

Faithful Presence: *Practicing Presence*

“With’ may be the most important word in the Christian faith” says Anglican theologian Samuel Wells. In the Gospels we see Jesus being with the people he encounters, mediating God’s grace to them with his own incarnational presence. For those in ministry, indeed for all disciples, being with people - the troubled, the afflicted, the challenged, and the seeking – is what the church’s incarnational ministry ought to look like (*Incarnational Ministry*).

At the beginning of Romans 12.1-2, Paul encourages followers of the Risen Christ to be faithful in their ministry of presence:

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life - your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life - and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. (THE MESSAGE)

So what can anchor us in this ministry of ‘being with’? In his book *Faithful Presence: Seven Disciplines that Shape the Church for Mission* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2016) David Fitch offers seven practices or disciplines for the church, practices that shape us for mission in our everyday working lives/world. These practices include: Lord’s Table, reconciliation, proclaiming the gospel, being with the ‘least of these,’ being with children, the five-fold gifting, and kingdom prayer.

Living into these practices enable us to ‘grow as communities of grace, joy, and peace so that God’s healing and hope flow through us to the world.’

About this Resource

To help us engage these seven practices, we have prepared an 8-Sunday series, beginning with an introduction service on “three-tables” followed a service dedicated to each practice. There is some variation to the flow of worship, however, we have anchored the services in three movements; ***Gathering around the Host, Preparing to Host, Sent out as Guests***. These movements reflect the “three-tables” introduced in the first service. Included is a study guide prepared by J.R. Briggs that can be used for conversation around the different themes. Lastly, Fitch’s book can be purchased through CommonWord.

While this worship series can be used during any stretch of 8-Sundays, the series was planned with two timeframes in mind; it would fit well beginning on Sunday, September 29, 2019 and

concluding November 17, (the week before Eternity/Memorial Sunday) or starting January 5, 2020 (Epiphany Sunday) and concluding February 23, 2020, the last Sunday before Ash Wednesday. Again, these are only suggestions.

We hope you find this series engaging for your congregation. May Christ's presence be with you as you gather around the table (or tables) of our Lord!

In Christ,

Garth Ewert Fisher, Claire Ewert Fisher, Andrea Enns-Gooding, Sharon Schultz, Ryan Siemens & Josh Wallace

Faithful Presence: *Practicing Presence at Three Tables (First Sunday)*

Scripture: Ezekiel 37:24-28; Matthew 28:16-20; Psalm 23:5; Mark 6:34-38a

Focus statement: "There is no separation between the church and the world as far as God is concerned. ... God is at work in the whole world, including, but beyond, the church. Yet he is uniquely present in Christ wherever the church is faithfully present to his work in the world." (David Fitch, *Faithful Presence*, 39)

Song Suggestions

HWB 1: What is this place

HWB 16: God is here among us

HWB 25: Jesus, stand among us

HWB 172: O come, O come, Immanuel

StJ 3: Jesus calls us here to meet him

StJ 4: You've got a place

StJ 29: You are all we have

StJ 59: Confitemini Domino (Come and fill our hearts)

Voices Together Summer Sampler in Leader Summer 2019

1: Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

21: Word and Sign

[Before the service, set up three tables in the worship space. These can be at the front or spread throughout the space, so long as people can be seen and heard speaking from nearby them. On one, place your congregation's communion set. Set the second table as a home or potluck meal in progress. The last table should look like a coffeeshop or bar in your community.]

Gathering Around the Host (Close Circle)

[These elements, as possible, should be led near the first table]

Welcome in Christ's Presence

Leader: Welcome, welcome, welcome.

People: Christ, you welcome us here.

Leader: Christ is here! Christ is waiting to welcome us in.

People: "You prepare a table for us; our cups overflow."

Leader: Christ is here for our healing, for our salvation.

**People: Christ is here, the Mighty Divine Word,
sharper than any two-edged sword,
discerning our hearts.**

*Leader: Here we know Christ in truth;
here Christ shows the truth in our hearts.*

**People: Welcome, welcome, welcome—
O Christ, you welcome us in.**

(based on "The Welcoming Prayer," Mary Mrozowski)

Opening Prayer:

Eternal God, Love of Christ,
mighty in power, incomprehensible mercy,
the heavens cannot contain you,
much less any walls made by human hands.
Yet you have promised your special presence
whenever two or three gather in your name
offering prayer and praise.

You meet us here!

By the power of your Holy Spirit you make your home with us.

We declare you alone are our God;

Jesus is Lord, here in this place and in all the earth.

Here in songs of praise, in the echo of your words,

in gifts of bread and wine,
in water and your body made glorious in its diversity,

we meet you again;
you offer yourself to us.

Our joy is your presence; our pleasure is your praise!

Renew us to be your body so you may be known here and in all the earth!

Amen.

Songs:

Offering:

At the communion table, which is the heart of Christian worship, gifts of bread and wine (or grape juice) are offered both to God and to our sisters and brothers. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, they become a meal Jesus himself shares with us.

What the bread and wine (or grape juice) of the communion meal reveals so, too, all our other gifts might show: that God in Christ is here with love and power, transforming the many grains into *one loaf*, as Paul tells the Corinthians (1 Cor. 10:17), working reconciliation that all may partake in the body of Christ.

Christ is present here, when we gather to hear his word, sing his praise, raise up prayer, and share his meal. Let us offer our many gifts, that they may be transfigured by his presence, and being drawn up into him who reconciles all things and makes all things new.

[Optional prayer for before or after the offering is gathered]

Great Creator of all things,
pour our your Holy Spirit on us gathered here
and on these gifts offered in your presence.
Transform us to be the body of your Son,
that all creation may be united to his undying life. Amen.

Sharing/Pastoral Prayer based on Psalm 27:

[If you congregation's pattern is to hold a sharing of thanksgiving and concerns, welcome this sharing in the presence of God. Draw this time of sharing together to offer up to God with this prayer or one of your own.]

You, LORD, are our light, our salvation;
why should we fear?
Evildoers assault us—
Lord, hear the cry of the people you have created!
Sisters, brothers, neighbors, strangers,
we are all together bound in networks of injustice,
our benefits calculated against someone else's loss.
O Lord, deliver us!
One thing we have asked of you, O LORD,
one thing we seek:
To dwell in your home all our days,
to behold your beauty and goodness
as we seek your face.
You have made your home with us,

set up your tent in our neighborhood.
 The light of your glory rises upon us,
 shining in justice, compassion, reconciliation
 sprouting up through cracks in the forces that constrains us.
 When we feel abandoned of home or hope, LORD,
 you take us in; you make a home for us in your heart.
 Teach us your ways, O LORD,
 that we may walk in your path, follow in your footsteps.
 May our lives reflect your goodness in the land of the living;
 may we in strength and courage become extensions
 of your compassion, your justice, your welcome, your peace.
 We long to be where you are,
 and for our community to dwell in the fullness of your light,
 just as Jesus taught us to pray, saying, *Our Father ...*

The Story of God's Presence with Us:

A: In the beginning, God spoke into the dark and said, "I want to be with you."
 B: And there was light and life, a garden world fit for royalty, a
 sanctuary of earth and diversity.
 A: God spoke into the garden and called forth companionship.
 B: "It is not good to be alone."
 A: God saw humanity enslaved, and God spoke deliverance.
 B: "This will be the sign: I will bear you to myself on eagles' wings."
 A: God sent us forth, but God said,
 B: "My presence will go with you; lo, I will be with you always, even
 unto the end of the age."
 A: And God moved into God's tent set among the people,
 B: into God's temple set on God's holy hill,
 A: into the womb of a woman, and took on flesh, and dwelt among us.
 B: Let all creation say, "Glory!"
 A: "How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD almighty!"
 B: "My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God."
 A: God said, "I want to be with you,"
 B: and God reached out to embrace the one whose skin was broken with
 sores,
 A: to comfort the grieving mother and raise the sleeping child,
 B: to lift the bedbound and strengthen the failing knees,
 A: to bring sight back to blinded eyes,
 B: to share bread and fish with hungry bellies,

A: to drive away the evil that grinds hope back into dust,
 B: to embrace us with welcome and forgiveness.

A: God said, “I want to be with you,”
 B: and God stretched God’s arms wide on a cross, God loved to the last breath.

A: God breathed in and said again, “I want to be with you,”
 B: and God sent us out: “Go ye, therefore, and make disciples.”

A: “Heal the sick, raise the dead, restore the leper, cast out evil.”
 B: “Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with the truth.”

A: “Fear not,” God said, “for I have overcome the world.”
 B: God spoke into our future, into our present, and said, “Lo, I am with you always.”

Preparing to Host (Dotted Circle)

Children’s Time:

Note: This children’s feature is taken from Jonah chapter 4. In it Jonah experiences the sure (but not always pleasing) presence of God. Children will hear that God is always with us and always with our neighbors—even with our enemies. They will also hear that God is with us working mercy and blessing. The skit requires one large plant for a prop.

[Jonah walks on stage and sits down on the ground, obviously unhappy.]
 JONAH, muttering: I’ll sit here and wait. We’ll see what happens. We’ll see what happens to these Ninevites.

[Jonah looks up, notices audience.]

JONAH: Oh, hello—good day, if it is a good one. I’m Jonah. Maybe you’ve heard of me. Our God told me to come here—to Nineveh—to warn these people, their wicked king, their mighty armies, that God has noticed their violence, greed, and terror. Do you get that? God said to *warn* them! *[gestures disparagingly offstage]* So what did I do? I ran away. Caught a ship bound for the other end of the earth. But would God leave me alone? No. A storm—I thought I was done. And then a fish. And here I am again. *[pauses]* Forty days I’ve been here, waiting for God to punish these people and their king. Sure, I warned them. “Forty days more, and Nineveh will be overthrown!” I walked all through their streets, their alleys, right up to their king. Now forty days are up, we’ll see what God does.

[Jonah sits and waits for a few moments.]

JONAH, standing up, calling to the ceiling: God? God! Are you going to do anything? Where's the fire and brimstone?

[Jonah sits and waits another moment.]

JONAH, growing more agitated: God, you know the Ninevites are murderers and thieves, right? You've seen what they've done to others. They've scarred the earth and wiped out whole cultures. Their every thought is violence and wickedness.

[Jonah sits and waits another moment.]

JONAH: God! Where are you? Are you even here?

GOD, gently: I am right here, Jonah. Why are you so angry? I am always here.

JONAH, to himself: What good is it that you're here if you don't do anything? *[pauses, wipes brow]* Whew! It's a hot one! That sun just beats down. *[JONAH sits back down, exhausted.]*

[Pause for a few beats. GOD walks out and places a large plant next to JONAH. GOD then steps back off stage]

JONAH, revived a little: What a lovely plant! Just the shade I needed. Now if only God would show up and do something about these Ninevites! *[looking up]* God, are you still here? Are you going to do anything about this?

GOD, gently: I am right here, Jonah. I am always here.

JONAH: You're not much good to me if you don't do anything about these Ninevites!

[Pause for a few beats. GOD walks back out on stage and takes the plant back off stage.]

JONAH, suddenly angry: What now, God? How could you do this to me? You took away my shade! What the use? I wish you weren't here at all!

GOD, gently: I am right here, Jonah. I am always here. Open your eyes, Jonah. I gave you a plant, and you rejoiced. But I give mercy to Nineveh, and you curse me. If I am here with you, can I not be with them too—their kings and armies, their grandparents and little children, even their cats and donkeys and dogs? I am here, Jonah. I am always here with love and mercy.

[Jonah stands, pauses, looks offstage toward Nineveh, shakes his head and walks offstage.]

[These elements, as possible, should be led near the second table]

Scripture: Psalm 23:5 & Mark 6:34-38a

[These passages would be read best with very little interruption between them in order to highlight the contrast of God preparing a table and the command for the disciples to feed the crowds.]

Sermon:

While the Christian tradition has long confessed God’s omnipresence (see, e.g., Ps 139:7), David Fitch, in *Faithful Presence*, asserts our need to wake up or “become present” to God’s presence (p. 36). God is present with us and working all around us, but our awareness of God’s presence has been “structured out” of our lives (p. 26). The practices and disciplines we will encounter in the next seven weeks each “open up space” for us to remember God-with-us and for “God to rearrange the world, starting in our social relationships” (p. 36). We encourage you to look over chapters one and two of *Faithful Presence*, if you are able, for a fuller discussion of God’s presence with us. (A preview of the book is available at <https://bit.ly/2I8YszJ>.)

When Christians gather in worship, we encounter and relearn God’s presence in a unique and intense way. Gathered in a **close circle** around his table, we meet Jesus’ as our host. Like the disciples at the Last Supper, our faithfulness and relationships are discerned—he tells us the truth, as he did to Peter, John, and Judas.

But, as Fitch says, God’s presence is on the move. “By knowing God’s presence in Christ this way, we are then able to recognize his presence in the world” (p. 26). Even more, we can join God where God is working in the world, offering lived testimony and make his presence “visible” to our neighbors.

We first do this in our homes or other spaces where we gather with other Christians and any curious onlookers. Fitch calls this a **dotted circle**—still gathered close, but here also very open to newcomers. Here we act as the hosts, with honesty, open welcome, and no presumption that all gathered there know or want to know the presence of God in Christ. “[T]here are entry points for strangers to be among us and taste of the kingdom.

Christ's special presence is extended into the neighborhood. ... We send no one away ... we invite them to be with us among Christ" (pp. 56-57).

However, Christ's presence goes with us further—into the many places where we work, play, volunteer, and participate *not* as hosts but *as guests* of others. Jesus' instructions to his followers in Luke 10 as he sends them out highlight their role as guests. Fitch calls these positions our **half circles**. Here we "submit ourselves to the hospitality of others" where we "give up control, risking humiliation and even scandal" (p. 61). Here we watch for Christ's presence already at work, taking the "posture of receiving before offering anything" (p. 62). Only then may we offer up our witness, submitting to others that God is working here. Fitch concludes, "the questions in the space of the half circle is not whether Jesus will be present, but will he be recognized? Will Jesus be received?" (p. 61).

We will find in the coming weeks that each of the actions and habits we practice gathered close around Jesus also finds a place in the other two circles: working reconciliation, being with the least and left out, declaring good news, eating together in Jesus' name. Elsewhere Fitch has said, "Everything we do in here, we also do out there."

In today's passages, Jesus the good shepherd prepares a meal for the crowds who were "like sheep without a shepherd." However he invites his disciples to step into the role of hosts: "You give them something to eat." Here they have opportunity to extend the awareness and blessing of Jesus' sustaining presence to the crowds, peering into what was supposed to be Jesus' close fellowship with his followers.

In what spaces outside of your church building do folks gather around Jesus? How are these like or unlike the disciples' lunch shared with the five thousand? In small groups, Bible studies, coffee gatherings, how might the presence of Jesus be extended so that others may "taste and see"?

You may want to consider the attached resources from Fitch's congregation, Peace of Christ Community Church in Westmont, Illinois, offering a model for how to hold a house gathering (the dotted circle) and on discerning the spaces in which one enters as a guest (the half circle).

Hymn of Response:

Sent as Guests (Half Circle)

[These elements, as possible, should be led near the third table]

Faith Stories/Responding:

David Fitch writes, "The church gathers in its place of worship to encounter Christ's presence. But this same church is sent out to extend his presence into our homes, our neighborhoods, and among the marginalized and hurting in the world" (p. 41).

The character of God we meet when gathered around Jesus on Sunday morning is the same character already at work in our neighborhoods, schools, coffeeshops, cabins at the lake, workplaces, and prisons. The question is not, “Is God there?” but “What is God doing?” When we gather around these other tables, God is already seated there, engaged, waiting for us to notice.

Invite the congregation to form three sharing groups, each focused on one of the following questions:

- What does Jesus or God look like when we meet within the close circle of corporate worship?
- When have you encountered God’s presence while purposefully gathered with other Christians outside of corporate worship gatherings?
- Where do you suspect God might be working in situations you enter as a guest?

After ample time for sharing in these groups, ask all the groups to gather back as one and to share some of what they heard. For further conversation, have the group explore how the character of God met in worship overlaps with God’s active presence in the other circles of life.

Pastoral Prayer of Offering

Eternal God, Love of Christ,
 mighty in power, incomprehensible mercy,
 the heavens cannot contain you,
 much less any walls made by human hands.
 Yet you have promised your special presence
 whenever two or three gather in your name
 offering prayer and praise.

You meet us here!

By the power of your Holy Spirit you make your home with us.

We declare you alone are our God;

Jesus is Lord, here in this place and in all the earth.

Here in songs of praise, in the echo of your words,

in gifts of bread and wine,

in water and your body made glorious in its diversity,

we meet you again;

you offer yourself to us.

Our joy is your presence; our pleasure is your praise!

Renew us to be your body so you may be known here and in all the earth!

Amen.

Sending:

Sending Song:

EXTRA RESOURCES

Three Circles Diagram



close circle
[recipients]



dotted circle
[hosts]



half circle
[guests]

Discerning Your Half Circle Trifold Worksheet (Peace of Christ Community Church)

Faithful Presence: *Practicing Presence through Communion* (Second Sunday)

Focus Statement: The Lord’s Table (Communion/Eucharist) is about presence: Jesus, the host, is present to the gathered community and we are present to each other. At the Table of the Lord, we are “re-membered” as Christ body, we become what we eat, and we learn to see Christ’s presence at our own tables and at the tables in our in our homes and communities.

Scripture: Psalm 23, Luke 22:14-30, 24:13-35, 1 Cor 11:17-34

Song Suggestions:

HWB 1: What is this place

HWB 2: In thy holy place

HWB 459: I came with joy

HWB 477: For the Bread

HWB 478: Sent forth by God’s blessing

StJ 87: Put peace into each other’s hand

StJ 88: Hallelujah! Pelo tsa rona!

Voices Together Summer Sampler in Leader Summer 2019

17: Touch That Soothes and Heals

20: I Will Sing with You

21: Word and Sign

Order of Worship

Gathering Around the Host

Call to Worship:

Leader: The God of creation, the maker of the heavens and the earth,
gathers us here.

People: **We come to worship the God of creation!**

Leader: The God of creation, the maker of the heavens and the earth,
comes to us in Jesus Christ, who invites us to his table.

People: **We come to eat the bread of life and drink the cup of salvation**

Leader: The God of creation, the maker of the heavens and the earth comes
to us in the Holy Spirit, to fill our hearts and make us one.

People: **We come to be filled of the Spirit,
And shaped more fully into the people of God.**

Opening Prayer:

Hymn:

Offering:

Sharing/Prayers of the People:

Prayer for World Communion Sunday

Lord as we gather around this wonderful meal
everywhere and in every place;
bless us all your children.

As we eat this bread and drink this cup
linking arms around the world,
pour your grace into us all.

Grace us with your presence
as we quietly and loudly pray to you.

May we see in each other
your light, your love and you.

May it not matter our differences,
our names, our languages,

our looks, and our way of doing things.

May what matter today and everyday be that we are one in you.

And as we pray many we call to mind our brothers and sisters
who are unable to be with us today whether in body or spirit.

May you bring comfort to those who are grieving, lonely,
heartbroken, ill or broken of spirit.

May you strengthen those whose lives feel shattered,
don't make sense, in crisis, and experiencing loss.
May you say the healing word to those who need it.
May you bring the human touch of love
to those who have not been touched.
May you love the unloved through us.

May you shine your light
into those whose world is covered in darkness.
May you use us to feed the hungry,
clothe the ones who need clothes,
give a cup of water to those who are thirsty,
shelter the homeless, visit the sick and those in prison.

May lives be awakened to you, Lord,
to your love and to your kingdom
whose door is always open to all.¹

Preparing to Host

Children's Item: Children's Story about Holy Communion

<https://www.sundaychildrensfocus.com/the-lords-supper>

Scripture:

Sermon:

Hymn of Response:

Sent as Guests:

Faith Stories of "being guests"

Communion:

Invitation to the Communion Table

Jesus was always the guest.
In the homes of Peter and Jairus
Martha and Mary, Joanna and Susanna,
He was always the guest.

At the meal tables of the wealthy
Where he pled the case of the poor,
He was always the guest.

Upsetting polite company
Befriending isolated people,
Welcoming the stranger
He was always the guest.

¹ Written by Rev Abi and posted on **A Place for Prayer**. <http://revgalprayerpals.blogspot.ca/>

But here, at this table
Jesus is the host.

Those who wish to serve him
Must first be served by him,
Those who want to follow him
Must first be fed by him,
Those who would wash his feet
Must first let him make them clean.

For this is the table where God intends us to be nourished;
This is the time when Christ can make us new.

So come, you who hunger and thirst
For a deeper faith,
For a fuller life,
For a better world.

Jesus Christ,
Who has sat at our tables,
Now invites us to be guests at his.²

Communion Prayer

Leader: O God, Ancient of Days,
your love brought galaxies into being,
and made us in your image.
Through the ages you have cared for all you created.
When we wandered, you called us to return to you.
In the fullness of time, you sent us the Messiah, Jesus Christ,
to teach the law of love.
He lived what he taught,
and loved his enemies to the end.
In wonder, we remember the life Jesus lived,
laid down, and took up again for us.
Send your Spirit upon us
so that the bread we break and the cup we share
may be the communion of the body of Christ.
Send your Spirit upon us
so that we might live, conformed to Christ,
who taught us to pray . . .
Our Father...

Leader: Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed,
took a loaf of bread,

² Wild Goose Worship Group, Iona Community (Scotland), *A Wee Worship Book: Fourth Edition, 1999*

and when he had given thanks,
he broke it and said,
“When you share bread together,
remember me.”
All: Blessed are you, abundant God,
for you made bread to strengthen us;
you gave us this bread as a sign of your body.
Let our sharing be a taste
of the bread that feeds the world. Amen.

(The bread may be distributed.)

Leader: The gifts of God for the people of God.
All: Thanks be to God.

(Participants may eat together.)

Leader: Jesus took the cup after supper, saying,
“This cup is the new covenant.
When you drink it together, remember me.”²
All: Blessed are you, bountiful God,
for you made the fruit of the vine to nourish us;
you gave us this cup as a sign of your blood.
Let our sharing be a taste of the wine we shall drink
in your joyful feast. Amen.

(The cup may be distributed.)

Leader: The gifts of God for the people of God.
All: Thanks be to God.

(Participants may drink together. Alternatively, the bread and cup may be distributed and received at this time.)

A time of silence may be kept after the bread and cup are received.³

Prayer after Communion:

**All: Blessed are you, Eternal God,
through this holy meal
you have joined us to yourself
and to one another.
Blessed are you, Incarnate God,
you have put your life into our hands;
now we put our lives into yours.
Blessed are you, Breath of God;
as we go forth, set us free**

³ “Words of institution for the bread model 1” developed by MCUSA with attention to the experience of survivors of abuse, *Leader*, Summer 2016.

to follow where you lead. Amen.⁴

Sending:

Sending Song:

Practicing Presence: *Faithful Presence through Reconciliation (Third Sunday)*

Focus Statement: Paul calls us to be ministers of reconciliation who proclaim a message of reconciliation. In *Anabaptist Essentials*, Palmer Becker calls reconciliation the centre of our work. This service invites us to consider the ways Christ is present to us in the work of reconciliation with God, each other, and the world we live in.

Scripture: Psalm 85:8-13, 2 Corinthians 5.16-6.13

Song Suggestions:

StJ 4: You've got a place

StJ 30: Jesus Christ is waiting

StJ 42: Listen, God is calling

StJ 52: Jesus, help us live in peace

StJ 56: Make me a channel of your peace

StJ 68: O hear, my people

StJ 87: Put peace into each other's hands

HWB 226: You are salt for the earth

HWB 310: How good a thing it is

HWB 411: I bind my heart this tide

Sending song StJ 74: Now go in peace

Voices Together Summer Sampler in Leader Summer 2019

26: I Bind My Heart This Tide

28: We are People of God's Peace

Order of Worship

Gathering Around the Host

Call to Worship:

Leader: Come, let us worship God in unity

Children & youth: It is choice when brothers and sisters get on.

All: When we are united in the love of Christ,

It is like precious, sweet smelling balm.

Leader: Come, let us be together in worship

Children & youth: No more fighting! No more "me first."

What really matters is God – and God is love!

⁴ Mennonite Worship and Song Committee, 2018

All: **As we draw near in worship, there is blessing and new life,
Let us worship our loving God together. [mj – reWorship]**

Opening Prayer:

Generous God,
We begin this day in gratitude;
 gratitude for the gifts you have given us:
 new and transformed lives through Jesus Christ,
 for sun and rain,
 for relationships of family and congregation,
 for neighbours and strangers.

Gracious God,
 create space for us this day for
 the gratitude we intend.

In thankfulness
 we will give,
 we will tell,
 we will live your gifts
 through us to the world. Amen

Songs:

Scripture Reading:

Offering:

Sharing/Prayers of the People:

Preparing to Host

Story for all ages:

Hymn:

A Litany of Shalom:

Leader: Two things we know about the vision of shalom.
Shalom is a gift to us from God. Shalom is our mission.

Women: Shalom is a personal relationship between God and all God's children.

Men: Shalom is the home that we seek, the goal of our spiritual journeys, and the valley of our delight.

Leader: Shalom is our sense of security, of being cared for and loved.

Women: Shalom is the source of our courage and strength.

Men: Shalom is reconciliation: reconciliation with God, with our neighbours and our enemies, and with all creation.

Women: Shalom is the justice for all that we so easily forget when we are in control.

Men: Shalom is our hope which calls us to deeds of mercy and acts of liberation.

Leader: Shalom is Jesus Christ, God's holy child, who died, was buried, and rose triumphant from the grave.

ALL: Shalom is a gift to us from God. Shalom is our mission.⁵

Scripture:

Sermon:

⁵ adapted from Touch Holiness, ed. Ruth Duck & Maren Tirabassi, p.227

Hymn of response:**Sent as Guests****Faith Stories of “being guests” or Seek Peace as Lifestyle (skit by Janet Woelk):****Sending:****Sending Song:****Other Resources**

Rogers/DeGagne/Dewar (ed.) – Speaking my Truth: Reflections on reconciliation and residential schools.

Lederach, J.P. – The Moral Imagination: The art and soul of building peace.

The Journey toward Reconciliation.

Myers/Enns – Ambassadors of Reconciliation.

Rendle, G. – Behavioral Covenants in Congregations.

Steinke, P. – Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times.

Woelk, J. – Seek Peace as a Lifestyle. Attached to Email

Film:

Places in the Heart - The closing scene takes place in a church. As the camera slowly pans the congregation receiving communion, we recognize all the characters — those living and dead and departed for other places. It is an image in which the lambs and the wolves, the wronged and the wrongdoers, the betrayers and the betrayed, are all together as one. An unforgettable film about community and hope.

Babette’s Feast - compels us to meditate upon the needs of the flesh and the needs of the spirit. It is also about choices, talent, gratitude, friendship, grace, hope, and reconciliation.

Hostiles - unusual western in which a military officer transporting a dying Cheyenne war chief back to his tribal lands finds his vengeful attitudes and expectations transformed.

The Insult - vividly conveys the roiling tension created when insults slung by a right-wing Christian garage owner and a Palestinian refugee in Lebanon escalate into a full-blown feud.

The Evening Sun - describes what happens when a stubborn and inflexible patriarch -- who has divided the world into good guys and bad guys -- discovers that his country farm has been leased to people he considers "white trash."

Faithful Presence: Practicing Presence through Proclamation (Fourth Sunday)

Scripture: Psalm 145:10 – 13; Luke 10:1-12, 16-20; 2 Corinthians 5:19b – 20

Focus Statement: The gospel is the good news that God has come in Christ, who has been made Lord, and a whole new world (the kingdom of God) has begun. In Christ, God has begun to make all things right. Proclaiming the gospel, therefore, is the art of announcing to our neighbors that this new world has begun in Jesus Christ (David Fitch, Faithful Presence, page 97,98).

Song Suggestions:

StJ 63: Lord, you gave the great commission

TMH 594: We have heard the joyful sound (TMH 594)

HWB 397: God loves all his many people

HWB 395: Here I am, Lord
 HWB 401: This little light of mine
 HWB 398: I love to tell the story
 HWB 478: Sent for by God's blessings
 Lord of Mercy
 Let the Words of the Lord Jesus Christ Dwell in You
 Hope of the Nations (Brian Doerksen)

Gathered Around the Host

Call to Worship: (from Ps. 145:10-13):

All You have made will applaud You, O Lord, and Your faithful followers will praise You. They will speak of the glory of Your kingdom and share their stories of Your power. They will tell about Your mighty deeds and about the majesty and glory of Your reign. For Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. You rule throughout all generations. You, O Lord, always keep Your promises and You are gracious in all You do. So come, let's worship our faithful God together.

Opening Prayer: (based on Psalm 145:8-14):

Merciful God, we gather together to offer You our praise and thanksgiving for the unfailing love You have shown toward us, generation after generation, and for the compassion You shower upon us, day after day. You alone are our God and we are Your people.

We pray that Your Holy Spirit would move among us as we worship You together. Empower us to tell of your goodness so that all people may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. Open our hearts and minds to see You at work among us and in Your world, encouraging, challenging, uplifting, and inspiring, as we live each day for You. May our worship bring honour and glory to You. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Songs:

Offering:

Sharing/Prayers of the People:

Preparing to Host

Scripture:

Story for all ages:

<https://www.sermons4kids.com/depends-on-jesus.html>

You can adapt this story to fit your setting -- it goes nicely with the Luke 10:1-4 scripture reading.

Sermon:

Here in Saskatchewan, fields of ripening grain are a familiar sight. In Luke 10:2 Jesus uses the image of *harvest* to describe the world around us: *The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.* We can be nervous about being *sent into the harvest field*. As you prepare to proclaim the gospel from Luke 10:1-12, 16-20, notice that the harvest is ready and not only ready, but plentiful. Notice that Jesus

is Lord of the harvest; He is the one who sends us. This centers us with Jesus and what He's already doing in the world. Notice Jesus instructions... *stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you* vs. 7. We are sent to be present with people, not in a position of power, but as guests. And as community is built, and space is opened up for God's Spirit to move, we proclaim the message: *the kingdom of God is near* vs. 9a. What does this look like in your setting? Where are the places Jesus is inviting us to visit and eat and drink together with our neighbors?

Hymn of Response:

Sent as Guests

Faith Stories of "being guests"

Sending:

God in Christ is reconciling the world to Himself thru Jesus Christ, and He is using you to do it! You are God's chosen, holy people, God's instruments to do His work and speak out for Him, to tell others what God has done for you. So go into the world in confidence; live as God's people, through the grace of Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Sending Song:

Faithful Presence: Practicing Presence with the "Least of These" Fifth Sunday

Focus statement: "God is, as it were, lying in the streets, if only we could learn to see."

Dorothee Soelle, (*Thinking About God: An Introduction to Theology*, Trinity Press, International:1990), 192 (See Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation from the Center for Action and Contemplation, Friday, March 8, 2019).

Scripture: Isaiah 61:1-3a; Matthew 25:31-46; Ephesians 2:19-22

Song Suggestions:

HWB 26: Holy Spirit, come with power

HWB 167: For God so loved me

StJ 13: My soul is filled with joy

HWB 307: Will you let me be your servant

StJ 63: Lord, you give the great commission

StJ 61: How can we be silent

Order of Worship

Gathering Around the Host

Call to Worship:

Leader: Loving God, we desire your kingdom come

People: **Help us to recognize it today.**

Leader: Bless our Holy Imaginations

People: To see where you are already at work
Leader: Be present to us
People: So that we may create space for you to work
All: *Among the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the imprisoned, the homeless*
People: Within us as well.
All: *On earth as it is in heaven.*

Opening Prayer:

Loving God,
We come to worship you today because we want to learn more about love.
As we accompany the ‘least of these members of your family’
Help us to love those whom you love.
Teach us, empower us, and accompany us, we pray.
Energize us with a love
That is greater than all understanding. AMEN

Songs:

Offering Prayer:

We are the receivers:
Receivers of love
Receivers of Jesus
Receivers of grace

We are also Givers,
Responding to God’s call,
Learning to see Jesus in the marginalized members of his family.

We return the gift of money, presence and compassion
So that your kingdom will grow among us.
Thank you for this privilege. AMEN

Sharing/Prayers of the People:

Preparing to Host

Story for all ages based on Matthew 25:31-46:

The Sheep And The Goats @ https://rfour.org/childrensmessgae_a_52.html

ASK (a.k.a [The On-Ramp](#))

Good morning!

[Hold up an extension cord] Can you tell me what this is? (an extension cord!)

And what does it do? (it helps bring power/electricity to a place where there is not power/electricity)

Do you mean you might use it for a lamp that’s too far away from an electric outlet? (Sure, like a lamp)

And what happens if the extension cord isn't long enough? (Then you get a longer extension cord...or you move the lamp)

But what if you can't move the lamp and you don't have a longer extension cord...can you just unplug the extension cord you already have from the wall and bring it over to the lamp?

Wouldn't that fix the problem? (NO! Because the extension cord has to be plugged in to be able to send the power)

Oh...I see...so THAT'S why none of my lamps at home work...

TELL (a.k.a. [The Freeway](#))

Well, it just so happens, that in today's scripture story, Jesus tells a story that's very similar to the idea of an extension cord.

But instead of extension cords, he's talking about people, and instead of plugging those people into an electric outlet (which would be dangerous!), he's talking about how the people are supposed to be plugged into God.

So in his story, Jesus says that people who are plugged into God are able to share God's love, light, and power with the people around them – especially with people who are not doing so well.

Jesus calls those people who share God's love, light, and power, “sheep,” in today's scripture story.

Jesus then says there are other people who are supposed to be plugged into God but are not plugged in – like the extension cords at my house.

Jesus calls those people, “goats,” in today's story.

Jesus says the goats are people who were not plugged into God and then do not share God's love, light, and power with the people around them – even with people who were not doing so well.

SHARE the Good News (a.k.a. [The Destination](#))

Many of the ways that Jesus taught the disciples about plugging into God's power are told in the Bible stories – which means we can read those stories and learn to do the same things that Jesus taught the disciples to do.

And, when we learn to do the same things that the disciples learned to do, we are learning how to be extension cords for God.

Have you ever helped a friend or even someone that you didn't know?” (Hopefully, they will say yes.) “We all have helped someone, even if we may not know it! When we offer a hug, a smile or say a kind word, very simple things, we can help someone know the love of God can't we? Here at our church we help people we know and people we don't know in many different ways. (List some of the internal ministries (meals for the sick, visits, etc.) and outward ministries here.

As we learn how to plug into God's power, light, and love – then we are also learning how to be God's sheep who share God's love, light, and power with those who aren't yet close enough to God to be able to plug into God's power, light, and love on their own.

What Jesus was teaching his disciples was that they were meant to be extension cords of God And, the same is true for us.

You, me – all of us – are meant to know and then extend to others God's love, light, and power – just like Jesus did.

And that is the Good News for today. Let's pray...

Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46

Sermon:

Hymn of Response:

Sent as Guests

Faith Stories of "being called to the "least of these":

Sending:

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen
(Ephesians 3: 20,21)

Go now in peace
To love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Sending Song

Faithful Presence: *Practicing Presence with Children (Sixth Sunday)*

Focus Statement: While the disciples were jostling for position and power, in the presence of a child, Jesus said to them, "Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name, welcomes me." Full of energy, wonder and awe, being with children opens us up to being in the presence of Christ.

Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-9, Matthew 18:1-5, 19:13-15

Song Suggestions:

StS 47: Let the children come to me

StS 49: I will come to you in the silence

StJ 90: Lord, we bring to you our children

HWB 6: Here in this place

HWB 341: Jesus loves me

HWB 397: God loves all his many people

HWB 489: O little children, gather

HWB 621: Jesus, friend so kind and gentle

Order of Worship

Gathering Around the Host

Call to worship:

Leader: Come, let us gather around Jesus—
**People: Where the child is invited to sing and dance
 And the little one is blessed**
 Leader: Blessed are those who dwell in Christ's presence—
**People: For they will have space to live, grow
 And know the fullness of God's love**
 Leader: Come, like a child, trusting in the one who loves you
 And calls you by name.

Opening Prayer:

O Loving God,
 As we gather in this hour of worship,
 Open us up to your presence,
 In our hymns, prayers, and thoughts,
 In our families, friends, and foes,
 And in the little ones in our lives,
 Who have much to teach us
 About love, trust and hope.
 May this time of worship glorify you,
 And shape us more fully into your people.
 In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Hymn:**Offering:**

O Generous God,
 Like the disciples, are temptation is to keep you confined,
 To hold you, and your love back,
 Fearful, we will not have enough.
 Help us unclench our hands,
 And become like the child
 Who loves as freely as you give love. Amen.

Sharing/Prayers of the People**Preparing to Host****Story for all ages: (end with a blessing for children)**

Reader 1: Children are God's most sacred surprise,
 A light in the eyes, a lift to the heart, a storylines continuation.
All: Thank you God, for children; Bless them, everyone.
 Reader 2: Children mirror mystery.
 Children are God's preferred way of being,
 Preferred way of seeing the world and all its people.
All: Teach us God, though children; Bless them, everyone.
 Reader 1: Our children are not our children.
 They are given to us and pass through us
 Into worlds of their own making, into risks of their own taking
 Into futures we will not know.
All: Help us, God, to let our children go; Bless them, everyone.
 Reader 2: When children feel they are included,

A little hope gleams on all horizons,
 A new dream dances in our generation,
 And seeds are sown for a new creation.

**All: Help us, God, to grow through children; Bless them, everyone.
 All of us are children;
 Children of God, children of children,
 children whose children are children
 And Jesus says, let the children come to me.
 Let us be reconciled to the child within,
 So that love can live on,
 Beyond us,
 Forever.
 We praise you, Jesus, for welcoming us as your children.
 Bless us, everyone.⁶**

Scripture:

Sermon:

Hymn of Response:

Sent as Guests

Faith Stories of being present to children:

Sending:

Sending Song:

Faithful Presence: *Practicing Presence through the Fivefold Gifts (Seventh Sunday)*

Scripture: Exodus 35:4-10; 1 Peter 2:4-5; Ephesians 4:7-8, 11-13

Focus statement: “We may be little, insignificant in the eyes of this world. But when we realize that God sent us to the world as blessed, our lives will multiply and grow to fill the needs of others. Our gift is not what we can do but who we are.” (Tara Ward, “Given,” *Hope for a Tree Cut Down*, <http://belovedschurch.org/hope/given.php>) (See Henri Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved*, 113, 122).

Song Suggestions

“Given” by Tara Ward, *Hope for a Tree Cut Down*

“Here by the Water” by Jim Croegaert

“May Your Spirit Give Life” by Phil Campbell Enns

HWB #304 “There are many gifts”

HWB #307 “Will you let me be your servant”

HWB #362 “Help us to help each other”

HWB #363 “Renew your church”

⁶ Miriam T. Winter, *WomanWisdom* in **Words for Worship, 279** (Waterloo: Herald Press, 1996). Adapted by Ryan Siemens.

HWB #383 “God, whose giving”
 HWB #384 “We give thee but thine own”
 HWB #389 “Take my life”
 STJ #56 “Make me a channel of your peace”
 STJ #64 “Somos el cuerpo de Cristo”
 STJ #72 “One is the body”
 STJ #81 “Take, O take me as I am”
 STS #017 “Fill now our life, O Lord”

Gathering Around the Host

Call to Worship

Leader: Lift up your hearts!

People: We lift them up to the Lord.

Leader: Not only your hearts! Mind, soul, body, and strength!

People: We lift them up to the Lord.

Leader: The gifts of God for the people of God;

You, people of God, are the gifts of God, the body of Christ!

People: We offer ourselves to the Lord—

every gift, every thought, every hope, every breath, every prayer.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Scriptures: Exodus 35:4-5, 10 & 1 Peter 2:4-5

Opening Prayer:

With your whole created universe we praise you for your unfailing gift of life.
 We thank you that you make us human and stay with us even when turn from
 you to sin.

In Jesus, you demonstrate your love for us.

Therefore, Lord of all creation, in the suffering and death of Jesus our redeemer,
 we meet you in your glory.

Here and now we celebrate your love,
 ever present and living in Jesus our Lord,
 crucified and risen, who was and is and is to come.

All glory to you, Giver of life.

Accept our praises, living God.

We offer ourselves to you;

pour out your Spirit on the gifts of God

that we may become truly the body of Christ in the world. Amen.

(adapted from “The Great Thanksgiving,” *A New Zealand Prayer Book*)

Songs:

[Invite those gathered to offer their voices, movement, and music to God.]

Offering:

[At this point, invite those gathered to practice offering all they are and have to God by giving a portion of their financial resources.]

(Optional Offering Prayer) With all that we have and all that we are, we worship you. May we be—body, heart, and mind—an offering of worship to you, holy and acceptable to you. Amen.

Prayers of Thanksgiving for the Gifts of Others:

[In place of the congregation's normal pastor or congregational prayer time, via spoken spontaneous prayers or through congregational sharing gathered into a pastoral prayer, offer thanksgiving to God for the many, varied gifts others in the congregation (and, possibly, beyond!) bring to God. (Examples might include someone who drives their neighbor to worship, Sunday School teachers who give their time to children's spiritual formation, elders who tie quilts for MCC, someone baking fresh bannock for the communion meal). Offer these with thanksgiving to God: God's people, the gifts of God!]

Preparing to Host

Story for all ages:

[Bring a precious, delicate jar or vase. Set it aside until the second story.]

With Jesus, each person has a gift.

- What might someone do with a gift? *[Some may say give it to someone; others may say open it or play with it.]*

Here are two stories about Jesus' friends. In them, people use their gifts in very different ways. The first story is about Jesus' friends James and John. They had the wonderful gift of going everywhere *with Jesus*. They got to be part of him healing sick people, feeding hungry people, welcoming folks others had forgotten about, and telling people about God's love. But listen to what they do with their gift. *Read Mark 10:35-37.*

- What does it sound like James and John want from Jesus? *[Suggest that they want to be even more important.]*

James and John already had a very special gift of time with Jesus. Now they want something even more for themselves—being the most important of all of Jesus' friends, in charge of everybody else. James and John were greedy with their gift.

Listen to how Jesus responds. *Read Mark 10:42-44.* Jesus says that gifts shouldn't make us greedy for more, more, more. They shouldn't make us selfish so that we try to keep the gift all to ourselves. That's what James and John were doing with Jesus. And they looked just like all the self-worried politicians who didn't know God.

- Instead, Jesus says his friends should treat each other like servants. How does a servant act?

Serving somebody in Jesus' time meant taking care of them and doing what is good for them. If you had a gift, it meant sharing it with them.

Here is one more story that shows how we can give away and share our gifts. *Hold up the beautiful jar or vase.* This is a precious gift. *[If you're willing, let the children pass the object around.]* Jesus' friend Mary had a beautiful jar like this, full of lovely perfume. Listen to what she did with it. *Read John 12:1-3.*

- What did Mary do with her gift?
- Why do you think Mary poured perfume on Jesus?

Mary gave away her gift to Jesus, and it made the whole house smell beautiful. With Jesus, each of us has a gift. We can choose either to be selfish with it or to share it. If we share it, it helps fill our world with good things and make it beautiful, just like Mary's perfume.

Fivefold Gifts Reading (Eph 4:7-8, 11-13):

[Before the service, set up five stations at the front of the sanctuary, representing the five gifts. At the apostle station, you might have toolbox and tools or a stand mixer and some bread dough—symbols of starting something new. At the prophet station, perhaps a flashlight, an open newspaper, or a bullhorn—symbols of seeing and knowing what God's doing in the world. For the evangelist station, consider seedlings or unopened flowers or a place setting for a meal about to be served—symbols of God's new life breaking in. The pastor station might have a first aid kit or two coffee mugs—symbols of caring for the hurting. Lastly, the teacher station might have a stack of books and some objects from the natural world (like pinecones), to show deepening understanding of God rooted in the real world.]

Reader: Read Ephesians 4:7-8, 11-13

Apostle [steps forward behind their station]: Christ gave apostles, God's gift to start new things, new works. We gather people in new places and new ways to dwell in God's good presence that's making all things new.

Prophet [steps forward behind their station]: Christ gave prophets, God's gift to speak truth, especially when the poor are neglected or others are shut out from God's life. We underline the outline of God's presence even in the jagged fragments of our world's hurt. We cannot help but speak a better world.

Evangelist [steps forward behind their station]: Christ gave evangelists, God's gift to tell you there's good news even now. We see the redemption story, the hands of Jesus, following us even through the valley of the shadow of death. We come to tell you resurrection is waiting right around the corner.

Pastor [steps forward behind their station]: Christ gave pastors, God's gift to shepherd, to accompany, to care. We hold you close when you're hurting, we bind up the broken-hearted. We rejoice with those who're celebrating, and weep with those who're hurting. We break bread to sustain you for the journey.

Teacher [steps forward behind their station]: Christ gave teachers, God's gift to renew our minds so that we may discern what is good, right, and pleasing to God. We hear the echoes of God's voice in all creation and all history. We see how new creation transforms our world from the roots up. We share the mystery of faith.

Together [as they move to join hands]: Christ gave these gifts to train Christ's followers in skilled servant work, working as Christ's body, until we all move fluidly and gracefully with each other, responding to God's Son, fully mature, fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ.

Reader: The gifts of God for the people of God!

Sermon:

[How has Christ gifted each person to your congregation? Read over other “gifts” passages: Romans 12:3-9 (or the entirety of chapters 12, if you’re audacious), 1 Corinthians 12 (especially vv 14-26), and 1 Peter 4:8-11, alongside Ephesians 4. How do each of these gifts, in their diverse ways (see, for example, the Eph 4 reading above), (1) enable your congregation to worship God, (2) enable you to support one another, and (3) enable you for witnessing to how God is present in the lives of your neighbors? You may want to utilize the items on the tables to illustrate how these gifts work in your congregation and in your neighborhood.]

Hymn of Response:**Sent as Guests****Faith Stories/Responding:**

Henri Nouwen, in *Life of the Beloved*, writes, “We may be little, insignificant servants in the eyes of a world motivated by efficiency, control, and success. But when we realize that God has chosen us from all eternity, sent us into the world as the blessed ones, handed us over to suffering, can’t we then, also trust that our little lives will multiply themselves and be able to fulfill the needs of countless people?” (122). He explains, “Our life itself is the greatest gift to give ... Our real gift is not so much what we can do, but who we are” (113).

The gifts of God are given for the life of the world. You body forth these gifts beyond worship services and neighborhood gatherings with fellow Christians. You embody the gift of God in all your work, doctor’s appointments, hockey or soccer games, volunteering, visiting on coffee row.

Three questions to guide sharing:

1. Who, beyond church and family, are a few people you see regularly?
2. How do you suspect God is present and active in their lives?
3. God’s gifts pull our hearts in particular directions. What do you hope for God’s work in these folks’ lives? How might your gift (in terms of Ephesians 4 or Romans 12) shape God's work through you in their live?

Sending:**Sending Song:****Faithful Presence: *Practicing Presence through Kingdom Prayer (Eighth Sunday)***

Focus Statement: “Prayer is the opposite of striving and anxiousness. Therefore, in everything we are to resist striving and instead present ourselves before God in prayer” (Faithful Presence, Pg 169). Prayer is not only about bringing our concerns to God, it is also about opening ourselves for God to bring about God’s kingdom through us. Prayer creates space in our lives to let go of control and to put our lives into God’s presence.

Scripture: Matthew 6: 9 – 15, Mark 9: 14 – 29

Song Suggestions:

HWB 26: Holy Spirit, come with power
HWB 13: Blessed Jesus, at your word
HWB 11: Sweet hour of prayer
HWB 5: There is a place of quiet rest
HWB 348: O Lord, hear my prayer
HWB 353: Lord, listen to your children
HWB 369: Lord, whose love in humble service
HWB 377: Healer of our every ill
HWB 383: God, who's giving
StS 42 or StJ 48: Our father, which art in heaven
StJ 59: Confitemini Domino
StS 57: Go, my friends, in grace

Gathered around the Host:

Call to Worship:

Leader: In all of the circles we move in,

Congregation: God of all, we pray to make space for your kingdom.

Leader: Lord, hear our prayer. Your children have come to seek your face,
and together, we cry:

**Congregation: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts! Heaven and earth
are full of your glory!**

Leader: Jesus, enable us to make space for your will, revealed to us in this
space. Let this place be a hallowed place, open to you.

**All: *Holy Spirit, we welcome your presence among us, guiding us into
the truth of your ways, and making plain to us the way of
submission and humility in you.***

Opening Prayer: (based on Romans 12: 1-8, Matthew 16: 13-20, Psalm 124)

Lord God,
Maker of heaven and earth,
We gather together in your name.

We come as living sacrifices,
To offer you our worship and thanksgiving,
Our praise and our prayers.

Come among us, living Lord.
Through the power of Your Holy Spirit,
Transform our hearts and minds
So that we may recognize your presence,
Hear your voice,
Know your will,
And walk in your way.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ,
Our Lord and Saviour.
Amen⁷.

Songs:

Offering:

Great God of Heaven and Earth,
We thank – you today for all of your gifts to us.
The gifts we want, and the ones we would rather not receive.
We offer our gratitude for all of the ways your loving-kindness encircles us.
Out of Your bounty to us, we now offer back what you these gifts so that the work
of your kingdom may continue.
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Sharing/Prayers of the People:

At the beginning sharing time, let the members of the congregation if they would
be comfortable with sharing their concerns or praise items during the time of
Pastoral Prayer.

The prayer could follow this form:

An individual could share a prayer in 2 – 3 sentences, ending in “Lord, in your
mercy.” When the congregation hears this, invite them to respond with, “Amen.”

When prayers cease, a time of silent prayer could be held, and the pastor begin the
Lord's Prayer, inviting all to join.

Alternately, sing: O Lord, hear my prayer HWB 348 after each spoken prayer.

Songs:

Preparing to Host

Story for all ages:

Scripture:

Sermon:

Hymn of Response:

Sent as Guests

Share Faith Stories of “Being Guests”

Sending:

You have come among us, Lord.

We have made space for you to move among us and to learn the truth of who we
are in you.

Jesus, we are grateful for your ability to help us make space for your will in this
gathering today.

Enable us to open the way for your will in our homes, our places where we
welcome the other and the stranger.

⁷ Opening Prayer: Proper 16A, re: Worship

Lord, grant us humility as we seek to make space for your kingdom when we are guests in places where we are no the hosts.

God and Father of us all, gently move us in your way.

Send us forward into your world, to speak your words of reconciliation and truth.

Amen.

Sending Song