

Call to Community *A Liturgy Celebrating* *God's Call to Experience Authentic Community* | BY CHARLES TEEL, JR.

Editor's Note: This liturgy was created for the November 17, 2007, worship service during the Adventist Society for Religious Studies meeting in San Diego, California.

Banners based on the Seven Churches hung at the front of the meeting room. Cultural artifacts from the Stahl Center Museum of Culture at La Sierra University were displayed, along with clay candleholders made from the clays in the Sinai Peninsula, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem.

Introducing the service and the work that is worship, the liturgist wrote:

In worship, humankind draws on rite, symbol, sacred text, and shared tradition in enacting our best hopes and understandings of the Divine. By engaging in such activity we hold up what "ought to be" against what "is." Worship at once calls us to confession no less than to celebration.

On this day as we celebrate our best hopes for authentic community, we are thus also called to confess how far we fall short. . . . More specific to our religious studies guild, major divisions exist with regard to how we approach the sacred text. And in such settings of "conflict" no less than in "concord," with Dietrich Bonhoeffer. . . we are called to kneel in humility before that One who is parent of us all, to seek reconciliation, and to give thanks for the gift of grace.

Call to Worship

Introduction

Word

ISAIAH 66

Hear the word of Yahweh:

Heaven is my throne and earth my footstool.
I myself will come to gather all nations and races,
and they will come and see my glory;
And I will perform a sign among them.
Distant coasts and islands that have never heard of me
shall announce my glory among the nations.
From every nation they shall bring countrymen on horses
and camels, and in chariots and wagons
as an offering to God.

And from one Sabbath to another and from one new moon
to another shall all people worship before me.

Hymn

"All People that on Earth Do Dwell" *Vaughn Williams*

All people that on earth do dwell
Sing to our God with cheerful voice.
Come now with mirth, God's praise foretell;
Come ye before God and rejoice.

Know that our God is God indeed,
Who did without our aid us make.
We are the folk that God doth lead,
And for his sheep he doth us take.

O enter in God's gates with praise;
Approach with joy God's courts unto.
Praise, laud, and bless God's name always,
For it is seemly so to do.
For why the God of all is good,
Whose mercy is forever sure,
Whose truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure.

In unison:

To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
The God whom heaven and earth adore;
From all on Earth and angel host,
Be praise and glory evermore. Amen.

Invocation

Call to Community From the Torah

GENESIS 1

Hear and respond to the word of the Lord from the Torah:

God said,
Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness:

So God created persons male and female in God's image.
God said,
Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth
and steward that creation which I give unto you.
It was so.
God saw everything that he had made.
Behold, it was good.

Call to Community From the Prophets

MICAH VI

Hear and respond to the word of the Lord from the Prophets:
With what shall I come before the Lord?
And bow down before the exalted God?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings?
Shall I come before him with sacrifices?
God has showed thee, my people, what is good;
For what does God require of thee?
To do justice, to love mercy, and
to walk humbly with thy God.

Call to Community From the Gospels

MATTHEW V

Hear and respond to the word of the Lord from the Gospel:
You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its savor
how may its saltiness be restored?
It is no longer good for anything,
but is thrown out and trampled under foot.
You are the light of the world.
A City built on a hill cannot be hid.
No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the basket,
but on the lamp stand and it gives light to all the house.
Let your light shine before others
so that they may see your good works.
And they will give glory to your Father in heaven.

Call to Community From the Primitive Church

1 CORINTHIANS XII/XIII / ROMANS X

Hear and respond to the word of the Lord from of the Apostle:
Christ is like a single body with its many limbs and
organs, which, though many, together make up one body.
Indeed we were all brought into one body by baptism,
in the one Spirit, whether we are Jews or Greeks,
whether slaves or free.
God has combined the various parts of the body that all
its organs might feel the same concern for one another.
If one organ suffers, they all suffer together.

If one flourishes, they all rejoice together.
Now you are Christ's body, and each members of it.

Eagerly desire the greater gifts.
Now I will show you a more excellent way.
If I speak in the tongues of humankind and of angels,
But if I have not love, I am only a sounding gong or a
clanging cymbal.

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries
and all knowledge and if I have a faith that can move
mountains, but if I have not love,
I gain nothing.

If I give all I possess to the poor and if I surrender my
body to be burned, but if I have not love,
I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind, love does not envy.
Love does not boast, love is not proud.
Love is not rude; love is not self-seeking.
Love is not easily angered.

Love keeps no records of wrongs.
Love does not delight in evil,
but rejoices with the truth.

Love always protects, always trusts,
always hopes, always perseveres.
Love never fails.

But where there are prophecies, they will cease.
Where there are tongues, they will be stilled.

Where there is knowledge, it will pass away.
Now we know in part and we prophesy in part.
But when that which is perfect is come,
That which is imperfect will disappear.

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I thought as a child,
and I reasoned as a child.

When I reached adulthood, I put away childish things.
Now we see through a glass darkly,
But then we shall see face to face.

Now we know in part,
But then we shall know fully, even as we are known.

And now abideth faith, hope, and love.
But the greatest of these is love.

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 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.
Do not be overcome by evil,
but overcome evil with good.

Call to Community From 20th Century People of God

"In Thee, In Me"
Hear from traditional words translated by Mohandas Ghandi:
In thee / In me / In all persons there dwelleth the One God.
In all/ God suffers/ And God suffers for all;
In all everywhere/ See thyself.
Abandon this thy ignorant conceit
Which holds that thou are separate from other persons.

"No Man is an Island"
Hear the words of John Donne:
No one is an Island entire of it self;
every one is a piece of the Continent, a part of the maine;
any one's death diminishes me, because I am involved in
Humankind; and therefore never send to know for whom
the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

"Strength to Love"
Hear the words of Martin Luther King, Jr.:
Any religion that ends with the individual ends. All life is
inter-related. We are caught in an inescapable network of
mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. What affects
one directly, affects all indirectly.

"Life Together"
Hear the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer:
Unity shines more brightly in the conflict of wills than in
concord, for as brothers and sisters disagree we are called
to kneel in humility before the One who is parent of us all.

Confession, Meditation, Benediction

Let us in silence confess the conflict of wills we experience.
Let us in silence celebrate the concord we experience.

Hymn

"Blest Be the Tie That Binds" (Arr. Lowell Mason)

Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love!

The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

Before the Creator's throne
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
Our comforts, and our cares.

We share our mutual woes,
Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.
When we asunder part,
It gives us inward pain;
But we shall still be joined in heart,
And hope to meet again.

Homily

Benedictory Hymn

"For All The Saints" *Vaughn Williams*

For all the saints who from their labors rest,
All who by faith before the world confessed.
Your name, O Savior, be forever blest.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

You were their rock, their fortress, and their might;
You, Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight;
You, in the darkness drear, their one true light.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

O blest communion, fellowship divine!
We carry on and in thy glory shine;
And all are one within your great design,
Alleluia! Alleluia!

The golden evening brightens in the west;
Soon, soon to faithful warriors comes their rest.
Sweet is the calm of paradise the blest.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest host,
Through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
Singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost:
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Benediction