around the world, as more and more women of different races and different languages started to come together to denounce structural violence.

#NiUnaMenos (Not One Less)

Campaign against gender-based violence, especially femicide that started in 2015 as a protest by a collective of artists, journalists and academics in Argentina. It quickly spread across Latin America and has grown into a feminist alliance.



DAY 6

TRANSFORMING FEAR INTO STRONG VULNERABILITY AND LOVING TRUST

By: María Lucía Uribe, Arigatou International Geneva Executive Director

Psalm 23 – A Psalm of David

"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

In a time when many children and young people around the world are experiencing emotional distress and troubling feelings, including anxiety, depression, anger, and worry due to isolation and uncertainty of how long this crisis will last, nurturing young people's spirituality is critical for their social, emotional and mental well-being.

Many young people are living in unsafe and deprived environments that compromise their dignity and capacity for their full and sound development. This is due to the changes in their routines, the disruption of education, the distress caused to some by the rampant violence online, or to others by the lack of access to the Internet or to a computer. The missing participation in significant life events: celebrations, vacations, informal reunions with friends, religious community activities, or inability to say goodbye to family and friends who have passed away; the increasing stress and domestic violence at home; and for millions around the world, the loss of food security and access to health and other basic services.

BIBLICAL INSPIRATION

David gives us very important clues in Psalm 23, and provides us with concrete tools to strengthen children's and young people's spirituality. Psalm 23 comes as a song of joy after going through distressful events, as a poem of hope, restored trust and strong vulnerability. David dares to compare God with a shepherd, as he being one himself, knows the self-giving love only a shepherd gives to its sheep.

The Lord is my shepherd. In the midst of so much uncertainty in our lives and when there is little we can really control; we leave our lives in God's hands. We trust that our lives are guided by God's wisdom and that we are led towards safe and comforting places. This notion of being guided by a shepherd makes us vulnerable and helps us get rid of the armor that we wear at times to protect ourselves. Sheeps are always vulnerable to the dangers in the fields, to the predators that can attack them, and limited by the fact that their bodies cannot run fast. What are the things we cannot control during this time? In who are we placing our trust when we need guidance and support?

The green pastures and quiet waters. When our trust is placed in God and we undress our souls and relax our bodies, we experience tranquility and quietness. David expresses that feeling of refreshment of his soul when brought by his shepherd beside the quiet waters. He is made to lie down in green pastures that provide rest and the nurturing he needs. During this time when our lives have been turned upside down, when young people's normalcy has been challenged, and when many find no safety and joy in their daily lives, the strength that comes from trusting God can restore the sense of being, the sense of connectedness to others, and the sense of belonging when we feel we don't.

I fear no evil. Many children and young people have been experiencing violence at home. For some this has been physical punishment, for others, rape, sexual exploitation and constant abuse; for some, it has been emotional burden, psychological abuse; and for many others, neglect. 'Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me', recalls David in the psalm. How can children and young people who experience violence, fear no evil? The Psalm does not tell that by being shepherded, we will not go through the darkest places, it only talks about strength, the strength that comes from trusting God, from making ourselves vulnerable. The unique strength that comes from within, and that can encourage us to seek help, stand up and say 'no more'. The strength that helps to denounce and guides us through the right paths, the paths of life! What kind of violence are we experiencing? Can we trust God to help us find a way out? Who can we ask for help and support?

Your comfort, goodness and love. God is not only giving us strength, God is helping us walk through difficult places by showing us signs of love, comfort, and goodness. God's rod and staff are designed to let us find support when we can walk no more; they are not to punish us, but to gently show us the way. The rod and staff symbolise the many signs God gives us when we place our trust in him and listen to his guidance. Those signs can be through people put in our paths, messages heard from others, inner voices that gives us comfort. David speaks of the close and intimate fellowship that he experiences with God, when he says ' you prepare a

table before me in the presence of my enemies'. The honor of being seated at a table prepared by God for us, speaks of that relationship that God wants us to experience, a relationship of trust, of being and feeling welcome, of protection, abundant love and safety. David continues, and says 'you anoint my head with oil'; the comfort and strength that God gives us, wouldn't be complete if we are left without healing. God's healing of physical injuries, mental distress, and emotional sadness. The healing that provides the goodness and love that will follow us the rest of our lives! The promise of always being in the presence of God, protected, safe and empowered!

There is transformation in the strength that comes from God; there is transformation in the healing that comes from God; there is transformation when we make ourselves vulnerable and trust that God's immense self-giving love will guide us and make us full again!

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- What prevents you from putting your trust in God?
- What holds you back when you try to make yourself vulnerable?
- What benefits have you experienced when you put your trust completely in God?
- Do some of the 'benefits' that David describes in the Psalm speak to you? How and which ones?
- How can you help others who are experiencing distress, anxiety, depression due to the current situation, to regain strength and build resilience through trusting God?
- How can you become one of the signs that God provides to its people to restore them, protect them and transform them?

BLESSING

Loving God, when life has proven difficult
And I walk through the darkest valley
You are there by my side.

God of light, when life has lost its colors
And I feel I can walk no more,
You are there by side.

Compassionate God, when I have moved away from you
When I have looked for strength somewhere else and forgotten you
You are there by my side.

God of strength, God of healing and goodness
When I feel disconnected, forgotten, betrayed and anxious
You are there by my side.

God of mercy
God of self-giving love
God of restoration and transformation
When I trust in you, when I make myself vulnerable
I am transformed
I am full
I am who you I am meant to be
I am complete with you by my side!

**End the prayer with the song "Your Love is in Me" by Teens for Unity - Focolare Movement*



DAYS OF WORSHIP

RAYS OF HOPE

By: Mikie Roberts, World Council of Churches Programme Executive for Spiritual Life and Faith and Order & Hannelore Schmid, World Council of Churches Programme Assistant on Spiritual Life

PROPOSAL AND GUIDELINES FOR CELEBRATION OF WORSHIP

Please note that you can schedule your day of worship at any point during the week.

PREPARATION OF THE SANCTUARY

A round piece of fabric is placed at the front or at a central location of the sanctuary. From this there are four other pieces of fabric radiating outwards. These will be seen representing the rays of hope that are emanating from the centre which is the source of light. Placed on the circular fabric should be a cross and a bible. Depending on the contexts, other liturgical symbols that are generally used in an ecumenical worship can also be used.

INVITATION

We have gathered as God's people
We gather in the name of Triune God.

We have gathered as followers of Jesus – the Life, the Truth, the Way.
We joyfully answer the invitation of our Lord – come follow me.
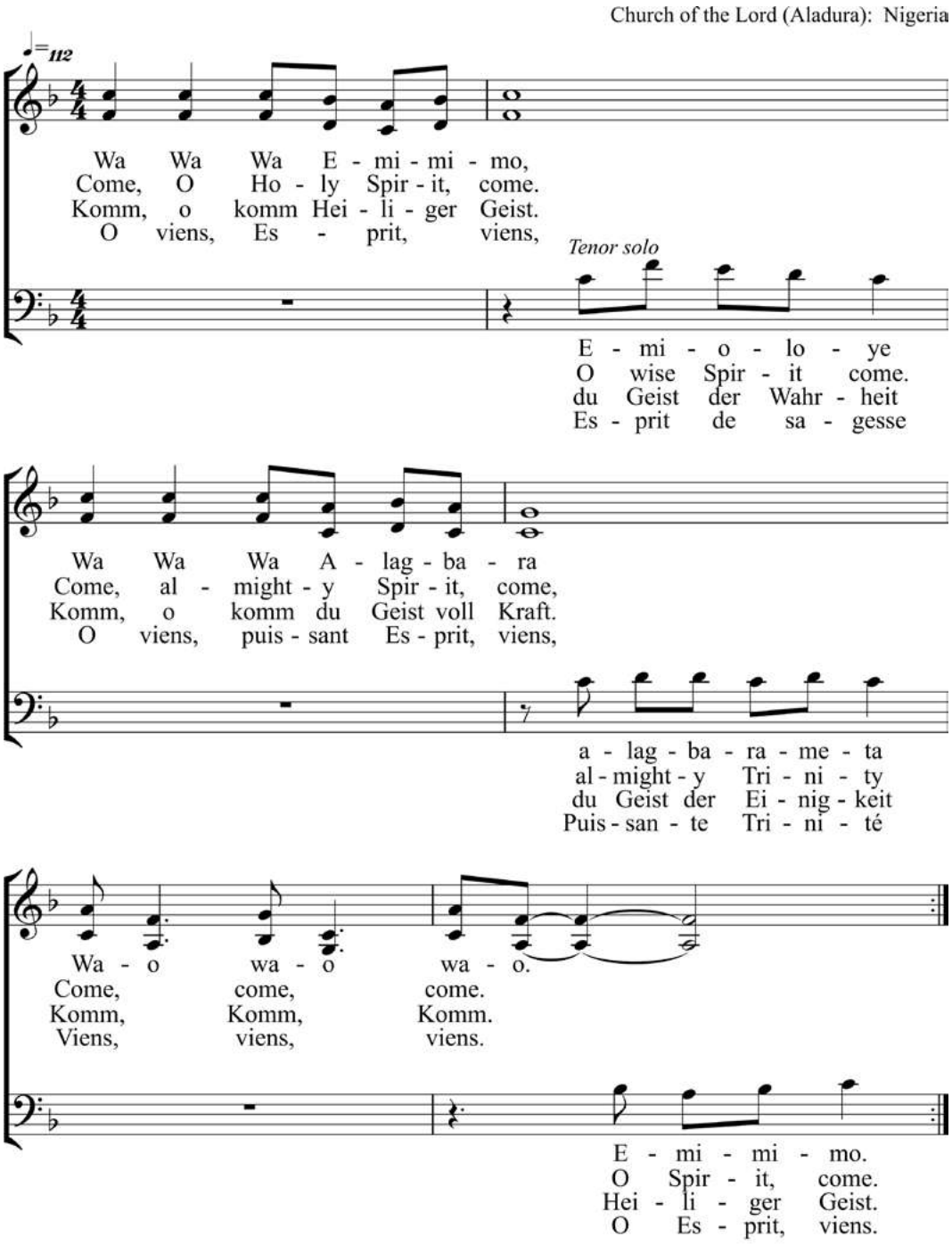
We have gathered as Holy Spirit-led people.
Come now, O Spirit Divine, lead us and fill us today.

We have gathered to worship the God who was, is and will forever be.
May our hope in God be renewed as we live and worship in community.

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, we offer to you on this day our praise and thanksgiving.
We give thanks for the beauty of creation, for all that lives and breathe – on the earth, under the sea or in the air.
We gaze at the mountains which in their awesome grandeur display your might and majesty.
We look out to the sea at the vast horizons, observing the waves breaking along the coast, and therein we witness again the beauty of your creation.
All of creation displays your greatness.
And yet we humbly confess that we have often marred and misused your creation.
We have defaced nature's beauty for our own selfish purposes.
We have trampled upon those who are weak while seeking to enlarge our coffers.
Each day we witness acts of injustice to the cosmos and to each other as humankind created in your image and likeness.
Our hope in humanity wanes and as we destroy each other out of pride and greed.
We confess too that we are struggling to keep our hope in you.
Our prayers seem to go unanswered as we plead – how long O Lord.
So, we come now asking for the rays of hope in you and in humanity to be rekindled, so that they may shine brightly for the world to see.
Quicken our faith, we pray.
Stir us to act faithfully as your disciples.
Make of us again your people – a community that has been called out and that lives in faith, hope, and love.
God, we believe. We pray you, help our unbelief and keep us hopeful to the very end;
We pray in the name of Jesus, who gives us the hope of the resurrection. **Amen.**

Wa Wa Emimimo

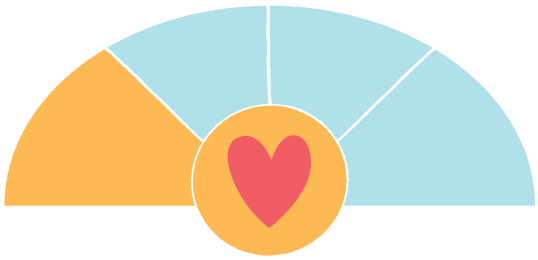


Yoruban and music as taught by Samuel Solanke © The Church of the Lord (Aladura), P.O. Box 71 Sagamo, Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria.
Notation and English paraphrase by I-to Loh © 1986 WCC and the Asian Institute for Liturgy and Music.
German © Wolfgang Leyk. French: Joëlle Gouël © 1990 WCC.

Wa Wa Emimimo

Provided to YouTube by NAXOS of America

Wa Wa Wa Emimimo (Come, O Holy Spirit) (Nigeria) • Chorus Pro Musica



THE FIRST RAY

LIVING HOPE

Preparation: At this point, the participant(s) involved go and hold the piece of fabric representing the first ray Living Hope. Where possible, these words can be represented on the fabric and held in a position so that all can see.

1 PETER 1: 3 – 12

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, 7 so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours made careful search and inquiry, 11 inquiring about the person or time that the Spirit of Christ within them indicated when it testified in advance to the sufferings destined for Christ and the subsequent glory. 12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in regard to the things that have now been announced to you through those who brought you good news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look!"
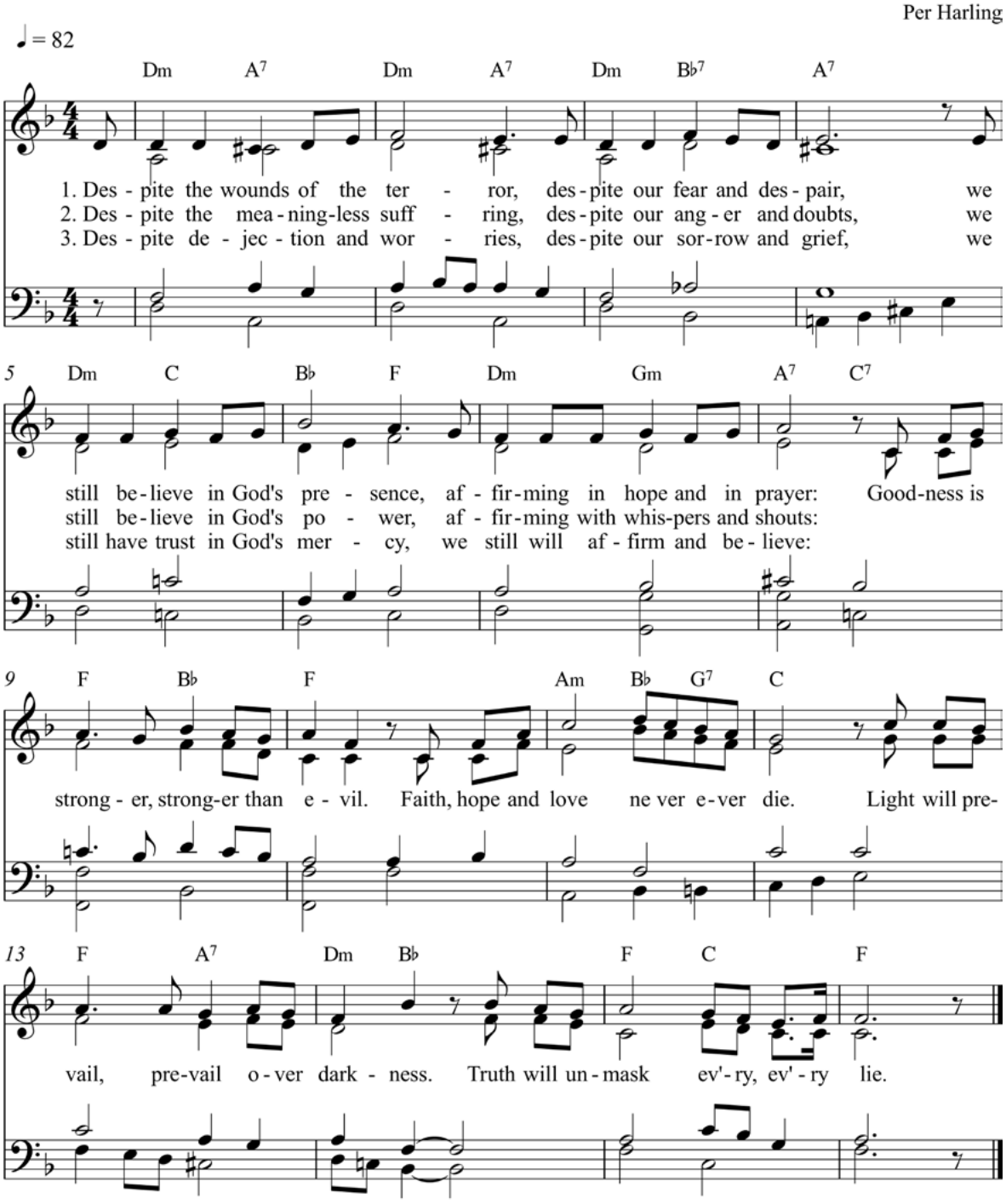
REFLECTION

Living Hope is more than just being optimistic that things will eventually improve. It is not simply keeping our fingers crossed and adopting a posture of uncertainty. It is not tossing a coin realizing that things can go either this way or that. Living Hope is grounded not in the circumstances around us or for that matter how we react or fail to react to these circumstances. Living Hope finds its foundation in our faith in the resurrected Christ. Living Hope affirms that because we believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, we have been given a new life. When our lives are in Christ, then the new birth that has been given, this gift we call salva-

tion, becomes too the frame and the foundation of our hope. As communities and individuals, we are encouraged to live our lives, individually and communally, through the lens of Living Hope. When we do, then this ray of Living Hope encourages us to move beyond optimism or expectancy and to embrace that because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have a Living Hope.

Despite the Wounds of the Terror

Per Harling



Music and words © Per Harling, Uppsala, Sweden

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

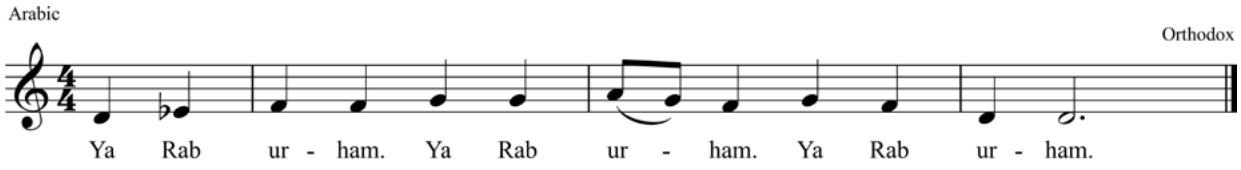
Merciful God, we remember before you today those for whom their hope in Christ and their faith has been challenged because of the current conditions they face.

We pray especially for those who have suffered and continue to face injustice because of their faith in the risen Lord.

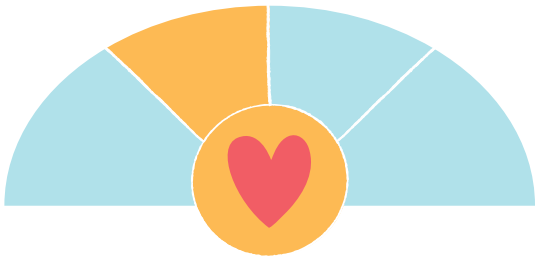
Grant them the assurance of your abiding presence and may their hope in Christ be affirmed through the work of the Holy Spirit.

We pray for believers everywhere that we may continue to bear witness to the Gospel, always being ready to give an account of the hope that lies within us.

Amen.



Kyrie eleison. Lord have mercy on us. Herr, erbarme dich unser. Seigneur, ai pitié de nous. Señor, ten piedad de nosotros.



THE SECOND RAY

HOPE IN DESPAIR

Preparation: At this point, the participant(s) involved go and hold the piece of fabric representing the second ray Hope in Despair. Where possible, these words can be represented on the fabric and held in a position so that all can see.
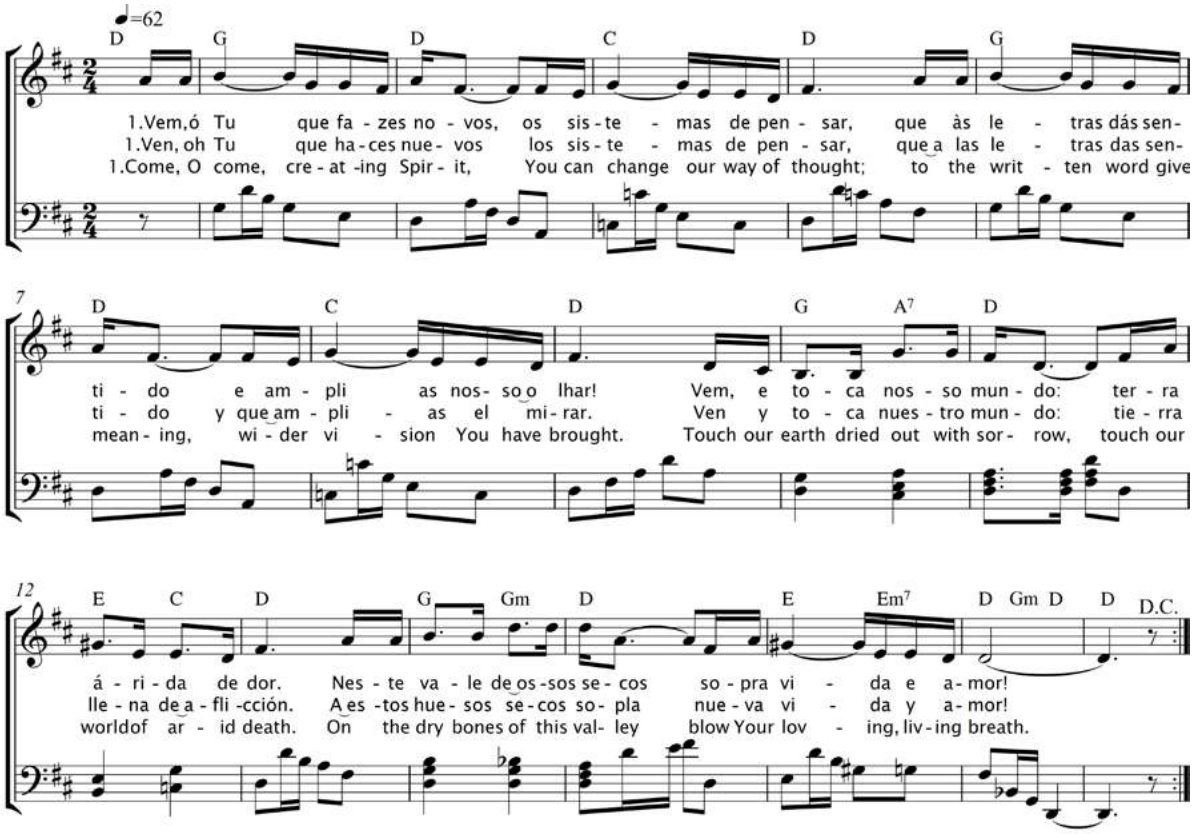
EZEKIEL 37: 1 – 14

1 The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in
the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. 2 He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the
valley, and they were very dry. 3 He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord God,
you know." 4 Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word
of the Lord. 5 Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.
6 I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in
you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord."
7 So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling,
and the bones came together, bone to its bone. 8 I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had
come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. 9 Then he said to me,
"Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the
four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." 10 I prophesied as he commanded
me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.
11 Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up,
and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' 12 Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord
God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you
back to the land of Israel. 13 And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you
up from your graves, O my people. 14 I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you
on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord."

REFLECTION

Some may suggest that the year 2020 can be described as a year of despair. Though at first this may be deemed as too pessimistic, yet for those who do they would certainly not be fully wrong. For with the world being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, despair is in no short supply. What else might one feel as one witnesses all that has unfolded as a result of this pandemic: un-told death, fear and panic, shrinking economies, rising unemployment, increase in human rights abuses, widespread hunger, increased mental health challenges and rising numbers of peopl facing poverty. The list goes on. Our present despair mirrors that of God's people in the vision that the Spirit of the Lord showed Ezekiel. For many these past few months have been like living in a valley of dry bones. However, **Hope in Despair** affirms that in the face of misery, anguish, desolation when it seems that there is no light at the end of tunnel, God is still at work. Amid our deep despair and uncertainty, we too hold on to the hope that the same life-giving Spirit will breathe new life – a life that is eternal, joy-filled, purpose-filled and; nourished and sustained by God.

Vem Santo Espirito (Come, O Come, Creating Spirit)



Music and original words: Simei Monteiro © GBGMusik, USA. Spanish © Juan Gattinoni. English: Shirely Erena Murray © Hope Publishing Co., USA.

2. Vem, ó Tu que intercedes,
e que gemes junto à nós.
Que ressoas nos lamentos
e aqueces nossa voz!
Sê a chama que alimenta
e incandesce o coração.
Vem, e rompe de repente
as amarras da omissão!

3. Vem, ó Tu que és dom divino
e convence-nos do mal.
Trava as máquinas da morte
e da força irracional.
Vem, transforma planos tolos
em projetos de viver.
Vem, inunda nossa era
de esperança e de saber!

2. Ven Oh Tú que intercedes,
gimes con nuestro dolor.
Tú que escuchas el lamento
y que alientas el clamor!
Sé la llama que alimenta
y que enciende el corazón.
Ven, desata de repente
las amarras de omisión.

3. Ven, Tú que eres don divino,
y convéncenos del mal.
Frena máquinas de muerte
y de fuerza irracional.
Ven, transforma planes locos,
en proyectos de vivir.
Ven, inunda nuestro tiempo
de esperanza y de saber.

2. Come, O Spirit of compassion,
crying out, You intercede
echoing our lamentation
cheer the voice in which we plead.
Be the flame that feeds our courage,
be the fire that fills our veins,
from our apathy's inaction
come and free us from these chains.

3. Come, O come, You gift of heaven
and convince us of our sin;
halt the weapons of destruction
and our madness, deep within.
Change our foolish ways of working
into plans for life and scope,
come and flood our world with wisdom,
come and flood our age with hope.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Life-giving Spirit, today we invite you to visit us in those dry and deserted places.

Our lives have been consumed by despair caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We feel enveloped by disease, sickness, death, disruption of our normal lives.
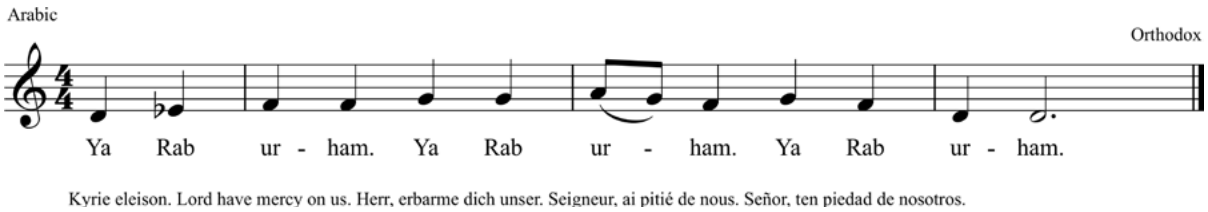
Our despair has immobilized us, causing us to feel hopeless and helpless.

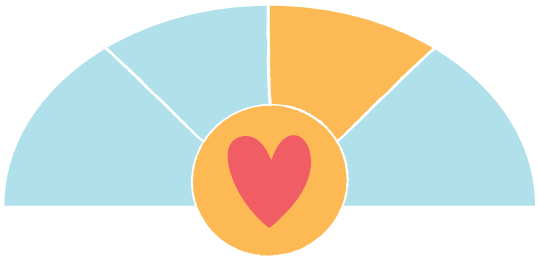
But we confess and affirm even now that you can make all things new.

Breathe new life among all people everywhere, so that we may once again be enabled to rise above our despair.

Put us back together, so that as individuals and as communities we will affirm – that all hope is not lost and that the Spirit is still at work in the earth.

Amen.





THE THIRD RAY

HOPE FOR CREATION

Preparation: At this point, the participant(s) involved go and hold the piece of fabric representing the third ray Hope for Creation. Where possible, these words can be represented on the fabric and held in a position so that all can see

GENESIS 9: 8 – 17

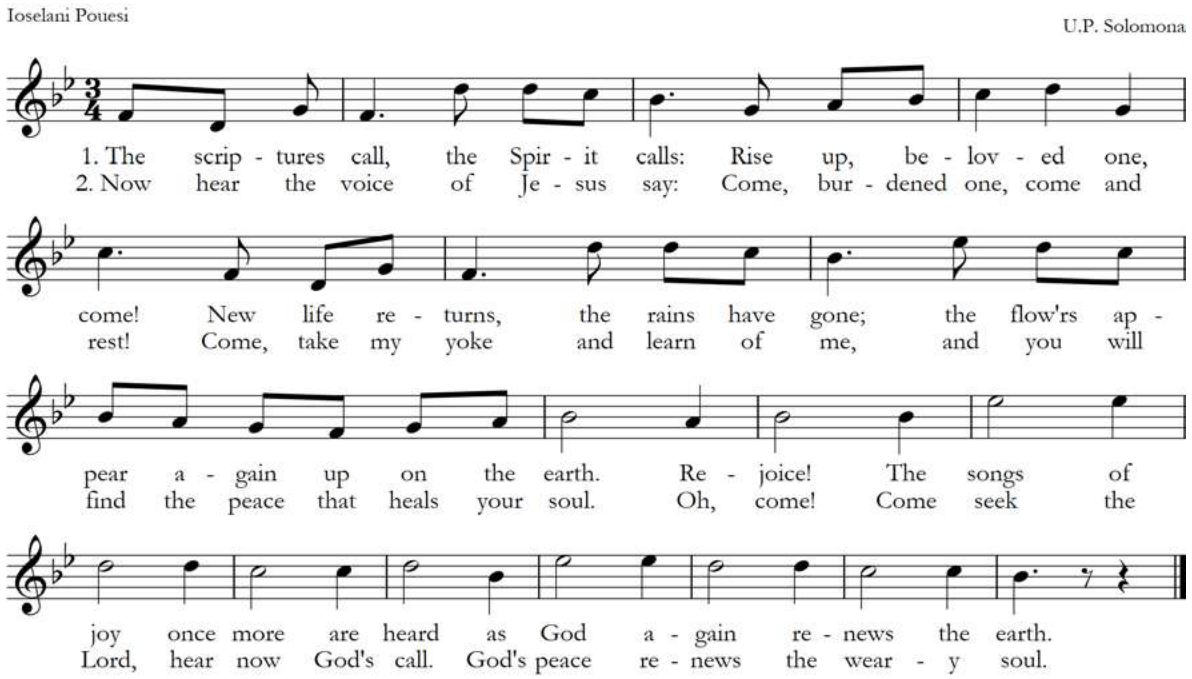
8 Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 9 "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you
and your descendants after you, 10 and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic
animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. 11 I establish my
covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall
there be a flood to destroy the earth." 12 God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between
me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: 13 I have set my bow in
the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. 14 When I bring clouds over
the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, 15 I will remember my covenant that is between me and you
and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.
16 When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and
every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." 17 God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant
that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

REFLECTION

There is no denying that the earth and all of creation is in trouble. Trouble? What sort of trouble we might ask? Well, according to science, we are now living on a planet that is facing the consequences of unprecedented rising temperatures. Of course, there are those who would want to deny science and push the case that global warming is a hoax or fake news. But science is clear and the time for us to act has passed. So, there is an urgent call for us to care for creation by making some changes both as individuals and communities. Yet one feels a sense of hopelessness as our governments engage in discussions and sign treaties but fail to implement the terms of these agreements. And while the powerful nations fail to act, those who live in small island states and whose carbon output footprint is the smallest usually suffer the greatest. That hopelessness in caring for the earth and all of creation is underscored when we see that the spirit of consumerism

and selfish greed continues to dictate personal choices. But there is hope for the earth and all creation. And how ironic that we see that hope with each rainbow that forms in the heavens. Our **Hope for Creation** rests not on the actions of governments, communities, and individuals but ultimately in God's covenant established with Noah. That promise still stands. Might the beauty of each rainbow stir in us **Hope for Creation**.
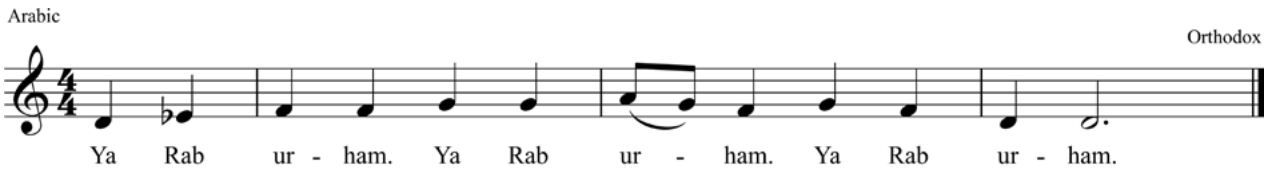
Aliitasi



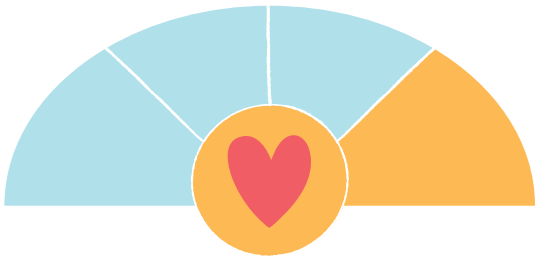
Words: Ioselani Pouesi. Music: M.P. Solomona © 1986 O Le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa.
English adaptation: Andrew Donaldson © 2013 WCC, P.O. Box 2100, CH-1211 Geneva 2.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Creator God,
you have created the earth and all that there is – all life comes from you.
We give thanks that you continue to take delight in your creation,having declared it all to be good.
Forgive us for not always delighting in your creation.
Forgive us for abusing and squandering nature's resources that you have provided for our well-being.
Help us to be good stewards of all that you have created, and may each rainbow revive our hope for the restoration of the earth and all that you have created. **Amen.**



Kyrie eleison. Lord have mercy on us. Herr, erbarme dich unser. Seigneur, ai pitié de nous. Señor, ten piedad de nosotros.



THE FOURTH RAY

GOSPEL OF HOPE

Preparation: At this point, the participant(s) involved go and hold the piece of fabric representing the third ray Hope for Creation. Where possible, these words can be represented on the fabric and held in a position so that all can see.

LUKE 4: 16 – 21

16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath
day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him.
He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:
18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."
20 And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue
were fixed on him. 21 Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your
hearing."

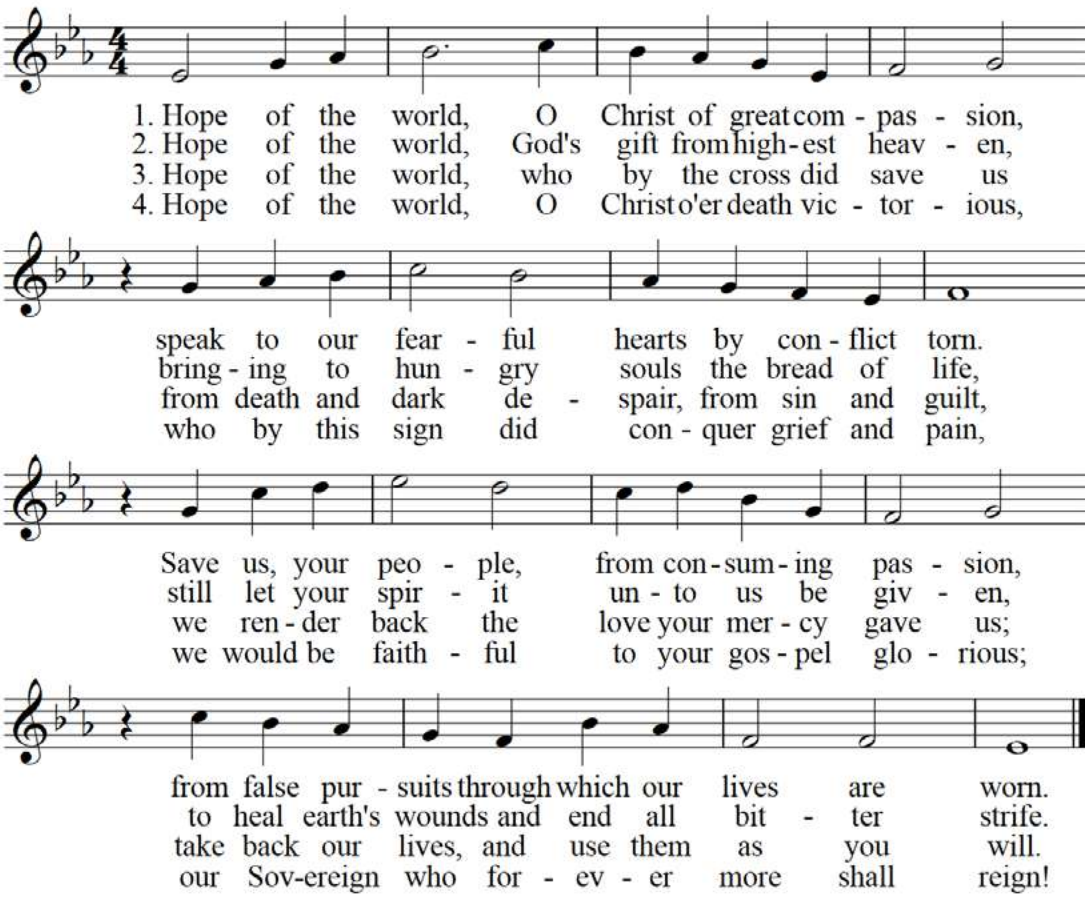
REFLECTION

Have you ever wondered what thoughts would have entered the minds of those who were in the synagogue on that sabbath as they heard Jesus utter these words? All eyes were fixed on him probably wondering how this new rabbi would interpret the words of the prophet. Here was an audience that would have heard these words being read for centuries. Yet here was an audience made up of Jews who were living under the occupancy and tyranny of the Roman government. They would have heard these words and most likely only thought of them as being applicable only to the listeners of Isaiah's day. But their ears heard words that they least expected. Jesus claimed that Isaiah's words of promise were now being fulfilled. That was novel. But for an audience living under the Roman rule, Jesus embodying the prophecy of Isaiah was

Good news. In these verses we see a summary of the essence and substance of the ministry of Jesus. As followers of Jesus, we too must be guided by these same words as the summary of our Gospel manifesto. When we do, then the Gospel is not only Good News but more precisely Good News of Hope. For whom? The poor. The imprisoned. The hurting. The loss. The oppressed. It is for all who will hear and believe. We therefore proclaim a Gospel of Hope to the world.

Hope of the World
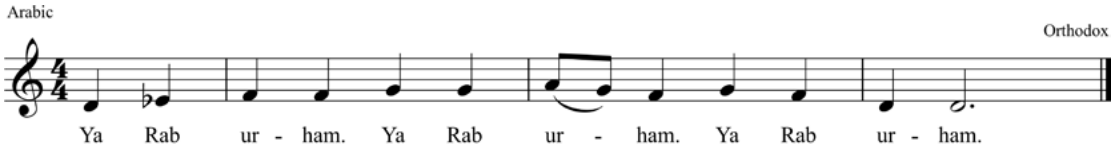
Georgia Harkness: USA — V. Earle Copes: USA



Music: V. Earle Copes, USA. Words: 1954 Georgia Harkness, USA; alt. © Renewal 1982 by the Hymn Society of Canada and the USA. *This text was written for the 2nd WCC Assembly.*

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Christ, our Saviour,
May our ears be opened to hear again with clarity the truth of your message of hope.
May our tongues be loosened to proclaim your message of hope.
Endue us with your grace as we share this Gospel of Hope specially to those who feel that they have been pushed to the margins by the world's systems.
Holy Saviour,
May we possess your Christ-like compassion that stirs others to live hopeful lives.
We pray that the hope of the Gospel may build us up as believers,
causing us to live as a community of the faithful.
May we welcome all people among us so that they may know you as the Christ,
the Living Hope. **Amen.**



Kyrie eleison. Lord have mercy on us. Herr, erbarme dich unser. Seigneur, ai pitié de nous. Señor, ten piedad de nosotros.

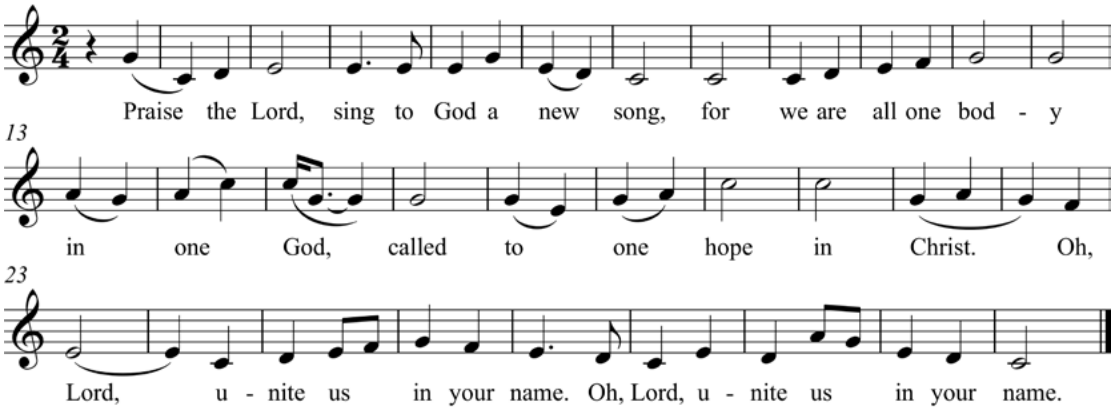
PRAYERS OF HOPE FOR INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

Christ, our Saviour,

L: We bring to you the wastelands of the earth, O God:
- the no-hope places, where oppression and injustice rule,
- the deserts, where people die of hunger and thirst,
- the battlefields, where lives are invaluable and cruelly cut short,
- the earth, depleted and devastated by human greed,
- the soil, that will not yield.

C: (Name those places loudly or silently.)

Praise the Lord, Sing to God a New Song



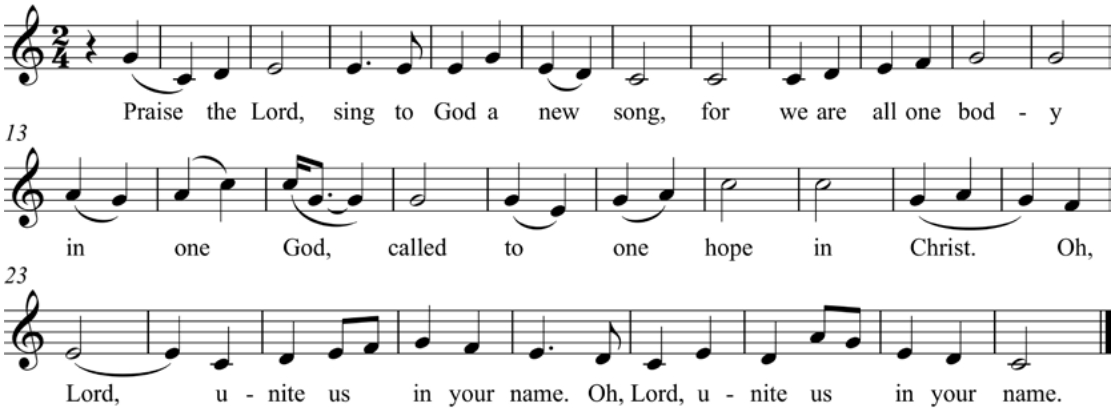
From Thailand. English: Ruth Srisuwan.

L: We bring to you the wastelands of our life in community:

- the parishes where hope has died,
- the missions that have lost their vigour,
- the councils that fear and suspect change,
- the communities of faith that are in conflict,
- the young people who are undermined,
- the immigrants who are not accepted,
- the strangers who are suspected,
- the marginalized because they are different from us.

C: (Name briefly your concerns aloud or silently)

Praise the Lord, Sing to God a New Song



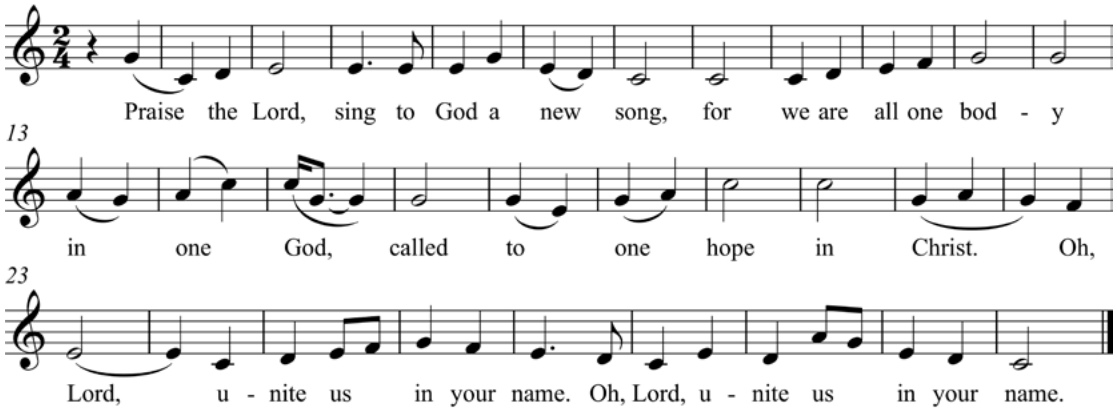
From Thailand. English: Ruth Srisuwan.

L: We bring to you the wastelands of our lives:

- when faith and hope are in dust and ashes,
- when the fruit of the Spirit is not in evidence,
- when love does not find expression in our lives,
- when searching for meanings seems failed,
- when loneliness is so distressing,
- when being bullied becomes a daily routine,
- when demands and expectations from others betray our true selves.

C: (Name briefly your concerns aloud or silently)

Praise the Lord, Sing to God a New Song



From Thailand. English: Ruth Srisuwan.
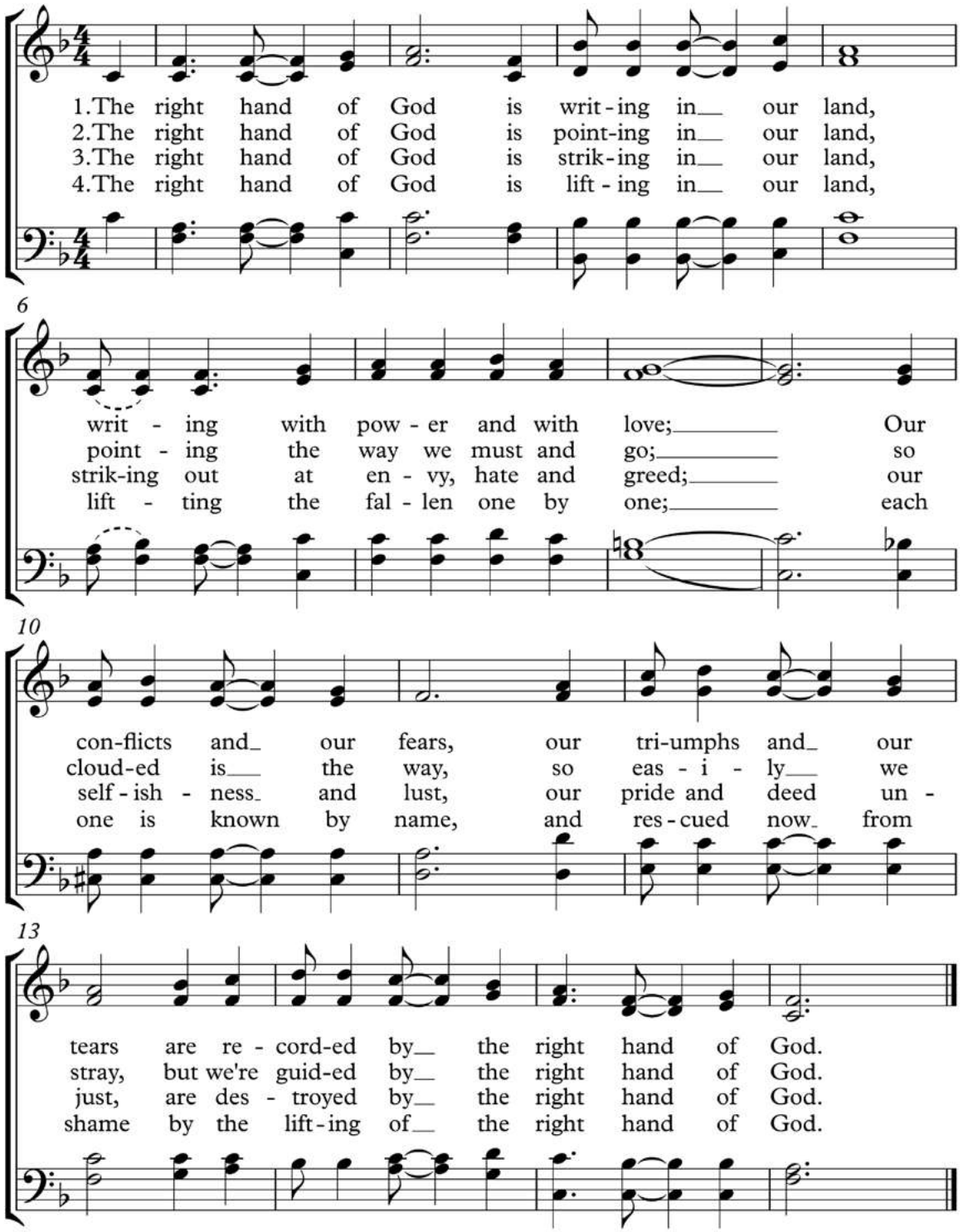
Our hope is affirmed as we pray together, each in our own language:

Our Father...

The Right Hand of God

Patrick Prescod

Noel Dexter: Jamaica



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Click here to play The Right Hand of God on Youtube by British Methodist Youth Choir
Provided to YouTube by CDBaby

BENEDICTION

We go into the world as hopeful believers, the people of God proclaiming the Good News that Christ is the Living Hope, that there is hope amid despair and that all of God's creation can live in the joyful hope of resurrection.
Amen.



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Bible Reading Plan: Ecumenical working group for Bible reading (Ökumenische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Bibellesen – ÖAB) - translation from German to English by Valeria Arriaga Mejía

Spanish Translation by Manuel Quintero

French Translation by Jean-François Delteil

Design by Alisa Wismer and World YWCA

Funded by Norwegian Church Aid (NCA)

BIBLE READING PLAN

November 2020 — November 2021

NOVEMBER 2020		DECEMBER 2020		JANUARY 2021	
1	Acts 12,1-11	1	Isaiah 60,19-22	1	Psalms 8
2	Acts 12,12-19	2	Isaiah 61,1-3	2	Luke 3,1-6
3	1 Corinthians 12,12-20	3	Isaiah 61,10-11	3	Psalms 100
4	1 Corinthians 12,21-26	4	Isaiah 62,6-12	4	Luke 3,7-14
5	1 Corinthians 12,27-31a	5	Isaiah 63,15-19a	5	Luke 3,15-20
6	1 Corinthians 12,31b–13,3	6	Isaiah 63,19b-64,3	6	Luke 3,21-38
7	1 Corinthians 13,4-7	7	Isaiah 65,16b-25	7	Luke 4,1-13
8	1 Corinthians 13,8-13	8	Isaiah 66,18b-19	8	Luke 4,14-21
9	1 Corinthians 15,1-11	9	Zechariah 1,1-6	9	Luke 4,22-30
10	1 Corinthians 15,12-22	10	Zechariah 1,13-17	10	Psalms 72
11	1 Corinthians 15,23-28	11	Zechariah 2,5-9	11	Luke 4,31-37
12	1 Corinthians 15,58	12	Zechariah 2,10-17	12	Luke 4,38-44
13	1 Corinthians 16,13-14	13	Zechariah 8,1-8	13	Luke 5,1-11
14	2 Timothy 1,1-5	14	Zechariah 8,14-17	14	Luke 5,12-16
15	2 Timothy1,6-11	15	Zechariah 8,20-23	15	Luke 5,17-26
16	2 Timothy 2,1-5	16	Zechariah 9,9-10	16	Luke 5,27-32
17	2 Timothy 2,11-13	17	Luke 1,1-4	17	Psalms 40
18	2 Timothy 3,1-5	18	Luke 1,5-17	18	Luke 5,33-39
19	2 Timothy 3,14-15	19	Luke 1,18-25	19	Luke 6,1-5
20	2 Timothy 3,16-17	20	Luke 1,26-38	20	Luke 6,6-11
21	2 Timothy 4,7-8	21	Luke 1,39-45	21	Luke 6,12-16
22	2 Timothy 4,9-15	22	Luke 1,46-56	22	Luke 6,17-26
23	2 Timothy 4,16-18	23	Luke 1,57-66	23	Luke 6,27-35
24	Psalms 126	24	Luke 1,67-80	24	Psalms 16
25	Isaiah 56,1-2.6-7	25	Luke 2,1-7	25	Luke 6,36-42
26	Isaiah 58,1-9a	26	Luke 2,8-21	26	Luke 6,43-46
27	Isaiah 58,9b-12	27	Luke 2,25-32	27	Luke 6,47-49
28	Isaiah 59,9-15a	28	Luke 2,36-40	28	Luke 7,1-10
29	Isaiah 59,15b-21	29	Luke 2,41-52	29	Luke 7,11-17
30	Isaiah 60,1-3	30	Psalms 131	30	Luke 7,18-23
		31	Psalms 133	31	Psalms 18,1-20

BIBLE READING PLAN

November 2020 – November 2021

FEBRUARY 2021		MARCH 2021		APRIL 2021	
1	Luke 7,24-35	1	Luke 11,29-32	1	Luke 23,26-31
2	Luke 7,36–8,3	2	Luke 11,33-36	2	Luke 23,32-49
3	Luke 8,4-15	3	Luke 11,37-54	3	Luke 23,50-56
4	Luke 8,16-18	4	Luke 18,31-43	4	Luke 24,1-12
5	Luke 8,19-21	5	Luke 19,1-10	5	Luke 24,13-35
6	Luke 8,22-25	6	Luke 19,11-27	6	Luke 24,36-49
7	Psalms 18,21-51	7	Psalms 34	7	Luke 24,50-53
8	Luke 8,26-39	8	Luke 19,28-40	8	Colossians 1,1-14
9	Luke 8,40-56	9	Luke 19,41-48	9	Colossians 1,15-23
10	Luke 9,1-9	10	Luke 20,1-8	10	Colossians 1,24-29
11	Luke 9,10-17	11	Luke 20,9-19	11	Psalms 116
12	Luke 9,18-27	12	Luke 20,20-26	12	Colossians 2,1-7
13	Luke 9,28-36	13	Luke 20,27-40	13	Colossians 2,8-15
14	Psalms 15	14	Psalms 84	14	Colossians 2,16-23
15	Luke 9,37-45	15	Luke 20,41-47	15	Colossians 3,1-4
16	Luke 9,46-48	16	Luke 21,1-4	16	Colossians 3,5-11
17	Luke 9,49-50	17	Luke 21,5-19	17	Colossians 3,12-17
18	Luke 9,51-56	18	Luke 21,20-28	18	Psalms 23
19	Luke 9,57-62	19	Luke 21,29-38	19	Colossians 3,18–4,1
20	Luke 10,1-16	20	Luke 22,1-6	20	Colossians 4,2-6
21	Psalms 10	21	Psalms 22,1-22	21	Colossians 4,7-18
22	Luke 10,17-24	22	Luke 22,7-23	22	Daniel 1,1-21
23	Luke 10,25-37	23	Luke 22,24-30	23	Daniel 2,1-23
24	Luke 10,38-42	24	Luke 22,31-38	24	Daniel 2,24-49
25	Luke 11,1-4	25	Luke 22,39-46	25	Psalms 67
26	Luke 11,5-13	26	Luke 22,47-53	26	Daniel 3,1-30
27	Luke 11,14-28	27	Luke 22,54-62	27	Daniel 5,1-30
28	Psalms 25	28	Psalms 22,23-32	28	Daniel 6,1-29
	Isaiah 59,15b-21	29	Luke 22,63-71	29	Daniel 7,1-15
	Isaiah 60,1-3	30	Luke 23,1-12	30	Daniel 7,16-28
		31	Luke 23,13-25		Psalms 18,1-20

BIBLE READING PLAN

November 2020 – November 2021

MAY 2021		JUNE 2021		JULY 2021	
1	Daniel 8,1-27	1	Acts 4,32-37	1	Acts 15,1-12
2	Psalms 45	2	Acts 5,1-16	2	Acts 15,13-35
3	Daniel 9,1-19	3	Acts 5,17-33	3	Acts 15,36–16,5
4	Daniel 9,20-27	4	Acts 5,34-42	4	Psalms 7
5	Daniel 10,1-21	5	Acts 6,1-7	5	Acts 16,6-15
6	Daniel 12,1-13	6	Psalms 3	6	Acts 16,16-22
7	Proverbs 25,11-28	7	Acts 6,8-15	7	Acts 16,23-40
8	Proverbs 26,1-17	8	Acts 7,1-29	8	Acts 17,1-15
9	Psalms 1	9	Acts 7,30-53	9	Acts 17,16-34
10	Proverbs 27,1-7	10	Acts 7,54–8,3	10	Acts 18,1-22
11	Proverbs 28,12-28	11	Acts 8,4-25	11	Psalms 26
12	Proverbs 29,1-18	12	Acts 8,26-40	12	Acts 18,23–19,7
13	Psalms 47	13	Psalms 13	13	Acts 19,8-22
14	Proverbs 30,1-19	14	Acts 9,1-9	14	Acts 19,23-40
15	Proverbs 31,1-9	15	Acts 9,10-19a	15	Acts 20,1-16
16	Psalms 27	16	Acts 9,19b-31	16	Acts 20,17-38
17	Acts 1,1-14	17	Acts 9,32-43	17	Acts 21,1-14
18	Acts 1,15-26	18	Acts 10,1-23	18	Psalms 9
19	Acts 2,1-13	19	Acts 10,24-48	19	Acts 21,15-26
20	Acts 2,14-21	20	Psalms 103	20	Acts 21,27-40
21	Acts 2,22-28	21	Acts 11,1-18	21	Acts 22,1-21
22	Acts 2,29-36	22	Acts 11,19-30	22	Acts 22,22-30
23	Acts 2,37-41	23	Acts 12,1-25	23	Acts 23,1-11
24	Acts 2,42-47	24	Acts 13,1-12	24	Acts 23,12-35
25	Acts 3,1-10	25	Acts 13,13-25	25	Psalms 11
26	Acts 3,11-16	26	Acts 13,26-43	26	Acts 24,1-27
27	Acts 3,17-26	27	Psalms 5	27	Acts 25,1-12
28	Acts 4,1-12	28	Acts 13,44-52	28	Acts 25,13-27
29	Acts 4,13-22	29	Acts 14,1-20a	29	Acts 26,1-23
30	Psalms 29	30	Acts 14,20b-28	30	Acts 26,24-32
31	Acts 4,23-31		Luke 23,13-25	31	Acts 27,1-12

BIBLE READING PLAN

November 2020 – November 2021

AUGUST 2021		SEPTEMBER 2021		OCTOBER 2021	
1	Psalms 63	1	Ezra 7,1-28	1	Hebrews 10,19-31
2	Acts 27,13-44	2	Haggai 1,1-15	2	Hebrews 10,32-39
3	Acts 28,1-16	3	Haggai 2,1-9	3	Psalms 104
4	Acts 28,17-31	4	Haggai 2,10-23	4	Hebrews 11,1-7
5	2 Kings 2,1-18	5	Psalms 119,137-144	5	Hebrews 11,8-22
6	2 Kings 4,1-7	6	Nehemiah 1,1-11	6	Hebrews 11,23-31
7	2 Kings 5,1-19a	7	Nehemiah 2,1-20	7	Hebrews 11,32-40
8	Psalms 30	8	Nehemiah 4,1-17	8	Hebrews 12,1-17
9	2 Kings 6,8-23	9	Nehemiah 5,1-19	9	Hebrews 12,18-29
10	2 Kings 16,1-16	10	Nehemiah 6,1–7,3	10	Psalms 32
11	2 Kings 17,1-23	11	Nehemiah 8,1-18	11	Hebrews 13,1-8
12	2 Kings 17,24-41	12	Psalms 119,145-152	12	Hebrews 13,9-14
13	2 Kings 18,1-12	13	Nehemiah 10,1.29-40	13	Hebrews 13,15-25
14	2 Kings 18,13-37	14	Nehemiah 12,27-43	14	Luke 12,1-12
15	Psalms 17	15	Nehemiah 13,15-22	15	Luke 12,13-21
16	2 Kings 19,1-19	16	Hebrews 1,1–2,4	16	Luke 12,22-34
17	2 Kings 19,20-37	17	Hebrews 2,5-18	17	Psalms 62
18	2 Kings 22,1-13	18	Hebrews 3,1-19	18	Luke 12,35-48
19	2 Kings 22,14–23,3	19	Psalms 119,153-160	19	Luke 12,49-53
20	2 Kings 23,4-25	20	Hebrews 4,1-13	20	Luke 12,54-59
21	2 Kings 23,26-37	21	Hebrews 4,14–5,10	21	Luke 13,1-9
22	Psalms 12	22	Hebrews 5,11–6,8	22	Luke 13,10-17
23	2 Kings 24,1-20	23	Hebrews 6,9-20	23	Luke 13,18-21
24	2 Kings 25,1-21	24	Hebrews 7,1-10	24	Psalms 19
25	2 Kings 25,22-30	25	Hebrews 7,11-28	25	Luke 13,22-30
26	Ezra 1,1-11	26	Psalms 110	26	Luke 13,31-35
27	Ezra 3,1-13	27	Hebrews 8,1-13	27	Luke 14,1-6
28	Ezra 4,1-24	28	Hebrews 9,1-15	28	Luke 14,7-14
29	Psalms 28	29	Hebrews 9,16-28	29	Luke 14,15-24
30	Ezra 5,1-17	30	Hebrews 10,1-18	30	Luke 14,25-35
31	Ezra 6,1-22		Luke 23,13-25	31	Psalms 20

BIBLE READING PLAN

November 2020 – November 2021

NOVEMBER 2021	
1	Luke 15,1-10
2	Luke 15,11-32
3	Luke 16,1-9
4	Luke 16,10-13
5	Luke 16,14-18
6	Luke 16,19-31
7	Psalms 21
8	Luke 17,1-10
9	Luke 17,11-19
10	Luke 17,20-37
11	Luke 18,1-8
12	Luke 18,9-17
13	Lukas 18,18-30
14	Psalms 6
15	1 Thess 1,1-10
16	1 Thess 2,1-12
17	1 Thess 2,13-20
18	1 Thess 3,1-13
19	1 Thess 4,1-12
20	1 Thess 4,13-18
21	Psalms 4
22	1 Thess 5,1-11
23	1 Thess 5,12-28
24	2 Thess 1,1-12
25	2 Thess 2,1-12
26	2 Thess 2,13–3,5
27	2 Thess 3,6-18
28	Psalms 24
29	Zechariah 1,1-6
30	Zechariah 1,7-17

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