

**32B*THE TIMELESS PSALMS:
A CALL TO WORSHIP
EASTER 2B 2015
PSALM 133**

God of our life's journey, we gather together as your family in the faith, on our way home.
Loving God, as we journey to our home in you, may we always keep our eyes only on you.

God of our every experience, we gather to share and support each other in our faith in you.
Encouraging God, guide and bless us as we seek to build our community in faith and love.

God our Creator and Parent, we gather together to strengthen our bonds of commitment and fellowship within the reality of God's Holy Presence that surrounds and upholds us.
**God of our faith journey, we gather before you in humble prayers and praise, seeking your forgiveness, restoration and renewal as your united and loving family in this time and place.
Amen.**

PSALM 133

A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.
A psalm of David.

1 How wonderful and pleasant it is
when brothers live together in harmony!

2 For harmony is as precious
as the anointing oil that was poured over Aaron's head,
that ran down his beard and onto the border of his robe.

3 Harmony is as refreshing as the dew from Mount Hermon
that falls on the mountains of Zion.
And there the Lord has pronounced his blessing,
even life everlasting.

**PRAYERS OF THANKFULNESS:
EASTER 2B 2015
PSALM 133**

God of our life's journey, we gather together in fellowship and in support of each other as we worship you; and to share our life's experiences and concerns within our own spiritual family. We give you our thanks for this very special privilege of being part of a worshipping community that accepts us for who and what we are; and enables us to express our faith in God in ways that are authentic to our life experiences. We have each travelled a different road, but we gather for the same purpose: to honour, praise and thank our God for our own faith journey. We give thanks that we each share a common purpose and travel to the same destination – being at home with God. Just as those long-ago pilgrims lifted their eyes to see the end of their journey – their holy place of worship of God, where they made their sacrifices for their sin, and thus received God's forgiveness; help us to keep our eyes lifted to God, and to develop our own deeper awareness of God's Holy Presence that is always with us, wherever we journey. May our fellow travellers see something of God's purposes and presence in us, so that they will join with us as we gather to worship and honour the God who guides us to our home.

God of our every experience, guide and bless us as we seek to build up our community in faith and love; and in a growing understanding of God's purposes for all peoples; so that all people may grow in love and in wisdom that God alone can give. As we journey together, teach us what it means to truly share in worshipping God; to be open in our vulnerability so that we may be healed of our hurts by the love and forgiveness of our fellow travellers; and to learn more about the forgiving and healing love and mercy of God. The psalmist sang of the joy of familial love and acceptance, which strengthens us for our daily pilgrimage, and is a rich and beautiful addition as we receive God's blessings—
"How wonderful and pleasant it is when our brothers and sisters live together in harmony!"

God of our faith journey, we gather before you in humble prayers and praise, seeking your forgiveness, restoration and renewal as your united and loving family in this time and place. May we each know the healing and renewing powers of the anointing oil of God's love; and cleansing freshness of the waters of life and of salvation that God pours over us to revive our tired bodies, souls and spirits. So, renewed and refreshed by God's blessings, may we witness and serve those people whom God has given to us to travel with on our pilgrimage. Amen.

**A PERSONAL MEDITATION:
EASTER 2B 2015
PSALM 133**

Hours of entertainment have been provided by “Road-Trip” films, as the concepts of travelling together as a family developed and the potential for many humorous disasters were explored. That sense of “togetherness” coincided with developments of highway systems across state and national borders as more modern methods of travelling evolved. However, long before those concepts developed, cross-country travel was a way of life for many people. The purposes for such travel were many and varied, including travelling with flocks of animals between various sites in search of better pastures; moving between traditional hunting grounds; or on a pilgrimage for religious purposes. Psalm 133 is the latter reason for a “road-trip” as the people of Israel travelled on their regular “road-trips” to Jerusalem for their various religious festivals. These “road-trips” had as much potential for comedy or disaster as any film ever created – even if the purpose for those journeys was for spiritual blessing— with families and people involved, anything could and probably did happen to them.

Creative pause: Are shared travel experiences always times of loving harmony?

According to my internet research, Jerusalem is situated on a limestone plateau 2500 feet above sea level. You can research how that height compares with hills in your local area. There are four mountains that surround Jerusalem, Mount Zion, 2550 feet is to the south-west; Mount Moriah, 2440 feet to the south-east; Mount Accra, 2479 feet; and Mount Bezetha, 2529 feet; but only Mounts Zion and Moriah are mentioned in the Bible. Jerusalem is very strategically situated, with deep valleys in between those mountains. King Solomon was responsible for increasing the height of Mount Moriah by building a large and high earth/rock platform there, and that is where the Jerusalem Temple was built. The Holy of Holies was situated at its highest point, at the same place where Abraham (in Genesis 22:2) was instructed thus by God: *“Take your son, your only son — yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you...”* It was through these often rather dangerous mountains that the pilgrims travelled to reach Jerusalem – often dangerous because of the many bandits who lived there, ready to prey on that steady flow of pilgrims. How inspirational were those pilgrims for their commitment to their shared worship of God!

Creative pause: How does your commitment compare to the perils of those pilgrimages?

I have had several very interesting “road-trips” in my 30+ years of leadership amongst women in the Church, where wonderful fellowship was enjoyed; and stimulating and inspirational chats produced new ideas and experiences. Such trips included West Africa, South Africa, China, and New Zealand. The purpose of those trips was usually to attend conferences as a speaker or panel member, but they always included inspirational times of shared worship and special fellowship opportunities. The warmth and joy I experienced then was surely experienced by the pilgrims in Psalm 133 as they too shared in worship of God and fellowship with new friends as they travelled.

Creative pause: Recall memories of times of shared fellowship and worship whilst travelling.

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