

# Lenten Reflections 2019

Created with love and full of care by the staff of the CTM for your Lenten journey.

From Ash Wednesday to Easter each day you will find a fresh thought and invitation for reflection, as well as an activity for your household at the end of each week.

We would be pleased to know how you are using the reflections and your ideas for future resources for individuals or groups.

May your Lenten discipleship be enriched by this resource.



Uniting Church in Australia  
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



equipping Leadership for Mission

## 6 MARCH: ISAIAH 58: 1-12 ASH WEDNESDAY

The reading from Isaiah asks for justice and healing, and warns against empty gestures without a genuine change of heart. It calls for a community that shares food and treats workers fairly. If people pay attention to God's call for justice, God promises life in 'parched places' and a community that flourishes 'like a watered garden', surrounded by 'streets to live in'.

The first day of Lent is called 'Ash Wednesday' because of the traditional call to 'put on sackcloth and ashes' as a sign of humility and repentance. In Australia, we also associate 'Ash Wednesday' with bush fire, a potentially destructive force that was used by Aboriginal people to cultivate the land, and which opens seed-pods and prompts new growth.

**What are the parched places in your life and community that need to be watered by God's streams, or activated by God's firing love?**

*Lord, during this season of Lent may I be open to your living water and fiery love.*

*May it call me to seek justice and healing in my life and the world. Amen.*

## 7 MARCH: PSALM 91: 1-2, 9-16

Growth can be painful, and it takes courage to seek a deeper relationship with God. Psalm 91 is full of confidence that the risk is worth it, that God overcomes all dangers and barriers. This prayer of trust in God's loving protection is a favourite of many, and a traditional prayer for the end of the day. Martin Luther called it 'the most distinguished jewel among all the psalms of consolation'. It does not promise that sorrow will be absent or that evil is not real, but that God is always present with us, guarding and guiding, and guaranteeing our path home.

**How are you aware of God's guiding protection in your life?  
What is God guiding you towards this Lent?**

*Lord, in the face of evil, sorrow and injustice help me remember that you are always present.*

*Help me to call on you when I am fearful and guide me to your loving refuge.*

*In this period of Lent I will open my eyes and ears, and search for you and your guiding love. Amen.*



## 8 MARCH: EXODUS 6: 1-13

The story of the Exodus goes to the heart of who God is. The story of Moses leading God's people out of slavery is a story that shows God is the One who brings life out of death. This story of liberation is the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus too.

In the reading, God of the Covenant is moved by the groaning of the chosen people. The people do not take God's promise seriously 'because of their broken spirit and their cruel slavery' (Ex 6: 9) but God continues to act, directing Moses's attention to Pharaoh, and enlisting Aaron as well when Moses is daunted by the idea of speaking to the ruler. God's action for life and freedom will not be deterred by our lack of interest, or by apparently impossible odds.

**What breaks our spirit or enslaves us so that we cannot hear God's promises?**

*Lord, when I am faced with and hold back because of my fears may I remember the story of Moses. Help me to trust in your actions and promises that seek freedom and justice for all. Amen.*

## 9 MARCH: JOHN 12: 27-36

The English word 'Lent' means 'Spring' because this is the season when the days begin to lengthen (lencten) out again after the darkness of winter and promise a change of season. Today's reading from John is full of transitions and changes. The crowd that has welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem with palm branches hears him cry out to God with troubled spirit, and they are confused. This Messiah will overthrow the world but not in a way that makes sense to them.

In response, Jesus identifies himself with 'light'. He urges them to stick with the lengthening glimmers of light, and to move with him away from false assumptions. The promises is that walking by this light, they will begin to shine with it also. The life that is the light of all people, that shines in the darkness, will not be overcome (John 1: 4-5).

**Is 'light' a helpful image of God for you?**

*Lord, thank you for the light.  
The light that warms our days and guides us through the night.  
Help me to continue to stay close to the light and reflect the light into the world.  
Amen.*





## 10 MARCH: LUKE 4:1-13

Luke tells the story of the temptation of Jesus with a typical dramatic flourish. By indicating that the devil 'departed from him until an opportune time' Luke reminds us that a greater testing still awaits Jesus. The taunting in the wilderness prepares us for the mocking of the soldiers, the religious leaders and one of the fellow-criminals at the crucifixion (see Luke 23.35-39). In enclosing Jesus' ministry with scenes in which he is offered alternatives, Luke seems to be telling us that something important is at stake; but what? What is Jesus being tempted to do? Many read this as a story about our daily choices: whether to do the right or wrong thing. But in the wilderness and on the cross another, deeper question is being asked of Jesus, and therefore is asked of us. Temptation is as much about allegiance as it is about behaviour: whom will you worship? To whom will you listen? To whom do you entrust your life?

**How might  
Lent become  
a time when  
I consider not  
only the way  
I act in each  
moment, but  
also the overall  
direction and  
purpose of my life?**

*Indwelling God,  
sustain me that I  
might seek the reign  
of God with my whole  
life. Amen.*

## AS A HOUSEHOLD:

- Ash Wednesday: As a household use charcoal to write or draw your prayers of repentance and being open to God's new life. You might use your charcoal on pieces of sandpaper, as you connect with the cleared land of a bushfire, or the 'parched places' of Isaiah 58, or perhaps the desert existence of the Israelites (Exodus 6) or the environment of Jesus' temptations (Luke 4).

Alternatively, writing or drawing on your driveway or front path 'takes it the streets'.

- Go for a walk in some bushland and look for fallen seed pods. Make a collection of pods that are in various stages of openness. Make a space in the centre of your dinner table to display the pods, lining them up in order from most closed to fully open. Focus your prayers on being open to God and opened by God.
- Isaiah 58:6:

*"Is not this the fast that I choose:  
to loose the bonds of injustice,  
to undo the thongs of the yoke,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
and to break every yoke?"*

Together as a household, write out the verses from Isaiah 58:1-12, in largish print on pieces of paper, dividing the task amongst you. You should end up with reasonable sized pile of papers. Fold the papers all up together, and then bind them with layers and layers of string and rope, tying it all with many knots. Let this sit in the middle of the dinner table for a week, as a reminder to pray for those who are bound up by injustice. At the end of the week, have a 'loosening' ceremony - in which you cut the strings and untie the prophetic voice of God, and read the text afresh to one another.



## 11 MARCH: PSALM 17

Images of walking - following the right path, of pilgrimage into the desert and the promised land, the journey to Jerusalem - recur in the Lenten readings. 'My steps have held fast to your paths, my feet have not slipped' (Ps 17: 5). This line from the beginning of Psalm 17 fends off unjust accusations and reminds God that the pray-er trusts God, and has always been guided by God along the path that God offers. It is a very confident boast. But it also prompts some reflection on 'the path' itself. Hildegard of Bingen called God 'most reliable path ... uniting all'. Continuing to put one foot in front of the other in the journey of faith might have more to do with the path itself than the righteousness of the person.

**How would you describe the path you are on this Lent?**

*Trustworthy God, guide my path this Lent that I might always seek to journey with you. Amen.*

## 12 MARCH: PSALM 17

Psalm 17 is a lament and a protest of innocence, calling out to God for vindication and justice. In the face of what seems like the success of the Godless, the psalmist reminds God to confront evil and to protect the faithful. 'Guard me as the apple of your eye, hide me in the shadow of your wings' (Ps 17:8), or more loosely, 'Keep a loving eye on me'. The pray-er asks urgently to be the focus of God's loving attention against surrounding threats.

Seeing clearly features in this psalm. At the beginning the plea is for God's 'eyes to see the right' (Ps 17:2), then God's loving gaze (Ps 17:8) is a contrast to the enemies whose hard eyes 'cast me to the ground' (Ps 17: 11). At the end, in a shift of focus, it is the psalmist who will see, finally confident of 'beholding' God's face. (Ps 17:15).

**Imagine being the centre of God's attention.  
What do you pray for God to see more clearly?**

*Merciful God grant that I might always see myself with Your sight, as the apple of Your eye. Amen.*

## 13 MARCH: JOB 1: 1-22

The book of Job is thought of as part of the 'wisdom literature' of the Bible. In the style of a folk-tale, it tells a classic story of 'when bad things happen to good people'.

This is a book of the Bible in which suffering has nothing at all to do with sin. Instead, the terrible grief and multiple losses that overtake Job flow from an agreement, almost a bet, between God and 'the Accuser', who is keen to test God's high opinion of Job. Job's trust in God in the midst of his grief vindicates God's high praise of 'my servant Job' as upright. Job was not living a holy life as a way of bribing God to ensure prosperity, but from reverence and love. In hideous adversity Job retains his freedom to bless God.

**Given the chance,  
what would you say to  
Job? To the Accuser?  
To God?**

*Tender God, help me live  
a holy life that I might  
always bless you. Amen.*

## 14 MARCH: PSALM 27

The prayer of Psalm 27 begins and ends with clear affirmations of trust in God. The strong statements and resounding questions at the outset (The Lord is my saving light; whom should I fear? God is my fortress; what should I dread?) weave through the verses of more anxious pleading (vv.7-12) to lead the prayer back to even deeper confidence that God's goodness overcomes all human trouble. The psalmist has no need to fear but announces 'I know I will see how good God is while I am still alive.' This trust and strength of conviction is not blind to the evil around us, or the dangers of the world, but is rather a deep awareness of God, hard-won in the midst of anxiety and temptation. The final verse sings out in confidence: 'Trust in the Lord. Be strong. Be brave. Trust in the Lord.'

**Imagine God's light and strength  
transforming the most difficult  
challenge you face. What does that  
free you for?**

*Saving God sustain me in difficult times  
that your light might free me to always  
sing of your goodness. Amen.*





## 15 MARCH: PHILIPPIANS 3:17-20

Paul reminds the Philippians that they are 'citizens of heaven', called to follow the pattern of Christ and give of themselves freely for others.

Tomorrow is traditionally remembered as the day on which Polycarp, a church leader in Roman Asia, was martyred in 155. The 86 year-old had left the city, doing his best to avoid arrest. But when officials pursued him to his farm, the account shows a gracious man who kept his composure. Memorably, he invited the arresting officers to eat and drink after their journey while he took some time in prayer. He refused to renounce his faith, saying that Christ had kept him safe this long, 'How could I now curse my King who saved me?'. With his eye on the horizon of faith, Polycarp is remembered as a 'citizen of heaven' whose life and death kept faith with the pattern set by Jesus, and so with the new life that flows from his Cross and Resurrection.

**Where is your citizenship centred?**

*Sustaining God, keep my life centred on the life that flows from Christ's Cross and Resurrection. Amen.*

## 16 MARCH: MATTHEW 23: 37-39

Through chapter 23 of Mathew's gospel Jesus rages against the religious authorities, again and again calling for 'woe' to them as hypocrites and blind guides who mislead the people. But at the end of the chapter in verses 37-39 his lament for Jerusalem moves from anger to a different kind of sorrow. Jesus tells the people of the faithless city that he has longed to gather them 'as a hen gathers her brood under her wings'.

The vivid image of a mother hen sheltering her chicks gives a terrible poignancy to the unwillingness of the people to hear Jesus's message. It is a simple picture of instinctive nurturing care, and a reminder that what God most wants from us is simply for us to let God love us.

**What other images of God's love and care come to mind?**

*Mother God, help me love you always. Amen.*



## 17 MARCH: LUKE 13:31-35

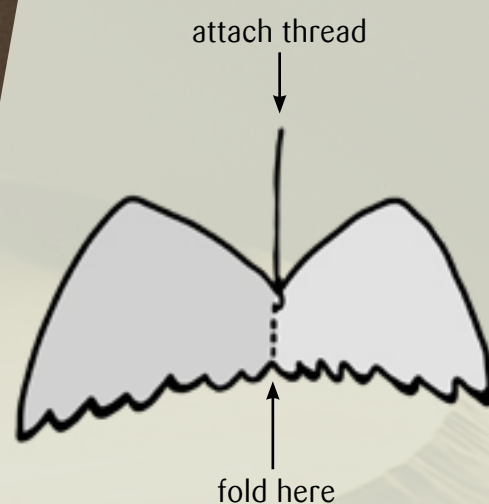
Jesus' love for, and distress over Jerusalem is a major theme in Luke. In dismissing Herod's threat (13:31-32), Jesus is committing himself to the greater danger of walking into the heart of the holy city and pronouncing judgement upon it. As so often in Luke, the prophecy of 13:35 is fulfilled directly later on in the narrative (see 19:29-48). These combined emotions of concern and critique have their roots deep in Old Testament prophetic traditions and extend far into the story of the church that we find in Acts. It is as if Jesus inherits from and hands on to God's people the vocation to speak truth to the city, the community, the centre, and to suffer the consequences of that vocation.

**If Jesus were to talk into the heart of your community, what would cause him to grieve and what word from God would he speak?**

*Righteous God strengthen our vocation to speak your words of truth where we live and work and play. Amen.*

## AS A HOUSEHOLD

- **Heads, Shoulder Knees and Toes:** Psalm 17 makes reference to a number of body parts. If you have younger children in your household, you might like to do a warm up for reading this passage by singing 'Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes'. Read the passage aloud and clearly, and as a group place your hands on each body part as it is mentioned. In order this will be: Ear, eyes, heart, mouth, lips, feet, ear, right hand, eye, (optional wings), hearts, mouths, eyes, bellies, face.
- **Wings:** Across this week several of the readings use the image of wings as an image of God's care. Cut a simple bird shape from light card (a cereal box is ideal), fold in the middle and suspend from a reasonable height (perhaps in a doorway!). Throughout the week add coloured craft feathers, sticking them on the upper side of the wings, and write brief prayers, names or situations on the underside of the wings. Use the verses in Psalm 17:8 'hide me/us/them in the shadow of your wings,' and Matthew 23:37 'gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings' as a repeated prayer together.
- **Paths:** Write the text of Psalm 17:5 in chalk on the path to your front and/or back door. Remind each other of it as a prayer in your journeys coming and going throughout the week.





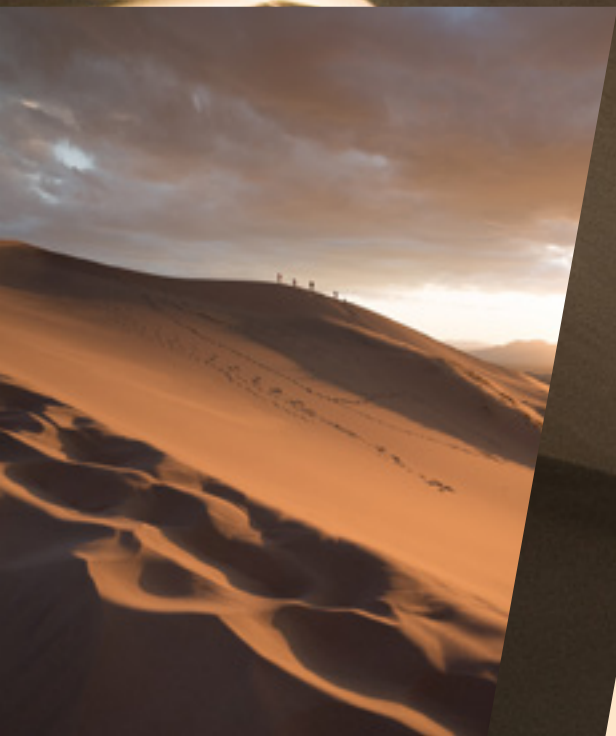
## 18 MARCH: EXODUS 33:1-6

Following the incident of the golden calf, God expresses God's displeasure at Israel's stubbornness. God has lost patience with a "stiff necked" people! God threatens to withdraw from their midst and declares that an angel will guide them into the Promised Land. One of the most dreaded consequences of sin is the departure of God from the community. God withdraws but not before providing for the security of God's people. But God's mercy is intrinsic to God's call to repentance. The people mourn over this and remove their ornaments (must have had plenty even after the making of the golden calf!) as a sign of their repentance. We can be strengthened by the experience of feeling God's absence, becoming certain of God's ultimate presence.

**Recall and reflect upon your most recent experience of God being 'absent' in your life. Have there been times when God seemed far off and yet your faith grew?**

*Lord, at times I drift from you. You know the very depths of my being and the ways to renew my faith and draw me to your side.*

*For this I am thankful even if the teaching requires your absence. Amen.*



## 19 MARCH: NUMBERS 14:10B-24

Yahweh seems to have reached the end of his tether. The people of Israel have been quite a challenge and Yahweh is angry and vows to disinherit them. Moses intercedes for Israel and seeks to motivate Yahweh by appealing to Yahweh's reputation, honor and reminds God of the risk of shame. Forgiveness is a better option says Moses, to convince Yahweh that divine help is the thing to do for it is characteristic of the nature of Yahweh. The passage gives us an example of human agency and initiative for the purposes of activating the liberative and transformative power of Yahweh for the sake and good of humankind. Our relationship with God gives us the freedom to move and stir God into rescuing activity in concrete ways and God expects this of us.

*Lord, remove my frustration and resentment for the world tainted by hurt and filled with revenge. Initiate in me the courage to liberate human kind in the ways you know are possible. Amen.*



## 20 MARCH: 2 CHRONICLES 20:1-22

King Jehoshaphat was a good king and a faithful follower of God's commandments, who is now facing the prospect of war against several neighbouring countries. The army approaching him was big and frightening and made him nervous. Jehoshaphat succumbs to prayer and reminds himself and those around him of who God is; the power of God; and the many saving deeds of God. Encouraged, strengthened and confident in God's power, he gives thanks even before the battle is won, so strong was his faith.

**What do you do when you are facing such enormous obstacles? How do you resist temptation? How do you flee from evil? How do you hold on to your faith? What do you recall or remember about God?**

*Lord, no matter the enormity of the obstacle you are ever reliable and powerful.*

*Instil in me the faithfulness that seeks courage in you and shares your strength with others whenever such obstacles present themselves. Amen.*

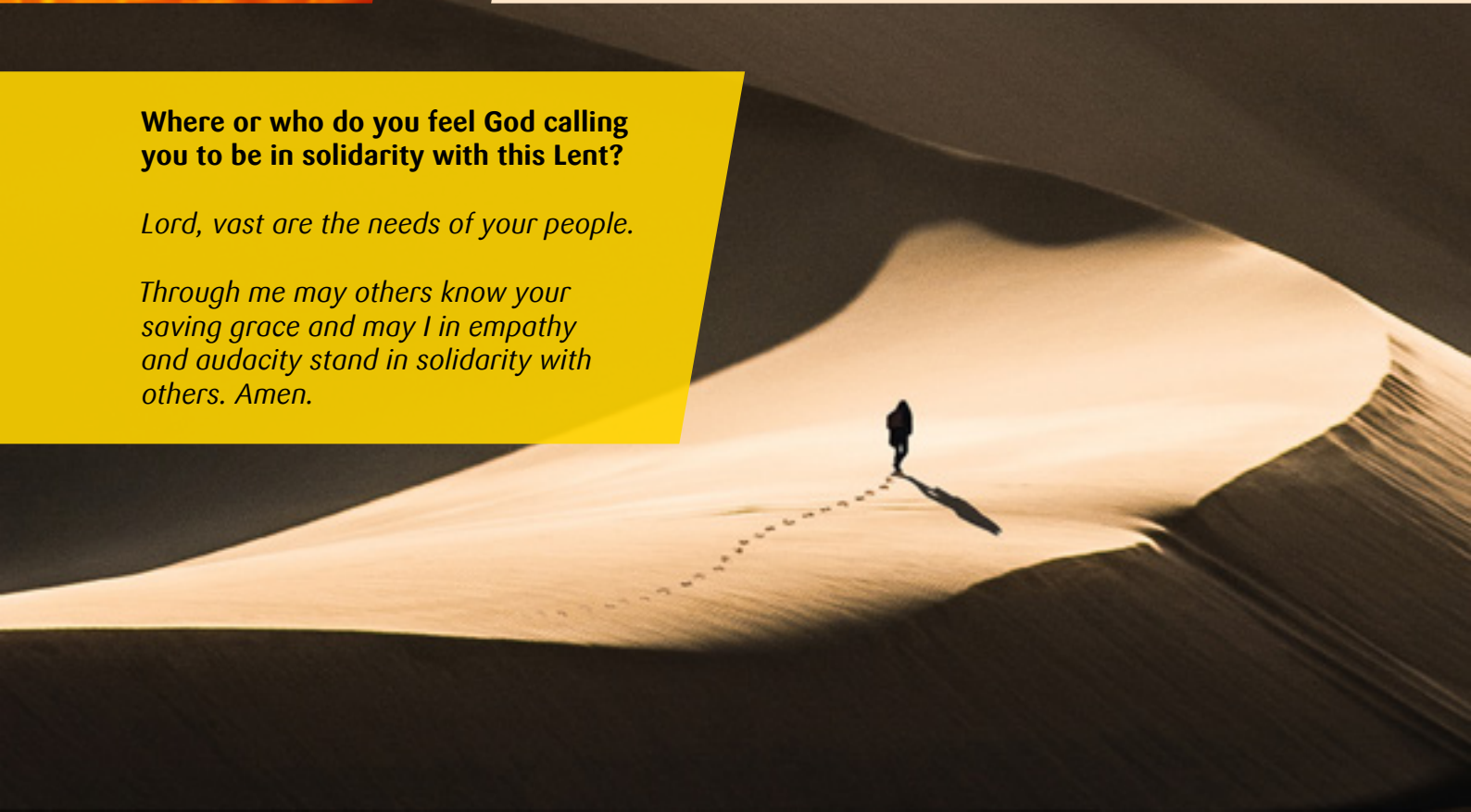
## 21 MARCH: DANIEL 3:19-30

Daniel and his friends are thrown into a heated furnace for refusing to worship the Babylonian gods, for standing firm in their faith, and for their unconditional love and loyalty to their God. The three are joined by a fourth and salvation occurs within the furnace. God joins the suffering ones in the furnace and becomes a co-victim. Troubles do come. But the Lord delivers. That is the faith we hold on to. While King Nebuchadnezzar uses his power to kill, God uses God's power to rescue and save. God's solidarity is with us in the realities of God's world, and God calls us to be in solidarity with our fellow human beings.

**Where or who do you feel God calling you to be in solidarity with this Lent?**

*Lord, vast are the needs of your people.*

*Through me may others know your saving grace and may I in empathy and audacity stand in solidarity with others. Amen.*





## 22 MARCH: DANIEL 12: 1-4

We have all at some time or the other contemplated death and the afterlife. The Babylonian King was killing innocent people and was claiming to be the master of life and death. In this context, Daniel considers the issue not out of preoccupation with himself. Daniel was concerned instead about the sovereignty and justice of God, the God of life who does not accept the termination of innocent and righteous lives at the whim of a despot. God receives the death of the wise and those who lead others to righteousness as a holy oblation. God will not lose one of these “little ones” who matter, and God will gather them. The lives of these cannot come to such an abrupt end! What form this afterlife will take is another matter and is up to God’s creative and redeeming love. What is important is that death has lost its sting! Let not your thoughts of another world take your eyes off this one.

*Praise be to you Lord  
that I no longer need  
to fear death and in  
this knowledge may it  
empower me to zealously  
build your kingdom here on  
earth. Amen.*



## 23 MARCH: ISAIAH 5:1-7

The vineyard has rebelled against her purpose providing not the expected sweet fruit for her master, but bitter fruit—wild grapes! The farmer is going to dismantle the vineyard, so it will be overgrown with thorns and thistles, and command that the rain not fall upon it. The love song has turned into one of scorn that addresses a nation and her God. Yahweh expected justice and instead they have produced bloodshed; righteousness and instead they brought forth a ‘cry’! The passage asks each one of us – what kind of a grape are you? We need to examine ourselves and our lives and how we might work for the creation of a better world. This might require destroying the field and starting anew. It requires that we break down, choke, and starve every notion, attitude or tendency within each of us that contributes to the building up of walls that separate, dehumanize and subjugate.

**What might need to die in me for God’s reign to flourish?**

*Lord, may I regularly practice the art of self-reflection so as to discern what within me may need to die in order for love to flourish and my focus return to the work of a building a better world. Amen.*



## 24 MARCH: LUKE 13:1-9

Just because you have escaped disaster so far, says Jesus, doesn't mean that you can escape death forever! The opening sayings of this passage seem to offer a fairly gloomy outlook; we could summarize Jesus teaching as 'you are all doomed'. Yet reading the parable of the fig tree helps us to see that the key phrase in the stories of the Galileans and Jerusalemites is 'unless you repent'. Repentance is not an especially fashionable concept. But the word and the parable that unpacks it, speak of the opportunity and invitation that God provides for all of us to reconsider the direction of our lives. Repentance, rightly understood, should not be limited to our regret for past wrongs, or our commitment to doing better. It is that turning towards God that makes true life possible whatever disaster might befall us. Jesus calls us to this repentance (Luke 5:32) and, crucially, commissions his disciples to call others to repentance (Luke 24:47).

**How are you and your church community putting the commission of Luke 24:47 into practice?**

*Ever-loving God, call us back to You that we might know true life. Amen.*

### AS A HOUSEHOLD

- Exodus 33: Either make some faux-jewellery by stringing together pasta that has been spray painted gold or silver. Write some of the key words from any of the texts you read together on the pasta pieces, adding as you go through the week. Keep these in the centre of your table as a reminder of the texts. Or
- Gather up some items of jewellery in your household - this includes genuine jewellery and fake things, plastic rings from the bubble-gum machine, cufflinks, watches or tie pins, and badges. Share the stories of what the jewellery reminds you, perhaps who gave it to you, the occasion it was bought, where it comes from, or what it commemorates. (An heirloom passed down the family, a house-captain badge, cuff links worn as best man at a wedding, super-sized dangly plastic earrings from the 80s), our jewellery helps tell our stories. The jewellery and gold of several communities in the texts tell people's stories of sin and sadness and sorry and strength.
- Second chances: a number of the texts involve someone or something (Israel, Nebuchadnezzar, the vineyard, the fig tree) being given a second chance. Play a favourite board game together (for example "Trouble" or "Snakes and Ladders" but give each person a second chance when something goes wrong. As you read each of the texts this week, listen out for the 'second chances'.
- Under pressure: a number of these texts show people under pressure - some give way and others stand. 2 Chronicles 20:1-22 tells the story of Jehoshaphat. Don Francisco sings a classic song in the best of story-telling style. It's very 70s, extremely daggy, but it is worth listening to and it grows on you... google the lyrics and get ready to join in on the 'great jumping Jehoshaphat'. If you have lively-bodied household members initiate jumping each time you hear the name 'Jehoshaphat' - or, if they are really fit, every word beginning with 'J'.

<http://youtu.be/psfMp46GDs8>



## 25 MARCH: JEREMIAH 11:1-17

*4b So shall you be my people, and I will be your God,  
13 For your gods have become as many as your towns, O Judah; and as many as the streets of Jerusalem are the altars you have set up to shame, altars to make offerings to Baal.*

A friend of mine recently returned from a 6 month stay in a Pacific Island and was confronted with the realisation of how much 'stuff' her household had, and how surrounded by excess she now felt.

We, in our predominantly western culture, experienced here in Australia, along with material possessions are also surrounded by an excess of choice, by information resources, expectations and emphasis on rights and entitlements.

In Jeremiah 11:13 we read *For your gods have become as many as your towns, O Judah.*  
It is not difficult to imagine that our assets and excesses can be likened to the many gods referred to - gods of wealth, gods of entitlements, gods of choice.

**What are the particular distractions and the excesses of your life that draw you away from recognising the centrality of God in your life?**

*Abundant God,  
enable me to focus  
always on you as  
the source of all life  
and joy. Amen.*

*Psalm 39, Ezekiel 17:1-10, Romans 2:12-16*

## 26 MARCH: ROMANS 2

*13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified.*

*15 They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them on the day when, according to my gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all.*

One definition of integrity is 'wholeness' and can be interpreted as each part reflecting congruence with each other part. We say a person has integrity because their values match their words which match their behaviour. All are congruent.

Paul's letter to the Romans in chapter 2 reminds us that as followers of Christ we are to lead lives of integrity, that is, what is understood as the law of Christ is also to be reflected in our hearts, and our conscience is to be congruent with our actions.

We fail to display integrity as people of Christ when our words or actions do not reflect our stated beliefs. Part of our Lenten practice is to discern and consider whether our lives have congruence and thus integrity.

**What aspects of your life struggle to be congruent with the good news of Christ's message of love and grace for all?**

*Forgiving God, shape our lives that in our struggles we are enabled to live with wholeness and integrity. Amen.*

## 27 MARCH: LUKE 13:18-21

*20 And again he said, "To what should I compare the kingdom of God? 21 It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."*

Watching the dough rise in a pizza base or home-made bread is a marvellous experience. Almost miraculous in its chemistry. Just as miraculous is the realisation that our moods and behaviours can sift through any occasion and influence its outcomes. Whether it is in a pastoral conversation, a church meeting, a coffee with friends, we know how our posture and attitudes can influence and affect others.

Given this, we have a precious and vibrant responsibility to be an enlightening and hope-filled ingredient in all and every situation in which we live and move and have our being. It is a precious responsibility to bring the words of peace and reconciliation, words of forgiveness and hope, to those with whom we work and live.

**How do you most ably bring good news into the spaces which you inhabit?**

*Reconciling God, leaven my life that I might act with joy and hope at all times. Amen.*

## 28 MARCH: PSALM 32

*8 I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.  
9 Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding, whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you.*

One of the differences between adults is that some of us rely primarily on an internal locus of control and others primarily on external locus of control. Simply put, some of us prefer rules and guidelines designed by others and some depend on intuition and internal reflection as to what is right and appropriate. Of course we are a mixture of both. Psalm 32 refers to the horse and mule reliant on an external locus of control – the bit and bridle. The psalmist is encouraging the readers to receive the instructions and teaching and to then make them our own – internalise and immerse ourselves in God's ways so that they become part of us – guiding and shaping us internally.

During Lent we take an opportunity for self-reflection about what shapes us.



**What practices do you have as part of your discipleship journey that assists and encourages you to allow God's ways to dwell within?**

*Indwelling God, write Your way on our hearts that we might be shaped by Your love. Amen.*



## 29 MARCH: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:6-15

*9 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.*

Paul is speaking of our earthly life when he refers to 'away' and our heavenly life when he refers to 'at home'. Wherever we are, we are to seek God and God's will. I can't but help think of a sporting fixture where it is as important to be successful whether in home matches or away matches – the success of the season is dependent on consistency. 'Away' matches are considered harder to win because one is distant from the support and familiarity. When we are distant from support and familiarity it is often harder to stay 'true' and be the best we can be.

Whether we feel out of sorts or distant from God and from others we are encouraged to continue to strive to be present to our calling to be God's people.

**When do you feel most 'away' from God and in such times how might you remind yourself of God's presence?**

*Ever-present God, home or away be our constant source of life and nourishment. Amen.*

## 30 MARCH: LUKE 15:1-10

*"Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? 9 When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.'"*

There is nothing as frustrating as losing something and nothing as joyous as finding it! It is so easy to empathise with the woman in Luke's story – because we have all been there. Yet we become a little more fractious when it is applied to God's love and grace offered to all.

Our struggle is to recognise that the joy of finding the lost item does not reflect on the status or otherwise of the other items not lost.

It is so easy to have a 'pie mentality' about faith matters, believing that God's pleasure at finding the one who is lost must surely undermine God's favour upon those that remain in God's fold.

God's free and abundant grace was a challenging thought to many of the hearers of the Good News.

**How does your life display the free and abundant grace of God?**

*Faithful God help me always to know I am cherished by You as is the whole of creation. Amen.*



## 31 MARCH LUKE 15:1-3, 11B-32

Make sure you read the first three verses of Luke 15 as the introduction to the well-known parable of the Prodigal. It is tempting, and legitimate, to read the parable as a story which describes the way that God has welcomed us back home, no matter what we have done or how far we have travelled. But the story in Luke is told to an audience of angry elder siblings, not grateful runaway children. What is at stake is less the refusal to come home, and more the refusal to eat with those whom the father now embraces. The elder son distances himself from his brother (note how 'this son of yours' in 15:30 is met with 'this brother of yours' in 15:32) and so makes himself unable to recognise the extent of the father's mercy and the need to celebrate and rejoice in it.

**What limits do I place on God's mercy? From whom do I keep a distance as a result?**

*Generous God, may we always celebrate your mercy and share your love with all. Amen.*

## AS A HOUSEHOLD

- The first two texts (Jeremiah 11 and Romans 2) and the Psalm (#2) involve displays of stubbornness and hard heartedness towards God – and the third text (Luke 13) speaks of the kingdom being like yeast.

During this week bake a loaf of damper, using no yeast. Eat some the first night – and then more the next night, when it is rock hard. Remind one another of the texts about hard and stubborn hearts towards God.

On the third day, bake some bread using yeast (or cheat and buy some from the bakery). Eat this together and notice the softness that comes from the yeast. Reflect on the idea of the kingdom of God's influence being like a woman mixing yeast into a batch of dough.

- Psalm 32 uses the image of a mule whose stubbornness is overcome by a bit and bridle. If you regularly walk your dog as a family, you'll know the pull of an animal against your will. Make this week's walk a time to be mindful of our own stubbornness and need for correction.
- This week includes the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15). There is no substitute for the way Jesus' voice tells it in Luke, but for a 'plasticene enhanced' version check out 'Stuck'.

**<http://ctm.uca.edu.au/children-and-families/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2018/12/Luke-15-Stuck-story.pdf>**

Get out the plasticene or playdough and bits and bobs, and make your own version together.



Follow the YouTube link below to Paul Kelly's 'Just About to Break', and take time to reflect on the images of East Timorese beauty, culture and social issues, and the partnerships of hope.

'Just About to Break': <http://youtu.be/hV37UdypUnE>

## 1 APRIL: PSALM 53

Often when we watch TV in my house there are comments like, "how dumb are these people!" and "what possesses a person to think this stuff!" or, when it gets very serious, "how can a person treat another human being in this way?"

Half way through Psalm 53 I think the Psalmist has one of these moments.

"Do all these evildoers know nothing?"

\*throws pillow at TV\*

"They devour my people as though eating bread; they never call on God." \*face palm\*

Anger, frustration and disbelief at what we see around us in the world (and some church meetings too) is a reality.

People made in the image of God are exploited, sold, marginalised, made commodities, killed and disregarded by corrupt systems and self-interest.

Do we know nothing? God's people are being devoured as if they are worth less than bread.

Are we calling on God in the face of this reality? Would we want to hear God's reply to our prayers?

**What personal, local and world issues keep you up at night?**

*God of Grace, today may I be mindful of the people I encounter who are struggling with life. Help me to find the word or action that offers your promise of love and dignity. Amen.*



## 2 APRIL: LEVITICUS 25:1-19 - SABBATH ECONOMICS & JUBILEE

Jesus when confronting a system that enslaves asked “Is the Sabbath made for people or people for the Sabbath?” Today we may ask, “Are economics made for people or people for economics?”

Leviticus 25 speaks of a Sabbath economic system and a Jubilee which cares for the environment and is concerned with the management of natural resources (v4).

A Jubilee system that believes all on the land have the right to eat, “food for yourself, your male and female servants, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you, as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land.” (v.6)

A Jubilee system that frees those that become enslaved to the economic system by prohibiting the accumulation of property to the detriment of the poor. (v13, 15, 28, 41)

A Jubilee system that is faithful and just, not corrupt or seeking to indebted others, “Do not take advantage of each other, but fear your God. I am the Lord your God.” (v17)

Why? As you read this chapter God’s perspective is clear – the people and the land belong to God. To a God who frees the slaves of Egypt it is important they not become slaves to other people or systems.

**How might you free yourself or others by enacting your own mini Jubilee?**

*Spirit of Justice, guide me through this day carefully so I can see and hear the voices of struggle. May my actions be ones of faithfulness and justice. Amen.*

## 3 APRIL: LUKE 9:10-17 - FISH & BREAD

Certainly if any figure in history has been ‘canonised, demonised, moralised, sermonised, sold the rights and serialised’, it is Jesus. Continuing to reflect on seeking justice. To what will you cry enough?

*When I am just about to break today  
God grant me the gift of your deep peace.*

*May your Spirit full of love guide me and  
ease my tired soul. Amen.*





## 4 APRIL: PHILIPPIANS 2:19-24 - GENUINE CONCERN

We began this week with the lament to be found in Psalm 53, 'no one doing good and everyone has turned away'. Today we move radically to Phil 2:19-24, where Timothy embodies a contrasting character.

"I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proven himself." (v.20-22)

I like that he shows genuine concern for the welfare of another. It is a characteristic I admire. When we think of friends, colleagues and others we are often quick to identify those who have fake or political concern for our or others welfare. Those we know who are genuine, who have integrity, also come easily to mind.

The background images for this week have come from East Timor - a congregational partnership which seeks to build genuine friendship and concern for one another. Certainly as one of the poorest nations in the world the issues of poverty, health, violence, war and economics are stark. Yet the faithful love of God shines in the people and our partnership and friendship grows in integrity with each visit.

I have visited East Timor twice. The second time it was as though we were old friends, but more than this we were some of the few people who returned to do what they promised. There is a trend of identifying vast needs, suggesting and offering solutions and never returning to see them through.

Like Timothy we have proven ourselves to have genuine concern for their welfare in seeking the interest of God.

**When was the last time you walked the talk and made a difference? Thank God for this and pray for more opportunities to be good news.**

*We pray today for the people of East Timor. May your Spirit bring peace in a place experiencing poverty and war.*

*We are thankful for your Love seen in partnership and friendship. Amen.*



## 5 APRIL: ISAIAH 43:8-15 - YOU ARE MY WITNESSES

"You are my witnesses", declares the Lord" is the emphasis of this text. We like the blind still have eyes to be opened. We like the deaf still have ears to be opened. Yet more than this we are to witness in such a way that the blind eyes and deaf ears of others become open to the reality of God.

In my last trip to East Timor I had an eye opening moment. We drove around a corner to see a welcome dance being performed for us - imagine a dozen kids in tradition dress, with drums, gongs and lots of smiles. The elder was dancing all over the place in bliss. We did not join in the dance as we couldn't work out if we were allowed. We went with the cautious, don't offend approach.

After the welcome and our conversations, I went outside and they gave me the drum. I started to play and lots of laughing continued; the elder came and danced around me.

Then he said something. I didn't understand the Tetum language so I smiled.

Then he got louder and began to shout. Oh crap! I thought - now I have offended the elder.

I called someone over to translate.

He is saying "My people have danced on these hills for generations", and there was a long pause before he continued. "And there is nothing you can play that I can't dance to!"

We are blind and deaf to much but we have lot to witness to, celebrate and dance to in our mission to reconcile all of creation.

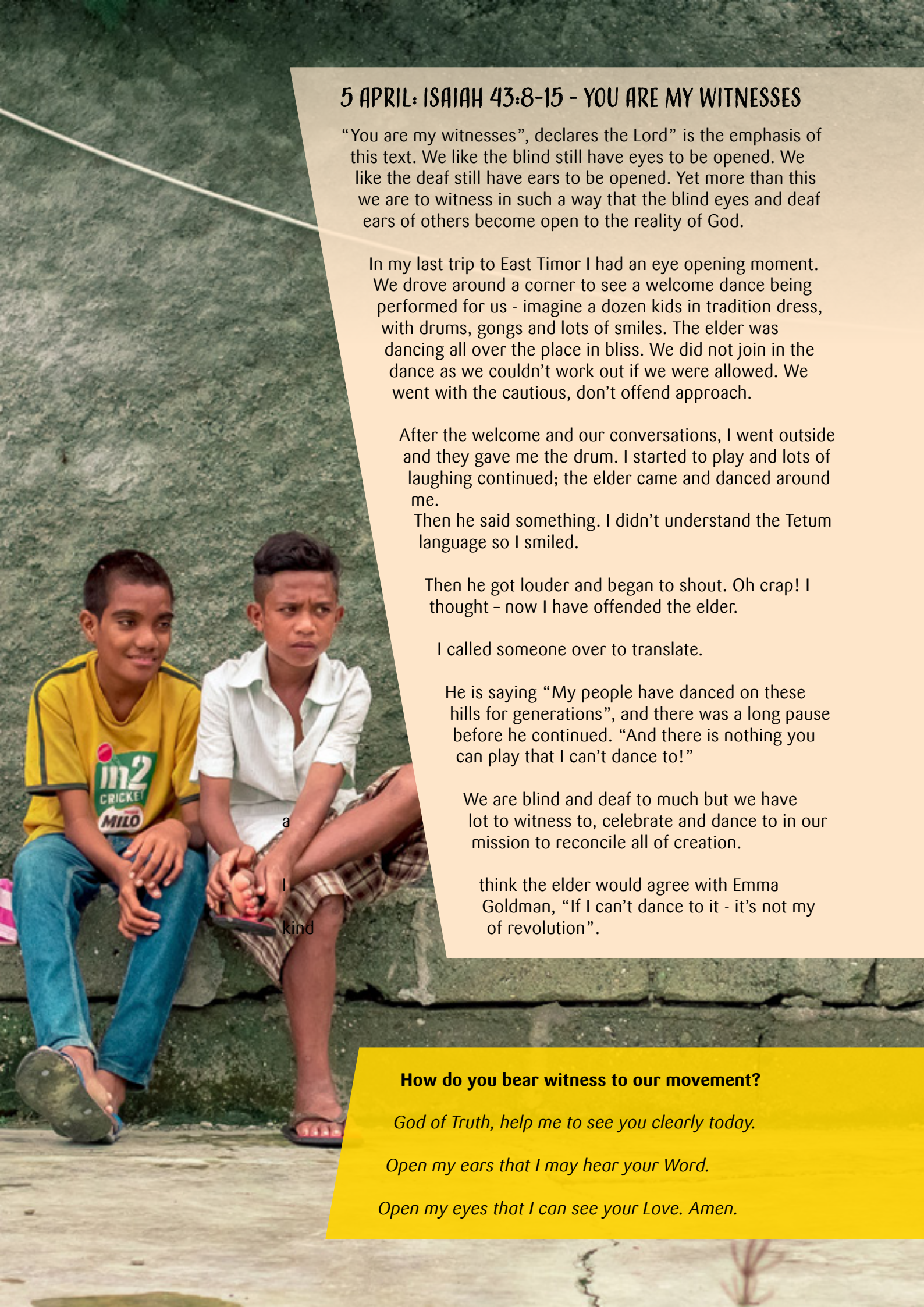
I think the elder would agree with Emma Goldman, "If I can't dance to it - it's not my kind of revolution".

**How do you bear witness to our movement?**

*God of Truth, help me to see you clearly today.*

*Open my ears that I may hear your Word.*

*Open my eyes that I can see your Love. Amen.*





## 6 APRIL: JOHN 11:45-57 - THE PLOT TO KILL JESUS

The revolutionary Lenten story is about to go into real time. We begin to be able to follow what Jesus lived through in that week. This part of the story is the sinister prelude to that week. A story of those in power revealing their own failures and ambitions. Imagine yourself into the story... re-member it.

The Chief Priest and Pharisees call a meeting, concerned over the loss of followers who now were believing Jesus as well as the loss of control should the Romans respond. Occupying forces usually crack down when a group is perceived as a threat to their reign. The possibility of people believing Jesus was a threat to the military powers of his day. I wonder what sermons and teachings of Jesus caused this?

The religious leaders decide, "it is better for one man to die for the people than that the whole nation perish" (v50), and they plot to assassinate Jesus. They start looking for any good opportunity to end his life (v53).

Not surprisingly Jesus can no longer move publicly or freely among the people of Judea without fear for his life. He seeks refuge in the wilderness until his time comes (v.54).

The priest & Pharisees continue to look, and have informants reporting back on Jesus' movements so they can arrest him (v56-57).

Which character in this story do you relate most to?

This is not like following Jesus on twitter - when we follow Jesus with these costs in mind the peace of the powerful is disturbed.

**What costs are you encountering today in being a follower of Jesus working for His good news?**

*We pray for those people facing persecution.*

*May they find courage in the face of fear.*

*May your Spirit surround them with love and Grace. Amen.*



## 7 APRIL: JOHN 12:1-8

There is a great irony in Jesus' final saying in this passage: 'you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me'. As the events of Jesus' passion draw nearer in John's gospel the sense of Jesus' impending departure becomes palpable. He will leave the disciples alone. They must come to terms with Jesus' absence. Yet, this departure will become the means by which he will ultimately be present with the disciples forever. We do not 'have' Jesus, but Jesus is, beyond his death and resurrection, always with us. The one who sees this most clearly is neither Martha, nor Lazarus, nor Judas, but Mary, whose extravagance is testimony to the truth.

**With whom do you identify in this story: Martha as she serves? Lazarus, still taking in the events of John 11? Judas, indignant at waste? Or Mary, anointing Jesus' feet?**

*Spend-thrift God, we thank you that you are always present to us. Amen.*

## AS A HOUSEHOLD

- Psalm 53 shall hence be known as the "face palm psalm", expressing the composer's exasperation at the stupidity of those who ignore God. Do a dramatic reading in your household with appropriate gestures of frustration! For those who can read, divide the text between you, and interpret your verse/s with gestures. For non-literate participants, invite freelance interpretations as others read.
- A common theme in some of the texts this week is the extravagant generosity God inspires - in preventing the tight squeeze of financial monopolies (Lev 25), in provision of food for thousands (Luke 9) and the pouring of perfume over Jesus (John 12). Brainstorm some ideas for generosity in your household or community this week. Share your stuff, do stuff in public where others can join in too, give stuff away...
- Leviticus 25:1-19: Play the 'Jubilee' board game to experience some of the dynamics of the Jubilee system in Leviticus. If you have 'Monopoly' you might like to play that by contrast.

For a copy of the Jubilee board game, please e-mail [chris.barnett@ctm.uca.edu.au](mailto:chris.barnett@ctm.uca.edu.au)



## 8 APRIL: HEBREWS 10.19-25

In Heb 10.12 Jesus has 'sat down at the right hand of God'. Now (19ff) the reader is urged to confidently enter the presence of God: to 'get' what entering God's presence means because of the Easter event. We are now five weeks into Lent, our own preparation for Easter. Reading, thinking, reflecting, praying... letting the meanings of Jesus death and resurrection enter more deeply into our minds, hearts and lives.

Notice as you read today how often 'we' and 'us' are used to encourage us to think of our entering God's presence as something we do together; not the individualising of faith but the joint celebration. Notice too how that celebration is seen in what we do 'spurred on to love and good deeds.'

**As you continue to move toward Easter, how is your preparation shared with others? How do you prepare for Easter in acts of love and justice?**

*God of consolation,  
may my participation in  
community strengthen  
me to love and justice.  
Amen.*

## 9 APRIL: 1 JOHN 2:18-28

*Live deeply.*

*If what you heard from the beginning lives deeply in you, you will live deeply in both Son and Father. (v. 23 The Message)*

The letter's author is arguing in this passage for truth, and for belief that rests on believing a central truth: Jesus is the Christ. Peterson's translation helpfully links a concept of truth as objective, to truth that is held and lived deeply within. There were many whose faith did not last. The letter is written to those who know the truth, who live deeply in God.

Living deeply requires commitment: acknowledging, believing the Son, Jesus the Christ

Living deeply takes time as faith seeps into every part of our being.

Living deeply lasts: it is not about a faith that gives up in the tricky times.

Living deeply satisfies because it is rooted in the divine life of Son and Father.

**How do you long in your Easter preparation for faith to live deeply in you? Take time in your Easter preparation for faith to sit, to dwell, to sink in, to live deeply in you.**

*God of grace, dwell with me that I might dwell deeply with You. Amen.*

## 10 APRIL: LUKE 18.31-34

Jesus understands what it means to be the Son of Man. He told his disciples again and again about his coming rejection, about the humiliation and death that awaited him, and the vindication that would follow. It was part of the general unfolding of the Scriptures they knew, shame and suffering along with blessing and glory. The disciples do not understand: humiliation, suffering, shame and death were beyond their conceptual categories of a Messiah. They wanted a Messiah of glory and victory.

If we don't understand what it means for Jesus to be the Son of Man, our own following can be enmeshed in the subtle and not so subtle draw to glory and victory.

**As we follow the disciples toward Easter do our lives display that we understand the humility and suffering that are part of discipleship?**

*God of glory, enable me to walk humbly as your disciple no matter the circumstance of my life. Amen.*

## 11 APRIL: PSALM 31:9-16; ISAIAH 53:10-12; HEBREWS 2:1-9

Yet and But

In the three passages set down for today is a pattern of 'the current situation... BUT' (or yet).

We see it in the distress of the Psalmist, in a state of continual anguish who can still say BUT I trust in you (14).

The passage from Isaiah 53.10 - 12 starts with YET, the yet standing against the suffering and death of the servant in the earlier verses. Why YET? Because even in the self-giving death of the servant God is at work. THEREFORE the passage continues, God has a future for the servant.

In Hebrews 2 we are urged to pay close attention to our continuing walk of discipleship. Here the YET (v8) of not seeing the world under God's control goes with the BUT of the true focus of our attention in discipleship: Jesus subjected and Jesus glorified.

**Do we see through the pain and buffeting of our lives the Buts and Yets of life in God's hand?**

*God of all times, prompt me to pay attention to your presence in the world. Amen.*





## 12 APRIL: HEB 2.10-18

*Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family (11).*

The solidarity of Jesus with humanity

I'm preparing these Lenten readings during Advent: it helpfully juxtaposes the foci of these two great Christian festivals. Jesus who the world did not recognise or receive as he came (John 1.10-11); Jesus who shares our humanity; Jesus who through suffering and death makes holy.

**As you approach Easter, what of your humanity do you find it easier to say, "yes Jesus shared this..." and what of your very human-ness do you resist acknowledging that Jesus also shared? Consider your image of Jesus: he who goes to the cross and he who shares your very human frailty. How might your understanding of Jesus be deepened or stretched? How might that impact on your willingness to walk in holiness?**

*God of hope, open me to be open to constant renewal in my understanding of all Jesus is. Amen.*



## 13 APRIL: LUKE 22.1-13

So they prepared the Passover...

The Passover festival acts in the gospels as a pointer to Jesus' death as Passover lamb.

The religious officials prepare for Passover by plotting to have Jesus out of the way by then (2), a plot where Satan (v3) and Judas (v4) also have roles. Jesus upset the authorities' sense of control and order, the status quo, their orthodoxy... so must be got rid of.

Jesus knows this: Peter and John under Jesus' direction prepare for what will be the disciples poignant farewell celebration, where bread and wine will point to Jesus' coming death. The directions Jesus gives don't make a lot of sense, they call for trust.

**The two preparations are in contrast: does your Easter preparation mean resisting the one who disturbs your sense of order and control, or openness to follow the one who gives disquietingly vague directions?**

*God of the poor, help me to be open to your unsettling presence and enable me to follow Jesus with trust. Amen.*



## 14 APRIL: LUKE 19:28-40

Luke mentions no palms, and the story he tells is really not a 'triumphal entry'. In fact, Jesus does not enter the city until later. The scene revolves around the actions of others: two disciples; a greater crowd and then the Pharisees and together their actions serve to draw our attention to a key question: what does it mean if Jesus is King? The answers hinted at here go to the heart of Christian life and discipleship. If Jesus is King, then obedience to his words and acknowledgement of him as 'Lord' are the appropriate response. On the other hand, there is always the chance that, like the Pharisees, we fail to see Jesus' reign clearly. The story that Luke will tell about the next seven days is marked by Jesus' humility and isolation. Yet it is precisely in the events of this holy week, that the true nature of God's kingdom and its king are revealed.

**'...the stones would shout out' (Luke 19:40): as you read this story, what do you think that the walls of Jerusalem would be shouting?**

*Holy God, help us always to have the proclamation Jesus is Lord on our lips and in our discipleship. Amen.*

## AS A HOUSEHOLD

- **Preparing:**  
As you set the table for each meal this week, set an extra place. Make your setting especially deliberate – perhaps adding flowers or carefully folded napkins (that would be out of the ordinary in our house at least). Exercise your imaginations as to who the extra place might be for? Perhaps invite a different character, either from the text, or from the world news that day to be your imaginary guest. Or, simply be mindful of the story in Luke 22 – in which Jesus' friends prepare for the Passover festival and Jesus prepares for suffering and death.
- Several of the texts this week emphasise the significance of Jesus' humanness and body. Make some plain ginger-bread-body biscuits to munch on as you read the texts this week.
- Picking up the theme of suffering in solidarity, Hebrews 2:10-18 uses the language of 'brotherhood' for the manner in which Jesus identifies with us. As you pray for the world this week, pray for people by addressing them as the sisters and brothers of Jesus. To make this more concrete, cut a string of 'fold and cut' people. Look through the news paper or an old 'really useful gift catalogue' and cut out various faces to glue on to your string of 'brothers and sisters'.



## HOLY WEEK – 15 APRIL: JOHN 12:1-11

John begins his story of Jesus' final days in a way which is striking both for its beauty and for its ugliness.

The beauty is displayed in a woman named Mary: she alone understands the true identity and destiny of Jesus, and, ignoring all social etiquette and personal criticism, performs an act of ultimate devotion – at a public dinner, she lavishes perfume, costing a worker's annual salary, on Jesus' feet.

The ugliness is displayed in male figures: first in the person of Judas, a disciple, who uses his office for personal fraud and will come to betray Jesus, and then in the chief priests, who will plot murder. Despite their places of religious privilege, neither Judas nor the chief priests glimpse what Mary sees so clearly, in the light of which even the worthy act of giving charity to the poor, becomes secondary.

**In a world full of 'ugliness', what act of beauty might we perform as we acknowledge that Jesus dies for us?**

*Lord, in this week help me respond to the world by creating moments of beauty and love.*

*May my actions point towards your sacrifice and grace. Amen.*

## HOLY WEEK – 16 APRIL: JOHN 12:20-36

These verses of John's gospel contain the most concise summary of how the gospel author understands the purpose of Jesus' death on a cross. For this gospel writer, the death of Jesus is the moment of decisive victory. Jesus will be 'lifted up' on the cross, both in the literal sense, but also in the more important sense of being enthroned or exalted. At the moment of Jesus' death, 'the ruler of this age' will be overcome and all people will be drawn into one with Christ. In other words, every power which plagues human life and interferes with the communion between God and humankind is now to be defeated. Little wonder then that the author records that the voice from heaven 'thunders' and it does so for our sake.

**What forms does 'the ruler of this age' take in our day, and what might it mean, in practice, for us to live in the confidence that the ruler of this age is overcome in the death of Jesus?**

*Lord, I thank you for your son Jesus.*

*That he lived a life on earth and showed me a way of living that gives life for all.*

*Help me to live the way you call me to with confidence and dedication. Amen.*



## HOLY WEEK – 17 APRIL: JOHN 13:21-32

John's picture of Jesus is not of a man who suffers deeply (as in Mark, Matthew or Luke), but of a man who seems in charge of the steps towards his own death. However, there is a glimpse of something different here; this reading begins with the recognition that Jesus is troubled in spirit. There is nothing so painful as to be betrayed by someone with whom you share an intimate relationship. This is the experience of Jesus – he will be betrayed by one of his own disciples, one with whom he will share bread dipped in the same dish. The betrayal by Judas is said to be instigated by Satan; this doesn't suggest that Judas is an innocent pawn, subject to some satanic force; rather that any deliberate act over against God can be described as satanic. Even so, such a 'satanic' action by Judas cannot thwart God's purposes, but becomes the means to fulfill them.

**Let us name our own betrayal of Christ, confident that they do not have the final word over God's purpose for us.**

*Dear Lord, I am sorry for the times I have betrayed Christ.*

*Through your forgiveness and grace may I overflow with your love and share it with the world. Amen.*

## HOLY WEEK – 18 APRIL: JOHN 13:1-17, 31B-35

Thursday of Holy Week is called 'Maundy Thursday'. The word 'Maundy' comes from the Latin 'Mandatum' meaning 'mandate' or 'law'. It refers to the 'new mandate' which Jesus gives to the disciples (John 13:34-35), calling on the disciples to display, in their lives, the love which God has displayed to them.

This mandate is vividly portrayed in the feet-washing drama (13:1-17). The first call upon the disciples is (the sometimes uncomfortable call) to allow Jesus to wash our feet, and then to take up the call to wash one another's feet.

Thus, discipleship is, in the first place, a call to receive what God graciously offers to us in Christ, in particular through the Easter event, namely the gracious gift of new life. Only then, may we be able to serve others, and our service will be of the same character and content, namely the gracious, uncalculated sharing of this new life for others.

**In what ways does Christ continue to serve us with the gift of new life; in what ways do we share this life with others?**

*Servant Lord, you are always loving and always giving.*

*Thank you for the blessing of new life I have in Jesus.*

*Help me to identify opportunities to share this life with others. Amen.*



## HOLY WEEK – 19 APRIL: JOHN 18:1-19:42

John's account of Jesus' death is unique in the sense in which it portrays the calm authority of Jesus each step of the way. It culminates in the final words of Jesus on the cross: 'It is finished'. Only in John's gospel are these words of Jesus from the cross recorded. They are not meant in a chronological sense, namely that Jesus' life has now ended; nor are they a cry of defeat: 'I give up'. Rather, they constitute a theological shouting: it is fulfilled! For John, the moment of Jesus' death is the moment of the fulfilment of God's purposes. If Easter Sunday is the resurrection of Jesus, then Good Friday cannot be a sad precursor to Sunday's victory, but rather integral to God's victory.

**What might it mean for us if Good Friday were a day of celebration of what God has 'finished' in Jesus?**

*Dear Lord, help me be an agent of change in this world like Jesus was.*

*May I strive for the reconciliation, peace and justice that Jesus strived for and may your glory fill all the earth. Amen.*

## HOLY WEEK – 20 APRIL: JOHN 19:38-42

The final reading of Holy Week (Saturday) bookends the first reading (Monday) with another generous act of devotion, this time involving about one hundred pounds in weight of perfumes and spices lavished on the body of the dead Jesus. On this occasion, the participants are two men who, between them, reflect the community of early disciples. One is Joseph, an apprehensive Jew who fears reprisals from his Jewish community if they find out about his devotion to Jesus; the other is Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews who came to Jesus by night and was allured by Jesus' call to new birth (ch.3). From 'the night' of apprehension and misunderstanding, they come out into the open together for this act of devotion, ensuring that Jesus body is properly prepared for a dignified burial.

**What fears and risks are part of our own experience of discipleship ... and how might we face up to these?**

*Lord, help me to remember the many faithful disciples that have stood together in the face of evil.*

*Calm me when facing injustice and hatred, and may I act with devotion to your call. Amen.*



## 21 APRIL: LUKE 24:1-12

In the conclusion to Mark's gospel the disciples are told that Jesus goes ahead of them to Galilee (Mark 16:7). Luke inverts this command. The men at the tomb instruct the disciples to 'remember what he said while he was in Galilee' (Luke 24:6). This establishes an unbreakable bond between the ministry of Jesus in the gospel, and the mission of the church in the power of the Spirit as this will be described in Acts. The church lives out the story of Jesus, and at the centre of its life and work it places the act of 'remembrance' of His death and resurrection. Easter faith is the news that the living One is no longer among the dead, but is with us in the breaking of bread and the sharing of life.

**The twelve heard the Easter message at first as so much 'nonsense'. What makes Easter faith real for you? How can you share that with others?**

*Easter God, we rejoice that you make yourself known to us in the bread and nourish us to live as your faithful people. Amen.*

### AS A HOUSEHOLD

- Use the 'Jesus Journal' multi-sensory activities and readings as a way of journeying through the complete Passion narrative choosing a few of the activities to accompany your readings.

<http://ctm.uca.edu.au/children-and-families/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2018/12/Jesus-Journal.pdf>