

WORLD  
**YMCA**



# WORLD WEEK OF PRAYER

10 - 16 NOVEMBER 2024



## MOVING WITH FAITH

THROUGH THE ELEMENTS

WATER | EARTH | FIRE | WIND

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# A JOINT MESSAGE

## FROM THE PRESIDENTS OF WORLD YWCA AND WORLD YMCA

Since 1904, the World YWCA-YMCA Week of Prayer has united our global movements in a cherished tradition of reflection and prayer. Each November, it gathers us under themes related to our collective communities' ongoing realities and needs.

We confront immense global challenges as we approach the World YWCA-YMCA Week of Prayer 2024. Wars are ravaging lives and communities across the Middle East, Africa, and Eastern Europe. Systemic oppression grips countless regions in the Americas and Southeast Asia, while environmental disasters—cyclones, floods, and an escalating climate crisis—displace families and threaten livelihoods worldwide. These harsh realities weigh heavily on our hearts, reminding us of life's fragility and our urgent call for healing, justice, and collective action. Now, more than ever, we must stand united in faith and purpose to work toward a world of peace and equity.

In these moments of struggle, we are called to look beyond ourselves, drawing strength from our faith, spiritual traditions, and shared values. Whether through prayer, reflection, or meditation, we gather in solidarity with all those who suffer, recognising our collective duty to uplift one another and advocate for compassion and justice. Faith, grounded in hope, becomes a powerful symbol of resilience and healing, guiding us toward a more just and peaceful world for all. From 10–16 November 2024, the theme 'Moving with Faith Through the Elements' will highlight how faith helps us navigate life's challenges, drawing meaning from the spiritual significance of water, earth, fire, and wind.

Within the global YWCA and YMCA movements, we honour the rich diversity of faiths, cultures, and perspectives that strengthens us. By celebrating our beautiful differences and fostering a sense of shared humanity, we cultivate empathy, solidarity, and a commitment to justice. As life-long learners and community advocates, we are dedicated to standing alongside those oppressed and marginalised.

Through our daily prayers, stories, and shared experiences, may we inspire resilience and fuel our collective work for justice. Together, we must persevere in creating meaningful change and promoting community wellbeing, ensuring a just and sustainable world for all.

In this Week of Prayer 2024, we invite you to join us with open hearts and minds, fully embracing the diversity that strengthens our movements. Let us move forward with unwavering faith through the elements—water, earth, fire, and wind—and recognise the divine presence in one another and the world we share. This connection with the Sacred ignites the transformative work of the global YWCA and YMCA movements. Now is the time to unite, take meaningful action, and strive for a brighter future that promises justice, equity, and a sustainable peace globally.

**Mira Rizeq**  
*President, World YWCA*

**Soheila Hayek**  
*President, World YMCA*

# INTRODUCTION

## JOIN US IN A WEEK OF DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITIES!

The World YWCA and World YMCA have partnered together since 1904 to organize the World Week of Prayer. Use this booklet and plan to join us this year, 10–16 November 2024. You can take part individually or form a small group and work through the short devotion each day together. The week's activities consist of six daily devotions, plus an optional collective worship service for day 7.

## ABOUT THE THEME

The theme of the World Week of Prayer 2024 is based on the four classical elements: water, earth, fire and wind. Through the week we will explore different aspects of the elements as they are described and experienced in scripture and our daily life. The prayers offer both a reflective perspective as well as a call for igniting change.

We hope the World Week of Prayer 2024 will help us become anchored in faith, trusting God's guidance, guided by the light as we serve with purpose and share God's love.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

### DAY 1 TO DAY 6

We have incorporated bible readings, introductions, interpretations and applications, questions/reflection points, and a prayer of blessing for each of the six days. There are also creative activities which you can complete during the day if you have time.

If you are leading a group, take some time to read through, pray and prepare beforehand. Ask different group members to read certain parts (e.g. bible reading, prayer etc.)

### DAY 7

Some YWCAs/YMCAs conclude the week with a collective worship service. We have provided the framework for you to plan your own service in your own locality.

### BIBLE READING PLAN 2025

At the last segment of this booklet, we have provided a Daily Bible Reading Plan for the year 2025. We hope this will be helpful in your bible reading throughout the year.

### WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

In the run-up and during the week, post your plans, testimonies and personal or group thoughts and experiences using the hashtag: #WWOP24

**Jens Christian Kirk**  
*Lead Editor*



DAY 1

# MOVING WITH FAITH THROUGH THE STORM

Sára Dzvoničková, YMCA Czech Republic

## INTRODUCTION

As YMCA and YWCA movements, we are called to be beacons of hope in a world that often feels chaotic and unpredictable. In such times, our collective faith can become a source of strength for others, reminding them that they are not alone in their challenges. The world today faces numerous challenges — economic disparities, social injustices, environmental crises — that can feel overwhelming, much like the storm on the Sea of Galilee. However, these challenges are also opportunities for transformation, for communities to come together in faith and action, to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world.

Today, we are invited to reflect on six foundational truths derived from the Scriptures that provide us with comfort and assurance: God is almighty and above all things; God brings order and purpose to our lives; storms are an inevitable part of our life journey; Christ is always with us in the boat; our prayers are heard; and our faith is crucial. As we delve deeper into these truths, may we find renewed strength and peace, knowing that God is always in control and cares for us deeply.

## BIBLE PASSAGES

### GENESIS 1: 1–10

*When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light", and there was light. And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening, and there was morning, the first day.*

*And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So, God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.*

*And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.*

### MARK 4: 35–41

*On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion, and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" And waking up, he rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Be silent! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"*

## INTERPRETATION & APPLICATION

As we meditate on the passages today, six key truths emerge that anchor our faith amid life's challenges:

### 1 | GOD IS ALMIGHTY AND ABOVE EVERYTHING

Genesis 1:1 presents us with the almighty nature of God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. This verse highlights that God is supreme over all creation. The Creator's eternal power and divine nature are clearly seen throughout the amazing precision, breath-taking complexity, and delicate intricacies of the creation. God's power is unmatched and immense. Just as God spoke the world into existence, God can bring forth life, order, and hope in the most chaotic and desperate situations in our lives. The almighty power of God is not just a distant force; it is active and present in our daily experiences, ready to intervene and provide support that surpasses our understanding. We are invited to trust God, knowing that nothing is beyond God's control.

## 2 | GOD BRINGS ORDER AND PURPOSE

In creating the world, God established order from chaos. God separated light from darkness, land from sea, and imbued everything with a specific purpose. In the first verses of Scripture/Genesis 1:1, the stage is set for a cosmic narrative of God's plan of redemption and God's deep desire for a relationship with creation. It teaches us that our lives find their meaning and purpose in the context of God's creation and divine intention. His divine order is also reflected in our lives, and when we align ourselves with God's design, we experience peace and fulfillment. This creation narrative reassures us that God is not only the Creator but also the Sustainer, continuously working to bring light into darkness and order into disorder. However, chaos ensues when we stray from His order — whether in our personal lives, relationships, or communities. God's creative work in Genesis reminds us that our lives have meaning and purpose within God's grand design. We are not accidents; we are intricately woven into God's plan. Embracing this reality calls us to live with intentionality, seeking God's wisdom and direction in all that we do.

## 3 | THE INEVITABILITY OF STORMS

The account of Jesus calming the storm in Mark 4:35–41 highlights that storms are a part of everyone's life. No one is exempt from the trials and tribulations that come our way. These storms often strike unexpectedly, challenging our faith and resilience. Not even the disciples, despite being in the presence of Jesus, were spared from the storm. This teaches us that being a follower of Christ does not mean a life free of challenges. Instead, it encourages us that in all these challenges we are not alone. Storms test our faith but also provide opportunities for growth and deeper trust in God.

## 4 | THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN OUR BOAT

One of the most comforting aspects of the story in Mark is the presence of Jesus in the boat with His disciples, even as the storm raged. Though Jesus was asleep, he was there, and his presence made all the difference. This symbolizes the truth that Christ is with us, even when we cannot see or feel him. Christ's presence is not dependent on our awareness but is a constant reality that we trust by faith. In our moments of panic, doubt, or fear, we can rest in the assurance that Christ is with us, guiding us through the storm. The presence of Christ in our lives brings peace and calm, even when the circumstances remain unchanged.

## 5 | JESUS HEARS US — THE POWER OF PRAYER

The disciples' cry to Jesus, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" is a poignant example of how our prayers, even when they are born out of fear and desperation, reach the heart of God. Jesus' immediate response to calm the storm demonstrates that he hears our cries and is moved by our pleas, and that he really cares. Prayer is a powerful tool that awakens our awareness of Christ's presence and brings divine intervention into our situations. It is through prayer that we connect with God, express our dependence on God, and invite divine power into our lives. In the midst of our storms, our prayers can bring about the peace and deliverance we so desperately need.

## 6 | THE NECESSITY OF FAITH

Finally, the story emphasizes the importance of faith, particularly in difficult times. Faith is not just a belief system; it is an active trust in God that sustains us when the waves of life threaten to overwhelm us. Like a muscle, faith must be exercised and strengthened through daily practices — prayer, scripture reading, and worship — so that when the storms come, we can stand firm. The disciples' experience teaches us that faith is not about having all the answers or being free from fear. It is about trusting in God's goodness and power, even when we do not understand what God is doing. In the end, faith anchors us in the reality of God's love and sovereignty, enabling us to navigate life's storms with courage and hope.

## REFLECTION POINTS

- What storms are you currently facing in your life or within your community?
- How can we, as a collective movement or as a community, offer support to those who are overwhelmed by life's challenges?
- What does it mean to trust God's presence, love, and power during chaotic times mean?

## PRAYER OF BLESSING

*Lord God, we exalt You as the almighty God, full of love, compassion, and endless care. You are the Creator of all things, and we stand in awe of Your greatness. We thank You for Your unwavering presence in our lives, especially during the challenging storms. We ask for Your peace to calm our hearts and minds. Help us to trust in Your power and love, even when we cannot see the way forward. Strengthen our faith, God, so that we may walk confidently, knowing that You are with us in every situation. Empower us to be sources of hope and comfort to those around us, always reflecting Your love and grace in all we do. May we move forward with faith, and be assured we will be guided to safety and peace through every storm. In Your mighty name, we pray. Amen.*

## CREATIVE ACTIVITY

### "BE A LIGHTHOUSE" ENCOURAGEMENT NOTES

The Objective of this activity is to commit to being a source of light for someone going through a storm by writing and delivering personalised encouragement notes. Here's how you can participate:

#### 1 | IDENTIFY THOSE IN NEED

Reflect on people in your community who may be facing challenges. These could range from personal hardships to health struggles to systemic injustices, or just individuals who could benefit from a kind word. Think of friends, neighbors, co-workers, or anyone who might need a boost.

## 2 | WRITE PERSONALISED NOTES

Take a few moments to write short, heartfelt notes with a message of encouragement. Each note should include a positive and uplifting message tailored to the person. Even simple words of support can make a big difference.

## 3 | DELIVER THE NOTES

You can hand-deliver these notes, leave them on someone's desk, or even send them by mail. The surprise of receiving an unexpected note of kindness can provide hope and comfort, reminding the recipient that they are not alone.

This simple gesture can have a powerful impact on someone's day, showing them that they are valued and reminding them that there is always light, even in the darkest of times.

DAY 2

# MOVING WITH FAITH THROUGH THE DROUGHT

Joshua Hastings, YMCA England & Wales

## INTRODUCTION

What essential elements do we require for a full and rewarding life?

For some, fulfillment might be found through spending time with friends, family, and loved ones. Studying and having a successful career might also bring a sense of reward, as might traveling to new and exciting destinations, exploring the wonders of nature, or dedicating valued time to volunteering and serving others. There are various unique ways in which we fill our lives, yet there are also some universal necessities essential for a complete life.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights outlines a common standard of achievements for all people. Central to these rights are equality, freedom, and justice. They constitute the elements we all require for a full and rewarding life — a life composed of peace, goodness, and love. Just as water is essential for all life to flourish, so also is equality, freedom, and justice; however, worldwide examples of inequality, discrimination, and racism in all its forms suggest a diminishing presence of them:

- The richest 10% of the world owns over 75% of all wealth ([BCTI](#)).
- 63% of young people say discrimination is common in their school, community, or workplace ([UNICEF](#)).
- In more than one-third of countries, at least 5% of young women reported experiences of sexual violence in childhood ([UNICEF](#)).

Continued injustices for marginalized and vulnerable groups in society result in a drought of dignity. How do we move with faith through this drought as we work towards a just world, dismantling discrimination and overthrowing oppression?

## BIBLE READINGS

### ACTS 8: 26–40

*Then, an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) So he got up and went. Now, there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:*

*"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,  
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,  
so he does not open his mouth.  
In his humiliation justice was denied him.  
Who can describe his generation?  
For his life is taken away from the earth."*

*The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?" He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.*

### AMOS 5: 24

*But let justice roll down like water  
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*

### JOHN 4: 7–14

*A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."*

## INTERPRETATION & APPLICATION

In the Hebrew tradition, the prophet Amos spoke directly about his society's injustice, with its widespread mistreatment of the poor and abhorrence of those who sought to do good. These people had no dignity, and their unfair treatment was contrary to God's commands to live a righteous life and govern justly.

In response to this drought of dignity, Amos calls for justice to "roll down like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). This evokes a sense of overwhelming and constant movement; imagine pouring out a large bucket of water on the ground and it spreads in every direction, drenching everything it reaches. Amos' prophecy invites us to consider an uninhibited flow of righteousness and justice pouring out over society. We too must denounce cases of injustice and examine what restricts the flow of goodness to those who are thirsting for it.

We learn more about what this outpouring of God's justice might look like through the life of Jesus, who models it during his encounter with someone described as a Samaritan woman in the book of John. This definition is culturally significant within a historical context that marginalizes women and discriminates against people from Samaria. This Samaritan woman has seemingly endured a never-ending drought of dignity, left with an unsatiated thirst for equality, freedom, and justice.

Jesus — a Jewish man — transgresses the cultural and gender norms of the time to include and speak with a Samaritan woman, courteously offering her a drink of water. Unlike the other water sources available to the Samaritan woman, the drink of water Jesus offers is divinely distilled to quench her thirst for equality, freedom, and justice. Jesus refers to this drink as "living water," gushing to eternal life. We could think of this eternal life in contrast with the Samaritan woman's unjust position, which is instead constituted by equality, freedom, and justice. Through this symbolism of water, we may see God's justice as that which nourishes satisfies and seeks to dignify and restore goodness within humanity. It is also significant to note that in the Bible, this sacred spring of living water was first revealed to someone marginalized and discriminated against by society. Those who presently endure a similar drought of dignity may also turn to God for a taste of the heavenly justice and righteousness found in short supply in the systems and institutions of our world.

Later, in the book of Acts, we meet someone else on the margins left, thirsting for equality, freedom, and justice. Described as a eunuch<sup>1</sup> from Ethiopia, not only is this person from a foreign nation but due to their ambiguous genitalia or castration, they are prevented from participating in certain religious customs and practices in the early Christian church. We are introduced to the Ethiopian eunuch while returning from Jerusalem, where they had gone to worship and perhaps were rejected by the institutions observing these discriminatory laws, denying their right to equality, freedom, and justice.

Apostle Philip encounters the Ethiopian eunuch traveling along the wilderness road away from Jerusalem. Following Jesus' example of radical inclusion, Philip is compelled to run up,

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<sup>1</sup> A eunuch was historically a castrated male, often serving in royal or religious roles. While the term reflects ancient societal norms, we recognise that modern understandings of gender and identity are more diverse and fluid. This usage is meant in its historical context, with sensitivity to contemporary gender discussions.

sit alongside, and speak to them rather than the accustomed and systematic exclusion. The Apostle dignifies the Ethiopian eunuch's inquiries about Jesus and indiscriminately includes them into Christian tradition through water baptism. This aquatic act symbolizes coming into a relationship with Jesus and thereby emerging into a life governed by God's justice and righteousness.

As we see in these biblical examples, water, which is essential for all humanity to flourish, comes also in the form of radical inclusion offered freely and equally to all. Whether that be a drink of living water or a dip in a baptismal pool, in Jesus there is a refreshing taste of justice and righteousness. As we seek to alleviate droughts of dignity in our society through the YMCA and the YWCA, we can call upon this source of ever-flowing righteousness to roll down from heaven and spring up on earth to irrigate a just world.

## REFLECTION POINTS

- Think about the freedoms you enjoy the most. How would it feel if they were restricted and what would you miss being able to do?
- The Samaritan woman and eunuch from Ethiopia may have been considered outsiders. Who are the people that experience discrimination in your context and how do their rights differ from yours?
- What springs to mind when you imagine a just world that treats all humanity fairly and equally? Note down any examples you see of this becoming a reality in your world.

## PRAYER OF BLESSING

*To the outsider and those at the margins of our society, may justice pour out.  
 May righteousness reform the environments and institutions where the oppressed call out.  
 Regardless of age, gender, race, religion, sexuality, or anything else that may divide,  
 Help us unite to build a world where all that is fair and just can reside.  
 Rain down on us living water to quench this drought of dignity,  
 And may fairness flow through this world, respecting the equality of all humanity.  
 Like Jesus with the Samaritan woman, may we welcome and include.  
 Like Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, let us listen and not exclude.  
 Let us protect the rights and freedoms that we all require and deserve,  
 And move with faith towards a just world, divinely honoring every person that we serve.  
 Amen.*

## CREATIVE ACTIVITY

### LIVING WATER

The objective of this activity is to foster reflection on the importance of resources, compassion, and self-care, using water and a sponge as metaphors for the distribution of care and sustenance in both personal and community life.

**Supplies:** Two small buckets (one filled with water and one empty), a sponge.

### 1 | INTRODUCTION

Begin with a bucket filled with water and ask the group the following reflection questions:

- How do we rely on water in our daily lives?
- Metaphorically, what does water represent? (Ideas: cleansing, refreshing, baptism, life, etc.)
- In today's society, who are the "women at the well" — those who are marginalised or excluded and may not have access to the resources they need to thrive?

### 2 | SPONGE DEMONSTRATION

Place the sponge in the water-filled bucket.

Allow it to absorb the water, then squeeze it into the empty bucket.

Ask the group:

- How are we called to be like this sponge, absorbing and sharing resources or compassion?
- What do you notice about this action, and how does it relate to the work you do every day?
- What happens to the sponge if it isn't placed in water for a long time? What can we do to refresh ourselves when we start feeling "dried out" like a sponge without water?

### OPTIONAL TAKEAWAY

Provide each participant with a small sponge to remind them of their role in bringing life and dignity to those experiencing a "drought" in society.

DAY 3

# MOVING WITH FAITH THROUGH THE VALLEY

Laura Avilés, Latin America and Caribbean Alliance of YMCAs



## INTRODUCTION

Valleys present a fascinating climatic contrast, with altitude and geography playing a crucial role. Warmth and humidity prevail in lower areas, while elevated regions offer cool, dry air. These factors make valleys places of contrast, reflecting the duality of the human experience where moments of warmth and joy are interspersed with periods of cold and challenge.

Though neither of the passages we will look at today use the word 'valley,' they describe going through the lows of life, with difficult times coming like the rains and winds of a flood. Finding refuge amid life's valleys can feel like salvation or rescue. Just as we want to find a safe and secure place to land when we experience hardship, we also want to be that refuge for others, where they can have some rest from the harsh weather of life. Today, let's learn together how to face the valleys of life and how to encourage others to move with faith through their own valleys too.

## BIBLE READINGS

### PSALM 71: 1–7

*In you, O LORD, I take refuge;  
let me never be put to shame.  
In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;  
incline your ear to me and save me.  
Be to me a rock of refuge,  
a strong fortress to save me,  
for you are my rock and my fortress.  
Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked,  
from the grasp of the unjust and cruel.  
For you, O Lord, are my hope,  
my trust, O LORD, from my youth.  
From my birth I have leaned upon you,  
my protector since my mother's womb.  
My praise is continually of you.  
I have been like a portent to many,  
but you are my strong refuge.*

### MATTHEW 7: 24–27

*"Everyone, then, who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!"*

## INTERPRETATION & APPLICATION

It is believed that the story behind Psalm 71 is that David wrote it later in life after the rebellion of his son Absalom. Regardless of the exact circumstance, it is clear that the writer is crying out for rescue from God in the midst of hard times. While this psalm reads as a prayer, it is more a declaration of hope as the psalmist reminds himself of who God is by saying phrases like, "You are my hope," "my trust," "my protector," "my strong refuge."

When we traverse life's valleys, it is important that we know who we are and that we remember who God is. Affirmations like "I am strong," "I am brave," and "I can do hard things" are more than just simplistic thoughts. They have the power to change our perspective even when our circumstances don't always change. David takes these affirmations one step further by reminding himself of who God is, "You are my hope," "my trust," "my strong refuge." He looks back and remembers "from my birth" who God has been and then asks God to continue to be his "rock of refuge," "a strong fortress to save me."

The firm foundation of a rock is echoed in the New Testament story of Matthew 7, as we see a wise man being described as someone who builds his life on solid ground. The storms of life will come, the flood waters will rise, and difficulties will be encountered. The question for us to consider is what kind of life are we building, not only for ourselves but also for others, in order to endure life's harshest storms? Do we have a hope to declare? Do we have a place to find refuge? Do we share the hope that we have with others? Do we lay the groundwork of a strong foundation for the generations that will come behind us?

You see, what if Psalm 71 could also be read as a declaration of hope for a community, and not just an individual? In this way, may no one be put to shame and may everyone find a refuge and be rescued. What if Matthew 7 wasn't just about my house or my life, but was about our community and our planet. Are we investing in the earth beneath our feet in sustainable ways that will help the world be a better place for those who come behind us? While all are invited to affirm and remember who God is, I hope we also will consider who God is inviting us to be and the future we are called to invest in on behalf of our neighbors, our countries and our entire world.

## PRAYER OF BLESSING

### "WELLSPRINGS OF HOPE" (TRANSLATION OF SPANISH PRAYER)

*God of grace and love, Lord of life and light,  
we bow before you in gratitude and adoration.  
We lift our eyes to you, for you, O God, are our refuge.  
In moments of desolation and desert spaces,  
your hands hold us and we find protection under the shadow of your wings.  
Where there seems to be no way, you create one  
and you nourish us with fresh waters from the northern canyons.  
You deposit rivers of living water in your sons and daughters  
and in our anguish, you lead us to paths of justice.  
Your redeemed walk confidently down the desert road  
singing praises to your name with everlasting joy.  
Although wild animals roar, no harm will be done us  
Because you, Adonai, are the ones who protects your creation,  
you are the inexhaustible source of all blessing.  
Keep us, oh beloved Savior, from the heat that traps by day  
and the cold that lurks at night and take us in your embrace.  
We will adore you with new songs, with tambourine and with dance,  
for you alone are worthy of supreme praise.  
Holy, Holy, Holy, you are Lord.  
Save us from our own deserts and heartaches  
mighty Savior, Jesus we trust in you,  
we depend on you, and our hope is in you.  
In the sweet and unwavering name of Jesus we pray.  
Amen.*

# CREATIVE ACTIVITY

## ART & STORYTELLING

This activity aims to explore the contrasts of human experiences through art and storytelling.

**Supplies:** Paper or canvas, paints or markers, journals.

### 1 | INTRODUCTION

Begin with a discussion about valleys and their climatic contrasts—how some valleys are warm and full of life, while others are cold and barren. Relate this to personal experiences of joy and challenges. Encourage participants to reflect on both “warm” and “cold” moments in their own lives or communities.

### 2 | ART CREATION

- Split the group into two: one group focuses on “warmth and joy,” and the other on “cold and challenge.”
- Each group will create artwork representing their theme, using paints, markers, or any other materials provided.

### 3 | REFLECTIVE WRITING/SHARING

After completing their artwork, participants will write a short poem, prayer, or personal story that reflects the theme of their creation. Encourage them to be authentic and personal in their expressions. They will then share their reflections with the group.

### 4 | DISCUSSION

Conclude with a group discussion about the warm and cold moments in our communities and on our planet. Encourage participants to think about how we can support each other during challenging times and be a source of strength for future generations. Ask: How can we, as individuals and as a community, be a “rock of refuge” for others?

This activity provides an opportunity for reflection, creativity, and meaningful conversation about the duality of human experience.

## BONUS

To explore the art of storytelling more, visit the [World YWCA’s Storytelling Guide: Weaving Stories of Activism](#).

DAY 4

# MOVING WITH FAITH THROUGH THE FIELD

Solomuzi Mabuza, YMCA South Africa



## INTRODUCTION

God created all we have in the universe, including Adam and Eve. In one Hebrew story from the Bible, we read that God created them, male and female, in “our” (plural) image and likeness and gave them the responsibility to take care of creation. God always intended that humanity co-exist on earth as equals on a level playing field, tending the earth. As we consider the context of the Bible’s creation narrative, may we move with faith on this earth to uncover a message for our present global context.

## BIBLE PASSAGES

### GENESIS 3:17–19

*And to the man he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the fruit about which I commanded you, You shall not eat of it, cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”*

### 1 CORINTHIANS 12:14

*Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many.*

## INTERPRETATION & APPLICATION

Reading through the lens of patriarchy doesn't benefit the World YMCA – YWCA. Liberation theology hermeneutical tools are used by Feminist and Womanist readers to re-read this text and give new meaning to a passage that may initially be read in bad taste, especially to the women who hear it. The essence of the message is that we ought to listen to the voice of God rather than any other deceitful or oppressive ones. Similarly, we must see that tending and caring for the earth was always part of God's desire for humanity, although sweat-filled toiling with thorns and thistles was not. All of us are invited to cherish and value hard work as a way of working alongside God rather than seeing it as a punishment from God. In a just world, meaningful work contributes immensely to our fulfillment and well-being. This re-interpretation shifts away from traditional readings that might focus on punishment and instead promotes a vision where humanity is entrusted with the responsibility of caring for the earth as stewards.

In doing so, it challenges oppressive systems that distort the original message of the Bible, advocating instead for a world where both work and creation are respected and cherished. When we treat the earth as a treasure to tend to, we can do what is right in the universe toward a sustainable planet.

The second passage emphasizes how humanity, as God's creation, depends on one another. All voices that speak to the will of the Creator are to be heard, treasured, and valued, regardless of privilege or power.

Structural sin is the same as the voice that speaks against the will of the Creator. Inequality, poverty, and unemployment are the consequences of sin. Women have been experiencing a world where they are not paid the same wages as men. Children who are minors are exploited by cruel employers who capitalize on their poverty. Youth are battling poverty in other parts of the world. The field is not leveled as desired by the Lord Jesus Christ. Walking through the field with faith requires a commitment to a just world where we are all treated equally. There should not be a First and a Third World divide. Education should not be a privilege to the rich and inaccessible to the poor and the marginalized. Religion should not divide and discriminate against people of different races and backgrounds. Instead, it should promote unity and inclusivity.

The idea of a unified body should always be a central part of our discourse as God's creation. All humanity has one home. We must respect the earth, the cradle of humanity. From the ground we were created, we are dust and shall return to the dust. Our bread cometh from the ground.

## REFLECTION POINTS

- Give examples of other texts that could be read in a toxic way. How can we re-read them?
- What is the work of your hands that God has given you to do?
- Who are the voices that have been ignored in our communities?
- What are we going to do differently to listen to other voices?
- How can we engage with those in our communities or YMCA–YWCA movement who are not being engaged?

## PRAYER OF BLESSING

*Creator of the universe, teach us to walk on this earth with the right mindset. Teach us not to discriminate against others based on religion, race, sexuality, creed, or class. Empower us all to make our world a just world. Make us all stewards of the earth you gifted to the universe. May those voices we have ignored on the globe be heard. Fill us with a new breath of fresh air so that we may love one another as you loved us. May all people experience meaningful work. We ask all of this in the name of the Triune God. Amen.*

## CREATIVE ACTIVITY 1

### CIRCLE OF CONNECTIONS

The objective of this activity is to encourage participants to engage in meaningful reflection about their relationships with themselves, each other, and the divine while fostering a sense of community and collective responsibility.

**Supplies:** A large circle of string or yarn (or any material to create a circle), Index cards. Markers or pens.

### 1 | CREATING THE CIRCLE

Lay the string or yarn in a large circle on the floor to represent unity and interconnectedness. This symbolizes how everyone in the group is connected.

### 2 | REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Provide participants with index cards and markers. Ask them to reflect on the following questions and write down their thoughts:

- What does connection mean to you in your community?
- How do you experience divine power or support in your life?
- How can we cultivate deeper relationships with one another?
- In what ways can we collaboratively create positive change in the world?
- What steps can we take together to promote equity and justice in our community?

### 3 | SHARING INSIGHTS

Once everyone has written their responses, invite participants to share their thoughts. They can choose to read their responses aloud or summarize them for the group.

### 4 | BUILDING THE CONNECTIONS

After sharing, participants will take their index cards and connect them to the circle using the string or yarn, either by tying them to it or placing them inside the circle. This visual representation reinforces the idea that each person's insights contribute to the larger community.

### 5 | GROUP DISCUSSION

Conclude with a discussion on how individual insights can collectively shape the community. Encourage participants to think about actions they can take to address the questions posed.

### OPTIONAL TAKEAWAY

As a takeaway, participants could create a small keepsake using a piece of string or yarn tied into a bracelet, symbolizing their commitment to maintaining connections and fostering inclusivity in their lives.

## CREATIVE ACTIVITY 2

### QUESTIONS FOR THE CROSS

Take a cross or make one for your Prayer Group. Ask yourself the following questions about the cross.

- What does the cross represent in your community?
- How should you relate to the divine power (vertical)?
- How should we relate to one another (horizontally)?
- Together, how can we make this world better?
- What are we going to do about leveling the field?



DAY 5

# MOVING WITH FAITH THROUGH THE FIRE

Duncan Chowdhury, World YMCA

## INTRODUCTION

Fire has been a primal force familiar to humans since the dawn of time, often symbolizing destruction. In prehistoric times, fire was a source of awe and fear, as humans witnessed entire forests being reduced to ash by wildfires ignited by lightning. Over time, however, humans learned to harness the power of fire for their benefit. Fire made meat safer to eat, transformed raw metals into useful alloys, and became a tool for both survival and progress. Fire represents not only destruction but also purification, and it plays a vital role in our daily lives.

In the Old and New Testaments, fire is a powerful metaphor for God's consuming presence, protection, and purification. It is not just a force of destruction, but also a means of testing and refining. Life often presents us with metaphorical fires — challenging situations that test our strength and faith. With a strong belief in God and adherence to God's teachings, we can emerge victorious from these trials. Considering this perspective, fire becomes a symbol of the purifying challenges we face in life and the grace of God that helps us persevere.

## BIBLE READINGS

### DANIEL 3: 19–30

*Then Nebuchadnezzar was so filled with rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face was distorted. He ordered the furnace heated up seven times more than was customary and ordered some of the strongest guards in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire. So the men were bound, still wearing their tunics, their trousers, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the furnace of blazing fire. Because the king's command was urgent and the furnace was so overheated, the raging flames killed the men who lifted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. But the three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down, bound, into the furnace of blazing fire.*

*Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up quickly. He said to his counselors, "Was it not three men that we threw bound into the fire?" They answered the king, "True, O king." 25 He replied, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the middle of the fire, and they are not hurt, and the fourth has the appearance of a god." Nebuchadnezzar then approached the door of the furnace of blazing fire and said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. 27 And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men; the hair of their heads was not singed, their tunics were not scorched, and not even the smell of fire came from them. Nebuchadnezzar said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him. They disobeyed the king's command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that utters blasphemy against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way." Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.*

### HEBREWS 12: 28–29

*Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe, for indeed our God is a consuming fire.*

## INTERPRETATION & APPLICATION

In the book of Daniel, we encounter a story that powerfully illustrates this dual symbolism of fire. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon ordered his people to worship a golden statue he had erected. However, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego — three devout Israelites — refused since they believed in worshiping only the Almighty God. Enraged by their defiance, Nebuchadnezzar commanded that they be thrown into a furnace heated seven times hotter than usual. Yet, miraculously, the flames did not consume them when they entered the furnace. Not only were they unharmed, but a fourth figure — believed by many to be the presence of God — appeared in the fire with them, protecting them from all harm.

This story serves as a striking reminder of God’s power to protect those who remain steadfast in their faith. It echoes the prophecy of Isaiah: “When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you” (Isaiah 43:2). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were captives in a foreign land, oppressed by a tyrannical ruler. Despite their circumstances, they remained true to God, placing their trust entirely in God, who in turn, was with them in their time of trial.

Similarly, in our daily lives, we often face metaphorical fires — trials of persecution, discrimination, exploitation, and violations of human rights. Women and children are particularly vulnerable to these injustices, and in many countries, marginalized communities and minorities face severe oppression. In these moments, our faith is tested. The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego encourages us to stand firm in our beliefs, even when society pressures us to compromise. Standing up for truth and justice may lead to conflict, but faith in God will see us through these challenges.

Today, the modern world presents new forms of idolatry. Materialism, consumerism, corruption, abuse of power, and cultural domination are the golden statues of our age. Just as Nebuchadnezzar sought to control the thoughts and beliefs of his subjects, modern-day dictators and oppressive regimes seek to silence, dissent and restrict religious freedom. Those who remain loyal to God in the face of these challenges are, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, protected by God’s grace. God stands with the marginalized and oppressed, providing them with the strength to endure and ultimately overcome.

The continuation of the story in the book of Daniel further highlights this point. After witnessing the miraculous survival of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, Nebuchadnezzar was so moved that he issued a decree stating that anyone who spoke against their God would be punished. This change of heart shows how steadfast faith in God can lead even the most powerful adversaries to recognize the truth. When we stand firm in our pursuit of justice and righteousness, our victory not only benefits us, but it can also inspire others to embrace the truth.

In the New Testament, the theme of fire as a purifying force is further emphasized. In the Letter to the Hebrews, the author reminds us that God’s Kingdom is eternal and unshakable, and nothing can overturn it. God, who is merciful and loving, is also just and holy. God’s holiness is often compared to fire, which burns away impurities and consumes all that is unworthy. This image of God as a purifying fire calls on us to live righteous lives, holding ourselves to high standards of ethical and moral behavior.

While God is infinitely merciful to us, God still asks that we strive for holiness. Just as fire refines metal by removing its impurities, so too does God refine us, testing our character and removing anything unworthy of God's Kingdom. These trials, while painful, are growth opportunities. They remind us that God is not only a protector but also a purifier who desires righteousness from God's people. In the face of these trials, we are called to worship God with reverence, give thanks for God's mercy, and uphold justice in all aspects of our lives.

## CONCLUSION

The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego is a powerful testament to faith's protective and purifying power. While often a symbol of destruction, fire also represents purification, strength, and divine presence. In our lives, we face many metaphorical fires — challenges that test our resolve and faith. By trusting in God and adhering to God's teachings, we can overcome these trials and emerge stronger, just as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did. Their story reminds us that God is always with us, guiding and protecting us as we navigate the challenges of faith, justice, and righteousness. Through these trials, we are purified and drawn closer to God's eternal and unshakable Kingdom.

## REFLECTION POINTS

- Consumerism and materialism are modern forms of idolatry.  
In what ways do these idols challenge our faith, and how can we resist them?
- How do we understand God's presence during our personal trial, and what practices can help us strengthen our faith in God during difficult times?
- We experience trials through various hardships in our lives.  
How can we shift our perspective on life's hardships to see them as opportunities for spiritual growth and moral upliftment rather than just suffering?

## PRAYER OF BLESSING

*Almighty God,*

*We thank You and praise You for the countless blessings You have poured into our lives. We are grateful for Your presence in our moments of joy, especially during times of trial and difficulty. Grant us Your constant protection and strength as we face life's challenges. Help us remain firm in our faith and purify our hearts so that we may live according to Your will, carrying the light of righteousness. Surround us with Your everlasting love and peace today and always.*

*Amen.*

## CREATIVE ACTION

### FIRE CIRCLE

This activity aims to provide participants with a space for introspection and release, allowing them to identify and let go of the idols or distractions in their lives that hinder their relationship with God, themselves, and their communities. This exercise aims to facilitate personal growth, foster community support, and encourage spiritual reflection through a symbolic act of burning.

**Supplies:** Index cards (small pieces of paper for participants to write on); pens; wood/fire; starter/matches, for creating a small fire pit (ensure safety measures are in place); large candle (an alternative for indoor settings, ensuring safety regulations are followed).

#### 1 | SETTING UP

- Gather participants in a circle around the fire pit or candle.
- Distribute one pen and one index card to each participant.

#### 2 | REFLECTION

- Invite participants to take a few moments to reflect and write down the idols in their lives—these could be anything they prioritize above God, themselves, or the communities they serve. Encourage honesty and openness.

#### 3 | SHARING

- Ask for a few volunteers to share what they have written on their index cards. This sharing can help foster a sense of community and support among participants.

#### 4 | SYMBOLIC BURNING

- As each person shares, invite them to place their index card into the fire pit or, if indoors, around the candle. This act symbolizes letting go of the burdens and distractions they have identified.

#### 5 | CONTEMPLATION

- After the cards are placed in the fire or around the candle, invite everyone to look at the flame for a couple of minutes. Encourage them to take deep breaths and reflect on the presence of God, comparing it to the flame—warm, transformative, and illuminating.

#### 6 | FINAL SHARING

- After a few moments of silence, ask if anyone wants to share their thoughts or feelings about the experience. This can be a powerful way for participants to process the activity and connect with each other.

The background features a series of concentric circles in shades of red and orange, centered on a light yellow circle. A white diamond shape is positioned on the right side, containing a wavy, flame-like pattern in shades of red and orange.

DAY 6

# MOVING WITH FAITH THROUGH THE DARKNESS

Jens Christian Kirk, YMCA–YWCA Denmark

## INTRODUCTION

Every so often we find ourselves in the wilderness. The wilderness can be a literal one, like the wilderness of the Bible in the Sinai and Negev Deserts. But the wilderness can also be metaphorical, like wandering through a place of doubt — doubt about our purpose or belonging, self-doubt, doubt in each other and even existential doubt.

Every so often, we also find ourselves in the dark. Darkness can be quite literal, as in the middle of a starless night. Like the wilderness, however, darkness can also be metaphorical. Loneliness, challenging experiences, and fragile mental health can all feel like darkness. In the wilderness and in the darkness, we long for a light — a light to guide us and a fire to ignite us.

The Bible readings for this day tells stories of that light.

## BIBLE READINGS

### EXODUS 13: 17–22

*When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was nearer, for God thought, "If the people face war, they may change their minds and return to Egypt." So God led the people by the roundabout way of the wilderness bordering the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of the land of Egypt prepared for battle. And Moses took with him the bones of Joseph, who had required a solemn oath of the Israelites, saying, "God will surely come to you, and then you must carry my bones with you from here." They set out from Succoth and camped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness. The LORD went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.*

### ACTS 2: 1–4

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.*

## INTERPRETATION & APPLICATION

When the Israelites left Egypt, they were a large group of refugees. Like many refugees today, they escape in the hope of finding a better future for themselves and future generations. They fled oppression, searching for a new homeland where they could find safety and peace. However, as is the case for many today, the most direct path to their "Promised Land" was filled with dangers—potential wars, raiders, or even the threat of being captured and forced back into Egypt. So, the Israelites took a longer, more difficult route—through the wilderness, desert, and sea—because it was the safer option when the direct roads were too dangerous.

The experience of fleeing oppression and becoming a refugee is, tragically, not unique. The 43.4 million refugees worldwide today testify to this, as does the fact that the areas the Israelites fled through and fled to have been one of the areas in the world with the most refugees and displaced citizens since 1948. The time since October 7, 2023, has only emphasized and worsened the situation among the Palestinian population. This should be a reminder to us all that the plight of displaced people remains urgent. Continuing to work for justice, especially in support of refugees, is more critical than ever.

Their status as refugees isn't what makes the Israelites unique, nor is traveling through the wilderness. What makes their story stand out is that God acts as their guide and never leaves them. The story claims that God's presence could be seen "in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night." What makes their experience significant is that God is present as their guide throughout both the day and the night, in the wilderness and in the darkness. This is

the most important thing the story has to offer us — God’s presence is our guide, by day and night, through the wilderness and the darkness. This is possible for all of us, too.

When we look ahead in Acts, the disciples were not gathered in the wilderness, and it wasn’t even dark on that day of Pentecost. But the last couple of months had been a rollercoaster ride of emotions for them: reaching Jerusalem with Jesus, cheering him into the city, celebrating the Pesach (Passover) with him, but then witnessing his capture and death. Amid grief, they were then told of the empty tomb, and from there, they had their own experience of Jesus standing among them, risen from the dead; and then ten days ago, he left them once again, but promising that his presence would remain with them. I would certainly forgive them for feeling bewildered and filled with doubt, and those feelings can overwhelm us like wilderness and darkness.

Interestingly, as the Holy Spirit descends upon them on that Pentecost day, tongues of fire rest on each of them, visually depicting the fire ignited within them—a fire that doesn’t necessarily erase their doubt or bewilderment but encourages them to act in spite of it. It instills in them courage to speak up, to act, and to lead others in the wilderness and through the darkness.

Both texts are a reminder of the realities of life. We are going to face times when we are walking in the wilderness or moving through the darkness. We can’t expect a life sheltered from difficult experiences, and sometimes, a life of faith can even feel like a period of emotional turmoil. But we can find through it all that a life of faith comes with a promise that we aren’t alone in the darkness and have a guide in the wilderness. God can be a pillar of fire before our eyes and a fire ignited in our hearts.

## REFLECTION POINTS:

- Have you experienced times in your life when you felt left to wander in the wilderness or walk through the darkness?
- Do you know the feeling of seeing a light in the darkness?
- How have you experienced God’s presence as a pillar of fire or a fire igniting your heart?
- Contemplate how your local YMCA/YWCA /community can work with refugees.
- Consider how your local YMCA or YWCA /or community can be a beacon of hope for people struggling with mental health issues.

## PRAYER OF BLESSING

*God of the refugees,  
Lead us through the wilderness — the wilderness of the world and the wilderness of our minds. Lead us through the deserts, the oceans and the gorges. Open our hearts so that we may care for our fellow wanderers.*

*God of promises,  
Lead us to the meadows of hope, the oases of peace, and the hills of refuge. Be present in our wanderings as our companion and guide so we know that we are not alone but that You are moving with us.*

*God of the bewildered and doubtful,  
Sit with us in our doubt, calm our noisy silence and light up the blinding darkness. Bless us with a guiding light before our eyes and fire igniting our hearts.*

*Amen*

## CREATIVE ACTION

### WALKING IN DARKNESS

The objective of this activity is to facilitate reflection on the themes of guidance, trust, and support within the community, particularly in times of uncertainty or difficulty.

**Supplies:** bandana or small strip of fabric to serve as a blindfold

#### 1 | PREPARATION

- Gather the participants in a safe space where they can move around without obstacles.
- Ensure you have a bandana or small strip of fabric to use as a blindfold.

#### 2 | SELECT VOLUNTEERS

Ask for two volunteers: one to be blindfolded and the other to be the guide.

#### 3 | THE ACTIVITY

- Place the blindfold on the chosen volunteer, ensuring they cannot see.
- Guide: Instruct the guide to lead the blindfolded person through the space using calm verbal directions (e.g., “Take a step forward,” “Turn right,” etc.). The guide should not touch the blindfolded person but can remain close by for reassurance.

#### 4 | DEBRIEFING THE EXPERIENCE

Once the activity is complete, gather everyone for a debriefing session. Encourage participants to share their feelings and observations, asking the following questions.

- For the Blindfolded Person: How did it feel to walk in darkness? What emotions or thoughts did you experience?
- For the Guide: What was it like to guide the blindfolded person through this space? How did it feel to provide directions without physical contact?
- For Observers: What did you notice during the activity? How did the dynamic between the guide and the blindfolded person unfold?
- Personal Reflection: How are we sometimes like the blindfolded person, feeling lost or uncertain? What guides does God use to help you through the darkness in your life?
- Community Reflection: How are we sometimes like the guide, providing support to those in need? Who in our communities might be experiencing darkness, and how can we offer guidance and support to them?

Wrap up the session by emphasizing the importance of being both a supportive guide and a trusting participant in the journey of life. Encourage participants to take the insights gained from this activity into their daily lives, fostering a sense of community and support for those who may be struggling.

DAY 7

# MOVING WITH FAITH THROUGH THE WORLD

Dori Gorman, YMCA USA, Middle Tennessee



## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP SERVICE

The details below have been provided as a guide to help YWCAs/YMCAs create their own local worship service during or at the end of this year's World Week of Prayer, and based on our theme, Moving With Faith Through the Elements.

### 00:00 | WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Leader welcomes the participants and introduces the service in whatever way is appropriate to their context. Here is a suggested introduction:

*Throughout this past week as we have celebrated the World Week of Prayer, all have been invited to Move with Faith Through the Elements. We've moved together through the waters, the earth, the fire, ...and today we will focus on the wind as we close out this week by "Moving with Faith Through the World."*

### 00:03 | OPENING PRAYER

**Leader:** May the grace, mercy, and peace from our Source of Life, our Creator and Sustainer Jesus Christ be with you.

**All:** And also with you.

**Leader:** This is the very day God acted

**All:** Let's celebrate a free and full life!

**00:04 | SONG — ‘VAPOR’ — MICHAEL AND LISA GUNGOR WITH GOOD SHEPHERD MUSIC COLLECTIVE**

This song choice is a suggestion for the type of worship content that will fit with the theme. ([youtu.be/mXJNjeVmuF8](https://youtu.be/mXJNjeVmuF8)).

You may wish to use an alternative song. If so, choose another song. Some alternative song choices can be found at [ymca.int/week-of-prayer](https://ymca.int/week-of-prayer)

**00:09 | THE LORD’S PRAYER FROM NEW ZEALAND**

by Bill Wallace, Aotearoa/New Zealand

**All:**

O most Compassionate Life-giver,

May we honor and praise you;

May we work with you to establish your new order of justice, peace and love;

Give us what we need for growth,

And help us, through forgiving others, to accept forgiveness.

Strengthen us in the time of testing, that we may resist all evil,

For all tenderness, strength and love are yours, now and forever.

Amen.

**00:10 | THREE READERS**

Three Scriptures (choose readers who represent a diverse cross-section of the participants) – if you choose to do this service during the week you are invited to use some of the scripture readings for that day instead.

**Old Testament: 1 Kings 19: 11–12**

*He said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.” Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind, and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake, and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.*

**Psalm: Psalm 104: 1–3**

*Bless the LORD, O my soul.*

*O LORD my God, you are very great.*

*You are clothed with honor and majesty,*

*wrapped in light as with a garment.*

*You stretch out the heavens like a tent;*

*you set the beams of your chambers on the waters;*

*you make the clouds your chariot;*

*you ride on the wings of the wind;*

*you make the winds your messengers,*

*fire and flame your ministers.*

**New Testament: John 3: 5–8**

Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

**00:16 | PRAYING WITH OUR BREATH**

This prayer is to be read slowly with the leader guiding and modeling to everyone, breathing in and out, as we pray together. It is adapted from **Black Liturgies** by Cole Arthur Riley.

Leader: Our Creator breathed life into the first human and with that same breath, the Spirit of God lives and moves within and through us in this world. As we pray, all are invited to slowly breathe in and out between each prayer we say aloud together.

**Leader: Inhale\***

**All: We resist Isolation**

**Leader: Exhale**

**All: We push back despair**

**Leader: Inhale**

**All: We ground ourselves in our bodies**

**Leader: Exhale**

**All: This breath carries wisdom**

**Leader: Inhale**

**All: We remember the Spirit’s still small voice within us**

**Leader: Exhale**

**All: We are not alone**

**00:20 | CREATIVE ART AS WORSHIP**

Use this section to perform a selection of creative art to enhance your worship. It requires pre-preparation to produce a montage, reflection, poem, visual art, or dance focused on the still small voice of God that leads us through our day and into the world.

**00:25 | THE SERMON**

“Invite a local YMCA leader or Christian minister to speak on our theme, ‘Moving with Faith Through the World,’ using 1 Kings 19:11–12. One of the other passages can also be used, but 1 Kings is recommended.

**00:35 | REFLECTION AND CENTERING PRAYER MOMENT**

Instrumental music can play throughout this session.

The worship leader begins this session with the following words:

Reflecting on 1 Kings 18, the British rabbi and author Jonathan Sacks wrote:

“The supreme power cares for the powerless. The creator of life loves life. The voice that summoned the universe into being is still and small, hardly louder than a whisper. To hear God you have to listen.”

Today, as we close our time together, we want to take time to listen to God in the midst of the hurry, worry and busyness of our world. It is important that we practice this together because it is not easy. It can also be tempting to only be still and listen to God when we are in a worship service. But our hope today is that being still to listen will become a part of our regular daily rhythm. What would it look like if we moved through our day and into the world with the ability to dial down the static and noise all around us, the earthquakes and the strong winds, to connect with the divine in a whisper?

I invite us to again breathe in and out together slowly, sitting up and grounding your feet on the floor. Pay attention to how the seat underneath you feels, and find a place of rest in your body. Inhale and exhale slowly as I say these words and then we will sit in silence together.

And when we get distracted by our thoughts, or our neighbors, or noises in the room, ever so gently I invite us to return to our intention to be still and listen for the still small voice.

**Be still and know that I am God.**

*(pause — inhale and exhale slowly)*

**Be still and know that I am.**

*(pause — inhale and exhale slowly)*

**Be still and know.**

*(pause — inhale and exhale slowly)*

**Be still.**

*(pause — inhale and exhale slowly)*

**Be.**

*(pause — inhale and exhale slowly)*

(Allow for 2 minutes of silence — it will feel long, but it is important to practice together.)

**00:40 | SONG — “STILL SMALL VOICE” — JOHAN GLIDDEN,  
SOLI DEO GLORIA**

This song choice ([youtu.be/tD9dlqhOCVg](https://youtu.be/tD9dlqhOCVg)) is a suggestion for the type of worship content that will fit with the theme of the service, especially the theme of “Moving with Faith through the Elements.”

You may wish to use an alternative song. If you choose to use an alternative song, select one that focuses on the Spirit of God moving in this world. Some alternative song choices can be found at: [ymca.int/week-of-prayer](https://ymca.int/week-of-prayer)

**00:44 | THE BENEDICTION — A BLESSING FOR WHEN THE ROAD IS LONG**  
by [Kate Bowler](#)**Leader:**

*Blessed are we, at the point of utter stillness,  
that becomes an empty space for that voice to echo and build and resound  
until it becomes a place to rest and receive and be made whole.  
And how blessed are we who are astonished  
to find that God’s strength begins at the very point  
when ours runs out.*

**All: Amen**

**00:45 | CLOSE**

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Disclaimer: The views expressed in the booklet by the various contributors do not necessarily reflect the position of the World YWCA or the World YMCA. The illustrations included in this booklet must be only used for World YWCA-YMCA Week of Prayer purposes.

# BIBLE READING PLAN 2025

## JANUARY

1	Psalm 19
2	Luke 3: 1–6
3	Luke 3: 7–14
4	Luke 3: 15–20
5	Psalm 72
6	Luke 3: 21–38
7	Luke 4: 1–13
8	Luke 4: 14–21
9	Luke 4: 22–30
10	Luke 4: 31–37
11	Luke 4: 38–44
12	Psalm 4
13	Luke 5: 1–11
14	Luke 5: 12–16
15	Luke 5: 17–26
16	Luke 5: 27–32
17	Luke 5: 33–39
18	Luke 6: 1–11
19	Psalm 3
20	Luke 6: 12–16
21	Luke 6: 17–26
22	Luke 6: 27–35
23	Luke 6: 36–42
24	Luke 6: 43–49
25	Luke 7: 1–10
26	Psalm 9
27	Luke 7: 11–17
28	Luke 7: 18–23
29	Luke 7: 24–35
30	Luke 7: 36–50
31	Luke 8: 1–3

## FEBRUARY

1	Luke 8: 4–15
2	Psalm 16
3	Luke 8: 16–21
4	Luke 8: 22–25
5	Luke 8: 26–39
6	Luke 8: 40–56
7	Luke 9: 1–9
8	Luke 9: 10–17
9	Psalm 18: 1–20
10	Luke 9: 18–27
11	Luke 9: 28–36
12	Luke 9: 37–45
13	Luke 9: 46–50
14	Luke 9: 51–56
15	Luke 9: 57–62
16	Psalm 18: 21–51
17	Luke 10: 1–16
18	Luke 10: 17–24
19	Luke 10: 25–37
20	Luke 10: 38–42
21	Luke 11: 1–4
22	Luke 11: 5–13
23	Psalm 15
24	Luke 11: 14–26
25	Luke 11: 27–32
26	Luke 11: 33–36
27	Luke 11: 37–54
28	Luke 12: 1–12

# BIBLE READING PLAN 2025

## MARCH

1	Luke 12: 13–21
2	Psalm 6
3	Luke 12: 22–34
4	Luke 12: 35–48
5	Luke 12: 49–53
6	Luke 12: 54–59
7	Luke 13: 1–9
8	Luke 13: 10–17
9	Psalm 10
10	Leviticus 1: 1–9
11	Leviticus 8: 1–13
12	Leviticus 9: 1–24
13	Leviticus 16: 1–22
14	Leviticus 18: 1–6. 19–24
15	Leviticus 19:1–18
16	Psalm 25
17	Leviticus 19: 31–37
18	Leviticus 25: 1–12
19	Leviticus 25: 35–43
20	Luke 18: 31–43
21	Luke 19: 1–10
22	Luke 19: 11–27
23	Psalm 34
24	Luke 19: 28–40
25	Luke 19: 41–48
26	Luke 20: 1–8
27	Luke 20:9–19
28	Luke 20: 20–26
29	Luke 20: 27–40
30	Psalm 84
31	Luke 20: 41–47

## APRIL

1	Luke 21: 1–4
2	Luke 21: 5–19
3	Luke 21: 20–28
4	Luke 21: 29–38
5	Luke 22: 1–6
6	Psalm 22: 1–22
7	Luke 22: 7–23
8	Luke 22: 24–30
9	Luke 22: 31–38
10	Luke 22: 39–46
11	Luke 22: 47–53
12	Luke 22: 54–62
13	Psalm 22: 23–32
14	Luke 22: 63–71
15	Luke 23: 1–12
16	Luke 23: 13–25
17	Luke 23: 26–31
18	Luke 23: 32–49
19	Luke 23: 50–56
20	Luke 24: 1–12
21	Luke 24: 13–35
22	Luke 24: 36–49
23	Luke 24: 50–53
24	Colossians 1: 1–8
25	Colossians 1: 9–14
26	Colossians 1: 15–20
27	Psalm 116
28	Colossians 1: 21–23
29	Colossians 1: 24–29
30	Colossians 2: 1–5

# BIBLE READING PLAN 2025

MAY	
1	Colossians 2: 6–10
2	Colossians 2: 11–15
3	Colossians 2: 16–23
4	Psalms 23
5	Colossians 3: 1–4
6	Colossians 3: 5–11
7	Colossians 3: 12–17
8	Colossians 3: 18 – 4:1
9	Colossians 4: 2–6
10	Colossians 4: 7–18
11	Psalms 45
12	Joel 1: 1–20
13	Joel 2: 1–11
14	Joel 2: 12–17
15	Joel 2: 18–27
16	Joel 3: 1–5
17	Joel 4: 1–21
18	Psalms 30
19	Acts 1: 1–14
20	Acts 1: 15–26
21	Acts 2: 1–13
22	Acts 2: 14–21
23	Acts 2: 22–36
24	Acts 2: 37–41
25	Psalms 67
26	Acts 2: 42–47
27	Acts 3:1–10
28	Acts 3:11–26
29	Psalms 47
30	Acts 4:1–12
31	Acts 4:13–22

JUNE	
1	Psalms 27
2	Acts 4: 23–31
3	Acts 4: 32–37
4	Acts 5: 1–11
5	Acts 5: 12–16
6	Acts 5: 17–33
7	Acts 5: 34–42
8	Psalms 118: 1–14
9	Psalms 118: 15–29
10	Acts 6: 1–7
11	Acts 6: 8–15
12	Acts 7: 1–16
13	Acts 7: 17–29
14	Acts 7: 30–43
15	Psalms 13
16	Acts 7: 44–53
17	Acts 7: 54–8:3
18	Acts 8: 4–25
19	Acts 8: 26–40
20	Acts 9: 1–9
21	Acts 9: 10–19a
22	Psalms 28
23	Acts 9:19b–31
24	Acts 9: 32–43
25	Acts 10: 1–23a
26	Acts 10: 23b–33
27	Acts 10: 34–48
28	Acts 11: 1–18
29	Psalms 12
30	Acts 11:19–30

# BIBLE READING PLAN 2025

## JULY

1	Acts 12: 1–17
2	Acts 12: 18–25
3	Acts 13: 1–12
4	Acts 13:13–25
5	Acts 13: 26–43
6	Psalm 103
7	Acts 13: 44–52
8	Acts 14: 1–7
9	Acts 14: 8–20a
10	Acts 14: 20b–28
11	Acts 15:1–21
12	Acts 15: 22–35
13	Psalm 7
14	Acts 15:36–16:5
15	Acts 16: 6–15
16	Acts 16: 16–24
17	Acts 16:25–40
18	Philippians 1: 1–11
19	Philippians 1: 12–18a
20	Psalm 26
21	Philippians 1: 18b–26
22	Philippians 1:27–2:4
23	Philippians 2: 5–11
24	Philippians 2:12–18
25	Philippians 2:19–30
26	Philippians 3: 1–11
27	Psalm 21
28	Philippians 3: 12–16
29	Philippians 3: 17–21
30	Philippians 4:1–9
31	Philippians 4:10–23

## AUGUST

1	Acts 17: 1–15
2	Acts 17: 16–34
3	Psalm 11
4	Acts 18: 1–22
5	Acts 18:23–19:7
6	Acts 19: 8–22
7	Acts 19: 23–40
8	Acts 20: 1–16
9	Acts 20: 17–38
10	Psalm 14
11	Acts 21:1–14
12	Acts 21:15–26
13	Acts 21:27–40
14	Acts 22:1–22
15	Acts 22: 23–30
16	Acts 23: 1–11
17	Psalm 63
18	Acts 23:12–35
19	Acts 24: 1–21
20	Acts 24: 22–27
21	Acts 25: 1–12
22	Acts 25: 13–27
23	Acts 26: 1–23
24	Psalm 17
25	Acts 26: 24–32
26	Acts 27: 1–12
27	Acts 27: 13–26
28	Acts 27: 27–44
29	Acts 28: 1–16
30	Acts 28:17–31
31	Psalm 119: 49–56

# BIBLE READING PLAN 2025

## SEPTEMBER

1	Numbers 6: 22–27
2	Numbers 9:15–23
3	Numbers 10:11–36
4	Numbers 11: 1–23
5	Numbers 11:24–35
6	Numbers 12: 1–16
7	Psalms 119: 57–64
8	Numbers 13: 1–3. 17–33
9	Numbers 14: 1–25
10	Numbers 14: 26–38
11	Numbers 14: 39–45
12	Numbers 17:16–26
13	Numbers 20: 1–13
14	Psalms 119: 65–72
15	Numbers 20: 22–29
16	Numbers 21: 4–9
17	Numbers 21: 21–35
18	Numbers 22: 1–20
19	Numbers 22:21–41
20	Numbers 23: 1–12
21	Psalms 20
22	Numbers 23:13–30
23	Numbers 24:1–25
24	Numbers 27:12–23
25	Luke 13: 18–21
26	Luke 13: 22–30
27	Luke 13: 31–35
28	Psalms 46
29	Luke 14: 1–6
30	Luke 14: 7–14

## OCTOBER

1	Luke 14: 15–24
2	Luke 14: 25–35
3	Luke 15: 1–10
4	Luke 15: 11–32
5	Psalms 104
6	Luke 16:1–13
7	Luke 16: 14–18
8	Luke 16: 19–31
9	Luke 17: 1–10
10	Luke 17: 11–19
11	Luke 17: 20–37
12	Psalms 5
13	Luke 18: 1–8
14	Luke 18: 9–17
15	Luke 18: 18–30
16	Ezekiel 1: 1–21
17	Ezekiel 1: 22–28
18	Ezekiel 2:1–3:3
19	Psalms 1
20	Ezekiel 3: 4–11
21	Ezekiel 3: 12–21
22	Ezekiel 3: 22–27
23	Ezekiel 7: 1–13.27
24	Ezekiel 8: 1–11
25	Ezekiel 8:12–18
26	Psalms 32
27	Ezekiel 11: 14–25
28	Ezekiel 12: 1–16
29	Ezekiel 16: 1–22
30	Ezekiel 17: 1–10
31	Ezekiel 17: 11–24

# BIBLE READING PLAN 2025

## NOVEMBER

1	Ezekiel 18: 1–3.20–32
2	Psalm 62
3	Ezekiel 22: 1–16
4	Ezekiel 24: 1–14
5	Ezekiel 24: 15–27
6	Ezekiel 33: 21–33
7	Ezekiel 34: 1–16
8	Ezekiel 34: 23–31
9	Psalm 69: 1–16
10	Ezekiel 36: 16–32
11	Ezekiel 37: 1–14
12	Ezekiel 37: 15–28
13	Ezekiel 40: 1–16
14	Ezekiel 42: 15 – 43: 12
15	Ezekiel 47: 1–12
16	Psalm 69: 17–37
17	1 Thessalonians 1: 1–10
18	1 Thessalonians 2: 1–12
19	1 Thessalonians 2: 13–20
20	1 Thessalonians 3: 1–13
21	1 Thessalonians 4: 1–12
22	1 Thessalonians 4: 13–18
23	Psalm 110
24	1 Thessalonians 5:1–11
25	1 Thessalonians 5: 12–28
26	2 Thessalonians 1: 1–12
27	2 Thessalonians 2: 1–12
28	2 Thessalonians 2: 13–17
29	2 Thessalonians 3:1–18
30	Psalm 24

## DECEMBER

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



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