

**Pennsylvania Southeast Conference
of the United Church of Christ**



**Friday Evening
2018 Annual Meeting
Worship Bulletin**

Matthew 5:23-24 So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister^[a] has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister,^[b] and then come and offer your gift. (NRSV)

Gathering Music

“We Have Come into His House” by Bruce Balinger

“Evening Hymn” from *Holden Evening Prayer* by Marty Haugen

“Gather Us In” by Marty Haugen

Invitation into Worship and Reconciliation

Friends in Christ, we gather in this space where our lives and God’s life intentionally cross. We are here seeking strength, renewal, and transformation. We worship offering God our praise and thanksgiving as well as our brokenness and burdens. The path toward authentic relationship with the Holy One involves reconciliation and healing. Tonight we remember these words of Jesus:

²³ *“So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you,²⁴ leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.”*
(Matthew 5:23-24, NLT)

Lest we continue squandering the grace we have received, lest we allow bitterness and pain to be our legacy, may we enter fully into this time and space, turning in worship to the God who breathes new life into dry bones, who changes shame into joy, and who brings the lost home.

Hymn “O God, How We Have Wandered”
(Permission - Public Domain)

Examination of Conscience

Leader: Jesus said the first commandment is: The Holy One, our God, is the only Holy One; and you shall love the Holy One, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second commandment is this: You shall love your neighbor as you love yourself. No other commandment is greater than these.

Leader: Let us call to mind the words of Jesus Christ: Blessed are the poor in spirit;

People: Theirs is the reign of God.

Leader: Blessed are those who mourn;

People: They shall be comforted.

Leader: Blessed are the meek;

People: They shall inherit the earth.

Leader: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness;

People: They shall be satisfied.

Leader: Blessed are the merciful;

People: They shall obtain mercy.

Leader: Blessed are the pure in heart;

People: They shall see God.

Leader: Blessed are the peacemakers;

People: They shall be called children of God.

Leader: Blessed are those persecuted for righteousness' sake;

People: Theirs is the reign of God.

Leader: Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

People: Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.

Prayer

People: Holy God, you are wind and breath and Spirit. We long for new life and pray you would spark newness in the ways you stir our imaginations and souls. Open us to your restorative power, and raise us up in hope and praise. Amen.

Special Music "You'll Never Walk Alone" by Richard Rodgers & Oscar Hammerstein – Bill Ludlow, soloist

Scripture Reading: Ezekiel 37:1-14

Sermon

The Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer

General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ

Invitation to the Offering

We receive an offering tonight as one way of working with God to breathe new life into dry spaces around us. Our offering will support the work of the United Church of Christ's Three Great Loves campaign. The gifts we share will show our love for God as expressed by our love for neighbor, for children, and for all creation. With joy and hope, may we offer ourselves and our resources to God's use now.

Offertory Hymn

"Help Us Accept Each Other"

(Permission by One License #708988)

Prayer of Dedication

Holy God, we pray you would receive and multiply the gifts we offer. Transform them into your work in the world. Through the lives they touch, we pray they would embody your great love for all you have made. May you continue to call us to greater service and deeper love following you, now and always. Amen.

Call to Confession

Tonight we remember again the words of Jesus:

²³ “So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you,²⁴ leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.” (Matthew 5:23-24, NLT)

Tonight we ask ourselves, who among us doesn't have someone who holds something against us? Who among us has no need of reconciliation? We all have sinned and fallen short of the glory and desire of God. We all need to be reconciled: with ourselves, with each other, and with our Creator. Holding fast to the faith that God can take the past, rework it and weave it into a vibrant, startling future, may we pray with each other.

Litany of Confession

Leader: Holy One, while we look at your creation and see so much that is beautiful, we also realize so much that isn't right.

People: We see churches with elaborate budgets, buildings and beautiful adornments and see the homeless who shelter in the doorways.

Leader: We hear messages of your gracious love for all and then remain silent as your people turn a blind eye to injustice, prejudice and hate.

People: We trust you created all life as sacred, and yet we live in the midst of vengeful habits, vicious trolls, and violent reactions.

Leader: Our imaginations and souls are stirred by the long ago stories of how you raised dry bones and resurrected a crucified man while our minds and hearts cling to dead habits and lifeless traditions.

People: We worship our past and all we once were instead of worshiping you, the God who can transform all things and create futures where we see no future.

Leader: We have scorned and dismissed prophetic leaders who sought to move us into new directions of faithfulness and service rather than wrestle with their challenging words.

People: Holy God, we have also distrusted each other, questioning motives and agendas instead of receiving each other's wisdom with holy understanding.

Leader: God, we know our world, our congregations, and our communities have problems, and we know we are complicit in them.

People: As people of faith, we have lived too long in fear. We have dwelt in brokenness, learned to love it, and have labelled it "normal."

Leader: We pray, gracious God, you would shake us from our past ways of discipleship.

People: We ask you would overturn our avoidant tendencies. Grant us the vision to see the desolation of the valleys we inhabit, and instead bless us with the clarity of perception to sense your immediate, abundant future. Empty us of our worries to free up space within us for healing and for transformation. Amen.

Moments of Quiet Reflection

Good News of God's Reconciliation

Leader: Kindred in Christ, no matter our complicity, failings or faults, God still desires to be in relationship with us. We have grace to forgive us and show us a new way of being. Remember these words of Jesus:

²⁸ "Come to me, all you who are struggling hard and carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Put on my yoke, and learn from me. I'm gentle and humble. And you will find rest for yourselves. ³⁰ My yoke is easy to bear, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30, CEB)

Affirmation of Reconciliation

All who are able may rise in body and/or in spirit

Leader: Do you believe that God is willing, for Christ's sake, to forgive all your sins?

People: I believe.

Leader: Do you forgive those who have sinned against you?

People: I do, with the help of God.

Leader: Do you resolve to offer yourself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit that you may have the power to resist evil and to do what is good?

People: I do.

Leader: In Christ's name, and as one with you in the church, I declare to you: Your sins are forgiven.

People: In Christ's name, and as sisters and brothers in the church, we declare to you: Your sins are forgiven.

All: Thanks be to God!

People: O God, from whom come all holy desires, all wise advice, and all just works; give to us, your servants, that peace which the world cannot give that our hearts may be set to obey your commandments; and that we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may live in peace and quietness; through the intercession of Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever. Amen.

Lord's Prayer (version from All Saints Fulham, Pryors Bank, Bishops Park, London)

**People: Eternal Spirit, Life-Giver, Pain-bearer, Love-maker,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:
the Hallowing of your Name
echo through the universe.**

**The Way of your Justice
be followed by the people of the world.**

**Your Heavenly Will be done
by all created beings.**

**Your commonwealth of Peace and Freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.**

With the bread we need for today feed us.

In the hurts we absorb from one another forgive us.

In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.

From trials too sharp to endure, spare us.

From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

**For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and for ever. Amen.**

Passing of the Peace

*As a sign of our desire to live as reconciled people, please greet one another with a sign of peace and the words, **"The peace of Christ be with you."***

Hymn "How Can I Keep from Singing?"
(Permission by One License #708988)

Blessing

Sending Music "Lead Me, Guide Me" by Doris Akers

Liturgists: Rev. William Worley, Rev. Anne Cormier, Rev. John Folk, Rev. Dwayne Mosier, Rev. Kimberly Berenotto, Rev. Joseph Long, Rev. Kimberly Kendrick

Musicians: Bill Ludlow (vocals and guitar), Karl Jones (vocals and guitar), Nick Pence (vocals and mandolin), Ken Jacob (vocals), Peg Jacob (piano), Brad Stull (drums)

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