

40 DAYS

a Lenten devotion and prayer guide

We are part of the body of Christ and we each contribute a part, a skill, a gift to that body.

For the past several years, LCA International Mission has produced a prayer guide/devotional for use during Lent as a resource to invite people in the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand to join with our mission partners, as together we pray for God's global mission.

The devotions you read in this *40 Days a Lenten Devotion and Prayer guide* are the result of people working in partnership with other parts of Christ's body.

We asked our brothers and sisters from Australia, New Zealand, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Papua New Guinea, Japan, Germany, America and Finland to write a devotion based on a Bible verse of their choice exploring the theme 'hope in the presence of grief'. These devotions tell of the challenges they have faced, but also of the hope they have in Jesus as their Saviour.

As you read through these Bible verses and devotions, we hope that you will not only learn more about the people with whom we partner, but that the Holy Spirit will also speak into your heart and you will be made aware of the many ways God is present in your life, as you read what our partners share.

Furthermore, during this Lenten period, please join us in prayer with and for our partners, knowing that our Heavenly Father hears the prayers of his children.

You can easily enough see how this kind of thing works by looking no further than your own body. Your body has many parts—limbs, organs, cells—but no matter how many parts you can name, you're still one body. It's exactly the same with Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:12-31



Rev Matt Anker Assistant to the Bishop, LCA International Mission



Erin Kerber Program Officer, LCA International Mission
with responsibility for Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia and Myanmar and the School Service-learning and Congregations Partnership Programs



Nevin Nitschke Program Officer, LCA International Mission
with responsibility for Papua New Guinea and Indonesia and the Scholarship program and Volunteers in Mission program



May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

1

Paul structures this verse in the form of a prayer, inviting us to ponder two vital and interconnected points. The first is a fundamental question: 'who' can offer hope, peace and joy in the midst of suffering and grief? The second is an invitation to put our trust in God who, through Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace, has drawn people to Himself and remains the source of hope. Since no one is exempt from pain, suffering and grief, we need to be prepared for such situations.

Paul reminds us that help is near us if we put our trust in God. The recent pandemic, political unrest and wars in some countries, famine, economic crises and other similar situations may have led some congregations, individuals and families to experience extreme pain and grief.

In this text, Paul reminds us that we are not left alone and helpless, because the God of hope will fill us with *all joy and peace* as we put our trust in Him. Our spiritual journey is enhanced by the power of the Holy Spirit, enabling us to understand the grace of God and to find joy and peace in His presence. The very title Paul gives God is '*the God of hope*'. This helps us to understand the inclusive nature of the gospel, which draws us to Christ by grace through faith and aids us to embrace the joy, peace and hope offered by God.

As we face trials and difficult times, we need to allow the Holy Spirit, with whom we have been sealed, to minister and revitalise us through an overflow of joy, peace and hope.

Rev Dr
Wilfred John
Samuel

Director,
Lutheran Study
Centre, Sabah

Pray for Rev Dr Wilfred, the staff and students studying through the Lutheran Study Centre in Sabah and that more young people will be inspired to offer themselves for fulltime ministry.

Pray for Churches in Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei, that the progress of the gospel and missionary task will not be hampered, despite the depressing socio-economic and political challenges they face.



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He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

Psalm 91:4

2

Several years ago, whilst in Asia, I was privileged to attend Sunday worship services for a number of months. This was such a joy. Most of the gathering were new Christians, who were vibrant and eager to talk about their faith.

On one occasion, I observed a young woman quite near to me quietly wiping away tears as she confessed her faith in the words of the Apostles Creed. I was deeply touched, as I realised that, although my faith is precious to me, I had never been tearful when saying the creed. That young lady must surely have been so grateful for her salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus her Saviour, as she recited those words. Maybe she was disconnected from her earthly family because of her belief. This sometimes occurs, causing grief, disappointment, hardship or anger within the family circle.

Whatever the reason for the tears, it was a precious time for her to worship the Triune God with her church family.

During the past year, there were anxious times for us all. Uncertainty, loss of income, grief, loneliness and sickness; the list goes on.

Our partner churches abroad have been faced with similar problems. They are encouraged by our support through prayer, giving and practical help. We in turn, are enriched by our interaction with them.

Sometimes we ask, "Where is hope" and "Where is God"? Look to God's Word. His many promises are there, when we are weary and dispirited God promises that *'those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint.'* (Isaiah 40:31)

We are all safe in His care. We can trust God's faithfulness and claim His promises through our Lord Jesus. He is our lifeline.

Ruth Craig

*St. John's Lutheran,
Dernancourt, SA
partnership with
Lutheran Church in
Cambodia*

Pray for the Dernancourt congregation in South Australia and their partnership with the Lutheran Church in Cambodia.

Pray for the ministry of all Pastors of the Christian Church in every land. May they be guided by the Holy Spirit in their teaching and shepherding of those within their care.



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Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

Psalm 116: 15

3

Last year when I lost my father, I knew my life would never be the same. I wondered why God had allowed this to happen. My father had served Him faithfully, our family has been very active and I had devoted my youth to serving. I struggled not to feel disappointed in God but the pain and loss forced me to think that way.

As a human being, I look for certainty and calmness. One way is to rationalise God. If my father serves God, God will heal him. If my father is faithful and obedient, God will bless him with a long life. This makes me think that what God did to my father depended on my father's attitude and actions. It means I determine how God should behave or act.

In my sadness, I considered the story of Job, a man who lived an abundant life but lost everything: property, children, wife and health. God even allowed Satan to tempt Job. In his miserable condition, Job wondered why God allowed these misfortunes. The story of Job tells how God's thoughts are beyond the reach of human thought. In Job 38, God answers Job's question by asserting His sovereignty over the universe.

Job's story stunned me. Who am I to guess the mind of God who created this universe? I am limited in understanding God's infinite mind. I cannot possibly understand God's way of working.

Many things in life are hard to understand but I know that God is kind and loving. He has proven his love and kindness by sending Jesus, whose death pays for our sins, and whose resurrection gives us hope that we get to share in His victory over the grave. God is good and God is loving because He is love. I have learned to accept that behind the death of my father, God did it in His wisdom and love for us as a family.

When I understand this truth, I gain strength to get through my days. As Psalm 116: 15 says, '*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.*' God really loved my father and because of Jesus, there is hope for the life to come.

I believe that God is wise and good. Even when I don't understand His plan, I can trust His heart through my faith.

Rev **Dedi**
Pardosi

Coordinator,
Lutheran Study
Centre, Indonesia

Pray for Rev Dedi and for his service to those who study through the Lutheran Study Centre in Indonesia. Pray the students will learn about God's great love and grace for them.



Jesus said to her, "Mary".

John 20:16a

4

When we think of common human experiences, words like 'love', 'joy', 'laughter', 'work' or 'rest' may come into our mind. One word we may not include is 'grief'. Yet as much as we may wish to avoid it, grief (that is, our reaction to loss) is part of the range of human experience.

There are the big griefs with which you may be all too familiar: loss of a loved one, loss of a job, news of a chronic health condition. We grieve such losses and the sudden change they bring to life's direction as we'd hoped it would be.

There are also the little griefs, the disappointments that mar our days: a broken friendship, words that hurt, plans that don't come to fruition. While these may not be life-changing events, they still cause an emotional reaction akin to grief, as we deal with the feelings they bring.

A reading of the gospels gives a glimpse into the big and little griefs experienced by the people of Jesus' day: the grief of a son born blind, grief at the death of a child, the rejection felt by prostitutes, the loss of freedom while living under the rule of the Roman Empire. For people then, as for us, hopes were destroyed and grief resulted.

The epitome of grief is the crucifixion, with those whom Jesus loved gathered around the foot of the cross. Grief has destroyed hope - grief is the enemy of hope.

Turn to Easter Sunday morning in the garden: picture Mary outside the tomb, still weeping, still without hope, until she heard the voice of Jesus saying her name, "Mary". That one word, that one voice, was enough to turn her grief into joy.

I don't know what grief you, the reader, have experienced or will experience in your life. In your grief, be it big or small, listen; His voice will also call your name.

Anne Maczkowiack

*Christian Curriculum
Consultant for the
Evangelical
Lutheran Church of
Papua New Guinea*

Pray for those involved with education for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea, including Anne, as they continue to develop the Christian curriculum. Pray for all Lutheran schools in Papua New Guinea, as they teach God's love to their students.



Rev James San Aung

Mission Director,
Myanmar Lutheran
Church

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, neither let be afraid.

John 14:27

5

Current threatening disasters remind us that the second coming of Jesus is drawing near. Dear friends in Christ, let us meditate on Jesus' promises, which he gives to all of us. I will share with you three important promises from this text.

'Peace I leave with you.'

Here John uses present tense, meaning the peace of Jesus' promise is always with us. We are reminded that Jesus always gives us peace, regardless of our circumstances. This peace comes from Jesus, through the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. Often, we fail to remember Jesus' peace when we face daily battles.

'My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.'

Over 10,000 Khumi people in Paletwa, Myanmar suffer from hunger. This is due to massive fighting between the Arakan and Myanmar armies since 2015. This civil war causes death, hunger, sickness, and a loss of peace for our people.

Likewise, other disease threatens life, hope and peace around the world. Many Christians ask "Where is God during our suffering?" "Where can we find 'hope' in suffering?" Whenever you have these questions remember, Jesus gives you his peace, which no one can take away.

'Do not let your heart be troubled, neither let be afraid.'

Jesus understands that we have many worries and griefs and he knows we are doubtful and fearful people. Jesus tells us not to worry because he has overcome the world (John 16:33).

Our peace and hope are not determined by our circumstances. When you have doubt, please ask the Holy Spirit to help you. He is our Comforter in the time of hopelessness. Our intimate relationship and deep love with God determine our real hope. So, let us not be discouraged; instead let us fix our eyes upon Jesus who is our hope and comforter. May God bless you, grant you peace, and shower His endless mercies upon you and your ministry! Amen.

Pray for the war-affected refugees in Paletwa, for their daily needs; for the Myanmar Lutheran Church and God's missions in Myanmar to provide for these needs; and for hope, peace, freedom, and justice in Myanmar.



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When you go through deep waters, I will be with you.

Isaiah 43: 2a

There are many memorable reflections that have been recorded about grief and the grieving process. A few reflections that resonate with me are:

"The reality is that you will grieve forever. You will not 'get over' the loss of a loved one; you will learn to live with it. You will heal and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered."

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

"No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear." CS Lewis

"Promise me you'll always remember: you're braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think."

Winnie-the-Pooh / AA Milne

"Grief is the price we pay for love." Queen Elizabeth II

But for Christians there is altogether a different dimension to our experience of grief and the hope that we look for in the presence of grief. We have a Saviour who walked this earth, who knew sorrow and grief, who suffered beyond all comprehension, and who promises to be with us intimately in our grief and suffering.

Here are some promises:

'The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.' (Psalm 34:18)

'When you go through deep waters, I will be with you.' (Isaiah 43:2)

'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' (2 Corinthians 12:9)

'Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.' (Psalm 23: 4)

When nearing the end of our lives (or our 'useful' lives, as we may see it), there can be a particular kind of grief that comes with the loss of one's physical and mental capacities, when one is totally reliant on others to continue living. What is it that we can then give to our Saviour who has given so much to us? What use is there in living on?

God wants nothing from us, but to come to Him daily with our sin and repentance – He covers us with His grace, He draws us to Himself with His unconditional love, and He promises that He will be with us for all eternity.

Timothy Pietsch

*Manager,
Wantok Place*

6

Pray for the volunteers who serve at Wantok Place.

Pray for comfort in dark moments, with the knowledge that God is indeed with you to the end of the age. Ask that God be with all His loved ones, particularly those in mission fields where His Word is being heard in difficult circumstances.



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God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

Psalm 46:1

7

The unprecedented onslaught of the recent pandemic turned our world upside down. We had never experienced such a level and degree of damage and impact. Almost everything came to a standstill; we were not allowed to travel or work, we were not able to move freely or even eat out where we wanted. We found it hard to adjust to the new ways of living.

Yet, there are other groups of people living among us with greater needs from these challenges and difficulties. For these people, when their hands stopped working, so did their mouths. One group is the Orang Asli (indigenous people) living in the remote areas of Malaysia. Who can help and provide them with their daily provisions and food? Another group are the migrant workers whose wages are just sufficient to provide for their family's daily needs; when they stop working, they also stop eating. Another group are poor families in the towns, cities and villages. Who cares for them? Lastly, the refugees who are stuck in such a dilemma. Who pays any attention to them?

We hear and see their plight and our hearts are moved to reach out and extend our helping hands because we know the hope we have through faith in Jesus' promises. The Lutheran Church in Malaysia called for financial assistance and the response from our people has encouraged us that there is still hope among us - there is hope in the presence of grief and pain. Such an encouraging witness from all of us, even as we face our own challenges, problems and grief!

The recipients of these 'love gifts' are so grateful that, in their time of need and grief, their plight and prayers have been heard and answered without any strings attached. Deep in their hearts, they too know, there is still hope in the presence of grief and trouble; they are neither abandoned nor forsaken.

The Psalmist proclaims, '*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*' (Psalm 46:1)

This is a song of hope, no matter what is happening around us. Jesus is the only hope we need. He has promised to never leave us or forsake us.

Bishop Aaron Yap

*Bishop, Lutheran
Church in Malaysia*

Pray for the Lutheran Church in Malaysia as they minister to the Orang Asli in their community. Thank God for his faithfulness, compassion and that no matter what situation we are in, he is our hope and refuge.



I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth.

Job 19: 25

8

Last year I am sure we all said it or heard, "2020 - we are living in unprecedented times". In fact, it became a cliché when said so many times! How do we cope in times of crisis and grief?

2020 was a very sad year with the worldwide virus causing unparalleled fatalities. The numbers were so huge, they became impersonal. But when four family members died within thirteen months and I was unable to attend the funerals or offer the comfort of a hug, the experience became personal. Then I cried out to God, *'Lord, where are you? Come and help! O that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you... come down to make your name known.'* (Isaiah 64:1 and 2b)

It is still very timely to cry out, "God where are you in this pandemic, where are you in our grief"? Have you ever felt like the Psalmist who wrote in Psalm 88 *'You have put me in the lowest pit ... [and]... You have taken from me friend and neighbour – darkness is my closest friend?'*

When we face dark times, it is important to remember the One who promises to be by our side. Sometimes we only learn to lean on the Lord by finding that all other supports have gone, *'but I cry to you Lord; in the morning my prayer comes before you.'* (Psalm 88:13)

We all experience heartache but one thing is certain: Jesus standing by our side to strengthen and deliver us in our time of need. We only have to ask and the promised Holy Spirit will comfort and give us peace.

We can say with Job, *'I know my redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes – I and not another. How my heart yearns within me!'* (Job 19:25-27)

Praise God that He is with us in good times, in times of trial and in times of grief.

Carilyn Trice

St Paul's Lutheran church, Wellington, New Zealand partnership with the Lua evangelists, Thailand

Pray for the St. Paul's Lutheran, Wellington congregation and their partnership with the Lua evangelists in Thailand. Pray that God will help you to make the most of your time, to be still and listen to His guidance and take comfort from Him, knowing that He hears your prayers and is with you always.



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Ridwin Purba

Education Secretary,
National Committee
of LWF, Indonesia

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Romans 12:12

9

Almost everybody experiences grief - the death of someone loved, a divorce, a job loss or a significant change in health. At these times, pain can seem unbearable. We feel powerless, helpless, ashamed, guilty, and without hope.

In 2004, I was fired from my job without knowing the reasons. I was in pain emotionally, physically and spiritually. It was not easy to find relief from the grief I felt at that time. Family and friends encouraged and supported me, counselling me to open my heart and give God a place there. I tried to open my heart, I prayed and read some texts from the Bible: *'He heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds'* (Psalm 147:3) and *'Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and body with grief.'* (Psalm 31:9)

God shows compassion and His love is unfailing. He does not willingly bring affliction or grief to anyone, which is a great truth to remember when you are tempted to blame God (Lamentations 3:31-33). The Lord is a very present helper. Imagine him taking your grief in his hand and examining it. Next, imagine him becoming your helper. God sees your trouble and His nature is to help you. You are not alone in your feelings and grief. Many before you—even those with tremendous faith—experienced great sorrow and anguish of heart.

Through His Word, God recharges our dim hope. Jesus is the ground for our hope, saving us from our sin through his blood. Hope is confident expectation and firm assurance regarding things that are unclear and unknown (Romans 8:24-25; Hebrews 11:1,7). Hope is a fundamental component of the life of the righteous (Proverbs 23:18). Without hope, life loses its meaning (Lamentations 3:18; Job 7:6) and in death there is no hope (Isaiah 38:18; Job 17:15). The righteous who trust or put their hope in God will be helped (Psalm 28:7). Hope is an enduring virtue of the Christian life (1 Corinthians 13:13), and love springs from hope (Colossians 1:4-5). Hope produces joy and peace in believers through the power of the Spirit (Romans 15:13).

So hope in the Lord Jesus because he cares for you and shares his life with you now and always.

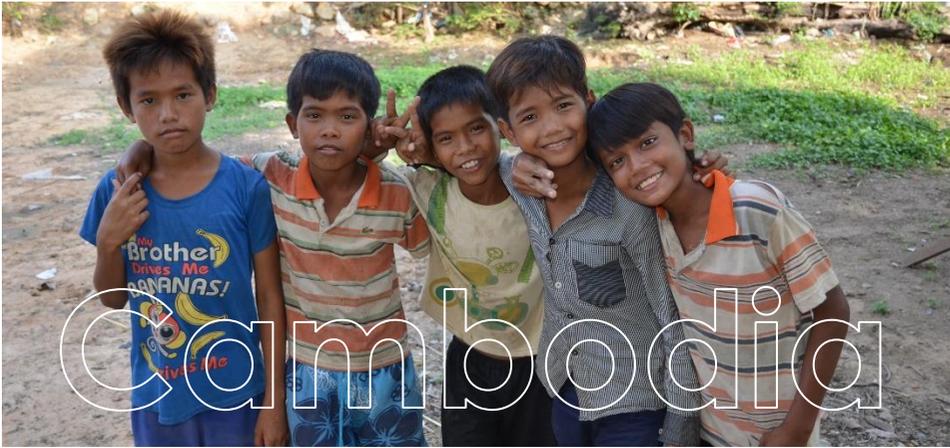
Pray for Ridwin in his support of education within the Lutheran schools in Indonesia and as he encourages the partnerships between Australian Lutheran and Indonesian Lutheran schools.

Pray that believers will have hope that produces joy and peace by the power of the Holy Spirit.



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He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.

Revelation 21:4

10

During 2020, many of us in the 'developed' world discovered fears which others have endured for years - deadly viruses, domestic violence, civil wars, bushfires, floods, storms, a changing climate, poverty, death.

Scripture offers a beautiful vision where all these things are gone and where God will be wiping every tear from His people's eyes. But it can be hard to maintain hope in this vision while suffering is so real and immediate. What is God doing about all the pain and grief present in the world?

We are also confronted with the question of what we are doing about pain and grief in the world. Often, I only give my leftovers to the suffering of others, especially if others are distant: my leftover time, leftover money, leftover attention. I give after I have taken care of myself and those close to me. It is difficult to hope in humanity's collective ability to overcome violence, poverty, climate change – in fact often human ingenuity seems to achieve the opposite – more violence, increased inequality, more environmental damage. If we find it difficult to hope in God's promise, it doesn't seem like hoping in ourselves or human achievement is a more promising option.

Our answer to pain and grief in the world is to want things fixed – now! God's answer to pain and grief is also to want things fixed, but God's timetable seems different to ours. What is God doing here and now?

While we await the glorious day where there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain, even now God's home is among His people. God does not give humanity His leftovers. Instead, in the person of Jesus, God chooses to participate in human existence: celebrating, laughing and feasting but also grieving, crying, suffering, dying. What is God doing about all the pain and grief in the world? God is participating in it. Experiencing it. In some sense, God is absorbing it. We can hope in God's promise for the future because God has chosen to be with us in the present.

Jacob Traeger

*Immanuel, Woden
Valley, ACT
partnership with the
Lutheran Church in
Cambodia*

Pray for the Immanuel, Woden Valley Lutheran church and their partnership with the Lutheran Church in Cambodia.

Pray that Jesus will refresh your hope, so that you might joyfully participate in his resurrection work in the world. Pray that he will help you to understand that he is present in suffering and give you the courage to focus on those who are suffering, even as we long for the day when all these things will be gone forever.



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Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Luke 23:43

11

In Japan, it is common for you to be the only Christian in your family because most Japanese people are Buddhists. Therefore, I am often asked a serious question by my church members: "Pastor, my father/mother/husband/wife/brother/sister passed away without believing in Jesus, so his/her funeral had to be Buddhist style. Now, does he/she have no more chance to enter Heaven? If so, I feel very sad."

How can I answer this kind of question, as a Christian pastor?

Probably in your country, most people may be baptised, so you may never face this same question. But there must still be a number of people who cannot be sure whether or not their beloved family member will enter heaven because some people never attend worship services, read the Bible, or pray to God. Some people even mock your Christian faith and say, "God never helps you!" or "God doesn't exist!"

Do they miss any chance to enter heaven? I answer, "We never know." We never know what?

We never know if Jesus comes to them and meets them in their very last second of life. We never know if Jesus touches their hearts to lead them to repentance, even if they look unconscious lying on their bed. We never know, in the midst of the suffering of death, if they ask Jesus, "Please remember me, my Lord!", as the criminal who hung on a cross asked Jesus in the very last moment of his life.

But this we know: Jesus replies, 'today you will be with me in paradise.' (Luke 23:43)

God is marvelous and we can never see how He works in people's hearts. We cannot know what impact His word has had on the people around us and whether in their hour of need, they come to saving faith in the Saviour.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, please note that our God is a loving Father and He is eager to save people's souls much more than even we wish to.

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ remain in your heart and strengthen your faith throughout this Lenten season.

Rev Naoki
Sugioka

Kinki Evangelical
Lutheran Church,
Japan

Pray that the Lord Jesus will show your beloved family, friends and neighbours his love and mercy in the time of troubles and suffering, by coming close to them. Thank God that He loves them, just as He loves you.



And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

12

Grief is not just the loss of a loved one through death, it can be experienced when there is any sense of loss: loss of health, broken friendships, marriages ending, failed crops and harvests, family breakdown, loss of jobs, sudden disability. All of these avenues, which normally bring us connection, identity and purpose, may bring on a journey of grief when lost. Grief can cloud us, making it hard to find hope, comfort, trust, joy, wholeness, meaning and purpose.

The season of Lent is a time for reflection on sorrow, separation, darkness, fear and ultimately sin. But it also reflects the brightest hope which comes from the darkest of journeys. Jesus himself knows all our troubling journeys and bears them with us. We can walk on with him towards a resurrection of fullness in our life, healing from brokenness and sin, and ultimately the glorious release from all tears, pain, crying, grief and death (Revelation 21:4).

How else could we know this hopeful promise if Jesus hadn't shared his life journey with us? *'The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us.'* (John 1:14)

Living among us, he felt rejection, suffered loss and wept with sorrow. He anguished over carrying the brokenness of the world to the cross and separation from his Father. He endured more suffering than we will ever have to experience. But Jesus doesn't minimise anyone's suffering, he suffers along with them. While he experienced terrible physical suffering, he did it so we may always have a sense of hope in the presence of grief, a sense of wholeness in the presence of our brokenness, and forgiveness despite our sin.

Felicia Neldner

*Member, LCA
International Mission
Committee*

Pray for the LCA International Mission committee, that our Lord Jesus will use them as beacons of his light to bring hope to others, wherever they may be. Pray for those whose journeys we may not understand or be able to comprehend. Pray for those who grieve in far-away places where hope is not easily found. Pray for those who are hurting and broken though we may not see it.



We were determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but our very lives. That is how dear you were to us.

1 Thessalonians 2:8

13

Australian First Nations musician, Nardi Simpson, said on ABC Conversations that when positive steps are taken to bridge cultural divides, we do not give thanks so much for the people involved, as for the relationship.

Friska Pakpahan has been my dear friend and cross-cultural mentor for ten years. She is an English teacher at HKBP (Lutheran) vocational high school in Sidikalang, Indonesia. We met in 2011 on my first visit to Sumatra to Grace Lutheran College partner schools, when Friska served as our interpreter.

Friska is a committed Christian with a deep, personal faith. When she was at university, she was injured in the Medan church bombings, but this has not made her bitter.

She says God has blessed her through our school partnership and the support of Australian Lutheran churches (Living Faith, Murrumba Downs and St Paul's, Caboolture). Reciprocal visits between Indonesia and Australia have provided new ideas and skills for many teachers and students, as well as the teacher networks and conferences which have been established with LCA International Mission support.

Friska's school is disadvantaged by our standards but there are other schools worse off, in poorer, more remote or Muslim-dominated areas. Friska says, "It's good that you come from Australia to show care to poor people; we need to do more of that ourselves."

This is a principle underlying the work of LCA International Mission – that schools across Sumatra and each of the thirteen Lutheran synods, share teaching expertise and Christian understanding with each other, supported by Indonesian and Australian educational leaders. In turn, the school partnerships offer Australian students and teachers, inspiration, cross-cultural understanding and outward demonstrations of God's love through the vibrant faith of our Indonesian friends.

Friska says: "God is dynamic and flexible and always shows his love in many ways...I am coming to understand why I was involved in the bombing... all the unfairness has been made fair by God."

Ruth Butler

*Educational Consultant
in Indonesia*

Pray for Ruth's contribution to education support in Indonesia, and for the relationship that people associated with the Lutheran schools in Australia have developed with our Indonesian brothers and sisters; that springs from the relationship we all share with our Heavenly Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit.



*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.
Matthew 24:35*

2020 was like an idle year. Many plans were interrupted and even church life, including our faith and trust, were plagued with the question of where God was working in these times. For Asians, world conditions such as natural disasters and disease are often associated with the wrath of the creator. But what about Christians? Could it be that events in the world today are from the wrath of God?

Some Christians have felt challenged. Those praying for well-being and healing despaired as the pandemic took away many souls. Christians who shout "God is with us" caught the virus after gathering to worship. Where was God in our troubles? Was our faith relevant?

God never leaves us. Even when we fall, He is there. When Job was tempted, God was there, making him understand the state of the world that has been corrupted by man. The Bible shows us that we are living in a world corrupted by our choices, which eventually take us away from God. But He approached us, without us asking. Jesus was sacrificed so that we can have our life, a life with God. God is in every moment of our life, even in our misery.

As a church, we have truth. When our members begin to get angry and anxious, we can strengthen them by speaking truth. We can take care of the welfare of the church by covering them with the Word. We can remind them that the blood of Christ was shed to cover them and is valid and true from the beginning to the end; that God is always there.

Keep waiting, keep believing that all these pains, sorrows and difficulties will end, with a new world and heaven from our God (Revelation 21). After all, there is nothing new under this sun. Only His Love is new every morning!

Amen.

Pastor Christopher Ogodong

*General Secretary,
Protestant Church in
Sabah, Malaysia*

14

Pray for the Protestant Church in Sabah, that they are daily reminded of God's presence in every moment of their lives and will keep waiting and keep believing amidst their pains, sorrows and difficulties.

Thank God that His love is new every morning.



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Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."
Luke 19: 39-40

When Jesus was entering Jerusalem, the disciples praised him as a king. The Pharisees and those in power could not stand this demonstration of loyalty, although Jesus looked like anything but a "real" king as he rode on a donkey without any visible signs of power and glory. It was just him, so what was his power? It was action and words by God's authority, empathy, healing, silencing demons, loving the marginalised, forgiving sins.

Today is no different. Most people like the success stories of the powerful, glamorous and rich, more than the gospel of a servant king with a message of caring for others, of forgiveness, of not exploiting other people or animals and nature.

Who would have thought that one day these words would come true, that creation would cry out for salvation in today's raging fires, rising floods, or environmental pollution (Romans 8:19-22)? We are realising that our personal lifestyle has a global impact and that abundance comes with a price, paid by all, close by and far away.

Lent is a season of self-reflection and repentance. It is a good time to try out things such as fasting, abstaining from alcohol, limiting shopping or television or playing internet games. In learning to be content with less, we become more sensitive to essential needs.

Change is a spiritual issue. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we change our hearts, minds, and habits. God's Spirit turns our self-centredness into openness to God and others, and our fear into trust that we have enough. This is our calling as disciples of Jesus.

Today's secular people reject Christian concepts of sin and a lost world, but fear climate change, the worldwide pandemic, uncertainty. They need the gospel and our examples of love. If Christians remain silent, the stones start crying for salvation. We are called to live and witness the hope we have in Christ.

Rev Wolfgang Grieninger

Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Bavaria, Germany

15

Pray that you will be filled with the Holy Spirit, to become sensitive to the needs of others and to share and care for what God has given you. Thank God that He has placed you into His creation as a steward of His blessings.



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Again the Israelites cried out to the Lord, and he gave them a deliverer – Ehud, a left-handed man.

Judges 3:15a

16

'Expect the Unexpected.' Since the pandemic, this phrase has possibly meant a lot more than it ever did. But it is also a reminder that God can, and often does, work and show up in the most unexpected ways.

During the time of Judges in the Old Testament we read: '*Again the Israelites cried out to the Lord, and he gave them a deliverer – Ehud, a left-handed man.*' (Judges 3:15)

God chose Ehud to lead His people, and to say that Ehud was a surprising choice would be an understatement. He lived in a society which was even more cruel than ours has ever been to those who are left-handed. Ehud would have been considered ineffective, and no one would have looked up to him, or naturally chosen to follow him, yet he was God's choice. In fact, Ehud was uniquely suited for the task of deliverance that God had chosen him for. He used his left-handedness to tackle the enemy king, and to rescue and deliver God's people.

This story gives us hope in the middle of whatever it is that we are going through, as we focus on what God can do, in and through the most unlikely of people.

I consider this story every time I think of the partnership our church has with a church in Myanmar. We are both so blessed to be part of something that, five years ago, was totally unexpected.

After spending time praying for who God might be calling our church to partner with, all the members of our leadership team came back with the same answer. Our journey has included visits and even a virtual pulpit exchange. In hindsight, maybe we should have expected the unexpected! We pray for each other every day, encouraging one another to bring the hope of Jesus to the families, communities and cities in which we serve. It is a message that we continually share as we partner together in the gospel.

So, expect the unexpected. In the same way God used Ehud, and now our church, he can use you to bring the hope of Jesus into a world that needs it more than ever before.

Rev Ben Hentschke

*Ipswich Lutheran Church, Qld
partnership with the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Myanmar*

Pray for the Ipswich Lutheran community in Queensland and their partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Myanmar, that they will continue to encourage one another to bring the hope of Jesus to the families, communities and cities in which they serve.



He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.

Luke 4: 18b

17

This text speaks of God's mission to 'recover the sight of the blind'. (Luke 4:18b)

The blindness here refers to life lived in darkness- life lived ignorant of God's love. When we live in darkness, we live in fear, which leads us to hide from God (like Adam and Eve) and spiritual death.

Life without God is a life in "tohu bohu", life that is in disorder, without shape, full of ignorance and sin. Jesus Christ has rescued human beings from this darkness and is still working through Christians around the world. He says that we are the light of the world. Only Jesus Christ's love can defeat this darkness. His love is stronger than death and fills the hearts of those who receive it with hope. Hope makes us strong to carry on the mission that Jesus entrusts to us.

Even though the world faces problems, corruption and injustice, we are called to keep our sight on the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and to continue to spread the good news of his life, death and resurrection into the world. This is the gospel for us. He will come and bring truth.

All who believe in him will be crowned with the crown of life.

Amen

Rev Harison Ratovohery

*Missionary from
Madagascar serving
the Evangelical
Lutheran Church in
Thailand*

Pray for Rev Tovo and his wife Rova as they serve in Northern Thailand as a minister and doctor and support the projects led by the evangelists there including farming, Lua language, Saturday club, health care and strong and safe family.



Wendy Habel

President, Lutheran Women of Australia

Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.
1 Corinthians 15:20, 22

18

There comes a time in your life when you expect to experience the death of loved ones, and yet it surprises you when this happens! As we get older the loss of a loved one stirs up a lot of intense, confusing and often conflicting emotions. Grief can overwhelm your thoughts and take away all reason.

Yet God knows exactly what our strength is. He allows this time when we are faced with situations causing grief, to remind us that we can turn to Him in confidence, showing that He cares enough for us, to carry us through this time. *'And hope does not disappoint us, because God poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.'* (Romans 5:5)

Believing in God's word is vital, *'for since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep.'* (1 Thessalonians 4:14)

Hope comes through our weeping, in putting all our weakness, our sinful nature, in the promise of the resurrection. God knows and feels our hurt and pain; He gives us the strength to go forward.

Jeremiah 29:10-12 tells us that God is listening, that what He has in store for us is good. Light may not be visible in the dark tunnel but hope and faith in the promise of the future is at the end of the tunnel. Through this passage of darkness, we can come confidently into the light.

This Lenten season we walk with Jesus to the cross. God speaks about the suffering of His dear Son but He also speaks about victory over suffering and death. The resurrection of Jesus is His answer to the grief that we all have.

This is the beginning of hope; that Jesus took the sin of the whole world to the cross. His death and resurrection pardon our sins and through this comes assured comfort for us in our grief... *'Be not afraid, for I am here....'* (Isaiah 41:10)

'I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.' (John 14:18-19)

Let us take comfort in His promises. He is real and He is living.

Pray thanks to God for the vital support of the Lutheran Women of Australia as they pray, prepare birthing kits, visit and give financial assistance to LCA International Mission programs. Pray that God will hear the cries of His people and will wipe away the tears from their eyes, through the peace of the Holy Spirit, in the blessed assurance of eternal life.



Bishop **James** Wong Chong Leong

*Bishop, The Basel
Christian Church of
Malaysia*

As for me, I look to the LORD for his help. I wait confidently for God to save me, and my God will certainly hear me.

Micah 7:7

19

We live amidst havoc caused by the worldwide pandemic. In July 2020, in Madagascar, we lost two missionary couples and we grieved. Numerous businesses have fumbled and unemployment has forced many people to move away from the city, in search of cheaper housing. Family violence has increased, and we have averaged one suicide per day.

How can we rise above the storm in such times of stress?

Everything in the prophet Micah's life had gone wrong, and in Micah 7:1-6 we read his list of stressors:

- depressing thoughts: he was overwhelmed with misery and illustrated it with the work of a person resulting in a wasted effort (verse 1);
- disappointing relationships: there were no godly people, Micah could not find a fair-minded person, murderers were everywhere and brothers trapped each other for personal gain (verse 2);
- corrupted social order: government officials and judges make decisions based on bribes; and the rich scheme to twist justice and get away with their wrongs (verse 3);
- relationship breakdown: neighbours and friends could not be trusted. (verse 5a);
- family stress: no one could be trusted, not even one's spouse, children, or in-laws. What they did could only be termed as 'enemies right in your own household!' (verses 5b-6).

To stay strong, Micah remembered God's promises and resolved that; 'As for me, I look to the Lord for help...' (verse 7a). Where we look to for help makes a big difference in our lives. Look to God who feeds the birds in the air (Matthew 6:26) and even counted the hairs on our head (Matthew 10:30) and rejoice that even when things are hard, He cares for you.

Faith has confidence: 'I wait confidently for God to save me, and my God will certainly hear me.' (verse 7b)

Be patient and remain hopeful. God will open a way where there is no way.

Remember the words of our Lord Jesus, '... with God all things are possible.' (Matthew 19:26)

Pray for The Basel Christian Church of Malaysia, that their churches will be a beacon of hope to the community through their ministry of fellowship, sharing and caring for those who are under stress or suffering.



...the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping.

Psalm 6:8b

20

Grief is usually accompanied by weeping, but I am sure many people would confess to hiding their tears, trying to stifle their sobbing. We do not like to let people see or hear that we are hurting or in the agony of grief. In grief, we feel vulnerable and naked, often accompanied by feelings of shame. We compound our grief in the private, dark prison cells of our lives, keeping it pent up and unresolved, and we feel hopeless in our grief.

But perhaps you also know that sometimes we just need a good cry. God has created us in such a way that crying actually makes us feel better. Crying releases oxytocin and endogenous opioids - endorphins. These feel-good chemicals help ease both physical and emotional pain. What a gift this is for us. Our tears, like the waters of baptism, provide a salve to ease blinding pain. They make space for hope to emerge, so that we might meditate on and call upon the one who has steadfast love for us, Jesus Christ.

In Psalm 6, the songwriter reflects on a long period of private grief, 'every night I flood my bed with tears.' (verse 6)

Three things are 'turned' within the poem. Firstly, the psalmist asks the Lord to *turn* and save his life for the sake of his steadfast love (verse 4). Secondly, the psalmist himself *turns* from his moaning and confidently proclaims that the Lord has heard the sound of his weeping and commanded workers of evil to depart from him (verse 8). Lastly, the psalmist displays a prophetic hope that because the Lord has taken to hand his prayer, his enemies will *turn* back and they themselves will be put to shame (verse 10).

Pray that the Lord will grant you the hope and confidence to command your foes to depart in the power of his holy name, that your grief may dissipate in the light of his love.

Mick Hauser

Lecturer, Martin Luther Seminary, Lae, Papua New Guinea

Pray for Mick and his family Milka and Kelly. Pray that the Lord Jesus Christ will help you to grieve without shame. Pray he will take to hand your prayers, your groaning in grief, the whimpers of your weeping, and the mumblings of your moaning. Pray he will help you through the waters that flow over you, by your tears and in your baptism, to meditate on his steadfast love for you.



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If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred and you together are that temple.

1 Corinthians 3: 17

Grief will always be with people in the world, whether we want it or not. It is a part of life. Grief comes with being human. It also comes from human beings who wish to destroy the people of God who are the temple of God.

Last year in November, in the village of Lembatongoa, Sigi District, a province of Central Sulawesi, four members of one family were killed by a group of terrorists. The terrorists also burned down six houses and a worship house, which was used for Sunday services by the Salvation Army community. This brutal attack in the village resulted in undeniable fear amongst the other villagers. Many were forced to flee, to find refuge away from their homes and villages.

The sin of hate, the sin of intolerance, the sin of murder and destruction, make our hearts heavy. Will this grief continue? This question is always on our mind. Will God destroy that person who destroys His temple?

As those who bear the image of God, we are sacred and imitate His actions that are full of love. Judgment is not for us but for Him.

Whatever grief you have, believe in Him. God will change the grief and comfort people who always rely on and lean on Him.

Our hope is not found in retaliation and judgement, but in Jesus Christ who died for the sins of the world so that even the hate and intolerance we sometimes experience, is not enough to rob us of the life we have in Him.

Rev Basa Hutabarat

*Executive Secretary,
National Committee of
the Lutheran World
Federation in Indonesia
(KN-LWF)*

21

Pray for the staff working for the National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation in Indonesia, that they may have peace with God, living out their lives as His children. Pray for those who feel fear, hopelessness and confusion about the tragedy faced by Christians in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia.



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Audrey

Wycliffe Bible
Translation Advisor

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.

Hebrews 6:19a

22

The letter to the Hebrews was likely written to Jewish Christians facing persecution and who were tempted to turn away from Christ to escape growing threats. They had been publicly exposed to insult and persecution, suffered with those in prison, and had their property confiscated (Hebrews 10:32-34).

Just as those Old Testament “Heroes of the Faith” mentioned in chapter 11 of Hebrews were commended for their faith despite not necessarily receiving in this life what had been promised, so too were the readers of this letter encouraged to persevere in their faith and remain faithful to Jesus. But they were not alone, and neither are we. Jesus shared in our humanity and is able to sympathise with us in our weakness and help us in our times of need, including grief.

We live in a world broken by sin and experience grief in many forms - the death of a loved one, disappointments, sickness, injustice, the loss of a relationship. During these times, we can tell God exactly how we feel. Maybe you feel angry or abandoned by God or that he broke his promise to protect you from evil? You can be honest and pour out your pain to God, including complaints, for he already knows how you feel. This is what it means to lament. *“Lament is often what faith looks like in hard situations. It is a sign of faith that God is listening, cares, and has power to help”* (from ‘Beyond Disaster’). The Bible gives us many examples, including Jesus who cried out on the cross, *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* (Matthew 27:46). We’re in good company!

As we pour out our hearts to God, we hold onto hope in the presence of our grief. Just as an anchor prevents a boat from drifting due to the current or wind, our hope in God anchors our souls in him during the storms of life.

What is this hope? It is God's promise that he is always with us, helping us through his Holy Spirit and that Jesus will return and set everything right: *‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’* (Revelation 21:4)

Pray for the work of Bible translation, that more people may know His hope in the presence of grief. Thank God for His Word, that helps us in every situation that we face. Pray for those who don't yet know Him or don't have access to His Word in a language that speaks to their heart.



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Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Philippians 4:4

Paul calls us to rejoice in the Lord always but, truth be told, there are hurts and pains, sufferings and crisis in life. How can we 'rejoice in the Lord always'? (Philippians 4:4a)

We are not expected to rejoice in our troubles. We are told to rejoice *in the Lord* always. No matter what life brings, the person of Jesus Christ himself is always one over whom we can rejoice ... always. We are not to ignore the reality of grief, but if we focus on our troubles, our grief magnifies. It is time to change our focus – unto JESUS.

We must not take out our anger on others. We are to be gentle with others. We maintain our gentleness by not getting anxious. In every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, we present our requests to God. It is important to make a daily habit of giving thanks in every situation, then the peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus.

Our hope in the midst of grief is the peace of God. The peace of the world depends on circumstances around us being at peace. But the peace of God transcends our circumstances and brings us into His peace. As our Lord Jesus greeted the frightened disciples, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*" (John 14:27)

While we look for peace in the midst of our grieving, God wants to give us more than His peace. Negative and fake news darken our minds and give us a dark view of God's world. But we are to practice godly thinking: think about whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy. As we think on these things and put them into practice, we discover that the God of peace is with us as He has promised. More than giving us His peace, God gives himself to us in Jesus Christ. May this be our desire in Lent. For this purpose did Jesus Christ come into the world; to reconcile men to God. With His peace, bring peace to others. Amen.

Rev **Andrew**
Thinagaran

Queenstown Lutheran
Church, Singapore

23

Pray that your desire during Lent will be to cling onto the God of peace, who gives Himself to us in Jesus Christ, to reconcile you to Himself, so that you might bring peace to others.



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*The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.
Deuteronomy 33:27a*

24

For as long as I can remember, this has been a favourite Bible verse, ‘...underneath are the everlasting arms.’ (Deuteronomy 33:27a) The picture is vivid: big, strong arms held together, poised beneath me; often not touching me, just there to catch me if I fall. Other times, those arms are holding me securely because I have fallen.

I often share this verse with people I know who are fearful or troubled and particularly in grief. The words and picture bring me comfort, and I hope they offer comfort to others, as they speak of the faithfulness of God. God never leaves or forsakes us. When my life is falling apart, His everlasting arms are underneath me.

We are surrounded by grief. No-one gets through life unscathed by loss and it has been particularly so since COVID-19 arrived. We did not need a pandemic to know the deep pain and aching heaviness of grief. You know your losses, I know mine, and there will be more to come as we continue through life.

But underneath us are the everlasting arms of God.

The Bible speaks of faithfulness as the quality and capability of God, shown most clearly in Jesus hanging on the cross in our place. God is the faithful one all through Scripture, and to be faith-full people, all we do is recognise our emptiness and incapability and throw ourselves into the arms of our merciful God. That is Biblical faithfulness: trust in God who is the only truly reliable, steadfast, trustworthy, *faithful* One.

God shares his faithfulness with us – a fruit of the Holy Spirit in us. The Spirit grows the faithfulness of God in us, His children. We become more steadfast, stable, trustworthy, true people as the Spirit works in us. He makes us faithful.

In the face of deep human grief, there is nothing we can do except to let ourselves fall into the arms of the faithful, everlasting God who is waiting for us, ready to catch us. He holds us in the darkest places of our lives. He breathes His comfort and His peace and His faithfulness into us.

Pauline Simonsen

Manawatu Parish, New Zealand partnership with Rumah Chrestus, Malaysia

Pray for the Manawatu Parish in New Zealand and their partnership with Rumah Chrestus. Pray that those who are living in the dark pain of grief, would know the reality of God's faithful loving arms beneath them.



Nipaporn

Kunarak

*Home of Grace and
Home of Praise,
Thailand*

They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Luke 24:32

25

In Luke 24, these two disciples were confused and heartbroken from Jesus' death. They did not realise they had been walking with the resurrected Master, even though Jesus had already explained to them that he would die and rise again.

But when Jesus broke the bread and prayed, they realised that he was their master. After Jesus died, his disciples faced all the horrors of death. But when Jesus rose from the dead, he gave them hope again.

Like the disciples, we may be overwhelmed by confusion and grief many times. But we have hope and comfort from knowing that Jesus is present in the world and in our lives. Even though we still experience grief and sorrow, we can receive Jesus walking with us, in the tunnel of sadness. Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* (John 8:12)

When we have problems, or sad things happen in our lives, he brings the light of hope.

Thanks be to God that He is the light in our darkness so that when we are in pain and sorrow, we may always have hope in Jesus.

Pray for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand, Diakonia department. Pray for the women staying at Home of Grace- that they will find good solutions for themselves and their babies. Pray for the staff at the Home of Praise nursery- that they will gain knowledge and strength. Pray for the children attending the Home of Praise nursery- that they will have safe and loving care. Pray that God will give you hope when you are sad and confused and help you to see His glory.



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I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

Romans 8:18

26

We often associate grief with death and the loss of someone close. As a nurse, I have sat beside many a patient in their last moments of life, witnessing the ways that patients and families deal with death. For some, it is terrifying; they are afraid of the unknown and families are distressed at the thought of never seeing their loved one again. Others busy themselves with prolonging life for as long as possible, unable to even think of death as a possibility. But then there are those who are at peace, knowing they are going home. They know Christ and the assurance of eternal life.

Christians can share their message of hope in times of grief. Our faith gives us peace and hope in the dying process. We are going home, to be welcomed into our Heavenly Father's arms. *'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. My Father's house has plenty of room; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.'* (John 14:1-3)

Discussing death is not easy. Even for Christians, there is sadness and pain as we are left without our loved one. But God comforts us, *'Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted'* (Matthew 5:4); *'He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.'* (Revelation 21:4)

Death reminds us that we live in a terribly broken world. But through Jesus' death and resurrection, we have the hope of eternal life. We long to dwell in a place where the enemy - death - has been defeated.

Cindy Kinion

Brisbane Valley
Lutheran, Qld
LCA International
Mission Congregational
Representative

Pray for people diagnosed with a terminal illness, who are facing death, that God will give them the strength to endure any suffering of their earthly body and when their time has come, take them homeward to His heavenly paradise where suffering will be no more.



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Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eye is wasted from grief; my soul and my body also.

Psalm 31:9

27

The Psalmist (David) is like a pilot whose plane is in trouble, calling 'mayday, mayday!' When such a distress call is received, those hearing it know right away that the plane is in trouble. But those who hear the call may not be in a position to save the plane and it may already be diving to its end. Only faith will save the plane and its passengers.

In the Psalm, David spoke of his distress, when he experienced grief so intensely that he could feel it physically and spiritually; so, he called out to God, "be gracious to me, O Lord for I am in distress." He could not help himself; he could not free himself as he was held captive by something overwhelming. He was feeling pain in his whole body and soul. His cry indicated something was very wrong, "be gracious to me, O Lord." Rather than wallowing in his misery, however, David poured out his heart to God, pleading for His grace. Unlike the pilot of a distressed plane, David's call was not in vain. When he cried out, he had hope of being heard and rescued.

Jesus quoted Psalm 31:5 in Luke 23:46, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." Jesus committed himself to the Father, knowing that God would not abandon him in his distress and grief.

David trusted God and had hope in him. Jesus, himself the Son of God, had full trust and hope in the Father.

When you are in distress and grieving, take your grief directly to God. Trust in Him, as David and Jesus did. God is your hope in time of hopelessness and grief. He knows what you are going through and it is His will that His children come to Him in prayer with their concerns and requests. It is His will that all who believe in Him cry out to him, "be gracious to me, O Lord" for I am a sinner. "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

Christians have hope in times of distress and grief. Remember the song:

*My hope is built on nothing less,
than Jesus' blood and righteousness.*

Amen.

Pastor Kinim Siloi

*Director- Inter Church
Relation/Ecumenism
and Partnership
program, Evangelical
Lutheran Church of
Papua New Guinea*

Pray for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea, and for relief against ongoing violence in Papua New Guinea. Come to God in prayer with your concerns and requests, knowing that He will answer.



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"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?" John 14:1-2

Maybe it sounds a bit strange if I tell you that I love strolling around at cemeteries – not because I would have a hidden desire to die but because I love looking at gravestones. We know what gravestones look like and what you can read there normally: the name, the date of birth, the day of death, RIP, or sometimes the profession. Occasionally you can find symbols of life like a branch of a palm tree, a cross or even a bible verse.

Gravestones speak their own language and some messages are going much deeper than many long sermons. On the stone of a 16-year-old girl who had been killed in a car accident was none of these Christian symbols. There were only a few capital letters, chiseled with heavy hammer blows: "WHY?" At the age of 16 life is just starting – finishing school, first boyfriend, looking for a job. All the despair, all the impotent anger, all the grief of this family cries out of this one little word. "WHY?"

More than 30 years ago, I discovered a very different gravestone at the cemetery in Neuendettelsau. It is shaped like a simple cross. At the bottom, you can read the name and the dates – nothing special. However, what impressed me is just one single word, written at the crosspiece: "Daheim" – "At home". Not a long sermon on resurrection – only one single word: "At home". What a deep peace and comfort flows out of here. Certainly, the relatives of that person were crying and mourning as well. This farewell was definitely not easy for them as well. But they had a view and a perspective which reached further than only 6ft under.

What enables and drives people to turn a gravestone – the ultimate sign of death – into a sermon of life? Hope in the presence of grief – this is what Christ brings into this world and what we celebrate on Christmas. Life in the presence of sickness and death – this is what we celebrate on Easter. Christ is not the great magician who spirits away all our doubts and difficulties and challenges and sickness and death. He is the one who comes into our life. He is the one who walks with us side by side like with the two disciples on their way to Emmaus. He is the one who leads us through. He is the one who promises to take us home.

What do you want to be chiseled on your gravestone?

Rev Thomas Paulsteiner

Head of Department
for Papua New
Guinea/Pacific/East
Asia, Evangelical-
Lutheran Church in
Bavaria, Germany

28

Pray for Christ to lead you through life in the presence of doubts, difficulties, challenges, sickness and death. Thank God that He promises to take you home.



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If I am in distress, you defend my life; Against the anger of my enemy you stretch out Your hand, and your right hand saved me.

Psalm 138:7

29

No-one is ever free from problems or difficulties. During this time of the pandemic, there are many people who are suffering - people being left behind or losing their jobs and housing, people being exposed to dangerous disease. When these things come into our lives, we may feel overwhelmed and anxious, but God is able to use even the darkest of problems for our good and blessing as he has promised. (Genesis 50:48-49; Romans 8:28)

We cannot choose the place or time or condition of suffering when it comes into our life. We cannot choose some of the things that happen in our life. Facing our problems is the best way, because we have a God who has great power to provide help.

Even God's people endure hardships. But the problems we experience are ordinary, they are not beyond our strength (1 Corinthians 10:13). We need not run away from reality. No matter how big the problem is, we will be able to bear it all in Him who gives us strength (Philippians 4:13). Never give up on any problem. We can be confident that regardless of the difficulties we face, in Jesus, God is on our side and so whatever the outcome, we will remain His forever. And we can face the future knowing that *'He who did not spare His own Son but gave him up for us all, will also with him graciously give us all things.'* (Romans 8:32)

Whatever our condition, God is always there for us, so let us rely on Jesus because he is our Saviour. Behind every problem, even those that persist, there is God's beautiful plan. God works together in all things for the good of those who love Him. (Romans 8:28) In God there are no coincidences, everything is God's beautiful plan. Stay strong and endure in Jesus.

Tuhan memberkati

Tutiyana

SMK HKBP Sidikalang
and SMA HKBP Lawe
Sigalagala TanahAlas,
Indonesia partnership
with Grace Lutheran
College, Rothwell and
Caboolture, Qld

Pray for Grace Lutheran College and their partnership with SMK HKBP Sidikalang and SMA HKBP Lawe Sigalagala TanahAlas. Pray for people who have lost their jobs and places to live. Ask God to bless those who are struggling and help them to pass all the challenges in this pandemic.



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Rev Chan Mun Kwan

Christ Centre Lutheran
Church in Malaysia

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Lamentations 3:22-23

30

In the first reading for the Lenten season (Joel 2:12-19), the prophet Joel called on Israel to return to God with fasting, weeping, and mourning. 'Mourning' means intense grief for the dead and 'grief' has been a very common word since the pandemic. Is there hope for grieving people during the COVID-19 pandemic?

In 586 BC, the prophet Jeremiah lamented the destruction of Jerusalem. The great city walls had been completely destroyed and Solomon's temple was burned and laid waste by the Babylonian invaders. Death was across the city and the nation's treasure, the Ark of the Covenant, had vanished. In his lamentations, Jeremiah recalled three qualities of God that gave hope in the presence of grief:

- Love. The *great love of the Lord* refers to God's loyalty in keeping his covenant. Because of his covenantal love, Israel was not completely consumed but a remnant remained. His great love remains steadfast, yesterday and today. We are taken into this covenant of love through Jesus Christ and our baptism.

- Compassion. *His compassion never fails*. God's compassion for his suffering people never ends. His compassion is new every morning. Jeremiah wakes up each morning with the freshness of God's compassionate love, giving him hope in the midst of grief.

- Faithfulness. *Great is His faithfulness*. The faithfulness of God is immeasurable and boundless. No matter how apostate or disobedient His people were, God remained faithful. This is our hope in times of grief: that God's faithfulness, compassion and love overcomes our small faith and our doubts and distress.

During this Lenten season, let us remember that we can face tomorrow with great confidence because we have hope from our God.

Pray that the Lord of all grace will pour forth his abundant grace to the suffering people in Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand and over the world.

Pray that in the midst of uncertainty, you look to his faithfulness for your daily needs. Thank God for the hope He has given to you.



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Rev Shigeo Sueoka

Kinki Evangelical
Lutheran Church,
Japan

...the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 2 Corinthians 1:3b-4

31

The spread of COVID-19 has meant worldwide sorrow and suffering for a huge number of people. Our regular daily life has been taken away and we have to fit ourselves into a so-called new lifestyle. Our church life has also been changed. Some congregations had to close their Christian gatherings and Sunday services. Thousands of people have lost their lives to the virus and families have not been allowed to go close or see their faces at funerals.

The fear of the pandemic weakens our hearts, and social distancing makes us distant from each other. We shout to the Lord, "Why do you allow such things to happen? How long do we have to be patient?" We need comfort and peace.

In this extraordinary year's Lenten season, we remember the pain of Christ, suffering on the cross. We will be led to the forgiveness of our sin and true peace by the suffering of Christ. We can put all our anxieties and troubles on him. You feel limited if you rely on yourself or focus on human actions. But the Scripture points out that Christ, who rose from the dead, is living with you now.

'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we receive from God.' (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

Jesus Christ understands and accepts all of our hardship and suffering because he has experienced all kinds of unreasonable suffering. That is why we again receive hope to live during this Lenten season. Your prayer in suffering brings you to joy and peace by the grace of the risen Christ.

Pray for an end to the expansion of the virus as soon as possible. Pray for a cure for this world and the peace of Christ to those who are suffering in our neighborhood.



We also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.
Romans 5:3-4

Recently I pulled up one of my photos, a broken clock stopped at 9:26. This was the time that Kumamoto, was hit by a devastating earthquake on 14 April 2016. Time stopped for those who perished, but also for the thousands who were injured or lost homes that day.

Kumamoto has a number of Lutheran congregations, two Lutheran schools and a university, and many social service facilities. Members, students and staff jumped into action, providing food and other relief supplies, temporary shelter and psychosocial support. All this was added to the support, which came in from government and other NGOs, including from around the world.

We see this kind of aid from the church whenever there are disasters. We are, after all, part of a global family of church that seeks to not just bring much needed relief in times of disasters, but to bring hope in the midst of unimaginable grief and suffering.

Hope is what the gospel is all about. We speak of hope in God's grace and mercy. Martin Luther said: "These two words, expectabo Dominum (I will wait for the Lord), contain the summary of the entire body of Christian doctrine, which consists, not in feeling, but in hoping." (Weimar 25, 119)

When we bring relief in times of disaster, it's not about preaching the gospel of hope. It's about living the gospel flowing out from us with hope for life, wholeness, peace, goodness, and love.

If the stopped clock I saw was about an end, that would be it. That is a way of seeing time as chronological or a linear matter. But the other word for time in the Bible is 'Kairos', the very moment for action, conversion and transformation: a change of life; a moment of grace. This kind of time is not singular or with an end. Kairos is at any given moment, whether it be when a disaster strikes or as we continue to live out our faith.

That is hope. It is what we live with, by our faith. Hope in life is what we offer when we reach out to others in times of need. Thank God for the hope we hold to and the hope we offer to many in need in times of disaster.

Rev Y Franklin Ishida

*Area Director for Asia
and the Pacific,
Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America*

32

Pray for relief and aid workers, and for us who support them in times of disasters.

Pray that you will be filled with hope, because God's love has been poured into your heart through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to you.



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"I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy."

John 16:20

Grief is an experience that all humans go through. There is a particular grief for many people in Papua New Guinea (PNG). It is a grief of identity and purpose within the socio-cultural and economic context. Traditionally, people grow up within a community, taught by their elders. Roles are gender based and individuals learn to look after their homes, do gardening, trade, hunt, gather food and items of wealth, and find medicines from within their environment. More than 60% of PNGs population survives without money or even simple necessities such as salt, soap or hand tools for gardening and homemaking.

But many people from rural areas have drifted to towns and cities, searching for a better life, and their children and grandchildren grow up in a completely new lifestyle and cultural setting. This milieu of clashing cultures, transitioning from traditional ways of living to modern ways, has meant losses of individual and ethnic, communal identities. Even the course of one's life can become a problem for those born and raised outside of traditional settings.

The 40 days of the Lent period, presents an important image - Jesus' walk to the cross. The denial of himself is described in Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation as 'the humiliation'. The next phase of the journey for God-made-man is described as 'the exaltation'. After his humiliation to the lowest point – death - Jesus was exalted from death into life. Although he gave up his life for you and me, God the Father rewarded him with life after death, raising him above all the angels of heaven, sitting him on His right hand to rule God's kingdom and judge His people with truth, righteousness, mercy and grace.

This dichotomy of death and life, suffering and triumph does not necessarily need to be observed by Christians just as outlined in the Church Year (with the season of Lent standing in stark contrast to the season of Easter). This dichotomy is the reality of life that is experienced everyday as Christians wrestle with Law and Gospel in every moment of life as Martin Luther explains using Paul's baptismal language – a daily experience of drowning the old self as we remember our baptism, and rising again to new life in Christ.

Rev

Emmanuel

Som Yalamu

LCA International
Mission Scholarship
Holder

33

Pray for all members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea, both displaced from their indigenous contexts and those trapped in their local contexts to find an identity and purpose in life. Pray that God will continue to guide and direct each individual and community to find their own way in life, so that everyone may become resourceful and lead purposeful lives, wherever Christians are stationed in life.



My soul longs for your salvation; I hope in your word.

Psalm 119:81

34

The year 2020 might have been an extraordinary year if the pandemic had not broken out. Many people had prepared for an exceptional year, with a lot of things in mind. Unfortunately, the pandemic destroyed those expectations, plans, and hopes.

Since the pandemic, many families around the world have lost loved ones and faced many kinds of problems, suffering and phobias that we could not have imagined beforehand. Some of the damage that the pandemic has caused is immeasurable. Many people have lost their faith and hope in God. Questions, doubts, criticism, judgment and lack of confidence has surpassed hope in God. Is that how human beings should continue to live in this world amidst a pandemic?

Hope is faith in the absolute promise that miracles prevail when darkness tries to overcome our despair. Hope is a gift from God that helps us yearn, and live a life that believes and moves with the pledge of a better tomorrow. Hope brings resurrection life, and draws us near to the love of Christ who can make the way for everlasting life.

Martin Luther lived through the plague, which lasted for about four to five months. He did so because he deliberately chose not to flee from it. Unlike the pandemic that we face, the bubonic plague that Luther endured was an epidemic. Even so, Luther's courage and facing the reality of those days would not have emerged if he had not put his faith in God's word.

Is there any hope for the world? King David yearned for God's salvation during his time of suffering. He knew that his hope in God would renew and transform his life. So, during Lent, how can we hold on to hope when there is so much struggle, trouble and grief in our lives? The simplest answer will be to put our faith and trust in God. Only the Saviour born in Bethlehem can be our help and refuge.

Rev Martin Lalthangliana

*President, Lutheran
Church of Myanmar*

Pray for the Lutheran Church of Myanmar, that they will put their faith and trust in God to be their help and refuge.

Pray that you will have faith in the absolute promise that miracles prevail when darkness tries to overcome your despair.



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For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, angels nor demons, the present nor the future, height nor depth, nor anything else shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. Romans 8:38-39

During Lent, we are encouraged to ponder the death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. As a member of God's family throughout my life, I have often wondered what it really means to ponder Jesus' death and resurrection. As I learn to appreciate more and more, the depth of God's love, whatever we do in life - sinning daily in thought, word and/or deed - I sometimes wonder why and how God can unconditionally love us. The short answer is, because it is His promise and God never breaks His promises.

The Roman's passage holds a profound statement, that '*absolutely nothing we can think of can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*' (Romans 8:39) This text ends with '*the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord*', a statement of God's promise about His huge love for us, demonstrated when He sent Jesus. To fulfil God's plan, Jesus suffered for the sins of the whole world, was cruelly treated, hung on a cross to die and then three days later, rose to life. Jesus was victorious over death for all humanity.

This is the gospel message we are called to ponder and, whenever prompted by the Holy Spirit, to use every opportunity to share that wonderful truth with the many people God places in our lives. God loves every human being on earth, and He wants everyone to know that. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God calls each person to believe in Jesus, asking him to forgive us our sin so that we may inherit eternal life.

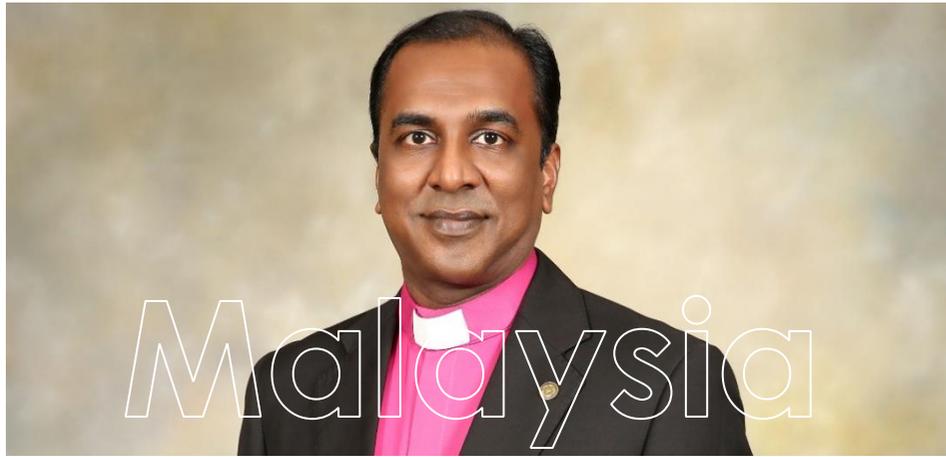
During the Lenten season, we are able to ponder the gospel message and then share it with people whom God places in our lives.

Ron Ehrke

St Paul Lutheran Blair
Athol, SA
LCA International
Mission Congregational
Representative

35

Pray for opportunities to share the wonderful gospel message, as we are prompted by the Holy Spirit.



Bishop Steven Lawrence

*Bishop, Evangelical
Lutheran Church in
Malaysia*

"You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?"

Job 2:10a

36

Dear disciple of Christ,

The book of Job answers the most common question asked by a Christian disciple when he or she grieves: "Why me? Why me, when I have not transgressed against the Lord my God?"

Grief is not a form of punishment. It is a mysterious way of how God moulds a person to be a faithful disciple, to be Christ-like. Even so, one cannot deny that grieving is a painful process.

Job was prepared to receive both good and adversity, whereas his wife could not accept that her once-prosperous husband had been reduced to a state of helplessness. Her only counsel was that Job should curse God and then die. (Job 2: 9) However, Job did not forget the God who blessed him and exclaimed 'You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?' (Job 2: 10b)

The counsel that we give our friends, family members, relatives, colleagues or even fellow believers during their times of grief or adversity is of utmost importance. When a person is grieving, our continuous presence and support, as a fellow disciple, may offer hope and remind them of God's goodness and greatness over every circumstance.

Lent is a time for us to remember the blessings that we have received as well as the adversities that we have gone through. We are reminded that God is faithful in every circumstance of our life. As disciples, we need to reflect on the counsel we have offered to those grieving or in adversity. Were we prudent or foolish in our counsel? Our counsel as a fellow disciple gives people hope that Jesus Christ saves.

Pray for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia, that God will help them to be faithful disciples of Christ in every circumstance of their lives.

Pray that when you have the opportunity to counsel others, that the Holy Spirit will teach you to be an instrument of hope; that those who grieve may know that they are not alone in their struggles.



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Bishop Terry Kee

Bishop, Lutheran Church in Singapore

fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endures the cross.

Hebrews 12:2a

37

"With Jesus I have hope..." These words echoed in my mind as I sat there, looking at him, looking at that little empty shack he called home and called to mind the words of Hebrews 12:2 'Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endures the cross.'

It was a truly unforgettable visit. We listened to Ta Mo as he told us his story of survival. As a young man in the 1970s, he avoided the killing fields, risked mine fields and border guards, travelling on foot through the jungle into Thailand. He told his story of living in the jungle for years, before settling down with his wife. He told of losing three of his seven children, and of how he came to faith in Jesus Christ.

During our visit, we learned that each week he walked for more than an hour to get to church, seldom missing a worship service. A friend who was with me during that visit asked, 'what is it about Jesus or the church that draws him to church week after week in spite of such inconvenience'?

Ta Mo told us, "I was poor and probably will continue to be poor. Without Jesus I had no hope but with Jesus, I have hope..."

With his eyes on Jesus and hope in his heart, Ta Mo has endured his suffering. Looking forward to that eternal joy, he faithfully goes to church to worship God and to be nourished by His Word and Sacraments.

May we fix our eyes on Jesus who for our salvation endured the cross so that we do not grow weary or lose heart.

O soul, are you weary and troubled?
No light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the Saviour
And life more abundant and free

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace (Helen H. Lemmel, 1922)

Pray for the Lutheran Church in Singapore, that they will turn their eyes upon Jesus and the light of his glory and grace. Pray for God's love and healing for those going through difficult times, that they can fix their eyes on Jesus through it all.



"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

1 Peter 5:7

38

As Christians, we live in similar circumstances to anybody else, although sometimes we would like to consider ourselves as people without worries. Jesus himself did not get special treatment when he became human and lived among us. Joys and trials were a part of his life, as they are a part of ours. Eventually, Jesus gave the ultimate sacrifice, restoring the pathway for humanity to return to God.

There is a beautiful promise in the Bible: *'Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.'* (1 Peter 5:7) There are no conditions in this promise. Whatever your circumstances, you can take your anxiety and questions to Him. We can go to our Heavenly Father as a child, and depend fully on Him. How simple is that but how difficult to apply in everyday life.

When the pandemic hit, our first reaction was to cancel all work until it was over. But now, we can see that things went differently to how we first thought. In God's world there is no "impossible", so the church and Christians have been busy helping vulnerable people. We are His hands in the middle of tragedy.

The church has been a light in the middle of fear and suffering. There has been hope in the presence of grief, and there still is. We did not know all the aspects of COVID-19 a year ago but we did our best and He took care of the rest.

When Peter wrote his Epistles, Christians were facing social discrimination and persecution. They longed for heaven where oppression and hostility would be over. Peter gave them a simple and tangible instruction: focus on staying firm in faith and God will take care, regardless of situations; the Holy Spirit will give power to live a full life and help God's witnesses in all circumstances.

It might sound complicated but in God's world things are simple because He is in charge and for Him there is no impossible. No matter what we grieve, He will be with us. Hallelujah!

He lifts us up. It is a simple promise without demanding conditions. It is a promise to live already in this life.

Pray that you will remain focused on staying firm in faith, because God is taking care of you, regardless of your situation.



So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18

39

What are you grieving right now? In the midst of your grief, what does hope look, sound and feel like to you?

As Christians, living in hope means resting completely in our trust that the God who created the world, continues to redeem the world by coming into it with love and grace, in the person of Jesus Christ. Living in the hope we are given in Christ does not mean we are immune to the harsh realities of life. We will still have struggles, difficulties and suffering in this life, but when we see them from an eternal perspective, we can also find the hope and joy we need to get us through.

If the bruised, rejected, isolated, crucified, dead and buried Jesus lives - risen from the dead - so will we; that is his promise. We can 'live again' each new day, get up off the floor and keep going, knowing where we are ultimately heading: towards him and the life he promises us in heaven.

Living in hope means we can live confidently and expectantly, trusting that the Lord of history continues to come into our lives with compassion and redemption. And, it means becoming aware of God's presence in our lives, even in times of uncertainty. To do this, we need constant renewing, refilling and refuelling. This happens as the Holy Spirit fills us with God's grace, especially in times when we don't feel it.

This happens as we live together in Christian community, encouraging one another to cling onto our Heavenly Father in all situations; as we participate in the work of the faith community by serving those who are struggling due to loss of income or poor health; as we courageously gather together despite situations that might otherwise create fear; as we pray for those we find unlovable. This happens as we read and reflect on God's Word and as we gather together and are fed by the very life of God.

Knowing Jesus enables us to live with hope not just throughout Lent and not only on a good day, but no matter what. Jesus lives, and so do we, so will we, whatever comes and whatever happens this side of heaven.

Pray that God will fill you with hope and give you a tangible reminder today that He is your deep and abiding anchor. Pray that you will entrust to Him, those things in your heart that you barely dare to hope for. Thank God for enabling you to live with hope, as His love continues to appear in your life in surprising and unexpected ways.



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Our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and a good hope. May he encourage your heart and give you strength in every good thing you do or say.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

40

LCA International Mission invites you to partner with us, as together we share in God's mission in the world.

PRAY

Continue to use this Lenten devotion and prayer guide throughout the year, or subscribe to receive our monthly prayer calendar by emailing Erin at erin.kerber@lca.org.au

GIVE

If you would like to use your Lenten offerings to assist in enabling the extension of God's kingdom and following our Lord in his mission to make disciples of all nations, please contact Matt on 08 8267 7316 or email lcaim@lca.org.au

If you would like to join in God's mission through collecting and sending your used stamps for the Stamps for Mission project, please contact Peter Nitschke on 0418 868 103 or email pmnitschke@bigpond.com. If you would like to prepare birthing kits to send to Papua New Guinea, please contact the LCA International Mission office on 08 8267 7300 or email lcaim@lca.org.au

CONNECT

If you would like to learn more about how you can connect to the mission of God through a LCA International Mission congregation or school partnership, please contact Erin on 08 8267 7317 or email erin.kerber@lca.org.au

If you would like to become a LCA International Mission congregation representative and share stories, information and prayer requests from LCA International Mission with your congregation, please contact Erin on 08 8267 7317 or email erin.kerber@lca.org.au

GO

If you would like to serve as a volunteer in mission, offering your time to serve in a wide range of exciting ministry areas with our overseas partner churches and in Australia, please contact Nevin on 08 8267 7334 or email nevin.nitschke@lca.org.au



40 DAYS - a Lenten Devotion and Prayer guide

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