

**World YMCA and YWCA
Week of Prayer and World Fellowship
11 – 17 November, 2007**

Children First



Bible Reading Plan 2007-2008

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- Day 4: Mr Tony Malcolm
- Day 5: Mr. Nader Abu Amsha
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Call to Worship: Rev. Samuel Stephens

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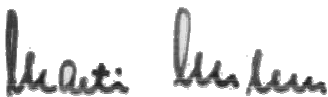
Presidents' Message

Dear Sisters and Brothers,


What makes the YMCA and YWCA different from any other NGO? One answer is that we are Christian organisations, motivated and inspired in our work by our faith in Jesus Christ. This Week of Prayer is an opportunity to take time out of our pressured working days to reflect on the link between what we are doing as YMCAs and YWCAs and why we are doing it. It is a time when we can consider our work in the context of the Bible and find guidance and encouragement from Jesus Christ's teachings for ourselves, our associations and for those we seek to serve. And of course it is a time to pray.

It is well known that Jesus spent a lot of his time with people on the margins of society and this is another distinct feature of our organisations – that we aim to serve those who are particularly vulnerable or at risk. This year the Week of Prayer focuses on one such group - children. The facts are horrifying – children are being sold as sex slaves, used as child soldiers, forced early into the labour market, denied access to education, food and shelter and the list goes on and on. Jesus says he has come that we might have life, life in all its fullness. What does fullness of life mean for these children?

It is our prayer that as we come together as YWCAs and YMCAs this week we may be refreshed and enlightened by the life-giving Word of God. May the God of all life renew us with a hunger for justice and a depth of love for all, especially children.



Martin Meißner
President, World Alliance of YMCAs



Mónica Zetzsche
President, World YWCA

Day 1: Christ as a child

'The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.'
(Luke 2:40)

Have you ever stopped to wonder why God, in his infinite wisdom, decided to come into the world as a babe and not as a powerful warrior riding a horse? That would have made it easier for him to be accepted as the saviour who had been promised. God chose not to defend his identity as a saviour through a show of strength, but through humility and vulnerability. Born as a child he epitomises fragility and defencelessness and being in need of absolute care and attention. Ironically, in that child's helplessness is contained the potential of greatness, even of eternal perfection.

Jesus chose to be born like any other child, so that sharing the mystery of power in powerlessness, he might sanctify child vulnerability, if only for its latent potential.

Jesus was saved from the murderous plans of Herod, thanks to the Flight to Egypt. Children can be feared for being considered a threat by the rulers of the world. They can be rejected or abandoned at birth. Thinking the world is good, a child can be run over or duped by strangers. Children only survive thanks to the care and attention they are offered, by the mother, the father, the babysitter, and above all by society at large. Child friendly politics will protect the young by protecting their mothers, by adopting policies that will assure them of care, and by giving their parents child benefits.

In Galilee, Jesus was educated according to the religious tradition of his time, and was presented to God in the temple. Every good gift that we get from God has to be given back to God in some way. We are told that Jesus grew and became strong. God was preparing him for the mission he was born to accomplish. This mission will never be fulfilled unless the child is introduced to the grace, truth and wisdom of God.

Every child is born with a mission, which nobody else is meant to accomplish. Many children in our time do not grow to accomplish their particular mission, because our socio-political and economic systems do not allow many children to grow and become strong. Many die of hunger and disease before they reach the age of five. When we allow this to happen, we throw away God's own gifts for the world. Who would know what kind of gifts these children would become for humanity if they were given a chance to live?

It is also said that Jesus grew up in wisdom. Yet we deny millions of children access to school. Think about Albert Einstein, Marie Curie, Leonardo da Vinci and others of their potential, without access to school. Who would lose - if not the entire human race? Think about how many we continue to lose in this way! We throw away as trash God's own unwrapped gifts for creation.

The grace of God was upon Jesus. God's grace is upon every child. The question is, can we make space in our hearts for the human gifts that come from God in every child? We stand to lose when these gifts are not allowed full expression. The peaceful face of every child is God's own image and likeness. It is our duty to protect and to care for it, for each one as it encloses God's own mystery.

Prayer

O Lord God of Life, how patient you are with us!
Your divine blessings are seeds of life, unborn kernels of hope
planted quietly in our midst.
But we do not recognise them!
They are too small to matter.
But you tell us that your reign is like a mustard seed,
so small as to be the smallest of all seeds in the midst of creation.
And when sown, it becomes the largest of shrubs.
Teach us to see the potential of your greatest divine gifts,
disguised in the smallness and mysteriousness
of little children in our midst...
If we allow them to be thrown into the dustbins of hunger,
ignorance, disease, war and strife,
with them we throw your many blessings and gifts for the world.

Teach us to see like you see, to love like you do,
to appreciate like you do, that from a tiny seed
comes the largest shrub.
Teach us to protect it with a look of love.
Amen.

Reflection

Human beings are like a great river, flowing to eternity. Imagine this river drying up because no more rain falls on the mountains. Think of this rain as little children being born in our midst. How does divine grace, like rain and children, sustain the whole of creation?

Day 2: Being heard

'... "Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn't we?" But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. "Why are you trying to trap me?" he asked. ...Then Jesus said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." And they were amazed at him.'

(Mark 12:14-17)

In this verse, Jesus reveals himself as just and transparent, a man who speaks the truth, who is not afraid to speak out. His radical words, strength of voice and his convictions silence the critics.

Enlightened by Jesus' teachings and characteristics, today we need to have the courage to defend children's right to be heard.

Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child says: "...The child shall be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law". Article 5 adds: "States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community..."

The responsibility that the community has for children has not been sufficiently recognised: it is not just parents who have to support and guide children to exercise their rights. The community also plays an important role in recognising and defending this right, since to listen to a child means to recognise their skills and opinions about their experiences. To listen to a child means to listen to the signals of his/her suffering; it is to take responsibility.

To really make sure that a child's right to be heard is respected, we need to consider each child as an individual, taking into account his/her culture, family ties and history.

We can listen to 13 year old Tic from Thailand who shares his experience of living with HIV.

“Greetings! My name is Tic and I am 13 years old. At present, I am studying as a first year secondary school student. Unfortunately, I had to leave home after my father died. It seemed that he died due to AIDS. So my mother and I left our house to stay with my aunt. A while after my father passed away, my mother died, also from AIDS. When it was known that both my parents had died of AIDS, I was subjected to discrimination which forced me out of school when I was still in the second grade.

As a person living with HIV and AIDS (and I am afraid that other people may get to know), I was taunted as “having parents with AIDS”. Nobody ever wanted to play with me so I had to look for a new school to continue studying. I started to take anti-viral drugs when I was 8 years old. These big pills are for adults, and have to be cut in half or in thirds for children. *I would like that the anti-viral drugs given to children are appropriate for them and that they cost less.* Once I went for dental treatment as I had very bad toothache, but the hospital told me that I should be treated last ‘because I was a special child’. *I would like people to treat me just like any other child, and to have someone take care of me and understand me.*

Because I have been living without a father and a mother ever since I was eight, my aunt brought me to YMCA Happy Home. Here I am among friends and we all share our duties and responsibilities. I can study, and join in, expressing my opinions and helping the development of this household. I would like other children similarly affected by HIV and AIDS to have the same opportunity and respect, based on the rights of children affected by AIDS; that is firstly, to be understood. *I don’t want people to disregard us, because we still have air to breathe and a life to live in this society.”*

Prayer

Jesus, help us not just to be listened to, but to listen, especially to children.
Amen

Reflection

How can we as YMCAs and YWCAs defend children’s right to be heard?

Day 3: The girl child

‘Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.’

(Mark 10:13-16)

Our Lord tells the disciples that the gospel builds a Kingdom. Was there ever a Kingdom which had no boys and girls in it? How, then, could it grow? Jesus tells us that the Kingdom is not just for children; on the contrary, the Kingdom of God belongs to children.

Children are born equal. *‘So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.’* (Genesis 1:27) Is there any difference in dignity between a girl and a boy? Do girls, by nature, deserve an inferior treatment? No. *‘God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.’* (Genesis 1:31)

In the 21st century there are still places, especially in low-income countries, where girls face double discrimination on the basis of both their age and their gender. There is growing international awareness that some traditional values and practices are root causes of discrimination and violence against girls. The established patriarchal system still endures the passage of time, cutting across geographical boundaries as well as religious and class differences.

Girls in these communities are expected to appear humble and respectful of males and of their elders. Because they are socialised to be “the weaker sex”, many are vulnerable to physical and sexual harassment and abuse; they often lack confidence, skills and knowledge of their rights. Parents do not invest in their formal education, since they are expected to get married and move out of the home. The practice of early and forced marriage of girls results in health complications, including weight loss and malnutrition due to frequent pregnancies when the young mothers themselves are still growing. Female genital mutilation is another brutal expression of patriarchy which reinforces girls’ lack of self worth.

Some traditional beliefs, erroneously based on religious obligations, have profound negative attitudes that limit the girl child's capacity for self-determination. Re-reading the Holy Bible and learning from Jesus' behaviour and words can show us how to treat girls. Jesus gave special attention to groups who were discriminated against and whose voices could not be heard, such as women and children. In God's Kingdom there is no discrimination, violence or domination: all lives are precious in God's eyes. Jewish society discriminated against women and children, but Jesus did not pay attention to this tradition. Instead, he asked people to '*...receive the Kingdom of God like a little child (or they) will never enter it*".

Improving the situation of the girl child is good for girls, good for the family and good for communities.

Building a bridge from information to positive behaviour practice

'Girls Building Bridges: in the context of HIV and AIDS' is a programme developed by the YWCA of Angola to help girls, 10 to 16 years old, acquire life skills that will ensure they grow up healthy in body, soul and spirit. Girls Building Bridges, a visual and interactive manual, was launched in 2004 and is used to facilitate the programme. The girls meet five times a week to take part in various activities that teach them life-skills. Each activity is a 'plank' on their bridge, and as they accomplish each activity, the bridge gets stronger and more complete until at the end of the programme they have built a bridge that has helped them cross to a healthy and positive lifestyle.

Building good self-esteem is the most important plank on a girl's bridge. "Once we feel good about ourselves, all other issues we face can be avoided or dealt with positively," says a girl in the programme.

To help the girls delve deeper inside themselves, they create a scrapbook called 'I'm a Girl Worth Watching!' that focuses on their individuality and uniqueness. In the book each girl records all that she has accomplished, her dreams and hopes, her favourite poems, her artwork, her report card, certificates and awards, and favourite photos of herself, her family and her friends.

Here is a pledge from the manual that each girl can put in her scrapbook

A Girl's Pledge

I am a girl.

I am an expression of beauty, joy, and love.

I have the right, the power and ability,
to create a beautiful, joyful, and peaceful world for myself and others.

I have a body, but I am not my body.

I have a face, but I am not my face.

I am the most important thing in the world to me.

I am love in motion.

I am the light of the world!

I can create!

I can make a mistake!

I can create something beautiful in all that I do.

I deserve the best.

I give my best.

I do my best to always take care of myself!

I am a girl!

I am growing into a woman!

I AM IT!

I am the joy the world is waiting for!

Prayer

Dear God, we pray for the girl child everywhere. Please help us to work for true gender equity starting in our own YMCAs and YWCAs. Amen.

Reflection

How can community leading organisations, such as the YMCA and the YWCA, raise community awareness about the urgent need for better education for the girl child?

Day 4: The right to develop to the fullest

‘The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.’ (John 10:10-11)

A few years ago in England, there was a story in the media about a boy aged about 10. He had been doing very well at school, but one week the teachers and his parents noticed his behaviour had suddenly deteriorated, and he was getting into all sorts of trouble. They asked him why he was behaving so badly. He said, “I want to go on holiday to Spain.” A few weeks before, he had seen a news item in the media, highlighting the story of a boy who had been expelled from school, was receiving one-to-one tuition, and had been allowed a few days in Spain as part of a field trip. The schoolboy thought that by behaving badly he would also be allowed to go to Spain

Where the development of the child is concerned, our societies seem to have established structures, processes and programmes to support children at the extremes – those with special needs, struggling to achieve academically, physically, emotionally, and socially and, at the other end of the scale, those who excel. But these two groups of children are the minority when we look at the whole picture of children across the world. The vast majority of children are somewhere in-between: not in trouble with the authorities, and trying their best to live up to the increasingly complex expectations of them. If “The right to develop to the fullest” is to mean anything for the child, it must be applied to all children, including so-called “ordinary” children.

This does not in any way undermine the important work being done by individuals and organisations to support those children at the extremes. However, if the words and promise of Jesus in John 10 are to be taken seriously we need to ask: What does the fullness of life look like for the “average child”? What’s the gospel for him/her? Or can we only proclaim the gospel with any confidence where grief and desperation provide us with opportunities to use well-rehearsed words - like thanksgiving,

aspiration, purpose, full potential and mutual support - which become the tools and signs of their salvation.

The fullness of life should be the aspiration of all people for themselves. Society, and particularly organisations which promote themselves as advocates for children and young people like the YWCA and YMCA, need to create the necessary protected space for the child to take root and grow into this fullness of life. We can only do this if we ourselves have a vision of what this fullness looks like.

Prayer/Meditation

The following text is taken and adapted from the book “The Prophet”, by Kahlil Gibran, in which the “prophet” is asked for guidance in relation to different areas of life and living by the people of Orphalese. His answers resonate with love, understanding and universal unity, all of which are at the heart of the YMCA and YWCA. This is what he has to say of children...

‘And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said,
“Speak to us of children”.

And he said:

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

and though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love, but not your thoughts,
for they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies, but not their souls,

for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit,
not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.

For life goes not backwards nor carries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.

The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite,

and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.

Let your bending in the archer’s hand be for gladness;

for even as He loves the arrow that flies,

so He loves also the bow that is stable.’

Reflection

As YMCA and YWCA we often say we express our faith, not so much through our preaching, but by the way we live our lives and carry out our duties. Do you think this is still true? Explain.

Day 5: Do not be afraid

‘So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.’ (Matthew 10:26)

While we are meeting to pray today, at this exact moment, millions and millions of children throughout the world are tasting the bitterness of all kinds of pain and suffering. We all know, or should know, that children are living in fear of the horror of being killed, tortured, and sexually abused, living in fear of being victims of child trafficking, corporal punishment and inhumane treatment. The physical and psychological pain and fear is caused and practised not only by governments, political authorities and foreign occupation, but it is also practised within communities, in schools and even within our families.

History teaches us that millions of people have been killed as a result of wars waged under the pretence of “fulfilling prophecies” while the real motives were kept hidden. The same hidden agendas and excuses were used to justify racial discrimination and “cleansing” of indigenous people while plundering other nations’ resources. And it seems that history is repeating itself. Similar hidden agendas and excuses are being used to justify occupation in the Middle East, where people are being killed daily and millions of children are living in extreme poverty, horror and daily violations of their right to life.

However, we have good news promised by Jesus: *‘I have come that they may have life, and have it to all its fullness.’* He is promising us a good life not just after death but before death as well. Jesus showed us the way to a good life when he said *‘Blessed are the peacemakers,’* and told us, *‘to act justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.’*

Are we afraid to disclose Jesus’ teachings? *‘What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.’* (Matthew 10:26) How can we say to His beloved children “Do not

be afraid,” while we are passing by hungry children, imprisoned and tortured youth, grieving mothers and helpless farmers?

Don't we see the similarity between the misuse of God's will by politicians, and the misuse of those who *'turned the Temple into a den of robbers'*? Jesus *'chased them all out of the Temple. He drove out the sheep and oxen, scattered the money changers' coins over the floor, and turned over their tables.'* Is Jesus our model? Are we the Good Samaritan and are we peacemakers? When will we put faith in action and walk our talk? Shall we tell children, “Do not be afraid,” and actually do something to advocate for their cause?

God says, *'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.'* (Hebrews 4:7)

Prayer

Oh Lord, we gather to thank you for enlightening us with your wisdom while your beloved children are suffering a lot but we are doing a little.

We thank you for the YWCA and the YMCA, but give us wisdom and power to be instruments of change.

You show us the way, but still we need your guidance, your courage to live out your way.

Please Lord, burn our hearts with your love, for justice and peace, for righteousness and truth.

Charge us with new boldness to speak the truth and to walk our talk.

Please Lord, change us to change the world, to convert violence into love, hunger into sufficiency, exploitation into cooperation, and injustice into justice.

Amen.

Reflections

- Are we courageous enough to revisit our plans to serve God's mission? If so, how can we do this?
- How do we know if exploited and oppressed children are happy with our work as YMCAs and YWCAs?

Day 6: Part of the whole

“Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” (Luke 2:49)

‘And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.’
(Luke 2:52)

The Bible has a lot to say about how close God is to children. We are never alone, but always connected directly to God through the Spirit. In Romans 8:15, we are told that we are all part of one family, adopted sons and daughters of the Lord. Now we can call Him “Abba, Father” forever. In John 17:21, the verse on which the YMCA was founded in 1844, we are taught, through a very important prayer given by Jesus to his disciples, that we are to act as one community, one family, just as Jesus Christ and God are one in love, so that the world may believe.

In reflecting on our own attitudes towards children, we are reminded of how worried Jesus’ parents were when they finally found Jesus in the Temple after searching for Him for three days. Their attitude might be familiar to ours - underestimating the child’s wisdom and understanding. Yet Jesus felt he belonged in the Temple, he felt very close to his heavenly father. Jesus replied, *‘Why were you searching for me? Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?’* (Luke 2:49)

In Luke 2:40, Jesus, as a child, grows strong and is filled with wisdom and grace. This model of how Jesus was raised is in the centre of the work of the YWCA and YMCA each day. Through the holistic development, protection and participation of children and adolescents, we are reminded that we are unified; that our goal is to help children grow strong and be filled with wisdom and God’s grace. In doing this, we also become closer to God and to one another.

Regardless of whether children are born into our family, into our community, or into our world, they all belong to God and we all belong to each other as children of God. He has granted us the joy and privilege of helping to care for His children and raise them to understand His love, compassion, and mercy. Children represent God’s pure, unconditional love

and renewed hope in the world. In our work it is essential that we develop, protect, and include the children.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for the gift of children.

Teach us to celebrate the natural gifts that children bring to us fresh from You to inspire and root us in the purity of Your unconditional love.

Teach us to learn from children forgiveness, hope, joy, and love, and help us to continue to develop, protect, and include all children in our programmes.

Thank You, God, for the presence of children in our lives and in our work. We honour the responsibility You have given us to do Your will for youth. Grant us your wisdom and guidance to develop a new generation of strong, wise, merciful young leaders who will one day soon become the new leaders of our world.

Blessed be the name of Jesus.

In Your wonderful name we pray. Amen.

Reflections

- What are we doing in our own families, communities, local associations, and together as world Movements, to foster the growth of strong, wise children and adolescents who are filled with the grace of our Lord?
- Often children are the icebreakers between two adult strangers but do we acknowledge children as natural community builders? How can we become more aware of the essential role children and adolescents play in our daily lives?

Call to Worship

Voice: Come let us worship our God, the creator of all, our shelter and the strength of our lives! Let us come to God's presence in praise and adoration. Let us worship our God whose love is immeasurable and whose grace and mercy abounds. We are "fearfully and wonderfully created".

Song

(Symbols of worship are brought to the altar by children.)

Flowers: To remind us that we are all part of God's creation. Children are like flowers. They are to be tenderly cared for.

Bowl of salted water: Let the salted water remind us today of the tears of the multitudes of suffering children.

Cross: The symbol of suffering and love, of death and life. This reminds us today of God's love for children expressed through Jesus our Saviour.

A lighted candle: To remind us that in darkness we have light. We are called to be the light.

An open Bible: To remind us of God's call for Justice and God's intervention throughout history on behalf of the disadvantaged, marginalised and disenfranchised.

Call to Prayer

Leader: Jesus said: 'I am the Light of the World. Whoever follows me will have the light of life and will never walk in darkness.' Oh God of Light, we praise you.

All: *Our God is our light. All darkness will be dispelled.*

Leader: Jesus said: 'The water that I will give will become a life-giving spring within and give eternal life.'

All: *Oh God, from whom flows the water of life, we praise you. The sting of death is removed and we are cleansed.*

Leader: Oh Word that became flesh and made your dwelling among us, we praise you.

All: *We have seen the glory of the Son, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

(Children may enact a mime or a skit, based on the theme and local contextual issues related to children's rights.)

Leader: Let justice roll on like a river,

All: *And righteousness like a never-failing stream.*

Prayer of Confession

Leader: Lord, forgive us for our apathy and complacency towards the needs of our children.

All: *We knew the answers but chose to remain silent.*

Leader: Lord, forgive us for our ignorance of the challenges our children face.

All: *We have remained blinded to the realities around us.*

Leader: Lord, forgive us for our indolence.

All: *We have given excuses because we did not want to leave our comforts.*

Leader: Lord, forgive us for turning away from children in need.

All: *We were afraid of what it would demand. We were not willing to commit ourselves.*

Leader: Lord, forgive us for our selfishness and greed that has left our children in want and need.

All: *We have not shared enough that everyone might have.*

Leader: Lord, forgive us for our self-centredness.

All: *We were concerned more about ourselves than others.*

Leader: Lord, forgive us for neglecting our children.
All: *We have been preoccupied with our own lives.*

Leader: Lord, forgive us for exploiting our children.
All: *We failed to realise how precious they are in your eyes.*

Leader: Lord, forgive us for we have been careless about the future of our children.
All: *We failed to recognise that today's children are tomorrow's leaders.*

Song

Scripture Readings

'He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven."' (Matthew 18:2-4)

'And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.' (Matthew 18:5-6)

'Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them.' (Matthew 19:13)

'Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these."' (Matthew 19:14)

Reflection

Prayer of Intercession

(Different people may lead each of the following prayers.)

Leader: Lord we pray for the millions of impoverished children around the world whose hunger knows no end.
All: *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer*

Leader: Lord we pray for children in many nations who have no access to health care.
All: *Lord hear our prayer*

Leader: We pray for all the children in our world who are deprived of the opportunity to be educated.
All: *Lord hear our prayer*

Leader: We pray for children who are victims of HIV and AIDS.
All: *Lord hear our prayer*

Leader: We pray for children who have been denied their basic rights.
All: *Lord hear our prayer*

Leader: We pray for children who toil and labour against their will because of poverty, need and exploitation.
All: *Lord hear our prayer*

Leader: We pray for children in conflict with the law.
All: *Lord hear our prayer*

Leader: We pray for children who grow up without parental care and attention; those children who have been abandoned and orphaned.
All: *Lord hear our prayer*

Leader: Lord we pray for children who are differently-abled. We pray that they will be provided equal opportunities as others.
All: *Lord hear our prayer*

Leader: Lord we pray for children who face various kinds and levels of discrimination. We specially remember the girl child.
All: *Lord hear our prayer*

Leader: Lord we pray for children caught in the crossfire of armed conflict.

All: *Lord hear our prayer*

Leader: Lord we pray for the children who are misrepresented by the media.

All: *Lord hear our prayer*

Leader: Lord we pray for children around the world who are sexually exploited. We seek their liberation.

All: *Lord hear our prayer*

Leader: We pray for children who are victims of violence and whose rights are violated. May justice be rendered.

All: *Lord hear our prayer*

Leader: We pray for the UN Special Session on Children and all other organisations taking up the cause of our children. We pray especially for the global efforts of the YMCA and YWCA to help children in various ways.

All: *Lord hear our prayer*

Song

Dedication

Leader: ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.’ (Jeremiah 1:5)

All: *‘Ah, Sovereign Lord,’ I said, ‘I do not know how to speak; I am only a child.’ (Jeremiah 1:6)*

Leader: ‘Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn your commands.’ (Psalms 119:73)

All: *‘May those who fear you rejoice when they see me, for I have put my hope in your word.’ (Psalms 119:74)*

Leader: *‘My eyes fail from weeping, I am in torment within, my heart is poured out on the ground because my people are destroyed, because children and infants faint in the streets of the city.’ (Lamentations 2:11)*

All: *‘Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to God for the lives of your children who faint from hunger at the head of every street.’ (Lamentations 2:19)*

Leader: *‘Because of thirst the infant’s tongue sticks to the roof of its mouth; the children beg for bread, but no one gives it to them.’ (Lamentations 4:4)*

All: *We have heard your voice O sovereign, merciful and gracious Lord. Make us willing to be doers of your Word and not remain as hearers alone. Make us ready to act in response.*

Benediction

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus enable us to respond to the cry of the underprivileged children. May the Peace of God flow through us as channels of peace and justice among them. May the Love of God so fill us that we will be motivated to cry out on their behalf. May the enabling presence of the Holy Spirit use us for the extension of the reign of God.

*‘Go tell this to your children,
and let your children tell it to their children,
and their children to the next generation.’ (Joel 1:3)*

Bible Reading Plan 2006 - 2007

November 2007

- | | | |
|------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Job 38,1-21 | 4. Isa 40,12-31 | 6. Ps 138 |
| 2. Job 40,1-5 | 5. Isa 41,8-14 | 7. Mk 1,40-45 |
| 3. Job 40,6-32 | 6. Isa 42,1-9 | 8. Mk 2,1-12 |
| 4. Ps 22,23-32 | 7. Isa 43,1-7 | 9. Mk 2,13-17 |
| 5. Job 42,1-6 | 8. Isa 43,8-13 | 10. Mk 2,18-22 |
| 6. Job 42,7-9 | 9. Ps 80 | 11. Mk 2,23-28 |
| 7. Job 42,10-17 | 10. Isa 43,14-28 | 12. Mk 3,1-6 |
| 8. Jas 1,1-12 | 11. Isa 44,1-5 | 13. Ps 89,1-19 |
| 9. Jas 1,13-18 | 12. Isa 44,6-20 | 14. 1 Tim 1,1-11 |
| 10. Jas 1,19-27 | 13. Isa 44,21-28 | 15. 1 Tim 1,12-20 |
| 11. Ps 112 | 14. Isa 45,1-8 | 16. 1 Tim 2,1-7 |
| 12. Jas 2,1-13 | 15. Isa 45,9-17 | 17. 1 Tim 2,8-15 |
| 13. Jas 2,14-26 | 16. Ps 85 | 18. 1 Tim 3,1-13 |
| 14. Jas 3,1-12 | 17. Isa 45,18-25 | 19. 1 Tim 3,14-16 |
| 15. Jas 3,13-18 | 18. Isa 49,1-6 | 20. Ps 89,20-53 |
| 16. Jas 4,1-12 | 19. Isa 49,7-17 | 21. 1 Tim 4,1-11 |
| 17. Jas 4,13-5,6 | 20. Isa 49,18-26 | 22. 1 Tim 4,12-5,2 |
| 18. Ps 79 | 21. Isa 50,4-11 | 23. 1 Tim 5,3-16 |
| 19. Jas 5,7-12 | 22. Isa 51,1-8 | 24. 1 Tim 5,17-6,2a |
| 20. Jas 5,13-20 | 23. Ps 115 | 25. 1 Tim 6,2b-10 |
| 21. Mt 24,1-14 | 24. Isa 52,7-10 | 26. 1 Tim 6,11-21 |
| 22. Mt 24,15-28 | 25. <i>Christmas</i> | 27. Ps 128 |
| 23. Mt 24,29-31 | Lk 1,46-55 | 28. 2 Tim 1,1-12 |
| 24. Mt 24,32-44 | 26. Lk 2,29-32 | 29. 2 Tim 1,13-18 |
| 25. Ps 126 | 27. Isa 52,13-53,6 | 30. 2 Tim 2,1-13 |
| 26. Mt 24,45-51 | 28. Isa 53,7-12 | 31. 2 Tim 2,14-26 |
| 27. Mt 25,1-13 | 29. Isa 54,1-10 | |
| 28. Mt 25,14-30 | 30. Ps 33 | |
| 29. Mt 25,31-46 | 31. Isa 55,6-11 | |
| 30. Jude 1-16 | | |

December 2007

1. Jude 17-25
2. Ps 117
3. Isa 40,1-11

January 2008

1. *New Year*
Ps 148
2. Mk 1,1-13
3. Mk 1,14-20
4. Mk 1,21-28
5. Mk 1,29-39

February 2008

1. 2 Tim 3,1-9
2. 2 Tim 3,10-17
3. Ps 31
4. 2 Tim 4,1-8
5. 2 Tim 4,9-22
6. Titus 1,1-16
7. Titus 2,1-15
8. Titus 3,1-15
9. Philemon 1-25

10. Ps 91
 11. Mk 11,1-11
 12. Mk 11,12-25
 13. Mk 11,27-33
 14. Mk 12,1-12
 15. Mk 12,13-17
 16. Mk 12,18-27
17. Ps 123
 18. Mk 12,28-34
 19. Mk 12,35-40
 20. Mk 12,41-44
 21. Mk 13,1-13
 22. Mk 13,14-23
 23. Mk 13,24-37
24. Ps 129
 25. Mk 14,1-11
 26. Mk 14,12-16
 27. Mk 14,17-25
 28. Jn 14,1-14
 29. Jn 14,15-26
- March 2008**
1. Jn 14,27-31
2. Ps 132
 3. Jn 15,1-8
 4. Jn 15,9-17
 5. Jn 15,18–16,4
 6. Jn 16,5-15
 7. Jn 16,16-24
 8. Jn 16,25-33
9. Ps 102
 10. Jn 17,1-8
 11. Jn 17,9-19
 12. Jn 17,20-26
 13. Mk 14,26-31
 14. Mk 14,32-42
 15. Mk 14,43-52
16. **Palm Sunday**
 Ps 88
17. Mk 14,53-65
 18. Mk 14,66-72
 19. Mk 15,1-15
 20. Mk 15,16-23
 21. **Good Friday**
 Mk 15,24-41
 22. Mk 15,42-47
23. **Easter**
 Mk 16,1-8
 24. Mk 16,9-20
 25. 1 Pet 1,1-12
 26. 1 Pet 1,13-16
 27. 1 Pet 1,17-21
 28. 1 Pet 1,22–2,3
 29. 1 Pet 2,4-10
30. Ps 122
 31. 1 Pet 2,11-17
- April 2008**
1. 1 Pet 2,18-25
 2. 1 Pet 3,1-7
 3. 1 Pet 3,8-12
 4. 1 Pet 3,13-17
 5. 1 Pet 3,18-22
6. Ps 136
 7. 1 Pet 4,1-11
 8. 1 Pet 4,12-19
 9. 1 Pet 5,1-7
 10. 1 Pet 5,8-14
 11. 1 Cor 1,1-9
 12. 1 Cor 1,10-17
13. Ps 96
 14. 1 Cor 1,18-25
 15. 1 Cor 1,26-31
 16. 1 Cor 2,1-5
 17. 1 Cor 2,6-16
 18. 1 Cor 3,1-4
 19. 1 Cor 3,5-8
20. Ps 149
 21. 1 Cor 3,9-17
22. 1 Cor 3,18-23
 23. 1 Cor 4,1-8
 24. 1 Cor 4,9-16
 25. 1 Cor 4,17-21
 26. 1 Cor 5,1-8
27. Ps 121
 28. 1 Cor 5,9-13
 29. 1 Cor 6,1-11
 30. 1 Cor 6,12-20
- May 2008**
1. **Ascension**
 Phil 2,5-11
 2. 1 Cor 7,1-16
 3. 1 Cor 7,17-24
4. Ps 131
 5. 1 Cor 7,25-40
 6. 1 Cor 8,1-6
 7. 1 Cor 8,7-13
 8. 1 Cor 9,1-18
 9. 1 Cor 9,19-23
 10. 1 Cor 9,24-27
11. **Pentecost**
 Eph 1,3-14
 12. Ps 150
 13. 1 Cor 10,1-13
 14. 1 Cor 10,14-22
 15. 1 Cor 10,23–11,1
 16. 1 Cor 11,2-16
 17. 1 Cor 11,17-26
18. Ps 145
 19. 1 Cor 11,27-34
 20. 1 Cor 12,1-11
 21. 1 Cor 12,12-26
 22. 1 Cor 12,27-31
 23. 1 Cor 13,1-7
 24. 1 Cor 13,8-13
25. Ps 133
 26. 1 Cor 14,1-12
 27. 1 Cor 14,13-25

28. 1 Cor 14,26-33a
29. 1 Cor 14,33b-40
30. 1 Cor 15,1-11
31. 1 Cor 15,12-19

June 2008

1. Ps 36
2. 1 Cor 15,20-28
3. 1 Cor 15,29-34
4. 1 Cor 15,35-49
5. 1 Cor 15,50-58
6. 1 Cor 16,1-12
7. 1 Cor 16,13-24

8. Ps 106,1-23
9. Ex 1,1-22
10. Ex 2,1-10
11. Ex 2,11-25
12. Ex 3,1-22
13. Ex 4,1-17
14. Ex 4,18-31

15. Ps 106,24-48
16. Ex 5,1-6,1
17. Ex 7,1-25
18. Ex 12,1-20
19. Ex 12,21-33,51
20. Ex 13,17-22
21. Ex 14,1-14

22. Ps 73
23. Ex 14,15-31
24. Ex 15,1-21
25. Ex 15,22-27
26. Ex 16,1-36
27. Ex 17,1-16
28. Ex 18,1-27

29. Ps 135
30. Ex 19,1-25

July 2008

1. Ex 20,1-21
2. Ex 24,1-18

3. Ex 25,1-22
4. Ex 32,1-14
5. Ex 32,15-35

6. Ps 139
7. Ex 33,1-23
8. Ex 34,1-16
9. Ex 34,17-28
10. Ex 34,29-35
11. Ex 40,1-17
12. Ex 40,34-38

13. Ps 124
14. Mk 3,7-19
15. Mk 3,20-30
16. Mk 3,31-35
17. Mk 4,1-9
18. Mk 4,10-20
19. Mk 4,21-25

20. Ps 119,25-32
21. Mk 4,26-29
22. Mk 4,30-34
23. Mk 4,35-41
24. Mk 5,1-20
25. Mk 5,21-34
26. Mk 5,35-43

27. Ps 119,33-40
28. Mk 6,1-6
29. Mk 6,7-13
30. Mk 6,14-29
31. Mk 6,30-44

August 2008

1. Mk 6,45-56
2. Mk 7,1-23

3. Ps 119,41-48
4. Mk 7,24-30
5. Mk 7,31-37
6. Mk 8,1-9
7. Mk 8,10-21
8. Mk 8,22-26
9. Mk 8,27-33

10. Ps 147
11. Mk 8,34-9,1
12. Mk 9,2-13
13. Mk 9,14-29
14. Mk 9,30-37
15. Mk 9,38-41
16. Mk 9,42-50

17. Ps 120
18. Mk 10,1-12
19. Mk 10,13-16
20. Mk 10,17-27
21. Mk 10,28-31
22. Mk 10,32-45
23. Mk 10,46-52

24. Ps 146
25. 1 Macc 1,1-15 (1-16)*

Jer 1,1-10

26. 1 Macc 1,16-28 (17-29)
Jer 1,11-19
27. 1 Macc 1,29-40 (30-42)
Jer 2,1-13
28. 1 Macc 1,41-64 (43-68)
Jer 3,1-10

29. 1 Macc 2,1-14
Jer 3,19-4,4
30. 1 Macc 2,15-28
Jer 6,9-23

31. Ps 127

September 2008

1. 1 Macc 2,29-41
Jer 7,1-15

* The Bible references are from the Revised Standard version and the Good News Bible. The verses from the Lutheran Bible are in brackets.

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|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 2. 1 Macc 2,42-48
Jer 7,16-28 | 24. Jdt 8,1-10 (1-8)
Jer 36,1-32 | 13. 2 Cor 1,1-7 |
| 3. 1 Macc 2,49-70
Jer 9,11-23 | 25. Jdt 8,11-24 (9-17)
Jer 37,1-21 | 14. 2 Cor 1,8-11 |
| 4. 1 Macc 3,1-26
Jer 12,1-6 | 26. Jdt 8,25-36 (18-28)
Jer 38,1-13 | 15. 2 Cor 1,12-24 |
| 5. 1 Macc 3,27-41
Jer 13,1-11 | 27. Jdt 9,1-14 (1-15)
Jer 38,14-28 | 16. 2 Cor 2,1-11 |
| 6. 1 Macc 3,42-60
Jer 14,1-16 | 28. Ps 109 | 17. 2 Cor 2,12-17 |
| 7. Ps 140 | 29. Jdt 10,1-13 (1-14)
Jer 39,1-18 | 18. 2 Cor 3,1-11 |
| 8. 1 Macc 4,1-25
Jer 15,10-21 | 30. Jdt 10,14-11,4 (10,15-11,3)
Jer 40,1-16 | 19. Ps 143 |
| 9. 1 Macc 4,26-35
Jer 16,1-13 | | 20. 2 Cor 3,12-18 |
| 10. 1 Macc 4,36-51
Jer 18,1-12 | | 21. 2 Cor 4,1-6 |
| 11. 1 Macc 4,52-61
Jer 19,1-13 | | 22. 2 Cor 4,7-12 |
| 12. Jdt 1,1-16 (1-11)
Jer 20,7-18 | | 23. 2 Cor 4,13-18 |
| 13. Jdt 2,1-13 (1-6)
Jer 21,1-14 | | 24. 2 Cor 5,1-10 |
| 14. Ps 141 | | 25. 2 Cor 5,11-15 |
| 15. Jdt 2,14-27 (7-17)
Jer 23,1-8 | | 26. Ps 53 |
| 16. Jdt 2,28-3,10 (2,18-3,12)
Jer 25,1-14 | | 27. 2 Cor 5,16-21 |
| 17. Jdt 4,1-15 (1-14)
Jer 25,15-31 | | 28. 2 Cor 6,1-10 |
| 18. Jdt 5,1-21 (1-23)
Jer 26,1-19 | | 29. 2 Cor 6,11-7,1 |
| 19. Jdt 5,22-6,9 (5,24-6,5)
Jer 28,1-17 | | 30. 2 Cor 7,2-16 |
| 20. Jdt 6,10-21 (6-20)
Jer 29,1-14 | | 31. 2 Cor 8,1-15 |
| 21. Ps 142 | | |
| 22. Jdt 7,1-15 (1-10)
Jer 30,1-3; 31,1-14 | | |
| 23. Jdt 7,16-32 (11-24)
Jer 31,18-20.31-37 | | |
| | October 2008 | |
| | 1. Jdt 11,5-15 (4-11)
Jer 41,1-18 | |
| | 2. Jdt 11,16-12,4 (11,12-12,4)
Jer 42,1-22 | |
| | 3. Jdt 12,5-14 (5-12)
Jer 43,1-13 | |
| | 4. Jdt 12,15-13,10 (12,16-13,11)
Jer 44,1-14 | |
| | 5. Ps 65 | |
| | 6. Jdt 13,11-20 (12-25)
Jer 44,15-30 | |
| | 7. Jdt 14,1-10 (13,26-14,6)
Jer 45,1-5 | |
| | 8. Jdt 14,11-15,3 (14,7-15,5)
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| | 9. Jdt 15,4-14 (6-16)
Lam 3,1-33 | |
| | 10. Jdt 16,1-17 (1-22)
Lam 3,34-44.55-59 | |
| | 11. Jdt 16,18-25 (22-31)
Lam 5,1-5.16-22 | |
| | 12. Ps 42 | |
| | | November 2008 |
| | | 1. 2 Cor 8,16-24 |
| | | 2. Ps 125 |
| | | 3. 2 Cor 9,1-5 |
| | | 4. 2 Cor 9,6-15 |
| | | 5. 2 Cor 10,1-11 |
| | | 6. 2 Cor 10,12-18 |
| | | 7. 2 Cor 11,1-6 |
| | | 8. 2 Cor 11,7-15 |
| | | 9. Ps 90 |
| | | 10. 2 Cor 11,16-33 |
| | | 11. 2 Cor 12,1-10 |
| | | 12. 2 Cor 12,11-18 |
| | | 13. 2 Cor 12,19-21 |
| | | 14. 2 Cor 13,1-4 |
| | | 15. 2 Cor 13,5-13 |
| | | 16. Ps 51 |
| | | 17. 2 Pet 1,1-11 |
| | | 18. 2 Pet 1,12-21 |

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|-------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 19. 2 Pet 2,1-11 | 23. Isa 26,7-19 | 28. Isa 58,13-14 |
| 20. 2 Pet 2,12-22 | 24. Isa 56,1-8 | 29. Isa 59,1-15a |
| 21. 2 Pet 3,1-9 | 25. Isa 57,1-13 | |
| 22. 2 Pet 3,10-18 | 26. Isa 57,14-21 | 30. Ps 24 |
| | 27. Isa 58,1-12 | |

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