

Order of Worship

Second Sunday of Lent

March 5, 2023

Call to worship (based on Psalm 121)

I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come?

My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.

Let us worship God.

Call to confession (based on Psalm 121)

Our God does not slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper and your shade at your right hand. Let us confess to our ever vigilant and ever faithful God.

Prayer of confession (World Day of Prayer Committee of Taiwan)

Gracious God, we are selfish and arrogant. We have overlooked human dignity; we ignore the needs of minorities, migrants and immigrants. We hear the cries of the land, women, children, and young people, but we have not done enough to respond to the grace that we have received. These actions have caused some people to suffer and experience oppression. Have mercy on us and forgive us.

Assurance of pardon (John 3:16-17)

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

Let us walk in the light of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Prayer for illumination

As these words are read and proclaimed, may we be compelled in these next moments amidst all the imperfections and misunderstandings that may come to be yet compelled into your will, your way, and your wisdom. May your grace and truth abound in our hearing and our doing your Word. Amen.



Scripture readings

Sermon

Affirmation of faith (from the Belhar Confession)

We believe in one holy, universal Christian church, the communion of saints called from the entire human family.

We believe:

- **that Christ's work of reconciliation is made manifest in the church as the community of believers who have been reconciled with God and with one another**
- **that unity is, therefore, both a gift and an obligation for the church of Jesus Christ**
- **that through the working of God's Spirit it is a binding force, yet simultaneously a reality which must be earnestly pursued and sought: one which the people of God must continually be built up to attain**
- **that this unity must become visible so that the world may believe that separation, enmity and hatred between people and groups is sin which Christ has already conquered, and accordingly that anything which threatens this unity may have no place in the church and must be resisted;**
- **that true faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition for membership of this church.**

Therefore, we reject any doctrine which denies that a refusal earnestly to pursue this visible unity as a priceless gift is sin;

Jesus is Lord. To the one and only God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be the honor and the glory for ever and ever.

Call for the offering

All that we have and all that we are belongs to God. Every time we perceive our abundance and give out of it, we engage in an act of resistance against the forces of scarcity, cynicism, and hopelessness about the possibilities for the world around us. Let us resist, give, and participate in God's transformation of us and our world.

Prayer of dedication

We return these gifts to you and relinquish our control over them, O God, that you may use them beyond us, beyond this place, and beyond self-interest that your love may abound in the flourishing of every living thing you have entrusted to us.

Prayers of the people and the Lord's Prayer (Based on the principles of World Day of Prayer USA)

Today we are called by Christian women throughout the world on this World Day of Prayer into informed prayer and prayerful action. We pray today "with, rather than for, our sisters of other races and nations, [to enrich] our experience and release the power which must be ours if we are to accomplish [what we must do]" for peace and



justice in our world.

Today we are bold enough to pray with this community of women:

For those we call and those we treat as enemies ... may we look for your face in their lives and their story. Center their humanity once again in our hearts even while we do not forsake accountability for actions that may diminish your goodness.

For those we call friends and those we whose lives we revere ... may we never take for granted the gift they are to our lives as a gift from you. We pray that we may be such a gift to the friendless and the lonely that we may give of that which we have experienced with such joy and delight for ourselves.

For our chosen families. Amidst the diverse configurations of family among us may we appreciate the gift that is our family and the gift of others' families regardless of their structure and gender configuration.

For ourselves ... for our very bodies where too seldom we see your image as you have woven us. May we value these vessels caring for them at their best and as they ultimately falter and decline over time. For our minds that bring creativity, ingenuity, and collaboration to the human community and to creation itself we pray with thanks and with a continued calling. May we use them for the good you intend and never to harm nations, neighbors or nature.

For our world ... may we confirm the rights of every people and nation has having the same divine image and righteous potential as our own. For our ailing planet, that we may care for her as the beautiful and only home she is for all.

For those who labor, that they may find their flourishing and their just compensation for their work. May we look not to do the minimum compensation for those who work for us but rather for that which gives them life, home and health for themselves and those in their care. We pray for a country where living wages rather than minimum wages are the standard and family leave is viewed as an investment in better work and better collegiality in the workplace.

For the church ... may the body of Christ renew her strength and purpose. May we, as the body of Christ in this place, look not to prioritize filling empty seats so much as empty hearts. May we be reminded to that only after your children no longer struggle for food, clothing, and shelter, can they turn toward nurturing a relationship with you and a love for the world. May we do our part to help people find their basic needs through community in all its forms.

Now hear us as we pray by name and circumstance for those closest to us ... [specific prayers previously collected may be read here or a time given for the vocalization of prayers aloud.]

As you have already wrapped your arms around each circumstance



spoken here you have embraced the unspoken and unknown needs among us and in the world. We acknowledge those private prayers known only in individual hearts and those perhaps beyond the reach of our knowledge In this moment. We are praying for all of these things in the name of our Gracious Savior and we join our voices with his, praying the prayer he taught us, “Our Father...”.

Charge and benediction

Recite the words you cherish in your hearts and remember to walk them into the world where your feet go and your hands work. Let these words change you into the salt and light Jesus expects us to be in the world. In that vein, I leave you with these traditional benediction words as the call-to-action Rev. William Sloane Coffin offered them to be:

May the Lord Bless you and keep you.
May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you.
May God give you grace not to sell yourselves short,
Grace to risk something big for something good,
Grace to remember that the world is now too dangerous for anything but truth, and too small for anything but love.
May God take your minds and think through them.
May God take your lips and speak through them.
May God take your hands and work through them.
May God take your hearts and set them on fire.
Amen.

© Presbyterian Outlook, 2023

Liturgy written by Kyle Walker
and provided for free distribution.

For more resources,
visit pres-outlook.org



THE PRESBYTERIAN OUTLOOK