

Called to be People of Hope

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LEADER: We gather as a community of faith trusting in God's promise of new life. During these uncertain times let us turn to our God who is our source of strength and love.

READER I:
A Reading from the Prophet Ezekiel (36:24-28)

I will draw you from the nations, gather you from exile and bring you home. I will wash you in fresh water, rid you from the filth of idols and make you clean again. I will make you a new heart, breathe new spirit into you. I will remove your heart of stone, give you back a heart of flesh. I will give you my own spirit to lead you in my ways, faithful to what I command. Then you will live in the land, the land I gave your ancestors. You will be my people and I will be your God.

RESPONSE: Isaiah 58:6-11

SIDE 1: Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

SIDE 2: Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

SIDE 1: Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

SIDE 2: Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and God will say, Here I am.

SIDE 1: If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.

SIDE 2: The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like

a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

READER II:
A Reading from *Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile* by Walter Brueggemann:

The world is perceived under the twin aspects of relinquishment and receiving. That perception of reality is based in an unshakeable theological conviction: God's powerful governance is displacing the present idolatrous order of public life and is generating a new order that befits God's will for the world. This theological conviction is not rooted in political observation, economic analysis, or cultural yearning. It is rooted decisively in the notion of who God is and what God wills.

(A moment of quiet reflection)

PRAYERS OF PETITION

LEADER: We pray for those in elected office and all who hold positions of authority that they promote justice and mercy for those whom they serve.

ALL: Christ our hope, hear our prayer.

LEADER: We pray for the generous deployment of our resources for those who are without health care and other necessities of life.

ALL: Christ our hope, hear our prayer.

LEADER: We pray for the strength to remain true to our convictions and our call to help bring about God's reign in our world today.

ALL: Christ our hope, hear our prayer.

CLOSING

ALL: It is our confidence in you, O God, that causes us to hope. May this hope give us courage and creativity for ministry, bringing us closer and closer to the realization of your reign. We ask this through Jesus, our companion and guide. Amen.



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