

# 40 DAYS

*a Lenten devotion and prayer guide*



LUTHERAN  
CHURCH  
OF AUSTRALIA

INTERNATIONAL MISSION

This year we are delighted to share devotions written by people partnering with LCA International Mission from all over the world. The writers include people in Australia and New Zealand who volunteer and serve in various ways, church workers from Papua New Guinea and South East Asia, as well as those supporting these missions from far off places like Germany and Norway.

Through their reflections and prayer requests, the writers invite you to journey with them through this Lenten season as they explore the psalms and share the comfort and hope they bring.

Psalms has always been considered the prayerbook of the church and through these inspired words we find prayers for every occasion, whether it be thanksgiving or lament, praise or despair. The psalms focus our prayers on the God who saves and remind us of our place in His divine plan. Just as Jesus prayed the psalms throughout His earthly life, we too can use them to pray through our joys and struggles, especially at those times when we cannot give voice to our innermost groanings.

It is our prayer that these devotions bless you as they point you to Christ and the hope we have in Him. May they enrich your appreciation for the beauty of the psalms and their ability to speak to our hearts even across the ages. It is also our hope that as you 'meet' those engaged with LCA International Mission through these devotions, you would make prayer for God's mission a regular part of your devotional practice. Our work and the work of those we support is abhorrent to the Devil and so the prayers of God's people are a treasured gift as we seek to make Christ known among the nations.

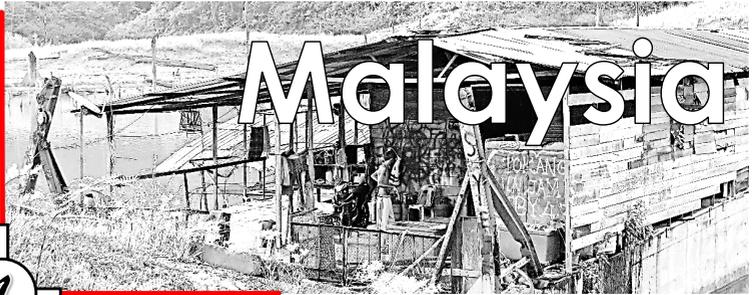
May God work mightily through the words of this prayerbook, that your faith may be strengthened in the One who came in the name of the Lord to forgive your sins, to wrap you in His loving mercy, to cover your shame and to welcome you home.

God bless your Lenten journey this year.

Pastor Matt Anker, Nevin Nitschke and Erin Kerber  
- LCA International Mission

# Rev Au Sze Ngui

Dean of the English  
General Council,  
Basel Christian Church  
of Malaysia



1

*Trust in the Lord, and do good; so you will live in the land, and enjoy security. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. - Psalm 37:3,4*

The psalmist starts (vs 1 and 2) by assuring his readers that we should not fret over those who are evil, or be envious about those who do wrong. Rather, we are to trust in the Lord and as a counter to evil, we should do good. But doing good is preceded by trusting in God.

These two years of covid-19 have been a real challenge for trusting God. As we have prayed consistently asking God for protection and to end this pandemic, many have been affected by what is perceived as inaction on God's part. Yet, God has not been inactive. He has heard our prayers, even though the pandemic has not ended.

Why are we to trust God and do good? It is so we will '*live in the land and enjoy security*'. The original Hebrew for the phrase translated '*live in the land*' is the word used for graze and to pasture, and '*enjoy security*' in Hebrew is the word for firmness, steadfastness, fidelity. So, this verse can be translated as '*Trust in the Lord, and do good; so that you will pasture and graze on God's steadfastness and fidelity.*'

By trusting in God and doing good, we can enjoy being pastured on God's faithfulness. Here in Sabah, many churches in the past year have been doing community aid. Many people have lost jobs due to covid-19 and some have lost their homes and possessions to fire and flood. Churches have given aid to communities who have experienced loss in the past year. In the case of the fire victims, they have been helping people throughout the year.

Verse 4 instructs us to '*delight*' in the Lord. Interestingly, this word is also the word for delicate or soft. When we look at flowers in the field, flower-bearing weeds that grow in the cracks of the sidewalk or roadside, we marvel at the resilience of the plant and admire the beauty in the delicate flowers that bloom and relieve the grey concrete or asphalt. We are reminded to take time to appreciate God as we take time to appreciate the beauty of flowers in unexpected places. The lockdown periods have caused many to be depressed but I must admit that I enjoyed having time to read the Bible more and to experience God in different ways.

When we trust and delight in God, we get to know Him better. We know He is faithful and looks after us in the midst of a pandemic or disaster, as well as grants us the privilege to do good, reflecting His presence in our lives.

**Pray for the Sabah Theological Seminary and the Lutheran Study Centre in East Malaysia, as they train pastors, church workers and lay-Christians in response to Christ's Great Commission.**

**Pray you will trust and take delight in the Lord-grazing on his steadfastness.**

# Ian Hutchinson

SA Representative,  
Wycliffe Bible  
Translators

2

# Australia



*...that you may tell the next generation that this is God, our God forever and ever. He will be our guide forever. - Psalm 48:13b, 14*

How do we communicate with the next generation, who are so tied to digital devices, always communicating on social media, playing an ever-increasing range of computer games, using expressions we do not understand and, with earphones attached, listening to music and unable to hear us talking to them?

There are two encouraging things to remember. The first is that 'he will be our guide forever.' Our unchanging God always knew that this millennial generation would be exactly the way it is. Everything living is, by definition, changing except the triune God Himself and His Living Word. He is forever the same, forever our guide. Every generation has its changes, much to the frustration of the previous one. But such is life. Life means change and that does not surprise God. As we trust Him to lead us, we can be confident that our faithful, unchanging God will guide us in the best ways to communicate with upcoming generations.

The second encouragement is that the next generation is still part of our family, church, culture, language and community, and needs to be able to communicate with the older generation for their own encouragement, welfare and survival. Seeing a child run into the arms of a grandparent after a covid-19 required separation, is enough to convince anyone that the next generation knows where they belong and want to communicate their desire for attachment and mutual affection. Perhaps the new and old generations have more in common than what we dare to believe at times.

We can confidently pray for the next generation, believing that our faithful God will give us the wisdom to communicate all He wants us to share with them. We can be confident that, because both groups are made in the image of God, and for the benefit of one another, we will be able to find a level where we can communicate our shared needs, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit.

More than all that, we can be confident of the blessings that will flow both ways because through holy baptism, we all belong to the living body of our Lord Jesus. In him, generational differences are swallowed up and we are united in faith, hope and love. To God be the glory!

**Praise God for Wycliffe Bible Translators and that His command to "make disciples of all nations" can still be carried out, following His guidance and grace.**

**Pray that you will rest in the assurance that God will be your guide forever.**

# Myanmar

Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in Myanmar

3

*How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. - Psalm 84:1-2*

This psalm centres around describing a love for being in the presence of God.

The psalmist begins by desiring to be where God dwells. He perceives the dwelling place of the Lord as lovely. His spirit desires to be in the courts of the Lord. In fact, his desire is so powerful that he says he faints for the chance to be in the courts of the Lord. His heart and his flesh sing for joy to the living God when thinking about being in God's presence. The psalmist is describing not a mere love for God, but an appetite for God. His spirit, his soul, and his flesh longs for God.

During this pandemic, we have all experienced the first, second and third waves of lockdowns affecting offices, churches and businesses. Some people have not only faced the pandemic but also political unrest. Many people have become hopeless and restless. Some have become jobless and homeless and are in need of shelter and security in their life. The world is running after the things of a worldly life: luxuries, business, money, jobs, popularity, education, a beautiful house, expensive cars. On the other hand, people are also searching for peace, love and hope.

In this difficult time the question is 'where is God'? We are praying, praying, praying - why is there no answer? The situation is getting worse and we feel hopeless, with no safe place, and no security. We can only pray because God is our refuge. We pray for a place like the psalmist can find, where we can rest, praise the Lord, be strengthened, and enjoy the favour and honor of God.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, be encouraged in every situation whatever you face. We may not feel physically close to the presence of God, but we have something far better - there is no greater or safer place than being in the presence of God. As the people of God, we have His Spirit within us and we can, at any time, draw near to Him (1 Hebrews 4:16).

In the final section of these verses, the psalmist makes the reasons for his longings clear. It is obvious that his longing for God is not out of a sense of duty, but out of delight. He truly believes that there is great joy and benefit to be experienced in drawing near to God. How incredible that while we were still far off, He drew near to us, and is still with us in the person of Jesus.

**Pray for the people of Myanmar. Pray that God will provide opportunities for the Federation of Lutheran Churches in Myanmar to offer the hope of the gospel.**

**Pray the Holy Spirit will help you to be in God's presence as your refuge and fortress, so that you will find rest in Him.**

# Bernard Kaisom

National Church  
Secretary, Evangelical  
Lutheran Church of  
Papua New Guinea

4

*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. - Psalm 51:10*

Located within Papua New Guinea (PNG)'s University of Technology in Lae, is a monument with the saying 'Tomorrow my sons and daughters will come'. This saying was from a tribal leader of the ELC Simbu District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea. Kondom Augando had no formal education and so could not speak English, but he showed great determination to learn English and was not afraid to speak, now and then. In 1963 he was invited to a Leadership Conference in Canberra, Australia. At that conference, he was asked to make a speech. Showing great courage, he started speaking in English, to the surprise of those in attendance. Those who could not control their emotions started giggling and laughing. He noticed their reaction but continued. He ended by saying, "I did not go to school to learn your language but tried to speak it which made you to laugh. But tomorrow my sons and daughters will come and they will speak your language and you will not laugh at them". Fast forward 40 years and Papua New Guineans are flying planes around the world, working in mines in Australia, serving as medical doctors in the Pacific, professors in universities, living in Australia through marriage or employment and looking for opportunities around the world.

Admitting one's failures and having determination to rise above challenges, is the best strategy to counter failure. Kondom Augando admitted his shortfalls and was so determined to fix it that he released a blessing to the future generations of PNG. 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me', is a statement of admitting to a failure and showing determination to rise above it. After the prophet Nathan bluntly told King David that he was the man (2 Samuel 12:7), David did two things: he admitted that he had sinned against the Lord and he showed determination to move on in life by asking God for forgiveness and to give him the strength to lead.

Many times, we Christians do not admit our failures, weakness, and shortfalls. We defend our actions with our backs to the wall. The result of our actions is sad. We do not allow change to come into our lives. Change will only manifest when we admit that we need help spiritually, physically or emotionally. We lose trust, which affects teamwork and cooperation with the people we influence. We find ourselves lonely, develop negative behaviour and in a worst-case scenario, spiral into disaster. As Christians, we believe that our Lord Jesus Christ has defeated Satan, sin and death on Golgotha. Confessing our sins and asking God for His forgiveness is the catalyst that allows determination, through the work of the Holy Spirit, to live a life of abundance.

**Pray for the redevelopment of the Christian studies Rainbow Curriculum, which is currently being used by teachers in Lutheran schools, and for those who share Jesus as part of the education to their students in Papua New Guinea.**

**Pray for God to create a new heart within you, so that you admit your failures and receive a new and right spirit.**

# Rev Jim Pietsch

St. Paul's Lutheran church, Wellington, NZ  
partnership with Lua evangelists living in  
Northern Thailand

# New Zealand and Thailand

5

*But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. - Psalm 3:3*

I know that sometimes attacks are in my own mind. I am afraid of what people might think or say about me or to me. I know we are living in a society that no longer believes in God. They might laugh if I tell them I believe in a being I cannot see. I know lots of people have no idea that Christ is the Saviour. They might think I am weak if I cannot trust in myself to achieve my own goodness. I know that only a small minority of people gather for worship. Others might ridicule me for wasting my precious Sundays to follow ancient rituals.

Sometimes attacks are also real. I have met people who are rude, aggressive or scornful; treating me and fellow-Christians as misguided and dependent, or moralistic and self-righteous. I have felt the barbs of their sarcasm and listened as they goaded me to join in the indulgences of their 'good life'.

I can think of others for whom attacks are much more vicious. I think of Christians living in places where their freedom, opportunities for education and work, physical safety, even lives, will be threatened if they are open about their faith in Jesus Christ their Lord and Saviour. They are confronted by authorities determined to suppress Christian life in any public form, or by mob rule that reacts violently to anyone branded as Christian.

I know that there is a deeper threat. There is a deeper power of evil threatening what is true and good. I know I am in a spiritual battle and am under attack. Not just me, but Christians near and far. I know there is a force we call satanic that wants to terrorise and use fear to make Christians hide or deny their faith. This is when I claim the ancient prayer: "*But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.*"

My Lord has delivered me from evil. My Saviour Jesus Christ has faced every evil on a cross, all the terrors that human and spiritual enemies could throw at him. He did not hide or deny his faith or forsake his mission.

My Lord is the Saviour who has fought for me. Now he is my defence. Whatever my attackers can threaten, they cannot take me away from Christ. They cannot rob me of the life he has given me. When I stop thinking about myself and focus my faith on my Lord, he lifts up my head. I am proud to bear his name.

**Pray for the partnership between St. Paul's Lutheran church and the Lua evangelists living in the Nan district of Thailand.**

**Pray for all who are threatened for their faith in Christ our Saviour, including you.**

Rev Dr  
**Dean**  
Zweck

Volunteer,  
Wantok Place



6

*Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress, to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress. - Psalm 71:3*

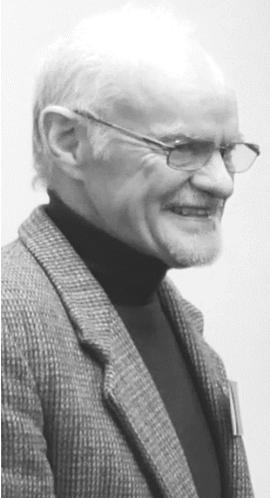
The people of God have been praising God as their 'rock' for three thousand years and more. It is a most reassuring image of God's steadfastness and faithfulness, His protective presence and unwavering love and compassion. The psalmist proclaims God as a rock of refuge and a strong fortress, and fervently prays that God would deliver him from the cruel hands of the wicked who are trying to bring him down. His assurance is that God has been with him from the day of his birth, and his prayer is that God will not cast him off in old age or when his strength is spent.

The New Testament does not directly ascribe the title 'rock' to Jesus, but in describing his own ministry, Jesus quoted from Psalm 118 where it says, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes' (Matt 21:42). Jesus is indeed the rock of our salvation. 'Come to him,' we read in 1 Peter 2:4-5, 'to that living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house.' Jesus is the living stone because he gave his life for us. He is the rock of ages cleft for us, that we may shelter in the safe place created by the smitteness he suffered for us.

The beloved hymn, *Rock of Ages*, written in about 1762 by an Anglican curate named Augustus Montague Toplady, has come down to us with a story. One day the curate was caught in a storm as he was travelling along the gorge of Burrington Combe in North Somerset. He found shelter in the crevice of a huge rock, and it is there that the words *Rock of Ages* came to him and he scribbled down the initial lyrics. That rock with its fissure is now marked as the *Rock of Ages* and bears a plaque that tells the story. It is a good story but may not be rock solid. Rock solid is what the hymn proclaims about our Lord and Saviour:

*Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
let me hide myself in Thee;  
let the water and the blood,  
from Thy riven side which flowed,  
be of sin the double cure,  
cleanse me from its guilt and power.*

LHS 330, Augustus Montague Toplady (1740-1778)



**Pray for those who visit and volunteer for Wantok Place, a museum of Papua New Guinea artefacts, that it will continue to be a visible sign of our ongoing partnership and friendship with partner churches in Papua New Guinea and South-East Asia.**

**Pray that God alone will be your rock and salvation and your fortress, that you may never be shaken.**

Pastor **Alvin**  
Tan Wei  
Jianh

Lutheran Church in  
Malaysia



7

*I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. - Psalm 139:14*

How often have you compared yourself with others? In this world of digital and advanced social media, an everyday activity among youths is the viewing of other people's lives and body image through their mobile devices. This habit has instilled a culture that induces young people to be obsessed with comparing themselves with others. They begin to look at themselves from the 'outside' and become overly worried about how others see them. They are obsessed with losing weight and they spend lots of time looking in the mirror, finding ways to change their body image.

Cosmetic surgery and intensive fitness programs are some of the common approaches they draw to. This has gradually become a major cause for concern among the younger generation, as many have suffered from the after-effects of this unhealthy culture, including low self-esteem and mental illness. This happens because they cannot accept their body image, while comparing themselves to their peers or the 'ideal' in the media.

It can be made worse by the social endorsement provided by the number of "likes" and "favourable comments" their post might get. In a survey, nearly one-fifth of the respondents said they have felt depressed and would delete the post if it didn't receive enough "likes". This shows how destructive it can be. Still, some argued that it might not be all negative as it promotes "self-grooming", which enhances one's confidence level and personality. Nonetheless, in general, such a culture certainly brings more harm than benefit.

In response to this virulent lifestyle, Psalm 139:14 reminds us of God's creation of human beings. Every aspect of our body, down to the tiniest microscopic cell, reveals that it is fearfully and wonderfully made by God Himself. '*Fearfully and wonderfully made*' means we are the pinnacle of God's creation, perfectly made in His image for a great purpose! Although we may still have flaws due to sin, we are not a defect or a reject. The Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 2:10, "*For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*" Therefore, there is nothing to be ashamed of our body image, as we are all uniquely designed to be the image-bearers of God on earth. As we continue journeying through this Lent season, let us be thankful for this gift of life God has granted each of us and may we also emulate the psalmist by saying to our Lord, "*I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.*" Amen.

**Pray for the Lutheran Church in Malaysia, that the Holy Spirit will continue to sustain them through the gospel and thereby unite believers with their Lord and one another in the fellowship of faith.**

**Pray for the younger generation, that they will realise the love of Christ and their worth in God's eyes, as they live as the one God has uniquely intended them to be.**

# Rev Peter Hage

LCA International  
Mission committee

# Australia



8

*I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my supplications. Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live. - Psalm 116:1,2*

When I was in my late teens, I can remember doggedly praying to God for direction in my life. The funny thing was that I wasn't exactly ready to listen to the answer that He kept giving me. Various people in the church had encouraged me to become a pastor but that was one of the last things I wanted to do. So, I kept on praying, hoping for a different answer.

Eventually I went to study theology in Adelaide, but I kept on praying to God, asking for a direction other than being a pastor. I even took a year and a half off from my studies to travel with an overseas mission team, thinking this might help me discern a different direction for my life. But after I returned, I continued my studies, including a year doing practical experience in a congregation. It was on this vicarage year, with renewed encouragement, that I finally gave in to what I thought was God's answer and resolved that I should be a pastor in the LCA/NZ.

It wasn't until the end of my final year of studies when I was assigned to be a missionary to Papua New Guinea, that I realised God had been waiting for me to stop telling Him what I wanted, and to simply trust Him to give me what He wanted.

It is a great comfort to know that we have a God who is always ready to listen to our prayers and cries for help. Knowing that God is always listening and will always answer us, is an encouragement to keep on praying to Him.

Can you remember a time when you were anxious and worried about where your life was heading? Don't be afraid to spend this time in conversation with the God who holds your life in His hands. He has your best interests at heart. And He never stops listening, even if your prayer journey takes years, like mine did.

Prayer is a wonderful thing. It is the breath of a Christian. To be able to converse with God at any time and in any situation brings comfort and reassurance, sustaining faith and growing confidence in a God who loves you *'...therefore I will call on God as long as I live!'*

**Pray for the members of the LCA International Mission committee, who serve as an advisory group in matters relating to international mission partnerships. Pray they will know the Holy Spirit's wisdom in discerning God's will.**

**Pray for whatever you are anxious and worried for at this time.**

# Krittavasai

## Saengserm

Head teacher,  
Home of Praise

# Thailand

9

*But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever. - Psalm 52:8*

In many passages of the Bible there is mention of an olive tree, which has a profound meaning. It is a tree that is evergreen throughout the year, durable and long-living, with valuable fruit that can be used in many ways and can sustain and promote life. Unlike the wicked tree, which must be uprooted (Psalm 52:5).

When David had God by his side, he compared himself to an olive tree growing in the house of God, which portrays the prosperity that God gave to him. David's prosperity was due to the unflinching love of God, and David trusted in this constant love forever.

David wrote this psalm after he was running from Saul and stopped to seek assistance at the tabernacle in Nob. At the tabernacle, the priest Ahimelech gave David and his men some consecrated bread (1 Samuel 21:6) and Goliath's sword (v 8-9). Doeg the Edomite witnessed this and later told Saul of David's whereabouts. By sharing this information with Saul, Doeg placed all the Lord's priests in peril.

In this psalm, David is writing about the joy that the righteous will receive and shows the contrast that Doeg the Edomite received: the destruction of the betrayal of Ahimelech and David. Doeg decided to rely on evil and his own hypocrisy. He used his tongue to criticise others. David used his tongue to glorify God and proclaimed his trust in Him forever.

David contrasted the eternal protection that God has given His faithful servants with the eternal destruction that will suddenly come upon the wicked. For all our lives, when sad things happen or situations occur around us, how we react depends on what the root of our beliefs are.

Years later, Jeremiah reflected on this thought: those who trust in God are blessed. They are like a tree planted by a stream. When the sun shines, there is no fear. It is God's covenant love that endures all the time, which He has bestowed upon all who trust in His steadfast love. Trusting in God will cause us to bear fruit and to blossom. When we put our trust in God, we raise our existing problems to a higher level, for God to take part in our care.

This passage invites us to trust in God as David did, no matter what obstacles and problems we are facing. Even though we do not understand what God is doing in the challenging situations and even when we may not know what will happen tomorrow, we can trust in His steadfast love. Our God is good and He has revealed just how good He is by sending His Son Jesus to suffer in our place so that we can live in His place. Thank God. Amen.

**Pray for the workers in Home of Praise in Thailand to have love and unity in serving God together. Pray for the children who come to Home of Praise, that they are cared for and filled with love and warmth.**

**Pray that no matter what obstacles or problems you are facing, the Holy Spirit will give you the strength to trust in God's steadfast love.**

Missionary,  
Papua New Guinea



10

*The heavens are yours the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it – you founded them. - Psalm 89:11*

Since the fall of our first parents (Adam and Eve), people have conducted their lives as if they have a right to ownership of the world, its resources and materials. In more recent years, the lines have been pushed to include our own version of the truth, in regard to how we perceive our own lives and bodies. The world would have us believe that our lives, our sexuality, our gender and even the lives of our children, are ours to determine. Psalm 89:11 casts a completely different light on these progressive perceptions.

Everything we have, that we see and have the means to do, is here and possible because God has provided for us. Everything we have needed and will need in the future is already here for us. From the earth we can grow food, from the heavens rains will come- seeds first created by God for planting and harvest (*'as seeds of the gospel are planted, fed and nurtured by Him'* Psalm 24:1). Our children are God's creation and firstly belong to Him. They are a gift to us from God. He provides parents for them. As parents we are the minders, nurturers of His children. Our whole life is in His hands.

It doesn't matter where we are in His world, we always have one constant: the love and promises that God has for all His children; salvation through His Son. Everything we have on earth and in heaven are because of His great sacrifice. In our life story, many of us have stories of sacrifice made by our ancestors that have brought us to where we are today. And yet, that we might know and see these worldly blessings and know and see by faith our eternal blessings, a greater sacrifice was made by our Heavenly Father.

Our gracious God provides for our physical needs through our vocations and those of others. He also brings reflection and repentance by grace, primarily through Word and Sacrament. From here we see our need for salvation, and the grace, hope, and peace He provides through Christ's death on the cross and resurrection. We can indeed trust God at His living Word – Jesus Christ, through whom *'He gives us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in him before the foundation of the world'* (Ephesians 1:3-4). We can have no greater certainty than clinging to Him to whom the heavens and the earth belong and who has *'set the earth on its foundations, so it can never be moved'* (Psalm 104:5).

**Pray for Pastor Murray and Tracy Smith as Pastor Murray serves as a lecturer at Senior Flieri Seminary in Papua New Guinea.**

**Thank God that, no matter where you are in His world, that you always have one constant – the love and promises that He has for all His children.**

Moderator, Mekong Mission Forum;  
General Secretary, the Chinese Rhenish Church Hong Kong Synod



11

*Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed be his glorious name forever; may his glory fill the whole earth. Amen and Amen. - Psalm 72:18,19*

Psalm 72 is the last psalm of the prayer collection of David, however it is also indicated as a Psalm of Solomon, son and heir of David. It is a psalm from the royal family. Some translations indicate that the theme of this psalm is a "prayer for guidance and support for the king". However, the prayer is not only for the prosperity of the kingdom and victory over enemies. It is more focused on the people. It speaks, for instance, about judging with righteousness, defending the cause of the poor people, giving deliverance to the needy and crushing the oppressor.

Good rulers can make a difference. For those who live in democratic countries, we may think that our modern political systems guarantee us a fair and just society. However, the worldwide pandemic has emphasized how vulnerable people are, especially at the grassroots. It was once thought that the public health system may equally protect people, rich and poor. Unfortunately, as hospitals are crowded by patients with covid-19, there are situations where the poor are not able to get a bed in a hospital for treatment. Meanwhile, the rich and the powerful ones have priority.

The political situation in Asia reminds us how important good rulers are. In several Asian countries during the past few years, we have witnessed how a democratic society turned into a police state in just one night. National security was used as a weapon against the opposite, and international support seemed so pale.

From where shall our help come?

This prayer of Solomon helps us look upward to our Lord, the almighty God, the King of kings, the Lord of Lords. When Solomon prays for guidance and support, he emphasizes 'people' as those who the Lord is looking after, not only those who are rich and powerful.

The Lord alone does wondrous things. While we saw how heroes or heroines could be put into jail or, more sadly, become corrupted, we can always depend on the unbeatable and never-failing God, and we know the Lord alone can do wondrous things. He has proven His faithfulness in sending Jesus as our long-promised Saviour, and so we can depend on Him in all circumstances.

Maybe the pandemic we are experiencing is our biggest challenge, for after nearly two years of isolation and vaccinations, we are not yet able to see an end. Maybe some of us under oppression are crying for help and yet there is no answer. The Lord alone does wondrous things. Although we do not know when, and do not know how, we can trust in our Lord and echo '*Blessed be his glorious name forever; may his glory fill the whole earth. Amen and Amen.*'



**Pray for the Mekong Mission Forum as it accompanies the ministries of the churches in the Mekong area, offers training in theological reflection for clergy and lay people, and strengthens the partnership of the related churches and institutions in Asia and beyond.**

**Pray for the political unrest in a lot of Mekong and Asian countries. Pray the Lord will work through the rulers.**

# Debbie Borgas

Volunteer teacher of  
online conversational  
English classes with STT  
Abdi Sabda students

12



# Australia and Indonesia

*Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary, praise him in his mighty heavens! Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness! - Psalm 150:1-2*

Have you ever found that something profoundly simple can lead you to deep rejoicing? For me it is watching buskers blow enormous bubbles for the enjoyment of those passing by. As a former teacher of young children, I love watching little people jump up and down in delight, squealing as the rainbow hued balls of bubble appear. I battle not to jump up and down and squeal too.

When I imagine 'God in His sanctuary' I am similarly overawed. I picture God on a golden throne and cherubim gently swaying as they praise Him. I imagine my parents in the staggeringly enormous throng of believers worshipping God. I know that because of God's gift of Jesus, my Redeemer, I too will get to be in that amazing sanctuary. These images, aroused by the words of this psalm, can bring tears of joy to my eyes as I praise God.

Making giant bubbles looked simple, so I tried it when I got home. I'll let you in on a secret: it's not as easy as it looks. Some of God's 'acts of power' can also appear deceptively simple: a glorious sun rise – well didn't you expect the sun to rise again today; a dazzling sunset – of course there is a time each day when the sun sets. God set the sun in place and keeps it doing the work He has assigned it. Sunrise and sunset happen day after day, and often we hardly give it a second thought. Yet some days we hold our breath in wonder at what God has done.

I am sure there are other acts of God's power that amaze you: the way a flower is contained within a bud and unfurls into a magnificent work of art; the grandeur of gum trees that have witnessed events over a hundred years before our time. The microscopic world of cells and atoms, and the incomprehensibly large world of outer space, are two areas where God's power is beyond the comprehension of many of us. We could spend every day of our lives contemplating God's surpassing greatness and still not have considered all aspects.

Jesus' cross seems such a simple image. Yet on it, Jesus gave himself so that God can be in personal relationship with you, without you needing to feel guilty or inadequate. God raising Jesus from death means that you are assured of resurrection also! These are no simple things. These are wonderous acts that could cause even the oldest of God's children to jump up and down, praise the Lord, and squeal with delight!

**Thank God for the students who are training to be pastors at Abdi Sabda Seminary in Indonesia, particularly as they learn online, which can be challenging.**

**Pray the Holy Spirit will bless you with a heart that is quick to praise God and to share heartfully of your joy in Him.**

# William Wong

Chair,  
Lutheran World Mission



13

*My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever. - Psalm 73:26*

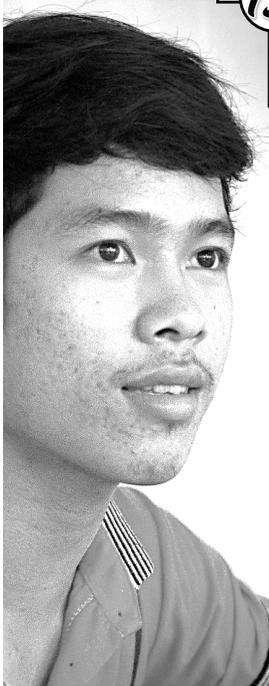
Nothing in this life is sure and certain. The pandemic has shaken many of our plans and brought us back to ground zero. Many families have not been spared, especially in many of our mission countries. Children have been made orphans overnight and widowhood has dawned upon the villagers. We are indeed living in an uncertain time and even with advanced medical science, nothing in this life is sure and certain.

Many of us have loads of questions. I think the most important and urgent in this season is: *is there hope?*

In Psalm 73, Asaph, who some believe was a gifted musician and song writer and author of twelve Psalms, serves in the temple of God and has done since he was a young man. Now as an elderly and more experienced man, Asaph acknowledges the wickedness of this world and how vulnerable human life is. Asaph did not stop short but looked to God and acknowledged the faithfulness of God. He proclaimed in his old age and from his own experience, that his body may fail, his heart may stop, his life may be restricted, but God is still his strength and a big portion of his life.

In verse 26, Asaph experiences the true source of his life, He encourages us to anchor our faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As we walk through the dark valley of covid-19, God is still our strength and a big portion of our life. Asaph had gone through many tough times throughout his life- hunger, pain, darkness and even sickness - yet his eyes were fixed on the hand of God, for God was a big portion of his life.

During this season of Lent, God continues to invite us into His sanctuary and helps us to make Him a bigger portion of our life. God will give you wisdom to know what matters in this life. He promises to hold you with His right hand and guide and counsel you with insight from His Word. Asaph proclaimed, "*on earth I have nothing but God is my strength of my heart and my portion for ever.*" Take time to know this God as the strength of your heart, and portion forever. Surely God is good to His people!



**Pray for Lutheran World Mission, as it supports the Lutheran Church in Cambodia to work towards self-reliance and independence through training them in financial, theological and self-sustainability diakonia work.**

**Pray that, although your body may fail you, you will look to God for your strength and hope in this time and age.**

President  
**Justin**  
Sansalu

President, Protestant  
Church in Sabah

# Malaysia

14

*I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds. - Psalm 77:11-12*

We have experienced one of the worst pandemics in the last few years. Its impact is still fresh in our minds. It has led to despair and hopelessness in the hearts of people because of the dramatic loss of human life worldwide, the devastating cascade effect on food systems and world public health and economics, and the faith of many believers. Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His compassion?

Many have doubted the graciousness of God and His divine mercy and protection. Some are trying to find peace in the raging storm, rationalising the cause and effect of it. God seems distant, yet, is it true?

As we ponder Psalm 77:11-12 in the time of this Lent season, we can find peace and the joy of trustfulness amid the pandemic. *'I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds'*. The psalmist remembers what God had done in leading and conducting His children of Israel through the Red Sea into the promised land. This astounding fact has inspired and has given new hope for the psalmist in God's assurance of salvation, the brightest hope that will pierce the darkest day in the valley of death.

As we look back on what God has accomplished in the past, rescuing us from sin and death through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, and giving us new life through holy baptism, current trials can be faced with the joy of gratitude still filling our hearts. Even in the rough storm of a pandemic, God has the power to kindle the soul into raptures of gratitude.

When God seems distant, we are encouraged to remember that He has come near to us in Christ. His eyes never close and His ears are open to hear the cry of the people. He works miraculously to tend to the needy and to strengthen the heart of His people with the hope of a new morning. His mercy and grace never ceases to amaze His people.

Let His name be praised; let His compassion be known to many. Amen.

**Pray for the Protestant Church in Sabah, that their hearts will be turned to God and remember all His deeds and works of wonder.**

**Pray the Lord will grant you the heart of compassion, graciousness and trust in the Lord's mercy for you in Christ.**

# Coral Gallasch

St Paul's, Hahndorf, SA  
partnership with  
Heldsbach  
Kindergartens,  
Finschhafen, PNG

15



**Pray for St Paul's  
congregation and their  
partnership with the  
Heldsbach  
Kindergarten Project.  
Pray for the village  
women who teach the  
children, and PNG  
Coordinators Pastor  
Walter Teunzac and  
Taningnao Zuhu.**

**Thank God for His loving  
presence. Pray for His  
gift of strength, courage  
and hope in your life.**

*When I said, "My foot is slipping," your love, O Lord, supported me.  
When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to  
my soul. - Psalm 94:18-19*

Have you ever felt your feet slipping? Perhaps you were walking in the garden and felt your shoes slipping on the loose gravel. Maybe you were hiking along a steep incline and loose rocks rolled out from under your boots, causing you to stumble. How did that make you feel? Did you cry out like the psalmist, "My foot is slipping"? Think of the relief you felt as a hand reached out to steady you, or your grasping hands clutched onto a handy tree branch.

I am reminded of the time when my husband Tony and I spent five hours on the open sea in an old workboat with a 40 horsepower engine, travelling from Lae to Finschhafen in Papua New Guinea. The local ferry was out of action and I needed to be in Heldsbach to do the planned kindergarten teachers' workshops. As the size of the waves grew, I was filled with fear, anxiety and anger that we had put ourselves at such risk where we were no longer in control. Nothing we could do would keep us safe. As doubts plagued me, I was tempted to think that God was not calling me for this. Like the psalmist I thought, 'My foot is slipping'.

But when we face times of crisis, God hears our prayers and reaches out to us in His love and mercy. As I slipped into anxiety and doubt, God's love was already there, surrounding and supporting me. Joyful relief filled my heart with praise and thankfulness when we finally arrived.

Are you in a situation where your foot is slipping? Do your troubles seem bigger than any ocean? How will your day be different because you know that God supports you when your 'foot slips' and that His *'loving consolation brings joy to your soul'*?

Our faithful God holds us up in His unfailing love no matter where we are or what we do. He who suffered for us in Jesus' death and triumphed in his resurrection, is there with us through the many challenges in our lives. What a relief for us to know that we are safe in God's loving grasp and that we can continue along life's path with joy and confidence.

Rev

**Terumitsu**

Hagenoshita

Kinki Evangelical  
Lutheran Church,  
Japan

# Japan

16

*"Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!" - Psalm 4:1*

This psalm has been called "An Evening Prayer" because it says in verse 8, *"in peace, I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety."*

The psalm writer has been mocked and criticised and seems to carry heavy burdens. He shouts and prays directly to God in his deep suffering because he believes that only God knows the truth and may defend him righteously. Indeed, the merciful God heard his prayer. Trusting God heard him, enabled the psalm writer to rest and sleep in peace.

We also experience times of trials and the sleepless nights where we are in great fear and anxiety. Particularly now in the world, I assume many people are spending peaceless nights, as covid-19 puts thousands of people into hopeless situations.

When we are overcome with distress, let us too, call upon God and plead for His mercy.

God delivered His beloved Son to die for our sin and always stands by our side. He always listens to our prayers, giving affirmed forgiveness and peace.

*'What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us' (Roman 8:31-34).*

When in distress, this psalm writer believed in the One who has promised to listen to the cry of His faithful servants, and so called on Him. May you also call on the merciful Lord to hold you in His arms and give you peaceful rest, whenever you are restless.

**Pray for the Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church in Japan, that they will continue to call upon God for His mercy whenever they experience trials.**

**Pray God will enable you to peacefully rest in His arms, knowing that He listens to your cries.**

Lua evangelist,  
Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in Thailand

# Thailand

17

*May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. I rise before dawn and cry for help; I put my hope in your words. - Psalm 119:147*

The Lua people living in Northern Thailand, of which I am one, are farmers. For farmers like me, we feel and live what the psalmist is saying in this verse.

For rice farmers, for example, it can be a very anxious time as we wait for the rains to come, as it is only then that we are able to start farming. We are then dependent on the rice harvest for our livelihood throughout the year.

Before that time, there is still work to be done. We mow the grass and work the land. Often the work is tiring and we feel weak when we have to face such physically demanding work, but the goal is to have a good rice harvest, so it is important to work hard. We may be discouraged as we work and we may weep at the time of sowing, but it is worthwhile at the end when the harvest is good and we can feed our families.

Similarly, this applies to those who have worries or concerns in their life. We need God's help from the moment we wake up. It also applies to those who share their faith in God with others, to bring in the kingdom of God. There are many things at stake in missionary work, including absence, persecution and family rejection. But we can be assured that Jesus sows life and brings life to all who preach the gospel, as well as those who hear it.

Jesus is our Shepherd and we can have hope that he will wipe every tear from our eyes. Like the psalmist, we can cry to God for help and give our concerns over to Him, knowing that He will answer us.

When you find yourself overwhelmed by your circumstances, rise, cry out and put your hope in His words of truth – that He will never leave you.

**Pray for the evangelists who minister to the Lua people living in Northern Thailand, that they will be assured that Jesus brings life to all who preach and hear the gospel.**

**Pray the Holy Spirit will give all you need to rise and face each day.**

Editorial Consultant,  
Lutheran Women of  
Australia magazine

# Australia

18

*You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me. - Psalm 31:3*

Uluru, or Ayers Rock, is a massive sandstone monolith in the heart of Australia's 'red centre'. Standing as a beacon strong and sure, it is our country's well-known landmark. Legend has it that the Aboriginal name Uluru means 'great pebble'. It is a revered site for Australia's Indigenous people and has drawn them to this place for many generations.

A standout in the arid surrounds, the rock reflects the warmth of the sun and creates a micro-climate in a harsh environment, giving shelter and protection to the many creatures who come for shade and to drink from its waterholes. Think of the feeling of the intrepid climbers who once scaled this rock. The exhilaration of just being there! With the endless blue of sky above and the immovable stone beneath – secure– one can imagine a feeling of wanting to remain as part of this stronghold forever.

Uluru embodies what the writer of the psalm had in mind when he wrote the above text in his prayer of trust in God; the Rock to which he came for refuge and protection. He turns to his Rock, *'In you, O Lord, I seek refuge ... Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me'*.

In a world full of uncertainties, we too seek some form of reassurance and relief. You may be experiencing doubts about the future. What does it hold for you? Are you facing health issues, employment doubts, relationship problems? Do you lie awake in the night worrying about what lies ahead for your neighbourhood, your country, your world?

The psalm writer, David, faced problems very similar to what you may be facing. He faced family and political problems and at times feared for his life. He even spent a great deal of time on the run. In his troubled life, he knew where to turn. He told his troubles to his Lord and laid them at the feet of his Rock. *'Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress'*.

We have that same gracious God to whom we can turn in our distress. We too can lay our worries and fears before him and seek refuge in His protection. We too can pray, *"For your name's sake lead me and guide me"*. Your loving Heavenly Father is waiting to hear from you for the sake of the name of His Son and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

In Jesus we have our rock and our fortress. In trusting him, we find our quiet, our confidence, our refuge, our strength and our peace.



**Give thanks for the Lutheran Women of Australia and their financial and prayerful support for God's mission to our brothers and sisters overseas.**

**Pray for courage in adversity, remembrance of our God who cares, thankfulness in all circumstances and peace of heart and mind.**

Preacher  
**Timothy Lo**  
Shen Loon

Basel Christian Church  
of Malaysia

19

# Malaysia

*Hear my prayer, O Lord; let my cry come to you! Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress! Incline your ear to me; answer me speedily in the day when I call! - Psalm 102:1-2*

The covid-19 pandemic is an unprecedented event that is happening and still unfolding in our lifetime. It is hard to imagine that such a small virus can bring so much damage, destruction and death to humanity. Because of this virus, we have needed to make changes to our lifestyle. Wearing a mask has become like a necessity. We need to practice physical distancing. Health authorities advise us to avoid going to crowded places.

As human beings, we like to think that we have the ability, the intelligence and the means to solve all our problems. We like to be in charge. We like to take control. We like to dictate how things happen. The pandemic has shown us that we are wrong. As much as we would like to, in reality, we are not in charge, we are not in control and we cannot dictate how things should happen and unfold as we would like.

In Psalm 102:1-2, the Psalmist prays to God. *"Hear my prayer, O Lord; let my cry for help come to you. Do not hide your face from me when I am in distress. Turn your ear to me; when I call, answer me quickly."* The psalmist is in a desperate mode. Perhaps he has exhausted his resources. He has no solution to the problem that he is facing. He turns to God and he cries out, asking God to listen to his call and answer him quickly.

We thank God for He is good and has shown that goodness to us in His Son Jesus Christ in who's name we have forgiveness and a place in His eternal family. As children of God, we have the privilege to come before our Heavenly Father with our requests and petitions. God will answer our prayer according to His will for us when we pray with humility and in sincerity.

*'This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us-whatever we ask-we know that we have what we asked of him.'* (1 John 5:14-15)

In Matthew 7:7-8, Jesus says *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened"*. This is the invitation for us to come before God. Like the psalmist, bring to God your worries, your cares and your concerns. Hear my cries, O God.



**Pray for the Basel Christian Church of Malaysia, that they will continue to come to God with their requests and petitions, knowing that He will answer them according to His will.**

**Pray that the Holy Spirit will prompt you to bring your worries and cares to God and have confidence that He will incline His ear to you.**

Anja

Markkanen

Advisor, diaconia work  
in South-East Asia,  
Finnish Evangelical  
Lutheran Mission (Felm)

# Thailand

20

*Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your judgments are like the great deep. - Psalm 36:5,6*

Think of a sunny day when the sun is high above you and clouds far away. Think of standing on a rock where you can see far, clouds high above you and a stream below your feet. You may think to yourself 'What beautiful scenery!' It is easy to agree with the psalm writer when standing on the mountain and looking around. Everything is calm and beautiful, nature in peaceful order. At the same time, I know that many human beings suffer down here.

God's love is eternal. We human beings make mistakes due to limited vision and knowledge, as well as because of our constant struggle with sin. Still, God is always ready to forgive because of His steadfast love and grace. His judgements come from deep wisdom and righteousness. God has mercy on us.

Our imagination is limited in seeing what God is capable of doing. We can just trust that nothing is too small or too complicated for God. His love covers everything because of His faithfulness. He has promised to be with us in all circumstances. No matter how great an obstacle we are facing, we can trust God to help. Jesus said, "all things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23). As those who have been forgiven and loved back to life by Jesus, we are called to join together in bearing His love and mercy to the world – a love and mercy that makes all things possible.

Home of Grace in Bangkok offers a place to stay for women who are rejected by their family, community, relatives and friends. As women get counselling, empowerment and healing, they become capable of going back to their families and communities and living their life as an equal member of their community. They will also be witnesses of God's love as they tell of what they have experienced of God's love and care.

At Home of Grace the staff sometimes feel helpless in front of trouble. Not all the challenges are solved when a young mother leaves the home. Prayers follow the young, fragile mother when she leaves the home full of hope for a better future.

If you feel that you are dragged down by declining hope or diminished faith, or you have lost vision for your life, you can be sure that God is with you and will guide you out of despair. He is entirely capable of accomplishing things far beyond our limited vision and our humble attempts. God is faithful and righteous and He has proven that by sending Jesus as our Saviour. Everything is possible with God.

**Pray for the church work that is done in Thailand through the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand parishes and Diakonia Department among vulnerable people. Pray for the beneficiaries of diaconal help, including the women who seek help from Home of Grace.**

**Pray that you can trust God's faithfulness, righteousness and His eternal love toward His people and earth.**

# Rev Roelof Buitendag

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



21

*The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me; Your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. - Psalm 138: 8a*

Hmmm...the three big questions everyone faces at some stage in their life: *Am I loved? Do I belong? What is my purpose?*  
In a world that seems to be sinking ever-so-constantly into uncertainty and chaos, questions are asked more than ever before. They are good questions and the words of this song have a lot to say in this space.

We do live in a time where we are more 'connected' than ever before, thanks to online platforms and social media apps. Yet, the Australian Psychology Society reports that one-in-four Australians report problematic levels of loneliness (even before covid-19 and isolation added to this issue). We are 'connected' yet don't seem to *belong*.

We live in a time where more young people find employment compared to 25 years ago. According to Mission Australia surveys, Australians are starting work sooner than ever before. Not only do Australians start working at a younger age but, according to McCrindle, the average Aussie will have seventeen different employers and five separate careers in their lifetime. It seems that the reason for this is employees are looking less for competitive salary and benefits, but more for places with shared ideals and a communicated sense of purpose. We are 'committed to living with/for a purpose' yet don't seem to be able to find it easily.

We live in a time where there are more 'romantic interests' before marriage and, according to McCrindle, many Aussies will only really commit to a long-term relationship with marriage, after having "shopped around" and living with the eventual spouse before fully committing to marriage. Once 'the one' is found and a marriage occurs, we are seeing an increase in marriages and length of marriages, with a decrease in divorce over the past 2 decades. We are more and more looking for love and will commit, but very carefully.

The psalmist writes a song that would make our hearts sing. In a place and time where we struggle with belonging, are at a loss for a purpose, and unsure about love, hear the words: *'The Lord will complete His purpose for you'*. You have a purpose, an eternal one that is far more significant and joy-bringing than you can imagine. He has fulfilled His purpose for you in sending Christ as your Saviour.

*'Your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever'*. You are loved by the Creator of all creation. He proved this by being born as a baby human. Not even death could stop His love from enduring for you.

You are loved, you are not alone, you have a purpose. Look to Him and find it!

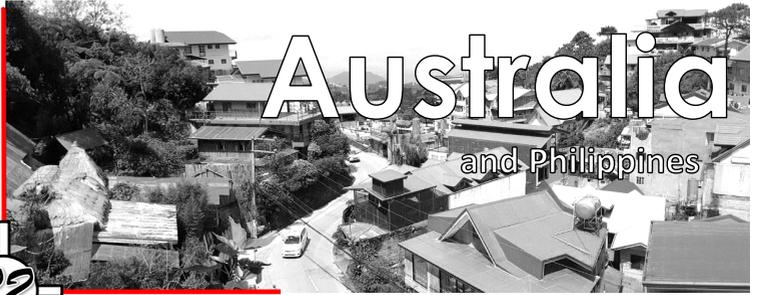


**Pray for Ipswich  
Lutheran congregation  
and their partnership  
with the Evangelical  
Lutheran Church in  
Myanmar.**

**Pray the Lord of life and  
love will focus your  
gaze on Him so that you  
can find your purpose  
and experience the  
love and belonging  
which you cannot find  
anywhere else.**

Rev Dr  
**Michael**  
Lockwood

Lecturer, Lutheran  
Theological Seminary,  
Baguio, Philippines



22

*Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me. - Psalm 50:15*

Jesus says to us, "in this world you will have trouble, but take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Every word our Lord speaks is true, so when he says we will have trouble, this is guaranteed! Yet at present, our world seems more troubled than I can remember in my lifetime. A virus circulating that causes much fear. Covid-19 injections saving some lives, while taking others, and spreading division within the community. Deteriorating mental health. Violations of human rights and freedoms. Conflict and decline in the church. Supply chain disruptions. Inflation. Starvation in North Korea and other places. Civil wars in Syria, Ethiopia, and Myanmar. Refugees fleeing the Taliban. China rattling its sabres against Taiwan, while it persecutes Uyghurs, Christians, Mongols, Tibetans and Falun Gong.

The fundamental assumption of secular western society is that there is a human solution to every problem and all too often we Christians buy into this thinking. We look to politics, economics, medicine, law, bureaucracies, armies, police forces, protest marches, science, and human hard work to be our saviours. This is the equivalent of King Canute standing on the seashore, commanding the waves to halt.

Yes, God calls us to use the gifts He has given us to help our neighbours, yet apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). He, on the other hand, has no end of resources at His disposal when our strength comes to an end. When we trust in ourselves, He says, "*cursed is the one who trusts in humankind and makes flesh his strength*" (Jeremiah 17:5), since '*vain is the salvation of man*' (Psalm 60:11; 108:12). In contrast, '*blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord*' (Jeremiah 17:7), since our God is the one who saves in every time of need.

Whatever troubles you are experiencing right now, Christ says to you, "*call upon me.*" Turn to me in prayer. Find solace, guidance and power in my word. I will forgive your sins. I will remove your shame. I will build my Church. I will empower you with my Spirit and make your labour bear fruit. I will renew your strength and lift you up on wings like eagles. I will protect you from the evil one. I will rescue you from death and hell. I will shield you in the storms of this life and overcome all the troubles of the world.

*'Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me'* (Psalm 50:15). This is the promise of our God, who never breaks His word.

**Pray for Rev Dr Michael as he teaches students studying at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Baguio, Philippines.**

**Pray that the Lord Jesus Christ will teach you to despair of human wisdom, goodness and strength, and to look to Him alone for hope and salvation.**

Rev Dr  
**William**  
Chang

Yishun Christian Church  
(Lutheran), Singapore



23

*Answer me, O Lord, for your steadfast love is good; according to your abundant mercy, turn to me. Hide not your face from your servant, for I am in distress; make haste to answer me. – Psalm 69:16-17*

Psalm 69 is the psalmist's desperate cry to God for help. The psalmist is drowning and is in despair of life (vs 1). Have you had such 'drowning' experiences in your life, when you felt that your breath was sucked out of you slowly and surely? Your desperate cries became muffled and fainter as the waters filled your lungs- a desperate and hopeless situation.

The psalmist was falsely accused by people close to him on all sides. In verse 4 we read that *'those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head; many are my enemies without cause, those who seek to destroy me.'*

He is innocent. The unjust sufferings resulted in much mental anguish, compounded by the fact that they come from the hand of his loved ones – his family. In verse 8, we hear the cry of betrayal, *"I am a foreigner to my own family, a stranger to my own mother's children."*

What is of interest and significance here is verse 7a, *'For I endure scorn for your sake, . . .'* This provides the lens to understand and appreciate the psalm. Throughout his suffering, he is conscious of the fact that God is in control and God is near him, *with him and for him*. God is *hidden* but not *absent*. He is also well aware that two wrongs don't make a right. Had he retaliated, perhaps life might have been better, but only from the human perspective. Instead, he chooses to trust and honour God.

This is a classic example of the theology of the cross, which expounds on the hiddenness of God. This provides him with a perspective to see the true reality around him. He knows that sometimes you do not get what you see. In dogged faith, he puts his trust in the steadfastness and goodness of the Lord God almighty and in His ultimate deliverance. This led to his outburst of faith and confidence in a good and faithful God in verses 16 and 17.

During this season of Lent, reflect upon how you typically see reality in your life. Think of a situation when you really thought that God had abandoned you, when you were disappointed with God and the outcome of that situation. Relook at the same situation but with the perspective of the psalmist, remembering that while you were still a sinner, Christ died for you. What new reality do you see this time?



**Pray for the Yishun Christian Church (Lutheran) as they provide Christian healthcare for their elders in the community, through services from St. Luke's ElderCare in nursing homes, senior care centres and the homes of their elders.**

**Pray you will see the mission challenges around you from the perspective of the theology of the cross, so that you may mount up courage and not miss the opportunities God has given you.**

**Sunitra**

Tuangjaruwina

Field Coordinator, The Norwegian Mission Society

# Norway



24



*In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears. - Psalm 18:6*

King David once experienced a time of life and death. He felt that he had been snared by death and bound as a prisoner of the grave. Saul's forces had hemmed him in, and he was flat on his back (1 Samuel 23:15). But David looked up and, in his distress, he prayed. He called out to God for help, and the Lord answered him.

David faced many trials throughout his life, yet his images of God in Psalm 18 are personal and relational. To David, God represents his fortress (security), his shield (protection), and the 'horn of my salvation' (power to deliver from enemies). Aren't all these things that we desire when we are facing difficulties?

Even during the difficulties, David's response was not pity or anger, but dependence on God for deliverance. Even in the darkest moments when we feel like God is at the furthest, God hears us. God is all we need to endure the difficult times. David experienced this because of the personal relationship he had with God. To experience deliverance the way David did, begins by taking our eyes off the problems we face and placing them on God who is our security, protection and who has the power to deliver us.

David understood what it meant to have to call on the Lord as his encouragement. The Bible tells us that when the families of the men who fought battles with David were kidnapped, the camp was burned down and David's enemies spoke of stoning him. David immediately '*...strengthened himself in the Lord his God*' (1 Samuel 30:6). We too are strengthened in the Lord our God when we remember that He is not a God who is far away but has joined us in our struggles in the person of Jesus Christ. Even the most serious situations do not have power to separate us from His love for us in Christ and He promises to work all things for good for those who love Him. We can cry out to Him in prayer just as David did because He has proven His faithfulness in sending Jesus to rescue us from our greatest enemies. So we can be sure He will hear our cries and help us, even in our most distressing predicaments.

May the Lord, our gracious God have mercy on you and me and on everybody who is in distress. May He answer your prayer from His temple and reach out His hand to you. May you find rest and peace under His protective wing.

**Pray for the Norwegian Mission Society, as they, together with organisations, churches, and individuals throughout the world, work actively to equip each other to share faith in Jesus, fight injustice and eradicate poverty.**

**Pray that when you are distressed, you will call to God for help, knowing that He is your fortress, shield and horn of your salvation.**

Rev **Sally**  
Sandford-  
Morgan

Endeavour College, SA  
partnership with SD GKPS,  
SMP GKPS 3 Jalan  
Sisingamangaraja, SMK  
GKPS 3 Jalan Sudirman  
Pematangsiantar



# Australia

and Indonesia

25

*Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let your glory be over all the earth. Give victory with your right hand, and answer me, so that those whom you love may be rescued. - Psalm 108:5,6*

God's glory is always present in the world around us and if we can take the time to look for it, we can see and feel its presence.

Our natural world is full of the beauty of God's creation. On a small scale, flowers that are abundant in spring and summer contain beautiful patterns and colours to attract the nectar-eating insects and birds. The birds are very attractive to look at as they gather their food. They are clothed with colourful, overlapping feathers and have specifically shaped beaks and feet. Each type has been created with its own particular features that enable it to fly, feed or balance as it needs, in order to survive. In South Australia the blue and white agapanthus flowers of summer attract honeyeaters and most days, they can be seen perched on top of one of the blooms with their beaks deep inside a flower. The glory of God's creation can be seen in the flowers and birds all over the world, but we need to take time to stop and look at them in order to appreciate them fully.

God's glory can be seen on a large scale too in many places on our earth. One example is Lake Toba in North Sumatra, Indonesia. It is the largest volcanic lake in the world, measuring approximately 100km by 30km, and it is up to 500m deep in some parts. It is the crater lake of Mount Toba and has Samosir Island in the middle of it. The lake is surrounded by dense, dark green jungle which contrasts with the usually calm water of the lake. The steep edges of the lake provide many opportunities for tourists and holidaymakers to stop at lookouts and appreciate the beauty that is revealed before them. When we are surrounded by awe-inspiring mountains and a vast lake, it is easy to reflect on the wonder of God's natural creations and be thankful.

Unfortunately, we do not always have the opportunity to stop and witness the outpouring of God's glory via our natural surroundings. God's glory, however, can also be observed in people that we see, hear about, or interact with. He works through His chosen people to bless, sustain, and rescue others. By ourselves, none of us are particularly glorious, but the writer to the Hebrews reminds us that because we are in Christ, we are crowned with God's glory and honour (2:7) and therefore reveal His glory in our interactions with others.

When we are in need and turn to God, He will use the people around us to help us through our problems and, when others are troubled, He will use us to help them. It is when we look into the eyes of our fellow believers as they help us, or others, that we see the glory of God at work in our everyday lives.



**Thanks to God for the blessings brought by partnerships between our overseas partner churches and schools and Australian Lutheran schools.**

**Pray you will notice the outpouring of God's glory through your natural surroundings and through fellow believers.**



**INTERNATIONAL MISSION**  
globally partners local church

Rev **Anne**  
Burghardt

General Secretary, The  
Lutheran World  
Federation



26

*Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted.  
Relieve the troubles of my heart and bring me out of my distress.  
Consider my affliction and my trouble and forgive all my sins. - Psalm  
25:16-18*

There was an elderly woman whom I used to know. Her husband had passed away and they did not have children. She lived on her own in a lonely place in the countryside. Yet she was not lonely. When I visited her, I asked how she coped with living totally alone in a place that most people described as godforsaken. She smiled at me and said: "Do not worry, in fact I am not alone. God is with me every single day. God hasn't forsaken me nor this place here."

There was another woman I knew, a younger one, who lived in a city. She always had people around her, to an extent where one wondered how she could handle being constantly surrounded by others. When asked, she said that she needed constant company to escape the feeling of loneliness that immediately enveloped her, once she was left alone with herself, with her thoughts and feelings.

To be alone is not the same as to be lonely. Most people need, now and then, time to be alone with themselves to reflect, to sort out their thoughts, to gather new energy. At the same time, they need communion with others, as human beings are created to be in communion with God and with each other.

Things get difficult when being alone is not a matter of choice but something that is imposed on us. During the times of pandemic, loneliness increased in many parts of the world. In Europe, more than 20% of people claimed that they frequently felt lonely. The pandemic imposed isolation on many people, without leaving them the possibility to choose when they wanted to be alone. Many felt lonely and afflicted.

Into this loneliness, God sends a word of comfort, which is a promise given to us in our baptism. It is the promise that as baptised persons, we will never be alone again: Jesus Christ will always accompany us. But this is not an imposed presence: he does not intrude on our lives, yet he turns to those who welcome him. He wants to relieve the troubles of our hearts and to bring us out of our distress. He is merciful, and wants those who experience his mercy to share it with others, so that relationships may be renewed and reconciled, loneliness healed and communion nourished.

**Pray for the Lutheran  
World Federation, as  
they strive to put their  
faith into action within  
and beyond the  
communion, and seek  
God's Word and Spirit to  
guide them.**

**Pray that into your  
loneliness, you will  
know God's comfort as  
Jesus accompanies you  
and relieves your  
troubles, so that you  
can share his mercy  
with others.**

# Bishop Jack Urame

Bishop, Evangelical  
Lutheran Church of  
Papua New Guinea



27

*Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit." - Psalm 51:1-12*

Seasons of the church year draw our attention to the biblical narratives of God's interaction with man. At the centre of those narratives lies the gospel of grace. As we journey through the Lenten season, we are reminded of Christ's suffering - an expression of God's love for the world. Psalm 51:11-12 is a prayer for forgiveness, healing and reconciliation, when one realises their weakness, failure and sin. The prayer reminds us of the importance of turning to God. Because of His love and mercy, we turn to Him and seek His divine grace.

God calls us to be His children through Christ, but we admit that we are not perfect and holy for as long as we live in the world. We are humans and due to our sinful nature, we are bound to fall. But by the grace of God we are called, redeemed and reconciled to God through Christ. This prayer in Psalm 51 informs us that we live in a broken world, torn apart by sin in the form of violence, greed, inequality and injustice. We suffer from our human physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual conditions of sin, sickness and other forms of miseries. Those realities of our human condition motivate us to turn to Jesus, who says: *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28).

The prayer reminds us of our need for forgiveness, renewal and strength to live each day with hope in Christ. At the dawn of each new day, we are assured by the promise of Christ that he is with us (Matt. 28:20). Even when we fall or suffer misery, God does not abandon us. In the midst of difficulties and suffering, we turn to Him in prayer to forgive us, renew us and fill us with the Holy Spirit so that we can continue the journey of our faith with a sure hope.

This Lenten season shall also remind us of the suffering brought to humanity by covid-19. Our life, faith, church and mission have been greatly challenged by the pandemic. Therefore, we seek the grace of God to live each day with hope in Christ. When we encounter challenges, difficulties and suffering through sin and sickness like covid-19, we can turn to God. He is merciful and ready to forgive and heal. He says to us, *"my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness"* (2 Cor.12:9). At the heart of the gospel of grace flows forgiveness, renewal, reconciliation, liberation, new life and peace.



**Pray for the Evangelical  
Lutheran Church of  
Papua New Guinea,  
that they will live in the  
grace of God that they  
are called into -  
redeemed and  
reconciled children of  
God.**

**Pray you will turn to God  
for forgiveness, renewal  
and strength to live  
each day with hope in  
Christ.**

# Grant Wildman

Tatachilla Lutheran  
College, SA partnered  
with the Lutheran  
Church in Cambodia



28

*Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. For he satisfies the thirsty, and the hungry he fills with good things. - Psalm 107:8,9*

As we read this psalm, perhaps we can ponder something of the universality of the sentiments expressed here. Often, we are tempted to place ourselves in the 'intended target group' for such blessings as people of faith, yet there is a truth here that is more profound and much more generous... something about the Creator and lover of all humanity saving all humanity. Whether this psalm was written by David reflecting on the wanderings of the Israelites for 40 years in the desert, or whether it was written by someone later referencing the return from Babylonian captivity, the theme is the same - desert times of suffering and deliverance. God delivers ordinary humans that muck up and this God is worthy of our praise. And praise has an impact. If we praise God, others might be convinced of God's worthiness for praise and so join in, especially if they know our story and the ups and downs of our lives.

I remember a group of open-minded students in a Christian Studies class who had little induction into any Christian community. I offered them the option of an assignment that included a personal reflection of attending a church - for some, their first time. I organised for our group to sit in the back row so they could observe. During the service I was their interpreter for what was going on - quite the 'cross cultural' experience. I remember one of the most impactful aspects was not how erudite the preaching was, nor the extent of intellectual agreement (or otherwise) from the students, but rather it was the experience of the body of Christ worshipping. These non-religious students saw a variety of people, some with hands in the air and some with eyes closed, all singing heart-felt praises to God. The students experienced a reality, a lived experience, not a codified and obeyed set of beliefs but an encounter with 'something' alive! What a testimony! Some things cannot be explained in a classroom.

No matter the wilderness experiences we may be facing, the psalms offer authentic ways of responding through both laments and praise. 1 Peter 3:15 echoes these verses by encouraging us to '*always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect*'. Putting one foot in front of the other when we go through the desert and still looking to the One who loves us, is an act of praise and will prompt people who are watching and tracking with you to ask, 'what gives you hope to carry on?' This will open doors to give an answer for the hope you have. And that hope is Jesus!

**Pray for the partnership between Tatachilla Lutheran College and the Lutheran Church in Cambodia.**

**Pray for students in faith-based schools, that through Jesus they can know an ultimate sense of their identity and through the Holy Spirit they may encounter the loving God, not just correct beliefs about God.**

Rev **Jörg**  
Ostermann-  
Ohno

Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in Northern  
Germany

# Germany

and PNG

29

*When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the broken hearted and saves the crushed in spirit. - Psalm 34:17-18*

These are wonderful promises for us. In difficult times as we struggle with heartaches, feel crushed in our spirit, or overwhelmed by the things of this world that threaten or frighten us, these can be refreshing and encouraging words.

If we look at the global spread of the coronavirus, many of us are troubled by the pandemic. Lockdowns have constantly limited our freedom. Some have suffered from the virus themselves or been isolated in quarantine or elderly people's homes with strict social distancing. Some have even lost family members.

In India and other countries of South Asia, millions of people have been pushed back into poverty and despair. The gruesome images of families in India desperately seeking help in front of overcrowded hospitals and the cries of people suffocating because of the lack of oxygen supply, are still stuck in my mind. Where is the Lord in these times of tribulations? Where is God when it hurts? There is no easy answer to that.

The words of the psalm encourage all who put their trust in the Lord. Whenever the righteous cry for help, the Lord is nearby. The cries of the faithful will not be unheard. No matter what circumstances we may find ourselves in, he will hear us when we cry out. How many people cry out with none to hear: social activists imprisoned because of their struggle for justice and truth; children silently starving under the impact of droughts and climate change. Or we might think of the silent cry of God's creation suffering from human greed and violence, too long and often unheard by us.

If we look at this world, we might sometimes be crushed in our spirit, but then we can take refuge in these encouraging promises, which have been made sure in Jesus. God always hears the cries of His children and He is close to the broken-hearted. Therefore, we can take great comfort that He will never leave or forsake us. He is always nearby, ready to give us strength and to sustain our faith. When we are broken-hearted, He hears our cry and stands with us. He will deliver us out of troubles. Of course, as the Bible and real life teaches us, this could mean that God chooses to deliver us out of our tribulations by ushering us into His eternal arms. Deliverance may not always come in the way we hope for, but surely He will deliver us from evil and save us. Because in his life, death and resurrection, Jesus has overcome all our enemies for us. Sometimes, it remains with us to comfort others.

To ease the pain of the righteous and rush to help those who are broken-hearted: this is at the core of Christian love of God and of our neighbours. Whatever troubles we face, God has shown that He is always near to us in His Son Jesus Christ. This is really good news.

**Pray for the Lutheran Overseas Partner Churches and the work they do to support the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea.**

**Pray that when you are broken-hearted, you will lean on God as he hears your cry and stands with you.**

Rev **Eliezer**  
Peter

Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in Malaysia



30

*The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore. - Psalm 121:7-8*

As we journey through this Lent season, let us continue to reflect on the current condition of our lives as we live in the lingering covid-19 pandemic and the effects it has had already. Many of us have lost our loved ones, friends and neighbours to covid-19, however, we are still living today with strict guidelines and laws to protect us and others.

Psalm 121 is a Psalm of Ascent. This psalm is sung by those travelling to the temple located on Mt. Moriah. The psalmist narrows the focus of the traveller on the God who helps him. It is not the hills, nor the temple that provides the help, but the God who created the heavens and the earth and who is being worshipped in the temple built on the hill. The psalmist affirms that it is this God who created the heavens and the earth and who is protecting us from all evil. Moreover, our creator preserves our life and keeps us safe in our going out and our coming in.

Despite all the precautionary measures taken to protect ourselves, we are reminded that it is God's action and decision that prevents any evil, including covid-19, from harming us. It is God our Heavenly Father, through His Son our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who protects us through the blood that he shed for us on the cross. His redemptive work on the cross includes protecting us from all evil and diseases. It is the work of Christ on the cross that enables us to have life abundantly.

Dearly beloved, we are on a journey to our Father's house. The many challenges we face, including the covid-19 pandemic, profoundly remind us that life is indeed temporary. However, our resolute focus on our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ will enable us to continue and complete our journey of life under God's loving protection and care.

Thus, may this Lent season be a time spent with being filled with the strength and power of the Holy Spirit to live our lives focused on the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we inherit eternal life.



**Pray for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia, that they will live in the assurance of the creator who keeps us safe in our going out and coming in.**

**Praise God for His continuous protection and care. Pray that you will remain focused on Him and implore the Holy Spirit to empower and strengthen you to live out your life for the name and glory of our Lord and Saviour.**

# Chris Sumner

Hills Lutheran churches,  
SA partnership with Lua  
evangelists living in  
Northern Thailand

31

# Australia and Thailand

*Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again - my Saviour and my God. - Psalm 42:11*

This psalm certainly reflects on our lives during the past few years, where our world has been turned upside down, without warning, by covid-19. The psalmist in verse 11 is feeling the depths of their depression after, earlier in Psalm 42 being taunted by non-believers saying "where is this God of yours?" We are faced with daily earthly challenges and if we forget our Saviour, this continual pressure can force us into depression with seemingly 'no light at the end of the tunnel'. How do we go forward, change our outlook on life, make it more positive and bear our fruit on the true vine?

The psalmist answers this for us – "I will put my hope in God". God is available 24/7. We don't have to wait on any helpline. Put your trust in God, let go of your earthly worries and talk to God. In my experience, a great cloud will be lifted off you. This may allow you to be happier, healthier, and able to see 'the light at the end of the tunnel'.

I think the song 'As the Deer Pants for the Water' sums up how we praise God in times of trouble and need, where we can see no way clear. Take some time now to meditate on these powerful lyrics:

*As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after You.*

*You alone are my heart's desire and I long to worship You.*

*You alone are my strength and shield. To You alone may my spirit yield.*

*You alone are my heart's desire and I long to worship You.*

*I want You more than gold or silver, Only You can satisfy.*

*You alone are the real joy-giver and the apple of my eye.*

*You're my friend and you are my brother, even though You are a King.*

*I love you more than any other, so much more than anything.*

ATE 206, Martin Nystrom (1983)

When you struggle to put your hope in the Lord, look to Jesus' cross and see in his suffering and death, the assurance that God is 'for you'. Have confidence once more to praise Him, knowing that He does indeed care for you.



**Pray for the partnership between the Hills Lutheran churches and the Lua evangelists living in the Nan district of Thailand.**

**Pray your eyes will always be focused on the Lord, particularly when times are tough and there doesn't seem to be any light at the end of the tunnel.**

# Bishop Lu Guan Hoe

Bishop, Lutheran  
Church in Singapore



32

*It is good for me that I was humbled, so that I might learn your statutes. The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces. - Psalm 119: 71,72*

I liked what the psalmist wrote in this psalm, 'I was humbled'. Indeed, suffering, punishment or troubles serve to humble us and help us to see that by our own efforts, we are not able to overcome those situations or circumstances except by the grace and help from God. Covid-19, for example, is such a tiny virus but it has caused the whole world to be afflicted, and we can see how frail we human beings are and that we are not able to overcome it.

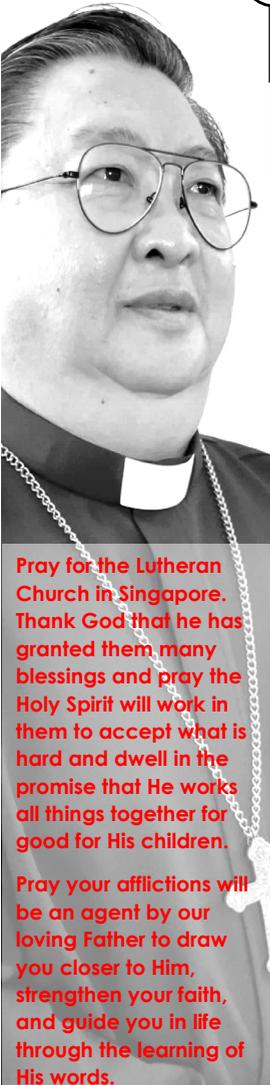
Afflictions sometimes do show us that there are weaknesses and rough edges that need to be dealt with by God. They may not be a punishment for our sins but are served as an agent by our loving Father to draw us closer to Him, strengthen our faith, and guide us in life through the learning of His words.

I don't think anyone likes to be afflicted. While we are in the midst of it, we would not say that affliction is good for us. Most probably we will not feel pleasant at the time, but instead will feel pain and may not be able to understand why we have to go through it. It is afterward that we can experience *'that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose'* (Romans 8:28). As Luther writes, *'this is the touchstone which teaches you not only to know and understand, but also to experience how right, how true, how sweet, how lovely, how mighty, how comforting God's Word is, wisdom beyond all wisdom'*.

Yes, that's why the psalmist says, *"The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces"*. Today in this world, many still believe that money is everything. Have you ever heard of this saying?

- Money can buy a house, but not a home.
- Money can buy a bed, but not sleep.
- Money can buy a book, but not knowledge.
- Money can buy blood, but not life.
- Money can buy the good life, but not eternal life!

But do you remember what the Word of God says to all these? He says: *"You are members of His household"* (Ephesians 2:19)  
*"He grants sleep to those He loves"* (Psalm 127:2)  
*"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"* (Proverbs 9:10)  
*"Whoever eats my body and drinks my blood has eternal life"* (John 6:54)  
*"Whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16)



**Pray for the Lutheran Church in Singapore. Thank God that he has granted them many blessings and pray the Holy Spirit will work in them to accept what is hard and dwell in the promise that He works all things together for good for His children.**

**Pray your afflictions will be an agent by our loving Father to draw you closer to Him, strengthen your faith, and guide you in life through the learning of His words.**

**Eka**

Lestiaman

Harefa

Deputy principal, SMA  
Swasta Kristen BNKP  
Gunungsitoli school,  
Indonesia

# Indonesia

33

*Satisfy us in the morning with your loyal love! Then we will shout for joy and be happy all our days! - Psalm 90:14*

Food is very important for our physical body. When your stomach is full, it gives your body the strength to do work. That is why every empty stomach must be filled again. At least three times a day, we must provide healthy and nutritious food such as rice and vegetables for our physical bodies, so that we are healthy and able to do our duties.

In the same way we must satisfy our inner body and God does this by filling it with His faithful love. The Bible invites us to feast ourselves with God's love in the morning. The Bible says that if we are satisfied with the Lord in the morning, then we too can have full joy throughout our day that will satisfy our struggling souls and tired hearts.

How can we fill ourselves with God's love in the morning?

Firstly, pray. This was a custom that even Jesus did: *'Early in the morning, while it was still dark, He got up and went outside. He went to a solitary place and prayed there'* (Mark 1:35). We can pray to God to tell Him about our plans and hopes for the day, to ask Him to be with us throughout this day, to ask His will to be done on our lives during the day, to help us to remain joyful and grateful, and to be open to His blessings.

Secondly, read the Bible. There are many words in the Bible that God can use to strengthen us. When we are weak, discouraged and find it difficult to give thanks, God's words can help by reminding us that He is good and He has not forsaken us. Often, we forget that we have an almighty and all-loving God because we forget to read His Words in the Bible. Prayer is how we talk to God, reading the Bible is how God talks back to us.

Thirdly, praise God. I really like listening to hymns because the lyrics usually remind me of God's love and who I am in Him. David thanked God for God's faithful love, which was new every morning. He sings and worships God. If, every morning, we contemplate the goodness of God in Christ, then whatever happens throughout the day will still make us grateful. Therefore, let's start each day with God, so we will experience strength and serenity in living life throughout the day. We can cheer all day long because of God's goodness, which we see most clearly in our wonderful Lord and Saviour.

**Pray for the members of the 13 synods who are part of the National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation in Indonesia, that they will experience God's strength for each day.**

**Pray you will fill yourself with God's love each morning, so that your day is filled with joy.**



34

*Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning, for in you I put my trust. Teach me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul. - Psalm 143:8*

At the beginning of Psalm 143, like in many of David's psalms, we see him struggling to make sense of everything that is happening to him. It is all getting too hard. He feels hopelessness and even depression.

Many of us are feeling this way at present. When will restrictions end? When will all this isolation and sickness, even death, go away? A massive array of negative thoughts, feelings and events impact our lives, the likes of which most of us have never experienced before.

Being godly, or even being one of God's chosen people, does not exempt us from severe trials. We need a hand to lift us up and guide us out of the mire, and that help is there for us to reach out and grab hold of. Just like a child who grabs a parent's hand or someone they trust when they feel afraid, so we too should reach out for God's hand each morning. As the psalmist says, "*Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning, for in you I put my trust.*"

My 103 year old mother who is hard of hearing, nearly blind and has restricted mobility, at times feels useless. Yet when I remind her to get up each morning and put her hand in God's hand and trust Him, a smile appears on her face, knowing that now is the time for prayer ministry - for herself, her family, the church and the world. We too need to turn to prayer.

When our hand is in God's hand, we can listen to Him and trust Him to lead. "*Teach me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul*", the psalmist says. We shall overcome because God is the only one who can help us overcome our fears and tribulations. Let Him carry you and give you strength each new day.

When Jesus was heading to the cross, he felt the weight of the world on his shoulders and he bowed his head and prayed to his Father, "*not my will but yours be done*". In so doing, he overcame sin and death and the devil so that nothing in all creation could separate us from God's love.

The words of Edith McNeill's song, based on Lamentations 3: 22-23, clearly express the same thoughts contained in our text:

*The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning, new every morning.*

*Great is your faithfulness, O Lord, great is your faithfulness.*

**Thank God for the support of those who volunteer their time to assist with LCA International Mission- those who put their faith into action, which can produce incredible fruit for the gospel.**

**Pray the Holy Spirit will continue to remind you to reach out for God's hand each morning and then trust Him to lead.**

Pastor  
**Rosanglura**

Lutheran Church of  
Myanmar



35

*O Most High, when I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I am not afraid; what can flesh do to me?  
- Psalm 56: 2b-4*

When we read Psalm 56: 2b-4, we can see that if we trust in God, we have nothing to fear. Anyone who believes in and obeys God is free from fear and trembling.

I am not sure what challenges or risks you are dealing with in these unpredictable times, but I do know that whatever difficulties you are facing, God loves you. Only God can provide you with the answers to all your life questions. These answers are yours not because of anything you have done. You can only have them through faith, belief, and trust in Jesus Christ. Have faith in God!

When we look into the life of King David, we see a little man who lacked the necessary training to become a soldier. But he had no fear because he trusted God, who is all-powerful and capable of doing anything for him. With God's guidance, David accomplished many incredible feats.

My friend, don't be afraid or depressed due to your illness, troubles, or threats in your daily life. The God you worship today is the one and only true God who aided and strengthened King David throughout his life. Just rely on God and put your faith in Him if you are having problems or going through a difficult time in your life. While His answers to our problems are not always exactly what we'd like, He is faithful and will work all things for good for those who love Him.

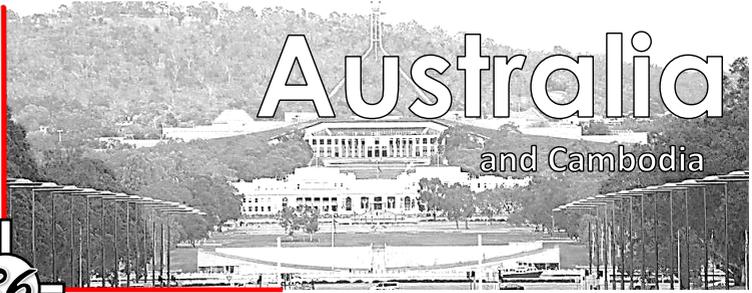
You can be sure of that because God has shown us how reliable He is by sending Jesus to die in our place and to secure all God's promises for you and me. If He cares for you so much that He sent His Son to suffer and die for you, how much more will He provide you all you need to serve the Lord with all your strength, and to be at peace with God and to face each day with hope?

**Pray for the Lutheran Church of Myanmar, that they continue to trust, believe and obey God, so they are free from fear and trembling.**

**Pray that when you are having problems or going through difficult times, that you will rely on God and put your faith in Him.**

# Rev Tim Muller

Immanuel Woden  
Valley, ACT partnered  
with the Lutheran  
Church in Cambodia



# Australia and Cambodia

36

*You are a hiding place for me. You preserve me from trouble. You surround me with glad cries of deliverance. - Psalm 32:7*

I remember when I was 17 years old, going to the Albury cinema to watch the movie, *The Hiding Place*. It is about Corrie ten Boom and her family. They were Dutch Christians who hid Jewish people in their home for their safety during World War Two. The ten Boom family were eventually reported to the Nazi authorities and Corrie and her sister were taken to Ravensbruck concentration camp. Corrie survived and later wrote the book, *The Hiding Place*. She gave witness to God's help and protection for her, and also for her sister Betsie who died in the camp. Corrie believed that Betsie died safely in the arms of Jesus.

David the psalmist knew first-hand of the protection of God, particularly when he hid from King Saul who was trying to kill him. David hid amongst rocks and in caves on several occasions. Have you ever had to hide for your safety? Many people through history have had to literally hide, and some still do. We can take this psalm verse as a wonderful metaphor of God's protection and care.

In my office I have a banner of Jesus the Good Shepherd, made by Christians in a rural village in Pakistan. There is a lamb safe on his shoulders and sheep of various colours close by him. Jesus holds a staff to protect and to guide the sheep. He is like a moving *Hiding Place*. Jesus is with you in the middle of the night when your thoughts are running and when fears abound. You can talk to him anytime. Even your thoughts are prayers. Jesus is your safe place, your go-to in any situation.

As a pastor, I know that people can be deeply disappointed when it seems like prayers are not heard, when it feels like there is not the safety, the protection that is promised in this psalm verse and others like it. I want to say: persist in prayer, keep talking, express disappointments, frustrations, pain. God can take it. When others express to you their disappointment about God's care, listen to their pain and, over time, affirm God's love for them.

Somewhere there will be glad cries of deliverance, on Easter Sunday, from saints on earth and in heaven. Think of people who have gone on ahead who are shouting and singing praise to a delivering God.

Pray for all who are in hiding at this time, hiding even in their own homes, looking somewhere for a safe space.



**Pray for Immanuel  
Woden Valley  
congregation and their  
partnership with the  
Lutheran Church in  
Cambodia.**

**Pray you continue to  
keep talking, expressing  
disappointments,  
frustrations and pain to  
God, and entrust Him to  
be your safe place and  
go-to in any situation.**

Rev

**Ravinder**

**Salooja**

Director, Evangelical  
Lutheran Leipzig  
Mission, Germany



37

*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. - Psalm 119:105*

Where does the lamp lead me? On which path am I walking?

Sometimes as we travel through this fallen world, we lose our way and the paths we take can make us stumble and feel lost. We face dangers on life's journey which can lead us to darkness and the feeling of loneliness and can draw us away from God.

Psalm 119 gives us the key to living in the light, during the dark periods of life. It gives us a promise that we can lean on the One who has a lamp which not only lights a path close to our feet for the immediate journey, but also gives us light as we look into the future. The light from this lamp enables us to find our way so we do not stumble.

Psalm 119:1: *'Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord'* reminds me of Psalm 1:1: *'Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord.'* Both psalms praise the Word of God, which is where we will find light, peace and freedom.

When God chose Israel to be His people and liberated them from slavery in Egypt, He began a relationship of blessing. He gave them the freedom to live in His law and in doing so, live in the light.

When we dwell in His word, our path is brightened, and our heart is enlightened. The word of God has wisdom that guides our thoughts, fills our hearts with love and gives us instruction on how to live as God wants us to. We then become loving to others, including those who have fallen into the hands of robbers, who are struck down, who flee from war and flooding.

Of course, if the light of His word were nothing more than guidelines for living a loving life, we would all still be trapped in darkness and despair, as none of us are able to fully live as He calls us to. But thanks be to God that Jesus – the Word of God made flesh – is the Light which enlightens our path as He leads us in the way of forgiveness, life and salvation. He is the One who meets us in our needs, so that we can meet others in theirs.

When we lose our way in life, we can trust God, who gives His trustworthy Word to enlighten our path and lead us back to Jesus so that we can face each and every day with the hope He offers, and share that hope with those we serve.

**Praise God for the Dresden Mission Society, who in 1838 sent missionaries into Australia to work among the local Aborigines in the Adelaide area. Thank God for the partnership that we continue to have with the Leipzig Mission, working together in Papua New Guinea.**

**Pray that the Lord, the light of your life, will lighten your path, and lead your feet to the place where your hands are needed.**

**Jamie**

Fewster

Navigator College, SA  
partnership with SMA  
GKPS Pematangraya,  
Kabupaten  
Simalungun, Indonesia



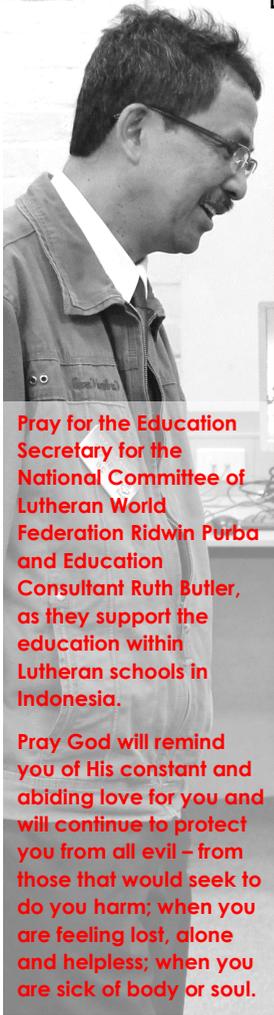
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*Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people, from this time forth and forevermore. - Psalm 125:1-2*

Sport has become a major source of enjoyment for me. I love going surfing, playing cricket and touch footy, and I will watch pretty much any sport on television. One of the more recent sports that I've followed is the NFL (American Football). At first I didn't understand it. However, through encouragement from some mates (and a healthy dose of NFL fantasy competition!), I have come to understand it and really enjoy watching it.

One thing that fascinates me is the attention and *protection* given to one player - the quarterback. If I was paying a player upwards of US\$40m per season, I'd want to look after him too! I love seeing how, after the snap (when the ball gets passed between the centre's legs to the quarterback), the offensive line (the REALLY BIG guys) all push against the opposition, slowly give ground, gradually moving back, and *surround* the quarterback, encircling him and creating a 'pocket' of protection (it's literally called the 'pocket'). The defensive line (the other REALLY BIG guys) of the opposition is trying to get to the quarterback. They want to tackle him and bring him down (called a 'sack'). When I read Psalm 125:1-2, I am reminded of the protection that is given to this one player. "As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people".

Ironically, the seven peaks surrounding Jerusalem do not really make for much protection! With Jerusalem not having a seaport, military significance, or really anything else that makes it stand out, it may seem strange that this city needs protecting at all! It is, for all intents and purposes, an ordinary town. However, the imagery that we receive of a God that surrounds us with His love and protection is clear: the temple in Jerusalem was the place where God dwelt, and the account of how God redeemed us through Jesus in Jerusalem shows us how God surrounds the ordinary (Jerusalem/us) and makes us extra-ordinary (because of Christ). We are His people. He surrounds us with His love and protection. Does this mean we won't get 'sacked'? Of course not. Life knocks us down sometimes and may be doing so more than usual at the moment. But Jesus pulls us back up and reminds us that he will be there again and again to protect us. *'Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved...'*. May you be encouraged to trust in the Lord. His love will be with you *'from this time forth and forevermore'*.



**Pray for the Education Secretary for the National Committee of Lutheran World Federation Ridwin Purba and Education Consultant Ruth Butler, as they support the education within Lutheran schools in Indonesia.**

**Pray God will remind you of His constant and abiding love for you and will continue to protect you from all evil - from those that would seek to do you harm; when you are feeling lost, alone and helpless; when you are sick of body or soul.**

# Nevin Nitschke

Program Officer,  
LCA International Mission



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*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. - Psalm 23:1-3*

Who is the **who** in the text? The doer is clearly identified in the first two words of Psalm 23. "*The Lord*". To make it obvious for us who the doer is, this is followed at the start of each sentence by the statements "*He makes...He leads...He restores*". If we think that somehow we can bring peace to our own lives, be able to rest on our own in green pastures, or smooth the rough waters around us, this text thankfully brings us back to reality. The shepherd in our life is "*The Lord*" and he is the doer!

**What** are the green pastures and still waters? When we think of these things, the images that first spring to mind may be a good education, a wonderfully fulfilling job, a happy and well provided-for family, a healthy bank balance or a mortgage-free home. However, what is spoken of here is far more precious than any limited thinking we may first have. This is where we are not in want and our soul is restored!

**When** does this happen? Often, we strive for those things that bring joy to our lives by focussing on planning and preparing for what *could* be; those things that *will* make us happy when we achieve them. Advertising is based around us believing that we can be healthier, look prettier and feel better about ourselves if we work toward certain goals or purchase certain products. It makes sense then, that we often believe if we get our act together, we will find peace and contentment. The psalm reminds us that even without the achievement of certain goals or obtaining material positions, our soul is being restored now! It doesn't say He *will* lead, or He has led, but that He **is** leading us now!

**How** can this happen?! We don't need to look any further than the first sentence. It is possible because "*The Lord is my shepherd*". Through your baptism, you are a part of the Creator of the universe's flock. He is your Shepherd. You belong, you are cherished, you are cared for, and you are His!

**Why** would God make us lie in green pastures, lead us beside still waters, restore our soul and lead us in right paths? There is nothing we have done to even whisper in hope that we deserve such treatment. Read the text again aloud. First, it mentions who and lastly, we read of the why. It's not because we are good, nor because we were born into the right family or went to the best school, nor because of our work for Him. He does all this for us "*for His name's sake*". His name is holy, His ways are pure. Praise the name of Jesus! In a walk that has challenges for us at every turn, may you be embraced by "*the peace that passes all understanding*" as you journey with the Lord as your Shepherd.



**Spend some time with Jesus during Easter, unpacking what it means to not want, to be made to lie down and be led by your Shepherd. Thank God for the earthly gifts He provides you with and especially thank Him for restoring your soul. Reflect on the way He lovingly cares for you.**


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*You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*  
– Psalm 16:11

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

### **PRAY**

We hope you are able to continue to use this *40 Days a Lent Devotion and Prayer guide* throughout the year.

You may also like to subscribe (by emailing Erin at [erin.kerber@lca.org.au](mailto:erin.kerber@lca.org.au)) to receive the LCA International Mission monthly prayer calendar.

### **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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:nevin.nitschke@lca.org.au)





**40 DAYS - a Lenten Devotion and Prayer guide**

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**LUTHERAN  
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**INTERNATIONAL  
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