

Worship Service

BY STAN WILSON

Gathering Prayer

Faithful God, gather us together!

Those who have been scattered and divided,

the ones who have been stubborn and suspicious,

the lost sheep and the faithful servants,

the tired, the oppressed, the fearful and the broken,

the courageous, the willing, the hopeful, and the healing.

Gracious God, gather us together!

Your people

the humble, forgiven people you have chosen to bear your good news

have come to this place to sing your praises.

Opening Hymn

“O Praise the Gracious Power”

Thomas H. Troeger (1984)†

Suggested Tune: MARION

Opening Hymn (alternate)

“For the Beauty of the Earth” (verses 1, 5, and 8)

For the beauty of the earth,

for the glory of the skies,

for the love which from our birth

over and around us lies,

Lord of all to thee we raise

this our hymn of grateful praise.

For thy Church that evermore

lifteth holy hands above,

offering up on every shore

her pure sacrifice of love,

Lord of all to thee we raise

this our hymn of grateful praise.

For each perfect gift of thine,
to our race so freely given,
graces human and divine,
flowers of earth and buds of heaven,
 Lord of all to thee we raise
 this our hymn of grateful praise.

Folliot S. Pierpoint (1864)

Tune: DIX

Greeting

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 the love of God the Father,
 and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

And also with you.

Welcome to this worship of the living God:
the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
 whose ways are not our ways,
 who calls together those who have been separated,
 who remembers those who have been lost or forgotten,
 and who binds together all things in love.

Welcome to this place which belongs to God
 and to this table which is set for the whole people of God.

May all who worship together this day receive a welcome.
May they discover the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ,
 and may they find themselves to be at home,
 among the people God has made one.

(Members are encouraged to greet visiting friends and to continue offering the "right hand of Christian fellowship" until all are greeted.)

Hymn

"All Creatures of Our God and King" (verses 1, 3, 5, and 7)

All creatures of our God and King,
lift up your voice and with us sing
 alleluia, alleluia!
O burning sun with golden beam,
O silver moon with softer gleam,
 O praise him, O praise him,
 alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

O flowing water, pure and clear,
make music for your Lord to hear,
 O praise him, alleluia!
O fire so masterful and bright,
providing us with warmth and light,
 Refrain

All you who are of tender heart
forgiving others, take your part,
 sing praises, alleluia!
You who long pain and sorrow bear,
praise God and on him cast your care,
 Refrain

Let all things their Creator bless,
and worship him in humbleness,
 O praise him, alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
and praise the Spirit, Three in One!
 Refrain

Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), translated by William H. Draper (1919), alt.
Tune: LASST UNS ERFREUEN

Call to Confession: Isaiah 1:16b-18

Cease to do evil,
 learn to do good;
seek justice;
 rescue the oppressed,
defend the orphan,
 plead for the widow.
Come now, let us argue it out,
 says the LORD:
though your sins are like scarlet,
 they shall be like snow;
though they are red like crimson
 they shall become like wool.

Unison Confession

Eternal God,
 you have reconciled a sinful world to yourself in Christ,
 and given your Church the ministry of reconciliation.
In your new creation,
 everything old is passing away.

We, your people,
confess that we have been slow to believe and follow you
into the newness of your kingdom.
We have remained captive
to the powers of sin and death.
We have submitted our thoughts
to false images of power, glory, and beauty.
We have been lulled into apathy and inaction.
We have doubted your power
to heal and give new life.
We have feared and distrusted
our brothers and sisters,
allowing ourselves to be ruled
by the divisions of race, gender, nation, and wealth
that belong to the old order, which is passing away.

Holy and gracious God,
pardon our sins,
free our captive imaginations,
and raise us out of the paralysis of despair
into the freedom of a forgiven and forgiving people.
Renew us in the power of your love,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn of Response

“There is a Balm in Gilead”

*There is a balm in Gilead
to make the wounded whole;
there is a balm in Gilead
to heal the sin-sick soul.*

Sometimes I feel discouraged
and think my work's in vain,
but then the Holy Spirit
revives my soul again.

Refrain

If you cannot preach like Peter,
if you cannot pray like Paul,
you can tell the love of Jesus,
and say, “He died for all!”

Refrain

African-American Spiritual
Tune: BALM IN GILEAD

Assurance of Pardon: Colossians 1:13

He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Brothers and sisters,

**hear the good news that by Jesus Christ our Lord,
we are freed from sin. Amen.**

The Old Testament Reading: Deuteronomy 26:5b-9

A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

The Epistle Reading: 1 Peter 2:9-10

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people,
but now you are God's people;
once you had not received mercy,
but now you have received mercy.

Hymn

"I Love the Lord, Who Heard My Cry"

I love the Lord, who heard my cry
and pitied every groan;
long as I live and troubles rise,
I'll hasten to God's throne.

I love the Lord, who heard my cry
and chased my grief away.
O let my heart no more despair
while I have breath to pray.

Isaac Watts (1719), alt.

Tune: AFRICAN-AMERICAN SPIRITUAL

Gospel Reading: John 1:10-13

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

Homily

Prayer of the Faithful

Merciful God,
in response to your good news,
we offer the prayers of your people
who ask you to bring to completion
the good work of your redemption.

(As members voice prayers of intercession – for the needs of those present; for the fellowship of this and neighboring congregations; for the local community, especially where tension, distrust, and division are present; for the country; and for the world – the minister and congregation respond to each request:

*Lord in your mercy,
hear our prayer.)*

Gracious God,
who is always more eager to hear us
than we are to pray,
we lift to you now our many prayers,
united as one.

(As members offer individual petitions, the minister and congregation respond to each request:

*Lord in your mercy,
hear our prayer.)*

Eternal God,
hear these prayers,
the spoken and the silent,
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit,
be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Invitation to the Celebration of the Lord's Supper

Hymn of Response

“Let Us Break Bread Together” (verses 1 and 2)

Let us break bread together on our knees,
 let us break bread together on our knees.
 When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,
 O Lord, have mercy on me.

Let us drink wine together on our knees,
 let us drink wine together on our knees.
 When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,
 O Lord, have mercy on me.

African-American Spiritual

Tune: LET US BREAK BREAD

Words of Institution: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Gracious God, we give you thanks.
 Once we were estranged,
 but now we have been befriended.
 Once we were lost in darkness,
 but now we have been found by the light of your word.
 Once we were alone,
 but now you have given us this meal,
 and promised your presence in it,
 that all your people may be fed, healed, and blessed.

**We praise you Christ,
 your cross has made us one!**

Let all who hunger for justice and thirst for the unity of God’s people
 keep this holy feast.

(The congregation will come forward to receive the bread as a witness of our common faith, and remain seated to receive the cup as a sign of a shared fellowship which holds no distinctions.)

Hymn of Response

“O God of Creation, We See All around Us”

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette (2010), www.carolynshymns.com

Tune: ASH GROVE

(pp. 37-39 of this volume)

Blessing and Sending

Now that we have been reunited,
look up, and see your family,
step out and find your place
in God’s still-unfolding story.

Since we have been given
this taste of heaven,
let us hunger and thirst
until that good day,
when we shall meet again.

Amen and amen.

NOTE

† Carol Doran and Thomas H. Troeger, “O Praise the Gracious Power,” *New Hymns for the Lectionary: To Glorify the Maker’s Name* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 2-3. This vibrant hymn, based on Ephesians 2:11-22, praises Christ whose cross has made us one body.



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