

# Reconciliation

**“SING A NEW  
SONG!”**

## **“SINGING A NEW SONG”**

***Let us continue to humble ourselves and pray for all our people and leaders. In the wake of the current eruption of actual and perceived incidents coupled with accusations of racism headlined by social and mass media, let us remember that our battle is not against ‘flesh and blood’! Most people from all sectors and levels of our multicultural and multiracial society bear some pain linked to sensitive and contentious issues from our joint past. This manifests whenever and wherever there is a trigger event, a potential flash and clash point. We are still not a healed people. Feelings of guilt, of hurt, of bitterness and hate fester beneath the surface. May God heal us!***

The turmoil and unrest and protests in countries, the broadening of racial tension, especially highlighted in the social media, as well as economic are all legitimate concerns. During all of this, the potential is high to lose hope, to start accusing each other, defend ourselves, and to use acts of violence as solutions to problems.

The Church, as the Body of Christ, is an important vehicle to bring healing to a country’s people suffering and divided by a torrid history. Despite this we believe emphatically that God has a specific purpose for and with the country and its diverse people. We often fail to recall the miracles of God’s intervention in the history of nations. Courageous leadership and much prayer undoubtedly aided the political transformation. Regrettably deep-seated pain and distrust remains prevalent. At the same time, distressing social pathologies – e.g. high levels of corruption, unemployment, poverty, xenophobia, farm murders – torment most people.

The Church played a dynamic role during transformation. The prevailing precarious situation in the nations, again summons the Church of Jesus Christ to rise up, stand firm and lead prophetically!

In nations’ calendars, certain days symbolise and personify past oppression, division, conflict, violence, distrust and agony. As the Church we must acknowledge this reality, but also confront and transform it toward the restoration of broken relationships; build new mutual bridges; commit to a shared future; and aspire to serve and enable one another, keeping especially the younger generation in mind. Our vision for reconciliation is to create opportunities –

- To stand humbly in brokenness before God acknowledging our failures and sins, not only related to the past, but also in the present.
- To take hands with fellow believers and people of different racial backgrounds.
- To confess and forgive to be redeemed from the past.
- To undertake to support our Youth, who are asking for help and a sign of hope today.
- To solve problems together without resorting to violence and bloodshed.
- To destroy dividing walls and the position of ‘us’ and ‘them’ and create a ‘we’ stance.
- To make a firm commitment to work together towards the nation we envision, free of discrimination and prejudice, and with opportunities for all.
- To support all former armed forces and others from all sides of the political and racial spectrum, who might still be struggling with some form of trauma or unresolved issues stemming from the past.
- To make a firm commitment by all who have skills, means and capacity to assist with training, job creation and empowerment so that all people can eat, live and work in a dignified manner. This entails practical ways to enhance healing and restoration.
- To give a sign of hope to all people that forgiveness and reconciliation is possible.

We believe the time is right for the Church to take the lead and assist the nations to heal. Let us move from fear, hatred and distrust to rebuilding the ruined walls, as in Nehemiah’s time, helping

each other to overcome the past and walking in faith, believing that the King of Kings is still empowering us. Let us celebrate our shared identity in Christ and as fellow believers. Let us rejoice in our achievements attained by the grace of God, while expecting future accomplishments in line with our potential and the possibilities presented ... as we serve one another to the benefit of all.

We cannot change, transform or heal ourselves. Only the Triune God can do that. But then we need to spend time with Him and allow Him to speak to us. In the light of the need for healing and reconciliation and for our hearts to be prepared a 40-Days of Prayer is initiated. Please join us in this process of humbling ourselves before God so that God Himself can heal and reconcile us with Him and with one another.

*2Chr 7:14 – “... if they pray to me and repent and turn away from the evil they have been doing, then I will hear them in heaven, forgive their sins, and make their land prosperous again” (GNB).*

*Ps 85:1, 2, 8 – “LORD, you have been merciful to your land; you have made Israel prosperous again. You have forgiven your people's sins and pardoned all their wrongs ... I am listening to what the LORD God is saying; He promises peace to us, his own people, if we do not go back to our foolish ways” (GNB).*

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Testimonies of Reconciliation

### HOW TO USE THIS PRAYER GUIDE.

1. The intention of this Prayer Guide is to allow you to spend time with God and to interact with Him concerning the issue of reconciliation for your nation. It is written for Christians who accept the authority of the Word of God, who have the desire to see the Kingdom of God established in their nation and who are willing to play their role in the ministry of reconciliation. (2Cor.5:18-21)
2. The Prayer Guide has 4 sections: a. Principles of reconciliation. b. Identify the problem: What destroyed us. c. Facing the Pain towards healing of our hearts. d. Reconcile and Restore.
3. As you pray through the different topics, allow the Holy Spirit to guide you into the truth concerning your own heart; to bring conviction and to enable you to ask forgiveness or extend forgiveness as is necessary; and to empower you to reconcile and bring healing and restoration to others. If at any time emotions should surface during your time of prayer, try to identify these emotions and ask the Lord to show you the incident(s) that caused you to have these emotions. This is usually the place where healing can take place through confession or forgiveness. If you are reminded of specific people who were involved in these incidents and you have the opportunity to personally speak to them to ask for forgiveness or to forgive, please try to do so at the first opportunity in a face-to-face meeting or via telephone.
4. Each day focusses on an aspect of reconciliation. Please read the devotion prayerfully, humbly and with an open heart.

***All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.***

***2Cor.5:18,19***

## SECTION 1. PRINCIPLES OF RECONCILIATION – PREPARING THE HEART (Day 1-8)

### DAY 1. Principle: Reconciled with God

Scriptures to meditate on: Isa.1:18; Hos.14:1; Rom.5:18-21; 2Cor.5:18-21; Col.1:21-22.

#### DEVOTION: **God is the great bridge builder**

Countries are “burning”. We have drifted far from the ideals we once cherished for our nations. The colours of the rainbow seem to be fading. Our communities are tense, anxious, and our streets are violent. There is discord and dissention amongst our people and racism and xenophobia seem to flourish. What we need more than anything else in our country, is reconciliation. We need to constantly remind ourselves that true reconciliation will only come as we get reconciled with God first. We need bridges to be built over the many chasms dividing us. For the next forty days we are going to pray for peace in our nation. But who will take the lead? Who will bring about reconciliation? Who will build the bridges? Will a leader rise to accomplish all of this? Or a group who will venture into the streets to make peace?

The amazing message from the Scriptures is this: to bring about reconciliation is not *our* task. It is *God’s*! He is the great Reconciler, the builder of bridges between people. What none of us could do, He has done. *Firstly*, He has reconciled us to Himself. He has removed our sins, our guilt, everything that separated us from Him. It cost him dearly – the death of his Son on the cross. Old things have passed away, and we have become new.

*The second thing* God has done was to reconcile us to one another, to eradicate all the hatred and animosity, the lack of love and the sinfulness dividing us. Because God has stretched his arms out to us, we can embrace one another. God has paid us the greatest compliment imaginable – he has invited us to become his co-workers on earth. He has given us the power and responsibility to be ambassadors for his reconciliation. When the people of Corinth were constantly fighting among themselves, rubbing one another up the wrong way, Paul wrote to the congregation: “Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed us to the world of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:18-20).

*Father God, thank You that I can call You my Father. Thank You that through faith in your Son, Jesus Christ, I am a child a God. Thank You that through the blood of Jesus Christ, I can be reconciled to You. I again choose today to accept the gift of salvation because of what Jesus Christ did on the cross. I again confirm my faith in Him as my Saviour. Thank You for your Holy Spirit who now lives in me since I was born again through your Spirit. Thank You for entrusting us as humans with the ministry of reconciliation. I want to be a bridge-builder. Amen!*

#### **Prayer points:**

1. Let us thank God that the message of the Good News reached us here in our nation.
2. Pray that the message of salvation and reconciliation with God will continue to be preached in your nation and that every person will hear the Good News of Jesus Christ as our Saviour who saves us from the power of sin, the fear of death and the power of Satan.
3. Pray for the salvation of people that you know or people that you hear or read about in the news. Pray for them by name that they will be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

## **DAY 2. Principle: Reconciliation with fellow humans**

Scriptures to meditate on: Lev.19:17-18; Matt.5:22-24; 22:39; Eph.2:14-16; Col.3:11-15.

### **DEVOTION: The two beams of the cross**

Take another look at the crucifix you wear on a chain round your neck, or the cross on the cover of your Bible. Jesus' cross had two beams, one horizontal, the other one vertical. Through the ages, Christians have come to explain it this way: The vertical beam, the one that points straight up, tells us that God reached down from heaven to us, human beings, on earth, that He reconciled Himself to us. The horizontal cross-beam tells us that we may be reconciled with one another. Through Jesus' death on the cross we were reconciled with God, and with our fellow man. In our Scripture reading and prayer today, we will consider the second beam, and the miracle of Christ enabling us, through his death, to reach out to others – also to those who are far from us, those who differ from us, even those who have harmed us or are still threatening us.

When we look at the world around us, there is so much to discourage us. There is so much misunderstanding and discord amongst people, so much hatred and intolerance that one wonders where it will all end. Christians differ with other Christians and struggle to break down walls of mistrust that have, through the years, been built between churches. But in the Scriptures, we find the good news: "For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation" (Eph.2:14). Thousands in our countries have experienced it – misunderstandings being cleared up; and former enemies discovering one another as brothers and sisters in the Lord. Let us pray today that this may happen throughout our nation. Perhaps I should start today, with myself. Perhaps I should go out today and amicably settle differences with others in my own life. We cannot really be instruments of peace if we ourselves live in discord with others. (Matt.5:23f).

*OUR Father! How wonderful it is to call You OUR Father. Father God, please forgive me for not loving my fellow brothers and sisters in the faith. Please forgive me for closing my heart to other people because they were not of my race, or my tribe, or my group. Please forgive me that I was not an instrument of reconciliation in this land. Please transform my heart with Your love, so that I can love people who are different from me. Pour your love into my heart and empower me to love and be an instrument of reconciliation. Amen!*

### **Prayer Points:**

1. Spend some time in waiting before God. Worship Him in expectation that He will fill your heart with peace and love. Trust Him to bring about a transformation that will empower you to become an instrument of reconciliation.
2. Pray for every Christian in your nation to be similarly transformed into instruments of reconciliation. Pray for those you know by name. Pray especially for the believers in churches near you that are from other denominations. Pray that they too will be filled with the peace and love of God, and with a desire to be reconciled.
3. Pray for every citizen in your nation, that they will be affected by the ministry of reconciliation that will flow forth from the hearts of all God's children who are praying and working for peace and reconciliation. Pray that the ministry of reconciliation will overcome the spirit of fear, hatred and violence in our nation.
4. With whom do you need to reconcile?

### **DAY 3. Principle: Obedience to the Word of God**

Scriptures to meditate on: 1Sam.15:22; Isa.6:1-8; 1Jn.5:2; Heb.5:7-9.

#### **DEVOTION: Because God has sent us!**

On this, the third day, of our prayer journey, we need to ask one another: Why are we doing this? It is not only us asking this question. People watching us, some of whom are sceptical about what we are doing and saying, also want to know: Who gave you the right? What made you believe that you can put everything right that is wrong in our country? Who authorized you to do this? On whose behalf are you speaking? There is only one possible response to all the questions: *God* has sent us! We cannot help but obey his command.

The Lord is calling us today like He called Isaiah (Is 6:1-8). Like us, Isaiah lived at a time of crisis. The good king Uzziah had died and the inhabitants of the land were sick with anxiety. Their enemies were preparing to attack them. Jerusalem was leaderless, the throne was unoccupied. But the throne in heaven was filled! Isaiah and his people could be certain: the Almighty God was on their side and He would keep them safe. God would not send his holy angels to do his work on earth. For that He needs us, his representatives on earth. God today looks at us when He asks, "Whom shall I send and who will go for Us?" Many of us today would prefer to step aside, arguing, "Lord, this is truly a great issue You are concerned with, reconciling people to one another. But You know me. I'm not up to it. I shun responsibility. Rather send my brother, my sister!" No! The only appropriate response for each of us would be to say, like Isaiah, "Here am I. Send me!"

*Heavenly Father, I confess today that I have not always been obedient to your Word and commandments. Please forgive me. I want to walk in obedience. Please empower me with your Holy Spirit, so that I can do that. Thank You for the example of Jesus who learned obedience through what He suffered! May the suffering of so many people in our nation not be in vain. Here am I. Make me a peacemaker. Amen!*

#### **Prayer Points:**

1. Pray again for the faithful preaching and teaching of the Word of God in your nation.
2. Pray that the hearts of Christians who hear and read the Word of God will be empowered to be obedient and that Christians will again love and cherish the Bible as the Word of God.
3. Pray that those who suffered pain because of injustice, rejection, violence, hatred, malice, misunderstanding, persecution and many other things, still choose to be obedient to the word and through their obedience also bring salvation to your nation.
4. Pray that Christians will respond to God's call to work towards reconciliation in your nation.

#### **DAY 4. Principle: Honour - glorify God's name**

Scriptures to meditate on: Matt.5:13; Rom.12:1-7; Eph.3:14-20.

#### **DEVOTION. Light and salt – to the glory of God**

On Day Four of our pilgrimage on the road to reconciliation we need to ask once again: Why are we doing this? Is it because we wish to obey God's command? Or are we compelled to act by the suffering of our country and our people? These are both good reasons, but first and foremost we do it to glorify God. This, the Bible teaches us, is the main reason for our existence – to glorify God in everything we do and everything we think and say. Do you remember Jesus' words to his disciples? He said, "You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" Matt 5:14ff).

For forty days we as believers will be called upon to pray and to work for reconciliation. It requires sacrifice and time, but we will do it gladly and freely since this is the way we glorify God. We want Jesus' Name to be proclaimed in huge letters across our country.

I'd like to tell you about an old mother who lived in Alexandra, a black township in Johannesburg, South Africa. Her smile was what you noticed first. She was old, and knew suffering, poverty and misery. She had witnessed her husband being taken away by the police and waited in vain for his return. Her children caused her sleepless nights. Her arms and back hurt as she faced the laundry and dishes every day. And still she did not stop laughing and singing. The door of her shack was always open, welcoming passers-by. Even if she had to go without food herself, she always had something to spare for a hungry child or an old beggar. If fighting broke out in her street, she was fetched to pacify the fighters. One day a pastor asked her for an explanation. She replied, "But *Moruti*, you surely know that I'm doing it for the Lord!" When she was buried, people flocked to the church in Alexandra, praising the Lord and thanking Him for her wonderful life, and for her smile.

*Father God, I honour You today as my God. I honour Jesus Christ as my Saviour. I honour your Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God who dwells in me. Please forgive me when I have caused your Name to be dishonoured because of my attitudes and actions. Please forgive me when I have dishonoured people through racism, superior attitude, rejection, violence, cursing and other ways, even when I was just doing it in my heart. Please wash and cleanse my heart with the blood of Jesus. Please cleanse my lips with your fire. Give me a clean heart and empower me to respect and honour You and other people around me. I want to be salt and light! Amen!*

#### **Prayer points:**

1. Ask the Lord to reveal situations where you have dishonoured God and dishonoured people. Confess these things before God and receive His forgiveness.
2. Like Daniel (Dan.9:7-10) we can even pray and confess the sins of previous generations. Ask the Lord to forgive the historic disrespect that your own family and people have shown towards other people and towards God.
3. Pray for the current situation in your nation where people tend to openly dishonour the elderly, the poor, the leaders and their fellow human beings. Pray that God will restore honour and dignity in your nation.

### **DAY 5. Principle: Humility**

Scriptures to meditate on: Phil.2:3-11; 2Chr.7:14; Zeph.2:3; Eph.4:2; 5:2; Jam.4:6-7.

#### **DEVOTION: Humility, the attitude of Christ!**

There was one issue about which James, the brother of Jesus and the leader of the first congregation in Jerusalem, was adamant: people who were proud and arrogant were unproductive both in the congregation and in the kingdom of the Lord. He put it plainly: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Any person who seeks his own glory, who looks down on others, could hardly be an instrument of peace. Paul agreed: The best model of humility is Christ Himself, he said - and if we want to represent Him in our troubled country, we are to follow his example. You may wish to read Phil. 2:5-11 prayerfully. Humility should be our motto.

It is unfortunate that Christians sometimes come across as arrogant. "You think you know everything. You have all the answers. You regard yourselves as better than the rest of us," people say. The best response might be: "We are sorry that we appear to be arrogant and nit-picking. And it may be true that we are, sometimes. But we have no reason to be proud. Christians are no better than anyone else. Like you, we are beggars in the marketplace of the world, as guilty and as miserable, and just as hungry as the rest of humanity. But there is one great difference: we have received bread. It does not make us any better – on the contrary! But we *are* able to show you where we found the bread!"

You may regard yourself as incompetent, not qualified to join in prayer for reconciliation in our country. You may believe that there are others who could do a better job. But remember, it is precisely the insignificant and the incompetent that are selected by the Lord to do his work – those who do not rely on their own strength. It is to the humble that God gives his grace!

*Father God, I kneel before You as my Maker. I also kneel before You as the God of heaven and earth. I kneel to humble myself as I acknowledge that You are the Almighty God. I kneel before You because I know that without You I am nothing. Without You I am lost. Without You and your mercy I deserve death. I humble myself before You to pray for the people of my nation. Father, without You, without your love, your mercy and your grace, we will destroy ourselves. I humble myself to plead with You to help us. Help us as the Church to find a way to reconcile with each other. Help us to find a way to help our fellow citizens to reconcile with each other. We bow in dependence upon You as our God. Amen!*

#### **Prayer points:**

1. Pray for the Holy Spirit to help us as the Church of God in our nations to truly humble ourselves before Him, so that together we can hear from Him and find a solution for our troubled and traumatized nation.
2. Pray that our hearts will be truly humble and broken and that no pride or prejudice will destroy our fragile unity that is beginning to form.
3. Pray that the Holy Spirit will help us to trust God and to trust one another in this process of reconciliation.

## **DAY 6. Problem: Selfishness**

Scriptures to meditate on: Rom.12:1-21; Psa.119:36; Eph.5:2; Phil.2:3-8.

### **DEVOTION: My life on the altar**

Ludwig, Duke of Zinzendorf (1700-1760), was an ambitious young man. He was a good student, popular with his friends, well-connected, and a member of the German aristocracy. Then one day he found himself in a museum, gazing at a painting of Jesus on the cross. He could not tear himself away from it: the wounds, the face, the crown of thorns. And then the inscription carved on the frame caught his eye: "This He has done for you. What are you doing for Him?" Suddenly he had found meaning in his life. He dedicated everything he possessed, his youthful enthusiasm, his connections and his wealth to the Lord. He welcomed a group of religious refugees to his estate at Hernnhut, and together with them he founded a missionary society that through the years sent numerous missionaries to many parts of the world. The very first missionary to arrive in South Africa in 1737 was Georg Schmidt, one of Von Zinzendorf's colleagues, who came to proclaim the Good News to the Khoi people. At Genadendal, the mission station he built, the Gospel is still preached today!

Von Zinzendorf and Schmidt are two of a great many Christians who have, through the ages, heeded Paul's words: "I beseech you therefore, brethren. By the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). If we follow Christ in our own country and at our own time, serving the cause of reconciliation, we will be joining the faithful who have followed him for countless generations. It is not an easy road to follow. Laying yourself on the altar means that you will be sacrificing everything for the Lord: your time, your enthusiasm, your comfort, your possessions, your safety, perhaps even your life. It is true that bridge-builders may be trampled on. But take heart. A bridge is meant to be walked over, isn't it? Remember: the cross is not only our badge or our logo. It is our manual, our guide to life.

*Father God, thank You for the example of your Son, Jesus Christ, who emptied Himself to become a human like us. I confess that I too am selfish and have selfish ambitions. Please forgive me for every selfish action in my life. Forgive me that I have not seen others as more significant than myself. Father, I ask today that You will transform my heart, and empower me to live a selfless, sacrificial life, to the benefit of other people around me. Amen!*

### **Prayer points:**

1. Ask the Lord to forgive us as Christians for our selfish ways and actions in the past and present.
2. Pray for the Church of Jesus Christ in your nation to understand Jesus' attitude of humility and self-sacrifice, and for us to commit to and dedicate ourselves to follow His example.
3. Pray for pastors, priests, reverends, elders and deacons, and for every ordinary Christian to give themselves freely to the strengthening and building of the Body of Christ in our nation.
4. Pray that people in your nation will respond to the call to reconciliation and join with one heart to transform their nation.

## **DAY 7. Principle: Confession**

Scriptures to meditate on: Psa.51:1-21; 2Chr.4:13-14; Dan.9:4-12; Neh.1:4-7; Luk.19:1-10.

### **DEVOTION: Confessing your sins**

There can be no reconciliation or peace without true repentance and confession of sins. When things have gone wrong, when sin and faithlessness have left wounds, wrongdoing must be confessed with a sincere heart. On the road to appeasement you are sometimes called to help others to become aware of their guilt, and to confess and to ask for forgiveness. But before this happens, each of us should confront *ourselves* in a mirror, to acknowledge and confess our own intractability and wrongdoing. Do you recall the story of King David? The Lord loved David, and David loved the Lord, but one day he committed a terrible sin. He fell in love with another man's wife, and committed adultery with her, and then to cover up, he caused the husband to be killed on the battlefield. When eventually he realized the magnitude of his transgression, and that he had actually sinned against God Himself, he prayed to the Lord – a moving prayer: "Have mercy upon me, O God. According to your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of your tender mercies. Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." Often we are called upon to confess our sins, not only to God, but to those we have hurt and wronged. It is not always easy, but when it happens, it brings relief and joy. Zacchaeus could testify to this (Luke 9:1-10).

In the past it has occasionally happened that a believer not only confessed his own sins, but also took responsibility for the transgressions of his people, his community, over many years. One touching example is that of Nehemiah, who led his people from exile back to Jerusalem. (You may like to read about this in Neh. 1:4-7). Another example is that of prof. Willie Jonker, a well-known leader in the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, a church that for many years supported and defended apartheid. A quarter of a century ago, in 1990, he rose at an important gathering in Rustenburg, South Africa, which was attended by representatives from all churches and racial groups. He said, "I confess today before you and before the Lord, not only my own sins and accountability for the pain we have caused to the people of our country, but I also dare to do this on behalf of the entire Dutch Reformed Church, and in addition, of the entire Afrikaner nation of which I am a member."

*Heavenly Father, I kneel before You today, like Daniel and Nehemiah did long ago, to confess before You my sins and the sins of my fathers. I confess that I and my father's house have sinned against You and against my fellow human beings. I confess that we have done things that were wrong. I confess the injustice of the past and present generations in my nation. Father, please forgive us and have mercy on us as a nation. Please restore us so that we can once again be a people of faith that will do Your will in this nation. Have mercy on us. Amen!*

### **Prayer points:**

1. Pray that the Holy Spirit will convict people of things that they personally did wrong and what our fathers (and mothers) did that was displeasing in the Lord's sight.
2. Pray that Christians will allow the conviction of sin to bring them to a place of repentance and honest confession of sins, so that the blood of Jesus can cleanse us, and empower us to become instruments of reconciliation and instruments of righteousness in our nation.
3. Pray that God will be gracious to remove all the collective debt of sin in the past through forgiveness, so that the present and future generations can be restored as happened in the generations that followed Daniel and Nehemiah's confessions.

## **DAY 8. Principle: Forgiveness / Pardon.**

Scriptures to meditate on: Matt.6:12-15; 18:28-35; Psa.103:8-16; 1Jn.1:9; Col.3:12-13.

DEVOTION: **Father, forgive us...**

The other day, in our Bible study group, a lady remarked in all honesty: “I am fond of the Lord’s Prayer, and I pray it often. But I must admit that I sometimes find it quite frightening.” She explained: “It’s great to be allowed to ask God to forgive us our trespasses, and it is wonderful to know that He will do so. But it is the second half of the prayer that scares me: ‘Forgive us as we forgive those who trespass against us.’ I struggle to do that, especially when it comes to certain people.”

The core of Christianity is the belief that Christ died on the cross for our sins; and that God loved us so much that He gave his son so that our sins might be forgiven and our guilt might be atoned for. The Scriptures confirm this repeatedly: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). This is where the Christian faith differs from other religions: we can constantly start anew. In his love and mercy, the Lord forgives us day by day and clasps us to his heart. But, Jesus taught us, as God forgives us, it is our duty to forgive those who have harmed us. This is a command he not only included in the Lord’s Prayer, but often mentioned to his followers, and explained in parables (Matt. 18:28-35). This is an important lesson which we must learn in our own lives and in our communities. If we do not learn to forgive, archbishop emeritus Desmond Tutu from South Africa, was fond of reminding us, our country will go up in flames. As title for the book in which he describes his experiences as chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, he chose *No future without forgiveness!* One of the moving scenes in the annals of the TRC involves an ex-policeman visiting a mother at her home in KwaZulu-Natal. He was responsible for the gruesome death of her son. On the day of the visit, he was embarrassed and apprehensive. How could she ever forgive him? But he needn’t have worried. “I forgive you, young man,” she assured him. “You have a life ahead of you, and I don’t want you to spend it in prison. I forgive you because Christ has died for me; because God has forgiven all my sins.”

*Father God, You are merciful and gracious, slow to anger. With You there is forgiveness. Thank You for forgiving my sins. Father, I confess before You that I am sometimes slow to forgive. Father, I confess that in my humanity I do not want to forgive because I want justice and revenge on those who hurt me. But, Father, I also want my heart to be softened and transformed so that I can forgive like Jesus did. I am willing and ready for You to lead me to forgive those who have sinned against me, and against my people. Amen!*

### **Prayer points:**

1. As deeply traumatized and wounded nations, many people have become hard and bitter. Let us pray for the Holy Spirit to help us with true forgiveness and true reconciliation.
2. Pray that God’s Holy Spirit will work supernaturally in every denomination of the Church to prepare and soften the hearts of Christians to come to a place of willingness to forgive their former enemies and those who have hurt them. Let us pray for husbands, wives, children, teachers, students, elderly people – any who carry grudges, bitterness and hatred, to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to bring healing and restoration in their hearts.
3. Pray that God will grant us a season of forgiveness and reconciliation in our nations, that many people, even non-Christians, will want to work together for peace and reconciliation. Pray for a season of divine grace over us as nations to begin a process of true, lasting reconciliation.

## SECTION 2. IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM: WHAT KEEPS US APART? DESTRUCTIVE ELEMENTS (Day 9-20)

### **DAY 9. Principle: Truth**

Scriptures to meditate on: Jn.8:32; 14:6,16-17; 17:17; 18:37-38; Psa.43:3.

#### **DEVOTION: Afraid of the truth**

The first victim of any war, it is often said, is the truth. Regrettably it is also true of the time after the conflict has ended, when people are talking about peace. In our countries many people say, "Let bygones be bygones. It isn't a good time now to rip open old sores." But that is wrong. *One cannot plan the future without reconciling the past.* The first prerequisite for reconciliation is for people to meet face to face, and speak the truth. "Of course we would all like to just close the books and move on," Desmond Tutu from South Africa said. "But first we need to open them, and *then* we'll be able to close them properly." Whenever we have to grapple with conflict – whether it is a couple with marital problems, or a looming strike, or when the problems of the past remain unsolved, as are the problems we are facing today – we are tempted to sweep the truth about what happened under the carpet or to ignore it. "It's not that bad!" we say, "let's move on." But that is not how it works. The truths you sweep under the carpet will eventually emerge again. If we do not seriously face the mistakes of the past and deal with them, they are certain to come back and haunt us!

If there is one issue calling for our prayers today, Day Nine, it is that God will give us the courage to insist on the truth; that He will send us "his light and his truth" to lead us (Ps. 43:3). To ask for the truth, to trust one another with it, is risky. People do not always want to be confronted with the truth. It could delay or impede the process of reconciliation. But there is no other option. Reconciliation in our community does not require amnesia. We do not need to give up our memories. Let us ask the Lord to give us the insight and the patience and the love we require to really make time for one another, to sincerely listen – even if what we hear may be shocking and difficult to digest. Let us pray that, as Jesus promised, the truth will set us free.

*Father, thank You for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, to show us the way of Truth. Thank you for your Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth that leads us into all the truth. Forgive me whenever I have lied or participated in lies to deceive others, even when it was unintended. Forgive us as nation for the many lies of the past and the lies being told today, that are destroying our people. Father, we pray that You will set our feet on the Way of Truth. Help us as the Church to be filled with Truth and Grace. Remove from our mouths and hearts anything that is tainted with lies and deception. Expose the lies in our nation, in our cultures and in our ideologies. Have mercy on us, O Lord! Amen!*

#### **Prayer Points:**

1. Ask the Lord to reveal to you any lies in your own life or lies that you believe influence how you act or react to other people in our nation.
2. Pray that the Lord will grant us grace as we move forward in the process of reconciliation, so that we will be totally honest and truthful in our dealings with each other from different races and different churches.
3. Pray for truth to prevail in all areas of society in our nation, that lies will be exposed and that those who continue in lies will be convicted to repent and turn their hearts to walk in truth.
4. Pray that the truth will truly set us free!

## **DAY 10. Problem: Injustice**

Scriptures to meditate on: Hos.10:12-13; Deut.32:4; 2Chr.19:6-7; Isa.1:16-17; Jer.22:13-14; Ezek.18:21-24; Amo.5; Luk.6:20-26; 12:14; Psalms.146.

### **DEVOTION: An unjust society**

Have you heard the story of the man who stole his employer's gold pen? He thought the boss was so rich that he would not even notice the loss. Little did he expect the upheaval it caused. The boss was dismayed; his wife, who had given him the pen as a wedding anniversary gift, was furious. The office workers eyed one another askance. People were tense and short-tempered. Highly embarrassed, the culprit knocked at his employer's door. "I am the guilty one, sir," he said. "All my life I have wanted a pen like this. I didn't think you would even miss it, but now I realize that it was very wrong. I am really sorry. Will you please forgive me?" The boss was relieved. He got up from his desk, and embraced the culprit. "I am so happy that the problem has at last been solved," he told him. Now I will have some peace again, at home, and here at work. Of course I forgive you!" The culprit was grateful. But as he was leaving the office, his boss stopped him and put out his hand, "I'm not angry with you, and I have forgiven you," he said. "But may I please have my pen back?"

There is so much injustice in our society – and if it is not dealt with, there can be no question of reconciliation. In the past millions of people were badly hurt. The scars of racism, apartheid, wars and discrimination are still evident everywhere. Millions of our fellow citizens have good reason to feel they have not received justice. Promises made and broken throughout history. Towns and cities are falling apart. Some live in luxury while others are sinking deeper into desperation. The chasm between rich and poor is deeper than ever before. Some squander their money. Others, the great masses, struggle to put food on the table for their children. Many people search for work in vain. Hundreds of thousands of young people leave school or university without any prospect of careers. There is violence in the streets, murder on the farms. Injustice reigns! To work for reconciliation entails facing the wrongs and confronting those responsible for the situation – including ourselves! God, we must know, does not tolerate injustice. He commands authorities and citizens alike, all of us, to do justice to everyone. The stolen pen must be returned!

*Father God, You are Righteous and Just. Your throne is built on righteousness and justice. You are the Righteous Judge. Throughout your Word we hear the command to be righteous, and still, we commit iniquity and reap injustice. Father, we are guilty. We ask forgiveness for all the injustice that happened and is still happening in our nation. Father, we come to the Throne of Grace to plead for your help. Help us to become a righteous nation. Help us to become workers of righteousness and not workers of injustice. Father, help us to be transformed in the inner man, so that we can sow seeds of righteousness. Amen!*

### **Prayer points:**

1. Iniquity is unconfessed sins that have piled up during many generations. Even so, our God forgives sin, trespasses and iniquity. Pray for God to work through his Holy Spirit to raise up a generation of righteous people in every sphere of society.
2. Pray and ask forgiveness for your own and your people's contribution towards a harvest of injustice in your nation. Ask the Lord to reveal specific acts of injustice that were done in your family or household. Bring these acts before the Lord to forgive and cleanse. Pray that others that still commit injustice will be convicted by the Holy Spirit.
3. Pray that the vicious cycle of sin, revenge and retaliation will be broken. Only when all parties that are involved will take responsibility for their actions, healing and reconciliation can come.

### **DAY 11. Problem: Mistrust and Suspicion**

Scriptures to meditate on: Psa.20:7; Psa.25:2; Psa.40:3-4.

#### **DEVOTION: Mistrust**

One of the greatest hurdles to be overcome on the road to justice, is mistrust. Through the years people have been torn apart, separated into groups: black, white, brown, Indian, Inuit, Arab, Jew, Chinese, Japanese, etc. We did not interact. Each group went their own way. Ordinary human contact was lacking. With the dawn of democracy, things have improved, and today there are many people everywhere who know and appreciate one another. In the workplace most people mingle amicably. But there is still little evidence of real social interaction. And this causes mistrust. Even when we reach out to different groups, we are never quite sure of their motives. In their *Reconciliation Barometer* the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation reported in 2015 that 63.3% of all South Africans had little or no confidence in their compatriots of other race groups. Other nations are not different. We will have to take note of this and work hard to bring about mutual trust.

As Christians we are called upon to re-establish trust in our society. We know that we can always trust in God; and that He, despite our shortcomings and disobedience, still counts on us. This will enable us to reach out to our neighbours. The first question is: How reliable am I? Can others truly depend on me? Is my yes always my yes, and my no my no? The second question is: Can I overcome my own prejudices and fears, and begin to trust others? We will urgently require the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit to accompany us on the road to trust. On this day, Day Eleven of our programme, it might be a good idea to spend a few minutes discussing ways to build trust in our relationships with others.

*Heavenly Father, we need your help to recover our trust in our fellow human beings. We are hurting because of betrayal and have become suspicious of everything that leaders, persons of other races or Church leaders are saying. We find it hard to trust other people who are different from us. We turn to You. You are trustworthy. We now put our trust in You to help us to trust other people again. We open our hearts to You. Please transform us from the inside out. We reach out our hands to others who also turn to us. Help us to find each other together. Help us to build trust between each other and to accept the motives of those who want to work towards reconciliation!*

#### **Prayer points:**

1. Pray that we, with the Lord's help, will start with a process towards building trust.
2. Ask the Lord to bring healing and to remove the suspicion with which we view other races and people and those who betrayed us before.
3. Pray that people will realise the seriousness of the situation that we are in, and will willingly choose to become part of the solution.
4. Pray that Christians all over the nation will begin to form or join groups that are working towards reconciliation and stop the negative talk and accusations.
5. How can you build trust?

## **DAY 12. Problem: Racism**

Scriptures to meditated on: Gal.5:1-15; 28-39; Acts.17:26-28; Eph.2:13-16; 3:14-15.

### **DEVOTION: The monster of racism**

We have not succeeded in slaying the monster of racism yet. We all idealized our countries, looking forward to a time where being white and black and brown would no longer be an issue, where people of all races would reach out to one another, where we would discover and enjoy one another anew. This *is* happening, but only in pockets – in the workplace, in families, schools, also in churches. But the cruel truth is that racism and racial prejudice are still alive in our communities. One is aware of it in the streets, in the conversations we overhear. We frequently notice prejudice being stirred up for political gain. And again and again we are alarmed to find vestiges of racism in our own hearts!

It is our duty as Christians to eradicate racism from our communities. With all the zeal we can muster, we are called to proclaim the message that God is the father of the entire human race, that He loves all groups, and that, at the end of time, He will gather his children from every nation and language and race, round his throne. The very best way for churches to spread this message is by demonstrating in their own congregations that all races can belong to one body; that they can join one another in praise and thanksgiving, that all barriers between them have been removed by Christ. Sadly, the exact opposite is often true: Christians can be as racist as anyone else, and churches only too often fail to demonstrate Christ's love to the world. It is often said that 10 o'clock every Sunday is the hour of isolation, the time when people disappear into their separate holes. But we hope that Christians from all churches and all races will gather as one, that they will take hands and sing and pray together. This may prove to be a huge step towards ridding our country of the ogre of racism.

*We bow the knee before You, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named. As families of different tribes and languages we come to the Throne of Grace to ask You to help us to break the hold of racism over our nation. We are sorry for the legacy of racism in our country. Please forgive us as Christians for contributing to this stronghold by our ideologies of the past and present, that did not bring honour to your Name. Please deliver us from racism in our own hearts and help us to become one in the Spirit. We are willing to lay down and let go of our own understanding. Come and fill us with Your wisdom. Amen!*

### **Prayer points:**

1. Pray that the Lord will help us in the Church to re-discover the truth of brotherly love, and that as Christians we can find a way to overcome racism. Ask the Lord to help us to find a new song to sing – a song of reconciliation, peace and brotherly love.
2. Pray that the Lord will raise up peacemakers in your nation in every sphere of society – business, education, government, entertainment, sport and recreation and in families.
3. Ask God to help us as Christians to stop all negative talk and criticism and for the will to work together towards a solution for a multi-cultural, multi-racial society. Pray that people will act responsibly and understand the danger of their actions and words.
4. Pray for leaders to have wisdom and courage to lead us out of this stronghold of racism in our nations.
5. Pray that people who stir hatred and unrest will be convicted and stopped in fanning flames that will destroy our nations.

### **Day 13: Problem: Broken relationships / Isolation**

Scriptures to meditate on: Psa.146; Deut.32:4; Isa.1:16-17;

#### **DEVOTION: Alienation**

One of the fruits of our historic past – and of what is happening in our communities at present – is alienation. Large groups of people feel isolated, rejected. Life has passed them by. They watched others pick the fruit of the struggle for freedom, but they themselves received none of it. Their frustration and despair are boiling over! The same is true of the hundreds of thousands of young people who have also cherished dreams about their future, about new opportunities, but today find themselves on the street corners, hungry, despondent, and highly cynical about the wordy promises their leaders make. Then there is that very special marginalized group of people who have travelled far, sometimes thousands of kilometers, to cross our borders, with a flame of hope and anticipation in their hearts. These are the people who are often rejected and victimized in the townships. Xenophobia has entered our lives. Alienation is experienced by many, not only by certain races or groups. People who lock their windows and doors every evening for fear of being attacked, men and women who lose their jobs, young people who feel that they are being discriminated against just because they happen to be white – they all belong to the alienated and marginalized masses.

God, we must remember, is a God who takes the side of the impoverished and the lonely and the wronged. He loves us all, but when any of his children – the lonely and the rejected, the widows and orphans, and the strangers - are ill-treated, He acts! We will have to follow his example, walk with Him to the street corners, to the isolated shelters, to those who have lost hope in rural areas, the townships and city centres. We must go in search of our alienated sisters and brothers! And today, Day 13, we need to talk to others about this. What is the situation in our own little bit of the world? How do we recognize alienation and marginalization in our midst? And what does Christ expect of us in our specific situation?

*Heavenly Father, forgive us for looking only at our own situation and as a result distancing and isolating ourselves from the pain and need of others. Open our eyes to see the need of people around us. Stir our hearts and fill us with compassion. Enable us to help the helpless, to embrace the fatherless, the motherless and the many lonely people in our communities. Help us to reach out to foreigners who have come to our nations for help. Soften our hearts to the destitute, homeless, hungry and cold. You said – even if we give a glass of cold water! Help us to see the need of prisoners, of sinners, of outcasts and of our young generation who grew up without fathers and mothers to guide and teach them. Help us to care for our elderly, to look with compassion on those who are lost and without knowledge of a God of love. Here we are. Use us! Amen!*

#### **Prayer Points:**

1. Pray that the Lord will give us great wisdom as we work together to bring fragmented families and fragmented societies, to a place of wholeness and restoration.
2. Pray that husbands and wives will be empowered to build a home for their children.
3. Pray that the many orphans in our nation will find homes and new families to belong to.
4. Pray that every citizen will feel beloved and that the deep need for belonging to nation that makes us truly proud, can be met. Pray foreigners will be welcomed and accepted.
5. Pray for different cultures and races to respect and accept their expressions of culture.
6. Is there someone that you know who feels lonely and isolated? Do you want to be God's instrument to reach out and help them to overcome their fear and isolation?

### **Day 14. Problem: Young vs. Old**

Scriptures to meditate on: Gen.17:7; Exo.20:12; Psa.119:9; Ecc.12:1; Jer.1:4-10; Mal.4:6; Act.2:1-18; 1Tim.4:12.

#### **DEVOTION: The youth on the march**

Today, we celebrate the role our youth and children played forty years ago in bringing about the fall of oppressive regimes. We need to examine their influence anew. Researchers report that tensions are at present mounting between generations. We all took note of the of the Arab Spring that took place in 2011 and the *#Fees Must Fall* protests at South African universities and colleges at the end of 2016. The students put it clearly: The older generation have had their opportunities. Now it is their turn to be heard. Struggle heroes attempting to intervene were pushed away, some even jeered. Evidently millions of young people feel that their interests are not being served. This has become a real obstacle on the road to reconciliation. If the leaders do not act, the youth will take control.

While we are praying for reconciliation, we will have to pay proper attention to the youth and find ways to involve them in this undertaking. Older citizens have the experience and wisdom to play an important role; but young people, bubbling with enthusiasm, have their dreams and their experience, their insights, to contribute in a unique way. We need to reach out not only to the schoolchildren and students, and the successful young entrepreneurs, but also to the frustrated young men and women who wait in long lines hoping to find employment. They need to be given an opportunity to speak. And we need to listen – really *listen*.

*Father God, You are a God of generations. You blessed Abraham and his offspring. It is in your heart to unite fathers and sons, mothers and daughters. You also commanded that we should honour our parents. In our days we have such a distance between the younger and older generations. Families are torn apart so that there is no blessing left. We cry out to You for our youth! They need fathers and mothers who will bless them and cheer them on to fulfil their dreams and hopes. Please turn the hearts of the older and younger generation to each other. Please restore the gap between us and them! Protect our youth from the many dangers and temptations that the world has to offer. Raise up a generation of young people that will fearlessly devote themselves to You. Raise up the leaders of tomorrow! Remove from our younger generation the burdens of the past. Father, we need You! Amen!*

#### **Prayer Points:**

1. Pray for a young generation who will set their hope in God and will follow Him in righteousness.
2. Many of today's young people do not have role models. Can you be one? Ask the Lord to show you in what ways you can help young people to develop the skills they need to find a job.
3. Pray for schools, universities and colleges to have wisdom to bring about a transformation that will benefit all the students.
4. Pray that God will help us to solve the many challenges that are facing this generation daily. Pray that young people will be empowered to contribute to the welfare of our nation and not participate in things that will destroy it.

### **DAY 15. Problem: Old Mind-sets**

Scriptures to meditate on: Rom.12:1-2; 2Cor.5:17; 10:4-6; Col.3:8-10; Phil.4:7-8; Heb.4:12.

#### **Devotion: Old ways of thinking**

A problem we must deal with on our road to reconciliation is the fact that many people – ourselves, often enough – are trapped in old mind-sets and paradigms. The way Dad and Mom thought, is good enough for me! What was good for them, is good for me. Of course our history and traditions are very important. We take pride in our roots! But we must adapt. New situations call for renewed thinking and altered thought patterns. When we talk to our own group, and with others, about what our country holds in store for us and the new roads we will have to learn to travel together, we will often have to face this truth: people do not like change.

Fortunately, it is precisely on this issue that the message of the Bible is clear: Jesus makes everything new! He pours new wine into new wineskins. “Therefore,” Paul wrote, “if anyone is in Christ, he [or she] is a new creation: old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). Some years ago the synod of one of the Afrikaans churches in South Africa had to decide whether they would stay on the old road, maintaining their support of apartheid, or change direction and denounce apartheid. Tension was high. One group clung to the past, the other wanted to move on. When voting was about to start, a prominent minister, someone who was known to be ultra-conservative, walked up to the microphone. “Brothers,” he said, “I have been sent to this synod to vote against the new proposals. I *am* afraid of change. But late last night, when I was unable to sleep, I opened my Bible at random and started reading. It was Romans 12. It was as if Paul was addressing me personally: ‘I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.’ Today I’m voting for the new proposals.” Many representatives agreed, and a huge majority voted for the new dispensation.

*Father God, your word says that you know my thoughts even before I think them. I confess that my thoughts towards other people are not always honourable and beneficial. Please forgive me. Forgive me that even my thoughts can be evil and can influence my actions negatively. I pray that You would also renew my mind. Let your Word be like a sword that will discern my thoughts and help me to be transformed to have the mind of Christ. Destroy every stronghold that was built in my mind through ideologies. Help me to take every thought captive and make it obedient to You and to think about and meditate on the things that are true, honourable, just, pure and praiseworthy. To the glory of your Name! Amen!*

#### **Prayer Points:**

1. Pray for the transformation of how Christians think and process events. That we will have a positive and Biblical mind-set with a willingness to help find solutions for our problems and not to criticize and demean other people.
2. Ask the Lord to forgive us for our critical spirit and for the many ways that we curse other people in our thoughts and attitudes. Pray that He will help us to change our ways.
3. Pray for the media that plays such a vital role in the formation of our thought-patterns. Pray that role-models, leaders and celebrities in your nation will be raised up to have a positive, nation-building influence on our youth.
4. Pray that the young generation will find constructive ways to help build their nations to be free from destructive mind-sets and old paradigms.

## **DAY 16. Problem: Culture and Worldview clash**

Scriptures to meditate on: Gen.1:26-27; Rom.12:4-5; Act.17-24-28; Col.3:8-15.

### **DEVOTION: When cultures (and languages) clash**

Yesterday we discussed the complexity of changing established thought patterns. It is not easy to bid farewell to the convictions that have accompanied us through the years. What further complicates the process, is the problem of clashing cultures. We live in a wonderful country, with so many peoples, and a diversity of cultures. Not to mention the languages! These differences, the cultures and languages, could make our lives interesting and enrich our communities in many ways. But cultural differences can also create tensions. We all have stories to tell about misunderstandings when people did not (or did not *want to*) allow for cultural differences - and how tension and conflict mounted as a result.

It is equally important that we should respect and enjoy the languages our fellow-citizens speak. According to the *South African Institute for Justice and Reconciliation* the diversity of languages is one of the greatest potential causes of conflict. Just consider the tensions created by the choice of languages to be used in parliament or at our colleges and universities. On the road to reconciliation, we will have to discuss this problem sincerely, courteously and patiently. We will have to talk about the wealth of cultures and languages, but also the potential pitfalls they create. What can we each do in our own circle of acquaintances?

*Father God, I confess that my actions and thoughts are tainted by my own culture, my upbringing and my own experiences in life. I need help to have the mind of Christ. I pray that You will help me to think differently about people around me. I pray that we as people of the land will develop a respect for other cultures and values. Start with me. Help me to see people through Your eyes. Help me to know that You love people and want all of us to be transformed into the image of your Son, Jesus Christ. I am willing to be part of a multi-cultural nation. Help me to not be judgmental and critical of people but to love them as they are. Here am I, use me! Amen!*

### **Prayer points:**

1. Our nations are filled with many different races. Pray that the purpose the Lord has in making our nations this way will be fulfilled.
2. Ask the Lord to enable and empower us to live together as many different cultures to the honour and glory of His name.
3. Pray that every person in your nation will see and discover the beauty in other cultures and not cling only to their own culture.
4. Pray that the Lord through His Holy Spirit will raise up teachers and leaders who can help us to change the way we think and to encourage a new mind-set and culture of brotherly love and acceptance for one another.
5. Pray that a new generation will arise, untainted by the past, who will want to be united in diversity, and who will value people of other cultures.

### **DAY 17. Problem: Religious differences**

Scriptures to meditate on: Rom.12:9-21; Luk.24:47; 2Cor.5:19-20.

#### **DEVOTION: When religions clash**

Our world is a world of many religions. Whilst many of our citizens are Christians, there are also Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Buddhists, adherents to the Traditional African religions, etc. In many countries of the world religions clash violently, but in other nations people try to live together amicably. There is, however, always the possibility that adherents to certain religions, incited by what is happening abroad, might start rubbing others up the wrong way. We cannot allow this to happen! Reconciliation in our communities, entails reaching out to those who believe differently, appreciating and respecting the differences. Doing that, we will soon discover that they are also members of the human family, sharing our dreams and our questions, people who are also yearning for peace and reconciliation in our land.

In the past, admittedly, we as Christians simply took it for granted that our customs, our principles and our festive days would be acceptable to all. In countries that support democracy, there is freedom of religion and no single religion is given preference. This is right. However, we should not simply avoid one another; we should reach out to other religions, take hands, especially when it comes to bringing about justice and healing for all. In other countries of the world it is often stated that religious strife causes a great deal of misery. Let us prove that our nation is different.

*Father God, You have called us to be ambassadors for Your kingdom, to call people from darkness to light. How can we do that if we are not able to love all people? We pray today for our nation. We pray that Christians will learn to love and respect other people; to willingly serve other people even though they do not believe the same way that we do. We pray that people will see Jesus' love, compassion and divine nature through the love and good deeds of the Church. Help us to be truly your ambassadors in our nation. Amen!*

#### **Prayer Points:**

1. Pray that God will grant us peace in our nations.
2. Pray that God will teach us how to reach out to people who belong to other religions, so that we can share His love with them.
3. Pray that Christians will respond to the need of people around them, regardless of what religions they belong to.
4. Pray that your nation will be a place where people of other religions can find refuge, healing, safety and be exposed to the love of God.

### **Day 18: Political differences.**

Scriptures to meditate on: Psa.2; Dan.2:20-22; Rom.13:1-7; 1Tim.2:1-4; Tit.3:1-2.

#### **DEVOTION: It's the politicians who are to blame!**

According to those in the know one of the most urgent problems facing our country is the way politicians conduct themselves, and the way political issues are debated. It is embarrassing to listen to one political leader after the other making a spectacle of himself, to crowds being stirred up and political issues being debated outside parliament. It's the politicians' fault that there is no respite or peace in this land, ever more of our citizens say. The *Reconciliation Barometer* (that we have quoted before) agrees: many people are disillusioned and frustrated by the political processes they observe. In a mature democracy, people are supposed to be able to accommodate political differences and opposing views; are supposed to be able to discuss issues without causing hurt to others – let alone assaulting others. Sometimes the road ahead of us seems to be very long! As for us: how will we unite people of different political persuasions in our quest for reconciliation?

The old question is: Does the church have a political calling? The response is a resounding "Yes!" As on all aspects of life, the light of the Word should also shine on the political processes in our country. It is the prophetic duty of the church to determine whether everything our government and our political leaders say and do, every change in policy, measures up to the standards set by the Word. Does the church have a party-political calling? The answer is a straightforward "No!" The church must maintain a distance from each party. It must treasure its independence, so that it will be able to judge actions across political borders. Above all, it is the duty of the church to teach all members - political leaders and the voting public alike – how to differ with one another, that it is possible for Christians to hold totally opposing views while remaining brothers and sisters who love and respect one another.

*Father, with prayers, intercession and thanksgiving we come before Your throne for our political leaders and for all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness - for this is good, and pleases You our God and Saviour, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. May all our politicians rule through justice so that we can have stability in this country. Father we know that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. We pray for our political leaders for protection against the powers of this dark world. Let your kingdom come. Amen!*

#### **Prayer Points:**

1. Pray for political leaders by name. Pray that they will open their hearts for instructions from the Holy Spirit. Pray that they will be men and women of integrity, who will not lie but speak and live the truth.
2. Pray that God will grant us peace in our nation through our political structure. Pray that politicians will adhere to and uphold our constitution and do their utmost to protect it and the values which we as South Africans bound ourselves to.
3. Pray that God will raise up the leaders for His purposes in our nations.
4. Pray that our politicians will be wise and serve the Lord with fear and trembling.

### **DAY 19. Problem: Violence and bloodshed**

Scriptures to meditate on: Gen.4:10-12; Exo.20:13; Deut.21:1-9; Num.35:33-34; Hos.4:1-7; Matt.5:21-24; Rom.12:17-21.

#### **DEVOTION: Bloodguilt on our hands**

We live in a violent society. There is no need to refer to statistics or news reports to prove this. We experience it every day. Much of this violence is perpetrated within families: rape, child abuse, drunkenness, drug abuse, the humiliation of marital partners. And in the streets, in villages and on farms the situation is no better. Violence resulting in bloodshed and murders – sometimes with the weirdest of motives – are daily occurrences. Human life has become cheap, worth no more than a cell phone or a bottle of beer. It is difficult to visit one of these communities and talk about peace and healing. Every family murder, every child that is abducted, every street robbery, every farm attack, calls for a response. People are infuriated, or they lose heart and give up, or they vow retaliation and vengeance.

If we believe that Jesus is the Lord of Peace, our “No!” to violence should resound throughout the country. In the Kingdom of Heaven there is no room for hatred and spite and bloodshed. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the Lord. While contemplating these words, it might be a good idea to confront ourselves in a mirror once again: How much violence and anger still lurk in our own hearts and need to be confessed before God?

*Father God, I stand today on behalf of myself, my family, my people and the previous generations of my nation, to confess that we have caused the land the land to cry out for revenge because of all the bloodshed of various political, racial and tribal conflicts, wars and murders. We are guilty and we need forgiveness and cleansing. Please forgive us. You are the giver of life, and by taking lives, no matter how we justify it, we have dishonoured You. We pray like David: we have sinned against You. Please remove the bloodguilt and the call for revenge from the soil of our land. May the blood of Jesus speak today of better things than the blood that calls for revenge. Please restore our land and our nation. Amen!*

#### **Prayer points:**

1. If you, or your family, or the previous generations of your family, were involved in any conflict or wars where lives were lost, or if someone in your family murdered another person, now is the time to confess it and to receive forgiveness. Ask the Lord to remove the bloodguilt from your family and from the coming generations.
2. According to the Bible, bloodguilt is also attached to the city and the nation where people were killed. Ask the Father to forgive and to remove the bloodguilt from your community, town or city.
3. Pray that God will help us all to value and celebrate life, and to restrain ourselves from even cursing someone as in Jesus’ eyes that already amounts to murder.
4. Pray that God will raise up a generation in your nation that will be free from the guilt and burdens of the past. A generation that will honour His name and prepare for Him a dwelling place in their hearts.

## **DAY 20. Problem: Greed, Covetousness and Bribery**

Scriptures to meditate on: Matt.23:25; Gal.5:19-23; 1Tim.6:10; 1Jn.3:17.

### **DEVOTION: Greed, the root of all evil**

Father Bonaventure Hinwood is a Franciscan monk who has left a marked impact on South Africa, particularly on the Roman Catholic Church. One day he said, "What is the greatest problem in our country? The materialism and avarice of our people! All the problems we have experienced in the past - apartheid, injustice, poverty – all stem from the same cause, greed! People are never satisfied with what they have. They constantly want more. Enough is never enough." According to economic research, sixteen persons on earth, the super-rich, possess as much as one half of the rest of the population of the world put together. This is truly shocking! If we mean to promote reconciliation and justice, we will have to question the avarice and greed of some of our citizens. How can a few amass millions of Rands/\$/€, drive expensive new cars every year, purchase luxury homes, earn huge amounts from the stock exchange – while so many of their fellow citizens are desperately struggling to put food on the table for their families?

The Scriptures teach us that greed is the root of all evil. Paul wrote to his young co-worker, Timothy: "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim.6:10). Covetousness could drive one to extremes. Judas's treacherous deed when he betrayed his master for some coins, is ascribed by some to precisely that: greed. Before we join in prayer today, on Day 20, we must talk about this evil. Do we agree with Father Hinwood? How can we prevent greed from prevailing in our country, in our churches – and in our own hearts?

*Father God, I confess today that even I have allowed my own desires to cloud my judgment of others. I confess that even I can be tempted by the love of money. Please forgive me and set me free from this terrible temptation of greed and covetousness. Forgive me for being jealous and envious of other people. Forgive us as humans for our greed and covetousness. Please deliver us from Mammon and its hold on the Church and our societies. Please deliver us from the practise of offering and accepting bribes and so perverting justice in our land. Please forgive us for neglecting the poor and needy and for the many times we turned a blind eye to their suffering. Fill us anew with your Spirit and restore us to righteousness and integrity. Amen!*

### **Prayer points:**

1. Pray that the Church in your nation will be set free from the love of money and become faithful stewards of finances.
2. Pray that your nation's resources will be used wisely and to the benefit of all our peoples.
3. Ask the Lord to raise up leaders for our nation who will not bow to Mammon, to bribery or to illegal ways of gaining wealth.
4. Pray for the Lord to fill the people in your nation with a creative, entrepreneurial spirit to build a prosperous, industrious society.
5. Pray that the young, upcoming generation will be set free from addictive substances, be delivered from laziness and laid-back attitudes and have the mind to work.

## SECTION 3. FACING THE PAIN – HEALING OF THE HEART (Day 21-30)

### DAY 21. Our hearts

Scriptures to meditate on: Psa.19:12-14; 139:1-24; Pro.4:20-23; Rom.5:5; 1Pet.1:21.

DEVOTION: **Search me, o Lord, and know my heart**

On Day Twenty-One, David's psalm has a lot to say to us. During the past days we had to attend to many issues. We were, firstly, invited to stand in front of the mirror asking ourselves: How do we prepare ourselves for our journey towards reconciliation? After that we had to take a long, honest, look at our fractured society, asking: What lies behind all the tension in our nations, behind the many problems we are facing? For the next ten days the question will be: How should our hearts be transformed by God, to enable us to reach out to one another? Reading David's moving prayer we realize: God knows and understands our hearts far better than we do ourselves. He sees our pain and sorrow, our hopes as well as our frustrations, everything that is living in our hearts and minds. He gives insight. He treats our wounds. He gives us the power and enthusiasm, after we have fallen, to get up again! This is what we need to pray for, today and in the days to follow.

One of the most moving examples of this, of how God transforms the hearts of people, was told by Nico Botha, who teaches Theology at UNISA, South Africa. At an ecumenical gathering somewhere in Africa, he listened to a woman from Liberia telling her story. Some years ago a cruel and bloody civil war raged through Liberia. Young boys were recruited by the opposing sides and trained and armed, sometimes to attack their own people, their own villages. One day a band of boy soldiers attacked a small village. A woman with her baby on her back tried to escape, to no avail. An eleven-year-old soldier chased after her, and with a blood curling cry, killed the baby with his bayonet. Two years later, after the war had ended, the woman met the young soldier again. She recognized him immediately, the murderer of her baby! By now the soldier had become a beggar, miserable, without friends, sitting all on his own in the marketplace. The woman walked to him and placed her arms around his shoulders, saying: "I do not have a child anymore. You do not have a mother. Come home with me. I will care for you. I will be your mother and you may be my son".

*Heavenly Father, I love You with all my heart! I want You to make my heart your dwelling place. I pray that my heart will be cleansed from all filthiness, sin, evil thoughts and unholy attitudes. Give me a broken and contrite heart, filled with compassion for those who are suffering, for the poor, needy, elderly, orphans and the children of our nation. Let my heart not be stubborn, closed or hardened against You and other people. Teach me to love even my enemies and those who want to hurt me. I give You today an undivided heart. Amen!*

#### **Prayer points:**

1. There are many of life's experiences that can cause a person to close and harden their hearts. If you are willing pray today that the Father will bring healing to your heart and cause you to be brave to open your heart again to love and to be vulnerable.
2. Our trust is not in people but in our heavenly Father. Pray that He will guard your heart against falsehood and betrayal. Ask Him to take up His throne in your heart.
3. Pray that people in your nation will receive healing and that their hearts will be restored. That it will once again be soft towards others, willing to love, willing to trust and willing to reconcile.

## **DAY 22. Facing the Pain: Emotional and Physical**

Scripture to meditate on: Psa.13:2; Isa.53:1-6; Matt.25:35-36; Jn.11:33-35.

### **DEVOTION: The tears of Jesus – and our tears**

One of the most moving scenes in the Bible is the encounter between Jesus and Mary, after the death of her brother Lazarus. Jesus knew that Lazarus would be raised again, but Mary's grief and pain affected Him so much that He burst into tears (Jn 11:33-35). But this is the way the New Testament introduces us the Him: wherever people were suffering Jesus was to be found: consoling a widow who had lost her son, a man in panic because his daughter was dying at home, the lame and the blind, reaching out to the lepers in the street. He came to the world to identify Himself with the anguish and the pain of all around Him, as the prophet Isaiah had announced centuries earlier: "Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows" (Isa 53:4).

And this is what He expects of us as well, that we will be his representatives in a world full of despair, also in our country with its complex and vexing problems, confronting the pain of our fellow citizens - emotional as well as physical. We are called to shed tears, with Jesus, about what is happening in our country. How will Jesus recognize his disciples when He comes again? "I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited Me in. I needed clothes and you clothed Me, I was sick and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you came to visit Me" (Mat 25:35-36).

Before we pray, we need to discuss the following questions: Where, in your nation, is the pain the most severe? What do we have to contend with most, physical or emotional pain? How can we meet the victims? How can we be of help?

*Father God, I bring before You the pain and sadness, the anger, hatred and bitterness in my heart because of what I, and my family have suffered and are still suffering even today. These emotions are a heavy burden, Father. I cannot carry it any longer. I ask that You help me and bring healing to my wounded heart, my wounded body and my wounded family. I pray that You will help me to forgive those who did these things to me. I want to be restored to full emotional health. I ask that You will restore joy and gladness to my heart. I also ask that You will forgive me for any emotional or physical pain that I have caused others. Give me the opportunity to reconcile with them and help them to be restored. Amen!*

### **Prayer Points:**

1. Emotions are not negative but if not handled correctly they can lead to negative behaviour. Use this time in the presence of the Lord to allow your emotions of pain to surface. Be honest about how you feel and trust that the Lord will help you to go through the pain to a place of healing.
2. Prayerfully bring every emotion before the Lord. Ask Him to bring comfort and healing. Also ask Him to bring His perspective and to help you to react in a godly way.
3. Pray that the Lord Himself will take charge of every situation and every person that has caused the pain.
4. Wait in His presence until the peace that passes understanding has settled in your soul and mind.
5. Ask the Lord who you can comfort and console today?

### **DAY 23. Facing the Pain: Losing loved ones**

Scriptures to meditate on: Isa.53:4; Jn.14:1; Psa.119:169; Psa.34:17-19; Psa.147:3; 2Cor.1:3-4; Isa.43:2; Psa.56:8.

**DEVOTION: Tonight, after all these years, I may sleep again.**

Many tears are shed in our country today. Men, women, and above all children, are suffering. The pain and injustices of the past, the loss of their loved ones, their shattered hopes and dreams, the many humiliations, prevent them from sleeping at night. The prophet Isaiah's message to his scattered people is meant for us as well, in our turbulent time: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name: you are mine. When you pass through the water, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned: the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour" (Isa 43:1-3). We are called not only to tell people that God cares about them and wants to wipe tears from their eyes but to reach out to them ourselves.

We are often embarrassed for doing so little to help others. But many times it is the small things we do - an arm around a shoulder, an encouraging word, a sympathetic word, the willingness to sit down and to listen to someone in pain - that make all the difference. At one of the hearings of the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) in East London, South Africa, a mother told the shocking story about the day when she had to collect her son's body at the local mortuary. The twelve-year-old boy was arrested by the police many years ago. He was tortured and eventually killed. When the mother related how she, a single parent, had to prepare her son's body for the funeral, with burn marks across the body, bullet wounds and a gaping wound at the back of his head, she broke down in tears. The chairperson and many in the audience wept with her. During lunch break a member of the TRC team asked her: "Madam, was this worth your while? Was it good to come to the hearing, reliving the pain and the trauma of your son's death?" She smiled: "O yes! It was worth my while! I am so glad that I came. I told my story and people listened to me. My burden is lifted. I think that tonight, for the first time in sixteen years, I will be able to fall asleep immediately, to sleep all night without nightmares!"

*Father God, You are the Giver of Life. You even sent Your Son to overcome death. It is a terrible thing to lose a loved one, so much more if it is through violence, hatred and anger. Please help us to find peace and healing. We pray for every person in our nation that lost a loved one because of racial and/or political violence. We are unable to overcome these strong emotions of anger, bitterness and desire for revenge, without divine help. We trust that You are using this opportunity to help us to face this pain and to reconcile with former enemies. Amen!*

#### **Prayer points:**

1. If you have lost a loved one through a violent act of someone else, there is hope for healing. Forgiveness is never to pardon a sin, but is a divine act that can bring healing to your heart. Are you willing to begin a process of forgiveness?
2. Pray that God will help us in this generation, to overcome the pain, anger and bitterness that destroy our people. Healing begins with each one of us. Ask God to help you to become a healer and to speak forgiveness like Jesus did.
3. The taking of a life is a serious thing for God. He will not let it pass unnoticed. In His divine justice the perpetrators will be brought to account for their deeds. Let us pray and release every person that we feel needs to pay for his/her deeds into the hands of the Divine Judge, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
4. Have you listened to the story of someone who is grieving a lost loved one? Have you shared your story with someone else?

## **DAY 24. Facing the pain: Judgment, prejudice, accusation, blame**

Scriptures to meditate on: Gen.3:8-12; Matt.5:10-11; 7:3-5; Rom.2:1-3.

### **DEVOTION: It is not me!**

Lord, it is not me! From the very first day we human beings are wont to point our fingers at others – like Adam did: “The women You put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it” (Gen 3:12). Adam excused himself: Lord, you are to blame – *You* gave me that women! And Eve is surely to be blamed – *she* tempted me! Through the centuries this is what has happened; it is far easier to put the blame on others, than to accept responsibility for your own doings. In our land, in our effort to help bring about peace, we will often be confronted with the “blame game”. One individual points to the other, one community holds the other responsible. It is not me, it’s not us – it is them!

Another, related, vexing problem we need to address is that of prejudice. We are good at creating caricatures of one another. White people are like this, Blacks like that! This not only unkind and unjust, it is untrue. Everybody is not like *that*! In preparation for our prayers today we need to talk: How often do we look at the speck of sawdust in our brother’s eye, and pay no attention to the plank in our own eye? Moreover, what can we do to dismantle the many caricatures in our community?

*Father God, I confess today that I many times accuse other people of things that I myself also do. Please forgive me. Forgive me for judging people without knowing their stories. Forgive me for being prejudiced about other races and people without knowing the facts and without trying to understand their perspective. Today I choose to be part of the solution in our nation and not part of the problem. Keep me from judging, accusing and blaming other people. Rather help me to encourage people to find a solution that can benefit all of us in our nation. I now take responsibility to pray rather than accuse. I pray today for the leadership of our nation – please give them wisdom, compassion and a sober mind as they negotiate a future for our nation. I bless them in Jesus’ name! Amen!*

### **Prayer points:**

1. Ask the Lord to reveal to you where you have accused people or judged them without knowing their side of the story. Confess this unrighteous attitude and ask the Lord to help you judge righteously.
2. As Christians we are not to accuse people before God, we are called to rather act as priests to intercede for those who are doing wrong. Let us join Jesus by praying that God will convict people and bring them to repentance and that He will judge their wrong actions.
3. Sometimes other people are to blame for situations in our nation, but negative talk and joining in blame-shifting is not helping us. Let us pray and ask the Lord to help each one of us to take responsibility for our nation and to find ways of solving our problems.

## **DAY 25. Facing the Pain: Pride, Arrogance, Superiority**

Scriptures to meditate on: Isa.2:17; 13:11; Rom.1:16; Gal.6:3-4; Phil.2:3; Jam.4:6.

### **DEVOTION: We are not like that!**

When we prepared to pray on Day Five, we spoke about pride and humility, and how pride and arrogance disqualify us from doing God's work. The temptation is always to say with self-righteousness: "I am not like that! We are different from the others!" James warned the first Christian congregation: "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble." (Jam.4:6). Today, when we prepare to be peacemakers, we need to pray that the Lord will not just deliver others from the sin of pride and arrogance, but also ourselves. Remember what Paul said: "For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbour" (Gal 6:3-4).

The natural effect of arrogant and proud people is to cause others to feel inferior. Our arrogant actions cause other people to lose their self-assurance. In the history of the world – and definitely of our country as well – people from one nation or group were demeaned to such an extent that they started to doubt in themselves. Is that what we see in our efforts to bring reconciliation? How should we handle this?

*Father God, I bow before You as the God of heaven and earth. I confess that even I am proud, arrogant and act as if I am superior to others. Father, this inherent pride in us humans does not please You. I am sorry! Please forgive me, where I have oppressed and demeaned other people because of my superior attitude and arrogance. As I bow before You I ask that You work the humility of your Son Jesus Christ into my heart, my mind and my actions. Father, help me to see that all people are equal to you, and to come to a place where I would be willing to be a servant and not a master. Father, I pray for my fellow brothers and sisters in the Church that You will help us to humble ourselves before You. Please remove this hindrance of pride so that we can find each other and reconcile with each other. Help us to come to a place of real brotherly love so that we can minister reconciliation to the other people in our nation. Amen!*

### **Prayer points:**

1. Humility is the first condition for the promised healing of the land. Pride is the biggest obstacle we face. Let us pray that God will help us as we confess the pride of our own cultures and political ideologies that contributed to destroying our country.
2. Let us join in our commitment to humbly depend on our fellow brothers and sisters to find unity in our diversity.
3. If you have hurt people through your pride, arrogance and superior attitude, are you willing to humble yourself and ask their forgiveness? Read again the stories of reconciliation in this prayer guide and see the breakthroughs because of people that were bold enough to humble themselves.
4. Pray that the Church in your nation will humble themselves to such an extent that God's promise for healing the land will be fulfilled in our generation.

## **DAY 26. Facing the Pain: Anger, hatred, resentment, bitterness and revenge**

Scriptures to meditate on: Isa.53:5-6; Luk.6:27-28; Rom.12:17-19; 1Jn.4:20.

### **DEVOTION: Still a captive?**

In his book *No future without forgiveness* Desmond Tutu refers to a recent issue of the journal *Spirituality and Health* that published, on its front cover, a picture of three US ex-servicemen standing in front of the Vietnam memorial in Washington DC. One asks: 'Have you forgiven those that held you prisoner of war?' 'I will never forgive them', replies the other. His mate says: 'Then it seems they still have you in prison, don't they?'

We need to take this lesson to heart. The feelings of anger and hatred of many because of what happened to them over the years are real and understandable. But they need to be addressed. We need to encourage people to talk about their experiences, not only to us, but to God. He brings healing and peace to us all.

An Anglican priest, Father Michael Lapsley, founded The Institute For the Healing of Memories. He was the very last victim of apartheid when, even after Nelson Mandela left prison, a letter bomb was sent to him in Zimbabwe. He almost died and had to suffer excruciating pain in hospital, for a year. He lost both hands, one eye and the hearing in one ear. His face and body were permanently scarred. But he eventually rose from his bed and is today assisting thousands of victims in South Africa and abroad, to deal with the ghosts of the past, to heal their painful memories. Jesus is the great Healer, Lapsley reminds the men and women around him. He will heal you, as He healed me – if you allow Him to do so. Are you willing to carry Father Lapsley's message to those who dearly need it?

*Father God, I humble myself before You today. I confess that even I have harboured feelings of anger, hatred and resentment in my heart. I confess that many times I have wanted to avenge myself on someone who hurt me either physically or emotionally. These emotions are tearing me apart. Sometimes I was righteously angry. Help me to use that anger constructively and positively to bring about changes for the good of people. Please remove the root of hatred and bitterness that took root in my heart and that has kept me from reconciling with others. I now give my desire for revenge into your Hand. I trust You to avenge me in your righteousness and justice. Please release me now from these emotions. Amen!*

### **Prayer points:**

1. Ask the Lord to help you to discern what specific person or situation it was that angered you. Then ask Him to help bring the situation into perspective. Give the person by name into the hand of the Lord.
2. Ask the Lord to help you to come to a place of forgiveness. Remember that forgiveness is not to pardon a person's sin, but to help you to become free from the person or situation that has kept you emotionally in bondage. Speak forgiveness to the person who caused the pain.
3. Pray that the Lord will help the Church in your nation to be an instrument that can facilitate the removal of this root of hatred, bitterness and revenge in the hearts of many people.
4. Pray that the Holy Spirit will minister deliverance and healing to thousands of angry people who do not yet know the freedom of forgiveness.

## **DAY 27. Facing the Pain: Denial**

Scriptures to meditate on: 1Sam.12:1-7. Matt.27:24; Psa.15:2; 43:3; Jn.16:13.

**DEVOTION: I do not believe it!**

The well-known American psychologist Elizabeth Koebler-Ross taught us that the very first human reaction to existential crisis in our lives is denial. When confronted with a looming divorce, with the death of a spouse or a child, or being told by your doctor that cancer has been diagnosed, anything too hard to stomach, our first line of defence is often denial: I don't believe it! It cannot be true!

What is true of individuals, goes for communities as well. When the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission), more than twenty years ago, commenced with its hearings across South Africa, and when the shocking news of what had happened in our country was cast in the media – what apartheid had done to people, how victims were abused and tortured and killed - many refused to believe the reports. Some whites (Afrikaans as well as English speaking) reacted strongly: It cannot be true! The reports are exaggerated! Some would go as far as to say: Apartheid was not really that bad – we meant well! There were those who declared: We have nothing to do with the TRC. It is nothing but a witch hunt!

On our reconciliation pilgrimage we will often encounter denial. Often we will have to combat denial in our own lives! But we must help our fellow citizens, and ourselves, to look the truth in the eye, to accept our responsibilities, to confess our wrongdoings, and to allow the Lord to lead us towards healing and forgiveness.

*Heavenly Father, You have made us as humans to be responsible for the world around us. Please forgive us for allowing ourselves to be deceived as to the responsibilities we have. Forgive us for allowing things to get to a place where people are no longer safe in our nations. Forgive us for turning a blind eye when we see things that are wrong. We pray today that You will restore us to a place of responsibility. Help us to face the truth! Help us to accept the truth of our own irresponsible actions and attitudes. Father, as a Church we together take responsibility for our nation. Help us to give sacrificially of our time and resources to make our land a better place for all to live. Please help us not to shirk our responsibility any longer. Amen!*

### **Prayer points:**

1. Pray that the Lord will bring conviction of truth to the hearts and minds of all people in your nation.
2. Pray that we will no longer accuse each other but that every person in your nation will understand that all of us need to work towards peace and reconciliation.
3. Pray that the truth will prevail in our nations and that all lies will be uncovered and brought to the light.
4. Pray that people will accept responsibility for their actions and decisions of the past and present and will want to help towards the process of reconciliation and restoration.

## **DAY 28. Facing the pain: Guilt and shame**

Scriptures to meditate on: 1Jn.1:9; 2:1-2; Psa.14:11-12; 51:2-14; 139:23-24; Isa.53. Luk.15.11-32; Jn.3:16-17; 16:3.

**DEVOTION: I am guilty before God and men.**

It does not matter how many times one reads the story, when the Prodigal Son kneels before his father and exclaims: "Father I have sinned against heaven and against you" (Luke 15:11-32), it touches one's heart. In his parable, Jesus told his disciples of the long arduous road the young man had to travel, before he came to his senses, recognizing his guilt, making his way back to his father's house to, at long last, confess his sins. In our time and our context, the same must happen. Many guilty persons are around – and we are amongst them. Before God and our fellowmen, we all are in the dock! All of us need to hear once again the incredible news, contained in the Scripture readings for today: The Father is waiting with open arms! He gave his Son on the cross to pay for our sins; "He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed" (Isa 53:5).

And our guilt before our fellow human beings? The Bible, again, brings us the good news: By the grace of God we are enabled to reach out to one another, to confess and to forgive. It does not come easily; it is sometimes very hard. It goes against the grain. But there are many stories to be told of women and men who experienced the grace of healing and forgiveness. Before we go into prayer today, let us share our own experiences in this regard. Moreover, whenever we are battling to forgive ourselves for what we have done – to others as well as to ourselves – we may know: in the house of the Father lost sons and lost daughters will find peace in their *own* hearts.

*Father God, like the lost son, we acknowledge our guilt before You. Please forgive us and remove from us the shame that we are carrying. Thank You for the shame that Jesus had to endure on the cross, so that we can be set free. Help us to forgive others and to set them free as well. Help us not to despise each other but to join hands as we seek You for total reconciliation and restoration of our nation. Clothe us anew with a garment of praise. Fill our hearts with joy. Give us a new song to sing in our nation. Amen!*

### **Prayer points:**

1. Pray that the Holy Spirit will minister to the hearts of many people who feel shame and guilt because of what they did or what was done to them, that God will remove the disappointment, disillusionment and self-condemnation that many of them are feeling.
2. Pray that the Holy Spirit will convict those people who committed shameful acts because of racism, arrogance, superiority, revenge or evil intentions, of their sins and bring them to a place of repentance.
3. Pray that God will give us a season of healing and reconciliation in our nation. A season where we can restore human dignity and honour. A season where we can destroy old foundations and build and plant new ones. A season of peace that will bring blessing and prosperity to our nation.

### **Day 29. Facing the Pain: Forgiveness – giving and receiving**

Scriptures to meditate on: Matt.6:12-15; Luk.23:34; Eph.4:31-32; Col.3:13.

DEVOTION: **I *must* wash your feet!**

It is never easy to ask for forgiveness. And it is definitely not easy to forgive. During the TRC'S process it happened that victims reached out to perpetrators, to embrace them and to extend forgiveness. But there were times as well when the victims were unable to do so. Sometimes they in all honesty declared: "I cannot forgive you!" Interestingly, from time to time, this proved to be the first step on the road towards forgiveness. It also happened, in some cases, that the perpetrator did not *want* to ask for forgiveness. In our efforts in the ministry of reconciliation we need to be very sensitive; forgiveness and reconciliation cannot be 'organized'. It requires a long process, but when it does happen the angels in heaven break out in song!

From time to time a perpetrator feels the need to do something to indicate to the victim as well as to himself that he is really serious in asking for forgiveness. Some years ago the story was carried in the media of Adriaan Vlok, the former South African Minister of Police visiting Rev. Frank Chikane in his office in the Union Buildings in Pretoria, South Africa. Vlok wanted to ask for forgiveness. During the Apartheid years the minister was responsible for an attempt on Chikane's life, as well as for his subsequent arrest and torture. When Chikane reached out to Vlok, assuring him of his forgiveness, the former Minister of Police asked for a bowl of water. He needed to wash the victim's feet! Recently Adrian Vlok had a similar meeting with Michael Lapsley, the last victim of apartheid (see Day 26). After a long and very honest discussion the two men, joyfully, embraced one another as brothers. Vlok presented the priest with a Bible, bearing the inscription: "I am guilty before God and before you. Will you please forgive me?" Lapsley picked up the Bible with his steel prostheses and smiled: "I gladly do that!"

*Father God, Jesus paid the price so that You could forgive and pardon us for our sins. Now I need to do the same. I now know that unforgiveness is holding me hostage. Today I choose to forgive. Today I choose to let go of the people and situations that have caused me so much pain. Father, I forgive them. I release them into your hands. I let go of the curse I carry in my heart. I pray that You will fill my mouth with a blessing over my enemies. I also need forgiveness, Father. The burden of guilt is too great. I pray that You will also let me go free from the sins of the past. I want to say to those that I have hurt: Please forgive me! Amen!*

#### **Prayer Points:**

1. Forgiveness does not approve of sin. In fact, forgiveness is the opening of a prison door for the person who had been sinned against. Will you open that prison door today?
2. Forgiveness is not an emotion but an act of obedience. Are you willing today to choose to forgive your enemies and those who have sinned against you?
3. Putting something behind you is nothing less than burying the bitterness and anger deep inside your heart, from where it can fester and influence your whole life. Are you willing today to let go of every bit of bitterness and anger by simply saying: I forgive you.
4. If you must go to someone to ask forgiveness for what you have done to that person, do so immediately, so that both of you can be set free.
5. Pray for a collective opening of the prison door for all people in your nation. That the bitterness, hatred and festering in many hearts may be healed and true freedom may come.

### **DAY 30. Facing the Pain: Lawlessness, Lack of Love, Indifference and Apathy**

Scriptures to meditate on: Matt.5:43-45; 1Cor.13; 1Jn.4:7-11; 5:2; Eph.5:1-2.

**DEVOTION: The greatest of all, love**

“Mister Pentecost”, David du Plessis, the South African born leader in the World Pentecostal Movement, once remarked: It seems to me that the apostle Paul specifically had the churches in our time in mind when he wrote 1 Corinthians 13.

All the *Pentecostal and Charismatic* churches should remember: “If I speak in the tongues of men and angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal”.

For all the *Protestant churches* for whom faith and knowledge and theology and sound preaching is of so much importance, the message is: “If I have the gift of prophecy (preaching) and can fathom all mysteries, and all knowledge, and I have faith that can move mountains, but I have not love, I am nothing”.

And for the *Roman Catholic Church* with its proud tradition of self-sacrifice and service, with its many monasteries across the world, Paul says: “If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but I have not love, I gain nothing”.

Uncle David, as thousands of South Africans have come to call him, hit the nail on its head!

We have millions of believers belonging to many churches in our country, and each of us, every denomination, has a unique contribution to make. We need one another’s gifts and talents. But all of us need to remember: the greatest of all is love! Our love for the Lord and for one another – as well as the love that we extend to the world around us – will determine if we will ever reach our goal of reconciliation and peace.

*Father God, I confess that because of all the things I have experienced in my life, my heart has grown cold towards my fellow humans. The pain and loss I have suffered, the daily struggle for survival, the anger and hatred towards other people and the increase in lawlessness have made me indifferent and hard of heart towards people from other races or different political orientation than I am. Father, I am sorry. Please forgive me. Fill my heart with your love for other people. Help me to love my enemies! Restore to me a compassion for all who are suffering and in need. I offer myself today as an instrument of healing in your Hand. No more clanging cymbals! Release a pure sound from our hearts and give us a new song to sing in our nations. Amen!*

#### **Prayer Points:**

1. Pray that the Lord will bless the process of reconciliation amongst the different Churches of your nation.
2. Ask the Lord to stir the hearts of people to become involved in projects that will bless the youth in your nation.
3. Pray that the Lord will raise up people in the older generation to bless and guide the younger generation with the development of gifts and talents, and the sharing of knowledge and experience.
4. Pray that the Church in your nation will demonstrate the love of the Lord in such a way that the world will know that Jesus Christ is Lord.

## SECTION 4. TO RECONCILE AND RESTORE (Day 31 – 40)

### Day 31. A reconciled land!

Scriptures to meditate on: Psa.85; Mic.4:1-7; Matt.5:3-12.

#### **A monument in the heart of hell.**

In the valley of Hinnom, outside and behind the wall of Jerusalem, stands a monument today. In Biblical times it was the rubbish dump of the city, where fires burned unceasingly, where dogs rummaged for scraps and the bodies of criminals, who were so guilty that they deserved no burial after their execution, were thrown. In the valley of Hinnom – such a terrible place that the name and concept of “hell” was derived from it – blood flowed again during the 1948 War. The Israelis and Jordanians fought to death. Their bodies were strewn over the scorched ground. After the war, the Israeli authorities erected the monument as a sign that they want to lay down their weapons and live in peace with their neighbours. From afar, the monument looks strange, like a giant spider or a squid on a base of sandstone. A closer look reveals what it really is. The tentacles stretching out in all directions consist on the one side of the barrel of a cannon, a machine gun, mortars and cartridge belts. In the centre they are melted together to protrude on the other side as a tractor’s steering wheel, a plough and a harrow. The weapons of war are transformed into implements of peace! And on the base of the monument, the words of the prophet Micah are written: “They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up swords against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.” (Mic.4:3)

This is what we need to pray for during the last 10 days of our Prayer Journey: that all over our nation, in our towns and cities, in the wealthy suburbs, in the poor squatter camps, on the mines, in the office buildings, on farms, on university campuses, in schools, in the homes of all our people, monuments of peace and reconciliation will be built. Everywhere swords must be beaten into ploughshares! How will our country look? What would God’s plan for our nation be? One of the most beautiful definitions of God’s peace, the *shalom* we all long for, is described in Psalm 85. Read it and discuss it with one another – then you will know what to pray for.

*Father we come to your throne of grace, the place where love and forgiveness meet, where righteousness and peace kiss each other. We come to pray for our nation. We confessed our sins, we emptied our hearts. We stand before You, ready to lay down the swords and to wait for your fire to melt away all anger, hatred, bitterness, pain and sin. Consecrate us in your fire. Change our words from swords into ploughshares so that we can speak forgiveness, love and grace. Fill us afresh with a hope for a better nation. Rekindle the dream of a nation where all of us can live together in harmony and shared prosperity. I surrender! I surrender to your love and grace. I surrender to the love and grace of fellow citizens. Meet us as we seek your face, together. Amen!*

#### **Prayer Points:**

1. Pray that God will work in each one of us the heart and mind of Jesus Christ, to willingly serve each other and to wash our brothers’ and sisters’ feet.
2. Pray that God will do a great work in our nation, to bring us to a place of humility, a place of forgiveness, a place of acceptance and a place of love and mercy.
3. Pray that God will grant us a season to work and find reconciliation.
4. Pray that people will take up their responsibility in our nation, to love sacrificially and give themselves freely to minister to those who are in need, and to accept the hands that are stretched out to reconcile.
5. Do something symbolic to express the laying down of your sword...

### **Day 32. Start talking to one another**

Scriptures to meditate on: Eze.3:5; Act.10:23-29.

#### **DEVOTION: Talk to one another!**

During the next few days, we need to address a few practical things. How do we get to a place of peace and healing? The first answer is simple and extremely important: talk to one another! One of the worst legacies of our country's past is that we still, in a great measure, live in our own little boxes, separated from one another. We think that we know our fellow citizens, but this is not always true. Frequently we are still strangers to one another, we do not know or understand one another's traditions, cultures, circumstances, ideals and fears. It is time that we start talking to one another. The time has come for us to start speaking to one another!

The famous South African writer Ellen Kuzwayo said: Africa is a place where stories must be told. We need one another's stories, if we want to get to know and appreciate one another. My story is the eyeglasses that I give to you to look through them to my life. I need your eyeglasses to look through them at your life. It does not matter how much pain some stories will cause by looking at them, if we want to understand one another we must speak to one another!

Talk to each other about a strategy to get people together from all backgrounds: business people, women, fathers, mothers, students, children - all possible groups – to speak to one another. You will be amazed what will happen. Healing starts with sympathetic conversations.

*Father God, I choose today to become a healing balm to other people in my nation. Open my eyes to see, open my ears to listen and anoint my lips to speak words of healing, encouragement and blessing. I ask for opportunities to meet people from other races and to hear their stories. Help me to break free from isolation and segregation. Fill us with love and compassion for others. Teach us to love each other, to esteem each other, to respect each other, to work together and to be instruments of righteousness, ministers of reconciliation and servants of God. Let our love truly cover a multitude of sins! Amen!*

#### **Prayer Points:**

1. Find at least one person of another race and ask him or her to tell you their story.
2. Invite a family or a person of another race to a meal at your house. Ask the Lord to open your heart for new cross-cultural friendships.
3. Visit an area where people from a different culture are staying. Just linger there and ask the Lord to open your eyes to see them in a different light.
4. Go to a church where people from a different race worship. Join them for a worship service and let your heart be blessed.

### **DAY 33. Healing the Land: Acceptance or Tolerance?**

Scripture to meditate on: Gen.33:1-17; Act.9:15-17; Rom 15:5-7.

#### **DEVOTION: Embrace one another!**

One of the most beautiful examples of reconciliation in the Bible is the story of Jacob and Esau. After many years of separation, when the two brothers met, it must have been a very stressful time for both. Jacob was afraid that Esau would want to take revenge after all these years. His fears were unfounded; God was in control of the situation. God told Jacob to go back to his country and to be reconciled with his brother. Jacob, feeling guilty, wrestled with God during the night and God assured him that He would protect him. All those years God also provided for Esau who was the victim of his brother's betrayal. God blessed him and he became a successful man. God also led Esau to the Jabbok River where he would meet his brother who betrayed him many years before. The Bible describes the way that this meeting took place: "He himself went on before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept." (Gen 33:3-4). As reconciled brothers they could each depart on his own way, in peace.

It is necessary for us to understand something about the process of reconciliation and embracing. In the story of Jacob and Esau there were four actions that took place. These actions are still important in our day; they are – repentance, forgiveness, embracing and letting go. Speak with one another about the words that Croatian theologian Miroslav Volf, also a victim of torture and persecution wrote about the "drama of embracing". He said the process consists of four stages: "opening the arms, waiting, closing the arms and opening them again". Have you experienced it, or seen others experience it?

*Father God, I open my heart for my brothers and sisters in Christ. I also open my heart to live in harmony with all peoples in my nation. Please strengthen me and empower me to be a peacemaker. To love people and to have compassion for them. Teach me to be a blessing to people around. Help me to be a good neighbour. Heal my heart from every fear, every wound, every painful experience, every hateful memory and fill me with love and acceptance even for strangers and outcasts. I give myself as an instrument of healing in your Hand. Help me to cover offenses with love. Help me to be patient with people who are struggling, who still hurt and still try to instigate hatred and violence. Here I am, use me. Amen!*

#### **Prayer Points:**

1. Pray that people will not just tolerate those who are different from them, but that they will truly accept others, value them and esteem them. Pray that leaders in our nation will set an example of acceptance, good-will and willingness to take hands and work for the good of all people.
2. Pray for a new generation that will walk together in harmony with each other as different races.
3. Is there someone near you who you can embrace?

### **Day 34. Healing the Land: Justice and Reconciliation**

Scriptures to meditate on: Exo.23:2; Deut.16:18-20; Deut.32:4; Psa.10:17-18; Pro.21:15; Isa.1:16-17; Luk.18:2-7.

**DEVOTION: Let justice flow like a river and righteousness like a never-ending stream.**

Without justice there can be no reconciliation. We already said that to one another at day 10. Remember the story of the golden pen? Reconciliation does not mean that you wipe away the pain and injustice of the past as if it does not mean anything. If we are serious about reconciliation, we will confront the injustice of our society and do something about it. The question is: How will we do it?

*Firstly*, we must know the God in whose service we stand. According to the scriptures we read today God is always on the side of the oppressed, He fights for us against all forms of injustice. He is a God who cares for the oppressed, He gives bread to the hungry, proclaims freedom for the prisoners, gives sight to the blind, protects the sojourner, looks after the widows and the orphans in their time of need and blocks the path of the wicked. He wants to teach his people to do good and seek justice.

*Secondly* we must do what God expects us to do. The Belhar Confession (a confession that has been drafted by some South African Christians) states that God expects from us, as His Church to support any people that are in need and suffering, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream; that the church as the possession of God must stand where the Lord stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the church must witness against all powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others.

Talk about the practical implications of this in a prayer group. Are you available to be in the service of the God of righteousness?

*Father God, we appeal to You on behalf of justice in our nation. We come like the widow in the parable of Jesus, and will cry day and night until You restore justice for us. We pray for government and the judicial system. We pray for righteous laws and fair treatment of our people. We cry out to You for old systems of injustice to be completely removed from our societies. We pray for leaders to be raised that will deal fairly and with equal justice to both rich and poor. We cry for justice for the oppressed, for the orphans and elderly, for the foreigners seeking refuge in our nation. We pray for the correction of oppression in both city and rural areas. Father, establish your throne of righteousness and justice in our country. Amen!*

#### **Prayer points:**

1. Pray that God's justice will be established in our nation.
2. Pray that those who perpetuate injustice and pervert justice will be called to account.
3. Pray that justice will be restored to our judicial systems so that evil doers can be stopped and peace and safety can return to our nation.
4. Pray for the Church to be a voice of righteousness and justice in your nation.
5. Pray that your Government will install righteous laws and that will be upheld.

### **DAY 35. Healing the Land: Restitution**

Scriptures to meditate on: Luk.19:1-10; Heb.10:34; Rom.15:27.

Meditation: **If I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold!**

During the amnesty process of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee of South Africa, the question of whether perpetrators should commit themselves to restitution, to righting their wrongs to pay-one way or another for the pain and suffering caused by them, were often asked? The TRC legislation did not require it, but in quite a few cases the perpetrators went out of their way to visit the families and people that they oppressed – to find out what their needs were and to offer assistance. When this happened there was normally great joy amongst all and there would be celebrations, songs and prayer, just like the day in Jericho when Zacchaeus invited Jesus to his house. Zacchaeus, the tax collector was guilty. The people of Jericho despised him, and they were justified to despise him, he cheated many and became rich amid their suffering. When he met Jesus, his whole life changed. He said to Jesus: “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold. And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house”. (Luke 19:8,9)

In our conversations we will have to talk seriously about the need for restitution. What has been taken unlawfully will have to be given back. Where people have been treated unjustly over many years, they will have to receive compensation. Restitution is frequently a very emotional issue and it involves not just individuals but also communities. It touches very sensitive issues close to the heart: our money, housing, education and land reform. In Worcester in the Western Cape, South Africa, a group of believers rose to the challenge of restitution with amazing results for the churches and the people of the town. Are you willing to rise to the challenge of restitution? Will you take it seriously? Talk to your prayer group about it. Which forms of restitution can justly be expected from us? Pray about this.

*Father God, our land and people need restoration and restitution. We pray today that You will help us to act righteously in this process of restitution. From your Word we learn that when You bless the land, there is more than enough for all its inhabitants. We want your favour and blessing on our nation. We pray for our leaders for wisdom, compassion and mercy as they deliberate on how to distribute the wealth, the resources and the land so that all peoples in our nation will benefit from it. We pray that the process of restoration and restitution will be honest, fair and peaceful. Help us as Christians to be a testimony of true reconciliation and restoration. Amen!*

#### **Prayer Points:**

1. Pray that the process of reconciliation, restoration and restitution will go ahead with consideration of the needs of all citizens.
2. Pray that all of us will work together until we have reached true peace and reconciliation in our nation.
3. Pray for great wisdom to develop all our resources in such a way that it will prosper the whole nation. Pray that valuable resources will not be wasted or stolen from our nation.
4. Pray for great wisdom for our leaders to distribute land according to need and productivity, and to increase our nation's wealth so that we can also bless other nations.

### **DAY 36. Healing the Land: Nationhood – accepting responsibility**

Scriptures to meditate on: Eph.2:13; Gal.6:15; 1Pet.2:9; Rev.5:9; Rev.7:9; Gen.12:22; Gen.17:20; Psa.33:12; Pro.14:34; Isa.26:2; Jer.18:7-8; Acts.10:34-35.

Meditation: **The pastor's confession**

You hear this cry every day: Where are the Christians of our country? When will they stand up to let their light shine? More than 70% of all South Africans say that they belong to a church and confess that they believe that Jesus Christ is their Saviour. Surely that must make a difference to our country and its problems? We are ashamed when we realise that it does not make a huge difference that there are so many Christians in our nation. Very few Christians take responsibility for the society around them. Talk about this in your prayer group: about the difference we as Christians can make in our country, on all levels – in politics, in business, on the sports field, in art circles, in schools, at universities, everywhere in society – to really be the salt and the light for the world around us.

In East Africa a pastor was so serious that he wrote his faith statement on his hut's walls so that everyone could see it: *I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have stepped over the line; the decision has been made: I'm a disciple of Jesus! I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future is secure. I no longer need to be praised, regarded or rewarded. My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions are few, my Guide reliable. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity or meander in the maze of mediocrity. I am a disciple of Jesus. I must go on till He comes and will work till He stops me. When He comes for His own, He will have no problem recognizing me. Are you willing to make this pastor's commitment your own? If every Christian in our nation does this, our country will change for the better!*

*Father God, You are the Father of all Nations. We lift our nation before You. You helped us to become a nation in which there is freedom for all its peoples. We have neglected our responsibility to guard over and build a nation that walks in your ways and obeys your instructions. Forgive us! Let righteousness be restored in our land. May we turn from our wicked ways and put our feet on a highway of holiness. Let the Church lift up a standard of holiness and influence every other person in our nation to walk in righteousness and justice. We pray for the leaders of our nation. May they walk in integrity. For young leaders who will learn the paths of righteousness and justice. Protect us from falsehood and evil intentions. Remove violence and hatred far from us. Let us be a nation that honours your name. Amen!*

#### **Prayer Points:**

1. Pray for the leaders in our nation for wisdom, courage and integrity.
2. Pray for our justice system in our nation.
3. Pray for the young generation to be raised up as the leaders of tomorrow, to lead a nation that establishes righteousness and justice as a standard.

### **Day 37. Healing the Land: Strong leadership needed**

Scriptures to meditate on: Gen.50:15-21; Num.27:15-20; 1Sam.3:19-20; 13:14; Isa.44:24-28; Dan.1:2-17; Eph.6:10-20; 2Tim.1:6-12.

Meditation: **To cultivate leaders**

To speed up the process of healing and nation building we need strong leaders - men and women who will be willing to stand up and walk in front. We need people with courage, conviction and a vision. People who have a lot of patience and a good measure of humour, who will be willing to sacrifice to build relationships. God blessed us with people like Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Martin Luther King (jr.) and many others. Next to them and behind them there were many other leaders - ordinary men and women and young people – who made it possible for them to do their work, who worked with much conviction with them. Our churches have the huge task, not just to call on its members to be peacemakers, but to teach, lead and empower them for their service.

Leaders are the people who are willing to go further than is expected of them. Nelson Mandela was such a man. After 27 years in prison because of apartheid, he had reconciliation and not revenge on his heart! Do you remember his words: “It was during those long and lonely years that my hunger for the freedom of my own people became a hunger for the freedom of all people, white and black. I knew as well as I knew anything that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. A man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred; he is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. I am not truly free if I take away someone else's freedom, just as surely I am not free when my freedom is taken away from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity. When I walked out of prison that was my mission, to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor both”.

*Father God, we pray today for a generation of leaders after your own heart. We pray that You will raise up leaders like Moses, who led a whole nation to freedom. We pray for Joshuas, young men and women who will be vested with authority from trusted fathers in the faith. We pray for Samuels who will hear the Word of the Lord and speak it with authority. We pray for men and women with David's humility and courage. We pray for young men and women, who like Daniel and his friends, will take a stand for purity and holiness. We pray for men and women like Joseph who rose out of rejection, slavery and oppression, to become leaders of world economies and trusted advisors of presidents. We pray for young men and women who will be clothed in the armour of God, able to resist the forces of the kingdom of darkness. We pray for leaders who do not have a spirit of fear, but of love, power and a sound mind. Amen!*

#### **Prayer Points:**

1. Pray for young leaders to emerge out of a broken, racist society, who will be willing to lay the past behind and look with courage and enthusiasm to the future.
2. Pray that fathers and mothers of the older generation will invest in young people, stimulate them from childhood to solve problems, teach them to have integrity and be of sober minds.
3. Pray for leaders from both the older and younger generation to take a stand against the flood of negativity and incitement to violence.
4. Pray that leaders will learn righteousness and justice, will walk humbly with their God and their fellow humans, and will be shepherds over the people of our nation.

### **Day 38. Healing the Land: The Church as an instrument**

Scriptures to meditate on: Jn.13:12-17; 34-35; 17:20-23; Rom.12:10; Rom.13:8-10; 2Cor.13:11; Gal.5:13; 1Thes.4:9; 1Pet.1:22; 1Pet.4:8; Jam.2:8; 1Jn.4:20-21.

#### **DEVOTION: The church, Gods experimental garden**

The day before his death Jesus spoke to his disciples about the church, about his body on earth, which would be tasked to continue the work that He had begun. The real difference between the church and the rest of the community was to be their love for one another. They needed to wash one another's feet – and to preserve their unity as something very precious. They needed to be one to survive. They needed to be one so that the world might believe in their message. Above all, they needed to be one to honour God! Jesus' disciples were a strange mix: Peter with his loud mouth, the short-tempered John and James, the "sons of thunder", Thomas who struggled with his faith, Matthew the tax collector, the enemy of the people, and Simon the Zealot, the "terrorist" in the eyes of many. But Jesus moulded them together and helped them to bridge their differences. And to all of them together He entrusted the good news of God's love.

This is to be the story of the church in our nations as well. We are called to be God's experimental garden, the advertisement of his love. Are we succeeding in this? We are called to unite people from all groups and races, with a myriad of characteristics and talents, the wealthy and the poor, with contradicting political views, into the body of Christ, the body of love.

Many years ago the great Indian leader, Mahatma Gandhi, who spent twenty-one years in South Africa, wrote to a lady in England about his visit to a church in Pretoria, South Africa. Gandhi was a devout Hindu, but had a profound respect for the Bible and for Jesus. He wanted to see how Christians come together to worship. His report? "I did not enjoy the service much. The pastor preached at length about salvation, but I did not see many saved faces in the church".

Let us pray for the Church, all the churches, in our nation. We have many reasons to be thankful, but as many reasons to confess.

*Father God, teach us to love! Jesus said that we are to love one another and that it will be a testimony to all people that we are your disciples. We ask for the fulfilment of Jesus' prayer in John 17 – Father let us be one! We pray today for the Church of Jesus Christ in our nation. Please bless every effort among Christians to join hands and hearts to work for unity in our nation. Please help us to remove hindrances and to solve differences among ourselves. Let us together lift holy hands in prayer for our nation. We pray for a church that will prophetically preach the Word to the government: a church that will be prepared in season and out of season to correct, rebuke and encourage; that the church will do it with great patience and careful instruction. Amen!*

#### **Prayer Points:**

1. Pray that God will pour His blessing on us and transform our hearts so that we can truly love one another with a brotherly love.
2. Pray for the ministries of apostles, prophets, teachers, pastors and evangelists to help the Church to grow up into a unity and love, to the full stature of Christ so that the Church can do the work of the Kingdom in a spirit of true brotherly love.
3. Pray for believers to take up their responsibility to do good works. That ordinary Christians will love sacrificially and give themselves freely to minister to others who are in need.
4. Pray for our church leaders, that they will be filled with the Spirit, anointed to preach and teach and admonish congregations to walk in love and peace with other people.

### **Day 39. Healing the Land: Becoming a healing balm**

Scriptures to meditate on: 2Chr.7:12-1; Psalms.85.

**DEVOTION: “I will forgive their sin and will heal their land”**

Prof. Piet Meiring, a participant of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee, said that on his bookshelf, in his study, is an AK47 cartridge-case, cut open and made into a small cross. Every time he sees it, he is back at the World Council of Church’s assembly in Porto Alegre (Brazil). The day belonged to the Orthodox Churches in the Near East, where they, daily, had to contend with violence, war and bloodshed. The Christians, in particular, had a hard time. They were marginalized, picked upon, and when the bombs exploded and the bullets came flying, they had nowhere to hide. But after the battle they would go into the killing fields to care for the wounded – and to collect cartridge-cases, to cut them open and to shape them into crosses. To the people around them they would hand one of these bullet-crosses, saying: Remember Jesus is the Lord of Peace. He died a violent death, to heal the world.

When we celebrate our National Days of Freedom or Liberation, people from across our countries come together. We remember the hopes and the dreams of yesterday, and we discuss the experiences and the disappointments of today. Our land is in trouble: drought, failure of crops, hunger, violence, political unrest, racism, resentment, ecological woes, all the issues we have been discussing the past forty days. The time, surely, has arrived for us to take the urgent message of 2 Chronicles 7:13-14 to our people: “When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locust to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people who are called by my Name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will forgive their sin and will heal their land”.

***Prayer to bless South Africa:*** Father God, heal our nation. According to your great compassion blot out our transgressions. You showed us what is good for us and what You require from us: To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God. Strengthen us to do your will; help us to follow Your example to administer true justice and to show mercy and compassion to one another. You encamp around those who fear You and deliver them. Let us taste Your goodness, for You call those who trust in You, blessed!

*You have chastened us so that we will walk in Your ways and fear You. Teach us Your ways, so that we will walk in Your truth. Help us to depart from evil and to do good, to seek peace and pursue it and to keep our lips from speaking deceit.*

*Reveal Yourself to us as Father, the One from whom every good and perfect gift comes and who does not change like shifting shadows. Reveal Yourself as Father to the fatherless and Defender of widows. We have not received a spirit from You that makes us slaves again to fear, but we have received from You the Spirit of sonship. And by this Spirit we also cry, “Abba, Father!”*

*Father, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray that You will bless our nation. Bless us and keep us, make Your face shine upon us and be gracious to us; Turn Your face toward us and give us Your peace. We ask this for our neighbours, our colleagues at work, for the police and people in prisons, for the children in school, the doctors and nurses and patients in hospitals, for fathers and mothers and for businesses, the teachers in schools, the city council and government officials, the homeless, the jobless, those involved in all kinds of addiction, the destitute, the national and provincial leaders as well as their advisors.*

*As Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, we cry out to You for our nation: Oh, that You would bless us, that Your hand be upon us and that You will keep us from harm so that we will be free from pain and that we will cause no pain. Amen!*

### **Day 40. Prayer for the nations**

Scriptures to meditate on: Matt.5:3-12; Rev.5:8-14.

DEVOTION: **A new song!**

We have come to the end of our forty days of prayer. It was our privilege and joy to come together with fellow believers to read from the Bible, to discuss the many problems we are facing, to think about the issues of reconciliation and healing - and to report for duty in the service of the God of justice and of peace.

All of us have one commitment: we want to sing a new song unto the Lord! This, above all, is what our Nations need. Against all the noise around us, against all the dissonance in our broken lands, we want to sing a new song, the song of forgiveness and peace, of healing and reconciliation. We believe that the angels in heaven will join us singing our new song to the glory of the Lamb who is worthy to open the scroll, also the scroll containing our story, "because You were slain and with your blood You purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God..." (Rev 5:9-10).

With our song on our lips we want to carry a prayer in our hearts, the prayer of St Francis of Assisi: Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.

O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love;  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.

#### **Prayer Points:**

1. Pray that repentance, forgiveness and prayer will bring a release of reconciliation in your nation.
2. Pray that people from across your nation will join a process of reconciliation.
3. Pray that God will lift the burden of racism and injustice from our nations, will restore us as nations and release us in a freedom that we have not yet seen.
4. Pray that the Lord will go ahead of us as we continue to look for ways to bless and heal people in our land.
5. Pray that the Lord will raise up many ministries and give the government favour to work for reconciliation and unity even amongst the diverse races and groups in our country.

## TESTIMONIES OF RECONCILIATION

### TESTIMONY: Free at last

On 28 April 1990, three months after Nelson Mandela was released and the negotiations began, Father Michael Lapsley was so severely mutilated by a letter bomb that he lost the use of both his hands and one eye. Although I had sympathy with what happened to him, I wanted to hear from him in person why he, as a priest, became a freedom fighter. His question to me was: “were you in Soweto in 1976 during the uprising?” When he told me his story of what he, as a young priest, experienced in Soweto, it led to a better understanding of his situation. I even wondered what I would have done in similar circumstances.

I got to know him as a remarkable person who had dealt with his trauma in such a way that he not only experienced true and freedom, but also brings healing to others internationally. During the Afrikaans version of his book *Redeeming the Past: My Journey from Freedom Fighter to Healer (Uiteindelik Vry: My Reis van Vryheidsvegter tot Geneser)* on 4 February 2016 in Pretoria, he referred to stories that he encountered. In one of the stories a mother of a freedom fighter told him that her daughter left the country to become part of the struggle and never returned. In another story a mother told him about her son that returned from the Border War but was injured psychologically in such a way that he was a stranger to her.

One of the most important aims of his *Institute for Healing of Memories* is to support the emotionally wounded to deal with the memories of the past in such way that it brings healing and freedom. Veterans in South Africa, especially white men of the so-called Conscript generations had to adapt to many changes since 1994. Although many have done well, there are still those that are held captive by their memories of the past. Isn't it time to redeem the past and be set free?

Roelf Schoeman

### TESTIMONY: Healing Encounter with an Extreme White Politician

In 1992 in the run-up towards the first South African non-racial elections in 1994, the country was in a terrible state of alienation, almost everyone from everyone else. In African Enterprise, as we celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our first mission to Pietermaritzburg in 1962 and we went with assorted groups of team members to visit key South African leaders on all sides of the spectrum. Thus we visited Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Oliver Tambo and the Executive of the ANC, Bennie Alexander and the Pan Africanist Congress leadership, Brigadier Oupa Gqozo, leader of the Ciskei, President de Klerk, and finally the extreme conservative Andries Treurnicht. Here is the story:

Several of our teams were in Pretoria, the capital city. First port of call for one of these was with Dr Andries Treurnicht, leader of the right-wing Conservative Party, viewed throughout South Africa as a notorious white supremacist, the most eloquent and vocal advocate of a volkstaat and possibly the white man most hated by blacks throughout South Africa. I said to John Gatu of Kenya: 'There is probably not a single black man in South Africa who is willing to do what you are doing today in visiting this man.'

Gatu raised his eyebrows and smiled his warm Kikuyu smile, as if to say: 'That's no problem with me.' Once seated round the table and served with characteristically strong Afrikaner coffee, Dr Treurnicht, who welcomed us warmly, told us something about his party's policies. Once a

minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, and a former newspaper editor in Pretoria, he said that his deep desire had been to apply the principles of the Bible to practical, social and political life. This, he said, was not always easy because in politics the name of the game is power, not the power of God's Spirit, but the power of man who is a sinner. As such, man will always want to dominate others around him.

"Treurnicht noted that South Africa has a great variety of communities and the question was how to formulate a model in which there existed understanding and cooperation between groups of people without the danger of one group's dominating another based on man's sinful power lusts. He said he believed that a system could be found which excluded the possibility of one community's dominating the others but to find this 'will take time, patience and much prayer, as well as humility and wisdom'. Testimonies of God working in lives and countries in the spirit of forgiveness were then brought by Bishop Gresford Chitemo of Tanzania and by John Gatu. Treurnicht listened fascinated, his eyes almost popping out of his head. Bishop Chitemo, a man of enormous Christian compassion, touched the Conservative leader when he said: 'Jesus Christ has changed my life and made me see that every person is precious in His sight. When I committed my life to Him, anger and hatred disappeared and I have a great hope that God is going to do the same thing in South Africa. We are praying for you, Dr Treurnicht, that God will grant you wisdom, understanding and knowledge of how this country should be governed in future.'

Treurnicht seemed moved by the ingenuous and simple sincerity of this gracious Tanzanian. But John Gatu brought the emotional uppercut which impacted all of us. He told Dr Treurnicht that years previously he had been caught up in the Mau Mau movement and had hated whites with a passion. But then he had been converted to Christ. His heart began to change and this hatred diminished dramatically. But he still felt 'a residual bitterness towards Afrikaners in general, and the Conservative Party in particular, and towards you, Dr Treurnicht, even more particularly'. Treurnicht looked wide-eyed, wondering what on earth was coming next.

Then humbly and slowly, his eyes riveted on Treurnicht's, Gatu went on: 'But meeting you here today and sensing in you a warm human being who wants to follow the Lord, I have to say to you that, although I do not agree with your politics at all, or some of your interpretations of the Bible, the Spirit of God is convicting me of my attitude towards you and I want to ask for your forgiveness. While I may not like someone's views, my Bible does not allow me to be bitter towards that person. I therefore want to give you the right hand of fellowship and greet you as my brother.' At this he stood and held out his right hand to grasp the hesitating hand of Dr Treurnicht, whose previously startled eyes were now filled with tears. 'Nothing like this has ever happened to me before' said Treurnicht. 'And certainly no black man has ever called me brother before.'

A matter of months later Dr Treurnicht was dead from a violent heart attack. I often wonder where he and others like him might have ended up, had they been loved long beforehand by forgiving black men such as John Gatu.

Michael Cassidy

### **TESTIMONY: My experience of reconciliation that changed my life**

I was privileged to be part of one of the first official story telling workshops between veterans of the old South African Defense Force (SADF) and veterans from the former Freedom Fighters from 28 to 30 March 2014. During the integration process of the new SANDF after 1994 a thorough process of reconciliation between former enemies was followed. The stability that we have in

South Africa currently can be attributed to the reconciliation between the permanent leaders of the SANW. A similar process of reconciliation has not yet been done with the National Conscripts, Civilian Force and former Freedom Fighters.

The Center for Contextual Ministry of the University of Pretoria where I am also involved, in cooperation with leaders of the Council of Military Veterans Organization (CMVO) and the veteran organizations of the Freedom Fighters decided to organise a weekend to start with the reconciliation process through story telling. The Department of Military Veterans (DMV) sponsored the weekend and created the opportunity to reach out to each other.

A diverse group of veterans such as members of 61 Mechanised Infantry Battalion (61 Meg Inf Bn) veteran organization, members of the Bophuthatswana Defense Force, members of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) and the Azanian Liberation Army (AZANLA) participated in the workshop. I was not sure how to start the conversation between the previous enemies but was surprised with the openness of the members to tell their stories and to listen to others. Once they started talking, it was like a dam wall that broke and the stories started flowing freely. A new world unfolded when we realized how wrong our perceptions were and how little we really knew about each other. It was liberating to honestly tell each other the negative stories we heard and believed about one another. Strangely enough this helped us to laugh about the past, identifying things we still need to ask forgiveness for.

After we realized we were just people with surprisingly similar pain, the requests for forgiveness from both sides started flowing spontaneously. In all of this we started to trust each other and only when trust was formed could we honestly share our hearts and allow healing from the past to take place. The acceptance and forgiveness that I experienced while meeting new friends made this weekend worth it. The reconciliation allowed us to jointly focus on the current problems we experience that the D.M.V. should address in the future. This experience motivated me to create similar opportunities where we can listen to each other and experience true healing and reconciliation.

Roelf Schoeman

### **TESTIMONY: A beautiful gift from SOWETO that changed our lives**

This is a testimony of the grace of God and freedom from racism in my own life.

I grew up in the Apartheid years in SA. I must admit it was difficult initially, as a child to accept the change that came in our schools and community after democracy in 1994. We would hear the adults speak badly about people of different races than ourselves and did not understand it completely.

After my studies I moved to Limpopo and after two years in a rural area I moved to Witbank to work there. It is here that the real change came into my life. The church I joined was a multi-racial church where I was exposed to outreaches to Zambia and other countries and areas without prejudice. I learned that it ok to hug, love and respect people of different races and it felt like the biggest weight had dropped off my shoulders! I was FREE from racism and in the process I learned about adoption from friends in the church and it became a desire in my heart.

Two years later I met my husband and moved to a small town. I had since learned that having children would be a bit more difficult for me than the average woman. We got married and two years later my son was born (after a lot of treatment that finally ended in an operation).

When he turned two we desired another child. We got a prophecy during this time that God is going to expand our family! Out of the blue my husband said that if the gynaecologist gives us more bad news we could consider adoption. Before this day any mention of adoption was met with negativity as both our families still suffer from racism to various degrees. I immediately phoned people to find out how adoption worked and got very excited. When the gynaecologist said that we would have to undergo more surgery to get pregnant again I was prepared. We also learned in the process that it would most likely be a black baby and started preparing our families. It was not the easiest process and we had to deal with a lot of stigmatism and wrong thoughts that people have about people of other races.

We used a private company, as we wanted to have some level of choice to our baby. They educated us very well for a range of difficulties and gave some general parenting advice. We thought of names and initially wanted to use Lillian. We didn't like the meaning that much and kept looking. We chose Lulanie (Hawaiian name meaning highest point of heaven). After a short 6 months we got our baby girl and she was the cutest little thing ever! She has immediately crawled into our hearts and those of our families and friends. We have had many words that she will break down the barriers and be a leader (watch this space for future woman president of SA!).

The surprise part of my testimony was the place she was from: SOWETO (the heart of the 'struggle') and born at the "Lillian" clinic, this was amazing to me! We also found out the Zulu meaning of her name while we were waiting for her: Lulanie means stretching or expanding! We first thought we were going to have many children but we were happy to learn God knew way before us that this little gift was going to expand our family, not physically but emotionally and spiritually. She is surely living up to her name.

I hope this testimony will help other people to be free from racism, both ways. I know it is hard to forgive someone who has hurt you so very deep into the core of your heart, but with GOD it IS possible!

Anneke Rabe

### **TESTIMONY: Nqobile, the girl whose name means "conqueror", conquered in Christ!**

My name is Nqobile, I grew up hearing stories of oppression from the apartheid years. My father told us stories of how they were belittled as young men by white people. They were cursed at and prohibited from entering certain areas. These stories would upset me. I could not understand how people could be so cruel? My father was a racist because of the way white people treated him. When I started school my parents put me in a multicultural school. I wanted to find out for myself why white people did not like black people. I studied the white children that went to school with me and did not trust them at all.

God used a white girl to start changing my perceptions of white people. She was one of the first people who reached out to me. I was young and shy and could barely speak English at that time. When this blue-eyed stranger offered me a place to sit, started playing with me and gave me hugs I found myself questioning what I believed about white people. As time went on our friendship grew and I realized that my father was so blinded by his pain and the deep wounds that he carried from the apartheid years that he could not see beyond the colour of people's skins.

I feel very sad that my father could never come to a place of healing, forgiveness and true freedom of racism. My father died when I was 15 years old and left me as an orphan. I have experienced racism when I went to high School and suffered a lot when my father died and I had to live on my own. During this terrible time in my life I turned to God for help and He made a way for me. In

many circumstances, He used white people to help me. When I was in matric an inter-denominational multi-cultural Christian ladies group did an outreach at our school. The way that they loved one another and the love of Christ that they reflected made a great impression on me. I shared my circumstances with them and they prayed for me.

After the outreach one of the white ladies who leads the Prayer and Reconciliation movement in our town contacted me. This lady and my school principal, who is also white, organised a bursary for me to study further. That lady became my second mother and mentor and while I studied I became an assistant teacher at my old school, because of the help of my principal. This is when my journey of true reconciliation started. A journey of healing, mending of hearts and relationships. I could forgive white people and all who wronged me and my family. I came to see that my father's wounds run deep but the love of God always runs deeper, deeper than all pain. I joined the Prayer Group. In this Prayer Group I have learnt that true forgiveness sets people free.

I accompanied the Prayer Group to numerous services of reconciliation and saw how they repent of the sins of apartheid. I have seen how the heart of God is being reflected and how the heavens open through their repentance and brokenness. I witnessed many people being set free and healed from the pain of apartheid. I have learnt to always look at the cross, where God decreased Himself and stood in the gap for us. Racism is not just white on black but also black on white. I see my Dads face and all the pain that used to be there and how I wish he could have seen the love of Christ reflected through these wonderful white people that God brought across my path to help and guide me. I know it would also have brought healing in his own heart. Today I have a degree and I am a teacher and studying to get my honours in education. My father would be so proud!

Jesus died for us and in doing so, He reconciled us to Him. I have conquered racism, suffering, heartache, loss and many obstacles by the love and strength of Christ through His beautiful children on this earth – both black and white! May God strengthen, unite and protect us as a nation as He prayed in John 17:11 Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are.

### **TESTIMONY to celebrate the “other”**

I grew up in a very poor family in Cape Town on the Cape Flats during the sixties and seventies. My father was a labourer at Groote Schuur hospital and early on I discovered that he was taken out of school at age 14 because he was only allowed to go to standard five by the then government. My mother was a housewife, taking care of 8 kids, though I remember going with her to a white person's home to do domestic work. My mother always carried herself with dignity and I remember thinking how my mother seemed so defeated and resigned at the way she was treated by the owners of the house.

Our community was very tight and though I saw the devastation of apartheid all around me, for us as kids, if we had food and could play with friends, we were ok. We could even put up with not having a proper sports field at both primary and high school. The crisis for me personally came during matric when I had to choose a university and discovered that I had to apply for a government permit to go to UCT. My world was conflicted because the students at the University of the Western Cape had just marched off the campus in protest against “bush” education. My parents could not help me in this decision. That is when Alan Boesak and other activists came to a stadium in Athlone to orientate us as to what the real issues were. I decided to boycott UCT and thus started my activist days, fueled by a burning anger against a system that reduced us to

second-class citizens in our own country. I began to be more aware of the fruits of apartheid viz. the poor housing far away from the work place, areas and privileges reserved for white people etc.

My struggle with inferiority and anger at the way white people treated Black continued even after I made a commitment to follow Jesus at the age of 20. It was 10 years later, at an OM conference, while attending a seminar on self-awareness, that I realized how much Jesus loved me and what *He* thought of me. Before this I would have said, “of course Jesus loves me”. That day however, I could transfer that knowledge from my head to my heart. I could let go of bitterness and anger. I decided never again to give in to the notion of victimhood but that through Christ I could live as a victor. A key for me was a fresh understanding of my identity and a deep appreciation for the person God has made me to be.

What helped my healing was meeting especially Afrikaner friends who were just wonderful, salt of the earth kind of people. I encountered a sincerity and love that challenged my perceptions. I learnt never to say, “all of them are”. By God’s grace, I have freedom to celebrate our diversity and to deeply appreciate “the other”.

I chuckle at the humor of God. My son is studying at the university that I could not attend and was chosen as head student of his Residence!

Peter Tarantal

### **TESTIMONY: Racism in remission**

My generation was blessed with the good fortune of being the one charged by history to ultimately see the end of apartheid, having lived through decades of it. It left deep scars, but they are healing nicely. Here is how the healing worked for me.

I was a 1976 high school kid. Angry, and running, both from the security police but also from God. I ran from the former because they had the means to cause me grave injury, even mortal injury. From the way things were, even supposing they violated me in that way, there would be no censuring them. After all, they were carrying out their jobs. Never mind that they were in service of a system that was inherently unjust.

I ran from the latter because, quite frankly I didn’t know Him. And judging by the people He hung out with it, ie white Christians who were distributing Gideon bibles to black students at our boarding school, I didn’t trust Him either. The bible, the white man and the system, were part of an unholy and toxic alliance I wanted to have nothing to do with.

I could run, but I couldn’t hide from God. I became a Christian in 1976 after being persuaded to allow Jesus to “speak for Himself”, as opposed to being mediated by white Apartheid Christianity. A travelling secretary of the Student Christian Movement at the time, Rev. Nat Nkosi, and His colleagues shared the gospel with me and God worked a miracle. I de-linked Jesus from the programme of apartheid. What a joy and a liberation it was to get to meet Him that way! In time I got to understand that it was a Christian to destroy apartheid, because it stood between Jesus and too many black youths of my generation who were set on throwing away the baby of the gospel and the bathwater of apartheid. A huge stumbling was placed before them and many couldn’t see their way clear to bowing the knee to Jesus as Lord. For their sake, apartheid had to go!

The task of participating with others in the ‘*pastoral*’ duty of removing the stumbling of apartheid became a crucible for my discipleship. After all, a huge part of Christian obedience, is serving the cause of justice. I found that there were others in the white community who embraced the responsibility, along with their black fellow South Africans, to join the struggle against apartheid. I

worked with four other students, black, white and Indian student leaders, to co found a non-racial student ministry called Student Union for Christian Action. As a racially mixed leadership team, we fought many skirmishes to get to the point of understanding each other across the racial divides that separated us. Called to reconcile with white people as well as participate with them in ongoing efforts of struggle became a rich experience of robust engagement, interrogating stereotypes and asking again and again the central question: *what did it mean to be true to Jesus in conditions of repressions and struggle*. It helped that walking with Jesus was walking with One who Himself knew what it meant to be unjustly treated, tried in a bogus kangaroo court, falsely accused, forced to denied who He really was and executed because He insisted in being who He said He was. Such affirmation of own identity in the face of fierce and hostile repression gave me the courage to affirm my own black identity against a system that insisted in calling me a non-white.

In a country where one's personhood was violated, ones' blackness denigrated, it takes courage to reclaim blackness, and assert that one is a child of God. Desmond Tutu once said that the worst thing that apartheid did to black people was to take away from them the confidence that they too are the children of God.

So God healed me through the journey of struggle, waged side by side with South Africans from every racial group who were determined that, for all our sakes, apartheid had to go!

But the demons of racism never die. As a country we did not kill racism, we just allowed it to go underground. We are in remission, and must use the time and the space to plant new trees of hope and solidarity. But from time to time the weeds of racism spring up, threatening to suffocate a nation that is not too vigilant to safeguard what God in His mercy gave us in 1994. We do well to heed the Lord's warning: "Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man." Luke 21:36

Moss Ntlha

### **TESTIMONY: The Prayer of John 17 changed a town**

The town of Piet Retief is situated in South East Mpumalanga and is known as the meeting place of cultures, it is the home of no less than thirteen culture groups. The town was named after the Voortrekker leader, Piet Retief – who was brutally murdered by the Zulu king Dingane in 1838. Just the mentioning of the name of the town brings to mind death, racial distrust, deceit and bloodshed. For many years this is exactly what happened in and around the town. Many people lost their lives in battles in this area. There was a lot of division and racism in the town.

Long ago a servant of God prophesied over the town of Piet Retief. God showed him numerous duck ponds with ducks swimming. Then the great rains came. So much rain fell that the dry ground between the ponds was filled with water. The ponds merged and all the ducks swam together in one big dam. Over the last 17 years God fulfilled this prophesy over Piet Retief:

In 1999 God raised a few women from different denominations to get together weekly to pray for the Christians in their town and country. They prayed for the same unity Jesus prayed for just before He was crucified: John 17: 20 -21 *"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; **that** they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.*

God answered the prayers above and beyond what they prayed for. The Christians of Piet Retief now have an interdenominational, multi-cultural Prayer Team and the Christians of Piet Retief

have been involved in numerous actions of reconciliation over the years. In 2003 White pastors repented to Black pastors for the sins of Apartheid. Over the last 17 years they spent a lot of time getting to know one another over meals, washing of feet, repenting on different levels, having intercession and repentance camps, crying together, laughing together, traveling together, worshipping God together and having annual unity services and outreaches. They were involved in doing public repentance for the sins of Apartheid in the Government of Mpumalanga and in different townships in SA. Today the body of Christ in Piet Retief is like a family.

God, in His wisdom chose a town whose mere name brings to mind death, racial distrust, deceit and bloodshed – to reflect His glory in true Reconciliation and Oneness in Christ. The name of the town has been changed recently to Mkhondo, which means little meandering road.

#### **TESTIMONY: God's grace amid great darkness**

Ina Smit is a South African woman whose life was suddenly turned upside down when crime affected her life in a devastating way. She rose above her dark circumstances and became a Christ-like example to many others.

Here is her testimony..." On the morning of 29 November 2002 when my husband greeted me on his way to the business he helped run for my son, I listened to the inner voice of the Spirit of God and went with him. It was a wonderful day. Late in the afternoon, just before we were to close the shop for the day, it started to rain and there was a storm with lots of thunder and lightning. My husband went outside to see how severe the storm was. I heard what I thought was two loud thunder strikes. The next moment two armed men ran into the office and demanded money and the keys of the vehicles. I could not find the car keys and said to the men that they could get anything they wanted when my husband comes back. The one-armed man then took his gun and held it against my back, forcing me to walk outside. When we came outside he kicked me and when I fell I saw my husband lying in a pool of blood on the ground. I crawled to him and called out the Name of Jesus Christ a few times." I also said, Lord I do not accept this, I speak Your life into him!"

I also immediately asked the Lord to forgive these two men because they did not know what they were doing. Suddenly a glorious peace that is beyond description settled all over me. I put my hand on my husband's shoulder and asked him to speak to me one more time. The next moment I felt how my husband took my hand, I saw his shining face surrounded by a glorious light. He said to me: "I am now ok, you must hold on, I know you can..." I just knew that my husband was in heaven and that just before he died, he saw heaven open, like Stephen in Acts 7:55&56. He saw the Son of God standing on the right hand of God the Father to receive him. Two years later, after the court procedures, I could go to my husband's murderer and tell him that I forgive him and that he needs to make right with God. Three years after my husband's death, the Lord sent me another godly husband, my own Boaz. We have been married for 11 years and are very blessed and happy. Recently I told my daughter that her father had to die, for me to realize how great GOD'S GRACE truly is...."

#### **TESTIMONY: From AWB to Mission work in Africa.**

I would like to share my testimony of faith and love and mercy and above all; God's faithfulness. I grew up in the old apartheid regime and as children we heard the grownups talking about it and did not realise that their anger was also rubbing off on us.

All around us things were set up to separate us, public toilets, restaurants, churches, etc. We were used to; “you in your corner and I in mine”. There were times that I felt something was amiss, but did not dwell on it too much. Satan wants us to hate each other, so he found ample opportunity to feed our feelings of discomfort with each other to such an extent, that it became hate. I did not know or understand, that Satan was our enemy and not each other. What I also did not realise then, was that I needed someone or something to hate and to vent my anger on, anger that started when I was four years old and I was molested by day care personnel at an orphanage.

All through high school this anger and hatred grew. All I knew was that I did not want to mix with any other cultural group. I had no desire to talk to them, work with them or above all, go to church with them!! So the AWB sounded like the perfect group to join and support! We did join them and were proud of it. Later on I also became part of the White Israelites. They believe that the white South African and European people, are the direct descendants of Abraham and that they must stay a pure nation, that they alone have been sought out to serve God and they alone will go to heaven one day. They also believe that they must stay separate, work separate and use the government to their own advantage, that all other cultural groups were made to serve them, and that the other culture groups will not go to heaven. We were indoctrinated to hate black people by various methods – one of them being films that depicted black people killing white people. There was so much anger inside of me, that I almost assaulted a drunk, black man at a café, he was rude to me and I could not stand it!! I hated black people.

We knew the Word very well, able to beat anyone in a debate about why we were the chosen Israelites. After a while we became disillusioned by the way other people in the White Israelites conducted themselves. During that time, I really sought to know God and He gave me the following Scripture: Joh 16:13 *However, when He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth. For He shall not speak of Himself, but whatever He hears, He shall speak. And He will announce to you things to come.* Shortly after that we broke away from the White Israelites and moved to another town.

In this new town a friend invited me to a Prayer Group for ladies. When I met the leader of the group, I challenged her with my questions and beliefs and my hurt and cynicism. I was desperately looking for answers, but was also afraid. We had a prayer meeting with our workers present as well. I nearly did not go. But God was drawing me. I went and it was an amazing experience. I enjoyed it, but did not want to acknowledge it, afraid that I might be imagining things, that I might be wrong and would suffer for it, that God might punish me for mixing with them. But, it did not happen, so I felt bolder, more relaxed. I became an active member of the Prayer Group. The Lord took me by my hand and slowly started showing me His love for all people and His deep love for me! Those ladies at the Prayer Group demonstrated the love of Christ to me. I went through a lot of counselling sessions and God totally set me free from all pain, fear, distrust, racism and pride.

I have repented of my sins before God and today I am involved in a Mission Group that focuses on inner healing and counselling. We have done short term missions to Swaziland, Mozambique and Uganda. Today I have such a love for all people, black and white! I understand that we serve a God that is so diverse, so great, so wonderful, and so different from what I have always thought. I am giving Him ALL the glory for the change that took place in me. Thank you, Father God. AMEN.

### **TESTIMONY: God changes hearts**

A few years ago I was in hospital for a big back operation. The first night after the operation the changing of my drip was very painful. The next evening a new male nurse attended to me and changed the drip without causing any pain. It resulted in a discussion throughout the night between

me as a white Chaplain General out of the old dispensation and him as a black nurse coming from the Liberation Forces. He told me of how God changed him from a freedom fighter, intending to harm people, to a man with a new passion to heal people, and as a nurse without hurting people anymore, therefore the painless change of my drip. The next morning, he greeted me with the news that his annual holiday begins later the day and that he is taking his family for the first time ever to see and enjoy the sea. Big was my surprise when the evening shift started and he reported for duty. On my question, what happened to his holiday he informed me that as a family, they discussed my situation and decided that he will cancel his holiday to come and care for me every night until my release from hospital, so that in his words “nobody will hurt me as his Chaplain General any more”. I was humbled, grateful and in awe of the way God can change people from hate and destruction to love, compassion and forgiveness. He blessed me with this deed of loving sacrifice, more than anyone else ever did in all my life. God does change people’s lives – and can do it in our country with each one of us today!

Marius Cornelissen

### **TESTIMONY: Cured from Bitterness and Anger**

As a Cape ‘Coloured’ I met my future wife Rosemarie during a study stint in Germany in the apartheid era. Having read books from Martin Luther King and Albert Luthuli during my stay in Germany - literature that was either unavailable or declared banned literature in South Africa - my interest in politics was more than merely aroused. I was ablaze in opposition to apartheid, regarding this as my Christian duty. One of the first things after my return was to join the *Christian Institute* (CI), an organisation founded by Dr Beyers Naudé in opposition to the apartheid regime. My church board assisted me to return to Germany, which was tantamount to exile. I was however determined to fight the apartheid laws to enable me to return with my wife and children one day. Just prior to my return to Germany I was involved in the organization of a youth rally with the theme ‘Youth Power’ in the *Old Drill Hall* of Cape Town. Dr Beyers Naudé, was our high-profiled key-note speaker.

In my activism prior to our wedding, I succeeded hereafter through correspondence with the government not only that we could spend our very special honeymoon with a difference in south Africa – entering the country on different flights. Three years later we were allowed to visit the country with our one- and a-half year-old son.

While we were visiting the Cape on this trip, I was terribly angered by the reaction of our *Church Board* chairperson to my suggestion to come and work in South Africa temporarily. I regarded this as a further attempt to chip away at the apartheid wall. This disappointment coincided with the response of the government when we wanted to travel in the same train compartment as a family of three from Cape Town to Johannesburg. (Our simple request went through the whole echelon of apartheid hierarchy to the cabinet.) My expectation in both cases was unreasonable and unrealistic, but all the same the effect was that I was hereafter terribly angered and embittered - determined not to put my foot on South African soil again.

I had only one last carnal wish - to worship with Dr Beyers Naudé, the gigantic rebel against the apartheid *status quo*, who was basically under house arrest at this time. (He was only allowed to attend church at that time.) With a few believers linked to *Moral Rearmament*, Rosemarie and I visited the church that the late Dr Naudé and his wife attended. I had intended that visit to be my farewell gesture of solidarity with the politically oppressed of the country. After the church service we also met Ds. Joop Lensink, a Dutch national, who ministered to Blacks in the mining

compounds! A miracle happened that Sunday when I was changed from within through the visits to the Naudé and Lensink homes. God used the banned Dr Beyers Naudé and the congregation where he worshipped to bring me to my senses. A divine touch cured me of my intense bitterness and anger towards the country that - paradoxically - I loved so dearly. In fact, after the red-letter Sunday I dearly wanted to make amends for my angry racist bias. Hereafter, I worked quietly for the lifting of the ban of the beloved *Dutch Reformed* Minister, who had meant so much to me

In His sovereign way God made me more determined than ever to fight the apartheid ideology, endeavouring to bring about racial reconciliation in my home country. After our return to Holland following the six-week stint, I saw a ministry of reconciliation even more as my personal duty to the country of my birth. I was still however very much a work in progress. God still had to deal with my activism which made me hard and uncompassionate in due course. Looking back, I am so thankful that He also dealt with that in His mercy and love.

Ashley Cloete