

# Worship Service

BY E. ANN BELL

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## I. AWAKENING

*Call to Worship: Psalm 24:1-6*

The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it,  
the world, and those who live in it;  
for he has founded it on the seas,  
and established it on the rivers.  
Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?  
And who shall stand in his holy place?  
Those who have clean hands and pure hearts,  
who do not lift up their souls to what is false,  
and do not swear deceitfully.  
They will receive blessing from the LORD,  
and vindication from the God of their salvation.  
Such is the company of those who seek him,  
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

*Invocation:*

O God, you know our hearts, our inmost thoughts and desires. You see our stubbornness and our sincerity, our benevolence and our blindness. Our fears and motivations, secret even to ourselves, are not hidden from you.  
In this shared time and sacred space of worship, search us, confront us, stir our consciences, and transform us.  
Awaken us to the challenges of this day. Open our eyes to the subtle pervasiveness of consumerism, that we might see our culture, the church, and ourselves in your divine light.  
Incline our ears to your beckoning. Remind us that you are the source of our hope and the giver of all that is good. You alone are worthy of our praise.  
Bring us to new life, that we might truly be your people. Amen.

*Processional Hymn:*

“God of Grace and God of Glory”

God of grace and God of glory,  
on thy people pour thy power.  
Crown thine ancient church’s story,  
bring her bud to glorious flower.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,  
for the facing of this hour,  
for the facing of this hour.

Cure thy children’s warring madness,  
bend our pride to thy control.  
Shame our wanton, selfish gladness,  
rich in things and poor in soul.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,  
lest we miss thy kingdom’s goal,  
lest we miss thy kingdom’s goal.

Save us from weak resignation  
to the evils we deplore.  
Let the search for thy salvation  
be our glory evermore.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,  
serving thee whom we adore,  
serving thee whom we adore.

*Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969)*  
*Tune: CWM RHONDDA*

*Reading from the Prophets: Ezekiel 37:1-14*

Reader: This is the word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

*Pastoral Reflection:*

The contemporary American church is so largely enculturated to the American ethos of consumerism that it has little power to believe or to act.

Walter Brueggemann<sup>1</sup>

*Solo Response:*

"The Church of Christ in Every Age" <sup>2</sup> (verse 1)

The church of Christ, in every age,  
beset by change, but Spirit led,  
must claim and test its heritage  
and keep on rising from the dead.

*Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)*  
*Tune: WAREHAM*

## II. LAMENT

*Litany:*

Leader: In mercy, O God, you confront us and expose our sin.

**People: May we respond in spirit and in truth,  
confessing our failure,  
reclaiming our hope.**

Even as we lift up your name,  
we offer allegiance to the patterns of this world.

**In passive and in active ways,  
we yield our souls to what is false.**

In our lust for lifeless objects and our relentless pursuit for more,  
we cross the line between innocent desire and masked idolatry.

**We dismiss our inner protests  
and slowly displace our faith with commercial philosophy  
and promises.**

We begin to seek salvation in spiritless things,  
to worship you for our own gratification,  
to see ourselves and each other as mere consumers and commodities.

**We treat people as expendable products  
and place ultimate significance in manufactured objects.**

**In our avoidance of human vulnerability,  
we deny our creation in your image.**

We, your people, have swallowed a subtle poison.

We have invested ourselves in the religion of our culture,  
and our substance has wasted away.

**We have become a valley of dry bones.**

Forgive us, O God, for we have sinned.

**In your mercy, raise us from the dead.**

Breathe new life into your people.

Empower us to be a prophetic community,  
living the gospel of Jesus.

**All: Create in us a consuming passion to love and serve you.**

*Organ Meditation:*

In forming a Christian response to contemporary consumerism it may help to recall that the original meaning of *consume* is to burn, to exhaust and to destroy completely. The object of our response to consumerism, then, is to try, with the Lord's gracious help, to avoid destroying ourselves in this behavior and to try to prevent our neighbor from being destroyed by such behavior as well.

Craig M. Gay<sup>3</sup>

*Hymn:*

"O God, You Own a Thousand Hills"

Terry W. York

(text and tune pp. 52-53 of this volume)

**III. CALL**

*Reading from the Gospels: Matthew 6:19-34*

Reader: This is the word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

*Choral Anthem:*

"A Heart to Love You More"<sup>4</sup>

*Sermon*

*Discipline of Silence:*

The Gospel is the most counter-cultural and the most significantly revolutionary document one could ever hope to find. It reveals the meaning and purpose of human life in terms which are close to being absolutely contradictory to the form of perceiving and valuing human persons in our culture.

John F. Kavanaugh<sup>5</sup>

*Hymn of Response:*

“O Breath of Life” (verses 1-3)

O Breath of Life, come sweeping through us,  
revive your church with life and power.

O Breath of Life, come, cleanse, renew us,  
and fit your church to meet this hour.

O Wind of God, come, bend us, break us,  
till humbly we confess our need.

Then in your tenderness remake us;  
revive, restore, for this we plead.

O Breath of Love, come, breathe within us,  
renewing thought and will and heart.

Come, love of Christ, afresh to win us;  
revive your church in every part.

*Bessie Porter Head (1850-1936)*

*Suggested tunes: ST. CLEMENT or SPIRITUS VITAE*

**IV. CENTERING***Offertory Prayer:*

Gracious God, as we come alive to your call to us, we are aware that this time of response is profoundly countercultural.

The consumer religion coaches us to believe that we are the center of the universe, that all things were created for us and our pleasure. We are taught to hoard our resources, to keep for ourselves, to value personal comfort above service and accumulation over sacrifice.

Yet you have shown us another way in the life and teachings of Jesus, in his death and resurrection.

As we reclaim our Christian heritage, we remember that all things were created for your pleasure, and we celebrate the invitation to participate in your work, bringing the ethics of heaven to earth. May we commit ourselves to you fully, making this offering not merely a token, but a guiding principle for our lives.  
We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

*Offertory Solo:*

"The Lord's Prayer"<sup>6</sup>

*Doxology*

*The Eucharist:*

The Eucharist grounds us in the self-giving life and death of Jesus. It is an act of receiving that recalls God's forgiveness and lays claim upon our lives as Christians. As we share the bread and the cup, we remember both a past event and our present calling to live as Jesus in the world. The choir leads us in the words of institution:

"In Remembrance"<sup>7</sup>

**V. COMMISSION**

*Responsive Benediction (Psalm 16:11):*

Awakened, renewed, and energized to meet the challenge before us, having re-centered our lives in the sacrificial love of Jesus, we now go forth as disciples, proclaiming with the psalmist:

**O God, you have shown us the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**

*Recessional Hymn:*

"We Call Ourselves Disciples"<sup>8</sup>

We call ourselves disciples, as pilgrims on the way.  
We seek the truth in wisdom, and beauty in each day.  
As women, men, and children, we serve, Christ's path to clear.  
In joyful expectation we see God's reign draw near.

The cup and cross before us, proclaim our hope above,  
the sign of our Redeemer, the vessel of his love.  
Once more the cross is lifted, the cup poured out for all.  
When gathered at the table we hear our common call.

We're baptized in the spirit, in waters God provides.  
In Christ we rise to newness, for in him we have died.  
Now dead to powers of evil, and free from hopeless fears,  
we live with faith and purpose, creative through the years.

We join with all disciples to live the Word in deed,  
to share the cup of water and bread with all in need;  
to work till God's compassion and righteousness prevail,  
till all this planet's people know justice without fail.

So now the vision brightens, the light of Christ burns still  
in hearts of all disciples to be the church God wills.  
From quiet meditation and joyous hymns of praise,  
we go to do God's mission! Christ, lead us all our days!

*Jim Miller*

*Tune: LANCASHIRE*

## NOTES

1 Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, second edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 1.

2 Copyright © 1971 Hope Publishing Company, Carol Stream, IL 60188. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

3 Craig M. Gay, "Sensualists Without Heart: Contemporary Consumerism in Light of the Modern Project," in Rodney Clapp, ed. *The Consuming Passion: Christianity and the Consumer Culture* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 38.

4 *A Heart to Love You More* words by Samuel Wesley and music by Stan Pethel, © 2000 Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp.

5 John F. Kavanaugh, *Following Christ in a Consumer Society: The Spirituality of Cultural Resistance*, revised edition (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 83.

6 *The Lord's Prayer*, music by Albert Hay Malotte, © 1935 G. Schirmer, Inc.

7 *In Remembrance*, words by Ragan Courtney and music by Buryl Red, © 1972 Broadman Press.

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