Journey to the Resurrection 2017

Lenten Resources from Baptist World Alliance Division on Mission, Evangelism and Justice

Artwork by Shannon Cowett
The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Division on Mission, Evangelism and Justice (MEJ) invites you to journey to the resurrection with us as the division seeks to connect with our global community in a variety of ways through our member bodies, regional bodies, ecumenical groups, interfaith groups and the United Nations (UN).

http://www.un.org/en/sections/observances/international-days/ You are invited to use these collected resources to help enhance your worship and/or devotion time leading up to Easter. You will also find links to information regarding concerns of the world and BWAID projects. We hope and trust you will find these resources helpful. If you would like to add to this collection, please contact us at MEJ@bwanet.org. To learn more about Baptist World Aid (BWAid), please go to http://www.bwanet.org/programs/baptist-world-aid. To learn more about our ministry at the United Nations, go to http://www.bwanet.org/programs/mej/united-nations.

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Many people seem to have a rather limited experience with Lent, that time before Easter, thinking that its purpose is simply to give up something. But this idea misses the best aspect of this holy season. Lent’s historic roots go back to the fourth century when the church began advocating setting aside the time before Easter for spiritual preparation in anticipation of the celebration of the Resurrection.

Lent lasts 40 days — from Ash Wednesday (March 1 this year) — through the day before Easter, Sundays not included. That 40-day period is inspired by the 40 days Jesus spent fasting and praying in the wilderness before he began his public ministry. Some people may indeed choose to give up something — certain foods, drinks or pastimes — for those six-and-a-half weeks. Such personal sacrifices can have a spiritual aspect if the time and/or money that they would normally use can be redirected into activities that involve introspection, repentance and ministry.

If a Lenten observance has not been part of your discipleship journey in past years, perhaps you might want to consider approaching Lent 2017 by thinking not of what you might give up but, rather, of what you might take on as we prepare our hearts and minds for the experiences of Holy Week and the celebration of Easter.  

Raymond White, USA
Links to other resources offered on Baptist websites in various parts of the world:

www.baptist.org.uk/Groups/220683/Prayer_and_Worship.aspx
https://ctbi.org.uk/lent/
https://40acts.org.uk/
http://d365.wpengine.com/
https://cbfblog.com/2017/02/20/lenten-resources/
www.abc-usa.org/2017/02/27/lenten-reflections-ash-wednesday
A Lenten Prayer which could be used as a responsive reading, a quiet reflection, a read prayer:

Poem of Pardon

Oh God, hear our prayer
When bodies find strength
and respond to it too,
and minds are at peace,
for many today
when women find value
need glimpses of You.
and slavery is ceased,

A life met with greed
When value is giv’n
distrust and despair.
where value is due
We live in a world
and the Spirit of God
that is woefully unfair.
is plainly in view

Oh Lord, may this place
in me and in You
reflect Your intent
in women and men
and prepare a way
one image of God
for your Kingdom’s advent.
over and over again.

When strangers welcome
Come Spirit, come grace
the desolate few
and forgive us our sins;
and neighbors become
restore us to one
a safe harbor too
through Jesus. Amen.

Katie Morgan, USA
Shiloh Baptist Church in Trenton, New Jersey, in the USA, offers their Lenten Worship. Their senior pastor, Rev. Dr. Darrell Armstrong, is the BWA Chief Administrative Officer at the United Nations.

**LENTEN SERVICE OF REFLECTION**

**KEY BIBLICAL SCRIPTURES ABOUT FASTING**

A. NEHEMIAH 9:1-2: "Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting in sackcloth and with dust on their heads. Then those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners; and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their GOD for one-fourth of the day; and for another fourth they confessed and worshiped the Lord their GOD."

B. JOEL 2:12-20 "'Now, therefore,' says the Lord, 'Turn to Me with ALL your heart, with fasting & with weeping, and with mourning.' So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord our GOD ..."

C. PSALMS 35:13: "But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; and my prayer would return to my own heart. I paced about as though he were my friend or brother; I bowed down heavily, as one who mourns for his mother."

D. PSALMS 109:24: "My knees are weak through fasting, and my flesh is feeble from lack of fatness."

E. ISAIAH 58:1-14: "'Why have we fasted, they say, and YOU have not seen ... Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?"

F. ZECHARIAH 7:1-14: "Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests: 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those seventy years, did you really fast for ME-for ME?"

G. MATTHEW 4:1-11: "And when HE had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward he was hungry."

H. MATTHEW 6:16-18: "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 'so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.'"

I. MATTHEW 9:14-17: "Then the disciples of John came to HIM, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.'"

J. MTT. 17:14-21MRK. 9:14-29: "However; this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

K. LUKE 2:37: "Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served GOD with fasting and prayers night and day."

L. ACTS 13:3: "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to ME Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' They, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away."

M. I CORINTHIANS 7:5: "Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive own another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. But I say this as a concession, NOT as a commandment."

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First Sunday: March 5 – HEALTH:


BWAid Project: Casa Club for Seniors in Ecuador

The Casa Club Seniors program is a space for recreation and personalized accompaniment for seniors ages 55 to 85 years old. Health care, educational enrichment, physical activity, companionship and spiritual formation are part of the program.
Intercessory Prayer

Congregation:
Eternal Triune God, Lord God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and Creator of every being, we, your children, come before you today with our prayers knowing that you hear us. Help and guide us even in our intercession.

Leader:
Lord Jesus, we remember when you walked this earth you invited all who were thirsty to come to you. You said in John 7:37-38, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me ... rivers of living water will flow from within them.” And in your lonely hours on the cross you cried, “I thirst” (John 19:21). Lord, you care both for our physical and spiritual thirst.

Lord, we confess that we have sinned in not caring as we should have for your children around the world who are suffering due to scarcity of good water. We have tasted the living water given to us in God the Holy Spirit and we live with unceasing good running water everywhere so we are not mindful of our waste. Forgive us, O Lord.

Merciful Lord, we ask that the change we so long for in the world would begin with us. Keep us mindful of not being wasteful, especially when we unthinkingly throw away good drinking water.

God, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Today, O Lord, we hold before you victims of water scarcity. Thousands of farmers in India are committing suicide burdened by debt due to lack of water to cultivate their land and provide for their families; they leave behind grieving families burdened with debt, shame, sorrow and suffering. Uncountable people in developing countries in Asia walk long distances just for a pot full of water, which is generally contaminated. The land and waters are polluted because corrupt government officials deliberately turn a blind eye to environmentally abusive industrial practices. So, poor and
ignorant families suffer with water borne sicknesses, many children are born crippled and uncountable die before attaining age five.

Congregation: O God of compassion, in your mercy turn our hearts to your ways to be generous that we may prayerfully seek opportunities to create awareness in our people to curb wastefulness and empower us to unite in asking our leaders to seek means of providing clean water to other parts of the world.

Leader: And may we also partner and support those who are committed to bring relief to thousands in need of good clean water so, that as good water is multiplied, hope and joy would also be multiplied to them.

Congregation: May your living water begin to flow to all the world through living examples, we, your children.

Leader: Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, be with us in the week ahead. You have satisfied our thirst and made us your source of living water for the world so as we go out into the world help us to be your living examples to others.

We ask in Jesus Name. Amen.

Rev. BM Sudheer & Rev. Regina Sudheer, India
Children’s Moment

Need: A child volunteer [notes to the presenter in brackets]

I have never really thought of water as being strong since it does not seem to be able to hold many things up, but I know some very strong people, and they are mostly water! Our bodies are made up of 60% water. [Have a child stand.] If we poured water into his/her frame, it would probably fill up to the top of his/her stomach. A jar/pitcher/glass/bucket of water will not hold a brick, but I know people who can carry many bricks! Water in our bodies not only makes up our muscles that help to move bricks, water also helps our brains tell them to do so. It is a very powerful element!

Water can be dangerously powerful, like in the story of Noah’s Ark when God destroys the whole earth with water. God then made a powerful promise never to flood the earth again. In a different water story, this one with Jesus, God makes another very powerful promise. Jesus was baptized with water, an act that promised his life in service to God. In Baptism we are reminded of God’s promise to us to be our caretaker, to love us and care for us in life. Like Jesus, we can be baptized and exchange the promise with God to be God’s children. That is some powerful water!

Prayer time

Sometimes it is hard to get the right amount of water that our bodies need. And even when we do, sometimes our bodies still get sick. Let’s pray today that the power of God can come to those whose bodies need God’s living water.

Dear God,

Protect us all from the dangerous flood waters, like you did Noah and his family. Protect all of us from the dangers of bacteria in water and dehydration from lack of it. Help others for whose bodies could use extra nutrients and healing abilities to recover from illness. Give them your healing hand. In Christ’s name. Amen.

Katie Morgan, USA

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Second Sunday: March 12 – WOMEN

International Women’s Day March 8

Quick facts: women’s health
http://www.who.int/gender/documents/10facts_womens_health_en.pdf?ua=1

BWAid project: Empowering Female Headed Families in Ethiopia

This program provides entrepreneurship training to women whose income is currently is extremely low. Once training is complete and money is saved, a seed loan is given in groups.
Scripture Focus: II Timothy 1:1-14

Prayer

God, our Father, our Creator and Renower, we stand before you with prayers for the hurting. We are reminded of the many who suffer and who are marginalized because of their suffering. We pray also for those losing faith in the face of the suffering and the injustices surrounding them in the world. We pray for ourselves, too, as our faith seems so feeble in view of the structures of sin. We all need your good news.

In particular, this week, we remember women and their struggles. The poorest of the poor, the sickest of the sick, the abused, belittled and enslaved, are in our prayer: meet them in the hardships of their lives, restore them and make them wells of living water. Our prayers are for the servants of your gospel among the women, who are often the first voice of hope. We pray for our sisters who model to the world what faith is – like Timothy’s grandmother and mother. They remind us who we are in Christ and they teach us to embrace hope.

Let us all remember that faith in you is the courage to love, even those that are not lovable. Faith is the offer of your power to the powerless by putting ourselves first. Like you did for us, we do in faith to others so that love may grow and change our world.

Amen.
Litany

God of grace, mercy, and peace we pray to you that our lives would reflect a courageous trust in you.

Leader: When we encounter pain in the world
All: Let us hope against of hope.

Leader: When we lose courage
All: Let us trust your power and continue doing your will.

Leader: When we meet the powers of evil
All: Let us not forget that you have overcome evil and so will we.

Leader: When we face self-doubt
All: Let us experience the power of self-discipline and continue in the treasure you entrusted us with.

Leader: When we face opposition
All: Strengthen us so we can endure the shame of the Gospel, Knowing that suffering is inevitable in the structures of sin, But that it is nothing compared with the blessing of salvation.

Leader: When we are plagued by doubt
All: Let us remember the good faith of those who have gone before us Let us never forget that the hope in you never fails And that faith means your promises will be fulfilled.

Amen.

Ksenija Magda, Croatia
Children’s Moment

It’s hard moving to a new place. You may have to leave your friends and family behind and all of your belongings to go to a place that is better for your family. You may not even know what you are going to do when you get to the new place. But what if someone came to your town/village and asked if you wanted to leave everything, including your friends and family to go somewhere, who knows where, to do who knows what? That sounds a little scary, doesn’t it?

There were several people in the Bible that faced this situation. God called out to Abraham to and told him to go to an unknown land and be the father of a faith that followed God. Abraham did not even know this God, but he went. God promised to give him a family (even in his old age) and to take care of him.

Later in the Bible, Jesus tells his disciples (strangers at that time) to take up their cross and follow him, whatever that may look like. Jesus calls Christians to the same challenge. We are to put our friendship with Christ first no matter where that takes us. God’s strength will go with you, so do not be afraid.

Prayer Time

As we pray today, let’s prayer for women all over the world that leave all they have and go to unknown places, just to find security and peace.

God,

Give courage to the women and their families as they seek shelter. Like Abraham and Sarah, provide for them on their journey and give them strength to endure. Amen.

Katie Morgan, USA

To donate to the Baptist World Alliance, please visit us at www.bwanet.org/give.
Third Sunday: March 19 – WOMEN

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, March 21

Quick facts: women clean water
http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/88/7/10-080077/en/

BWAid project: Rural Water and Sanitation Project, Zambia

This project provides clean drinking and cooking water for 30 communities with the construction of boreholes, equipped with hand-operated pumps, and ventilated pit latrines. This project provides training on good hygiene practices to the community members as well as training on how to maintain the wells and latrines.
Scripture Focus: Proverbs 9:9

Prayer

Oh Lord,

My heart leaps and jumps for joy when I think of the women I met in Malawi. I am so impressed with their faith and their trust in you in spite of their challenging circumstances.

They came from the mountains, eight hours on foot,

From remote places where no transport can reach, not even a bicycle.

They walked in the blazing sun and unbearable heat

And when they arrived, they sang!

They sang and praised you, oh Lord,

They danced for you, they played their drums

And their faces radiated with joy!

What an infections joy that was!

Oh the faith of these women!

Thank you Lord for filling them with your Spirit

And for transforming their dreary lives in poverty into the victorious life of worship.

I praise you for my Sisters!

But I also wonder: What if … ?

What if these women would be handed the key of education together with their love for you?

What if they themselves could read and study your Word?
What if they learned to count and write numbers?

I remember the old Malawian lady who in the name of Jesus went to her village and taught everyone to read and write. They now could read their Bible and also the newspaper. They could participate in shaping their community, generating income, assisting people in need and preaching the Word of God. Through educating her people, this believer transformed her village.

Oh Lord,

Raise more of your daughters around the world to share our resources and educate those who did not have the privilege of formal education. Make us willing to share our knowledge, skills and experiences so that others can advance in their lives. Help us to fight poverty and oppression by truly empowering women in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

_Régina Claas, Malawi and South Africa (originally from Germany)_

To donate to the Baptist World Alliance, please visit us at [www.bwanet.org/give](http://www.bwanet.org/give)
Greetings Friends and God’s deepest blessings to each of you during this Lenten season!

It’s a joy to share some reflections and worship opportunities with you. I hope you experience the love of Jesus in praying through these guided prayer experiences!

First, since the next two worship guides for the BWA Lenten journey are focused on slavery and its victims, I thought I’d share the 30,000 foot view with each of you. I’ve also included some specifics about my home, Virginia, in the United States, as a way to draw near to you, my brothers and sisters around the world. It is my attempt to say “we’re in this together” and while the details of specific injustices our individual lives, families, and communities, differ, we can find grace, love, and fellowship in our shared relationship with Jesus who draws near to us in these darkest of places.

Peace and wholeness friends!

Rev. Tom Lynch, Pastor of Students and Family Life, First Baptist Church, Ashland, VA, USA
tom@firstbaptistashland.org

Background

Human trafficking, also understood as modern day slavery, is the exploitation of human beings for profit (Polaris, 2014). It is present in every area around the globe (United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, 2013) and is estimated to generate $150 billion a year for traffickers (International Labor Organization, 2014). One study claimed that of an estimated 27 million human trafficking victims, 80% are children and women (Linden & Andrees, 2005) although the data about the prevalence of human trafficking is unreliable (Goździak & Bump, 2008).

The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) rescued a total of 105 children in a 2013 operation (Johnson, 2013) and another 168 in 2014 according to a Washington Times newspaper article (Swarts & Riddell, 2014). In my own state, Virginia, response to a 2012 Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services survey indicated that, 55 of 118 local service providers reported having served human trafficking victims (Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, 2012). In the same survey, it was reported that the median age of juvenile trafficking victims were aged 13-17 (Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, 2012). While the literature does not indicate the specific number of children who are trafficked the national human trafficking hotline estimates that 100,000 are trafficked yearly in the United States (Polaris, 2014). Add to that stories of forced labor, forced prostitution, or forced organ harvesting from each of our neighborhoods around the world and it isn’t surprising modern day slavery numbers are estimated to be around 30 million victims.

Lord hear our prayer!
March 25, 2017
Prayer Station Orientation

If you haven’t set-up a prayer station before think of it more like sharing the Lord’s Supper. It is a tactile or hands-on experience. You have to prepare the space by securing the elements so that those present might participate. You approach the worship experience with your whole person by engaging multiple senses, sight, hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling. That being said here are preparation lists and suggestions as you set up the prayer stations. Include the participant instructions at the display. I encourage you to include the suggested background narrative above by displaying it near the prayer station or by printing out copies to be provided to participants as they enter worship or the prayer space on March 25 and 26.

Prayer Station: Victims of Slavery

Activity

Purpose: Participants will read articles, scripture, pray, reflect on pictures, and form a paper chain symbolic of those in our lives and around the world experiencing the injustice of slavery.

Instruction – Print the following article for display at the prayer station
Article 1: Excerpt
January 04, 2017

On Christmas Eve, eight Indian traffickers were convicted for torturing and chopping off the right hands of two innocent men they had tried to enslave. All eight were sentenced to life imprisonment—the longest sentences ever in an Indian bonded labor slavery case — while a ninth suspect is still on trial (Complete article is available at the link below).

http://news.ijm.org/eight-convicted-in-brutal-hand-chopping-slavery-case/

Instruction – Print the following article for display at the prayer station
Article 2: Excerpt
November 4, 2016

One victim said she was told if she wanted to see her baby again she had to continue to prostitute and send the proceeds to Maynes. She made as much as $1,000 a day.

"Her baby was being held for ransom," prosecutors said.
Instruction – Print the following scripture for display at the prayer station

Scripture: Isaiah 61:1-3

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners;
2 to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;
3 to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.

Suggested Supplies (Please feel free to use supplies available to you in your context):

1) Black paper cut into two-inch-wide strips (these will be folded to make links in a chain)
2) Stapler with staples
3) Print Outs (See set-up instructions below)
4) Tin coffee can in middle of the table/space/nook/cranny (this will give texture to the display but won’t be used until the second prayer station)

Set-up Instructions:

Set-up Instructions: Print or write out the scripture passage and display at the prayer station which can be placed on a table, the floor, a nook, a cranny, a platform, etc. Read the excerpts (or the entire articles by clicking on the links) about recent survivors and perpetrators of modern day slavery. Print pictures of victims of slavery and one of the provided stories displaying them at the prayer station. Make sure they’re displayed clearly and with good lighting. Using the black paper, create the beginnings of a chain by stapling five or six links together and draping it on the display.
Participant Instructions (Print the instructions below and display at the station so worshippers will understand how to interact with the prayer station experience):

Participant Instructions (For Display): Read Isaiah 61:1-3.

Participant Instructions (For Display): Responding to modern day slavery as a follower of Jesus is about proximity. Look at the pictures. Read the articles. Draw near to God, the victims, and the perpetrators by praying for them. It is only in close proximity that we can intervene on behalf of the oppressed.

Participant Instructions (For Display): After reading, reflecting, and praying take a piece of black paper and form a chain link by stapling it to the other paper chain links. Ask God how you might be and instrument in setting free the captives.

[This worship/prayer station, “Victims of Slavery,” was inspired by International Justice Mission, World Vision, Dan Kimball’s Sacredspace, and my personal studies, work, and interactions with the anti-human trafficking community.]
Prayer Station Orientation

If you haven’t set-up a prayer station before think of it more like sharing the Lord’s Supper. It is a tactile or hands-on experience. You have to prepare the space by securing the elements so that those present might participate. You approach the worship experience with your whole person by engaging multiple senses, sight, hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling. That being said here are preparation lists and suggestions as you set up the prayer stations. Include the participant instructions at the display. I encourage you to include the suggested background narrative above by displaying it near the prayer station or by printing out copies to be provided to participants as they enter worship or the prayer space on March 25 and 26.

Prayer Station: Break the Chains of Slavery

Activity

Purpose: Participants will read survivor stories, scripture, pray, reflect on maps, and burn links in a paper chain symbolic of setting the captives free around the world who experience the injustice of slavery.

Activity Narrative (Instruction – Print the following narrative for display at the prayer station):

People still experience slavery. 30 million literally do. Many others experience a less institutional slavery but still feel like they’re held captive. Will you allow Jesus to call you to flip over the money changer tables allowing the captives to draw near to God? Will you intervene on behalf of the oppressed? Will the captives be set free?

Survivor Story (Instruction – Print the following survivor stories for display at the prayer station):

Story Excerpt (follow link for full story):

My name is Holly Austin Smith, and I am a survivor of Human Trafficking.

When I was fourteen years old, I ran away from home with a man I had met at a shopping mall in Ocean County, New Jersey. After exchanging numbers, this man called at night while my unknowing parents watched television in the living room.

Instruction – Print the following scripture for display at the prayer station

Scripture: Matthew 21:12-13

12 Then Jesus entered the temple[a] and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. 13 He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’; but you are making it a den of robbers.”

Suggested Supplies (Please feel free to use supplies available to you in your context):

1) One candle (light the candle – it will be used to set each chain link on fire)
2) Cup of water set off to the side
3) Print Outs (See set-up instructions below)
4) Tin coffee can (large) in middle of the table/space/nook/cranny (as the links are torn from the chain they can be burned and dropped into this can)
5) Maps of different communities, places, countries, etc. from around the world

Instructions:

Set-up Instructions: Print or write out the scripture passage and display at the prayer station which can be placed on a table, the floor, a nook, a cranny, a platform, etc. Print survivor stories for displaying at the prayer station. Print a suggested narrative (above) to guide the breaking the chains activity. Make sure they’re displayed clearly and with good lighting. Light the candle. Set a cup of water off to the side. Drape black paper chain across and around table. Scatter maps around the prayer station.

Participant Instructions (Print the instructions below and display at the station so worshippers will understand how to interact with the prayer station experience):

Participant Instructions (For Display): Read Matthew 21:12-13. Read the U.S. slavery survivor stories.

Participant Instructions (For Display): Responding to modern day slavery as a follower of Jesus is about proximity. Look at the maps. Draw near to God, the victims, and the perpetrators by praying for them and slavery in the different areas of the world. It is only in close proximity that we can intervene on behalf of the oppressed.

Participant Instructions (For Display): After reading, reflecting, and praying take a piece of the paper chain and tear a link from it. Light it on fire and drop it in the tin can. Make yourself available to God to “set the captives free” by breaking the chain of slavery and burning it asking God to end slavery for all time.

*NOTE: You may find other passages compelling. Feel free to change and edit so that you might better connect with people in your context.
Fourth Sunday: March 26 – Slavery

BWAid project: Skills Training for Human Trafficked Women, Maharashtra Baptist Society, India

Rehabilitation and skills Training Home for Trafficked Women, India

This project provides a safe place for survivors of Human Trafficking; educates them in a trade so they may be self supportive; and brings awareness among the community on the seriousness of human trafficking.

The focus is on providing shelter, food, counseling, and education to young women who were rescued from human trafficking in the suburbs of Mumbai. A home for 6 women provides services that will assist them in re-establishing themselves back into the community. The education portion of this project focuses on skill development and job placement. Those who are interested in higher education are given an opportunity to do so.
**Scripture Focus:** John 15: 13-15

"13 Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are My friends if you do what I command you. 15 No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you" NASV.

**Prayer**

Lord God and Father in heaven, on this day, we celebrate you laying down your life for men and women who were and are victims of slavery to sin. Changing their status from slaves to friends, revealing the Father and His heart, ending their ignorance of who the Father is and what He says.

We thank you for all those who you have set free from slavery of sin and pray for those who are still victims of slavery of sin.

Today we also want to remember those who were victims of economic slavery. Many whom were merchandised for sexual exploitation, child sacrifice, and drug trafficking. We pray for those who are economic slaves and are victims of them same vices today. We pray that they will come to accept your sacrifice on the cross for their salvation and freedom.

We pray that the memory of slavery will compel us to love and serve you and appreciate the freedom we have in you and because of your sacrifice on the cross

*Michael Okwakol, Uganda*
Prayer

Oh Lord,

My heart is breaking when I think of the young girls among the many refugees in my country and all over Europe. They are the most vulnerable among these thousands and thousands of displaced people who had to leave their homes and are now desperately looking for a safe and peaceful place to live.

Many of these little girls are traumatized by horrible experiences of war, pain and death at such an early age. They have been rudely pulled out of their safe homes. They have witnessed their parents despair and have seen them lose all hope. They have been dragged along in dangerous and fearsome treks of strangers, refugees like them trying to make it to safer shores. They did not have enough to eat and not enough water, warm clothes or proper shelter on the way. Their school education has come to a grinding halt. They have been cheated of their childhood. Instead, many of them have of necessity become hardened, street-wise and war-wise survivors.

And now, in their new host countries, their parents are so often treated harshly, with suspicion and resentment and severe lack of respect. They feel unwanted. They do not speak the local language, they have no friends. How can they survive in a strange and cold land?

Oh Lord,

You see these little girls, each and every one of them. You have made them beautiful, they are from your own DNA, and they carry your likeness.

When they suffer, you suffer, again and again.

How long, oh Lord, how long? How much longer must this continue?

Raise up your children, oh Lord, awaken our compassion for these little ones.

Help us to make a difference in their lives, where we encounter them.
Help us to seek them out in the refugee camps, in our neighborhoods, at the public schools, at the employment agencies where they are queueing with their parents.

Help us to love them, to encourage them, to protect them, and to bring your healing into their lives.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Regina Claas, Malawi and South Africa (originally from Germany)

To donate to the Baptist World Alliance, please visit us at www.bwanet.org/give.
Fifth Sunday: April 2 – Mental Health

World Down Syndrome Day March 21
World Autism Day April 2


BWAid project: Peacebuilding and Development in New Dawn and Glory

Buenaventura, Colombia, is a main port town that has a number of low economic housing areas. The neighborhoods, New Dawn and Glory, have a high youth/teen population that are involved in armed gang activity and drug trade. This project aims to work with 80 children and 40 teens/youth living in these communities and empowers them to build peace among the two warring communities through sports and Bible camps where the participants will receive training in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and leadership. The project will also address the poverty and hunger prevalent in the community by teaching the youth how to grow and maintain vegetable gardens to supplement their nutrition.
A Reflection…

Suddenly dreams and hopes, some of which we had been aware of and others that we had not been aware of, were shattered into a thousand pieces – our second child has Down’s Syndrome … Little did we know what new course our life as a family and as individuals would take. Today, fourteen years later, we can say that things are not always what they may seem to be at face value: problem-free times can quickly turn into bumpy roads and seemingly insurmountable challenges shrink into nothing much more than hurdles we take in our stride.

Our son has built many bridges to others. Warm-heartedness, empathy and friendliness exude from him and touch troubled people around him. In the face of this person being so obviously different people take courage and drop their facades; impressing with superior performance and shining in the light of success seem to become somehow irrelevant. This has led us to many a precious encounter with those around us. Moments we cherish. And yet there will probably always remain a degree of sadness, having been led a path we had not chosen for ourselves, for our daughter, for our son, for our families. But we have come to appreciate the many unexpected beauties along the wayside and we are learning to trust every step of the way.

Renate Wolf (Friend of Regina Claas)
Litany:

Leader: A new-born child –
  What a miracle!
  A girl, a boy, what a wonder!
  The smile, the laugh,
  Even the cry – a precious gift from God!

All: I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works, oh Lord, are wonderful, I know that full well.

Leader: A young man, full of energy,
  A young woman, full of dreams,
  A family, a circle of friends –
  What potential, what great hopes!

All: I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works, oh Lord, are wonderful, I know that full well.

Leader: A new-born child-
  Just a bit different
  A girl, a boy, with different genes
  And yet
  The smile, the laugh,
  Even the cry – a precious gift from God!

All: You are fearfully and wonderfully made; your works, oh Lord, are wonderful, I know that full well.
Leader: My child, you may be different,
But no less precious.
Young man, full of energy,
Young woman, full of dreams,
A family, a circle of friends –
You are welcome!

All: You are fearfully and wonderfully made; your works, oh Lord, are wonderful, I know that full well.

Leader: Lord, we thank you for our differences.
We thank you for the diversity of your creation.
You cherish each one of us
Tall and short,
Young and old,
Male and female,
In any color, shape or form.
You do not judge us
By our performances
You do not appraise our abilities
When you look at us
With tender love
You see one thing only:
“My beautiful child!”
All: We are fearfully and wonderfully made; your works, oh Lord, are wonderful, we know that full well.

Prayer of Penitence

Leader: For judging others
By human standards and expectations …

All: Forgive us, Lord.

Leader: For disregarding those who are different,
For not taking them seriously,
For abusing them …

All: Forgive us, Lord.

Leader: For overlooking your gifts in those
Who don’t quite fit the norm,
For not recognizing their precious gifts so needed in our society –
Their kindness, their sensitivity, their pure heart …

All: Forgive us, Lord.

Leader: Open our eyes
To see the beauty of all your children.

All: For we are fearfully and wonderfully made; your works, oh Lord, are wonderful, we know that full well.

Amen. Regina Claas

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Palm Sunday: April 9

BWAid project: Greenhouse Project, Jamaica

The Jamaica Baptist Union Mission Agency in partnership with the Jones Town Baptist Church is now in Phase 3 of the Farming Inna Di City Project. The overarching goals of the project are to:

1. Develop a poverty alleviation project with an “Inner City Community.”
2. Provide opportunity for Christian Witness.
3. Expose the community to greenhouse technology as a ‘new’ farming technique on limited land space.
4. Provide opportunity for open field farming.

The achievement of these overarching objectives remains a work in progress. The specific objectives for Phase three are as follows:

1. Improve the farming infrastructure through expansion of water supply and improvements in existing greenhouse.
2. Continue work to find more economic crops.
3. Build the technical capacity greenhouse staff.
4. Develop communication products to document and share the Farming Inna the City experience.
Litany

The parade to the cross begins today.

“Tell the daughter of Zion,”

Let us look up beyond our lives to see.

“Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

Let us join the bustling crowd in anticipation.

“A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.”

Let us shout with joy because everything is changing.

“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

The parade to the cross begins today. Let us enter into worship and walk the path with him.

(based on Matthew 21:1-11 [NRSV])

Prayer

O Lord,

On this day, filled with palm fronds and processionals, we are reminded of the great anticipation that preceded your entrance into Jerusalem. The crowds expected you to meet their expectations of king and leader. Instead, you revealed to them another Kingdom centered on the cross. We come to worship today with many expectations of our own for You and Your Kingdom. In the midst of our celebrations, reveal to us anew Your true Kingdom defined by Your sacrificial love. In the name of the One who comes in the name of the Lord. Amen.

Eric Spivey, USA
Children’s Moment

In some places, shouting is a form of praise, like cheering for a sports team or telling a group good job! In other places, shouting shows anger and displeasure. In the last few days of Jesus’ life, he is shouted at in both ways. One time, he gets on a donkey and rides it into town. People are lining the streets, praising him for going to save them! Just a few days later, some people decided they did not like the way Jesus was telling them to live. It was very different from the way that they worshipped God, so they yelled at him—very mean things. The actually yelled “Crucify him!” which meant, “kill him!” He knew that he was going to die. In fact, he had been telling everyone that for a long time now. Maybe he remembered the encouragement from the first people on the streets and knew that he wanted to demonstrate God’s love for them and save them.

Perhaps we can show our love and thanks for God by praising God with shouts. [Praise God with a culturally appropriate gesture, such as clapping, waiving, shouting, etc.]

Prayer

God,

We praise you for being the Almighty God, for coming to this earth to let us know you more! Thank you for the gift of eternal life so that we may remain in Your presence forever. Hosanna! Amen.

Katie Morgan, USA

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Resurrection: April 16

BWAid project: Refugees, Serbia

This project focuses on providing clothing and hygiene packs for women. In addition to clothing, blankets for babies and small children, shoes and cold weather items assist refugees and immigrants in dire need.
Reflection on Resurrection

Christ is Risen!

Christ is risen indeed!

By the time we on the West Coast of Canada mark Easter much of the world will have done so before us. It is as if we hear the reverberations anticipating the many voices of Pentecost echoing just this same declaration: Christ is risen! Jesus is Lord! My church has had a sunrise service on the shores of the Pacific since its beginning over 25 years ago; an infant church by world Christian standards. The Salvation Army used to gather each Easter here in Vancouver at a particular place across English Bay. Their rousing celebration of the Resurrection caused the place to be renamed “Hallelujah Point”. So we look across the ocean imagining an Easter in Asia the day before. We share a simple meal on the beach as Jesus did for his disciples. The psychoanalyst Carl Jung was once asked on the BBC near the end of his life whether he believed. His response was, “I don’t need to believe, I know.” That statement for Christians, that experience and knowledge, is not a shout of triumphalism but an expression of joy; a blending of heart and mind; a place of certitude found in Christ not in our needs for intellectual security. John Updike famously wrote a poem about the bodily resurrection of Jesus. It follows here. I share it with you to experience a belief rooted with intellectual integrity in the history, wonder, and joy of the bodily resurrection of Jesus nestled, as it were, in the beauty, power and simplicity of that first Easter story. May we echo with the angels, not just this day but every day, when the disciples came looking and found an empty tomb, “Why do we look for the living among the dead? He is risen just as he said.” We might add “he has gone from this place to every place in our world even to the most hidden and complicated places to get to: those of our own hearts and minds and lives.”

Jeremy Bell, Canada

Seven Stanzas at Easter – John Updike

Make no mistake: if he rose at all
It was as His body;
If the cell’s dissolution did not reverse, the molecule reknit,
The amino acids rekindle,
The Church will fall.
It was not as the flowers,
Each soft spring recurrent;
It was not as His Spirit in the mouths and fuddled eyes of the
Eleven apostles;
It was as His flesh; ours.

The same hinged thumbs and toes
The same valved heart
That—pierced—died, withered, paused, and then regathered
Out of enduring Might
New strength to enclose.

Let us not mock God with metaphor,
Analogy, sidestepping, transcendence,
Making of the event a parable, a sign painted in the faded
Credulity of earlier ages:
Let us walk through the door.

The stone is rolled back, not papier-mache,
Not a stone in a story,
But the vast rock of materiality that in the slow grinding of
Time will eclipse for each of us
The wide light of day.

And if we have an angel at the tomb,
Make it a real angel,
Weighty with Max Planck’s quanta, vivid with hair, opaque in
The dawn light, robed in real linen
Spun on a definite loom.

Let us not seek to make it less monstrous,
For our own convenience, our own sense of beauty,
Lest, awakened in one unthinkable hour, we are embarrassed
By the miracle,
And crushed by remonstrance.

Jeremy Bell, Canada
Children’s Moment

Once there was a young girl who would turn five on her birthday. When the day came to celebrate, she walked into the kitchen to find a very, very, very large box. It must be her birthday present, she thought. She became so excited about what could possibly be in a box that large. Just then, her mother came into the kitchen and gave her permission to open the box. As she approached it, she began to imagine what she might find inside. Maybe it would be a pet horse or an oversized dollhouse. With the help of her mother, she climbed to the top and opened it up. When she looked down inside, do you know what she saw?

Nothing! An empty box!

She was disappointed at first. Surely there was some mistake. Had her mother forgotten to put something inside?? But then she thought back to those things she imagined before opening the box. It was not a horse, but it did look like just the right size for an imaginary saddle. And although it was not a dollhouse, it was plenty big enough to be a hotel for her dolls, with a little imagination. She spent hours and hours imagining up things to do with that box. It was not what was inside of it; it was so much more!

We learn on this Easter Sunday that some women went to the tomb of Jesus, anticipating finding his body there. When they arrived, what do you think they saw inside the tomb?

An empty tomb!

There was no body there! Had someone taken him?? At first, they were disappointed like the girl was in our story with the empty box. Then they remembered what he had said. He would live again. When they saw him living again, they were so overjoyed! It was not just about getting their friend back. It was about so much more! It was about Jesus coming to be the savior of the world and to love and care for them and for us forever!

Prayer Time

Jesus, Thank you for choosing to die so that we may live. Amen.

Katie Morgan, USA

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BWAid project: Arsenic Mitigation, Bangladesh

Adopt a Village Arsenic Mitigation, Bangladesh

This project provides safe drinking water to the people of Bangladesh. Tests conducted in rural areas have found high levels of arsenic in the groundwater in many communities. 97% of the population of Bangladesh relies on groundwater as a source of drinking water. Nearly 75% of the total land farmed is irrigated by ground water.

Arsenic poisoning cause arsenicosis skin lesions and women with the arsenic poisoning are less likely to marry and may become more vulnerable to poverty. Those who suffer arsenic poisoning suffer from social stigma. Many people believe that those who have Arsenic poisoning are contagious or cursed. Funds for the project will be used to conduct surveys for 12 villages, arrange tube-well screening test, and provide arsenic removal water filters. The tube-well screening and arsenic removal water filters will be distributed by 12 trained facilitators so that people may enjoy drinking safe water again.

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