

lentevent)

A photograph of three young children of African descent smiling and climbing a wooden structure made of beams. The child on the left is wearing a red shirt and patterned pants. The child in the middle is wearing a white shirt and a black headscarf. The child on the right is wearing a patterned dress. The background is a light-colored wall.

# 40 DAYS OF HOPE

Six Bible Studies for the Lenten Journey

By Rev Dr Cliff Bird

Prayers by Rev Jon Humphries



UnitingWorld  
connecting communities for life

'I warmly commend the Lent Event Bible studies as a way to deepen our personal and communal Lenten journey. Cliff Bird has distilled, in the Lenten gospel readings, the deep hopefulness that enables us to embrace Christ's challenge to live oriented to the Reign of God. The authentic stories from our partner churches further enlighten us to God's work in the world today, inspiring us in practical ways to live out the Kingdom.'

*Rev Alistair Macrae*

lentevent)



UnitingWorld  
connecting communities for life

Copyright © 2015 UnitingWorld  
ISBN 978-0-646-93027-5

UnitingWorld  
PO Box A2266  
Sydney South NSW 1235

e: [info@unitingworld.org.au](mailto:info@unitingworld.org.au)  
t: (02) 8267 4267

### **Permission to reproduce this booklet**

UnitingWorld is keen to make this Bible Study Discussion Series widely available and permission is granted to reproduce and transmit this material, provided UnitingWorld is acknowledged as the resource originator.

All prayers by Rev Jon Humphries. Lent Event resources can be downloaded free of charge from [www.lentevent.com](http://www.lentevent.com). Printed copies can be ordered by calling (02) 8267 4267.

All photographs courtesy of UnitingWorld Relief and Development.

# CONTENTS

---

<b>About UnitingWorld</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>A word about Lent</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>From the Author</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>About the Bible Studies</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>The Bible Studies</b>	
Study 1 – Hope and our Christian Journey: Living Today’s Will of God	8
Study 2 – Hope for All People: The New Exodus Beckons	14
Study 3 – Hope for All Creation: When Eco-Justice Prevails	20
Study 4 – Hope in Unlikely Places: Inclusion of Non-Believers	26
Study 5 – Hope Overflowing: A Glimpse of Life at its Fullest	32
Study 6 – Hope Leads Us Forward: Deeds of Love amidst Schemes of Death	38
<b>Daily Prayers</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Project Information</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>Donation Form</b>	<b>85</b>

# ABOUT UNITINGWORLD

---

UnitingWorld is a national agency of the Uniting Church in Australia. Our vision is to see transformed communities who honour God, experience hope and well-being and live free from poverty and injustice. We achieve this through genuine and vibrant partnerships between people and communities here in Australia, Asia, Africa and the Pacific.

We believe this is what it means to partner in God's mission.

Connecting Australian church communities with this mission is a big part of what we do. We achieve this by helping our church here in Australia - from individuals to congregations to youth groups to schools - to be effective global partners who are passionate about God's mission in the world and their role in it.

---

**It's all about developing real connections on a global level.**

---

For over a decade, Lent Event has invited Australian congregations to a deeper understanding of what poverty is and highlighted the imperative for the Church today to embrace those on the margins, to seek justice and to share resources.

Bible Studies, worship resources, activities for children and daily prayers provide a catalyst for people and communities across Australia to connect with the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world, to listen to their voices and learn from their experiences.

Lent Event is just one way you can engage with UnitingWorld and connect with the Uniting Church in Australia's overseas partners. Our prayer is that along the way you will be challenged and motivated to pray, act and connect on a deeper, more engaged level.

# A WORD ABOUT LENT

---

**Lent is a period in the Christian calendar that's associated with some important traditions, including:**

## **Journeying with Jesus toward Jerusalem and beyond**

The gospel writers Matthew, Mark and Luke present Jesus' journey toward Jerusalem as an invitation for us to join Jesus on the way. According to Luke's gospel, immediately after Jesus 'set his face to go to Jerusalem' (9:51 NRSV) comes the narrative of 'the would-be followers of Jesus' (9:57-62). All three men for various reasons did not follow Jesus on the journey. Luke's question for us, therefore, is will we follow Jesus on the way to Jerusalem, or do we have other more urgent tasks to attend to? Through this Bible Study series and other resources for Lent we journey with Jesus to Jerusalem and beyond. We do this as disciples of Jesus today.

## **Engaging in the (re)building of relationships**

The essence of Easter is about reconciliation – the renewed relationship of humanity with God, of humanity with each other, and with God's 'very good' creation.

Lent provides an occasion for us to mend broken relationships and build new ones and the opportunity to right the wrongs of both past and present. Lent also provides an opportunity to repent from the ways in which we trample upon the Earth.

## **Imposing limitations**

Various practices of self-imposed limitations and restraint are usually exercised during Lent. These include observing a fast, giving up unhealthy habits, foregoing some level of comfort and luxury (for those who have them) or giving up certain foods and drinks. The motivation for such self-imposed limitations is quite noble – it is not simply an inward journey of desiring to be more Christ-like, but also an outward journey of being an agent of God's love and compassion to a world that is hurting. To be Christ-like is to move toward a fuller realisation and sense of our common humanity and Lent provides an occasion for us to give up a part of ourselves in order that another may have the chance to live.

# FROM THE AUTHOR

---

The season of Lent is here. Over the next six weeks we'll be journeying together through Lent to Easter. Thanks to Jesus' resurrection the journey takes on an unprecedented new beginning when death seemed to have won! We are part of this new journey and these studies are our resources on the journey. Let us pray together that we will all be enlightened, encouraged and strengthened as we go through the studies.

---

**One useful and now common way of looking at the Bible is in terms of stories – stories about people, their cultures, experiences, fears and hopes.**

---

Interwoven with these human stories are stories of God and stories about God as experienced and understood by the story-writers. We read these stories, learn from them, ask questions and think about how they do or don't resonate with our own

stories. How might the stories in the Bible guide and empower us as our own stories continue to unfold and develop before us and before God?

Ours is a storied world. Stories of the past and present abound and stories will be created for the future. Many of the stories that saturate the airwaves are on the negative side of the spectrum: death, war, suffering, poverty, injustice. At the same time there are also stories of generosity, kindness and hope. Somewhere in these stories must be the relevance of the story of Jesus, and Lent provides us with the precise moment to seek out this relevance for today in truth and sincerity. Jesus himself lived and worked in a world of contradictions and paradoxes. Over the next six weeks, with the Spirit of God to guide us, let us strive to discern how God's story of hope in Jesus Christ helps us to live and shape our own stories.

*Rev Dr Cliff Bird*

# ABOUT THE BIBLE STUDIES

---

The theme of this Bible Study series is ‘40 Days of Hope’. The studies can be done in groups of two or more people, or used as a journey guide for individual reflection. The studies, which are based on the Gospel readings taken from the Revised Standard Lectionary, are as follows:

**Study 1 (Mark 1:9-15  
cf. Matthew 4:1-11)**

Hope and our Christian Journey:  
Living Today’s Will of God

**Study 2 (Mark 9:2-9)**

Hope for All People:  
The New Exodus Beckons

**Study 3 (John 2:13-22)**

Hope for All Creation:  
When Eco-Justice Prevails

**Study 4 (John 3:14-21)**

Hope in Unlikely Places:  
Inclusion of Non-Believers

**Study 5 (John 12:20-33)**

Hope Overflowing:  
A Glimpse of Life at its Fullest

**Study 6 (Mark 14:1-11)**

Hope Leads Us Forward: Deeds  
of Love Amidst Schemes of Death

Each study follows a basic format. The studies are written in a way that encourages all participants to actively engage with the biblical texts. Prayers lead into and close each study while questions for personal meditation, prompts for group discussion and additional resources assist deeper thinking and active engagement. Each study also includes stories from UnitingWorld’s partners around the world. These stories point us beyond ourselves and toward the experiences of our overseas church partners and the communities they serve.

Through these stories, we are given the opportunity to look at life from another point of view and to hope for a more just, equitable and humane society.

# STUDY I

---

## HOPE AND OUR CHRISTIAN JOURNEY: LIVING TODAY'S WILL OF GOD

Genesis 9:8-17

Gospel Reading – Mark 1:9-15 (cf. Matthew 4:1-11)

---

### Opening prayer

Lord, remove the scales from our eyes this Lenten season and enable us to swallow our human pride so that we can respond to your call in our lives – especially when it challenges us. Amen

*Nathan Eddy (editor) 2014  
Fresh from the Word, 93*

### Introduction

Traditionally, the gospel reading at the start of the Lenten season focuses on the temptation of Jesus. The temptation of Jesus as told by Matthew is in mind in this study. Traditional interpretations of the three temptations say that the devil tempted Jesus with food and pleasure, power, glory, wealth and popularity. However, the devil's role in the temptations is far more subtle and points us to an understanding of our call to live today's will of God.

---

### **Read Matthew 4:1-11**

*Personal Meditation:* What do you think this passage is about? What is your initial response? What main challenge does the story have for you?

---



## Reflection

The story of the temptation of Jesus occurs immediately after his baptism by John in the Jordan, during which the Spirit of God came down on him and a voice from heaven affirmed him as 'my Son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased.' What exactly is the role of the devil in the temptation of Jesus? A very brief look into each temptation will help us to address this question.

The first temptation was for Jesus to turn stones into bread to fill his stomach. What is so wrong with such a request? After all, Moses cried out to God in the wilderness and God sent down food for the hungry Israelites. Would God not do the same on behalf of the beloved Son? By performing such a miracle people would have recognised him as the New Moses, the prophet of the end time, the deliverer of Israel, and they would flock to his banner. After all, this was what the people had hoped and longed for. Was Jesus not aware of this? Was it the pinch of doubt that he was indeed the Son of God that held him back from performing the miracle? Whatever the reason, Jesus turned the temptation aside by responding that he would not live by bread alone but by 'every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'

The second temptation was for Jesus to worship the devil in exchange for glory and authority. Exactly what did the devil show Jesus? It was the kingdom of David, which had grown to become a world empire. Expectations were exceedingly high amongst the Jewish people for the restoration of David's kingdom from the oppression of the Roman rulers. Restoration of Israel would be a vindication of the honour of God. So this temptation again reflected the collective consciousness and hope of Israel, and the perceived will of God for God's chosen people. Did Jesus not share this collective hope and consciousness? Did he not discern that restoration of David's kingdom was the will of God? Jesus again brushed aside the temptation with the words, 'It is written, *worship the Lord your God, and serve only Him.*'

The third temptation was for Jesus to prove himself a super human being who was immune to death by throwing himself from the temple pinnacle. Surely, the courtyard would be filled with people. They would immediately recognise him as the Chosen One of God to rescue Israel. After all, Malachi had prophesied that the Lord would suddenly appear to cleanse the temple of pollution and to purify the priesthood and restore true worship in Israel.

Was this the priestly Messiah? Once again the devil played into the collective expectations of the people. Jesus refused for the third time with the words 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'

Oh the subtlety of the devil's role! The devil tempted Jesus with what everyone knew to be the will of God: the Mosaic Prophet (Prophet like Moses); Davidic King (King in the line of David); and Priestly Messiah (Messiah who would restore the royal priesthood and true worship). There was nothing wrong with any of these. These were the very images of redemption which every Israelite believed God had given them though the Scriptures. However, when tested against his own sense of calling, Jesus saw these as second-best to that which God intended for them.

What the devil offered to Jesus were not outright evils, but the highest goods known to Israel. This is when evil is most difficult to discern – when it offers the good instead of the best. The devil offered yesterday's will of God but Jesus was living out today's will of God through his declaration and practice of the reign of God. In the confluence of the devil's tempting and the enabling and strengthening power of the Spirit, Jesus was able to see the ebbing of an old novelty and experience the appearing of a new – that transforming power had begun

through him and the gospel that he preached and lived.

As we move through Lent, and through life, may we journey with Jesus Christ, living out God's will in every aspect of life, knowing full well that today's will of God may even go against public opinion and collective consciousness, and hence be quite counter-cultural. Let us affirm that with the Spirit's help we will!

---

## Questions for Discussion

1. Share an experience where you struggled to make a tough decision between conflicting and/or opposing opinions or possibilities.
  2. How might you be able to discern today's will of God on issues where public consciousness and popular opinions hold powerful leverage in decision making?
-

## Going Further

Lent Event encourages participants to give up an everyday item to experience in part what it is like to live with less. Write down a list of things you could give up this Lent. After that, write a list of practices you'd like to *take up* this Lent. Look over each of the things you've listed and pray that God will enable you to learn what it means to live in today's will of God, even when it is countercultural or perhaps risky to do so.

What I could **give up** this Lent

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

What I could **take up** this Lent

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



## Closing Prayer

God,  
God of all,  
God with us,  
As we take our first steps in the  
season of Lent,  
Take us deeper into your love.  
Take us into truth, that we may learn  
and grow.  
Connect us to your grace and  
compassion,  
So that we may hold onto hope when  
we come to the place where we have  
to face our shortcomings.  
Push us into the wilderness of  
reflection,  
Test and strengthen us as you reveal  
your will in our lives.  
As we travel with you on the story to  
the cross;  
As we journey to the cross and  
beyond,  
May we take up our own crosses and  
follow you anew.

Jesus,  
Walker of the Way,  
Lead us again this Lent into deeper  
discipleship.  
Mould us as your people.  
As we remember your commitment  
to us;  
Your new covenant of love,  
May we join anew with you in the  
being of the Kingdom.  
God,  
God of all,  
God with us,  
As we take our first steps in the  
season of Lent,  
Take us deeper into your love.  
This we ask in the name of Christ.  
Amen.

*Rev Jon Humphries 2015*



# STUDY 2

---

## HOPE FOR ALL PEOPLE: THE NEW EXODUS BECKONS

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

Gospel Reading – Mark 9:2-9 (2-29)

---

### Opening prayer

Lord, I want to be part of your new people of God. Give me courage and strength. Amen.

*Nathan Eddy (editor) 2014  
Fresh from the Word, 44*

### Introduction

Last week we looked at the temptation of Jesus. One of our key points was that the devil's temptations represented yesterday's will of God, whereas Jesus was moving toward today's will of God. Today's reading is about the transfiguration of Jesus on a mountain-top. The text is located within the middle section of Mark's gospel where Jesus leaves Galilee and heads toward Jerusalem. A key theme in this section is the identity of Jesus, which is further unveiled as his journey progresses. Importantly, we

also learn what Jesus' identity means for our own discipleship. In 8:29 Peter declares Jesus as the Messiah. Not denying this, Jesus tells his disciples of the suffering and death that awaits him (8:31-32a). On the mountain-top Jesus' identity as God's Son is affirmed. The mention of Moses and Elijah and the voice from the clouds in the story take us back in time, especially to the exodus event.

---

### **Read Mark 9:2-29**

*Personal Meditation:* What do you think this passage is about? What is your initial response? What main challenge does the story have for you?

---

## Reflection

By placing the story of the transfiguration 'six days' after Peter's declaration and Jesus' response and assurance (8:27-9:1), Mark underscores that the call to discipleship is to be understood in terms of the promise of the kingdom and power of God, and the way in which that kingdom is revealed also in the death and resurrection of Jesus. What of the appearance of Elijah and Moses? The passing of these two figures were mysterious: Elijah went bodily into heaven (2 Kings 2:9-12) while Moses' grave was never found (Deuteronomy 34:4-7, hinting that he was buried by God). These two men of the faith were thought to be available for God to send back when the time was right to inform humankind that God's reign was at hand, which Jesus announced in Mark 1:15. It is no accident that these two appear with Jesus on the mountain. As they disappear into the cloud, which according to Exodus 40:34-38 is a sign of God's presence, the command comes to listen to Jesus. Now Jesus becomes the divinely chosen figure to announce the new dawn of God's reign.

The transfiguration of Jesus connects with the story of Moses' shining face when he met and spoke with God on Mount Sinai about the future of the Israelites (Exodus 34:29-35). In Jesus

God creates a new people who are invited to follow him in announcing and practising God's vision. It also connects with Daniel's Son of Man in dazzling white (Daniel 7:9-14). For Daniel this Son of Man will bring about God's will and justice. In Jesus we see the justice and goodness of God more clearly. As Jesus is transfigured we catch a glimpse of his reality as Son of Man, Son of God and God's chosen messenger of God's kingdom. In truth, therefore, Jesus is more than a messenger. Rather, he represents God's vision for all people and for the world.

Moses did not stay on the mountain-top forever and neither did Jesus and his disciples. They all had to descend the mountain and engage with the difficult and harsh realities of life, but not in a 'business as usual' frame of mind. Something had happened – the transfiguration pointed them to new possibilities. Jesus had begun an unprecedented journey that would stop only momentarily in Jerusalem, and would then continue into the world upon his victorious resurrection.

The point of the story of mountain-top transfiguration is that all present would have to go back down the mountain, to the un-level and rugged terrains of life. The new exodus begun by Jesus calls us to a discipleship that requires descending from mountain-top spiritualities to the

life 'here below'. For us, this means engaging with life's challenges and fears and rejoicing with its successes and hopes, always following in the footsteps of Jesus, the leader of the new exodus toward the reign of God in the world today.

---

## Questions for discussion

1. Share an experience or a story that reflects aspects of God's transforming presence.
  2. What other themes do you find embedded in the story that are meaningful to you?
- 

## Disability Inclusion in Sri Lanka

*An excerpt from a blog written by UnitingWorld's Hannah Ireland*

It was dusk when we arrived at the church in a small town in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka. Towns in this area were significantly impacted by the war and many people have only returned to their homes in the last few years. About twenty people came to meet with us - people with disabilities as well as the carers of people and children with disabilities. One elderly woman's story has stayed with me since.

As we sat in the church, she talked about how people from that area used to be full of dignity. They were proud people because they were good at farming the land and producing food. But early on in the war, 21 years ago, her nine year old daughter was hit with shrapnel from a bomb and completely paralysed. Eventually they had to flee their homes and she had to carry her daughter across hundreds of kilometres, constantly on the move until 2009 when, at the end of the war, she was finally able to return to her home. Now she's older, can't work and is the full time carer for her daughter. It doesn't help that there are very few services to assist her in caring for her daughter.

Her story is not unique. It is one that bears likeness to the stories of all the people who sat with us that evening, and to hundreds of other people with disabilities and their carers in Sri Lanka.

UnitingWorld has begun focusing on the inclusion of people with disabilities in the transformation of their communities. With 80% of people with disabilities living in the world's poorest communities, we know there is a relationship between poverty and disability that must be broken. Across all our projects



we are prioritising the inclusion of people with disabilities, and working alongside our partners to address the societal, cultural and physical barriers which block people with disabilities from participating. In Sri Lanka, we're focussing specifically on enabling children with disabilities to access quality, inclusive education, and promoting vocational skills training for young people with disabilities. When all people are included, there is real hope for the future.

## A prayer for our partner

God of all people, today we remember the people of Sri Lanka who have experienced the reality of war in their lifetime. We pray for people all around the world who are living with a disability and feeling the weight of poverty. Thank you for people and organisations who are working to create opportunities for them.

## Going Further

*Read the excerpt and poem below:*

“Disability unsettles easy assurances. It exemplifies how people can be represented in terms that exclude. Disability often signifies the way that some people are recognised

as lacking something basic to what is understood as human, being abnormal, a body gone wrong. The implications of such “recognition” – which is more adequately a ‘mis-recognition’ – extend far beyond disability, and in fact touch on the cultural, social and religious systems by which human beings gain orientation in the world and traffic with each other.”

Thomas E. Reynolds (2013), *Theology and Disability: Changing the Conversation*, Searching for Dignity: Conversations on human dignity, theology and disability, SUN MeDIA Stellenbosch

## Lenses

*By Stevie Wills  
(www.steviewills.com)*

Through cloudy lenses, his world,  
he can't see  
his home, parents and siblings  
his surroundings  
he's negotiating.

Without sight  
education, is almost out of sight  
education, necessary for employment  
poverty, imminent.

Through tinted lenses he's seen  
if at all he's seen  
helpless, weak  
but this he exceeds  
a unique and necessary  
contribution to his community.

---

## Follow up activity

Discuss as a group how the excerpts on the previous page challenge or reinforce your understanding of disability.

---

## Closing prayer

You are our God.  
We are your people.  
In Jesus you established  
a new covenant.  
You set before us a life lived well.  
You taught us the way of loving  
sacrifice.

You fully enfolded us into your  
grace and forgiveness.  
You called us into communion  
with you and each other.  
In your promise we find hope.  
In our promise you hope.  
Bind us together anew.  
Want us and will us to be yours.  
Lord of all,  
God in Christ,  
You are our God.  
We are your people.  
May this be so.  
Amen.

*Rev Jon Humphries 2015*





# STUDY 3

---

## HOPE FOR ALL CREATION: WHEN ECO-JUSTICE PREVAILS

Exodus 20:1-17

Gospel Reading – John 2:13-22

---

### Opening prayer

Gracious God, we hold up to you for healing our relationships with the land and its peoples, mindful that this Earth is a gift from you and we are but stewards. Amen.

*Nathan Eddy (editor) 2014  
Fresh from the Word, 126*

### Introduction

This week we read the story of Jesus causing quite a scene in the temple in Jerusalem. The text has evoked multiple interpretations, including those that reject any sort of economic interpretation; those that see it more in terms of Jesus asserting himself as God's son and his body as the (new) temple; those that see it in terms of Jesus exercising and condoning violent actions; those that see it in terms of Jesus protecting animals and birds from being killed/offered as sacrifices; and those that see it as Jesus confronting and removing corrupt economic practices which hindered proper and authentic worship. As we go through this study, keep in mind the question: what does John want us to see?

---

## **Read John 2:13-22**

*Personal Meditation:* What do you think this passage is about? What is your initial response? What main challenge does the story have for you?

---

## **Reflection**

Jesus' visit to Jerusalem as recorded in this passage took place as the Jewish Passover festival was drawing near. The Temple in Jerusalem was the centre of the Jewish world, with an inner and an outer court. A market was taking place in the outer court when Jesus entered. What he saw angered him deeply. The question that stares us in the face is 'why did Jesus do what he did?'

Pilgrims from all over the Jewish world went to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover and offer sacrifices at the Temple. They also had to pay the Temple tax. To help those who'd travelled far two basic services were provided. Animals such as oxen, lamb and doves were sold and money changers were at hand to convert currencies into the coin accepted for the purchase of sacrifices and for paying the Temple tax. The sale of sacrificial animals and the exchange of currencies were, therefore, not the issue. So what was?

Brought up and taught strictly as a Jew, Jesus would have been aware of what was performed on Passover as a norm and what was not. In the outer court that day two market monopolies were in operation which squeezed money from those who came to worship. Firstly, there was a monopoly on the dove market. Secondly, there was a monopoly on the special coin that was used to purchase sacrifices and pay the Temple tax. Poorer people used doves for sacrifice and the only coin acceptable for Temple tax was a half-ounce of pure silver without the image of the Emperor. Unfortunately there was limited supply of these coins so money changers raised their prices. These monopolies imposed huge financial burdens on the poor and brought in exorbitant profits for the Temple authorities. In fact, the Temple sacrifice during the reign of High Priest Annas could be best summed up as the marketplace of the family of Annas. All of this merchandising made genuine and solemn worship difficult. Carson writes "Instead of solemn dignity and murmur of prayer there is the bellowing of cattle and bleating of sheep. Instead of brokenness and contrition, holy adoration and prolonged petition, there is noisy commerce."<sup>1</sup> It was indeed a marketplace instead of Temple!

<sup>1</sup> D.A. Carson (1991), *The Gospel according to John*, 179

It is no wonder that Jesus was angry and acted as he did.

Amongst other things, this text invites us to reflect on the challenges of economic and ecological injustices that occur under the name of economic development and growth. Economics (Greek *oikos-nomos*) and ecology (Greek *oikos-logos*) both have to do with the *oikos* or our home, the Earth. Both have to do with the way things relate and are integrated to make our home function properly. Lent opens up for us the sacred space to think deeply about the economic suffering of millions of people and the devastation of the Earth's environments in the name of economic growth.

---

## Questions for Discussion

1. Share an experience or a story about struggling to make a living, or simply surviving, in the midst of glaring economic poverty that has touched you deeply and changed you as a person.
  2. In what ways does our own society take advantage of the most vulnerable within it? What do you think this passage says about what our response might be?
- 

## Home in rural Zimbabwe

It's not a long drive to Muzarabani – four or five hours from Harare at most. But the township, reached by a single road which passes over hills and dusty plains, feels like a world away from Zimbabwe's capital city. Whereas Harare is an increasingly bustling city, you are more likely to see ox-drawn carts than cars in this rural area of the country. The bellowing of cattle and bleating of sheep are not out of place here. The township itself, which has several stores and a marketplace, acts as a gateway to more remote communities, some of which take several hours to reach.

In rural areas like Muzarabani many people survive off subsistence farming, selling small amounts of grain or vegetables at the local market and using the rest to feed their families and household animals. All over Africa today, families are feeling the brunt of unpredictable weather patterns more than ever. And with little to fall back on, families fear that drought will leave them with nothing.

With over 70% of people in Zimbabwe living below the poverty line, it's vital that families in rural areas are able to broaden their

opportunities to earn a living beyond subsistence farming.

Mr and Mrs Mugeti are one such family. The couple have six children – four boys and two young girls. They have witnessed with despair how their grain reserves have shrunk this year. Without a good harvest, how will they have enough to eat?

“Living here, we have so many challenges,” Mrs Mugeti says, holding her youngest child on her hip. “The harvest has been very poor and we have no other source of income. Sometimes we do small jobs for other families who can afford to pay us. But more and more, families cannot afford this.”

Over the past three years UnitingWorld has supported our partner, the Methodist Development and Relief Agency (MeDRA) to run a livelihood development project in Mr and Mrs Mugeti’s community. The couple has recently joined a group which raises and breeds sheep.

“We are hoping the sheep will breed at least twice before we start selling them,” says Mr Mugeti. “Because we are a group, we will share the profits. We are sure we will be helped by the project, but it will take time.”

MeDRA’s model of equipping families with diverse means to earn an income

has proved successful at building resilience in rural communities, and ultimately helping families break the poverty cycle. Members of other, longer standing livelihood groups – including beekeeping and breeding chickens – currently receive USD50 from their activities each month. It may not seem like much, but this amount is used for buying food, paying for education and accessing transport and health care.

Over time, as the sheep breed and are sold at market, Mr and Mrs Mugeti can expect to be earning similar amounts. This will change not only their lives, but those of their children as well – a true message of hope for the future.

## **A prayer for our partner**

Today we pray for families struggling to make a living in Zimbabwe. We thank you for the work of MeDRA in helping families overcome poverty. Gracious God, we pray you will sustain them as they bring your hope.

## Going further

This week's materials remind us to think about the Earth as our home. In thinking of the Earth in these terms, we are able to see all people around the world as part of our own household, equally affected by the management of the household in terms of our global economy and shared environment.

Write a list of five rules you have instigated or experienced in your own household. An example might be – “in this house we share what we have”. When you've finished, discuss them with your group and mark those which others have also written down.

### Household rules

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Now create a second list of rules which you think would help all humans live peacefully, equitably and justly in the same 'global household'. An example might be – “in this world we treat others as we would want to be treated.” When you are finished, discuss them with your group.

### Global household rules

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





# STUDY 4

---

## HOPE IN UNLIKELY PLACES: INCLUSION OF NON-BELIEVERS

Numbers 21:4-9

Gospel Reading – John 3:14-21

---

### Opening prayer

God of all people, help us to recognise the human dignity that you notice, and not to stumble over the 'little ones'. We praise you for diversity of human beings with all their challenges, opportunities and rewards. Amen.

*Nathan Eddy (editor) 2014  
Fresh from the Word, 44*

### Introduction

We focus our attention this week on perhaps one of the most well-known of all Bible passages. A casual reading will show that John's gospel is quite different from the other three. Throughout the gospel opposites are pitted against each other: light or darkness; above or below; saved or condemned; in or out; us or them; flesh or spirit; believers or non-believers. One important factor will help us understand why dualistic thinking permeates John's gospel. That is the expulsion of the Johannine community from the synagogue. This community of Christian Jews believed in Jesus as God's Messiah and initially remained within the synagogue in an increasingly shaky relationship with synagogue authorities. It became difficult for the community, with their claims about Jesus and different worship

practices, to fit in with synagogue life. Eventually they were expelled from the synagogue. The dispute that lies behind John's gospel, therefore, is between two Jewish groups: one that was committed to synagogue life and practice and another that believed in Jesus as the Messiah. John's gospel embodies the beliefs and claims of this expelled community, who tried to maintain their own identity outside of the established synagogue life and practice.

---

### **Read John 3:14-21**

*Personal Meditation:* What do you think this passage is about? What is your initial response? What main challenge does the story have for you?

---

## **Reflection**

Today's passage is part of a longer discourse between Nicodemus and Jesus. Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin and Jesus, according to the text, is the new Moses, Son of Man and Son of God. Eternal life belongs only to those who believe in God's only Son. Jesus' words raise some rather challenging questions for today: what about followers of other faiths, the billions who do not believe in Jesus let alone know him?

At the beginning of his gospel John introduces to the reader the *cosmic and universal* pre-existent Word that became flesh. This enfleshed Word was light for *all people* (1:4) through whom God demonstrated God's love for *the world* (3:16). The universality of God was/is not exhausted in the humanity and particularity of Jesus. God gives life to all people through the Spirit that 'blows where it chooses' (3:8a), and not only to certain people. The same Spirit gives life to all living beings (Psalm 104:29-30). Does this nullify belief in God's Son? Not at all! Believing in Jesus means trusting in him and his vision of God's reign for the Earth; it is giving one's heart and following Jesus. This leads to having eternal life now. Eternal life is the life that is lived in the awareness of God's presence, life lived in the realm of the spirit, life that is full, whole, abundant; it is life lived in the manner of Jesus where the 'other' is accepted and embraced within God's reign.

We live in a multi religious world so how do or must Christians relate to people of other faiths? These questions are of fundamental importance.

The UCA Doctrine Working Group has produced an excellent and invaluable paper, 'Living with the Neighbour who is Different: Christian

Faith in a Multi Religious World.<sup>12</sup> Three theological affirmations for engagement are made: 'God is calling us to engage in conversation with people of other faiths... Christians are called to love the neighbour who is different... God has placed the contemporary Church in an ideal situation to engage in genuine dialogue with those of other faiths.' The paper highlights that mission is God's and the Church participates in it through dialogue from both heart and mind. Our motivation for evangelism is to 'grow Christ-like persons living in Christ-like communities, and not to add to the numbers in the Church.'

The challenge for Christians when speaking with people of other faiths is to take off our shoes and be open to the possibility that God awaits us in the most 'unlikely' places.

---

## Questions for discussion

1. Share an experience or story of talking with someone who belongs to another faith.
2. Archbishop Desmond Tutu argues strongly that *God Is Not Christian* in the book of the same title. What is your reaction?

## Breaking down barriers Maluku

"I do not feel scared anymore."

How do you overcome fear when you have experienced conflict firsthand?

In places where sectarian violence, ethnic conflict and persecution have wrought havoc, the path to peace is often long and hard. It is a path along which truth-telling, building trust and encouraging new relationships to flourish are vital.

Ambon Island, in the Indonesian province of Maluku, is no different. With over 5000 people killed and a third of the population displaced during violence from 1998 to 2004, nearly everyone on the island was affected. Yet what was once the site of tension and conflict between different religious groups has become home to intentional efforts to build peace across the religious and cultural divide.

One of UnitingWorld's partners in Maluku working in this area is Gereja Protestan Maluku (Protestant Church of Maluku). GPM works to equip women to know their rights, earn sustainable livelihoods and promote peace as respected community leaders. Their model brings women from different religious backgrounds together, so

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.assembly.uca.org.au/rof/images/stories/theology/livingsummary.pdf>

not only are women empowered, but the whole community experiences transformation.

“Before, I rarely came to Waai village,” says young Muslim woman Lia, just one of the many women who have been brought together through GPM’s work. “But since attending training with women from Waai, I do not feel scared anymore. Now I can visit and I am getting to know our brothers and sisters in Waai better.”

The training has also made a big difference to Lia’s own family.

“I have gained so much more knowledge in matters of social and economic problems, and the help of business capital to increase my economic income. In the past, I could only assist my parents with their business. Now I have my own business and my own savings.”

Women like Lia are a vibrant example of the power of everyday people to break down the walls that divide, always looking to the future with hope. Those who were once the ‘other’ are now friends. A woman who once seemed like a stranger is now a neighbour. What once seemed impossible is coming to pass.

## A prayer for our partner

Thank you God for the work of GPM in Maluku and many others like them. We pray you will continue to spread seeds of peace through their work.

## Going Further

Discuss as a group how your local church has previously engaged in interfaith relations and how you might engage in the future. For ideas, you might like to visit the Assembly’s Relations with Other Faiths website

**[www.assembly.uca.org.au/rof/](http://www.assembly.uca.org.au/rof/)**

## Closing prayer

Reconciling God,  
Christ of connections,  
Despite our rejection of you,  
You extend to us grace and mercy.  
Despite our failings and sin,  
You offer us grace and forgiveness.

Reconciling God,  
Christ of connections,  
You call us to go into the world.  
You call us to love as we have  
been loved.  
As we are being your disciples,  
you call us to invite others to  
meet you.  
As we are learning to be disciples,  
You call us to help others learn your  
way too.  
As we are brought into your  
fellowship of love and growth,

You call us to bring others into  
fellowship as well.

As we find meaning and purpose in  
loving service to you through loving  
service of others,

You call us to bring out the best in  
others that they might find meaning  
and purpose too.

As we are brought your Word of hope  
and redemption, may we share it  
with others.

Reconciling God,  
Christ of connections,  
You extend to us grace and mercy.  
May we extend the same to  
all people,  
In your name,  
Amen.

*Rev Jon Humphries 2015*

# NOTES

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



# STUDY 5

---

## HOPE OVERFLOWING: A GLIMPSE OF LIFE AT ITS FULLEST!

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Gospel Reading – John 12:20-33

---

### Opening prayer

Almighty God, who through your Son cautioned that it would not profit us if we gained the whole world, but suffered the loss of our souls: help us to live simply that the poor and less fortunate might simply live. Amen.

*Nathan Eddy (editor) 2014, Fresh from the Word, 279*

### Introduction

Our passage for this study comes immediately after Jesus entered Jerusalem – for the third and final time – with shouts of Hosanna from the crowd, and his affirmation as ‘the King of Israel’ (12:13b-15). We are immediately introduced to ‘some Greeks’ who request to see Jesus. Surely hearing of the seven signs Jesus performed – the most recent being the raising of Lazarus from the dead – would have spurred them. Who were these Greeks? Did they get to see Jesus? John leaves these questions unanswered, inviting us instead to step into their shoes and participate in the unfolding drama that culminated in Jesus’ death and his victorious resurrection. Do we as contemporary readers see Jesus as John wants us to? Do we feel what following Jesus means?



---

## **Read John 12:20-33**

*Personal Meditation:* What do you think this passage is about? What is your initial response? What main challenge does the story have for you?

---

## **Reflection**

Instead of granting or not granting the Greeks' request, Jesus' response refocused the terms of discussion on his ensuing death and glorification and their implications for discipleship, and for the 'ruler of this world'. Jesus' words echo those in Mark's gospel which say 'followers must lose their life in order to save it' (8:31-38). Discipleship was an invitation to follow Jesus to Jerusalem where suffering and certain death awaited him, but also to follow him from the resurrection where new life and possibilities would spring forth into the world.

Unlike the other gospels, John's narrative focuses on the conflict between Jesus and the life of discipleship on the one hand, and the ruler of the world on the other. In John's gospel the 'ruler of this world' is synonymous with the devil or Satan. However, as the unfolding narrative and drama would show the 'ruler of this world' is

also embodied and exposed in the 'locus of all (individual, institutional and systemic) power that does not recognise the rule of God.'<sup>3</sup> At that time, this included Judas Iscariot, the soldiers and Temple police, religious authorities (Priests and Pharisees) and systems, and imperial authorities (Governor Pilate) and systems. For instance, in 13:27 Satan entered into Judas, and from chapter 18 on religious authorities connived with imperial authorities against Jesus. The conflict would end in Jesus being 'lifted up from the Earth' by crucifixion. It is from this vantage point that the counteracting grains of irony are displayed: the religious authorities would see this as victory over a self-proclaimed king and trouble-maker, and the imperial authorities would see this as success in keeping law and order. Not so, says John! The death and resurrection of Jesus is a judgment against the religious and imperial powers – and ironically – a victory over them! 'And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself' (12:32). For John this enthronement was a clear statement that Jesus, not the Emperor, was King. The cross is not a defeat but elevation and glorification; it is here, at the cross, when death seemed victorious, that life at its fullest is displayed.

<sup>3</sup> J. D. Weaver (2011), *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 307

The world has many ways of death: poverty and destitution; economic collapse; hunger and thirst; homelessness; sickness; war; violence against women and children; natural disasters; destruction of the environment. Our text urges that it is in these ways of death that we are drawn even closer to Jesus. Lent invites us to see the irony that in these ways of death is the promise and possibility of new life – eternal life.

---

## Questions for discussion

1. Share an experience or a story where, against all odds, life and love persisted and in the end proved victorious.
  2. Discuss the relevance and significance of Jesus' words, 'And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw **all people** to myself,' in the context of religious pluralism and the world's many ways of death.
- 

## Training midwives in South Sudan: life in the midst of conflict

In mid-December 2013 conflict erupted in the world's newest nation, South Sudan. Sparked by accusations of a coup, conflict quickly escalated between groups loyal to both sides. Before long, the conflict moved from the capital Juba toward the oil fields in the north of the country.

When the fighting reached Leer, a small town in Unity State, homes were ransacked and razed to the ground. Fearing for their lives, local residents fled into the bush. Amid the chaos, the Leer Midwifery School, run by UnitingWorld's partner the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan, was also looted and destroyed.

In a small village not far from Leer, 24 year old midwifery student Teresa was also fleeing for her life. Along with her husband, Teresa hid in the bush while troops stormed through their homes. When they were able to return, Teresa learned she would not be able to return to Leer for her training. Instead, the Presbyterian Church had organised her travel to Lokichoggio on the Kenyan border. Once she arrived, she and other students were granted refugee status.

“There is no trained midwife in my village,” Teresa said, reflecting on her desire to become a midwife. “I want to be a midwife so I can help pregnant women in my community by conducting safe deliveries.”

The past year has been a nightmare for people all over South Sudan. By mid-2014 thousands of people had died. One million people were internally displaced inside South Sudan, while half a million people had fled into neighboring countries, hoping for safety and security.

Teresa and her fellow students will complete their studies in Kenya. From there, they will receive practical training and spend time at the nearby Kakuma Refugee Camp, home to over 130,000 people, where they will put their skills into practice. Yet like many of the students at the PRDA Midwifery Training School, Teresa has a real desire to work in her community back in South Sudan.

“I want to help the people in my community,” she said. “I also want to provide for my family. One day, I would like to build them a concrete house.”

Teresa and the other trainee midwives don’t know what the future holds, or when they will return home. But in the face of death and destruction, these young women are learning how

to save lives. In the midst of conflict and disease, their skills will build a foundation of hope for a whole nation.

## **A prayer for our partner**

Loving God, today we remember Teresa and her fellow students as they complete their studies in Kenya. We pray for long lasting peace in South Sudan, and thank you that these women will bring life and hope to their country.

## **Going Further**

In June 2014 the UN refugee agency reported that the number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people worldwide had, for the first time since World War II, exceeded 50 million people. When we think of South Sudan, Syria, Iraq and other countries where conflict, persecution and famine have caused people to flee, it is easy to think that death has won.

This week’s study has called us to see the promise and possibility of life in even the darkest situation. As a group, discuss possibilities for responding to conflict and offering support to displaced people both here in Australia and overseas.

## Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus,  
You bring us hope.  
You came to save.  
You gave your life for us  
Beginning in your incarnation.  
Living simply and simply living.  
Teaching and healing.  
Rebuking and cajoling  
Dying and rising.  
In you we meet God's love  
face to face.

In you we see the grace of God.  
In you we grasp the depth of God's  
compassion.  
In you we know God is for us and no  
one can be against us.  
Lord Jesus,  
We are your people.  
May we be found in you again.  
Of you we ask.  
Amen.

*Rev Jon Humphries 2015*





# STUDY 6

---

## HOPE LEADS US FORWARD: DEEDS OF LOVE AMIDST SCHEMES OF DEATH

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Gospel Reading – Mark 14:1-11

---

### Opening prayer

Saviour God, teach us to live the spiritual life, working together towards the realisation of your vision for a world healed and at peace, even when it seems to us an impossible dream. Amen.

*Nathan Eddy (editor) 2014  
Fresh from the Word, 349*

### Introduction

The Passover and festival of Unleavened Bread are only two days away and Jerusalem is a hive of activity. The stage is set for the final series of events that would lead to Jesus' death and culminate in his resurrection. Just before his death we are confronted with a powerful and beautiful story. This story is of an unnamed woman who anointed Jesus in the home of a leper named Simon. Get the picture? Jesus, with a leper and a self-invited woman with no name!

---

### **Read Mark 14:1-11**

*Personal Meditation:* With your eyes closed, imagine the scene and try putting yourself into each character's place – Simon, Jesus, Unnamed Woman. What do you see? What do you feel?

---

## Reflection

The text consists of three strands, with the second taking most space, and Mark weaves these strands masterfully. We begin with the first and third strands and then end with the middle strand.

In verses 1-2 the chief priest and scribes look for a way to arrest Jesus in secret and to kill him. Why all this scheming? In more than one way Jesus had confronted and angered these religious leaders upon entering Jerusalem. Many who came to celebrate Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread were listening to and following him. He was becoming a real and imminent threat to the chief priest and scribes and their positions of power and wealth. In verses 10-11 we read how Judas Iscariot, for some unspecified reason, decided to change his allegiance. This was most welcome and timely news for the religious leaders. What made Judas side with them? Was his loyalty a tradable commodity? Or did he want to make Jesus do something more by forcing him into a corner? Whatever the reason, Judas 'began to look for an opportunity to betray him' (14:11).

Sandwiched between these two strands of plotting and colluding, from verses 3-9, is the courageous act of love of a woman at the

home of a social outcast. Having table fellowship was a practice for which Jesus was known. These fellowships were a demonstration of association and solidarity with people of low social classes and quite countercultural to the exclusive, lavish feasts amongst the upper echelons of society. A woman interrupted the meal and anointed Jesus' head with expensive perfume, likely imported from India, amounting to 300 denarii or a year's wage. And not just some of the perfume – all of it! The anointing was significant for at least two reasons: according to Jesus, it was a gesture to prepare his body for burial. It could also be seen as statement and affirmation that Jesus was royalty. Countering an objection by some who were present, Jesus gave the assurance that wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world she will be remembered for what she had done.

What did she do? She came and exercised selfless love in the midst of self-preserving schemes and collusions of death. A woman with no name being remembered as an integral part of the good news!

Lent presents us with the challenge to demonstrate true acts of compassionate love amidst the world's schemes of death. More specifically, today's text exposes

the scheming and collusion of mostly male-dominated institutional-structural-systemic power bases with misguided and self-centred individuals that lead to death and destruction. There is also good news: 'She has done what she could.' When we all do what we can in the love and spirit demonstrated by the un-named woman, together we will be, and are, a counteracting force sustained and energised by her memory, and propelled by the good news of God!

---

## Questions for discussion

1. Share an experience or a story about brave and compassionate deeds of women against many odds.
2. In memory of an un-named woman: can someone without a name be remembered?

---

## Listening to the Wisdom of Women

*An excerpt from a blog written by UnitingWorld's Bronwyn Fraser.*

Recently I returned from a visit to Vanuatu. My role there was to sit with the leaders of the Women's

Fellowship and to help design the "Gender and Leadership" program they want to run for their communities.

Violence, especially against women, is a huge issue in the Pacific. There is a lot of work being done in response, much of which is based on notions of human rights as enshrined in various United Nations conventions. Now I don't have a problem with that. But as I have sat with women from various island nations across the Pacific, as well as participated in a number of Aid Sector forums on the subject, I have made two observations:

1. Most of these programs focus on the problem more than the people.
2. Most programs cling to "UN speak" – using language that is often disconnected from Pacific faith and culture.

As I sat talking with Melody, Cyrilline and Martha, in lovely circular conversations as is the way of *talanoa*, of story and of life, I caught their vision of a different way.

As we sat together on the mat, Melody, Cyrilline and Martha told me their own stories. They told me of the violence they have seen and experienced in their own families. They told me of the fear many women



have, and the lack of opportunities for women to lead and flourish.

These courageous women spoke of the love that God has for creation and humanity. For them gender rightfully isn't just about women, and the problems communities face aren't just problems of violence. Gender is about men and women created as equals in the image of God, respectful relationships and recognising the inherent dignity of all people. Despite their own experiences, they don't want to paint men as the bad guys and women as the victims. Rather they want to lead a program that is inclusive of the voices of all people.

They told me they see violence as an outplaying of an unbalanced human system, one that has strayed from God's design. And the only way back is to build their Gender and Leadership program on the foundation of God's word. Without this real change will not happen.

### **A prayer for our partner**

God, we thank you for women like Melody, Cyrilline and Martha. We thank you for their vision and their leadership. We pray you will continue to work through them, your Spirit bringing new life and transformation.

### **Going Further**

Each study over the past six weeks has highlighted a unique story from Jesus' journey toward the cross. At the same time, we've read the inspiring stories of the partners and local communities with whom the Uniting Church in Australia is in relationship through UnitingWorld. Each story highlighted the life-transforming way that God is at work in the world – sometimes in the most surprising ways.

In this last study we have learned of courageous women who seek to overcome cultural norms and prejudice to do remarkable things. One, unnamed woman sat at Jesus' feet in an amazing display of sacrifice and understanding of Jesus' position. And in Bronwyn's blog we read of three, this time named women who are seeking to overcome deeply embedded cultural practices, allowing space for God to move in transforming and healing ways.

As you think back over the stories we have read these past six week, which story has meant the most to you? How might this story impact your own? How could you share it with others? Discuss this with your group.



# PRAYERS FOR 2015 LENT EVENT

## 40 DAYS OF HOPE

---

**The following is a collection of prayers for the season of Lent developed for Lent Event. They loosely connect with the lectionary readings for each week, and they also relate to the themes in the Lent Event Bible Studies.**

In writing the prayers, the aim was to take up the challenge of the season of Lent as a time of reflection and preparation for Easter. Many are modelled on the honest expression of faith found in the Psalms. Many seek to take the readings for the week and pray the Scriptures into one's faith and discipleship, especially seeking to connect with God's passion for justice. Each week ends with a prayer action. This caters for those

who are more extroverted in their spirituality, and is a reminder that prayer is not just speaking, but is also about listening and may involve a call to action.

Hopefully these prayers will assist you in your Lenten journey, or at least inspire you in your own prayer life to connect with God and the Christ who calls us into discipleship, and whose loving compassion is embodied for us at Easter. God bless.

(The Rev)  
*Jon Humphries*

Chaplain, Ravenswood School for Girls

---

# DAY I

**18th February**

ASH WEDNESDAY

---

Lord of Truth,

Just as the palms of praise and celebration of last Easter  
have turned to ash,

We come into this time of reflection and preparation,  
with some sense of desiccation of our faith.

As we remember your sacrifice;

As we hear of your love;

As we listen for your call,

Awaken within us our discipleship anew.

May the passion of your living revive our devotion.

May the sign of your cross lead us to repentance.

May this time awaken our faith.

Christ of the Cross,

Forgive us our shallow religion.

Forgive us when our acts of devotion fill us with  
self-righteousness.

Forgive us when our times of praise imbue us with  
unholy smugness.

Forgive us when our heads are lifted so far in worship of you  
that we fail to see the world around us and all its need.

Forgive us when our deeds of charity gain us prominence  
and attention.

Forgive us our stunted generosity and impoverished  
gestures of good will

Forgive us when our shallow acts of confession wipe  
the slate of our conscience before the depth of our short  
comings truly reach our hearts and begin the work of  
transformation.

Forgive us when our Sunday mornings eclipse our  
weekly living.

Forgive us when our faith evaporates in the busyness  
of our mundane existence.

Spirit of God,

Push us into the wilderness of learning.

Challenge and test our faith.

Grow us,

Inspire us,

Lead us,

Teach us.

Open our hearts,  
Open our souls,  
Open our minds,  
Open us up.  
In this season of Lent,  
As we listen to your story,  
Reinvigorate our discipleship.  
Renew our sense of call and purpose.  
Teach us who we are.  
Reform us as your people.  
Please help us make this so.  
Amen

---

## DAY 2

**19th February**

THURSDAY

---

Lord of the Way,  
Take us into your love again this Lent.  
Draw us deeper into your compassion.  
Shine the light of your hope into our lives.  
Renew a right spirit within us.  
That we may live your love.  
In you, may we find ourselves again,  
Christ, we pray.  
Amen

---

## DAY 3

**20th February**

FRIDAY

---

God of hope,  
Spirit, guide,  
Cast us out into the wilderness.  
In the wild place of your presence,  
Disconnect us from our consuming.  
Disempower us.  
Disorient us.  
May we find ourselves in a place of challenge and renewal.  
Draw out of us growth and learning.  
Test and strengthen us.  
Teach us to rely on you once again.  
Through faith in your love, may we find not only hope

---

# DAY 4

21st February

SATURDAY

---

in our own lives,  
But also how to be and work for hope in this world.  
Connect us to creation.  
Empower us with your compassion.  
Reorient us in your way.  
God of hope,  
Spirit, guide,  
Word of God who spoke Creation into being,  
This we ask of you.  
Amen

## An Act of Prayer

Today spend some time reading through the day's newspaper or one from the week (if you don't have access to a newspaper watch a TV news show).

**Step 1. Attend:** Listen for how the stories speak of the way people are, or our society is, struggling with temptations that Jesus faced in the wilderness;

- materialism,
- the desire for power and authority,
- the desire for attention and adoration.

**Step 2. Listen:** Spend some time in silence listening for how these temptations and desires echo in your life.

**Step 3. Confess:** Spend some time thinking about how you as an individual and how we as the Church contribute or participate in assisting such situations to exist or how we do the same thing in our lives. Then bring this to God and ask God for forgiving transformation of this area/these areas of our life.

**Step 4. Receive:** Spend some reading the Scriptures (maybe go back to the story of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness). Be open to how the still, small voice of God may be speaking to you of challenge and of hope for change.

**Step 5. Pray:** Spend some time praying for those involved in these situations that you have attended to, both those who are perpetrators or participants and those affected by the consequences of these situations.

---

# DAY 5

**22nd February**

SUNDAY

---

God,  
God of all,  
God with us,  
As we take our first steps in the season of Lent,  
Take us deeper into your love.  
Take us into truth, that we may learn and grow.  
Connect us to your grace and compassion,  
So that we may hold onto hope when we come to the place  
where we have to face our shortcomings.  
Push us into the wilderness of reflection,  
Test and strengthen us as you reveal your will in our lives.  
As we travel with you on the story to the cross;  
As we journey to the cross and beyond,  
May we take up our own crosses and follow you anew.  
Jesus,  
Walker of the Way,  
Lead us again this Lent into deeper discipleship.  
Mould us as your people.  
As we remember your commitment to us;  
Your new covenant of love,  
May we join anew with you in the being of the Kingdom  
God,  
God of all,  
God with us,  
As we take our first steps in the season of Lent,  
Take us deeper into your love.  
This we ask in the name of the Christ one.  
Amen

---

# DAY 6

23rd February

MONDAY

---

God of all people,  
Who sees beyond our failings and who focuses on  
our potential,  
What is your hope for us?  
Where do you need us to change?  
How might we live better aligned to your will?  
When might we fully heed your call?  
Teach us why we need to change.  
In that space of grace,  
Between who we have been and who we are becoming,  
Open up a field of growth.  
Lead us to repent of that which needs repentance.  
May we leave behind that which is unhelpful.  
Help us to slip out of our selfishness into your way of service.  
Renew a right spirit within us.

God of all people,  
Who sees beyond our failings and who focuses on  
our potential,  
Give us a positive vision of our future,  
So that we may see the changes and choices that we  
need to make.

God of all people,  
Who sees beyond our failings and who focuses on  
our potential,  
Provoke us to step out into your image that we may  
become who we can become.  
In the name of the redeeming Christ,  
We ask that this may be so.  
Amen



---

# DAY 7

24th February

TUESDAY

---

God,  
It is Lent again.  
If I am honest I am not sure what it really means.  
I mean I know what it is supposed to be about.  
I know that it is about preparing for Easter.  
I know that it is about renewing my discipleship.  
I know that it is about reflecting on my living this past year.  
However, God,  
If I am honest, I know that I have probably grown little.  
I want to long to make more significant change.  
I want to want to live as you would have me live,  
But I am fearful.  
I worry about my standard of living.  
I worry about whether I have the strength of faith.  
I worry about whether I have the strength of conviction.  
I worry about whether it will make any difference in the world.  
God,  
It is Lent again.  
I want to want to change,  
But I can see that I am as stuck as ever in my self.  
I can see that my will is as weak as it has always seemed to be.  
I know what is right, but I worry about the cost.  
I stand at the edge of a new beginning.  
Push me into the abyss of faith,  
So that I may fall into your love  
And be transformed.  
Christ,  
It is Lent again.  
I am willing to give it another go.  
Continue to be patient with me.  
Keep leading me on your way  
That I may finally live as you call me to.  
Christ,  
It is Lent again.  
You are my hope.  
You are my redeemer.  
You are the one whose Spirit I need.

---

# DAY 8

**25th February**

WEDNESDAY

---

Christ,  
It is Lent again.  
Do what is necessary,  
That I might fully become your disciple.  
This I ask of you.  
Let it be so.  
Amen

Lord of all,  
You are our God.  
We are your people.  
You have given us life.  
We are established in creation.  
You have made us your own.  
We are given meaning and purpose.  
You gift us with grace.  
We are called to reconciliation.  
You have joined us to your purpose.  
We are brought within your love.  
You set your way before us  
We are disciples of the living Christ - the one whose love  
is not broken by death.  
You unite us as the Church.  
We are a radical Communion of broken and breaking  
souls who are united in faith, hope and love.  
Lord of all,  
You are our God.  
We are your people.  
Amen - May we let it be so.

---

# DAY 9

**26th February**

THURSDAY

---

Jesus,  
In this time of reflection,  
Just as you were baptised,  
May we remember the meaning of baptism.  
Take us to the place of repentance.  
Renew our commitment to your purpose.  
Connect us with your Spirit,  
That we may listen for your Word,  
And accept your call to join with your mission,  
To share your love and grace.  
Flush out that mire that is lodged in the cracks of our  
conscience.  
Awaken within us the seeds of new life,  
And trigger within us growth and transformation.  
Help us to discern our gifts and talents, along with how  
you are calling us to use them in ministry or service.  
Unite us again as your body, the Church.  
Teach us how to nurture and support each other with  
honesty, integrity and humble accountability.  
Recommit us to your way.  
Make us your disciples.  
May all this be so.  
Amen

---

# DAY 10

**27th February**

FRIDAY

---

God of transforming grace,  
Lord of redemption,  
Christ in my life,  
Words are but words  
Thoughts are but thoughts  
My prayers, however eloquent, however sincere,  
echo in the emptiness of my living.  
Do you share my frustration?  
Do you share my impatience?  
I see inroads of your working in my life.  
I see small transformations.  
I recognise that I am changing for the better, however slowly.  
Gradually I am growing.

At times I feel that I could break free and burst forth in faith;  
Break away from the selfish and fearful limitations that I allow  
to rule my life.  
But the fear remains,  
The leap of faith goes unleapt.  
I diverge from your way,  
Your call goes unanswered.  
Bear with me.  
Push me harder.  
Relentlessly love me.  
Ceaselessly pursue me.  
Search me out.  
Find me for I am almost lost again.  
Christ,  
Jesus,  
Attack my defences until I surrender to your will.  
Love me into loving as you do.  
Integrate my being so that my thoughts, words and action  
become synchronised in your service.  
May this truly be so.  
Amen

---

## DAY II

**28th February**

SATURDAY

---

### **An Act of Prayer**

Prayers come in different forms. Sometimes they are short breath prayers. Other times they are long conversations with God. Prayer has the power to move us beyond ourselves in to the world around us.

So it is with a prayer walk. Think of it as praying on-site with insight, as some have said. Sometimes we're too busy going about our day to recognize the needs of those in front of us. Have you stopped to wonder about the school in your neighbourhood? Or the neighbours down the street? By going on a prayer walk, we open ourselves up to God's guidance and transformation for the community, and for ourselves as God's hands and feet to those we meet.

As you walk around the neighbourhood by yourself or with a group, pray aloud in a quiet, conversational voice or silently. Offer prayers of comfort or peace or blessing as you encounter

different spaces in your community. Perhaps you do this at the start of a new school year, or as you notice transition in the neighbourhood.

Here are some ideas of what to pray for:

**Discernment:** Ask God how to see the community through a different lens. Where is God already at work? How can you join?

**Empathy:** What are those things individuals in your community are experiencing? Brokenness? Joy? As Romans 12:15 says, "Be happy with those who are happy, and cry with those who are crying."

**Blessing:** Pray for each person, home and business you encounter.

Maybe in praying this way, you, too will be transformed.

*From: [rethinkchurch.org/articles/spirituality/praying-with-our-feet](http://rethinkchurch.org/articles/spirituality/praying-with-our-feet)*

And...

What if we paused in our prayer to not only pray for people we encounter on our prayer walk, but to greet them, and not only to greet them, but to strike up a conversation with them?

What if we talked to them about their lives?

What if we offered to pray for them?

What if we asked to help them with their needs?

Might then prayer lead us into loving service of our neighbour?

---

# DAY 12

**1st March**

SUNDAY

---

God of freedom,

You who are.

Hosanna - save us.

Set us free from our enslavement to our culture of wants and excesses.

Break us away from the tendrils of consumerism that are so entwined in our thinking and worldview.

Confront the misguided values which choke selflessness and generosity in our spirit.

Do not pass over our unrighteousness.

Put to death in us that which kills the spirit and deadens our living.

Lead us in to the wilderness of freedom where we may learn your ways again.  
Guide us to the promised end so that we may enter your kingdom.  
Lord of hope and freedom,  
Cross us over from the land of sin and death in your realm of eternal life.  
May we not fall into temptation to despair or seek easy hollow gods.  
May we be prepared to bear the cost.  
May we accept that hardship will test our commitment.  
May we rely on your provision for our needs.  
May you set before us your way.  
Send us your Spirit that we may walk by faith into freedom.  
God of freedom,  
You who are.  
Amen - may it be so.

---

# DAY 13

**2nd March**

MONDAY

---

Lord of Hope,  
We give you praise for the gift of life.  
We give thanks for will that is free.  
However, we lament the poor choices that we make.  
We would seek your direction.  
We would follow in your way.  
However, our poor judgement and self-interest distract us from your path.  
We would do as you ask.  
We would live as you desire.  
However, our lack of will and our compassion-fatigue pull us up short.  
We would give as you give.  
We would love as you love.  
However, our fear and limited faith keep us to ourselves.  
Lord of Hope,  
We would follow in your way.  
We would live as you desire.  
We would love as you love.  
The potential lies within us.  
We hold the seeds of your glory.

---

# DAY 14

**3rd March**

TUESDAY

---

We are upheld in your Spirit.  
We have your example in Christ.  
Lord of Hope,  
We call upon your patience.  
We ask for your perseverance.  
We need your help.  
We rely on your grace.  
Having fallen short again of your glory,  
Having made as many steps backwards as we  
have made forwards,  
Pick us up.  
Help us dust off the taint of our failure.  
Point us in the right direction.  
Renew a right Spirit within us.  
Set before us your vision of the world again.  
Empower us with your Spirit.  
Lord of Hope,  
Bless us as we move forward into your future.  
May we align with your will.  
May this be so.  
Amen

You are our God.  
We are your people.  
In Jesus you established a new covenant.  
You set before us a life lived well.  
You taught us the way of loving sacrifice.  
You fully enfolded us into your grace and forgiveness.  
You called us into communion with you and each other.  
In your promise we find hope.  
In our promise you hope.  
Bind us together anew.  
Want us and will us to be yours.  
Lord of all,  
God in Christ,  
You are our God.  
We are your people.  
May this be so.  
Amen

---

# DAY 15

**4th March**

WEDNESDAY

---

God of the journey,  
Christ of compassion,  
Spirit in our midst,  
Walk with me.  
Even though I stray from your path;  
When I fail to follow your lead;  
As I go my own way,  
Bring me along with you.  
Forgive me, for I think that I know what I do.  
I think I know where I should go.  
Command my attention.  
Reset my moral compass to point to your justice.  
Map my way again so that I may walk in the footsteps of  
the Christ.  
Through your patience and kindness,  
But with firmness and truth  
Work your will in my life.  
This I ask of you, knowing that I will struggle against you again.  
Move me, O Lord.  
Amen

---

# DAY 16

**5th March**

THURSDAY

---

## A Promising Prayer

Lord of all things,  
We hear about your promises.  
Some say you promise this.  
Others say you promise that.  
The world promises many things:

- promises that often excite us
- happiness if we do this
- satisfaction if we buy that

but do we hear in them, the echoes of that voice in the wilderness that promised things to Jesus after forty days and nights alone?



---

# DAY 17

**6th March**

FRIDAY

---

There are many promises in the scriptures.  
In the Gospels we hear troubling promises that you spoke  
to your disciples - promises of sacrifice and suffering.  
Grant us true insight into the depth of your love.  
Assist us to feel your compassion in our living.  
Help us discern your presence with us and within us.  
Teach us to slip out of selfishness and slide into selflessness  
So that we become promising as your followers.  
So that we might bear your hope in the world.  
So that we might be your hands and feet in our caring and  
serving of others.  
Promise to be with us.  
Promise to support us  
Promise to transform us.  
Promise to renew us.  
Promise to sustain us.  
May we show promise in letting you work within us.  
We will promise to listen and try.  
This we ask for Jesus' sake.  
Amen

Commanding God,  
Teach us your ways anew.  
Commanding God,  
Teach us your ways anew.  
Commanding God,  
Teach us your ways anew.  
Renew your commandments in our hearts.  
Set us free from the slavery to consumerism.  
Liberate us from limited thinking.  
Rescue us from restrictive dogma and the tempting  
entrapment of superficial religiosity.  
Bring us to repentance with your truth.  
Release us from the power of sin and death through your  
grace and forgiveness.  
Lead us onward

---

# DAY 18

7th March

SATURDAY

---

Place our feet on your way  
Strengthen your will in our lives.  
Write your commandment to love on our hearts.  
Commanding God,  
Teach us your ways anew.  
Amen

## An Act of Prayer

- Find five things around your house that you would consider 'precious'.
- Arrange them (if you can) on a table in front of you.
- What do they represent in your life?
- Look up one of the Lent Event Projects - one that you may not have thought about yet.
- Think about the people the people whom the project seeks to help.
- What might they put on their table of precious things?
- How might the two tables be different?
- Write down two names for God (e.g. God who is... and ...)
- Write down three words that speak of a need for change.
- Write down four words that speak of hope.
- Pray.

---

# DAY 19

8th March

SUNDAY

---

Creator God,  
Lord of all Creation,  
For all that we enjoy  
We give thanks.  
For the beauty of the universe, especially or small part,  
We give thanks.  
For the gift and abundance of life,  
We give thanks.  
For the complexity of ecology,  
We give thanks.  
For the depth of biodiversity,  
We give thanks.

For the interdependence of the biosphere and the  
physical world,  
We give thanks.  
For our role as stewards,  
We give thanks.  
Creator God,  
For our failure to be as thankful as we could be,  
We lament.  
For the fact that all is not as it should be,  
We should accept responsibility.  
For our stepping out of synchronicity with your will,  
We are sorry (although most of us probably don't  
appreciate how sorry we should be).  
For our poor stewardship,  
We ask forgiveness.  
Creative God,  
In you we place our hope.  
In your redemption we aspire.  
In your will we will work.  
Creative God,  
Lord of all creation,  
May we work in your work.  
May we do as you will.  
May we atone for our mistakes.  
Creative God,  
Lord of all creation,  
We give thanks.  
May we live our thanks in living well.  
This we ask of you.  
Amen

---

# DAY 20

**9th March**

MONDAY

---

Lord of life,  
Things are not as they should be.  
Our world is not as you intended.  
We have overreached our place in the world.  
We have upset the balance of nature.  
We do not live in harmony with the environment.  
We have exploited our planet.  
Our devouring of resources is unnatural.  
Our excesses are overbearing.  
Our destruction of the wild places is abhorrent.  
Our ignorance of the damage resulting from our lifestyle  
is inexcusable.  
We should be sorry.  
We know the facts.  
We have seen the effects.  
But little do we change.  
Do not forgive our token gestures.  
Hold us accountable until we repent.  
Disabuse us of our perverted selfish ways.  
Grant us the shocking vision of the truth.  
But also call us to your purpose.  
Awaken in us the seeds of change.  
Help us take up our responsibility.  
Show us how to make amends.  
Join us to your mission,  
That our world may be renewed.  
That we may be redeemed.  
That the Creating Christ may be served.  
In his name.  
Amen

---

# DAY 21

**10th March**

TUESDAY

---

Creative, creating, Creator God,  
You spoke and it was good.  
You saw and it was good.  
You blessed and it was good.  
May we seek and find your goodness.  
May we ask and be a blessing.  
May we walk in your hope.  
May we be found in your grace.  
May we rest in your peace.  
May we share of your joy.  
May we see with your compassion.  
May we bear with your forgiveness.  
May we work for you justice.  
May we shine with your presence.  
May we witness to your working.  
May we partner with your Spirit.  
May we follow in the way of your Christ.  
May we live out your love.  
May all this be so.  
Amen

---

# DAY 22

**11th March**

WEDNESDAY

---

God,  
Depth of our being,  
Take me deeper,  
Deeper into faith and discipleship.  
Take me deeper:  
From understanding into knowing;  
From simple belief into active faith;  
From concern into action;  
From sympathy into compassion;  
From the comfortable to the challenging;  
From start of forgiveness into the fulfilment of reconciliation;  
From worship services into service worship;  
From gratitude to gracefulness.

---

# DAY 23

12th March

THURSDAY

---

Christ,  
Depth of our being,  
Take me deeper,  
Into deeper living,  
Into deeper loving,  
Deeper into your way of grace and love,  
Deeper into faith and discipleship.  
Take me deeper, Jesus.  
This I pray.  
Amen

Lord of Creation,  
Teach us to walk the earth more lightly.  
Restore us to your vision of a renewed world.  
Give us the strength of conviction,  
and the passion of community,  
So that we might act together to reduce our rabid consumption  
and waste-filled living.  
May we humble ourselves and tread the earth more lightly.  
Transform our selfish arrogance.  
Teach us anew to submit to your will.  
Creator of all,  
Christ in Creation,  
May we partner with you in the renewal of the world.  
May these words be lived.  
May we make them so.  
Amen

---

# DAY 24

13th March

FRIDAY

---

Almighty Creator,  
God abundance,  
Word of God through whom all things came into being,  
Blessed of all,  
Beginning and end.  
We give thanks.  
May we take up a discipline of gratefulness.  
Help us to begin.  
May we set a target to give us focus,  
Let us look for a thousand beautiful things to appreciate.  
Every day may we find the blessing in our daily living  
and the world we inhabit.  
Grant that we may not take for granted things that  
we usually do.  
May we be thankful.  
For the air we breathe and the ecosystem that generates it.  
For food we eat and the complex web of life that sustains it.  
For the trees and their magnificence.  
For microbes that live and undergird the cycle of life.  
For flowers, not only for their beauty, but the staggering  
subtle way that they promulgate the renewal of plant life.  
For animals and the wonder that we and others are.  
For the cosmos and the seemingly limitless mystery  
that it presents.  
For the oceans and their depths.  
For the skies and the wonder of weather.  
For the earth and its aged structure, the foundation of our world.  
These are but ten, may we find ten times more reasons,  
And then let us start again.  
Almighty Creator,  
God abundance,  
Word of God through whom all things were made,  
Blessed of all,  
Beginning and end.  
May we continue to give thanks.  
May we live in harmony with creation.  
Amen - let it be so.

---

# DAY 25

14th March

SATURDAY

---

## An Act of Prayer

Take at least ten minutes (preferably half an hour) to sit outside. Ideally, if you can, spend the time in a garden, a park or the bush.

- a. **Find three natural objects that somehow make you think about the complexity of life and the awesomeness of the Creator God.**
  - Arrange the objects in a creative or reflective way before you.
  - Praise God for as many things that the objects help you to think of.
- b. **Reflect upon four things that you can be deeply grateful for.**
  - Name each of the four things four times.
- c. **Bring the faces of five people who are significant to you at the moment (for whatever reason or in whatever way.** (Rule of thumb: the five that come to mind first are probably there for a reason, but don't overthink it, just let them be your focus in this time).
  - Think about what you know of them, their lives and their current situation.
  - Pray compassionately for them.
- d. **Choose one of the objects and place it in a place to remind you of this time in the coming week.**
  - Remember one thing to be grateful for and commit to being mindful and grateful for it each day of the week.
  - Choose one person and commit to doing something practical or significant to help them in the coming week (even if it is to just chat with them and listen).



---

# DAY 26

15th March

SUNDAY

---

Jesus of the Cross,

As Moses lifted up the snake on a pole in the wilderness,

May we look to you, and be healed.

Healed of the poison of arrogance and self-righteousness which inflicts suffering on others.

Healed of the venom of violence and hatred which fuels persecution and oppression.

Healed of the blight of apathy and indifference which prevents our action to address wrong and injustice.

Healed of the toxin of bitterness and cynicism.

May we gaze upon your face and believe your love.

May we view your pain and comprehend your passion.

May we recoil at the injustice, and understand your solidarity with the oppressed.

May we hear your cry of abandonment and know your compassion.

May we listen to your words of grace and know your forgiveness.

May we see your suffering and see our culpability in the suffering of others.

May we feel your loneliness and sense of betrayal and recognise how we break relationships and cut ourselves off from others and others from ourselves.

You should have been exalted, but instead you were raised and crucified.

May the cross be a mirror of truth where we can see the dark depths of our humanity.

As you are lifted up, draw us to you.

And may we envisage a new way of sacrifice and redemption.

May this be so.

Amen

---

# DAY 27

16th March

MONDAY

---

## A Real Confession

Tireless God of endless grace and love,  
Help me I pray.  
I have almost had enough.  
I am tired and stressed,  
There is so much to be done and never enough  
time to do it.  
There always seems to be more;  
More people to help,  
More problems to solve,  
More care that is needed,  
More effort that is required.  
I just want to stop.  
I just want some peace.  
Actually, I want a lot of peace.  
I want to stop caring.  
I don't want to feel the pain of others.  
I can barely cope with my own hurt and stress.  
I want to close my eyes,  
Shut my ears,  
Remain silent,  
And curl up into my self.  
Love me God.  
Open me up in your Spirit  
Come alongside and restore my hope.  
Fill me with faith.  
Defibrillate me with your Word and gospel.  
Awaken my heart again to beat with your compassion,  
Renew my strength and energy to take up your call  
to live for better.  
Fill me with your love,  
And lead me once again into discipleship and out  
into the world to serve those I encounter.  
Push me back into the way of Jesus.  
Please help me make it so.  
Amen

---

# DAY 28

**17th March**

TUESDAY

---

God of Hope,  
Christ with us,  
In our darkness you see the spark of your light.  
In our struggles, you wrestle with us.  
In our pain and suffering, you hurt with us,  
In our weakness you lend us your strength.  
In our ignorance, you try to teach us wisdom.  
In our selfishness, you lead us to your way of the cross.  
In the breaking down of our relationships you pave the way towards reconciliation.  
In our falling short of your glory, you lift our eyes to see our potential.  
Into our desperation you bring hope.  
Into our brokenness you bring healing.  
Into our failure you bring redemption.  
Into our living you bring meaning and purpose.  
Into our dying you bring life.  
God of Hope,  
Christ with us,  
In your image we are created.  
In you we are made complete.  
In your way we seek to follow.  
In your truth we are revealed.  
In you we find life.  
God of Hope,  
Christ with us,  
Redeem and transform us,  
That we may truly be your people.  
This we ask.  
Amen

---

# DAY 29

**18th March**

WEDNESDAY

---

## **A Prayer of Hope**

Lord you are our shepherd.  
We should not want.  
You set green pastures for us to lie in.  
You lead us by still waters.  
You comfort and protect us.  
But there are times when we cannot feel it.  
There are times when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
And, though we should fear no evil,  
The darkness of such times is heavy and fearsome.  
In this dark place it is hard to hold hope  
– especially when we have to hold it for others who have lost or misplaced it.  
It is hard to hold the light, when it is like the sun has gone beyond the horizon.  
It is hard to find the positive, when so much is uncertain.  
In those times when:  
All that we want;  
All that we desire;  
Seems to be evaporating  
Like water held in my hands,  
It is seeping away through the cracks, no matter how hard I try to keep hold of it.  
But I trust in you.  
You are my hope.  
Lavish me with your love,  
That my hope may be rekindled  
And that my faith may be renewed.  
Bring me out of the dark places.  
Help me find the light.  
Just as Jesus did.  
Please may it be so.  
Amen

---

# DAY 30

19th March

THURSDAY

---

Crucified Christ,  
You reach out to us beyond the veil of time and space,  
You break into our existence and bring into being the will of God.  
You enfold us in love and grace.  
You touch the deepest places of our pain and suffering with  
your compassion.  
In our rejections of you and your truth, you pursue us with  
relentless passion and concern.  
You plunge yourself into the depth of our brokenness and  
sinfulness to redeem and restore us.  
You respond to our unbelief with hope and faith.  
How can we not do the same for others?  
Who is not to be included in our love and care?  
Surely, no one can be excluded and no one left out.  
Given who we are with our flaws and failings, how can we be  
anything but humble in our dealing with others?  
Bless us that we may be a blessing to others.  
Include us in your mission, that we might include others in  
your Kingdom.  
May we bear all that you are and all that you have given to us,  
And gift it to all we encounter.  
Amen

---

# DAY 31

20th March

FRIDAY

---

Reconciling God,  
Christ of connections,  
Despite our rejection of you,  
You extend to us grace and mercy.  
Despite our failings and sin,  
You offer us grace and forgiveness.  
Reconciling God,  
Christ of connections,  
You call us to go into the world.  
You call us to love as we have been loved.  
As we are being your disciples,  
you call us to invite others to meet you.

As we are learning to be disciples,  
You call us to help others learn your way too.  
As we are brought into your fellowship of love and growth,  
You call us to bring others into fellowship as well.  
As we find meaning and purpose in loving service to you  
through loving service of others,  
You call us to bring out the best in others that they might  
find meaning and purpose too.  
As we are brought your Word of hope and redemption,  
may we share it with others.  
Reconciling God,  
Christ of connections,  
You extend to us grace and mercy.  
May we extend the same to all people,  
In your name,  
Amen

---

# DAY 32

21st March

SATURDAY

---

## An Act of Prayer

- Go to the [Lent Event Website](#).
- Read about the projects Lent Event will be supporting.
- Use the Hand Folding Prayer below to pray into the situations.
- Spend about a minute for each action/gesture.



**Think** Think of five situations or places where people might be suffering.



**Feel** Try to imagine what it might be like and feel like to be a person in the situation.



**Connect** How might God be calling you to reach out and help in some way?



**Act** Let it be so. How might you act? What might you do to respond to God's call?

---

# DAY 33

22nd March

SUNDAY

---

God of healing

Heal us of our wounded misconceptions

Heal us of our ignorance and apathy

Heal us from the poison of our hate, condemnation and judgment

Heal us from our festering bitterness and anger

Heal us of our empty theatrics

God of healing

Cure us from fear and anxiety

Cure us of our negativity and pessimism

Cure us from our greed and self-interest

Cure us of ignorance and apathy

Cure us from woundedness and scarring

Cure us of hopelessness and defeatedness

God of healing

Perform your healing surgery on our hearts

Cut out the cancer of self-righteousness from our attitude

Unblock the hardening of our arteries so that compassion may flow through our hearts with ease.

Inject us with authentic faith when we seek to inoculate ourselves from guilt with token praise, prayers and worship

Thaw our limbs from the cold frostbite of narcissistic and hedonistic consumerism that we might act for justice

God of healing

Revive us when we are dead spiritually

Breathe into us your Spirit, that we might live rightly

Pound on our chests with your compassion until our heart beat as yours

Get the lifeblood of love, grace, compassion and forgiveness, justice and mercy flowing through our veins.

God of healing

Heal us

Cure us

Repair our souls

Revive our faith

Enliven our discipleship

Restore us to your love

This we ask in the healing of Jesus

Amen

---

# DAY 34

23rd March

MONDAY

---

God of deliverance,  
Hosanna.

Lord,  
Save us.

So many of us are imprisoned.

We are trapped in our habits and routines.

Set us free by showing us again the better way of being.

Too often we are entrenched in our biases and prejudices.

Break open our mindset with compassion and understanding.

Saviour,

For those of us locked in our all-consuming consumption  
and self-focused lifestyles,

Spend all your efforts to transform our worldview with its  
impoverished values.

Healing God,

Set us free from the suffering of disease.

For those captive to mental illness, break the chains that hold  
them that they make break free into wellness and joy.

God of justice,

The world, and the cultures and societies that we humans  
have established, hold millions in oppression.

May we break out, or be pushed out, of our ignorance and  
apathy so we may work in advocacy and awareness raising  
that governments and the world may end the suppression of  
anyone's rightful freedom.

God of abundance,

For those caught in the cycle of poverty, may we who are rich  
be convicted by your judgement and work generously  
to address the inequality.

For those trapped by inescapable circumstances,

Christ with us,

For those cast out in the wilderness of isolation and loneliness,  
may our eyes be open as a community to their suffering,  
that we might reach out with friendship and compassion and  
connect with them as your people.

God of deliverance,

Hosanna.

Lord, save us through your Christ.

Amen



---

# DAY 35

**24th March**

TUESDAY

---

God of Hope,  
In our sufferings be with us.  
In our weakness strengthen us.  
God of Compassion,  
When we feel alone come alongside us.  
When we can't cope bring to us people who can help.  
God of Help,  
Uplift us when we are down.  
When we are uplifted help us to reach out to others.  
God with Us,  
Care for us.  
Be with us.  
Just as you promised.  
Just as Jesus promised.  
Amen – please may it be so.

---

# DAY 36

**25th March**

WEDNESDAY

---

## **Annunciation of the Lord**

Lord Jesus,  
You bring us hope.  
You came to save.  
You gave your life for us  
Beginning in your incarnation.  
Living simply and simply living.  
Teaching and healing.  
Rebuking and cajoling  
Dying and rising.  
In you we meet God's love face to face.  
In you we see the grace of God.  
In you we grasp the depth of God's compassion.  
In you we know God is for us and no one can be against us.  
Lord Jesus,  
We are your people.  
May we be found in you again.  
Of you we ask.  
Amen

---

# DAY 37

**26th March**

THURSDAY

---

Lord of all,  
You are a God of hope.  
We have a hope in You.  
Your steadfast love remains forever.  
In the face of our stubbornness, you offer patience.  
In the desert of our indifference, you rain down passion.  
In the void of our miserly meagreness you pour in abundance and generosity.  
In the violence of rejection, you extend peace and acceptance.  
In the face of anger and blame, you return understanding and forgiveness.  
In the light of lies and deception, you pursue us with truth and integrity.  
In the wake of our selfishness and self-centredness, you love selflessly.  
Lord of all,  
You are a God of hope.  
We have a hope in You.  
All this is wrapped for us in the person of Jesus.  
May we be always grateful.  
Amen

---

# DAY 38

**27th March**

FRIDAY

---

God of Hope,  
Comfort us in our distress.  
Sit with us in our hurting.  
Wipe away our tears.  
Lift our eyes to look to that time when suffering will be no more.  
In the midst of our distress, help us to see you with us.  
May all sadness melt away in the warmth of your love.  
May pain and sorrow be healed in your grace.  
May fear in death evaporate like mist in the morning.  
This we ask of you.  
Amen

---

# DAY 39

**28th March**

SATURDAY

---

## **An Act of Prayer**

- Go to [www.lentevent.com](http://www.lentevent.com).
- Look up one or two of the projects that are being supported by Lent Event.
- Spend some time looking at the pictures of people being assisted by the project.
- Spend some time focusing on each face in each picture. What might life be like for that person?
- Pray for each person.
- Pray for their community.
- Pray for their country.
- Pray for the world.

---

# DAY 40

**29th March**

PALM SUNDAY

---

## **A Prayer for Palm Sunday**

Triumphant God,

Save us.

With hosannas ringing in our ears,

The memory of palm waving crowds in our minds,

and the expectation of Easter in our hearts,

Save us from hypocrisy and misunderstanding.

Would we have waved the palms?

Would we have hailed you king?

Would we have welcomed you in?

Would we have been surprised at your message?

Would we have been disappointed in your actions?

Would we have been ones with the potential to turn on you?

Triumphant God,

Save us from wanting a king without a cross.

Save us from wanting a cross that only situates us in heaven.

Save us from wanting the kingdom without the cost.

Triumphant God,

Save us.

With hosannas ringing in our ears,

The memory of palm waving crowds in our minds,

and the expectation of Easter in our hearts,

---

# DAY 41

**30th March**

MONDAY

---

May we walk the last days of Lent with you,  
Learning of your way and love.  
Triumphant God who is the one who comes in name  
of the Lord,  
May this be so.  
Amen

Jesus,  
Our Christ,  
With what shall we anoint you?  
What can we give of ourselves to honour what you give for us?  
How do we express our love?  
How might we demonstrate our appreciation of grace?  
Help us to live more justly.  
Move us to love more deeply.  
Teach us true humility of spirit that we might walk in your way.  
This we pray.  
Amen

---

# DAY 42

**31st March**

TUESDAY

---

Jesus,  
Our Christ,  
Our souls are troubled.  
We know that we should not hold ourselves back.  
We know that you ask from us our all.  
We know that we should not ask to be saved from trials.  
But,  
Jesus,  
Our Christ,  
Our souls are troubled.  
We love our lives.  
We are scared though of losing them.  
We are fearful of your tough sayings.  
We are afraid.  
We want to want to give our life to you.  
We want to commit ourselves fully to your will.

---

# DAY 43

**1st April**

WEDNESDAY

---

We want to be your servants.  
We want to go where you go.  
But it seems so hard.  
Jesus,  
Our Christ,  
Our souls are troubled.  
Draw us to yourself.  
May we be found in you.  
Strengthen our faith that we might follow in your way.  
Give us your light that we might walk within it.  
Lift us up so that we might stand as your disciples.  
Jesus,  
Our Christ,  
Our souls are troubled.  
But grant us your grace and mercy,  
So that we might find redemption in your love.  
This we ask of you.  
Amen

Lord Jesus,  
Surely, it is not us who would betray you?  
Surely, it is not us who would sell you out?  
Surely, it is not us who would mistake your purpose?  
Surely, it is not us who would lose faith in who you are?  
Surely, it is not us who would turn from knowing you?  
But Lord, it is us.  
We may not mean to.  
We may not want to.  
We may not understand why.  
We may be mistaken in doing so.  
But we do it.  
Lord, Jesus,  
Forgive us for we do not truly know what it is that we do.  
Enfold us in your grace.  
Embrace us with your forgiveness.  
Turn us back to your truth.

---

# DAY 44

2nd April

THURSDAY

---

Love us and lead us.  
Shock us with your words.  
Lead us to the cross, that we might discover anew its  
meaning and power.  
Jesus, may we want it to be so.  
Amen

Wash our feet Lord,  
Make us clean.  
Join us to your people.  
Teach us to serve as you have served us.  
Teach us to love, so that all may know that we are your  
disciples.  
Wash us of our guilt,  
Commit us to your purpose,  
Command us in your love.  
Awaken in us an epiphany of your way.  
May we journey into your love, into the cross and beyond,  
And learn the power of redemptive love -  
The power of unremitting grace.  
This we ask of you.  
Amen

---

# DAY 45

**3rd April**

GOOD FRIDAY

---

Jesus of the Cross,  
Christ of God,  
It is finished.

In you the Way is set before us.

In you the Truth is found.

In you the Life is discovered.

In you our death is owned.

In you our life is lived.

In you the sacrifice has been offered.

In you God's debt has been paid.

In you atonement is possible.

In you salvation is offered.

In your love redemption takes place.

In your eyes we find grace.

In your compassion we find ourselves.

In your mercy we find forgiveness.

In your way we seek to follow.

Jesus of the Cross,  
Christ of God,  
It has begun anew.

As we wait.

As we watch.

As we listen.

As we learn.

Bring us into resurrection.

In you, may this be so.

Amen

---

# DAY 46

4th April

EASTER SATURDAY

---

Jesus,  
Waiting God,  
Where are you?  
At times, it feels that you are far away.  
At times, we don't know how to find you.  
At times, we seem lost in our fear.  
Has your love for us died, or have we killed the  
connection with you?  
Have we entombed you in our hurt and suffering?  
Have we buried you in our despair and resentment?  
Wait with us.  
Bring us into awareness of your presence.

Jesus,  
Waiting God,  
Where are you?  
At times, life seems to lull.  
At times, nothing seems to happen.  
At times, numbness seems the norm.  
Have we over-expectations of what life with you should  
be like?  
Have we misunderstood what your way is about?  
Have our brains seized at the cost of discipleship?  
Wait with us.  
Bring us into your future.

Jesus,  
Waiting God,  
Where are you?  
At times we feel that we are separated from your purpose.  
At times we feel that there is no way to work out just what  
your will for us is.  
Have we let our thinking overtake our experience?  
Have we let our worries erode our faith?  
Wait with us.  
Bring us into your way.

Jesus,  
Waiting God,  
Where are you?



We remember that you walked with us.  
We remember the things you did.  
We remember the words that were spoken.  
We remember the learning you shared.  
We remember the example you gave.  
We remember the experiences that we had.  
We remember the life you offered.  
Bring us to that place again, where we can meet you.  
Bring us to that place again, where we know that you  
are with us.  
Bring us to that place again, where you call us to your  
purpose.  
Bring us to that place again, where we trust in you.  
Bring us to that place again, where we know the enfolding  
of your love.

Jesus,  
Waiting God,  
May you ever be near.  
May it always be so.  
Amen

---

# DAY 47

**5th April**

EASTER SUNDAY

---

Christ of the resurrection,  
Jesus who is alive,  
Burst forth into our lives.  
Shatter our disbelief.  
Why do we look for the living among the dead?  
Fill us with awe and wonder at your possibilities.  
Surprise us with your presence.  
Wipe away our fear.  
Meet us again.  
Call us by our name.  
Awaken our faith.  
Bless us with your hope.  
Fill us with your love.  
Send us on your way.  
Gift us with our mission.  
Tell us what to say.  
Go before us, that we may encounter you again and again.  
Risen Christ,  
Jesus of resurrection,  
May we be your Easter people.  
In your name may we let it be so.  
Amen

# PROJECT INFORMATION

In 2015 Lent Event is supporting UnitingWorld's overseas community development projects.

## Disability inclusion in Sri Lanka



In the shadow of civil war young people with disabilities in Sri Lanka face many challenges. Our partner is providing vocational training to young adults so they can earn a sustainable income, and creating pathways for children with disabilities to access inclusive education.

---

## Livelihood development in Zimbabwe



In rural Zimbabwe there aren't many opportunities to make a living, and drought threatens the livelihood of whole communities reliant on subsistence farming. This project strengthens the ability of local people to earn an income through innovative solutions, including animal husbandry, beekeeping and carpentry.

---

## Peacebuilding in Indonesia



In Maluku, Indonesia, women are working together to overcome prejudice born out of years of conflict between different religious groups. UnitingWorld's partners equip women to know their rights, earn sustainable livelihoods and promote peace as respected community leaders.

# PROJECT INFORMATION

## Training midwives in South Sudan



Women in South Sudan are more likely to die in pregnancy or childbirth than anywhere else in the world. This project trains midwives to deliver quality care to mothers and their babies. Even in the midst of conflict, they are bringing hope.

---

## Women's empowerment across the Pacific



Throughout the Pacific women are often at the centre of family and community life. But they face huge challenges – there are limited opportunities for women to earn an income, high rates of domestic violence and very few women in leadership roles. This project works with women's networks to promote change.

---

For more information about these projects visit [www.lentevent.com](http://www.lentevent.com) or download the **free Lent Event App**.



# MAKE A DONATION

Your financial contribution to Lent Event will support vital community development projects that are transforming lives worldwide.

## Here are the simple ways to make a donation:

(1) Complete and return this form to

**Lent Event**

PO Box A2266

Sydney South NSW 1235

(2) Call 1800 998 122

(3) Donate online [www.lentevent.com](http://www.lentevent.com)

(4) Fax this form to (02) 9262 7936

## Contact Details:

UNITINGWORLD SUPPORTER ID (IF EXISTING)

TITLE (Please tick):

Mr  Ms  Mrs  Miss  Dr  Rev  Prof

FIRST NAME

SURNAME

ADDRESS

STATE

P/CODE

DAYTIME TELEPHONE

EMAIL

GROUP/CONGREGATION

# MAKE A DONATION

## Donation Details:

I enclose my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Cheque/Money Order

I enclose my:  Cheque  Money Order

Please make payable to Lent Event

### Credit Card

Please debit my:  MasterCard  Visa

CARD NUMBER

□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

EXPIRY DATE (MM/YY)

CVV

□	□	/	□	□	□	□	□
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

TOTAL AMOUNT \$ \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF CARDHOLDER \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me information on leaving a Bequest to UnitingWorld in my Will.

Your personal information will only be used for the purpose for which it was collected and will not be disclosed to any person, body or agency except where required by law. Visit [www.unitingworld.org.au](http://www.unitingworld.org.au) to read our Privacy Policy.

Donations to Lent Event support the community development and emergency relief work of UnitingWorld through the Relief and Development Unit.

Donations \$2 and above are tax deductible.



