

Selah



Selah ~ Psalms of Ascent
Rev. Dr. Charlene Han Powell
March 7, 2021

Selah

One simple refrain echoes throughout the Psalms, *Selah*. An invitation for God's people to pause, to exalt, and to lift up all that we are to God. In response to joy and blessing, *Selah*. In the face of suffering and sorrow, *Selah*. In the midst of judgment and salvation, *Selah*.

This Lent we pursue the sacred call to pause before God. We dwell with the words of the psalmist giving voice to the full range of our experience and with Christ, our guide and example for living authentically before God in the breadth and depth of our humanity.

Gather

Together pray:

Oh Lord, let my soul rise up to meet you
as the day rises to meet the sun.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Dwell

1. Psalms 103 and 104 are songs of soaring thanksgiving. For what is the psalmist thankful in them?
2. As you listen to the psalmist's words, which particular notes of thanksgiving resound in you today?
3. Psalms 103 and 104 both share a formula of self-exhortation: "Bless the Lord, O my soul...." Why might the psalmist have used this form of exhortation? Why might we need to be exhorted to thanksgiving?

Listen ~ Lectio Divina

Psalm 103:1–5 (NRSV)

- ¹ Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.
- ² Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and do not forget all his benefits—
- ³ who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
- ⁴ who redeems your life from the Pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
- ⁵ who satisfies you with good as long as you live
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Respond in Prayer

Flowing from your pausing and listening in Lectio, what is the Spirit stirring in you to pray about in silence or aloud? Bring this authentically to God.

Respond in Service

Review together the various ways to serve our communities in collaboration with our Mission Partners. (Refer to the Serving in Community During Lent resource found at the end of this document.) Discuss where God might be leading you, individually or as a Community Group, to serve this season.

Selah



Selah ~ Psalms of Petition

Michelle Vecchio-Lyzenga, Minister for Christian Formation

February 28, 2021

Selah

One simple refrain echoes throughout the Psalms, *Selah*. An invitation for God's people to pause, to exalt, and to lift up all that we are to God. In response to joy and blessing, *Selah*. In the face of suffering and sorrow, *Selah*. In the midst of judgment and salvation, *Selah*.

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Gather

Together pray:

How long, Lord?

How long must we cry out?

Are you listening? Do you hear us? See us?

You do? You do. Amen.

Dwell

1. Psalm 88 is an angry prayer directed at a God who remains seemingly silent, distant. When, if ever, have you prayed angry prayers? What brought you to those prayers? Or, perhaps, what prevented you from voicing them? What did you discover about God, yourself through the process?
2. We all have bed-bearers in our life; people who pick us up and bring us to the feet of Jesus when we cannot get there ourselves, like the paralytic's friends in Luke 5:17–26. Share about one person who has been a bed-bearer for you.

Listen ~ Lectio Divina

Psalm 88:1–4 (NRSV)

1 O Lord, God of my salvation,
when, at night, I cry out in your presence,
2 let my prayer come before you;
incline your ear to my cry.

3 For my soul is full of troubles,
and my life draws near to Sheol.

4 I am counted among those who go down to the Pit;
I am like those who have no help....

Respond in Prayer

Flowing from your pausing and listening in Lectio, what is the Spirit stirring in you to pray about in silence or aloud? Bring this authentically to God.

Respond in Service

Review together the various ways to serve our communities in collaboration with our Mission Partners. (Refer to the Serving in Community During Lent resource found at the end of this document.) Discuss where God might be leading you, individually or as a Community Group, to serve this season.

Selah



Selah ~ Psalms of Witness
Rev. Dr. Charlene Han Powell
February 21, 2021

Selah

One simple refrain echoes throughout the Psalms, *Selah*. An invitation for God's people to pause, to exalt, and to lift up all that we are to God. In response to joy and blessing, *Selah*. In the face of suffering and sorrow, *Selah*. In the midst of judgment and salvation, *Selah*.

This Lent we pursue the sacred call to pause before God. We dwell with the words of the psalmist giving voice to the full range of our experience and with Christ, our guide and example for living authentically before God in the breadth and depth of our humanity

Gather

During your first gathering of this Lenten season, take time to review and discuss the Community Group Covenant so that all can affirm how we will engage with and care for one another. The CG Covenant is found at the end of this document.

Dwell

Together pray:

Self-giving God...you are the God who unleashes well-being into the world.

May we see; may we love; may we follow.

Amen

1. Are you a "journey" or a "destination" focused person? Why do you think that is the case?
2. What could pausing in the midst of your journey look like? What practices or mindsets can you embrace this Lent to remind you to pause?

Listen ~ Lectio Divina

Psalm 139 (NRSV) 1, 13–18

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.
How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
I come to the end—I am still with you.

Respond in Prayer

Flowing from this place of pause and listening to God and one another, what is the Spirit stirring in your heart to pray in silence or aloud...for one another, our communities, our church, our Mission Partner, our world. Bring these authentically to God.

Respond in Service

In the coming week, review the many ways to serve our communities in collaboration with our Mission Partners, including praying weekly for a Mission Partner. Consider spending time at your next Community Group gathering to discuss how your CG might respond to where God might be leading you, individually or as a community. Refer to the Serving in Community During Lent resource found at the end of this document.



COMMUNITY GROUP COVENANT-LENT 2021

As we begin this Lenten community group experience, we do so with the desire to pause before God to listen to and deepen our life with God and one another.

Values

We hold the following values as essential to our life together during Lent:

Curiosity | Yes And

We agree to be open to engaging others' perspectives through a posture of curiosity. "Yes And" allows us to be "both/and" rather than "either/or" and keeps us inclusive and compassionate toward everything. Our goal is to learn with and from each other.

Attentive Listening | To One Another, and To God

We agree to respect and demonstrate loving care for one another by practicing attentive listening by paying full attention to the one speaking, without interruption, talking over others, and refraining from giving advice. The practice of Lectio Divina graces each of us with the opportunity to share what God is revealing. During this time of sharing, we agree to refrain from cross-talk or comment, free to just be present to one another.

Participation | Engaging with Others

We agree to be mutual stewards of the life of our group, prioritizing our weekly gatherings and inviting every group members' participation, as they feel comfortable. We will be aware of group participation dynamics. If I am someone who tends to be a listener in group settings, I will consider leaning in to share my insights, perspectives, or questions. If I am someone who tends to talk a lot, I will consider practicing moderation to create space and time for others.

Care | "OOPS" and "OUCH"

We agree, in all of our conversations, to assume positive intent in others while also acknowledging potentially negative impact. Anyone can say "ouch" if hurt or offended to stop the process from continuing and explore what's happening and why. Anyone can say "oops" to acknowledge their assumptions and/or to respond to another's "ouch."

Confidentiality | Creating Safe Space

We commit to hold in confidence the personal stories, concerns, and reflections, and requests for prayer shared in our community. Our bond of trust is essential to creating space for God's good work in each of us to take place.

Norms

We agree to meet on _____ (day of week) from _____ (am/pm) to _____ (am/pm) for six weeks, beginning February ____ and concluding March/April ____ .

We agree to discuss how our group can serve during Lent through

- Praying for our Mission Partners
- Digital Day of Service or other opportunities provided on Serving in Community During Lent

We agree to revisit our group covenant mid-way through our six weeks together to assess how we are doing.



Serving In Community During Lent

No matter where we are in our faith journey, we are partners with God in God's mission in the world. A tangible step in living into this call is right at our doorstep. CGs are invited to explore and commit to joining together in safely serving others in our community during this season of Lent.

[View the video Serving in Community - Lent 2021](#)

First Pres Street Meal

Our Street Meal program is running with a small number of volunteers providing our guests a hot meal and a bagged lunch to-go along with warm clothing, sleeping bags, ponchos, and much needed socks.

Ways to serve:

- Create [Hospitality Kits](#)
- Drop off warm clothing, ponchos, sleeping bags, socks at our campus Reception area

Do Justice – [Digital Day of Service with Project Peace](#)

Project Peace has re-imagined our days of service, allowing us to continue to support our community, our partners, and the servants that serve our partners. All of these links will show you the various ways you can participate in making a difference in our community.

Ways you can engage and take action:

- [volunteer from home](#)
- [volunteer in person](#)
- [donate goods](#)
- [shop for a cause](#)
- [donate money](#)

Praying for our Mission Partners

A powerful and practical way to serve and support our Mission Partners is to commit to praying for their work and the people they serve. We are co-laborers in God's mission with 29 organizations locally and internationally.

[Meet our partners](#), and learn about their ministries and the communities they serve. The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically increased the challenges they face. During each of the 40 days of Lent, devote time to praying for these friends in ministry, perhaps selecting a new partner each day!

Visit www.fpcberkeley.org/lent-2021-serving/ for complete details on these and other ways to serve our community and Mission Partners