God, what do You want to do through me?





14 Day Devotional Guide

Purpose

Jubilee Devotional Guide

As we enter the next 14 days in devotion together through our Jubilee campaign, we are individually praying and collectively responding. Because we all have unique life circumstances and situations, we will have varying financial offerings to give. But every one of us is valuable in this journey to Jubilee, and it requires every single member to participate for us to respond fully to God's call. Each of us has something to offer and no one person is more valued than another. You have purpose, and you are important to this campaign.

This devotional guide is a reminder that the Jubilee campaign is not a fundraiser for the church. This is a spiritual journey together, listening to God's response as together we pray:

God, what do You want to do through me?

Each day, over the next 14 days, I hope you will pray through these devotionals, written by pastors, staff and laity of our church. Their writings are designed to share support as you listen with open-ness, intention and discernment for God's call. In this experience, I pray you find:

God knows your hesitations and your hopes.

God knows your dreams and duties.

God knows your plans and your purpose.

God knows you,

and needs you to be the hands and feet of Christ in this world.

You have a part in this body of Christ, and this is the time to pray over how you are being called to be a part of this church for its future growth. No one can answer that question for you, only you, in conversation with your Creator.

And so as you pray through this devotional guide these two weeks, I hope you will feel known, loved and needed.

I pray that you experience God's presence in your intention and discernment.

I pray that as we collectively respond, we will be free to grow in the future of God's steadfast love!

Remember - you are a blessing,
Pastor Alex

Freedom

And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family. - Leviticus 25:10

Freedom runs as a theme through the Biblical story. God has freedom to create good, Adam and Eve use their freedom to obey and disobey God, the Hebrews receive freedom out of Egyptian slavery, the cross offers freedom from our sins,

and the resurrection provides freedom from death's sting.

In Leviticus 25, the Year of Jubilee is one more example of God's will for us to live in freedom. During this fiftieth year, freedom from work was given as the crops were not harvested, freedom from slavery was granted as the indentured were returned to their families, freedom from the cycle of debt ended as generational land was returned. The freedom God offers in Jubilee is new life providing for generations ahead, so the cycle of indebtedness does not continue. What a beautiful glimpse the Year of Jubilee offers of freedom's power!

And yet, as the saying goes - freedom isn't free.

The nature of freedom means we have a privilege of choice.

Choices to disobey God's wisdom or to accept an offer of redemption.

Choices to continue a cycle of debt or to release.

Choices to provide for generations ahead or to focus on the worries of today.

Our choice to enter into this debt reduction campaign is to follow God's will for our church's life to be free - to live in the redemptive power of resurrected life. This is a choice to be released from the burden debt places on our current budget and the choice to grow in new ministries to reach future generations. As you read and reflect on this devotional book, the choice is yours of how you will respond.

I pray it will be a choice leading this church to freedom of new life.

What choices does God make in the Bible to offer us freedom?

How does your freedom impact your choices?

What freedom has God offered you?

Let us pray:

Thank you God for your continual work for our freedom. May we never take our choices for granted and remain forever grateful for your sacrificial choices. Amen.

by Rev. Alexandra Robinson

Wisdom

Bring the full tenth into the storehouse so that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this way," says the Lord of Hosts.
"See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure. - Malachi 3:10

As wise believers we know that tithing and giving are what God calls us to do. We do not give to get something in return but rather as an act of obedience. Our purpose is and should always be to fulfill Gods calling for the Kingdom. However, in this season of Jubilee for FMUMC, as we generously give above and beyond to become debt free, this Scripture promises us that God will multiply our offering and open the floodgates of Heaven and pour out without measure.

How is this possible?

It is my belief that as we are obedient, God brings unexpected income from places that we may not be able to see and can also multiply our offering miraculously beyond what we can comprehend or understand. Imagine the potential we will have for this community with the financial freedom our obedience and generosity will bring.

What does it mean to you to be a wise believer?

How do obedience and faith go hand in hand?

Do you believe that God can do miracles though our faithful and generous giving in our season of Jubilee?

Let us pray

Dear Lord, help me to be wise in my beliefs, with an assurance of your abundant nature.

May my obedience result in the miracles of your abundance.

Amen.

by Marci Reed

Abundance

...give and it will be given to you.

A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.

- Luke 6:38



Luke sets this verse within the Sermon on the Plain, which is Luke's version of the Gospel of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount. Jesus teaches the people ways of acting and living. In the language of this verse on giving, listeners would imagine a scene in a marketplace, buying and selling grain. In Jesus' time, a buyer would fold up the front edge of his/her garment to hold grain like a basket. This verse suggests that the buyer receives "a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over..." meaning more grain than the buyer can fit into his/her garment. It provides the image of overflowing generosity returned to one who gives.

Now imagine this provides a metaphor for God's grace, mercy, and abundant love and life poured out in overflowing amounts. Generosity like this offers a framework for our mindset of giving and receiving in God's economy, not our own.

How are you grateful for God's overflowing grace, mercy, love, and life?
How does your view of generosity compare to God's view of generosity?
We are called to give in and of our lives.
How do you feel called to give of yourself today?

Let us pray:

God of All Grace, We are so grateful for the ways you show up and remind us of your generosity in our lives. Grant us space to imagine how you call us to give, considering your framework is more expansive than we can ever envision.

Hold us within this expansiveness, enfolding us in the warmth of your grace.

Amen.

by Rev. Meredith Scruggs

Growth

You will be enriched in every way for your generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us, for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but overflows with many thanksgivings to God. - 2 Corinthians 9:11-12

On our first visit 21 years ago Judy and I received our first sample of the warm welcoming hospitality that has always been hallmarks of this congregation. As we departed that first Sunday, Gary Kitchens, who was already in his car, got out to say that he hoped to "see you next week." A few weeks later we made the commitment to join the Church. In our initial meeting, Pastor Matt asked why we were there. We responded that we had a desire for a deeper study of the Bible. As was Pastor Matt's way, he said "I have just the thing for you," and we were asked to facilitate a Disciple One class. Over time we were enriched with several long-term and short-term classes and studies, often as part of the Sunday School programs.

In addition to the religious instruction and growth this Church has offered us we have enjoyed a generous history of missionary work to the community and those in need. Over time we were honored to take on other responsibilities in support of the Church such as filling vacancies on various committees. All of that and much more is paid for by the operating budget which is funded by tithes and other offerings. However, at least in this church, capital expenses such as interest on loans for the buildings and other major purchases are paid out of periodic capital campaigns such as we all are now being asked for contributions. Judy and I feel this is really another blessing; one where a

contribution can help ensure the church will still be here for those who come behind

Those that will need this Church as we did and do.

How have the ministries of this church impacted your life?
How do you hope the ministries of this church will impact future generations?

Let us pray

Dear Lord, I give you thanks for this congregation - for the ways it has encouraged, challenged and blessed me. May my offering be a blessing to all those who need this church in the future. Amen.

Calling

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us. - Ephesians 3:20

Are the church goals for FMUMC's Jubilee campaign too high?

What difference will my contribution make?

What about the household expenses we have?

I already give to the annual stewardship campaign, isn't that enough?

What is God asking of us?

The above are some of the questions and thoughts my wife Elaine and I went through when we were deciding how much we should contribute to the three year Jubilee campaign. However,

as we talked it became apparent that the last question above was really the question we needed to focus on....it wasn't about us, but our response to God's calling.

That is what Ephesians 3:20 is really talking about. "...according to His power that is at work within us." When we prayed about our commitment, and when we asked ourselves what is God asking us to do, then the answer became clear. I can say that the answer was larger than either of us originally thought. We came away with a feeling of "this feels good, a stretch, but happy that we can do our part in reducing the church debt, so FMUMC could continue to do what has been in our church DNA since we first joined in 1998." That is to be a welcoming church, and a church that reaches out in so many ways to others as the hands and feet of Christ.

For us, with reduced or eliminated debt interest expense, it is comforting to think that our outreach programs at FMUMC can continue to grow, continue to make an impact not only on the lives outside of our church, but within the walls of FMUMC as well.

How are you open to God's power, so you might respond to what God is calling you to do?

Let us pray

All Merciful God, Thank you for the blessings you have given to us.

Help us listen to you with open hearts on how our family can make a difference in the Jubilee campaign and the outreach of Flower Mound UMC. Amen.

For to this end we toil and struggle, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all people, especially those who believe. These are the things you must insist and teach. Let no one despise your youth but set the believers as an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. - 1 Timothy 4:11-12

In life I believe we are called to find the good and joy in everything. This does not mean there is no "struggle and toil" but with our belief and faith in God, we know there is good and we just have to open our eyes and be willing to see it.

I enjoy working with the youth of our church because they don't have adult filters on life yet.

They ask questions that most of us have thought at one point or another but haven't asked.

They observe the world around them in ways I might not think to notice.

Our youth are not afraid to ask: "If there is a God then why..." or "I'm not sure I believe there is a God." I'm always so honored to be a part of these searching questions and conversations because it shows our youth are thinking and questioning and searching for answers so that they can grow into confident and educated adults. What a privilege it is to help shape someone's faith and be trusted with the hard questions. My prayer is that you take advantage of the unique opportunity and spend time learning and growing alongside our youth. I may never be a Bible scholar but I believe that no matter our age or experience, we are called to shine brightly and let our lives be a reflection of God's love and grace so that others might find their way to Him.

In what ways do you actively engage with the youth in your church or community?

How are you currently finding the good and joy in everything in your life?

Are you inviting others to be a part of your faith journey?

Let us pray

God, thank you for the gift of our youth and their perspective and willingness to ask the tough questions. Help us to see the world with their eyes and have their openness to seek answers to our questions so we can grow in our faith and understanding of you. Use us as a beacon of light, reflecting your love and acceptance for everyone in all we do. Give us the patience to listen, the courage to speak truth, and compassion for others. As we spend time with our youth, may we be reminded of the importance of finding joy and goodness in all things, even in the toil and struggles. Amen.

Serve

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"But now as for what is inside you-be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you."
- Luke 11:41

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When I was asked to serve as the Interim Missions Chair for the church, I immediately knew that this was a role I wanted to be a part of...even if only for a short time (our family is moving to Colorado this summer). I have always had a strong sense of compassion for those in need and I was grateful for the opportunity to serve the church as a leader of our missions program. As I've worked with Pastor Paul over the past few months to truly understand the various organizations our missions program serves, I've learned so much about the deep financial need right here in our own community. From children in need of beds, to homeless teens, to families who struggle to provide food on the table. Our church is dedicated to serving those in need and it makes me so proud to be a member of FMUMC. Moving from mortgage to ministry not only eliminates the burden of debt, but it opens so many opportunities for our church to dig deeper into serving our community. As you carefully pray on how your family can participate in the "Jubilee – Free to Grow!" campaign, please consider how your generosity can help transform the lives of those around us...especially the ones right in our backyard.

How have you seen our church positively impact the community in meeting needs?

How has connecting in compassion to the needs of homelessness and food scarcity through our missions programs impacted your life?

Let us pray

Dear Heavenly Father, I come to you and ask that you help guide me on how I can support the debt-free campaign of our church. I ask for the clarity on my personal finances to truly determine how I can help move our church from focusing on mortgage payments to instead focusing more time and funds on supporting our community in need. Thank you for the abundant blessings you have provided in my life. I am devoted to helping those who are suffering from poverty and am thankful to have the opportunity to do so. It's in your name I pray, Amen.

by Kristi Raney

Only One #1

No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other or you will be loyal to the one and have contempt for the other.

You can not serve God and wealth. - Matthew 6:24

Jesus makes his point abundantly clear in the Sermon on the Mount that you cannot serve both God and wealth, which includes other earthly possessions and materialism we tend to try to store up or accumulate. Money and wealth really are not the problem. By themselves they are not evil, rather a gift from God to be used for His purposes. For example, FMUMC collects money every week to be used for missions, music, outreach, Bible study, classes, programming, etc., all that further the glory of God. Accordingly, money cannot by definition be evil and be used by the church. Money and wealth are simply tools in our toolbox that God has blessed us with to help us along our earthly journey in fulfillment of God's plan for our lives. How we use money, wealth, etc., dictates whether we master it, or it masters us. When we love money, worship wealth, and buy into the other lies of materialism, then it becomes destructive to us and knocks us off our intended path. This is the warning Jesus is trying to convey. The Bible in many places challenges us to put God first. Money and wealth can never give us all we need and dangerously can turn into an endless cycle of wanting more and more – hello greed, hello pride! Money can never fulfill our desires fully and be the ultimate treasure. However, when we place God first as our master, the true treasures of life can be found. We must have our eyes set to this light! We must be focused on living for God rather than our self-centered nature!

It is important to remember that we were made by God (in His own image, no less) and for God. So, if we were made by God and for God, He is our rightful master. The Bible is very clear that we should not allow anything in this worldly life to become more important than God is. Consequently, we must be devoted to God and His good gifts to us. We must store up our treasure in Heaven for eternity rather than this world as it is only fleeting at best. Jesus calls us to follow Him and to leave other worldly "masters" behind. Of all the things in this world that seem to distract, the lure of money and wealth offers a false hope, promise or mirage of security. It seems that if we 'just have this money,' we have permanent options, and many forget our need and dependence on God — which deprives us of what we were created to be. We are meant to be God's children through Jesus and made to do great things with the tools and gifts with which God has blessed us to further his kingdom here on this earth. We must not cling to or place false hope and security in wealth, but in the security that God has covenanted to provide us.

The bottom line is that we should focus on the riches found in God, not on temporary, fleeting worldly riches. Jesus doesn't want us to miss out on riches, rather He wants us to see and experience what true riches are. He wants us to see that love, peace, grace, forgiveness, joy, and true belonging in the family of God is so much better and fulfilling. He wants us to fulfill our lives with something way more enriching and permanent during our short time here.

What 2-3 things do you focus on the most?
What are the gifts and tools God has individually blessed you with in your life
that are unique to you?

Be honest with yourself - how many of these gifts and tools are in your life because of any control you had over them?

How can you change your focus to God's gifts and tools so that Jesus might be shown to others?

Let us pray:

Holy and Almighty God, I want to live with you and your Kingdom as my number one priority. Help me awaken to the things I may be placing in my heart that rival you as my God, and come into my spirit and being and help me to remove them. I pray this prayer in earnest to you in Jesus' name.

Amen.

by Herman Randow

J.J. and S.D.G.

These are things we learned from our ancestors, and we will tell them to the next generation. We won't keep secret the glorious deed and the mighty miracles of the Lord. - Psalm 78:3-4

In the book **Spiritual Moments with the Great Composers** by Patrick Kavanaugh, I was struck by several comments about Johann Sebastian Bach. The first was by his son Carl Philipp Emanuel who credited his father with his faith. "The whole Bach family were in the habit of beginning all things with religion." What a lovely thing to say about your parents. They gave you your faith. What a gift! And it made me ask myself, what am I giving my son? Would he someday be able to make a similar comment about me? Am I setting an example of service? I'm drawn to music so much of my service is in that arena. But what if my son isn't musical?

That is where the church body steps in. Who else is he seeing in service? To all who have helped me set that example — thank you! This is why we gather.

That is where the physical building comes into play. The building is where we worship. The building is where we teach our faith to each other. The building is where we plan our missions. The building enables us to begin sending our faith out into the community. What a wonderful gift to give ourselves and future generations than a building to worship in, learn in, fellowship in, and serve in!

Bach was a humble man who lived a quiet life of service receiving little recognition for his genius. What kept him going? "He treated each work with the care of a master producing a renowned showpiece, knowing that he was preparing a work for a greater Master." When Bach sat down to write the chorale anthem or the organ prelude, the first thing he wrote on the blank paper was "J.J.," which stands for Jesu Juva, meaning "help me Jesus." After finishing he initialed the last page with "S.D.G." denoting Soli Deo Gloria, "To God Alone the Glory". As you prayerfully think about your giving to our Jubilee campaign, I encourage you to write on the check (or on a piece of paper) J.J. After filling out the check or simply writing down your pledge write S.D.G. May our gifts no matter the size glorify our God and enable us to share our faith with the next generation so that more of us can go out into the community in humble service.

How do you begin all things with religion? How do you encourage your children to be charitable?

Do you have a way to support the activities of the church you and your family participate in?

What do you want to ask Jesus to help you with regarding your commitment to the Jubilee campaign?

How might the next generation hear a faithful proclamation of "To God Be the Glory!" through your contribution to this Jubilee campaign?

Let us pray

Glorious God,

As we praise you from generation to generation, may all we say, do and give be a reflection of you and not ourselves. Help me Jesus, to claim my part in this masterpiece called your holy church.

Amen.

by Donna Baxter

Blessing

In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' - Acts 20:35

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These are the Apostle Paul's words before he starts his final journey to Jerusalem — where he ultimately is imprisoned until his death. Paul has already done so much for the early Christian church. He started congregations, inspired early Christian leaders, and of course wrote so many letters of encouragement, challenge, and witness to the life and work of Jesus Christ that almost a quarter of the New Testament is his composition.

I find it compelling that Paul's last words were about serving and giving. He easily could have talked about church structure and leadership. He could have told people to be brave and bold missionaries like he was himself. He could have shared his fears for the future. Instead, the heart of church according to the Apostle Paul is serving and giving to those in need. Paul knew that this essential posture from the life of Christ defines us as Christian. If we remember our primary task of serving and giving, then the church's future becomes secure.

When I think about our church's pursuit towards Jubilee, I think of the potential our church has to move such a significant amount of money from our loan interest payments to the actual work of ministry. There could be such incredible freedom for us as a church to better embody the example of Christ as well as the Apostle Paul's guidance. During this campaign, my prayer for myself and each of us is that we can work to focus on these same priorities of service and giving in our own lives for the betterment of our collective church mission.

What could our church be freed to do in new ways as a blessing for those in need in our community and beyond?

How do I need to center on Christ's call to giving my best helping propel the future of our community of faith?

Let us pray:

Give us the eyes to see Your continued call on our lives and help us to become more like Christ in how we give and serve. In Christ's name. Amen.

Enriched

You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God.

- 2 Corinthians 9:11-12

In Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth, he encourages them to set aside some money for the impoverished Christians in Jerusalem. Paul hopes these Gentile converts acts of goodwill would reinforce the unity of the body of Christ, and allay the Jewish Christian's concerns that Gentile Christians were not following all of the Jewish laws.

In today's Scripture, Paul encourages the Corinthians by letting them know their own lives will be enriched by their generosity as it also is a thanksgiving to God for his loving grace.

Love is the underlying theme of our sacred Scriptures. Jesus made it simple ...love God and love your neighbor as yourself. When we join our church, we pledge to support the church with our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness. It is our way of responding to God's loving grace. One of the blessings of our debt reduction will be our church's ability to devote more resources to serving our community especially those our Lord asked us to care for... the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger the sick and the prisoner. Jesus always reached out to those who were outcast and lonely. We currently have robust missions programs but we can share God's love more with less debt. To make this happen there is a cost to each of us, or as my Dad used to say, "Son, there ain't nothing free in the world, except God's grace." Paul too reassured each of us, "You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity..."

Thanks be to God.

Do you find that generosity enriches your life?

Have you ever considered your generosity as a thanksgiving to God?

Is our church's ability to increase our missional outreach to serve our community even more important?

Let us pray:

Thank you Lord for your generous enrichment of our lives, as we generously give to our neighbors. May we accept the cost as never too great in your grace filled love.

Amen.

by Rev Bill Lewis

Inheritance

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They are ever giving liberally and lending, and their children become a blessing. -Psalm 37:26

I believe that God leads us by giving us dreams and a passion for making them come true. Travel today is fast and convenient because the Wright brothers dreamed they could build a flying machine. Henry Ford dreamed of producing a car that would be affordable for common people. Alexander Graham Bell followed a dream to help his loved ones hear better. Through his invention of the telephone, we can now talk to our loved ones all over the world. Our generation witnessed the fulfilled dream of sending men into space and making science fiction a reality. We benefit from the technology this has made possible.

Our church prayed together and were inspired to provide a growing space for God's family to meet for worship, nurture and mission. We made a down payment on a dream. We see that dream coming true every time we praise God together, invite a neighbor in, and go out to witness and care for others in a hurting world.

Our children learn about generosity by observing our faithfulness in giving our time, our talents and our resources. We teach the next generation by 'doing'. We show them how to participate in making the world a better place; to pray and work to help a dream become reality. By reducing our debt, we give our children and their children the opportunity in their time to dream for a better future. We help make it possible for them to be a blessing in God's world.

Who in your past made it possible for you to follow your dreams?

What gifts and passions have you been given that can help
further the Kingdom of God?

What is God calling you to do to make it possible
for future generations to dream their dreams?

Let us pray:

Gracious God, we are so thankful for the people who have come before us that paved the way for us to follow the passions of our hearts. Help us to be a blessing to the generations to come, that they may continue your loving work in the world. Amen.

by Jan Call



Treasures

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. - Matthew 6:21



Money is mentioned 140 times in the Bible. When we include similar words such as wealth, riches, gold, and silver, that number skyrockets to over 2,300 times!

God has a lot to say to us when we start looking at our finances, and rightly so. In our current Amazon Prime age of "I can have anything I want in two days," God knows, if we are not careful, our daily focus can easily turn to the contents of our wallet instead of the contents of our heart.

Matthew uses the word "treasure" here intentionally because God is not just referring to our monetary blessings. God is referring to anything that has value to us, things that we treasure. Where we spend our time, where we utilize our gifts, where we exercise our talents, these are the things that hold our heart.

The preceding passages to this line talk about the danger of putting our heart into earthly things that can be destroyed or lost, and instead advises us to build up our treasure in heaven that cannot be lost or destroyed. However, what these "heavenly treasures" consist of is not specifically stated by Matthew. This places the responsibility on us to be in conversation with Jesus to know how to best steward the treasures God has placed with us.

What treasures has God blessed you with?

What are the top three things that you spend your treasures on?

How are you currently storing up heavenly treasures?

Let us pray

Thank you Lord for the treasures that you have allowed us to steward.

Help us to utilize these gifts with wisdom so that we may continue to build your kingdom here on earth. Amen.

by Chris Czechowski

God, what do You want to do through me?



Time

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens. -Ecclesiastes 3:1

God's time is not like our time.

The chronos schedules of our days, certainly do not align with God's kairos kingdom coming. If I have learned one thing in ministry, it is that my to do list often is not what God has planned for that day. I used to become frustrated with the lack of checkboxes filled, but if I'm wise enough to pay attention, I typically find what God has in store is much more fulfilling than anything I could have imagined.

There is a time and place for everything, Ecclesiastes reminds us, and likely many of you have thought that this debt-reduction campaign doesn't align with your financial timing. Me neither. Having two kids in college and another about to enter soon, not to mention inflation, this timing is rough for another financial sacrifice. And yet, it's time.

Why?

Because sooner rather than later, our kindergarten Sunday school class will be starting confirmation, and will need a strong youth program to enter into.

Because with every day that goes by, a child goes to school hungry because a Lovepacs box could not be provided.

Because quicker than we realize, opportunities for new ministries to reach new people will have passed and another group of future disciples missed.

Because soon we will look back on this time and realize, it wasn't that long ago when we made one of the best decisions of our lives.

We listened to the future - God's future for our church.

This takes trust that what we offer, no matter how big or small is for a future yet to be seen. It requires belief that God is at work in this body of Christ beyond what can be imagined today. It takes an equal sacrifice from all of us to collectively offer ourselves for God's growth. Now is the time, because only God knows what must be done during this time.

In this time and season of the Jubilee campaign, what does God want to do through you?

<u>Let us pray together:</u> Thank you Lord for this time. Amen. Rev. Alexandra Robinson