

World YWCA and World YMCA

Week of Prayer and World Fellowship

November 8-14, 2015



LET THERE BE HOPE

BIBLE READING PLAN 2015-2016

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President's Message

"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed..." 2 Corinthians 4:8

God is faithful and continues to reveal Himself to us; always showing us His loving-kindness and steadfast love. Yes, evil abounds, and we experience accidents, natural disasters, war, conflicts and other situations that impact many people around the world. At times we struggle to make sense of things. The depressing images we see throughout the year in our work, the physical destruction that we walk through as we retrieve trapped bodies, the crying and wailing that deafens our ears, all those people whose lives are permanently altered – this is part of our call to duty. This work, our work is not easy, but we are called to continue even in the face of death, persecution, and despair.

We are reminded: ***"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair; persecuted but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed..." (2 Corinthians 4:8)***. So we will not relent or be pushed back by the forces of evil.

At the same time, we are filled with hope, and we are creating positive change in the lives of the young people, women and communities in which we are present. In addition, we know our actions at global level continue to contribute to policy change. Our actions at a Global level contribute to change of policies such as the adoption of common positions and resolutions against child marriage and the redefinition of the sustainable development goals.

Since last year's Week of Prayer, a lot has happened that has brought sadness to people on a global scale, making this one of the most difficult years in recent times. This year our YWCA/YMCA Week of Prayer comes at a time when the world has suffered from a myriad of tragedies: terrorist attacks, conflicts wars, diseases, as well as ongoing human rights abuses... The list is endless! Yet we remain hopeful that our work will make a difference.

As we gather together during this Week of Prayer, we will take a moment to reflect on these; but better still we will pray, and declare that we will rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation and be constant in prayer (Romans 12: 12). Circumstances might seem hopeless, it may seem that evil continues unabated, suffering continues in different forms. But we have a message to tell to the nations; the message we bring to the masses we serve, those who have to face this pain every day; ***"...Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning."*** (Psalm 30:5b).

"...Darkness will only be for a while, and then there will be no bleakness in our journey

We will learn new words; we will carry hope for a new world

Our world will be void of evil and suffering

We hope for a world that is God's Kingdom

Restoration of humankind and creation, this is our hope

Hope we will keep alive, and despair we will not know again

When they see us, may they experience God's love; and as we walk with them side by side, holding each other's hands – hope becomes real. In these moments of darkness and despair, let us bring light. In these moments of bleakness, let us bring hope, let us keep hope alive; let us become aware of God's protection, reminding ourselves and appreciating the prayer of Jesus Christ, as he prayed, saying, ***"I am not asking you to take them out of this world but I ask you to protect them from the evil one."*** (John 17:15). Let us know that we are not alone, let us be encouraged, and encourage others – this suffering will not crush us! God will restore peace on earth. We are privileged to be part of the great work, the story of renewing hope and restoring God's creation.

Our work takes us to places and people who are troubled and every year we pause and draw inspiration from the Week of Prayer. Those who do not participate should be encouraged to make time for this all important life-giving tradition hosted by the YWCA/YMCA staff and volunteers.

This week's reflections are based on our various experiences and realities related to personal suffering, natural disasters, violence against women, the plight of migration and globalized terror. We must remain hopeful, helpful and continue to be a force for positive change in the world.

Our calling is to keep hope alive in times of despair and persecution, and to keep assisting others as needed. The foundation of our faith is Hope. We must maintain our hope in God's grace, his promises and his interventions. We shall and should keep Hope alive and continue ***"to bring the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release of the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*** (Luke 4:18-19).

Deborah Thomas



President
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DAY ONE:

When I am Depressed and Hurt

Scripture: Psalm 121:2, and 2 Cor 4:8-9

As humans we, in one way or another, face challenging situations: Health, broken relations, loss of loved ones, economic difficulties and other situations which can bring us despair. In our personal anguish, loss, and grief we may drown in anger, disbelief, and even annoyance. It is easy to feel dejection and hopelessness.

In such situations where we are feeling down, where can we find hope and new strength? The Psalmist declares, "My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. (Psalm 121:2). Pain is real, it is around us. And we have seen and felt the pain. We have experienced the loss. And yes, we have cried. Our text today is a song of hope and encouragement; it is a song for renewal.

Let the weak say I am strong. Let the poor say I am rich. In our times of weakness God gives us strength.

In such situations let us also reflect on the many positive things in our lives, the moments of joy, of pleasure and of hope.

Disaster changes lives drastically. We are challenged to adapt to a new normal and new realities. The challenge for us is always how to cope. To move does not always seem possible, especially in circumstances where there is no closure. During this week, as YWCAs and YMCAs gather around the world for prayer our calling is to keep hope alive. "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed..." (2 Cor 4:8-9)

In the midst of all the suffering and pain, what gives you the energy and inspiration to rise and start a new day? Whether you are experiencing tragedy in your life, or you are volunteering at a disaster site, you experience pain. In man-made tragedies, persecution and death have been used to intimidate people and cause them to withdraw. In our work, every day and everywhere we are threatened and humiliated when we are wounded. Yet in the face of such adversity we rise. We find inspiration and the seeds of hope. We know in our hearts that we cannot trade our work for anything else. We know we must rise again, and that we will. We know that we are strong and empowered to remain a force for positive change. In fact, we derive our strength from doing what is right in our lives and for our people.

Persecution, threats of pain and death; these will not prevail over good. Nothing will stop us, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39).

So, when I am Depressed and Hurt, my faith gives me hope!

Questions for personal and group reflection

- How do you cope with the loss of loved ones or property, with sickness or with rejection?
- Share a situation where you were very hurt but you managed to come out of it. What was the turning point? Where did you find hope and inspiration to move forward?
- How do we deal with depression?
- What can we do to bring hope to those who are severely depressed?
- How can we learn to remain positive and hopeful when we are challenged the most?

Proposed song for Closing

“You Raise Me Up”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rkkw8RhH9ck>

When I am down and, oh, my soul, so weary;
When troubles come and my heart burdened be;
Then I am still and wait here in the silence,
Until you come and sit awhile with me.

You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains;
You raise me up to walk on stormy seas;
I am strong when I am on your shoulders;
You raise me up to more than I can be.

You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains;
You raise me up to walk on stormy seas;
I am strong when I am on your shoulders;
You raise me up to more than I can be.

There is no life - no life without its hunger;
Each restless heart beats so imperfectly;
But when you come and I am filled with wonder,
Sometimes, I think I glimpse eternity.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, Whom in heaven do we have besides you? Whom on earth but thee? Life's challenges come to us like a flood but you have promised never to leave us nor forsake us. We cling to that promise knowing that you are a faithful God. When we go through times of depression and hurt, may we be reminded that nothing can ever separate us from your loving-kindness? May our Hope and Faith be anchored in you now and forever more?

DAY TWO:

Diakonia... Are we doing enough?

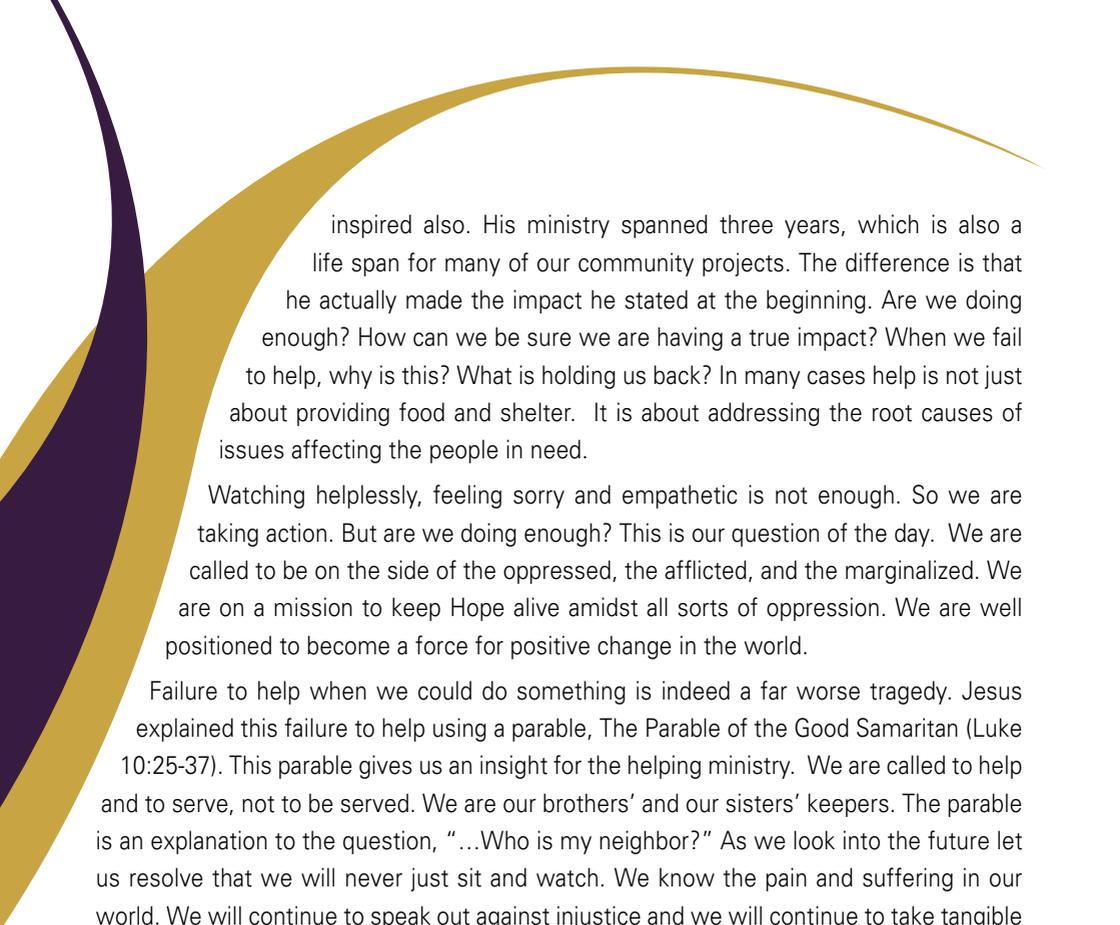
Scripture: Luke 4:18-19

The Greek word *diakonia* means service among others, and has its roots in the Christian scriptures. Deacons or “diaconal ministers” carry out all kinds of ministries, often in the areas of education, service, and pastoral care.

If we all went about doing our best, our world would be a better, safer, happier place to be. Unfortunately; too many times we miss the opportunity to help and to keep hope alive for people who are afflicted. How many times have you watched people hurting and looked the other way? How many times have you thought, not me? Let someone else step in this time. We are all too familiar with the excuses and reasons that people give for not taking action. Whatever the reasons are, during this week, we have the opportunity to reflect on them and we can decide to look beyond the obstacles. We will ask ourselves difficult questions and help each other to offer honest answers. Why do we fail to help?

Jesus Christ laid a good foundation for us. He became a strong advocate for the oppressed and down trodden from the time he launched his ministry. He outlined a very ambitious mission for himself, declaring that: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:18-19). Jesus did not lose focus of his ministry. He identified himself with those that needed help, and advocated on their behalf. The same mission that Jesus outlined more than two thousand years ago is still sound, relevant and valid for us today. There still is poverty around us, there still are too many captives, many of our young people are incarcerated, and some for flimsy political reasons. All around the world we hear narratives of oppression, of oppressive systems and governments. Yet we remain hopeful. We step in to help where we can. Are we doing enough? How is our Diakonia today?

After spelling out his mission, “Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness.” (Matthew 9:35). We also are called to action. Our collaborative actions are what will enable us to have a true impact. Our mission must be translated into tangible actions, whether this demands us to challenge oppressive systems, or bringing hope to people in despair around us. We also note that Jesus spoke a lot about his mission, about what he believed, and what he envisioned for a better world. When we look at his life critically, we can be



inspired also. His ministry spanned three years, which is also a life span for many of our community projects. The difference is that he actually made the impact he stated at the beginning. Are we doing enough? How can we be sure we are having a true impact? When we fail to help, why is this? What is holding us back? In many cases help is not just about providing food and shelter. It is about addressing the root causes of issues affecting the people in need.

Watching helplessly, feeling sorry and empathetic is not enough. So we are taking action. But are we doing enough? This is our question of the day. We are called to be on the side of the oppressed, the afflicted, and the marginalized. We are on a mission to keep Hope alive amidst all sorts of oppression. We are well positioned to become a force for positive change in the world.

Failure to help when we could do something is indeed a far worse tragedy. Jesus explained this failure to help using a parable, The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). This parable gives us an insight for the helping ministry. We are called to help and to serve, not to be served. We are our brothers' and our sisters' keepers. The parable is an explanation to the question, "...Who is my neighbor?" As we look into the future let us resolve that we will never just sit and watch. We know the pain and suffering in our world. We will continue to speak out against injustice and we will continue to take tangible action where we have the ability to help. We will play our part, in our own ways. We will not by-pass those who need our help. We will bring hope to those in despair. And yes! We will advocate on behalf of the oppressed and the marginalized.

So, are we doing enough?

Questions for reflection

- Diakonia refers to the help that we selflessly render to those in need. How does this relate to the current context of the communities served by your YWCA/YMCA?
- "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18-19). Discuss the relevance of this Scripture to our own mission.
- Share an experience when you or your group kept hope alive for people afflicted.
- What are the situations in our communities where we can make a difference today by keeping hope alive? How can we mobilize others to have an even greater impact?

Proposed song for Closing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcXOkht8w7c>

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard My people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin,
My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear My light to them?
Whom shall I send?
Here I am Lord, Is it I, Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if You lead me.
I will hold Your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them, They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
Give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak My word to them
Whom shall I send?
Here I am Lord, Is it I, Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if You lead me.
I will hold Your people in my heart.

Prayer:

Lord it is true that you have called us to serve rather than be served. Forgive us for times when we have selfishly looked at our own needs rather than at the needs of those you have placed around us. Teach us to serve just like you did; proclaiming your good news to others; releasing the oppressed and captives and bring healing to your people.

DAY THREE:

When Mother Nature is Destructive

Scripture: Matthew 9:37-38

Our YMCAs and YWCAs are actively involved in disaster relief in many places. However, they are overstretched because we do not have adequate human resources, trained and equipped to go as first responders to disaster areas. The 2015 Week of Prayer comes at a time when the world is dealing with effects of recent tragedies: Terrorism, Disasters, Youth helplessness, Massive Migration etc.... These are just but a few examples that are current and depressing. We want to use the week of prayer to find new inspiration and new seeds of hope that will renew our energy and sustain our spirits in the face of challenging times. Today's focus is on natural disasters, but not exclusively.

First, it may help to take note of the impact of these many crises and reflect on our (human) reactions to disasters:

- **Many growing disasters, more volunteers needed** – Frequency, scale, complexity and variety of disasters, for example tsunamis, droughts, tornadoes, and earthquakes have ravaged lives. The effects of climate change have been devastating. In the last 20 years, 4.4 billion people have been affected by natural disasters. In many places community life has been disrupted in many ways, reversing many years of development. Food security and provision of clean water has been hampered. But we have a responsibility. Our actions as humans or lack of action have affected our climate. Now the challenge for us everywhere is to take responsible action in our communities, to protect our environment. And where disasters have befallen us, we must continue to work to reduce the negative effects on our people, everywhere. Let us remember to dress our barren lands with forests, mindful that Mother Nature nourishes us. She provides us with food and water, with shelter, and with sunlight to sustain us. Yes she is powerful and destructive at times, but she also provides for us and takes care of us. She also.
- **Feelings of helplessness:** When we are affected by disasters, we face tremendous challenges. It is easy to feel helpless when our lives have been altered overnight. New problems all of a sudden emerge, we deal with new social and psychological issues. In such circumstances, how can we remain positive?
- **Exhaustion and fatigue** – How can we cope in the face of exhaustion and fatigue that we experience as part of our work? How can we ensure we continue to nourish ourselves (and mother earth too!) so that we can provide much needed help and services to ravaged communities?

- Whenever there is a disaster, global appeals have been sent to us individually and to our various organisations. Did we take action? Or did we hope some other people elsewhere would do it? When we have face tragedies, health threats, natural disasters, and conflict or terrorism, how do we respond?
- Our challenges have been many, including Ebola, earthquakes, terrorism, plane crashes, tornadoes, drowning of illegal migrants at sea, hail storms, fires, oil spills. The list is endless. All these have been associated with the loss of human, animal and plant life, and destruction of properties. Some people escaped death but their lives have been changed for the worst; maimed, lost properties, lost loved ones. Many people have been impacted, but we continue to look for seeds of hope. All of these people are our neighbors and brothers and sisters regardless of where they are geographically located. Yes they are crying out to us for help. What are we going to do?
- There are many things that can happen, to help communities recovering from disasters. Sometimes we can only offer assistance to communities but other times we can help individuals through the recovery and help them to cope with details of the tragic event. It may be possible to send volunteers, but many times we will offer financial and material support. What is important is to maintain human dignity in our work. As we respond to disasters, we must be driven by compassion; we must focus on bringing healing to the communities. Most importantly, we must treat people with dignity and respect, even if they are left with nothing in their lives. Everyone needs a chance to live. We cannot afford to turn our backs on those needing our help. Jesus reached out to the outcasts, such as the lepers and healed them (Matthew 8:1-4). He taught the parable of the Good Samaritan to show us that we cannot afford to turn our backs to those needing attention. (Luke 10:25-37).

It might seem overwhelming but ... there are lots of things that young people, communities, YWCAs and YMCAs have done and can do to build resilience to disasters, reduce the risk of them, and be ready to respond.

Here are some big disasters, the contexts & what's been learned – with some very top-line pointers to features that are noteworthy and encouraging:

- **Tsunami** – massive scale of the response, with intensive lessons learned about being better prepared.
- **Philippines Typhoon** – YWCA and YMCA were prepared to respond, and began providing food, water and shelter to those affected within days of the Typhoon – before many

others got there!

- Ebola Outbreak – YWCAs and YMCAs have truly empowered local communities and young people throughout their emergency response and shown their adaptability in a continuously changing emergency situation.
- Nepal Earthquake – Christian communities including YWCAs and YMCAs have reached remote rural villages with food, water and shelter where no-one else had reached, their solidarity and empathy has been recognized ... and we have worked well together to help.

Never give up! Let us Keep Hope alive.

Practical response

- **Preparedness** - What we can do to help get ready & get others ready. Many YWCAs and YMCAs have developed a Disaster Management Strategy which outlines how they will reduce the risk of future disasters and respond to them when they hit.
- **Keeping going** – On a personal and team level, keeping fit, remaining positive, looking after ourselves and those directly involved. YWCAs and YMCA staff said they all looked after each other throughout the difficult time of the Ebola outbreak.
- Drawing inspiration from the examples of others, especially what young people and women are doing, also those who are made vulnerable but stand firm (young people and women took the lead in the Ebola outbreak emergency response reaching thousands of people within their communities to give them the essential information to help them to protect themselves.
- **Communicating** – Noting the experiences & impacts that can help others to understand how to help. Philippines YMCA is keen to share their experiences and learning about responding to a devastating disaster with Nepal YMCA; learning within the YMCA Movement to become stronger in the face of increasing disaster risk.
- **Be ready for unexpected** – crises often present opportunities for action that might otherwise not have been possible. Crises also present opportunities to forge new alliances, to encourage others to join us, to help, and to take action so we can have a greater impact.

When Mother Nature is destructive, we remember that she also provides for our basic needs

Questions for Reflection

1. Share some concrete experiences of disaster situations you were directly or indirectly involved in.
2. What are our beliefs regarding natural disasters? How can we balance the sometimes destructive forces of Mother Nature with the positive nourishing aspects?
3. Why should we be involved in disaster response? What is our capacity to help? How can we involve others to have a greater impact?
4. What is your understanding of helping affected people and communities with dignity and respect?
5. How can we Keep Hope alive for those in disaster areas? And what are we doing to mitigate the situation?

Proposed song for Closing

In Christ alone

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjiiF83q7G0>

In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song;
this Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! Who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones he came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,

The wrath of God was satisfied -
For every sin on Him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain;
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave he rose again!
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine -
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

Prayer:

The Earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters. We are your creation and the days of our lives are numbered on your palm. So teach us to count our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom as we serve you and Humanity.

DAY FOUR:

I was battered !!!

Scripture Matthew 25, 31-40

A United Nations report released this year, argues that despite significant progress towards gender equality over the last 20 years, violence against women “persists at an alarmingly high level”. This is hardly surprising. Women are dominated economically, physically, socially and legally, the world over. Within this, gender-based violence, and in particular violence against women and children, remains a major concern for policy makers and rights activists. Over this last year alone we have seen horrifying stories of rape and violence come from all continents; stories of rape victims, many of them children, being forced to marry their abusers, the mass kidnapping and sexual abuses committed against hundreds of girls and women by Islamic extremist groups. It is easy to lose faith and feel helpless when we hear of these events.

How can we keep hope alive in the midst of all the horror we see? The very fact that we are aware of these events, that we discuss them, and that the world speaks out against them through collective global action such as the “Bring Back Our Girls” campaign is proof that we can take action and not give up. This generation, more than any before them, has vocally and actively worked together, on a global platform, to stand against violence against women. We must continue to speak out against these injustices, to advocate for the observance of human rights of women and girls worldwide and to take action against harmful practices such as child marriage.

When we see violence against women and girls, we challenge it. We have made massive social progress, and we need to build on this progress. We have hope for continued changes. However hope is more than just a positive expression of faith in a better world... it is a vehicle for change and a driver for the willingness to act. Without hope, there is no language for communicating for change, no space to share learnings and no strategy we can use to collectively work towards change. Hope then is crucial to the shift in thinking the world needs in order to eradicate gender-based violence.

A vital space to nurture and act on hope is within Christian organisations, such as ours. Historically, religion and tradition have been common tools for the justification and continuation of violence



against women. Just as the Bible and the church can be used to dominate, so too can they be used to support equality and peace within the family. The bible is the source of keeping hope alive:

In Genesis 1:26-27 the man and the woman together bear the image of God. It is clear that not only do the man and the woman equally bear the image of God, but that it is the two of them together who bear this image.

In Genesis 2:23 the man affirms that the woman is bone of his bones; not just equal but of exactly the same substance as him. The man and the woman are perfectly suited to one another and only after the creation of the woman is the one element in creation which is “not good”, the man’s aloneness (Gen 2:18), resolved. In this respect, women are seen to complete the creation of man.

In our perfect state, Eden, it is clear that men and women are created equal. Attitudes that perpetuate male domination, which ultimately leads to violence against women, are undermined by the teaching of creation itself. Violence against women then, is an act of violence against one’s own self and to weaken women, is to weaken the self.

The idea that women are an extension that completes man is inherent to the idea that women and men are equal, made the same through creation. This is the heart of the change we need to advocate for through our work.

I was battered, but I turned to my faith to renew my strength

Questions for personal and group reflections/Discussion topics:

1. How publically do people in your community discuss violence against women?
2. What does the government say and do about violence against women in your community?
3. How can we respond to acts of violence against women in our community and in the larger society? How can we mobilize on a larger scale for maximum impact?
4. When somebody is raped his/her identity is affected. How can we support rape victims to recover their dignity? What kinds of services are most effective?

Proposed song:

we shall not give up the fight.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZBGWLyZvY>

South Africa

The image shows a musical score for the song 'We Shall Not Give Up the Fight'. It consists of two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a bass clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The first system has the lyrics: 'We shall not give up the fight, we have on-ly start ed, we have on-ly start ed, we have on-ly start ed.' The second system has the lyrics: 'We shall not give up the fight, we have on-ly start-ed, we have on-ly start-ed, we have on-ly start-ed.'

2. Together we'll have victory,
hand holding hand.
3. Never, ever put to flight,
we're bound to win.

*1 La lucha no terminó,
sólo ha comenzado.
2 La victoria llegará,
dándonos la mano.
3 Nunca nos doblegarán,
unidos hasta el fin.*

*1 Nous n'abandonnerons pas le combat,
nous avons seulement commencé
2 Ensemble nous gagnerons,
la main dans la main,
3 Même pourchassés,
nous allons gagner*

Prayer:

Father touch our hearts with your hands of Love. Teach us how to be gentle and tender with our brothers and especially with our sisters. May there be unity and love in the basic unit of society that you created. May you name be forever praised.

DAY FIVE:

Get Up... Take the Child and his mother and escape...

Scripture Matthew 2, 13-15

In 2013, 232 Million people, over 3.2 per cent of the world's population, lived outside their country of birth. For the majority of these people, migration is an act of hope borne out of desperation... some flee physical violence and political instability, others find the allure of wealth in a foreign land a tempting prize against their own economic poverty at home and for some, natural disasters and environmental shocks make staying behind a dangerous and untenable option. For almost everyone though, migration is about the desire to seek a better condition than the one you have and it is one of the hardest and most frightening decisions anyone can make for their life.

Over the last decade, international migration has been met with a surge in social problems and tension arising from the effect migration has on both the origin and host countries.

For the origin country, emigration can reduce housing, resource and employment pressures, especially in developing world countries. But, this alleviation of pressure is short-lived. For the home country, migration often results in the loss of the young, most able and most skilled. It can create an unbalanced population structure and divides families, leaving the elderly to care for themselves in worsening conditions.

For the host country, immigration increases the availability of cheap labour, brings diverse skills into the country and increases cultural diversity and world knowledge. This in itself though, leads to language problems, a surge in racial/ethnic tensions and xenophobia, loss of employment for those born in the country and an increase in pressure on housing and public services such as health care and employment services.

Most recently, the resurgence of xenophobic violence in Africa, blatant discrimination in the Americas and Europe, and loss of life through high-risk immigration practices to Europe, have exposed the very real problems migrants' face, especially if they enter a country illegally. Migrants have very few protections, are often unwelcome in host countries, are relegated to live in high-risk, low income neighbourhoods, and struggle to cope with the culture shock created by the loss of



their families and support structures back home.

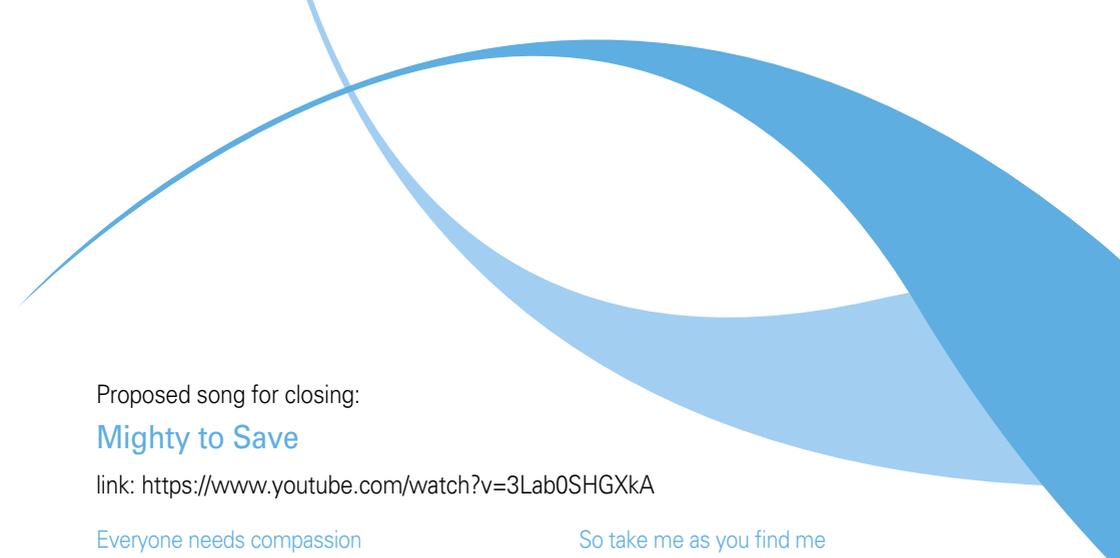
This does not need to be the case. One of the largest difficulties migrants face, is the absence of support and a system of cultural integration that helps them adapt to their new homes. YWCAs and YMCAs throughout the world have made remarkable positive impact on the migrant community by providing them with the support they need to adapt. Programmes offered include language classes, geographical orientation, legal support and employment placement, social and cultural acclimatisation, providing safe spaces and generally ensuring that immigrants are aware that there is a place they can go to for help and that hope is within Christian organisations, such as ours. Historically, religion and tradition have been common tools for the justification and continuation of violence.

Being a friend to a stranger has never been more important than when that stranger is unwanted in a country where they cannot speak the language, cannot find work and are unable to turn to anyone for help.

As members of YWCAs and YMCAs we can act as a bridge for those coming from the outside. We can through our movements provide the services immigrants need, but can also, most importantly, become a place for psychosocial support. Immigrants find comfort in a reassuring environment, where they can experience love and warmth and know that they are not alone and that they are accepted even though they may be different. YWCAs and YMCAs can become the one place where an immigrant can have a sense of belonging as well as feel safe, no matter what their original country or reason for leaving is. We can give them hope that their future is secure and that they have worth to contribute to their host societies.

Questions for personal and group reflections/Discussion topics:

1. How are migrants treated in your country?
2. Where do the majority of migrants in your country usually come from and why do they leave their home countries?
3. What social services and public protections are in place to help migrants in your region?
4. What more can YWCAs and YMCAs do to keep Hope alive for Migrants in your region?



Proposed song for closing:

Mighty to Save

link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Lab0SHGXkA>

Everyone needs compassion
A love that's never failing
Let mercy fall on me

So take me as you find me
All my fears and failures
Fill my life again

Everyone needs forgiveness
The kindness of a Saviour
The hope of nations

I give my life to follow
Everything i believe in
Now i surrender

[Chorus:]
Saviour he can move the mountains
My God is mighty to save
He is mighty to save
Forever author of salvation
He rose and conquered the grave
Jesus conquered the grave

Shine your light and let the whole world see
We're singing for the glory of the risen king
Jesus [2x]

Prayer:

God thank you for a roof over our heads; clothes on our backs and for food to eat. Many times we take these basic needs for granted yet there are many who need them but cannot find them. So teach us to be thankful always for what you have provided and the peace we experience within our borders.

DAY SIX:

When I walk through the Darkest valley ...

Scripture Ps 23

The increase of terrorism has become a worrying concern for the effectiveness of youth development in the world, especially in regions experiencing poverty and political instability. This year alone, numerous heart-breaking terror attacks against innocent people have dominated the news. In January, the Charlie Hebdo attack by Al-Qaeda in France drew worldwide attention. During the same month, Boko Haram decimated the town of Baga in Nigeria. Following this, 147 Kenyan students were killed in April at the Garissa University College by Al-Shabaab. Over the last few years, terror attacks, perpetrated in the name of religion, have resulted in the deaths and displacement of thousands.

While the violence and fear perpetrated by terrorism is reason enough for concern, perhaps the most worrying aspect is the focus terrorists have placed on making youth the perpetrators and victims of violence. In effect, young people have become the target and suppliers of terrorism. Key to terrorist activities is the recruitment of young people, especially young men.

Youth are not drawn to terrorist organisations without reason. They are not drawn and recruited to commit acts of violence because they like violence and want to hurt innocent people. Youth today have borne the brunt of unemployment, violence, racist attacks, dehumanisation in immigrant detention centers, and a slew of other forms of social injustice. All of which result in youth feeling unjustly marginalised by those in power and has created a real need for a clear purpose and an active role in greatness.

Terrorist attacks then become a violent, desperate protest against the ways that youth feel marginalised. Youth are drawn to religious and political ideals because they are desperate for purpose and action that has meaning. Terrorist groups encourage a sense of belonging, based on a shared sense of injustice through historical pain. Youth are drawn to religious fundamentalists because they feel victimised and powerless in their own lives.

People who join extremist groups do not feel like anyone listens to them or cares about their own needs. They do not feel like they can lead a safe and secure life filled with potential and possibility. Religious extremism is popular today because it is passionate and has a clear purpose, and those who participate are treated as valuable members

of the group.

People of goodwill everywhere; governments, NGOs, the corporate, religious institutions must work together to understand the root causes of terrorism and address them. The world is at a defining moment. Military approach alone is not addressing terrorism and unless the right solutions are found we will allow terrorism to define our future. But, any solutions for our world must also be solutions for our youth. Young people must be at the forefront of the fight against the root causes of terrorism – and the YWCAs and YMCAs should provide leadership through their ecumenical advantage and by empowering youth to confront the issues that affect them – issues within the political, economic and cultural spheres.

Call to Action

Terrorism is a contemporary challenge for youth and the YWCAs and YMCAs is challenged to be part of the solution. There is a real need to develop new strategies for intervention, ones that differ from how our movements have operated in the past. The YWCAs and YMCAs needs to increase the safe and dedicated spaces available for youth and to develop a new intervention methodology, including the development of a think-tank approach to critical issues affecting young people.

Our work must continue with vigour and determination. The YWCAs and YMCAs must strengthen their position as a positive place for youth to find guidance, especially in regions prone to terrorism. We must bring hope to young people by identifying youth who are at the highest risk and working with them directly; we must provide sanctuary to young people. We must become the alternative hope and space for young people who are living in constant desperation, without hope and in conflict within themselves and with the system. Youth must begin to view the YWCAs and YMCAs as an oasis of hope, a place to belong, and a space to influence... these are the key areas terrorists recruit youth with and we can instead provide positive alternatives. Our young people will not be exposed to recruitment into extremist and fundamentalist groups - because the YWCAs and YMCAs will instead become their space, their voice and their influence.

I walk through the darkest valley ...but there is a light

Questions for Reflection

- How can the YM-YWCAs be an alternative place to more positively shape the energy of youth? How can we mobilise resources on a larger scale?
- What do you think is causing the resurgence of terrorism on such a large scale? What can we do to address this?

Proposed closing song:

God will make a way

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RsMAXhc0QTs>

God will make a way

Where there seems to be no way

He works in ways we cannot see

He will make a way for me

He will be my guide

Hold me closely to His side

With love and strength for each new day

He will make a way, He will make a way

Oh, God will make a way

Where there seems to be no way

He works in ways we cannot see

He will make a way for me

He will be my guide

Hold me closely to His side

With love and strength for each new day

He will make a way, He will make a way

By a roadway in the wilderness, He'll lead me

And rivers in the desert will I see

Heaven and Earth will fade but His Word will still remain

And He will do something new today

Oh, God will make a way

Where there seems to be no way

He works in ways we cannot see

He will make a way for me

He will be my guide

Hold me closely to His side

With love and strength for each new day

He will make a way, He will make a way

Prayer:

Every day we walk though the valley of the shadow of Death but the Lord's staff and rod are there to protect us. We commit ourselves to you Lord knowing that you shall guide and protect our every step and that in you our lives and futures are safe for there is hope eternal in you.

Suggested order of worship: **CALL TO WORSHIP**

Reader: We have come together as an ecumenical worldwide community to offer prayers throughout the world for this Week of Prayer.

People: We bring the needs of the world before God.

Reader: We link hand and hand to work with one another.

People: We, your servants, gather and pray for people and places that suffer.

Reader: Many are the tongues we speak but we are one as we seek to serve and be agents of change to bring hope.

All: We will be together as one as we work, serve, and pray.

*HYMN: "Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather" (a Japanese hymn) found in United Methodist Hymnal #552 (Officiants could choose other Hymns)

RESPONSIVE PRAYER:

Reader: God of hope, grant us the determination to reach out in solidarity with one another as we look for ways to bring hope alive in our world today.

People: Hope is alive today.

SUNG RESPONSE: "Send Your Word" (Japanese hymn #195 in United Methodist Hymnal. Please sing verse 1 only)

Reader: God of peace, open our eyes to the world around us. You call us to be instruments of hope, peace, and change.

People: Hope is alive today.

SUNG RESPONSE: "Send Your Word" (sing verse 2)

Reader: God of hope, we pray for our world where people are afflicted, in despair, persecuted, and struck down. We pray that we can work together to find ways to help people so they are neither crushed nor forsaken. As it says in scripture, we ask that we may "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. (Romans 12:12)

People: Hope is alive today.

SUNG RESPONSE: "Send Your Word" verse 3

Reader: God of hope, we give thanks for the blessings we have experienced and glimpses of your grace. For the worldwide ecumenical community which works and lives to bring relief, hope, transformation and action.

All: Hope is alive today. Amen.

HYMN: "Hymn of Promise" (found in the United Methodist Hymnal #707)

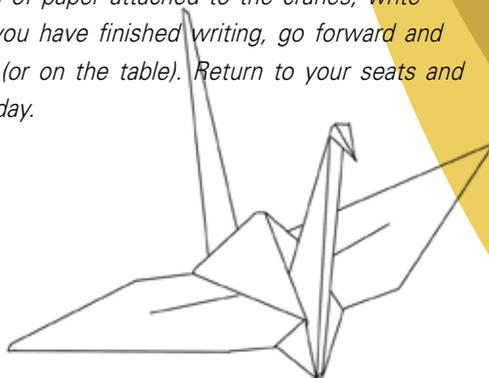
SCRIPTURE: 2 Corinthians 4:7-8

REFLECTION (*a short meditation on the scripture may be given here.*)

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION with origami cranes

Cranes (called "tsuru" in Japanese) are a symbol of hope and peace in Japan.

Please take a crane and on the piece of paper attached to the cranes, write down a short prayer of hope. After you have finished writing, go forward and please place your crane on the altar (or on the table). Return to your seats and remain in quiet prayer for the world today.



*HYMN: "My Hope is Built" UMC Hymnal #368

BENEDICTION/BLESSING: (Please follow the movements of the leader.)

Leader: Touch your head with your hands. May our minds be open to ways we can be channels of hope in our world.

Touch your ears. May we hear the voices of those who are suffering throughout the world. May we also hear their words that are filled with hope.

Touch your mouth. May we to share words of hope and reconciliation with one another. Touch your heart. May the Holy Spirit give us the courage to be instruments of hope and change.

Hold hands with the person next to you. May our hands reach out to others as we work together in solidarity. Let us go forth knowing we are not alone. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. (Romans 15:13)

People: Hope is alive today! Amen.

How to make a Paper Crane

<http://www.instructables.com/id/How-to-make-a-Paper-Crane-1/>

Reading plan

November 2015 – November 2016

NOVEMBER 2015

1. Psalm 22:23-32
2. Job 42:1-6
3. Job 42:7-9
4. Job 42:10-17
5. James 1:1-12
6. James 1:13-18
7. James 1:19-27

8. Psalm 112
9. James 2:1-13
10. James 2:14-26
11. James 3:1-12
12. James 3:13-18
13. James 4:1-12
14. James of 4:13-5,6

15. Psalm 79
16. James 5:7-12
17. James 5:13-20
18. Matthew 24:1-14
19. Matthew 24:15-28
20. Matthew 24:29-31
21. Matthew 24:32-44
22. Psalm 126
23. Matthew 24:45-51
24. Matthew 25:1-13
25. Matthew 25:14-30
26. Matthew 25:31-46
27. Judas 1-16
28. Judas 17-25
29. Psalm 117
30. Isaiah 40:1-11

DECEMBER 2015

1. Isaiah 40:12-31
2. Isaiah 41:8-14
3. Isaiah 42:1-9
4. Isaiah 43:1-7
5. Isaiah 43:8-13

6. Psalm 80
7. Isaiah 43:14-28
8. Isaiah 44:1-5
9. Isaiah 44:6-20
10. Isaiah 44:21-28
11. Isaiah 45:1-8
12. Isaiah 45:9-17

13. Psalm 85
14. Isaiah 45:18-25
15. Isaiah 46:1-13
16. Isaiah 49:1-6
17. Isaiah 49:7-17
18. Isaiah 49:18-26
19. Isaiah 50: 4-11
20. Psalm 115
21. Isaiah 51:1-8
22. Isaiah 51:9-16
23. Isaiah 52:1-6
24. Isaiah 52:7-12
25. Luke 1:46-55
26. Luke 2:29-32

27. Psalm 118:15-29
28. Isaiah 52:13-53,5
29. Isaiah 53:6-12
30. Isaiah 55:1-5
31. Isaiah 55:6-13

JANUARY 2016

1. Psalm 148
2. Mark 1:1-8

3. Psalm 138
4. Mark 1:9-13
5. Mark 1:14-20
6. Mark 1:21-28
7. Mark 1:29-39
8. Mark 1:40-45
9. Mark 2:1-12

10. Psalm 2
11. Mark 2:13-17
12. Mark 2:18-22
13. Mark 2:23-28
14. Mark 3:1-6
15. 1Timothy 1:1-11
16. 1Timothy 1:12-20

17. Psalm 89:1-19
18. 1Timothy 2:1-7
19. 1Timothy 2:8-15
20. 1Timothy 3:1-13
21. 1Timothy 3:14-16
22. 1Timothy 4:1-11
23. 1Timothy 4:12-5,2
24. Psalm 89:20-53
25. 1Timothy 5:3-16
26. 1Timothy 5:17-25
27. 1Timothy 6:1-10
28. 1Timothy 6:11-21
29. 2 Timothy 1:1-12
30. 2Timothy 1:13-18

31. Psalm 128

FEBRUARY 2016

1. 2Timothy 2:1-13
2. 2Timothy 2:14-26
3. 2Timothy 3:1-9
4. 2Timothy 3:10-17
5. 2Timothy 4:1-8
6. 2Timothy 4:9-22

7. Psalm 31
8. Titus 1:1-9
9. Titus 1:10-16
10. Titus 2:1-10
11. Titus 2:11-15
12. Titus 3:1-15
13. Philemon 1-25

14. Psalm 91
15. Mark 11:1-11
16. Mark 11:12-25
17. Mark 11:27-33
18. Mark 12:1-12
19. Mark 12:13-17
20. Mark 12:18-27

21. Psalm 123
22. Mark 12:28-34
23. Mark 12:35-40
24. Mark 12:41-44
25. Mark 13:1-13
26. Mark 13:14-23
27. Mark 13:24-37

28. Psalm 141
29. Mark 14:1-11

MARCH 2016

1. Mark 14:12-16
2. Mark 14:17-25
3. John 14:1-14
4. John 14:15-26
5. John 14:27-31

6. Psalm 132
7. John 15:1-8
8. John 15:9-17
9. John 15:18-16,4
10. John 16:5-15
11. John 16:16-24
12. John 16:25-33

13. Psalm 102
14. John 17:1- 8
15. John 17:9-19
16. John 17:20-26
17. Mark 14:26-31
18. Mark 14:32-42
19. Mark 14:43-52

20. Psalm 88
21. Mark 14:53-65
22. Mark 14:66-72
23. Mark 15:1-15
24. Mark 15:16-23
25. Mark 15:24-41
26. Mark 15:42-47

27. Mark 16:1-8
28. Mark 16:9-20
29. 1 Peter 1:1-12
30. 1 Peter 1: 13-16
31. 1 Peter 1:17-21

APRIL 2016

1. 1Peter 1:22-2,3
2. 1Peter 2:4-10

3. Psalm 122
4. 1 Peter 2:11-17
5. 1 Peter 2:18-25
6. 1 Peter 3:1-7
7. 1 Peter 3:8-12
8. 1 Peter 3:13-17
9. 1 Peter 3:18-22

10. Psalm 136
11. 1 Peter 4:1-11
12. 1 Peter 4:12-19
13. 1 Peter 5:1-7
14. 1 Peter 5:8-14
15. 1 Corinthians 1:1- 9
16. 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

17. Psalm 96
18. 1 Corinthians 1:18-25
19. 1 Corinthians 1:26-31
20. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5
21. 1 Corinthians 2:6-16
22. 1 Corinthians 3:1-4
23. 1 Corinthians 3:5-8

24. Psalm 149
25. 1 Corinthians 3:9-17
26. 1 Corinthians 3:18-23
27. 1 Corinthians 4:1-5
28. 1 Corinthians 4:6-13
29. 1 Corinthians 4:14-21
30. 1 Corinthians 5:1-8

MAY 2016

1. Psalm 93
2. 1 Corinthians 5:9-13
3. 1 Corinthians 6:1-11
4. 1 Corinthians 6:12-20
5. Philippians 2:5-11
6. 1 Corinthians 7:1-16
7. 1 Corinthians 7:17-24

8. Psalm 86
9. 1 Corinthians 7:25-40
10. 1 Corinthians 8:1-6
11. 1 Corinthians 8:7-13
12. 1 Corinthians 9:1-18
13. 1 Corinthians 9:19-23
14. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

15. Ephesians 1:3-14
16. Psalm 150
17. 1 Corinthians 10:1-13
18. 1 Corinthians 10:14-22
19. 1 Corinthians 10:23-11,1
20. 1 Corinthians 11:2-16
21. 1 Corinthians 11:17-26

22. Psalm 145
23. 1 Corinthians 11:27-34
24. 1 Corinthians 12:1-11
25. 1 Corinthians 12:12-26
26. 1 Corinthians 12:27-31
27. 1 Corinthians 13:1-7
28. 1 Corinthians 13:8-13

29. Psalm 133
30. 1 Corinthians 14:1-12
31. 1 Corinthians 14:13-25

JUNE 2016

1. 1 Corinthians 14:26-33a
2. 1 Corinthians 14:33b-40
3. 1 Corinthians 15:1-11
4. 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

5. Psalm 36
6. 1 Corinthians 15:20-28
7. 1 Corinthians 15:29-34
8. 1 Corinthians 15:35-49
9. 1 Corinthians 15:50-58
10. 1 Corinthians 16:1-12
11. 1 Corinthians 16:13-24

12. Psalm 106:1-23
13. Exodus 1:1-22
14. Exodus 2:1-10
15. Exodus 2:11-25
16. Exodus 3:1-22
17. Exodus 4:1-17
18. Exodus 4:18-31

19. Psalm 106:24-48
20. Exodus 5:1-6,1
21. Exodus 7:1-25
22. Exodus 12:1-20
23. Exodus 12:21-33,51
24. Exodus 13:17-22
25. Exodus 14:1-14

26. Psalm 73
27. Exodus 14:15-31
28. Exodus 15:1-21
29. Exodus 15:22-27
30. Exodus 16:1-16

JULY 2016

1. Exodus 16:17-36
2. Exodus 17:1-16

3. Psalm 135
4. Exodus 18:1-27
5. Exodus 19:1-25
6. Exodus 20:1-21
7. Exodus 24:1-18
8. Exodus 25:1-22
9. Exodus 32:1-14

10. Psalm 139
11. Exodus 32:15-35
12. Exodus 33:1-23
13. Exodus 34:1-17
14. Exodus 34:18-35
15. Exodus 40:1-17
16. Exodus 40:34-38

17. Psalm 124
18. Mark 3:7-19
19. Mark 3:20-30
20. Mark 3:31-35
21. Mark 4:1-9
22. Mark 4:10-20
23. Mark 4:21-25

24. Psalm 119:25-32
25. Mark 4:26-29
26. Mark 4:30-34
27. Mark 4:35-41
28. Mark 5:1-20
29. Mark 5:21-34
30. Mark 5:35-43

31. Psalm 119:33-40

AUGUST 2016

1. Mark 6:1-6
2. Mark 6:7-13
3. Mark 6:14-29
4. Mark 6:30-44
5. Mark 6:45-56
6. Mark 7:1-23

7. Psalm 119:41-48
8. Mark 7:24-30
9. Mark 7:31-37
10. Mark 8:1-9
11. Mark 8:10-21
12. Mark 8:22-26
13. Mark 8:27-33

14. Psalm 147
15. Mark 8:34-9,1
16. Mark 9:2-13
17. Mark 9:14-29
18. Mark 9:30-37
19. Mark 9:38-41
20. Mark 9:42-50

21. Psalm 120
22. Mark 10:1-12
23. Mark 10:13-16
24. Mark 10:17-27
25. Mark 10:28-31
26. Mark 10:32-45
27. Mark 10:46-52

28. Psalm 146
29. Jeremiah 1:1-10
30. Jeremiah 1:11-19
31. Jeremiah 2:1-13

SEPTEMBER 2016

1. Jeremiah 3:1-10
2. Jeremiah 3:21-4: 4
3. Jeremiah 6:9-23

4. Psalm 127
5. Jeremiah 7:1-15
6. Jeremiah 7:16-28
7. Jeremiah 9:22-23
8. Jeremiah 12:1-6
9. Jeremiah 13:1-11
10. Jeremiah 14:1-16

11. Psalm 140
12. Jeremiah 15:10-21
13. Jeremiah 16:1-13
14. Jeremiah 18:1-12
15. Jeremiah 19:1-13
16. Jeremiah 20:7-18
17. Jeremiah 21:1-14

18. Psalm 129
19. Jeremiah 23:1-8
20. Jeremiah 25:1-14
21. Jeremiah 26:1-19
22. Jeremiah 28:1-17
23. Jeremiah 29:1-14
24. Jeremiah 30:1-3,31:1-14

25. Psalm 142
26. Jeremiah 31:18-20,31-37
27. Jeremiah 36:1-19
28. Jeremiah 36:20-32
29. Jeremiah 37:1-21
30. Jeremiah 38:1-13

OCTOBER 2016

1. Jeremiah 38:14-28

2. Psalm 65
3. Jeremiah 39:1-18
4. Jeremiah 40:1-16
5. Jeremiah 41:1-18
6. Jeremiah 42:1-22
7. Jeremiah 43:1-13
8. Jeremiah 44:1-14

9. Psalm 109
10. Jeremiah 44:15-30
11. Jeremiah 45:1-5
12. Lamentations 1:1-11,17-22
13. Lamentations 3:1-33
14. Lamentations 3:34-66
15. Lamentations 5:1-22

16. Psalm 42
17. 2 Corinthians 1:1-11
18. 2 Corinthians 1:12-24
19. 2 Corinthians 2:1-11
20. 2 Corinthians 2:12-17
21. 2 Corinthians 3:1-11
22. 2 Corinthians 3:12-18

23. Psalm 143
24. 2 Corinthians 4:1-6
25. 2 Corinthians 4:7-18
26. 2 Corinthians 5:1-10
27. 2 Corinthians 5:11-15
28. 2 Corinthians 5:16-21
29. 2 Corinthians 6:1-10

30. Psalm 125
31. 2 Corinthians 6:11-7,1

NOVEMBER 2016

1. 2 Corinthians 7:2-16
2. 2 Corinthians 8:1-15
3. 2 Corinthians 8:16-24
4. 2 Corinthians 9:1-15
5. 2 Corinthians 10:1-11

6. Psalm 90
7. 2 Corinthians 10:12-18
8. 2 Corinthians 11:1-15
9. 2 Corinthians 11:16-33
10. 2 Corinthians 12:1-10
11. 2 Corinthians 12:11-21
12. 2 Corinthians 13:1-13

13. Psalm 51
14. 2 Peter 1:1-11
15. 2 Peter 1:12-21
16. 2 Peter 2:1-11
17. 2 Peter 2:12-22
18. 2 Peter 3:1-9
19. 2 Peter 3:10-18

20. Isaiah 26:7-19
21. Isaiah 56:1-8
22. Isaiah 56:9-12
23. Isaiah 57:1-13
24. Isaiah 57:14-21
25. Isaiah 58:1-9a
26. Isaiah 58:9b-14

27. Psalm 24
28. Isaiah 59:1-15a
29. Isaiah 59:15b-21
30. Isaiah 60:1-14

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