



CTM Lenten Daily Devotional Resources 2014

From Ash Wednesday (5 March) to Easter Sunday (20 April)

Prepared by the Centre for Theology and Ministry (CTM), this 2014 Lenten Resource contains resources suitable for use by individuals, households, small groups and congregations. Whether you use this Lenten Resource in an individual or communal context, we trust that you find it engaging, stimulating and helpful as you journey through Lent.

Similar to the CTM Advent Resource, this Lenten Resource combines two distinct elements. Firstly, there are the individual daily reflections comprising a suggested Scripture reading, some words of reflection and a short prayer. Secondly, there are ideas that can be used in the household, small group or multi-age contexts. Based on the Lectionary readings for the Sunday that begins the week, these can be engaged in at any time during the week.



Photo: Kim Cain

with bushfire, the powerful force that cracks open seed-pods and prompts new growth. In many Ash Wednesday services, Christians use ash to mark each other's foreheads with a cross, as a symbol of all that needs healing, of all that cries out to be washed fresh in the water of new life.

Reflection

What is dry and weary for you and for our country, what has crumbled to ash, what needs to be renewed with God's abundant love?

Prayer

O God, have mercy on us and on all your creation, and bring your gift of healing and new life.

From Ash Wednesday

Household Activities

- "A Shrove Tuesday Liturgy for making pancakes in your household" on [page 3](#)
- "Ash Wednesday Sacred Space" on [page 3](#)

Ash Wednesday 5 March

Isaiah 58: 1-12

Shout out! Do not hold back! Ash and rubble stink everywhere! We know it from our news screens, and the prophets call us to pay attention. The journey towards Easter begins with the reality that our world is broken; it begins with a call to let our hearts crack open.

Traditionally this first day of Lent is called 'Ash Wednesday' because dressing in sackcloth and covering the head with ashes was a sign of radical repentance, a break with old habits. Our memories of 'Ash Wednesday' are also seared

Thursday 6 March

Psalm 51: 1-9

God is mercy and kindness, and this famous Psalm of repentance stresses that it is in God's very nature to 'blot out', 'wash', or 'wipe away' whatever comes between us and God. John Calvin wrote of this plea for healing, 'God's pardon is full and complete; but our faith cannot take in his overflowing goodness.' It takes spiritual maturity to admit weakness.

The pray-er here is clear about the pervasiveness of sin. Sin is not 'passed on' exactly (v.5) but we are caught up in a web that divides us from the person we have been created to be.

With clear-eyed self-awareness the prayer admits guilt and wrongdoing 'against God alone'. This disruption has consequences. (Tradition holds that this Psalm was written by

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David when he finally understood how much he had wronged Bathsheba and Uriah, 2 Sam 2.) But God delights in sincerity, and God's wisdom can heal our innermost core.

Reflection

What is it that enmeshes us, catches us out so that we cannot hear God's loving promise for life?

Prayer

God of overflowing mercy, we confess our broken-ness before you. Take away everything that divides us from you.

Friday 7 March Isaiah 58: 9-12

This year the first Friday of Lent is also the first Friday of Autumn. This is an 'ember day' according to older calendars, from the German *quaterember*, one of four in the year that mark the change of a season. From early centuries Christians have been encouraged to pray on these days for the needs of all people, especially labourers; eventually these days were associated with prayer for a fruitful harvest. Autumn's 'ember day' calls us to see connections between ourselves and our land and to heed earth's cry for healing.

The reading from Isaiah asks for this justice, and warns against action without a 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'.

Reflection

Where do you sense your connection to the earth? What is God's call in this for you?

Prayer

God of life and land, come to every dry place and bring your harvest of new life, watered by your grace and mercy.

Saturday 8 March Psalm 51: 10-19

'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and steadfast spirit within me.'

The Hebrew word *bara'*, 'create', used to refer only to God. It links God's action in the heart of the pray-er here with God's cosmic work of creation in Genesis, and the renewal of life for the oppressed in Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel. Here, the believer dares to hope for a heart and spirit fit enough, large enough, to change the world. As Howard Wallace remarks of this Psalm, 'Confession is not the end of sin so much as the beginning of praise.' God 'blots out' the barriers so that we may be entirely renewed, and enabled to proclaim God's ways in public. The proclamation is part of total surrender to God, and it flows into a healthy community where worship is holy, and the city itself is a new public reality.

Reflection

What do you hope for this Lent? What is God fitting you for in the world?

Prayer


O God, creator and re-creator of all that is, renew our lives and give to us a spirit which is steadfast in love and bold in witness.



Household Activities

A Shrove Tuesday Liturgy for making pancakes in your household

Gather the ingredients, and print out the prayers and bible bits of the liturgy out. Distribute the tasks so that each person can contribute in the process of cooking, reading and praying. Add each ingredient to a bowl and mix as you go, reading the corresponding bible bit and prayer sentence.

 Our Loving God, We mark this Shrove Tuesday, celebrating with pancakes and remembering the ways your ancient stories and living words combine, calling us to give up greed and find fullness in faith and sweetness in serving. Give us a taste for your truth and a hunger for helping others.



1 Egg (beaten)



"God gives life to all things" (1 Tim 6:13)



Creator God, we thank you for the life you have given us. Help us to honour life in all the earth.



$\frac{3}{4}$ cup of Milk –



"Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation" (1 Peter 2:2)



Lord Jesus, your good news of salvation is like milk that nourishes the new born child. The bible encourages us to eagerly desire it.



1 cup of Flour –



"One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Deut 8:3)



Lord God, thank you for your words that are better than bread. Help us to rely on what is good and substantial and lasting; to be generous sharers of food and truth; to offer our resources freely to those in need.



Pinch of Salt



"You are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13)



Lord Jesus, help us as your followers to be salt, preserving what is of value, healing what is wounded and bringing out the good flavours in the world.



Cook the pancake mix. As you sit down to eat, pray again.



Our Loving God, We mark this Shrove Tuesday, celebrating with pancakes and remembering the ways your ancient stories and living words combine, calling us to give up greed and find fullness in faith and sweetness in serving. Give us a taste for your truth and a hunger for helping others.

Ash Wednesday Sacred Space

Begin your season of Lent as a household by creating a (portable) space that will remind you of the invitation to travel with Jesus and his followers across the ages through the intersecting stories and symbols of life and death and new life. Use a tray to define the space, so it can be placed in the middle of your common table as a focus, or moved easily to one side, or another space as necessary over the whole season of Lent. This can serve as a place for leaving short written prayers, or simply one word reminders (names, places, issues), and to light tea-lights for prayers.

Some options:

- Make a collection of small bits of junk: pipecleaners, wire, plasticene, sticks, bolts and nuts, springs, hinges, buttons, the broken innards of clocks/radios/mp3s, straws, cardboard scraps, plastic scraps, fabric... Form this into a scene of some kind from your imaginations that relates to your concerns and views of the world.
- Use pieces of charcoal to write or draw symbols and words of Lent on a piece of sandpaper. Tear the edges of the sand paper to 'roughen' the boundaries. Leave some crumbled charcoal and dust clumps on the sandpaper.

A confession prayer to pray as you construct your space

(Often there are one or two people in any given group who find words more helpful than tactile activity. You'll know who those ones are. Don't compel anyone to either read or to construct, but allow people to gravitate to the part of the task that will engage them well. The aim is not for everyone to have to do the same thing, but to do something together, in which each person has a part.)

We are made from solid stuff

We can list our molecules and decode our DNA

But we cannot make ourselves

God alone is our creator and life giver

We are easily broken

We burn out and we crumble to ash and to dust



And we cannot save ourselves
Christ alone is our deliverer and healer

We are able to know both good and evil
We can choose between our desires
But we cannot fully resist evil or get rid of it
The Lord alone is the holy one who defeats death with love.

We are called to follow Jesus and walk in his steps
But only forgiven and forgivingly
Only falteringly and only together
The Spirit alone makes us one, gives what we need and
comforts our steps.

Lent Resources Week One



Photo: Kim Cain

Household Activities

- "Matthew 4: 1-11 'You're not yourself'" on [page 7](#)
- "Romans 5:12-19 'Rightification'" on [page 7](#)

Sunday 9 March Genesis 2:15-17

What is the intention of the story of Adam and Eve? It is not to tell us about how the world began a long time ago but more importantly to address urgent questions like: 'why is the world like it is?' and 'what role does God have in the world's suffering and evil?' Hence the two key characters have symbolic names: 'Adam' means 'humankind' and 'Eve' means 'life'. In this early part of the story, the point is being made that the single purpose of God is to provide everything that humankind needs for fullness of life – there is no source of evil to be found in God. The one condition for this gift of abundant life is that to decide what is best belongs to God and not to humankind, that is, what is good and what is evil. To eat of this 'tree of knowledge of good and evil' is to take God's place which is forbidden and leads to 'death'.

Reflection

What difference does it make to consider that the single intention of God is to provide fullness of life – for you and for all humankind?

Prayer

O God, source of abundant life, in a world of pain and suffering, help us to find our life in you.



Monday 10 March

Genesis 3:1-7

The harmony and fullness of life, intended by God, becomes poisoned by the decision of the woman and the man to take the forbidden step of eating of the fruit of the tree of good and evil, that is, they take the place of God. As the story unfolds, the man and the woman do not die in the way in which we might expect from the story, but their relationship with God, with one another and with the world becomes severely fractured, and they are banished from the garden of abundant life. In other words, they are condemned to an existence without 'life', an existence which is now mortal and which is now lived under the ever-present shadows of darkness and death.

Reflection

In what ways do we still marginalise the place of God in our lives?

Prayer

Lord God, have mercy upon us. Free us from the temptation to serve ourselves and not you.

Tuesday 11 March

Psalms 32

Having the courage and honesty to share our deepest troubles with another is often the first step towards dealing with those troubles. In the Psalm, the author conveys a story of liberation from the burdens of 'sin'. At first, deciding to keep silent and mulling over it, simply amplifies the suffering. The breakthrough comes when the author takes the courageous step of being open and transparent before God, only to discover that the response of God is not punishment but free-flowing grace and mercy, leading to a genuine sense of being liberated and made new. The experience is so liberating that the psalmist is compelled to share the joy with others. Central to this joy is the assurance that God is a merciful God who is desperate to bring healing and forgiveness to troubled people.

Reflection

Is there any part of the Psalmist's experience which connects with your own response to times when you have been burdened with a troubled heart?

Prayer

Gracious God, give to us the courage to be honest and open with you, confident in your power to liberate us from our troubles and bring new beginnings.

Wednesday 12 March

Matthew 4:1-2

The writer of Matthew's gospel has understood Jesus to be the one who has come to right the wrongs of the world, which means fundamentally to restore the broken relationship between God and humankind and re-establish harmony among people. Such a global project requires a new 'Moses'. While the first Moses delivered the people of God from slavery in Egypt, Jesus will now deliver the world from slavery to sin – where sin is essentially any power which takes the place of God. (The word Moses comes from Hebrew and means 'deliverer'; the name Jesus comes from Greek and also means 'deliverer'.) Events in Jesus' life follow the pattern of events in Moses' life. As the newborn child of Mary and Joseph, Jesus also finds himself in Egypt from which he too escapes. Subsequently his baptism in the River Jordan parallels the journey of Moses through the Red Sea. Whereas Moses leads the people through the wilderness for a period of forty years, it is the Spirit of God which, immediately following baptism drives Jesus into the wilderness for forty days.

Reflection

The wilderness is a place where human resources are utterly depleted and obedience to God is tested. What does it mean that the Spirit of God has led Jesus into such a place?

Prayer

O Lord our God, we give you thanks that life in the wilderness has been known and endured first hand by you. Give strength to those who feel that their life is a wilderness.

Thursday 13 March

Matthew 4:3-11

The word 'temptation' is commonly applied when we experience the tendency or impulse to do something which is inappropriate or prohibited. In Christian understanding, temptation is very different and far more fundamental – it is the impulse to usurp the place of God, to live as if there is no God. The three temptations faced by Jesus address this fundamental question: am I lord of my own life with a





god to satisfy my own longings, or am I dependent on and obedient to the living God who alone can give me life? The three temptations faced by Jesus parallel the temptations faced by the people of Israel as they journeyed through the wilderness towards a promised land, temptations to which they succumbed.

Here is the first significant step of the victory of God over the powers of death represented by the temptations offered by the devil. It is a path of victory which Jesus will continue to walk to its conclusion.

Reflection

What might it mean to say that the only real temptation experienced by Christians is the temptation to live as if there is no God and no gospel?

Prayer

Through the victory of Jesus over all temptation, give to us the desire and strength to serve you faithfully.

Friday 14 March Romans 5:12-14

Perhaps the language and ideas of Paul seem strange and complicated. It is helpful if we can simplify things a bit. For Paul, the word 'sin', rather than referring to all the things we may do which are wrong, fundamentally means to be turned away from God; thus Paul uses the word in the singular (sin) rather than in the plural (sins). The word 'death', rather than meaning the end of our existence on earth, means to be separated from fullness of life – existence without access to fulfilment.

In Christian understanding, 'sin' and 'death' describe the nature of all human life, whose common story is represented in the story of Adam. Thus the life of Jesus takes on a global significance, to redress the core problem which plagues the world, namely its captivity to the powers of sin and death. This power is evident in all aspects of human life, intra-personal, inter-personal, social and international.

Reflection

How does our own understanding of the world's predicament compare with the picture represented by Paul who sees a world overshadowed by the clouds of sin and death?

Prayer

Lord God, creator and lover of the world, come to us and to all humankind and liberate us from all forms of sin and death.

Saturday 15 March Romans 5:15-21

Having set the scene for the conditions which burden all humankind, the apostle Paul then declares boldly that the purpose and significance of Jesus is to overcome the powers of sin and of death. Jesus has accomplished that for all people, first through his own life in which he has not allowed sin to have a place, then through his death in which he has engaged with the darkest and most decaying of all powers, and finally through his resurrection in which God has declared a decisive victory for life over death. All of this is freely offered by God as an unexpected gift (i.e. gracefully), for all humankind. To say that 'Jesus is Lord' is to say that 'sin' and 'death' are no longer ruling human existence. In the words of Paul, 'the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord' where the word 'eternal' refers to 'fullness' or 'abundance'.

Reflection

How might our approach to life and its trials be changed by the claim that now 'Jesus is Lord'?

Prayer

Through the power of your Spirit, renew your victory of life over death for us and for all people, that we may enjoy the liberty of those who are free from the powers of sin and death.



Household Activities

Matthew 4: 1-11 'You're not yourself'

'Snickers' have run a series of commercials (there are many versions adapted for different countries) with the tag line: 'You're not you when you're hungry'.

They show scenarios of people behaving in socially unacceptable ways to their context and being given a chocolate bar, with the advice from the friend that they need to eat the chocolate because 'you're not you when you're hungry'. The camera switches away and then back again, and the person is dramatically transformed to their 'normal' self. Often they have been depicted as the opposite gender in their 'abnormal/unacceptable' state – and I should add the warning that on the whole the series of ads is irrevocably sexist.

Below are links to 3 examples (the ones which don't involve gender parodies – you can search for those yourself). As a household watch the clips, and together consider the effects of being hungry. Is there room to challenge the idea that fasting intentionally might make you 'not yourself' but rather help you to become more authentically you, by confronting your humanness and the power of your desires?

As Jesus was fasting, he was tempted to become untrue to himself, to use his power for self-gain and self-gratification and self-aggrandisement, but the episode ultimately reaffirms Jesus' true self and call to serve. As a household help each other see the ways in which your season of Lent, whether you are fasting or not, reaffirms your call to serve others – as you were truly made to do.

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ziTmA8z6X2s>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBk2MbFeUxg>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndphyShO9HA>

Romans 5:12-19 "Rightification"

Start with a large cardboard circle, no less than 30 cm in diameter. From old magazines, tear out pieces of pictures of 'nature' scenes (mountains, jungles, beaches, cliffs, deserts, oceans, trees, animals, birds, fish...etc) and people in healthy communities. Glue these to cover the entire circle (both sides if you like), to make a 'world'. Keep 13 pieces spare. On these extra pieces write in white crayon or gold marker as follows:

- 5 pieces - 'free gift'
- 3 pieces - 'grace'
- 5 pieces - 'rightification/justousness'

You will also need a thick black marker.

As you read the passage, each time the word 'sin' (in any of its forms) or 'trespass' (in any of its forms) occurs write 'sin' somewhere on the cardboard circle world.

Each time 'free gift', 'grace', 'righteousness' or 'justification' occurs, paste a corresponding extra piece of world over one of the 'sins' or 'trespasses'.

By the end of the reading the 'world' should have been restored with all 'sins' and 'trespasses' covered by the 'free gift', 'grace' and 'rightification/justousness' pieces.

NB: The use of rightification/justousness is worth some comment in your household, remembering that both 'justification' and 'righteousness', as they appear in the English texts, stem from the one word root in Greek.

- Consider the ways 'right' words and 'just' words are associated in English.
- How does this help us understand the way Paul tells the story of humanity and God in Romans 5?



Lent Resources Week Two

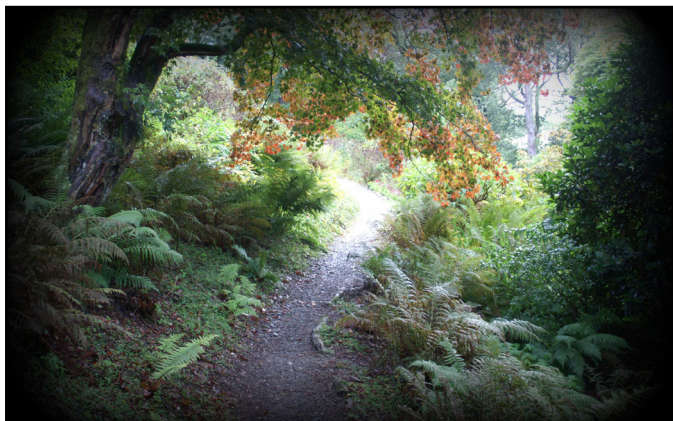


Photo: Kim Cain

Household Activities

- "Genesis 12:1-3 'Go and Bless'" on [page 10](#)
- "John 3:1-17 'Round and Round' (from Rewind)" on [page 10](#)

Sunday 16 March

Psalm 121

This Psalm was probably used by pilgrims in their journeys to and from the Temple, located on the holy mountain, Zion. Lifting ones eyes to "the hills" is not a suggestion to take in the scenery and whatever hints of God's presence it might provide. It is more likely a reference to the temple and all it signified about God's presence. We don't know if Jesus recited this Psalm during his journey to Jerusalem. We do know that he went with anxiety, but also with a confidence that it was part of his God-given vocation. In doing so, he displayed a deep trust in the one "who made heaven and earth". Christians are called to follow that example of trust and to 'lift their eyes', to Jesus as the new temple. What they see will not necessarily be as attractive as the scenery around us, for to look to Jesus will confront us with his suffering way. But it will always confront us with his trust in God.

Reflection

The language of 'trusting God' can be easily romanticised and trivialised. Lent reminds us that Jesus' trust in God is hard-edged. He looked to God not to secure his own welfare, but to be able to do God's demanding will.

Prayer

Help me, God, not to trivialise your place in my life, but to trust you to lead me to do your will.

Monday 17 March

Genesis 12:1-4a

God's first word to Abram is 'Go'. The command is as direct as the attached promise is unlikely. The familiarity of family and home is to be a thing of a past. The text tells us that Abram just did as he was told. This apparently uncomplicated obedience later became an important example to Christian faith, but that's not the focus of this short text.

A new land and a new nation lie ahead. More than that, the new nation will be a blessing to "all the families on earth". God's call is not primarily about the one called and the heroism they may or may not display. It's about the purpose of the call. As in different ways we embark on Lenten journeys, the purpose of the journey is not an end in itself. The real focus is not how the journey takes us into ourselves, but how it takes us into God's purposes for the world.

Reflection

How will your journey through Lent take you out of yourself and into God's work in the world?

Prayer

Deliver me, God, from an inward looking faith and help me to follow Jesus, not only to the cross, but into the world.

Tuesday 18 March

Genesis 12:1-4a

By the time this text became authoritative and a regular part of Israel's canon, Israel had become the great nation. It had land; it had already experienced blessings and curses. Yet its place in the world was not quite as straight-forward as this text predicted. Not everyone thought that its presence was a blessing. And Israel continued to read it even when it had ceased to be a great nation, and when its name was far from great. Those readings must have produced a certain amount of irony. The Christian community has seen it fulfilled in Jesus and the establishment of yet another community. The connections between God's promises and God's ways of fulfilling those promises are never straightforward. They need to be sought through discernment and reflection.

Reflection

During Lent, the familiar story of Jesus' journey to the cross invites discernment and reflection about its meaning and our response to it.



Prayer

Open my eyes, God, to the aspects of Jesus' journey to the cross that I have side-stepped or ignored or simply not understood.

Wednesday 19 March Romans 4:1-5; 13-17

From the beginning the Christian community has understood Jesus within the framework provided by the promises to Israel. This was (and is) a deeply contentious move. Paul found himself turning received readings of Abraham's story on their head to make the argument that Christians (especially non-Jewish Christians) were included among the inheritors of those promises. Building on those novel arguments and the appeal to 'faith' as the foundation of God's people, Christianity radicalised the universal impulse already present in the promises. Everyone is welcome on the basis of faith. Paul's contrast between faith and works is mirrored in his contrast between trusting and boasting. Yet the appeal to faith has often produced its own forms of boasting; faith itself has often become a work. The radicalising of the universal impulse in the divine promises must be matched by a radicalising of our non-boasting trust in God.

Reflection

We are reminded during Lent of Jesus' complete trust in God. Unlike Abraham who had little idea of where his trust would lead, Jesus' knew what his trust would cost him.

Prayer

God, help me to trust you whether I know what lies ahead or not.

Thursday 20 March Romans 4:1-5; 13-17

As Paul builds from his novel reading of Abraham's faith and develops his argument that Abraham is the 'father of all' he uses words that are familiar to our Christian ears: grace, gift, promise, righteousness, trust. Are they perhaps too familiar? It's not so much that familiarity breeds contempt, but produces a straightjacket. We can easily lock these words into meanings that hide just how radical Paul's meaning was. When we read these words assembled in the way they are in

Paul's argument, we are reading a manifesto for a theological revolution. A new understanding of God's ways in and for the world is being articulated. And yet this *new* understanding is based in the *constancy* of God's character. The God of Abraham and of all who share Abraham's faith is the God "who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist".

Reflection

God is the God not just of surprises, but of reversals, including the ultimate reversal of life from death. Lent confronts us with this dynamic of Jesus' confidence that the death which lies ahead of him is the way to life.

Prayer

As I learn to trust you, God, help me to trust that death is not your final word.

Friday 21 March John 3:1-17

Novelty is not always easy to accept. Abraham and Sarah may have started out their journey as compliant, but their complaints came quickly enough. And their complaints were often related to confusion. Jesus' ministry also repeatedly produced confusion. In different ways, Nicodemus' words, "How can this be?" were echoed by others throughout Jesus' ministry. They've also been echoed over the subsequent centuries as people have encountered Jesus and discovered that so often his words and actions lay outside normal categories. Nicodemus could at least sense that Jesus had "come from God" but even that acknowledgement earns a none-too-mild rebuke from Jesus - you don't really know anything about God unless you are born of the Spirit. Every fresh exposure to Jesus' life and ministry carries the risk of unsettling any confidence we might place in our most treasured assumptions. In a sense, this free-roaming Spirit messes with our minds, not to cause confusion but to direct us to Jesus.

Reflection

Following Jesus' journey to the Cross is to embark on an often confusing journey. Lent can be a good occasion to sit with the confusion and through it discover what we do and don't know about Jesus.



Prayer

Wherever you come from and wherever you are leading me,
Holy Spirit, direct me to Jesus.

Saturday 22 March John 3:1-17

The promise given to Abraham envisaged a nation that would be a blessing to all nations. The horizon of God's purposes is the whole world. And the character of these purposes is blessing. The same themes emerge near the end of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. The Son was sent by God "not to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him". God's orientation to the world is one of salvation. The purposes of God revealed in Jesus continue the purposes of God announced to Abraham. God intends good for the world. This can sound like a mere platitude. But it is more than that. It cuts across the multitude of ideas about God - from within the church and beyond - that point to ideas and images of a more grudging and less generous God.

Reflection

A certain darkness will always loom over the Lenten anticipation of Easter. We already know that terrible suffering awaits Jesus. But Jesus is not overwhelmed by this darkness. He is sustained by knowing that God intends good.

Prayer

Save me, O God, from thinking ungenerously of you. Open my mind and heart to your good intentions for this world.

Household Activities

Genesis 12:1-3 'Go and Bless'

- Make a board game in the style of Monopoly, 40 squares around the edge of the board. There are just under 72 words in the words God speaks to Abram (beginning from 'Go') in Genesis 12:1b-3 to spread around the 40 squares. Write one or two or three words on each square, beginning with 'Go!' on the first.
- Add strips of colour to the squares in the style of Monopoly properties, grouping some phrases together. Make matching cards that players can collect when they land on a square.
- Make the word BLESS a special square on which every player receives a Jelly baby.
- Play the game by giving each person in your household a character from Abram's family – Abram, Sarai, Nephew Lot, Slavegirl Hagar, cow, sheep, camel, donkey...use Lego people and plastic animals as tokens for the players, according to the characters.

Roll dice for each person to advance around the board. Keep going as many times as you can, rehearsing the words as you go, until all the 'property' cards have been collected, and you are all well and truly blessed!

An invitation to pray: Let this passage call you to prayer for all the families of the earth, whom God intends to be blessed by those who are already blessed.

John 3:1-17 'Round and Round' (from Rewind)



Download the pdf of Round and Round (from Rewind)

<http://ctm.uca.edu.au/childrenfamilies/multi-age-lenten-resource-2014/>



Lent Resources Week Three



Photo: Kim Cain

Household Activities

- "Exodus 17:1-7 'Is the Lord among us or not?'" on [page 14](#)
- "Exodus 17:1-7 'Sticks and Stones'" on [page 14](#)
- "John 4:5-42 'Well, Well, Well' (from Rewind)" on [page 14](#)

Sunday 23 March Romans 5:1–11

This passage appears, at first glance, to be full of the kind of abstract and difficult theological language for which Paul is notorious. In actual fact, words like suffering, endurance, testing and hope would have connected strongly to the everyday experiences of the Christians in Rome. Life at the heart of the empire was often harsh. Poverty, violence, and conflict were regular realities. The small and fragile Christian community was undoubtedly struggling to survive in the midst of a culture that ignored it at best, or was hostile to it at worst. We could do worse than to wish for lives marked by the characteristics mentioned in vv.3–4. So it is important to see that Paul helps the Roman Christians see that the gospel both produces and sustains Christian character and community. Peace is first and foremost a gift of God, made possible by the reconciling death of Jesus Christ, the ultimate demonstration of the extent and nature of God's love for the world. Paul seems to be saying to the Romans that if they can live in that truth, then they can endure pretty much anything.

Reflection

How might the message of God's reconciling love sustain fragile lives and fragile communities?

Prayer

For those who suffer, God's gift of endurance
For those who are at war, God's gift of peace
For those in the midst of despair, God's gift of hope
And for us all, the knowledge of God's love for this and every day.

Monday 24 March 2 John 1–13

A rare chance to read an entire New Testament letter through in one sitting! In 2 John the Elder shows an equal concern for the twin values of truth and love. The two ideas are inseparable: the definition of love is to walk in the truth of the commandments that have been handed down 'from the beginning'. And yet, truth and love are always in danger of being separated from each other. Arguably the church in recent times has a pretty good track record on love (with some exceptions). Many people within and beyond the church identify Christian faith with the values and virtues of loving others, loving one's neighbour, perhaps even loving one's enemies. But there is always the danger that we, like the church to which 2 John was written, lose our grip on the important truth claims of Christian faith. The Elder encourages the community to reject falsehood, even when it is spoken by friends, or former members of the community. Central to the truth, and therefore central to the Christian understanding of love, is the confession that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh and, as such, is the revelation of God's will and purpose for us all.

Reflection

What does it mean to 'love in truth'? How does belief in the truth shape loving behaviour in your own life?

Prayer

May grace, mercy, and peace be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, in truth and love.



Tuesday 25 March 1 Corinthians 10:1–4

Here we see Paul interpreting Israel's history and Israel's Scripture. The most surprising statement for the Corinthians (easy to overlook from the perspective of today) was the idea that Paul is speaking about 'our ancestors' (10:1). To connect the Gentile Christians in Corinth to the example of Moses and Israel in the wilderness in this way is to make an audacious claim. It places them into the story and brings the story into their present experience. At a time when people often struggle to understand how and why the Bible relates to the present day, perhaps the crucial thing is to recognize that the story of Israel, Jesus and the first Christian communities *is our story*. For Paul, as for us, it is Christ who bridges the past and the present and who makes it possible for the past to nourish us and give us life. Although we don't know quite what Paul meant when he said 'the rock was Christ' (is this a metaphor? a statement about Christ's pre-existence?) the point is that God's saving action in the past is food and drink and therefore the means of survival throughout the generations.

Reflection

How does the Bible nourish you? How do you encounter Christ in Scripture?

Prayer

Almighty God, may your word from the past, come alive for us in the present, and may it feed and sustain us to serve you in the days to come.

Wednesday 26 March John 7:14–31, 37–39

Like the reading yesterday, this gospel text uses the metaphor of thirst/drink (see vv.37–39). Jesus is placing himself in danger by going to Jerusalem and to the temple. Rather than keeping his head down, he uses the last day of the Festival as an opportunity to draw attention to himself, 'if you are thirsty, come to me'. But here, as John interprets things, the Spirit is the focus. The Gospel of John is especially interested in the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus later teaches his disciples about the work of the Spirit as their 'Advocate' and gives the Spirit as the key resource for the church's mission. Today, there is a real and understandable 'thirst' for spiritual experience and for what many call 'spirituality'. The only kind of spirituality that the New Testament knows about is one that is connected to the person of Jesus and, even more challenging, to Jesus'

death on the cross (this is what John refers to as Jesus being 'glorified' in v.39). Lent becomes an opportunity to find satisfying spiritual renewal by accompanying Jesus to the cross.

Reflection

How can these days of Lent be a time for spiritual renewal for you? What practical steps can you take to ensure that you can focus on the story of Jesus' passion and its spiritual power?

Prayer

Lord, I am thirsty, so I come to you. Give me the gift of your Spirit, so that I can love you and serve you in the world.

Thursday 27 March Ephesians 4:25–32

All of the readings this past week have really been explorations of the theme of grace and its consequences. God meets with us in Christ and we are changed or transformed as a result of the encounter. This passage from Ephesians spells out that transformation in very specific terms. It forms something of a checklist. Look at this list and see how you measure up:

- Are we truthful?
- Can we move beyond our anger?
- Do we work honestly?
- Do we share with the needy?
- Do our words build others up?
- Do we show kindness and compassion?
- Do we practice forgiveness?

Note how these very practical tests of behaviour are constantly connected with theological ideas: not making room for the devil, not grieving the Holy Spirit, grace, forgiveness. Some see a reference to baptism in v.30. So the list above spells out the hallmarks of the baptised life.

Reflection

Take another look at the list. How do you measure up?

Prayer (from Ephesians 4:2–3)

Lord Jesus Christ, today and every day, help me to lead a life worthy of your calling:
with all humility and gentleness, with patience, to bear with



others in love,
to make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the
bond of peace.

Friday 28 March Ephesians 5:1–9

More of the same? It is easy to feel a bit overwhelmed by the long list of 'dos' and 'don'ts' that we find at some points in the Pauline letters. Once again, the author of Ephesians connects behavior to belief and to the gift of divine love that sustains us. Perhaps today we can think especially about the image of 'light'. The theme of light works in two different ways in this passage. First, it is contrasted to darkness; there is an emphasis on *distinctiveness*. To live in the light is, in some sense, to live *differently*. Both in yesterday's and today's reading the positive commands to live in love, or to speak truthfully, are contrasted with prohibitions or living in darkness. On the other hand, the image of light speaks of *illumination*. A commitment to living in Christ-like love (v.2) results in 'fruit' that is 'good and right/just and true' (v.9). These are words from the wider culture of the world of the New Testament. It suggests that Christian life brings truth and goodness and justice to others. So the life of a Christian community and the Christian believer is always marked by difference from and engagement with the wider culture.

Reflection

Where do these ideas connect to your own situation? On what issues does the church need to maintain a distinctive voice? At what points might the church affirm what is good, true and just in our culture today?

Prayer

God of light and love, may we know what is good, believe what is true, and work for what is just, so that all people may live in your light and your love.

Saturday 29 March John 1:1–9

We are more used to hearing this text read at Christmas. But the connection to yesterday's reading is clear: Jesus is the light who comes into the world to enlighten everyone. The connection to the season of Lent is most obvious in the person of John the Baptist, whose task is described as 'testifying'

to the light (v.8). The Gospel of John makes it clear that all believers are called to bear witness, and perhaps this is a challenge for us in Lent. John's witness is a kind of pointing to Jesus through words: 'Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' (John 1:29). The result is that those who hear him end up following Jesus (John 1:37). When was the last time we said anything to that effect? Can we find ways of speaking and living that direct others to the one whose life, death and resurrection transforms the world?

Reflection

What opportunities could you find during Lent to speak to someone else about your Christian faith, or about what Lent and Easter mean for you?

Prayer

Help us to see you, to speak about you, and so to lead others to the light and forgiveness that you offer.



Household Activities

Exodus 17:1-7 "Is the Lord among us or not?"

Thoroughly rinse an empty plastic or glass bottle. In permanent marker write the final question of this text...

'Is the Lord among us or not?'

...on the side of the bottle.

During the week keep the bottle on your table at meal times to serve your water from. Use it as a reminder to ask yourselves the question each day, and share your answers with examples of your sense of God's presence, or perhaps absence.

Exodus 17:1-7 "Sticks and Stones"

Gather 14 sticks and 15 stones. The sticks should be at least 1 cm in diameter and the stones 3-4cm across to enable you to write on them.

As a household, work slowly through the text stopping to write each of the words that begin with 'w' on a stick and the words that begin with S on stones (note that there are a few repetitions).

Divide the sticks and stones between you (mix them up at random). Have one person read the whole text, while others join in calling out on the 'W' and 'S' words of the particular sticks and stones they have. Somewhere outside use the sticks and stones to spell out the phrase 'Is God with us or not?' (You'll need some extra sticks).

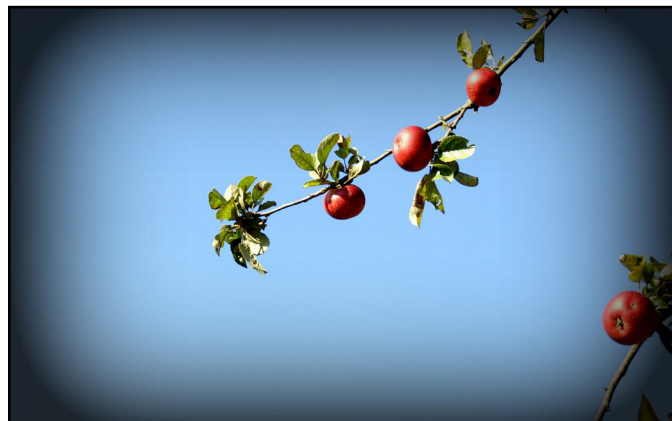
John 4:5-42 'Well, Well, Well' (from Rewind)



Download the pdf of Well, Well, Well(from Rewind)

<http://ctm.uca.edu.au/childrenfamilies/multi-age-lenten-resource-2014/>

Lent Resources Week Four



Household Activities

- "Ephesians 5: 8-14 'Light in Darkness'" on [page 17](#)
- "1 Samuel 16:1-13 "Silhouettes"" on [page 17](#)
- "John 9:1-41 'Eyes Wide Open' (from Rewind)" on [page 17](#)

Sunday 30 March

1 Samuel 16:1-5

This week's readings begin with the election of a king for the people of Israel. The process of the king's election is very strange; it is not 'democratic' (belonging to the people) but is 'theocratic' (belonging to God). It is carried out through Samuel, the prophet of God. Is it not astonishing that the King, the political head of the nation, is elected in this way!? In our context, we assume a separation between church and state, between religion and politics, even between God and the 'real world'. Yet, the Church declares that God has created the world, that God loves the world, that God brings salvation to the world, that Jesus has come as a chosen 'king'. Perhaps, then, we need to think differently about the interconnection between faith in God and the socio-political affairs of the world.

Reflection

What might be the social and political implications of your faith in God, and how can you express that in action?

Prayer

Lord God, creator, healer and liberator of the world, help us to display our faith in the midst of the world we live in.



Monday 31 March

1 Samuel 16:6-13

In the mind of Jesse and of Samuel, David, as the youngest of the sons of Jesse, is not even considered a candidate for election as king, especially next to his impressive older brothers. But the ways of God are so often at odds with cultural wisdom, human expectations or common sense. Here, the youngest becomes the elected one – the last becomes the first. Snatched from the rural fields of shepherding, and without preparation, David is suddenly anointed to the vocation of being Israel's king. But he can only take up that daunting role because the one who chooses him also equips him - with the gift of the Spirit which comes 'mightily' upon him. Perhaps the calling of all God's servants has the same character – bestowed on people unexpectedly, and achievable only because of the Spirit of God.

Reflection

Perhaps your own call to serve God seems unexpected or foolish? Do you have trust that God will fulfil that call through the Spirit of God?

Prayer

God, you called David to be king, and you call us to be your servants today, equip and renew us in your service through the might of your Holy Spirit.

Tuesday 1 April

John 9:1-12

Each of the miracles recorded in John's gospel is called 'a sign'. That means, it points beyond itself to a deeper meaning. Here in this story, a man born blind is given sight in order to point to the fact that Jesus is the light of the world – in him, God has come into the midst of the world's darkness - in all its many and varied forms - and has transformed the darkness into light. Jesus disagrees with his disciples that the man's blindness is God's punishment for sinfulness – for Jesus, God is not a harsh punishing God but a light-giving and life-giving God. This is made vividly clear, not only in this story, but in Jesus' death and resurrection which is the climax of all God's miracles, the miracle which 'signifies' that God has won a victory over all powers of darkness, even death.

Reflection

What does it mean to you that, far from being judgmental and punishing, God is determined to be one who brings light and life to you, to your community, to the world?

Prayer

We give you thanks, O God, that you are a God of life and light. Come to us and renew us; come to our loved ones and renew them; come and renew the whole world.

Wednesday 2 April

John 9:35-41

There are different forms of 'sight'. The most obvious of these is the sight through our eyes. But there is also what we call 'insight', a perception of something which does not come naturally but comes by discovery. For the man born blind, the miracle of 'eyesight' leads to a more significant miracle of 'insight', to the discovery that the man Jesus is not simply a miracle-worker but the presence of the life-giving and light-giving God. This startling discovery is the true miracle and it leads to one inevitable consequence, namely to worship this one. The irony is that the Pharisees, the ones who are widely acknowledged to be the true people of God, while they have fine eyesight, actually lack the insight discovered by the man born blind. Their form of blindness – their lack of insight - means that their world is as yet bereft of the light and life of God.

Reflection

What discoveries of insight about God have you experienced, which have led you to worship God?

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, establish yourself as the light and life of our lives, that we may gladly worship you.

Thursday 3 April

Ephesians 5:8-14

The language of light and darkness is striking language of contrasts. For the apostle Paul, writing to the Ephesian church community, the impact of the gospel of Jesus Christ is such that it brings into the world the possibility of a new and different lifestyle, so new and so different that it seems like the long-awaited arrival of God's 'light'. Everything beforehand seems like darkness. But this 'enlightened' life



is not automatic, it is a constant calling. And it is not a call to separate oneself from the world of darkness, but a call to a courageous life in the midst of darkness, and a call to 'expose' that darkness. Therefore Paul, having declared that the church in Ephesus is a community of 'enlightened' people, calls on that same community to make every effort to live in the way of the light.

Reflection:

What might be the marks of a church community which is living an 'enlightened life'? What are the areas of darkness that need to be exposed?

Prayer

Give to us, O Lord, the courage to challenge and expose the darkness of the world, through the power of your Holy Spirit.

Friday 4 April

Psalm 23:1-3

Perhaps the familiarity of this Psalm means that it has lost its radical edge for us. Originally, the Psalm was an exodus Psalm, repeated by the people of God as they stumbled their way through the wilderness towards a promised land. The Psalm begins by reminding the people that the one who called them out of Egypt was actually 'shepherding' them as they journeyed into a new land. Therefore, even (or perhaps especially) when they felt bereft and bewildered, they declared: 'The Lord is my shepherd ...I have everything I need!' Surely that is a defiant and radical declaration.

Reflection

What might it mean for you to declare with defiance: 'The Lord is my shepherd, therefore I have everything I need!'

Prayer

O God, help us to live our lives in the confidence that you are shepherding us, leading us through the wilderness of life into your promised land.

Saturday 5 April

Psalm 23:4-6

Such is the assurance which comes from knowing that God is shepherding the people that they can then declare their readiness to journey even through 'the darkest of all valleys', comforted and strengthened by 'the rod and the staff' of God. For the Christian church, this declaration is embodied in the person of Jesus Christ whose journey took him to the deepest and darkest valley of desolation and death, then to be raised from the dead as the source of hope – the Good Shepherd – for all of us. This same Jesus, crucified and risen, is now the rod and the staff of God, assuring us that not even the worst of hell and death can ultimately consume us.

Reflection

In what ways have you been (or are you now being) called to enter into 'the darkest valley'?

Prayer

Good Shepherd, who will never forsake us, grant to us the assurance and the courage to walk the path which takes us into the valleys of darkness and death.



Household Activities

Ephesians 5: 8-14 'Light in Darkness'

This activity spreads over a few days – possibly the whole week - and enacts the narrative of the vibrant creation being overtaken by darkness, and then light coming again.

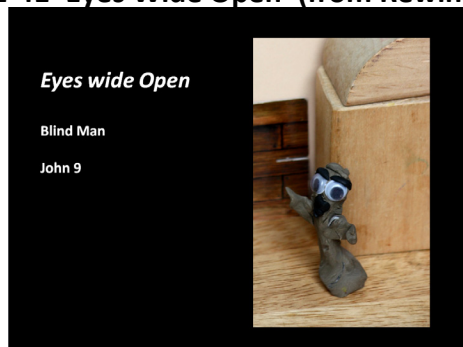
- Paint a piece of white card with bright colours. This can be a creation garden scene, or just random splashes of colour. Leave to dry completely.
- Cover the entire card by colouring thickly over with black and/or grey crayon.
- Use a wooden skewer to scratch through the black crayon to reveal the colour underneath.
- Mark a border all around and decorate this with symbols, patterns and pictures that the passage suggests to you. Do some brainstorming together over the text and discuss your ideas.
- Scratch in some of the key phrases from Ephesians 5:8-14. You can add more each day. There are seven verses which could provide one verse for each day...but most households will find it more beneficial to concentrate on a few verses.
- Substitute pictures or glyphs for key words as appropriate to your imaginations, ages and literacy levels.

1 Samuel 16:1-13 "Silhouettes"

On an outside wall or fence where you live, take it in turns to stand against the wall - preferably in height order from tallest to shortest - and trace around each other's silhouette in chalk.

Read the passage and agree on a pithy paraphrase for each verse to be written inside the silhouettes. For example, vs. 2: 'Sam: Death danger from Crazy King. God: BBQ bluff'

John 9:1-41 'Eyes Wide Open' (from Rewind)



Download the pdf of Eyes wide open (from Rewind)

<http://ctm.uca.edu.au/childrenfamilies/multi-age-lenten-resource-2014/>

Lent Resources Week Five



Photo: Kim Cain

Household Activities

- "Psalm 130 'Out of the Depths'" on [page 20](#)
- "Romans 8:6-11 'Breath of life'" on [page 20](#)
- "John 11:1-45 'Mazzie, Lazzie and Martie' (from Rewind)" on [page 20](#)

Sunday 6 April

Ezekiel 37:1-6

The words which are spoken and heard between people are not neutral – they have some form of power – they may inform and illuminate, they may confuse and upset, they can provoke warmth and joy, they can provoke anger and sadness, they can build up and they can drag down, they can give 'life' and they can bring 'death'. In the Old and New Testaments, there is an understanding that the Christian God is a speaking God – one who, through this speaking, brings about the life-giving purposes which God has in mind. (Note for example, that in Genesis 1, God gives life to the world simply through speech: 'Let there be ...').

The word 'prophet' is often understood as referring to someone who is able to predict the future. While that is frequently what a prophet often seems to do, the word itself literally means 'to speak out' – and in the context of the prophetic books of the Old Testament, the prophets are those who 'speak out' the Word of God, and in doing so, bring about the purposes of God.



Reflection

One of the main reasons why Christians gather for worship is to hear the speech of God, confident that God keenly desires to speak into our lives and to bring a word which brings new life. This may come in song, in prayer, in proclamation. When and how might this have happened to you?

Prayer

O God, speak to us the word we need to hear, and so shape us into the people you want us to be.

Monday 7 April Ezekiel 37:7-14

The word 'Ezekiel' means 'God strengthens'. Ezekiel was aptly named; he was a prophet of the people of Israel in the period around 600 years before the birth of Jesus, at a time of great tribulation and destruction of the nation. He was among several thousand Jews who were exiled to Babylon just a few years before the catastrophe of the downfall of Jerusalem and its temple in 587; this downfall marked the end of Israel's nationhood and crushed any remaining sense of being a chosen people of God. It was in this period of exile that Ezekiel received the call to be a prophet to his people. The story in chapter 37 recounts the nature and purpose of Ezekiel's calling: in the midst of a people utterly drained of any sign of life (skeleton-like), he is to speak a word of prophecy – the promise of new life, a victory over the power of the grave. And so it happened.

Reflection:

Have you ever had an 'Ezekiel-like' experience when someone has spoken a word to you which has brought a new strength and unexpected 'life'?

Prayer

O God, we give you thanks that not even death can silence your life-creating word. Help us to know you as one who strengthens us to live, and bring your strength to all who have become like skeletons.

Tuesday 8 April Psalm 130

It is not uncommon for people to turn to God when they need help, whether or not they have much of an active belief in God. Sometimes it may be a last resort, when nothing or no-one else seems to offer any help.

It may seem that this is what is happening here in this Psalm. Certainly it begins with a loud cry for help from a position of desolation. But the cry of the Psalmist is not a 'last-resort' cry for help – it is a 'first-resort' cry, and it is uttered from the depths of the Psalmist's being, confident that God will act to bring about release and relief. The Psalmist has come to know that this God to whom he cries is a God who is passionately in love with him, and that this love will translate into a power to liberate and overcome. This is so, not only for the Psalmist, but for all people ...which is why this prayer is now among the psalms, still being prayed by the people of God down through the generations.

Reflection

Do you make time and space in your prayers to cry out to God from the depths of your experience, in the confidence of liberation? How might this also find expression in the life of a church community? What might we cry out about?

Prayer

In the midst of desolation O God, bring liberty; in the midst of life's shadows, bring light; in the midst of dying and death, bring life and hope.

Wednesday 9 April Romans 8:6-11

"I'm not religious but I am spiritual" we might hear people say, or we might even say of ourselves. What might this mean? Perhaps it means that 'religion' represents the formal institutional life and structure of the Christian Church, or of one of the other Living Faiths like Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, while to be 'spiritual' means to have some deep personal sense of connection with a divine power which seems important or even life-giving. The suggestion is that such a sense of 'divine power' does not come through 'organised religion'. In fact, people may well consider that 'religion' and 'spiritual' are opposites of each other. Perhaps, today more than previously, people do not want to connect with institutional faiths, and especially with the Church which has



been shamed publicly by the abuses of its powerful leaders against powerless children.

For the apostle Paul, the word 'religion' does not exist, but the word 'spiritual' does. By this word, Paul means a way of life, empowered by the Spirit of God to be lived in response to God's love. For Paul, the opposite of 'spiritual' is 'flesh', where the word 'flesh' is used, not as we commonly use it, but to mean 'a life lived without any thought for God'. In this sense, the whole of one's life and not just a segment of it, and the whole of one's time and not just occasional moments, are intended to be 'spiritual' – shaped by the Spirit in response to the love of God.

Reflection:

How might you give expression to a 'spiritual life' in the context where you live?

Prayer:

Empower our lives, O God, by your Holy Spirit, that in all we do, we might display our love for you.

Thursday 10 April Romans 8:6-11

When a novel is being read, it makes most sense normally to read it as a whole, from beginning to end. In the same way Chapter 8 of Romans is worth reading as a whole, because if we do so, we may then see more clearly how to understand better each of its verses. The chapter is one of the most read and most used and most loved chapters of the whole of the Scriptures. Its thrust is to declare that the purpose of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, is to win a victory of 'life' over the powers of 'death' for all humankind, where 'life' is a way of living in the world which is marked by joy, liberty and hope, and where 'death' refers to all those forces which dehumanise and destroy. In that sense, 'life' is not the same as 'existence' but rather, a new way of existence; in the same way 'death' is not the end of existence, but a form of existence.

The verses 6-11 then declare the fact that the same power which brought resurrection from the dead to Jesus is at work in us to bring 'life' out of 'death'.

Reflection:

What might it mean for us to hear Paul's word: 'the Spirit of God dwells in you' if this means 'the power of resurrection life is given to us'?

Prayer

We rejoice O God in the gift and promise of resurrection life; help us to live as those who are no longer prisoners to the powers of death.

Friday 11 April John 11:1-27

The Gospel of John records seven miracles of Jesus, with the raising of Lazarus from the dead as the sixth. Each of the miracles is a sign which points beyond itself to something which is significant about the person Jesus. For example, the feeding of the five thousand with the bread leads to the declaration that Jesus is the bread of life (ch.6). Here in this long chapter, the key point being made is that Jesus is 'the resurrection and the life'. Resurrection life is not something which may come eventually after we die, but here in this Gospel, it refers to the victory of life over the powers of death – where 'death' may be understood as anything which destroys human beings, whether this take the form of war between people and nations, or whether it be a form of emotional and psychological abuse ...and anything in between. To the words of traditional faith spoken by Martha (about the resurrection on the last day), Jesus declares himself to be the source of risen life this very day (11:24ff)

Reflection:

What comes to your mind when you think about the resurrection of Jesus ...and how might John's story change this for you?

Prayer:

God and Father of Jesus Christ, bring your gift of resurrection life to us, and to all who live under the shadows of death.

Saturday 12 April John 11:28-44

When was the last time you cried? For many Australians, crying is not encouraged; some of us, perhaps especially men, have even forgotten how to cry – it is seen to be a sign of weakness. But perhaps it is more adequately understood as a sign of love. Think about that! On occasions of funerals when people gather for the burial of a dead person, to cry might be the most appropriate emotion to express ...if the one who has died is one whom we loved. Maybe the more deeply we have



loved, the more expressive will be our grief. We should take note that to grieve in an open way belongs to the heart of the Christian faith. One of the most striking aspects of this chapter is the depth of love felt by Jesus for the dead man, Lazarus. It prompted him to tears. In fact, there is a lot of weeping in these verses (28-37). The affirmation of resurrection life does not negate the experience of the power of death; rather it invites the most open and honest expression of grief! Why? Because the darkness of grief and death is embraced and overcome in Jesus Christ. This fact will find its climactic expression in the seventh and final miracle recorded by this Gospel, namely the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Reflection

How might it change you if you knew that God was inviting you to give honest and open expression to the reality of grief, loss and death?

Prayer

O God, we give you thanks that you are no stranger to grief, loss and death. Comfort all who grieve and embrace in love all who have lost loved ones.

Household Activities

Psalm 130 'Out of the Depths'

Make a large batch of slime in a bucket (perhaps using the recipe here - <http://chemistry.about.com/cs/howtos/ht/slime.htm>)

Copy out the verses of Psalm 130 on to individual pieces of sturdy plastic using permanent marker.

Drop the verses into the slime and mix around, submerging them completely.

Take turns reaching into the 'slimy depths' of the bucket and pulling out one verse at a time and reading it. When all the verses have been salvaged, refer to a full copy of the text and place them in order, reading them again.

Romans 8:6-11 "Breath of life"

In Genesis 2, the human is made from earth and the breath of God. Life is earthy and godly (or in Paul's terms, flesh and spirit). To just think we are physical matter is a 'dead end' – life is breathing in the spirit; the spirit in us, and we in the spirit.

Celebrate the way Paul pulls these ideas together in this passage by all

- Clapping your hands together each time the word 'flesh' or 'body' occurs.
- Exhaling through your lips each time the word 'spirit' occurs.

John 11:1-45 'Mazzie, Lazzie and Martie' (from Rewind)



Download the pdf of Mazzie, Lazzie and Martie (from Rewind)
<http://ctm.uca.edu.au/childrenfamilies/multi-age-lenten-resource-2014/>



Lent Resources Week Six - Holy Week



Photo: Kim Cain

Household Activities

- "Matthew 21:1-11 'Branches of (short-lived) enthusiasm'" on [page 24](#)
- "Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 'Open gates'" on [page 24](#)
- "John 13:21-32 'Do it quickly'" on [page 24](#)
- "John 13:21-32 'Quick Draw'" on [page 24](#)
- "John 20:1-10 'Relaying the Resurrection News'" on [page 24](#)
- "John 13:1-17, 31b-35 'Wriggly Toes' (from Rewind)" on [page 25](#)
- "John 18:1-19:42 'Busted' (from Rewind)" on [page 25](#)

Sunday 13 April Matthew 21:1-11

Beware of crowd mania! Mind you, it's not always a bad thing – I've seen it at a concert when the crowd (audience) is enraptured by a stage or musical performance and, excitedly, gives a standing ovation to the performers. But I've also seen the more ugly side of it, when a protest turns to violence. Today the Christian Church marks the event of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, and it stirs up a crowd reaction which 'disturbs the whole city of Jerusalem' and suggests the imminent crowning of a new king for Israel. But crowd reactions are fickle and variable. Just a few days later, the same crowd, carried along by a different momentum, will have turned against this same Jesus of Nazareth and be shouting for his crucifixion. The irony will be that Jesus' death on the cross will win such a kingly victory, not only for Israel but for the whole world, so that 'all authority in heaven and earth' will be his.

Reflection

In what ways may we, as disciples of a crucified Lord, need to stand separate from 'the crowds' around us?

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, give us the insight to know your ways in the world, and to have the courage of our convictions, even when it means that we are alone in a crowd of people.

Monday 14 April Isaiah 42:1-9

The scope of the Christian faith is expansive and bold, even when it is shared by just a handful of people. By connecting the event of Jesus' journey with the hopes expressed in the book of the prophet Isaiah, the early Christians were wanting to declare that, in this young man from Nazareth, the God who created and loves the world, will accomplish a cosmic renewal. Already in Jesus' life there have been glimpses of renewal of broken human lives; now in his suffering, death and resurrection will be the gift and promise of a new life for all. Perhaps we need to be renewed ourselves - in our confidence in this gospel.

Reflection

What might it mean if our church community, whether large or small in numbers, is driven by the conviction that we are to celebrate and share the news of the renewal of all human life?

Prayer

Renew us, O God, in the hope of new life in Jesus Christ, for us and for all people.

Tuesday 15 April John 12:27-33

If someone were to ask the question: 'Why did Jesus die on the cross?', what might you say in response? In the space of just a few verses, we discover the meaning and purpose of Jesus' suffering and death as depicted by the Gospel of John. Without denying the depth of suffering being experienced, Jesus recognises the hand of God in his vocation to die. Here, in this death, the power of God will be seen in a unique way. While Jesus will be lifted up on the cross, through him, God will be lifted up (glorified). How? Because in this event, God will be acting to overcome and drive out all the forces which





dehumanize, divide and destroy – what Jesus refers to as ‘the ruler of this age’. The impact will be to bring all people and races into unity – with God and with each other. Nothing less than this will be achieved in Jesus’ death ...which is why the final words of Jesus on the cross (in this Gospel) are: ‘It is accomplished!’

Reflection

Where are the places in your own experience where the forces of destruction or division still seem powerful, and where the transforming victory of God is needed to drive them out?

Prayer

Renew, O God, in our generation, your victory over all the powers which dehumanize, divide and destroy, and help us to join in your victory march.

Wednesday 16 April Hebrews 12:1-3

Pioneers are people who, casting aside concerns about safety and security, venture into new territory or embark on things which have not been attempted before. In this passage, Jesus is described as a pioneer ... and a perfecter ... of our faith! In other words, Jesus is the one who not only plants the seed of faith into our lives but will ensure that this seed grows to its completion. He does this by inspiring us to walk in the footsteps which he himself has trodden. In his own journey to death, he has gone into places where no-one has ventured before - into the darkest of valleys - and faced the greatest of human enemies, even death itself where his own resources were utterly drained from him. Through death and resurrection, the victory of life over death is now assured also for us. To shape our lives accordingly is to become vulnerable to suffering, and in the end, at the point of our death, have all human resources drained from us. But it is life and victory, and not death and defeat, which has the last word.

Reflection

What might it mean for us to share the pioneering life trodden already by Jesus, in the confidence that the joy of his victory will be ours?

Prayer

Help us, O God, to live as those who are prepared to die, and to die as those who go forth to live.

Maundy Thursday 17 April 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

To be at the bedside of someone who is close to death can be memorable; certain words or actions may stay with us for a long time. On the night before Jesus died, something happened which has etched its way permanently into the memory of the Church – Jesus broke bread with his disciples and said, ‘This is my body which is for you’. He then shared a cup of wine with them and said, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood’. It was an event which was and is still remembered because it vividly displays the full force of Jesus’ crucifixion – a death died in order to bring about a new relationship with God and a new life for all people. No wonder that in the life of the church over the generations, people have wanted this event ‘remembered’ by re-enactment on every occasion of worship – the risen crucified Jesus is still present in it, lavishing his gift on those who, yearning for this new life, eat and drink together.

Reflection

Does the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup have a central place in feeding you with the new life of the gospel?

Prayer

Help us, O God, whenever we eat the bread and drink the cup, to do so in remembrance of you and in the eager anticipation of your gift of new life for us and for all.

Good Friday 18 April Psalm 22:1-18

Perhaps you can recall a time of abandonment and loss, when you seemed completely alone and without any strength or purpose for living. Perhaps it came through the loss of a loved one, perhaps through a broken relationship, perhaps through unexpected tragedy.

One of the most radical insights into the death of Jesus on the cross is contained in this Psalm; the words which begin it are the same as those uttered with a loud cry by Jesus as his last words. The Gospels of Mark and Matthew are



two Gospels which depict the death of Jesus as complete and utter abandonment, not simply by friends and family, but scandalously, by God, the one whom Jesus has known intimately as 'my Father'.

The Church has seen in this depiction of Jesus' death on the cross, the most radical act of God's passionate love for the world – that he entered into, shared, and took upon himself the worst of all human experiences of desolation and hell. If this is so, then there is no situation of human hell which is not embraced by God in the death of this Jesus – and no hell which is beyond the transforming touch of resurrection life.

Reflection

What might it mean to say that in Jesus Christ, God has taken more seriously than we dare, the suffering and hell of the world?

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, enable us to take seriously our own suffering, and the suffering of the world, in the assurance that even the worst of hell is embraced and overcome in your love.

Holy Saturday 19 April Job 14:1-14

The end of all signs of life, the end of all possibilities, mortality most vividly displayed, death in all its power. We might grasp for some source of artificial light in this darkness; we might search for a single distant star, glimmering even a little, on this moonless night; we might reach for some indicator of life in this pale and breathless figure ...but no, nothing. Here there is no hope for a future. There is no enduring soul, which is eternal, hidden inside this dead person and which therefore continues on in some mysterious form; there is no tiny spark of light at the end of this blackened unlit tunnel. Such is the experience depicted in the story of Job ... and such is the experience embodied in the death of Jesus.

Unless we have some appreciation of the totality of the power of death in Jesus' life and ours, then we will not have an adequate appreciation of the totally unexpected nature of resurrection – which will come soon.

Reflection

What are the forms of despair and hopelessness which have been or are most evident in your experience?

Prayer

Perhaps what is most appropriate is a period of silent meditation on the pain and loss experienced by those who know the harsh reality of despair and death ... in the comfort of Jesus' own experience of the same on this Holy Saturday.

Easter Sunday 20 April Matthew 28: 1-10

Jesus said, "Do not be afraid; go and tell the others they must leave for Galilee; there they will see me."

Six weeks ago at the beginning of Lent, we stood with Jesus on the banks of the Jordan as John was baptising. John preached from the wilderness side of the river, outside the promised land. Jesus plunged back into that river, and he crossed out of the wilderness and into the hill-towns and villages. In the midst of the people he ate and drank, and healed and taught. Alive like no-one they had seen before, he told stories of God who was present, compassionate, and whose Reign had already arrived, in him and even in them.

The authorities have crucified him; always the authorities have crucified him. But now we stand with his friends, a frightened few, and hear him say, 'Do not be afraid.' Ahead of us, in the midst of the people, this Jesus is alive; he waits for us to follow.

Reflection

What might it mean for you to walk on the path towards the gift and promise of resurrection in your own life?

Prayer

Help us to walk in the way of resurrection life, to join those who, in word and in action, declare: Hallelujah! The Lord is Risen! Thanks be to God!



Household activities

Matthew 21:1-11 'Branches of (short-lived) enthusiasm'

Cut a leafy branch from a garden. The leaves should be plentiful and a reasonable size. Write the key words (nouns and verbs), one word per leaf in random order, leaving the leaves attached to the branch.

On the first day of the week, pass the branch around from person to person, inviting each person to find three or four words among the leaves (don't pull them off the branch) and read them out.

Talk about whether this gives any clues to what might be happening in the story? If you knew some of the story ahead of time would it help you put the words together? Note that Jesus' actions were seemingly a little random, though if you knew what was going to happen next it helps to understand these slightly strange instructions and the events that unfold.

Finally, read the text, listening for the words that each person had chosen from the branch.

Keep the branch in a prominent position for the rest of the week and further engagement.

On a following day of the week, allow each person to pick several leaves from the tree and, reading the text from the bible together, place the leaves in order as you go.

As the week goes on, read again, picking from the remaining leaves.

Towards the end of the week, your branch is likely to begin to look not so fresh, drying up and withering. As this happens, consider how the enthusiasm of the people in this story also withers away as the week progresses.

Psalms 118:1-2, 19-29 "Open gates"

Pick up the theme of open gates in this psalm with a bit of photo-poetry in your neighbourhood. Read the passage together and note the call to a community to be open to God.

Take a camera with you on a walk and photograph various gates you observe. As you photograph your streetscape stop and pray that there will be openness to God in your community.

When you have an interesting collection of photographs, use the images to assemble a slideshow of Psalms 118:1-2, 19-29. Later in the week, revisit your slide show and pray the psalm together as you do.

John 13:21-32 'Do it quickly'

Leonardo Da Vinci's famous painting of 'The Last Supper' depicting Jesus' disciples' reactions to the declaration that one would betray him, took around four years to complete. It has been copied and adapted many times with many variations, either for humor (several 'Simpsons' versions) or to help us critique our assumptions about Jesus and his disciples through different cultural lenses. Take some time together to look at some different versions online. Or, if you like, print out a selection and create a mini-gallery for Holy Week.

John 13:21-32 'Quick Draw'

While Da Vinci's work took years to paint, this activity is called 'Quick Draw'. Jesus tells Judas to 'Do quickly' what he has decided to do (betray Jesus).

Give each person a few pieces of paper and a marker or crayon. Explain that you will read the passage from the Bible and every now and again stop and call out 'Quick Draw', repeating the word you have just read. Each person must try to quickly draw that word, calling out 'Quick Draw' when they are finished. Awarding a silver chocolate coin (if you haven't given up chocolate for Lent) is an appropriate reward for being first!

When the passage is finished, compare your artistic efforts, and the interpretations of the text they reveal. If you have made a 'Last Supper Gallery' of Da Vinci replicas, add your own 'Quick Draw' Last Supper art.

John 20:1-10 "Relaying the Resurrection News"

This is not a text to read sitting comfortably! Firstly it is full of physical running around, secondly it is full of uncomfortable ideas and questions - Where is Jesus? What has happened? What is possible?

Choose two people in your household who are happy not to do any running to be readers. They should stand, bible in hand open at John 20, 5-10 metres apart (best done outside, but not essential). Each other member of the household should stand with either of the readers.

One of the readers starts by reading the first phrase to someone with them. This person runs to the other reader and their companions, and repeats the phrase. In response the reader at this end reads the next phrase in the text to someone else, who runs back to the first reader and repeats the phrase. Keep going like this, phrase by phrase (or two phrases and runners at a time depending on the size of your household).



Confusion and exhaustion are authentic to the text. If you can't get through it all in one reading, that's fine. Pick it up again another day...

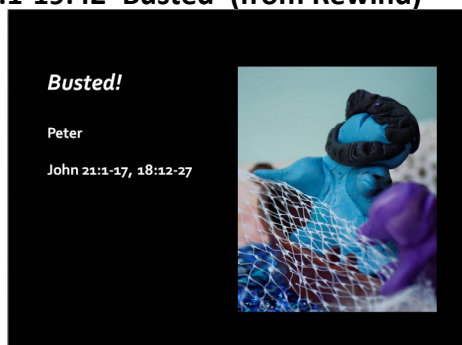
John 13:1-17, 31b-35 'Wriggly Toes' (from Rewind)



[Download the pdf of Wriggly Toes \(from Rewind\)](http://ctm.uca.edu.au/childrenfamilies/multi-age-lenten-resource-2014/)

<http://ctm.uca.edu.au/childrenfamilies/multi-age-lenten-resource-2014/>

John 18:1-19:42 'Busted' (from Rewind)



[Download the pdf of Busted \(from Rewind\)](http://ctm.uca.edu.au/childrenfamilies/multi-age-lenten-resource-2014/)

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Nb. This CTM Lenten Resource references a number of stories from *Rewind: a resource for opening the Bible with children and families*. Throughout Lent 2014, these stories can be used freely in communities of any size or description, bearing the attribution 'Beth Barnett: *Rewind John's Gospel, SUVic, 2012*'. However, if you wish to use these resources beyond Lent 2014, purchase of an original copy of the entire *Rewind* resource would be appropriate.