

Worship Service

BY MICHELE HERSHBERGER

Prelude

Call to Worship

(This hymn may be sung as a duet, with one singer at the front of the sanctuary and the other singer, singing the descant, walking up to the front during the singing.)

“Come, Brother, Sit with Me” (verses 1 and 2)¹

Come, brother, sit with me,
sharing this simple bread.

Come, sister, to my home,
drink till you’ve had your fill.

Who gives these gifts of friendship and table?
None but the living God.

Come, stranger, walk with me,
sharing the narrow road.

Come, wise one, talk with me,
show me the better way.

Who gives these gifts of wisdom and wonder?
None but the living God.

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Tune: HOSPITALITY, James E. Clemens (2006)

(pp. 53-55 of this volume)

Invocation

Living God,
Giver of food and friendship,
Giver of wisdom and wonder,
Holy God our Host,
be our guest this day.

We welcome you
and seek your welcoming presence among us.

Hymn of Praise

"God Is Here Among Us"

God is here among us: let us all adore him
and with awe appear before him.

God is here within us: soul, in silence fear him,
humbly, fervently draw near him.

Now his own who have known God in worship lowly
yield their spirits wholly.

Come, abide within me; let my soul like Mary
be your earthly sanctuary.

Come, indwelling Spirit, with transfigured splendor;
love and honor will I render.

Where I go here below, let me bow before you,
know you, and adore you.

Gladly we surrender earth's deceitful treasures,
pride of life, and sinful pleasures.

Gladly, Lord, we offer yours to be forever,
soul and life and each endeavor.

You alone shall be known, Lord of all our being,
life's true way decreeing.

Gerhard Tersteegen (1729), altered

Tune: ARNSBERG (WUNDERBARER KÖNIG)



HEARING THE WORD: GOD AS HOST

The Jesus of Luke's Gospel always enters upon the scene as a guest in need of hospitality. He has nowhere to lay his head, unless a kind host obliges. But on another level this man without a home is obviously the supreme host, the welcomer par excellence to God's kingdom.²

John Koenig

Antiphonal Reading: based on Psalm 23 and Ephesians 1:3-14

The LORD is my shepherd,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
I shall not want.

who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
in the heavenly places.

He leads me beside still waters;

He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.

He restores my soul.

He destines us for adoption as his children
He leads me in right paths
according to the good pleasure of his will.
for his name's sake.

In him we have redemption through his blood,
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
the forgiveness of our trespasses,
I fear no evil;
according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us.
For you are with me;

With all wisdom and insight, he has made known to us the mystery
of his will

Your rod and your staff – they comfort me.

to gather up all things in him.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

In Christ we have obtained an inheritance

You anoint my head with oil;

so that we might live for the praise of his glory.

My cup overflows.

We are marked with the seal of the Spirit,
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
the promised Holy Spirit.

and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

Hymn of Assurance

“The King of Love My Shepherd Is”

The King of love my shepherd is,
whose goodness faileth never.

I nothing lack if I am his,
and he is mine forever.

Where streams of living water flow
my ransomed soul he leadeth,
and, where the verdant pastures grow,
with food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
but yet in love he sought me,
and on his shoulder gently laid,
and home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill
with thee, dear Lord beside me;
thy rod and staff my comfort still,
thy cross before to guide me.

Thou spread'st a table in my sight;
thy unction grace bestoweth;
and O what transport of delight
from thy pure chalice floweth!

And so through all the length of days
thy goodness faileth never.
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
within thy house forever.

Henry W. Baker, Hymns Ancient and Modern (1868)
Tune: ST. COLUMBA



HEARING THE WORD: GOD AS GUEST

Stories from the Community

(These may be read dramatically by four readers.)

Let all guests who come be received as Christ would be, because he will say, "I was a stranger and ye took me in" By bowed head, or body prostrate on the ground, all shall adore Christ in them, who, indeed, is received in their persons.³

St. Benedict of Nursia (c. 480-543)

One of the things I enjoyed most about Uganda was the opportunity to walk on meandering paths through gardens, up and down hills, and long streams. Walking was almost synonymous with conversing because invariably I would meet someone along the path or at work in their garden and we would talk.

One afternoon I came across my friend Ruth, busy pulling weeds. After chatting a while, she took me to one corner of her garden to see what she had grown. She was excited because she had planted eggplant for the first time and they were just beginning to bear; two lovely fruits dangled on the stem.

Later that evening two unexpected visitors arrived to spend the night at my home. Word soon spread that we had guests, and before long Ruth appeared at the kitchen door. In her hands were the two eggplants. She gave them to me, saying, "Please prepare these for your friends tonight."

I wanted to say, "No! No! You must keep your eggplant. We have plenty of food, and you have so little." But I could not do that. I could not deny Ruth the opportunity to give of her literal firstfruits. She was giving so joyously.

So I accepted the eggplants with much gratitude, a tear in my eye, and a new humbleness, for once again a Ugandan had taught me a lesson of generosity.⁴

From a missionary in Uganda

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.

John 1:10-12

Lord, we see that you'll be coming
through the line today.
So Lord, help us to treat you well,
help us to treat you well.⁵

A prayer from a worker at a food-line a mile and a half from the White House

Prayer of Confession

For the times we are afraid of the stranger,
for the times we refuse the stranger,
because we think our resources are just too meager,

Lord, forgive us.

For the times we stereotype the stranger
as enemy,
as dangerous,
as inferior somehow,

Lord, forgive us.

For the times we are too busy trying to impress our guests—
the times we think we are being hospitable,
but instead serve only our own needs—

Lord, forgive us.

For the times we miss the gift of the stranger,
for the times we close our door in fear,
for the times we miss your face in the other,

Lord, have mercy. Forgive us.

Assurance of Pardon: Ephesians 1:7-8a

In him we have redemption through his blood,
the forgiveness of our trespasses,
according to the riches of his grace
that he lavished on us.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:31-46

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.

“Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’

“Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Sermon



RESPONDING TO THE WORD

The Giving of Tithes and Offerings

Hymn of Preparation for Communion

“Come, Brother, Sit with Me” (verses 1 and 2)

Invitation to Celebrate Communion

God the gracious Host,
we are gathered in your presence
to celebrate and remember the best of all gifts,
the broken body and shed blood of your Son.
Make us worthy, through the Holy Spirit,
to sit at Christ's table as his friends.
In this supper, let our hungry souls so be fed,
that nurtured in your hospitality,
we may feed others
both physical bread
and the bread of true friendship.
Through the gift of the Holy Spirit,
may Christ live in us and we in him
so that we may in turn be hosts to others
and in so doing
entertain you.

Celebration of the Eucharist

(To nurture hospitality during communion, members may serve one another as they gather in small groups around a table.)

Hymn of Response

"I Bind My Heart This Tide"

I bind my heart this tide
to the Galilean's side,
to the wounds of Calvary,
to the Christ who died for me.

I bind my soul this day
to the neighbor far away,
and the stranger near at hand,
in this town, and in this land.

I bind my heart in thrall
to the God, the Lord of all,
to the God, the poor one's friend,
and the Christ whom he did send.

I bind myself to peace,
to make strife and envy cease.
God, knit thou sure the cord
of my thralldom to my Lord!

Lauchlan M. Watt, The Tryst, A Book of the Soul (1907)

Tune: UNION

Sending Forth

“Come, Brother, Sit with Me” (verse 3)

Go, children, sing with joy,

praising the risen Lord.

Go, servants, to the world,

borne on the Spirit’s strength.

Who gives these gifts of worship and service?

None but the living God.

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Postlude

NOTES

1 Reprinted with permission from James E. Clemens and David Wright, *A Field of Voices: Hymns for Worship* (Champaign, IL: Table Round Press, 2007). This collection is available online at www.tableroundpress.com.

2 John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Stranger as Promise and Mission* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1974), 90.

3 St. Benedict, *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, translated by Cardinal Gasquet (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1966), 91.

4 Joetta Handrich Schlabach, *Extending the Table* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991), 19-20. Used by permission.

5 Schlabach, *Extending the Table*, 100. Used by permission.



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