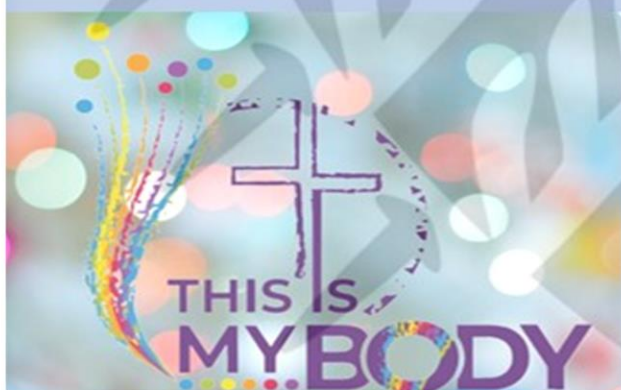


Lenten Devotions 2023

*A Journey from
Brokenness to Wholeness*



Acknowledgements

This devotional is an expression of the LUCSA Christian Education Desk in the search of different Lenten tradition within the 15 LUCSA Member Churches.

As Lent is an important period of preparation towards the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the devotional seeks to assist churches in this journey. Inspired by the LUCSA Theme: This is my Body, the theme for Lent is “A Journey from Brokenness to Healing”. This is from the perspective that in Christ’s broken body we find healing ourselves (Isa. 53:5). The Lenten Series is based on readings from Matthew's Gospel as this is Year A in the Revised Common Lectionary which focuses on Matthew.

We acknowledge all the contributors from our Regional Christian Educators Network, Rev. Dr. Knutson for the concept, outline, and editing, Dr. Löytty who developed the liturgy, and Ms. Tiejia Lievonon from FELM/IELA for the translations in Portuguese.

We trust and pray that this will be an inspiring resource.

LUCSA Christian Education Desk 2023

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Lenten Devotion Liturgy

Can be conducted by pastors or lay persons.

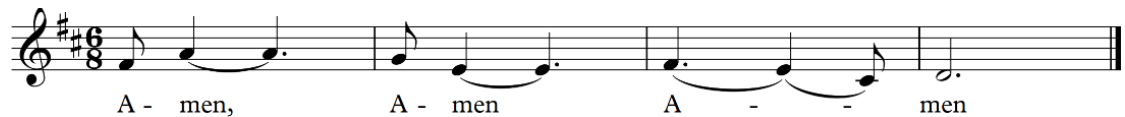
G A T H E R I N G

1 Opening hymn/song

2 Invocation

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Congregation:



Leader: The Lord be with you

Congregation: And also with you

Leader: Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful

Congregation: I have taken refuge in you

Leader: in the shadow of your wings will take refuge

Congregation: until this time of trouble has gone by.

(Psalm 57:1)

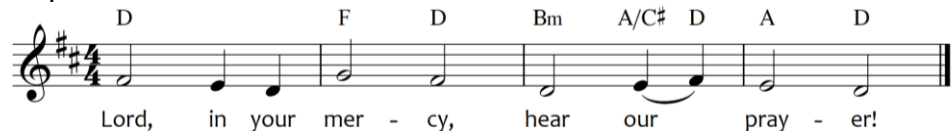
P S A L M O D Y

3 Psalmody

Leader:

Let us all join in singing Psalm 32: 1-7

Response:



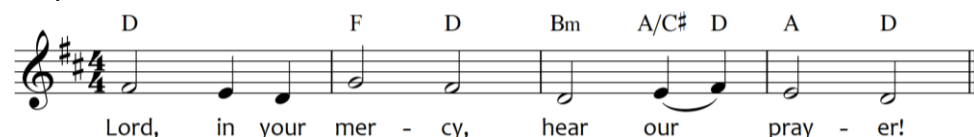
L: Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

C: Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit.

L: When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

C: For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer.

Response



L: Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity.

I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.' And you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

C: Therefore, let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found; surely the rising of the mighty waters will not reach them.

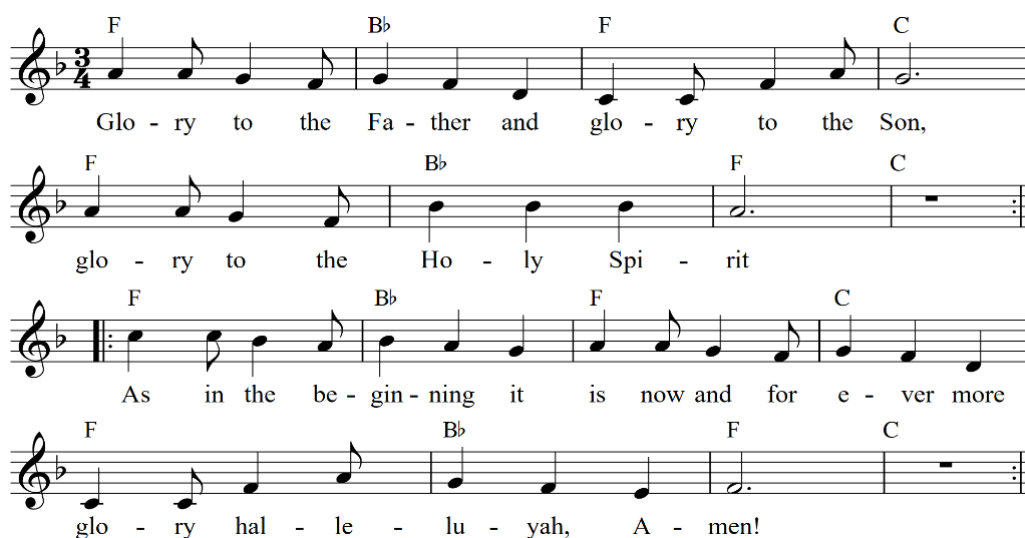
C: You are my hiding-place;

L: You will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

Response:



Doxology, Gloria Patri (After the Psalm):



W O R D

4

Scripture reading

Mathew 6: 16-21

16 "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father,

who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.
¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

5 Reflection/Meditation
(A short reflection leading to the confession)

P R A Y E R (and RECEIVING OF ASHES)

6 Hymn

7 Prayer of confession

Leader:

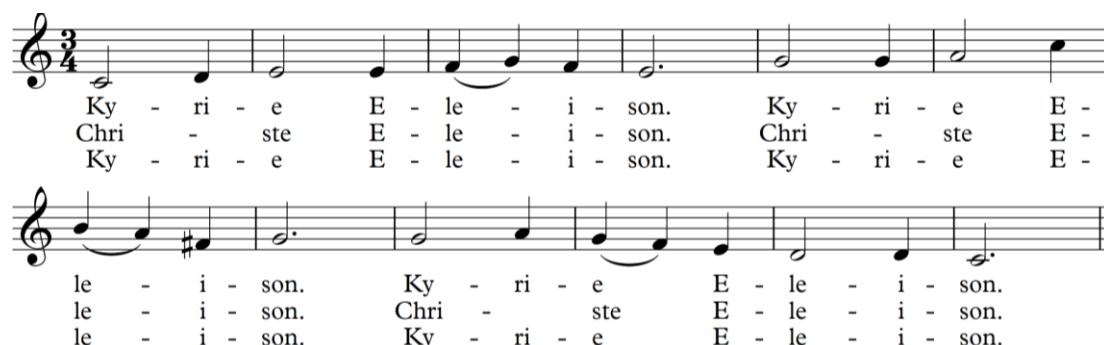
Let us all pray together:

Almighty God, you have created us to serve you and our neighbors. You call us to repentance so that we will truly ask for the forgiveness of our sins.

We confess to you, Merciful God, and to one another, that we have sinned by our own fault, by our most grievous fault, in thought, word and deed, by what we have done and what we have left undone.

Create in us new and honest hearts so that we may receive from you a full pardon and forgiveness through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Kyrie



Ky - ri - e E - le - i - son. Ky - ri - e E -
 Chri - ste E - le - i - son. Chri - ste E -
 Ky - ri - e E - le - i - son. Ky - ri - e E -
 le - i - son. Ky - ri - e E - le - i - son.
 le - i - son. Chri - ste E - le - i - son.
 le - i - son. Ky - ri - e E - le - i - son.

Composed by Patrick Kgapola

Ash Wednesday prayer. *The other times of lent you may continue from the Absolution*

Leader:

The Word of God reminds us that we are dust and to dust we shall return. However, God has promised to raise “the poor from the dust and the needy from the ash heap” (Ps 113:7). Our Redeemer encourages us, saying: “Repent and believe the good news!” Therefore, come now, all of you, and receive the sign of the cross on your forehead as a sign of repentance and forgiveness.

Congregation members may come forward and the leader marks the forehead of each person with a cross of ashes saying:

Leader: Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return. Receive the sign of repentance and forgiveness.

Soft music can be played, or choruses sung while the congregation receives the ashes.

Absolution

Leader:

Let us pray:

The Almighty and Merciful God forgives us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ. With his love he will strengthen us in all goodness and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal peace. Amen

Congregation:

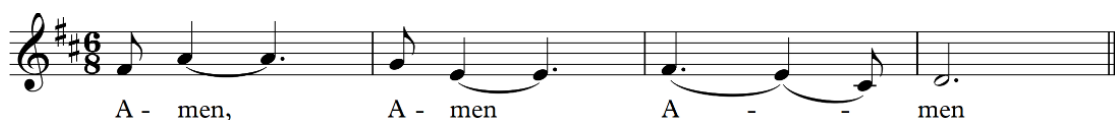


Leader continues:

Merciful God, we have so often journeyed through the season of Lent without concentration. Lord, we ask you to accompany us on the journey through these forty days of Lent. Renew in us the gift of Baptism, teach us how to pray and how we may provide for those who are poor, pray for those in need, fast from self-indulgence, and above all that we may find our treasure in the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Together: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.



S E N D I N G

8 **Blessing/Benediction**

Leader: Let us say the benediction together:

The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

Dismissal

Leader:

Go in peace. Have courage, hold on to what is good,
do not repay evil for evil, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak,
lift the burdens of the oppressed, treat all people with respect.
Love and serve the Lord with gladness in the power of the Holy Spirit.

9 **Closing hymn/song**

Towards the Healing of Relationships

We all love to be forgiven - we expect it and want it. But we find it a struggle to forgive. Lent is the liturgical season of spiritual preparation before Easter, the ultimate act of God's redemption and forgiveness to the entire world.

The pericope deals with the healing of hurts between people, that is, the way to resolve differences, settle bitter feuds and fights that sometimes break out.

Peter felt that he was being very magnanimous in suggesting that he forgive seven times. But Jesus is saying that how often is not the question. The real question is, "Why should I forgive at all?"

Jesus is here holding up a mirror in order that we might see ourselves. We are like the servant who has been forgiven a staggering amount of money, and God is the great king that has forgiven us. It means, of course, that this king assumed the costly debt himself, allowing it to go unpaid and thus impoverishing his treasury. This is no trifling matter.

There are reasons revealed here why Christians must forgive each other.

First, we must forgive because anything less is hypocritical. We cannot demand justice from others if we do not stand on that ground ourselves. As the king said to this servant, "You wicked servant! Should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?"

Secondly, we can and must forgive one another because we have already been forgiven. Our Lord is telling us that forgiveness occurs when we stop saying, "Look what you're doing to me," and start saying, "What can I do to relieve your hurt?"

The thing that makes forgiveness possible is to remember that God forgave us unconditionally for the healing of all relationships.

Prayer

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for dealing so honestly with us. We know you do not show us these things in order to leave us feeling condemned and guilty, but rather once again to hear the word of the great King, "All is forgiven" so that we might receive and share the riches of God's grace, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Bishop Sageus / Keib,

LUCSA Program Committee for Education, Theology and Ecumenical Relations (PETER)

Towards Physical Healing: Jesus as Model for Physical Healing

In this text we learn that Jesus heals people physically. If we look at John 9: 6-7 Jesus' approach to "physical healing" is clarified. Jesus makes use of spittle and mud. Jesus does not merely "pray away" the sickness. Here, the Great Physician, our God in Jesus Christ, uses ordinary means. Jesus teaches us that the healing powers of nature are part of God's gracious gift and will. As Christians we can also use medicine along with prayer.

Jesus heals the whole person: In body, mind, and spirit. This is illustrated in Matthew 4: 23-25 where Jesus is facing the situation at the grass root level, of hunger, poor hygiene, anxiety and depression. Jesus counters the sinful effects of our economic and political systems, and immediately addresses the situation by physically healing the people and thereby ensuring blessings for plenty and health for all (Isaiah 35: 5-10).

In summary, Jesus' healing is a model for the Church today. Jesus entrusts the apostles, pastors, elders and us as laity, with the ministry of healing. In other words, according to Jesus' example, the Gospel and the Kingdom of God cannot stand without concrete salvation illustrated by healing. Therefore, the Good News for all people is that God's healing ministry continues to overcome all manner of diseases including COVID-19, depression, suicide, and HIV&AIDS

Prayer

Lord, we thank you for complete healing that we find in You. Help us to also use all the means available to us to continue your healing ministry also for our physical bodies. Be with those who suffer from physical infirmities. Let us not lose hope in your Salvation. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Rev. Prof. Paul John Isaak, ELCRN

Towards Psychosocial Healing

Jesus had emphasized earlier that his mission was not to the Gentiles but to the lost sheep of Israel. But then he met a Gentile woman who so deeply impressed him by her persistent desire for healing for her child, that he healed her daughter and, in the process, broadened our understanding of who is included in God's mission. Everyone!

As the woman seeks the healing and wellness not of herself, but of her child, she seeks the healing of her community. She experiences many obstacles, firstly, the disciples sending her away, as well as the fact that Jesus did not answer her immediately. But she did not shrug and walk away. Even Jesus' initial response, that it was not appropriate to cast the children's food to the dogs, was met with her stubborn reply that even the dogs were allowed to eat the crumbs that fall under the table. In the end Jesus declared, Great is your faith, lifting her example up for all to see, including us today.

Not only was the girl healed, but relationships healed. The cries of a woman, a foreign woman for that matter, are heard and acknowledged by our Lord. And through the brave and persistent outcries of a mother, salvation came to a whole community. Her personal faith, now through the grace of God, established and strengthens relationships. In this powerful story we perceive the miracle and blessing of God's grace for all people through Jesus Christ!

Prayer

Thank you, Lord, that in and through You individuals, families, communities and societies can be healed. Thank you that you invite each and every one of us to become part of your kingdom. May your ultimate sacrifice on the cross inspire us to also seek the healing and well-being of others. Amen!

Bishop-elect Rev. S. Matsimbe IELM

Towards Psychosocial Healing

Jesus met a Canaanite woman at Tyre and Sidon. She cried out to Jesus to heal her daughter who was ill, saying, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon possession.” (Matthew 15: 22 NIV)

Jesus did not answer her immediately. His disciples requested him to send her away. Jesus told them that he had come only for the needy among the people of Israel.

The woman, when hearing what Jesus said, humbled herself and pleaded for help. She spoke with boldness saying that, even those who are not on the list of dignitaries or from the chosen nation, are also in need of sustenance, even if it is just remnants from the table.

Jesus Christ changed when he saw how the woman was persistently pleading. He was also moved by the way she addressed him, calling him “Lord, Son of David”. We recall that in John 14: 14, it is written that when anyone asks anything in Jesus’ name, it will be given.

Even when Jesus mentioned that he had come only to the Jews, he was challenged by the faith which the woman demonstrated. Her nationality, gender and economic status were not the issue. What was important was her fervent desire that her daughter be healed.

For us too, social background and economic context should not limit healing. Instead, we trust and believe that God will be merciful and hear and heal us, our families, communities and society.

And so, on this Lenten journey we declare with bold humility that it is by God’s gifts of grace and faith alone that we are healed and made whole in body, mind and spirit.

Prayer

Lord, Son of David, have mercy upon us! As we seek healing for all those around us, may we be bold and persistent like the Canaanite woman. Help us that we will not listen to negative voices around us but seek in earnestness an encounter with you. May we utilize the gifts of your grace to hear the voices of those who need healing. Amen

Sr. Rebecca Mokoena, ELCSA

Towards Spiritual Healing

28 *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

Jesus gives us this wonderful invitation to heal our souls and find rest for our body, which houses our souls. It is an open invitation that has no restrictions. He invites all who labour and are heavy laden.

Think about the things that pertain to your relationship with God. How is your relationship with God? Are you satisfied in this relationship? Are you labouring in prayer and how about your reading of God's word. Is it a burden to find time to read and study God's word?

When Jesus says "take my yoke" he means that the Son of God pulls the load with you. If you are weary with your burdens, what could be greater than to be yoked to Jesus Christ and have him pull your load with you?

It calls for submitting to the Lordship of Christ and being led by the Holy Spirit.

In this Lenten time may we surrender to the Lordship of Christ our Saviour and live in obedience to his Holy Word.

Prayer

All to Jesus I surrender, all to Him I freely give. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for inviting me once more to submit to Your Lordship over my life. Remind me that I do not have to carry the world on my shoulders but that I can find rest in you, in whom I live, move and exist. Amen

Rev Chundran Chetty, ELCSA

Towards Healing of the Earth

In our region, we have various disasters relating to climate change. In some areas there is severe drought, yet in other areas there is serious flooding. We experience cyclones, earthquakes and all this while people are hungry and dying in unstable political environments.

The story of Jesus calming the storm speaks to the same type of natural disaster. This disaster, invoking fear in the disciples for their seeming untimely death, all this while Jesus sleeps comfortably in the boat and does not seem to be bothered.

Often in our context, we might also feel and wonder whether God is still concerned about the earth. Often, we might even ask, as the psalmist does in Ps. 13 “How long, O Lord?” Is the Lord not concerned about human life, or the preservation of nature? How long will flooding, drought, cyclones and all other natural disaster persist? How long will human life be at risk due to natural disaster? Is God inattentive to the plight of humanity?

But Jesus wakes up and calms the storms. This is the good news in a bad situation. God is concerned, God is attentive, God is moved. For we know that all in the world is not as God has created it. We know that God wants to make things better through and in Christ. Perhaps, in calling out the disciples’ little faith, Jesus also calls us not be bystanders in times of disaster, but to be faith-actors, not only through our prayers and cries to him, but also in demonstrating God’s love, and his will for all to live in safety and abundance. God uses our hands, our hearts and our minds and resources to prepare for, respond to and mitigate disasters.

May we, in this time of Lent, also open our hearts, minds and hands to those in crisis and disaster. As bearers of the first fruits of the Spirit may we apply our minds and resources also to the healing of the earth and creation that is groaning as with the pains of childbirth, right up to the present time (Rom. 8:23).

Prayer

Lord, thank you for healing us, and making health and life possible. We pray for the whole of creation and ask, dear Lord, that you will heal and bring calm in disaster. Use us as your servants to seek the well-being of the earth and not to exploit the resources you have given us for life. Amen

Rev. Denver Grauman, MCSA

Towards Healing in times of War and Conflict

We thank the Lord for this time of reflection during the Lenten season. This period is set aside to remember and celebrate the great love of God poured out for us and for all people through Christ's death on the cross and resurrection from the grave.

We arrive in this season against the background of wars and conflicts that are tearing our world apart including the war between Russia and Ukraine, conflicts in many parts of Africa, political instability in our region and beyond, xenophobic attacks and hate speech. It is a time to reflect on the great teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 5:43-45.

Here the Lord teaches us to love our enemies. This is a difficult thing since our enemies have and continue to inflict pain on us.

The Father, God himself, is to be our inspiration. God loves the world and sent his dear Son, Jesus Christ, knowing that many would reject Him. But his unconditional love is transformational for our world, our families, or friendships and our attitude towards our enemies. God gives his grace to the wicked and sinners, just as he does to the faithful.

Our neighbour can be those who do not share our religion, who belong to different political parties, who even hate us. But Jesus loves us all and calls us to love our neighbour.

Prayer

Almighty Father, give me greater patience and confidence as I try to love those who are not lovable. Teach me to return grace to those who have enmity against me. When I do these things, I am allowing your character to be formed in my life. Work your will in my heart through your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name. AMEN

*Bishop Kenneth Sibanda, ELCZ
LUCSA President*