

WORLD WEEK OF PRAYER

# STAND UP, SPEAK UP.

*Be the voice of  
the voiceless.*

NOVEMBER 12 - 18, 2017



WorldYWCA



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## LEAD SCRIPTURE

*Consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.*

**Romans 8-18-21**

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## STAND UP, SPEAK UP!

*First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—Because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a Trade Unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—Because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.*

These excruciating words of Martin Niemöller <sup>[1]</sup> are a harsh reminder of the risks of silence when there is injustice and oppression all around us. The call to justice is a Christian obligation; not a mere choice. Archbishop Tutu once stated: If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.

We live in a world groaning in pain at harsh attacks on human dignity stemming from acts of racism, nationalism and institutionalized exclusion. The rich and powerful have chosen exclusion as their tactic to retain their clutches on their dominant status. The vulnerable and poor masses bear the scars of being thrust into the margins where they have access to too little to be shared among too many. Young people and women pay a high price by the injustice they are facing.

Martin Luther King Jr asserted: “Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals”.

Do we have reason to be hopeful? We do because we have seen empires fall, dictator’s collapse, systems being transformed, and the powerful crumbling in the face of ethical force. Injustice is never perpetual simply because it has no moral foundations. What can we learn from historical moments when leaders have transformed horrific situations of injustice into spaces of peace and justice? How can we follow the path of being the prophetic voice in these times of social inequalities that are staged by political maneuvering?

Hope is not an abstract idea. It is about holding to visions of a new dawn and formulating ways and means to act that alter an unjust reality over time, first in short spurts, and then in a massive, sustained mobilization that humankind has witnessed before.

We invite you to analyse the world as we see it today. Not just in our immediate environs but the world over. For, we live in an interconnected world and what happens in one spot of the world has its impact in other corners. How can we begin to change the world and seek to be voices that speak with courage and conviction against injustice? How can we move past our own discomfort in speaking out, to provide comfort for others who have so much more to lose?

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[1] **Martin Niemöller (1892-1984)** was a prominent Protestant pastor who emerged as an outspoken public foe of Adolf Hitler and spent the last seven years of Nazi rule in concentration camps.

Are we making our voice heard enough on issues that are affecting our humanity? Do we speak out boldly against fascist tendencies, and economic injustices that leave our youth and women, workers, indigenous people, minorities, and caste-dominated groups feeling vulnerable?

Can we affirm: “I am a voice crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’” as Isaiah the prophet said. (Isiah 40:3 )

Both YWCAs and YMCAs have travelled through history and its multiple societal changes. We assume we have learnt from events in the past which are calling us to be and remain the prophetic voice in time of social and political uncertainties.

Throughout this week we are invited to reflect on our voices, individual and collective. Voices that are loud and clear, voices that encourage, heal and speak against evil and any type of oppression. Voices that restore the dignity of the oppressed; credible voices which are listened to and which empower the last girls and boys in the most remote of our communities.

We wish you a good Celebration of the Week of Prayer



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# DAY ONE:

## STAND UP, SPEAK UP!

*“Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more”*

**Mark 10: 46-52**

<sup>46</sup> Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means “son of Timaeus”), was sitting by the roadside begging. <sup>47</sup> When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

<sup>48</sup> Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

<sup>49</sup> Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.”

So they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.”

<sup>50</sup> Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

<sup>51</sup> “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.”

<sup>52</sup> “Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

*“How long shall they kill our prophets while we stand aside and look?”*

**Redemption Song, Bob Marley**

In these words, one can tell that there is a feeling of anguish, agony and pain on one hand, and, on the other hand, a demand for action to liberate a person or people. The words of the song are symptomatic of an undesirable experience in which those who are suffering feel that enough is enough! In our reading today, we encounter Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, who in making a loud plea for Jesus to help him, is obstructed by other people. As he shouted and cried out to Jesus for mercy, “Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more...” (Mark 10:48).

In our jargon in the social movements, we talk about ‘The Voiceless’. Who are The voiceless? Of course, this term does not simply refer to those who have lost their voice in some illness, or those who cannot speak from birth. Rather, when we hear the word ‘voiceless’, we think about people who can speak very well, but are ignored or not taken seriously. We also think of people who, when they attempt to raise their voices, are prevented from expressing themselves freely. This is usually done systematically, and sometimes with no physical harm inflicted.

We have already noted that people tried all they could to prevent Bartimaeus from speaking to Jesus but there is good news that follows. Jesus heard and healed him saying, “go, your faith has healed you.” (Mark 10:52). In our case, while people and systems may try to prevent us from speaking, we must be resilient and consistent, speaking without fear. This narrative of the healing of Bartimaeus is very relevant in our world today. While the story brings to the fore the tension that arises from people trying to prevent him from speaking, it also brings into perspective the importance of faith and hope. In fact, it is of the same faith that Jesus says, “...your faith has healed you.” (Mark 10:52)

We must, like Bartimaeus, speak even more. We are advocates for the marginalized, the vulnerable and the disadvantaged. Our role as YMCAs and YWCAs is to make our voices heard. We must continue to speak on behalf of the voiceless, but more importantly, we must also empower them, and equip them to speak for themselves.

Our calling is also to confront the powers that silence people. We must speak against policies that continue to impoverish and oppress people, and deny them their human rights. We must speak against systems that prevent resources from reaching all people equitably. We must speak against selective justice. We must speak against the pollution of our waters, our air, and our soil. The list is endless. The more people try to prevent us from raising our voices, the more we must speak and take action.

Redemption Song, as alluded to earlier, has a very deep meaning. The tone in the song, though it is one of lamentation, is not defeatist. The lamentation seems to serve as a provocation to action; for people to rise and stop the carnage and plunder. For us, it can serve to help people see beyond today; to see into a future in which we can celebrate restoration. For Bartimaeus, he raised his voice and attracted the attention of Jesus and he received restoration – restoration of his sight. We too can see into a future in which we will celebrate the restoration – restoration of human dignity! So will you be silent or will you speak?

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How do you say Speak Out in your language?  
Try in two other languages.
2. During this week, try to greet each other with  
Speak out!!!
3. List some of those situations or issues in your  
community or country that you are not allowed to  
speak about. How can you find ways to speak up?  
Think of as many situations as possible in the past  
when you could have spoken, but you were silenced.  
What could you have done differently?
4. What are the topics your YMCA or YWCA is currently  
advocating for?



# PRAYER

## Leader:

The ability to speak out is a skill all of us should nurture across our beloved YMCAs and YWCAs. We should guard against the sin of over-emphasising the platform of the marginalised against that of the perpetrator.

## Let us Pray

Oh God, our heavenly parent!

Thank you for the lesson and the courage of Bartimaeus.

Today, teach us to raise up the marginalized. .

Help us, oh Lord, to ensure their voices are heard.

Lord Jesus, give us the courage to use our own powerful voices.

Help us to create safe spaces for those who are marginalized to obtain knowledge and strength.

Help us, oh Lord, to teach the powerful to repent

Like Zacchaeus, it is possible for the powerful to do your will.

Teach our movements to learn to work with all people—men, women, those most marginalized and those most powerful.

Lord Jesus, we can transform the world, if you are with us always.

Lord, hear our prayers! Amen.

## Blessing

No voice should be  
shut down.

Let us all desire to b  
like Jesus always.

Go and serve the  
Lord freely.



# DAY TWO:

## BRING DOWN THE WALLS

*Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."*

**Ephesians 5:11-14, NIV**

*"I wait  
Babies crying  
Birds flying  
Wishing I was a bird  
No need for permit  
No need for discriminatory ID  
No need for racist abuse  
I wait  
Simply cause I am Palestinian  
Simply refusing to be extinct  
Simply wanting basic human right to self determination  
I wait  
We stand still in a closed cage that used to be legal for slaughtering animals  
While all the world makes illegal the mistreatment of animals and labels its inhumane  
The same world watches the illegal, inhumane mistreatment of the Palestinians  
The world watches in silence"*

This is part of a poem by YWCA of Palestine staff member Suhair Ramadan describing a normal day at an Israeli checkpoint and the struggles Palestinians face crossing it. The Israeli Annexation Wall, which is over 8 meters high in some areas, is a great example of works of darkness. The Wall is not only a mechanism of separation and confinement, but of humiliation and violation of Palestinian's rights, specifically the right to movement. Israel started building the Wall in 2002, and it currently runs over 600 kilometers and cuts through 85% of the West Bank—meaning only 15% is on the Greenline. This has allowed approximately 600,000 Israeli settlers to live illegally on Palestinian land.

The Wall and its "Matrix of Control" checkpoints and watchtowers, buffer zones and by pass roads, prohibits freedom of movement, divides Palestinian neighborhoods and families, and separates Palestinian farmers from their agricultural lands and access to water resources. The construction of the Wall has isolated wells, springs and cisterns, and damaged or destroyed water infrastructure, especially irrigation networks. In addition, the Wall acts as a barrier to health care violating article 56 of the Fourth Geneva Convention by making it difficult for people to get medical care on the other side of the Wall. The Wall, as does the Israeli Occupation, knows no gender, for women are affected by it as well. Since the construction of the Wall, women's economic participation has declined significantly. Women constantly face sexual harassment by Israeli soldiers at checkpoints, and obstacles accessing hospitals and clinics.



The YWCA of Palestine has always been an organization working and advocating for ending the occupation and establishing peace. “Breaking Down the Wall” is one of the organization’s advocacy projects that is aimed at raising awareness about the Annexation Wall and its effects on Palestinians, their daily lives and land. The project provides people with a five-piece mini wall made of olive wood, a symbol of peace, in addition to a booklet including suggestions on how to effectively use it, whether in worship or education, to advocate for the destruction of the Annexation Wall and building bridges for peace. Advent and Lent are the best seasons to use the mini wall. People are invited to knock or break down one piece each Sunday of Advent using the prayers and/or reflections suggested in the booklit until Jesus is born on Christmas Eve with no more walls and barriers. During Holy Week, however, people are invited to assemble the wall and knock it down on Easter.

The YWCA of Palestine works hand-in-hand with the East Jerusalem YMCA, and together, they have formed the Joint Advocacy Initiative (JAI) to advocate for peace and justice in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. “The Olive Tree Campaign” is one of JAI’s projects, which was launched in 2002. It provides Palestinian farmers with olive saplings, sponsored by individuals, YMCAs, YWCAs, churches, church related organizations, human rights organizations, as well as solidarity and advocacy groups around the world. These olive saplings are then planted in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip areas where olive trees have been uprooted and destroyed by the Israelis. The olive saplings have also been planted where fields are threatened to be confiscated by the Israeli military occupation, or where parts of the Israeli Apartheid Wall and settlements are constructed.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

### Let’s ask ourselves:

1. Hearing today’s story, what comes to mind?
2. What are other walls around you or in other places are you aware of?
3. Are we as YMCAs and YWCAs speaking out enough against these walls?
4. During this week, how can we advocate for conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding.

# PRAYER

## Leader:

Our movements must not turn a blind eye to the nationalist, separatist, racist and exclusionist ideals, which are gaining support in many parts of the world.  
Building walls to separate people is dehumanizing and unjust. It prevents people from realizing their human rights.

## Let us Pray

Lord, you broke down the Tower of Babel  
Lord, you confused the architects of ungodly pursuit  
We pray that you thwart every human effort against your purpose  
Lord, you empowered Joshua to break down the Jericho Wall  
Without you Lord, the Jericho Wall would have stood the test of time  
We pray, oh Lord, that you rekindle in us that resolute conviction of Joshua  
In recent times, Lord you brought down the Berlin Wall  
The cold war was not serving your purpose, oh Lord!  
Today, Germany is a united nation because the wall fell  
Lord, our prayer is that you break down the Wall in Palestine and other places.  
Lord, you are not a God of separation  
End the conflict in the Holy Land  
Lord, we pray! Amen

## Blessing

Let us all serve  
God's purpose.  
United in God's purpose  
is our calling.  
Ma salaam!  
Shalom! Khotso!

# DAY THREE:

## A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS

*“We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,”*  
**2 Corinthians 10:5**

On March 10th 2017, South Korea impeached President Park Guen-Hye, a first in the Nation's history. President Park was the first female president of South Korea but as soon as she became president in 2013, she started to move away from the people. Although expectations of her performance had been high when she was elected, the so-called image politics concealed the reality that she had begun to privatize her political power for her personal interests. While in office she was directly or indirectly involved in many corruption cases. Together with some close friends, she made decisions critical to state matters and related to the destiny of the nation through a secret process, neglecting all the due public process. President Park and her friends even made a blacklist of artists who expressed critical views about government policies and kept a watch on them.

Finally, the people lost their patience and started to gather in the streets, lighting their candles in Gwanghwamun square in Seoul in October 2016. The candles rapidly increased from 500,000, to 800,000, to 1,000,000 and continued to grow. The Korea YMCA actively joined the demonstration with like-minded NGOs and people's movements. The blazing candles came to number 17 million throughout the winter of 2016, and the people who gathered in the square shouted slogans such as “Is this a country?”, “Impeach the President!”, “Step her down from the post” and “Restore our Democracy”.

The people became resolute and grew into a strong resistance movement with huge numbers demonstrating every Saturday for 4 months consecutively. Once again in the Korean political history, people demonstrated in a peaceful way their collective power in resistance to the corrupt power, demanding the impeachment of the president as well as restoring democracy. They proved that power comes from people, not from the top. Due to this huge people's power, she became the first president in Korea who was impeached by the national assembly. Her reign met a tragic end, and as soon as she got dismissed, she was placed under arrest for investigation.

This story proves that the voices of the ordinary people, if awakened and spontaneously organized, could change the course of history towards a true, participatory democracy and justice for all. Truly, this was a non-violent revolution without gun or sword, but by awakened people's collective power.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Is this a familiar situation for you?
2. Do you think YMCAs and YWCAs should be joining such movements? Why or why not? ( Make reference to our Christian faith imperatives)
3. Do you recall situations where your YMCA or YWCA felt compelled to join other civil society movements to call for changes to improve the well-being of your communities?

## PRAYER

### Leader:

Good governance and stewardship is part of God's mandate to humankind. YMCAs and YWCAs cannot stand by and keep quiet when world leaders use their power for personal gain and corruption. We need to take action. The Kingdom of God on earth should not be deferred to eternity.

### Let us Pray:

Lord, you taught us that all authority belongs to you  
Give us courage, Lord Jesus, to teach this to world leaders  
Help us Lord to partner with all those who love justice  
Lord, you came so that all could have life in abundance  
We pray for all our leaders to work for the common good of your creation  
Lord, give us the courage of the Apostles to obey you, rather than human authority  
A just world and clean governance is possible if the world follows your dictates  
Create in us a new commitment to rise against all evil in the world  
Lord, we pray! Amen.

### Blessing

Let us act justly and walk humbly with God.  
Let us love all creation and do what is right.  
If we keep quiet the stones will cry out.



# DAY FOUR:

## DO NOT BE SILENT – I AM WITH YOU

*“And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.’”*

**Acts 18: 9-10**

Her name is Heydi. At age 30, the Honduran mother of five still has nightmares from the night her husband attacked her with a machete after an argument. Her oldest daughter saw her dad cut off both of her mother’s feet that night—an image she will never forget. Heydi survived, but will walk with prosthetic limbs for the rest of her life.

Heydi and her daughter are some of the “lucky ones”—those who lived to tell their stories. According to the statistics, up to 70% of women experience physical or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime. That’s almost one in every three women.

Every second of every day, a woman is raped, beaten, mutilated or simply deprived of her basic rights, simply because she is a woman. It’s time to #RiseUp and say enough!

Violence against women, especially in the home, was once considered a private “domestic matter.” But there’s nothing private about a 12-year old girl being abused by her uncle. There is nothing private about a woman who is scared to go home at night for fear that her husband will beat her. And there is nothing private about a 10-year old girl being married off to an older man as “tradition” requires.

We all have a responsibility to protect and promote women’s rights. We all need to speak out against the violence in our homes, in our communities and in our countries. Although many countries have laws against domestic and sexual violence, they are not always implemented in practice because of pervasive gender stereotypes and cultural traditions.

Who will challenge these gender stereotypes and the culture of violence that exists in many communities if we do not? Who will ensure that there are programmes in place to protect, support and empower women, young women, and girls—especially those who are survivors of violence—if we do not? Who will provide the safe spaces they need to learn about their rights, to heal and to stay safe, if we do not? Who will help end this global pandemic if we do not?

The World YWCA works in 120 countries to empower young women and girls to reclaim their rights and give them a space to develop their full potential. This includes supporting survivors of violence to rebuild their lives and dignity.

For example, in Heydi’s home country, Honduras, just outside the capital city of Tegucigalpa, the Centro de Niñas Las Flores provides a home and safe space for up to 20 young women and girls who are victims of sexual abuse. Las Flores provides much more than food and shelter. For the girls who stay there, Las Flores represents their home and their family. It’s an essential step in their recovery, their development, their

empowerment and their future.

In Africa, the YMCAs developed the Transformative Masculinity Programme to foster a positive male identity among young men so they embrace peaceful co-existence with their female counterparts.

In Kenya and Zambia, through the #ARealManIs Project, the YMCAs are working to build the capacity of young men to be at the fore in the campaign to end violence against women. This is designed to counter the image of men as perpetrators of violence and encourage them to become agents of change. The project is also working to build the capacity of traditional and religious leaders together with private sector, so they take action to end violence against women, young women, and girls in their various spaces.

Already, we are seeing young men changing their perspectives about the roles they play at home. In addition, conversations and interactions with traditional leaders are helping to promote best practices to end violence against women, young women, and girls in targeted communities.

As communities, individuals, and advocates, we can all rise up to prevent violence against women, young women, and girls. We can all speak out against violence in our communities, and we can all work to eliminate it—especially when it is committed in the form of cultural traditions or faith.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Hearing today's story, what comes to mind?
2. As a community, how do you contribute to preventing violence against women, young women, and girls?
3. During this week, how can we help victims of violence in our lives?



# PRAYER

## Leader:

*“No, my brother!” she said to him, “Don’t force me! Such a thing should not be done in Israel! Don’t do this wicked thing.” 2 Samuel 13: 12*

## Let us Pray

Lord, help us to ensure we protect, empower and support women, young women and girls.

Lord, please ensure women, young women, and girls feel free to raise their voices, and help those who have been affected by violence to heal.

Lord, please help create the positive masculinity among men and boys that ensures they treat women, young women, and girls with dignity and respect.

Encourage all men and women to advocate against violence and become agents of change.

Let men and women be equal as you intended.

There is no minority and no weaker person in the Trinity.

Lord, please encourage all of us to speak out against violence in our communities, and work to eliminate it—especially when it is committed in the form of cultural traditions or faith.

Lord, we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

## Blessing

As it was in the beginning –  
Lord – let us, men  
and women, have dominion  
over all creation.

Let no one sex have dominion  
over another.

Lord, in you we trust.



# DAY FIVE:

## I WILL PUT WORDS IN YOUR MOUTH

*For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.*

**Deuteronomy 10:17-19 (NIV)**

Like so many people in the world, we believe that our community is beautiful. In our city, we have economic growth, a beautiful tree canopy, towering buildings, good roads, good schools, new train lines, companies moving here, and plenty of food. The difficulty of such a situation is that just below the surface, there are issues with challenges that we must address. We cannot ignore the fact that almost half of our citizens lack access to opportunities, privilege and equity.

We see these neighbors every day. The long-term unemployed, the immigrant worker afraid of deportation, the single parent working two jobs, the criminal who has served his time but will never rid himself of the stigma. Those who are discriminated against because of the colour of their skin, their faith, their culture or because they represent any group outside mainstream society. The injustices of the socioeconomic and caste systems run deep in each of our countries in different ways, and to different extents. In some countries, it is defined by gender, in others by a formal class system, but we must all confront it.

In order to be truly authentic, we must be able to stare straight into the face of our best and our very worst. It is in these moments that we see God's face. Choosing a verse in the midst of one of the most quoted verses in the bible was intentional. It is right there in the middle of "the Love" verse. We must pause and reflect. Regardless of whether your ancestors come from Africa, Europe or Asia, we collectively live on this planet. Yet we can only live together peacefully, when we accept that we are stronger together against serious foes, not ones we construct based on skin colour skin or country of birth

### **Speaking against racism**

*Last year, on the evening of September 20th, I was finishing up work at my desk. The news was reporting the possibility of protests in our city of Charlotte, North Carolina USA because a person of colour had just been shot by a police officer. I looked out the window and saw quiet and peaceful streets. I worked late and drove home. As I reached my quiet suburban home, it appeared to be a normal night. I turned on my television for the news and saw police officers in riot gear confronting crowds of protestors on the exact city block in downtown Charlotte where I had been sitting only one hour earlier.*

*Protests started that night, and early into the next morning. The protests began peacefully, but then erupted into violence with large crowds looting and causing damage to city property and local businesses. The Governor of North Carolina declared a state of emergency, and the U.S. National Guard joined police officers in riot gear, making our*



*Queen City unrecognizable. The City of Charlotte quickly dominated the national news with members of our community taking a courageous stand against police brutality and systemic violence.*

The first step in solving any serious problem is to first admit that you have a problem. This takes incredible authenticity and courage for a person, an organization or a community to face their biggest issues. After the protests in our city, we were forced to take a hard look at the presence of institutionalized racism in our community and how it continues to breed inequality.

In an effort to raise consciousness around institutional racism the YMCA of Greater Charlotte coordinated 3 (two-day) sessions of a workshop called Dismantling Racism. The workshops were facilitated by the Racial Equity Institute out of Greensboro, NC. (<http://rei.racialequityinstitute.org/>). In total, 99 staff and volunteers participated, including our entire YMCA Senior Leadership, Branch Executive Directors, Board members, Diversity & Inclusion volunteers, and even the Mayor of Charlotte.

These learning experiences helped Y leaders and volunteers better understand historical systems of oppression and recognize the reality of current racial inequities. As a result, our Y teams have a raised level of consciousness on how inequities affect people and communities and how we can begin to address and eliminate disparities. In challenging times, the YMCA is committed to creating a culture where all voices are heard, welcomed and valued.

At the YMCA of Greater Charlotte, we will continue to cultivate our staff, our volunteers, members and our collective community to ensure the justice that makes true peace possible.

*“I have one life and one chance to make it count for something....My faith demands that I do whatever I can, wherever I am, whenever I can, for as long as I can with whatever I have to try and make a difference.” Jimmy Carter*

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Rereading Deuteronomy 10:17-19 in the context of this devotion, does anything new resonate to?
2. What is “in the ground” or “beneath the surface” in your community that we are not discussing?
3. In my next 5 interactions, can I approach people I meet assuming that they may have ‘invisible’ burdens on them? How will that change my engagement with them?
4. How often do I think about privilege? Do I think about the system that got me to this place and my neighbour to his/her place?



# PRAYER

## Leader:

It is impossible to talk about Racism outside Colonialism. Racism is a Sin. It is about Power and Privilege. Our YMCAs and YWCAs are well vested in these realities crippling the world as we know it.

## Let us pray:

Lord, teach us again that the earth belongs to you  
Only you Lord is the Creator of the Universe  
All of us owe our being and existence to you Lord  
Lord, help us get rid of racism in the globe  
Let all forms of patriarchy and segregation fall  
All of us were created in your image and likeness  
Lord, guide us to work for parity in our movements  
You created us all equal and co-creators with you God  
Lord, we pray! Amen.

## Blessing

Let there be no "Gentile"  
or "Jew" in the world  
Let us celebrate and  
embrace diversity.  
Go and serve the  
Lord in love.



# DAY SIX:

## LORD I HAVE HEARD – NOW I SPEAK

*“Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy”*  
**Proverbs 31, 9**

In many regions, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is still regarded as an essential transition from a girl's childhood to adulthood. However, it poses a serious health risk to young women and girls, both physically and psychologically, and it is a fundamental violation of their human rights. FGM causes tremendous pain, suffering and trauma, and can result in permanent injuries and/or death.

The YWCA of Kenya works to end Female Genital Mutilation in the regions where its prevalence is highest, while educating women, young women and girls about their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). As Female Genital Mutilation is both a religious and cultural practice, the YWCA approaches this from a human-rights based and educational perspective.

One of the main ways the YWCA advocates to end FGM, and increase awareness of SRHR is through educational seminars delivered via existing women's and youth groups in Kenya. This includes a week-long training called the “Alternative Rite of Passage Seminar”.

Since FGM, or circumcision, is seen as a cultural rite of passage among, for instance the Masaai and Samburu, there is a need for an alternative. The seminar covers information on SRHR, as well as, FGM. This includes demystifying myths around FGM (for example that not being cut brings death to the family, increases the risk of HIV and AIDS etc), explaining the legal implications of FGM, and providing information on children's and women's legal rights.

YWCA targets four key audiences in their Anti-FGM projects: girls, boys, opinion leaders and circumcisers. The key project stakeholders include communities, schools, community trainers, health care workers, local authorities/law enforcers. The strategies undertaken include community mobilization and awareness, as well as trainings and policy advocacy and legislation on harmful traditional practices.

Moreover, the YWCA organizes life skills sessions, referrals to health care services for young girls, shelters for girls who have escaped the practice, and public campaigns through the media. YWCA tries, in addition, to target the circumcisers, to inform them of the severe physical and mental health implications of FGM, while providing advice on alternative sources of income.

At the same time, Alternative Rites of Passage Seminars, organizations and community groups work on potential alternatives to mark the transition from childhood to adulthood. This includes group seminars with girls, which cover positive cultural values, while encouraging them to say no to FGM. The curriculum incorporates lessons on how to interact with boys and men, stresses the importance of education, and provides life skills, decision making skills, communications skills, as well as teaching about good grooming and good health habits.

The YWCA often experiences challenges in its bid to end FGM, especially from traditional elders whose mind-set is difficult to change – and who profit economically from working with the circumcisers. There is also resistance from some elderly women, who still believe in the importance of the practice. Nevertheless the, YWCA continues its work to inform, empower and protect all those affected by FGM.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What do you think about this story? Are you familiar with that reality?
2. What are the harmful practices your community is confronted with?
3. What are we not seeing or are refusing to see? What are we not hearing or refusing to hear? What are we not saying or refuse to say
4. What could we be doing to stop FGM or other harmful traditional or cultural practices?

## PRAYER

### Leader:

Female Genital Mutilation is a classic example of the tension between harmful cultural practices and the freedom found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Early child marriage and arranged marriages form part of this creative tension throughout the world

We call on Jesus to help us speak out against and stop these harmful practices





### **Let us pray**

Lord Jesus, how can we learn from your love of children?

Teach us to see anew your purpose for children.

Our actions cause so much pain and leave lasting scars amongst girls .

Lord Jesus, grant us the wisdom to speak out against harmful practices visited upon children.

Lord Jesus, give us the power to root out all ungodly rituals that destroys girls.

Lord Jesus, teach us to treat boys and girls equally for the benefit of your Kingdom.

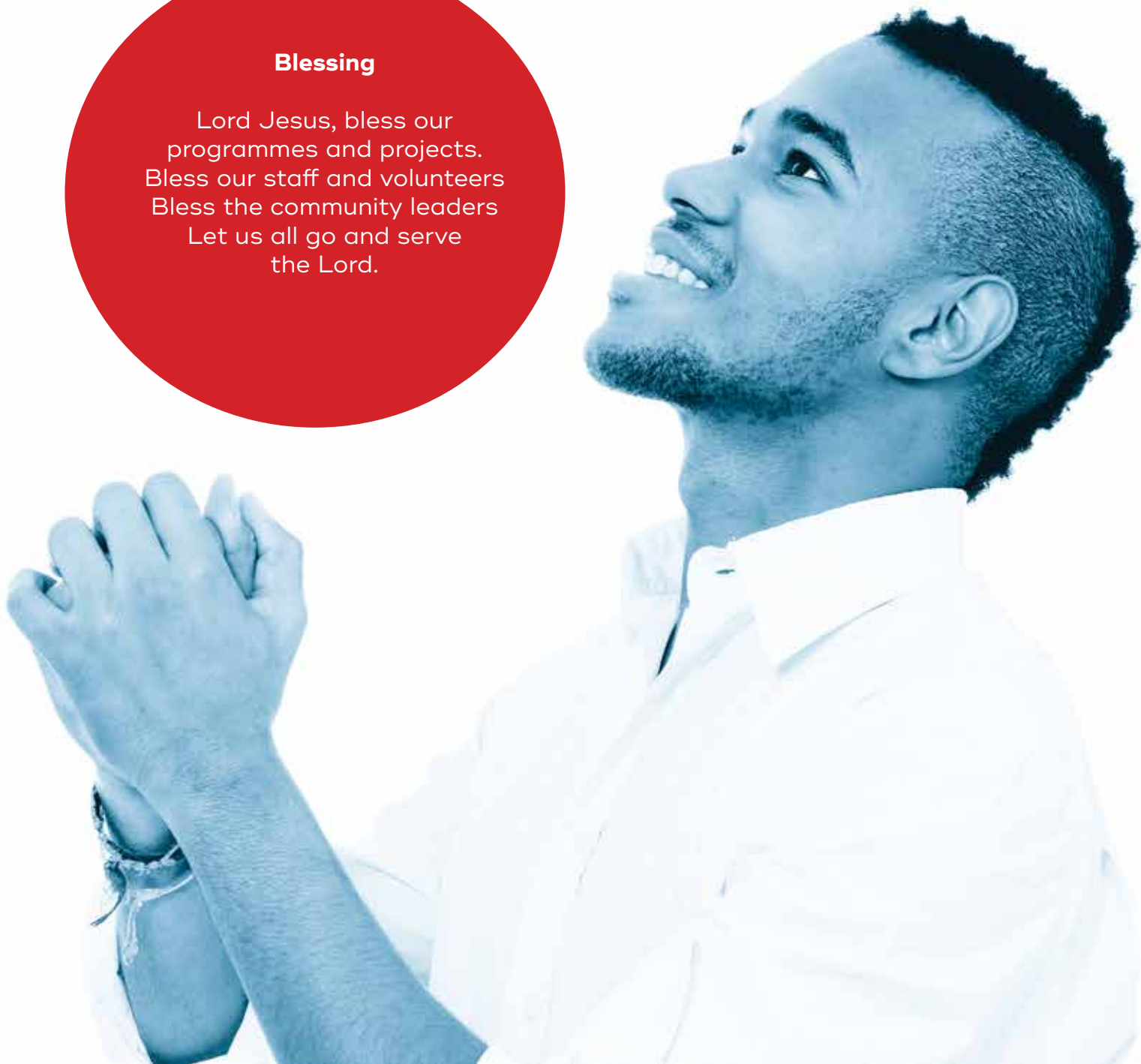
Where we have faltered and sinned against children, we ask for your forgiveness.

Lord, we pray!

Lord, hear our prayers. Amen.

### **Blessing**

Lord Jesus, bless our  
programmes and projects.  
Bless our staff and volunteers  
Bless the community leaders  
Let us all go and serve  
the Lord.



# DAY SEVEN:

## THE POWER OF RESISTANCE

### CALL TO WORSHIP

**Reader:**

During this Week of Prayer, we come together as brothers and sisters, old and young, connected across continents, desiring to give thanks and pray for the world and the worldwide YMCA and YWCA movement. We are gathered here in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

### OPENING PRAYER

**Reader:**

Let us pray: Loving God, we thank you for this opportunity to meet. We thank you for our brothers and sister in YMCAs/YWCAs around the globe. Just like you sent Jesus into this world, you send us today. Bless this time of devotion and worship and let us be your witnesses in this world.

**All:**

Help us to testify your love. Amen.

**SONG**

### READING

**Reader: Isaiah 40:3-5**

<sup>3</sup> A voice cries out:

‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

<sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.

<sup>5</sup> Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.’

## REFLECTION

### Reader:

At the time of Isaiah, the kingdom of Juda had been smashed. The temple had been burnt down. All that was left of Jerusalem was just a heap of rubble. For decades, most of its population had been living in a foreign land, Babylon. Perhaps some of them still remembered “the good old days”; the times when God was working miracles for them.

Many of them sank into deep self-pity and depression which often comes along with hopelessness and despair. It is at this moment in time when prophet Isaiah enters the stage and speaks: “Comfort, comfort my people” (Isaiah 40:1). He makes it clear: God is not yet finished with his world and his people. Whenever we recognise God as the sovereign king, any despair loses its ground. Hope perseveres. New things are possible. Impossible things are possible. God rules. That’s Isaiah’s encouragement which also meant to speak into our world today. Amen.

## CREDO

### Reader:

Let us use the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer as our credo

### All:

*“I believe that God can and will bring good out of evil, even out of the greatest evil. For that purpose he needs men [and women] who make the best use of everything. I believe that God will give us all the strength we need to help us resist in all time of distress. But he never gives it in advance, lest we should rely on ourselves and not on him alone. A faith such as this should allay all our fears for the future. I believe that even our mistakes and shortcomings are turned to good account, and that it is no harder for God to deal with them than with our supposedly good deeds. I believe that God is no timeless fate, but that he waits for and answers sincere prayers and responsible actions.”*

(Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

**AMEN**

### SONG



## PRAYER

**Reader:** In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

**All:** Lord, bring good out of evil.

**Reader:** In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

**All:** Lord, give us the strength we need.

**Reader:** In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

**All:** Lord, help us resist in all times of distress.

**Reader:** In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

**All:** Lord, turn our mistakes and shortcomings to good account.

**Reader:** In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

**All:** Lord, allay all our fears for the future.

**Reader:** In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

**All:** Lord, we rely on you alone.

**Reader:** In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

**All:** Lord, let us act responsibly.

**Reader:** In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

**All:** Lord, answer our prayers. Amen.

## SONG

*Possibility to continue praying in Silence, Prayer Groups  
or Prayer Stations*



## CLOSING BLESSING

**Reader:**

***Psalm 121***

- <sup>1</sup> I lift up my eyes to the hills;  
from where is my help to come?
- <sup>2</sup> My help comes from the Lord,  
the maker of heaven and earth.
- <sup>3</sup> He will not suffer your foot to stumble;  
he who watches over you will not sleep.
- <sup>4</sup> Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel  
shall neither slumber nor sleep.
- <sup>5</sup> The Lord himself watches over you;  
the Lord is your shade at your right hand,
- <sup>6</sup> So that the sun shall not strike you by day,  
neither the moon by night.
- <sup>7</sup> The Lord shall keep you from all evil;  
it is he who shall keep your soul.
- <sup>8</sup> The Lord shall keep watch over your going out  
and your coming in,  
from this time forth for evermore.

**All:** Amen.



# BIBLE READING PLAN

2017-2018

## NOVEMBER 2017

- 1 Ezekiel 12:1-16
- 2 Ezekiel 16:1-22
- 3 Ezekiel 17:1-24
- 4 Ezekiel 18:1-3, 20-32
- 5 Psalms 69:17-37
- 6 Ezekiel 20:1-17
- 7 Ezekiel 20:30-44
- 8 Ezekiel 33:10-20
- 9 Ezekiel 33:21-33
- 10 Ezekiel 34:1-16
- 11 Ezekiel 34:23-31
- 12 Psalms 110
- 13 Ezekiel 36:16-32
- 14 Ezekiel 37:1-14
- 15 Ezekiel 37:15-28
- 16 Ezekiel 40:1-16
- 17 Ezekiel 42:15-43:12
- 18 Ezekiel 47:1-12
- 19 Psalms 63
- 20 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
- 21 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12
- 22 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20
- 23 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13
- 24 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12
- 25 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
- 26 Psalms 46
- 27 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
- 28 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28
- 29 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12
- 30 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

## DECEMBER 2017

- 1 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17
- 2 2 Thessalonians 3:1-18
- 3 Psalms 24
- 4 Zechariah 1:1-6
- 5 Zechariah 1:7-17
- 6 Zechariah 2:1-9
- 7 Zechariah 2:10-17
- 8 Zechariah 3:1-10
- 9 Zechariah 4:1-14
- 10 1 Samuel 2:1-10
- 11 Zechariah 5:1-11
- 12 Zechariah 6:1-8
- 13 Zechariah 6:9-15
- 14 Zechariah 7:1-14
- 15 Zechariah 8:1-23
- 16 Zechariah 9:9-12
- 17 Luke 1:46-55
- 18 Zechariah 11:4-17
- 19 Zechariah 12:9-13:1
- 20 Zechariah 14:1-11
- 21 Malachi 1:6-14
- 22 Malachi 2:17-3:12
- 23 Malachi 3:13-24
- 24 Luke 1:68-79
- 25 Psalms 2
- 26 Luke 2:29-32
- 27 John 1:1-5
- 28 John 1:6-8
- 29 John 1:9-13
- 30 John 1:14-18
- 31 Psalms 103

## JANUARY 2018

- 1 Psalms 97
- 2 John 1:19-28
- 3 John 1:29-34
- 4 John 1:35-51
- 5 John 2:1-12
- 6 John 2:13-25
- 7 Psalms 96
- 8 John 3:1-21
- 9 John 3:22-36
- 10 Deuteronomy 1:1-18
- 11 Deuteronomy 1:19-33
- 12 Deuteronomy 1:34-46
- 13 Deuteronomy 2:1-15
- 14 Psalms 55
- 15 Deuteronomy 2:16-25
- 16 Deuteronomy 3:12-29
- 17 Deuteronomy 4:1-14
- 18 Deuteronomy 4:15-24
- 19 Deuteronomy 4:25-40
- 20 Deuteronomy 5:1-22
- 21 Psalms 54
- 22 Deuteronomy 5:23-33
- 23 Deuteronomy 6:1-9
- 24 Deuteronomy 6:10-25
- 25 Deuteronomy 7:1-11
- 26 Deuteronomy 7:12-26
- 27 Deuteronomy 8:1-20
- 28 Psalms 119:73-80
- 29 Deuteronomy 9:1-14
- 30 Deuteronomy 9:15-29
- 31 Deuteronomy 10:1-9

## BIBLE READING PLAN 2017-2018

### FEBRUARY 2018

- 1 Deuteronomy 10:10-22
- 2 Deuteronomy 11:1-12
- 3 Deuteronomy 11:13-32
- 4 Psalms 119:81-88
- 5 Deuteronomy 12:1-12
- 6 Deuteronomy 15:1-11
- 7 Deuteronomy 15:12-18
- 8 Deuteronomy 16:1-17
- 9 Deuteronomy 16:18-20
- 10 Deuteronomy 17:14-20
- 11 Psalms 31
- 12 Deuteronomy 18:9-22
- 13 Deuteronomy 19:1-13
- 14 Deuteronomy 21:1-9
- 15 Deuteronomy 24:6-22
- 16 Deuteronomy 25:1-16
- 17 Deuteronomy 26:1-15
- 18 Psalms 91
- 19 Deuteronomy 27:1-10
- 20 Deuteronomy 27:11-26
- 21 Deuteronomy 30:11-20
- 22 Deuteronomy 31:1-8
- 23 Deuteronomy 33:1-5.26-29
- 24 Deuteronomy 34:1-12
- 25 Psalms 35:1-16
- 26 John 11:1-16
- 27 John 11:17-31
- 28 John 11:32-45

### MARCH 2018

- 1 John 11:46-57
- 2 John 12:1-11
- 3 John 12:12-19
- 4 Psalms 35:17-28
- 5 John 12:20-26
- 6 John 12:27-36
- 7 John 12:37-50
- 8 John 13:1-11
- 9 John 13:12-20
- 10 John 13:21-30
- 11 Psalms 57
- 12 John 13:31-38
- 13 John 14:1-14
- 14 John 14:15-26
- 15 John 14:27-31
- 16 John 15:1-8
- 17 John 15:9-17
- 18 Psalms 43
- 19 John 15:18-16:4
- 20 John 16:5-15
- 21 John 16:16-24
- 22 John 16:25-33
- 23 John 17:1-11a
- 24 John 17:11b-26
- 25 Psalms 92
- 26 John 18:1-11
- 27 John 18:12-27
- 28 John 18:28-40
- 29 John 19:1-16a
- 30 John 19:16b-30
- 31 John 19:31-42

### APRIL 2018

- 1 John 20:1-10
- 2 John 20:11-18
- 3 John 20:19-23
- 4 John 20:24-31
- 5 John 21:1-14
- 6 John 21:15-19
- 7 John 21:20-25
- 8 Psalms 84
- 9 Ephesians 1:1-10
- 10 Ephesians 1:11-14
- 11 Ephesians 1:15-23
- 12 Ephesians 2:1-10
- 13 Ephesians 2:11-22
- 14 Ephesians 3:1-13
- 15 Psalms 87
- 16 Ephesians 3:14-21
- 17 Ephesians 4:1-6
- 18 Ephesians 4:7-16
- 19 Ephesians 4:17-24
- 20 Ephesians 4:25-32
- 21 21) Ephesians 5:1-14
- 22 Psalms 66
- 23 Ephesians 5:15-20
- 24 Ephesians 5:21-33
- 25 Ephesians 6:1-4
- 26 Ephesians 6:5-9
- 27 Ephesians 6:10-17
- 28 Ephesians 6:18-24
- 29 Psalms 98
- 30 Hebrews 1:1-4

## BIBLE READING PLAN 2017-2018

### MAY 2018

- 1 Hebrews 1:5-14
- 2 Hebrews 2:1-10
- 3 Hebrews 2:11-18
- 4 Hebrews 3:1-6
- 5 Hebrews 3:7-19
- 6 Psalms 95
- 7 Hebrews 4:1-13
- 8 Hebrews 4:14-5:10
- 9 Hebrews 5:11-6:8
- 10 Psalms 68:1-19
- 11 Hebrews 6:9-20
- 12 Hebrews 7:1-10
- 13 Psalms 68:20-36
- 14 Hebrews 7:11-22
- 15 Hebrews 7:23-28
- 16 Hebrews 8:1-13
- 17 Hebrews 9:1-10
- 18 Hebrews 9:11-15
- 19 Hebrews 9:16-28
- 20 Psalms 99
- 21 Psalms 81
- 22 Hebrews 10:1-18
- 23 Hebrews 10:19-25
- 24 Hebrews 10:26-31
- 25 Hebrews 10:32-39
- 26 Hebrews 11:1-7
- 27 Psalms 145
- 28 Hebrews 11:8-22
- 29 Hebrews 11:23-31
- 30 Hebrews 11:32-40
- 31 Hebrews 12:1-11

### JUNE 2018

- 1 Hebrews 12:12-17
- 2 Hebrews 12:18-24
- 3 Psalms 76
- 4 Hebrews 12:25-29
- 5 Hebrews 13:1-14
- 6 Hebrews 13:15-25
- 7 Amos 1:1-2;3:3-8
- 8 Amos 3:1-2.9-15
- 9 Amos 4:1-13
- 10 Psalms 36
- 11 Amos 5:1-17
- 12 Amos 5:18-24
- 13 Amos 6:1-14
- 14 Amos 7:1-9
- 15 Amos 7:10-17
- 16 Amos 8:1-10
- 17 Psalms 139
- 18 Amos 8:11-14
- 19 Amos 9:1-10
- 20 Amos 9:11-15
- 21 Hosea 1:1-9
- 22 Hosea 2:1-3
- 23 Hosea 2:4-15
- 24 Psalms 58
- 25 Hosea 2:16-25
- 26 Hosea 3:1-5
- 27 Hosea 4:1-14
- 28 Hosea 5:8-15
- 29 Hosea 6:1-6
- 30 Hosea 8:1-14

### JULY 2018

- 1 Psalms 73
- 2 Hosea 9:10-17
- 3 Hosea 10:1-15
- 4 Hosea 11:1-11
- 5 Hosea 12:1-11
- 6 Hosea 13:1-14
- 7 Hosea 14:2-10
- 8 Psalms 51
- 9 John 4:1-14
- 10 John 4:15-26
- 11 John 4:27-42
- 12 John 4:43-54
- 13 John 5:1-9a
- 14 John 5:9b-18
- 15 Psalms 53
- 16 John 5:19-23
- 17 John 5:24-30
- 18 John 5:31-47
- 19 John 6:1-15
- 20 John 6:16-21
- 21 John 6:22-27
- 22 Psalms 48
- 23 John 6:28-40
- 24 John 6:41-59
- 25 John 6:60-71
- 26 John 7:1-13
- 27 John 7:14-24
- 28 John 7:25-39
- 29 Psalms 42
- 30 John 7:40-52
- 31 John 7:53-8:11



## BIBLE READING PLAN 2017-2018

### AUGUST 2018

- 1 John 8:12-20
- 2 John 8:21-29
- 3 John 8:30-36
- 4 John 8:37-45
- 5 Psalms 59
- 6 John 8:46-59
- 7 John 9:1-12
- 8 John 9:13-23
- 9 John 9:24-34
- 10 John 9:35-41
- 11 John 10:1-10
- 12 Psalms 148
- 13 John 10:11-21
- 14 John 10:22-30
- 15 John 10:31-42
- 16 1 John 1:1-4
- 17 1 John 1:5-10
- 18 1 John 2:1-6
- 19 Psalms 41
- 20 1 John 2:7-11
- 21 1 John 2:12-17
- 22 1 John 2:18-29
- 23 1 John 3:1-10
- 24 1 John 3:11-18
- 25 1 John 3:19-24
- 26 Psalms 93
- 27 1 John 4:1-6
- 28 1 John 4:7-21
- 29 1 John 5:1-5
- 30 1 John 5:6-12
- 31 1 John 5:13-21

### SEPTEMBER 2018

- 1 2 John 1-13
- 2 Psalms 146
- 3 3 John 1-15
- 4 Zephaniah 1:1-9
- 5 Zephaniah 2:1-7
- 6 Zephaniah 3:9-20
- 7 Habakkuk 1:1-11
- 8 Habakkuk 1:12-2:3
- 9 Psalms 49
- 10 Habakkuk 2:4-20
- 11 Habakkuk 3:1-19
- 12 Ecclesiastes 1:1-18
- 13 Ecclesiastes 2:1-11, 24-26
- 14 Ecclesiastes 3:1-15
- 15 Ecclesiastes 4:1-12
- 16 Psalms 37:1-20
- 17 Ecclesiastes 4:17-5:6
- 18 Ecclesiastes 5:9-19
- 19 Ecclesiastes 6:1-12
- 20 Ecclesiastes 7:1-14
- 21 Ecclesiastes 11:1-10
- 22 Ecclesiastes 12:1-14
- 23 Psalms 37:21-40
- 24 Galatians 1:1-5
- 25 Galatians 1:6-10
- 26 Galatians 1:11-24
- 27 Galatians 2:1-10
- 28 Galatians 2:11-21
- 29 Galatians 3:1-14
- 30 Psalms 56

### OCTOBER 2018

- 1 Galatians 3:15-18
- 2 Galatians 3:19-29
- 3 Galatians 4:1-7
- 4 Galatians 4:8-20
- 5 Galatians 4:21-31
- 6 Galatians 5:1-15
- 7 Psalms 65
- 8 Galatians 5:16-26
- 9 Galatians 6:1-10
- 10 Galatians 6:11-18
- 11 Revelations 1:1-8
- 12 Revelations 1:9-20
- 13 Revelations 2:1-7
- 14 Psalms 75
- 15 Revelations 2:8-11
- 16 Revelations 2:12-17
- 17 Revelations 2:18-29
- 18 Revelations 3:1-6
- 19 Revelations 3:7-13
- 20 Revelations 3:14-22
- 21 Psalms 38
- 22 Revelations 4:1-11
- 23 Revelations 5:1-5
- 24 Revelations 5:6-14
- 25 Revelations 6:1-8
- 26 Revelations 6:9-17
- 27 Revelations 7:1-8
- 28 Psalms 143
- 29 Revelations 7:9-17
- 30 Revelations 8:1-5
- 31 Revelations 8:6-13



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the following team of writers, YMCA and YWCA Staff and volunteers and contributors for developing the content of this year's World week of Prayer booklet

### **World YWCA**

**Amany Abu Awad**, World YWCA  
YWCA of Palestine  
YWCA of Honduras

### **World YMCA**

**Rev, Solomuzi Mabuza**, South Africa  
**Rev, Jacob Maforo**, Zimbabwe-USA  
**Mr. Lee Dong-Sik**, YMCA of Korea  
**Ms. Lee Mee-Jung**, YMCA of Korea  
**Purity Kiguatha**, Africa Alliance of YMCAs  
**Caroline Hagen**, Africa Alliance of YMCAs  
**David Head**, YMCA of Greater Charlotte, USA  
The German YMCA, CVJM



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**WorldYWCA**

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Design by Looma Designs .

*Printed 2017*