

# lentevent

## NOTES FOR WORSHIP LEADERS 2018



**These notes have been provided for you, the worship leader, to adapt as you see fit.** You may incorporate your own prayers and readings, your own Lenten candle liturgies, or simply use these notes exactly as they are.

**If you use them as they are...**

You will need access to either a live internet stream, a download of the videos on USB, or the ability to show PowerPoint summaries.

You can find instructions for the PowerPoint and video downloads on our website.

You can also request a USB with the videos sent to you from UnitingWorld.

Each segment will take about 10 minutes to complete within your service, including the prayers, and could incorporate one or two readers.



# Week 1: Together we change the world

Today we begin the season of Lent, six weeks of reflection that echoes both the time Israel wandered in the desert on their way to freedom, and the 40 days Jesus spent alone in the wilderness before his public ministry began. Traditionally Lent is a time of preparation for Easter. Some people choose to give something up during Lent – a luxury, a bad habit – while others intentionally focus on taking up a new discipline or attitude. At its heart, Lent is an opportunity to consider our commitment to being a follower of Jesus.

Lent Event, a ministry of UnitingWorld, is about using this time to intentionally join ourselves to the global church, where God is at work in ways that are surprising and encouraging. This year's theme is "Together we change the world – faith in action." As we learn from the witness of our partners in places around the world where spiritual growth is strong but physical resources are often lacking, we better understand what it means to be part of the body of Christ. It's a body that is wounded and frail at times, but also resilient and full of resolve.

We're going to take the time this morning to watch an introductory video that calls us to this Lenten period together, and then we'll pray.

Watch the video from Week 1: [Together we Change the World](#)

(It is also available on the website, available to download from the LEARN section.)

(If you don't have access to the video, please use the PowerPoints provided.)

## Reader

Our Uniting Church Partners are gathered this morning to prepare for Lent. In Zimbabwe, people are praying for stable political leadership – hundreds of thousands of faithful Christians. Christianity is growing faster in Africa than in any other region of the world other than China, which sees four churches opened every week. In China this morning, over a million Christians will be gathered praying for their elderly, their young people and especially for their government, one of the most powerful in the world. And in the Pacific, which is where we'll be focusing for the next five weeks, the church is gathered to pray for girls and women who are strong and creative, but too often have their voices silenced; for those who've been forced to relocate their homes because of the rising sea; and for those who can't put food on the table for their families.

Let's join our partners now in prayer.

[Prayers are also provided on a separate PowerPoint, available from the LEARN section on the website]



## Let's pray together

Our God,  
The path is a lonely one  
Strewn with mistakes  
Tentative steps,  
Injustice  
And the cries, not only of anguish  
But also of love,  
Compassion and exaltation.

*Lord, they were the people you had set free,  
And they had believed in you, the Exodus God.  
But now in the desert they were lost.*

Day followed day in a succession  
Of frustrations, anxieties and difficulties

*Some wanted to return to slavery  
Responding to the lure of the familiar  
Some were content to complain in the wilderness  
To resign from the struggle to journey on.*

We, Lord, who call ourselves your people  
Share the wilderness and the road.  
We set out in great hope,  
Sure of our God  
And of the path ahead.

*But now our dreams are shattered,  
We are disappointed and perplexed,  
Too weary to be angry  
Struggling to find reason  
In a world of pain, competition and hate.*

God of the Exodus, remind us, too  
That it is in the desert that we have experienced your grace  
And have grown stronger and gentler.

*For to those who persist and journey on,  
There is the surprise of discovering  
That the desert is fertile.*



Amen.

*(Adapted from 'The True Wilderness' – Be our Freedom, Lord. Terry Falla, OpenBook, 1994)*

If your congregation has set a fundraising target, now would be a great time to explain what the target is and how you plan to meet it – for example, you may be holding an International Women's Day event or simply asking people to donate during morning tea. If you're giving out individual stickers and asking people to give up something from daily life to help raise funds, now might also be the time to give out the stickers and explain the process.



## Week 2: Faith in a changing climate

**Reader:** Today we travel to another island in the Pacific, where the water is warm, palms gently sweep the sky and dogs snore peacefully. The pace of life is slow here, but under the day-to-day calm there's a lurking threat.

Tuvalu, along with Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and other tiny nation states in the Pacific, constantly finds herself wrung out by violent storms that are increasing in intensity and king tides that are bigger, more frequent and flood more homes. Seasons of wet and dry are less predictable. Fresh water is harder to come by. It's becoming more and more difficult to grow local food and catch local fish because of rising levels of salt in the earth and increasing water temperatures. Almost all the local food is mass produced, plastic-wrapped and imported from Fiji, Australia and New Zealand. Overpopulation is a problem and so is sewage and sanitation. Most young people know they'll have to live somewhere else to find good jobs and a future.

In the midst of all this change, almost 90% of Pacific Islanders hold to the Christian faith and the Church is critical to helping people cope and adapt. Some are resistant to what is happening right in front of them, preferring to cling to the hope that God will magically intervene to save them. Others are determined advocates, calling to one another and to us to be better caretakers of the earth.

We're partners with churches in Tuvalu and Kiribati in particular, supporting them as they grapple with faith in a changing climate.

**Watch the video:** [Faith in a Changing Climate.](#)

(Or show the PowerPoint)

### **Reader:**

Few of us deal well with change – the change that comes suddenly, as Jesus burst into the temple and turned over tables to challenge the corruption of the moneylenders and those who exploited the most vulnerable – the change that creeps up slowly and erodes our lives before we're fully aware of it.

Like our friends in Tuvalu, we grapple with our attitudes to change and the call to action that lies before us in the faces of our friends in the Pacific. Around the world, more and more vulnerable communities are dealing with the impact of natural disaster, shortages in drinking water, the impact of forest clearing and the sharing of natural resources. This calls for a radical rethink of the way we collectively treat our planet.

**Let's pray together.**



On the seventh day you rested, Creator God,  
Looked at all you had made  
And called it good.  
And from mountain to moon to majestic sweep of ocean,  
It  
Is  
Good!

*Yet somehow, God, we've failed to care for it as we should  
Cleared the mountains of trees, filled the oceans with plastic  
Bought more than we need, used more than our share  
And those who can bear it least suffer most.*

We pray today for our brothers and sisters in the Pacific  
Already carrying a load most of us fail to imagine  
Simply because of the lottery of birth.  
We want to step up, play our part  
In changing the way we think about sharing the earth  
Using less, recycling more, holding polluters to account, including ourselves.

*We want to support our brothers and sisters as they  
Prepare plans to prevent disasters from becoming tragedies,  
Educate and train leaders,  
Rebuild, relocate, refresh themselves for the long road ahead.*

Creator God, change our hearts and minds.  
In the beauty of a sunset, the swell of the ocean, the smile of a grandchild  
Give us the vision of the future of your creation  
As you imagined it from the start.

Amen



## Week 3: Faith tackles poverty

We begin our journey of faith in action with the local Church in an informal settlement in Suva, Fiji. Across the Pacific 90% of people identify as Christian, and although the percentage is lower within Fiji, the Church is still a powerful force for change. Fiji, known to many Australians as an idyllic holiday destination, is full of creative, friendly and warm-hearted people. And faith is an active ingredient in the culture, where churches are the bedrock of the community. Aside from being active worship congregations, they assist in everything from recovery after frequent cyclones to providing education.

When Jesus told the crowds that those who wanted to be his followers should take up their crosses, living generously and willing to sacrifice for others, the Church in Fiji heard and responded. Without much in the way of resources, the Church has stepped up to be a light within their community – in this case an informal settlement on the outskirts of Suva where people live without reliable water or electricity. Many who live here were attracted to the city from the country, hoping for better lives for their children. Education is key to their dreams.

Watch the video: [Education for change](#)

If not, show the PPT which you can download from our LEARN section.

**Reader:** We have our own pressing needs within our local communities – older people looking for company and help with meals; children in need of encouragement and support with homework; neighbours under strain, some resorting to domestic violence. As we pray for our partners, we pray also for those we know locally who need us to step out in faith to offer care.

**Let's pray together.**

To love someone else's life  
More than our own,  
To reach out in support  
Of another person's weakness  
When we ourselves are falling,  
To give another person hope  
When we are close to despair  
And to offer forgiveness  
When we are unforgiven;  
This is what you ask of us Lord  
And it is hard

*Hard to give when we are poor  
Hard to help when we need help*





*Hard to encourage when we are discouraged*

Yet in you Jesus, we see love when you were hated  
Forgiveness when you were crucified  
Life for the whole world  
From your death

*We are thankful for the courage and commitment  
Of our friends and neighbours in Suva  
Who give freely in the midst of their need  
And carry their faith with love and conviction.  
Might our souls catch fire from theirs.  
Give us the courage to carry our crosses  
And share both our burdens and our strengths  
Knowing that you are with us  
Leading us to fullness of life  
Which cannot be taken away*

Amen.

*(Adapted from "Venturing the Harder Road" - Be our Freedom, Lord. Terry Falla, OpenBook, 1994)*



## Week 4: Faith seeks equality

A pastor in Vanuatu attends a workshop on the importance of valuing men and women equally, re-interpreting Bible passages that have been used to keep women silent and oppressed in his culture. When he returns home, he takes the unusual step of washing the pots and pans for his family. This happens outside his home, as is the custom, and women returning from the market are horrified to see their pastor engaged in this work. “Pastor!” they cry. “Don’t wash the pots and pans! We’ll send a girl from the village to do that work for you!” “No,” says the Pastor, “It’s fine, I can wash the pots. I’m happy to do this work for my family. Why don’t you go home and ask your husbands to do this work too?”

It’s one small but telling example of the changes that are happening – and must happen – across the Pacific if women are to take their place as valued members of society. Violence against women and girls is more common in the Pacific than almost anywhere else in the world – attitudes like these help explain why. The local Church is leading the way toward change - mostly because the scriptures are a central source of wisdom for a culture where 98% of the population identifies as Christian. Biblical teaching is far more influential than ideas about ‘feminism’ or ‘human rights’. Just as today’s Lenten readings speak of the need for forgiveness, and of new life emerging from the death of our past, the type of change this culture needs to undergo is profound. It requires unpicking centuries of misrepresentation of Biblical texts as well as cultural attitudes; retraining pastors and equipping both male and female advocates against violence; providing opportunities for education and economic development. The Pacific isn’t alone in the need for this complete reorientation of thinking toward women and men, as we’ve seen all over the world this year.

We’re going to watch a video this morning that explains more about the project with women in the Pacific, and as we watch, the parallels with our own society are worth thinking about.

Watch the video: [Raising Her Voice](#)

Or download the PPT

### Reader:

The key to better health, education and lives for women around the world lies in their being given the chance to use their gifts, raise their voices, and get on with the business of being who they were created to be. We support the work of our brothers and sisters in the Pacific as they preach, teach and pray to make it happen. We pray too for violence against women here in our own communities, and for the attitudes that allow it to flourish.

Let’s pray together.

Creator God,



Today we pray for women who give birth in dangerous places

And women who watch their children die because they don't have what they need to care for them

We pray for women who work tirelessly and never hear thanks or recognition for all that they give

And for women who have gifts that go unrecognised

We pray especially for the church throughout the Pacific, including here at home,

For both men and women, who are working hard for change:

Changes of heart, changes of mind, changes of action, changes of policy.

We give thanks,  
for women across the world,  
whose leadership, resilience and resourcefulness  
in raising families, resisting despair and embracing new livelihoods,  
is transforming their communities.

Show us, God, how we can add our voices to the voices

Of others so that women and men might live together with the dignity

You intended.

Amen.



## Week 5: Faith gives generously

This morning we meet Alexandra, one of our own from Adelaide. Alexandra can tell her own story in the video (ppt if you don't have access) but it's worth reflecting for a moment on the connection between our salvation and how that relates to caring for others.

For many of us, today's Lenten readings - which are about salvation by grace for the forgiveness of sin and eternity in heaven – often form the basis of our early Christian journey. But the idea that salvation is for here and now – in order to make a difference to the lives of others around us – develops with time. Generosity with our gifts, time and finances is a significant part of that journey. As we get older, we're often challenged by the question of our legacy: how will we be remembered? What significant project have we devoted our lives to that will outlive us? What have we built with our time and finances that will stand the test of time? There are countless ways people give to others, but many Uniting Church people have found an abiding joy in partnering with UnitingWorld, giving generously long term to projects that they pray for, know intimately and occasionally even visit. There's great joy in the knowledge that their life's purpose stretches beyond their own small circle and has literally created life – and will go on creating it – for others. As we hear from Alexandra this morning, reflect on the ways your own life will be remembered and the people and places you're investing in that give you life beyond death.

Watch the video: [The Power of Partnership](#)

(Or use the PowerPoint)

### Let's pray together

Generous God,  
We give thanks that in Jesus, you became one of us  
Felt the earth beneath your feet and sun on your back  
Knew the satisfaction of completing a job with your own hands  
And the warmth of another person's smile.

We give thanks that in a world longing for light,  
You invite us to be part of all that you are  
And all that you imagined for this earth –  
Part of the growing of food and the sharing of it so that everyone has enough  
Part of the shepherding of little lives and the joy of watching people grow  
Part of the healing of wounds and the drying of tears  
Part of righting what is wrong, filling gaps, showing up  
Knowing when to listen and when to speak.



We ask today that you would give us eyes to see ourselves and others as you do  
Full of potential and pain, hardship and happiness.  
Give us the courage and conviction to use what we have  
Bravely, boldly, without holding back  
Knowing that this one life,  
Gifted to us,  
Is a gift to others.

Amen.



## Week 6: The road ahead

This week we're walking with Jesus to Jerusalem – his final journey. As we hear again of those who threw down their cloaks and raised high their palm branches, our emotions are mixed. On the one hand, we recognise ourselves among those who celebrate – on the other, we know what lies ahead and how easy it is for us to give up, like the early disciples, and switch sides. Over the last five weeks we've walked with men, women and children from across the Pacific and shared their challenges as well as celebrated their stories of hope. As we walk toward the death and resurrection of Jesus, we each face a moment of truth. What does it actually mean for us to know about these stories? How does our care and solidarity continue beyond the 6 weeks of Lent?

We consider these questions as watch this morning's video, led by UnitingWorld National Director Dr Sureka Goringe.

Watch the video: [The Road Ahead](#)  
(Or use the PowerPoint)

We hope you've been challenged and inspired by the people you've met in the Pacific throughout Lent Event and have been encouraged to give up something from daily life, pray and donate so you can support their efforts.

### Let's pray

Our God:

Where does this journey lead, this journey beside you to Jerusalem?

Do we dare travel with you through death -

The death of self, and ideas that hold us back -

To the new life of wider horizons, forgiveness, transformed spirits?

Today we pray for our brothers and sisters right across the Pacific.

We thank you for bold spirited teachers, preachers and leaders of all kinds,

For people who look death in the eye and share love.

May we be inspired by their commitment to share what we have

So that children are not hungry,

Women are not kept silent

Homes are not destroyed by disasters that can be avoided.

Show us that true worship is to be distracted from the busyness of our lives –

To stop to bind up wounds

To give generously of our own time and money and to those who aren't of our tribe.

Take us with you on the journey to new life, whatever the cost.

Amen.

