

A Journey Into Wholeness

Photos and Text by Christine Sine

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MSA is a small non profit organization that seeks to raise awareness of challenges that Christians will face in their lives, churches & communities in the future. It is unique in that it is a crossroads, grassroots organization - connecting people across generations, denominations and cultures and encouraging them to become cultural creatives. MSA is unusual in that we encourage people to become contemplative activists. We want to foster spirituality and innovation that enable Christians to create new ways to both be a difference and make a difference in order to advance God's kingdom purposes and engage tomorrow's challenges. For more information visit us on the web at www.msainfo.org or www.mustardseedjourney.wordpress.com

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Journeying With Jesus Toward the Cross.

The idea of journey is fundamental to the Christian faith. From the time that God called Abraham and Sarah and commanded them to “Leave your country and your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you” (Gen 12:1) people of faith have journeyed both physically and spiritually toward a deeper understanding of God. In the Middle Ages Christians were encouraged to make pilgrimages to special holy places called shrines. It was believed that if you prayed at these shrines you might be forgiven for your sins and have more chance of going to heaven. Others went to shrines hoping to be cured from an illness they were suffering from.

If you were rich enough, too busy or just plain lazy you could go on pilgrimage by proxy, paying some other person to endure the hardships for you. Amazingly this service is still available today. For anyone who has vowed to make the pilgrimage to Fatima in Portugal which is famous for religious visions but can't fulfill their promise, help is at hand -- rent-a-pilgrim. For about \$2,500 Pilgrim Gil will make the journey in your place -- and send

you a certificate stamped along the way to prove he walked your every step.¹

Journeying or *peregrinatio* from which we get the English word pilgrimage was also basic to Celtic Christianity. Believers often left home and loved ones with no specific physical destination in mind but rather on an inner journey to find Christ. They believed their home was not this world, but the heavenly Jerusalem, toward which all of life moves us. They saw themselves as “guests of the world”. Every experience encountered and every activity undertaken on the way was an opportunity to meet or to represent Christ.

A Journey Into Wholeness

At the center of God’s vision for the future is a wonderful dream of a world in which all of creation is restored to the wholeness and harmony of relationships that were broken through the disruption of the Fall. God looks forward to the day when all people are restored physically, emotionally and spiritually. God’s dream is that we live and work together in

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<http://www.guardian.co.uk/religion/Story/0,,1955974,00.html>

harmony and mutual trust, caring for the earth and relating personally to our loving Creator.

To be a disciple of Christ means to grab hold of this vision and make it the destination for our life journey. We deliberately choose to lay down our own self-centered lives and consciously live each moment journeying towards God's presence and towards a life that is fully integrated with God's will for restoration and wholeness. The Holy Spirit is constantly at work in us breaking down the barriers that distort our ability to lead a life that is fully integrated with God's purposes.

According to Henri Nouwen, "Discipline is the creation of boundaries that keep time and space open for God – a time and place where God's gracious presence can be acknowledged and responded to."² This is the kind of discipline we all need in order to mature into the people God wants us to be.

A Journey into Lent

Lent, those days before Easter that commemorate the 40 days Jesus spent out in the wilderness before his ministry began, invites us to contemplate our own Christian journey and consider the disciplines we need to become whole. How can we deepen our relationship to God as we meet with and represent Christ through our words and action?

Many of us are unfamiliar with the practice of Lent though its observance is gaining popularity in all kinds of churches from Baptist to Pentecostal. Those of us who do acknowledge it tend to think of Lent as a time to give up some non essential food item like chocolate or activities such as watching TV. Some of us fast for a day or two and get a warm glow of satisfaction because of our sacrifice but these observances make little if any difference to the ongoing journey of our lives.

² *Lent and Easter Wisdom from Henri Nouwen*, compiled by Judy Bauer, Ligouri Press, Ligouri Missouri 2005, p4.

Lent is not really about sacrifice or deprivation. In the early church this was a time of preparation for those about to be baptized. Today it is more often regarded as a season of soul searching and repentance for all Christians as a preparation for the joy and celebration of Easter. Unfortunately for many of us our soul searching is as perfunctory as our sacrifices. We spend a little more time reading the bible and in prayer. Some of us spend a few hours working with a local mission we are concerned about but otherwise our lives are unchanged and after Easter there is very little to show for our commitment.

During Lent this year we would like to invite you to join us on a journey with Jesus towards the Cross, a journey that we hope will change our lives forever. We want to challenge you to set aside time to deepen your relationship with God by entering the brokenness of our world. Allow yourself to encounter Christ as you reflect on all the aspects of your life and of our world that distort your ability to live as effective representatives of God and God's kingdom.

When humankind was separated from God at the Fall it was not just our relationship to God that was distorted and broken. Our relationship to each other, our stewardship of the earth and even the wholeness within ourselves were all broken or distorted by sin. Our journey toward the Cross should encourage us to confront all these areas of brokenness and lead us to a place of healing and wholeness.

Enter the Weekly Challenge

Over the six weeks of Lent as we journey with Christ toward the cross we want to examine these areas of brokenness and explore how we can move closer to God and more effectively be God's hands of healing and wholeness. Our journey will begin with an exploration of the barriers within ourselves that resist God's will. Selfishness, fear, feelings of abandonment and our inability to trust that God

really loves us all separate us from God and the life that God wants for us.

In the second and third weeks we will confront some of the barriers that separate us from other human beings. Lack of forgiveness, the desire to control, greed, indifference to the suffering of others all distort our relationships to those with whom we share this planet. In the fourth week we will explore barriers that separate us from God's creation. Lack of proper stewardship, over-consumption and a lack of respect for what God has made all destroy our relationship to God's creation. In the fifth week of Lent we will confront some of the barriers that isolate us from other parts of God's family because of lack of unity between believers with different theological perspectives. Independence, the desire to "do it my way" and lack of unity with fellow believer are all barriers to a mature relationship with God.

It is not surprising that in a culture like ours that craves comfort and ease, few people practice fasting and self sacrifice during Lent anymore. Deliberately walking with Christ towards the Cross is very costly. In fact it demands our whole life. But we pray that this year will be different. As we journey this year towards the Cross may we walk towards a deeper commitment to God. In the words of the apostle Paul "Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." (Hebrews 12: 1-3)

Accept the Challenge

Discipline is a word that harkens back to our childhood, or to the machinations of those in our lives who want us to conform to certain behaviors or to the needed requirement for developing ‘character.’ Actually, the word is grounded in the word disciple, which means a ‘learner.’ Discipline can become for us a way to encounter new learnings about ourselves and to actively engage in extracting from those learnings insights that can deepen our understanding of life and spirit. Lent invites us to re-enter the school of life and be disciplined in the endless possibilities for growth.³

This Lenten guide is designed to take you each week on a journey into a different aspect of the brokenness of God’s world so that you can become an instrument of God’s healing and restoration. As we prepare for this Lenten season together there are several disciplines you may want to consider that will facilitate your journey.

1. **This journey is not meant to be travelled alone – plan to begin each week with a group meeting with a spouse or friends.** *Look at your schedule for the six weeks of Lent. What do you need to give up over this period in order to make meetings possible? These times together are an important part of your journey. Plan a simple (soup & bread) meal as part of your community discipline. Give a different person responsibility for the meal each week. Allow time to discuss your struggles and plan your week’s activities. Spend time praying for each other and also for those who are less fortunate in our world.*
2. **Set aside time each day for solitary reflection.** *Buy a new journal specifically to reflect on your Lenten journey. Each day*

read through the scripture designated for the week. Which verse stands out for you? Read this verse aloud several times. Then spend time in quiet reflection. What is God saying to you through this verse? Write down any reflections, thoughts, & prayers that come out of your time.

3. **Purchase a book of Lenten reflections to read each day as part of your discipline.** *One of my favourites is Lent and Easter: Wisdom from Henri J. M. Nouwen, compiled by Judy Bauer. Alternatively you may like to read a book such as Pilgrim’s Progress, by John Bunyan with your spouse or a friend.*
4. **Find an Ash Wednesday service to attend on February 21st as the first act of your Lenten journey.** *Lent for Western Christians begins with Ash Wednesday, a day for penitence to clean the soul before the Lent fast. Roman Catholic, Anglican, and some other churches hold special services at which worshippers are marked with ashes as a symbol of death, and sorrow for sin. In Ash Wednesday services churchgoers are marked on the forehead with a cross of ashes as a sign of penitence and mortality. The minister or priest marks each worshipper on the forehead, and says “remember you are dust and unto dust you shall return”, or a similar phrase based on God’s sentence on Adam in Genesis 3:19. At some churches worshippers leave with the mark still on their forehead so that they carry the sign of the cross out into the world. At others the service ends with the ashes being washed off as a sign that the participants have been cleansed of their sins.*
5. **Take time to visit our blog each week** www.mustardseedjourney.wordpress.com *Check out the new liturgies and resources that have been added. Share your own reflections, photos, comments and struggles.*

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http://www.healthdiaries.com/mentalhealth/ptsd/brenda/archives/2006/03/lenten_week_3_reflections.html

February 25th – March 3rd - First Week of Lent



Journey into the Brokenness of Our Inner Selves

At the heart of the biblical story is not the sinfulness of humankind but the love and forgiveness of God. As we journey toward the cross we are not meant to wallow in our sin even though we desperately need to acknowledge it and seek repentance and forgiveness. The reason we focus on our brokenness and need for repentance is so that we can be healed and enabled to become all that God intends us to be.

During this first week of Lent as we walk with Jesus towards the Cross we are reminded that to follow him we must be willing to enter into the fullness of the Easter story. We don't just follow a resurrected Christ who through the sacrifice of his life poured out the love of God so that we might find the wonder of eternal life. We also follow a crucified Christ who willingly entered the pain and suffering of our world and became one of us. What we often forget as we read the Easter story is that Christ's sacrifice was not just so that we might be set free from our own sin and

brokenness. Christ lived and died as an example of how we too should live.

Our walk with Jesus to the cross begins with an invitation to lay down all the inner burdens of self-centeredness, indifference and greed that distract us from a wholehearted commitment to God. It is to the cross we come for forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration. Only then can we experience the full joy of Easter morning and be resurrected into the new life that God intends for us, – a life in which all that we do and all that we commit our time and our resources to is truly governed by our love for God and our love for neighbours around the world.

Scripture – Psalm 51: 10 – 16

10 Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
11 Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will turn back to you.

14 Deliver me from bloodguilt, O God,
you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your
righteousness.

15 Open my lips, Lord,
and my mouth will declare your praise.

16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would
bring it;

you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

17 My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.

- *Memorize one new scripture verse each day*
- *Take time each day to read a chapter from a book on spiritual disciplines such as Richard Foster's Celebration of Discipline*
- *What is one way that you could help each other maintain this discipline?*

Accept the Challenge

“Create in me a clean heart O God and renew a right spirit within me.” (Ps 51:10)

Read Ps 51 in unison together and then spend time in silence meditating on its implications for your life

** Get each person to look into a mirror and using a felt tip marker or soap, write or draw onto your reflection words and symbols that represent your anxieties and fears. When you are ready spray glass cleaner onto the mirror and wipe it clean.*

** Pray together for God's cleansing in your hearts*

Reflect on those things in your life that focus you on yourself rather than on God. Discuss the following questions:

** What is one thing you struggle with that distracts you from a whole hearted commitment to Christ? Write down your areas of struggle on a piece of paper.*

** How could you use this first week of Lent to initiate a new spiritual discipline that would bring reconciliation and healing in your place of struggle? Some possibilities you might like to consider are:*

- *Free up an extra fifteen minutes each day to pray and read the scripture*

March 4th – 10th – Second Week of Lent



Journey into the Brokenness of Hunger

“The cost of progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”⁴

Half the world – 3 billion people – live on less than \$2 per person per day. 854 million people across the world are hungry on a regular basis. 16,000 children under the age of 5 still die every day as a result of hunger related diseases – that is one every 5 seconds. Hunger and malnutrition are the number one risk to global health killing more people than AIDS, malaria and TB combined. In the U.S. 38 million people are at risk of hunger and as a consequence the US has the highest infant mortality of any Western nation⁵.

During this second week of Lent we want to identify with those in our world who are chronically hungry and investigate ways that we can assist them in their struggle to establish food security.

⁴ US President Franklin D Roosevelt 2nd inaugural address 1937

⁵All statistics from UN Human Development Trends 2005 produced by UN Development Programme

Scripture – Isaiah 58:5-12

5 Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?

6 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?"

7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.

9 Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk,

10 and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.

11 The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

12 Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

Accept the Challenge

Begin your weekly meeting by discussing your discipline for the past week. In what ways have you been tempted to take short cuts over the week to avoid or minimize your new discipline? Write your distractions and struggles on a piece of paper. If you have a wooden cross available nail or tape your distractions to the cross. Alternatively you may like to place them in a fireplace or a bowl and set them alight to symbolize your new freedom from those distractions.

Now focus on the next stage of your journey. Familiarize yourself with some of the facts about poverty. Watch the following video on the World Food Programme website. How does this make you feel? What can you do to make a difference?

http://www.wfp.org/aboutwfp/introduction/counting_the_hungry/infodiag.asp

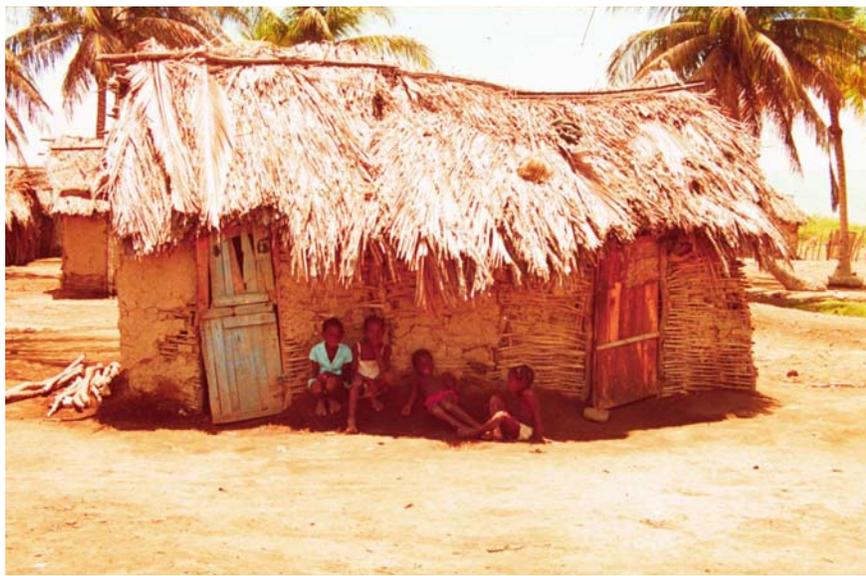
The Mutunga Partnership www.mutunga.com based in Melbourne Australia is trying to turn the tragic statistics of world hunger into a tool for raising awareness, for building a sense of community with the poor, and for raising funds for micro-credit development. The idea is that a household lives on a food budget of \$2.00 a day, per person for a week. The money saved is then donated to The Mutunga Partnership⁶. This idea doesn't require finding extra cash – just a temporary change in lifestyle. It's a challenge!

We challenge you to take the issue of world hunger seriously. Restrict your food budget to less than \$2 a day per person for this second week of Lent. Send the money you save to the Mutunga Partnership. Send us your reflections and comments.

- * *What permanent changes would you consider making in your eating habits as a result of this challenge?*
- * *How much money would this save on a monthly basis and how could you use it to make an ongoing difference for those that live in poverty?*

⁶ The Mutunga \$2 Challenge is a trademark of the Mutunga Partnership

March 11th – 17th – Third Week of Lent



Journey into the Brokenness of Homelessness

“There are only two families in the world as my grandmother used to say: the haves and the have-nots.”⁷

Homelessness or houselessness as it is now often called, is a huge and complex challenge throughout our world. UN-HABITAT's 2005 report⁸ indicates that over one billion of the world's six billion residents live in inadequate housing, mostly in the sprawling slums and squatter settlements in developing countries. They estimate that by the year 2050 this figure could rise to over 3 billion⁹.

In the U.S. an estimated 4-5 million people go homeless each year. In Australia an estimated 100,000 are homeless and in Britain 100,000 households live in temporary accommodation and are therefore classified as homeless. In all our countries the numbers have increased in the

⁷ Miguel de Cervantes, Don Quixote de la Mancha, said by Sancho Panza

⁸ www.unhabitat.org

⁹ UN-Habitat 2005 report p7

last few years and the fastest growing segment of the homeless population is young women with children. Millions of others live without a safety net and constantly struggle with the knowledge that loss of a job or serious illness could quickly push them onto the streets.

Scripture Isaiah 65: 17 – 25 or Isaiah 53

17 "See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.

18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.

19 I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.

20 "Never again will there be in it infants who live but a few days, or older people who do not live out their years; those who die at a hundred will be thought mere youths; those who fail to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.

21 They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

22 No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands.

23 They will not labor in vain, or will they bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them.

24 Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.

25 The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD.

Accept the Challenge

Begin your weekly meeting by discussing your participation in the \$2 challenge. In what ways have you been tempted to take short cuts over the week to avoid your restricted diet? What long term impact could it have on your eating habits?

Now try to put yourself in the place of people who are homeless. Sit for a few moments and look around your house. Focus on the things you value most – your family photos, the tablecloth lovingly embroidered by your grandmother, the gifts from your mother and father. How would you feel if these were

suddenly lost? Even worse how would you feel if everything else was stripped away too – including your job and your life savings?

Now imagine that you and your family have been forced to travel hundreds of miles to find safety. You are crowded into a makeshift refugee camp with thousands of others. During the trip your passport and money were stolen. Now you have heard rumors that there is only enough food and water for a small portion of the people in the camp. How would you feel? How would you react? How would you want others to react to you?

Plan some ways to interact with homeless people and refugees each day during the next week. Here are some possible ways to accomplish this:

- * *Find out where the homeless people in your neighbourhood congregate. Walk around the area with a friend. Talk to at least one homeless person you encounter and ask them about their life. If possible find out why they became homeless.*
- * *Buy a paper from a homeless person when you go shopping.*
- * *Volunteer at a homeless shelter for an evening.*
- * *Take a homeless person out for a cup of coffee or for lunch.*
- * *Talk to people who have been refugees. Ask them about their experiences of homelessness.*
- * *Visit a tent city if there is one in your area.*

March 18th – 24th - Fourth Week of Lent



Journey into the Brokenness of Creation

“On October 9, 2006 we passed a critical juncture. The Global Footprint Network reported that on that day the world moved into ecological overdraft. In a little over 9 months into the year 2006 we have used up the ecological capacity of the planet”¹⁰.

According to the Global Footprint Network, if everyone lived like Americans we would need almost five and a half planets to sustain us. If we lived like Canadians or Australians or Brits we would need four planets to sustain us. Bangladesh has the lightest footprint – if we all lived at the level of the average Bangladeshi the earth would support 22 billion people.

It is not only our level of consumption that determines ecological footprint however. Italy's eco footprint is two-thirds that of other

European countries because Italians eat less processed food. Eating fresh rather than processed food (particularly processed meat and dairy) could immediately shrink your environmental footprint.

If every UK household installed 3 Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs enough energy would be saved in a year to supply all street lighting in Britain. 500 billion to 1 trillion plastic bags are used worldwide each year which is 150 bags for every person on earth.

Scripture – Psalm 65: 5 – 12

5 You answer us with awesome and righteous deeds, God our Savior, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas,

6 who formed the mountains by your power, having armed yourself with strength,

¹⁰ www.footprintnetwork.org

7 who stilled the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves, and the turmoil of
the nations.

8 The whole earth is filled with awe at your
wonders; where morning dawns, where evening
fades, you call forth songs of joy.

9 You care for the land and water it;
you enrich it abundantly.
The streams of God are filled with water
to provide the people with grain,
for so you have ordained it.

10 You drench its furrows and level its ridges;
you soften it with showers and bless its crops.

11 You crown the year with your bounty,
and your carts overflow with abundance.

12 The grasslands of the wilderness overflow;
the hills are clothed with gladness.

Accept the Challenge

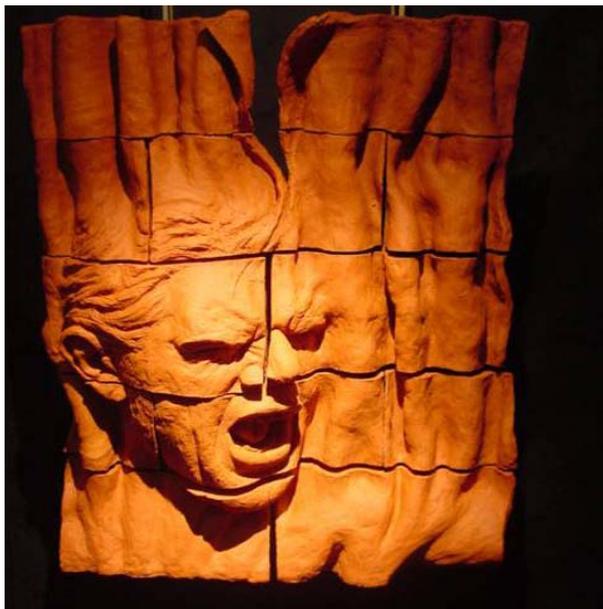
Begin your weekly meeting by discussing your discipline for the past week. How did talking to homeless people make you feel? What new insights did it give you into their way of life? In what ways have you been tempted to take short cuts over the week to avoid or minimize your interaction with the homeless? Discuss ways you could interact with the homeless on a long term basis.

Now focus on your new discipline. Check out your own eco footprint. If you have internet access get each person to do the eco footprint quiz <http://ecofoot.org/> If internet access is not available suggest that participants check out their eco footprint before they attend. What was your immediate reaction to this information? Were you shocked by your consumption and its impact on the world? Discuss ways that you would like to simplify your life during this next week in order to decrease your impact on the earth.

Here are some suggestions that you could commit to for the week

- * *Use public transport or car pool rather than driving your own car to work each day.*
- * *If public transport is not available plan a car free day for you and your family.*
- * *Purchase reusable shopping bags (canvas or biodegradable material) and begin using them for your grocery shopping.*
- * *Buy local - When purchasing items this week, consider the distance which they had to travel in order to reach you, and the amount of petroleum used in the process. Whether in the grocery or hardware store - factor the proximity of the source into your purchasing criteria*
- * *Replace all of the incandescent lights in your house with new Compact Fluorescent Lights (CFLs), or halogens - both of which use significantly less energy and also last many years more!*

March 25th – 31st – Fifth Week of Lent



Journey into the Brokenness of God's Family

“Americans by and large work together, shop together, and play together, but they do not worship together. If we are at our core spiritual, then the fact that we seem unable and unwilling to relate to one another elbow-to-elbow in the pews of the local congregation reveals how fragile the integrity of the church is.”¹¹

It has been said that Sunday morning is the most segregated time in our Christian life. We are segregated by race, by age, by economic class, by denominational affiliation and by theological perspectives as we gravitate towards others who think and worship in the same way we do. Often instead of living together in unity and love we are separated by prejudice and intolerance.

Yet the golden rule of Christianity, what James calls “the royal law” (James 2:8) is “love your

neighbor as you do yourself”. At a recent conference Pakistani theologian Charles Amjad Ali reminded us that we are all prejudiced. What changes in dialogue with others is the focus of our prejudice. He then challenged us to consider “Can we be prejudiced towards justice, equality and respect or do we always live primarily with the prejudices of exclusion?”

God is much bigger than our culturally bound viewpoint. All people are created in God's image and worthy of being treated with respect and understanding. I do not believe that we will fully understand who God is or appreciate the incredible sacrifice of Christ on the cross until we learn to see these events through the eyes of others who come from very different viewpoints than our own.

¹¹ Jin S Kim, *A Pentecostal Vision for the Church*, <http://www.cando.org/resources/sermon>.

Scripture Luke 10: 25 - 37

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

26 "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

27 He answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

28 "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

30 In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

36 "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

37 The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Accept the Challenge

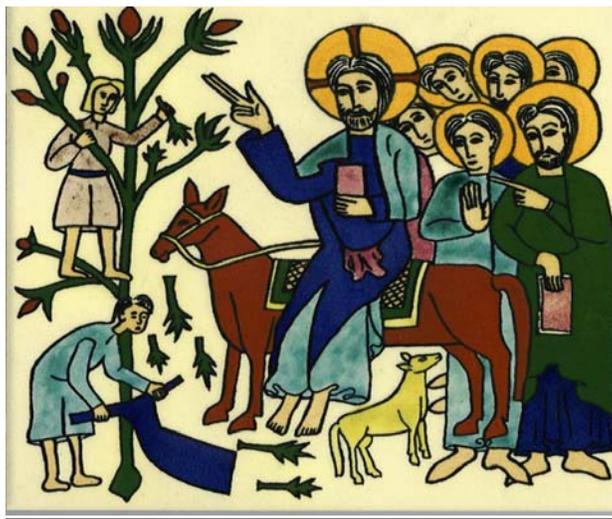
Begin your weekly meeting by discussing your discipline from the past week. What was the most challenging aspect of your week? What new insights did you gain regarding your use of the earth's resources? In what ways have you been tempted to take short cuts over the week and rationalized your use of resources? What permanent changes are you considering making in your life in order to reduce your impact on the earth?

Now focus on your new discipline for the upcoming week. Discuss your prejudices. What ethnic and religious groups do you struggle to understand? What theological viewpoints are you intolerant of? What other prejudices separate you from God's people. Talk about ways to bridge to these different groups during this week.

Here are some suggestions that you might like to consider. In each situation ask yourself: What are the life experiences that have molded their view of faith? Where do you have beliefs in common? What are the differences? What are the foundations for unity and respect?

- * *Plan to get together with someone in your church who has a different theological perspective than your own. Make this specifically a time to listen to their ideas and learn from their understanding of faith.*
- * *Visit a church of another denomination or worship style that you have never been a part of before.*
- * *Visit a church from a different ethnic background that you are unfamiliar with.*
- * *Visit the web and check out the theological discussions of indigenous peoples in country.*

April 1st – 5th – Holy Week



Journeying from Palm Sunday to the Cross

“Anything is possible in a world in which a Jewish carpenter can rise from the dead.”¹²

Holy week, the final week of Lent, commemorates the events of Christ’s last week before his death. For many of Christ’s followers it was a roller coaster ride, beginning with his triumphal entry into Jerusalem and ending with his death on the cross.

Holy week begins Palm Sunday with Jesus entering Jerusalem as the Messiah promised long ago by God. An enthusiastic crowd spread palm branches along the road as a symbol of triumph and victory, shouting *Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!* (Matthew 2:9). All of Jerusalem must have buzzed with the news of his coming. Jew and Gentile alike were caught up in the contagion, rejoicing with enthusiasm at the passing man on the donkey.

Palm Sunday services traditionally begin with a joyful march into the sanctuary. Worshippers wave palm leaves or palm crosses as they walk.

Some congregations walk around their neighbourhood in procession first. Sadly I have yet to hear of a congregation that used their Palm Sunday procession as an opportunity to meet their neighbours as they walk or to invite local people to join them. This is a wonderful occasion for sharing the good news of the gospel with others and yet it rarely moves us out of our churches into the streets.

Accept the Challenge

Your Palm Sunday meeting is the last Lenten get together with your group. Begin by looking back over the last week. What new insights have you gained into the nature of God and God’s family? What long term changes have they encouraged you to make?

Now look ahead. It is too late to reach out to others for your Palm Sunday celebration but what are some ways that you might be able to include people from your neighbourhood or even from across the world in this celebration of the good news of Christ over Holy Week or the Easter weekend?

¹² Kathryn Hepburn, *The Lion in Winter* (1968 film)

April 6th – Good Friday



Journey Beyond Lent

Lent officially ends with Maundy Thursday, the day before Good Friday. However, most of our focus during Holy week will be on Good Friday and Jesus' final walk to the Cross. As part of their acts of devotion, early Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem retraced Jesus' route as he carried his cross to his death. By the sixteenth century, this pilgrimage route through Jerusalem was called the Via Dolorosa, the Way of Sorrow. Along the Way, certain points on the journey (stations) were associated with specific events recounted or implied in the Gospel accounts.

There are presently fourteen Stations of the Cross on the Via Dolorosa, some with chapels or places to pray and meditate. Today churches of all traditions have rediscovered their significance and invite people from their community to walk the stations with Jesus. Check out some of the links to a variety of Stations of the Cross in MSA's March Seed Sampler on our website at www.msainfo.org

The horror of Christ's crucifixion reaches deep into all our souls. I am often overwhelmed by memories of when I too felt abandoned and

alone. Knowing in those moments that Christ endured more pain and suffering than I can ever imagine powerfully opens a door in the midst of my darkness and provides a way for me to emerge into new life.

Walking with Jesus through the agonies of his final journey is an incredible opportunity for us all to express our own pain and the grief we have suffered over the past year. In the process we find the healing that only comes through such intimate identification with Christ.

Accept the Challenge

As the last act of our Lenten journey we invite you to join us in reliving this final week of Christ's life.

Read through the gospel account of Jesus' journey from the time of his entry into Jerusalem until he is laid in the tomb. (John 18: 1 – 19: 42)

* *Which event most catches your attention? Reread this part of the story several times aloud.*

- * *Imagine yourself walking beside Jesus at this point of his journey. What aspect of your own life comes to mind as you read?*
- * *Spend time in silence reflecting on the scripture.*
- * *Now get creative. Write a poem, reflection, prayer, draw a picture, make a sculpture out of wood, clay or paper, take a photo that captures the essence of this part of the story for you.*

- * *Send your offerings to us at mail@msainfo.org. Make sure that you let us know which part of the story they apply to.*
- * *Good Friday we will publish these on our blog www.mustardseedjourney.wordpress.com*



Resources

We hope that your journey of discovery has deepened your relationship to God, to God's people and to God's world. Through confronting our own brokenness we find the healing God desires for us and are enabled to become God's loving hands of compassion and care in a world that desperately needs healing. We hope this study has prompted permanent changes in your life that will lead you into new journeys of discovery. The following resources may help you continue your journey.

Books

Lynne M Baab, *Fasting: Spiritual Freedom Beyond Our Appetites*, (Downers Grove Illinois, Intervarsity Press, 2006)

Compiled by Judy Bauer *Lent and Easter: Wisdom from Henri J. M. Nouwen*, (Liguori, Missouri, Liguori Publications, 2005)

John Bunyan *Pilgrim's Progress*:

Phyllis Tickle, *The Shaping of a Life: A Spiritual Landscape*, (NY, Image Books, 2003)

Paul Elie, *The Life You Save May Be Your Own: An American Pilgrimage* (NY, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003)

Richard Foster, *The Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, (HarperSanFrancisco, 1998)

Brother Victor-Antoine d'Avila-Latourrette, *A Monastic Year, Reflections from a Monastery*, (Dallas, Texas, Taylor, 1996)

Christine Sine, *GodSpace: Time for Peace in the Rhythms of Life*, (Newberg Or, Barclay, 2006)

Christine & Tom Sine, *Living on Purpose: Finding God's Best for Your Life*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2001)

Lauren F Winner, *Girl Meets God: On the Path to a Spiritual Life*, (Chapel Hill, Algonquin Books, 2002)

Websites

United Nations Development Program - <http://www.undp.org>

United Nations World Food Program - <http://www.wfp.org>

The Mutunga \$2 Challenge – <http://www.mutunga.com>

The Global Footprint Network – <http://www.footprintnetwork.org>

UN-Habitat – <http://www.unhabitat.org>

Eco footprint quiz - <http://ecofoot.org/>

For more resources and for information on the work of Mustard Seed Associates visit us on the web at www.msainfo.org



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www.mustardseedjourney.wordpress.com

www.mustardseedhouse.wordpress.com

www.godspace.wordpress.com

www.momentoamomento.com

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