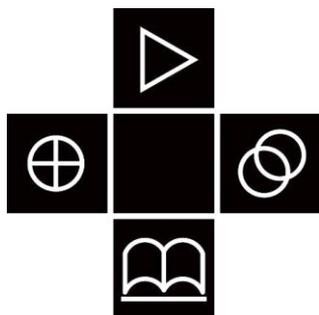


A PLACE IN GOD'S HEART



A PLACE AT CHRIST'S TABLE

WORSHIP RESOURCES FOR THE
WELCOMING CHURCH MOVEMENT

**A PLACE IN GOD'S HEART
A PLACE AT CHRIST'S TABLE**

**WORSHIP RESOURCES FOR THE
WELCOMING CHURCH MOVEMENT**

David Lohman, editor

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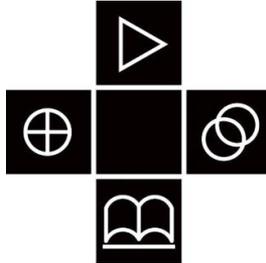
Dedicated to
REV. ANN B. DAY
&
DONNA ENBERG

in honor and celebration of their
twenty years as leaders of the
Open and Affirming Program
of the United Church of Christ
Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,
and Transgender Concerns

...and for their founding and
ongoing spirit in the ecumenical
Welcoming Church Movement.

*Prepared by their friends in the
Welcoming Church Movement
and the Institute for Welcoming Resources.*

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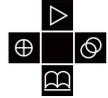
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OPENING WORSHIP





CALL TO WORSHIP

Creating God

From the More Light Presbyterians Retreat & Mission Weekend
New Orleans, LA, 2006

- One: Creating God, blessed are You and blessed is this time and place.
Thank You for Your people gathered here.
- All: We are here! Being the Church! We have not retreated! We are standing in praise!**
- One: Reconciling Redeemer, You are the mender of our souls and the healer of our broken bodies. You lift us up, strengthen and sustain, nurture and nourish, heal and help.
- All: Holy Fire, ignite a new spark in the heart of each one gathered here.**
- One: Light our way. Warm our bodies. Inspire our tongues to speak a new word, to shout another praise, and to sing an amazing song that will bring to us life and to You glory!

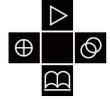


CALL TO WORSHIP

God Has Shown Us What is Good

From St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Oklahoma City, OK
More Light Sunday, 2005

- One: God has shown us what is good, and what then is required of us?
- All: To act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.**
- One: Jesus says: Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the One who sent me.
- All: The Spirit says, "Come." Let each one who hears the Spirit say, "Come," for all are welcome here.**
- One: Let us worship God!



CALL TO WORSHIP

The Heavens Are Telling the Glory of God

By Rev. Ann B. Day
Program Coordinator, Open and Affirming Program of the
United Church of Christ Coalition for LGBT Concerns 1987-2007
Originally published in *Shaping Sanctuary*

One: The heavens are telling the glory of God!

**All: Day to day and night to night,
unending is their silent speech of beauty and wonder.**

One: How shall we join their joyful witness?

**All: With words that proclaim God's inclusive love,
with works that bring forth God's powerful justice,
with worship that rejoices in God's wondrous presence,
now and always. Amen!**



INVOCATION

Inviting the Presence

By Rev. Dr. Sally Harris
Co-Chair, Affirm United, United Church of Canada

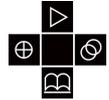
One: Gathered in this sacred space, O Creator Spirit,
in the multicolored company of Your Church on earth and in
heaven,
We celebrate Your creation and invite Your presence into our
midst.
We know, Creator Spirit, that eternity cannot hold You,
Nor can our little words describe the breadth of Your faithfulness
to us.
Yet in the space of our small heart and in silence,
Come close and repair us.

(Silence)

One: Creator Spirit, bring new life
All: Where we are worn and tired,
One: New love
All: Where we have turned hard-hearted,
One: Forgiveness
All: Where we feel hurt and are wounded,
One: And the joy and freedom of Your holy presence
All: Where we are prisoners of ourselves.

One: Creator Spirit,
**All: In the space of our small heart and in silence,
Come close that we may dream.**

(Silence)



OPENING PRAYER

O God, Whom No Image Can Encompass

From the More Light Presbyterians Retreat & Mission Weekend
New Orleans, LA, 2006

**All: O God, whom no image can encompass, no definition encircle, and yet who meets us in the gentle touch of love, the beauty of a butterfly's wing, and the laughter of children, help us to move beyond our attempts to limit You, intellectualize You, or to eliminate You from all that is earthy, sensuous, or vibrant, so that we may greet You in every particle of this spectacular universe which You are creating.
Amen.**



CALL TO WORSHIP

Send No One Away!

By Meredith Bischoff

President, Welcoming Communities Network, Community of Christ

One: Some Pharisees wanted to test Jesus. So they came up to him and asked if it was right for a man to divorce his wife. Jesus asked them, “What does the Law of Moses say about that?” They answered, “Moses allows a man to write out divorce papers and send his wife away.” *(Mark 10:2-4 CEV)*

All: We will send no one away.

One: Some people brought their children to Jesus so that he could bless them by placing his hands on them. But his disciples told the people to stop bothering him. *(Mark 10:13-14 CEV)*

All: We will send no one away.

One: In those days, when there was a very great multitude, and they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to himself, and said to them, “I have compassion on the multitude, because they have stayed with me now three days, and have nothing to eat. If I send them away fasting to their home, they will faint on the way, for some of them have come a long way.” *(Mark 8:1-3 CEV)*

All: We will send no one away.

One: And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed.” But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and implored Him, saying, “Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us.” *(Matthew 22-23 NIV)*

All: We will send no one away.

One: Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender brothers and sisters are walking with us on the path of the disciple. They have chosen to be there because they feel God's call to them. Some have struggled throughout their lives with questions and uncertainties about their identity, their acceptability, their status as children of God. Some have dared to tell their story, resulting at times in warm acceptance and other times in cold rejection. Some have come to understand that God loves them unconditionally and embraces them as valued members of the human family; others are not so sure.

(adapted from Community of Christ President W. Grant McMurray's Address at the 2002 World Conference Address)

All: We as a community of faith value diversity and celebrate those differences as intentional acts of God's creation. In that the realm of God includes all persons, we welcome and include all persons including persons of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and family units in the full life of the congregation. We will send no one away!

*(adapted from the welcoming statement of
Basileia: An Open Door Community of Christ)*



CALL TO WORSHIP

We Are Part of the Church Universal

By Rev. Ann B. Day
Program Coordinator, Open and Affirming Program of the
United Church of Christ Coalition for LGBT Concerns 1987-2007
Originally published in *Shaping Sanctuary*

Voice I: We are part of the Church universal – faithful people of every color, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, and ability, gathered to love and serve God.

Voice II: We are an Open and Affirming church.*
Together, let us worship God,
rejoicing in the good news which we celebrate this day!

All: **There is a place in God's heart,
there is a place at Christ's table,
there is a place here and in every welcoming church
for all people – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender,
and Straight!**

Voice I: Christ who gathers us,
bids us follow in the ways of love and justice.

All: **May our hearts be open to Christ's leading in our worship
and our living, this day and always.**

**use the appropriate denominational designation*



CALL TO WORSHIP

We Are the Body of Christ

By Rev. Ann B. Day

Program Coordinator, Open and Affirming Program of the
United Church of Christ Coalition for LGBT Concerns 1987-2007

Based on I Corinthians 12:14-31

Originally published in *Shaping Sanctuary*

Voice I: We are the body of Christ!

Voice II: The hand clapping, toe tapping, heart pumping, mouth tasting,
arms embracing,

Voice III: Justice seeing, hymn singing, love making, bread breaking, risk
taking

All: Body of Christ!

Voice I: Baptized in one Spirit, we are members of one body.

**All: Many and varied in gender, color, sexuality, age, class,
and ability,
we are members of Christ's beautiful body.**

Voice II: None of us can say to another, "I have no need of you."

All: For only together can we find wholeness.

Voice III: None of us can say to another, "I will not care for you."

**All: For we are connected like muscle and bone.
If one suffers, we all suffer. If one rejoices, we all rejoice!**

Voice I: Thanks be to God who, in Christ, has made us one.

All: Let us worship God!



CALL TO WORSHIP

What Right Have We to Invoke God's Name?

From the More Light Presbyterians Retreat & Mission Weekend
New Orleans, LA, 2006

One: What right have we to invoke God's name on what we say and do
here together?

**All: In Christ we have been called to be God's people, and given
God's Spirit and Word.**

One: Have we the courage to worship in spirit and in truth, knowing that
it may change us?

All: We have come to seek, to find, and to be found.

CONFESSIONS & ASSURANCES





CONFESSION OF SIN

Based on the Ten Affirmations for GLBT Spirituality

See page 15

We are painfully aware of the ways we dismiss or disdain others who think or act or look differently from ourselves. At our best,

We celebrate the unity we create in the midst of our diversity.

We are so quick to look down on the defect or sin of another. At our best,

We affirm the inherent beauty, worth, and dignity of every GLBT and straight person.

We insist that our way and view are the only ones. At our best, we remember:

There are many paths to the sacred. The spiritual paths of GLBT persons are among them.

We get caught up in categories, presumptions, and stereotypes around and within us. At our best, we know:

The choice is not whether to be GLBT or straight, but whether or not to live an authentic life.

We so often want to pull the covers over our heads or stay in the closet. At our best, we acknowledge:

Coming out is a courageous and spiritual act.

We confess the times when sexual expression has been manipulative and self-interested. At our best, we understand:

Sexual expression is one of the many sacred ways that GLBT and straight adults can express the depth of love in their relationships.

We regret the ways in which sexuality and spirituality have been turned against each other. At our best, we commit ourselves:

We support each person's journey of integrating spirituality and sexuality which leads to wholeness.

We grieve the misuse of marriage, the withholding of its rights and responsibilities, for political gain. At our best, we proclaim:

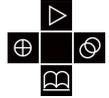
Marriage is a sacred union for people who are committed to each other without regard to gender. Love makes a family.

We regret the missed opportunities to care for GLBT people persecuted by bigots. At our best, we pledge ourselves:

Spiritual leaders must take responsibility to lead, protect, and affirm GLBT people: children, adults, and their families.

We hold fast to the promising truth that we are one human family. At our best, we remind ourselves:

No one is free when others are oppressed.



CONFESSION & ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

God, Who Made Me in Your Image

From the More Light Presbyterians Retreat & Mission Weekend
New Orleans, LA, 2006

- All:** **God, who made me in Your image, teach me to love myself as
 You love me.**
- God, who made me in Your image, allow me to show that
 image to the world.**
- God, who made me in Your image, help me to see Your
 image in all those I meet.**
- God, who made me in Your image, teach me to conserve and
 protect all Your creation.**
- God, who made me in Your image, bless, protect, and keep
 me and all Your children safe.**
- One:** The One who breathed life into our lungs continues to be present
 with us. God, who has made us reflective of God's own image,
 has forgiven us all and made us new creations. Therefore, since
 our sins are forgiven, let us go forth with love and peace,
 honoring and upholding the dignity of all we meet, knowing
 we see reflections of God's image all around.
- All:** **Thanks be to God.**



CONFESSION & ASSURANCE OF PARDON

We Are a Pilgrim People

By Rev. Ann B. Day
Program Coordinator, Open and Affirming Program of the
United Church of Christ Coalition for LGBT Concerns 1987-2007
Originally published in *Shaping Sanctuary*

One: We are a pilgrim people, accompanied by our God,
who journeys beside us, accepting who we are;
yet goes before us, beckoning us toward who we might become.

**All: But as we move through our days,
other gods call to us, questions confound us,
direction blurs, indifference lulls; we lose our way.**

One: So we enter into silence, to discern again the nearness of God, who
is our hope and guide.

(Moments for silent prayer.)

One: Sisters and brothers, we can trust God at all times,
for the Holy One is our refuge and our salvation!
So with confidence, let us pour out a shared confession of our
hearts.

**All: We confess to You, steadfast God, that we wander from the
path of love upon which we are meant to walk.
Fears divide us, prejudice hardens us,
violence destroys us.**

One: But God eternally beckons.

**All: We turn our hearts again to You,
God of grace and mercy.
Forgive us love that is self-satisfied,
and teach us love that is self- and other-affirming.
Forgive us faith that makes us rush to judgment,
and give us faith that fills us with compassion.
Forgive us peace we have made with our divisions,
and unite us in peace that passes understanding.
We pray, with thanksgiving, in the name of Christ.
Amen.**

One: By God's mercy, our feet are set again upon the path of
faithfulness;
our hearts are set again upon the coming of God's realm.

All: Thanks be to God, our hope and our guide forever!



CONFESSION

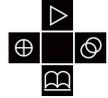
We Give Thanks

From St. Andrews Presbyterian Church
More Light Sunday, 2005

**All: We give thanks, merciful God, that in Christ, You seek to unite all things in heaven and in earth, and to reconcile all people to one another and to You. We confess that the new creation is not yet complete in us, and that we feel everywhere the barriers that separate humankind. Forgive us, and fill us with Your Spirit of oneness. Reveal to us those places where pride and selfishness rebuild the walls once torn down in Christ; through the power of Your Spirit.
Amen.**

AFFIRMATIONS OF FAITH



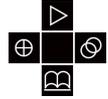


AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Ten Affirmations for GLBT Spirituality

Religion and Spirituality Working Group of Voices for a New Tomorrow

- One: We celebrate the unity we create in the midst of our diversity.
- Two: We affirm the inherent beauty, worth, and dignity of every GLBT and straight person.
- Three: There are many paths to the sacred. The spiritual paths of GLBT persons are among them.
- Four: The choice is not whether to be GLBT or straight, but whether or not to live an authentic life.
- Five: Coming out is a courageous and spiritual act.
- Six: Sexual expression is one of the many sacred ways that GLBT and straight adults can express the depth of love in their relationships.
- Seven: We support each person's journey of integrating spirituality and sexuality which leads to wholeness.
- Eight: Marriage is a sacred union for people who are committed to each other without regard to gender. Love makes a family.
- Nine: Spiritual leaders must take responsibility to lead, protect, and affirm GLBT people: children, adults, and their families.
- Ten: No one is free when others are oppressed.



AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Based on the Ten Affirmations for GLBT Spirituality

See page 15

- One: We celebrate the unity we create in the midst of our diversity.
We believe in God's creative, embracing love for all that is.
- Two: We affirm the inherent beauty, worth, and dignity of every GLBT and straight person.
We believe that God does not make junk.
- Three: There are many paths to the sacred. The spiritual paths of GLBT persons are among them.
We believe that God's Wisdom may be known in a variety of ways.
- Four: The choice is not whether to be GLBT or straight, but whether or not to live an authentic life.
We believe God wants us to be reliable and trustworthy.
- Five: Coming out is a courageous and spiritual act.
We believe that God rejoices when we reveal to the world our full selves.
- Six: Sexual expression is one of the many sacred ways that GLBT and straight adults can express the depth of love in their relationships.
We believe God made sex good.
- Seven: We support each person's journey of integrating spirituality and sexuality which leads to wholeness.
We believe God entwines body and spirit in all people.
- Eight: Marriage is a sacred union for people who are committed to each other without regard to gender. Love makes a family.
We believe God wills life-long covenants.
- Nine: Spiritual leaders must take responsibility to lead, protect, and affirm GLBT people: children, adults, and their families.
We believe God inspires leaders to do this.
- Ten: No one is free when others are oppressed.
We believe God cries out with the persecuted. Their yearning for freedom is also God's.



AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We Are Not Our Own

From the Declaration of Debrecen, 1977
World Alliance of Reformed Churches

All: We are not our own. We belong to the living God who made all things and declared them to be very good. We will not exploit and destroy that creation. We will be stewards of creation for God.

We are not our own. We know that in Jesus Christ we were bought with a price. We will not patronize, exclude, or ignore the gifts of any person, male or female, young or old. We declare solidarity with the poor, and with all who are suffering, oppressed, or excluded.

We are not our own. We do not despair, for God reigns. We will continue to struggle against injustice in this world. We look forward to the Holy City in which God will dwell with human beings and be their God.

LITANIES





LITANY

The Beatitudes – A Litany

By Rev. Ann B. Day

Program Coordinator, Open and Affirming Program of the
United Church of Christ Coalition for LGBT Concerns 1987-2007

Based on verses from Matthew 5

Originally published in *Shaping Sanctuary*

One: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

All: God our Center, we are grateful for Your presence within and among us. May all that we are and do arise from our love for you.

One: Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

All: God our Comfort, be with all whose hearts are filled with grief. Let Christ's peace uphold them. May we bear with them the burden of sorrow, and bring to them faith's message of hope.

One: Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

All: God our Inspiration, may we have the mind of Christ as we relate to one another. Let love be our guide, and reconciliation our desire. May people of every color and class, age and ability, sexual and gender orientation be truly welcomed and valued among us.

One: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

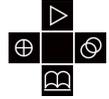
All: God our Advocate, let our righteousness be born, not of arrogance, but of yearning to do Your good will. May we hunger for churches where all belong, where diversity of humanity and unity in Christ create community and promote justice. May we thirst for right relationship with You and all our neighbors.

One: Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

All: God our Refreshment, as Your forgiveness restores us, so may we offer the blessing of restoration to those who wrong us, and accept it from those we have wronged. Help us to find our way when the paths of justice and compassion seem to diverge. Give us hearts ever open to mercy's possibilities.

One: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

All: God our Hope, plant deep in us the longing for a world where children do not suffer at the hands of adults, where lovers' quarrels do not end in violence, where nations do not battle. May we pray peace, make peace, live peace. Amen.



LITANY

The Good Word

By Rev. Ann B. Day

Program Coordinator, Open and Affirming Program of the
United Church of Christ Coalition for LGBT Concerns 1987-2007

Based on I Corinthians 13:1-13

Originally published in *Shaping Sanctuary*

Voice I: What's the "good word" we have for the world?
What do we say through the worship and witness of our church?

Voice II: We say, "We believe in God, known in Jesus Christ."
We say, "Let there be justice and peace!"

Voice I: We say, "Come, accept the cost and joy of discipleship."
We say, "Our congregation is Open and Affirming." *

**All: It is good to voice our beliefs and commitments.
But say what we will, even in angelic tones,
if we do not love each other, our talk is cheap.
We shall sound to the world like clanging cymbals.**

Voice II: We thank God for the joy of learning!
We are curious about the world within us,
the world around us and the worlds beyond us.
We wonder about the Creator of it all.
Exploring tradition, scripture, and experience,
we pray and reason together.
Our faith seeks understanding.

**All: It is good to grow in knowledge and wisdom.
But even if we knew everything,
even if we have mountain-moving faith,
if we do not love each other,
we have gained nothing.**

Voice II: What does love ask of us?

**All: Love asks that we be patient and kind
as we build an inclusive faith community,
that we abandon arrogance,
that we risk new things,
that we not delight in the failings of others,
that we rejoice in discerning and living God's truth.**

**use the appropriate denominational designation*

Voice II: Love is strong!
It believes and hopes and endures.
But sometimes even love falters.
Then we may forgive and accept forgiveness,
so that love may be renewed.

Voice I: Sustained by God's Spirit,
three things abide within and among us,
faith, hope, and love.

All: And the greatest of these is love.



LITANY

A Litany of Hope and Struggle: Honoring the Shower of Stoles Project

By Carol Wise

Executive Director, Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests

One: Because injustice can break the most eager spirit and force the abandonment of dreams...

All: We hold tenderly our sisters and brothers and grieve the loss of vibrancy and faith.

One: Because fear can overwhelm goodness and silence those whom God has called...

All: We decry the betrayal of God's own and announce our resolve to speak the truth of our lives.

One: Because hate destroys the human heart and limits the wonders of love...

All: We open ourselves to compassion and offer our lives as witnesses to the healing presence of God.

One: Because complacency gives consent to systems that oppress and harm...

All: We refuse to cede our world to hurtful powers and principalities and dare to dream new creations into being.

One: Because courage in the face of fear and injustice is a holy deed...

All: We celebrate the passion that chooses life in the midst of violence and claims the goodness of human dignity with power and grace.

One: Because hope in a world of complacency and hate is a sacred act of resistance...

All: We stand among this incredible cloud of witnesses and today proclaim:

Where hatred roars, we will sing of love.

Where fear stalks, we will stand with courage.

Where bigotry rages, we will call for justice.

Where pain overwhelms, we will extend kind comfort.

Where systems oppress, we will work for change.

Now and ever, now and ever, now and evermore.

Amen.





LITANY

A Litany of Inclusion

By Rev. Kenneth L. Pennings

Executive Director, Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists

(perhaps best used with Communion)

First Voice: We are fearfully and wonderfully made.
All: **God has revealed to us that homosexuality is not a sin to be confessed...**

Second Voice: Or a sickness to be cured...
First Voice: But is a natural human condition.
All: **While some would restrict us from the table of the Lord...**

Second Voice: From church membership...
First Voice: From church leadership...
Second Voice: From ordination...
First Voice: From professional ministry positions...
Second Voice: From jobs...
First Voice: From marriage...
All: **Because of their restricted view of the Bible...**

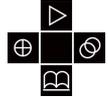
Second Voice: Their restricted view of truth...
First Voice: And their restricted view of reality...
Second Voice: We welcome all to the Table of the Lord.
All: **We say to all who are excluded because of skin color, physical and mental ableness...**

First Voice: Income level, marital status...
Second Voice: Gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation...
All: **"Be excluded no more!"**

First Voice: We are stretching out our hands to those who have been stereotyped, stigmatized, labeled, and assigned to the margins of church and society, saying...
Second Voice: In the name of Jesus, partake of the body and blood of our Lord...

First Voice: Join our churches...
Second Voice: Lead our churches...
First Voice: Retain your jobs...
Second Voice: Marry your life partners!
All: **Because we are all God's beloved children...**

First Voice: We will live, laugh, love and lead...
Second Voice: With integrity, dignity, faithfulness, gratitude and joy!
All: **Amen.**



LITANY

A Litany of Trust in God

By Rev. Ann B. Day

Program Coordinator, Open and Affirming Program of the
United Church of Christ Coalition for LGBT Concerns 1987-2007

Based on Psalm 62:5-12

Originally published in *Shaping Sanctuary*

One: In the many silences of the heart, O God,
when feeling is beyond saying,
Your faithful people everywhere wait upon Your Spirit.
In the silence of joy –
when a baby is born,
when a sunset blazes,
when a loved one is restored to health,
when peace replaces strife –

**All: In our joy, we wait upon You, O God.
We give You thanks and praise.**

One: In the silence of sorrow –
when love is lost,
when pain is too constant a companion,
when time brings change that is hard to bear,
when death seems victorious –

**All: In our sorrow, we wait upon You, O God.
You alone are our rock and our refuge.**

One: In the silence of anger –
when justice is postponed until tomorrow,
when violence shatters body and soul,
when prejudice sets neighbor against neighbor,
when no one will listen –

**All: In our anger, we wait upon You, O God.
Teach us the ways of justice and mercy.**

One: Let us put our trust where it belongs,
not in our positions of power or wealth,
for such things are lighter than breath.

**All: In our joy, our sorrow, our anger, we trust in God's unfailing
love and guidance. We rely upon the blessing of being a
community of faith, a Church universal. Sisters and brothers
of many colors, ages, sexual orientations, gender identities,
and abilities, we are one in Christ! Together, let us wait upon
the God of our salvation!**



LITANY

A Litany to Re-Shape the World

By David R. Weiss, 2003

Poet & Theologian, Lutherans Concerned/North America

The world as it is, is an affront to the longing of God for justice.

The world as it is, is an affront to the People of God created for wholeness.

The world as it should be unsettles our imaginations and haunts our hearts.

The world as it should be is restless to break into the world as it is.

Power grounded in solidarity is God's gift to transform the world.

Power guided by love is God's capacity to make us instruments of change.

We are selves only in community.

The dignity of each self rests on the integrity of our relations with each other.

We are each treasures to ourselves and to our communities.

We share the task of calling forth the truth of each for the good of all.

Day by day, we bring the Wisdom of God to bear on the chaos of the world.

Day by day, we bring the Love of God to bear on the isolating fear of the world.

And day by day, we return to taste the Joy that is both first and final.

Matching tears with laughter, matching work with play; matching political struggle with intimate love.

**All: Because the Kin-dom which is not yet, already is for sure.
Amen.**

LITURGIES & OCCASIONAL SERVICES





LITURGY

A Passion Sunday Liturgy

By Maggie Shannon George
Shared to honor Rev. Ann B. Day and Donna Enberg
for their powerful ministry as leaders of the Open and
Affirming Program of the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Narrator	Pilate
Simon	Candle Lighter
Chief Priest	Extra One
Disciple One	Extra Two
Peter	Crucifixion Observer
Judas	Cross Bearer/Jesus

MUSIC FOR MEDITATION

Narrator: *(from the back of the sanctuary)* As we enter the story of the Passion of Jesus, it is just before the Passover feast. The chief priests and scribes are looking for a way to arrest Jesus before the feast begins. They are afraid of a riot breaking out if they wait any longer. Listen to the story as it is told from various parts of the community gathered at that time and place.

FIRST READING

Simon tells the story of the woman who comes to his house and anoints Jesus

Simon: *(entering from the side)* There's something about this place that reminds me of the night Jesus was at my house. Maybe it's the variety of people... I can't quite put my finger on it. Let me tell you a little bit about that evening and maybe you'll know what I mean. Quite frankly it is still amazing to me that Jesus and his friends were actually at my house. They even sat at my table. This might not sound so unusual or like a big deal to you but what you do not know is that I am a leper. My name is Simon. Being a leper in that community made me an outcast much as someone with AIDS or a mental illness or some other disease might be an outcast today. So, for me in that time, sharing a meal with anyone was a rare deal. I was overwhelmed and honored when Jesus and his friends showed up at my house.

But, I really want to tell you about what happened next. That's even more powerful, I think. We were all lounging around my table when this woman came to my house. It was clear she

knew that Jesus was there or she would never have come to the door. She walked past everyone in the room and went right over to where Jesus was sitting. She opened a jar of ointment she had brought with her and poured it over Jesus' head. The room fell silent as we stared with astonishment. I will never forget the look in her eye. She looked at him like she knew him. It was as though she were honoring Jesus with her ointment. Everyone gathered there stared in amazement and confusion. We couldn't figure out why she would do this. Who was Jesus to get such treatment? That question would have to wait because the silence of the group changed to outrage. (Do you ever notice how sometimes people move right to outrage when they are really confused?) Anyway, they began yelling at her saying how dare she be so wasteful with such expensive oil. They even told her that instead of pouring the oil over Jesus head that she should have sold it and given the money to the poor... I think they were trying to justify their anger in a way that would please Jesus.

But before anyone could say another word, Jesus came to her defense. He told us to leave her alone. What he said next still has me thinking. He said that the woman had performed a great service to him. He then looked at the woman and said, "I will never forget what you have done." He looked back at each one of us and said, "You will always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. This woman has done what she could. She has anointed my body in preparation for its burial." While I did not fully understand what had taken place, I could not help but feel that it had been a profound moment in Jesus' life and the life of our whole community. (*Simon exits during the following.*)

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Narrator: We have the opportunity to withdraw from our busy lives, to journey to the desert to the margins of our culture.

All: **We commit to supporting each other as we journey to strange places and grapple with difficult questions.**

SECOND READING

The chief priest describes the plan they have worked out with Judas

Ch. Priest: I can hardly believe that Judas came to see us today. Finally, information that can help us get Jesus once and for all. He is ours! Although I must say that I am skeptical. Judas was one of

Jesus' closest friends. Why would he betray him to us? He has followed this guy for several years. Maybe they are not as close as we thought. Or maybe our offer to pay him for his trouble is more important than his friendship with Jesus. Or could it be that he finally saw what a fraud and a danger this Jesus really is. Judas actually told us where we could find Jesus so that we could arrest him. His story was pretty convincing. He agreed to hand Jesus over to us in a secluded spot. I guess we will soon find out if this Judas is true to his word. If he is, we will have Jesus before the Passover feast, and Judas will have his money. Good trade if you ask me.

CANDLE LIGHTING

C. Lighter: Betrayal and intimacy is within each one of us.

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Presider: Let us bring our whole selves to this time and space.

All: We come together to hear and be moved by the story of Jesus and the disciples.

Presider: May we also bring our whole selves and our gifts to this community.

All: We share our gifts of heart and talent and treasure to build this community.

Presider: Let us collect our offering at this time.

OFFERTORY

(The ushers come forward up with the collection and the elements and set it all on the table. The pastor(s) are not there to receive it.)

THIRD READING

A disciple tells of their last supper together

Disciple: There we sat, having a wonderful Passover meal with Jesus. We were so consciously together in community and so intentionally acknowledging God's presence with us. We had a very intimate connection to one another and to the spirit of God in our midst. Then Jesus suddenly got this intense look on his face and said that one of us was going to betray him. Talk about a showstopper. We all looked at one another with confusion and some distrust. I'm sure everyone had the same thoughts I did. What did he mean "betray him?" Why would he think or say something like that out of the blue – we have been together for so long. We are like family. I looked around the room and tried to imagine who would even consider betraying Jesus? Did he think it would be me? I know there have been some hard moments lately, we have had heavy conversation about where all this was going, what we were all

together for, what our purpose was and how we would help to change the world. I know there were some tempers and some fears in the group, but I didn't think they had gotten so bad that there was a question of betraying Jesus.

Each one of us tried to reassure him that we would not betray him. I could not imagine such a thing. How could I possibly betray someone I love so much? But he spoke with such urgency and almost as if he was seeing the future in his mind's eye. He slowly looked at us one at a time and spoke words that sent chills down my spine. (*Pause and look slowly around the room at each section of the community.*) He said that one who betrays him would have been better off never being born. You can imagine the tension in the room and knot in my stomach, as it seemed Jesus was desperate for us to know something we were not able to understand or believe.

As the meal went on, our conversation was hushed and not as easy as before. Then Jesus stood up and held up a loaf of bread. He quietly glanced around the room and made a connection with each of us that was so filled with love that we began to feel more at ease.

Narrator: The events of that last supper are so central to our tradition that we still re-enact that Passover event. So let us gather here and be part of that event that has been carried through time to us today.

COMMUNION LITURGY *from Spirit of the Lakes UCC, see page 44*

Presider: God is with you.

All: And also with you.

Presider: Let us share our communion prayer.

All: We remember that on the night before Jesus was killed by those who feared him, he sat at table with his friends, women and men and children, sharing in the feast of the Passover, which is the celebration of the liberation of God's people. And remembering God's power, Jesus took bread, and after he had given thanks and blessed it, he broke it saying, "This is my work and my life, for you and with you. Take it all of you, and do this remembering me.

After dinner Jesus took the Elijah Cup, the cup that was traditionally reserved for the Holy One to come. But instead of waiting, Jesus passed it to them as it is now being passed on to us, and he said, "This is the cup of the new covenant. It is the cup of justice and peace poured

out for all. Drink of it all of you and do this remembering me.

Each time that we break bread together we participate in the Body of the Risen Christ, for we are the Body of the Risen Christ. And each time we share this cup we participate in the New Community for we are God's hope of the New Community. Let us consecrate these elements as we sing our table prayer together.

TABLE PRAYER *(A song such as "Eat This Bread" from the Taizé Community)*

THE COMMUNION INVITATION

One: Consider your place at this feast. Gathered with friends and experiencing Jesus' intimate sharing as he begins the end of his life journey. With this in mind, we invite you to approach the servers from the center aisle in whatever configuration is comfortable for you. The servers will give you the elements and instead of spoken prayer, today we will simply share together in silence the intimate presence and connection with one another.

(After Communion is completed, everything should be removed from the communion table/altar except for the Christ candle and the paraments.)

FOURTH READING *Peter tells of being in the garden with Jesus*

Peter: My name is Peter. I have loved my time and connection with Jesus. I am sure you can imagine my feelings when Jesus brought up the idea that one of us would betray him. My heart raced with fear, we have been having pretty intense discussions lately about what we are all being called to do. I felt like something big was about to happen, otherwise why would he say something so disturbing during the Passover dinner.

It only got worse from there. As planned after dinner we walked to the Mount of Olives. Upon our arrival, Jesus turned to us and said that we would all desert him. Betray him... desert him? What was going on? I pulled him aside because I had to tell him that I loved him and that I would never desert him, no matter what. Based on the pained look in his eyes, I knew he did not believe me. I think he wanted to, but some how couldn't. His reply broke my heart and also made me mad. In fact, he said, before the rooster crows twice I would deny him not just once but three times. I told him that was crazy thinking – I would never do such a thing. But, there was no getting through to him. In his mind it seemed like a done deal. I was devastated and sick to my stomach. I couldn't figure out

why he would think I would ever deny him! I love him!
(Peter picks up the Christ candle from the communion table and sets it elsewhere.)

A few minutes later Jesus asked us to go with him to Gethsemane so he could pray. Of course we went with him. I think we all wanted to keep a close eye on him. While some of the other disciples hung back at the edge of the garden, James, John and I went with him to where he wanted to pray. It was so painful to see him in such a state. I could just see the agony he was feeling. He said he was deeply grieved and asked us to stay awake with him. We stood a few feet away as Jesus threw himself on the ground and prayed out loud that “this hour might pass him by.” He asked that he might be spared what was to come, but also that he might be able to accept the will of God rather than run from it. I always admired Jesus' willingness to be open to God's call in his life. But I have to say it was also that openness that was often the cause of our arguments. Some of us wanted to play it safer than it seemed Jesus was willing to play. He would push us to places we never really wanted to go. He always seemed to be right, too. That's why I was so uncomfortable that night. I was sure that Jesus knew something or was being called to something that would be a great hardship even for him to accept.

As we waited for Jesus to finish his praying, we fell asleep. Jesus had to wake us up. He was disappointed and hurt that we had not stayed awake with him like we said we would. Talk about feeling like jerks, just when he really needed friends and we couldn't come through for him. He gave us another chance and asked us to stay awake as he spent more time praying. With so much adrenalin running through our veins we agreed that we would stay awake. Honestly, we tried to stay awake. We really did, but once he was off praying again the sleepiness snuck up on us and we fell asleep. After all the wine at dinner, and the tension, we were tired. I was at a loss for words when he woke us up again. What does one say after letting down someone you love not once but twice within a matter of hours? Worst of all, we fell asleep yet a third time. What kind of friend was I? How hard is it to stay awake when asked? I have asked myself these questions thousands of times since then. The third and last time Jesus woke us up, he said it was time to face his betrayer. I did not know what to think until I saw the lights in the distance. *(Peter gathers up the altar paraments, hugs them to his*

chest, and exits.)

CANDLE LIGHTING

C. Lighter: Betrayal and intimacy is within each one of us.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

One: Jesus relived the history of his people – a people who traced their origins to freed slaves and itinerant tribes.

All: Jesus found his voice and his power in the desert. He returned to society determined to speak truth to power, to build a circle of equals in a world of oppression, and to live his life even in the face of death.

HYMN

perhaps "Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley"

FIFTH READING

Judas speaks of his reason to betray Jesus

Judas: I knew the whole evening that I was going to betray Jesus, but I don't know how Jesus knew. And why didn't he do something to stop me? I love Jesus just as much as Peter and the others do, but I could see what the others could not see. The people were beginning to believe that they could rise up and overthrow the powers in place. Certainly, that would not bring the peace. There isn't enough organizing to keep control of the masses that are beginning to listen to him. We will all be killed. If Jesus is not stopped in the uprising he is leading, we will all be killed! I am the only one who knows how bad it can be and who has a way to stop it. I have friends in the seats of power; I know their strength and determination to end this whole thing. What I am doing will minimize the lives lost. I must see my loyalty to the country before my loyalty to my friend.

CANDLE LIGHTING

C. Lighter: Betrayal and intimacy is within each one of us.

SIXTH READING

The chief priest tells of Jesus' trial

Ch. Priest: The other chief priests and I gathered before the whole council to put a case together against this Jesus that was before us now. We were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death.

(Extra One and Extra Two each stand and speak from their places in the congregation.)

Extra One: Many of us would give false testimony against him but our testimony did not agree.

Extra Two: We heard him say, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands." But even on this point we did not agree.

Ch. Priest: We stood and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?” But he was silent and did not answer. So we asked again, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” Jesus said, “I am; and you will see the Human One seated at the right hand of the Power,” and “Coming with the clouds of heaven.” His answer enraged us. We tore his clothes, and of the whole council we asked, “Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?” (*pause and smile menacingly*) All of them condemned him as deserving death. Then the crowd that was gathered took over. They began to spit on Jesus, they blindfolded him, struck him and shouted for him to save himself. They shouted “Prophecy! Prophecy!” Then the guards beat him as the crowd watched and cheered.

CANDLE LIGHTING

C. Lighter: Betrayal and intimacy is within each one of us.

SEVENTH READING

Peter explains his denial of Jesus

Peter: (*Scared and nervous about being seen, Peter returns by way of the side aisle but doesn't come completely into the center area.*) I followed at a safe distance as they took Jesus off to the High Priests. This was so much worse than I could ever have imagined, Jesus has done *nothing* wrong, there is no testimony that is credible, and surely he will be released. And yet, it didn't look good. The leaders were serious about getting rid of Jesus and I think they would have done whatever they needed to do in order to put an end to Him and to the movement that was growing. When someone in the crowd recognized me, I reacted out of fear, and without thinking. I just said I didn't know him. I kept watching from a safe distance and prayed that this was a bad dream, and that it couldn't really go this badly. Someone else asked if I was with Jesus. That time I just quietly said no. I was there all through the night watching this all unfold. Jesus was being beaten and the crowd was cheering. There was so much fear and hate in that crowd I couldn't believe it. The third time someone accused me of being part of his group, I feared for my own safety as I saw what was happening to Jesus. I got defensive and said I didn't know what they were talking about... Then, I heard that rooster crow and I remembered what Jesus has said to me in the garden just the night before. He was right, even though I loved him; I protected myself first and denied him. What good would it have done if I had done otherwise? But how could I let him go through this alone? Did

he know what he was expecting of me? (*Peter quietly moves away during the following.*)

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

One: We face hard questions.

All: Questions about ourselves – who are we as individuals and what have we each done with our lives? Questions about our community – how do we relate to family and community as equals? Questions about God – what is the nature of God? What does God want of each of us and all of us together?

SILENT REFLECTION

Music: perhaps “Pilate's Dream” from *Jesus Christ Superstar*

(All the readers throughout the space join in and recite the following line in a cacophony. Let it crescendo and then die out prior to the candle lighting.)

All Readers: “Crucify him, crucify him, crucify him!”

CANDLE LIGHTING

C. Lighter: Betrayal and intimacy is within each one of us.

EIGHTH READING

The gathered crowd tells of the crucifixion of Jesus

Observer: We gathered around as Jesus was stripped in the courtyard. Someone placed a purple robe on him, one man made a crown out of a grapevine and put thorns in it and placed it firmly on Jesus' head. As the blood began to drip from his forehead, we jeered, “Hail, King of the Jews.” We paraded by him and knocked into him, shoved him or spat on him, always mocking him, and he remained silent through it all. Before we took him out to be crucified, we took the purple cloak back and threw his clothes back on him. We found a man passing by and made him bring the cross for Jesus.

(The cross-bearer brings the cross down the center aisle and stands there with it.)

Observer: Once we reached Golgotha, we stripped him again and nailed him to the cross. We continued to deride him as he hung there. Some joked at him that he said he would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days... save yourself, come down from the cross.

Ch. Priest: *(with sarcasm)* He saved others and cannot save himself.

Observer: Someone offered him wine mixed with myrrh but he refused it. We rolled dice to decide who would get his clothes. Finally, he hung there.

(Cross-bearer, who is now playing Jesus, slowly drops the cross.)

Jesus: My God, My God why have you forsaken me?

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Narrator: We find our lives joined with the story of Jesus.

All: We find our hearts attuned to the suffering of our sisters and brothers and we pray for strength to recommit to our personal well being, the health of our relationships, and the healing of an oppressive and violent world.

All Cast: Betrayal and intimacy are within each one of us.

POSTLUDE



LITURGY

A Service of Baptism

By Rev. Rebecca Voelkel

IWR & Faith Work Program Director

National Gay & Lesbian Task Force's Institute for Welcoming Resources

Written for the baptism of Cailey Jean Hansen, June 17, 2001

INTRODUCTION

One: Friends and family of (*congregation's name*), the time has come to honor our new daughter/son, (*child's name*), with the seal and blessing of baptism. As we begin, we light a candle to symbolize the light of Christ's way of living in the world and proclaiming justice. We are also reminded of the illumination of the mysterious and powerful Holy Spirit with us this morning.

All: Bless us, Holy One, as we gather.

EXPLANATION

One: Baptism is a sacrament which acknowledges the grace and nurturing that God and this community have for this child.

All: Baptism is a covenanting between a community and a new member.

One: Just as God covenants with us in grace, so we covenant with one another.

All: Baptism is a beginning.

One: This morning is a time to honor the beginning of a lifelong spiritual journey.

All: Water has been an important part of sacramental Christian ritual for thousands of years.

One: It is also a part of sacred ritual in many other spiritual traditions.

All: Water is a fundamental part of the cells in our bodies and the oceans of our planet.

One: In a bowl, one drop is an integral part of the whole.

All: Just as we are all drops of water in a larger ocean of life.

One: Water restores and nourishes us in times of exertion and healing.

All: Water provides swimming and coolness and splashing in the summer.

One: We are also called to be a sanctuary of mystery.

All: There is mystery in the holy sacraments. The oneness we become in this ritual of baptism is mysterious and

blessed. God is present fully, openly, and in ways we do not know or understand in each of our lives.

One: One important story about water and mystery in the Christian tradition is the account of Jesus' baptism. Jesus approached John to be baptized and, though John thought himself unworthy, he baptized Jesus. As Jesus came out of the water, the sky opened up and the Spirit of God came down like a dove and descended on him.

All: Then a voice from heaven said, "This is my own dear Son, with whom I am well pleased."

One: This morning, we witness a similar blessing coming from God and this community of faith. (*child's name*) is God's own beloved son/daughter with whom God is well pleased.

All: Today, as we baptize (*child's name*), we reaffirm our own baptisms and the reality that we are all children of God, full of grace.

COVENANTING

One: Baptism, particularly an infant baptism, is about the promise of an entire community to nurture a child in his or her spiritual faith journey. As we baptize (*child's name*), I ask the following questions to her parent(s): Will you covenant to raise your daughter/son in a faith community? Will you promise to teach him/her the stories, beliefs, and rituals of Christianity, while at the same time encouraging her/him to respect and learn about the religious and spiritual traditions of others? If so, answer, "I will, with God's grace".

Parent(s): I will, with God's grace.

One: As you are raising her/him, will you be mindful of his/her spiritual life and growth, encouraging questions and conversations? If so, answer, "I will, with God's grace".

Parent(s): I will, with God's grace.

One: Will you promise to work for justice in your own life and to teach (*child's name*) the ways of justice? If so, answer, "I will, with God's grace".

Parent(s): I will, with God's grace.

One: Will you promise to ask for help from this community when you need counselor assistance in the spiritual rearing of (*child's name*)? If so, answer "I will, with God's grace."

Parent(s): I will, with God's grace.

One: I now turn to (*child's name*)'s godparent(s). Being a godparent is a holy calling. It means being a spiritual guide, an adult companion, and a playful influence. It entails supporting (*child's name*) in a special kind of relationship which each of

you has already begun. Will you promise to pay particular attention to *(child's name)* spiritual milestones, to honor and remember her/his baptism, and to answer tough questions he/she asks honestly, even if it means being vulnerable or awkward? If so, answer, "I will, with God's grace".

Godparent(s): I will, with God's grace.

One: Will you promise to take *(child's name)* out for ice cream, play games with her/him, and to continue to love him/her unconditionally? If so, answer, "I will, with God's grace".

Godparent(s): I will, with God's grace.

One: Finally, will you promise to work for justice in your own life and to teach *(child's name)* the ways of justice? If so, answer, "I will, with God's grace".

Godparent(s): I will, with God's grace.

One: There are at least two different communities that *(child's name)* will grow up in, the community of *(congregation's name)*, and the community of chosen family and friends. Will you, the community of *(congregation's name)*, and the chosen family and friends that surround her/him, promise to encourage *(child's name)*'s spiritual life and growth, to provide an education for *(child's name)* in the church, and to teach *(child's name)* about issues of justice? If so, answer "I will, with God's grace."

All: I will, with God's grace.

One: Do you promise to be with him/her as a community in joy, in sadness and in questions? Will you bestow on her/him the grace of a child of God? Will you laugh with him/her and play with her/him? If so, answer, "I will, with God's grace".

All: I will, with God's grace.

One: I now invite all the children here today up to the front. You children are special playmates of *(child's name)*'s. Will you, the children in *(child's name)*'s life, agree to help *(child's name)* learn about God? Will you listen to him/her and laugh with her/him? Will you show him/her how to be an honest and playful child? If so, answer, "We will!"

Children: We will!

BAPTISM

One: Now it is time to baptize *(child's name)*.
(Children of the congregation take containers filled with water and pour them into the baptismal bowl.)

Will you join with me as we bless this water and the covenants we made.

God of water and life, we celebrate the community that

surrounds (*child's name*). Give each of us strength, conviction, and courage as we live into the promises we have made. Bless this water that it might be a sign and symbol of Your abundant grace. Amen.

One: By what name will this child be called?

Parent(s): (*child's full name*).

One: (*child's full name*), I baptize you in the name of the Creator who is Mother and Father of us all; in the name of the Christ who guides us in the ways of love and justice; and in the name of the Holy Spirit who comforts, inspires, and sustains us. Amen.

BAPTISMAL PRAYER

*adapted from "Blessing Prayer
for Infant" by Maren Tirabassi*

One: Gentle God, we give thanks for (*child's name*), received with water, words, and the whisper of God into the church and this community of faith. We pray grace on this young life as infancy stands up into childhood and childhood reaches out for adolescence. Grant, O God, strength for the journey, insight appropriate for years, laughter in her/his home, and blessing in all places. May these parents/this parent find courage; may his/her godparent(s) share wisdom, may a friend arrive for every loneliness; and may the community of faith be alert always to the needs and hopes of all God's children. Amen.

LITURGY

A Service of Communion

From Spirit of the Lakes United Church of Christ,
Minneapolis, MN



Offertory Hymn/Presentation of the Gifts

Great Thanksgiving

One: God is with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Let us lift up our hearts.

All: We lift them up to our God.

One: Let us give God thanks and praise.

All: This is a good and joyful thing to do.



LITURGY

Service of Communion: A Ritual with Salt

By Carol Wise

Executive Director, Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests

Scripture Reading

Mark 9:50

Introduction

One: Salt – this mighty symbol of life and vitality. Salt is the only rock that we eat.

Salt preserves and protects against decay. We die from a lack of it. Interestingly, when we hunger, we crave food. When we thirst, we crave water. But even when dying from a salt deficiency, at no time will we experience a craving for it. Perhaps that is why it is so difficult for dying institutions to embrace the salty ones in their midst.

Salt – a blessing, a necessity, a holy substance, a tasty gift. No wonder Jesus spoke of it. It is only fitting.

Today we celebrate the salt that we call the welcoming community. As a people called to justice, hospitality, love and healing, we offer to our churches and to the world the possibility of life, a protection against decay, an enhanced experience of flavor, health and vitality.

I invite us to consider the blessings that the salty ones pour out upon us and to celebrate that goodness. We welcome them to this holy table...

(Individuals come forward, take a pinch of salt and sprinkle it over the communion bread as they speak:)

One: I bring the saltiness of those who have gone before us and cleared the path... the ones who have taught us the meaning of courage, who embodied integrity, who ruptured the death-dealing silence, who call us yet today to be bold, brave and bodaciously honest. Their virtue continues to be a blessing to us all.

All: Be welcome at this table!

One: I bring the saltiness of people of faith whose hunger and thirst for righteousness has called them to remain within their faith traditions, and by their presence, insist that the church be faithful to God's call to hospitality and justice. Their hopefulness is a blessing to us all.

All: Be welcome at this table!

One: I bring the saltiness of those whose hunger and thirst for righteousness has called them to leave the familiarity of their religious traditions to embrace new spiritualities, or live within the ambiguity of their exile. Their absence from our churches is a reflection of an unquenchable, life affirming spirit, and is a blessing to us all.

All: Be welcome at this table!

One: I bring the saltiness of those allies who see in the liberation of lgbt, same gender loving people, hope for the whole of humankind. Their willingness to stand in solidarity is a profound act of imagination and peace, and their generosity is a blessing to us all.

All: Be welcome at this table!

One: I bring the saltiness of the most outrageous queens and uppity women and pesky peacemakers and annoying gadflies. These saints remind us that laughter and celebration are brazen acts of resistance and expressions of a strength and a passion that the world cannot take away. Their audacity is a blessing to us all.

All: Be welcome at this table!

One: I bring the saltiness of all who refuse to be silenced and made timid by fear. Their songs of love, their prayers of hope, their sermons of outrage, their protests, letters, speeches, mailings, poems, tears, righteous defiance and shouts of indignation, are gifts of passion and a blessing to us all.

All: Be welcome at this table!

One: Let us take a moment to give thanks for those whose presence graces our table...If you would like, I invite you to name them out loud...

Prayer of Blessing

All: Holy One,

With hearts full of gratitude, we give thanks for this cloud of witnesses whose spirits linger among, around and within us. May the hope, generosity, audacity, and passion and life affirming presence that is present around this table and in this meal inspire us to be bold in our speech and strong in our commitment to a just and kind world where there is room enough for all at the table. Amen.

Sharing of the Bread and Cup

(insert your own Words of Institution)

A Reading

“When I Use My Power” by Audre Lorde

(All three voices happen simultaneously. However, each only speaks the words printed in bold. So sometimes there is only one voice speaking at a time, sometimes two, and sometimes all three.)

VOICE ONE;

When I dare to be powerful – to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.

When I dare to be powerful – to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.

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VOICE TWO:

When I dare to be powerful – to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.

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VOICE THREE:

When I dare to be powerful – to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.

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When I dare to be powerful – to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.

Hymn

“You Are Salt for the Earth, O People” by Marty Haugen
New Century Hymnal 181



LITURGY

A Service of Covenant (Mantling)

In honor of Ann B. Day and Donna Enberg
and their dedication to the welcoming movement.

Adapted by Rev. Troy Plummer, Executive Director,
Reconciling Ministries Network, and by Heather Murray Elkins
with appreciation to John Wesley's service of covenant
Experienced in part at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina.

While the Ku Klux Klan intimidated outside,
justice seekers for persons of all sexual orientations
and gender identities worshipped inside.

Reading

2 Kings 2:9-14

Response to the Word

One: We have been wandering in the wilderness, forty days and forty
years.

All: Forty nights and for a life time.

One: Here we will camp.

All: Here we will come to a conclusion.

One: Here we will decide if we will bind ourselves

All: To the service of Christ again

One: Or travel on alone.

All: This is the place of covenant.

One: We have not traveled to this place by ourselves. Hear the names of
those whose ministries and mantles have been showers of blessing.
(pause for names)

Now, surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,

All: Let us persevere in the calling to which Christ has called us.

Reading (optional)

Acts 1:6-11

Meditation/Sermon

*Focus: Elishah picking up Elijah's mantle or
disciples receiving a double portion and commissioned*

Procession of Yoke

*(Use an actual oxen yoke or symbolic creation,
with one piece of rainbow cloth or stole draped at its middle.
The yoke is carried throughout the assembled by two
people, ending at a spot center front, accessible to all.)*

Prayer of Covenant

(See John Wesley's Covenant Service)

Alternative:

One: Will you proclaim the faith marked by baptism trusting in God's promises?

All: We will.

One: Will you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?

All: We will.

One: Will you act to create community, sanctuary, and peace with justice?

All: We will.

One: Will you gather at the table remembering grace, offering hospitality to all, expecting love to prevail?

All: We will.

One: Will you accept the mantle of discipleship as one who follows Christ?

All: We will.

Receiving the Mantles

(Several stations holding rainbow fabric pieces are needed. These mantles need to be at least 3 ½ feet long; 3-5 inches wide. The congregation is invited to come forward and touch the "yoke" in the center aisle and move to a station to receive the mantle.

Attendants at the stations will place the mantle around the back of the neck draping over the front shoulders.

Covenant Prayer and Blessing *(Example: see John Wesley Covenant Prayer)*

(Invite all to place a hand on the shoulder of the brother or sister in front of them.)

Optional Service Music

"Here I am, Lord" by Dan Schutte (Isaiah 6:8) © Daniel L. Schutte and NALR

"We Are Called" by David Haas (Micah 6:8) © GIA Publications, Inc.

PRAYERS





PRAYER

Grandmother God

By David R. Weiss
Poet & Theologian, Lutherans Concerned/North America

Grandmother God with wizened face,
join us in our table grace.
Bless the words and food we share
and strengthen us so that we dare
embrace Your world with loving care.
Amen.



PRAYER

A Prayer for Openness

By Rev. Pamela June Webb

Founder, Covenant of Inclusion, Open and Affirming Ministries
of the GLAD Alliance, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

One: Blessed God, we give thanks for our many gifts: for the gifts of our race, gender and sexual orientation, and for the sacraments of relationship and community that grow from these gifts.

All: Holy God, we rejoice for the healing power of salvation.

One: Sanctify our hearts that our lives may glorify and show forth Your power of salvation.

All: We thank You for healing our ears to hear how racism attempts to silence a people by consensus. Open our ears to hear the silence and the language of our own racism.

One: God, we give You thanks because You give us the wisdom to discern injustice and the courage to stand for peace.

All: Give us the strength of a mountain to stand against the ignorance of sexism, the promotion of racism, and the condemnation and defamation of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people.

One: Blessed God, thank You for delivering us out of the mire of injustice that pollutes, disrespects, and dismisses the needs and concerns of women throughout the world.

All: Holy God, we rejoice because You are healing the blindness of sexism. Open our eyes to see how we can support women in their struggles.

One: Holy Spirit, our teacher, teach us to be aware of when our own freedoms infringe on the freedoms of others.

All: Blessed God, forgive us for participating in attitudes and behaviors that cause repression and grief for others. Make us aware and give us the power to change.

One: Holy Spirit of life, thank You for the gift of those who give their hearts of empathy, who reach out with support and understanding to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people, to those healing the injuries of racism, and to those who nurture the rights of women.

All: Be with us all in our struggles. Amen

Source: #342 of *Chalice Worship*, compiled and edited by Cartwright and Harrison, Chalice Press, 1997.
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PRAYER

Prayers of the Gathered Community

By Rev. Rebecca Voelkel

IWR & Faith Work Coordinator

National Gay & Lesbian Task Force's Institute for Welcoming Resources

Based on the prayer format at Spirit of the Lakes

United Church of Christ, Minneapolis

See page 75 for the sung response, "O God, Remind Us"

One: Holy One, You are a God of pine trees and of oaks, of hostas and daisies and sunflowers. You are a God of the dog days of summer, and the promise of cool lake water. You are a God of art fests and protests and fastings.* You are everywhere, in all things, and yet contained by no one thing. And so we pause in awe and in gratitude.

(Invite the congregation to sing by saying:)

Holy One, remind us You are near.

**All: O God, remind us You are near.
May we open our hearts to You.**

One: Holy One, You call us to places we might never imagine – places of forgiveness and grace, places of love and tenderheartedness. And we must step back because our world is so often filled with revenge and judgment, hatred, and hardheartedness. In Israel and Palestine. In the Pentagon, and the Congress, and the White House. But You call us to imagine a different way. You call us to imagine Your way. So enliven our creativity and our imaginations as we lift up our prayers for our world and our nation...

(At this point, the congregation is invited to lift up prayers of their own. When it is time to move on, invite the congregation to sing by saying:)

Holy One, remind us You are near.

**All: O God, remind us You are near.
May we open our hearts to You.**

One: Holy One, You call us to ways we have tried and too often failed – ways of speaking honestly, ways of putting away wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, ways of being kind to one another. And we must step back because our lives are so often filled with

** replace with appropriate seasonal imagery, if needed*

pettiness and greed. In our state budgeting process. In our interactions with new immigrants to our communities. In our dealings with those we love. But You call us to re-imagine a different way. You call us to try again at the way You have laid before us. So give us new energy, give us to re-engage one another in the enterprise of Your radical community as we lift up our prayers for our state and our spiritual home...

(At this point, the congregation is invited to lift up prayers of their own. When it is time to move on, invite the congregation to sing by saying:)

Holy One, remind us You are near.

**All: O God, remind us You are near.
May we open our hearts to You.**

One: Finally, Holy One, God of imagination and creativity and trying again, lay Your hand upon us as we live with HIV/AIDS, with Hepatitis, with cancer, with addictions, with MS, with mental illness, with depression, with coming out issues, with grief and loss, and when we simply need to know that You are near.



PRAYER

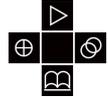
Wondrous God

By Rev. Ann B. Day
Program Coordinator, Open and Affirming Program
of the United Church of Christ Coalition for Lesbian,
Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns 1987-2007
Originally published in *Shaping Sanctuary*

Wondrous God, lover of lion and lizard, cedar and cactus, raindrop and river, we praise You for the splendor of the world! We thank You, that woven throughout the tapestry of earth are the varied threads of human diversity. Created in Your image, we are of many colors and cultures, ages and classes, gender and sexual identities. Different and alike, we are Your beloved people. Free us, we pray, from fears of difference that divide and wound us. Move us to dismantle our attitudes and systems of prejudice. Renew our commitment to make this a household of faith for all people – gay, bisexual, lesbian, transgender, and straight – that all who worship and minister here may know the grace and challenge of faith. In our life together, grant us minds and hearts eager to learn, reluctant to judge, and responsive to the leading of Your loving Spirit. We ask in Christ's name, Amen.

CLOSING WORSHIP





WORDS OF SENDING FORTH

Branches Bent With Ripening Fruit

By Rev. Rebecca Voelkel

IWR & Faith Work Program Director

National Gay & Lesbian Task Force's Institute for Welcoming Resources

One: Branches bent with ripening fruit, golden grain in wind swaying,

All: God, we go forth and rejoice in Your creation.

One: Gatherings, parades, festivals, and fairs,

All: Be with us as we dance in the garden of Your creation.



CLOSING PRAYER

May Your Gifts of Love Transform

From the More Light Presbyterians Retreat & Mission Weekend

New Orleans, LA, 2006

**All: May Your gifts of love transform and enliven us that we may
live lives of thanksgiving.**

**May Your presence among us provoke such longing for Your
realm that we will never be satisfied until the whole earth
knows Your justice, Your peace, and Your love.**

Amen.



CLOSING PRAYER

We Will Try to Be Holy and Useful

From the More Light Presbyterians Retreat & Mission Weekend

New Orleans, LA, 2006

**All: We will try to be holy and useful,
We will strive to repair the world given to us to hand on.
Let us lift each other on our shoulders and carry each other
along.**

Let us see the light in others and honor that light.

Let holiness move in us.

Praise the light that shines before us, through us, after us.

Amen.

MUSIC





CHORAL MEDITATION

Be Still

By David Lohman
IWR & Faith Work Coordinator
National Gay & Lesbian Task Force's Institute for Welcoming Resources
Written for the 2003 National Gathering of the United Church of Christ
Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns

*(This is to be sung slowly and repeated many times.
Begin with the basses alone. After a few repeats,
add the tenors, and so on. After several repeats
with everyone, begin dropping out voices,
beginning with the sopranos.)*

Be still ——— and know I am God.

Be still, — be still, — be still and know. —

Be still, be still, know I am God.

Still, be still, be still and know.

Text: Psalm 46:10
Music: David Lohman

*Written for the 2003 National Gathering
of the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns*
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HYMN

The Creation/Wind Upon the Waters: A Weaving of Poetry and Song

Adapted from “The Creation” by James Weldon Johnson
and “Wind Upon the Waters” by Marty Haugen
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Available in the Marty Haugen collection, *Spirit of God Among Us*
Adapted by Rev. Rebecca Voelkel and David Lohman

(The poem is spoken by readers, perhaps placed in various spots around the sanctuary. The congregation sings the hymn, printed in bold. This provides the pianist a great opportunity to improvise, all in G minor, the key of the hymn. The pianist begins playing sparsely, setting the mood. Music continues to underscore each section of the poem, and then brings the congregation in to sing each verse.)

One: And God stepped out on space,
And God looked around and said,
*“I’m lonely –
I’ll make me a world.”*

And far as the eye of God could see
Darkness covered everything,
Blacker than a hundred midnights
Down in a cypress swamp.

Then God smiled,
And the light broke,
And the darkness rolled up on one side,
And the light stood shining on the other,
And God said, *“That’s good!”*

**All: Blazing light of wonder, flame that pierces night;
Burst the dark asunder, fill our souls with light.
God of glory, fill the skies, make an end to hatred’s cries,
Be the blazing Sun of justice in our lives.**

One: Then God reached out and took the light in Her hands,
And God rolled the light around in Her hands
Until she made the sun;
And She set that sun ablazing in the heavens.
And the light that was left from making the sun

God gathered it up in a shining ball
And flung it against the darkness,
Spangling the night with the moon and stars.
Then down between
The darkness and the light
She hurled the world;
And God said, "*That's good!*"

**All: Showers from the heaven, water from the earth;
 Gift so wholly given, source of every birth.
 Joy of every living thing, making all creation sing,
 Shower down upon the dry earth of my soul.**

One: Then God himself stepped down –
 And the sun was on His right hand,
 And the moon was on His left,
 The stars were clustered about His head,
 And the earth was under His feet.
 And God walked, and where He trod
 His footsteps hollowed the valleys out
 And bulged the mountains up.

 Then He stopped and looked and saw
 That the earth was hot and barren.
 So God stepped over to the edge of the world
 And He spat out the seven seas;
 He batted His eyes and the lightnings flashed;
 He clapped His hands and the thunders rolled;
 And the waters above the earth came down,
 The cooling waters came down.

 Then the green grass sprouted,
 And the little red flowers blossomed,
 The pine tree pointed her finger to the sky,
 And the oak spread out his arms,
 The lakes cuddled down in the hollows of the ground,
 And the rivers ran down to the sea;
 And God smiled again,
 And the rainbow appeared,
 And curled itself around His shoulder.

 Then God raised His arm and He waved his hand,
 Over the sea and over the land,
 And He said, "Bring forth, bring forth."
 And quicker than God could drop his hand,
 Fishes and fowls,

And beasts and birds
Swam the rivers and the seas,
Roamed the forests and the woods,
And split the air with their wings.
And God said, "*That's good!*"

**All: Rock and hill and garden, wood and desert sand;
 Prairie, field and meadow, shaped by Love's own hand.
 Love that fills the world around, springing up from barren
 ground,
 Grow Your love within the garden of my soul.**

One: Then God walked around,
 And God looked around
 On all that She had made.
 She looked at Her sun,
 And She looked at Her moon,
 An She looked at Her little stars;
 She looked on Her world
 With all its living things,
 And God said, "*I'm lonely still.*"

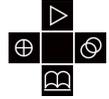
 Then God sat down
 On the side of a hill where She could think;
 By a deep, wide river She sat down;
 With Her head in Her hands,
 God thought and thought,
 Till She thought, "*I'll make me a human!*"

**All: Wind upon the waters, voice upon the deep;
 Rouse Your sons and daughters, wake us from our sleep.
 Breathing life into all flesh, breathing love into all hearts,
 Living wind upon the waters of my soul.**

One: Up from the bed of the river
 God scooped the clay;
 And by the bank of the river
 He kneeled Him down;
 And there the great God Almighty
 Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky,
 Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the night,
 Who rounded the earth in the middle of His hand;
 This Great God,
 Like a mammy bending over her baby,
 Kneeled down in the dust
 Toiling over the lump of clay

Till He shaped it in His own image;
Then into it He blew the breath of life,
And the human became a living soul.
Amen. Amen.

**All: Wind upon the waters, rains upon the sand;
Grace Your sons and daughters, newborn by Your hand.
Come, O Spirit, and renew all the life that comes from you,
Send Your winds upon the waters of my soul.**



HYMN

For All the Children

Words and Music by David Lohman

IWR & Faith Work Coordinator

National Gay & Lesbian Task Force's Institute for Welcoming Resources



1 God, we gath - er as your peo - ple To
2 Oh, we sing for all the chil - dren, That
3 Oh, we pray for all the young lives Cut
4 God, we're work - ing for the fu - ture When



raise our song a - bove, And we dare to claim the
one day they be free; And we sing for gen - er -
short by fear and shame So a - fraid of who they
chil - dren far and wide, Can— live their lives with



pro - mise of Your love, ————— Though the
a - tions yet to be, ————— That they
are and whom they love. ————— May the
dig - ni - ty and pride. ————— As they

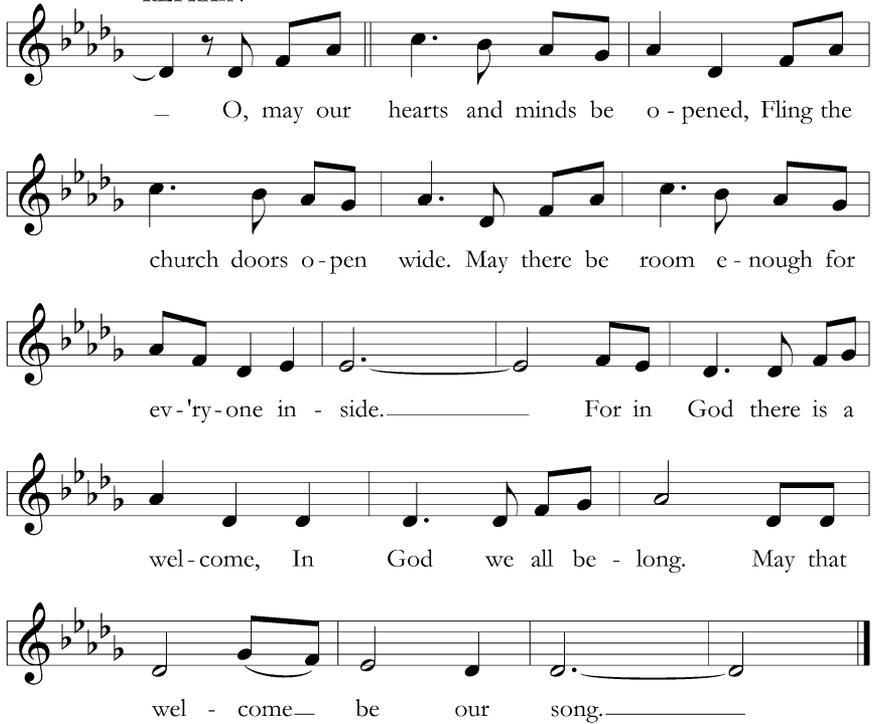


day may not yet be here, We— trust it soon will
nev - er have a rea - son To— doubt that they are
mess - age now be ban - ished That Your love is for the
grow in strength and sta - ture, May they join us hand in



be, When your chil - dren— will be free. —————
blest. May they, in Your— love, find rest. —————
few, May their faith in— You re - new. —————
hand, As a - gainst all— hate we stand. —————

REFRAIN



O, may our hearts and minds be o-pened, Fling the
church doors o-pen wide. May there be room e-nough for
ev-'ry-one in - side. For in God there is a
wel-come, In God we all be-long. May that
wel - come be our song.

Text: David Lohman
Music: David Lohman

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Dedicated to
REV. ANN B. DAY
&
DONNA ENBERG

in honor and celebration for their twenty years as leaders of the
Open and Affirming Program of the United Church of Christ
Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns,
and for their founding and ongoing spirit in the ecumenical
Welcoming Church Movement.
June 2007

A bulletin-ready copy and the piano accompaniment
are both available under Worship Resources at our web site:
www.WelcomingResources.org



HYMN

God Made Us From One Blood

Sung to “Immortal, Invisible”

Tune: ST. DENIO 11.11.11.11

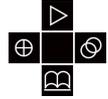
Words by Thomas H. Troeger, 1988

God made us from one blood all families of earth,
The circles of nurture that raise us from birth,
Companions who join us to work through each stage,
Of childhood and youth and adulthood and age.

We turn to You, God, with our thanks and our tears,
For all of the families we’ve known through the years,
The intimate networks on whom we depend
Of parents and partners and children and friends.

Through families we’ve tasted the value of trust
And felt what it means to be loving and just.
Yet families have also betrayed their best goals,
Mistreating their members and bruising their souls.

Help families in all of their various forms
To face with integrity struggles and storms;
Grant peace to our homes that will nurture the bud
Of peace for the families You made from one blood.



HYMN

Guide Us To Openness

Sung to “Great Is Thy Faithfulness”

Tune: FAITHFULNESS 11.10.11.10 with refrain

Words by The Rev. W. Robert Martin, III

Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Palo Alto, CA

Dedicated to the faithful ministry of More Light Presbyterians

Guide us to openness, Spirit of mercy,
Aid us in seeking God’s justice and grace.
Move us to show Christ’s compassion through witness,
Love first to offer and hate to erase.
Guide us to openness! Guide us to openness!
Let no one ever be shunned or denied.
Make of the Church a bold place of compassion,
That all who seek You may come and abide.

Spirit of tenderness, impart Your presence,
Fill both our hearts and our hands with Your care.
Let no one suffer or grieve unattended,
Grant us Your kindness and warmth here to share.
Guide us to openness! Guide us to openness!
Let no one ever be shunned or denied.
Make of the Church a bold place of compassion,
That all who seek You may come and abide.

Though there are those who would limit Christ’s graces,
Still we refuse to believe in such lies,
For in this time we have made a commitment
Never to limit love’s power or size.
Guide us to openness! Guide us to openness!
Let no one ever be shunned or denied.
Make of the Church a bold place of compassion,
That all who seek You may come and abide.

© W. Robert Martin, III



HYMN

Hear Our Prayer, O Holy God

Sung to “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” 7.7.7.7.7.7

Also works with the following melodies:

“Gracious Spirit, Dwell With Me” GETHSEMANE

“For the Beauty of the Earth” DIX

“Jesus Savior Pilot Me” PILOT

“Rock of Ages” TOPLADY

Text by Rev. Pamela June Webb

Founder, Covenant of Inclusion, Open and Affirming Ministries
of the GLAD Alliance, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Hear our prayer, O Holy God.
Help us place our trust in you.
Be for us new strength each day.
Let us follow in your way.
With your Spirit, like the Dove,
Healing others with your love.

Hear our prayer, O Holy God.
Bless us with the skill we need.
Help us listen with our ears
To the feelings and the fears.
With your Spirit, like the Dove.
Healing others with your love.

Hear our prayer, O Holy God,
May we always be prepared.
Sense the need of those in pain,
Let their tears flow like the rain.
With your Spirit, like the Dove,
Healing others with your love.

Hear our prayer, O Holy God,
Free us from our closet’s dark.
Give us courage we can share,
Daring lives which show we care.
With your Spirit, like the Dove
Healing others with your love.



PRAYER RESPONSE

O God, Remind Us

Words and Music by David Lohman

IWR & Faith Work Coordinator

National Gay & Lesbian Task Force's Institute for Welcoming Resources

O — God, re - mind us you are
near; ————— May we o - pen our
hearts ————— to you. —————

Text: David Lohman
Music: David Lohman

*Written for Spirit of the Lakes United
Church of Christ, Minneapolis, MN
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A bulletin-ready copy and the piano accompaniment
are both available under Worship Resources at our web site:
www.WelcomingResources.org



HYMN

Welcoming God

Sung to “Blessed Assurance”

Tune: ASSURANCE Irr.

Words by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

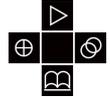
Co-Pastor, Limestone Presbyterian Church, Wilmington, Delaware

Children are welcome, Christ said one day,
When the disciples urged them away.
Children are welcome at Jesus’ knee:
God’s own example for ministry.
Welcoming God, You open the Way:
Even the smallest worship and pray,
Singing with faith and serving You well,
Your life to know and good news tell.

Women are welcome, as are the men;
Through God’s own Spirit, we’re partners again.
Partners as prophets, ministers, too:
No more divided – made one anew.
Welcoming God, You open the way;
Those once divided join now to pray,
Serving at Table, preaching Your Words,
So that Your love for all will be heard.

Outcasts are welcome; sinners are, too,
Eating with Jesus and being made new:
Some like Zacchaeus turned right around;
Wounded and poor ones felt peace profound.
God of great love, You stand at the door,
Welcoming people outcast and poor.
So You forgive and call us to be
Filled with the joy of Your jubilee.

So may we welcome into our pew
All who in Jesus are being made new-
All those who seek him, wanting to know,
Wanting to love him, wanting to grow.
Welcoming God, You stand at our door,
As someone different, outcast or poor.
With longing eyes, Lord Jesus, You search
May we all welcome You in Your church.



HYMN

Word of Welcome

Sung to “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee”

Tune: HYMN TO JOY 8.7.8.7.D

Words by David R. Weiss, 2003

Poet & Theologian, Lutherans Concerned/North America

In this holy place we gather, claimed through grace by God above;
Heaven’s wings now wrap around us, downy depths of boundless love.
Freed from fears that keep us hidden, for the work that You desire.
Reconciling as we’re bidden, hearts aflame with joyful fire.

Earth in all her verdant beauty sings Your joy made manifest;
Winged and finned and scaled and limbed life; fruitful frenzy, quiet rest.
Rushing wind and roiling waters, green of forest, blue of sky,
Dark of night and dawn of morning, all give praise to You on high.

As by imprint nature offers witness to Your gracious care
So in freedom’s faith we follow after Christ if we but dare.
Rushing wind of Spirit able, blowing from the most to least
From the font and for the table, born again and bid to feast.

Word of welcome walk among us, watching as these wineskins burst
Breaking bread and pouring wine for all who hunger, all who thirst.
Now as we go forth to scatter, may Your presence yet abide
Joy of life and Love of justice, be our Wisdom and our Guide.



A program of the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force

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