

February 2019



NEW BEGINNINGS E-BLAST



We Gift you with Lenten Resources

As we move to being a more nimble and responsive conference and associations, we are committed to building solid relationships based upon listening more (speaking less), digesting what is being said to us through verbal and non-verbal communications, and not making assumptions that "we" know what you need. You are the experts within your congregations and communities. We want you to tell us what you need so that we can respond as a Conference Leadership Team.

As part of our desire to meet your needs, we are aware that Lent is about to begin and wanted to offer you some resources that may (or may not) work within your context. Use what you like and throw away what doesn't work for you or your people.

Lastly, I've included a piece that Worship Ways will upload on the website in a day or two. I was invited to re-imagine Psalm 51 for Ash Wednesday from my lived reality. I suspect some of you will resonate with it as it may be similar to your own stories. I invite your feedback. I always want to hear from you. Feel free to email me, ilconfjusto@gmail.com or call (716) 989-9207 cell.

Rev. Justo González, II
Interim Conference Minister
Ministro de la Conferencia Interino

A Re-imagination of Psalm 51

Ash Wednesday Resource

By Rev. Justo González, II

¹ I've messed up again. Not that I want to keep getting things wrong and violating the core of my beliefs. I truly regret violating others and the pain that I have caused. Dios (God), I have this affliction called "Being Human." Ten misericordia de mi (Have mercy on me), Dios, I know that I don't deserve your faithful love! Yet, I am so grateful that you are Dios and my critics are not.

"Dios de Justicia, ten misericordia de nosotros." ("God of Justice, have mercy on us.")

² I'm being real, God. I'm not going to come up with reasons to rationalize the damage I've caused. I've screwed up and I will do it again. I only pray that you know the sincerity of my soul and my deep regret. I get it if you don't want to forgive me; I often don't forgive myself and then have an awful burden to carry around. Compassionate Yahweh, people like me need misericordia. HEAR me, SEE me, I plea. Wash me completely of my self-loathing and to cleanse me of mis violaciones (my violations).

"Dios de Justicia, ten misericordia de nosotros."

³ Liberate me from myself and my poor decisions. I have missed the mark! I need redeeming grace. My life is not always pretty. Indeed, it is a mess at times. Don Quixote stands with a mirror in front of me forcing me to recognize how I violate others and the wrong pathways I've traveled, saying, "Look at your life. Look at your mistakes. Own them." I own my flaws, violaciones and weaknesses. I am human, after all.

"Dios de Justicia, ten misericordia de nosotros."

⁴ I have wronged others. "Hhatah" (miss the mark) demands that I do the work of introspection. I have violated many by not recognizing or affirming their dignity. I've failed to acknowledge that these siblings are YOU; worthy of dignity and having their names uplifted and celebrated. YOU come in all genders and gender expressions, in all colors and cultures, and, in you, I celebrate diverse ways of being and engaging others. YOU speak a plethora of languages and eat foods from across the globe and it is all good. I've been complicit in much that dishonors you and my global siblings. You have the right to chastise me for what I've done and failed to do.

"Dios de Justicia, ten misericordia de nosotros."

⁵ I've inherited guilt. I carry tons of it with me. I don't want it or need it but it was gifted to me at birth. How can I shed shame, blame and guilt that do not serve me well? ⁶ You seek truth, I am a train wreck. Yet, as I own my stuff, I experience your embrace. You love me. Your wisdom comes through as you wrap me in love and journey with me. ⁷ Purificame (Purify me), use hyssop to sprinkle the healing, wholeness and transformative grace that I need. L á vame (wash me) and it is over. I am healed, transformed and full of grace.

"Dios de Justicia, ten misericordia de nosotros."

⁸ Let joy and celebration flow within and through me once again. I have been crushed, yet, within my bones I experience rejoicing. It will be normative once again. I am thrilled. ⁹ Thank you, gracias, merci, grazie, Danke dir, for not focusing on my human frailty and all that I get wrong. Help me to move away from shame, blame and guilt to acceptance of your warm embrace of all of me. ¹⁰ Dios, create a clean corazón (heart) within me. Ayudame (Help me), fill me with your Spirit. Plant seeds of faithfulness within me and let them grow roots in my heart that are manifested in relationships of mutuality with all those I engage.

"Dios de Justicia, ten misericordia de nosotros."

¹¹ The voices loudly demand that you throw away the key and deny me grace, mercy and compassion. They shout that I have "no right" to experience YOU or be in YOUR Santa Presencia (Holy Presence). I beg that you ignore them and accept my plea for a loving compassionate response. I know I've really messed up and am unworthy. But YOU, HOLY ONE, embrace those who are not travelling the road that others travel. You wrap around the flawed; you call us humans. We are your children.

"Dios de Justicia, ten misericordia de nosotros."

¹² Help me experience the Holy Ghost movement once again even in the midst of guilt and self-loathing. I am not perfect but I am honest and in need of revival within my life. ¹³ I will soak in your compassion and mercy and will model that love and compassion to others. They will experience YOUR loving openness to the flawed and they will know that coming home is a safe and sacred place of encountering YOU again.

"Dios de Justicia, ten misericordia de nosotros."

¹⁴ Deliver us from those whose starting place is one of condemnation; save us from the righteous who think they have exclusive rights to you. They believe that they can deny our dignity and your compassionate love. I will sing a Gospel of love and extravagant welcome I received so others experience YOU as the lover of all lives. ¹⁵ In the midst of everything, I dare to open my mouth and uplift, celebrate and proclaim that YOU are the God who welcomes and embraces the flawed. My life and mouth praise you even when I don't use words. ¹⁶ We do not need sacrifices to wipe away guilt, shame and blame. ¹⁷ You simply desire that we come as we are; flawed human beings who love you and are trying to live faithful lives. Our brokenness is our sacrifice. Our naming our flaws is our part of the healing.

"Dios de Justicia, ten misericordia de nosotros."

¹⁸ Honor the sincerity of our souls; uplift us. Help us to be the instruments of peace and justice who open doors to community. ¹⁹ Owning our stuff, the sincerity of our souls and engagement with YOU and OUR SIBLINGS are the hinges of right relations. Our lives, our truth telling and engagement are the burnt offerings and they are complete.

"Dios de Justicia, oye nuestra oración." (God of Justice, hear our prayer)

Lenten Resources That Inspire Meaning

Compiled by Rev. Nicole Havelka, Tri-Conference Ministries

The United Church of Christ has yet another exciting devotional from the Still Speaking Writers group, "[Take Nothing with You](#)." Orders begin shipping on Feb. 20. Don't delay, these resources usually sell out! At only \$18.50 for a 5-pack, you'll want to buy them for your whole congregation. The UCC also features a new downloadable Lent devotional "[Young Voices: Stepping Out Into the Wilderness](#)," a devotional written entirely by young people. Promote your church by giving "[Pray. Fast. Give.](#)" UCC Lenten Yard Signs to members of your congregation to post in their yards to promote the practices of Lent and your church! Check out the full collection of resources (devotionals, books, Bible studies, etc.) for Lent and Easter available from [UCC Resources](#).

Lent and Easter Resources from Global Ministries: Lent and Easter is a time where we can journey with global partners and mission co-workers. Global Ministries offers [liturgical resources, bible studies, and reflections](#) for a global Christian perspective.

Podcast For a Just World Lenten Series: Podcast For a Just World is back March 5th! Together with Sacred Conversations To End Racism, will be bringing you 6 weeks of meaningful and important conversations for the Lenten Season. Stay posted on the [Facebook page](#) and subscribe to PFJW at [SoundCloud](#).

Looking to offer inspired worship? Dr. Marcia McFee of the Worship Design Studio is once again offering fully scripted, affordable Lenten worship resources such as "[Busy: Reconnecting with an Unhurried God](#)". The UCC offers its free online [Worship Ways](#) resources for Lent and every season, [RevGalBlogPals](#) writes inspiring prayers and reflections on both the Revised Common and Narrative lectionaries. [Rev. Rachel Hackenberg](#) also writes weekly lectionary reflections on her blog.

For Sunday School and midweek programs for all ages, check out Illustrated Children's Ministry's [7 Last Words](#) coloring posters, pages, and devotional guide. The Salt Project brought together scripture and the poetry of beloved poet Mary Oliver in "[The Poetry of Lent](#)" devotional.

Looking for more things to share during Lent on social media? Our Roman Catholic sisters and brothers at Busted Halo developed shareable videos [Lent in 3 minutes](#), [Ash Wednesday and Lent in 2 minutes](#), and [Holy Week in 2 minutes](#). These videos could also become a simple Lenten educational series for people new to the church and

Christianity!

As always, the UCC offers its free [Daily Devotional](#) that you can receive via email or see posted on the [UCC's Facebook page](#) and [Twitter feed](#).

Lent



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