



# Together on the Way of the Cross

Praying, reflecting and journeying  
together during Lent

16–22 March 2020



THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION

A Communion  
of Churches

# Introduction

The season of Lent is a time for introspection, prayer, fasting, and sharing. While many believers will embark on their own individual journey of spiritual renewal, Christian life goes beyond the privatized individualistic endeavor. Our pilgrimage on earth is both personal, communal, and even global. It is about our life together, and the call to mutually encourage one another during trying times.

We offer this guide to accompany fellow believers in affirming ‘togetherness’ within the communion of Lutheran churches worldwide. It is organized in a threefold format based on Luther’s guide for doing theology through *Oratio* (prayer), *Meditatio* (meditation), and *Tentatio* (trial/struggle). This season, in particular, offers an opportunity to immerse ourselves in a world where:

there is the *tentatio*, testing (Anfechtung). This is the touchstone. It teaches you not only to know and understand but also to experience how right, how true, how sweet, how lovely, how mighty, how comforting God’s word is: it is wisdom supreme. (Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works: Career of the Reformer*. Vol. 34, 286-87.)

Inspired by Luther, let us cultivate the art of praying and reflecting together as a communion in Christ. As we discern God’s wisdom through agonizing struggles in our world today, often wounded and marred by division, disappointment, and despair, our faith gives us hope to persevere by journeying together no matter what.

Indeed, God accompanies each of us step by step together on the way of the cross.

Note: All prayers are cited from *Koinonia: Services and Prayers* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2004). All scriptural texts are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

# Monday, 16 March 2020

## Praying Together

Bountiful God,  
we thank you for sending the rain,  
for making the land fertile,  
for filling the streams with water,  
for providing the earth with crops,  
for nurturing the young plants,  
for tending the cattle and sheep.  
With your Spirit inspire us to share your harvest  
with all the hungry world,  
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

## Reflecting Together

Genesis 24:1-27;

### **2 John 1:1-13**

<sup>5</sup> ... I ask you, not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but one we have had from the beginning, let us love one another. <sup>6</sup> And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment just as you have heard it from the beginning—you must walk in it.

## Journeying Together

Find practical ways this week to show how we may love one another. May God's Spirit inspire us to respond to opportunities open to us for showing kindness.

# Tuesday, 17 March 2020

## Praying Together

Creating God,  
your name is written on every leaf, every bird, every  
river, every stone, every living being.

We praise and worship you for the magnificence  
of your creation.

Make us attentive to the wounds of the earth  
and willing to work for the healing of the whole creation,  
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

## Reflecting Together

Genesis 29:1-14

**1 Corinthians 10:1-4**

<sup>4</sup> ... For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.

## Journeying Together

Look up and look around you. Be open to the presence of God revealed in the beauty of creation. Be ready to encounter Christ in unexpected places and attend to “the wounds of the earth.”

# Wednesday, 18 March 2020

## Praying Together

O God of all,  
with wonderful diversity of languages and cultures  
you created all people in your image.  
Free us from prejudice and fear  
that we may see your face  
in the faces of people around the world,  
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

## Reflecting Together

Jeremiah 2:4-13

**John 7:14-31, 37-39**

<sup>23</sup> If a man receives circumcision on the sabbath in order that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because I healed a man's whole body on the sabbath? <sup>24</sup> Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."

## Journeying Together

Let us re-examine how we treat people around us. Take time to reconsider the criteria we use to judge daily events.

# Thursday, 19 March 2020

## Praying Together

O God of mystery, in your Triune life  
you show us how to live as one in joy and peace.  
Bless our families and all relationships of care.  
With your Spirit,  
shape us into communities of respect and affection,  
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

## Reflecting Together

1 Samuel 15:10-21

**Ephesians 4:25-32**

<sup>31</sup> Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, <sup>32</sup> and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

## Journeying Together

May God enable us to remove every hindrance that is blocking us from healthy redemptive relationships with family, friends, fellow believers and our neighbors.

# Friday, 20 March 2020

## Praying Together

Keep watch, dear Lord,  
with those who work, or watch, or weep,  
and give your angels charge over those who sleep.  
Tend the sick, Lord Christ;  
give rest to the weary,  
bless the dying,  
soothe the suffering,  
pity the afflicted,  
shield the joyous,  
all for your love's sake.  
– *Saint Augustine*

## Reflecting Together

1 Samuel 15:22-31

**Ephesians 5:1-9**

<sup>1</sup> Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, <sup>2</sup> and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

## Journeying Together

When we feel like we are imposters of piety rather than true “imitators of God,” let us reorient our thoughts, feelings, and actions back to living as God’s beloved children.

# Saturday, 21 March 2020

## Praying Together

God most mighty, God most merciful,  
our stories tell us that you help and save your people.  
You are the fortress: may there be no more war.  
You are the harvest: may there be no more hunger.  
You are the light: may no one die alone or in despair.  
God most majestic, God most motherly,  
grant us your life, the life that flows  
from your Son and his Spirit,  
one God, now and forever.

## Reflecting Together

1 Samuel 15:32-34

**John 1:1-9**

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

## Journeying Together

May God send us out to 'dark' places of conflict, need, and despair to 'testify to the light' through our words and actions.



# Fourth Sunday in Lent

## Sunday, 22 March 2020

### Praying Together

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
I fear no evil;  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff—  
they comfort me.  
— *Psalm 23:4*

### Reflecting Together

1 Samuel 16:1-13  
Ephesians 5:8-14  
**John 9:1-41**

<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” <sup>36</sup> He answered, “And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” <sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” <sup>38</sup> He said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped him. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.”

Religious authorities are supposed to ‘see’ things clearly. The Pharisees in this text are well trained in the matters of the law, they claim to be the disciples of Moses. They questioned the healing of this man born blind, parents were cross-examined, there was even debate between them about whether one can pray for the sick on the Sabbath. They appeared to be armed with the ‘right answers’; but in the end, the healed man who stood before them didn’t fit their religious framework. Their verdict showed they were preoccupied with analyzing sins and sinners rather than ‘seeing’ what this ‘sign’ of God’s creative and healing work was pointing to.

Who do we relate to more in this text? The disciples? The parents? The Pharisees? Or the man healed of blindness — who was later driven out? Jesus' words of judgment on the 'spiritual blindness' displayed by religious authorities is a warning to us from following their example. However, his act of reaching out to the man who was driven out offers us an invitation to the 'right response' he is calling for: believing in him.

Who is the messiah we are called to believe in today? Jesus shows us that he is more than a healer giving sight to the blind (9:35-39); he is also more than a prophet who challenges power structures that misuse authority to determine who is in and who is out (9:40-41). Jesus is the good Shepherd who offers us abundant life, who was willing to lay down his life ultimately on the cross for sinners, and unlike those preoccupied with analyzing sin, he truly cares for his sheep (John 10:10-12). He graciously draws us into the deeper encounter of this truth: "in him was life, and the life was the light of all people" (1:4).

## Journeying Together

Let us join with the communion in Christ around the world with thanksgiving to God our healer and good shepherd singing in harmony that "... I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see."