

## **Prayers for Southern People:**

*Poems and Prayers for Christian Worship and Devotions*

**By Joy Kingsbury-Aitken**

### **Samples from the season of Lent**

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#### **Lighting a Candle during Lent** (Candle lighting)

*Isaiah 58:6-7; Luke 4:17-21*

We light a candle during Lent for all who are imprisoned unjustly.

**We remember that Jesus was robbed of his liberty and his life.**

We light a candle during Lent for all who are in some form of bondage.

**We remember that Jesus came to set the captives free.**

We light a candle during Lent for all who are hungry and homeless.

**We remember that Jesus depended on others for food and shelter.**

We light a candle during Lent for all who suffer.

**We remember that by his suffering on the cross Jesus was glorified,  
and that by alleviating the suffering of others we share in his glory. Amen.**

#### **“Is not this the fast that I choose?”** (Intercession)

*Isaiah 58:6-11; Luke 4:18*

God you inspired the prophet to write:

**“Is not this the fast that I choose:**

**to loosen the bonds of injustice...**

**to let the oppressed go free?”**

God we cry out for those suffering injustice,  
those falsely accused and wrongly convicted.

Send champions to argue their case,  
bring truth to light that they may go free.

God we cry out for those suffering imprisonment  
for their political ideas or their religious beliefs.

Replace corrupt dictators with honest leaders  
who will let the prisoners of conscience go free.

God you inspired the prophet to write:

**“Is not this the fast that I choose...**

**To share your bread with the hungry,**

**to bring the homeless poor into your house?”**

God we cry out for those suffering hunger,  
those starving because of famine and war.

Let us who are rich give generously to the poor  
while addressing the causes of climate change and conflict.

God we cry out for those without shelter,  
the rough sleepers forced to dwell on the streets.  
Help us provide sufficient warm and safe houses  
for all folk to have a good place to call home.

God you inspired the prophet to write:  
**“If you offer your food to the hungry  
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted  
then your light shall arise in the darkness and...  
the LORD will guide you continually.”**

God this Lent we remember that Jesus came  
bringing good news to the poor,  
proclaiming release to the captives  
and freedom for all who are oppressed.

God this Lent grant to us a heart of compassion like Jesus  
and show us how to bring prosperity to the impoverished,  
obtain justice and liberation for the unlawfully imprisoned,  
and provide comfort and aid to the afflicted and oppressed.

God may our fasting this Lent be the fasting you desire  
of our actions being a blessing for all we encounter.  
May our fasting this Lent lead to radical self-giving;  
God guide us into living the way Jesus taught. Amen.

### **Lenten Blessing** (Blessing)

At a time when food is plentiful  
we speak of a time of fasting,  
for here in the southern hemisphere  
Lent comes at the time of harvest.  
Fast from the hurtful and spiteful  
and gather in the fruits of kindness.  
Fast from the mean and selfish  
and gather in the fruits of generosity.  
Fast from conflict and quarrels  
and gather in the fruits of peace.  
Fast throughout Lent in this way,  
and experience the blessing of God. Amen.

### **The Season of Autumn** (Meditation)

The season of autumn is upon us.  
Summer's warmth is past and winter's chill approaches.  
Autumn flowering bulbs like crocus and nerines  
give a final burst of colour before the greyness sets in.

The season of autumn is upon us.  
A season for reaping the last of the harvest.  
A season for planting in anticipation  
of the colour and life that bursts forth in the spring.

The church in the west is in a season like autumn.  
The fruits of the past are now all gathered in.  
The faithful still gather but in numbers declining.  
The dying of winter seems not far away.

God you are the gardener, we only the labourers  
in your church as it prepares for the seasons ahead.  
We need you to show us what needs to be planted,  
where we should mulch and what prune away.

God you are the gardener, we only the labourers.  
By our own efforts we can't grow your church,  
but by our attitudes we can hamper its thriving,  
our actions and dogmas can turn people away.

The church in the west is in a season like autumn,  
but how things are now are not how they need be.  
Proclaim through us God your life-giving gospel  
to a new generation in a life-granting way. Amen.

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