

# Worship Service

BY KATIE COOK

---

## *Call to Worship:*

Leader: Welcome to you in the name of Christ,  
for this is God's house and God's table,  
and we are God's people.

**People: Let us rejoice and be glad,  
for God has created this day and this time.**

We gather to worship God.

**Let us open our hearts to God's presence,  
and open our hearts to God's word.**

We come together to exchange many things:

**to share our faith and thanksgiving;  
to confess our shortcomings and seek God's guidance.**

We gather to become a community:

**to break ourselves open to each other,  
to share the sacred moments of our lives.**

## *Invocation:*

Holy God, come among us and make yourself known.

**Speak to our hearts;  
help us to hear your words  
and be doers of them. Amen.**

## *Hymn:*

"Come, We That Love the Lord"

Come, we that love the Lord,  
and let our joys be known;  
join in a song with sweet accord,  
and thus surround the throne.

Let those refuse to sing,  
who never knew our God;  
but children of the heavenly King  
may speak their joys abroad.

The hill of Zion yields  
a thousand sacred sweets  
before we reach the heavenly fields,  
or walk the golden streets.

Then let our songs abound,  
and every tear be dry;  
we're marching through Immanuel's ground,  
to fairer worlds on high.

*Isaac Watts (1674-1748)*

*Tune: ST. THOMAS*

*Litany:* (from Isaiah 58:3-7; Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:8; and Isaiah 58:9-11)

Today, we call out to the LORD in our confusion:

**"Why do you not notice us?**

**Why are you not pleased with our worship?**

**Why do you not believe that we love you?"**

And the LORD answers:

"Look, you serve your own interests  
and oppress all your workers.

You only go through your spiritual disciplines  
in order to fight with one another."

**So we ask the LORD:**

**"What kind of worship do you want?"**

The LORD says through the prophet Isaiah:

"I want you to loose the bonds of injustice,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to share your bread with the hungry,  
to bring the homeless poor into your house,  
to cover the naked."

**But we answer:**

**"We do not understand your anger.**

**What about our sacrifices?**

**What about our solemn assemblies?**

**Are you not pleased with those?"**

The LORD says through the prophet Amos:

"Take away from me the noise of your songs;  
I will not listen to the melody of your harps.  
Instead, let justice roll down like waters  
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

**And we respond:**

**“What shall we give the LORD for our transgressions?  
With what sacrifice shall we come before the Holy Presence?  
What will take away God’s anger?”**

The LORD says through the prophet Micah:

“I have told you what I require:  
do justice, love kindness,  
and walk humbly with your God.”

**So we confess to God:**

**“O God, we pledge to you that we will put our feet on this path.  
But we do not always know what is the just cause  
or the kind action;  
and sometimes we need courage to do what is right.  
We need your help.  
Give us wisdom and courage.  
Guide our steps and illuminate our path,  
that we might walk more closely with you.**

Hear this word of hope, you people of God.

God has said:

“If you remove the yoke from among you,  
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,  
if you offer your food to the hungry  
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,  
then your light shall rise in the darkness  
and your gloom shall be like the noonday.  
The LORD will guide you continually.”

**May it be so.**

*Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 40:1-5*

Comfort, O comfort my people,  
says your God.

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to her  
that she has served her term,  
that her penalty is paid,  
that she has received from the LORD’s hand  
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.

Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

*Hymn:*

"Where Is Bread?"

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette  
(text and tune on pp. 44-45 of this volume)

*Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:31-40*

"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.'"

*Meditation of Confession:*

Christ is shown in mercy when his people break bread to [the hungry]; he is shown in judgment when we do not. Never did Lazarus press closer to the rich man's door than does the hungry world that presses its claim upon us in Jesus' name right now. God's people ought to break bread to them in sacrificial giving, in political action, and in eco-

conomic sharing of our abundant resources. The challenge is to find the way rather than bemoan our helplessness.<sup>1</sup>

W. Clyde Tilley

*Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Forgiveness:*

**Lord, we are a proud and stiff-necked people.  
We have often heard your call and refused to answer.  
We have seen you hungry and thirsty on the streets of our city  
but we have not given you food or drink.  
We have seen you homeless in our public shelters  
but we have not worked to house you.  
We have seen you stripped naked of your dignity  
before our inhuman bureaucracies and institutions,  
but we have not cared for your spirit.  
Forgive us, Lord Jesus.  
Be present to us, be patient with us,  
and give us new opportunities to show our love for you.**

God so loved the world that Jesus was sent as a gift to us,  
to be with us  
and reveal the divine presence within each one of us.  
We are assured that, in Christ, we are forgiven;  
we are assured that God wants us to come to the Great Table.

*Epistle Reading: Romans 12*

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor.

Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord." No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

*Hymn:*

"When the Church of Jesus"<sup>2</sup>

When the Church of Jesus shuts its outer door,  
lest the roar of traffic drown the voice of prayer:  
may our prayers, Lord, make us ten times more aware  
that the world we banish is our Christian care.

If our hearts are lifted where devotion soars  
high above this hungry, suffering world of ours:  
lest our hymns should drug us to forget its needs,  
forge our Christian worship into Christian deeds.

Lest the gifts we offer, money, talents, time,  
serve to salve our conscience, to our secret shame:  
Lord, reprove, inspire us by the way you give,  
Teach us, dying Savior, how true Christians live.

*Fred Pratt Green* © 1969 Hope Publishing Co.

*Suggested Tune:* KING'S WESTON

*Alternate tune:* WYE VALLEY (without refrain)

*Pastoral Prayer:*

Our God, make of our living a habit of giving. May the basic needs of others be a priority in our culture of magnified personal wants. And may we be uneasy eating the Lord's Supper as long as there are those that hunger—as long as there are the least of these whose needs are not yet met—as long as Jesus is not fully present. All this we pray in

the name of the one whose voice disturbs us from the very back of where we're comfortable. Amen.<sup>3</sup>

John Ballenger

*Sermon*

*Hymn:*

"Let Us Break Bread Together" (traditional spiritual)

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.

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

*Invitation to the Table:*<sup>4</sup>

I invite you now to the Table of the Lord.  
Let us now share the bread.

**This is bread that is necessary for life;  
bread which comes as a gift from God;  
bread broken and shared to remember Christ's body broken for us.**

We have not earned this bread, it is a gift from God.

**But what if we feel unworthy to receive this bread?**

Hear this word, you who are created by God,  
everyone here is welcome to this bread,  
not because of our worthiness,  
but because God loves us and wants us to have it.

*Sharing of the Bread:*

So let us pass the baskets of bread to one another  
and be filled with the bread of heaven.

Let us say to each other:  
God wants you to have this bread!

*(Saying as they pass the bread)* **God wants you to have this bread.**

Now let us pass the cup,  
the fruit of the vine,  
the drink that is poured out,  
to remind us of Jesus' love poured out.

**May we be filled with the Holy Spirit;  
may we be infused with new life;  
may we be inebriated with that love.**

Let us say to each other: God wants you to be filled with love.

*(Saying as they pass the cup)* **God wants you to be filled with love.**

*Passing of the Peace:*

*(Sharing a greeting/response, such as)* May the peace of Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

*Benediction:*

Go in peace from this place,  
and may all of you be drenched with the spirit of God.  
And everywhere you go, through your lives, may these things  
come true:  
no one will go hungry;  
no one will shiver in the cold;  
and no one will cower in fear. Amen.

## NOTES

1 Excerpt from W. Clyde Tilley, "Knowing Jesus in the Breaking of the Bread," in *Sacred Seasons* (Seeds of Hope Publishers, Hunger Emphasis 2002). Used by permission.

2 Words © 1969 Hope Publishing Co., Carol Stream, IL 60188. All rights reserved. Used by permission. Permission to reproduce these words must be obtained from Hope Publishing Co., 800-323-1049, [www.hopepublishing.com](http://www.hopepublishing.com).

3 Excerpt from John Ballenger, "The Table of the Lord," in *Sacred Seasons* (Seeds of Hope Publishers, Hunger Emphasis 2001). Used by permission.

4 This invitation to a shared meal is adapted from the Agape Meal at Broadway Baptist Church, Fort Worth, TX, a meal shared by members and homeless people from the neighborhood. It may also be used in a communion service.



### **KATIE COOK**

*edits HUNGER NEWS & HOPE and SACRED SEASONS for Seeds of Hope Publishers, and BAPTIST PEACEMAKER for the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. She is a novice in the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans and lives in Waco, Texas.*