

DALIT LIBERATION SUNDAY

9th November 2025

**"For Such a time as this:
Church in Mission with
the Oppressed"
Esther 4:14**



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Foreword

We stand at a kairos moment, a God-appointed time, in the life of our nation and our churches. The relentless struggle for justice, dignity, and liberation for our Dalit communities describe our faith and our witness. It is in this urgent context that we are called to observe this year's Dalit Liberation Sunday.

This year's theme is drawn from a moment of existential crisis that echoes through the centuries and finds a deeply profound consonance with today's reality. The story of Esther is not merely a tale of individual courage; it is a divine narrative about a community's survival in the face of state-sanctioned annihilation.

Similarly, The Church in India today must ask itself: For what purpose has it been placed in this nation, at this unprecedented times a day-to-day violence on Dalits. We have been given a platform, a voice, and a spiritual mandate. We must capture the narrative of Esther, who being summoned to risk her comfort zone to speak truth to power for the sake of those marked for marginalized.

The theme for Dalit Liberation Sunday 2025, "For Such a Time as This: Church in the Mission with the Oppressed," is therefore both a prophetic challenge and a loud call to the institution of the church, its structure. It compels us to move beyond mere charity and occasional solidarity. It demands a fundamental reorientation of our mission—to stand with the oppressed, to feel the strike of casteist hatred with them, to amplify their voices, and to make their struggle our own.

This is not one of the social agenda; it is the gospel imperative. In the crucified Christ, we see God as one who is crucified among the outcasts, sharing in their humiliation and pain. The liturgy has been prayerfully prepared to guide our churches in this critical reflection. Through prayers, confessions, scriptures, and affirmations we worship meaningfully, repent collectively and renew our commitment to God's mission of liberation.

Let us not miss the moment as Church. May this Dalit Liberation Sunday be a turning point a time when we, the collective body of Christ in India, truly embrace our Esther-moment. May we rise, fast, pray, and act, trusting that we have been placed in this time and in this place for such a time as this.

In solidarity,

Rev. Dr. Asir Ebenezer
General Secretary

Preface

The liturgy for this year's Dalit Liberation Sunday has been prayerfully prepared blending together every dimension - bible based, theologically sound and highly relevant to existential realities of Dalits in contemporary India. It suggests usage of symbols that resonate well with the marginalized and oppressed peoples and also with all others in the whole body of Christ, the Church.

I am sure worshippers using this liturgy would at once feel the spirit moving amidst them and be inspired to be drawn into action. The suggested reflection points are guidelines around which preachers may prepare their sermon - devotional yet reflecting upon social conditions that need urgent attention.

Let us be conscious that we worship a living God actively engaged in humanizing and redeeming a world groaning for justice and transformation. I commend this liturgy wholeheartedly for all irrespective of denominations and traditions to use.

May the liberating God liberate us all..

Rev. Dr. Y. Moses
Chairperson-Commission on Dalit Concerns
National Council of Churches in India

Introduction

The National Council of Churches in India-Commission on Dalit Concerns observes every 2nd Sunday of November as Dalit Liberation Sunday. Dalit liberation Sunday is observed on the Sunday nearest to International human rights day commemorating the importance of Dalit rights as human rights. Dalit Liberation Sunday has become an important feature in our Church calendars and ecumenical movements.

The Theme for Dalit Liberation Sunday 2025 is “For Such a Time as This: The Church in Mission with the Oppressed,” calls us directly from the story of Queen Esther. She stood at a crossroads, hearing those pivotal words from Mordecai: **“And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?”** (Esther 4:14).

Like Esther, the Church today finds itself in a privileged position. We have a voice, a platform, and the transformative gospel of liberation. We are not called to be silent or comfortable within the palace walls while our kindred suffer. We are called for *this* time—for this moment—to stand in solidarity, to speak truth to power, and to act courageously.

This is not merely a social issue; it is a gospel issue. It is at the very heart of God’s mission. So let us worship this morning not as passive observers, but as a people being commissioned. Let our prayers, our songs, and our listening be an act of solidarity. May our hearts be broken open by the stories of pain and resilience, and may we leave this place with a renewed commitment to be the Church *in mission with the oppressed*.

Rev. B. Asher Noah

Executive Secretary-Commission on Dalit Concerns

National Council of Churches in India

**National Council of Churches in India-
Commission on Dalit Concerns
Dalit Liberation Sunday
9th November 2025
Worship Order**

Theme:
For Such a Time as This:
Church in the Mission with the Oppressed...*Esther 4:14*

PREPARATIONS:

Include any symbols of oppression and symbols of celebration of Dalit lives according to the context of the worship Place.

Ex: Parai as Instrument of Liberation in Tamil Nadu, Dappu in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, Tamate in Karnataka, Chenda in Kerala.

ALTAR ARRANGEMENTS:

Church as the Altar: The Presbyter/Deacon to lead worship from among the people among the symbols of oppression (preferably blue in Colour) and celebration which are part and parcel of Dalit Lives.

Invocation:

Leader:

God of the wounded earth and buried dreams,
You call us from the dust where histories were trampled.
You breathe again into dry bones, and whisper: *Now is the time.*

People:

We rise, O God, with bruised hands and fierce hope.
For such a time as this, you have called us.

Leader:

From Esther's trembling courage, from Ambedkar's pen,
from the cries of Rohith vemula, the songs of Musalamma,
from every mother who carried water and word,
Your Spirit moves.

All:

**For such a time as this,
We come, O God of the Dalits,
To rise, to remember, and to rebuild.
Let Your Spirit move through us now.
Let the chains of caste and fear be broken.
Let this gathering become your dwelling place. Amen.**

Opening Prayer:

God of the outcast,
You call us from silence to song,
from despair to defiance,
from the dust of oppression to the dance of dignity.
You placed us here, now, for such a time as this.
Strengthen our hearts with courage and compassion.
Let our worship become resistance, our prayers become justice,
our faith become freedom. God of the Dalits
make this gathering a sign of your new creation,
where none are untouchable and all are beloved..Amen.

Opening Lyric: For Such a Time as This (sung to the tune: This little light of mine)

Verse 1

For such a time as this, let our light speak,
For such a time as this, let our light speak,
For such a time as this, let our light speak,
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Verse 2

When voices are silenced, we'll lift up our song,
When voices are silenced, we'll lift up our song,
When voices are silenced, we'll lift up our song,
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Thanksgiving**Leader:**

For such a time as this, O God,
You have called your people
from the margins and the by-lanes,
from the broken earth and the burning fields,
to rise in gratitude and courage.

People:

We thank you, God of our ancestors,
who walks with us through the fires of oppression,
and sings with us in the songs of freedom.

Leader:

We thank you for the hands that till the soil,
for the mothers who feed hope with little,
for the children who still dream beyond walls and wounds,
for the Church that stands with the crucified of our world.

People:

We thank you for the breath of your Spirit,
stirring the ashes into new beginnings,

turning our mourning into movement,
and our lament into life. **Amen.**

Confession:

Leader:

God of truth and tenderness, we confess that we have turned away from your image in one another. We have built walls where you planted welcome, and allowed the poison of caste and class to stain our common life.

People:

Forgive us, O God, for the silence that protects the powerful and the fear that keeps us from standing with the oppressed.

Leader:

You call us to remember the broken body of your people, those denied water, worship, and worth. Yet we have often walked past their pain, too busy to notice the wounds we helped to make.

People:

Renew us, O God, where our hearts are closed and our pride divides us. Let your mercy make us whole again”.

Leader:

We confess also the harm done to ourselves, how we have believed the lies of inferiority, how shame has silenced our songs and chained our joy.

People:

Set us free, O God, to rise in the dignity you gave us at creation, to live as your children, beloved and bold.

All:

For such a time as this, break our hardness of heart, wash us in the waters of truth, and fill us with the Spirit of new beginnings. Amen.

Bible Readings:

Old Testament: Esther 4:1-14

Responsive Reading: Psalm 146:5-10

Luke 4:16-19

Song: Bind us together, Lord

Reflection: For Such a Time as This: A Reflection for Dalit Liberation Sunday

There comes a moment when silence becomes sin, when faith demands a trembling “yes,” and when the Church, like Esther, must risk everything for the lives at stake outside its palace walls. “For such a time as this”. These words are not comfort; they are a call. They are not flattery, they are fire. They summon the Church, a Church too long tempted by respectability, by neutrality, by the false peace of privilege to remember who it is and whose it is.

1. The Esther Moment:

Esther's world was divided by power and proximity, who could approach the throne, who could speak, who could live. Our world is no different. The caste wall stands tall, the earth groans under the weight of exploitation, and the crucified peoples of our land, Dalits, women, queer, migrant workers, farmers, still wait for a word of deliverance. Mordecai's challenge echoes across centuries: "If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise from another place, but you and your house will perish." Silence is no longer safety. It is complicity with the empire. The Church cannot claim Esther's anointing while dining with Haman. It cannot speak of salvation while guarding the gates of caste and patriarchy. It cannot pray for rain while blessing the corporations that poison the rivers.

2. The Church in the Mission with the Oppressed:

The mission of the Church is not charity from above but solidarity from below. It is not to save others but to stand with them. The Church with the mission of the oppressed must first unlearn its baptism in the concept of purity and be reborn in the muddy waters of Dalit pain and resilience. To be Church is to touch what society calls polluted, to honor what the system calls expendable, to listen where the world demands silence. It is to remember that Christ was not crucified in a cathedral but on the city's garbage heap, the Golgotha of the empire's rejects. Here is the Church's holy geography: the sanitation worker's lane, the farmer's parched field, the flood refugee's broken shelter, the young Dalit scholar's empty hostel room. Each is an altar. Each bears the mark of the crucified God.

3. Such a Time as This:

This is the time for the Church to choose, between empire and empathy, between respectability and righteousness, between comfort and courage. If not now, when? If not we, who? If not here, where the gospel meets the gutter and the grain, then where will liberation begin? The Spirit who stirred Esther in the palace is stirring the Church in the by-lanes and the burning fields, in the lungs of the earth and the longings of the poor. That Spirit is calling us out, out of fear and into faith, out of hierarchy and into healing, out of pious ritual and into radical relationship.

4. A Church Becoming:

The Church in the mission with the oppressed is not a new initiative, it is an old covenant rediscovered. It is the dream of God where every person is seen, everybody is sacred, and every river runs clean. It is a Church that speaks Esther's courage in the face of power, Jesus' compassion in the face of cruelty. It is a Church that carries the cross not as ornament but as oath. It does not whisper peace where there is none, it shouts justice until the heavens respond. For such a time as this, the Church must not merely believe, it must become. Become the voice that breaks silence. Become the hand that heals wounds. Become the body that bears God's love into every street and sorrow of this land. For such a time as this, when the earth burns, when the poor are crushed, when truth is traded for convenience, the Spirit of Esther rises again in the hearts of Dalit women, in the tears of laborers, in the songs of those who still believe that another world is possible. And the voice of God whispers once more: "Who knows? Perhaps you were born, Church, for such a time as this."

Dear friends, God does not call us to power for privilege, but for purpose. Our influence, resources, and voices are entrusted to us to **be God's instruments of justice**. Just as Esther's courage changed the course of her people's history, the Church today is called to participate in God's redemptive work: standing in solidarity with the oppressed, advocating for justice, and embodying hope in a world often shadowed by fear and inequality.

Let us, therefore, hear God's call to **faithful action**: to lift the fallen, to protect the vulnerable, and to become a living witness to God's mercy and justice. For indeed, the Church exists *for such a time as this*. Amen.

Creed for Such a Time as This

I believe in the God of all beginnings
who created stars and soil,
who formed humankind from dust and dignity,
and who still breathes courage into the weary and the waiting.

I believe in the Christ of the margins,
who walked among the poor,
who touched the untouchable,
and who calls us to stand where the world is breaking.

I believe in the Spirit who stirs in forgotten places
in slums and streets, in kitchens and classrooms,
in the voices of women who refuse silence,
and in the dreams of youth and children who imagine freedom.

I believe in a Church called *for such a time as this*,
to speak truth to power, to lift the fallen, and to break every chain of caste and cruelty.

I reject every system that names some pure and others polluted,
that divides, degrades, or destroys.

I affirm the sacredness of every tongue, tribe, and laboring hand
the song of the earth, the rhythm of resistance, the breath of justice.

I believe in resurrection
in life rising from oppression,
in love stronger than death,
in a new heaven and a new earth
where God dwells with the oppressed and sets them free.

So, we rise, with Esther's courage and Ambedkar's dream,
to be the Church of the broken and the bold
for such a time as this. Amen.

Lord's Prayer of Liberation and the Earth

(An Ecological and Dalit Liberation Prayer)

Our God of the outcast and the earth,
You who dwell in every humble home and polluted river,
holy is your name, spoken in many tongues,
sung in the fields, and whispered by those the world forgets.

Your reign of justice come;
Your will of liberation be done,
in our villages and valleys, in our cities and hearts
as it is in Your dream for all creation.

Give us today the bread of dignity
grown from clean soil, shared without discrimination,
blessed by hands long excluded from the altar.

Forgive us the sins of silence,
the greed that wounds the land,
the caste that scars your children.
As we forgive those who taught us shame,
teach us to live in the freedom of your love.

Lead us away from the path of greed and domination;
deliver us from every apartheid of body, birth, and belief.

For yours is the reign of interdependence,
the power of solidarity,
and the glory of creation renewed
from this time, and for such a time as this, and forever. Amen.

Intercessory Prayers:

Leader:

God of Esther and every unnamed hero, you call your Church to stand in the gap,
between fear and faith, between comfort and courage. Hear our prayers for such a time
as this.

Response:

God of justice and mercy, hear our prayer.

Leader:

We pray for your Church, that it may no longer seek safety in silence, but stand with the
oppressed, proclaiming liberation as the heart of the Gospel.

Response:

God of justice and mercy, hear our prayer.

Leader:

We pray for all Dalit communities, children, women, men and queer folk those whose
dignity is denied, whose bodies bare the weight of untouchability and exclusion. May
their tears become testimony, their songs become strength, and their lives become light
for us all.

Response:

God of justice and mercy, hear our prayer.

Leader:

We pray for our wounded earth, for poisoned rivers and feces induced water tanks parched lands, for the forests that weep under chainsaws, for all creatures whose home is destroyed by greed. May we repent, restore, and renew our kinship with all creation.

Response:

God of justice and mercy, hear our prayer.

Leader:

We pray for the women who, like Esther, risk voice and life for justice; for the youth who dare to dream of a casteless, compassionate, and empathetic people of God; for the workers, farmers, and sanitation laborers whose sweat keeps the world alive.

Response:

God of justice and mercy, hear our prayer.

Leader:

We pray for those in power, that they may hear the cry from the margins, and be moved not just by charity, but also by conscience. Transform their hearts, O God, that laws may reflect love, and policies protect life.

All together:

God of the oppressed and the earth, we offer our prayers, our pain, and our promise: to live as people of justice and joy. Amen.

Offertory Song: We bring sacrifices of praise

We bring the sacrifice of praise
Into the house of the Lord.
We bring the sacrifice of praise
Into the house of the Lord.

And we offer up to You
The sacrifices of thanksgiving;
And we offer up to You
The sacrifices of joy

(Repeat 3 times....)

Call to Action: The Church in the Mission with the Oppressed

Leader:

Beloved in Christ, our faith is not a fortress; it is a movement.
Our worship is not complete until it becomes witness.
We are called, like Esther, not to wait for another voice or another time,
but to act now, for such a time as this.

Let the Church rise from its comfort zones into the streets and soils of suffering.
Let it dismantle caste from pulpit to policy.
Let it heal the wounded earth and honor every laboring hand.

People:

We will be the Church with the mission of the oppressed, partners in God's work of liberation, agents of justice, bearers of hope. For such a time as this, we rise. **Amen.**

Closing Prayer

God of the margins and the mighty wind, thank you for meeting us in this space of struggle and song. You have reminded us that faith is not a hiding place, but a holy fire. As we go forth, let our hearts burn with courage, our words birth change, our hands build bridges of justice. May our churches become shelters for the rejected, gardens for the weary, and classrooms for freedom. And when the world forgets its wounded, let us remember, we were called *for such a time as this*. **Amen.**

Benediction**Leader:**

May the God of the Dalit go before you in every act of courage; Christ walk beside you in every step toward justice, and the Spirit rise within you as breath, as fire, as freedom.

All together:

For such a time as this, we go in peace,
we go in power, we go in hope. **Amen.**

Prepared by**Rev. Dr. Moses Shanthi Kumar Bollam John**

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Dalit Liberation Sunday Themes (2007-2024)

2007: Put away Violence and Oppression, Execute Justice and Righteousness (Ezekiel 45:12)

2008: Seek Justice, rescue the oppressed (Isaiah 1:17)

2009: Crossing boundaries and building bridges: Overcoming prejudices
(Matthew 15:28)

2010: Will not God bring justice to people who cry out to God day and night?
(Luke 18:7)

2011: Our God with struggling people (Exodus 3:7-8)

2012: Break the barriers; build a world of equality

2013: “Celebrating Faith by Witnessing” (Deuteronomy 1:13-18)

2014: “Dalit Culture, Dalit history, Dalit pathos: Regaining the lost identity in Christ”

2015: “Climate, Caste, and Care for the Earth”

2016: “Administer Justice Daily! Deliver the Oppressed (Jeremiah 21:12)

2017: Religious Freedom of Dalits

2018: As for Me and My household. We will serve the Lord (Joshua 24:15)

2019: Resist Caste: If one suffers all suffer together (1 Corinthians 12:26)

2020: Challenge Caste: Affirming the Dignity of Dalit Women

2021: God Says ‘NO’ to Caste Discrimination (Acts 10:28)

2022: All are Equal in Christ; Let’s dismantle Caste Division: Galatians 3:28

2023: No One Can Serve Christ and Caste: Mathew; 6:24a

2024: Proclaiming the Good News, Setting the captives free: Luke 4: 18-19