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The Evangelical Covenant Church

MAKE & DEEPEN DISCIPLES

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Healing BLESS Communities

2025 WEEK OF PRAYER



Initiate. Create. Proclaim.

Dear Beloved Community,

Blessings to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. In these times of great trial and tribulation, we come together to seek healing for our beloved community. In this year's Week of Prayer, we focus on healing and restoration.

I am reminded of the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19, NRSV).

Love is the foundation of our ministry. We are called to embody God's love, grace, and peace in every interaction. Let us be present for one another, offering a listening ear and a compassionate heart. In the quiet moments of solitude, may we find strength and renewal, affirming that God's love is ever-present and unchanging.

Encouragement is vital as we navigate challenging times. The prophet Isaiah reassures us: "Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you" (54:10, NIV). Let these words be a source of comfort and hope, reminding us that God's covenant of peace is steadfast, even when the world around us is in turmoil.

Service to one another is a powerful expression of our faith. Let us reach out to those in need, offering practical help and spiritual support. By serving others we become vessels of God's grace, bringing light into the darkest of situations.

Solitude and spiritual practices are essential for personal and communal healing. In moments of quiet reflection, let us affirm God's promises and meditate on God's Word. Through prayer and contemplation, we can find peace and clarity, allowing us to be more effective in our ministry to others.

May the peace of Christ, which surpasses all understanding, guard our hearts and minds. Together, let us build a community rooted in love, grace, and peace, trusting in God's unfailing love to guide us through these difficult times.

In Christ's love and service,

IEISHA D. HAWLEY
DIRECTOR OF EVANGELISM WITH MAKE AND DEEPEN DISCIPLES, SERVE LOCALLY

2025 WEEK OF PRAYER — Authors

IEISHA HAWLEY is an ordained Covenant pastor and director of evangelism for the Evangelical Covenant Church. Leisha's extensive career in ministry and experience serving as pastor, chaplain, and coach have prepared her to work with regional conferences and local congregations throughout the Covenant.

NANCY SUGIKAWA is an ordained Covenant pastor and discipleship coach with the Pacific Northwest Conference, where she helps pastors and churches develop helpful and meaningful discipleship pathways. She is a graduate of Fuller Theological Seminary and has served with several Asian American ministries that mentor young pastors. She recently completed 19 years serving as associate pastor at Lighthouse Christian Church in Bellevue, Washington.

JUANA NESTA was born and raised in Los Angeles, California, a daughter of immigrants from Mexico. She made a first-time decision to follow Jesus as a university student. Juana and her husband, Fil, have planted three churches and served side-by-side as co-pastors throughout their 28 years of marriage. Juana also works in education and currently serves as the president of ALIPE (Asociación Latina de la Iglesia del Pacto Evangélico), serving Latino/a pastors of the Covenant.

TAMARA F. RAVELO'S roots are from the Quechan Indigenous Nation where she draws inspiration from her late grandmother, Denise Dugan, a boarding school survivor who encouraged her in prayer and healing work. Tamara's ministry blends Indigenous healing practices with preaching and teaching, creating transformative spaces for others. Tamara has an MBA, earned an MDiv from Yale, and an accredited diploma for ministry from Andover-Newton. She is an ordained Covenant minister and is a doctoral candidate at NAIITS, an Indigenous Learning Community, where she is exploring Indigenous healing in modern faith. She is wonderfully loved by her husband, Michael, and daughter, Stephanie.

CHRISTINA BURROWS is an ordained Covenant minister, president of the Association of Covenant Spiritual Directors, ICF-certified intercultural leadership coach, and former adjunct faculty member for North Park Theological Seminary. Originally from the UK, with Korean and British parents, Christina brings experience in global missions learning and development. Christina and her husband, Ted, live in sunny Sacramento, California, with their two teenage girls and their yellow labrador retriever, Friar Tuck.

DAY ONE — begin with prayer



by: *Leisha Hawley*

Blessed to Be a Blessing

“And I will bless you...and you will be a blessing” (GENESIS 12:2, NIV).

God’s promise to Abraham is not just about receiving blessings. It is also about being a conduit of blessings to others. In a world where communities are often fractured and hurting, we are called to be agents of healing and restoration.

As followers of Christ, we are blessed with the greatest gift of all—God’s love, grace, and salvation. But our blessings do not end with us. God blesses us so that we can be a blessing to others. Sharing our faith is not confined to grand events or extraordinary moments; it happens in the simplicity of everyday life. Whether it’s a kind word, an ear to listen, or an act of service, we reflect Christ’s love in the small and intentional ways we engage with those around us.

Evangelism can seem daunting, but Jesus calls us to start right where we are. We start in our homes, our neighborhoods, our communities. When we begin by praying for the people in our lives, God opens doors for us to bless them in tangible ways. Listening to their stories, eating meals together, and serving their needs builds trust and shows them the love of Christ long before we even speak Jesus’s name.

We are all part of God’s mission to make disciples. By sharing our faith in our daily lives, we play an essential role in that mission. God uses ordinary people to carry out an extraordinary plan of love and redemption. As you go through your day today, remember that every interaction is an opportunity to bless someone and point them toward Jesus.

PRAYER

Heavenly Creator, we come before you with hearts open to your grace and mercy. We thank you for the promise that you will bless us and make us a blessing to others. Today we lift our communities to you, asking for your healing touch to mend broken relationships, soothe wounded hearts, and restore hope. May our actions reflect your kindness and bring comfort to those who are suffering. Guide us to be peacemakers, bridge-builders, and sources of encouragement. Break down the barriers that divide us and help us to embrace one another with understanding and respect. Amen.

REACH YOUR NEIGHBOR

Take a moment to intentionally bless someone in your neighborhood or workplace. Start with prayer, listen to their needs, and find a simple way to serve or encourage them.

DAY TWO — listen with care



by: *Leisha Hawley*

Do You Hear What I Hear?

“Whoever has ears, let them hear” (MATTHEW 11:15, NIV).

Once upon a time in a small, bustling town, lived a young woman named Delores. Delores was known for her warm smile and kind heart, but what truly set her apart was her ability to listen with genuine care.

One chilly December evening, as Delores walked home from work, she noticed an elderly man sitting alone on a park bench. His eyes were fixed on the ground, and he seemed lost in thought. Delores felt a tug in her heart and decided to approach him.

“Good evening, sir,” she said softly. “Do you mind if I sit with you?”

The man looked up, surprised but grateful. “Of course, young lady. My name is Mr. Johnson.”

Delores introduced herself and sat down. She could sense that Mr. Johnson had a story to tell, so she simply listened. He began to speak about his late wife, Meredith, and how they used to visit this very park every evening. As he spoke, his voice trembled with emotion, and tears welled up in his eyes.

Delores listened intently, nodding and offering gentle words of encouragement. She did not interrupt or rush him. She gave him space to share his memories and feelings. Mr. Johnson talked about the love he and his wife shared, the challenges they faced, and the beautiful moments that lingered in his heart.

As the evening grew darker, Mr. Johnson’s voice grew steadier. He smiled through his tears and said, “Thank you, Delores. It’s been a long time since someone truly listened to me. You’ve given me a precious gift tonight.”

Delores smiled back, her heart full. “Sometimes, all we need is someone to listen,” she replied.

From that day on, Delores made a point to listen with care to everyone she met. She realized that listening was not just about hearing words; it was about understanding and connecting with others on a deeper level. In doing so, she brought more light and warmth into the world.

Do you hear what I hear? It is the sound of hearts opening, stories being shared, and connections being made—through the simple act of listening with care. In the Scripture for today, we are reminded that true listening goes beyond hearing; it involves understanding and responding with empathy. As we focus on healing for our communities, let us commit to listening deeply to the needs and pains of those around us.

PRAYER

Gracious God, we thank you for the gift of listening and the power it holds to bring healing and comfort. We ask for your guidance as we strive to listen with care to those in our communities who are hurting and in need. Lord, teach us to be present in our interactions, to hear beyond the words spoken, and to respond with compassion and love. Help us to create safe spaces where people feel valued and understood. We pray for those who feel unheard and overlooked. May they find solace in knowing that you hear their cries. Amen.

REACH YOUR NEIGHBOR

Today, focus on active listening in your conversations. Join community forums to hear stories. Connect with support networks to offer emotional and practical support. Let empathy shine through your actions.



DAY THREE — eat together



by: *Leisha Hawley*

Welcoming Jesus

“When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.’ So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly” (LUKE 19:5-6, NIV).

In today’s Scripture, we see a beautiful example of Jesus’s willingness to reach out to those who are overlooked or despised. Zacchaeus, a tax collector, was eager to see Jesus but likely never expected such a personal encounter. Jesus invites himself to stay at Zacchaeus’s house, which was a profound act of acceptance and love. Zacchaeus’s immediate and joyful response demonstrates the transformative power of Jesus’s presence.

Zacchaeus’s story illustrates the power of invitation and acceptance. Just as Jesus invited Zacchaeus into a moment of connection and transformation, we too can extend invitations that bring warmth and welcome to others. Let us embrace the spirit of hospitality and openness, knowing that our genuine care and presence can make a profound difference in the lives of others. Let this be a reminder that every act of kindness and every invitation to connect can create moments of joy and transformation.

Zacchaeus’s encounter with Jesus transformed his life, leading to his repentance and restitution. We are reminded of the importance of welcoming Jesus into our lives and homes. When we open our hearts to Jesus, we experience his love and grace in profound ways. Let us focus on inviting Jesus into our daily lives and extending that same welcome to others.

PRAYER

Dear Jesus, we thank you for your love and acceptance, which you so freely offer to all. Help us to open our hearts to you, inviting you into every aspect of our daily lives. Teach us to extend this same welcome to others, especially those who feel marginalized or overlooked. May our homes be places of hospitality and grace, where your love is evident in our actions. We pray for our communities, that they may be filled with your presence and peace. Use us as instruments of your love, bringing healing and hope to those around us. Let our lives reflect your grace as we welcome you and others with open hearts. Amen.

REACH YOUR NEIGHBOR

This week, invite someone to share a meal with you or organize a community potluck. Use mealtime to listen and share stories, fostering mutual understanding. Spend time in prayer, inviting Jesus into your heart and home. Show hospitality to those who feel isolated, and be fully present in your interactions, showing genuine care.

DAY FOUR — serve in love



by: Nancy Sugikawa

Pray for a Heart to Serve & Be Served

“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)” (JOHN 4:7-9 NRSV).

Many people today do not have a positive view of Christians or know who Jesus really is, but they understand kindness and generosity. As followers of Jesus Christ, we can point to a loving God by blessing and serving people in practical ways. Yet, for those who feel like outsiders, unseen, or rejected, simple acts of service may not be the blessing we think they are. We usually define personal needs in terms of material resources like food, education, and housing, but what is often at the heart of a person’s need is social, emotional, and spiritual.

In their book *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor*, authors Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert define poverty as “broken relationships that each person has with God, self, others, and the rest of creation.” It is therefore the ministry of reconciliation, the healing of one’s relationships, that brings true blessing to the whole person. This is the healing and loving service that Jesus offers the Samaritan woman he encounters in John 4.

In the NRSV, verse 9 includes the annotation “Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans,” as if to remind readers of the longstanding condemnation and rejection of Samaritans by their Jewish ancestors. Jesus invites conversation with her, asks her for help, and affirms that she has something of value to offer. With one request Jesus reverses the power dynamic between a holy Jewish rabbi and a sinful Samaritan woman and places himself at her mercy.

For many of us it is easier to give than to receive. To ask for help is to admit that we are not self-sufficient and to acknowledge our limitations, making ourselves

vulnerable to rejection and disappointment. But it is precisely when we ask for help that we affirm the strength and autonomy of the one to whom we make our request. We invite them to be our benefactor and open the door to healing and reconciliation.

Our church was once invited to visit the local detention center and meet with six Hispanic women. They were imprisoned because they did not have the right paperwork to live in this country. A few Spanish-speaking volunteers came along to translate for us. When I asked what we could do to serve these women, the friend who organized the visit said, “Just look them in the eyes, smile, and say their name. Remind them that their identity is not their prisoner number or the crime they are accused of committing. Invite them to share their story and show them that you care. Finally, thank them for sharing their time and experiences with you.”

When someone shares their story with us—their pain, their hopes, and especially their regrets—they entrust us with a precious gift. They become the one serving instead of being served. We become the ones being honored instead of doing the honoring. And we experience God’s healing mercy together.

PRAYER

Lord God, show us how to serve in love by embodying the message of reconciliation you have entrusted to us. Give us eyes to see those who feel unseen and undervalued. Help us bless them by offering tangible help in times of need and by asking for help in our times of need. In doing so, may your gracious love, kindness, and healing be experienced by us all. Amen.

REACH YOUR NEIGHBOR

How might the kindness and generosity of Jesus be revealed through us as we serve those who don’t look like us, vote like us, listen to the same music, or worship the same God we do? How might we embody the deeper ministry of reconciliation when we humbly ask for their help?

DAY FIVE — share your story



by: Juana Nesta

Restored to Restore

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free” (LUKE 4:18, NRSV).

When I was growing up in South Central Los Angeles, my grandfather would collect broken tiles into a large pile in the backyard. One day I asked, “Why do you collect so many tiles, *abuelito* (grandfather)?” He said, “*De lo roto de la vida hay belleza y propósito*,” which means “From the brokenness of life there is beauty and purpose.” Then he showed me this wonderful mosaic artwork he had made from the broken tiles he’d collected. From a distance it looked like a complete piece of art, but as you got closer you could see the brokenness of the tiles and how they came together. My prayer is that we can step back and see the bigger picture that God is trying to create through each of our stories and brokenness. In our brokenness there is beauty and purpose.

I see my own story intersect with Scripture in many ways. Sharing these stories can be a source of encouragement for others. In Luke 3-4, God affirms Jesus as a beloved child before Jesus is tempted and tried in the desert. I remember when I first heard that God loved me, no matter what I had done, and that his love was unconditional. It changed my life.

In today’s passage, Jesus is ready to receive his call and purpose; he is centered on being loved by his Father. This became an anchor for Jesus. My mother, whom I lost to cancer 15 years ago, was that anchor for me. We shared a special bond, and I knew how much she loved me. I was able to face tough times because I knew she was ready to offer words that would affirm me when I was down. My hope is that we can all be centered in the love of God so that we can be bold as we share our call and purpose.

Earlier in today’s passage, Luke declares, “Jesus, in the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee” (4:14). Then in verse 18 we see him say, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me.” Luke mentions the presence of the Holy Spirit being with Jesus on several occasions, including Jesus’s baptism and in the desert facing temptation by Satan. In the Old Testament, anointing of the Spirit was for people on an important assignment from God, such as the kings and prophets. Jesus’s mission includes bringing good news to the poor and announcing release to captives. To complete this mission Jesus needed the help of the Holy Spirit. I am so grateful that God has given everyone who receives Jesus the gift of the Holy Spirit as our guide and as we share our stories with people.

PRAYER

Dear God, as we move toward being reconciled with you, I pray that you help me to be your hands and feet to share my stories so that others may be reconciled with you. Remind me that I am unconditionally loved by you to be a part of your mosaic masterpiece. Give me the boldness to share my story so others can be reconciled to you. Amen.

REACH YOUR NEIGHBOR

Identify some of the stories of God’s presence in your life. Be attentive to the Holy Spirit and to opportunities to share one of these stories with someone.

DAY SIX—bless in living color



by: *Tamara Ravelo*

Be Encouraged: The Lord Is with You!

“News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.” (ACTS 11:22-23, NIV).

If you have lived this life for any good length, you have come to know that our journey is filled with ups and downs. At times, the road is long, windy, and weighty with what seems like challenge after challenge. You wonder, “Am I making a difference at all?” “Do my efforts, prayers, and acts of service matter?” In these instances, exhaustion comes easily, tiredness appears as a traveling companion, and hope, for some, hangs in the balance. Whew. My spirit hears you, friend, and I want to encourage you with this comforting truth: The Lord is always with us. It does matter and you matter.

Acts 11:19-26 serves as a wonderful reminder of hope and encouragement. The early believers faced discrimination, intimidation, harassment, sexism, lack of belonging, and everything else you can imagine. For some, their physical life was on the line. Yet in the face of these challenges, they continued to be faithful in sharing of the goodness of God by way of our resurrected Lord. What began as a small gathering of believers evolved into a thriving community, all because they chose to let their light shine even when it was tough. As they kept doing their work, many would come to know the way of Jesus. The key here is that we must not give up. As long as we have the breath of life, there is hope. God is hope, and God is with us.

Today we are still being called to the work that began with the early church: letting our light shine brightly in a challenging world. Like those early believers, we will face obstacles as we live out our witness. However, these very challenges

present opportunities to demonstrate God’s love and grace. Our mission is to stand firm and share joy, compassion, and hope with those around us. By doing so, we continue a legacy of faith that is rooted in resilience and unwavering trust in God’s purpose and plan that began a long time ago. Every act of kindness, every word of encouragement extends an invitation for others to experience God.

So when you feel like what you are doing doesn’t matter or it feels thankless, remember that you are part of a larger purpose. You are planting seeds of faith and hope in others’ lives, allowing them to encounter God’s love through you. Trust that your efforts, no matter how small they may seem, are not in vain. The early believers’ steadfastness in their faith brought many to salvation and spread the message of God’s love. May we all find encouragement in knowing that the Lord walks with us each day, lighting our path and filling our hearts with faith, hope, and love. Keep shining for the Lord is with you!

PRAYER

Lord, fill us with the courage to shine your light so that others may see and know your love. Empower us to share the good news of your grace wherever we go. Amen.

REACH YOUR NEIGHBOR

Let us ask ourselves, what small steps can I take today to let my light shine? How can I continue to bring joy and hope into the world, even when I face challenges? Trust that God will guide you every step of the way and empower you to be a light in this ever-changing world.



DAY SEVEN — bless in living color



by: Christina Burrows

Joining in Prayer to BLESS in Living Color

“Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him, but they doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age’” (MATTHEW 28:16-20, NSRV).

After the crucifixion and resurrection, the disciples were reeling. The Roman authorities had brutally killed their beloved Lord, but then several of them had experienced the joy of seeing him again, risen from the dead. What were they supposed to do now? Jesus gathered them together for a final time on a mountain in Galilee. This is how he opened the Great Commission: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (v. 18, NRSV). This is the reason why Jesus can commission his disciples in the way that he does. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, he can commission his disciples to live into the new era, the reign of God here on earth. God’s kingdom is a reign of shalom, God’s very best. It is a kingdom of reconciliation; we are reconciled to God, we experience reconciliation and wholeness within ourselves, we are reconciled with those around us, and we are reconciled with creation that God has called us to steward.

With the knowledge that Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, he commissioned his disciples. And now 2,000 years later, as his disciples we too receive his commission. All nations, all peoples, all ethnicities. This is a call to lead those outside our cultural circle into the kingdom of God;

a call to pray for and to proclaim the reign of God in word and deed across boundaries of difference. This commission echoes God’s promise to Abraham, that “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3, NRSV).

In what way is God calling us to bless others by making disciples of Jesus? Sometimes we think the call to relocate for the sake of the gospel is just for elite Christians with a special calling. But what if God is calling us to do just that? If you think God might be calling you to respond to the Great Commission by relocating to a different culture or country, talk to your pastor or someone from Serve Globally. Those of us who are not called to relocate can still partner with the global church through prayer, using the Serve Globally prayer calendar each day. We can learn by signing up for newsletters from Serve Globally personnel or participating in a learning or serving journey to another part of the world. We can give, actively seeking to create wealth to invest in global ministries.

Wherever we live, there are people in our communities who are different from us. God is also calling us to build healing communities right where we live by seeking to bless those around us in our schools, neighborhoods, and workplaces. May the Holy Spirit open our eyes to the bridges he wants us to build. Let us pray and bless others in the name of Jesus wherever there are differences of race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, ability, generation, gender, class, and beyond.

PRAYER

Lord, as you sent Abram to be a blessing to the nations, now you send us, in the name of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thank you that we can join in your mission as mission friends to bring all things in heaven and earth into unity under Christ, reconciling them through the blood of your cross. May your kingdom come, may your will be done, on earth, as in heaven. Amen.

REACH YOUR NEIGHBOR

Prayer is central to our response to the Great Commission. We begin with prayer and continue with prayer. Let us join with Jesus, Lord of heaven and earth, as he pursues his people with his relentless love.

