

# Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music

## Membership

The Rev. Dr. Ruth Meyers, <i>Chair</i>	Chicago, V	2015
The Rev. Jennifer Phillips, <i>Vice-Chair</i>	Rio Grande, VII	2012
Mr. John Repulski, <i>Secretary</i>	Michigan, V	2015
The Rt. Rev. Sergio Carranza-Gomez*	Los Angeles, VIII	2012
Ms. Martha K. Baker*	Missouri, V	2012
Mr. Samuel Cheung*	New York, II	2012
Ms. Rebecca Clark*	Olympia, VIII	2012
Mr. Dent Davidson	Chicago, V	2015
The Rt. Rev. Thomas Ely	Vermont, I	2015
Br. Christopher Hamlett, O.P.	Virginia, III	2015
Mr. Sandra Montes	Texas, VII	2012
Ms. Jeannine Otis	New York, II	2012
The Rt. Rev. John McKee Sloan	Alabama, IV	2015
The Rev. Dr. Louis Weil	California, VIII	2015
The Rt. Rev. Pierre Welte Whalon*	Churches in Europe, II	2012
The Rev. Canon Sandye Wilson, <i>EC Liaison</i>	Newark, II	
The Rev. Canon Gregory Howe, <i>Custodian to the Standard Book of Common Prayer</i>		
Mr. Frank Tedeschi, <i>CPI Liaison*</i>		
Ms. Nancy Bryan, <i>CPI Liaison*</i>		
The Rev. Tom Brackett, <i>Staff</i>		

## Changes in Membership

Four changes in membership occurred during the triennium: Bishop Pierre Whalon replaced Bishop Sergio Carranza-Gomez in November 2009; Martha Baker replaced Rebecca Clark in September 2010, who replaced Samuel Cheung in November 2009; and Ms. Nancy Bryan joined as the new liaison from Church Publishing Incorporated in October 2011.

## Representation at General Convention

Deputy Ruth Meyers and Bishop Kee Sloan are authorized to receive non-substantive amendments to the report at Convention.

## Summary of Work

### Meetings

- November 17–20, 2009, Chicago, Illinois
- March 10–13, 2010, Linthicum Heights, Maryland
- October 18–20, 2010, Concord, New Hampshire
- March 15–19, 2011, Atlanta, Georgia
- June 22, 2011, web/teleconference
- October 11–15, 2011, Bloomington, Minnesota
- November 14, 2011, teleconference

## Hymnal Revision Study

*Project Chair:* Jeannine Otis

In response to the 76th General Convention's mandate in Resolution 2009-B004, the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music undertook a feasibility study on the need for revision of *The Hymnal 1982* with the assistance of the Church Pension Group's Office of Research.

The primary instrument for this study was an online questionnaire with three separate, role-specific versions: one for congregation members, one for clergy, and one for music directors. This instrument, in its various versions, was created by the Office of Research team in consultation with the Commission, Episcopal research colleagues, and subject-matter experts. Spanish translations of the surveys were created and made available online.

The surveys covered a few major content areas:

- congregational details (location, languages, and staffing)
- worship music resources (book availability, book and style, frequency of use)
- personal worship and worship music experiences
- opinions on current music resources and styles
- individual demographics (age, gender, race, general musical tastes)

All surveys included a free-text comment section at the end to capture qualitative information participants wished to share. Similar but more role-specific online questionnaires covering the same fundamental content areas were created for and administered to bishops and seminarians.

The survey was conducted in two phases: first, a stratified random sample of congregations, based on the proportionate number of total members across the church according to parish size; second, a “snowball” or viral sample, in which the survey was opened up to all clergy, music directors, and congregation members who wished to participate. Information about the survey was disseminated widely through articles and news releases on Episcopal News Service and through the Office of Public Affairs, through the Episcopal Communicators network, by members of the Commission contacting stakeholder groups directly, by e-mail to all clergy for whom the Church Pension Fund had an e-mail address on record, and through a dedicated page on the Office of Research’s area of the CPG website.

Between the stratified random sample and the “snowball” sample, responses were received from 9,016 congregation members, 2,575 clergy, and 1,139 music directors, representing 3,060 congregations (roughly 40% of all parishes). Additionally, 55 bishops completed the dedicated bishops’ survey, and 102 seminarians completed the dedicated seminarians’ survey.

In order to address specific populations of The Episcopal Church, the research team also conducted in-person, structured interviews. One portion of these interviews was conducted in focus groups with seminary faculty members at seminaries of The Episcopal Church.

The research team also sought to study the unique cultures and musical experiences of worship in Province IX. Members of the research team visited a selection of Province IX dioceses (Puerto Rico, Ecuador Central, and the Dominican Republic). During these visits, team members conducted interviews with bishops and with clergy and music leaders of parishes in the dioceses, attended parish worship services, video-recorded the various musical styles experienced in different parishes, and gained perspective on the cultural climate of these dioceses in terms of musical tradition, worship, and the environment in which the Church ministers.

A full version of the Hymnal Revision Feasibility Study report made by the research team to the Commission is available for download on the CPG website (<https://www.cpg.org/redirects/reports-statistics-on-church-related-topics/>), and the Commission commends it to all bishops and deputies, as it goes into a level of detail and analysis not possible in the brief summary given here.

The table below summarizes the responses of congregation members, clergy, music directors, bishops, and seminarians to the principle question, “Do you think a new, revised version of the Hymnal is needed?” Averages are based on participants’ responses on a 1-to-5 scale: (1) Not at all, (2) Not very much, (3) Neutral, (4) Very much, (5) Completely.

**“Do you think a new, revised version of the Hymnal is needed?”**

	<b>Congregation Members</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>Music Directors</b>	<b>Bishops</b>	<b>Seminarians</b>
<b>Against</b>	48.4%	35.7%	33.8%	37.6%	33.3%
<b>Neutral</b>	27.2%	23.4%	22.3%	27.1%	18.5%
<b>In Favor</b>	24.4%	40.9%	43.8%	35.4%	48.2%
<b>Average</b>	2.6	3.1	3.1	2.9	3.3

Respondents in the congregation member sample opposed hymnal revision by a ratio of nearly 2 to 1. And although clergy and music directors were more favorably disposed to revision, the average response for all of these categories falls below neutral (congregation members and bishops) or just slightly above neutral (clergy, music directors, and seminarians).

As reported by congregation members, *The Hymnal 1982* remains the medium of choice for worship music in The Episcopal Church. Over 95 percent of congregants report using *The Hymnal 1982* at least once per week for worship. The preeminence of *The Hymnal 1982* stands in contrast to the relatively low usage rates of the authorized supplements. *Lift Every Voice and Sing II* and *Wonder, Love, and Praise* are used at least once per month by around 30 percent of congregants, whereas *El Himnario*, *My Heart Sings Out*, *Voices Found*, and *The Hymnal 1940* are rarely used.

**Frequency of Hymnal / supplement use, as reported by congregation members**

	Less than once/month	At least once/month	At least once/week
<b>The Hymnal 1982</b>	2.7%	1.7%	95.5%
<b>El Himnario</b>	97.8%	0.7%	1.5%
<b>LEVAS II</b>	70.1%	21.9%	7.9%
<b>My Heart Sings Out</b>	98.7%	1.0%	0.4%
<b>Voices Found</b>	97.1%	2.4%	0.4%
<b>Wonder, Love, &amp; Praise</b>	66.7%	27.1%	6.2%
<b>The Hymnal 1940</b>	93.0%	2.5%	4.5%

When asked to rate how their current hymnal or hymnal supplements satisfy their congregation’s needs on the 5-point scale, congregation members, clergy, and music directors responded in very similar terms. The most favored resource of all three groups is *The Hymnal 1982*, with a mean rating for all three samples of nearly 4. By and large, congregation members, clergy, and music directors all view hymnal supplements much less favorably in terms of the supplements’ ability to satisfy their congregations’ needs, as no supplement had a mean score higher than 3 in any sample.

**Satisfaction (means) with The Hymnal 1982 and supplements**

	Congregation Members	Clergy	Music Directors
<b>The Hymnal 1982</b>	4.00	3.92	4.03
<b>El Himnario</b>	1.96	1.63	1.59
<b>LEVAS II</b>	2.94	2.93	2.90
<b>My Heart Sings Out</b>	2.01	2.05	2.06
<b>Voices Found</b>	2.03	2.19	2.29
<b>Wonder, Love, &amp; Praise</b>	2.98	2.98	3.00
<b>The Hymnal 1940</b>	3.03	2.16	2.73

It is important to note that the results described above reflect the responses of congregation members, clergy, and music directors in the domestic dioceses of The Episcopal Church. The experiences and needs of the congregations and dioceses in Province IX are radically different. Clergy and musicians in Province IX expressed clearly to the research interviewers that the currently available authorized musical resources of The Episcopal Church do not meet their needs in terms of worship style, theological and cultural context, and affordability. Clergy from all types of congregations wanted a resource that would combine the best of *El Himnario*, Latin American charismatic music, and the new music of the Pentecostal movement. The research team perceived a strong need and desire for new material to be developed and, most importantly, to be available at a cost that would make it realistically obtainable by congregations that serve the poorer members of those societies. It was clear that this work should begin immediately.

The data from domestic dioceses of The Episcopal Church indicate that African Americans and Native Americans are more favorably disposed toward hymnal revision; over one-third of those who identified themselves in these groups favor a revised hymnal, while fewer than one-fourth of Whites/Caucasians and Asian/Pacific Islanders are supportive. This is related to perceptions of *The Hymnal 1982*. Being in “The Book” itself represents being at the core of the Church and not on the periphery, a sentiment expressed in interviews with clergy and music directors from communities that are not of European ancestry.

A major line of investigation in this project concerned the quality of congregational musical programming. As any decision concerning whether or not to undertake a hymnal revision project would be grounded in part on the premise that musical programming bears some relationship to congregational vitality and stability, the research team sought to examine the role of worship music in helping or hindering the efforts of congregations to recruit and retain members. The research in the Hymnal study does point, in several clear ways, to a positive relationship between quality of music and congregational vitality.

While the data does not point towards revision at this time, it does indicate the need to begin an in-depth process of discernment as to what new music beyond the current set of authorized resources will inspire and revitalize our congregations. A process of carefully observed and rigorously measured trial use of music that is currently beyond what is authorized would be at the heart of this discernment. This new music may come from other parts of the Anglican Communion or from traditions beyond Anglicanism. The test will be in the ability of the musical resources to enhance the vitality of the congregations where they are used.

The Commission proposes to undertake this work during the next triennium through the creation of a congregational song task force that will explore a variety of musical resources and foster musical leadership able to learn, perform, and teach various musical styles. Some of this work is underway in the World Music project, and the Commission proposes to incorporate that project into the work of a congregational song task force.

### **World Music**

*Project Subcommittee:* Nancy Bryan, Dent Davidson, Sandra Montes, Jeannine Otis, John Repulski, Pierre Whalon, Sandye Wilson, with significant help from Scott Weidler of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Resolution 2009-A089 directed the Commission “to continue the work begun in the World Music project,” and was divided into three tasks:

1. Sort the existing body of World Music from the Praise Music (per recommendation of the Commission gathered 2007–2009), categorize, and distribute to the current members of the Commission. This was completed in March 2010.
2. Gather new music and discern what to add to existing list. This was completed in June 2011.
3. Develop a report to the Commission, and a work plan for the coming triennium. This was completed in October 2011.

### **World Music Work Plan, 2013–2015**

#### ***Recording Project for Selecciones del Himnario (Online RiteSong) and El Cancionero***

According to the Hymnal Revision Feasibility Study, Province IX is in urgent need of musical resources. The subcommittee saw this as an ideal companion to its work, as it will greatly enhance resources for Latino congregations and indeed, all musical leadership of the Church. This work includes a recording project which is hoped to be made available both as a teaching tool (with vocalists and instrumentalists) and as a practical tool for congregations who have no musical leadership (i.e., the vocal track removed).

#### ***Resource Gathering and Categorizing***

It was deemed essential for the subcommittee to continue gathering and expanding a library of musical choices in this process. The aim is to select, edit and arrange the music both in traditional styles and in alternative styles (suggested instrumentation, rhythms, etc.). This will also enable the creation of a liturgical, scriptural, thematic, and seasonal index for the music gathered; further, this will strive to identify music that seems to be “missing” in certain areas. The aim will be to then develop a group of “testers” who will be able to access a database of these selections, use them in their local congregations, and report back to the subcommittee.

#### ***“People Skills”***

The subcommittee felt it to be necessary to encourage musicians—both seasoned professionals and new leadership—to develop confidence in learning, performing, and teaching new musical styles. The hope is to use technology to help this happen: a “how-to” for video sharing, sharing different arrangements of certain selections, and the like. It is hoped that the use of recognized personalities in the Church can help the process. Additionally, a gathering of interested musicians is planned for summer 2012 as an initial face-to-face training and sharing experience.

### ***Sharing Information***

Following on these initial action items, a parallel step is to develop a network of musicians/congregations doing diverse styles of music. The network will serve to support and inspire one another and those newer to these styles of music. Some mode of communication online (such as a listserv or forum website) can enable all to share ideas and resources.

### ***Develop an Ongoing Library of World Music Resources for the Commission***

There is a plethora of information and music available; the Commission seems to be behind the curve and should catch up to remain current and begin to lead in this endeavor.

### **Resolution A048 Form Congregational Song Task Force**

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That the 77th General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, in response to the hymnal revision feasibility study called for by the 76th General Convention, to form a congregational song task force to further the mission of The Episcopal Church by enlivening and invigorating congregational song through the development of a variety of musical resources and energized and empowered leadership; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music continue to develop and expand the work begun in the World Music Project.

### **Explanation**

A majority of respondents to the hymnal revision feasibility study conducted in 2010-2011 do not favor revision of *The Hymnal 1982*. Respondents in Province IX expressed an urgent need for affordable musical resources suitable for their context, and non-European-American clergy and musicians expressed their desire to have culturally appropriate musical resources included in the official hymnal of the Church. A task force on congregational song will help discover and develop both music and musical leadership that contribute to congregational vitality. The work already begun in the world music project dovetails with the need for musical resources suitable for diverse contexts.

### **Resources for Blessing Same-Gender Relationships**

*Project Chair*: Ruth Meyers.

*Theological Resources Task Group*: Jay Emerson Johnson, *chair*; Thomas Ely; Christopher Hamlett; Gabriel Lamazares; Gene Rogers; Kee Sloan; Brian Taylor; Ellen Wondra; Gale Yee.

*Liturgical Resources Task Group*: Patrick Malloy, *chair*; Andrew Cooley; Mary Gray-Reeves; Michael Hopkins; Susan Ironside; Mark Jenkins; Jeffrey Lee; Ivette Linares; Jennifer Phillips; Bowie Snodgrass; Sandye Wilson.

*Pastoral and Teaching Resources Task Group*: Thaddeus Bennett and Susan Russell, *co-chairs*; Stannard Baker; Susan Blue; Jaime Case; Heidi Clark; Dent Davidson; Jack Finlaw; Raisin Horn; Mary Catherine Young.

*Canons and Legal Issues Task Group*: Thomas Little, *chair*; Joan Geiszler-Ludlum; Larry Hitt; Dorsey Henderson; The Rev. Canon Greg Howe.

*Consultants*: Keri Aubert, *project manager*; Vicki Black.

### **Meetings of Chairs**

- May 27, 2010, teleconference
- June 3, 2010, teleconference
- August 24, 2010, teleconference
- September 10, 2010, teleconference
- October 4, 2010, teleconference
- October 28, 2010, teleconference
- November 15, 2010, teleconference
- December 20, 2010, teleconference
- January 12–14, 2011, Atlanta, Georgia
- February 14, 2011, web/teleconference
- March 2, 2011, web/teleconference
- March 15, 2011, web/teleconference
- March 30, 2011, web/teleconference
- May 12, 2011, web/teleconference
- June 14, 2011 web/teleconference

### Meetings of Task Groups

- July 7–10, 2010, Los Angeles, California
- September 1, 2010, teleconference
- September 23, 2010, teleconference
- November 15, 2010, teleconference
- November 29 – December 2, 2010, Burlingame, California
- March 18–19, 2011, Atlanta, Georgia
- May 31 – June 3, 2011, Linthicum Heights, Maryland
- April 7, 2011, teleconference
- April 21, 2011, teleconference
- May 19, 2011, teleconference
- August 11, 2011, teleconference
- August 15–17, 2011, Menlo Park, California
- September 3, 2011, teleconference

Resolution 2009-C056 directed the Commission to “collect and develop theological and liturgical resources” for blessing same-gender relationships, and to do so with “an open process” that invited widespread participation from throughout The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion.

The Archives of the Episcopal Church created a digital archive for this project, and many of the resources collected are available on their website. The document of resources the Commission developed, entitled “I Will Bless You, and You Will Be a Blessing,” is appended to this report.

The introduction to this document provides a full account of the Commission’s work during this triennium. Consultation on this project has included:

- presentations at meetings of the House of Bishops in September 2010 and March and September 2011;
- a hearing in New Hampshire on October 19, 2010, at which representatives of all 7 dioceses of Province I (New England) testified about their experience with same-gender blessings and marriages;
- a web-based Churchwide survey regarding pastoral and teaching materials, available from October 2010 through January 6, 2011, yielding 1131 responses from 111 dioceses;
- a Churchwide consultation, held from March 18–19, 2011, and attended by 195 deputies from 98 dioceses;
- a web-based review of first drafts in July 2011 by 133 lay and ordained people from all 9 provinces of The Episcopal Church; and
- a presentation and discussion at the August 2011 meeting of the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation.

At the request of the Commission, in January 2012 the Secretary of General Convention sent to the Secretary of every Province in the Anglican Communion an overview of the Commission’s work, one-page summaries of theological and liturgical principles, and an overview of General Convention legislation, with an invitation for comments.

Prior to General Convention, the Commission will send a copy of “I Will Bless You, and You Will Be a Blessing” to the Secretary of every Province in the Anglican Communion.

As the Commission began its work in response to this resolution, it determined that an open process with widespread participation required significant funding beyond what was available in the funds allocated by Resolution 2009-A089, which also provided funds for all SCLM projects during the triennium. The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society subsequently contracted with Church Divinity School of the Pacific (CDSP) to support this work. In turn, CDSP secured funding totaling \$573,235, including grants from the Arcus Foundation, the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, and several much smaller gifts.

Recognizing that civil law is an important consideration when the Church decides to bless same-gender relationships, the Commission formed a task group on canons and legal issues. The findings of this task group are included in the resources. A working list of related issues, questions, and areas of research covers (1) issues that may be particular to parts of The Episcopal Church outside the United States, (2) a survey of diocesan canons in this area, and (3) a survey of state marriage and civil union laws.

**Resolution A049 Authorize Liturgical Resources for Blessing Same-Gender Relationships**

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That the 77th General Convention commend “Liturgical Resources I: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing” for study and use in congregations and dioceses of The Episcopal Church; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the 77th General Convention authorize for trial use “The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant” from “Liturgical Resources I: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing” beginning the First Sunday of Advent 2012, under the direction of a bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority; and be it further

*Resolved*, That bishops, particularly those in dioceses within civil jurisdictions where same-gender marriage, civil unions, or domestic partnerships are legal, may provide generous pastoral response to meet the needs of members of this Church, including adaptation of the liturgy and declaration of intention contained in “I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing”; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music develop an open process to review “I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing,” inviting responses from provinces, dioceses, congregations, and individuals from throughout The Episcopal Church and from throughout the Anglican Communion, and report to the 78th General Convention.

**Explanation**

In response to Resolution 2009-C056, the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music developed liturgical and theological resources for blessing same-gender relationships. Throughout the triennium, the commission heard stories of the urgent pastoral need for these resources in congregations of The Episcopal Church. Because these are new resources for a pastoral situation not previously recognized in official liturgical books of The Episcopal Church, the commission recommends that they be used under the direction of a bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority, and that there be a process of review in order to refine the materials, so that they are in keeping with Anglican theological and liturgical tradition.

**Resolution A050 Create Task Force on the Study of Marriage**

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That the 77th General Convention direct the Presiding Bishop and President of the House of Deputies to appoint a task force of not more than twelve people, consisting of theologians, liturgists, pastors, and educators, to identify and explore biblical, theological, historical, liturgical, and canonical dimensions of marriage; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the task force consider issues raised by changing societal and cultural norms and legal structures, including legislation authorizing or forbidding marriage, civil unions, or domestic partnerships between two people of the same sex, in the U.S. and other countries where The Episcopal Church is located; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the task force develop tools for theological reflection and norms for theological discussion at a local level; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the task force report its progress to the 78th General Convention; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$30,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

**Explanation**

As the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music developed liturgical resources for blessing same-gender relationships, it faced repeated questions about marriage. What makes a marriage Christian? What is the relationship between the Church’s blessing of a relationship, whether different-

gender or same-gender, and a union, “marriage” or otherwise, created by civil law? Is the blessing of a same-gender relationship equivalent to the marriage of a different-gender couple, and if so, should this liturgy be called “marriage”?

Because the Church’s understanding of marriage affects so many of its members, the Commission believes it is important to engage in a Churchwide conversation about our theology of marriage. The Dioceses of El Camino Real and North Carolina have both recently undertaken studies of marriage, with reports available from the Digital Archives.

### **Holy Women, Holy Men**

*Calendar Committee:* Sandye Wilson, *Chair*; Martha Baker; Ruth Meyers; Kee Sloan.

*Consultants:* Sam Portaro, Dan Joslyn-Siemiatkoski.

*Meetings:* February 7–9, 2011, and September 26–28, 2011, Church Divinity School of the Pacific, Berkeley, CA; November 4, 2011, teleconference

Resolution 2009-A096 authorized trial use of revised and additional commemorations in *Holy Women, Holy Men* and called for a “proactive approach” to trial use that intentionally solicited feedback from a variety of congregations, while Resolution 2009-A097 authorized for trial use the propers set forth in *Holy Women, Holy Men*. Resolution 2009-B020 directed the Commission to add Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall to the liturgical Calendar of this Church, and this commemoration was added to *Holy Women, Holy Men*.

General Convention also adopted or referred to the Commission several resolutions proposing new commemorations:

- 2009-A170, first ordinations of women to the priesthood in The Episcopal Church;
- 2009-C002 and 2009-C057, Pauli Murray;
- 2009-C003, John Jay;
- 2009-C006, Brother William West Skiles;
- 2009-C016, Frederick B. Howden;
- 2009-C021, 2009-C062, and 2009-C065, Andronicus and Junia;
- 2009-C058, Manteo and Virginia Dare;
- 2009-C066, James Solomon Russell;
- 2009-C086, James Markham Ambler;
- 2009-D008, Thecla; and
- 2009-D056, Gifford Pinchot.

In addition, during the triennium, in accord with the procedures for Churchwide recognition set forth in *Holy Women, Holy Men* (see pages 745–746), the Diocese of Kentucky proposed directly to the Commission the commemoration of Sister Emily Cooper, Deaconess, and All Forgotten Children. Other names were suggested to the Commission but none included the information required for a formal proposal.

### **Resolution A051 Continue Trial Use of Holy Women, Holy Men**

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That the 77th General Convention continue the trial use of Holy Women, Holy Men until the next General Convention; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the 77th General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to continue the process of inviting responses from the wider Church and developing Holy Women, Holy Men for the coming triennium; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music be requested to present the revised edition of Holy Women, Holy Men to the 78th General Convention in 2015 for a first reading.

### **Resolution A052 Identify Additional Church Calendar Commemorations**

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That the 77th General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to consult with the Executive Council Committee on the Status of Women, the Episcopal

Women's History Project, and other organizations of women in The Episcopal Church to identify women suitable for inclusion in the Calendar of the Church Year and to develop liturgical material for their commemoration; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the 77th General Convention propose additional commemorations in the Calendar of the Church Year and authorize trial use thereof for the triennium 2013-2015, as follows:

- March 28, James Solomon Russell;
- April 17, Emily Cooper;
- May 15, Junia and Andronicus;
- July 1, Pauli Murray;
- July 29, First Ordination of Women to the Priesthood in The Episcopal Church;
- August 17, Virginia Dare and Manteo;
- September 23, Thecla.

and be it further

*Resolved*, That the 77th General Convention authorize for trial use as a supplement to *Holy Women, Holy Men* the propers for these commemorations as found in the Blue Book; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the 77th General Convention authorize for trial use during the 2013-2015 triennium alternative collects to those in *Holy Women, Holy Men*, as found in the Blue Book.

#### Explanation

James Solomon Russell (March 28): Born in slavery, James Solomon Russell (1837-1935) nevertheless managed to obtain a sound education and attended the first seminary in Virginia founded for African Americans (later the Bishop Payne Divinity School). Ordained a deacon in 1882 and a priest in 1887, he served St. Paul's, Lawrenceville, where he founded a normal school that would provide both a literary and industrial education for African Americans. Though elected Suffragan Bishop of Arkansas, and later of North Carolina, he declined both to continue his school; in 1917, he was appointed the first "Archdeacon for Colored Work" in Southern Virginia, and received honorary degrees from Virginia Theological Seminary and Monrovia College in Liberia.

Emily Cooper (April 17): At age 36, Emily Cooper became a deaconess in 1873. Shortly afterwards, she was called to serve in the Diocese of Kentucky. In 1880, she was made director of the Home of the Innocents in Louisville, where she cared for neglected, unwanted, seriously ill and abused children. She assisted at the baptisms of 284 children (often providing them with names since no one else had named them) and the burial of 220 who either had no parents or whose families were too poor to afford a grave.

Junia and Andronicus (May 15): Andronicus and Junia are referred to in Paul's letter to the Romans as "my relatives who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was" (Romans 16:7, NRSV). They are celebrated on May 17 in the Eastern Orthodox calendar.

Pauli Murray (July 1): Pauli Murray (1910-July 5, 1985) was the first African-American woman ordained to the Episcopal priesthood (1977). Growing up as a mixed-race person in the South, she became an advocate of "the universal cause of freedom," and throughout her life she worked tirelessly and with distinction as a lawyer, an advocate for civil and labor rights and feminism through her legal writings, essays and poetry.

Virginia Dare and Manteo (August 17): Virginia Dare was the first child of English parents born in the New World, days after the establishment of the Roanoke Colony, on August 18, 1587. Her baptism was held a few days after the colony's first baptism—that of Algonquian Native American Manteo on August 13; on that same day, Sir Walter Raleigh had proclaimed the chief "Lord of Roanoke." Manteo traveled to England with Raleigh several times, helped convert some of his people to Christianity, assisted the settlers during harsh winters, and proved an invaluable mediator between cultures. The ultimate fate of the "Lost Colony" and of Dare and Manteo remains unknown.

Thecla (September 23): Known from the apocryphal *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, Thecla was a follower of Paul. Widely venerated by the Church from at least the fourth century, she is called "Apostle and proto-martyr among women" among the Orthodox.

### **New Liturgical Materials: Honoring God in Creation; Loss of Companion Animals**

*Creation Season and Animal Rites Team:* Jennifer Phillips, *convener*; Rebecca Clark; Rodney Hudgen; Steve Keplinger; Amy McCreath; Anne Rowthorn; Marcia Sessions; Daniel Simons; Robert Stiefel; Skip Vilas; with help from members of the Executive Council Committee on Science, Faith and Technology (Josephine Borgeson, Alicia Graham, Gretchen Rehberg, Alistair So); additional authors Jeff Gollither, W. Richard Hamlin, Anne Kelsey, Thomas Lindell, Mary K. Morrison, and Michael Ray; and with thanks to the dioceses, congregations, and organizations who generously shared their materials.

The Commission was charged to respond to Resolutions 2009-C034 and 2009-D001, establishing a Creation Cycle of the Pentecost Season; and Resolution 2009-C078, for developing rites to observe the loss of companion animals. In doing so, the Commission considered related rites in which churches often offer prayers for the well-being of God's creation, for our relationship to and stewardship of the earth, and for earth's creatures, including those that are particularly dear to us: pets and companion, service, and domestic animals. The materials presented here include rites for observing Rogation Days (often observed following the 6th Sunday of Easter), the blessing of animals on the Feast of St. Francis or on the closest Sunday in October, and prayers that might be suitable for such civic occasions as Earth Day and Arbor Day or the blessing of a community garden.

In preparing for this project the team gathered and reviewed materials from across The Episcopal Church and from Anglican Communion and ecumenical partners, and also dipped into the extensive literature available today on creation-related theology. The Executive Council Committee on Science, Technology, and Faith has been an active collaborator in this work, as well as the House of Bishops in their September 2011 Pastoral Teaching on the Environment, which underpins efforts to honor Anglican traditions of praying for the earth and its creatures, and to consider in the light of contemporary scientific knowledge the activity and blessing of God at work in the cosmos.

The team heard many Episcopalians' sense of urgency about responding to environmental concerns, and is conscious that Christian and Anglican traditions offer deeper insights into the scriptures and the relationship of faith and science than popular media portrayal of the dichotomy between creationist/intelligent design and science allows.

The Commission ultimately did not decide to recommend that General Convention create an optional season of Sundays to honor God in creation during the season after Pentecost, but rather recommends that such propers and other materials be made available for a variety of liturgical occasions (for example, a Lenten weekday series of worship services to accompany environmental education classes). In response to Resolution 2009-C034 and Resolution 2009-D001, the following rites and materials concerning creation are offered: Propers for the Honoring God in Creation, with its introduction; three forms for the Prayers of the People Honoring God in Creation; A Confession of Sin against God's Creation; and A Litany for the Planet. For the observation of Rogation Days, offered is a Rogation Day Procession and Liturgy, and Prayers for Rogation Day: A Rite for the Blessing of a Garden and All Who Labor. For our care of the earth's creatures there is a modified Liturgy in Thanksgiving for Creation and in Honor of the Feast of St. Francis, with the Blessing of Animals, as well as Additional Readings and Resources for St. Francis Day, gathered from ancient and modern theologians, that might be useful for various occasions when God's people gather to pray for the earth and its creatures.

In response to Resolution 2009-C078 concerning rites for companion animals, a Burial Office for a Beloved Animal was developed, along with additional prayers for use at the adoption, illness, loss, or death of companion, service, and other beloved animals.

### **Resolution A053 Authorize Liturgical Materials for Honoring God in Creation**

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That the 77th General Convention authorize Liturgical Materials Honoring God in Creation, found in the Blue Book report of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, for use in The Episcopal Church; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music consider these liturgical materials for inclusion in a revised edition of The Book of Occasional Services.

#### Explanation

These materials respond to the desire for liturgical materials for a season of creation as expressed in resolutions proposed to the 76th General Convention. Rather than establishing a season of creation, these liturgical texts allow congregations and other groups to honor God in creation in a variety of contexts. While the Book of Occasional Services is being revised, the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music proposes to make these texts available electronically.

#### **Resolution A054 Authorize Rites and Prayers for the Care of Beloved Animals**

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That the 77th General Convention authorize for use in congregations or other church groups wishing to provide pastoral care for people caring for animals, liturgical materials found in the Blue Book report of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, entitled “Various Rites and Prayers for Animals.”

#### Explanation

These liturgical texts respond to resolution 2009-C078, which directed the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to develop liturgical resources to observe the loss of a companion animal. The Commission proposes to make these texts available electronically.

#### **Daily Prayer**

*Consultants:* Julia Wakelee-Lynch, *lead consultant*; Devon Anderson; Mark Bozutti-Jones; Rebecca Clark; Joseph Farnes; Paul Fromberg; Paul Joo; Lizette Larson-Miller; Julia McCray-Goldsmith; Sam Dessórdi Leite; Ernesto Medina; Clay Morris; Elizabeth Muñoz; Ruth Meyers; Dan Prechtel; Cristina Rose Smith; Carol Wade; Louis Weil.

Resolution 2009-A089 directed the Commission to complete work on daily prayer, a project begun in the 2007–2009 triennium. After reviewing the first draft completed in 2009, the Commission requested daily prayers for Holy Week. The Commission used the material for its worship throughout the triennium, and the revised body of work was also tested informally in seminaries, church camps, and other gatherings.

#### **Resolution A055 Authorize Daily Prayer for All Seasons**

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That the 77th General Convention authorize liturgical materials entitled “Daily Prayer for All Seasons,” found in the Blue Book report of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, for publication and distribution by Church Publishing Incorporated for experimental use by individuals and in congregations and other church groups wishing to pray or meditate throughout the day.

#### Explanation

Just as the Book of Common Prayer is threaded throughout with familiar scripture, this new resource draws heavily on the collects, rhythms and patterns that those who have used and love the BCP’s daily office will recognize. This new resource is intended as a complement to the Daily Offices and Daily Devotions for Individuals and Families in the 1979 BCP, to encourage individuals and small groups, particularly those not already using the full Daily Offices, to take time to pray during the day.

#### **Book of Occasional Services**

*Project Chair:* Thomas Ely.

Resolution 2009-A089 directed the Commission “to undertake a substantial revision of the Book of Occasional Services.” The Commission began its work on this topic by discussing the history of the development of the Book of Occasional Services and a perception of how well it is serving the Church today. It was decided that for this project requiring intense labor, a realistic goal would be to have a progress report of work accomplished for the 77th General Convention in 2012, not a completed task, and to work towards bringing a full report with recommendations to General Convention in 2015. A subcommittee is established for the purpose of accomplishing this task. The Commission reviewed all services in the current Book of Occasional Services and suggested changes, additions, and deletions to help guide the work of the subcommittee. Due to other project commitments, this project has been slow to gain traction beyond this preliminary stage during the current triennium.

**Resolution A056 Continue Revision of the Book of Occasional Services**

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That the 77th General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to continue its work on a revision of the Book of Occasional Services and report its progress to the 78th General Convention.

**Explanation**

The 76th General Convention directed the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to undertake a substantial revision of the Book of Occasional Services and report its progress to the 77th General Convention. The Commission established a subcommittee to undertake this work. It was determined that a realistic goal would be to work towards bringing a full report with recommendations to General Convention in 2015.

**Inclusive and Expansive Language**

In March 2011, the Commission received a report of the WordsMatter project of the National Council of Churches Women for Justice Working Group Expansive Language Committee. The Rev. Terri Pilarski of the Diocese of Michigan represents The Episcopal Church on this project.

The goal of the project is to promote dialogue rooted in diverse contexts that explores the words, images and symbols we use for God, self, and other human beings for the purpose of building trust and transformational relationships. A conversation guide for congregations and other groups is in development, and a blog and Facebook page offer places for sharing resources.

The use of expansive language is consistent with the Commission's work on inclusive language, as first directed in Resolution 1985-A095. As former Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold writes in the Preface to *Enriching Our Worship 1*, "Expanding our vocabulary of prayer and the ways in which we name the Holy One bear witness to the fact that the mystery of God transcends all categories of knowing, including those of masculine and feminine."

Materials in the *Enriching Our Worship* series are authorized for use under the direction of a bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority.

**Resolution A057 Authorize Enriching Our Worship 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5**

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That the 77th General Convention authorize continuing use of Enriching Our Worship 1: The Daily Office, Great Litany, and Eucharist; Enriching Our Worship 2: Ministry with the Sick and Dying and Burial of a Child; Enriching Our Worship 3: Burial Rites for Adults together with a Rite for the Burial of a Child; Enriching Our Worship 4: The Renewal of Ministry and the Welcoming of a New Rector or other Pastor; and Enriching Our Worship 5: Liturgies and Prayers Related to Childbearing, Childbirth, and Loss, under the direction of a bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority.

**Addressing Christian Anti-Judaism**

*Project Chair*: Louis Weil

Resolution 2009-A089 directed the Commission to continue to "collect, develop, and disseminate materials to assist members of the Church to address Christian anti-Judaism expressed in and stirred by portions of Christian scriptures and liturgical texts." Members of the Commission engaged in serious discussion concerning the most effective means to respond to this resolution. It was felt that the idea of a pamphlet on this subject would not gain the desired attention among Church members, and there was concern that this work not be trivialized with an inadequate response.

Professor Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski of the Church Divinity School of the Pacific was invited to the Commission's October 2010 meeting, to share the substantial work he has done on the problem of anti-Judaism in Christian history. He offered an insightful critique of the development of supersessionism which has dominated the attitude of Christians generally toward the Jews, the view that the Church has replaced Israel as God's chosen people. His critique has now

been prepared as an essay which the Commission plans to share more generally with members of the Church via the internet during the next triennium.

In the coming triennium, the Commission plans to focus attention on the problematic passages in Scripture which have been used to fuel anti-Judaism, primarily those passages which occur in the Lectionary and most particularly in the readings and rites of Holy Week and Easter. Our intention is to prepare commentaries on these problematic passages as an aid to sermon preparation. In support of that work, the Commission has also asked the Consultation on Common Texts to address Christian anti-Judaism in its development of resources for the Revised Common Lectionary.

### **Resolution A058 Continue Addressing Christian Anti-Judaism**

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That the 77th General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to continue to collect, review, and disseminate materials to address Christian anti-Judaism expressed in and stirred by portions of Christian scriptures and liturgical texts.

#### **Explanation**

This resolution asks the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to continue work first directed in Resolution 2006-C001, calling for “materials to assist members of the Church to address anti-Jewish prejudice expressed in and stirred by portions of Christian scriptures and liturgical texts.”

### **Revised Common Lectionary: Holy Week**

General Convention Resolution 2006-A077 adopted the Revised Common Lectionary as the Lectionary of The Episcopal Church. During the 2009–2012 triennium, Frank Tedeschi, liaison from Church Publishing Incorporated, brought to the Commission’s attention resulting inconsistencies between this Lectionary and the Holy Week liturgies in the section “Proper Liturgies for Special Days” (BCP 1979, pages 270–95), which include the appointed lessons. The Commission proposes that these liturgies be revised in order to bring them into conformity with the Lectionary.

### **Resolution A059 Revise Book of Common Prayer for Revised Common Lectionary**

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, the *Standard Book of Common Prayer* shall be revised as follows:

p.271: Palm Sunday, Liturgy of the Palms

Year A: Matthew 21:1-11

Year B: ~~Mark 11:1-11a~~ *Mark 11:1-11, or John 12:12-16*

Year C: ~~Luke 19:29-40~~ *Luke 19:28-40*

p. 272: Palm Sunday, At the Eucharist

Old Testament: ~~Isaiah 45:21-25, or Isaiah 52:13-53:12~~ *Isaiah 50:4-9a*

Psalms: ~~22:1-21, or 22:1-11~~ *31:9-16*

Epistle: Philippians 2:5-11

p. 273: Palm Sunday, At the Eucharist

Year A: ~~Matthew 26:36-27:54(55-66) or 27:1-54(55-66)~~ *Matthew 26:14-27:66, or 27:11-54*

Year B: ~~Mark 14:32-15:39(40-47)~~ *Mark 14:1-15:47, or 15:1-39 (40-47)*

Year C: ~~Luke 22:39-23:49(50-56)~~, *Luke 22:14-23:56, or 23:1-49 (50-56)*

p. 274: Maundy Thursday

Old Testament: ~~Exodus 12:1-14a~~ *Exodus 12:1-4(5-10)11-14*

Psalms: ~~78:14-20,23-25~~ *116:1,10-17 (omit Hallelujah in verse 17)*

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (~~27-32~~)

Gospel: ~~John 13:1-15, or Luke 22:14-30~~ *John 13:1-17, 31b-35*

p. 276: Good Friday

Old Testament: ~~Isaiah 52:13-53:12, or Genesis 22:1-18, or Wisdom 2:1, 12-24~~

Psalm: ~~22:1-11(12-21), or 40:1-14, or 69:1-23~~

Epistle: ~~Hebrews 10:1-25~~ *Hebrews 10:16-25, or 4:14-16; 5:7-9*

p. 277: Good Friday

~~John 18:1-19:37, or 19:1-37~~ *John 18:1-19:42*

p. 283: Holy Saturday

Old Testament: ~~Job 14:1-14, or Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24~~

Psalm: ~~130, or 31:1-5~~ *31:1-4, 15-16*

Epistle: I Peter 4:1-8

Gospel: ~~Matthew 27:57-66, or John 19:38-42~~

pp. 288-295: The Great Vigil of Easter:

p. 288: The story of Creation

~~Genesis 1:1-2:2~~ *Genesis 1:1-2:4a*

Psalm ~~33:1-11, or Psalm 36:5-10~~ *136:1-9, 23-26*

p. 288: The Flood

~~Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:6-18; 9:8-13~~

Psalm 46

p. 289: Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac

~~Genesis 22:1-18~~

~~Psalm 33:12-22, or Psalm 16~~

p. 289: Israel's deliverance at the Red Sea

~~Exodus 14:10-15:1~~ *Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21*

Canticle 8, The Song of Moses

p. 290: God's Presence in a renewed Israel

~~Isaiah 4:2-6~~ *Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4, or Proverbs 8:1-8, 19-21; 9:4b-6*

~~Psalm 122~~ *Psalm 19*

p. 290: Salvation offered freely to all

~~Isaiah 55:1-11~~

~~Canticle 9, The First Song of Isaiah, or Psalm 42:1-7~~

p. 290: A new heart and a new spirit

~~Ezekiel 36:24-28~~

~~Psalm 42:1-7, or Canticle 9, The First Song of Isaiah~~ *Psalms 42 and 43*

p. 291: The valley of dry bones

~~Ezekiel 37:1-14~~

~~Psalm 30, or Psalm 143~~

p. 291: The gathering of God's people

~~Zephaniah 3:12-20~~ *Zephaniah 3:14-20*

Psalm 98, ~~or Psalm 126~~

p. 295: At the Eucharist

Gospel: *Year A* Matthew 28:1-10

*Year B: Mark 16:1-8*

*Year C: Luke 24:1-12*

#### Explanation

General Convention Resolution 2006-A077 resolved that “the Revised Common Lectionary shall be the Lectionary of this Church, amending the Lectionary on pp. 889-921 of the Book of Common Prayer.” While the Revised Common Lectionary made no changes to Ash Wednesday, there are changes in the lectionary passages for each of the Holy Week liturgies and for the Easter Vigil. The section of “Proper Liturgies for Special Days” (pp. 270-295) includes the passages appointed for these days. As a result, the internal pages of the Book of Common Prayer are no longer consistent with the Lectionary. This resolution brings pages 270-295 of the BCP into conformity with the current Lectionary of The Episcopal Church.

Article X of the Constitution requires that revisions to the Book of Common Prayer are proposed in one regular meeting of General Convention, published to the Diocesan Conventions, and adopted at the next succeeding regular meeting of General Convention by a vote by orders. This is the proposing resolution for revisions to the authorized text of the Book of Common Prayer, “Proper Liturgies for Special Days” (pp. 270–295) to reflect the previously approved changes to the Lectionary. If adopted, this revision will return to the next regular meeting of General Convention for second reading and vote by orders.

#### Liturgies for Adoption of Children

*Project Chair:* Ruth Meyers; Devon Anderson, *consultant*.

Resolution 2009-A089 directed the Commission to continue to develop liturgical materials for “pastoral issues in the context of adoption of children.” This work had begun during the 2007–2009 triennium, as directed by Resolution 2006-A070.

During this triennium, a small group of liturgists and writers convened over conference call to review the liturgical material and theological rationale concerning adoption developed during the previous triennium. While the material was heartfelt, it was largely incomplete, did not survey the present landscape for existing materials, and needed a significant re-imagining regarding theology and the pastoral situations to which it responds.

The Commission recommends the following process during the 2013–2015 triennium for development of needed liturgical materials regarding adoption:

- A face-to-face meeting with five to seven liturgists and musicians, appointed by the Commission, and with particular awareness or direct experience of adoption to articulate the pastoral circumstances to which the liturgies would minister, determine the scope of the project and its correlating strategy and time-line for development, develop a theological rationale and framework for the work, and analyze pre-existing liturgical material surrounding adoption.
- The work would then be handed off to one or two writers charged with writing original liturgies, litanies, and prayers and editing/developing pre-existing material that fits the scope and theological focus determined by the working group.
- The liturgies, litanies, and prayers would be subject to several rounds of editing and writing and feedback from the editorial group, the Commission and other stakeholders throughout The Episcopal Church.
- The final work would be sent to a professional editor for final development, and presented to the Commission at its last meeting of the triennium.

#### Resolution A060 Continue Work on Liturgies for Adoption of Children

*Resolved*, that the 77th General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to continue the work of developing liturgical materials for inclusion in the Enriching Our Worship series to address pastoral issues in the context of adoption of children, and to report to the 78th General Convention.

### Explanation

The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music first began work on liturgical materials addressing pastoral issues in the context of adoption of children in response to General Convention Resolution 2006-A070. Work has begun on articulating theological principles and drafting liturgical materials. The Commission hopes to complete this project and present materials to the 78th General Convention in 2015.

### Bible Translations

The Canons of the Episcopal Church prescribe translations that shall be used for reading the lessons during public worship. The Commission proposes the authorization of two more recent translations.

### Resolution A061 Amend Canon II.2

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That Canon II.2 be amended to read as follows:

#### Canon 2: Of Translations of the Bible

The Lessons prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer shall be read from the translation of the Holy Scriptures commonly known as the King James or Authorized Version (which is the historic Bible of this Church) together with the Marginal Readings authorized for use by the General Convention of 1901; or from one of the three translations known as Revised Versions, including the English Revision of 1881, the American Revision of 1901, and the Revised Standard Version of 1952; from the Jerusalem Bible of 1966; from the New English Bible with the Apocrypha of 1970; or from The 1976 Good News Bible (Today's English Version); or from The New American Bible (1970); or from The Revised Standard Version, an Ecumenical Edition, commonly known as the "R.S.V. Common Bible" (1973); or from The New International Version (1978); or from The New Jerusalem Bible (1987); or from the Revised English Bible (1989); or from the New Revised Standard Version (1989) (~~1990~~); or from *The Message* (2002); or from *the Common English Bible* (2011); or from translations, authorized by the diocesan bishop, of those approved versions published in any other language; or from other versions of the Bible, including those in languages other than English, which shall be authorized by diocesan bishops for specific use in congregations or ministries within their dioceses.

### Explanation

This amendment seeks to authorize two additional translations of the Holy Scriptures for use in the reading the Lessons prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer. It also corrects the date of publication of the New Revised Standard Version, which the 1991 General Convention added to this canon.

The Common English Bible is an important new translation involving 120 biblical scholars from 22 denominations, including the Anglican Communion. The translators came from American, African, Asian, European, and Latino communities. An additional 500 people field-tested the translation.

*The Message* Bible (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002) offers good biblical scholarship and a keen grasp of the nuance of the Greek and Hebrew texts often missed by standard translations, and a vivid contemporary idiom that improves greatly upon *The Good News Bible*. For congregations desiring to hear scripture with a contemporary conversational feel, for youth wanting a more engaging and readable Bible, for comparative Bible study, and for those not fluent in traditional language, this Bible version preserves much of original the tone and rhythm in paraphrasing the original language texts in lively accessible English, ideal for reading aloud. Eugene Peterson, the author, is Professor Emeritus of Spiritual Theology at Regent College, Vancouver, is a Presbyterian pastor, poet, and author of many books, and earned his master's degree in Hebrew.

### Liturgical Translations

In its report to the 76th General Convention, the Commission reported on working principles it had developed for translating liturgical texts:

1. The translator does not translate literally, but translates ideas and concepts idiomatically.
2. It is imperative that the translator be familiar with idioms and their meanings in source and translated languages.
3. The translator needs to be familiar with nuances of the source and translated languages and cultures.

4. The translator must take into account multi-ethnic distinctions that influence dialects and idioms, and utilize language that has the widest currency.
5. The translator must take into account style & affect as well as cadence, rhythm and meter.
6. The translator needs to be fluent in the poetics of both languages.

Early in this triennium, the Commission consulted with Kaleidoscope Institute, directed by the Rev. Eric Law, to develop a process for translating liturgical texts that would implement the above principles.

1. A translator prepares a first draft of the translation.
2. If music is included in the liturgical resource, a person knowledgeable about liturgical music in the translated language proposes suitable liturgical music.
3. The translation, including music, is sent to members of a review committee fluent in both languages and representing different cultural groups and countries that use the language. Bilingual members of the group that produced the source liturgical material also serve on this committee.
4. The principal translator hosts web/teleconferences with the review committee to finalize the translation.

The Commission has used this process to commission a translation of *Enriching Our Worship 5: Liturgies and Prayers for Healing from Loss Related to Childbearing and Childbirth*, authorized by resolution 2009-A088. It is also working with the General Convention Office to implement this process for liturgical materials being presented to the 77th General Convention.

Resolution 2009-A100 directed the Commission, and the Standing Commission on Constitution and Canons, to review the language and intent of Canon II.3.5 concerning translations of the Book of Common Prayer. The principles enumerated above informed the following proposed revision of the canon.

#### **Resolution A062 Amend Canon II.3.5**

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That Canon II.3.5 is hereby amended to read as follows:

**Sec. 5.** No copy, translation, or edition of the Book of Common Prayer, or a part or parts thereof, shall be made, printed, published, or used as of authority in this Church, unless it contains the authorization of the Custodian of the Standard Book of Common Prayer, certifying that the Custodian or some person appointed by the Custodian has compared the said copy, translation, or edition with the said Standard, or a certified copy thereof, and that it conforms thereto. *The Custodian, or some person appointed by the Custodian, may exercise due discretion in reference to translations of the entire Standard Book or parts thereof, into the Church's other official languages, so that such translations reflect the idiomatic style and cultural context of those languages.* And no copy, translation, or edition of the Book of Common Prayer, or a part or parts thereof, shall be made, printed, published, or used as of authority in this Church, or certified as aforesaid, which contains or is bound up with any alterations or additions thereto, or with any other matter, except the Holy Scriptures or the authorized Hymnal of this Church, or with material set forth in the Book of Occasional Services and The Proper for the Lesser Feasts and Fasts, as those books are authorized from time to time by the General Convention.

#### **Explanation**

Throughout our history, translations from the Standard Book of Common Prayer have tended to be rather literal translations on the *formal equivalence* model. To be a multi-lingual church with three official languages, it would seem to be a matter of simple justice to encourage a degree of idiomatic freedom, moving in the direction of *dynamic equivalence*, for translations of the Standard Book into French and Spanish. Moving in this direction could have positive implications for inculturation and evangelism, while remaining faithful to the content and direction of the Standard Book.

## Budget Report

### Meetings

The Commission had a budget of \$50,000 for the triennium and expended all of these funds.

The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music will meet approximately 9 times during the next triennium: 2 face-to-face meetings and 2 web/teleconferences in 2013; 2 face-to-face meetings and 2 web/teleconferences in 2014; and 1 face-to-face meeting in 2015. This will require \$42,500 for 2013, \$42,500 for 2014, and \$20,000 for 2015, for a total of \$105,000 for the triennium.

### **General Convention Mandates: Development and Review of Liturgical Resources**

The Commission had a budget of \$219,767 for General Convention mandates during the triennium: \$51,188 in 2010; \$82,583 in 2011; and \$85,996 in 2012. As of September 30, 2011, the Commission had spent \$78,882 and anticipated spending most or all of the remaining funds by the end of 2012. These funds were budgeted in the program budget for the Liturgy and Music Office, which was closed on December 31, 2009. In spring 2011, this budget was transferred from the Congregational Vitality area of the Church Center to the General Convention Office.

The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music anticipates that during the next triennium the development and review of liturgical resources mandated by General Convention and the Canons of the The Episcopal Church will require approximately \$101,000 in 2013, \$95,000 in 2014, and \$6000 in 2015, for a total of \$202,000 for the triennium.

### **Resolution A063 Fund Meetings of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music**

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, that the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$105,000 for meetings of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music during the 2013–2015 triennium.

### **Resolution A064 Fund Liturgical Resource Work of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music**

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, that the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$202,000 for the work of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music during the 2013-2015 triennium to develop and review liturgical resources as mandated by General Convention and the Canons of the Episcopal Church.

## Report on the Consultation on Common Texts

The Consultation on Common Texts (CCT) is an ecumenical body composed of representatives from a wide range of churches and traditions in North America. It has existed since the mid-1960s and has produced and published *The Common Lectionary* (1983) and its successor *The Revised Common Lectionary* (1992).

The Episcopal Church has been a part of the Consultation on Common Texts from its inception, and in recent decades its *ex officio* representative has been The Episcopal Church's Liturgical Officer. With the closing of the Liturgy and Music Office on December 31, 2009, appointment of The Episcopal Church's representative was referred to the Presiding Bishop, and support for The Episcopal Church's participation is now lodged with the Ecumenical and Interfaith Office. In 2010, the Very Rev. William H. Petersen was appointed to CCT, with the understanding that it would be more appropriate for liaison to be made with the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music rather than the Standing Commission on Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations.

The last meeting of CCT prior to this report was April 2011 in Denver. Matters considered included the reception and work necessary to completing the 2012 publication of the new comprehensive *RCL* study guide under the title *The Revised Common Lectionary: 20th Anniversary Edition*. The meeting also: (1) received evidence of increasingly wide adoption of the *RCL* by churches and traditions on continents other than North America; (2) heard with approbation a presentation on the Advent Project Seminar by The Episcopal Church's representative; (3) elected two Canadian and one United States member to represent CCT to the August 2011 meeting of the international and ecumenical English Language Liturgical Consultation in Reims, France; and (4) set plans for further projects in publishing English-language ecumenical liturgical texts as well as the production of the *RCL* in Spanish, French, German, and Portuguese.

Respectfully submitted,

The Very Rev. William H. Petersen, PhD, DD

## Report of the Custodian to the Standard Book of Common Prayer

I wish to thank the Presiding Bishop for my reappointment to this office. During the last triennium I attended all but one of the meetings of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music as an *ex officio* member and assisted the Commission's work as requested. In the spring of 2010 I assisted the Rev. Canon Dr. David Chee with a Certificate for a new translation of the Book of Common Prayer (1979) in Mandarin for the Diocese of Taiwan. This includes an appendix of local observances similar to the Korean translation previously certified by my predecessor. In September 2011 I renewed permission, originally granted by Canon Guilbert, for the Community of the Holy Name, Derby, U.K., to use an amended version of the USBCP (1979) Psalter for a new edition of the Community's service book.

I hope that this General Convention will look favorably on the proposed revision of Canon II.3.5. This would provide an opportunity for significantly less literal and more idiomatic translations of the Book of Common Prayer into our other official languages.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Canon Gregory M. Howe  
*Custodian to the Standard Book of Common Prayer*

## Appendices

- *I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing*
- Supplement to *Holy Women, Holy Men: Celebrating the Saints*
- *Liturgical Materials Honoring God in Creation and Various Rites and Prayers for Animals*
- Daily Prayer for All Seasons



# I Will Bless You, and You Will Be a Blessing

Resources for Blessing Same-Gender Relationships

This portion of the report of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music is intended for the consideration of the 77th General Convention of The Episcopal Church, and for study in preparation for that Convention. It is intended to be read in connection with the Commission's report contained in the Blue Book. None of the material in this document is authorized for use in The Episcopal Church.

# Table of Contents

Introduction

Faith, Hope, and Love: *Theological Resources for Blessing Same-Gender Relationships*  
Preface

Overview: Theological Reflection on Same-Gender Relationships

1. The Church's Call: A Focus on Mission
2. The Church's Joy: A Theology of Blessing
3. The Church's Life: Covenantal Relationship
4. The Church's Challenge: Christian Unity and Biblical Interpretation

The Church's Canon Law and Laws of the States

Hearing, Seeing, and Declaring New Things:  
*Preparing Same-Gender Couples for a Liturgy of Blessing*

The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant:  
*Liturgical Resources for Blessing Same-Gender Relationships*

Discussion Guide to *I Will Bless You, and You Will Be a Blessing*

Appendices

A Review of General Convention Legislation

Glossary

# Introduction

As members of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music of the General Convention of The Episcopal Church, we give thanks for the many and various ways that the grace of God in Christ is made manifest in our Church and throughout the world. Whenever the Church pronounces God's blessing, it does so with such gratitude always in mind.

For more than thirty years, The Episcopal Church has been responding to the call to seek and serve Christ in its members who are gay and lesbian. In 1976, General Convention Resolution A069 affirmed that "homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church." Since then, we have been in a Churchwide discernment process about how we live out that resolution. Some congregations and their clergy have welcomed same-gender couples and offered liturgical blessings of their relationships, and some dioceses have developed guidelines for such blessings. Resolution 2003-C051 of the 74th General Convention recognized "that local faith communities are operating within the bounds of our common life as they explore and experience liturgies celebrating and blessing same-sex unions." Six years later, General Convention called for the collection and development of resources for those blessings. The materials presented here respond to that call.

Resolution 2009-C056 of the 76th General Convention directed the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to "collect and develop theological and liturgical resources" for the blessing of same-gender relationships. This resolution instructed the Commission to work in consultation with the House of Bishops and to "devise an open process for the conduct of its work, inviting participation from provinces, dioceses, congregations, and individuals who are engaged in such theological work, and inviting theological reflection from throughout the Anglican Communion." We have understood the process for our work to be as important as the resources themselves.

## The Scope of Our Work

Because Resolution 2009-C056 directed us to "collect and develop" resources, we have not debated whether the Church should bless same-gender relationships. Nonetheless, we recognize that Episcopalians and Christians throughout the Anglican Communion have disagreed about whether such blessings are a legitimate development within Christian tradition or an unacceptable departure from biblical teaching. Resolution 2009-C056 acknowledged this dispute in the resolve "that this Convention honor the theological diversity of this Church in regard to matters of human sexuality," and previous General Convention resolutions have also recognized this disagreement. In the theological essay "Faith, Hope, and Love" we acknowledge these differences, and offer an approach to blessing same-gender relationships that reflects the centrality of Scripture in Anglican tradition, interpreted in concert with the historical traditions of the Church and in the light of reason. The discussion guide included in these resources is intended to enable all congregations and dioceses to explore the materials, whether or not they believe the Church should bless same-gender relationships.

As we developed the resources, many people asked whether we were actually preparing a rite for same-gender marriage. In accord with Resolution 2009-C056, the Commission has understood our charge to be the development of a liturgy of blessing, not marriage. Nonetheless, there are a number of parallels to different-gender marriage, as General Convention Resolution 2000-D039 suggested when it acknowledged that "there are currently couples in the Body of Christ and in this Church who are living in marriage and couples in the Body of Christ and in this Church who are living in other life-long committed relationships." That 2000 resolution then set forth the expectation that "such relationships will be characterized by fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God," and denounced "promiscuity, exploitation, and abusiveness in the relationships of any of our members." These expectations have defined the Commission's understanding of the same-gender relationships for which we have developed resources. While the liturgy we have developed is not called "marriage," we recognize significant parallels: two people publicly make a lifelong, monogamous

commitment to one another with the exchange of solemn vows in a ritual that pronounces God's blessing on their life together.

The question of marriage is complicated by ongoing changes in American civil law. As of August 2011, six states and the District of Columbia issue marriage licenses to same-gender couples, five states allow civil unions, and seven recognize some form of domestic partnership; on the other hand, thirty states have adopted constitutional language defining marriage as between one man and one woman and thirty-nine states have statutes defining marriage in this way.<sup>1</sup> Civil law in other countries where The Episcopal Church is located adds further complexity. Both the *Book of Common Prayer* and the Canons of the Episcopal Church require clergy to conform to the laws of the state regarding marriage and describe marriage as being between a man and a woman. To address this complexity, these resources include an essay on canon law that discusses scenarios likely to arise as same-gender couples request an authorized liturgy for blessing of their relationship and/or civil marriage (or union) in the Church.

In addition to questions about the term "marriage," we received many comments about the terms "gender" and "sex." Following the wording of Resolution 2009-C056, we have used the term "same-gender" rather than "same-sex" to describe these relationships. Previous General Convention resolutions, along with the diocesan resources we have collected, are not consistent in their choice of terminology. This is more than a linguistic question. As the Commission has worked on these resources, we acknowledged but did not address the complexity of contemporary social and academic conversations about the categories of "sex" and "gender." The pastoral resources for preparation of couples prior to a liturgy of blessing offer ways to work with individuals who identify themselves as bisexual or transgender. The resources expect that a bisexual or transgender couple who seeks the Church's blessing of their relationship will commit to monogamy and lifelong faithfulness, the same commitment asked of every other same-gender and different-gender couple.

## Collecting Resources

The Commission has gathered a vast amount of materials, including official studies, service leaflets from liturgies of blessing, and diocesan and provincial guidelines for these blessings. The Archives of the Episcopal Church established a digital archive for the project, <http://www.episcopalarchives.org/SCLM/>, where anyone may review the materials we have gathered.

Resolution 2009-C056 allows bishops to "provide generous pastoral response" to meet the needs of the Church's members, so in December 2009, the chair of the Commission asked all diocesan bishops to report what provisions they were making and what resources they were commending to their dioceses. Twenty-seven bishops responded to this request, and a number of these bishops included theological, pastoral, teaching, and/or liturgical resources. Seven other dioceses subsequently submitted materials. All diocesan materials that we received are available for review in the digital archive for Resolution 2009-C056.

We gathered liturgical resources from many places. Clayton Morris, who served as Liturgical Officer for the Episcopal Church until 2009, had accumulated numerous materials over the course of nearly two decades. The Commission received resources from lay and ordained Episcopalians throughout the Church, including some of our own members. Commission members reviewed all of these as we began the process of developing liturgies. A representative sampling of the resources is posted on the digital archive, and all of the resources will be permanently housed at the Archives of the Episcopal Church.

## Developing Resources

At our March 2010 meeting, the Commission began our work in response to this resolution with a day of theological reflection. That conversation resulted in a brief outline of the resources to be developed:

- one or more essays setting forth scriptural and theological foundations for blessing same-gender relationships;

<sup>1</sup> This information is from the website of the National Conference of State Legislatures: <http://www.ncsl.org/default.aspx?tabid=16430>.

- one or more rites for blessing same-gender relationships;
- pastoral and teaching resources to assist clergy and congregations as they consider these blessings; and
- resources designed to help communities understand and address canonical and legal matters.

This proposed outline became the basis for four task groups formed to develop materials. These groups were advisory to the Commission, which made the final decision about the resources to be reported to the 77th General Convention in 2012.

In forming the task groups, the Commission sought the wisdom and experience of lay people and clergy from both academic and congregational contexts. Members of the task groups reflected the diversity of The Episcopal Church in terms of age, gender, race/ethnicity, geography, and sexual orientation. The task groups met four times in 2010 and 2011, and the chairs of the task groups met monthly by telephone or video conference. The Commission discussed the work at each of its five meetings during the triennium.

## **An Open Process ... Inviting Participation**

### **Consultation with the House of Bishops**

In September 2010, the chair of the Commission and four of the task-group chairs presented to the House of Bishops a draft of theological and liturgical principles that would guide this work. Responses from the bishops helped refine those principles. At the March and September 2011 House of Bishops meetings, bishops serving on the Commission and/or the task groups updated their colleagues. At the September 2011 meeting, bishops had an informal opportunity to discuss the final draft of the theological essay and the liturgy with the bishops who are members of the Commission.

### **Province I Hearing**

In October 2010, the Commission meeting in New Hampshire included a hearing with bishops, other clergy, and same-gender couples from each of the seven dioceses in Province I, which comprises the six New England states. The evolving legal status of civil unions and marriage equality in those states has meant that many of the dioceses have been addressing questions of blessing same-gender relationships for many years. Province I is the only province of The Episcopal Church to develop a resource for clergy ministering to same-gender couples, and a majority of the dioceses in this province have guidelines for blessing these relationships. Thus, our meeting in one of the dioceses of Province I offered a good opportunity to consult with those engaged in this work, as directed in Resolution 2009-C056.

At the hearing, thirty-three people, lay and ordained, testified about their experiences. Many told the Commission that congregations were transformed when they joined in the celebration of a blessing. For some congregations and couples, the blessing of a civil union as part of the regular Sunday liturgy was an especially powerful expression of the Church's acceptance and care for the couple. Clergy and couples alike were surprised at how jubilant congregations were. We also heard about the cost of secrecy in places where relationships had to be hidden and blessings could not be openly celebrated. Couples and clergy spoke of the joy that came when relationships could be openly acknowledged. A few couples told powerful stories of reconciliation that happened within their families when their relationship was celebrated and blessed in a Church liturgy.

### **Churchwide Survey Regarding Pastoral and Teaching Materials**

In October 2010, the Task Group on Pastoral and Teaching Resources created a Web-based survey asking what resources congregations were using to prepare same-gender couples who came to the Church seeking a blessing, and what teaching materials and resources were used or would be needed to help congregations in a discernment process about welcoming the blessing of same-gender relationships. The Commission used both official and unofficial channels to invite responses to the survey: a press release sent to diocesan communicators, a letter to all members of the 2009 House of Deputies and the House of Bishops, invitations on the unofficial list-serve for bishops and deputies, and networking by members of the Commission and the task groups.

Between October 2010 and January 6, 2011, we received 1,131 responses to the survey from 111 dioceses and all nine provinces of The Episcopal Church. Twenty-three percent of the respondents stated that the blessing of same-gender relationships already occurs in their congregations, and of these, 55 percent confirmed that their congregations had engaged in an educational and/or discernment process before the blessing of same-gender relationships began. With regard to preparing same-gender couples, 32 percent of respondents said that their preparation differed from that provided for different-gender couples, and 43 percent expressed a need for additional resources. The data from this survey helped guide the development of the pastoral and teaching resources.

### **Churchwide Consultation**

The Commission invited every diocese in The Episcopal Church to send two General Convention deputies, one lay and one clergy, to an overnight consultation at the conclusion of its March 2011 meeting in Atlanta, Georgia. Three goals were set forth:

- to *inform* the deputies about the work of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music in response to Resolution 2009-C056;
- to *engage* the deputies in theological reflection in response to the Commission's work, and to solicit feedback that would inform the Commission and its task groups as they continued their work;
- to *equip* the deputies to report to the rest of their deputations and engage them in ongoing theological reflection about the blessing of same-gender relationships.

Materials distributed to participants at the consultation are available for review in the SCLM digital archive, which also includes a link to the webcast of the entire consultation.

One hundred ninety-five deputies from ninety-eight dioceses registered for the gathering. Most responded enthusiastically to the process. A significant majority stated on the evaluation form that they felt either "completely equipped" or "somewhat equipped" to discuss this work in their dioceses and at the 2012 General Convention. When asked what they valued most, one responded, "the thoughtful and prayerful way that people with differing opinions were able to discuss this important work." Another deputy noted "the opportunity to speak and listen to other people and the broader perspective I gained from those interactions; the opportunity to engage the process, principles and issues that are in play as we do this work together; the real and abiding sense that we are doing this work 'together.'" A few deputies commented on the absence of opposing viewpoints in the plenary sessions. One wrote, "The only thing lacking for me was an opportunity for those who are new to engaging this conversation or who are opposed to have enough space to express their reservations, be heard, and maybe to hear constructive, respectful responses."

### **Review of Draft Resources**

After the task groups presented a complete first draft of the resources to the Commission in June 2011, we made the drafts available to a group of consultant reviewers. During July 2011, 133 people, lay and ordained, representing all nine provinces of The Episcopal Church, offered thousands of comments on the draft resources. In August, the task groups' extensive revisions led to final drafts for the Commission.

### **Inviting Reflection from throughout the Anglican Communion**

In addition to the direction of Resolution 2009-C056, the Commission was mindful that the 2004 Windsor Report urged "all provinces that are engaged in processes of discernment regarding the blessing of same sex unions to engage the Communion in continuing study of biblical and theological rationale for and against such unions" (par. 145).

Knowing that the Anglican Church of Canada has been addressing this subject for many years, we requested and received liturgies from several of the Canadian dioceses. The digital archive includes, under "Church-Wide Resources," an issue of *Liturgy Canada* that gives an overview of the history and summarizes the guidelines and rites available on diocesan websites in the Anglican Church of Canada.

### **International Anglican Liturgical Consultation (IALC)**

The IALC, a biennial gathering, includes liturgical scholars, representatives nominated and sent by provinces of the Anglican Communion, and members of liturgical commissions of Anglican provinces. Since provinces may refer matters to the Consultation, the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music requested time on the agenda of the August 2011 meeting. The IALC Steering Committee not only granted a half-day for this discussion, but also met in March 2011 with representatives of the Commission to learn more about the work and to prepare for the discussion in the full Consultation.

The IALC meeting included fifty-five people from nineteen provinces of the Anglican Communion. The official representatives of The Episcopal Church, Ruth Meyers (Chair of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music) and Thomas Ely (Bishop of Vermont and a member of the Commission), presented a summary of the theological rationale and liturgical principles guiding the development of resources, along with a draft of the liturgy. Not all participants in the IALC meeting supported The Episcopal Church's decision to develop these resources, but all joined in respectful conversation in a small-group format. In the written notes submitted from the small groups, some stated that the work of The Episcopal Church would be helpful for their own province, while others indicated that blessing same-gender relationships is not on the agenda for them.

Participants in the IALC conversation asked for development of the scriptural foundations for blessing same-gender relationships and clarification of the concepts of blessing and covenant. They urged that the theological and liturgical resources make clear that The Episcopal Church is envisioning these relationships as monogamous and lifelong. Many found the liturgy to be strikingly similar to marriage. They encouraged greater clarity in the liturgy about the nature of the covenant and a more robust form of blessing.

The task groups received a detailed report of the comments from the IALC meeting and took account of them as they prepared the final draft of the resources.

### **Conclusion**

“I will bless you,” God declared to Abraham, “so that you will be a blessing” (Genesis 12:2). The Commission and its task groups have been reminded, at every step in this process, of the many blessings God has bestowed on our Church. The unprecedented opportunities we have had to engage with our sister and brother Episcopalians in every province of The Episcopal Church and with Anglicans from the wider Anglican Communion have illustrated for us the rich diversity of our life together in the Body of Christ. This work has been a divine gift and a blessing to us, which we are eager to share.

We offer these resources with the hope that they will strengthen our shared witness in The Episcopal Church to the love and grace of God in Christ. As in every other aspect of our life together as God's people, we offer these resources, not relying on ourselves alone, but on God, who “is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine,” and always for the sake of God's glory in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 3:20-21).

**Faith, Hope, and Love**  
*Theological Resources for  
Blessing Same-Gender Relationships*

## Preface

The Episcopal Church has been seeking, in various ways and over the last thirty years, to celebrate the goodness of God, the grace of Christ, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the lives of our brothers and sisters who are gay and lesbian. A series of General Convention resolutions during that time (1976-A069; 1985-D082; 1991-A104; 1994-C020; 1994-C042; 1997-C003; 2000-D039; 2003-C051) has now led the Church to ask the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to “collect and develop theological and liturgical resources” for the blessing of same-gender relationships (Resolution 2009-C056). In response to that call, we offer this essay as a theological resource and invite the wider Church to reflect with us on how God is working today in the committed relationships of same-gender couples.

For generations the Church has celebrated and blessed the faithful, committed, lifelong, monogamous relationships of men and women united in the bonds of Holy Matrimony. In The Episcopal Church, the marriage relationship is held in high regard, included as a “sacramental rite” by some,<sup>2</sup> and as one of the seven sacraments by others. The Commission has discovered in its work in response to Resolution 2009-C056 that any consideration of the blessing of faithful, committed, lifelong, monogamous relationships of same-gender couples cannot ignore the parallels to marriage, whether from practical, theological, or liturgical perspectives. While this reality may well be inviting the Church to deeper conversation regarding marriage, the similarities between marriage and the blessing of same-gender unions also illuminate our discussions in this resource.

For some Episcopalians, this material will resonate well with their long-standing experience and theological reflection; for others, the call from the 2009 General Convention represents a new and perhaps perplexing moment in the life of our Church. We take that difference seriously. To the best of our ability, given the mandate of Resolution 2009-C056 to “collect and develop theological and liturgical resources” for the blessing of same-gender relationships, we address those who are eager to receive this theological resource while also acknowledging that others have deep reservations about proceeding in this direction. All of us belong equally to The Episcopal Church and to the worldwide Anglican Communion and, most of all, to the universal Body of Christ. This theological resource honors the centrality of Scripture among Anglicans, interpreted in concert with the historical traditions of the Church and in the light of reason.

An overview introduces and summarizes questions and major theological themes. Four sections follow the overview, each expanding on the themes. While readers may engage with this material in a number of ways, the order of the four sections, which we recommend following, reflects a particular theological approach to this work. Section one affirms the understanding that everything we do as Christians is meant to express the Church’s call to participate in God’s own mission in the world. The second section offers theological reflections on blessing. The third considers blessing same-gender couples within the broader sacramental life of the Church, especially in light of the theological significance of covenantal relationship. The fourth section reflects on the challenge of living into our baptismal bond with each other in the midst of disagreements over biblical interpretation.

In researching and preparing this essay, we discovered and recalled an abundance of resources in Scripture and the traditions of the Church that have informed our response to Resolution 2009-C056. We now invite the wider Church to further study and conversation, mindful that the apostle Paul described our shared life in Christ as one marked by faith, hope, and love, the greatest of these being love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

<sup>2</sup> “An Outline of the Faith,” *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Church Hymnal Corporation, 1979), 860. Hereafter this edition of the Prayer Book is cited as BCP.

## Overview: Theological Reflection on Same-Gender Relationships

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*1 Corinthians 1:4-7*

In 2009, the General Convention of The Episcopal Church asked for theological and liturgical resources for the blessing of same-gender relationships (Resolution C056). In response to that call, we invite the Church to reflect on the theological material collected and developed here for that purpose. In our theological reflection, we have kept in view more than thirty years of deliberation at General Convention on these matters, especially Resolution 2000-D039, which identified certain characteristics the Church expects of couples living in marriage and other lifelong, committed relationships: “fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God.”<sup>3</sup> We understand couples who manifest this manner of life, with God’s grace, to have entered into a covenant with each other, which presents a rich opportunity for theological reflection.<sup>4</sup>

The theological themes in this resource, rooted in baptism, eucharist, and the paschal mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection, offer ways to consider how the Church may appropriately bless lifelong, committed covenantal relationships of same-gender couples. Such covenantal relationships can reflect God’s own gracious covenant with us in Christ, manifest the fruits of the Spirit in holiness of life, and model for the whole community the love of neighbor in the practice of forgiveness and reconciliation.

As the Commission responded to the charge to collect and develop theological resources, we focused our attention on four areas of consideration. The first is *mission*: what does the Church believe these blessings will contribute to God’s own work of redeeming and reconciling love in the world? Second, what does the Church believe is happening when it pronounces God’s *blessing*? Third, what does the Church believe are the distinguishing marks of a holy *covenant*? And, finally, what is the relationship between *Christian unity* and our differing approaches to *biblical interpretation* regarding same-gender relationships? This overview introduces and summarizes these areas, and the subsequent sections expand on each of them in turn.

### A Focus on Mission

Our starting point is Holy Baptism, which incorporates us into the Body of Christ and commissions us to participate in God’s mission of reconciliation in the world (2 Corinthians 5:17-19). The purpose of this reconciling mission is nothing less than the restoration of all people to “unity with God and with each other in Christ.”<sup>5</sup> One of the ways Christians participate in this mission is by witnessing to Christ in how we live in our closest relationships. “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples,” Jesus said, “if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

As Christians, then, our closest relationships are not solely private. The Church has always affirmed the public and communal dimension of our covenantal relationships. The character of our love, both its fruitfulness and its failures, affects others around us. The Church, therefore, commissions a couple bound by sacred vows in Holy Matrimony to participate in God’s mission of reconciliation. Such

<sup>3</sup> Texts of these resolutions are included in the appendix to these resources. For a fuller discussion of the history of General Convention resolutions and reports on these issues, see the Appendix in *To Set Our Hope on Christ: A Response to the Invitation of Windsor Report ¶ 135* (New York: The Office of Communication, The Episcopal Church Center, 2005), 63-121.

<sup>4</sup> As Paul Marshall points out, the marriage rite of the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* uses the language of “covenant” (423). Marshall notes that covenant-making is a key biblical motif, which makes it useful in our theological reflection on the committed relationships of all couples (*Same-Sex Unions: Stories and Rites* [New York: Church Publishing, 2004], 40).

<sup>5</sup> “An Outline of the Faith,” BCP, 855.

relationships are set apart for precisely that divine purpose: to bear witness to and participate in the creating, redeeming, and sustaining love of God.

This missional character of covenantal blessing, reflected in both Scripture and the historical traditions of the Church, deserves renewed attention today. The 2000 General Convention contributed to this renewal when it passed resolution D039, which identified monogamy, fidelity, holy love, and other characteristics of lifelong, committed relationships. Significantly, that resolution was framed as a way to enable the Church to engage more effectively in its mission. Many in The Episcopal Church have witnessed these characteristics in the committed relationships of same-gender couples. That recognition can, and in many places already has, broadened the understanding of the Church's mission of participating in God's reconciling work in the world.

### **A Theology of Blessing**

We understand the celebration and blessing of committed, monogamous, lifelong, faithful same-gender relationships as part of the Church's work of offering outward and visible signs of God's grace among us. "Blessing" exhibits a multifaceted character, yet the Church has always affirmed that blessing originates in God, the giver of every good gift. The Church participates in God's blessing of committed, covenantal couples in three intertwined aspects: first, we thank God for the grace already discerned in the lives of the couple; second, we ask God's continual favor so that the couple may manifest more fully the fruits of the Spirit in their lives; and third, we seek the empowerment of the Holy Spirit as the Church commissions the couple to bear witness to the gospel in the world.

This threefold character of blessing, therefore, acknowledges what is already present—God's goodness. The Church's blessing also sets the relationship apart for God's purposes and prays for the divine grace the couple will need to fulfill those purposes. Just as the blessing of bread and wine at the eucharist sets them apart from ordinary usage and designates them for a particular, sacred purpose, so the public affirmation of divine blessing in a covenantal relationship sets that relationship apart from other types of relationship.

The Church expects the blessing of a covenantal relationship to bear the fruits of divine grace in particular ways—and always with God's continual help and favor. This makes the couple accountable to the community of faith as well as to God and to one another. The community, in turn, is held accountable for encouraging, supporting, and nurturing a blessed relationship as the couple seeks to grow together in holiness of life. Through its participation in the blessing of covenantal relationships, the Church is blessed by the goodness of God, who continues to offer blessings in abundance, regardless of merit or circumstance. As we live more fully into our call to discern, pronounce, seek, and return blessing wherever it may be found, we find that we ourselves are blessed with joy.

### **Covenantal Relationship**

Reflecting theologically on same-gender relationships can become an occasion for the Church to reflect more broadly on the significance of covenantal commitment in the life of faith. Both Scripture and our theological traditions invite us to consider, first, the *sacramental character* of covenantal relationships; by this we mean the potential of such relationships to become outward and visible signs of God's grace. And second, covenantal relationships can both reflect and inspire the *eschatological vision* of Christian life. The covenantal commitments we make with each other, in other words, can evoke our desire for union with God, which is our final hope in Christ.

Our understanding of covenant thus derives first and foremost from the gracious covenant God makes with us in Christ. The many types of relational commitments we make carry the potential to reflect and bear witness to that divine covenant. Here we have especially in mind the covenants made by intimate couples in the sacred vows they make to enter into a public, lifelong relationship of faithful monogamy.

Scripture and Christian tradition encourage us to see in these intimate relationships a reflection of God's own desire for us. The long tradition of commentary on the biblical Song of Songs, for example, illustrates this spiritual significance of sexual relationships. Hebrew prophets likewise turned frequently

to the metaphor of marriage to describe God's commitment to Israel (Isaiah 62:5), an image the Pauline writer also used to describe the relationship of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:21-33).

Covenantal commitments are thus shaped by and can also reflect the paschal mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, which the Church celebrates in baptism and eucharist. Intimate couples who live in a sacred covenant find themselves swept up into a grand and risky endeavor: to see if they can find their life in God by giving it to another. This dynamic reflects the baptismal life all of us share as Christians. As we live out our baptismal vows throughout our lives, we are called to follow this pattern of God's self-giving desire and love.

In the eucharist, we recall Christ's willingness to give his life for the world: "This is my body, given for you." When two people give their lives, their bodies, to one another in a lifelong covenant, they can discover and show how in giving ourselves we find ourselves (Matthew 16:25). When the Church pronounces God's blessing on the vows of lifelong fidelity—for different-gender and same-gender couples alike—the Church makes a bold claim: the paschal mystery is the very root and source of life in the couple's relationship.

This sacramental framework in which to reflect on same-gender relationships has, in turn, led us to consider more carefully several other key theological themes: the *vocational* aspect of covenantal relationship; how such a vocation is lived in Christian *households*; the *fruitfulness* of covenantal relationships in lives of service, generosity, and hospitality; and *mutual blessing*, as God's blessing in covenantal relationship becomes a blessing to the wider community.

### **Christian Unity and Biblical Interpretation**

Baptism binds us to God by binding us to one another. Salvation is inherently social and communal. This bond, furthermore, does not depend on our agreement with one another but instead relies on what God has done and is doing among us. In fact, our unity in God gives us room to disagree safely, ideally without threat of breaking our unity, which is God's own gift. This principle is the very foundation of all covenants, beginning with the covenant between God and God's people, exemplified in baptism, reflected in ordained ministry, lived in vowed religious life and marriage, and encompassing the life of the Church. Our common call as God's people is not to find unanimity in all matters of faith and morals, but to go out into all nations as witnesses to the good news of God in Christ.

Most Christians would, nonetheless, recognize limits to acceptable and legitimate differences. Beyond such limits, unity becomes untenable. Those limits then pose difficult questions: How far is too far? What kind of difference would constitute essential disunity? In the debate over same-gender relationships and biblical interpretation, Episcopalians and other Christians throughout the Anglican Communion have disagreed about the answers to these questions. Some Episcopalians have concluded that blessing such relationships has gone too far and, acting on their conscience, have parted company with The Episcopal Church, while others who disagree have chosen to remain. As a Church, we continue to take different approaches to interpreting Scripture as we consider same-gender relationships.

We who differ profoundly and yet desire unity more profoundly recall that the Church has held this creative tension in the past. In Acts 15, we see that Paul differed from the community in Jerusalem over whether circumcision and the observation of dietary laws should be required of Gentiles in order for them to be baptized into Christ's Body. This difference was a matter of biblical interpretation. As Church members held the tension between their essential unity and their differences in how they understood Scripture, they found themselves guided by the Holy Spirit.<sup>6</sup>

Since then, the Church has faced many other similar times of wrestling over differing views of Scripture concerning a wide range of questions: whether vowed religious life takes priority over marriage, the prohibition on lending money at interest, polygamous households, divorce and remarriage, contraception, the institution of slavery, and the role of women in both Church and society, to name just a few. In all these times, the Church has sought to follow the apostolic process of prayerful

<sup>6</sup> This process of discernment over scriptural interpretation guided by the Holy Spirit has shaped every era in Christian history, including Anglican approaches. See "An Outline of the Faith," BCP, 853-54.

deliberation, which respects the centrality of Scripture and attends carefully to the Spirit's work among us. This process will not resolve all of our disagreements, but we continue to trust in the unity that comes not from our own efforts but as God's gift to us and for which Christ himself prayed (John 17:11).

The following four sections expand on all of these theological themes and considerations, and we offer them to the wider Church for ongoing, shared discernment as the Body of Christ. No one perspective or community can fully capture the fullness of the truth into which the Spirit of God continually leads the Church. In this work, then, as in every other matter of concern for the Church's life and mission, we take to heart Paul's reminder that now "we know only in part" while awaiting that day when "the partial will come to an end" (1 Corinthians 13:9-10). In that spirit of humility, in which no one knows fully, we offer this theological resource on the blessing of same-gender relationships, trusting that it reflects a shared faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ, inspires hope for that union with God which Christ has promised, and, above all, expresses that love which shall not end (1 Corinthians 13:8).

## 1. The Church's Call: A Focus on Mission

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

*2 Corinthians 5:17-19*

The meaning and character of blessing play an important role in our shared calling to participate in God's own mission of reconciling love in the world. Pronouncing divine blessing takes many forms covering a wide range of occasions. When the Church gathers to bless the exchanging of sacred vows in a covenantal relationship, the blessing reflects a threefold action. First, the Church gives thanks for the presence of the Spirit discerned in the lives of the couple. Second, the Church prays for the divine grace and favor the couple will need to live into their commitment to each other with love, fidelity, and holiness of life. And third, the Church commissions the couple to participate in God's own mission in the world. This missional character of covenantal blessing, reflected in both Scripture and the historical traditions of the Church, deserves renewed attention today. While the Church gives thanks for God's presence and blessing, the public affirmation of the blessing of a covenantal relationship also sets that relationship apart for a sacred purpose: to bear witness to the creating, redeeming, and sustaining love of God.

God's promise to Abraham sets the tone for this missional understanding of blessing: "I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing" (Genesis 12:2b). Through Moses, God's promise extends to the divine covenant with Israel, a people God chooses to receive divine gifts of protection, guidance, and fruitfulness. In this covenantal relationship, God makes the people of Israel the stewards of these gifts, not for their sake only, but to become a blessing for the world. As God declared to Jacob: "All the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring" (Genesis 28:14b). And as God also declared through Isaiah: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6).

The earliest Christians likewise adopted this missional understanding of covenantal blessing as they recognized that the grace they received in Christ was not for themselves alone but so that they could bear witness to that grace "in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Jesus urged this view of the life of faith by reminding his listeners that "no one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house" (Matthew 5:15). In John's Gospel, Jesus models this divine mission by washing his disciples' feet. This act of intimate service provided the example his disciples were to follow in blessing others with the

same life of service (John 13:14-15); the love God shows for us in Christ, in other words, becomes a blessing for mission and ministry. The covenant of grace God has made with us in Christ thus calls all of us to that life of service: “Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received” (1 Peter 4:10).

### **Worship and Mission: An Eschatological Vision**

Whenever the people of God gather for worship, we return to this foundational view in Scripture: God continues to bless us through our covenantal relationship with Christ, and this blessing enables and empowers us to provide a blessing to others. In all of the Church’s rites, from the Daily Office to the Holy Eucharist, we give thanks for God’s blessings, and we pray for the grace we need to manifest that blessing in the world, to “do the work [God has] given us to do.”<sup>7</sup> This pattern appears in the marriage rite as well, which celebrates God’s blessing on loving commitment, not for the sake of the couple alone, but for the world, which stands in need of such witness to love and faithfulness. In that rite, the assembly prays for the couple, that God will “make their life together a sign of Christ’s love to this sinful and broken world, that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy conquer despair.”<sup>8</sup> God’s covenantal blessing empowers the couple as missionaries of grace.

Moreover, the Church blesses and sends in order to lay claim to our part in the fulfillment of salvation history; we collaborate with God as both proclaimers of and instruments for the new creation God is bringing about. “The redemption of the world is not finished, and so human history is not finished. History is going somewhere, and it is not there yet,” one theologian reminds us. “The church exists to be the thing that God is doing, and to become the thing that God will be doing until the End.” What God has done and will continue to do in the life of the Church manifests “not just the inherent goodness of creation but the possibility of *new* creation, of healing and justice and forgiveness.” And so the Church blesses in order to fulfill its “‘eschatological’ project of becoming the kingdom.”<sup>9</sup>

This eschatological vision of the Church’s life of worship and mission carries the potential to deepen our shared reflection on the meaning of blessing itself. In blessing and being blessed, we join in the great work of redemption that God has always been doing, is doing now, and will do until the End. Indeed, this expansive view of blessing, rooted deeply in the covenant God has made with us in Christ, led Paul to declare that God’s own mission of reconciliation has been entrusted to all those who have been blessed by this promise of a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17-19).

### **Same-Gender Relationships and the Church’s Mission**

In responding to the call to participate in God’s mission in the world, the Church must attend carefully to the particular cultural circumstances in which it proclaims the hope of the gospel. Over the last sixty years in the United States (among other places), social, psychological, and biomedical sciences have contributed to a gradual shift in cultural perspectives on the complexity of sexual orientation and gender identity. The American Psychiatric Association, for example, no longer considers homosexuality to be a pathological condition,<sup>10</sup> which it did in the mid-twentieth century. Gay and lesbian people now participate openly in nearly every profession and aspect of life. Many openly form stable and enduring relationships and some also raise children in their families. Many churches, including The Episcopal Church, have also discerned in same-gender relationships the same possibility of holiness of life and the fruits of the Spirit that we pray for in those who seek the commitment of marriage and its blessings.<sup>11</sup>

7 Postcommunion Prayer, BCP, 366.

8 BCP, 429.

9 Charles Hefling, “What Do We Bless and Why?” *Anglican Theological Review* 85:1 (Winter 2003): 91-93.

10 “All major professional mental health organizations have gone on record to affirm that homosexuality is not a mental disorder. In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its official diagnostic manual, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*.” From “Let’s Talk Facts about Sexual Orientation,” produced by the American Psychiatric Association, <http://www.healthyminds.org/Document-Library/Brochure-Library/Lets-Talk-Facts-Sexual-Orientation.aspx?FT=.pdf>.

11 *To Set Our Hope on Christ*, 24-25. For a broader overview and analysis, see the collection of essays edited by Walter Wink, *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999).

This cultural shift concerning human sexuality bears on the Church's pastoral care and also on its mission. The 73rd General Convention, for example, identified certain characteristics that the Church expects of all couples in lifelong, committed relationships: "fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love that enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God."<sup>12</sup> Significantly, the Convention framed that resolution as a matter of *mission*. Witnessing the Spirit at work in same-gender relationships, just as we do in different-gender relationships, can and in many places already has broadened the Church's understanding of how it participates in God's own reconciling work in the world.

Many gay and lesbian people (among others) who see same-gender couples exchange vows and receive a blessing are moved, likewise, to seek the Church's support for deepening their own commitments and faithfulness. They, in turn, offer their gifts for ministry to the wider community, gifts that contribute to the Church's mission to "restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ."<sup>13</sup> When the Church pronounces God's blessing on same-gender couples who are also raising children, those children can understand better the sanctity of their own family, and the family itself can receive the same support and encouragement from the Church that different-gender couples receive for their families. The blessing of same-gender relationships in the community of faith can also become an occasion for reconciliation among estranged family members, including those who have not understood or have even rejected their lesbian and gay relatives.

Heterosexual people may also find their own vocations and ministries strengthened and empowered in those moments of blessing, as they may do at the celebration of a marriage, or at the public profession of commitment to a particular ministry or community. In other words, the gifts lesbians and gay men discern in their own lives and committed relationships are not just for themselves alone. One Episcopal priest has observed, "Over and over again, we see lesbians and gay men, people who would have been hiding in the shadows of our church a generation ago, now coming forward to contribute their gifts, their strength and loyalty and wisdom, freely and openly to the whole community of faith. And heterosexual people who have seen this happening have also been freed to give more generously of themselves."<sup>14</sup>

Friends of same-gender couples and many others in the general public also take note of these moments of blessing, encountering the expansive and generous reach of gospel welcome. As friends witness the grace of these covenantal commitments, and the generosity of the Church's embrace, many of them will be drawn to the community of faith, perhaps for the first time or after having left. Such has already been the case in many congregations and dioceses in The Episcopal Church.

### The Challenge of God's Blessing for Mission

Scripture attests to significant moments in which biblical writers challenged their communities to expand their vision of God's saving work in the world or in which the writers were themselves challenged by that divine word to see past their present horizons. The ancient Israelites, for example, had to struggle with how far the blessing of their covenantal life would reach. Isaiah urged them to see all the nations—not just their own—streaming to God's holy mountain (Isaiah 2:1-4). The early Church was no exception to this struggle.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we read about Peter's hesitation to cross traditional boundaries between the clean and the unclean in his encounter with Cornelius, a Roman centurion (Acts 10). In a vision, Peter heard God urging him to eat certain unclean animals in direct disobedience to the injunctions found in Leviticus 11. This vision led Peter to consider anew whether God's saving work and blessing might be found in places and among particular people he had not before considered possible. When challenged

12 General Convention Resolution 2000-D039. Scripture reflects a similar approach to discerning evidence of divine grace and the Spirit's work when, for example, Jesus uses the analogy of assessing the goodness of a tree based on the kind of fruit it bears (Matthew 7:16-18 and Luke 6:43).

13 "An Outline of the Faith," BCP, 855.

14 L. William Countryman, "The Big House of Classic Anglicanism," from a speech given at the Claiming the Blessing Conference in St. Louis, Missouri, in November 2002 and quoted in *Claiming the Blessing*, the theology statement of the Claiming the Blessing coalition, page 11; [http://www.claimingtheblessing.org/files/pdf/CTBTheology\\_Final\\_.pdf](http://www.claimingtheblessing.org/files/pdf/CTBTheology_Final_.pdf).

about this expansive vision, Peter declared, “God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean” (Acts 10:28). To those who were startled and perhaps scandalized by the extension of the gospel to Gentiles, Peter asked, “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” (Acts 10:47).<sup>15</sup>

Time after time in the history of Israel and in the early Church, responding to the challenge of God’s extravagant grace and the richness of divine blessing has expanded the mission of God’s people in the world, even beyond where many had previously imagined. The loving faithfulness and covenantal commitment of lesbian and gay couples presents a similar challenge to the Church today. Many throughout The Episcopal Church and other Christian communions have recognized and discerned the Spirit’s presence and work in these same-gender relationships, and are asking God’s people to ponder why we would withhold a public affirmation and declaration of blessing from those who have received the Holy Spirit just as others have. More importantly, however, this moment in The Episcopal Church’s life calls all of us to consider anew the rich blessings we receive by God’s grace in Christ and through the Holy Spirit. These blessings, in turn, animate the ministry of reconciliation that God has given us as ambassadors of the new creation that is unfolding, even now, in our midst.

## 2. The Church’s Joy: A Theology of Blessing

Whoever invokes a blessing in the land shall bless by the God of faithfulness.

*Isaiah 65:16*

The disciples were continually in the temple blessing God.

*Luke 24:53*

“Blessed are you, Lord God, ruler of the universe, who created everything for your glory!” This classic blessing in Jewish tradition sets the tone for any theological reflection on what it means to bless and to receive a blessing. Rather than ourselves, other people, animals, places, or things, God’s people first and foremost bless God, the giver of life and creator of all. Discerning and giving thanks for the countless reasons that we can and should bless God are, therefore, at the heart of the Church’s work in the world. Indeed, at the heart of Christian worship is the eucharist, or “thanksgiving,” in which we lift up the “cup of blessing” (1 Corinthians 10:16).

In Anglican contexts, the Church’s work in the world is shaped by common prayer and worship. In addition to reading the Scriptures and prayerful meditation, Anglicans have always relied on our shared liturgical life for discerning where God is present and how God is calling us to live in the world as witnesses to the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. While God is active always and everywhere, the community of faith gathers to discern God’s activity and make it ever more visible.

Although ordained ministers are called to the Church’s work in a particular way, they share the work with the whole community of the baptized. In their sacramental vocation, ordained ministers lead the community in offering outward and visible signs of the inward and spiritual grace that is present among God’s people. Clergy do not, in other words, “create grace” where there was none to be found already; rather, the whole Body of Christ, in many and various ways, proclaims God’s gracious activity in our midst. This proclamation offers the assurance of God’s grace promised to us in Christ Jesus and offers support as we strive to manifest the fruits of the Spirit in our daily lives.

Many in The Episcopal Church and other Christian communions believe that the celebration and blessing of the covenantal commitment of a same-gender couple also belongs in the Church’s work of offering outward and visible signs of God’s grace. While “blessing” exhibits a multifaceted meaning,

<sup>15</sup> Paul describes his confrontation with Peter about these very issues in Galatians 2:1-21.

it always originates in God, which the Church rightly and daily acknowledges: “We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.”<sup>16</sup>

The Church participates in this fundamental, divine blessing in three related ways: thanking God for God’s goodness and favor; seeking God’s continued favor and grace so that we may manifest more fully that gratitude in our lives; and receiving power from the Holy Spirit to bear witness to that grace in the world. This threefold character of blessing acknowledges what is already present, God’s grace, but it does something more as well: it establishes a new reality. Bread and wine, for example, when blessed at the eucharistic table, are set apart from their ordinary use and designated for a particular, sacred purpose. Similarly, the public affirmation of divine blessing in a covenantal relationship sets that relationship apart from other types. God’s people expect such a blessing to bear the fruits of God’s grace in particular ways, making a couple in such a blessed covenant accountable to the community of faith, as well as to God and to each other. The community, in turn, is held accountable for encouraging, supporting, and nurturing a blessed relationship as the couple seeks to grow together in holiness of life.

In short, the grace and blessing of God already discerned in a couple’s relationship does not thereby render a liturgical rite of blessing redundant. To the contrary, the Church’s blessing performs what it declares, thus changing the couple and the Church. The couple becomes more fully aware of God’s favor and also receives a particular role, as a couple, in the Church’s mission in the world; the Church is likewise changed, as holiness of life is made more visible and as it receives and accepts its commission to support the couple in their life and ministry.

Scripture guides us in this understanding of blessing by placing it in relation to both creation and covenant. In Genesis, God declares the whole creation good, a source of blessing for which we thank God, the giver of every good gift. This blessing is manifested in more particular ways in the covenant God makes with Noah and, by extension, the whole of the creation (Genesis 9:8-16), with Abraham (Genesis 12:2-3), and, through Moses, with the people of Israel (Deuteronomy 7:12-14). Likewise, the New Testament reflects God’s blessing on all creation, as the Word of God becomes flesh in Jesus; it reflects the blessing of covenant as well, as the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus reconcile us with God and assure us of God’s loving faithfulness toward us and the whole creation. In his final meal with his disciples, Jesus blessed God for the bread and cup as signs of the new covenant (Matthew 26:26-29). The blessing we receive by participating in that meal at the eucharistic table strengthens us to live out in all of our relationships the forgiveness and reconciliation to which that meal calls us.

Scripture bears witness to the relational character of blessing: being in relationship with God is not only a blessing for us, but becomes a blessing to others as well. God’s covenant with Israel becomes a blessing not for Israel alone but for “all the nations.” This is the very promise made to Abraham: “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3b). The extent of this divine blessing unfolded in Israel’s self-awareness over time and in various ways. “All the nations” referred, of course, to Gentiles, the very ones many in Israel had not expected to share in God’s promises. God’s blessing thus expands the reach of welcome and hospitality not only to the near and familiar neighbor, but also to the distant stranger, who is made neighbor because of God’s own generosity. As Paul noted, through faith “in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:14). The blessing of God’s covenant with us in Christ empowers us, through the Spirit, to offer such expansive and generous blessing to the world, in thought, word, and deed. God’s blessings inspire us in countless ways to live as emissaries of divine blessing in all that we do—in our work, our play, and our relationships. In all of this, God’s goodness in our lives becomes a blessing to others, to neighbors both near and far.

As Christians, baptism and eucharist focus our attention on the particular blessings of the paschal mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection. Those blessings, in turn, encourage us to discern the many other ways God’s blessing is manifested in both creation and covenant. The goodness of God makes everything in creation a potential vehicle for blessing, including the love and faithfulness of covenantal relationship, in which we experience our call to manifest divine goodness. Thus, the Church

<sup>16</sup> “The General Thanksgiving,” BCP, 125.

is continually discerning where the goodness of God, the grace of Christ, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are urging the Church to manifest God's blessing for others and, in response, to bless God with hearts and lives marked by gratitude and praise.

Another aspect of the biblical witness deserves attention as well: the emphasis on *abundance*. In the midst of desert wanderings, Moses struck a rock and "water came out abundantly" for the people of Israel (Numbers 20:11). "Like the vine," we read in Ecclesiasticus, "I bud forth delights, and my blossoms become glorious and abundant fruit" (Ecclesiasticus 24:17). "You prepare a table before me," declares the psalmist, and "my cup overflows" (Psalm 23:5). "Give," Jesus says, "and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap" (Luke 6:38). And to the Christians in Corinth, Paul declares, "God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8). Scripture invites us, in other words, to see the blessing of God's goodness, not as a scarce commodity either to hoard or to protect, but rather as an unending font of deathless love and perpetual grace—a veritable embarrassment of divine riches. In sacred covenantal relationship, God's abundance is exhibited in many ways, including the companionship, friendship, and mutual joy of intimacy. By affirming and publicly acknowledging that blessing of abundance already present in vibrant covenantal relationships, including same-gender relationships, the Church expects those relationships to manifest the grace of God, the gifts of the Spirit, and holiness of life.

Jesus' iconic parable about the prodigal son adds a further layer to this biblical witness to God's abundant love and grace. In this story, God pours out the abundance of divine blessing on all, regardless of merit or circumstance. When the prodigal son decides at last to return to his father's house, hoping to be granted, at best, the status of a slave, his father rushes to meet him and welcome him home, and even prepares a lavish feast in his honor. "While he was still far off," Jesus says, and thus well before the son could speak any words of repentance, "his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him" (Luke 15:20). In our lives, as in the parable, God showers us with blessings so that we may receive life abundantly, even though we have in no way earned these blessings.

This parable suggests that the abundance of this household is more than sufficient to open outward to receive the younger son. The abundance of this household is even more than sufficient for the resentful elder son, who begrudges such celebration for his wayward brother. The household brims with abundance, if only the elder son would open his heart to receive it (Luke 15:29-31). Both sons in Jesus' parable stand as potent reminders that the blessing of divine goodness does not automatically transform lives: we must be willing to receive such blessing. And yet even when we are not willing, God will continue to offer blessings in abundance. The teachings of Jesus return to this theme repeatedly, as in the parables of the sower (Mark 4:3-8) and the wedding banquet (Matthew 22:1-10), as well as the feeding of more than five thousand with just five loaves of bread and two fish (Luke 9:12-17).

The Church's participation in divine blessing can help each of us in various ways to be open to God's abundant goodness. The Church's liturgical life, that is, our practice of common prayer and worship, can create space for God's people to open their hearts and minds to receiving the blessing God offers. For those in a covenantal relationship, that intentional space (for both hearing the word of blessing in their lives and blessing God in return) marks a significant, even an essential deepening and strengthening of their lives with each other, with their community, and with God. In blessing covenantal relationships, just as in the eucharist, we give thanks for God's abundant goodness and pray for the continued presence of the Spirit to empower us to do the work God has given us to do in the world. The blessing of the eucharistic table sets us apart as the Body of Christ in the world, called and empowered to proclaim the gospel, just as the blessing of a covenantal relationship sets that relationship apart as "a sign of Christ's love to this sinful and broken world, that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy conquer despair."<sup>17</sup>

Discerning, pronouncing, seeking, and returning blessing describe well the Church's work. Even more, it is the Church's *joy*. Paul urged the Christians in Rome to "rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with

17 The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage, BCP, 429.

those who weep” (Romans 12:15). The early Christians gave themselves to such rejoicing, as they were “continually in the temple blessing God” in their celebration of Christ’s victory over death (Luke 24:53). Whenever and wherever the Church discerns particular instances of God’s abundant goodness, the Church rightly thanks God for such a gift. We also ask God for the grace to live into that gift more fully, as we joyfully bear witness to that blessing in the world.

### 3. The Church’s Life: Covenantal Relationship

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

*Romans 6:3-4*

#### Creation, Baptism, and Eucharist

Covenants have taken many different forms across time and in diverse cultural contexts. Both Scripture and Christian history exhibit that diversity as well. The most familiar covenantal relationship is marriage, to which both the Hebrew prophets and New Testament writers turned as a way to describe God’s desire and commitment to be in relationship with us (Isaiah 62:5, Ephesians 5:21-33). Marriage itself has exhibited a variety of forms over the centuries yet still provides a pattern for a number of significant covenantal relationships, such as the vowed religious life or ordained ministry.

In 2000, General Convention identified certain characteristics that the Church expects to see in lifelong, committed relationships: “fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God” (Resolution D039). These characteristics describe well what we mean by “covenant” as we have reflected theologically on same-gender relationships. A couple enacts their decision to enter into a lifelong commitment of fidelity and accountability in the context of God’s household, the Church, by exchanging vows, and the Church responds by pronouncing God’s blessing. Covenantal relationship then carries the potential to reflect for the Church the gracious covenant God has made with us in the paschal mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection, which the Church celebrates in baptism and eucharist.

Some will find this kind of theological reflection on same-gender relationships unfamiliar and perhaps unwarranted. Many different-gender couples would likewise find this to be a new way of thinking about their own marital vows. Thus, General Convention Resolution 2009-C056, which called for these theological resources, becomes an opportunity for reflecting more broadly on the role of covenantal relationship in the life of the Church. In doing so, the blessing of same-gender relationships can then be understood within the broader framework of the Church’s sacramental life and its mission in the world.

The framework for covenantal relationship begins with God’s own declaration of the goodness of creation (Genesis 1:31). That goodness inspires us to give thanks to God, the creator of all things. The heavens declare God’s glory, the psalmist reminds us, and the earth proclaims God’s handiwork (Psalm 19:1). Thus, even in creation’s fragility, limitation, and affliction, the biblical writers discerned signs of God’s providential power, sustaining love, and saving grace. The Church celebrates God’s goodness in worship and with sacramental signs of God’s blessing. These “outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace” manifest God’s transforming presence and so are “sure and certain means by which we receive that grace.”<sup>18</sup> Chief among these signs are baptism and eucharist, which derive directly from the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Reconciliation, confirmation, marriage, ordination, and unction also manifest the grace of God at key moments in Christian life, each in its own way, yet these are by no

<sup>18</sup> “An Outline of the Faith,” BCP, 857.

means the only occasions that do so.<sup>19</sup> As disciples of Jesus, the incarnate Word of God, we are called to make God's creating, redeeming, and sustaining love known in all things, in all circumstances, and throughout our daily lives and relationships. The sacramental life of the Church focuses that calling in particular ways.

Baptism and eucharist recapitulate the arc of salvation history in creation, sin, judgment, repentance, and redemption, or the fulfillment of the whole creation in the presence of God.<sup>20</sup> In baptism, we are incorporated into the paschal mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, and we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live more fully into the holiness of life to which God calls all of us. This sacramental act manifests the eternal covenant God has made with us, declaring that we are God's own beloved, inheritors of God's promises, and God's friends;<sup>21</sup> we are sealed by God's own Spirit and marked as Christ's own forever.<sup>22</sup> This sign of God's covenant is irrevocable, not relying on our adherence to the covenant but rather on the grace and goodness of God in Christ Jesus. As members of the Body of Christ, we commit ourselves to live in the manner of life appropriate to the body to which we belong. This manner of life is summed up in the two great commandments: to love God with our whole being and to love our neighbors as ourselves.<sup>23</sup> Even though we inevitably fall far short of this commitment, God's steadfast love maintains the covenant God has made, and God both seeks and graciously enables our return to fidelity.

In The Episcopal Church, the significance of baptism for Christian faith and life became even clearer with the ratification of the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*. The Baptismal Covenant shapes the rite of Holy Baptism by beginning with an affirmation of faith (the Apostles' Creed), followed by five distinct promises made by (or on behalf of) those being baptized: to continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship; to persevere in resisting evil; to proclaim the Good News of God in Christ; to seek and serve Christ in all persons; and to strive for justice and peace, respecting the dignity of all persons.<sup>24</sup> The rite begins, in other words, with God's own Trinitarian mission of creating, redeeming, and sustaining love in the world. The promises we make are in response to that divine mission and constitute our vowed commitment to participate in that mission—and always “with God's help.” This approach to baptismal theology continues to guide and inform our prayerful discernment as Episcopalians, which is rooted first and foremost in the covenant God makes with us through the Word of God made flesh (John 1:14).<sup>25</sup>

In the redemptive work of the Incarnation, God draws the whole creation back into union with God, lifting it up through the resurrection and ascension of Christ toward its perfection, when God will be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28). In the eucharist we celebrate this transformative action, accomplished through Christ's self-giving of his own Body and Blood, which nourishes our bodies and souls, equipping us to participate in God's own mission of reconciliation in the world.

In the eucharist, our fragmented lives are gathered together into one offering to God, the giver of all good things. As a community gathered in prayer, we reaffirm our participation in God's covenant as we hear God's holy word, confess and receive forgiveness of our sins, and join with the whole company of saints in prayer for the Church and the world. God receives the gifts we bring, limited and flawed as they may be, blesses them, and then returns them to us as bread from heaven. As we are nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ, we are formed ever deeper in holiness of life, conforming to the likeness of Christ. At the table, we are given a foretaste of the heavenly banquet in which all are gathered to God, a foretaste that clarifies and strengthens our longing to witness to God's love. As we are blessed

19 “An Outline of the Faith,” BCP, 857-58, 861.

20 See “Thanksgiving over the Water,” BCP, 306-307; Romans 8:18-25; and 1 Corinthians 15:28.

21 “I do not call you servants any longer, ... but I have called you friends” (John 15:15). See also Gregory of Nyssa, who understood our incorporation into the Body of Christ to make us God's own “friends” (*Orat. in 1 Cor. xv.28*).

22 Holy Baptism, BCP, 308.

23 See Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:18, and Matthew 22:37-40.

24 BCP, 304-305.

25 See Louis Weil, *A Theology of Worship*, The New Church's Teaching Series, vol. 12 (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 2002), 11-22.

and sent out, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to participate in God’s work of bringing all things to that sanctification and fullness for which God created them. Moreover, as we celebrate eucharist together, we recall all the other tables that we gather around in our various households and come to see them as places where Christ is present. This eucharistic pattern—often described with the actions *take, bless, break, and give*—shapes all the relationships that we bring into our baptismal life with God. We *take* these relationships, *bless* God for their goodness, ask God to bless them and *break* them open further to divine grace, so that we may *give* them to the world as witnesses to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Baptism and eucharist, as sacraments of God’s covenant of creating, redeeming, and sustaining love, shape our lives as Christians in relation to God and to God’s creation; this calls us to live with love, compassion, justice, and peace toward all creatures, friend or foe, neighbor or stranger. We are not only called to live in this way but also strengthened to do so by our participation in these sacramental acts. The sacramental life of the Church strengthens us to give ourselves and to receive others as we contribute to the coming of God’s realm “on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10) and proclaim Christ until he comes again (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Through baptism and eucharist we are brought into and sustained in all these many and various relationships. First and foremost among them is our relationship with the God who creates, redeems, and sustains us. We also participate in countless other relationships with the many diverse people, communities, and institutions that we encounter throughout the world. All of these relationships call us to bear witness to the gospel precisely because our lives as creatures of God are constituted in relation; we are created in the Trinitarian image of God, an image that is inherently relational and rooted and grounded in love.<sup>26</sup>

Accordingly, same-gender relationships belong in that extensive network of relations in which we are called to bear witness to the gospel. In the next section, we consider the blessing of same-gender relationships in that broader context, beginning with the fundamental call all of us share to love our neighbors as ourselves. Since God calls us into particular forms of loving commitments with others, we turn in the following sections to three interrelated aspects of that calling: covenant-making, intentional Christian households, and faithful intimacy.

### Loving Our Neighbors as Ourselves

Christians strive to model all of our relationships on the love, grace, and compassion of Christ, loving our neighbors, both near and distant, as we love ourselves. Loving others is possible only because of the grace of God, who first loved us (1 John 4:19). Baptism and eucharist continually send us out to all our neighbors, where we learn again and again the blessing of offering ourselves and receiving others in gospel hospitality.

Hospitality means more than good manners. Scripture regards hospitality toward both friend and stranger as evidence of covenantal obedience and fruitfulness.<sup>27</sup> The story of Sodom’s destruction in Genesis 19, a particularly dramatic biblical reminder of the importance of hospitable relations, has been frequently cited by opponents of blessing same-gender relationships. However, such interpretations of this passage rely less on the biblical story itself than on the cultural reception of this story over many centuries of European history.<sup>28</sup>

The narrative in this passage turns on whether certain visitors to Sodom will be received graciously and hospitably by the city’s inhabitants or instead will be exploited and even raped. The sin of Sodom’s citizens thus refers explicitly to the codes of hospitality in the ancient Near East rather than to same-

26 “An Outline of the Faith,” BCP, 845.

27 See Exodus 22:21, Leviticus 19:34, Deuteronomy 24:19-21, Malachi 3:5, and Hebrews 13:2, among many others. For an overview and analysis of the centrality of hospitality in Scripture and in early Christianity, see Amos Yong, *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbor* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008).

28 The term “sodomy,” for example, does not appear in Scripture, and what it has come to mean (including within North Atlantic jurisprudence) is not supported by the biblical references to it. See Jay Emerson Johnson, “Sodomy and Gendered Love: Reading Genesis 19 in the Anglican Communion,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible*, ed. Michael Lieb, Emma Mason, and Jonathan Roberts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 413-34; and Michael Carden, *Sodomy: A History of a Christian Biblical Myth* (London: Equinox Publishing, 2004).

gender sexual relations.<sup>29</sup> Other biblical writers who refer to Sodom never highlight sexuality—or mention it at all. Ezekiel’s interpretation, for example, is quite direct: “This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy” (Ezekiel 16:49).<sup>30</sup> Jesus evokes the story of Sodom not to teach about sexual ethics but in the context of sending out his disciples to minister. Those who do not receive his disciples, he promises, will suffer a fate worse than the citizens of Sodom (Matthew 10:15). The threat underscores the centrality of hospitality in that ancient story.<sup>31</sup>

As early as the 1950s, biblical scholars attempted to place Genesis 19 in its original cultural context and to revive an interpretive approach to that story that resonated with the intrabiblical witness to it.<sup>32</sup> In this interpretation, Genesis 19 applies to all people rather than only to some, and the lesson for all is the primacy of hospitality, or the love of neighbor, as Jesus himself commanded.<sup>33</sup> We manifest this love of neighbor in countless ways, each instance shaped by the particular individual or community we encounter, whether in our own family, or with coworkers, or strangers.

Relationships, in other words, take many different forms. At times, we choose particular relationships based on our own preferences, needs, or desires; at other times, we are in relationships without a lot of choice, as with colleagues at work or fellow travelers. No matter which, the “neighbor” offers us an occasion for manifesting the love of God in Christ. The gospels proclaim not only the self-giving love Jesus showed to the disciples he chose, but also the love Jesus urged for the stranger encountered by chance, as in the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37). Christ sets the example for us to follow in all of our many and varied relationships, a model that respects the dignity of every person and that encourages giving oneself for the good of the other.<sup>34</sup> Relationships are “schools for virtue” and formation, that is, opportunities for us to form dispositions and habits that manifest Christ-like love.

As people joined with God and to each other by baptism and eucharist, we are called to embody in all of our relationships—those we may consider personal or private *and* those we consider corporate or public—a love that is both self-giving and other-receiving. As we endeavor to respond to this calling, we depend on God’s grace as we are gradually brought by the Spirit into that union with God for which Christ himself prayed (John 17:11). We also serve as living proclamations of God’s creative, redeeming, and sustaining love for the world. Given our limitations, that witness is inevitably imperfect and sometimes ambiguous, yet we continue to trust that all things are working together for good (Romans 8:28) as we shape our lives and relationships to the pattern of God’s own love for us and for the world. That pattern may then lead into particular forms of commitment in which we discern a call to covenantal relationship.

### Called into Covenant

Some loving relationships with our neighbors exhibit a particular depth of commitment, which can lead to an intentional covenant with another person or with a community. Scripture bears witness to

29 The definition of “sodomy” varied widely throughout Christian history and coalesced exclusively around a particular sexual act between men only in the eleventh century; see Mark D. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

30 Ezekiel’s description represents the approach most often taken by writers in the Hebrew Bible, in which the sin of Sodom is always associated with violence or injustice; see Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual Background for Contemporary Debate* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983). In the New Testament, Jude 7 is sometimes cited as well, yet that verse does not describe “sexual immorality” precisely (it could refer to rape, for example); the “unnatural lust” of Sodom’s inhabitants could also mean that the strangers sent to Sodom were actually angels (see Genesis 6:4).

31 Patristic writers viewed hospitality as central. See, for example, Origen, *Homilia V in Genesim* (PG 12:188-89): “Hear this, you who close your homes to guests! Hear this, you who shun the traveler as an enemy! Lot lived among the Sodomites. We do not read of any other good deeds of his ... [save] he opened his home to guests”; Ambrose of Milan, *De Abrahamo* 1:6:52 (PL 14:440): Lot “placed the hospitality of his house—sacred even among a barbarous people—above the modesty [of his daughters].” Cited by John Boswell, *Christianity, Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 98.

32 One of the earliest examples of this approach was Derrick Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (London: Longmans, Green, 1955).

33 Some biblical scholars continue to interpret the story as a condemnation of homosexual behavior. See, for example, Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 71-91.

34 “The Baptismal Covenant,” BCP, 305.

the significance of covenant-making in many ways but especially as an expression of God's blessing, such as the covenant God makes with the whole of creation through Noah (Genesis 9:9-13) and with the people of Israel through Abraham (Genesis 12:2-3). Christians celebrate the covenant that Jesus proclaimed and enacted at the final meal he shared with his disciples (Luke 22:20) and which we mark with the "cup of blessing" (1 Corinthians 10:16) at the eucharistic table.

Scripture invites us, in other words, to see our covenantal commitments with each other as particular expressions of the love of both God and neighbor as well as expressions of God's blessing. As we commit ourselves to the good of the other, we offer that commitment as a witness to God's covenantal love for the world. We discover God's blessing in these covenantal commitments as we are able, more and more, to manifest consistent regard and respect for the other, even as we struggle with our own limitations and flaws. We discover God's blessing even further as we realize, in ever newer ways, how a covenantal relationship can enhance and contribute to the well-being of others, of neighbors, strangers, the Church, and the world.

People who enter a covenant promise each other, a community, and God that their shared future will take a particular shape, one for which they intend to be held accountable, not only by their covenant partners but also by the wider community.<sup>35</sup> While the Canons of the Episcopal Church describe marriage as a union of a man and a woman, the patterns of marriage can help us understand other kinds of covenantal relationship, such as vowed religious life and the commitments of same-gender couples. In all of these covenantal relationships, the partners promise to be trustworthy, to remain faithful to one another despite other demands on their time and energy or possibilities for engagement with others. The partners promise to accompany and assist each other in faithfulness; they pledge their support for the well-being of the other. These relationships are directed toward vitality and fruitfulness as they contribute to human flourishing, within and beyond the relationship. The depth of this covenantal commitment means it is a *vocation*, a life of faithfulness to which some are called by God and which God blesses, so that, by God's grace, that blessing will be made manifest to the world.

Recognizing God's blessing and the work of the Spirit in relationships of lifelong commitment, the Church rightly celebrates these moments of covenantal vocation. This divine calling, discerned by a couple and their faith community, draws the Church deeper into God's own mission of redeeming and sanctifying love in the world. Christians express this calling in the ways we live our lives with others. Two of these ways deserve attention here: shaping households and deepening faithful intimacy.

### **The Vocation of Households**

Households today are most often associated with marriage and child-rearing, yet this has not always been the case. The history of the Church offers a broader view of how households can bear witness to the gospel. Since it is finally God, and not another human being or anything else in creation, that fulfills and completes us, some people feel called to remain unmarried or single. A single life, which is not necessarily the same as a solitary life, can be lived in households of various types. Living in this way can allow individuals to be more available as friends and companions; this is often the case with vowed religious life, such as a monastic calling. Indeed, for the first half of its history (more than a thousand years), the Church understood vowed religious life as a calling higher than marriage, a view that changed decisively only during the Protestant Reformation. The diverse forms of an intentional single life may afford greater opportunity for contemplation, service, and mission, which some people understand as a particular vocational calling into deeper relationship with God and the world. This seems to be Paul's understanding of the spiritual significance of remaining unmarried (1 Corinthians 7:25-32).

Paul also discusses human sexuality in relation to God's gracious covenant with us in Christ in the first chapter of his letter to the Romans. This chapter, especially verses 26-27, has been used to support the Church's reluctance to embrace the loving faithfulness of same-gender couples and continues to influence conversation in Christian communities.

35 See Margaret A. Farley, *Personal Commitments: Beginning, Keeping, Changing* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990).

In interpreting this Pauline passage, it is difficult to know precisely what Paul meant by “unnatural” in those verses and to whom he was addressing these concerns.<sup>36</sup> Significantly, Paul’s description of sexual behavior in the first chapter appears in direct relation to his condemnation of idolatry. For Paul, the consequence—not the cause—of worshiping false gods is a distorted understanding of sexuality, its purpose and goal (Romans 1:22-23). In the Greco-Roman world of the first century, those distortions of sexuality with which Paul was most likely familiar included a range of practices associated with cults devoted to fertility gods and goddesses. Some interpreters have claimed that these cultic rituals may have included self-castration, drunken orgies, and sex with young male and female temple prostitutes.<sup>37</sup> Christians rightly condemn all those behaviors as violations of the human body, the very temple of the Holy Spirit, Paul insisted (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). Moreover, some interpreters say, those alleged ancient cultic practices have nothing to do with today’s same-gender Christian couples.<sup>38</sup>

Paul’s broader insight, however, still compels the Church to continual discernment and assessment of its common life: proper worship corresponds directly to proper sexual relations. This insight can shed even further light on Paul’s recommendation to the Christians in Corinth that they remain unmarried.

In the end, human sexual relationships of any kind are not the purpose or goal of human life. Instead, union with God in Christ is the goal for all, including the whole created order, as the rest of Paul’s letter to the Romans makes clear (Romans 8:18-25). At their best, human relationships can only point us toward that final fulfillment. People who make an intentional decision to remain unmarried place important signposts on that spiritual journey to which all of us are called and in which nothing, including marriage, should supplant our primary devotion to God and to God’s household, the Church.

Other types of relationships teach us that to prepare us for life with God, God can bind us with another for life. Thus, some (though not all) covenantal commitments are enacted in households, those intimate spaces where people encounter each other as their nearest neighbors daily and continually.<sup>39</sup> Clearly, the character, shape, and form of a household have varied enormously over time, from the patriarchal and polygamous families of ancient Israel to the family Jesus created between his mother and his beloved disciple (John 19:26-27) and the economic reordering of familial relations among early believers (Acts 4:32-37, 5:1-7). What “household” means and how people may be called, as a vocation, into covenantal households matter not only in light of historical differences but also in the midst of the wide range of household customs and organizational patterns found throughout the world today.

Appreciating the significant cultural differences between the households of ancient Israel and today’s Western, nuclear families can also inform our interpretation of two biblical passages cited as a scriptural warrant for rejecting the loving faithfulness of same-gender couples: Leviticus 18:22 and its analogue, 20:13. These two verses belong to an extensive array of dietary restrictions, commandments, and ritual practices often referred to as the “Levitical holiness code.” Two features of ancient Israelite society are important in interpreting these difficult passages: the process of constructing a religious identity for Israel distinct from its surrounding cultures, and the strict gender hierarchy of the ancient Mediterranean world.<sup>40</sup>

36 See L. William Countryman, *Dirt, Greed, and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and Their Implications for Today*, revised edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 119-123. See also Dale B. Martin, “Heterosexism and the Interpretation of Romans 1:18–32,” in *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 51-64. Some interpreters have noted that Paul uses the phrase often translated as “contrary to nature” in Romans 1 again in Romans 11:24 to describe the love of God in saving those same Gentiles; see William Stacy Johnson, *A Time to Embrace: Same-Gender Relationships in Religion, Law, and Politics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 98-99.

37 For the controversy over ancient fertility cults and the alleged sexual practices associated with them, see Robert A. Oden, Jr., *The Bible Without Theology: The Theological Tradition and Alternatives to It* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), especially chapter 5, “Religious Identity and the Sacred Prostitution Accusation,” 131-153.

38 See Martti Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 103-113.

39 Thomas E. Breidenthal, *Christian Households: The Sanctification of Nearness* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2004).

40 Insights from Jewish commentators and scholars on these and other important aspects of biblical interpretation deserve renewed attention in Christian communities. See, for example, Steven Greenberg, *Wrestling with God and Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004); and Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

Leviticus 18:22 condemns sex between men, and, more particularly, treating a man like a woman. The Hebrew word used for this condemnation, translated as “abomination,” appears most often with reference to the cultic practices associated with the worship of foreign gods; similar condemnations of child sacrifice and bestiality in Leviticus 18 strengthen the connection to idolatrous rituals.<sup>41</sup> Equally important, patriarchy placed a high premium on male privilege. Sexual practices reflected this gendered ordering as men were expected to take an active role and women a passive one, reflecting and perpetuating male dominance in all other spheres of cultural and religious life and reinforcing the treatment of women as property. Sexual relations in the ancient Near Eastern cultural context were defined by who had power over whom. So, according to this worldview, sex between men would violate male privilege and disrupt the patriarchal ordering of society.<sup>42</sup>

Ancient Israelite culture, which the Levitical holiness code was meant to uphold, differs significantly from the egalitarian ideals toward which many Christian families strive in modern Western culture (and indeed in other locales as well).<sup>43</sup> Likewise, the distinctive concerns shared by both the ancient Israelites and Paul to reject the sexual practices associated with idolatrous cults are in no way applicable to the lives of faithful Christians today who identify themselves as gay or lesbian. These historical and cultural differences, however, do not render these biblical passages irrelevant: Scripture continues to bear witness to the primacy of covenantal relationship with the one true God of Israel, whom Christians believe and proclaim is revealed decisively in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Scripture would have us make that divine covenant primary in the ordering of our household relations in culturally appropriate ways.

In households formed by married different-gender couples and covenanted same-gender couples alike, the process of conforming to the likeness of Christ and striving toward holiness of life unfolds in deeply shared accountability. The couple continually attempts to place their desires within the vows and commitments they have made to each other. Living together in a household may provide the stability which makes possible the vulnerability necessary to self-giving and other-receiving.<sup>44</sup> In a household, the members of the couple become one another’s nearest neighbor so that they may grow together in the love of God. The household shelters the daily practice, which Jesus urged, of finding one’s life by giving it to another.

For same-gender couples as for married different-gender couples, households provide the structure for the daily life of covenanted closeness: laboring to provide for one another and to support family, organizing a household and its daily table, maintaining and sharing property, caring for another in sickness and at death.<sup>45</sup> Households may be schools for virtue and for penance and reconciliation, as well as habitations of mutual support and joy, places for glimpsing and also deepening our experience of the presence of God. People living alone, who are single, bereaved, or divorced, are also called to live out their baptismal vocation by the love, service, hospitality, and accountability of their relationships within the Church and in the communities of which they are a part, as well as through their service of prayer to others.

41 See Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 37-56. Paul would likely have known the connection between the Levitical holiness code and idolatrous cults as well, which lends further support to interpreting the first chapter of Romans with reference to temple prostitution.

42 Jack Rogers, *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church*, revised edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 68-69.

43 The treatment not only of women but also of children as property, as well as the practice of keeping concubines and slaves in ancient Mediterranean households, mark these differences even further. See Carol L. Meyers, “Everyday Life: Women in the Period of the Hebrew Bible,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, expanded edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 251-59; Gale A. Yee, *Poor Banished Children of Eve: Woman as Evil in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 29-58; and Amy L. Wordelman, “Everyday Life: Women in the Period of the New Testament,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, 482-88.

44 Rowan Williams, “The Body’s Grace,” in *Our Selves, Our Souls and Bodies: Sexuality and the Household of God*, ed. Charles Hefling (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1996), 58-68.

45 See Deirdre J. Good, Willis J. Jenkins, Cynthia B. Kittredge, and Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., “A Theology of Marriage including Same-Sex Couples: A View from the Liberals,” *Anglican Theological Review* 93:1 (Winter 2011): 63-64.

A household formed by a couple in a covenantal relationship can remind all of us of our incorporation into the paschal mystery through baptism, in which we are received into the household of God and encouraged to “confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share ... in his eternal priesthood.”<sup>46</sup> In their household, a couple faces the many ways in which their faith forms their daily lives. They offer themselves daily to each other in order to become part of the other’s life, dying to sin and rising to a new life directed toward love of neighbor and love of God. In this giving of self and receiving of another, we see the gracious pattern of God’s own triune life into which we are, more and more, caught up and transformed for mission.

In households we also see an image of the eucharist. The household tables around which couples in covenantal relationship gather evoke the eucharistic table around which we gather as the community of believers. In the household, as at the eucharist, couples take what is given to them and offer it to God. They are nourished and blessed by what they receive, and the Spirit then empowers them to be a blessing to others and to God. In a household, as at the eucharistic table, what God has joined together may become one body, and the Spirit may distribute a household’s gifts to many. In households, same-gender as well as different-gender couples in covenantal relationships strive to imitate Jesus, who gave himself bodily for those he loved.

To give one’s self over to love, care, and commitment in solidarity with another person, for better or worse, in sickness and in health, till death do us part, is daily and bodily to partake in the reconciling work of God in Christ. In the lives of intimate couples, sexual desire for one another can be forged into covenantal witness to the gospel.

### Faithful Intimacy

The movement from sexual desire into faithful intimacy and covenantal commitment marks a particular kind of vocational path, which for Christians shapes the passion of *eros* into the affection of *agape* for the good of the Church and the world. Theological reflection on this path begins by affirming the goodness of sexual desire itself. Indeed, sexual desire is a metaphor for God’s desire to be in relationship with us and the whole creation. Scripture and Christian tradition draw on sexually intimate relationships to point to the God who is Love and who stands in relationships of love with all creation. The long tradition of commentary on the biblical Song of Songs, for example, illustrates the spiritual significance of sexual relationships and the fruitfulness of reflecting theologically on the commitment of sexually intimate couples.<sup>47</sup> In such reflection, we can realize and appreciate that “the whole story of creation, incarnation, and our incorporation into the fellowship of Christ’s body tells us that God desires us.” The good news of God’s desire for us can then shape our intimate commitments and the life of the wider Christian community so that all of us may see ourselves as desired, as “the occasion of joy.”<sup>48</sup>

The gift of human sexuality, established by God in creation, can be a source of sustaining joy, reminding us bodily of the abundance God intends for the whole creation. In the mutual self-offering of one to another in a sexual relationship of fidelity, we can catch a glimpse of the delight God exhibits for each of us. Yet sexual desire is also fraught with risk because it draws us into relationships of vulnerability, where not only the brightest and best dimensions of ourselves are offered to another but also where the painful aspects are exposed, the ones that we often prefer to keep hidden and that need healing. Sexual desire and intimacy make us vulnerable so that God can turn our limits to our good, showing us that we are not our own but belong to someone else.

Faithful relationships of sexual intimacy can also be an occasion to bear witness to God’s love as they form the couples more fully in the image of Christ. In marriage, the Church blesses and celebrates these relationships as potential vehicles for God’s grace. Many in The Episcopal Church today have come

46 Holy Baptism, BCP, 308.

47 David M. Carr, *The Erotic Word: Sexuality, Spirituality, and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). See also Douglas Burton-Christie, “Into the Body of Another: *Eros*, Embodiment and Intimacy with the Natural World,” *Anglican Theological Review* 81:1 (Winter 1999): 13-37.

48 Williams, “The Body’s Grace,” in *Our Selves, Our Souls and Bodies*, 59.

to believe that this is as true for same-gender couples as it is for different-gender couples.<sup>49</sup> Others, however, understand the doctrine of creation differently and believe that God's gift of human sexuality is intended only for different-gender couples. Even the language of "same-gender" and "different-gender" raises many complex questions, not only biologically, socially, and culturally, but also and especially biblically.

Genesis 1 and 2, for example, are often cited to support two interrelated convictions: first, that "gender complementarity" describes God's creation of human beings as male and female; and second, that such complementarity is best expressed in the procreation of children within monogamous marriage. The extensive biblical scholarship available on these passages—in both Jewish and Christian traditions—nuances those two convictions in some important ways.

In the first of the two creation accounts (Genesis 1:26-27), gender differentiation is attributed to the whole human species rather than to individuals, just as both male and female alike apply to God, in whose image humanity is made.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, the command to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28) is given to the human species, not to each individual. If this were not the case, people "who are single, celibate, or who for whatever reason do not have children—including Jesus of Nazareth"—would be viewed as "disobedient sinners."<sup>51</sup> Moreover, the generative aspects of a loving and faithful commitment can be seen in many different ways, not only in bearing and raising children. For same-gender couples, as one Episcopal bishop has pointed out, "the care and nurture of those already in the world may be a mission more excellently fulfilled by those who do not have the concerns of child-rearing."<sup>52</sup>

The second account in Genesis refers specifically to the creation of distinct individuals (Genesis 2:7-22), and introduces something that is *not* good in God's creation: "It is not good," God declares, "for the human being to be alone."<sup>53</sup> Here the story turns on the importance of companionship and not, as in the first account, on the procreation of children. Significantly, the companion God provides for the solitary human is not defined by "otherness" but by suitable similarity. In this passage, "there is no emphasis ... on 'difference' or 'complementarity' at all—in fact, just the opposite. When Adam sees Eve, he does not celebrate her otherness but her sameness: what strikes him is that she is 'bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh.'" Reducing this story to the fitness of particular anatomical parts misses the poignancy of this story: "God sees the plight of this first human being and steps in and does whatever it takes to provide him with a life-giving, life-sustaining companion."<sup>54</sup> Rather than focusing on marriage, these creation accounts affirm God as the creator of all things and "the priority of human companionship."<sup>55</sup>

Genesis 1 and 2 can and should continue to shape, inform, and energize the Church's faithful witness to the God revealed in Scripture. These passages can do so as the Church proclaims God as the creator and affirms the goodness of God's creation, which includes the dignity of every human being as created in God's image. This affirmation remains vital, not least for the sake of embracing the full humanity of women. The unqualified dignity with which the biblical writer treated both men and women in the account of their creation stands out as quite remarkable in the patriarchal culture in which it was written.<sup>56</sup>

49 *To Set Our Hope on Christ*, 8-9, 24-25.

50 Some ancient Talmudic commentaries suggest, for example, that the original human shared with God all of the possible gender characteristics, which were later divided between "male" and "female." This text, in other words, raises a host of questions which the text itself does not address concerning gender and sexuality in both humanity and God. See Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, ed., *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

51 Johnson, *A Time to Embrace*, 115-16.

52 Marshall, *Same-Sex Unions*, 38.

53 Genesis 2:18 (for the significance of this translation of the verse, see Johnson, *A Time to Embrace*, 114-115, 117).

54 Johnson, *A Time to Embrace*, 120.

55 Johnson, *A Time to Embrace*, 114.

56 William Stacy Johnson notes, for example, that in ancient Mediterranean society, women were considered human beings but decidedly deficient ones and were therefore rightly subservient to men (*A Time to Embrace*, 275, n.16). Dale B. Martin likewise relates this ancient view of the inferiority of women—as "deficient men"—to the difficulties in translating, let alone interpreting, two Greek words in the New Testament that have been frequently cited regarding homosexuality. Those words

Paul, furthermore, would urge Christians to read the Genesis accounts of creation through the lens of the *new* creation, which God has promised in Christ, the first fruits of which God has provided by raising Christ from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20-25). Living into that promise and anticipating its fulfillment, Paul urged the Christians in Galatia to understand their baptism as erasing familiar social and cultural hierarchies: “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:27-28).<sup>57</sup> Rather than emphasizing the significance of gender, the faithfulness of sexually intimate couples can contribute to the Church’s witness to the new life God offers in Christ and through the Spirit, which the Church celebrates in the “sacraments of the new creation.”<sup>58</sup> For both same-gender and different-gender couples, then, the theological and moral significance of their covenantal commitment is rooted in the paschal mystery.

As in baptism and eucharist, the covenantal commitments of sexually intimate couples sweep their bodies up into a grand and risky endeavor: to see if they can find their life in God by giving it to another. In these covenants, two people vow to give themselves bodily and wholeheartedly to each other. They do this, in part, to live out the promises of baptism while also living into the self-offering of Christ, as expressed at the eucharistic table: “This is my body, given for you.” The lifelong commitment of covenanted couples can, by God’s grace, testify to the love of God by signifying Christ and the Church. These commitments can thus evoke for the wider community the very promise of the paschal mystery enacted in baptism and eucharist: we are being drawn deeper into God’s own life where we learn that God’s love is stronger than death.

Sexually intimate couples can also testify to the love of neighbor by loving each other, a love that requires both time and the sustenance of God’s grace. Covenantal couples can model this love, not as a static tableau but as an ongoing school for virtue in which the practices of neighbor-love are developed, reformed, and brought toward perfection. The moral significance of a covenantal relationship is its potential to bring each of the covenant partners up against their embodied limits as finite creatures and to become willing to be vulnerable to another. A covenantal commitment challenges and inspires each partner to self-offering as each lives out with the other the relation of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:21-33). Members of a couple urge each other forward in growth, which occurs through and with the creaturely limitations that Christ took on for our good: the limits of time and the body. Our desires, including our sexual desires, “can be an especially intense and unsettling reminder of our radical availability to the other. Like parental affection or simple compassion, sexual desire can cause our heart to ‘belong’ to another.... This desire shatters any illusions we may have regarding our ability to choose when and if we shall be connected to others; indeed, it is itself a warrant for the claim that our fundamental relation to one another is one of connection.”<sup>59</sup>

Giving ourselves to another, as Christ gave himself for the world, takes time and the willingness to risk the vulnerability inherent to the commitment of love. The movement of sexual desire toward intimacy and into commitment begins as we give ourselves over to another in faithful relation and continues toward the final moment of committal, surrendering our lives to God. This movement describes a lifelong, deliberate process that, with obedience and faithfulness, produces visible holiness and the fruits of the Spirit. Both for the good of the couple and for the good of the Church, God blesses this

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appear in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10. The words “sodomite” or “homosexual” have appeared in some English translations of those verses, but the meaning of the Greek in both cases is obscure and elusive. Martin believes it likely that these words referred to cultural practices involving sexual exploitation (perhaps including rape) and also effeminate behavior, which for men in that society triggered both alarm and disgust (“*Arsenokoitês* and *Malakos*: Meanings and Consequences,” in *Biblical Ethics and Homosexuality: Listening to Scripture*, ed. Robert L. Brawley [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996], 117-36).

57 See Dale B. Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 77-90.

58 Among the many sources for this connection between the sacramental life of the Church and the divine promise of the new creation, see Herbert McCabe, *The New Creation* (London: Continuum, 2010), where he refers to the Church’s sacraments as “mysteries of human unity” insofar as we are, through the sacraments, being incorporated into the new creation God is bringing about (xii).

59 Thomas Breidenthal, “Sanctifying Nearness,” in *Theology and Sexuality: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Eugene F. Rogers, Jr. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 345.

loving, intimate commitment. This blessing, in turn, empowers the couple for their ministry in the world and energizes the Church for mission.

### **Mutual Blessing and Fruitfulness**

As Christians, all of our relationships—as single people, in households, as intimate couples—are occasions to live more fully into our Baptismal Covenant and participate more deeply in the paschal mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection enacted at the eucharistic table. The commitment we exhibit in our relationships—to love our neighbor as we love ourselves and as God loves each of us in Christ—thus becomes a source of blessing for the whole Church.

This broad framework of covenantal relationship for the Church’s life offers a way to reflect on the significance of the many types of covenants with which the Church is blessed—in ordination, monastic vows, marriage, and also in same-gender relationships. The blessing of any relationship is a blessing not only for those in a relationship but also and equally for the wider community in which the relationship is lived. This mutual blessing is exhibited in many ways, not least by enabling those engaged in such relationships to manifest the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), which they might not have done apart from the relationship. Discerning the gifts of the Spirit in a relationship is one reason a faith community blesses that relationship.

In addition, pronouncing a blessing can become an important occasion for deepening the process of sanctification. Many couples desire this—and they need it. God can use the vulnerability of intimacy and the giving of ourselves to another to expose our weaknesses, make us better, set us apart, and spur our moral growth. The Church in turn can witness to the sanctifying work of the Spirit as God transforms the energy of *eros* into the virtues of faith, hope, and love.

A blessing changes a couple as they become more aware of God’s grace and are commissioned by the Church to bear witness to the paschal mystery. A blessing changes the Church as well: holiness of life is made more manifest, so the community becomes accountable for supporting the couple as they grow into the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

Entering into a covenant of faithfulness with another human being is one among many ways Christians live out their baptismal calling in the world. As covenantal households are shaped by lives given over to service, compassion, generosity, and hospitality, the grace encountered at the eucharistic table is further manifested in the world. Thus, the fruitfulness of covenantal relationships and the blessings they offer to the Church belong to the mission of the Church in its ongoing witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and our hope of union with God. This is the very source of our desire for communion with another.

## **4. The Church’s Challenge: Christian Unity and Biblical Interpretation**

O God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Savior, the Prince of Peace:  
Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions; take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatever else may hinder us from godly union and concord; that, as there is but one Body and one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may be all of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*“For the Unity of the Church,” BCP, 818*

Christian unity with God and one another in Christ is a precious gift; likewise, our differences as believers are gifts to be honored because these differences belong to God’s created order. Through these

gifts we are equipped for “building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Ephesians 4:12-13).

*The Book of Common Prayer* (1979) encourages Episcopalians to pray for Christian unity by recalling the Pauline letter to the Ephesians. This letter reminds us that our bonds of affection are rooted not in our own efforts but in God’s gracious gift in baptism. There is but one Body and one Lord. There is but one baptism, by which we are joined—heart, soul, and mind—to one another (Ephesians 4:5). Most of all, as the prayer quoted above reminds us, this baptismal unity serves the Christian call to praise and glorify God.

In baptism, God binds us to God’s own self by binding us to others who are different from us, linking our salvation inextricably to the salvation of others. Furthermore, the divine gift of unity in no way relies on uniformity. We are not united, one to the other, because we agree but because God has joined us together.<sup>60</sup> The bond we share in baptism makes room for us to disagree with one another within the bonds of affection we share as members of God’s own household of love and grace. We enact this unity by continuing “in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers.”<sup>61</sup> We cannot live into this gift on our own, but with “sighs too deep for words,” the Spirit “helps us in our weakness” (Romans 8:26). The Spirit slowly takes, offers, and transforms all the prayers of those who disagree with one another to make them occasions to manifest the Body of Christ more visibly in the world and in the Church as well. In this ongoing process of sanctification, we proclaim that we are marked as Christ’s own forever as members of the Body of Christ.<sup>62</sup> This foundational reality of our shared life sends us out to the world in witness to Christ’s reconciling love.<sup>63</sup>

The challenges in making God’s gift of unity more and more visible appear, for example, within the New Testament concerning the divisions in the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 3:1-9), in Paul’s reminder to the Romans that the body includes many diverse members (Romans 12:3-8), and perhaps most notably in Paul’s baptism of non-Jews, which caused a debate with Peter over how to interpret their inherited Scriptures. Paul recounts this disagreement in his letter to the Galatians (2:2-21). Peter’s vision (Acts 10:9-16) prior to encountering Cornelius, a Roman centurion, and interacting with other Gentiles, moved him to declare that no one should be called “profane or unclean” (Acts 10:28), and to urge his fellow apostles not to withhold the water of baptism from those who had received the Holy Spirit just as they had (Acts 10:47). The inclusion of Gentiles who did not observe dietary laws within the household of the God of Israel overturned centuries of biblical interpretation.

Throughout the Church’s history, Christians have endeavored to follow that apostolic practice of prayerful deliberation in the light of Scripture and to discern the will of God—“what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2)—in each new time and place. As the Body of Christ, our fundamental call is to live together not only when we agree in our discernment but also when the Spirit leads faithful Christians to hold more than one view. Different interpretations of Scripture are possible, provided they lead us to love God and one another.<sup>64</sup>

General Convention Resolution 2009-C056 acknowledges differences of opinion within The Episcopal Church concerning the interpretation of Scripture and same-gender relationships. This theological resource has presented interpretations of some of the most difficult of these biblical passages to support

60 See Thomas E. Breidenthal, “Communion as Disagreement,” in *Gays and the Future of Anglicanism: Responses to the Windsor Report*, ed. Andrew Linzey and Richard Kirker (Ropley, UK: O Books, 2005), 188-198.

61 “The Baptismal Covenant,” BCP, 304.

62 The centrality of baptism in our common life has been championed by a series of Anglican leaders, starting with Thomas Cranmer and including F. D. Maurice and William Reed Huntington. As Paul Avis describes it, Anglican ecclesiology depends on the insistence that “what unites us to Christ [that is, baptism] is all that is necessary to unite us, sacramentally, to each other” (*The Identity of Anglicanism: Essentials of Anglican Ecclesiology* [London: T&T Clark, 2007], 111).

63 On baptismal ecclesiology, see Weil, *A Theology of Worship*, 22-28.

64 Augustine of Hippo believed that the command in Genesis to “increase and multiply” (1:22, 28) applied not only to the procreation of children but also to the proliferation of textual meanings of Scripture. Augustine also believed that there were limits to multiple interpretations: no interpretation of Scripture could be considered ethically Christian if it violated the commandment to love God and one’s neighbor. See Dale B. Martin, *Pedagogy of the Bible: An Analysis and Proposal* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 59, 83-84.

the covenants of same-gender couples while understanding that some members of The Episcopal Church continue to hear the word of the Lord differently in these passages. All of us have more to learn from Scripture and from each other. The Spirit baptizes us all in the name of Jesus, who is himself the Word of God and the Lord of Scripture. In faithfulness to Christ, we acknowledge and respect those differences among us in our fervent hope that disagreements over this biblical material need not divide the Church.<sup>65</sup> Anglican Christians, along with Christians in many other communions and historical eras, have discovered in ever new ways how the grace of God in Christ offers a path toward unity even in the midst of profound disagreement.<sup>66</sup>

Our disagreements today belong in the context of the agreement we do enjoy concerning biblical interpretation: the saving love and grace of God in Christ call us to be a holy people, living in faithfulness and treating the human body as the temple of the Holy Spirit as we endeavor, with God's help, to fulfill our baptismal vows to "seek and serve Christ in all persons," loving our neighbors as ourselves, to "strive for justice and peace among all people," and to "respect the dignity of every human being."<sup>67</sup> In such agreement, the love with which we treat each other is to be modeled on the love of God for God's people, as well as on the life and ministry of Jesus himself.

Scripture offers little material that would address modern notions of sexual orientation, and biblical writers devoted relatively little attention to questions of same-gender relations. Biblical scholars are divided regarding the translation and interpretation of the texts most often cited on this question.<sup>68</sup> Some maintain that these texts unequivocally forbid same-gender relationships; others argue that these texts do not refer to same-gender relationships as we understand them today and that each text must be interpreted within its own historical and literary contexts.<sup>69</sup>

Similar disagreements over biblical interpretation have marked the Church's life throughout its history. Faithful Christians struggled for centuries to understand whether Scripture encouraged a view of vowed religious life as a higher calling than marriage. Churches have disagreed over the biblical condemnation of "usury," which originally meant charging interest on loaned money, and whether it applies to contemporary economic systems. Protestant reformers disagreed about biblical interpretations of the eucharist and even whether particular biblical books ought to remain in the canon of Scripture. English reformers wrestled with differing biblical views concerning liturgical vestments, Church music, the relationship between Church and state, sacramental theology, and the role of ordained ministers.<sup>70</sup>

The Episcopal Church has struggled with how to interpret Scripture amid cultural change, whether concerning economic reform, divorce and remarriage, or contraception.<sup>71</sup> The practice of slavery and the role of women are two areas in which major departures from the biblical text have been especially

65 Rowan Williams has noted, for example, that writers in our shared Anglican history have often turned to "a theologically informed and spiritually sustained *patience*" as Anglican Christianity continues to grow and change. These writers, Williams says, "do not expect human words to solve their problems rapidly, they do not expect the Bible to yield up its treasures overnight.... They know that as Christians they live among immensities of meaning, live in the wake of a divine action which defies summary explanation. They take it for granted that the believer is always learning (*Anglican Identities* [Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 2003], 7).

66 While the Church's history is replete with many such examples, for illustrations from Anglican history, see William L. Sachs, *The Transformation of Anglicanism: From State Church to Global Communion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), esp. chap. 4, "The Struggle to Define the Church and its Belief," 120-63.

67 "The Baptismal Covenant," BCP, 305.

68 Those texts are Genesis 1-2, Genesis 19, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6:9, 1 Timothy 1:10, and Jude 7.

69 An overview of these positions appears in an issue of the *Anglican Theological Review* devoted to same-sex marriage; it offers "two interpretations of doctrinal and scriptural faithfulness that fundamentally disagree" (Ellen T. Charry, "Preface," *Anglican Theological Review* 93:1 [Winter 2011]: xiv). The two major essays in this issue of the journal originated as a project commissioned in spring 2008 by the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church, to be overseen by the Theology Committee of the House of Bishops.

70 For a history of the various ways the Church has read difficult biblical passages, see John L. Thompson, *Reading the Bible with the Dead: What You Can Learn from the History of Exegesis That You Can't Learn from Exegesis Alone* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007).

71 For an overview of challenges in biblical interpretation for a wide range of ethical concerns in the Episcopal Church, see Robert E. Hood, *Social Teachings in the Episcopal Church* (Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1990).

controversial. Christians, including Episcopalians, in the nineteenth century used the Bible extensively to justify the institution of slavery, particularly in the United States.<sup>72</sup> In 1863, for example, Presiding Bishop John Henry Hopkins of Vermont published a paper called “Bible View of Slavery,” which defended slavery as “fully authorized both in the Old and New Testament,” defining it as “servitude for life, descending to the offspring.”<sup>73</sup>

The struggle to ordain women in The Episcopal Church also involved deep conflicts over biblical interpretation. Supporters of women’s ordination based their arguments on the gospel’s promise of freedom and wholeness for all, while opponents believed that the maleness of the disciples named in the New Testament established an unalterable tradition of male priesthood.<sup>74</sup>

The Episcopal Church eventually changed its positions regarding slavery and the ordination of women. The diversity of approaches to Scripture in both cases made these decisions contentious. Serious questions continue to be posed about how we understand the authority of Scripture, not only concerning slavery and the status of women but also, now, same-gender relationships. All three of these issues have threatened to divide the Church. No one today would justify the institution of slavery, but the worldwide Anglican Communion continues to live with disagreement about ordaining women and blessing same-gender relationships. With previous generations of the faithful who struggled in similar ways, our present disagreements need not compromise our shared witness to the good news of God in Christ as we look toward that day when our partial knowledge will be complete (1 Corinthians 13:12) and when God will be “all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28).

The hope we share for that day of final fulfillment in Christ does not thereby erase the challenge of living into God’s gracious gift of unity today. For most Christians, this means noting carefully the limits of acceptable differences; beyond those limits, the claim to Christian unity would prove difficult if not impossible. The challenge, then, is not whether limits to our differences exist, but how to discern when we have crossed those limits, and over what kinds of questions (whether doctrinal, moral, or liturgical, for example) we may hold differing beliefs and still remain in communion.<sup>75</sup> In the debate over same-gender relationships and biblical interpretation, Anglican Christians have disagreed about this process of discernment. Some Episcopalians have concluded that blessing such relationships goes beyond the limits of acceptable difference, and, acting on their conscience, they have parted company with The Episcopal Church, while others who disagree have chosen to remain. Our Church will continue to live with varying approaches to Scripture on this question.

At a pivotal moment among early believers, recorded in Acts 15, the possibility of including Gentiles in the Christian family sparked considerable controversy. The importance of this historical moment today lies not in the first-century differences between Jews and Gentiles but in the process of prayerful deliberation those early believers adopted. Facing the real possibility of irreparable division, the apostles sought a way to honor the centrality of Scripture while also attending carefully to the ongoing movement of the Spirit in their midst.

The Acts of the Apostles recounts that certain believers from the sect of the Pharisees were insisting that men could not be saved unless they were circumcised and kept the law of Moses (Acts 15:5). As the apostles and elders in Jerusalem considered this question, Peter (who had been persuaded by Paul’s point of view) confirmed the work of the Holy Spirit among the Gentiles: “God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us” (Acts 15:8-9). James considered this

72 Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah’s Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

73 John Henry Hopkins, “Bible View of Slavery,” *Papers from the Society for the Diffusion of Political Knowledge*, no. 8 (1863): 132, 117; see also John Henry Hopkins, *A Scriptural, Ecclesiastical, and Historical View of Slavery, From the Days of the Patriarch Abraham, to the Nineteenth Century* (New York: W. I. Pooley and Co., 1864), 6.

74 Pamela W. Darling, *New Wine: The Story of Women Transforming Leadership and Power in the Episcopal Church* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1994), 149.

75 For observations concerning matters that are essential to Christian life and those over which we may have legitimate differences of opinion, see *To Set Our Hope on Christ*, 49-52.

testimony and concluded that the Spirit's work urged a reconsideration of Scripture and an expansion of the gospel's reach to include Gentiles (Acts 15:13-21).

Acts 15 stands among other key biblical moments in which God's people have found their vision broadened to see a new thing God is bringing about (Isaiah 43:18-21), their assumptions challenged by the outpouring of God's Spirit where they had not expected it (Numbers 11:26-29; Joel 2:28), and the startling first fruits of God's new creation in raising Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20-25). These biblical turning points, in themselves, will not settle today's disagreements, yet they urge the same apostolic process of prayerful deliberation: reliance on the centrality of Scripture while attending carefully to the Spirit's work in our midst.<sup>76</sup>

The Episcopal Church listened closely to the Spirit concerning slavery and the ordination of women. We are summoned today to listen to the narratives of sanctification and holiness within the relationships of same-gender couples and to discern and testify to the work of God in their lives. As we listen, we trust in that Spirit who, as Jesus promised, will lead us further into truth (John 16:13), praying as Christ himself did for our unity with each other in God (John 17:11) and blessing God for God's abundant goodness in Christ so that, with Paul, we may share more fully in the blessings of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:23).

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<sup>76</sup> See Stephen E. Fowl, "How the Spirit Reads and How to Read the Spirit," in *Engaging Scripture: A Model for Theological Interpretation* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 97-127; Jeffrey S. Siker, "How to Decide? Homosexual Christians, the Bible, and Gentile Inclusion," *Theology Today* 51:2 (July 1994): 219-34; and Rogers, *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality*, 89-90.

# **The Church's Canon Law and Laws of the States**

## The Impact of Civil Law on Church Blessings

This essay is the work of a group called together by the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to provide analysis and insight into the canonical and legal issues arising from the Church's blessing of same-gender relationships.<sup>77</sup> As The Episcopal Church considers these resources, many people will want to know how the civil law affects the Church. Do state laws restricting civil marriage to different-gender couples present problems or risks for The Episcopal Church and for Episcopal clergy celebrating the liturgy?

Those who studied this question for the Commission concluded that the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution forbids a state from enforcing a law prohibiting same-gender blessings. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which applies both to the federal government and to the states, provides:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Some thirty-five states define marriage as between a man and a woman; these states expressly withhold recognition of a same-gender marriage that a couple obtains lawfully in another state or country. Preliminary research indicates that this legal scenario is common among the states that forbid and do not recognize same-gender marriages. The statutory or constitutional language used varies, but the intended result is the same.

So long as clergy in these states are *blessing a same-gender couple's covenantal relationship*, rather than purporting to establish a *civil marriage*, lawyers within the Church anticipate no successful state criminal prosecution or other adverse state action against the member of the clergy or his or her Church. The reason is that blessing a covenantal relationship is an exercise of religious faith, whereas establishing a civil marriage (through officiating at a "civil ceremony" and signing a marriage license) is an official act as an agent of the state. Well-settled First Amendment jurisprudence recognizes the difference between the two and protects the former.

*The Book of Common Prayer* and Canon I.18.1 require Episcopal clergy to conform to the laws of their state governing the creation of a civil marriage. Disciplinary consequences are clearly outlined for Episcopal clergy who perform a civil marriage ceremony and sign a state marriage license for a couple not permitted to marry in their state; civil law consequences could result, as well. However, celebrating a same-gender blessing ceremony using an authorized Church liturgy would not be counter to the Canons or the *Book of Common Prayer*—assuming that the language of the liturgy does not use the text of the *Book of Common Prayer's* marriage rites. This also assumes that the clergy person is not attempting to create a civil marriage contrary to state law and canon law.<sup>78</sup>

The above conclusion and assumptions are the same where the blessing ceremony takes place in a diocese located in a state that prohibits same-gender civil marriage, but where the same-gender couple was previously married or joined in a civil union in a state where same-gender civil marriage is legal.

Some states not only forbid (or do not recognize) same-gender marriage, but also do not recognize any legal status for same-gender couples who have a civil marriage or civil union from another state where that status is legal. This analysis and conclusion apply to these "non-recognition" states as well.

Clergy and lay members of the Church with questions or concerns about a specific impact or application of a marriage or civil union law in their state should ask their bishop for guidance.

<sup>77</sup> This essay on canons and civil law is presented for study and as a resource for diocesan chancellors and others, providing an interpretation of canon and civil law that we believe to be sound but with which some may differ.

<sup>78</sup> Canon I.18.2(b) describes Holy Matrimony as a "physical and spiritual union of a man and a woman." The structure and text of parts of Canon I.18 seem to contemplate that wherever a member of the clergy is officiating at a civil marriage, he or she is also solemnizing Holy Matrimony when, in fact, the two are distinct and separate acts.

## The Requirements of the Marriage Canon in Different State Contexts

The following discussion of the “marriage Canon” (Canon I.18) continues with exploration of various scenarios of same-gender couples expected to request the proposed liturgy developed in response to General Convention Resolution 2009-C056 and/or civil marriage. It considers possibilities both in dioceses that permit blessings of same-gender relationships or same-gender marriage and in those that prohibit it.

### The Marriage Canon

The “Marriage Canon” is Canon I.18, “Of the Solemnization of Holy Matrimony.” Section 1 of the Canon requires clergy to conform to (i) their state’s civil marriage laws (“shall conform to the laws of the State governing the creation of the civil status of marriage”) and (ii) the “laws of this Church governing the solemnization of Holy Matrimony.”

Section 2 sets forth five conditions for a member of the clergy to ascertain prior to solemnizing a marriage. This section does not always distinguish between the act of officiating at a civil marriage as an agent of the state, and the act of solemnizing Holy Matrimony using the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage from the *Book of Common Prayer*. The structure and text of portions of the Canon seem to contemplate that the celebrant is performing both of these acts, not one or the other. The five conditions are:

- (a) both parties have the right to contract a marriage under state law;
- (b) both parties understand that “Holy Matrimony is a physical and spiritual union of a man and a woman, entered into within the community of faith, by mutual consent of heart, mind, and will, and with intent that it be lifelong”;
- (c) both parties “freely and knowingly consent to such marriage, without fraud, coercion, mistake as to identity of a partner, or mental reservation”;
- (d) at least one of the parties is baptized; and
- (e) both parties “have been instructed as to the nature, meaning, and purpose of Holy Matrimony by the Member of the Clergy, or that they have both received such instruction from persons known by the Member of the Clergy to be competent and responsible.”

Items (a) and (c) are conventional findings required of agents of the state (e.g., justices of the peace, judges, clergy) when performing a civil marriage ceremony, but they are critical canonical requirements for the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage as well. The other three conditions are additional requirements of the Church, unrelated to state law.

Section 3 of the Canon states four additional requirements to be satisfied in connection with the solemnization of a marriage:

- (a) The announcement of the banns of marriage (this may be waived by the celebrant);
- (b) The requirement of at least two witnesses;
- (c) The recording of required data in the parish registry;
- (d) The signing of the declaration of intention, the contents of which are spelled out in subsections I.18.3 (e)-(g).

Section 4 of the Canon states that a member of the clergy has the discretion to decline to solemnize any marriage.

### Scenarios

The following scenarios present a spectrum of likely fact patterns arising under the proposed liturgy. In each scenario, “eligible same-gender couple” means that at least one of the couple is baptized and participating in a Christian community of faith, and that a divorced person has obtained the required consent of the Bishop Diocesan. The term “civil union” may be substituted for “civil marriage” with the same results in most cases. Clergy and lay members of the Church with questions or concerns about

a specific impact or application of a marriage or civil union law in their state should seek guidance from their bishop.

Variations on these scenarios should generally be consistent with the following analysis.

### **Scenario A**

In a state that authorizes same-gender civil marriage, an eligible same-gender couple asks a member of the clergy to celebrate the proposed liturgy for them and officiate at their civil marriage.

The member of the clergy must respond consistently with the directives of his or her Bishop Diocesan:

1. The Bishop Diocesan's directive is that neither is available in the diocese.
2. The Bishop Diocesan's directive is that a priest may celebrate the proposed liturgy but not officiate at the civil marriage.
3. The Bishop Diocesan's directive is that a priest may officiate at the civil marriage but not celebrate the proposed liturgy.
4. The Bishop Diocesan's directive is that a priest may both officiate at the civil marriage and celebrate the proposed liturgy.

Where a Bishop Diocesan is silent about officiating at a civil marriage, state law permits the clergy member to do so (although when in any doubt about this, the clergy member should seek guidance from his or her bishop). Where a Bishop Diocesan is silent about use of a proposed liturgy, such liturgy may not be celebrated.

Under these scenarios and those that follow, a priest disobeys the Bishop Diocesan's directive and/or the applicable Canon or rubric at her or his own risk of Title IV disciplinary action.

### **Scenario B**

In a state that authorizes same-gender civil marriage, an eligible same-gender couple asks a priest to celebrate Holy Matrimony using the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage from the *Book of Common Prayer* and also to officiate at their civil marriage.

Both the rubrics of the *Book of Common Prayer* and Canon I.18 reserve the rite of Holy Matrimony to a man and a woman. This is not subject to the discretion of either a bishop or priest. If the Bishop Diocesan has authorized use of a liturgy for Blessings, the priest may celebrate that. And, unless directed not to do so by the Bishop Diocesan, the priest may officiate at the civil marriage. However, the structure and text of parts of Canon I.18 may be interpreted as not authorizing a member of the clergy to officiate at a civil marriage where the couple is not eligible for Holy Matrimony, e.g., a civil marriage of a same-gender couple.

A bishop, priest, or deacon who violates the rubrics or the Canon risks disciplinary action under Title IV.

### **Scenario C**

In a state that prohibits same-gender civil marriage, an eligible same-gender couple seeks both the proposed liturgy and civil marriage from a priest.

Since state law prohibits civil marriage for the couple, the priest may not officiate at their civil marriage.

If the Bishop Diocesan has authorized use of the proposed liturgy, the priest may celebrate that liturgy.

**Scenario D**

In a state that prohibits same-gender civil marriage, an eligible same-gender couple seeks only the proposed liturgy.

If the Bishop Diocesan has authorized use of the proposed liturgy, the priest may celebrate that liturgy.

**Scenario E**

In a state that authorizes same-gender civil marriage, an eligible same-gender couple with a marriage license from another state where that marriage is legal seeks the proposed liturgy from a priest.

If the Bishop Diocesan has authorized use of the proposed liturgy, the priest may celebrate that liturgy.

**Scenario F**

In a state that prohibits same-gender civil marriage, an eligible same-gender couple with a marriage license from another state where that marriage is legal seeks the proposed liturgy from a priest.

If the Bishop Diocesan has authorized use of the proposed liturgy, the priest may celebrate that liturgy.

**Other Materials**

The National Conference of State Legislatures, a nonpartisan association providing resources to state legislatures and legislators, maintains a useful Web resource on state marriage, civil union, and related laws.

**Hearing, Seeing,  
and Declaring New Things**  
*Preparing Same-Gender Couples for a  
Liturgy of Blessing*

## Contents

### Overview: Pastoral Care for Same-Gender Couples

1. Available Resources: Materials for Pastoral Preparation
2. Particular Issues Affecting Same-Gender Couples
3. Presenters
4. Outline of Pre-Blessing Preparation for Same-Gender Couples

### Handouts

1. Theological Reflection on Covenantal Relationship: Spiritual Practice for Same-Gender Couples
2. Declaration of Intention for Lifelong Covenant
3. About Presenters—For the Couple
4. Information for Presenters
5. Model Congregational Guidelines

## Overview: Pastoral Care for Same-Gender Couples

You have heard; now see all this; and will you not declare it? From this time forward I make you hear new things, hidden things that you have not known.

*Isaiah 48:6*

I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

*Isaiah 49:6*

The pastoral resources in this essay are provided to assist clergy and trained lay people who are preparing same-gender couples for a blessing of their relationship, using the liturgy “The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant.” The expectation of such preparation is equivalent to the canonical requirement that couples preparing for marriage receive instruction “as to the nature, meaning, and purpose of Holy Matrimony” (Canon I.18.2[e]).

Preparation is similar for all couples, whether same-gender or different-gender. Most clergy and lay people who currently offer premarital preparation to different-gender couples are more than capable of working with same-gender couples. However, understanding the differences is necessary—and helpful.

The pastoral resources described in this essay address differences in the preparation of same-gender and different-gender couples and include some of the available resources for preparing same-gender couples for the blessing of their relationships.

### Contextual Competence

Clergy and qualified lay people preparing couples for blessings need to be *contextually competent*, a concept derived from *cultural competence*. In fields such as health care, social work, and education, culturally competent professionals embody awareness, a positive attitude, knowledge, and skills that enable them to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.

Consider the different situations that one might encounter when preparing a couple for a blessing or marriage:

- Preparing a couple in their seventies for a blessing of their relationship is very different from preparing a couple in their twenties.
- Preparing a couple entering a new relationship is different from preparing two people who have been living in a committed relationship for a long time.
- Preparing an interracial couple differs in some aspects from preparing a couple of the same race.
- Preparing a couple without children differs from preparing parents.

Being “contextually competent” means understanding and appreciating these, and many more, differing situations. Clergy and trained lay people need to examine their own contextual competence as they consider working with same-gender couples. If they feel they cannot work with—or learn to work with—a same-gender couple with appreciation and awareness, then they must refer the couple to another clergyperson or trained layperson.

The materials below will help clergy and trained lay people adapt their skills to work with same-gender couples in a contextually competent manner.

## 1. Available Resources: Materials for Pastoral Preparation

In their Churchwide survey regarding pastoral and teaching materials, the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music found that the following resources are among those commonly used to prepare same-gender couples for a blessing.

### **Prepare/Enrich (Life Innovations, Inc.)**

Prepare/Enrich is a relationship inventory that assesses couples' strengths and growth areas on topics such as finances, communication, conflict resolution, and sexuality. This assessment tool is by far the one used most frequently among respondents to the Commission's survey.

"Facilitators" (the term that Prepare/Enrich employs) must be trained in its use; see website for cost of materials.

#### *Positives*

- newly revised (2008), customized version easily used with same-gender couples
- uses the language of "partner"
- most comprehensive tool to address personality, conflict resolution, family, health, and financial and spiritual issues
- assesses goals, strengths, and growth areas
- large, national norm base (more than five hundred thousand couples)

#### *Negatives*

Currently, research results are standardized only for different-gender couples, so there is no "norm" against which to compare a same-gender couple's data.

### **Premarriage Awareness Inventory (Logos Productions)**

This resource is preferred by persons not trained in Prepare/Enrich.

#### *Positives*

- three customized formats, including inventories for those living together or previously married
- thorough personality assessment
- coverage of major areas, such as faith, finances, family of origin, children, power issues, life goals

#### *Negatives*

This is also standardized for different-gender couples only, though the author indicates that he will be implementing a same-gender version (no target date given).

## 2. Particular Issues Affecting Same-Gender Couples

Issues or differences that are particular to same-gender couples are not necessarily challenges in blessing preparation. They are more often gifts, especially if the clergyperson or layperson preparing a couple understands variation as part of God's plan for the world and a sign of God's blessing. Contextual competence is important here, especially in a preparer's awareness of places where skills for preparing different-gender couples do not transfer to same-gender couples. In addition, the person working with the couple needs to examine his/her own understanding of same-gender blessing, as well as the assumptions of the couple's faith and civil communities, including diocesan authority and various state laws.

Same-gender couples come to ask for a blessing with a variety of life backgrounds; thus provision for some variations and differences appear, for example, in the prayer choices in the liturgy. Other variations that clergy or lay preparers will meet in their work with same-gender couples follow below.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>79</sup> This material is adapted from "Pastoral Resources for Province One Episcopal Clergy Ministering to Same-Gender Couples," which covered these topics well.

### **Legal Civil Unions / Same-Gender Marriages and Diocesan Policies**

Currently the laws regarding state-recognized same-gender civil unions or marriages are very much in flux throughout the United States and other countries where The Episcopal Church is located. As a result, tracking these laws can be confusing. Some states recognize civil unions while others recognize marriages. A marriage or civil union in one state may not be recognized in another. Some states may have residency requirements for civil unions or marriages, or for the dissolution of those unions. Likewise, diocesan bishops have differing guidelines as to how clergy should respond pastorally to couples seeking a blessing for their union.

Therefore, clergy and couples seeking blessing must be familiar with the laws of their state and with the policies or guidelines of their diocese. Because some dioceses require professional counseling for a couple if one member of the couple (or both) has been divorced more than once or has had more than one previous long-term relationship, clergy should check with the diocesan office for guidance on what is expected in such situations.

Clergy who feel they cannot confer formal blessings upon same-gender couples may wish to provide a pastoral response to those couples. Such a pastoral response might involve:

- Affirming and supporting their desire for God's blessing upon their relationship
- Attending their union ceremony conducted by a civil authority
- Referring the couple to another Episcopal clergyperson or minister of other denomination who would be willing to conduct a formal blessing (those who choose to refer couples to other clergy might think about ways to continue and reaffirm a pastoral relationship with the couple after the blessing)
- Acknowledging the relationship within the congregation and reaffirming the congregation's ties to, acceptance of, and love for the couple, remembering that the blessing is transformative not only for the couple but also for the congregation.

A final issue: very few denominations authorize their clergy to conduct same-gender blessings or marriages, so an Episcopal clergyperson may be approached by a couple seeking a blessing of their union simply because it is not an option for them within their own denomination. Episcopal clergy may expect that some of these couples from other denominations feel tender and vulnerable in their relationship to the wider Church and so may need particular nurture and support.

### **Issues Arising from Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity**

*"Late bloomers" who "come out" later in life:* Some gay and lesbian people recognize their orientation from a very young age. Others may have a growing realization that does not become fully clear until much later in life; some may have understood their sexual orientation for some time but are only recently "coming out" publicly. A "late bloomer" may need some time to begin to live into his/her sexual orientation or explore with a counselor this core change in self-perception before entering into a lifelong commitment.

*Gay/lesbian/bisexual:* Despite studies of sexuality since the 1940s, many people commonly perceive that a person is either homosexual or heterosexual—with no category in between. However, sexual orientation is a spectrum with many gradations, and a person's primary orientation may vary at different times in life.

One or both members of the couple may have been in previous heterosexual relationships. While some individuals may have done so in an attempt to conform to familial, societal, and/or religious expectations, others may have done so as bisexuals for whom a different-gender relationship was satisfactory.

A bisexual person who seeks the Church's blessing of a same-gender relationship is expected to commit to monogamous, lifelong fidelity. In preparing a couple with a bisexual member for a blessing of their relationship, a clergyperson or trained layperson should treat the bisexual member's previous relationships in the same manner as any other person's previous relationships would be considered.

*Transgender:* The term “transgender” includes a wide range of people who experience and/or express their gender differently from broader societal expectations. This includes expressing a gender that does not match the sex listed on one’s original birth certificate or physically changing one’s sex. This complex situation for both the individual and the couple needs to be explored during the process of preparing for a blessing. (This is not unique to same-gender couples because one member of a different-gender couple may be transgender.) Preparers are encouraged to seek out and study some of the excellent sources on this complex subject, and/or to consult with a professional counselor experienced in working with transgender people.

*Internalized homophobia:* One or both members of a same-gender couple may have been subjected to a continual societal onslaught of negative or stereotypical messages. These messages may have been internalized, with the result that a person may be severely uncomfortable with his/her sexual orientation. A clergy person or trained lay person who perceives that a person has significant negative feelings or stigma about his/her orientation may appropriately refer the person for counseling with a therapist trained to handle this issue.

### **Long-Term Relationships**

Preparers may be working with people who have been together for many years or have previously had long-term, monogamous relationships. This means the preparers must be open to learning and benefiting from the wisdom generated by a couple’s long years together.

### **Higher Level of Hurt**

One or both members of a same-gender couple may have been wounded by exclusion or marginalization, that is, experiences and feelings of being “other” or “less than.” Certainly, lesbian and gay people are at greater risk in their teen years of being victims of abuse or exploitation. Clergy and lay people preparing couples for blessings need to be sensitive to these issues.

All too often, one or both members of the couple may have a history of being excluded from benefits that heterosexuals receive from the state and especially from the Church. For the couple, a clergy person or lay person providing blessing preparation represents the Church, so a preparer will need to build a trusting relationship with the couple in order to support them in dealing with the anger, hurt, or confusion that erupts from rejection.

### **In or Out?**

Although a couple is seeking a public union, one or even both members of the couple may need to remain “closeted” in some aspects of their individual lives. For instance, one person may be employed in a workplace or profession where being “out” could jeopardize the ability to function there at top form or even to continue to work there. Unfortunately, a prime example is the Church. For gay and lesbian clergy in many denominations, “coming out,” especially when in a relationship, can result in being stripped of the ability to function as ordained clergy or to hold any position of leadership in the Church. In secular places of employment, where lesbian or gay people might be protected by law, their orientation or relationship could affect their ability to be hired or result in a tense and unfriendly work environment. Being “out” could have a negative impact on seeking or maintaining a position in public office. Lesbians and gays serving in the military no longer need to remain closeted, but many who were in the military previous to this change might need to talk about their pasts as closeted members of the armed services.

Gay and lesbian couples take risks, even to their lives, when they display affection in public; when they cannot hold hands, they hold secrets. Because of this, there can be tension in a relationship when one person is fully “out” and comfortable with some public, visible displays of affection while the other is not. In some work situations, one person in the relationship may need to be careful when calling a partner at the workplace or taking messages at home.

Couples need to discuss when, where, and with whom it is okay to be open about their relationship in general. Specifically, as part of their preparation, they need to discuss each other’s comfort levels and needs regarding making their relationship known in a public ceremony.

### **Relational History and Resolution of Previous Relationships**

All couples have to deal with what went before; however, since legal recognition for same-gender relationships has only recently been available, it is less likely that couples have recorded formal, written, legal dissolutions of these relationships. Couples will be freer to proceed into a new relationship when they have processed what one or the other has learned from earlier relationships and when they have resolved matters of finance, property, child custody, and responsibility to former spouses or partners.

### **Families of Origin**

Most clergy and trained lay people inquire about each individual's family of origin when preparing different-gender couples for marriage. The answers can give the couple insights regarding a number of issues, including their understanding of what a healthy or unhealthy relationship looks like and their attitudes toward finances and parenting practices; the responses may also enable couples to identify unresolved issues that could affect the relationship.

One area which may be unique to same-gender couples is their families' responses to their orientation, their public lives as lesbian or gay people, and their life together as a couple. Couples will benefit from exploring questions such as: Have the individuals "come out" to their own families? If so, what was the response? Has either member of a couple told his/her family about the intended blessing liturgy? Is the family supportive, hostile, or grieving, or simply absent? How will each family respond to the individual's partner: will the family define a partner as a spouse and therefore part of the family, or will they treat one's partner as a friend or roommate? In other words, has the couple discussed what they anticipate their relationship with the in-laws will be as they enter into a lifelong, committed relationship? Likewise, is the couple able to engage a network of support, individually and as a couple, and do they perceive how it will become a part of their new life together?

### **Legal Matters**

For different-gender couples, marriage automatically comes with legal protections and obligations (above and beyond the legality of the union itself). In states where no civil union or same-gender marriage is allowed, and even in states which make legal provision for same-gender couples, it is critical that same-gender couples pursue private legal protections that substitute for some of the legal protections flowing from civil marriage (though private measures cannot cover all of the legal attributes of civil marriage). The couple should consider arranging for medical and financial durable powers-of-attorney, wills, and living wills, and may need to seek professional advice regarding financial and property matters. In addition, couples should consider soliciting legal advice on their rights and risks, especially regarding issues of tax, Social Security, or other state and federal legal matters (for example, Social Security benefits do not pass to the survivor of a same-gender couple).

### **Children**

As with any different-gender, childless couple preparing for marriage, same-gender couples should also discuss with each other whether one or the other wants children. This discussion might include topics such as when to have children, how to reproduce, the impact of children on finances and employment, and matters of parenting, such as childcare and discipline. Couples entering the relationship with children should discuss how to help the children adjust and integrate into the new family constellation. Same-gender couples, especially those blessed with children from a previous heterosexual relationship, also need to support their children through their various stages of development, particularly as the children relate to their peers, who may have no understanding of, or possibly even a hostile reaction to, a friend with same-gender parents.

Same-gender couples should be aware of the legal ambiguity, in both federal and state law, pertaining to custodial cases and may want to seek counsel to protect themselves and their children. This applies whether or not the couple resides in a state that provides civil unions or marriage for same-gender couples.

### 3. Presenters

Presenters are people chosen by the couple to support and present them to the presider and the assembly during the blessing liturgy. The proposed liturgy for same-gender couples provides for the option of presenters, just as some congregations offer to different-gender couples. This option gives a voice to important people in the life of the couple during the liturgy and enriches the experience for all present. Presenters can also serve an important role in supporting the couple before and after the blessing liturgy. The selection of a couple mature in their relationship can be particularly helpful to a couple starting life together. The couple, together with the clergy or lay preparer, should talk as soon as possible about selecting presenters, so that the prayerful work of the presenters can begin early on.

Two short handouts (one for the couple and one for presenters) detail the role of presenters and are intended for use at the conclusion of the initial pre-blessing preparation session.

### 4. Outline of Pre-Blessing Preparation for Same-Gender Couples

Below is a guideline for a five-session, pre-blessing preparation that may be used along with the two assessments described above. In their Churchwide survey regarding pastoral and teaching materials, the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music found that a large number of trained lay people and clergy want a very specific template; however, those with experience preparing couples may choose to adapt, combine, or reorder this outline. Ideally, sessions last 60 to 90 minutes each, and both partners should be present for all sessions (although the preparer may decide to meet with one of the individuals to address specific issues).

#### Goal

Pre-blessing preparation sets as its goal the strengthening of a lifelong, monogamous partnership rooted in Christ. General Convention Resolution 2000-D039 addresses the hope—the Church’s and the couple’s—for an enduring relationship:

*Resolved*, That we expect such relationships will be characterized by fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God; and be it further

*Resolved*, That we denounce promiscuity, exploitation, and abusiveness in the relationships of any of our members; and be it further

*Resolved*, That this Church intends to hold all its members accountable to these values, and will provide for them the prayerful support, encouragement, and pastoral care necessary to live faithfully by them.

#### Expectations

##### *Realities*

- Clergy and lay people are trained in many different ways to conduct premarital preparation.
- Clergy and trained lay people apply a wide variety of methods for pre-blessing/marriage preparation.

##### *Assumptions*

- The priest or bishop is prepared to preside at the blessing.
- The clergyperson or trained layperson is experienced in preparing couples before marriages and / or blessings.
- The clergyperson or trained layperson is willing to refer the couple to a professional therapist should circumstances warrant.

##### *Truth*

- Each couple is unique, requiring adaptations as appropriate.

### **Preparing Same-Gender Couples in Long-term Relationships**

When preparing people who have been together for many years, the session structure may need to be changed, and fewer sessions may be needed. One suggestion is to adapt the first session to get to know the couple, introduce the liturgy, and so on. The second session could employ the following questions or discussion topics, which respect the length of the couple's relationship and invite them to discuss their understanding of the Church.

- What does it mean to you to have your relationship blessed by the Church after all these years?
- How will having the Church's blessing and making a commitment in public, even if you have done so privately or in a non-Church setting, affect you or your relationship?
- What can your relationship teach the Church?

Finally, the third session could be adapted from the current fifth session: wrapping up, clarifying the liturgy, and fielding any other questions that may have arisen.

### **Session One: Getting To Know You and an Overview**

This session focuses on getting to know one another. It also starts to address the details of the rite, offering the couple and the clergy person an opportunity to study the rite together, looking at its meaning and choices and affirming that the blessing, grounded in God, is given through the Church. Some clergy, however, may prefer to do a very general overview of the rite in this session, then study it more intensely later in the process.

Addressing the practical issues of the blessing at the outset helps to build trust and allows the couple to open themselves to the substance of the next four sessions. By providing even a general overview of the rite, the preparer can address questions and alleviate anxieties about the actual day.

Session One includes a great deal of material, some of which may be moved to another session. Handouts for this session include:

- The liturgy "The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant"
- Theological Reflection on Covenantal Relationship: Spiritual Practice for Same-Gender Couples
- Declaration of Intention for Lifelong Covenant
- About Presenters—For the Couple
- Information for Presenters

### ***Outline of Session One***

- Pray together.
- Get to know one another (varies as to how well the preparer knows the couple).
- Explore the couples' religious backgrounds, their experiences with the Church(es), and their reasons for being in this congregation.
- Reflect on the theological significance of the couple's relationship. The handout Theological Reflection on Covenantal Relationship: Spiritual Practice for Same-Gender Couples may be useful in this discussion. (This reflection might be moved to a later session.)
- Review and ask the couple to sign the Declaration of Intention for Lifelong Covenant.
- Walk through the blessing rite, raising theological issues and naming liturgical choices:
  - Discuss the eucharist as normative in the service. However, including a celebration of the eucharist may not be appropriate if only one member of the couple is Christian.
  - Emphasize the difference between a civil service and an ecclesial blessing.
  - Answer general questions regarding details of the service and the Church's practice.
  - Introduce the possibility of presenters.

At the end of the session, provide written handouts and suggest "homework" topics for the couple to think about for Sessions Two and Three:

- Families of origin and growing up in them
  - What worked and didn't work so well in their families of origin (this topic may also influence work in Session Four)

- Family Church/religious history as well as each individual's history—positive and negative—with the Church/religion
- Marriages of family members, particularly parents
  - Parents' ways of dealing with conflict
  - Parents' styles of child-rearing
  - Family tolerance of children's sexual orientation.

### **Session Two: Learning from the Past, Part 1**

This session provides a time for one member of the couple to speak and for the other to listen. Session Two opens with prayer, then looks back to focus upon the relationship of one partner with his/her family of origin, including exploring the marriage(s) of his/her parents and siblings and, if possible, grandparents and close friends. This discussion includes what the individual would or would not replicate from the past in his/her own ongoing and future relationships, particularly the relationship that is to be blessed. In addition, the individual can look at levels of acceptance of his/her relationship by his/her family and at other issues from family of origin and childhood.

The guiding assumption underlying this analysis is that certain issues are replicated from generation to generation, and that, once the issues are identified, individuals can choose to continue those patterns or deliberately alter them. This session works most effectively if the conversation flows naturally, rather than following a rigid interview, and if it includes the following important areas:

- Family: number and birth order of siblings
- Money: its role and influence in the family
- Sex: attitudes in family of origin about monogamy, fidelity, and the role of sex in relationship
- Alcohol and drugs: their places within the family as children grew
- In-laws: relationship with in-laws and greater family
- Children:
  - agreement or disagreement between parents about child-rearing
  - the individual's feelings about being a child in his/her family
- Conflict: parents' methods of arguing and disagreeing.

As the conversation concludes, the preparer invites the individual to identify what he/she would or would not replicate in his/her own adult relationship with the life partner. Following that, the silent partner is given the floor to comment on what he/she has heard and learned, especially any surprises.

### **Session Three: Learning from the Past, Part 2**

This session continues the look back by extending the chance for the other member of the couple to speak about his/her family of origin. Both members of the couple need the opportunity to explore the topics and to hear each other's stories so that each can learn and appreciate more deeply what the other brings to their relationship.

Session Three, which also begins with prayer, duplicates with the second person the process with the first from Session Two. If time permits at the end, the couple might discuss the impact of family history on their own relationship.

### **Session Four: Looking to the Future**

This session, an opportunity to look at the relationship today and into the future, invites the couple to name areas in the relationship that appear strong and supportive while also opening a space to identify and address areas that may be problematic. Thoughts, questions, and new information from previous sessions may help determine where the couple is today and where their relationship and household may need attention in the future.

After opening with prayer, this session should include discussion of:

- The couple's relationship in general: in-depth exploration of where they have been and where they are now
- Role of sex and intimacy in the relationship (for example, potential changes of sexual behavior as a result of committing to a monogamous relationship)

- Role of alcohol and drugs in the relationship
- Money (for example, household finances and financial planning)
- Legal protections (for example, medical and financial durable powers-of-attorney, wills, and living wills, insurance)
- Household roles (for example, who takes out the trash, who keeps the social calendar?)
- Communication:
  - How the couple talks things through
  - What happens when they disagree
- Concerns for the future
- Decision-making as a couple
- Dealing with families as individuals (one's own as well as one's partner's) and as a couple
- Support networks, now and in the future.

Session Four concludes with a discussion of the need for boundaries between generations so that the couples' life as a unit may be seen as distinct from older and younger generations.

### **Session Five: Liturgical Decisions and Wrap-up**

Session Five, focused on the blessing service itself, is an opportunity to make choices for the liturgy, based on the Theological Reflection on Covenantal Relationship handout (and discussed) at the first session. The depth of this discussion will be determined by what was or was not addressed in Session One. In addition, as the final session, Session Five serves as a time to consider questions that may have arisen from previous sessions.

#### ***Outline of Session Five***

- Pray together.
- Address questions and concerns regarding previous sessions and other issues that have arisen.
- Review theological reflections in light of previous sessions and what is to come. The preparer can help the couple connect the spiritual practices of their life as a couple and the "staging" of the service. For example, will they process into the service together or separately, or will they be already in the worship space as the liturgy begins? Will they sit together during the Ministry of the Word or across the aisle from one another?
- Discuss details of the service itself:
  - Scripture (which passages speak particularly to the couple's life together?) and whether non-biblical readings may be included
  - Will the liturgy take place at the congregation's principal weekly celebration? Is celebration of the eucharist to be omitted for pastoral cause?
  - Other liturgical choices, especially:
    - Which collect will be used?
    - Which of the two vows will be used?
    - Will rings be exchanged, or, if rings have already been worn, are they to be blessed?
    - What music, if any, will be included? (The couple should consult with the congregation's musician.)
- Discuss presenters and their roles in supporting the couple in the service and in their ongoing life.

In closing, the preparer can assure the couple that they have done hard and important work together, work that is a gift both to the preparer and to the couple. The preparer can express his/her eager anticipation of the couple's blessing and of meeting their close and extended families, seeing them with their friends, and celebrating their relationship in the sight of God.

## Handouts

1. Theological Reflection on Covenantal Relationship: Spiritual Practice for Same-Gender Couples
2. Declaration of Intention for Lifelong Covenant
3. About Presenters—For the Couple
4. Information for Presenters
5. Model Congregational Guidelines

The Declaration of Intention requires the replacement of *N.N.* and *N. N.* in the first sentence with the couple's names. Handouts 3 through 5 are samples that may be adapted for the use of a specific congregation. In these, "*N. Episcopal Church*" should be replaced with the congregation's name, and a similar change made for "*Episcopal Diocese of X.*"

## **Handout 1 - Theological Reflection on Covenantal Relationship: Spiritual Practice for Same-Gender Couples**

### ***Christian Life and Covenants***

All Christians are called to bear witness to the good news of God's love and grace in Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. We are empowered for such witness by our covenantal relationship with God.

Baptism initiates us into that covenant, making us Christ's own forever and members of Christ's Body, the Church. The eucharist sustains us in that covenantal life and strengthens us to be Christ's witnesses in the world.

Our covenantal life with God is expressed in relationships of commitment and faithfulness, including those of same-gender couples. It is the Church's joy to celebrate these relationships as signs of God's love, to pray for God's grace to support couples in their life together, and to join with these couples in our shared witness to the gospel in the world.

### ***Themes for Theological Reflection and Spiritual Practice***

A sacramental framework for covenantal relationships offers a way to reflect on the grace of Christ and the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of faithful, committed couples. Several theological themes can assist couples as they consider their covenantal vows as a form of spiritual practice.

#### **Vocation**

God calls people into various kinds of relationship, whether as single people, in monastic communities, or as intimate couples. These vocational callings can empower our witness to the gospel. The decision to enter into a covenantal union is a vocation marked by these characteristics: "fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God."

#### **Households**

Covenantal relationships are often lived in households in which we practice daily the giving of ourselves for the good of another. While households take many different forms, they create a space of mutual trust and accountability. The joy, intimacy, and shared vulnerability of households can thus help us learn the spiritual disciplines of compassion, forgiveness, and reconciliation in lives of committed monogamy and fidelity.

#### **Fruitfulness**

The divine grace that sustains a covenantal relationship bears fruit in countless ways, not only for the couple but for the wider community as well. Covenanted couples manifest this grace in their shared gifts for ministry and in lives of service, generosity, and hospitality.

#### **Mutual Blessing**

A blessed relationship is set apart for a divine purpose: to bear witness to the creating, redeeming, and sanctifying love of God in the world. As the Spirit empowers the couple for this witness, the Church is likewise blessed and strengthened for its mission and ministry.

In all of these ways and more, the blessing of a same-gender relationship invites the couple and the whole Church to renew our commitment to the Baptismal Covenant. That commitment is expressed by *faith* in the good news of Jesus Christ, in the *hope* for union with God that Christ promised, and with the *love* that knits us together as the Body of Christ. As the apostle Paul says, we live our life together as God's people with faith, hope, and love. And the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

**Handout 2 - Declaration of Intention for Lifelong Covenant**

NOTE: This template is presented for use with same-gender couples since a similar declaration is required by the Canons of the Episcopal Church (Canon I.18.3[d-g]) for different-gender couples prior to their marriage.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

We, *N.N.* and *N.N.*, desiring to receive the blessing of a Lifelong Covenant, do solemnly declare that we hold this covenant to be our lifelong commitment as provided by The Episcopal Church gathered in General Convention.

We believe that our covenant is intended by God for our mutual joy, for the encouragement and support given one another in daily life and changing circumstances, for bringing God's grace to our community, for the deepening of faith as we experience God's love in our love for one another, and (if it may be) for the physical and spiritual nurture of children. This covenant shall be nurtured and characterized by fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which shall enable us to see in each other the image of God.

And we do engage ourselves, so far as in us lies, to make our utmost effort to establish this covenant and to seek God's help hereto.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### Handout 3 - About Presenters—For the Couple

At N. Episcopal Church, we consider the “Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant” to be a celebration supported by the congregation, much as candidates for baptism are supported by all the members of the Church. Just as those who are baptized are initiated into the full life of the Church, those who receive the Church’s blessing upon their relationship are embraced in a new way in the faith community.

#### *The Blessing Liturgy*

The presentation takes place immediately after the sermon, as follows:

*The couple comes before the assembly. If there is to be a presentation, the presenters stand with the couple, and the Presider says to them*

*Presider*               Who presents N. and N., who seek the blessing of God and the Church on their love and life together?

*Presenters*            We do.

*Presider*               Do you promise  
to love, respect, and pray for N. and N.,  
and to do all in your power  
to stand with them in the life they will share?

*Presenters*            We do.

#### *Choosing Presenters*

There are a variety of possibilities for choosing presenters who will stand with you and present you at the liturgy. It can be helpful to choose at least one member of this faith community to walk with you through this process. If you are new to the congregation, the priest (or other person designated) can help you discern whom you might consider. The selection of a couple mature in their relationship can be particularly helpful if you are just beginning your life together. Often, couples will choose their own parents, children, or other supportive family members to be their presenters.

Presenters can pray for you during the period of preparation before your blessing, keep you connected to the congregation, and continue to support you in your ongoing covenanted life together.

Finally, in choosing, remember that these people will stand with you during the liturgy and present you at this rite. Also remember that, immediately after you are presented, the entire congregation will vow to support you as you, in turn, become a blessing and bear grace to the entire congregation.

Because presenters serve an important role before and after the blessing, you and your clergy person should talk early about selecting presenters, so that your prayerful partnership may begin as soon as possible.

#### Handout 4 - Information for Presenters

At N. Episcopal Church, we consider the “Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant” to be a celebration supported by the congregation, much as candidates for baptism are supported by all the members of the Church. Just as those who are baptized are initiated into the full life of the Church, those who receive the Church’s blessing upon their relationship are embraced in a new way in the faith community.

At the blessing service, you present the couple to the presider and to the assembly, as follows:

*The couple comes before the assembly. If there is to be a presentation, the presenters stand with the couple, and the Presider says to them*

*Presider*            Who presents N. and N., who seek the blessing of God and the Church on their love and life together?

*Presenters*        We do.

*Presider*            Do you promise  
to love, respect, and pray for N. and N.,  
and to do all in your power  
to stand with them in the life they will share?

*Presenters*        We do.

As a presenter, your role begins even before the blessing. We encourage you to pray for the couple both privately and in the Prayers of the People at Sunday services during their period of preparation. You can continue to support their ongoing life by acknowledging the anniversary of their blessing and offering your presence whenever their household experiences times of difficulty or celebrates occasions of joy. If you are a member of the congregation, you also have a role in keeping them connected to others in the congregation.

As a presenter, you promise to support the couple as they become a blessing and bear grace to their families and friends, the Church, and the world. In this role, then, you are a witness to the blessing given and received in the liturgy and carried forth by the couple into the world.

## Handout 5 - Model Congregational Guidelines

NOTE: Most congregations adopt some form of “marriage policy” expressing norms and guidelines for different-gender couples preparing for marriage. All congregations may engage in a helpful and fruitful exercise to develop guidelines that reflect the Christian community in which they worship; the guidelines that are developed should apply to both different-gender couples and same-gender couples. Obviously, such a policy is optional at the discretion of the clergy in consultation with the vestry or bishop’s committee. As always with liturgical matters, final decisions are the responsibility of the clergy. Following is a model of a guideline that applies for all couples preparing for marriage or a blessing. It may be modified to meet specific situations and needs.

### *Information for All Couples Seeking the Church’s Blessing at N. Episcopal Church*

#### **A. Introduction**

The Christian community at N. Episcopal Church understands that relationships are complex and that making a lifelong commitment to a relationship through a marriage or blessing is a significant, exciting, and wonder-filled event in people’s lives. We also believe that a Christian community that agrees to bless such a relationship needs to be intentional about supporting the couple as they prepare for the blessing and as they live out their lives.

We understand that committed, lifelong relationships, whether for same-gender or different-gender couples, are to be outward and visible signs of an inward, spiritual, and God-given love. In this context, N. Episcopal Church seeks to support all couples in their commitment to one another and to help make the love of God more visible for the whole community.

#### **B. Guidelines**

The following guidelines have been adopted by the lay and ordained leaders of N. Episcopal Church:

1. As required for different-gender couples seeking marriage according to the *Book of Common Prayer*, at least one member of a same-gender couple must be baptized.
2. It is desirable that at least one member of the couple be an active member of this, or some other, Christian community. We hope this membership might include giving serious, prayerful consideration to supporting the congregation through time, talent, and/or treasure.
3. Approximately six months’ notice should be given to allow for planning and pastoral preparation.
4. If the couple has no connection with N. Episcopal Church but wishes to have the blessing at N. Episcopal Church or to use the services of N. Episcopal Church’s priest:
  - they should be able to show that at least one of the couple has active membership in another Episcopal or Christian congregation;
  - they need to complete marriage or blessing preparation with their own or other clergy person or a qualified lay preparer;
  - they might consider making a financial contribution to N. Episcopal Church in thanksgiving for their marriage or blessing and for the ongoing support of the Church, its ministry and mission. A creative formula to calculate this contribution might be to consider a tithe (10 percent) of the budget for the entire celebration. (Clergy have discretion here, as resources vary greatly from couple to couple. Also, if a couple is returning to Church for the first time, an unconditional welcome may be the best pastoral response.)

In all cases, it is important that all concerned comply with the laws of the state, the Canons of the Episcopal Church, and the canons and policies of the Episcopal Diocese of X as well as the directives of the diocesan bishop, including compliance with diocesan policies for cases in which the relationship is not the first marriage or committed relationship for one or both people.

**The Witnessing and Blessing  
of a Lifelong Covenant**  
*Liturgical Resources for Blessing  
Same-Gender Relationships*

## Concerning the Service

This rite is appropriately celebrated in the context of the Holy Eucharist and may take place at the principal Sunday Liturgy. This rite then replaces the Ministry of the Word. A bishop or priest normally presides. Parallel texts from *Enriching Our Worship 1* are included as options for elements of this rite.

Two or more presenters, at least one of whom is baptized, who may be friends, parents, family members, or drawn from the local assembly, may present the couple to the presider and the assembly.

To comply with the laws of the civil jurisdiction in which the rite is celebrated, the priest shall consult the bishop, who may authorize modifications of the Pronouncement.

## The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant

### *The Word of God*

#### Gathering

*The couple to be blessed joins the assembly. A hymn of praise, Psalm, or anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.*

*The Presider says the following, the people standing*

Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
*People* And blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever.  
Amen.

*In place of the above may be said*

*Presider* Blessed be the one, holy, and living God.  
*People* Glory to God for ever and ever.

*From Easter Day through the Day of Pentecost*

*Presider* Alleluia. Christ is risen.  
*People* The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

*In place of the above may be said*

*Presider* Alleluia. Christ is risen.  
*People* Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia.

*Then may be said*

*Presider* Beloved, let us love one another,  
*People* For love is of God.  
*Presider* Whoever does not love does not know God,  
*People* For God is love.  
*Presider* Since God so loves us,  
*People* Let us love one another.

*The Presider may address the assembly in these words*

Dear friends in Christ,  
we have gathered together today  
to witness *N. N.* and *N. N.* publically committing themselves to one another  
and, in the name of the Church, to bless their union:  
a relationship of mutual fidelity and steadfast love,  
forsaking all others,  
holding one another in tenderness and respect,  
in strength and bravery,  
come what may,  
as long as they live.

Ahead of them is a life of joy and sorrow,  
of blessing and struggle,  
of gain and loss,  
demanding of them the kind of self-giving love  
made manifest to us in the life of Jesus.  
Christ stands among us today,  
calling these two people always to witness in their life together

to the generosity of his life for the sake of the world,  
a life in which Christ calls us all to share.

Let us pray, then,  
that they may be strengthened for the promises they make this day,  
and that we will have the generosity  
to support them in what they undertake  
and the wisdom to see God at work in their life together.

### The Collect of the Day

*Presider*            The Lord be with you.  
*or*                     God be with you.  
*People*                And also with you.  
*Presider*            Let us pray.

*The Presider says one of the following Collects*

Gracious and everliving God:  
assist by your grace *N.* and *N.*,  
whose lifelong commitment of love and fidelity we witness this day.  
Grant them your blessing, that with firm resolve  
they may honor and keep the covenant they make;  
through Jesus Christ our Savior,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

*or this*

Almighty and everliving God:  
look tenderly upon *N.* and *N.*,  
who stand before you in the company of your Church.  
Lift them up in joy in their life together.  
Grant them so to love selflessly and live humbly,  
that they may be to one another and to the world  
a witness and a sign of your never-failing care;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, to the ages of ages. *Amen.*

*or this*

O God, faithful and true,  
whose steadfast love endures for ever:  
we give you thanks for sustaining *N.* and *N.* in the life they share  
and for bringing them to this day.  
Nurture them and fill them with joy in their life together,  
continuing the good work you have begun in them;  
and grant us, with them, a dwelling place eternal in the heavens  
where all your people will share the joy of perfect love,  
and where you, with the Son and the Holy Spirit, live and reign,  
one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

*or this*

*For those who bring children*

Holy Trinity, one God,  
three Persons perfect in unity and equal in majesty:  
Draw together with bonds of love and affection  
*N.* and *N.*, who with *their families*  
seek to live in harmony and forbearance all their days,  
that their joining together will be to us  
a reflection of that perfect communion

which is your very essence and life,  
O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
who live and reign in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

### The Lessons

*The people sit. Then one or more of the following passages of Scripture is read. If the Holy Communion is to be celebrated, a passage from the Gospels always concludes the Readings. When the blessing is celebrated in the context of the Sunday Eucharist, the Readings of the Sunday are used, except with the permission of the Bishop.*

Ruth 1:16-17  
1 Samuel 18:1b, 3, 20:16-17, 42a;  
    *or* 1 Samuel 18:1-4  
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12  
Song of Solomon 2:10-13, 8:6-7  
Micah 4:1-4

Romans 12:9-18  
1 Corinthians 12:31b-13:13  
2 Corinthians 5:17-20  
Galatians 5:14, 22-26  
Ephesians 3:14-21  
Colossians 3:12-17  
1 John 3:18-24  
1 John 4:7-16, 21

*When a biblical passage other than one from the Gospels is to be read, the Reader announces it with these words*

*Reader*            A Reading from \_\_\_\_\_.

*After the Reading, the Reader may say*

The Word of the Lord.

*or*

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

*or*

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches.

*People*    Thanks be to God.

*Between the Readings, a Psalm, hymn, or anthem may be sung or said. Appropriate Psalms are*

Psalm 65  
Psalm 67  
Psalm 85:7-13  
Psalm 98  
Psalm 100  
Psalm 126  
Psalm 127  
Psalm 133  
Psalm 148  
Psalm 149:1-5

*All standing, the Deacon or Priest reads the Gospel, first saying*

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to  
\_\_\_\_\_.

or

The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ according to

\_\_\_\_\_  
*People* Glory to you, Lord Christ.

*After the Gospel, the Reader says*

*People* The Gospel of the Lord.  
Praise to you, Lord Christ.

*Appropriate passages from the Gospels are*

Matthew 5:1-16  
Mark 12:28-34  
Luke 6:32-38  
John 15:9-17  
John 17:1-2, 18-26

## The Sermon

### *The Witnessing of the Vows and the Blessing of the Covenant*

*The couple comes before the assembly. If there is to be a presentation, the presenters stand with the couple, and the Presider says to them*

*Presider* Who presents N. and N., who seek the blessing of God and the Church on their love and life together?

*Presenters* We do.

*Presider* Do you promise  
to love, respect, and pray for N. and N.,  
and to do all in your power  
to stand with them in the life they will share?

*Presenters* We do.

*The Presider then addresses the couple, saying*

*Presider* N. and N., you have come before God and the Church to make public your commitment to one another and to ask God's blessing.

*The Presider addresses one member of the couple*

*Presider* N., do you freely and unreservedly offer yourself to N.?

*Answer* I do.

*Presider* Will you live together in faithfulness and holiness of life as long as you both shall live?

*Answer* I will.

*The Presider addresses the other member of the couple*

*Presider* N., do you freely and unreservedly offer yourself to N.?

*Answer* I do.

*Presider* Will you live together in faithfulness and holiness of life as long as you both shall live?

*Answer* I will.

*The assembly stands, the couple faces the people, and the Presider addresses them, saying*

*Presider* Will all of you here gathered uphold and honor this couple and respect the covenant they make?

*People* We will.

*Presider* Will you pray for them in times of trouble and celebrate with them in times of joy?

*People* We will.

### The Prayers

*Presider* Then let us pray for N. and N. in their life together and for the concerns of this community.

*A Deacon or another leader bids prayers for the couple.*

*Prayers for the Church and for the world, for the concerns of the local community, for those who suffer or face trouble, and for the departed are also appropriate. If the rite takes place in the principal Sunday worship of the congregation, the rubric concerning the Prayers of the People on page 359 of the Book of Common Prayer is followed.*

*Adaptations or insertions may be made to the form that follows.*

*A bar in the margin indicates a bidding that may be omitted.*

*Leader* For N. and N., seeking your blessing and the blessing of your holy people;

Lord, in your mercy (or Lord, in your goodness)

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For a spirit of loving-kindness to shelter them all their days;

Lord, in your mercy (or Lord, in your goodness)

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For friends to support them and communities to enfold them;

Lord, in your mercy (or Lord, in your goodness)

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For peace in their home and love in their family;

Lord, in your mercy (or Lord, in your goodness)

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For the outpouring of your love through their work and witness;

Lord, in your mercy (or Lord, in your goodness)

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For the wisdom to care for the children you may entrust (*have entrusted*) to them;

Lord, in your mercy (or Lord, in your goodness)

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For the growth of their children from strength to strength;

Lord, in your mercy (or Lord, in your goodness)

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For the strength to keep our vows and commitments;

Lord, in your mercy (or Lord, in your goodness)

*People* Hear our prayer.

*After a time of silence, during which the assembly voices its petitions, the leader may add the following biddings*

*Leader* For all who have been reborn and made new in the waters of  
Baptism;  
Lord, in your mercy (*or* Lord, in your goodness)

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For those who lead and serve in communities of faith;  
Lord, in your mercy (*or* Lord, in your goodness)

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For those who seek justice, peace, and concord among nations;  
Lord, in your mercy (*or* Lord, in your goodness)

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For those who are sick and suffering, homeless and poor;  
Lord, in your mercy (*or* Lord, in your goodness)

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For victims of violence and those who inflict it;  
Lord, in your mercy (*or* Lord, in your goodness)

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For communion with all who have died in the hope of rising  
again [especially \_\_\_\_];  
Lord, in your mercy (*or* Lord, in your goodness)

*People* Hear our prayer.

*The Presider concludes the Prayers with the following or another appropriate Collect*

Giver of every gift, source of all goodness,  
hear the prayers we bring before you  
for N. and N., who seek your blessing this day.  
Give them a share in the saving work of Jesus,  
who gave himself for us,  
and bring about the fullness of life he promised,  
who now lives and reigns for ever and ever. *Amen.*

*If the Eucharist is to follow, the Lord's Prayer is omitted here.*

*Leader*

As our Savior Christ  
has taught us,  
we now pray,

*People and Leader*

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your Name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever. Amen.

*Leader*

And now, as our Savior  
Christ has taught us,  
we are bold to say,

*People and Leader*

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
Forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

### ***Commitment***

*The people sit. The couple stands, facing the Presider.*

*Presider*            *N. and N., I invite you now, illumined by the Word of God  
and strengthened by the prayer of this community,  
to make your covenant before God and the Church.*

*Each member of the couple, in turn, takes the hand of the other and says*

In the name of God,  
I, *N.*, give myself to you, *N.*  
I will support and care for you by the grace of God:  
enduring all things, bearing all things.  
I will hold and cherish you in the love of Christ:  
in times of plenty, in times of want.  
I will honor and keep you with the Spirit's help:  
forsaking all others,  
as long as we both shall live.  
This is my solemn vow.

*or this*

In the name of God,  
I, *N.*, give myself to you, *N.*  
I will support and care for you:  
enduring all things, bearing all things.  
I will hold and cherish you:  
in times of plenty, in times of want.  
I will honor and keep you:  
forsaking all others,  
as long as we both shall live.  
This is my solemn vow.

*If rings are to be exchanged, they are brought before the Presider, who prays using the  
following words*

Let us pray.

Bless, O God, these rings  
as enduring signs of the covenant  
N. and N. have made with each other,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*The two people place the rings on the fingers of one another, first the one, then the other,  
saying*

N., receive this ring as a symbol of my abiding love.

*If the two have previously given and worn rings as a symbol of their commitment, the rings  
may be blessed on the hands of the couple, the Presider saying*

Let us pray.

By these rings N. and N. have shown to one another and the world  
their love and faithfulness.  
Bless these rings, Holy God,  
that they may now be signs of the covenant  
N. and N. have made this day,  
through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

### ***Pronouncement***

*The Presider says*

Inasmuch as N. and N. have exchanged vows of love and fidelity  
in the presence of God and the Church,  
I now pronounce that they are bound to one another  
in a holy covenant,  
as long as they both shall live. *Amen.*

### ***Blessing of the Couple***

*As the couple stands or kneels, the Presider invokes God's blessing upon them, saying*

Let us pray.

Most gracious God,  
we praise you for the tender mercy and unfailing care  
revealed to us in Jesus the Christ  
and for the great joy and comfort bestowed upon us  
in the gift of human love.  
We give you thanks for N. and N.,  
and the covenant of faithfulness they have made.  
Pour out the abundance of your Holy Spirit upon them.  
Keep them in your steadfast love;  
protect them from all danger;  
fill them with your wisdom and peace;  
lead them in holy service to each other and the world.

God the Father,  
God the Son,  
God the Holy Spirit,  
bless, preserve, and keep you,  
and mercifully grant you rich and boundless grace,  
that you may please God in body and soul.  
God make you a sign of the loving-kindness and steadfast fidelity  
manifest in the life, death, and resurrection of our Savior,  
and bring you at last to the delight of the heavenly banquet,  
where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. *Amen.*

***The Peace***

*The Presider bids the Peace.*

*Presider*            The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
*People*              And also with you.

*In place of the above may be said*

*Presider*            The peace of Christ be always with you.  
*People*              And also with you.

*The liturgy continues with the Holy Communion. When the Eucharist is not celebrated, the Presider blesses the people. The Deacon, or in the absence of a Deacon, the Priest, dismisses them.*

***At the Eucharist***

*The liturgy continues with the Offertory, at which the couple may present the offerings of bread and wine.*

*The following proper preface may be used.*

Because in the giving of two people to each other in faithful love  
you reveal the joy and abundant life  
you share with your Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

*The following postcommunion prayer may be used.*

God our strength and joy,  
we thank you for the communion of our life together,  
for the example of holy love that you give us in *N.* and *N.*,  
and for the Sacrament  
of the Body and Blood of our Savior Jesus Christ.  
Grant that it may renew our hope  
and nourish us for the work you set before us,  
to witness to the presence of Christ in the world,  
through the power of your Spirit,  
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

**Discussion Guide to**  
*I Will Bless You,*  
*and You Will Be a Blessing*

## Contents

Introduction to the Discussion Guide

**Study Area One:**

History: *Reviewing the history of The Episcopal Church's decisions regarding same-gender relationships and reflecting on the current context*

**Study Area Two:**

Theology and the Bible: *Examining our understanding of God's blessing through the lens of theology and Scripture*

**Study Area Three:**

Liturgy: *Discussing liturgy in general and the liturgical resources developed for the blessing of same-gender relationships*

**Study Area Four:**

Civil and Canon Law: *Exploring legal, canonical, and spiritual issues that arise as the Church considers blessing same-gender couples*

**Study Area Five:**

Mission: *Exploring the blessing of same-gender relationships as part of the Church's mission and God's reconciling work in the world*

Handouts for Discussions

A. Covenant for Discussion

**Study Area One:**

B. Understanding the History

C. An Introduction to General Convention

D. Relationships and Blessing: Reflection Questions

A Review of General Convention Legislation (appended to the full collection of resources)

**Study Area Two:**

E. Theological Reflection on Same-Gender Relationships: A Summary of "Faith, Hope, and Love"

**Study Area Three:**

F. Principles for Evaluating Liturgical Materials

## Introduction to the Discussion Guide

This discussion guide invites the people of The Episcopal Church into a process of thoughtful consideration of the liturgical and theological resources for blessing same-gender relationships. Each of the five modules contains introductory teaching material and questions for group discussion; the first three also have handouts. The questions are shaped to equip individuals and groups to explore the materials in this collection in a reflective Christian manner.

These materials encourage participants to approach the discussion of resources for blessing same-gender relationships with respect for one another and for the various perspectives that individuals will bring to the conversation.

Because the same ideas will not inspire or challenge all groups, each area of study is wide-ranging and could span more than one session. Many congregations currently gather for Bible study and adult formation or education, and leaders can adapt these materials for such forums. Congregations may choose to engage in this process over an extended period of time or plan a one- to two-day retreat in order to enter more deeply into conversation and study. The amount of time suggested for particular discussions may be adjusted to meet the needs of a group. We strongly encourage that each session include time for Bible study related to the topic.

Encouraging time for participants to speak from their own experiences is essential when people engage in theological reflection on any topic. Significant factors in the conversation will include the cultural context of individuals and the makeup of the community. Each session's opening gives participants an opportunity to introduce themselves.

Ideally, the facilitator of these conversations will be someone who is respected by the community and who is respectful of, and familiar with, the group. Facilitators should read the entire resource *I Will Bless You, and You Will Be a Blessing* in preparation for leading discussion; they should also be familiar with local civil law and diocesan policies.

### Establishing Group Norms for Conversations

#### *Prayers and practices that make for good conversations*

Parishioners enter the conversation about blessing same-gender relationships from many different starting points. Some congregations and individuals do not understand why any Episcopal church would bless same-gender relationships; others do not understand why the blessing of same-gender relationships continues to be controversial. Recognizing these differences, facilitators should begin these conversations with agreement for respectful conversation; a *Covenant for Discussion* is included among the handouts found at the end of this discussion guide. Beginning and ending each session with prayers of thanksgiving for the opportunity for dialogue can underscore the value of respectful discussion.

The idea that the Church is a safe place to disagree is attractive, but living it out is difficult. Doing so requires that we expand our boundaries to accept those we do not understand or with whom we do not agree on matters of great importance. We do this because, more than anything, Christians do agree on matters of the *greatest* importance—the love and salvation offered by Jesus Christ. While we may disagree over the definition of marriage and how we understand biblical texts about divorce and sexuality, we can agree on our shared participation in Christ's mission to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

The goal of dialogue is not to win the day for one's own point of view, but for all participants to grow in understanding of both themselves and others. If participants come to this conversation with open hearts and minds, it is possible to honor both the integrity and holiness of gay and lesbian couples and their families, and the deep traditions of the Church.

### Recommended Background Materials

*To Set Our Hope on Christ*<sup>80</sup> was prepared as a response to the request by the Windsor Report that The Episcopal Church explain how “a person living in a same gender union may be considered eligible to lead the flock of Christ.” This document provides an overview as to how and why The Episcopal Church has moved toward the fuller inclusion of gay and lesbian people in the life of the Church. The appendix comprises a historical summary of beliefs and policies concerning sexuality in The Episcopal Church.

The June 2009 “Report of the Task Force on Holiness in Relationships and the Blessing of Same-Sex Relationships,” from the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego,<sup>81</sup> presents different points of view in an even-handed manner. The report considers the interpretation of Holy Scripture; marriage and holiness in Scripture; biblical texts that may condemn same-gender relationships and those that may portray positive roles of gays and lesbians; Church history and tradition; practical, pastoral and sacramental theology; and the movement of the Holy Spirit.

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80 *To Set Our Hope in Christ: A Response to the Invitation of Windsor Report ¶135* is available on the website of the Episcopal Church: [http://www.episcopalchurch.org/documents/ToSetOurHope\\_eng.pdf](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/documents/ToSetOurHope_eng.pdf).

81 *Report of the Task Force on Holiness in Relationships and the Blessing of Same-Sex Relationships* is available on the website of the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego: <http://www.edsd.org/mediafiles/holiness-in-relationships-task-force-report.pdf>.

## Study Area One

*History: Reviewing the history of The Episcopal Church's decisions regarding same-gender relationships and reflecting on the current context*

### A. Preparing for the Session

Have the following handouts ready (included at the end of this Discussion Guide, unless otherwise noted):

- A. Covenant for Discussion
- B. Understanding the History
- C. An Introduction to General Convention
- A Review of General Convention Legislation (appended to the full collection of resources)
- D. Relationships and Blessing: Reflection Questions

Prepare for the Bible study to be offered in this session by choosing the passage to be read and deciding on the method of study.

### B. Gathering

- Welcome participants and make any announcements necessary regarding hospitality (restrooms, coffee) and scheduling.
- Continue with a prayer of thanksgiving for the opportunity to have this conversation.
- Go around the room to have each person introduce herself or himself and share what he/she is most looking forward to in these conversations.
- Establish group norms for engaging in respectful conversation. Facilitators may distribute and review the Covenant for Discussion provided in the handouts, or choose a set of norms from their own resources.
- Introduce the Bible study prepared for this session.

### C. Introducing the Topic

Distribute the worksheet Understanding the History and give participants about 10 minutes to complete it.

After everyone has had time to write something, ask everyone to share their answers to “A” (how long The Episcopal Church has been talking about same-gender relationships and its gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender members). Continue by inviting deputies to share whatever is comfortable from “B” for each decade. Listen to see whether there is a thread or theme that runs through the memories.

### D. General Convention Legislation

Give a very brief description of what General Convention is, who attends, and what it does, using the handout An Introduction to General Convention.

Distribute A Review of General Convention Legislation, and discuss it in light of responses to the worksheet. Here—and throughout the balance of the sessions—clearly distinguish when you are expressing an idea or opinion based on your own experience and when you are communicating official Church stances.

### E. The Blessings of Relationships

Ask the group to call to mind at least three committed relationships they are familiar with: for example, relationships of family members, friends at work or school, or couples in your congregation; or their own committed relationship. Remind them that they may know people in committed relationships who are not married for one reason or another.

Divide into groups of threes, and distribute the handout Relationships and Blessing; Reflection Questions. Instruct the group to reflect for 15 or 20 minutes on the questions in the handout, which

explore the nature of committed relationships. Afterward, have them reflect back to the larger group by asking these questions:

- What was especially illuminating or challenging in your conversations?
- Regarding the complexities of the relationships you discussed, were there any surprises?
- Based on your conversations, why do you think the Church blesses any committed relationships at all?

**F. Conclusion**

Thank the participants for coming, remind them of the next meeting date and time, and close with a prayer of thanksgiving.

## Study Area Two

*Theology and the Bible: Examining our understanding of God's blessing through the lens of theology and Scripture*

### A. Preparing for the Session

Have the following handouts ready (included at the end of this discussion guide):

- A. Covenant for Discussion (or other norm for discussion)
- E. Theological Reflection on Same-Gender Relationships: A Summary of “Faith, Hope, and Love”

Prepare for the Bible study to be offered in this session by choosing the passage to be read and deciding on the method of study.

### B. Gathering

- Welcome participants and make any announcements necessary regarding hospitality (restrooms, coffee) and scheduling.
- Continue with a prayer of thanksgiving for the opportunity to have this conversation.
- Review group norms for engaging in respectful conversation, using the Covenant for Discussion or other set of norms established in the first session.
- Invite participants who attended the previous session to share illuminations and challenges that occurred to them regarding the history of The Episcopal Church, rites of blessing same-gender relationships, and their own experience of blessings revealed in committed relationships.
- Introduce the Bible study prepared for this session.

### C. Introducing the Topic

Introduce the theological principles with these or similar words:

In The Episcopal Church, we develop our theology, or the way we think about God, through Scripture, tradition, and reason. Consider, for example, the concept of “hospitality.” Numerous examples in Scripture tell of God’s hospitality toward God’s people and of the people of God issuing or withholding God’s hospitality from others. Although some of the stories seem to show behavior that conflicts with the ways God might have us respond to outsiders today, these biblical stories still help guide us. Other theological principles, like eschatology (beliefs about final events in the history of the world) and the triune nature of God, take a little more exploration from Scripture to interpret in light of Christian experience and understanding over the millennia since biblical times. We believe that God continues to reveal God’s self to the world. We experience this revelation in many ways, including faithful, lifelong, committed relationships.

Distribute Theological Reflection on Same-Gender Relationships and ask participants to read and reflect on this summary of the essay “Faith, Hope, and Love.” Describing relationships as “covenantal,” this document identifies four themes for theological reflection: vocation, households, fruitfulness, and mutual blessing. Invite the group to discuss some or all of these principles, using the introductions and discussion questions that follow.

### D. Covenant

Introduce the concept of “covenant” with these or similar words:

Covenants are made and held in relationships not only between the individual and God but within a community, which is also held accountable. The Baptismal Covenant is an example that will be familiar to Episcopalians, where commitments are made by (or for) the individual being baptized as well as by the sponsors and the gathered community.

Covenants take many forms in Scripture. They typically, but not always, contain a solemn agreement in which all parties pledge themselves to the others, outlining mutual obligations and responsibilities. Scripture tells about covenants concerning marriage, water rights, tribal relationships, protection, and faithfulness; the covenants include rituals involving animals, exchanges, and other gestures of the now-sealed relationship. The book of Genesis contains a series of covenants God made. For example, after making a covenant with Noah (Genesis 6:18) to protect his family from the impending flood, God makes a covenant with creation: “I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth” (Genesis 9:11).

Relational commitment can lead a couple to enter into a lifelong covenant in which their love and faithfulness participate in and reflect God’s own gracious covenant with us in Christ.

***Discussion Questions to Further Reflection and Understanding***

One description of the difference between a contract and a covenant reads: “A contract is an agreement made in suspicion. A covenant is an agreement made in trust.” What are some examples of contracts and covenants in your own life?

Where have you seen God’s graciousness evidenced in committed relationships of couples you have known?

**E. Vocation**

Introduce the theme of “vocation” with these or similar words:

Some people are called into long-term committed relationships as a vocation, defined here as a responsibility or way of life to which one is called by God. In Scripture, we find an example of this kind of relationship in Abraham and Sarah, who are vocationally linked to God and to one another. They are sent on a journey together that changes not just their names but the world (Genesis 11:27–25:11). Many other examples of committed relationships in the Bible—for example, Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1), Eli and Samuel (1 Samuel 18), Jesus and his disciples—might be considered vocational, that is, carrying a function called by God. These partnerships defined not only the individuals but also the work they had to do together as a function of God’s life in the world.

***Discussion Questions to Further Reflection and Understanding***

Have you been in, witnessed, or read about relationships you could consider “vocational”? If so, what makes them so?

In the Bible we are told that Paul, when counseling early Christians about the complexities and persecutions Christians were facing at the time, suggested that remaining single is a way to serve God, a vocation to “promote good order and unhindered devotion to the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:35). Not everyone is called into long-term committed relationships; being single may be a vocation for some. Have you experienced, or do you know other people who have experienced, singleness as a vocation?

**F. Households**

Introduce the theme of “households” with these or similar words:

Households take many different forms. Consider the story of the prodigal son, in which obligations of loyalty and love were made, broken, and reconciled. Families of origin come with implicit household covenants. When individuals join together to create new households, they have the opportunity to bind themselves to one another in new ways. In these newly created households, the covenanted relation-

ships within allow for holy love, care, risk-taking, and sacrifice on behalf of the other. People have reflected that, in such relationships, they begin to understand God's unconditional love of, and faithfulness to, us. They experience many of the gifts that such a household can bring, including mutual joy, companionship, faithfulness, compromise, charity, grace, and forgiveness.

***Discussion Questions to Further Reflection and Understanding***

The Theological Reflection on Same-Gender Relationships handout states: "While households take many different forms, they create a space of mutual trust and accountability" where we can "learn the spiritual disciplines of compassion, forgiveness, and reconciliation." Have you known or experienced households that provide that "sacred space"? How does thinking about households as a theological concept resonate with your experience?

In the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), the household celebrates when the father welcomes the younger son with compassion, despite the son's disregard for their family agreements. What similar responses have you seen in households you have known, and what do such responses reveal about the nature of households?

In the same story, the elder brother resents the prodigal. What do you think gets in the way of healing the break in mutual trust and accountability between these two members of the same household?

**G. Mutual Blessing and Fruitfulness**

Introduce the themes of "mutual blessing" and "fruitfulness" with these or similar words:

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Donald Coggan summed up the essence of the apostle Paul's message to the world in three words: grace, love, and fellowship: "These are the key words of what has become the second-best-known prayer in the Christian Church: 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.'"<sup>82</sup> Grace. Love. Fellowship. These blessings are abundant in Christian relationships and in Christian communities.

The apostle Paul tells us, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22). Just as Abraham was blessed by God in order to be a blessing (Genesis 12:2), the commitment exhibited in covenantal relationships becomes a source of blessing for the whole Church. When divine grace sustains a covenantal relationship it bears fruit in countless ways, not only for the couple but for the wider community as well.

When we are present in any public naming of graces or gifts, be it baptism or graduation or the giving of an award, we are often reminded that the individual or group upon which the recognition is bestowed is expected to return that value back to society. At a liturgy of blessing, we are reminded of the value of the individuals entering into a covenant with one another—of their love, faith, loyalty, and devotion to each other and to God. As we bless their relationship we expect in return that this naming and strengthening of the couple will bless the congregation.

***Discussion Questions to Further Reflection and Understanding***

In your experience, how have you seen covenantal relationships that are blessed in the Church become in turn a blessing for the Church?

In your experience, how have you seen covenantal relationships bear fruit?

<sup>82</sup> Donald Coggan, *Meet Paul: An Encounter with the Apostle* (London: SPCK, 1998), 73-75.

How can the blessing of a same-gender relationship sustain and enable a couple to embody service, generosity, and hospitality beyond their household?

**H. Conclusion**

Thank the participants for coming, remind them of the next meeting date and time, and close with a prayer of thanksgiving.

## Study Area Three

*Liturgy: Discussing liturgy in general and the liturgical resources developed for the blessing of same-gender relationships*

### A. Preparing for the Session

Have the following handouts ready (included at the end of this discussion guide, unless otherwise noted):

- A. Covenant for Discussion (or other norm for discussion)
- F. Principles for Evaluating Liturgical Materials
- “The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant” (liturgical resources document)

Prior to the session, solicit volunteers to walk through the liturgy (ending with the greeting of the Peace) during the session. Ask them to be respectful of the process and to recognize that even when role-playing the words and actions in a liturgy can have an impact on the people saying and doing them.

Prepare for the Bible study to be offered in this session by choosing the passage to be read and deciding on the method of study.

### B. Gathering

- Welcome participants and make any announcements necessary regarding hospitality (restrooms, coffee) and scheduling.
- Continue with a prayer of thanksgiving for the opportunity to have this conversation.
- Review group norms for engaging in respectful conversation, using the Covenant for Discussion or other set of norms established in the first session.
- Invite participants who attended the previous session to share illuminations and challenges that have occurred to them regarding the interaction of the Bible and theology with the blessing of same-gender relationships.
- Introduce the Bible study prepared for this session.

### C. Introducing the Topic

Introduce a discussion of the meaning and purpose of liturgy with these or similar words:

Christians over the centuries have found ways to ritualize our story as a people of God, our place in God’s life today, and our hope for an eternity with Christ. Liturgy, as an event, retells salvation history in word and sacrament: by the proclamation of Scripture, through preaching and prayer, and in the liturgy of the table. Each time we celebrate liturgy, we become active participants in re-presenting this history—life with God, from creation and fall through covenant, redemption, and fulfillment—and in bringing it into the present. When we consecrate water during baptism, we go back to the waters of creation at the beginning of our story. We are buried with Christ in this water and brought forth into a new life in Christ, a new future. Scripture calls us to keep rituals when we are told to “make this day holy” or to “remember this place” or to “do this” from this day forward in order to keep our inherited faith as present as it ever was.

Liturgy can be understood as an exchange between heaven and earth. All that we have comes from God, and that is what we return. In our prayers, we as a community breathe in and out our petitions, thanksgivings, sorrows, hopes, and praises.

Celebrating important moments in the lives of individual Christians and in the community often happens in the context of liturgy. In the liturgies of baptism, confirmation, marriage, and ordination, we join together to enact and celebrate our commitment to a vocation with Christ and with one another.

#### **D. Qualities of Anglican Liturgy**

Distribute the handout *Principles for Evaluating Liturgical Materials*, and introduce the principles with these or similar words:

In Resolution 2009-C056, the General Convention directed the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to “collect and develop theological and liturgical resources” for the blessing of same-gender relationships. The Commission discovered a vast array of unofficial liturgies, some dating back to the 1970s, and, more recently, rites of blessing commended for use in dioceses in The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada. These liturgies were created in response to the pastoral needs of same-gender couples in various local jurisdictions. The Commission found strong similarities in the rites; many used The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage from the *Book of Common Prayer* as a template.

This research led the Commission to develop liturgical principles to assess the resources it had collected and as the basis for creating a new liturgical resource to present to General Convention in 2012. Consistency with Anglican theological tradition and the liturgical style of the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* was essential in developing these materials. Keeping proposed rites as an expression of the whole Church, not only the two people seeking a blessing, was also important. A full list of those qualities is in the handout.

These qualities can be gathered into two general categories: words and actions. In liturgy, words and actions together express and shape what we believe. In “The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant,” this combination of words and actions expresses what we understand and hope about blessing, households, and the revelation of God’s love in the world through these committed relationships.

#### **E. Exploring the Liturgy for Blessing Same-Gender Relationships**

Distribute copies of “The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant” and invite participants to keep in mind the principles outlined in the handout for evaluating liturgical materials as they role-play the liturgy.

Before reading through the liturgy with the volunteers selected in advance of the session, explain that it is not the intention of this “couple” to receive this blessing. Acknowledge that there may be anxiety when role-playing the rite, and invite participants to engage the experience prayerfully. When finished, remind the “couple,” the “presider,” and the “assembly” that the role-play is not binding, and thank the volunteers for their help.

#### ***Discussion Questions to Further Reflection and Understanding***

- What did you hear?
- What did you see?
- What did you feel?
- How does this liturgy hold to the liturgical principles set forth in the handout?
- What words, symbols, and actions in this liturgy stand out for you and draw you into reflection on your own experience of covenantal relationship?
- What do the words, symbols, and actions call forth, challenge, or offer to the couple who experience them in the context of a blessing of their relationship?
- In your experience, which elements seem to have the most meaning when a community gathers to receive God’s blessing?

#### **F. Conclusion**

Thank the participants for coming, remind them of the next meeting date and time, and close with a prayer of thanksgiving.

## Study Area Four

*Civil and Canon Law: Exploring legal, canonical, and spiritual issues that arise as the Church considers blessing same-gender couples*

### A. Preparing for the Session

Have the following handout ready:

- A. Covenant for Discussion (or other norm for discussion)

Set up two pages of newsprint, each with two columns:

Page One		Page Two	
<b>Marriage</b>		<b>Blessing</b>	
Secular Benefits/ Obligations	Sacred Benefits/ Obligations	Secular Benefits/ Obligations	Sacred Benefits/ Obligations

Prepare for the Bible study to be offered in this session by choosing the passage to be read and deciding on the method of study.

### B. Gathering

- Welcome participants and make any announcements necessary regarding hospitality (restrooms, coffee) and scheduling.
- Continue with a prayer of thanksgiving for the opportunity to have this conversation.
- Review group norms for engaging in respectful conversation, using the Covenant for Discussion or other set of norms established in the first session.
- Invite participants who attended the previous session to share illuminations and challenges that have occurred to them regarding the liturgy for the blessing of same-gender relationships.
- Introduce the Bible study prepared for this session.

### C. Introducing the Topic

Introduce the discussion of civil and canon law with these or similar words:

Resolution 2009-C056 directed the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to develop resources for blessing same-gender relationships. As the Commission went about its work, Episcopalians asked about the relationship between these blessings and marriage. Following the direction of General Convention, the Commission developed a resource for blessing relationships, not marriage, while also recognizing the complexity of civil and canon (that is, Church) law.

Some states allow same-gender couples to marry; others permit civil unions or provide other legal status for these couples. Other states forbid (or do not recognize) same-gender marriage or unions; some of these states also do not recognize any legal status for same-gender couples who have a civil marriage or civil union from another state where that status is legal.

*The Book of Common Prayer* (p. 422) and Canon I.18.1 require Episcopal clergy to conform to the laws of their state governing the creation of a civil marriage.

### D. Exploring the Benefits and Obligations of Marriage and Blessing

Invite people to brainstorm about the secular benefits and obligations of marriage, and note their answers in that column of the newsprint page headed “Marriage.” Then ask about the sacred benefits and obligations of marriage and note their answers. Now, do the same on the page with the heading

“Blessing” (that is, blessing a lifelong, committed relationship)—secular benefits and obligations first, then sacred benefits and obligations. Step back and ask people what they notice about the four lists. Have a conversation.

The following are lists of responses people might give.

***Marriage: Secular Benefits/Obligation***

- Legal status given by the state: global for different-gender couple; local/state for same-gender couple
- Defined by some states as only between a man and a woman—supporting the traditional view of marriage
- Part of the institution of marriage and its social benefits
- Potential financial benefits—joint tax returns, automatic joint ownership, etc.—global for different-gender couple; local/state for same-gender couple
- Clarity about the relationship—fits a known model, people know what you are talking about if you say you are married; clarity about monogamy and faithfulness
- Legal responsibilities shared by the couple
- Social status
- Usually, acceptance of parents, family, and friends of the relationship

***Marriage: Sacred Benefits/Obligations***

- God’s blessing proclaimed by the Church
- Recognition of spiritual nature of relationship
- Public religious and spiritual commitment of love
- Call to constant reconciliation and assurance of forgiveness
- Spiritual preparation and counseling prior to ceremony
- “Church wedding” and social recognition and support of religious community
- Exchange and blessing of symbols of relationship—ring(s)
- Done as part of the Prayer Book and Episcopal Church norms—not true for same-gender couples

***Blessing: Secular Benefits/Obligations***

- Possible gained clarity about the relationship; commitment statements made to one another
- Possible social status
- Possible acceptance/recognition of parents, family, and friends

***Blessing: Sacred Benefits/Obligations***

- God’s blessing proclaimed by the Church
- Recognition of spiritual nature of relationship; clarity about monogamy and faithfulness
- Public religious and spiritual commitment of love
- Call to constant reconciliation and assurance of forgiveness
- Spiritual preparation and counseling prior to ceremony
- “Church wedding” and social recognition and support of religious community
- Exchange and blessing of symbols of relationship—ring(s)
- Falls within Episcopal Church norms, if permitted by bishop as pastoral response

***Follow Up***

Invite the group to draw conclusions from the lists and their discussion of them. They might discover that when the Church blesses same-gender couples such blessings seem to carry most but not all of the “sacred benefit” that one finds in marriage, and when the Church blesses same-gender couples such blessings seem to carry much less of the “secular benefit” that one finds in marriage.

**E. Conclusion**

Thank the participants for coming, remind them of the next meeting date and time, and close with a prayer of thanksgiving.

## Study Area Five

*Mission: Exploring the blessing of same-gender relationships as part of the Church's mission and God's reconciling work in the world*

### A. Preparing for the Session

Have the following handout ready:

- A. *Covenant for Discussion* (or other norm for discussion)

Prepare for the Bible study to be offered in this session by choosing the passage to be read and deciding on the method of study.

### B. Gathering

- Welcome participants and make any announcements necessary regarding hospitality (restrooms, coffee) and scheduling.
- Continue with a prayer of thanksgiving for the opportunity to have this conversation.
- Review group norms for engaging in respectful conversation, using the Covenant for Discussion or other set of norms established in the first session.
- Invite participants who attended the previous session to share illuminations and challenges that have occurred to them regarding the comparison of marriage and blessings.
- Introduce the Bible study prepared for this session.

### C. Introducing the Topic

Introduce this final session by reminding participants that we are a part of a larger story, using these or similar words:

Using the “three-legged stool” of Anglicanism, we have explored Scripture, tradition, and reason relating to the development of rites for blessing same-gender relationships in The Episcopal Church. We have explored God’s call to us to live in relationship to God and to one another. We may have disagreed, misunderstood, or challenged one another, but we have been reminded at each turn that our life together, centered in baptism and the eucharist, is central to being people of faith in this time and in this Church.

The essay “Faith, Hope, and Love” has this to say about the significance for mission of blessing same-gender relationships:

This missional character of covenantal blessing, reflected in both Scripture and the historical traditions of the Church, deserves renewed attention today. The 2000 General Convention contributed to this renewal when it passed resolution D039, which identified monogamy, fidelity, holy love, and other characteristics of lifelong, committed relationships. Significantly, that resolution was framed as a way to enable the Church to engage more effectively in its mission. Many in The Episcopal Church have witnessed these characteristics in the committed relationships of same-gender couples. That recognition can, and in many places already has, broadened the understanding of the Church’s mission of participating in God’s reconciling work in the world.

Our willingness to continue to receive a new thing while remaining in communion and in love with one other models a gift we have to offer the world.

We began our study by exploring The Episcopal Church’s recent history regarding same-gender couples seeking acceptance and blessing of their relationships in the Church, and by reflecting on our own experiences of lifelong, committed relationships. We continued with a study of the theological and liturgical resources that

the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music developed. Finally, we compared the benefits and obligations of marriage and blessing same-gender relationships.

***Discussion Questions to Further Reflection and Understanding***

- Over the past few weeks, how have our conversations emerged in the course of your daily lives? Have you found yourselves talking (or e-mailing or Facebook-ing) with colleagues, friends, or family regarding the willingness of The Episcopal Church to provide these blessings?
- This discussion guide was designed to equip participants to understand the presence of rites of blessing same-gender relationships in our common life in The Episcopal Church. Did it fulfill that purpose for you? Why or why not?
- If your community is not considering offering these rites to same-gender couples seeking a blessing of their relationship, are you able to explain why other parishes or dioceses in The Episcopal Church are? If yes, where would you begin that explanation? If no, what more information or background would be helpful?

**D. Conclusion**

Thank everyone for participating, for their hard work and dedication, and for loving the Church and those who come through the doors enough to have these conversations together.

Close with a prayer of thanksgiving.

## Handouts for Discussions

A. Covenant for Discussion

**Study Area One:**

B. Understanding the History

C. An Introduction to General Convention

D. Relationships and Blessing: Reflection Questions

**Study Area Two:**

E. Theological Reflection on Same-Gender Relationships: A Summary of “Faith, Hope, and Love”

**Study Area Three:**

F. Principles for Evaluating Liturgical Materials

### Handout A - Covenant for Discussion

As we gather in the name of Christ to share our thoughts, feelings, and ideas, we accept this covenant to guide our conversation along God's path of love.

- I recognize that everyone comes to this experience with very different backgrounds, experiences, and views. I will respectfully seek clarification of other perspectives to add to my understanding.
- If I choose to disagree with a perspective different from mine, I will do this in a loving and respectful way.

I will:

- Speak only for myself (using "I" statements)
- Take responsibility for my own thoughts and feelings
- Remember my baptismal promise to "respect the dignity of every human being"
- Seek and acknowledge common ground
- Honor confidentiality unless permission to share is explicitly given
- Practice "sacred listening" by:
  - Listening for God in the experiences of others
  - Accepting those experiences as valid for the speakers
  - Searching for strengths in the other's position
  - Avoiding interruptions and argument
  - Avoiding applause or other reactions to speakers
  - Allowing each person to speak before I speak again.

If a particular group or person is going to be discussed, some of them should be present.

Adapted from *Our Covenant for Conversation*, the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont; *Good News: A Congregational Resource for Reconciliation*, by the Rt. Rev. Steven Charleston (2003); and *Intimate Human Relationships: Resources for Conversation in the Congregations and Deaneries of the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont*, edited by Anne Clarke Brown (2004).

**Handout B - Understanding the History**

Please use this worksheet to record your memories and thoughts about discussion of same-gender relationships over the past few decades.

A. The Episcopal Church has formally been talking about same-gender relationships and its gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender members for how many years? \_\_\_\_\_

B. Under each decade list briefly—using just key words—what you remember about:

1. What was going on in your own life
2. What was going on in the world and/or the Church
3. What was going on with issues of same-gender relationships.

	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s
What I remember in my own life					
What I remember happening in the world and/or the Church					
What I remember about issues of same-gender relationships					

## Handout C - An Introduction to General Convention

*Adapted from an introduction to the 2009 General Convention prepared by the Rev. Dr. Gregory S. Straub, Executive Officer and Secretary of General Convention*

With few precedents for a republican form of Church governance, the first General Convention met in 1785 in Philadelphia. That convention began work on a constitution and a revision of the *Book of Common Prayer*, the Church's book of worship. Within ten years the General Convention had agreed on its form of governance and its pattern of worship, both of which endure to the present day.

Uniquely for its time, the first General Conventions determined on a bicameral house in which elected (rather than royally appointed) bishops would make up one house, and lay and ordained deputies (equally represented) would make up the other house.

All bishops of The Episcopal Church, active and retired, are entitled to seat, voice, and vote in the House of Bishops (unless deprived of the privilege). Each of The Episcopal Church's dioceses (and the Convocation of Churches in Europe and the Navajoland Area Mission) is entitled to elect eight deputies, four laypersons and four priests and/or deacons, to the House of Deputies. (The diocesan electors of deputies are themselves elected representatives from local parishes.) Deputies are not delegates; that is, they are not elected to represent the electing dioceses.

Deputies vote their conscience for the good of the Church. They cannot be instructed to vote one way or another, for to do so would preclude godly debate and preempt the work of the Holy Spirit. Deputies are expected to serve on committees, if appointed, to attend forums and hearings, to read the reports to the Church from its commissions, committees, agencies, and boards, to listen to, and if so moved, to respond to resolutions on the floor of the house.

The House of Bishops and House of Deputies meet, deliberate, and vote separately. To be enacted, resolutions must pass both houses in the same language. Both houses have the right to amend legislation, but the amendment must be accepted by the other house. Resolutions presented to Convention come from four sources: committees, commissions, agencies, and boards of the Church; bishops; dioceses and provinces; and deputies.

The House of Bishops is chaired by the Presiding Bishop, and the House of Deputies is chaired by an elected President of the House. In the absence of the presiding officer, a Vice Chair (in the House of Bishops) or Vice President (in the House of Deputies) chairs. In each house, a secretary and parliamentarian assist the presiding officer.

General Convention meets prayerfully. Each day, bishops, deputies, registered alternates, and delegates to the ECW Triennial Meeting gather for Bible study and the Holy Eucharist. Both the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops have chaplains, who lead their houses in regular prayer at the beginning and end of sessions and daily at noon. Chaplains are also asked to pray before the enactment of important legislation. Organizations within the Church sponsor additional worship services, while volunteers staff a prayer room in which there is continual intercession for the work of Convention.

Much of the work of Convention is carried out by legislative committees. The Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies determine the number of persons who serve on committees and their membership. In their appointments, the presiding officers consider previous experience, expertise, and interest, ensuring the committees represent diverse points of view, geographic, ethnic and gender diversity, and participation by younger deputies.

Resolutions proposed for discussion at Convention are referred to legislative committees, which consider, amalgamate, and perfect them before presenting them on the floor of Convention. Legislative committees hold hearings on legislation at which the following can speak: bishop, deputy, registered alternate deputy, or registered visitor.

Debate on the floor is governed by the Constitution and Canons of the Church, Rules of Order for each house, Joint Rules of Order (that apply to both houses) and Roberts' Rules of Order. Deputies are expected to listen respectfully to the views of others and to adhere to the rules, which require, for example, that persons of different points of view alternate at microphones.

Convention is more than legislation. One of the most interesting parts of Convention is the Exhibit Hall, a marketplace of goods and ideas in which the organizations and interest groups within the Church present their wares, recruit members, and do their best to influence legislation.

Many Church-related organizations hold meetings in conjunction with Convention, and there are lunches and dinners hosted by seminaries, provinces, societies, boards and staff offices of the Church. The Episcopal Church Women (ECW) holds its triennial meeting simultaneously with the General Convention. The ECW meeting has changed over the past several decades; today it focuses on the mission and service of the Church, and many of the Church's most distinguished members are invited to address this body.

General Convention is a combination of legislative assembly, bazaar of goods and services, and family reunion. It is one of the most exciting and, truth be told, one of the most awe-inspiring gatherings in the world.

### Handout D - Relationships and Blessing: Reflection Questions

I invite you to reflect on the committed relationships of couples you know (friends, colleagues, family members, and so on), whether same-gender or not, including your own, if you are in such a relationship.

Consider questions such as these:

- How is each relationship named or described: marriage? covenant? union? some other way? Are those involved in the relationship considered husband and wife? partners? lovers? Does the term vary depending on circumstances? How important (or not) is the terminology used for your understanding and experience of the relationship?
- As you reflect on these relationships, what about them (their qualities, gifts, character) would make them appropriate for a liturgical blessing? Or, to put this in another way, why do we “bless” committed relationships in a Church at all?

*For those who are in a committed relationship:*

- Have you discerned any spiritual gifts that have emerged from your commitment that you may not have recognized apart from that commitment?
- What role does your faith community play in your ongoing commitment? Does the community offer something you find important in your relationship?
- What role (if any) did your Christian faith play in the early and now ongoing development of your relationship and in discerning your commitment to each other?
- Would you consider your committed relationship as part of your Christian calling and vocation to ministry? If so, how and in what ways?

*For those who are reflecting on another couple’s relationship:*

- Have you discerned any spiritual gifts emerging from their relationship that benefit the wider community or perhaps yourself?
- Have you discerned what you or your faith community contributes to their relationship?
- How would you name the primary “blessing” of that relationship in your own life and in your faith community?
- Have you learned anything or gained fresh insights about your own life from observing the relationship and interacting with the couple?

## Handout E - Theological Reflection on Same-Gender Relationships: A Summary of “Faith, Hope, and Love”

### *Baptism, Eucharist, and the Paschal Mystery*

All Christians are called to bear witness to the good news of God’s love and grace in Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. We are empowered for such witness by our covenantal relationship with God. Baptism initiates us into that covenant, making us Christ’s own forever and members of Christ’s Body, the Church. The eucharist sustains us in that covenantal life and strengthens us to be Christ’s witnesses in the world.

Our covenantal life with God can shape and be expressed in our relationships of commitment and faithfulness with others. Our committed relationships can thus reflect a *sacramental character* (making divine grace visible) and evoke *eschatological hope* (our ultimate union with God). These relationships thus invite further reflection on the mission of the Church, what it means “to bless,” and the distinguishing marks of a covenantal relationship.

### *Themes for Theological Reflection*

A sacramental framework for covenantal relationships suggests several other key theological themes for reflection and shared discernment, including the following.

#### **Vocation**

God calls people into various kinds of relationship, whether as single people, in monastic communities, or as intimate couples. These vocational callings can empower our witness to the gospel. The decision to enter into a covenantal union is likewise a vocation marked by these characteristics: “fidelity; monogamy; mutual affection and respect; careful, honest communication; and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God.”

#### **Households**

Covenantal relationships are often lived in households in which we practice daily the giving of ourselves for the good of another. While households take many different forms, they create a space of mutual trust and accountability. The joy, intimacy, and shared vulnerability of households can thus help us learn the spiritual disciplines of compassion, forgiveness, and reconciliation in lives of committed monogamy and fidelity.

#### **Fruitfulness**

The divine grace that sustains a covenantal relationship bears fruit in countless ways, not only for the couple but for the wider community as well. Covenantal couples manifest this grace in their shared gifts for ministry and in lives of service, generosity, and hospitality.

#### **Mutual Blessing**

A blessed relationship is set apart for a divine purpose: to bear witness to the creating, redeeming, and sanctifying love of God in the world. As the Spirit empowers the couple for this witness, the Church is likewise blessed and strengthened for its mission and ministry.

In all of these ways and more, the blessing of a same-gender relationship invites covenantal couples and the whole Church to renew our commitment to the Baptismal Covenant. That commitment is expressed by *faith* in the good news of Jesus Christ, in the *hope* for union with God that Christ promised, and with the *love* that knits us together as the Body of Christ. As the apostle Paul reminds us, we live our life together as God’s people with faith, hope, and love. And the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

## Handout F - Principles for Evaluating Liturgical Materials

Materials proposed for blessing same-gender relationships must above all be consistent with the implicit theology and ecclesiology of the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*. This would suggest, for example, that they must reflect the Prayer Book's underlying assumption that the entire life of the Church finds its origin in baptism.

Nearly as important is that the proposed liturgical materials embody a classically Anglican liturgical ethos and style. Recognizing the varying notions of what makes public prayer recognizably Anglican, the task group identified these qualities:

- It resonates with Scripture and proclaims the gospel.
- It is rooted in Anglican theological tradition.
- It has high literary value; it is beautiful according to accepted and respected standards.
- It uses the recurring structures, linguistic patterns, and metaphors of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer.
- It is formal, not casual, conversational, or colloquial.
- It is dense enough to bear the weight of the sacred purpose for which it is intended.
- It is metaphoric without being obtuse.
- It is performative: that is, it effects what it says.

At the same time, these rites must resonate as natural speech in contemporary ears. A religious or sacred tone must be achieved without the use of arcane or antiquated words or patterns of speech.

The rites should provide explanatory notes and rubrics. The material must be considered as the script for an event, not merely a collection of texts.

Any rite of blessing must be an expression primarily of the entire Church, not of the couple seeking a blessing. These rites must allow for robust communal participation, reflecting the baptismal ecclesiology of the Prayer Book. Related to this, since the eucharist is the symbol of the unity of the Church through unity with Christ, these services of blessing should normatively take place within a celebration of the eucharist.

Such rites must enact the notion of sacramental reciprocity by suggesting that, even as the Church blesses the relationship of the couple, the relationship of the couple is a blessing to the Church.

Options for various elements of the rites, particularly Scripture and the Prayers of the People, must be provided so that this action of the entire Church—this common prayer—does not degenerate into a generic rite.

Any rite of blessing a couple must hold up the two people making the covenant as the primary ministers within this action of God and of the entire Church. Such rites should give expression to the Church's understanding that the couple is freely assuming a vocation that can be expected to yield the fruits of mutual fidelity for the couple, for the Church, and for the entire world, and that points ultimately toward the fulfillment of all human relationships and unity in the eschatological Reign of God, when God will be all-in-all.

The rites must be what they purport to be—liturgical prayer—not didactic or polemical statements in the guise of liturgy.

# Appendices

A Review of General Convention Legislation

Glossary

## A Review of General Convention Legislation

### Introduction

The legislative history here shows the development of General Convention deliberations about the place of gay men and lesbians in the life of the Church, particularly with regard to the blessing of their faithful, monogamous, lifelong relationships. Successive conventions have both acknowledged the work of their predecessors and reached new decisions. Resolution texts are from the website of the Archives of the Episcopal Church: <http://www.episcopalarchives.org/e-archives/acts/>.

### Minneapolis, 1976

For the first time, General Convention adopted a resolution that acknowledged and affirmed the presence of persons of homosexual orientation in the Church.

### Resolution 1976-A069

*Resolved*, the House of Bishops concurring, That it is the sense of this General Convention that homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church.

### Anaheim, 1985

General Convention reaffirmed the 1976 resolution and encouraged dioceses to deepen understanding.

### Resolution 1985-D082

*Resolved*, the House of Bishops concurring, That the 68th General Convention urge each diocese of this Church to find an effective way to foster a better understanding of homosexual persons, to dispel myths and prejudices about homosexuality, to provide pastoral support, and to give life to the claim of homosexual persons “upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral care and concern of the Church” as recognized by the General Convention in 1976.

### Phoenix, 1991

General Convention affirmed the traditional understanding of marriage as between a man and a woman, and acknowledged “discontinuity” between that teaching and the experience of many members of The Episcopal Church.

### Resolution 1991-A104

*Resolved*, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 70th General Convention of the Episcopal Church affirms that the teaching of the Episcopal Church is that physical sexual expression is appropriate only within the lifelong monogamous “union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind” “intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity and, when it is God’s will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord” as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer; and be it further

*Resolved*, That this Church continues to work to reconcile the discontinuity between this teaching and the experience of many members of this body; and be it further

*Resolved*, That this General Convention confesses our failure to lead and to resolve this discontinuity through legislative efforts based upon resolutions directed at singular and various aspects of these issues; and be it further

*Resolved*, That this General Convention commissions the Bishops and members of each Diocesan Deputation to initiate a means for all congregations in their jurisdiction to enter into dialogue and deepen their understanding of these complex issues; and further this General Convention directs the President of each Province to appoint one Bishop, one lay deputy and one clerical deputy in that province to

facilitate the process, to receive reports from the dioceses at each meeting of their provincial synod and report to the 71st General Convention; and be it further

*Resolved*, That this General Convention directs the House of Bishops to prepare a Pastoral Teaching prior to the 71st General Convention using the learnings from the diocesan and provincial processes and calling upon such insight as is necessary from theologians, theological ethicists, social scientists and gay and lesbian persons; and that three lay persons and three members of the clergy from the House of Deputies, appointed by the President of the House of Deputies be included in the preparation of this Pastoral Teaching.

### **Indianapolis, 1994**

General Convention added sexual orientation, along with marital status, sex, disabilities, and age as categories to which non-discrimination in Church membership is assured.

### **Resolution 1994-C020**

*Resolved*, the House of Bishops concurring, That Title I, Canon 17, Section 5 be amended as follows:

No person shall be denied rights, status [in], or [access to] an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of this Church because of race, color, [or] ethnic origin, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, disabilities or age, except as otherwise specified by [this] Canon.

General Convention also called for a study of “the theological foundations and pastoral considerations involved in the development of rites honoring love and commitment between persons of the same sex.”

### **Resolution 1994-C042**

*Resolved*, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 71st General Convention direct the Standing Liturgical Commission and the Theology Committee of the House of Bishops to prepare and present to the 72nd General Convention, as part of the Church’s ongoing dialogue on human sexuality, a report addressing the theological foundations and pastoral considerations involved in the development of rites honoring love and commitment between persons of the same sex; and be it further

*Resolved*, That no rites for the honoring of love and commitment between persons of the same sex be developed unless and until the preparation of such rites has been authorized by the General Convention; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the sum of \$8,600 be appropriated to support this work, subject to funding considerations.

### **Philadelphia, 1997**

General Convention reaffirmed the traditional understanding of marriage and called for continuing study.

### **Resolution 1997-C003**

*Resolved*, That this 72nd General Convention affirm the sacredness of Christian marriage between one man and one woman with intent of life-long relationship; and be it further

*Resolved*, That this Convention direct the Standing Liturgical Commission to continue its study of theological aspects of committed relationships of same-sex couples, and to issue a full report including recommendations of future steps for the resolution of issues related to such committed relationships no later than November 1999 for consideration at the 73rd General Convention.

**Denver, 2000**

General Convention acknowledged relationships other than marriage.

**Resolution 2000-D039**

*Resolved*, That the members of the 73rd General Convention intend for this Church to provide a safe and just structure in which all can utilize their gifts and creative energies for mission; and be it further

*Resolved*, That we acknowledge that while the issues of human sexuality are not yet resolved, there are currently couples in the Body of Christ and in this Church who are living in marriage and couples in the Body of Christ and in this Church who are living in other life-long committed relationships; and be it further

*Resolved*, That we expect such relationships will be characterized by fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God; and be it further

*Resolved*, That we denounce promiscuity, exploitation, and abusiveness in the relationships of any of our members; and be it further

*Resolved*, That this Church intends to hold all its members accountable to these values, and will provide for them the prayerful support, encouragement, and pastoral care necessary to live faithfully by them; and be it further

*Resolved*, That we acknowledge that some, acting in good conscience, who disagree with the traditional teaching of the Church on human sexuality, will act in contradiction to that position; and be it further

*Resolved*, That in continuity with previous actions of the General Convention of this Church, and in response to the call for dialogue by the Lambeth Conference, we affirm that those on various sides of controversial issues have a place in the Church, and we reaffirm the imperative to promote conversation between persons of differing experiences and perspectives, while acknowledging the Church's teaching on the sanctity of marriage.

**Minneapolis, 2003**

Acknowledging continuing differences, General Convention recognized "that local faith communities are operating within the bounds of our common life as they explore and experience liturgies celebrating and blessing same-sex unions."

**Resolution 2003-C051**

*Resolved*, That the 74th General Convention affirm the following:

1. That our life together as a community of faith is grounded in the saving work of Jesus Christ and expressed in the principles of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral: Holy Scripture, the historic Creeds of the Church, the two dominical Sacraments, and the Historic Episcopate.
2. That we reaffirm Resolution A069 of the 65th General Convention (1976) that "homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church."
3. That, in our understanding of homosexual persons, differences exist among us about how best to care pastorally for those who intend to live in monogamous, non-celibate unions; and what is, or should be, required, permitted, or prohibited by the doctrine, discipline, and worship of The Episcopal Church concerning the blessing of the same.

4. That we reaffirm Resolution D039 of the 73rd General Convention (2000), that “We expect such relationships will be characterized by fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God,” and that such relationships exist throughout the church.

5. That we recognize that local faith communities are operating within the bounds of our common life as they explore and experience liturgies celebrating and blessing same-sex unions.

6. That we commit ourselves, and call our church, in the spirit of Resolution A104 of the 70th General Convention (1991), to continued prayer, study, and discernment on the pastoral care for gay and lesbian persons, to include the compilation and development by a special commission organized and appointed by the Presiding Bishop, of resources to facilitate as wide a conversation of discernment as possible throughout the church.

7. That our baptism into Jesus Christ is inseparable from our communion with one another, and we commit ourselves to that communion despite our diversity of opinion and, among dioceses, a diversity of pastoral practice with the gay men and lesbians among us.

8. That it is a matter of faith that our Lord longs for our unity as his disciples, and for us this entails living within the boundaries of the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church. We believe this discipline expresses faithfulness to our polity and that it will facilitate the conversation we seek, not only in The Episcopal Church, but also in the wider Anglican Communion and beyond.

#### **Anaheim, 2009**

The General Convention directs the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to “collect and develop theological and liturgical resources” for blessing same-gender relationships.

#### **Resolution 2009-C056**

*Resolved*, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 76th General Convention acknowledge the changing circumstances in the United States and in other nations, as legislation authorizing or forbidding marriage, civil unions or domestic partnerships for gay and lesbian persons is passed in various civil jurisdictions that call forth a renewed pastoral response from this Church, and for an open process for the consideration of theological and liturgical resources for the blessing of same gender relationships; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, in consultation with the House of Bishops, collect and develop theological and liturgical resources, and report to the 77th General Convention; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, in consultation with the House of Bishops, devise an open process for the conduct of its work inviting participation from provinces, dioceses, congregations, and individuals who are engaged in such theological work, and inviting theological reflection from throughout the Anglican Communion; and be it further

*Resolved*, That bishops, particularly those in dioceses within civil jurisdictions where same-gender marriage, civil unions, or domestic partnerships are legal, may provide generous pastoral response to meet the needs of members of this Church; and be it further

*Resolved*, That this Convention honor the theological diversity of this Church in regard to matters of human sexuality; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the members of this Church be encouraged to engage in this effort.

## Glossary

This glossary of legal and canonical terms, along with other terms often used in discussing same-gender blessings, is intended to inform and enhance discussions of the theological and liturgical resources, as well as preparation for and use of any liturgy authorized by General Convention. Most of these terms are discussed in greater depth in the essay “Faith, Hope, and Love: Theological Resources for Blessing Same-Gender Relationships.”

*Blessing.* “The active outgoing of divine grace.”<sup>83</sup> When a blessing is given, for example, at a Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage or during a rite for blessing a same-gender relationship, the Church understands that God’s blessing has been recognized in the lives of the couple and also imparted in a new way because of the Church’s action. The marital blessing involves three distinct but interdependent aspects: we (the Church) bless God in thanksgiving for God’s grace already evident in the lives of the couple; we pronounce God’s blessing upon those in covenantal relationships to strengthen their covenantal bonds; and we commission couples as witnesses of God’s love for the world.

*Blessing of a Civil Marriage.* *The Book of Common Prayer* rite by which a husband and wife who were previously married by competent civil authority, with appropriate documentation, have their civil marriage blessed by the Church.

*Canon.* The Canons of the Episcopal Church are the laws which set out the enactments of the ecclesiastical polity of the Church as governed by The Episcopal Church’s Constitution and revised by General Convention. Each diocese of The Episcopal Church has its own canons, which must be consistent with the Canons of the Episcopal Church.

*Civil marriage.* A civil marriage is a marriage obtained by following the legal requirements of the state or jurisdiction in which the marriage is created. A civil marriage is often described as a special form of legal contract, established and regulated by each state and entered into by two consenting parties. A civil marriage carries both legal benefits and responsibilities under both state and federal law. A state’s civil marriage statutes specify which couples are permitted to marry or are prohibited from marrying and who is authorized to officiate at a civil marriage.

*Civil union.* A civil union is a state-recognized legal contract, the status of which is authorized under the laws of some states. The enacting statutes typically grant couples, including same-gender couples, in a civil union the rights, benefits, and obligations of married couples under state law. These benefits and responsibilities vary from state to state and in some cases do not replicate all of the benefits of civil marriage. The statutes specify who is eligible to enter into a civil union and who is authorized to officiate at a civil union. Under current federal law and the laws of at least thirty-five states, civil unions are either not recognized at all or are not recognized as the equivalent of civil marriage. Some states that do not authorize civil unions will recognize a civil union lawfully obtained in another state.

*Common-law marriage.* A common-law marriage is established when a man and a woman live together and identify themselves as husband and wife for a sufficient time, with the express mutual intent of establishing a marriage. Some states require seven years of continuous cohabitation; but others do not specify the number of years. In states that recognize common-law marriage, the status of common-law marriage is generally accorded all of the benefits and obligations of a civil marriage. Fewer than twenty states recognize common-law marriages.

*Constitution.* Unless otherwise noted, this word refers to the Constitution of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, otherwise known as The Episcopal Church, as adopted by the General Convention in October 1789 and amended in subsequent General Conventions.

*Covenant.* The fundamental relationship between God and God’s people. The concept has a long and varied history, biblical and otherwise. Christians understand covenantal relationship to derive primarily from the gracious covenant God has made with us in Christ. We enact this covenant in baptism and

83 Alan Richardson, ed., *A Theological Word Book of the Bible* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 33.

sustain it in the eucharist. For the Church, a covenant is a relationship initiated by God through Jesus Christ to which a body of people responds in faith; in which God promises that the people will be God's; and in which God requires God's people to be faithful, to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God; and to whom, through the Holy Spirit, God gives the grace to do so. As Christians, we respond to God's gracious covenant in Christ by living faithfully in all of our various relationships. Scripture and Christian history bear witness to these essential elements of covenantal relationship: taking vows, intending lifelong commitment, and bearing the fruit of God's grace in the relationship.

*Covenant of marriage.* The *Book of Common Prayer* proclaims that "Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman in the presence of God" (BCP, 422). In the Catechism (BCP, 861), in response to the question "What is Holy Matrimony?" we read: "Holy Matrimony is Christian Marriage, in which the woman and man enter into a life-long union, make their vows before God and the Church, and receive the grace and blessing of God to help them fulfill their vows."

*Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA).* The Defense of Marriage Act, commonly known as DOMA, is a federal law which defines marriage as a legal union between one man and one woman for purposes of all federal laws and which provides that states (or other governmental entities) do not need to recognize a marriage from another state if it is between people of the same sex. DOMA was signed into law in 1996. Some state laws prohibiting same-gender marriages are known as "state DOMAs."

In addition, at least thirty-five states have their own Defense of Marriage Acts, while two more states have strong language that defines marriage as only between one man and one woman. In approximately thirty states, voters have approved amendments to state constitutions that also define marriage as between one man and one woman only.

DOMA has raised serious legal issues when people of the same gender marry legally in one state but then move to another state that does not recognize or permit same-gender marriages.

*Divorce.* The legal process under state law by which a marriage is ended and through which the court determines the parties' future legal and financial obligations to each other and to their children. In states with civil unions, the termination process generally is known as "dissolution," or some term other than "divorce."

*Domestic partnership.* Some states and cities have enacted domestic partnership laws or ordinances, granting same-gender and different-gender couples a bundle of specific rights, less than those granted under marriage or civil-union laws. These laws vary considerably in their scope.

*Holy Matrimony.* Holy Matrimony is Christian marriage, as defined above under "Covenant of Marriage," using The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage or An Order for Marriage from the *Book of Common Prayer*.

*Judgment of marital status.* Under Canon I.19.2, a "member of the Church whose marriage has been annulled or dissolved by a civil court may apply to the Bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese in which such person is legally or canonically resident for a judgment as to his or her marital status in the eyes of the Church. Such judgment may be a recognition of the nullity, or of the termination of the said marriage." A judgment of marital status may be requested at any time, not just when contemplating remarriage. Many Church members find support and comfort, after the termination of a civil marriage, in seeking this judgment, which establishes the unmarried status in the eyes of the Church. Such a judgment is also useful if the person seeks to remarry and, under Canon I.19.3(a), must provide evidence of the end of the prior marriage through annulment or divorce. This process is distinct from the consultation with the Bishop Diocesan regarding remarriage after divorce, found in Canon I.19.3(c).

*Same-gender marriage.* Some states give same-gender couples access to their civil marriage statutes, which typically use the phrase "same-sex marriage." In those states, these marriages are accorded all

of the rights and obligations of civil marriage under state law. Currently, the federal government and more than thirty-five states do not recognize these as civil marriages (see “Defense of Marriage Act”).

*Vow.* A solemn and voluntary promise. Marital vows are voluntary pledges instituted and accepted by the Church, by which the woman and man give and bind themselves to each other. Vows exchanged in Holy Matrimony or in the proposed liturgy for the blessing of a same-gender couple represent commitment, fidelity, and witness.

As Christians have come to understand covenantal relationship, especially in the light of God’s gracious covenant with us in Christ, a “vow” signifies permanence and inviolability. The Church affirms and supports this definition of a vowed relationship for couples entering into marriage as well as for same-gender couples entering into covenantal relationship using the proposed liturgy. The Church also recognizes that human covenants will sometimes, perhaps often, fall short of the model established in the covenant God makes with us in baptism. Nonetheless, Christians strive to enter into a vowed relationship with God’s help and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Supplement to  
Holy Women,  
Holy Men:  
Celebrating the Saints**

## Additional Commemorations

### March 28 James Solomon Russell

I

O God the font of resurrected life, we bless thee for the courageous witness of thy deacon, James Solomon Russell, whose mosaic ministry overcame all adversities: Draw us into the wilderness and speak tenderly to us there so that we might love and worship thee as he did, assured in our legacy of saving grace through Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

II

God, font of resurrected life, we bless you for the courageous witness of your deacon, James Solomon Russell, whose mosaic ministry vaulted over adversity; allure us into the wilderness and speak tenderly to us there so that we might love and worship you as he did, sure of our legacy of saving grace through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, always and ever. *Amen.*

1 Chronicles 29:10-13

Psalm 126

1 Timothy 6:11-16

John 14:8-14

*Preface of Dedication of a Church*

### April 17 Emily Cooper

I

God of the holy innocents, we thank thee for the motherly witness of thy deaconess Emily Cooper, who, in naming and baptizing, did not forget the children: Draw our hearts and minds to the plight of little ones, remembering always the teaching of thy Son that, in receiving a little child in his name, we receive Christ himself, who liveth and reigneth as one with thee and the Spirit, as one, caring for ever and ever. *Amen.*

II

God of the holy innocents, we thank you for the motherly witness of your deaconess Emily Cooper, who, in naming and baptizing, did not forget the children: Draw our hearts and minds also to the plight of little ones, always remembering your Son's teaching that in receiving a little child in his name, we receive Christ himself, who lives and reigns as one with you and the Spirit, as one, caring forever and ever. *Amen.*

Isaiah 40: 3-11

Psalm 27:10-14

Romans 8:35-39

Matthew 18:10-14

*Preface of Commemoration of the Dead*

### May 15 Junia and Andronicus

I

Almighty God, whose Son, the risen Christ, sent forth thine apostles Andronicus and Junia to proclaim the Gospel and extend thy reign: Send us forth in thy Holy Spirit, that women and men may minister as one in faithful witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit in perfect unity, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Almighty God, whose Son, the risen Christ, sent forth your apostles Andronicus and Junia to proclaim the Gospel and extend your reign: send us forth in your Holy Spirit, that women and men may minister as one in faithful witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit in perfect unity, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Isaiah 61:1-4

Psalm 68:7-11

Romans 16: 7, 25-27

John 17:6-23

*Preface of Apostles and Ordinations*

## **July 1 Pauli Murray**

**I**

Liberating God, we thank thee most heartily for the steadfast courage of thy servant Pauli Murray, who didst fight long and well: Unshackle us from the bonds of prejudice and fear so that we may show forth thy reconciling love and true freedom, which thou didst reveal through thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Liberating God, we thank you most heartily for the steadfast courage of your servant Pauli Murray, who fought long and well: Unshackle us from bonds of prejudice and fear so that we show forth your reconciling love and true freedom, which you revealed through your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Isaiah 49:1-6

Psalm 119:17-24

Galatians 3:26-29

Mark 12:1-12

*Preface of All Saints*

## **July 29 First Ordination of Women to the Priesthood in The Episcopal Church**

**I**

O God, who didst pour thy Spirit from on high to bless and summon these women, who heard the strength of thy call: We beseech thee to equip, guide, and inspire us with wisdom, boldness, and faith to put our trust in thee always, hear thee preach new life to thy church and stretch out our hands to serve thee, as thou didst create and redeem us in the name of Jesus Christ, who liveth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God everlasting. *Amen.*

**II**

O God, you poured your Spirit from on high to bless and summon these women, who heard the strength of your call: Equip, guide, and inspire us with wisdom, boldness, and faith to trust you in all circumstances, hear you preach new life to your church, and stretch out our hands to serve you, as you created us and redeemed us in the name of Jesus Christ, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, one God everlasting. *Amen.*

Psalm 33:1-5, 20-21

Esther 12:10-16

Romans 12:9-13

Luke 10:38-42

*Preface for Apostles and Ordinations*

## **August 17 Virginia Dare and Manteo**

**I**

God of new life, we give thee thanks for that by the sealing of thy Holy Spirit in baptism thou didst bind Virginia Dare and Manteo to thy service in making neighbors of the peoples of this land: By the power of thy Spirit, lead us into the unknown, trusting in the resurrection of thy Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, who reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

God of new life, we thank you that, by the sealing of your Holy Spirit in baptism, you bound Virginia Dare and Manteo to your service in making neighbors of the peoples of this land: By the power of your Spirit, lead us into the unknown, trusting in the resurrection of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Isaiah 60:1-4

Psalm 33: 13-15, 18-22

Ephesians 2:13-22

John 10:14-16

*Preface of Baptism*

## **September 23 Thecla**

**I**

O God of liberating power, who didst raise up thine apostle Thecla, permitting no obstacle or peril to inhibit her from bearing witness to new life in Jesus Christ: Empower courageous evangelists among us, that men and women everywhere may know the freedom which thou dost offer; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

God of liberating power, you raised up your apostle Thecla, who allowed no obstacle or peril to inhibit her from bearing witness to new life in Jesus Christ: Empower courageous evangelists among us, that men and women everywhere may experience the freedom you offer; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Exodus 1:15-21

Psalm 91:9-15

2 Timothy 3:10-12

John 4:23-30, 39-42

*Preface of Apostles and Ordinations*

# Alternative Collects

## December 1 Charles de Foucauld

I

God of all, whose son Charles de Foucauld didst return to thee through his encounter with Islam and the desert, and glorified thee by his very life: Be ever present to us wherever we are living out the Gospel, that we also might be faithful witnesses of the life and death of Jesus; who doeth minister in hope and glory with thee and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

II

God of all, your son Charles de Foucauld returned to you through Islam and the desert, and glorified you by his very life: Be ever present to us, wherever we are living the Gospel, that we might be faithful witnesses of the life and death of Jesus; who ministers in hope and glory with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## December 3 Francis Xavier

I

Loving God, who didst call Francis Xavier to be a harbinger of the Good News of Jesus Christ to people far off: Bring us to the new life of glory promised to all who follow in the Way of thy Son Jesus Christ; who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

II

Loving God, you commissioned Francis Xavier as a harbinger of the Good News of Jesus Christ to people far from his home: Bring us, we pray, to the new life of glory promised to all who follow in the Way; through the same Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## December 8 Richard Baxter

I

Righteous and Steadfast God, we offer thanks for the witness of Richard Baxter, who did not cease to love thee despite the cost to himself: Steady us in paths of righteousness and truth, following thy Son Jesus Christ; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

II

Righteous and Steadfast God, we offer manifold thanks for the witness of Richard Baxter, who did not yield his love for you despite the cost to himself. Steady us in paths of righteousness and truth, following your Son Jesus Christ, who walks with you and the Holy Spirit as One, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## December 10 Karl Barth

I

Transcendent God, who didst reveal to Karl Barth a vision of the system of theology, providing a key to knowledge of sin and creation: Grant us the intelligence and definition to grasp what is within our ken that we may realize our heritage as rational beings, wise to the word, the water and the wine of thy Son, Jesus Christ; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, One for ever more. *Amen.*

II

Transcendent God, you revealed to Karl Barth a vision of the system of theology, glimpsing the knowledge of sin and creation: Admit to us intelligence and definition to grasp what is within our ken so that we fulfill our potential as thinking beings, wise to the Word, the Water and the Wine of your son, Jesus, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one mind, for ever more. *Amen.*

## December 10 Thomas Merton

I

O God, who didst guide thy servant Thomas Merton to proclaim justice in the midst of silence: Edify us also, so that we may contemplate Christ in the silence of our hearts and in our souls, continually craving the knowledge of him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, One God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

II

God of guiding words, you led your servant Thomas Merton to form the letters that promoted justice over silence; edify us, too, so that we contemplate Christ in the silence of our hearts and in our souls, continually craving the knowledge of him, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, all One, forevermore. *Amen.*

## December 13 Lucy (Lucia)

I

God of the martyrs, who didst send Jesus to illumine our darkness: We beseech thee to crown us with the light of Christ, that with thy daughter Lucy, we may shun the way of sin and so walk the path that thou dost light each day of our lives; through the glory of thy Son Jesus Christ, who liveth with thee and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

II

God of the martyrs, you sent Jesus to illumine our darkness: Crown us with the light of Christ, that with your daughter Lucy, we may shun the way of sin to walk on the path that you light each day of our lives, through the glory of your Son Jesus Christ, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## December 14 Juan de la Cruz (John of the Cross)

I

God of love, who didst endow Juan de la Cruz with a spirit of self-denial, a love of the Cross, and a tireless heart for others: Grant that we also may seek thee first, love with thy love, and come to the eternal vision of thy glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Brother and Friend, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

II

God of love, who endowed Juan de la Cruz with a spirit of self-denial, a love of your Cross, and a tireless heart for others: Grant that we may seek you first, love with your love and come to the eternal vision of your glory; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Brother and Friend, who lives and reigns with you, in unity with the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## December 15 John Horden

I

Beloved God, Breath of Life, who didst endue the intrepid John Horden with a facility for many languages, that he might speak thy word with native peoples in snowy lands: Loose our tongues that, we may fearlessly proclaim and make known the Good News of communion everlasting with Christ, who with thee and the Holy Spirit, reigneth as One in glory, through ages of ages. *Amen.*

II

Beloved Breath of Life, you formed intrepid John Horden with facility in many languages that he might speak your word with native peoples in snowy lands: Untie our tongues, we pray, so that, unafraid and understood, we may proclaim the Good News of communion everlasting with Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit, reigns as one, in glory, through ages and ages. *Amen.*

## December 15 Robert McDonald

I

God of ice, sea and sky, whose call to mission steeled the resolve of Robert McDonald that he might brave the Arctic to minister to thy peoples: Fill us with longing for communion with companions that we may praise thee in the language of love, through the Name of Jesus Christ who dwelleth with thee and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

II

God of ice, sea and sky, your call to mission steeled the resolve of Robert McDonald, who braved the Arctic to minister to your peoples: Entice us with longing for communion through companions so that we praise you in the language of love, through the name of Jesus Christ, who dwells with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## December 16 Ralph Adams Cram, Richard Upjohn, and John LaFarge

I

Architect of Souls, whose soaring vision, which thou didst reveal to Ralph Cram, Richard Upjohn and John LaFarge, moved them to design churches of arches and towers in carved stone and stained glass: Revive our artists' eyes that we may reveal a heavenly brilliance in the world; in the Name of Jesus Christ, who liveth with thee and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

II

Soul builder, your soaring vision, granted to Ralph Cram, Richard Upjohn and John LaFarge, moved them to design churches of arches and towers, in carved stone and stained glass. Revive our artist's eyes that we might recolor a dull world with heavenly brilliance in the name of Jesus Christ, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. *Amen.*

## December 17 William Lloyd Garrison and Maria Stewart

I

God, in whose service alone is perfect freedom; we thank thee for thy prophets William Lloyd Garrison and Maria Stewart, who testified that we are made not by the color of our skin but by the principle formed in our soul: Commission us to break every chain of enslavement so that bondage and ignorance may melt like wax before flames, and we may build a community of justice and love, founded on Jesus Christ our cornerstone; who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

II

God, in whose service alone is perfect freedom; we thank you for your prophets William Lloyd Garrison and Maria Stewart, who testified that we are made not by the color of our skin but by the principle formed in our soul: Commission us to break every chain of enslavement so that bondage and ignorance may melt like wax before flames and we may build a community of justice and love, founded on Jesus Christ, our cornerstone; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## December 22 Henry Budd

I

Creator of light, who didst call thy son Henry Budd to serve Christ at the margins of northern Canada: Transform us, we pray, as baptized believers in service to our Lord, so that we may be ever joyful in that mission; through Jesus Christ, who with thee and the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth, now and always. *Amen.*

**II**

Creator of light, you called your son Henry Budd to serve Christ at the margins of northern Canada: Transform us, baptized believers in service to our Lord, so that we may be ever joyful in that mission, through Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, now and always. *Amen.*

## **December 22 Charlotte Diggs (Lottie) Moon**

**I**

God of love, who in Jesus Christ brought Good News to the world: We thank thee for instilling in Lottie Moon a zeal for thy mission. Humble us, thine ambassadors, to show our faith through thy grace as we do thy work in the world; for the sake of Jesus Christ thy Son, our Savior, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, always and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

God of love, who, in Jesus Christ brought Good News to the world: We thank you for instilling Lottie Moon with zeal for your mission. Humble us, your ambassadors, to show our faith through your grace as we do your work in the world, for Christ Jesus, your son, our Savior, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, all ways and for ever. *Amen.*

## **December 31 Samuel Ajayi Crowther**

**I**

O God, who with words and witness didst equip thy son, Samuel Crowther, with nimbleness of tongue and integrity of spirit to preach the Word in West Africa: Free us from all enslavement so that, with endurance and authority, we may boldly proclaim thy Son Jesus Christ; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, here and now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

God of words and witness, you equipped your son, Samuel Crowther, with nimbleness of tongue and integrity of spirit to preach the Word in West Africa: Free us from all enslavement so that, with endurance and authority, we may boldly proclaim your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, here and now and for ever. *Amen.*

## **January 2 Vedanayagam Samuel Azariah**

**I**

O God who art with us in every culture and community; we thank thee for raising up Samuel Azariah as the first indigenous bishop in India: Strengthen us, we beseech thee, by his witness to thy love in his labor to unify the Church in India, so that we, being of diverse tongues and cultures, might braid our threads into one strong cord to speak thy word; we pray this in thy name, in the name of thy Son, and the name of the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

God, you are with us in every culture and community; we thank you for raising up Samuel Azariah as the first indigenous bishop in India: Strengthen us by his witness to your love in his labor to unify the Church in India, so that we, of many tongues and cultures, might braid our threads into one strong cord to speak your word; we ask this in your name, in the name of your Son and the name of the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## **January 3 William Passavant**

**I**

O God of Compassion and Mercy who dost search our hearts; we give thanks for William Passavant and the women of the German deaconess movement, who didst follow Jesus to teach, foster and nurse the needy: So fill our sight with the foretaste of thy heaven come down to earth that we might see the dignity of all thy children; through Jesus Christ, who with thee and the Holy Spirit, blesseth us always. *Amen.*

**II**

Compassionate God, Mother of Mercy, who searches our hearts, we thank you for William Passavant and the women of the German deaconess movement, who followed Jesus to teach, to mother and to nurse those who are needy: So fill our sights with your vision of heaven on earth that we might see the dignity of all your children; through Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit blesses us always. *Amen.*

**January 16 Richard Meux Benson and Charles Gore**

**I**

Generous God, we thank thee for the ministries of Richard Meux Benson and Charles Gore, to strengthen thy church through the revival of Anglican monasticism: Fill us also, we pray, with longing to live according to the teachings of Christ, so that through him we may transform church and society, following thy Son Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth we thee and the Holy Spirit, in justice and peace, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Generous God, we thank you for the ministries of Richard Meux Benson and Charles Gore, to energize your church by reviving Anglican monasticism: Fill us also with longing to live as Christ taught, so that we may transform church and society, following your Son Jesus Christ, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, in justice and peace, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**January 27 Lydia, Dorcas and Phoebe**

**I**

God of all Grace, who didst call thy daughters, Lydia, Dorcas and Phoebe, to serve as prayerful and devoted disciples of Jesus Christ through stewardship, mercy and service: We beseech thee to inspire us, like them, to build up thy church in hospitality, charity and bold witness to the Gospel of Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and evermore. *Amen.*

**II**

God of all Grace, you called your daughters, Lydia, Dorcas and Phoebe, to serve as prayerful and devoted disciples of Jesus Christ through stewardship, mercy and service: Inspire us, like them, to build up your church in hospitality, charity and bold witness to the Gospel of Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and evermore. *Amen.*

**January 29 Andrei Rublev**

**I**

Holy God, we bless thee for the gift of thy monk and icon writer Andrei Rublev, who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, didst open a window into heaven for generations to come, revealing the beauty of Christ and the majesty and mystery of the holy and blessed Trinity; who liveth and reigneth throughout ages of ages. *Amen.*

**II**

Holy God, we bless you for the gift of your monk and icon writer Andrei Rublev, who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, opened a window into heaven for generations to come, revealing the beauty of Christ and the majesty and mystery of the holy and blessed Trinity; who lives and reigns through ages of ages. *Amen.*

**January 31 Juan Bosco**

**I**

Compassionate God, who didst call Giovanni Bosco to be a teacher and father to the young: Fill us with love like his, that we may give ourselves completely to thy service and to the salvation of all;

through thy Son Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Compassionate God, you called Giovanni Bosco to be a teacher and father to the young: Fill us with love like his, that we may give ourselves completely to your service and to the salvation of all; through your Son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**January 31 Samuel Shoemaker**

**I**

O God, Shepherd of our Souls, we thank thee for thy priest Samuel Shoemaker and for spreading thy grace and power for healing and recovery through Alcoholics Anonymous: Lead us, we pray saints and sinners all, that we may follow thy way according to the word spoken by thy Son, Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

O God, Shepherd of our Souls, we thank you for your priest Samuel Shoemaker and for spreading your grace and power for healing and recovery through Alcoholics Anonymous; Lead us, saints and sinners all, so that we may follow your way according to the word spoken by your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**February 3 The Dorchester Chaplains: Lieutenant George Fox,  
Lieutenant Alexander D. Goode, Lieutenant Clark V. Poling,  
Lieutenant John P. Washington**

**I**

Holy God, who didst inspire the Dorchester Chaplains to be models of steadfast sacrificial love in a tragic and terrifying time: Help us to follow their example, that their courageous ministry may inspire chaplains and all who serve to recognize and witness to your presence in the midst of peril; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Holy God, you inspired the Dorchester chaplains to be models of steadfast sacrificial love in a tragic and terrifying time: Help us to follow their example, that their courageous ministry may inspire chaplains and all who serve, to recognize and witness to your presence in the midst of peril; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**February 5 Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson**

**I**

O God who dost bless us that we might be a blessing; we thank thee for the lives of Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams, prophets and exemplars of tolerance and liberty: Accompany us in your paths of holiness and good conscience so that we may be guided to fullness of life in harmony with our neighbors; through the radiance of Jesus Christ, who liveth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

God, who blesses us so we will be a blessing, we thank you for the lives of Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams, prophets and exemplars of tolerance and liberty; accompany us in your paths of holiness and good conscience so that we may be guided to fullness of life in harmony with our neighbors, through the radiance of Jesus Christ, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## February 11 Frances Jane (Fanny) Van Alstyne Crosby

I

O God, the blessed assurance of all who trust in thee; we thank thee for thy servant Fanny Crosby, who gave voice to thy people's heartfelt praise; and we pray that, inspired by her words and example, we may rejoice to sing of thy love, praising our Savior, who liveth and reigneth we thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

II

O God, the blessed assurance of all who trust in you: We give you thanks for your servant Fanny Crosby, who gave voice to your people's heartfelt praise; and we pray that we, inspired by her words and example, may rejoice to sing of your love, praising our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## February 12 Charles Freer Andrews

I

Gracious God, who didst call Charles Freer Andrews to show forth thy salvation to the poor: By the power of thy Holy Spirit, inspire in us a tender concern, a passionate justice, and an active love for all people, that there may be one Body and one Spirit in Jesus Christ, our Savior; who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

II

Gracious God, you called Charles Freer Andrews to show forth your salvation to the poor: By your Holy Spirit inspire in us a tender concern, a passionate justice and an active love for all people, that there may be one Body and one Spirit in Jesus Christ, our Savior; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## February 16 Charles Todd Quintard

I

O God, whose name is blessed among the faithful; we remember thy bishop and physician Charles Quintard for his dedicated devotion to the injured, segregated and uneducated, burdened by bigotry and poverty: Open our hearts, we beseech thee, to bring unity, reconciliation, and sanctuary in the name of Jesus Christ, our One High Priest, who with thee and thy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

II

O God, whose name is blessed among the faithful; we remember your bishop and physician Charles Quintard for his dedicated devotion to people who are injured, segregated and uneducated, burdened by bigotry and poverty: Open our hearts to bring unity, reconciliation, and sanctuary in the name of Jesus Christ, our One High Priest, who with you and your Spirit lives and reigns, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

## February 20 Frederick Douglass

I

God of justice, we bless thee for the impassioned and lifelong witness of Frederick Douglas to this nation's declarations of democracy, and for thine assurance of equality for all: Steady our way against tyranny, our own and others', so that we may respect every human being as we have vowed to our beloved Savior Jesus Christ, and to thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

II

God of justice, we bless you for the impassioned and lifelong witness of Frederick Douglass to this nation's declarations of democracy, and for your assurance of equality for all: steady our way against tyranny, our own and others', so that we respect every human being as we have vowed to our beloved Savior Jesus Christ, and to you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## February 21 John Henry Newman

I

God of all wisdom we thank thee for John Henry Newman, whose eloquence bore witness that thy Church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic: Keep thou our feet on our journey, we pray, that thy kindly light may lead us into thy kingdom, offered through the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Savior, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever. *Amen.*

II

God of all wisdom, we thank you for John Henry Newman, whose eloquence bore witness that your Church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic: Stay close to us on our journey so that your kindly light leads us into your kingdom, offered through the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever. *Amen.*

## February 22 Eric Liddell

I

God of our strength, we thank thee for the mission and ministry of Eric Liddell, for his resolute courage in contest and captivity: Grant us endurance that we also may run the race that is set before us, and persevere in patient witness, until we wear the crown of victory won for us by Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth One God, for ever. *Amen.*

II

God of our strength, we thank you for the mission and ministry of Eric Liddell, for his resolute courage in contest and captivity: Grant us endurance that we also may run the race set before us and persevere in patient witness, until we wear the crown of victory won for us by Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns as One, for ever. *Amen.*

## February 25 John Roberts

I

O God our Creator: we thank thee for thy missionary John Roberts, who didst live and teach thy Gospel with respect and amity among the Shoshone and Arapahoe peoples: And we pray that we also may share the Good News of thy Christ as friends gathered in the embrace of thy loving Spirit; for thou art one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, living and true, unto the ages of ages. *Amen.*

II

Creator God, we thank you for your missionary John Roberts, who lived and taught your Gospel with respect and amity among the Shoshone and Arapahoe peoples: And we pray that we also may share the Good News of your Christ as friends gathered in the embrace of your loving Spirit; for you are one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, living and true, to the ages of ages. *Amen.*

## February 26 Emily Malbone Morgan

I

God, our Companion, we thank thee for the life of Emily Malbone Morgan; and for the simple path of intercession, social justice, and unity that she walked with her sisters in Christ: Draw us, like her, we beseech thee, to companions in prayer and faithful living so that we may dedicate ourselves to the life and teaching of our just Savior, Jesus Christ, who with thee and the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

II

God, our Companion, we thank you for the life of Emily Malbone Morgan; and for the simple path of intercession, social justice, and unity that she walked with her sisters in Christ: Draw us, like her, to companions in prayer and to faithful living so that we dedicate ourselves to the life and teachings

of our just Savior, Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## **February 28 Anna Julia Haywood Cooper and Elizabeth Evelyn Wright**

**I**

Almighty God, who didst inspire thy servants Anna Julia Haywood Cooper and Elizabeth Evelyn Wright with the love of learning and the skill of teaching: Enlighten us more and more, we pray, though the discipline of learning, and deepen our commitment to the education of all your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Almighty God, you inspired your servants Anna Julia Haywood Cooper and Elizabeth Evelyn Wright with the love of learning and the skill of teaching: Enlighten us more and more through the discipline of learning, and deepen our commitment to the education of all your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## **February 29 John Cassian**

**I**

Holy and Mighty One, whose beloved Son Jesus Christ blessed the pure in heart; we give thee thanks for the life and teaching of John Cassian that draw us to a discipline of holy living for the sake of thy reign: Help us to transform purity of heart into holiness of life, that we and the whole creation may resound with thy love, shown to us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who with thee and the Holy Spirit is one God, living and true, unto the ages of ages. *Amen.*

**II**

Holy and Mighty One, whose beloved Son Jesus Christ blessed the pure in heart; we give you thanks for the life and teachings of John Cassian that draw us to a discipline of holy living for the sake of your reign: Help us to transform purity of heart into holiness of life, that we and the whole creation may resound with your love, shown to us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who with you and the Holy Spirit is one God, living and true, to the ages of ages. *Amen.*

## **March 4 Paul Cuffee**

**I**

Almighty God, who didst call Paul Cuffee to be a powerful evangelist and preacher and so to win many souls for Christ among the Native Americans of Long Island: Help us, we pray, to proclaim thy Word with power, in the Name of the same Jesus Christ; who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Almighty God, you called Paul Cuffee to be a powerful evangelist and preacher and so to win many souls for Christ among the Native Americans of Long Island: Help us to proclaim your Word with power, in the Name of the same Jesus Christ; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## **March 6 William W. Mayo, Charles F. Menninger, and Their Sons**

**I**

Divine Physician, who blindest all wounds and makest all things whole: We bless thee for the work and witness of the Mayo and Menninger families in changing medicine by caring for the whole person, not illness alone. As Jesus went about healing the sick as a sign of the reign of God come near, renew our minds and heal our bodies so that our lives may be made whole and thy grace may fill all with the

healing offered in thy Word, Jesus Christ, divine physician, who liveth and reigneth with thee as One God with the Holy Spirit, world without end. *Amen.*

**II**

Divine Physician, who binds all wounds and makes all things whole: We bless you for the work and witness of the Mayo and Menninger families in changing medicine by caring for the whole person, not illness alone. As Jesus went about healing the sick as a sign of the reign of God come near, renew our minds and heal our bodies so that our lives may be made whole and your grace may fill all with the healing offered in your Word, Jesus Christ, divine physician, who lives and reigns with you as One God with the Holy Spirit, world without end. *Amen.*

## **March 8 Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy**

**I**

Glorious God, we give thanks for the high and holy as well as for the common things of the earth which thou hast created: Awaken us to your divine and human gifts in all people, we beseech thee, that, like thy servant Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, we may magnify thee, the holy and undivided Trinity, who livest and reignest for the life of the world to come. *Amen.*

**II**

Glorious God, we give thanks for the high and holy as well as for the common things of the earth which you have created: Awaken us to your divine and human gifts in all people, so that, like your servant Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, we may magnify you, the holy and undivided Trinity, living and reigning for the life of the world to come. *Amen.*

## **March 26 Richard Allen**

**I**

Loving God, whose servant Richard Allen was born a slave, but your beloved child by adoption in Jesus Christ; by the power of the Holy Spirit he was led to proclaim liberty to his captive people: Give us strength, we pray, to proclaim thy freedom to the captives of our world; through Jesus Christ, Savior of all, who with thee and the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Loving God, your servant Richard Allen was born a slave, but your beloved child by adoption in Jesus Christ; by the power of the Holy Spirit he was led to proclaim liberty to his captive people: Give us strength to proclaim your freedom to the captives of our world; through Jesus Christ, Savior of all, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## **March 30 Innocent of Alaska**

**I**

Holy Immortal One, who didst bless thy people by calling Innocent to be an apostle and light to the people of Alaska, and to proclaim the providence and grace of God: Guide our steps that we may witness to the Gospel of Christ wherever we are led and serve thee as gladly in privation as in power; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, unto the ages of ages. *Amen.*

**II**

Holy Immortal One, you blessed your people by calling Innocent to be an apostle and light to the people of Alaska, and to proclaim the providence and grace of God: Guide our steps, that we may witness to the Gospel of Christ wherever we are led, and serve you as gladly in privation as in power; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, to the ages of ages. *Amen.*

## **April 5 Pandita Mary Ramabai**

**I**

O God, giver of Life; we bless thee for the baptismal witness of Mary Ramabai, who didst seek to give freedom, voice and vote to the women of India: so fill us with thy promise of new life that we also may be brave and persistent in bearing witness to the living Christ in company with those women who ran from his tomb to tell the good news of his resurrection. *Amen.*

**II**

Life-giving God, we bless you for the baptismal witness of Mary Ramabai, who sought to give freedom, voice and vote to the women of India; so fill us with your promise of new life that we also may be brave and persistent in bearing witness to the living Christ in company with those women who ran from his tomb to tell the good news of his resurrection. *Amen.*

## **April 6 Daniel G.C. Wu**

**I**

O God who loveth thy people always; we thank thee for Daniel Wu and his mission among Chinese immigrants to raise up congregations. By the power of the Holy Spirit, encourage thy Church to raise up leaders for the gifts and ministries of all people, so that thy love may hold us all constant in faith to the Eternal Word, Jesus Christ, who with thee and the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

God our Constant Lover, we thank you for Daniel Wu and his mission among Chinese immigrants to raise up congregations; by the power of your Holy Spirit, encourage your Church to raise up leaders with respect for the gifts and ministries for all people, so that your love holds us all constant in faith to the Eternal Word, Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## **April 8 William Augustus Muhlenberg and Anne Ayres**

**I**

God of justice and truth, we pray that thy Church may never abandon those who are poor and neglected, homeless and destitute, old or sick or lonely. Perpetually renew in us the vision and compassion of thy servants, William Muhlenberg and Anne Ayers, that we may endeavor to heal the broken and turn their sorrow into joy; through Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, the strong name of the Trinity, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

God of justice, God of Truth, we pray that your Church never abandon those who are poor and neglected, homeless and destitute, old or sick or lonely. Perpetually renew in us the vision and compassion of your servants, William Muhlenberg and Anne Ayers, so that we may endeavor to heal the broken and turn their sorrow to joy; through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, the strong name of the Trinity, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## **April 10 Pierre Teilhard de Chardin**

**I**

Eternal God, whose glory the whole cosmos singeth, from the division of a single cell to the vast expanse of interstellar space: We bless thee for thy theologian and scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who didst perceive the divine in evolving creation. Sustain our vows to be faithful stewards of thy creation and our longing to be heirs of thine eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ, the firstborn of all creation, who with thee and the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth, for this day and always. *Amen.*

**II**

Eternal God, the whole cosmos sings of your glory, from the division of a single cell to the vast expanse of interstellar space: We bless you for your theologian and scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who perceived the divine in evolving creation. Sustain our vows to be faithful stewards of your creation and our longing to be heirs of your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ, the firstborn of all creation, who with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, from this day and always. *Amen.*

**April 14 Edward Thomas Demby and Henry Beard Delaney**

**I**

O God, who bringeth light to all the world: we thank thee for thy sons Edward Demby and Henry Delany and their life-giving ministries in a time of shameful prejudice against their race; embolden us, we pray, with strength of mind and purity of heart to secure justice and peace for all people so that we may show forth the dignity thou dost accord to all through Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

O God, who brings light to all the world: we thank you for your sons Edward Demby and Henry Delany and their life-giving ministries in a time of shameful prejudice against their race; embolden us with strength of mind and purity of heart to secure justice and peace for all people so that we may show forth the dignity you accord to all through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**April 15 Damien and Marianne of Molokai**

**I**

O God who art the Companion of the Outcast, we bless thy name for Damien and Marianne of Molokai and for their selfless dedication to the abandoned lepers of Hawai'i: forgive the trespasses that separate us from thee and strengthen us, we pray, to be bold and loving in confronting the incurable plagues of our time, in the name of Jesus the Divine Physician, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, on God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Companion of the Outcast, we bless your name for Damien and Marianne of Molokai and for their selfless dedication to the abandoned lepers of Hawai'i; forgive the trespasses that separate us from you and strengthen us to be bold and loving in confronting the incurable plagues of our time, in the name of Jesus, the Divine Physician, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, as one God, for ever and always. *Amen.*

**April 22 John Muir and Hudson Stuck**

**I**

Creator of heaven and earth, we thank thee for the naturalists John Muir and Hudson Stuck, and for the majesty of thy creation: Ravish our souls with thy beauty made known in natural things, so that, through our stewardship, we magnify thy lavish providence for all creatures and all creation, in the name of the living Lord, through whom all things were made, and who reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, over all and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Creator of heaven and earth, we thank you for the naturalists John Muir and Hudson Stuck, and for the majesty of your creation: Ravish our souls with your beauty, made known in natural things, so that, through our stewardship, we magnify your lavish providence for all creatures and all creation in the name of the living Lord, through whom all things were made, and who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, as one God, over all and for ever. *Amen.*

## April 22 George

I

Almighty God who didst commission thy holy martyr George to bear before the rulers of this world the banner of the cross: Strengthen us in our battles against sin and evil, that we too may attain the crown of eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

II

Almighty God, you commissioned your holy martyr George to bear before the rulers of this world the banner of the cross: Strengthen us in our battles against sin and evil, that we too may attain the crown of eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## April 23 Toyohiko Kagawa

I

We bless thy Name, O God, for the witness of Toyohiko Kagawa, reformer and pacifist: Grant us courage to realize Christ's vision of justice, and to proclaim new life in the name of the Prince of Peace, Jesus thy Son; who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

II

We bless your Name, O God, for the witness of Toyohiko Kagawa, reformer and pacifist: Grant us courage to realize Christ's vision of justice, and to proclaim new life in the name of the Prince of Peace, Jesus, your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## April 24 Genocide Remembrance

I

Almighty God, our refuge and our rock, whose loving care embraceth all the peoples of the earth: Defend and protect those who fall victim to human evil, and as we remember those who endured depredation and death, give us the will to resist evil, the humility to repent of our complicity, and the conviction to labor for the well-being of all, for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ, in whom thou hast reconciled the world to thyself; and who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

II

Almighty God, our refuge and our rock, your loving care embraces all the peoples of the earth: Defend and protect those who fall victim to human evil, and as we remember those who endured depredation and death, give us the will to resist evil, the humility to repent of our complicity, and the conviction to labor for the well-being of all for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ, in whom you have reconciled the world to yourself; and who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## April 26 Robert Hunt

I

O God whose power leads and holds, we bless thee for the life and ministry of chaplain Robert Hunt and for the devotion to endure that no hardship may separate us from the love of Christ: Encourage us to live into thy promise of a new earth and heaven so that we all may flourish as members of Christ's body, the Church, gathered in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ, who liveth with thee and the Holy Spirit, in forgiveness and love everlasting. *Amen.*

II

God, whose power leads and holds, we bless you for the life and ministry of chaplain Robert Hunt and for the devotion to endure the hardships that cannot separate us from the love of Christ: Encourage us to live into your promise of a new earth and heaven so that we all may flourish as members of Christ's

body, the Church, gathered in the Name of your Son Jesus Christ, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, in reckless forgiveness and love everlasting. *Amen.*

### **April 27 Christina Rossetti**

**I**

O God whom heaven cannot hold; who didst inspire Christina Rossetti to express the mystery of the Incarnation through poetry: Help us, we pray, to follow her example in giving our hearts wholly to Christ, the love divine, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

**II**

God, whom heaven cannot hold, you inspired Christina Rossetti to express the mystery of the Incarnation through poetry: Help us to follow her example in giving our hearts wholly to Christ, who is love divine and who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

### **April 30 Sarah Josepha Buell Hale**

**I**

Gracious God, we bless thy Name for the vision and witness of Sarah Hale, whose advocacy for the ministry of women nurtured the deaconess movement; We beseech thee to make us grateful for thy many blessings, that we may come closer to Christ in our own families; through the same Jesus Christ our Savior, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Gracious God, we bless your Name for the vision and witness of Sarah Hale, whose advocacy for the ministry of women nurtured the deaconess movement: Make us grateful for your many blessings, that we may come closer to Christ in our own families; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

### **May 7 Harriet Starr Cannon**

**I**

Gracious God, who didst call Harriet Starr Cannon and her companions to revive the religious life in the Episcopal Church by founding the religious community of St. Mary, and to dedicate their lives to thee: Grant that, after their example, we may ever surrender ourselves to the revelation of thy holy will; through our Savior Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Gracious God, you called Harriet Starr Cannon and her companions to revive the religious life in the Episcopal Church by founding the religious community of St. Mary, and to dedicate their lives to you: Grant that, after their example, we may ever surrender ourselves to the revelation of your holy will; through our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

### **May 10 Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf**

**I**

God of new life, we remember before thee the bold witness of thy servant Nicolaus von Zinzendorf, who, moved by thy Spirit, drew many to renewed faith and conversion of life: Move us, like him, to sing thy praise, live thy love and rest secure in thy safekeeping; in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

God of new life, we remember before you the bold witness of your servant Nicolaus von Zinzendorf, who, moved by your Spirit, drew many to renewed faith and conversion of life: Move us, like him, to sing your praise, live your love and rest secure in your safekeeping, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, united as One\*, now and forever. *Amen.*

## **May 13 Frances Perkins**

**I**

Merciful God, we bless thy name for Frances Perkins, who labored to build a society of decency and well-being for all people: Help us, following her example, to contend tirelessly for justice and for the protection of all, that we may be faithful followers of Jesus Christ; who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Merciful God, we bless your name for Frances Perkins, who labored to build a society of decency and well-being for all people: Help us, following her example, to contend tirelessly for justice and for the protection of all, that we may be faithful followers of Jesus Christ; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## **May 16 The Martyrs of the Sudan**

**I**

O Lord our God, who hast set a rampart against our adversaries, we remember today the Martyrs of Sudan who, when tried in the fires of war, refused to abandon Christ: Make us ever mindful of thee, our heart's treasure, and of those martyrs imprisoned, tortured or killed for the sake of their unyielding faith, so that by thy grace our violent world may become thy promised reign of peace; through Jesus Christ thy Son, who liveth with thee and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

O Lord our God, who has set a rampart against our adversaries, we remember today the Martyrs of Sudan who, when tried in the fires of war, refused to abandon Christ: Make us ever mindful of you, our heart's treasure, and of those martyrs imprisoned, tortured or killed for the sake of their unyielding faith, so that, by your grace our violent world may become your promised reign of peace; through Jesus Christ your Son, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. *Amen.*

## **May 17 William Hobart Hare**

**I**

O God whose Word goest forth to accomplish thy purpose; we thank thee for thy servant William Hobart Hare who didst proclaim thy Word among the peoples of the Dakotas: Send us into the world with love for thy reconciling word and zeal for thy Gospel, that all peoples may dance with joy in thy grace revealed in our Savior Jesus Christ; who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

God, your Word goes forth to accomplish your purpose; we thank you for your servant, William Hobart Hare who proclaimed your Word among the peoples of the Dakotas: Send us into the world with love for your reconciling word and zeal for your Gospel, so that all peoples may dance with joy in your grace, revealed in our Savior, Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## **May 17 Thurgood Marshall**

**I**

Eternal and ever-gracious God, who didst bless thy servant Thurgood Marshall with exceptional grace and courage to discern and speak the truth: Grant that, following his example, we may know thee and

recognize that we are all thy children, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, who teacheth us to love one another; and who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Eternal and ever-gracious God, you blessed your servant Thurgood Marshall with exceptional grace and courage to discern and speak the truth: Grant that, following his example, we may know you and recognize that we are all your children, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, who teaches us to love one another; and who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## **May 21 John Eliot**

**I**

God of Creation, Font of Mercy; we thank thee for John Eliot and the courage and conviction with which he didst take into his heart the Algonquin people as his whole life's work: We beseech thee to plant such seeds of love in us that, with truth and understanding shared among all, we may succeed in broadcasting the Gospel of Jesus Christ; who liveth and reigneth with thee and thy Spirit for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Creator God, Font of Mercy, we thank you for John Eliot and for the courage and conviction with which he took into his heart the Algonquin people as his whole life's work: Plant such seeds of love in us so that, with truth and understanding shared among all, we succeed in broadcasting the Gospel of Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and your Spirit, forever. *Amen.*

## **May 28 John Calvin**

**I**

Sovereign God, who attendest our every prayer; we thank thee for the life of John Calvin and for his passion for thee and the promise of everlasting salvation: We pray thee to magnify in us a yearning for thee, that we may praise thee for the gifts of thy creation; in the name of Jesus Christ, thy Word and Wisdom, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, from this day forward and always. *Amen.*

**II**

Sovereign God, who attends our every prayer, we thank you for the life of John Calvin and for his passion for you and the promise of everlasting salvation: Magnify in us a yearning for you, that we may praise you for the gifts of your Creation and your Word, in the name of Jesus Christ, your Word and Wisdom, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, from day to day and always. *Amen.*

## **May 30 Jeanne d'Arc (Joan of Arc)**

**I**

Holy God, whose power is made perfect in weakness; we honor thee for the calling of Jeanne d'Arc, who, though young, rose up in valor to bear thy standard for her country; and endured with grace and fortitude both victory and defeat: And we pray that we may bear witness to the truth that is in us and, encouraged by the companionship of thy saints, give ourselves bravely to the struggle for justice in our time; through Christ our Savior, who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Holy God, whose power is made perfect in weakness; we honor you for the calling of Jeanne d'Arc, who, though young, rose up in valor to bear your standard for her country, and endured with grace and fortitude both victory and defeat: And we pray that we may bear witness to the truth that is in us and, encouraged by the companionship of your saints, give ourselves bravely to the struggle for justice in our time; through Christ our Savior, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## June 4 John XXIII (Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli)

I

Lord of all truth and peace, who didst raise up thy bishop John to be servant of the servants of God and bestowed on him wisdom to call for the renewal of thy Church: Grant that, following his example, we may embrace other Christians with the love of thy Son, and labor with them for justice and peace; through Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

II

Lord of all truth and peace, you raised up your bishop John to be servant of the servants of God and gave him wisdom to call for the renewal of your Church: Grant that, following his example, we may embrace other Christians with the love of your Son, and labor with them for justice and peace; through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## June 6 Ini Kopuria

I

God of love divine and universal; may thy name be blessed for thy son Ini Kopuria and for his proclamation of Jesus to the world and the Church through service sacred and secular: Order our steps, we pray, so that we, thy servant-children, may forge paths of peace and simple living; through Jesus, our beloved brother, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

II

Love divine and universal, may your name be blessed for your son Ini Kopuria, and for his proclaiming Jesus to the world and to the church through service sacred and secular: Order our steps so that we, your servant-children, may forge paths of peace and simple living; through Jesus, our beloved brother, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, now and ever. *Amen.*

## June 7 The Pioneers of the Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil

I

O God who didst send Jesus to preach peace far and near; we thank thee for the Episcopal missionaries of Brazil and those who, with them, sustained thy Church: Prepare us, we beseech thee, with whole hearts to support missions; that the Gospel, proclaimed and embraced, may restore all people to unity with God and with one another in Christ; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, everywhere and eternally. *Amen.*

II

God, who sent Jesus to preach peace far and near, we thank you for the Episcopal missionaries to Brazil and those who, with them, nurtured your church: Prepare us to wholeheartedly support missions, so that the gospel, proclaimed and embraced, may restore all people to unity with God and one another in Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, everywhere and eternally. *Amen.*

## June 8 Roland Allen

I

Almighty God, who by the power of thy Holy Spirit didst open the Scriptures to thy servant Roland Allen, and lead many to know, live and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ: Give us grace to follow his example, that those to whom we reach out in love may receive thy saving Word and may witness in their own languages and cultures to thy glorious Name; through Jesus Christ, thy Word made flesh, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

II

Almighty God, by your Spirit you opened the Scriptures to your servant Roland Allen, leading many to know, live and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ: Give us grace to follow his example, that those to whom we reach out in love may receive your saving Word and may witness in their own languages

and cultures to your glorious Name; through Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## **June 26 Isabel Florence Hapgood**

**I**

Loving God, who hast proclaimed each family thine own; we thank thee for the work and witness of thy daughter Isabel Florence Hapgood whose gifts for language fostered dialogue between Orthodox and Anglican Christians: Heal us, thy Church, from divisions of ignorance so that we may speak the truth in tongues of faith, from our one foundation, Jesus Christ; who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth, reigneth and loveth always, unto the end of ages. *Amen.*

**II**

Loving God, who has proclaimed each family your own; we thank you for the work and witness of your daughter Isabel Florence Hapgood, whose gifts for language fostered dialogue between Orthodox and Anglican Christians: Heal us, your church, from divisions of ignorance so that we may speak the truth in tongues of faith, from our one foundation, Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit, lives, reigns and loves always, to the end of ages.

## **June 27 Cornelius Hill**

**I**

O Benevolent Refuge, who didst raise up thy priest Cornelius Hill from among the Oneida to keep his people from being scattered within the wilderness: Husband our energies, we pray, that we may not grow weary or lose heart, but consider always the One who endured, Jesus Christ, our companion and brother, who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Benevolent Refuge, you raised up your priest Cornelius Hill from among the Oneida to keep his people from being scattered within the wilderness; husband our energies so that we do not grow weary or lose heart but consider always the One who endured, Jesus Christ, our companion and brother, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives as one God, forever more. *Amen.*

## **July 1 Harriet Beecher Stowe**

**I**

Gracious God, we thank thee for the witness of Harriet Beecher Stowe, whose writings inspired compassion for the shame and suffering of slaves: Help us, like her, to strive for justice, that our eyes may see the glory of thy Son Jesus Christ; who reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit in reconciliation and peace, one God, now and always. *Amen.*

**II**

Gracious God, we thank you for the witness of Harriet Beecher Stowe, whose writings inspired compassion for the shame and suffering of slaves: Help us, like her, to strive for justice, that our eyes may see the glory of your Son, Jesus Christ, who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit in reconciliation and peace, one God, now and always. *Amen.*

## **July 2 Walter Rauschenbusch, Washington Gladden, and Jacob Riis**

**I**

Loving God, who callest us to work justice and love kindness; we thank thee for the witness of Walter Rauschenbusch, Washington Gladden and Jacob Riis; And we pray that, following their examples of faithfulness to the Gospel, we may be ever mindful of the sufferings of the poor and work diligently for their relief and for the reform of our communities; through Jesus Christ, who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Loving God, you call us to do justice and love kindness; we thank you for the witness of Walter Rauschenbusch, Washington Gladden and Jacob Riis: And we pray that, following their examples of faithfulness to the Gospel, we may be ever mindful of the sufferings of the poor and work diligently for their relief and for the reform of our communities; through Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**July 6 John Hus**

**I**

Faithful God, who gavest John Hus the courage to confess thy truth and to recall thy Church to the image of Christ: Encourage us, emboldened by his example, to bear witness against corruption but never cease from praying for our enemies, that we may prove heartfelt followers of our Savior Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Faithful God, you gave John Hus the courage to confess your truth and to recall your Church to the image of Christ. Encourage us, emboldened by his example, to bear witness against corruption but never to stop praying for our enemies, that we may prove heartfelt followers of our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**July 12 Nathan Söderblom**

**I**

Holy God of Harmony, who didst bless thy son Nathan Söderblom with a yearning for unity among Churches, and didst inspire him with an ecumenical spirit to work through liturgy and prayer: Install in us, we pray, that drive to renew thy Church in the World through life and worship, for the glory of thy holy name, and in the name of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, who livest and reignest, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Holy God of Harmony, you blessed your son Nathan Söderblom with a craving for unity among Churches and inspired him with an ecumenical spirit to work through liturgy and prayer: Instill in us, too, that drive to renew your Church in the World through life and worship, for the glory of your holy Name, and in the names of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, who live and reign, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**July 13 Conrad Weiser**

**I**

God of reconciliation, who, of thy grace gavest Conrad Weiser a gift of tongues, that he might speak words of diplomacy across cultures: Bless us, also, as ambassadors with the tongues of thy Kingdom, so that we might proclaim the Gospel of peace spoken by our Savior Jesus Christ; who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and speaketh as one God, throughout all ages. *Amen.*

**II**

God of reconciliation, of your grace you gave Conrad Weiser a gift of tongues, that he might speak in diplomacy across cultures. Bless us, too, as ambassadors with the tongues of your Kingdom, so that we might proclaim the Gospel of peace spoken by our Savior Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and speaks as one God, through all ages. *Amen.*

**July 14 Samson Occom**

**I**

God of all tribes and peoples and languages: we thank thee for the faith and service of Sampson Occom who, in fervently preaching thy Gospel, guided the steps of many seekers. We pray for thy blessings, so that with faith, hope and boundless love we, also, may build up those to whom thou dost send us and

may ever walk with your Son Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit, who liveth and reigneth in glory with thee, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

God of all tribes and peoples and languages: thank you for the faith and the service of Samson Occom, who, in fervently preaching your Gospel, guided the steps of many seekers; we pray for your blessings, so that with faith, hope and boundless love we, too, may build up those to whom you send us and may ever walk with your Son Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit, who live and reign in glory with you, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## **July 16 “The Righteous Gentiles”**

**I**

O God of the covenant and Lord of the exodus, who by the hand of Moses didst deliver thy chosen people from enslavement: We give thee humble thanks for the Righteous Gentiles of World War II, who rescued thousands terrorized under Nazi rule; brace us with stout hearts and steady wills to stand tall, that we may protect the innocent of every race and creed; in the name of Jesus Christ, our strong deliverer, who with thee and the Holy Spirit empowers thy people; and liveth one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

God of the covenant and Lord of the exodus, by the hand of Moses you delivered your chosen people from enslavement: we give you humble thanks for the Righteous Gentiles of World War II, who rescued thousands terrorized under Nazi rule; brace us with stout hearts and steady wills to stand tall, so that we may protect the innocent of every race and creed in the name of Jesus Christ, our strong deliverer, who with you and the Holy Spirit empowers us as one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## **July 18 Bartolomé de las Casas**

**I**

Eternal God, we give thee thanks for the witness of Bartolomé de las Casas, whose deep love for thy people aroused in him a passion for justice and a zeal against oppression: Help us, inspired by his example, to work and pray for the freeing of all enslaved peoples of our world, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Eternal God, we give you thanks for the witness of Bartolomé de las Casas, whose deep love for your people aroused in him a passion for justice and a zeal against oppression: Help us, inspired by his example, to work and pray for the freeing of all enslaved people of our world, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## **July 19 Adelaide Teague Case**

**I**

Everliving God, in whose light we profess our faith, we thank thee for summoning thy daughter Adelaide Case to breathe thy Word of peace into generations of children and church-builders: Fill us, also, we pray, with the living breath of thy love for the world so that we may serve as willing conduits of thy wisdom through Christ, who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, today and always. *Amen.*

**II**

Everliving God, in whose light we profess our faith: we thank you for summoning your daughter Adelaide Case to breathe your Word of peace into generations of children and church-builders: Fill us, too, with the living breath of your love for the world so that we may serve as willing conduits of

your wisdom through Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, this day and always. *Amen.*

### **July 21 Albert John Luthuli**

**I**

God of peace, we give thanks for the witness of Albert Luthuli, a peacemaker emboldened by faith to protest apartheid in South Africa: Strengthen us to be such bulwarks against tyranny that we, also, may never make peace with oppression, but remain forever fortified by thy Son Jesus Christ; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, for all time. *Amen.*

**II**

God of peace, we give thanks for the witness of Albert Luthuli, a peacemaker emboldened by faith to protest apartheid in South Africa: Strengthen us to be such bulwarks against tyranny that we, too, never make peace with oppression but remain forever fortified by your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for all time. *Amen.*

### **July 28 Johann Sebastian Bach, George Frederick Handel, and Henry Purcell**

**I**

God of resounding power, awesome in majesty and majestic in holiness, who didst give to thy musicians Henry Purcell, Johann Bach and George Handel the grace notes to show forth thy glory through their music: We beseech thee to give to all the company of composers and players harmony of heart for us to hear, that we may repeat your word and trumpet your new creation in Jesus Christ' who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

God of resounding power, awesome in majesty and majestic in holiness, you gave to your musicians Henry Purcell, Johann Bach, and George Handel the grace notes to show forth your glory through their music: Give to all the company of composers and players harmony of heart for us to hear, that we may repeat your word and trumpet your new creation in Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### **July 30 William Wilberforce and Anthony Ashley Cooper, Lord Shaftesbury**

**I**

Just and eternal God, we give thee humble thanks for the exemplary faith and stalwart persistence of thy servants, Williams Wilberforce and Anthony Ashley Cooper: Grant that we, like them, drawn by a Gospel vision of justice, may persevere in serving the common good by lifting the downcast as we have been raised up through Jesus Christ; who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Just and eternal God, we give you humble thanks for the exemplary faith and stalwart persistence of your servants, William Wilberforce and Anthony Ashley Cooper. Grant that we, like them, drawn by a Gospel vision of justice, may persevere in serving the common good by lifting the downcast as we have been raised up through Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### **August 2 Samuel Ferguson**

**I**

Almighty God, we bless thee for they servant Samuel Ferguson and his missionary vision of thy Church in education and ministry: Stir up in us, we pray, a zeal and yearning for thy holy Word that we may

daily discern and do the work of thy Kingdom, equipping ourselves and others, rejoicing in thy blessing of all; through Jesus Christ, who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Almighty God, we bless you for your servant Samuel Ferguson and his missionary vision of your Church in education and ministry: Stir up in us a zeal and a yearning for your holy Word that we may daily discern and do the work of your Kingdom, equipping ourselves and others, rejoicing in your blessing of all; through Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**August 3 George Freeman Bragg, Jr.**

**I**

O God, the emancipator of souls, whose gifts of perseverance and courage buttressed George Freeman Bragg to discern within his own history, rooted in slavery, a vocation to advocacy for his fellow African-Americans in this Church and Nation: We beseech thee to lead us, with him, to live in thy will for justice, peace and human dignity, bound together in one family, freed by thy Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

**II**

Emancipator of Souls, your gifts of perseverance and courage buttressed George Freeman Bragg to discern within his own history, rooted in slavery, a vocation to advocacy for his fellow African-Americans in this church and nation: Lead us, like him, to live your will for justice, peace and human dignity, bound in one family, freed by your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and loves with you and the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

**August 3 William Edward Burghardt DuBois**

**I**

Gracious God, we thank thee for W. E. B. DuBois, whose passionate witness and prophetic scholarship did advance the dignity and rights of his people: And we pray that we may use our gifts to do justice in the Name of Jesus Christ our Liberator and Advocate; who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Gracious God, we thank you for W. E. B. DuBois, whose passionate witness and prophetic scholarship advanced the dignity and rights of his people; and we pray that we may use our gifts to do justice in the Name of Jesus Christ our Liberator and Advocate; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**August 5 Albrecht Dürer, Matthias Grünewald, and Lucas Cranach the Elder**

**I**

We give thee thanks, O Lord, for the imaginations and skills of Albrecht Dürer, Matthias Grünewald, and Lucas Cranach the Elder, and all visual artists whose works assist us to apprehend, appreciate and appropriate the power and glory of the Incarnation: And we pray that their work may strengthen our faith and life in Jesus Christ and the mystery of the Holy Trinity; who liveth and reigneth, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

We give thanks to you, O Lord, for the imaginations and skills of Albrecht Dürer, Matthias Grünewald, and Lucas Cranach the Elder, and all visual artists whose works assist us to apprehend, appreciate and appropriate the power and glory of the Incarnation; and we pray that their work may strengthen our

faith and life in Jesus Christ and the mystery of the Holy Trinity; for you live and reign, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

### **August 7 Catherine Winkworth**

**I**

Comfort thy people, God of peace, and grant us grace and gladness that, like thy poet and translator Catherine Winkworth, we may sing our thanks to thee with hearts and hands and voices, eternal triune God, whom earth and heaven adore; who liveth and reigneth for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Comfort your people, God of peace, and grant us grace and gladness that, like your poet and translator Catherine Winkworth, we may sing our thanks to you with hearts and hands and voices, eternal triune God, whom earth and heaven adore; for you live and reign for ever and ever. *Amen.*

### **August 9 Herman of Alaska**

**I**

O God who guidest thy people by thy light; we bless thee for Herman, North Star of Christ's Church, who tendered peace to the Aleuts; paint thy light across the skies for us that we also may see to follow closely on the paths of the peace of Jesus Christ; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, One God, throughout all ages. *Amen.*

**II**

Guiding Light, bless you for Herman, the North Star of Christ's Church, who tendered peace to the Aleuts; paint your light across the skies for us so that we, also, may see to follow closely on the path of the peace of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns, with you and the Holy Spirit, always and forever. *Amen.*

### **August 17 Samuel Johnson, Timothy Cutler, and Thomas Bradbury Chandler**

**I**

God of a pilgrim people, who didst call Samuel Johnson, Timothy Cutler, and Thomas Chandler to ministry in a new spiritual home; we give thee thanks for their devoted shepherding of thy flock in tumultuous times: And we pray that, like them, we may follow where thy Spirit leadeth and be ever eager to feed the hearts and minds of those entrusted to our care, in the Name of Jesus Christ; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

God of a pilgrim people, you called Samuel Johnson, Timothy Cutler, and Thomas Chandler to ministry in a new spiritual home; we give you thanks for their devoted shepherding of your flock in tumultuous times: And we pray that, like them, we may follow where your Spirit leads and be ever eager to feed the hearts and minds of those entrusted to our care, in the Name of Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### **August 20 Martin de Porres, Rose de Lima, and Toribio de Mogrovejo**

**I**

O God of mercy and might, who didst send the Gospel through the good offices of Martin de Porres, Rose de Lima, and Toribio de Mogrovejo, that they might tenderly care of the sick and poor of Peru: Stir up thy people so to resist evil, that we might offer thy grace with open hearts and hands, in the Name of Jesus Christ; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

God of mercy and might, you sent the Gospel through the good offices of Martin de Porres, Rosa de Lima, and Toribio de Mogrovejo, who tenderly cared for the sick and poor people of Peru: Stir us to resist evil so that we offer your grace with open hearts and hands, in the name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns, with you and the Holy Spirit, then and now and forevermore. *Amen.*

**August 29 John Bunyan**

**I**

God of the Word, who didst instill Christian truth in thy son John Bunyan as prisoner, poet and preacher: Direct us in our progress as thy pilgrim Church, with words and songs, so that we wander no longer but are saved by the Christ who, with thee and the Holy Spirit, liveth as One, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

God of the Word, who instilled Christian truth in your son John Bunyan as a prisoner, poet and preacher: Direct us, in our progress as your pilgrim church, with words and songs so that we wander no longer but are saved by the Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives as one, now and forever and a day. *Amen.*

**August 30 Charles Chapman Grafton**

**I**

Holy, Longing God, who didst call thy servant Charles Chapman Grafton to a catholic respect for souls of every color and cloth: Enkindle within us an ecumenical spirit, we beseech thee, that we may live out the baptismal vows we made to Jesus Christ; who liveth and reigneth with the Creator and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Holy, Longing God, you beckoned your servant Charles Chapman Grafton with a call to catholic respect for souls of every color and cloth; Enkindle within us an ecumenical spirit so that we live the baptismal vows we made to Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Creator and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**August 31 Aidan and Cuthbert**

**I**

Compassionate God, who didst inspire the monks Aidan and Cuthbert, each in his time, to lead thy Church with quiet and healing spirits: We beseech thee to show us, in our own lands, how to follow thee through deeds of faith that, with humility and simplicity we may take on the face of Christ, with love toward all; in the Name of him who liveth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Compassionate God, you inspired the monks Aidan and Cuthbert, each in his time, to lead your Church with quiet and healing spirits: Show us, in our own lands, how to follow you through deeds of faith so that, humbly and simply, we may take on the face of Christ, with love toward all in the Name of Him, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit as one giving God, now and without end. *Amen.*

**September 7 Elie Naud**

**I**

O God of light and hope, whom we bless for sending Elie Naud to proclaim the Gospel to the littlest and least: We pray that thy will may be done in the dark places as well as the light, that, blessed with thy heavenly grace, we may minister in the name of Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Savior, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Burning Light of Hope, we bless you for sending Elie Naud to proclaim the Gospel to the littlest and least: We pray for your will to be done in the dark places as well as the light so that, blessed with your heavenly grace, we may minister in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, our savior, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, always One, for ever. *Amen.*

**September 8 Nikolai Grundtvig**

**I**

O God the ever radiant, who didst shine in the heart of thy son Nikolai Grundtvig, warming him to create hymns a thousandfold: We pray that thou mayest sing to us so heartily of thy blessed Son Jesus Christ that we might join in the alleluia chorus with him; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, in unison everlasting. *Amen.*

**II**

Ever radiant God, when you shone into the heart of your son, Nikolai Grundtvig, you warmed him to create hymns a thousandfold: Sing to us so lustily of your blessed Son Jesus Christ, that we must join in the alleluia chorus with him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God in unison everlasting. *Amen.*

**September 11 Harry Thacker Burleigh**

**I**

God of grace throughout all ages; we bless thy name for investing thy spirit in Harry Burleigh to write, to hear, and to preserve music recalling the struggles of his people. Bless us with heightened harmonies that we, as one Church, may find our days to ring in one accord with our Savior Jesus Christ, with thee and the Holy Spirit, throughout all measure and time. *Amen.*

**II**

God of timeless grace, we bless your name for investing your spirit in Harry Burleigh to write, to hear, and to preserve music that recalls the struggles of his people. Bless us with heightened harmonies so that, as one church, our days may ring in accord with our Savior Jesus Christ, with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, through all measure and time. *Amen.*

**September 15 James Chisholm**

**I**

God of constancy, who didst call James Chisholm to be present as a priest to his own people, and in a time of pestilence to remain constant as a nurse through their deaths until his own: Discipline us, we pray, to hold fast to thy calling through sickness and health until such time as we enter thy heavenly kingdom; where thou livest and reignest with thy Son, our Savior Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit, where there is neither pain nor sickness but glory everlasting. *Amen.*

**II**

God of constancy, you called James Chisholm to be present as a priest to his people and, in a time of pestilence, to remain constant as a nurse through their deaths until his own. Discipline us, we pray, to hold fast to your calling, through sickness and in health, until such time as we enter your heavenly kingdom, where you live and reign with your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit, and where there is neither pain nor sickness but glory everlasting. *Amen.*

**September 27 Vincent de Paul**

**I**

God of Charity, who didst train thy servant Vincent de Paul to care for the poor, inspiring him to teach others the greater goodness of serving the sick, orphans and prisoners: Enable us, we beseech thee, to encounter Christ in those who are outcast or downcast, that together we may all come to thy Kingdom where thou reignest, one holy and undivided Trinity, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

God of Charity, you trained your servant Vincent de Paul to care for poor people, and he, in turn, taught others the greater goodness of giving to sick people, to orphans and to prisoners. Enable us to encounter Christ in those who are outcast or downcast, so that together we all may come to your kingdom, where you reign, one holy and undivided Trinity, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**September 27 Thomas Traherne**

**I**

Creator of wonder and majesty, who didst inspire Thomas Traherne with mystical insight to see thy glory in the natural world and in the faces of women and men around us: Help us to know thee in thy creation and in our neighbors, and to understand our obligations to both, that we may ever grow into the people thou hast created us to be; through our Savior Jesus Christ, who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, in everlasting light. *Amen.*

**II**

Creator of wonder and majesty, you inspired Thomas Traherne with mystical insight to see your glory in the natural world and in the faces of women and men around us: Help us to know you in your creation and in our neighbors, and to understand our obligations to both, that we may ever grow into the people you have created us to be; through our Savior Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in everlasting light. *Amen.*

**September 28 Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton, and Margery Kempe**

**I**

Gracious God, we offer thanks for the testimony of Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton, and Margery Kempe who, passing through the cloud of unknowing, beheld thy glory: Enlighten us, we pray thee, to see thee more clearly and love thee more dearly so that we might behold our Lord Jesus Christ; who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**II**

Gracious God, we give you thanks for the testimony of Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton, and Margery Kempe, who, passing through the cloud of unknowing, beheld your glory. Enlighten us to see you more clearly and love you more dearly so that we might behold our Lord Jesus Christ; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**October 3 George Kennedy Allen Bell**

**I**

God of peace, who didst sustain thy servant George Bell with the courage to proclaim thy truth and justice in the face of disapproval: As he taught that friends and enemies alike are all children of God, draw us to stand with Christ in his hour of grieving, so that at length we may enter thy country where there is no sorrow nor sighing, but the fullness of joy in thee; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer, who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

**II**

God of peace, you sustained your bishop George Bell with the courage to proclaim your truth and justice in the face of disapproval: As he taught that friends and enemies alike are all children of God, draw us to stand with Christ in his hour of grieving, so that at length we may enter your country where there is no sorrow nor sighing, but fullness of joy in you; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

## October 3 John Raleigh Mott

I

O God, the Shepherd of all, we offer thanks for thy servant John Raleigh Mott and his lifelong commitment to the Christian nurture of students: We pray that, after his example, we may strive for the unity of all peoples in friendship, fellowship and cooperation, and while life lasts that we may be evangelists for Jesus Christ, in whom alone is our peace; and who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

II

Shepherd of all, we give you thanks for your servant John Raleigh Mott and his lifelong commitment to the Christian nurture of students. We pray that, after his example, we may strive for the unity of all peoples in friendship, fellowship and cooperation, and while life lasts be evangelists for Jesus Christ, in whom alone is our peace; and who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## October 6 William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale

I

O God, the eternal Word of Life, who didst plant in the hearts of thy servants William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale passion and skill to translate the Holy Scriptures into graceful and enduring language: Enrapture us, we pray, with the love of thy Word, that we may all delight in thy presence as it is revealed in text and incarnated in the love of Jesus Christ; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

II

Life's eternal Word, you planted in the hearts of your servants William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale passion and skill to translate the Holy Scriptures into graceful and enduring language: Enrapture us, we pray, with the love of your Word that we all may delight in your presence, revealed in text and incarnated in the love of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## October 7 Henry Melchior Muhlenberg

I

Loving God, shepherd of thy people; we offer thanks for the ministry of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, who didst leave his native land to care for German and Scandinavian pioneers in North America: Raise us up into the full stature of Christ; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

II

Loving God, shepherd of your people, we thank you for the ministry of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, who left his native land to care for German and Scandinavian pioneers in North America: We beseech thee to raise us into the full stature of Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## October 8 William Dwight Porter Bliss and Richard Theodore Ely

I

Blessed God, whose Son Jesus came as servant to all; we offer thanks for William Bliss and Richard Ely, whose dedication to economic justice made them bold advocates of reform in Church and State: May we, with them, find our true happiness in service to thy reign, where all the hungry are fed and the downtrodden raised up through the same Jesus Christ our Liberator; who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

II

Blessed God, whose Son Jesus came as servant to all: We thank you for William Bliss and Richard Ely, whose dedication to economic justice made them bold advocates of reform in Church and State. May we, with them, find our true happiness in service to your reign, where all the hungry are fed and the downtrodden raised up through Jesus Christ our Liberator; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## October 9 Wilfred Thomason Grenfell

I

Generous God, who didst exercise thy willing servant Wilfred Grenfell that he might feed, school and doctor the sick and seafaring in the cold north through Seaman's Institutes throughout the world: We beseech thee to warm our hands for the charity you have asked of us, that we may proffer abundance in the name of thy caring Son, Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

II

Giving God, you exercised your willing servant Wilfred Grenfell that he might feed, school and doctor those who are sick and the seafaring in the cold north, through Seaman's Institutes throughout the world: Warm our hands for the charity you have asked of us so that we proffer abundance in the name of your caring son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## October 19 William Carey

I

Merciful God, who didst grant William Carey zeal for thy Word and gifts to open doors to Scripture through the languages and dialects of India: Enlarge our hearts, we pray, that we may spread thy Gospel, and grant us grace to help bring justice among all the peoples of the world; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who shedeth thy light and peace upon all humanity, and who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

II

Merciful God, you granted William Carey zeal for your Word and gifts to open doors to Scripture through the languages and dialects of India: Enlarge our hearts for spreading your Gospel and grace to be your justice among all the peoples of the world; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who sheds your light and peace throughout humanity, and who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## October 30 John Wyclif

I

God of justice, who dost continually challenge thy Church to live according to its calling: Grant us who now remember the work of John Wyclif contrition for the wounds our sins do inflict on thy Church, and give us such love for Christ that we may seek to heal the divisions that afflict his Body; through the same Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

God of justice, you continually challenge your Church to live according to its calling: Grant us who now remember the work of John Wyclif contrition for the wounds our sins inflict on your Church, and such love for Christ that we may seek to heal the divisions that afflict his Body; through the same Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**October 31 Paul Shinji Sasaki and Philip Lindel Tsen**

**I**

Reconciling God, we thank thee for the tenacity shown by your servants Paul Sasaki and Philip Tsen who, though imprisoned in separate homelands, were united in building up thy Church: We pray that all who suffer hostility for their faith in Christ may be delivered by thy mercy so that we may show forth thy goodness and share the life fully given to all who serve thy Son, Jesus Christ, who liveth, One with thee and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. *Amen.*

**II**

Reconciling God, we thank you for the tenacity shown by your servants Paul Sasaki and Philip Tsen who, although imprisoned in separate homelands, were united in building your Church: We pray that all who suffer hostility for their faith in Christ may be delivered by your mercy so that we may show forth your goodness and share life as it is fully given to all who serve your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives as One with you and the Holy Spirit, all ways and always. *Amen.*

**November 21 William Byrd, John Merbecke, and Thomas Tallis**

**I**

O God, whose praises are sung night and day, we give thee thanks for the musicians William Byrd, John Merbecke and Thomas Tallis who did elevate earthly hymns that we might hear the music of heaven: Direct us to love thee so soundly that we may prepare ourselves for the choirs of heaven, where Jesus Christ our Lord liveth with thee and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**II**

God, whose praises are sung night and day, we thank you for the musicians William Byrd, John Merbecke and Thomas Tallis, who elevated earthly hymns to heavenly realms through extraordinary composing. Direct us to love you so soundly that we ready ourselves for the chorus of heaven, where Jesus Christ, our Lord, lives with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**November 22 Cecilia**

**I**

O resounding God, who didst inspire thy martyr Cecilia; we offer praise and thanks in her name for all makers of music: Direct the music of our lives, we beseech thee, so that with every song of lament or praise, wisdom or need, we may pray in harmony with heaven; where with the Son and Holy Spirit thou liveth, one God, through ages without measure. *Amen.*

**II**

Resounding God, in the honored name of Cecilia, we praise you and thank you for all makers of music; direct the music of our lives, so that, with each song of lament, of praise, of wisdom or need, we pray in harmony with heaven, where with the Son and Holy Spirit, you live, one God, Mother and Father, through ages without measure. *Amen.*

**Liturgical Materials Honoring  
God in Creation and  
Various Rites and Prayers for  
Animals**

# Contents

Introduction to the Propers for the Honoring of God in Creation

Propers for the Honoring of God in Creation

Prayers of the People Honoring God in Creation

*Form 1*

*Form 2*

*Form 3*

A Confession of Sin Against God's Creation

A Litany for the Planet

A Rogation Day Procession and Liturgy

Prayers for Rogation Day: A Rite for the Blessing of a Garden and All Who Labor

A Liturgy in Thanksgiving for Creation and in Honor of the Feast of St. Francis,  
with the Blessing of Animals

Additional Readings and Resources for St. Francis Day

Burial Office for a Beloved Animal

Prayers Suitable for Use in Church or for Other Gatherings,  
at the Adoption, Illness, Loss, or Death of Companion, Service, or Other Beloved Animals

# Introduction to the Propers for the Honoring of God in Creation

When we see the great abundance, diversity, and intricacy of God's creatures, we are awestruck by life on our planet. We are amazed by the God who has created all that is, and who is the engineer or crafter of the cosmos, designing and assembling all the details. But we also know from science that the details of organisms change through time according to their situations, that is, that they evolve through adaptation and natural selection.

Some people take this to mean that there is no role for God in the evolution of life on our planet, but they miss the point that it is through God's love and humility that the processes of nature operate, bringing growth and adaptive change. God's love grants creation the freedom to make and remake. Scripture is clear that the divine mercy is over all God's works. The material world is not something to be simply disregarded and destroyed as unimportant to God, whose love is unwavering.

Just as we do not read scripture literally, so we must resist reading nature literally, but instead search for the big themes and the evolving stories, exploring a deeper and more sweeping narrative. It is in Jesus Christ that we see God's humility most particularly, and gain insight into what theologian John Haught has called the "extravagant generosity" of God. In the ancient hymn of Philippians 2 we gaze at Christ, who did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself to take the form of a servant, not simply on behalf of humankind, but on behalf of the whole cosmos which is redeemed in him.

Just as we are called to consider the lost and the least among our human brothers and sisters, so we may say that we are called to consider the dignity of all God's creatures. Science currently is working on several fronts to discover more about kinship. There are both genetic/hereditary and ecological relationships among earth's creatures. We share much of our DNA with plants and animals we do not usually consider as having much in common with us, and the air we breathe requires the healthy function of organisms far less complex than we are. For many people honoring the dignity of every creature involves thinking about threatened species of birds and mammals and large fish, environmentalism's poster children, but for those who study life on earth, whether professional biologists or backyard naturalists, it means considering the insects and the plankton, the mushrooms and molds, the plants that bring us joy and the ones we call weeds, the algae and the bacteria. It means considering the dignity of even those species which bring humans disease, such as mosquitoes and viruses. It means pondering the relationships among creatures which are not always pretty: predation, parasitism, scavenging.

Each creature's uniqueness is neither individual nor fixed. Living things develop their characteristics in their contexts in relationship to other creatures, other members of their population, and other species in their community. As the resources in their habitats change, and pressures from their fellow creatures shift, they change. Death and even extinction of populations and species are a natural part of this process of change. But that reality does not mean that humans should accelerate extinction through our activities.

Our understanding of God as One, yet three persons, is a divine picture of diversity in community. Each person of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit, gives to and receives from the others, in a community of exchange we call love. What is true of God may then be seen to be true of the community of life which God has loved into being and sustains through love. While each creature has its dignity, in life and death, in struggle and in beauty, all creatures in their diversity, including human beings, are held in community with one another.

There is no doubt that human beings have changed the earth's cycles, surface, and creatures by our activities. We have managed and bred for our use and enjoyment some plants and animals, and destroyed the habitats of others. We have extracted minerals, fossil fuels, and soils, and have been careless with our use of extracted water. We have preserved some biomes for their scenic beauty, but

ignored the ecological services provided by others. We have trawled the bottom of the seas and used them as a trash repository. A growing and increasingly urban population's hunger for food, clothing, shelter, and fuel is taking its toll, despite ongoing efforts to slow the loss of traditional rural wisdom about conservation and creation care. Human migration has fostered the spread of invasive species that displace native species, just as human migrants have often displaced indigenous peoples.

Scientists and activists may disagree about what is the greatest threat to human survival on the planet. Should the scarcity of water for drinking and sanitation be our biggest concern, or the challenge to feed a hungry world in an ecologically sustainable way? And which of our excesses put the whole planet in the greatest peril? Is it climate change or the loss of biodiversity that poses the greatest threat to the resilience of life on earth?

Ecologists understand that while entry points for concern and action vary, all these issues are interrelated. In agriculture, to take an example from our managed environment, resilience in the face of climate change will depend on better stewardship of water and increased preservation of the diversity of seed stock available for developing improved crops, while those engaged in agriculture continue to assess their contribution to greenhouse gases, polluted waste water, and soil erosion, and how all these negative impacts on the environment can be decreased.

There have been and will continue to be unintended consequences for our environment due to our choices and behaviors, but study and prayer can help us to become more conscious of the human impact on our planet. As we consider the risen and ascended Christ drawing all things to their perfection in himself, indeed drawing the cosmos into the heart of God in that process the Eastern Church calls "deification," we find reason for hope and an impetus for the renewing and reconciling of our relationships within the creation of which we are a part.

# Propers for the Honoring of God in Creation

## 1. God, the source and destiny of the cosmos

Author of creation:

In wisdom you brought forth all that is,  
to participate in your divine being,  
and to change, adapt, and grow in freedom.  
You make holy the matter and energy of the universe  
that it may delight you and give you praise.  
We thank you for gathering all creation into your heart  
by the energy of your Spirit  
and bringing it through death to resurrection glory;  
through the One in whom all things have their being,  
Jesus Christ, our Lord. *Amen.*

Isaiah 40:21-28a  
Psalm 136:1-9, 25-26  
Revelation 22:1-5  
John 3:16-17

## 2. God of order and dynamic change

Mysterious God, whose imagination and desire embrace all:  
We seek to discern you in the interplay of forces,  
in the order and the chaos of the universe,  
and in the complexities of every living system.  
Give us grace to honor your goodness  
in what we know and in what we do not know,  
in the world's harmonies and turbulence,  
and in its promise and change.  
For you are in, through, and beyond all that is:  
one God, made known to us in Jesus Christ,  
through the Holy Spirit, our inspiration and guide. *Amen.*

Job 37:1-7  
Psalm 102:25-28  
Revelation 21:3-5a  
Luke 13:6-9

## 3. The justice of God and the dignity of all creatures

Holy God, your mercy is over all your works,  
and in the web of life each creature has its role and place.  
We praise you for ocelot and owl, cactus and kelp, lichen and whale;  
we honor you for whirlwind and lava, tide and topsoil, cliff and marsh.  
Give us hearts and minds eager to care for your planet,  
humility to recognize all creatures as your beloved ones,  
justice to share the resources of the earth with all its inhabitants,  
and love not limited by our ignorance.  
This we pray in the name of Jesus,  
who unifies what is far off and what is near,  
and in whom, by grace and the working of your Holy Spirit,  
all things hold together. *Amen.*

Jonah 3:4-10  
Psalm 145:8-10, 16-18  
Ephesians 1:8b-10  
Luke 10:25-37

**4. The kinship and unity of all creation in Christ**

God, maker of marvels,  
you weave the planet and all its creatures together in kinship;  
your unifying love is revealed in the interdependence of relationships  
in the complex world that you have made.  
Save us from the illusion that humankind is separate and alone,  
and join us in communion with all inhabitants of the universe;  
through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer,  
who topples the dividing walls by the power of your Holy Spirit,  
and who lives and reigns with you, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Genesis 9:8-16  
Psalm 36:5-10  
Colossians 1:15-20  
John 1:1-5

**5. Reading God's goodness in the diversity of life**

Gracious God, you reveal your goodness  
in the beauty and diversity of creation:  
in the circle dance of earth and air and water;  
in a universe rich in processes that support growth and coherence,  
distinctiveness and community;  
and above all in the gift of Jesus Christ,  
who emptied himself to serve your world.  
And so we offer thanks and praise to you,  
one God in three persons:  
the Author and Source of all,  
Christ the Incarnate Word,  
and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Genesis 1:11-12, 20-22  
Psalm 104:25-32  
Revelation 5:11-14  
Matthew 13:31-32

**6. Called to be God's partners in the care of the planet**

Bountiful God, you call us to labor with you in tending the earth:  
Where we lack love, open our hearts to the world;  
where we waste, give us discipline to conserve;  
where we neglect, awaken our minds and wills to insight and care.  
May we in all things honor and serve you alongside all your creatures,  
for you live and reign with Christ, Redeemer of all,  
and with your Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Ezekiel 47:6-12  
Psalm 33:3-9, 13-15  
Romans 8:18-23  
Mark 16:14-15

# Prayers of the People Honoring God in Creation

## Form 1

*Deacon or other Leader*

Blessed God, whose love calls the whole creation into covenant relationship with you, and who puts in our hands responsibility for the care of the earth and its creatures: we pray for all to whom you have given life and being, saying:  
Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the well-being of the earth; for its resources of water, air, light, and soil, that they may be tended for the good of all creatures, we pray:  
Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the waters of the earth; for their careful use and conservation, that we may have the skill and the will to keep them clean and pure, we pray:  
Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the mineral, soil, and energy resources of the planet, that we may learn sustainable consumption and sound care of the environment from which they come, we pray:  
Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the animals of the earth, wild and domestic, large and very small, that they may know the harmony of relationship among them that sustains all life, we pray:  
Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the creatures of the earth who do us harm and those whose place in your creation we do not understand or welcome, that we may see them as beloved creatures of God, we pray:  
Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For all who shape public policies affecting the planet and its creatures [especially \_\_\_\_\_ and our local leaders \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_], that they may consider wisely the commonweal of those who will come after us, we pray:  
Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For all those engaged in conservation, in agriculture and ranching, in aquaculture and fishing, in mining and industry, and in forestry and timber-harvesting, that the health, fruitfulness, and beauty of the natural world may be sustained alongside human activity, we pray:  
Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the creatures and the human beings of your world who are ill, or in danger, pain, or special need [especially \_\_\_\_\_], and for all who suffer from the unjust, violent, or intemperate use of the earth's resources or their devastation by war, that all may one day live in communities of justice and peace, we pray:  
Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the gifts of science and technology and for those who practice these skills, that they may be wise, visionary, and compassionate in their work, we pray:  
Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

For the creatures and the people of the earth whose lives and deaths have contributed to the fruitful abundance of this planet [giving thanks especially for \_\_\_\_\_], we pray:  
Merciful God, keep your planet and people in peace.

*The Presider concludes the Prayers with this or another suitable collect*

Gracious God:

Grant that your people may have in them  
the same mind that was in Christ Jesus,  
and guide us into harmony of relationship  
through loving-kindness and the wise use  
of all that you have given;  
for you are drawing all things into communion with you  
and with each other by the power of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

## Form 2

*During the silence after each bidding, the people offer their own prayers, either silently or aloud.*

*Intercessor*

Let us pray for the revealing of the reign of God in the world, now and always:

*Intercessor and People*

In the beginning, God was.  
Here and now, God is.  
In the future, God will be.

*Intercessor*

Creator of earth, sea, and sky, kindle the fire of your Spirit within us that we may  
be bold to heal and defend the earth around us, and pour your blessing upon the  
people and organizations working everywhere for the good of the planet.

*Silence*

God, Giver of life,  
*Hear our prayer.*

Breath of life, receive our thanks for the beauty of our local habitat and all its  
inhabitants, and lend us the wisdom and will to conserve them.

*Silence*

God, Giver of life,  
*Hear our prayer.*

Light and source of life, heal and redeem the wounds of your creation, and visit  
the places and people who suffer from our indifference, neglect, and greed.

*Silence*

God, Giver of life,  
*Hear our prayer.*

Lover of all you have made, we thank you for the wondrous diversity of your  
creatures, and we pray for their well-being.

*Silence*

God, Giver of life,  
*Hear our prayer.*

Author of the book of nature, receive our gratitude for the places of restoration  
and healing, and challenge us to sustain the places that feed our lives and spirits.

*Silence*

God, Giver of life,

*Hear our prayer.*

Wise Creator whose works are full of mystery, give us wonder and appreciation for your creatures with whom we find ourselves in conflict.

*Silence*

God, Giver of life,

*Hear our prayer.*

Giver of all good gifts, awaken us daily to our dependence upon your generosity, and make us always thankful for the abundance of your blessings.

*Silence*

God, Giver of life,

*Hear our prayer.*

Joy of human hearts, heal our human communities, especially those where your word is not heard, or where neglect, violence, greed, and warfare increase the suffering and need of people and other creatures.

*Silence*

God, Giver of life,

*Hear our prayer.*

Comforter of all the earth, sustain the people of this *congregation* who desire or need your presence and help [especially \_\_\_\_\_].

*Silence*

God, Giver of life,

*Hear our prayer.*

Rock and refuge of all your creatures, receive into everlasting mercy all those who have died [especially \_\_\_\_\_].

*Silence*

God, Giver of life,

*Hear our prayer.*

*The Presider concludes the prayers with one of the following collects*

Eternal God, the light of all who know you,  
come and fill our hearts with your love.  
Help us speak when many keep silent,  
help us stand for what is right when many sit in indifference.  
Increase our faith and charity,  
until your kingdom comes and heaven and earth rejoice  
in everlasting glory;  
through your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ.

*Amen.*

(source: Anne Kelsey)

*or this*

Holy God, you alone are unutterable,  
from the time you created all things that can be spoken of.  
You alone are unknowable,  
from the time you created all things that can be known.  
All things cry out about you: those that speak, and those that cannot speak.  
All things honor you: those that think, and those that cannot think.  
For there is one longing, one groaning, which all things have for you.  
All things pray to you that comprehend your plan and offer you a silent hymn.  
In you, the One, all things abide,

and all things endlessly run to you who are the end of all. Amen.  
(source: Gregory of Nazianzus)

*or this*

[Gichi Manidoo,] Great Spirit God,  
we give you thanks for another day on this earth.  
We give you thanks for this day  
to enjoy the compassionate goodness of you, our Creator.  
We acknowledge with one mind  
our respect and gratefulness to all the sacred cycle of life.  
Bind us together in the circle of compassion  
to embrace all living creatures and one another. *Amen.*  
(source: *Native American/Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Liturgies*, Prepared for the 76th General  
Convention of the Episcopal Church, July 2009, Anaheim, California)

### Form 3 (on the theme of water)

*The silence after each petition may be followed by an appropriate response, such as “Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.”*

The water that God called into being is at the heart of all that lives. Mindful of the many ways water affects our lives, let us pray for our waters and for the life of the world around us.

*Silence*

I ask your prayers for all people of faith, and for the transformations in their lives that are marked by the sacredness of water: at the Red Sea, in the Jordan and the Ganges Rivers, in ritual baths, in the washing of feet, and in Holy Baptism.

*Silence*

I ask your prayers for the leaders of nations, corporations, and communities around the world, that they may exercise wise stewardship over the waters of their lands, so that all people may have clean water to drink and live free from waterborne diseases.

*Silence*

I ask your prayers for the wisdom to shape creative solutions to conflicts over water in the dry places of our planet, and for justice and peace in desert lands.

*Silence*

I ask your prayers for the oceans, seas, rivers, lakes, watersheds, streams, ponds, deltas, marshes, and swamps of our planet, for the waters beneath the ground, and for all creatures that live in the waters of the earth.

*Silence*

I ask your prayers for all who travel or work at sea or on inland waterways.

*Silence*

I ask your prayers for all who suffer from too much water in the destruction of flood, storm, tsunami, and ice; and for those people and creatures who suffer as the glaciers and ice floes vanish.

*Silence*

I ask your prayers for all who thirst for water, for health, for love, for wisdom, for God, that their cups may be filled to overflowing.

*Silence*

I ask your prayers for all who have died and for all who mourn, that their tears of grief may be turned to wellsprings of joy.

*Silence*

*Collect*

Blessed God, in your wisdom you uphold creation  
and renew it again and again.  
Help us to see all water as holy water,  
and all our concerns as bathed in the living water Christ gives us,  
in whose name we pray. *Amen.*

# A Confession of Sin against God's Creation

*The Deacon or Presider may introduce the Confession with these words*

Let us confess our sin against God and God's creation.

*Silence may be kept.*

*Minister and People*

Holy and merciful God,  
we confess that we have failed to honor you  
by rightly claiming our kinship with all your creatures.  
We have walked heavily on your earth,  
overused and wasted its resources,  
taken for granted its beauty and abundance,  
and treated its inhabitants unjustly,  
holding future generations hostage to our greed.  
Have mercy on us and forgive us our sin.  
Renew in us the resolve to tend and keep your earth  
as you desire and intend,  
with grateful and compassionate hearts,  
through your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

*or this*

Merciful and sustaining God,  
we have sinned against you.  
We confess our lack of gratitude  
for the beauty and bounty of your creation:  
teach us to see that your earth sustains us and all that lives.  
We confess that we have misused your earth:  
grant us amendment of life.  
We confess that we have been intemperate in our appetites:  
strengthen us in self-control.  
We confess that we have taken the abundance of your world for granted:  
make us urgent now for its protection.  
Forgive and renew us now through our Savior Jesus Christ,  
by the power of the Holy Spirit,  
with whom you live and reign, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

*or this*

God of compassion, have mercy upon us.  
Bring healing to our relationship with all your creation.  
Forgive us for our mistreatment and neglect  
of the creatures with whom we share your earth:  
for what we have done to harm them,  
and for what we have not done to help them.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
We ask you to fill us with your Spirit,  
that we may care for one another and for all your creatures,  
according to your will and in the fullness of your love;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

# A Litany for the Planet

*The Deacon or other Leader may select apt portions of this litany, and add local examples to any category, as well as special concerns and occasions for prayer where appropriate.*

Lord, have mercy.  
*Christ, have mercy.*  
Lord, have mercy.

On your earth, as it changes,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On the soil, that it may be built up and be fruitful,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On the minerals below ground that nourish life,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your volcanoes and lava flows,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your hills and great mountains, on your valleys, cliffs, and caves,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your deserts and their hardy creatures,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

\* \* \*

On your waters, that they may be clean and sustain a diverse community of life,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your coral reefs, on the animals, plants, and fish that inhabit them,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your deeps and their creatures, on the open seas and all that travel them,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your rivers, that they may flow unpolluted, bringing water to thirsty land,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your lakes and streams, that their right balance may sustain plants and animals,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your vernal ponds and marshes, cradles of life,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your wetlands and estuaries, on shingles and beaches,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your islands and atolls, on your oases and all outposts of life in harsh places,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your glaciers and ice fields, holding the water of life,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your storms, floods, and tempests, and all fearful forces for change,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your clement rains that cause the plants to sprout and grow,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your snow and hail, sleet and winter cold, and all that waits dormant for  
spring,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your mists and fog that water the ground,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

\* \* \*

On the atmosphere of your planet earth, that it may sustain all that breathes,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your winds that carry seeds and spores, that warm and cool, that moisten and  
dry,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your lightning and fire that cleanse and destroy, and on all in their path,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

\* \* \*

On eukaryotes and prokaryotes, archaea<sup>1</sup> and viruses; on microbes of endless  
variety, the complex and the simple,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your reptiles and amphibians, on \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ [*local examples*],  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your four-legged creatures, on \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ [*local examples*],  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your two legged and winged creatures, on \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ [*local examples*],  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your many-legged creatures, on your insects, on \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ [*local  
examples*],  
*Creator, have mercy.*

\* \* \*

On your forests of many kinds, on your trees and shrubs and vines,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your grasslands and plains, on your tundras and their plants,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

1 *Eukaryotes* (yu-kar-ee-ohts): any organism having as its fundamental structural unit a cell type that contains specialized organelles in the cytoplasm, a membrane-bound nucleus enclosing genetic material organized into chromosomes, and an elaborate system of division by mitosis or meiosis, characteristic of all life forms except bacteria, blue-green algae, and other primitive microorganisms.

*Prokaryotes* (proh-kar-ee-ohts): any cellular organism that has no nuclear membrane, no organelles in the cytoplasm except ribosomes, and has its genetic material in the form of single continuous strands forming coils or loops, characteristic of all organisms in the kingdom Monera, as the bacteria and blue-green algae.

*Archaea* (ahr-kay-ah): any of the unicellular microorganisms that are genetically distinct from bacteria and eukaryotes, and are often found inhabiting extreme environmental conditions (caves, undersea vents, great ocean deeps, etc. Archaea (or archaeobacteria) evolved separately from eubacteria and eukaryotes. They are similar to eukaryotes in possessing genes and metabolic pathways. They are considered to be living fossils and survivors of an ancient group of organisms that bridged the gap in evolution between eubacteria and eukaryotes.

(Definitions from Dictionary.com and biology.com)

On your ferns and your fungi, on the spore-bearing plants and the seed-bearing plants,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On all the ecosystems of your earth and their intricate communities,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On your mysterious creatures and places unknown to humankind,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On the human family across the globe, that we may know our kinship with all creation,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

\* \* \*

*For the city/town*

On all who live in this *city* and this neighborhood,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On those who work around us, whose labor builds up the world, on \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ [*local work examples*],  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On the businesses and industries of this *city*, on \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ [*local examples*],  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On the plants and animals of the urban ecosystem, on \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ [*local examples*],  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On the parks and green spaces of this *city* and those who maintain them,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On those who produce food and energy for this *city's* people,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On schools and places of learning, on all who care for and teach children and adults,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On the poor and homeless residents of this *city*,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On visitors and immigrants, on all who offer welcome and shelter here,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On all places of reverence and prayer, on all who honor you and all who do not know you,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On our ancestors and those who will come after us, and on all your people,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On all creation returning praise to you,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

\* \* \*

*In time of widespread disease*

On all those stricken with \_\_\_\_\_, and all who are ill of any disease,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On those who care for loved ones who are ill,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On doctors and nurses and all who render help and lend skill,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On scientists and researchers, that there may be treatments and cures,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On all working for public health, safety, and well-being,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On all who are fearful, on those who are alone and in need,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

On those who are dying and those who have died, and on all who mourn,  
*Creator, have mercy.*

# A Rogation Day Procession and Liturgy

*The Rogation Days are traditionally observed on the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before Ascension Day. They may, however, be observed on other days, depending on local conditions and the convenience of the congregation. In ancient times, the observance consisted of an outdoor procession that culminated in a special celebration of the Eucharist. Prayers might be offered for the city, the neighborhood, all who labor, the fruitfulness of the land and waters, and for deliverance in time of war, disaster, or epidemic disease. The term from which this observance is drawn is the Latin rogare, meaning “to ask.”*

*Stations suitable for the procession may be selected, adapted, and ordered according to local circumstances.*

## The Rogation Procession

*The congregation gathers at a convenient place and may sing a hymn. During the movement from place to place, to preserve the solemnity of the procession, it is desirable for the people to refrain from conversation and to join in hymns, litanies said or sung, bells, instrumental music, or silence. At the stations the Presider may cense or sprinkle the place.*

*Suitable litanies include Psalm 103 with the refrain “Bless the Lord, O my soul”; Psalm 104 with the refrain “Hallelujah!”; the Venite (Psalm 95:1-7); Canticle D, A Song of the Wilderness (Isaiah 35:1-7, 10); and Canticle O, A Song of the Heavenly City (Revelation 21:22-26, 22:1-4). The Great Litany might be used. Several of these may be found in contemporary language in Enriching Our Worship 1. The Presider may assign lay people to read the prayers.*

*Presider* Blessed be the one, holy, and living God.  
*People* Glory to God for ever and ever.

*Presider* Almighty God, Lord of heaven and earth: We humbly pray that your gracious providence may give and preserve for the good of all creatures the harvests of the land and of the seas, that those who receive good things from your hand may always give you thanks and praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

*Deacon* Let us go forth in peace.  
*People* In the name of Christ. Amen.

*A hymn, litany, or silence for the procession follows.*

## Station: At a place of work

*Reading* Romans 8:18-25 or Ecclesiasticus 38:27-32a

*Presider* Let us pray.  
Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ in his earthly life shared our toil and hallowed our labor: Be present with your people where they work. Make those who carry on the industries and commerce of this land responsive to your will, and bring all workers satisfaction in what they do and a just return for their

labor; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

*A hymn, litany, or silence for the procession follows.*

## Station: At a garden or park

*Reading* Mark 4:26-32

*Presider* Let us pray.  
Gracious God, we give you thanks for the fruitfulness of the earth that nourishes our life and the life of all your creatures. Bless those who work in fields and gardens. Send them seasonable and temperate weather, and grant that the fruits of the earth may be shared justly with all having need of them; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*A hymn, litany, or silence for the procession follows.*

## Station: At agricultural land or a farmer's market

*Reading* 2 Corinthians 9:8-12 or John 4:35-38

*Presider* Let us pray.  
Holy God, we thank you for the land and its soil, and all those who bring forth food and necessities of life from it. Send an abundant harvest to the farmers and ranchers of the world, and make all your people just, loving, and generous in their life together and mindful of the needs of your poor, after the example of Jesus Christ, the true Bread. *Amen.*

*A hymn, litany, or silence for the procession follows.*

## Station: For scientists, explorers, teachers, and learners

*Reading* Canticle 12      A Song of Creation      *Benedicite, omnia opera Domini*  
*The Book of Common Prayer, pages 88-90, Enriching Our Worship 1, page 25*

*The Benedicite may be said or sung.*

*Presider* Let us pray.  
Almighty and everlasting God, you made the universe with its marvelous order and chaos, its atoms, worlds, and galaxies, and the infinite complexity of living creatures. We give you thanks for all who increase knowledge of and wonder at your works. Grant that as we explore the mysteries of your creation, we may come to know you more truly and serve you more humbly; in the name of Jesus Christ our Risen Savior. *Amen.*

*A hymn, litany, or silence for the procession follows.*

## Station: At a place of food service

*Reading* Mark 6:35-44

*Presider* Let us pray.  
Merciful Creator, your hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every creature: Make us always thankful for your loving providence, and grant that we, remembering the account that we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your good gifts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

*A hymn, litany, or silence for the procession follows.*

## Station: For waters and those whose work depends on them

*Reading* Isaiah 41:17-20

*Presider* Let us pray.  
God, whose Spirit moved over the deep at its creation, and whose Son Jesus entered the waters of baptism and hallowed them for ever: We thank you for the gift of water—the waters on the surface of the earth, the waters beneath the ground, the water in our atmosphere, and the water in our bodies—and for all that dwells in the waters. Make us mindful of the care of all the planet's waters, that they may richly sustain life for us and for those who will come after us; through Jesus Christ, who is the source of living water. *Amen.*

*A hymn, litany, or silence for the procession follows.*

## Station: At a memorial garden or cemetery

*Reading* Job 14:1-14 or Matthew 27:57-61, 28:1-8

*Presider* Let us pray.  
Blessed God, because of your faithful love we do not perish for ever, for your mercies never end but are new every morning. Bring all your beloved ones who have died into the joy of your eternal presence [especially \_\_\_\_\_]. Renew the face of the ground by your life-giving Spirit, and, for your tender mercy's sake, bring healing and hope to all that lives; through your child, our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

*A hymn, litany, or silence for the procession follows.*

## Station: For the air, winds, and all that flies

*Reading* Genesis 1:1-2, 14-23 or Ezekiel 37:9-10

*Presider* Let us pray.  
Creator God, who divided heaven from earth by a firmament so that living things might flourish by your word and holy breath:

We give thanks for the atmosphere and its cycles of renewal by plants and animals of the planet. Teach us to cherish the air we breathe as your gift to all life, worthy to be kept clean and healthful for the good of all. We pray in the name of Jesus, whom even the winds and seas obeyed. *Amen.*

*A hymn, litany, or silence for the procession follows.*

## **Station: For those working at a place of government**

*Reading* Psalm 67:1-5 or Isaiah 32:1-8

*Presider* Let us pray.  
God our governor, we pray for all those who labor to govern the people of this and every land. Send upon them the spirit of wisdom, charity, and justice, and give them steadfast purpose to serve the commonweal of all your earth. This we ask for the sake of Jesus Christ, our mediator and advocate. *Amen.*

*A hymn, litany, or silence for the procession follows.*

## **Station: For a place of healing**

*Reading* Matthew 8:14-15

*Presider* Let us pray.  
Merciful God, whose Son Jesus healed many who were sick as a sign of your reign come near: We commend to your care all who suffer, and those who care for them. By your grace lend skill to health and veterinary workers here and everywhere, and bring comfort to those in need, that all may know your power and goodness and rise up to serve you, in the strength of your Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

*A hymn, litany, or silence for the procession follows.*

## **Station: For military workers**

*Reading* Psalm 59:1-3, 18-20

*Presider* Let us pray.  
God our strength and shield: Protect and defend all in military service who do not count the cost to themselves as they labor for others. Grant that peace may increase and warfare and violence come to an end, and let your people dwell in harmony with each other and with all creation; through our Savior Jesus Christ, who said, "My peace I leave with you," and by your Holy Spirit, in whom our hearts dwell in your peace. *Amen.*

*A hymn, litany, or silence for the procession follows.*

## Station: For public safety workers

*Reading* Isaiah 21:6-8 or Psalm 121

*Presider* Let us pray.  
God our rock and our refuge: Guard and bless all those who work to keep our community healthy and safe. Lend those who rise up by night or by day at our urgent call courage, vigilance, and skill, and grant that they may always find your arm mighty to save; through our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

*A hymn, litany, or silence for the procession follows.*

## Station: At a place where trash, compost, or recycling is handled

*Reading* Luke 13:6-9

*Presider* Let us pray.  
Redeeming God: Bless this *place*, that it may be to us a sign of your will and power to renew your creation and of our calling to work in concert with you for the care of the earth. Strengthen us as ministers of your new creation in all places and at all times; by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, who working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. *Amen.*

*A hymn, litany, or silence for the procession follows.*

## Station: At a place of worship

*Reading* Luke 2:41-49 or Acts 2:41-47

*Presider* Let us pray.  
Holy God, you give your people a longing to seek after you and to know you, and an appreciation for the mysteries of creation. You stir up reverent curiosity among people of many faiths, and even in the minds of unbelievers. May your many names be blessed wherever people see you present, and may all come to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with you. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior. *Amen.*

*A hymn, litany, or silence for the procession follows.*

*The procession returns to the Church, where a celebration of the Holy Eucharist may follow.*

*If the Eucharist is not to follow, the service may end with one of the following collects, a passing of the Peace, and a blessing and dismissal.*

*If a celebration of the Eucharist is to follow on a day other than Sunday, one of these collects may be used as a Collect of the Day, or as a Collect at the Prayers.*

## Collect of the Day

O God from whom all good proceeds:  
You established your covenant with all creation,  
and called it to be just, free, and fruitful according to your will.

Guide all your people by your wisdom  
to walk upon the earth in righteousness and peace,  
and to honor you in our kinship with all your creatures;  
through our Risen Lord, Jesus Christ,  
who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns,  
one God, to the ages of ages. *Amen.*

*or this*

O heavenly Father, you have filled the world with beauty:  
Open our eyes to recognize your gracious hand in all your works,  
that, rejoicing in your whole creation,  
we may learn to serve you with gladness;  
for the sake of the One through whom all things were made,  
Jesus Christ our Redeemer. *Amen.*

*or this*

Creator, we give you thanks for all you are  
and all you bring to us for our visit within your creation.  
In Jesus, you place the gospel in the center of this Sacred Circle  
through which all of creation is related.  
You show us the way to live a generous and compassionate life.  
Give us your strength to live together with respect and commitment  
as we grow in your Spirit, for you are God, now and forever. *Amen.*  
(source: A Gathering Prayer adapted from *Native American/Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Liturgies*,  
Prepared for the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church, July 2009, Anaheim, California)

*or this*

Collect 19: For Rogation Days (The Book of Common Prayer, *pages 258, 207*)

## At the Eucharist

*The Readings for the Eucharist may be those of the day if on a Sunday, or a selection from the Propers for Rogation Days in The Book of Common Prayer, page 930. Or the following Readings may be used.*

Ezekiel 34:25-31 or Deuteronomy 11:10-15  
Psalm 107:1-9  
1 Corinthians 3:10-14  
Matthew 6:19-24 or Mark 4:26-32

*The threefold blessing for the Easter Season in The Book of Occasional Services may be used.*

### *A Proper Preface for Rogation Day*

Because in the mystery of Christ's incarnation you have gathered into one things  
earthly and heavenly, calling your people to be ministers of his reconciliation and  
to go into all the world and proclaim the Good News to the whole creation.

# Prayers for Rogation Day: A Rite for the Blessing of a Garden and All Who Labor

*Presider* Blessed be the God of all creation:  
*People* For in your goodness you make all things new.

*Presider* The Lord be with you.  
*People* And also with you.  
*Presider* Let us pray.  
Gracious God, you open wide your hand and give of your goodness to all things living; Renew the face of the earth and increase the sustainable harvests of the world, that the land may bring forth enough for all, and your people may share justly and give honor to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*The Presider or other appointed leaders from the congregation may then lead the People in prayer, using one or more of the following collects, as appropriate.*

Lover of all you have made: Protect and sustain the creatures of our local habitat. Increase their well-being and watch over them with love, and give us wisdom to honor our kinship with them; through Jesus Christ, who has made of one blood those who are near and those who are far. *Amen.*

God, whose Spirit moved over the deep: Bless the waters on the ground and under the ground, the seas, and the mists that provide moisture for all growing things. We thank you for the gift of water; through Jesus Christ our Savior. *Amen.*

Lord God, you alone provide seed for the sower and bread for the eater, and have taught us to ask our daily bread from you: Bless the sowing of the seed this year, strengthen the hands of the garden workers, and grant fertility to the soil that receives the seed. Accept the labors of your servants for the nourishment and well-being of your people; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Holy God, you have blessed our plowing and preparing of the ground: Protect what we plant in your name, and grant that working late and early, we and others may enjoy a fruitful harvest; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

God of all, we pray for all the workers on the earth: for those who work in mill or mine; for those by whose labor we are clothed and fed; for those who work in the depths of the earth; for those who trade in mall or market; and for those who go down to the sea in ships and ply their trade in deep waters and along the coasts. May all our work be service, and all our goods be holy to you; and may we do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with you; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*The Presider then says*

Blessed One:  
We ask you to hallow this garden, this compost, and these seeds,  
and ask that wherever it is spread and they are planted,  
you will add your blessing and protection.  
Support and make fruitful what we grow;  
strengthen and uphold all those who work to tend your creation;

nourish in mind, body, and soul those who are fed by this crop;  
that our care for your earth may give witness to your love and justice;  
in the name of the Creator, Word, and Spirit. *Amen.*

*The Deacon or Presider may dismiss the People with these words*

*Deacon*            Let us bless the Lord.

*People*            Thanks be to God.

# A Liturgy in Thanksgiving for Creation and in Honor of the Feast of St. Francis, with the Blessing of Animals

*An entrance hymn may be sung.*

*Presider* Blessed be the God of all creation.  
*People* And blessed be God's holy Name for ever and ever.

*or this*

*Presider* Blessed be God, Creator, Word and Spirit;  
*People* Who brings all things into being and calls them good.

*Presider* Bless your Creator, all animals of the land.

*People* Let us praise and exalt our Creator together.

*Presider* Bless your Creator, all birds of the air.

*People* Let us praise and exalt our Creator together.

*Presider* Bless your Creator, all creatures of the sea.

*People* Let us praise and exalt our Creator together.

*Presider* Bless your Creator, all children of God.

*People* Let us praise and exalt our Creator together.

*Presider* The Lord be with you.

*People* And also with you.

*Presider* Let us pray.

Most high, omnipotent, good Lord: Grant your people grace to renounce gladly the vanities of this world; that, following the way of blessed Francis, we may for love of you delight in your whole creation with perfect joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## The Readings

*First Reading:* Psalm 104:10-25

You, LORD God, send the springs into the valleys; \*  
they flow between the mountains.

All the beasts of the field drink their fill from them, \*  
and the wild asses quench their thirst.

Beside them the birds of the air make their nests \*  
and sing among the branches.

You water the mountains from your dwelling on high; \*  
the earth is fully satisfied by the fruit of your works.

You make grass grow for flocks and herds \*  
and plants to serve humankind;

That they may bring forth food from the earth, \*  
and wine to gladden our hearts,

Oil to make a cheerful countenance, \*  
and bread to strengthen the heart.

The trees of the LORD are full of sap, \*  
the cedars of Lebanon which God planted,  
In which the birds build their nests, \*  
and in whose tops the stork makes a dwelling.  
The high hills are a refuge for the mountain goats, \*  
and the stony cliffs for the rock badgers.  
You appointed the moon to mark the seasons, \*  
and the sun knows the time of its setting.  
You make darkness that it may be night, \*  
in which all the beasts of the forest prowl.  
The lions roar after their prey \*  
and seek their food from God.  
The sun rises, and they slip away \*  
and lay themselves down in their dens.  
People go forth to their work \*  
and to their labor until the evening.  
O LORD, how manifold are your works! \*  
in wisdom you have made them all;  
the earth is full of your creatures.

*A second Reading may be added here.*

## Prayers for God's Creation and God's Creatures

*The Prayers may be led by a Deacon or other Leader.*

*Deacon* God the Creator of all: that all your creatures may thank you  
and serve you,

*People* *We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.*

*Deacon* That it may please you to grant favorable weather, temperate  
rain, and fruitful seasons, providing food and drink for all your  
creatures,

*People* *We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.*

*Deacon* That it may please you to open our eyes to the joy and beauty  
of your creation, and to see your presence in all your works,

*People* *We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.*

*Deacon* That it may please you to look with favor upon all who care for  
the earth, the water, and the air so the riches of your creation  
may abound for all your creatures, from age to age,

*People* *We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.*

*Deacon* That it may please you to make us faithful stewards of your  
creation, caring for the earth, air, seas, and all the creatures who  
live in them,

*People* *We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.*

*Deacon* That it may please you to make us aware of our responsibility  
to all your creatures and to be faithful in caring for them,

*People* *We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.*

*Deacon* That it may please you to forgive our waste and pollution of  
your creation and to strengthen us to heal its wounds,

*People* *We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.*

*Deacon* That it may please you to remember all animals in captivity and those who are hunted, trapped, deserted, abused, or exploited, so that by our actions they may find safety and homes of loving care,

*People* *We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.*

*Deacon* That it may please you to remember those animals who have died yet remain special or dear to us, that they may rejoice in the new creation of your kingdom.

*People* We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.

*Presider* Let us name with thanksgiving those animals for whom we now care, who are at home: \_\_\_\_\_.

Let us name with thanksgiving those animals who have companioned us over the years, and who have died: \_\_\_\_\_.

And let us remember in silence the unnamed, unknown animals whose lives have benefited our own.

*Silence*

*Presider* Holy God: No sparrow falls without your attention; nothing dies that is lost to your remembrance; nothing exists that comes into being without your love. Give us just and compassionate hearts, that we may serve your will for creation, holding the vision of your peaceable reign in which all shall live with you eternally, through the Risen One, Christ our Savior. *Amen.*

## Confession of Sin

*The Confession may be omitted on occasion.*

*The Deacon or Presider says*

Let us confess to God our sins against our fellow creatures.

*Silence may be kept.*

*Minister and People*

God of compassion, have mercy upon us.  
Bring healing to our relationship with all your creation.  
Forgive us for our mistreatment and neglect  
of the creatures with whom we share your earth:  
for what we have done to harm them,  
and for what we have not done to help them.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
We ask you to fill us with your Spirit,  
that we may care for one another and for all your creatures,  
according to your will and in the fullness of your love;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*The Priest alone says*

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through the grace of Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. *Amen.*

*If no Priest is present, the Presider uses the preceding form and substitutes "us" for "you" and "our" for "your."*

## The Blessing of the Animals

*Presider* It is the priestly work of all God's people to give thanks for God's blessings to us, to ask for and lend assistance for all in need, and to stretch our hands to heal and to cherish creatures of God; this is our work of blessing. Recognizing the blessing that these creatures are to us, I invite you to bring forward the animals entrusted to your care, one by one, and to join me in the laying on of hands and in prayer.

*The animals are blessed individually by name by the Presider, using these or other words*

Fellow creature, friend and companion:  
May God your creator and preserver  
bless, defend, heal, and keep you,  
this day and always. *Amen.*

*The Presider invites then the people to name aloud their animals at home and to pray together, using these words*

*All* Fellow creatures, friends and companions:  
May God your creator and preserver  
bless, defend, heal, and keep you,  
this day and always. *Amen.*

*Presider* Let us pray.  
God of manifold blessings, source of all that is good and true and holy: Raise us up to see the world through your eyes, so that with the eyes of our heart enlightened, we may treasure each creature alive with your Spirit and touched by your creative hand. And may the blessing of this bountiful God, who creates, redeems, and sanctifies, be upon us all, now and for ever. *Amen.*

*Or the animals may be blessed collectively, using this prayer*

*Presider* Almighty and everlasting God, Creator of all things and giver of all life: Let your blessing be upon these and all animals. May our relationships with them mirror your love, and may our care for them follow the example of your bountiful mercy. Grant these animals health and peace. Strengthen us to love and care for them as we strive, like God's servant Francis of Assisi, to imitate Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

## The Lord's Prayer

*Presider* The Lord be with you.  
*People* And also with you.  
*Presider* Let us pray.

*Presider and People*

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your Name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
Forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

*If desired, this Prayer attributed to St. Francis may also be said*

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let us sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.  
Grant that we may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

*The Presider may say this blessing from St. Clare*

*Presider* Live without fear: your Creator has made you holy, has always  
protected you, and loves you as a mother. Go in peace to follow  
the good road, and may God's blessing be with you always.  
*Amen.*

*A hymn may be sung.*

*The Deacon, or the Presider, dismisses them with these words*

*Deacon* Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
*People* Thanks be to God.

# Additional Readings and Resources for St. Francis Day

## Additional Readings

Genesis 1:20-22a, 24-26a,28, 31a

And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them....

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let us make humankind."... God blessed them....

God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good.

## Wisdom 11:24-12:1

For you love all things that exist,  
and detest none of the things that you have made,  
for you would not have made anything if you had hated it.  
How would anything have endured if you had not willed it?  
Or how would anything not called forth by you have been preserved?  
You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord,  
you who love the living.  
For your immortal spirit is in all things.

## Job 12:7, 8b-10a

But ask the animals, and they will teach you;  
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;...  
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.  
Who among all these does not know  
that the hand of the LORD has done this?  
In his hand is the life of every living thing.

## Matthew 6:25-26

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

## Matthew 11:25-30

At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am

gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

**Psalm 104:24-25, 27-28, 30-31**

O LORD, how manifold are your works!  
In wisdom you have made them all;  
the earth is full of your creatures.  
Yonder is the sea, great and wide,  
creeping things innumerable are there,  
living things both small and great....

These all look to you  
to give them their food in due season;  
when you give to them, they gather it up;  
when you open your hand, they are filled with good things....

When you send forth your spirit, they are created;  
and you renew the face of the ground.  
May the glory of the LORD endure forever.

**Canticle 12 A Song of Creation** *Benedicite, omnia opera Domini*  
From *Enriching Our Worship 1*, page 26

*II. The Earth and Its Creatures*

Let the earth glorify the Lord, \*  
sing praise and give honor for ever.  
Glorify the Lord, O mountains and hills, and all that grows upon the earth,\*  
sing praise and give honor for ever.  
Glorify the Lord, O springs of water, seas, and streams, \*  
O whales and all that move in the waters.  
All birds of the air, glorify the Lord, \*  
sing praise and give honor for ever.  
Glorify the Lord, O beasts of the wild, \*  
and all you flocks and herds.  
O men and women everywhere, glorify the Lord, \*  
*sing praise and give honor for ever.*

**Additional Materials**

**A Prayer attributed to St. Basil**

Enlarge within us the sense of fellowship  
with all living things,  
our brothers and sisters the animals to whom you gave the earth  
as their home in common with us.

We remember with shame that in the past  
we have exercised the high dominion of humans  
with ruthless cruelty,  
so that the voice of the earth  
which should have gone up to you in song  
has been a groan of travail.

May we realize that they live, not for us alone,  
but for themselves, and for you,  
and that they love the sweetness of life.  
We pray through our Savior Jesus Christ  
who lifts up and redeems us all. *Amen.*

**A Reading from Meister Eckhart**

Apprehend God in all things,  
for God is in all things.  
Every single creature is full of God,  
and is a book about God.  
Every creature is a word of God.  
If I spent enough time with the tiniest creature—  
even a caterpillar—  
I would never have to prepare a sermon,  
so full of God  
is every creature.

**A Reading adapted from St. Isaac the Syrian**

This is a charitable heart: It is a heart burning with love for the whole creation, for humans, for the birds, for the beasts, for the demons—for all creatures. One who has such a heart cannot see or call to mind a creature without having eyes being filled with tears by reason of the immense compassion which seizes the heart; a heart which is softened and can no longer bear to see or learn from others of any suffering, even the smallest pain, being inflicted on a creature. That is why such a person never ceases to pray also for the animals, that they may be preserved and purified. This person will even pray for the reptiles, moved by the infinite pity which reigns in the hearts of those who are becoming united with God.

**A Reading from *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoevsky**

Love all God's creation, the whole of it and every grain of sand, love every leaf, every ray of God's light; love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in all things. And once you have perceived it, you will begin to comprehend it ceaselessly, more and more every day. And you will at last come to love the whole world with an abiding, universal love. Love the animals: God has given them the rudiments of thought and untroubled joy. Do not, therefore, trouble it, do not torture them, do not deprive them of their joy, do not go against God's intent.

# Burial Office for a Beloved Animal

*The opening anthem may be sung or said.*

Canticle 18      A Song to the Lamb      *Dignus es*  
from *Enriching Our Worship 1*, pages 28-29

Revelation 4:11; 5:9-10, 13

Splendor and honor and royal power \*  
are yours by right, O God most High,  
For you created everything that is, \*  
and by your will they were created and have their being;

And yours by right, O Lamb that was slain, \*  
for with your blood you have redeemed for God,  
From every family, language, people, and nation, \*  
a royal priesthood to serve our God.

And so, to the One who sits upon the throne, \*  
and to Christ the Lamb,  
Be worship and praise, dominion and splendor, \*  
for ever and for evermore.

*Officiant*      God be with you.

*People*      And also with you.

*Officiant*      Let us pray.

God of grace and glory, we remember before you this day N.'s beloved companion A. We thank you for giving her to N. and to us to be a friend, and an abundant source of love, affection, and joy on N.'s journey in this life. In your compassion, comfort us who grieve. Give us faith to commit this beloved creature to your care, and hear our hope that we all may one day be reunited with our animals in the heavenly places, where you live and reign for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## The Readings

*One or more of the following passages may be read. Other suitable readings might include: Job 12:7-10; Isaiah 11:6-9; Psalm 148:7-14; Matthew 10:27-31; Mark 16:14-15; Romans 8:19-25; Revelation 4:1-2, 6b-7, 9-11, 5:5.*

Psalm 104:24, 28b-30

O LORD, how manifold are your works!  
In wisdom you have made them all;  
the earth is full of your creatures.  
When you open your hand  
they are filled with good things.  
When you hide your face, they are dismayed;  
when you take away their breath,  
they die and return to their dust.  
When you send forth your spirit, they are created;  
and you renew the face of the ground.

Tobit 5:21-6:2a

Canticle 12      A Song of Creation      *Benedicite, omnia opera Domini*  
from *Enriching Our Worship 1*, page 26

*II. The Earth and Its Creatures*

Let the earth glorify the Lord,\*  
sing praise and give honor for ever.

Glorify the Lord, O mountains  
and hills, and all that grows upon the earth,\*  
sing praise and give honor for ever.

Glorify the Lord, O springs of water, seas, and streams,\*  
O whales and all that move in the waters.

All birds of the air, glorify the Lord,\*  
sing praise and give honor for ever.

Glorify the Lord, O beasts of the wild,\*  
and all you flocks and herds [and all you cats and dogs].

O men and women everywhere, glorify the Lord,\*  
sing praise and give honor for ever.

## The Prayers of the People

Creator of all, you gave us the rainbow as the sign of your everlasting covenant with every living creature: Help us to trust in your covenant of faithfulness to A., a part of your beloved creation; in your goodness,  
*Blessed Creator, hear our prayer.*

Loving God, you brought this beloved animal into the life of N. [and N.] to share kindness, joy, and faithful companionship: Receive our thanks and praise for the community between your animals and your people and all the ways we bless each other's lives; in your goodness,  
*Blessed Creator, hear our prayer.*

Gracious God, you have given us the responsibility and blessing of caring for animals during their earthly life: If in any way we have failed in that responsibility, we ask for your pardon and trust in your mercy; in your goodness,  
*Blessed Creator, hear our prayer.*

These biddings may be used when appropriate  
God our wisdom, bring your peace to N., in whose hands the decision to end the suffering of A. was placed. Give N. and all of us hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God; in your goodness,  
*Blessed Creator, hear our prayer.*

Holy God, we pray for N., for the companion *she* has lost, and for all pets, animal companions, and all the animals of the earth. We ask for the wisdom to preserve their dwelling places, to heal their diseases and relieve their suffering, and to respect their place in the world; in your goodness,  
*Blessed Creator, hear our prayer.*

*A period of silence is kept.*

*The Lord's Prayer may then be said*

*Officiant*            The Lord be with you.

*People*                And also with you.

*Officiant*            Let us pray.

*Officiant and People*

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your Name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
Forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

*If a burial is to take place, the remains are now placed in the grave and the mourners may cast earth over them, or fill in the grave completely. Cremated remains may be scattered or buried, after the Officiant offers this prayer*

We return the remains of A. to the earth  
and entrust *her* to your everlasting loving-kindness;  
for you care for us and all that you have made,  
and your mercy is over all your works,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

*The Officiant continues*

Lord of all Creation, you love everything that you have made.  
We pray to you for A. and for all those animal companions  
whom we love but see no longer.  
Hold them in your wisdom and love.  
Ease the grief of those who mourn.  
Receive our thanks for the joyful memories of A.  
Widen our hearts to receive those animals who will yet need our care,  
and give us generous and kind hearts toward all your creatures;  
through Jesus our Redeemer and Friend,  
who said, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news  
to the whole creation." *Amen.*

<i>Officiant</i>	Alleluia. Christ is risen.
<i>People</i>	The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.
<i>Officiant</i>	Let us go forth in the name of Christ.
<i>People</i>	Thanks be to God.

*When appropriate, this confession may be said at the start of the Prayers of the People, followed by the absolution on page 353 of The Book of Common Prayer.*

God of compassion, have mercy upon us;  
bring healing to our relationship with all your creation.  
Forgive us for our mistreatment and neglect  
of the creatures with whom we share your earth,  
for what we have done to harm them,  
and for what we have not done to help them.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
We ask you to fill us with your Spirit,  
that we may care for one another and for all your creatures,  
according to your will and in the fullness of your love;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

# Prayers Suitable for Use in Church or for Other Gatherings, at the Adoption, Illness, Loss, or Death of Companion, Service, or Other Beloved Animals

## At the adoption of an animal

God, whose nature and whose name is Love: We thank you for this new relationship between *N.* [*and N.*] and this animal *A.* Let their home be filled with kindness and care; let them be the delight of one another's hearts; and watch over and keep them from this day forward in safety and peace; for your Name's sake. *Amen.*

## For a lost or missing animal

Good Shepherd, whose eye is upon each creature, and who never slumbers nor sleeps: Hear our prayers for *N.* and for *her* lost animal *A.* Calm their anxiety by the grace of your Holy Spirit, protect and keep them, and bring them to the time of reunion. *Amen.*

## For an infirm animal

God, whose compassion and mercy are over all your works: Hear our prayers for *A.*, this creature of yours, in *her* infirmity. Free *her* from suffering and from fear; bring *her* healing and repose; and comfort the hearts of those burdened with anxiety [*especially N. and N.*]. We pray through your beloved Child Jesus and by the power of your Spirit. *Amen.*

## For one whose beloved animal has died

God, the refuge and strength of those who mourn: Hear our prayers for *N.* [*and N.*], who grieves the death of *her* beloved *A.* Bring solace in loneliness, peace in distress, and comfort in remembering; and lift *her* heart in thanksgiving for the gift of companionship *she has* known. Be near to all who have mourned the loss of dear animals; this we pray in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

## At the euthanizing of an infirm animal

God, whose wisdom is over all your works: Be with us as we act to end the suffering of *A.*, this creature of yours entrusted to our care. Our power to heal has reached its end, and so we put our trust in your mercy and love to gather into your sacred heart all that is lost and broken. We pray through the kindness of Christ and the grace of your Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

## **For the suffering of animals during warfare**

Eternal God, the comfort and peace of all your creatures: Hear our prayers for all animals that suffer in times of war, especially for those that bear burdens, those that serve as food, those that detect mines, those that search for the missing and the dead, and for wild creatures in the path of war's destruction. May your divine assistance be with them according to their need; and may our swords be beaten into plowshares and our hearts be softened toward animals of every kind; for they are yours, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## **At the burial of a farm animal**

Most gracious, good Lord, we are the people of your pasture and the sheep of your hand: We thank you for placing us among the beasts of the field and allowing us to care for them, and to receive from them food and clothing to meet our necessities. We grieve this day the death of A., and we return to you a creature of your own making, one who served as an effective sign of the generosity of your love for us; through Jesus Christ our Good Shepherd, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## **At the death of a wild animal**

Almighty God, who makes the beasts of the wild move in beauty and show forth the glory of your Name: We grieve the death of this creature, in whose living and dying the power of your Spirit was made manifest. We reverence the loss of that which was never ours to claim but only to behold with wonder; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

# Daily Prayer for All Seasons

# Introduction

“Let us pray.”

Those words can be so embracing, so soothing. But there are times when they simply remind us that we don't have time to pray – not the way we long to. We want to pray without ceasing, but we also want to repair that engine and train the puppy and plow the south 40 before sunset. Still, the call to prayer is strong. The call to pray throughout the day has sounded for centuries as a way to deepen our faith.

*Daily Prayer for All Seasons* provides a holy – and wholly realistic – way to order our days, no matter how full they seem.

*Daily Prayer for All Seasons* was compiled and written by a diverse team of people from all over the United States. We came together periodically over four years to create a set of prayers that acknowledge in their brevity both the need to pray and the short time we have to pray. The *Daily Prayer for All Seasons* team comprised people like you: we have jobs and families, groceries and gardens and ironing; subways to catch, doctors to see, and reports to write. We put these demands on the table. We never lost sight of those pressures on our time and energy as we plowed through wonderful resources for meditation and song, assembling the richest ones into a prayer book for all of us, clergy and laity, who think we're too busy to pray.

## Background of *Daily Prayer*

People in all kinds of religious traditions, including Judaism and Christianity, have been marking time with prayer for almost as long as we've had hours. “Praying the hours,” as it's called, has always reminded us that God walks with us throughout each day; “praying the hours” is also a way that the community of faith comes together, whether we're all in one place or scattered like raindrops. Praying at set hours links us, both to God and to all God's people. We know this, and we are comforted.

In the Episcopal Church, our *Book of Common Prayer* offers beautiful services for morning, noon, evening, and nighttime in a section called “The Daily Office” (pp. 35-146). *Daily Prayer for All Seasons* offers a variation on that theme, a shortened version, where a complete service covers one or two pages at most, thereby eliminating the need to shuffle prayer books and hymnals. *Daily Prayer for All Seasons* works for individuals, small groups, and/or congregations. This prayer book presents a variety of images of God by including inclusive and expansive language for and about God, and it presents a variety of words by including poetry, meditation and prayers from the broader community of faith.

## How To Use What's Here

The church divides its calendar into periods called “seasons,” which track the events of Jesus' birth, death and resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit to the Church. The seasons are Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week (the final week of Lent), and Easter, followed by what the church calls Ordinary Time; because Ordinary Time is the longest season in the church year, we crafted two sets of services for the summertime: Creation (spiritual growth) and Rest. The eight sets of seasonal prayers provide the outer structure of *Daily Prayer for All Seasons*.

For the inner structure, each set of seasonal prayers falls into eight “hours,” which follows the pattern of Benedictine monks, who divided the day into a cycle of eight intervals, called “hours,” that effected a rhythm between work (*labora*) and prayer (*ora*). As a contemporary complement, the committee crafting *Daily Prayer for All Seasons* assigned a specific labor to each prayer “hour”: We named dawn as the time for praise; we designated starting the day as the time for discernment; later morning, wisdom; midday, perseverance and renewal; afternoon, love; evening, forgiveness; bedtime, trust; and midnight we named as the time to watch. Each hour has a foreign name, which also dates back to Christian monastic history and which we printed in italics after the hour's “work” name, for example, Praise (*Lauds*).

Don't be inhibited by the hours as we've labeled them. Maybe your day "starts" at the crack of noon or your bedtime comes after the night shift; maybe the end of your workday marks only the beginning of meetings for another part of your life. It's all right to adjust the prayers to the day as you live it, no matter how topsy-turvy it seems. In addition, it's all right to adapt the texts as you need to.

## Format for the Hours

**Basic form** (Praise, Watch): *Written in first person and generally anticipated for private use.*

Entering and Going out: the same simple, short call-and-response, which emphasizes the spiritual work of the hour

Scripture: a short, easily memorized passage, related to both the time and the season

Meditation: a question or a prompt for spiritual reflection

Prayer: a closing collect related to the hour and season

**Shorter hours during the day** (Wisdom, Perseverance and Renewal, Love, Trust): *Intended for group use, may be adapted for individual use.* These add the following to the basic form:

Prayer: an opening collect, suited to time and season

Praise: hymn, psalm or canticle

Meditation: an inspirational quote precedes the prompt for reflection

Prayers: responsive prayers of the people, with space for personal intercession and thanksgiving

Lord's Prayer: Versions of the prayer are omitted to allow for local traditions; if praying in a group, the leader may choose to specify the form of the prayer (old/new, short/long, English/foreign) to be used or encourage worshippers to pray in the language of the heart (versions of the Lord's Prayer appear in the Appendix).

**Longer hours** (Discernment, Forgiveness): *Intended for group use, may be adapted for individual use.* To the above, add the following:

Discernment: affirmation

Forgiveness: confession and assurance of pardon (the latter allows for lay leadership of the hour whereas absolution requires a bishop or priest)

The consultants who began this project in 2007 did so in prayer and with the hope that anyone—newcomer, stalwart or someone in between—who wants to pray within the Christian tradition will be enriched by *Daily Prayer for All Seasons*.

Devon Anderson, Mark Bozutti-Jones, Rebecca Clark, Joseph Farnes, Paul Fromberg, Paul Joo, Lizette Larson-Miller, Julia McCray-Goldsmith, Sam Dessórdi Leite, Ernesto Medina, Clay Morris, Elizabeth Muñoz, Ruth Meyers, Dan Prechtel, Cristina Rose Smith, Carol Wade, Julia Wakelee-Lynch, Louis Weil.

With gratitude,  
The Rev. Julia Wakelee-Lynch  
March 2011  
Berkeley, California

# Advent

The Christian calendar begins its new year not on January 1, but on the first Sunday of Advent—which is always four Sundays before Christmas (December 25) and the Sunday closest to St. Andrew’s Day (November 30). Our word “Advent” derives from the Latin *Adventus*, which means “coming,” and originally referred just to the coming of the feast of Christmas. But over time the season of Advent took on a double meaning. Today it refers both to the “first coming” of Jesus Christ in his birth at Christmas and to his “second coming” at the end of time.

It is important to remember that Advent is not just a season in which we recall an event of the past—Jesus’ birth—but also a time in which we look to the present and the future. When will Jesus come again? When will we see the kingdom of God on earth, as it is in heaven? Of course no one knows. And so the more important questions are: What can we do as the Church, Christ’s body here on earth, to welcome God’s reign of justice and peace today? What can we do as individuals to reorder our lives in the light of God’s love? What would it mean to live as a people who believe in Jesus as the Savior of all the earth and who expect him to come again at the fulfillment of time? Each Advent we turn to these questions anew.<sup>1</sup>

**Praise** *Lauds*

(Traditional hour: dawn/waking up)

Laudate, omnes gentes, laudate Dominum! [*Sing praises, all people, sing praises to the Lord!*]

*We greet the new day by praising the Creator (the ancient name for this hour, Lauds, means "praise").*

**Opening** Praise the Lord, O my soul:  
Praise God's holy name.

**Scripture** The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together.  
Isaiah 40:5

**Meditation** *How will I look for God's glory today? How will I help others see it?*

**Prayers** Come, Emmanuel, come dwell with me.  
Hope of the world and Word of life:  
Come, Emmanuel, come dwell with me.

**Going Out** Praise the Lord, O my soul:  
Praise God's holy name.

**Discernment** *Prime*

(Traditional hour: morning/start of the day)

*As we begin the day, we focus on our calling to live faithfully, for who knows what today holds?*

**Opening** God's bright glory will shine,  
and everyone will see it.

Isaiah 40: 5, *The Message*

**Prayer** O Holy One, thank you for coming to us anew this day. Prepare our hearts and reawaken our love for you as we discern your call within us. May we make level the path for all people. **Amen.**

**Praise** *Prepare the way, O Zion*

(Music, if desired, may be found in *The Hymnal 1982*, #65.)

Prepare the way, O Zion, your Christ is drawing near!  
Let every hill and valley a level way appear.  
Greet one who comes in glory, foretold in sacred story.

*Refrain*

Oh, blest is Christ that came in God's most holy name.

Words: Frans Mikael Franzen (1772-1847);  
tr. composite; adapt. Charles P. Price (1920-1999)

**Scripture** 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."

Isaiah 40:3-5

**Meditation** "To enter Advent we leave fear for faith." Sam Portaro<sup>2</sup>

*What fears must we release in order to level the way for ourselves and for others?*

**Affirmation**

We believe in God, Creator of all:

The two-legged, the four-legged,  
the winged ones, and those that crawl upon the earth  
and swim in the waters.

We believe in God, One Who Walked with Us:

Our Brother Jesus born in humility,  
who lived and died for us and  
who will come again to bring us to glory.

We believe in God, Spirit with Us:

Ever present and ever guiding, upholding us and  
showing us the principles to live by.  
We hear God's voice through the prophets.

Creator, One Who Walked with Us, Spirit with Us, Holy One:

We are named in the waters of baptism as your own,  
all of us related, all of us your children.  
We watch for signs of your homecoming  
and thank you for this sacred circle of life. **Amen.**

**Prayers**

In the beginning, it is dark, cool, and quiet, and we ask you:  
**Invite us into your presence, O Christ.**  
We do not know your works, Holy One, yet still we ask you:  
**Invite us into your presence, O Christ.**  
We look to the rising sun and trust that you  
**invite us into your presence, O Christ.**

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

You are our Shepherd, and we need nothing more.  
**We rejoice in your presence with us in all of creation. Amen.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

God of hope, you call us from the exile of our sin with the good news of restoration; you build a highway through the wilderness; you come to us to bring us home. Comfort us with the expectation of your saving power, made known to us in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**<sup>3</sup>

**Going Out**

God's bright glory will shine,  
**and everyone will see it.**

**Wisdom** *Terce*

(Traditional hour: mid-morning)

*Having asked for direction and guidance, we pray now to equip ourselves properly for the journey ahead.*

**Opening** All that we owe is redeemed  
in the love of God.

**Prayer** Wise and loving God, you bear us for joy. In humility, you show us wisdom.  
Enfold us at this hour with the knowledge born of love. Awaken within us the  
desire to know rightly and the will to live justly, with grace and generosity. **Amen.**

**Praise** *A Song of True Motherhood*  
God chose to be our mother in all things\*  
and so made the foundation of his work,  
most humbly and most pure, in the Virgin's womb.  
God, the perfect wisdom of all\*  
arrayed himself in this humble place.  
Christ came in our poor flesh\*  
to share a mother's care.  
Our mothers bear us for pain and for death;\*  
our true mother, Jesus, bears us for joy and endless life.  
Christ carried us within him in love and travail,\*  
until the full time of his passion.  
And when all was complete and he had carried us so for joy,\*  
still all this could not satisfy the power of his wonderful love.  
All that we owe is redeemed in truly loving God,\*  
for the love of Christ works in us; Christ is the one whom we love.  
Julian of Norwich<sup>4</sup>

**Scripture** A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out  
of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and  
understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear  
of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears  
hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the  
meek of the earth.  
Isaiah 11: 1-2, 4

**Meditation** "The desert is always the same, the sky is always beautiful, the road deserted....  
The only thing that is always new is God."  
Carlo Carretto<sup>5</sup>

*How will we ask for new eyes to see God and to see the needs in God's world?*

**Prayers** Holy One, as we prepare for the advent of Christ,  
**Give us your spirit of wisdom.**  
As we seek to embody your love in the world,  
**Give us your spirit of good counsel.**  
As we seek to be faithful,  
**Give us eyes to see beyond the obvious.**  
As we gather in this hour, we lift all in need before you.

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

May we be instruments of your peace on earth  
as we accept the gifts of your Spirit.

Lord's Prayer

Prayer

God, whose holy name defies our definition but whose will is known in freeing the oppressed: Make us one with all who cry for justice, that we who speak your praise may struggle for your truth; through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**<sup>6</sup>

Going Out

All that we owe is redeemed  
in the love of God.

**Perseverance/Renewal** *Sext*

(Traditional hour: mid-day)

*As we pause to feed our bodies in the middle of the day, we pause also to feed our souls by vowing again to live faithfully.*

**Opening**

Do not be afraid.  
**God is with us, always.**

**Prayer**

Shepherd of Israel, may Jesus, who is Emmanuel and son of Mary, be more than just a dream in our hearts. With the apostles, prophets, and saints, save us, restore us, and lead us in the way of grace and peace, that we may bear your promise into the world. **Amen.**<sup>7</sup>

**Praise**

*The Song of Mary* (*Magnificat*; Luke 1:46-55)<sup>8</sup>  
My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in you, O God, my Savior,  
for you have looked with favor on your servant.  
From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
you, the Almighty, have done great things for me,  
and holy is your Name.  
You have mercy on those who fear you  
from generation to generation.  
You have shown strength with your arm  
and scattered the proud in their conceit,  
Casting down the mighty from their thrones  
and lifting up the lowly.  
You have filled the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away empty.  
You have come to the help of your servant Israel,  
for you have remembered your promise of mercy,  
The promise made to our forebears,  
to Abraham and his children for ever.

**Scripture**

When a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.  
John 16: 21-22

**Meditation**

Ask yourself: Will this satisfy  
a woman satisfied to bear a child?  
Will this disturb the sleep  
of a woman near to giving birth?  
Wendell Berry<sup>9</sup>

*As we seek our own renewal, we look at others through the lens of compassion;  
how will this point of view affect our choices?*

**Prayers**

For our deepest and most holy longings we pray:  
**Renew us, O God.**  
For all who wander, who hunger, who thirst:  
**Renew us as people of service and compassion.**  
For this planet, our home:  
**Renew our will to be healers of creation.**  
For this and every nation:

**Renew in all people the will for good and the longing for peace.**  
For those whom we hold in our hearts:

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

Bless these and all creation with your goodness,  
**and renew our trust in your love. Amen.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

O God of Elizabeth and Mary, you visited your servants with news of the world's redemption in the coming of the Savior: Make our hearts leap with joy, and fill our mouths with songs of praise, that we may announce glad tidings of peace and welcome the Christ in our midst. **Amen.**<sup>10</sup>

**Going Out**

Do not be afraid.  
**God is with us, always.**

**Love** *None*

(Traditional hour: afternoon)

*As shadows lengthen, we are filled by the day's encounters; now, more than ever, we accept the depth and breadth of God's grace.*

**Opening** In the beginning, God created, and it was good.  
**In the beginning was the Word.**

**Prayer** Creator of the world, you are the potter, we are the clay, and you form us in your own image: Shape our spirits by Christ's transforming power, that as one people we may live out your compassion and justice, whole and sound in the realm of your peace. **Amen.**<sup>11</sup>

**Praise** *O Come, thou Dayspring*<sup>12</sup>  
 (Music, if desired, may be found in *The Hymnal 1982*, #56.)

*Verse 1*

*Verse 2*

O come, thou Dayspring from on high,  
 and cheer us by thy drawing nigh;  
 Disperse the gloomy clouds of night  
 and death's dark shadow put to flight.  
**Rejoice! Rejoice!**  
**Emmanuel shall come again**  
**and with us ever dwell.**

O come, Desire of nations,  
 bind in one the hearts of humankind;  
 Bid thou our sad divisions cease,  
 and be thyself our King of Peace.  
**Rejoice! Rejoice!**  
**Emmanuel shall come again**  
**and with us ever dwell.**

**Scripture** For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the LORD, who has compassion on you.  
 Isaiah 54:10

**Meditation** Hail, Mary, full of grace.  
 The Lord is with you.  
 Blessed are you among women,  
 And blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.

*How have we received love today, and how will we bear its fruit to others?*

**Prayers** God of compassion,  
**Teach us to embody your love.**  
 God of faithfulness,  
**Help us be constant in service.**  
 God of all creation,  
**Give us compassion for all your children.**  
 God of blessing, hear our prayers.

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

God of love,  
**Draw our hearts to you.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

God of community, whose call is more insistent than ties of family or blood: May we so respect and love those whose lives are linked with ours that we fail not in loyalty to you but make choices according to your will. Amen.<sup>13</sup>

**Going Out**

In the beginning, God created, and it was good.  
**In the beginning was the Word.**

**Forgiveness** *Vespers*

(Traditional hour: dusk/end of the day)

*As we turn on lamps at dusk, we greet the evening by welcoming God to abide with us anew.*

**Opening** All who thirst  
come to the waters.

**Prayer** Holy One, whose coming we await, you invite us into the light of your presence: Illumine the dim places of our hearts. We are thirsty for your compassion. Draw near to us and fill us, that we may pour out your goodness to all who hunger.  
**Amen.**

**Praise** *A Song of the Spirit* (Revelation 22:12-17)<sup>14</sup>  
“Behold, I am coming soon,” says the Lord,  
“and bringing my reward with me, \*  
to give to everyone according to their deeds.  
I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, \*  
the beginning and the end.”  
Blessed are those who do God’s commandments,  
that they may have the right to the tree of life, \*  
and enter the city through the gates.  
“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to you, \*  
with this testimony for all the churches.  
“I am the root and the offspring of David, \*  
I am the bright morning star.”  
“Come!” say the Spirit and the Bride; \*  
“Come!” let each hearer reply!  
Come forward, you who are thirsty, \*  
let those who desire take the water of life as a gift.

**Scripture** Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come buy wine and milk without money and wisdom without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good. Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.  
Isaiah 55:1-2a, 6

**Meditation** “Redemption is the journey of being reconnected to the light of God within. It is a journey home that takes us through what seems like unknown land. ... Redemption is not the bringing of light to a creation that is essentially dark, but rather the liberating of light from the heart of life.”  
J. Philip Newell<sup>15</sup>

*Where do we thirst for the light of redemption today? How will we offer that light to others who thirst?*

**Confession** Most Holy God,  
In the midst of this season of new life, we confess:  
We have resisted the light of your love;  
we have not fully shared the gifts entrusted to us; and  
we have not treasured the gifts of others around us.  
We stand in need of your love.  
Holy Father, make us holy.  
Holy Jesus, make us holy.

Holy Spirit, make us holy.  
Holy God, make us whole. Amen.<sup>16</sup>

**Assurance of Pardon**

God forgives us and loves us, and invites us to continue the journey.  
As a woman is delivered from the pain of her labor to the joy of cradling her child,  
so are we delivered into God's grace.

**Prayers**

Holy One, healer of the world,  
**Shed your light upon this world.**  
Holy One, healer of brokenness,  
**Make us bold to share your light with others.**  
Holy One, healer of the world, we offer our prayers:

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

Lead us to wholeness  
**And make us shine with your light of healing love.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

God, our healer, whose mercy is like a refining fire: Touch us with your judgment  
and confront us with your tenderness; that, being comforted by you, we may reach  
out to a troubled world; through Jesus Christ. Amen.<sup>17</sup>

**Going Out**

All who thirst  
**come to the waters.**

**Trust** *Compline*

(Traditional hour: night/bedtime)

*We sum up this day with a bedtime prayer to examine our conscience and offer our actions to God.*

**Opening** Be strong and let your heart take courage,  
**all you who wait for the Lord.**

Psalm 31: 24

**Prayer** Holy One, whose coming we await, we lift our hearts to you: Remind us of your faithfulness, that we may trust ever more deeply in your grace. We set down the tasks of the day so that we may arise renewed, to love and serve you. **Amen.**

**Praise** *The Song of Hannah* (1 Samuel 2:1-2,8)<sup>18</sup>  
My heart exults in you, O God; \*  
My triumph song is lifted in you.  
For I rejoice in your salvation: \*  
There is none holy like you.  
God raises the poor from the dust; \*  
And lifts the needy from the ash heap  
To make them sit with the rulers\*  
and inherit a place of honor.  
For the pillars of the earth are God's\*  
on which the whole earth is founded.

**Scripture** The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; and to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor.

Isaiah 61:1-2a

**Meditation** *A Reflection on Finding your Way: What To Do in the Darkness*

Go slowly  
Consent to it  
But don't wallow in it  
Know it as a place of germination  
And growth  
Remember the light  
Take an outstretched hand if you find one  
Exercise unused senses  
Find the path by walking in it  
Practice trust  
Watch for dawn

Marilyn Chandler McEntyre<sup>19</sup>

*How shall we travel through the darkness of Advent?*

**Prayers** God of grace and hope:  
**Help us to move from fear to trust.**  
Your grace surrounds and fills us:  
**Remind us that you provide all we need.**  
Your healing love is offered to all:

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

May we be full of peace in our waiting  
And full of joy in our praise of you. Amen.

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer** Merciful God of peace, your word, spoken by the prophets, restores your people's life and hope: Fill our hearts with the joy of your saving grace, that we may hold fast to your great goodness and proclaim your justice in all the world. Amen.<sup>20</sup>

**Going Out** Be strong and let your heart take courage,  
all you who wait for the Lord.

**Watch** *Vigils*

(Traditional hour: late night)

*Like nuns and monks at prayer, we can listen in the stillness of the night to hear God's call.*

**Opening**            Even in the waiting,  
                              **God is with me.**

**Scripture**            The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.  
                              John 1:9

**Meditation**        *What keeps me in the shadows? What light am I waiting for?*

**Prayers**             Holy One, come this night.  
                              Open my heart to the brightness of your love.  
                              Release my fears and revive my hope,  
                              that I may rest well and rise to share your love. **Amen.**

**Going Out**         Even in the waiting,  
                              **God is with me.**

# Christmas

For the church, Christmas is a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. We celebrate this birth not because Jesus was simply a “good man” but because we believe Jesus was—and is—both the human son of Mary and the divine Son of God. That makes Christmas a time to reflect on a mystery that the church calls the doctrine of the Incarnation. This important theological term comes from the Latin word *carne*, which means “flesh,” and has to do with the divine taking on human flesh and coming among us in human form.

In one of his Christmas sermons Augustine, the fifth-century bishop of Hippo, described the mystery of the Incarnation this way: “Beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal creator of all things, today became our Savior by being born of a mother. Of his own will he was born for us today, in time, so that he could lead us to his Father’s eternity. God became human like us so that we might become God. The Lord of the angels became one of us today so that we could eat the bread of angels.”

**Praise** *Lauds*

(Traditional hour: dawn/waking up)

Laudate, omnes gentes, laudate Dominum! [*Sing praises, all people, sing praises to the Lord!*]

*We greet the new day by praising the Creator (the ancient name for this hour, Lauds, means "praise").*

**Opening** Praise God from the heavens;  
**sing praise in the heights!**  
Psalm 148:1 (St. Helena Psalter)

**Scripture** The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.  
Isaiah 9:2

**Meditation** *Where will I seek God's light today?*

**Prayers** Open my eyes this day, dear Lord, to see your light in the world.  
Accompany me, so that I may walk faithfully  
and share the light of your love with others. **Amen.**

**Closing** Praise God from the heavens.  
**Sing praise in the heights!**

**Discernment** *Prime*

(Traditional hour: morning/start of the day)

*As we begin the day, we focus on our calling to live faithfully, for who knows what today holds?*

**Opening**           The Word made flesh  
                          **makes God known to us.**

**Prayer**             Light of life, you came in flesh, born into human pain and joy, and gave us power to be your children: Grant us faith, O Christ, to see your presence among us, so that all creation may sing new songs of gladness and walk in the way of peace. **Amen.**<sup>21</sup>

**Praise**                 *The Song of Mary* (Magnificat; Luke 1:46-55)<sup>22</sup>  
My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
                          my spirit rejoices in you, O God, my Savior,\*  
                          for you have looked with favor on your servant.  
From this day all generations will call me blessed: \*  
                          you, the Almighty, have done great things for me,  
                          and holy is your Name.  
You have mercy on those who fear you \*  
                          from generation to generation.  
You have shown strength with your arm, \*  
                          and scattered the proud in their conceit,  
Casting down the mighty from their thrones \*  
                          and lifting up the lowly.  
You have filled the hungry with good things \*  
                          and sent the rich away empty.  
You have come to the help of your servant Israel, \*  
                          for you have remembered your promise of mercy,  
The promise made to our forebears, \*  
                          to Abraham and his children forever.

**Scripture**           And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's bosom, who has made God known.  
John 1:14, 16, 18

**Meditation**        “You will know when it is time to bring to birth the new creation. The signs will be all around you, urging, insisting: Now is the time. You have to know just when to bear down and concentrate on one thing only. It takes labor, hard, hard labor to bring to birth something new.”  
*Miriam Therese Winter*<sup>23</sup>

*What is God calling forth from us? How will we labor to birth what God calls for?*

**Affirmation**        We believe in God, the source of love,  
                          who created humanity in God's own image and likeness,  
                          who blessed them and asked them to  
                          procreate, nurture and preserve God's creation for prosperity.  
We believe in Jesus Christ, God incarnate,  
                          who was born of a woman and was a carpenter,  
                          who identified himself with women, men and children,

transforming them to have life abundantly.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit active before creation,  
who through the ages has inspired Christians without number,  
who continues to inspire us to usher in the reign of God,  
where no one is cast out, lonely or bereft.<sup>24</sup>

**Prayers**

Prince of Peace,  
whose righteousness is like the strong mountains  
and whose justice is as the great deep:  
**Let us know your presence now.**

Mighty God,  
whose power girds creation,  
whose hands cradle the hills, yet whose mercy is boundless:  
**Let us know your presence now.**

Wonderful Counselor,  
whose glory is beyond our understanding  
and whose love is beyond measure:  
**Let us know your presence now.**

Emmanuel,  
whose property it is always to have mercy,  
and whose arm is long to save, we lift before you now:

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

Hold all those we love in your unbounded love.  
**Make us your healing presence in the world.**<sup>25</sup>

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Loving Word of God, you have shown us the fullness of your glory in taking human flesh: Fill us, in our bodily life, with your grace and truth, that our pleasure may be boundless and our integrity complete. **Amen.**<sup>26</sup>

**Going Out**

The Word made flesh  
makes God known to us.

**Wisdom** *Terce*

(Traditional hour: mid-morning)

*Having asked for direction and guidance, we pray now to equip ourselves properly for the journey ahead.*

**Opening** O come, all ye faithful.  
Come, let us adore him.

**Prayer** O holy Wisdom: Fill us this day with joy, understanding and grace, that we may tell out the wonder of your love; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Praise** *Go Tell It on the Mountain*  
(Music, if desired, may be found in *Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, #21.)

*Refrain:*  
Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere.  
Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.

While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,  
behold throughout the heavens there shown a holy light. *Refrain*

The shepherds feared and trembled, when lo! above the earth,  
Rang out the angel chorus that hailed the Savior's birth. *Refrain*

Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born,  
and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. *Refrain*  
Words: John W. Work Jr.

**Scripture** But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. So you are no longer a slave, but a child, and if a child, then also an heir, through God.  
Galatians 4:4-5, 7

**Meditation** "We who are charged with announcing the message of Christ need to learn the incomparable lesson that he taught us by his own example. He taught first of all with his life, and only then did he preach."  
Dom Helder Camara<sup>27</sup>

*What are we called to preach with our lives today?*

**Prayers** Holy Wisdom, you fill us with goodness,  
and we are grateful:  
**Let us show with our lives.**  
Holy Wisdom, you invite us to serve,  
and we answer "yes":  
**Let us show with our actions.**  
Holy Wisdom, you open our eyes to those in need,  
and we want to be faithful:  
**Let us show with our love.**  
Holy Wisdom, we want to live more deeply in your peace:  
**Show us the Way.**

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Great Spirit, God, Creator of all, we receive you into our hearts, our minds, our Souls: Grant us Mary's wisdom to heed the inner voice that we know is you. Guide us to accept your invitation to serve and to do so with strength and courage.  
**Amen.**

**Going Out**

O come, all ye faithful.  
Come, let us adore him.

## Perseverance/Renewal *Sext*

(Traditional hour: mid-day)

*As we pause to feed our bodies in the middle of the day, we pause also to feed our souls by vowing again to live faithfully.*

**Opening** All life is interwoven.  
All life is gift from God.

**Prayer** Giver of life and author of love: Be present at this hour as we pause to rest in your love. Fill us with the memory of your goodness, bless us with the grace of your light, and send us out again with renewed faithfulness to show your love to the world. **Amen.**

**Praise** *Love Came Down at Christmas*  
(Music, if desired, may be found in *The Hymnal 1982*, #84.)

### *Verse 1*

Love came down at Christmas,  
Love all lovely, love divine;  
Love was born at Christmas:  
Star and angels gave the sign.

### *Verse 2*

Worship we the Godhead,  
Love incarnate, love divine;  
Worship we our Jesus,  
But where for a sacred sign?

### *Verse 3*

Love shall be our token;  
Love be yours and love be mine;  
Love to God and neighbor,  
Love for plea and gift and sign.

Words (alt.): Christina Rossetti

**Scripture** But when the goodness and loving-kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.  
Titus 3: 4-5

**Meditation** “Grace is often portrayed as ‘washing away’ the things that obscure the essential goodness of life. That light that was in the beginning still glows at the heart of life, but we do not see its full brilliance. ... Grace is like a cleansing rain over the landscape of life, followed by a sunlight that restores our vision.”  
J. Philip Newell<sup>28</sup>

*Where do we need the grace of renewal right now? How can we offer it to others?*

**Prayers** God our Savior,  
Cleanse from our hearts all that impedes your love.  
God our Savior,  
Renew in us the desire to live in your grace.  
God our Savior,  
Fill us again with the will to persevere.  
God our Savior, we bless your name and ask your healing love:

*Here, the people may add particular thanksgivings and intercessions.*

Give us ever-grateful hearts,

**To share your love with all.**  
Hold all the earth in your goodness,  
**And make us ministers of your gospel.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

God of creation, through your great mercy you renew us: Send us now back to the love and labor of this day with joy and compassion in our hearts; Through Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

**Going Out**

All life is interwoven.  
**All life is a gift from God.**

**Love** *None*

(Traditional hour: afternoon)

*As shadows lengthen, we are filled by the day's encounters; now, more than ever, we accept the depth and breadth of God's grace.*

**Opening** Little One, born this day:  
**Savior, Redeemer, Beloved of God.**

**Prayer** Blessed Savior, in love you came to us as a child: Enlighten our hearts, that we may more deeply understand the richness of this gift and practice more faithfully your call to give of ourselves in love. **Amen.**

**Praise** *Shengye quing, shengye jing/Holy Night, Blessed Night*  
(Music, if desired, may be found in *Wonder, Love and Praise*, #725.)

*Refrain:* Holy night, blessed night.

*Verse 1*

*Verse 2*

Stars shine brightly, earth is still,  
Hills and valleys, field and woodlands,  
all surround the small town Bethlehem  
In a manger Christ the Lord sleeps.  
*Refrain*

Angels sing praise, shepherds fear,  
Earth and heaven ring with praises,  
"Alleluia" all creation sings  
Tell the good news: Christ is born now.  
*Refrain*

*Verse 3*

Christ has come down, dwells with us.  
Sacrifice, love, peace, and justice  
shine upon us like the morning sun.  
Grace and glory bless the whole world.  
*Refrain*

**Scripture** As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, [and] let the word of God dwell in you richly.  
Colossians 3:12-15a, 16a

**Meditation** "Let us imagine that within us is an extremely rich place, built entirely of gold and precious stones. ...[W]ithin us lies something incomparably more precious than what we see outside ourselves. Let's not imagine that we are hollow inside."  
Theresa of Avila<sup>29</sup>

*What does it mean that God's love dwells in us? How might this help us love others?*

**Prayers** Beloved, we are called to love those in need:  
**Let us love in truth and action.**  
Beloved, we are called to be people of peace:  
**Let us love one another.**  
Beloved, we are called to be people of healing:  
**Let us love not only God, but our brothers and sisters, also.**

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

May we abide in God's love.  
May God's love abide in us.<sup>30</sup>

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**            Savior, Redeemer, Beloved of God: Clothe us in your love, strengthen us to live gently on this earth, give us humility to see all we encounter as precious to you, and teach us to walk with kindness and patience this hour and always. **Amen.**

**Going Out**        Little One, born this day:  
Savior, Redeemer, Beloved of God.

**Forgiveness** *Vespers* (Traditional hour: dusk/end of the day)

*As we turn on lamps at dusk, we greet the evening by welcoming God to abide with us anew.*

**Opening** The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness has not overcome it.

**Prayer** God our Savior: Meet us in this time and place; focus our hearts on your love, feed the hungry places of our souls, release us from all that resists your grace, and renew our bodies to serve your world. Amen.

**Praise** *Hark! the Herald Angels Sing*  
(Music, if desired, may be found in *The Hymnal 1982*, #87.)

Hark! the herald angels sing  
Glory to the newborn King!  
Peace on earth and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled!  
Joyful, all ye nations rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies;  
With the angelic host proclaim  
Christ is born in Bethlehem!

*Refrain:* Hark! the herald angels sing  
Glory to the newborn King!

Words (alt.): Charles Wesley

**Scripture** The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, he gave power to become children of God.  
John 1:9-12

**Meditation** “Holiness is not an attainment, in any sense of the term, but is a gift of the Word of God. Holiness is not a badge of achievement for a saint, but is wrought in the life, in the very being, of an ordinary person by the will of the Word of God. Holiness ... is the restoration of integrity and wholeness to a person.”  
William Stringfellow<sup>31</sup>

*What do we, needing wholeness, present to God at this hour?*

**Confession** Word of God,  
we confess that we need your wholeness.  
We have often looked to outward gifts and measures  
when what we need is your love in our souls.  
We have often aimed toward what we can achieve  
or where we stand in relation to others,  
when what we desire is the integrity your love bestows.  
We confess our need for your illumination.  
Be our light, O Christ.

**Assurance of Pardon**  
God forgives all our sins  
and heals all our infirmities.  
God lifts us from the low places

and sets mercy and love upon us.  
God fills us with goodness  
and renews our lives.  
**Thanks be to God.**<sup>32</sup>

**Prayers**

For all who live in poverty,  
**May we build the just kingdom of God now.**  
For all who hunger,  
**May we, the Body of Christ, be bread.**  
For all who weep,  
**May we offer comfort and joy.**  
For all who are outcast or in any need or trouble:

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

As we yearn to be the faithful people of God,  
**May we be people of true and gracious welcome to all.**<sup>33</sup>

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**<sup>34</sup>

**Going Out**

The light shines in the darkness,  
**and the darkness has not overcome it.**

**Trust** *Compline*

(Traditional hour: night/bedtime)

*We sum up this day with a bedtime prayer to examine our conscience and offer our actions to God.*

**Opening** Jesus the Word  
now dwells among us.

**Prayer** Almighty and ever-loving God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**<sup>35</sup>

**Praise** *O Little Town of Bethlehem*  
(Music, if desired, may be found in *The Hymnal 1982*, #78 & #79.)

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, the silent stars go by;  
yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;  
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary; and gathered all above,  
while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.  
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth!  
and praises sing to God the King and peace to all on earth.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.  
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,  
where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.

Where children pure and happy pray to the blessed Child,  
where misery cries out to thee, Son of the mother mild;  
where charity stands watching and faith holds wide the door,  
the dark night wakes, the glory breaks, and Christmas comes once more.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!

Words: Phillips Brooks (1835-1893)

**Scripture** O God, you will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are fixed on you; for in returning and rest we shall be saved; in quietness and trust shall be our strength.  
Isaiah 26: 3, 30:15

**Meditation** “The frightened shepherds become God’s messengers. They organize, make haste, find others, and speak with them. Do we not all want to become shepherds and catch sight of the angels? I think so. ...Because the angels sing, the shepherds rise, leave their fears behind, and set out for Bethlehem, wherever it is situated these days.”

Dorothy Soelle<sup>36</sup>

*As we lay aside the concerns and fears of this day, where do we need strength and courage to tell God’s good news to others tomorrow?*

**Prayers**

Jesus the Word,  
We pray for the confidence of your peace in our lives.  
Jesus the Word,  
We pray for all those who live amid violence or uproar.  
Jesus the Word,  
We pray for the earth, knowing we have broken its peace.  
Jesus the Word,  
We pray for all those in need of good news this night:

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

With the angels and shepherds that first Christmas,  
O Jesus, the Word made flesh,  
may we trust in and share the joy of your incarnation.

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Gracious God, you have redeemed us through Jesus Christ, the firstborn of all creation, whose birth we celebrate as the child of Bethlehem: Bless us with every spiritual blessing, that we may live as your adopted children and witness to your glory with unending praise and thanksgiving. **Amen.** <sup>37</sup>

**Going Out**

Jesus the Word  
now dwells among us.

**Watch** *Vigils*

(Traditional hour: late night)

*Like nuns and monks at prayer, we can listen in the stillness of the night to hear God's call.*

**Opening**            O come, let us worship  
**Christ the Lord.**

**Scripture**            For a child has been born for us ... and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty  
God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
Isaiah 9:6

**Meditation**        *How is Jesus my counselor, loving parent, strength and/or peace this night?*

**Prayers**             Fill us, gentle God, with so great a sense of you in our souls that we never know  
abandonment, never know despair. Lead us beyond ourselves to become what  
you were born to be. Never let us be deterred by those who burden us with false  
expectations. In your holy name, we pray. **Amen.**<sup>38</sup>

**Going Out**         O come, let us worship  
**Christ the Lord.**

# Epiphany

*Epiphany* is a Greek word meaning “manifestation, showing forth, revelation.” This feast proclaims our faith that in Jesus, God is revealed to all people—not just to an inner circle or a chosen few, but to all people, in all places, and throughout all time. Christians believe that in the person of Jesus we see who God is, and in the words and actions of Jesus we see God at work in the world. Epiphany marks a series of occasions at which Jesus was revealed to be God’s Son.

The feast of Epiphany and the weeks that follow are a time when we reflect on several “manifestations” of Jesus, as he was recognized as the Messiah (or Christ) by many different people. We hear about Jesus’ baptism in the river Jordan by John the Baptist and the visit of the magi, or wise men, who followed the star to Bethlehem at Jesus’ birth. We share the amazement of the guests at the wedding party at Cana as Jesus performs his first miracle by turning water into fine wine. And at the end of the season we see Jesus’ glory shown to three of his disciples on the mountain as he is transfigured before them in a blaze of light.

**Praise** *Lauds*

(Traditional hour: dawn/waking up)

Laudate, omnes gentes, laudate Dominum! [*Sing praises, all people, sing praises to the Lord!*]

*We greet the new day by praising the Creator (the ancient name for this hour, Lauds, means "praise").*

**Opening:** Arise, shine,  
for your light has come.

**Scripture:** God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.  
And God saw that the light was good.  
Genesis 1:3

**Meditation:** *How will I invite God's love to shine through me today?*

**Prayer:** Brightest and best of the stars of the morning,  
Dawn on my darkness and lend me your aid;  
Star of the east, the horizon adorning,  
Guide where the infant Redeemer is laid.<sup>39</sup>

**Going Out:** Arise, shine,  
for your light has come.

**Discernment** *Prime*

(Traditional hour: morning/start of the day)

*As we begin the day, we focus on our calling to live faithfully, for who knows what today holds?*

**Opening**

Your word is a lamp to our feet  
and a light for our path.

**Prayer**

Insistent God, by night and day you summon your slumbering people: So stir us with your voice and enlighten our lives with your grace that we give ourselves fully to Christ's call to mission and ministry. **Amen.**<sup>40</sup>

**Praise**

*Psalm 27:1, 5-6, 10-11*<sup>41</sup>  
God is my light and my salvation;  
whom then shall I fear?  
God is the strength of my life;  
of whom then shall I be afraid?  
One thing have I asked of you, O God;  
one thing I seek:  
that I may dwell in your house all the days of my life,  
To behold your fair beauty, O God,  
and to seek you in your temple.  
Hearken to my voice, O Most High, when I call;  
have mercy on me and answer me.  
You speak in my heart and say, "Seek my face."  
Your face, O God, will I seek.

**Scripture**

The next day, John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?"  
John 1:35-38

**Meditation**

"The eye of the cormorant is emerald. The eye of the eagle is amber. The eye of the grebe is ruby. The eye of the ibis is sapphire. Four gemstones mirror the minds of birds, birds who mediate between heaven and earth. We miss the eyes of the birds, focusing only on feathers."  
Terry Tempest Williams<sup>42</sup>

*What are we looking for? Where have we failed to look?*

**Affirmation**

We are not alone; we live in God's world.  
We believe in God:  
who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus,  
the Word made flesh,  
to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and others by the Spirit.  
We trust in God.  
We are called to be the Church:  
to celebrate God's presence,  
to live with respect in creation,  
to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,

our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.

We are not alone. Thanks be to God.<sup>43</sup>

**Prayers**

Jesus, you are the light of the world:

**May your light open our eyes to see those in need.**

Jesus, you are the light of the world:

**May the works of our lives demonstrate your love.**

Jesus, you are the light of the world:

**May your wisdom enlighten our decisions.**

Jesus, you are the light of the world, hear the prayers of our hearts:

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

As you enlighten our lives,

**May we be light for others.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Open our eyes that we may see.

Incline our hearts that we may desire.

Order our steps that we may follow  
the way of your commandments. **Amen.**<sup>44</sup>

**Going Out**

Your word is a lamp to our feet  
**and a light for our path.**

**Wisdom** *Terce*

(Traditional hour: mid-morning)

*Having asked for direction and guidance, we pray now to equip ourselves properly for the journey ahead.*

**Opening** Wisdom knows and understands all things  
and guides us in our actions.

**Prayer** O God, your Spirit of Wisdom was present at the creation and with Jesus at his baptism: Open our hearts to that same Spirit, and strengthen and guide us to love and serve you and our neighbors; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Praise** *A Song of the Spirit of Wisdom* (Wisdom 7:7-8,10-14a)<sup>45</sup>  
I prayed and understanding was given me;\*  
I called on God and the Spirit of Wisdom came to me.  
I preferred her to scepters and thrones,\*  
and I accounted wealth as nothing in comparison with her.  
I loved her more than health or beauty,\*  
and I chose to have her rather than light  
because her radiance never ceases.  
In her company, all good things came to me;\*  
in her hands, a wealth of true riches.  
In all these good things, I rejoiced  
because Wisdom brings them,\*  
but I did not know that she was their mother.  
What I learned without selfishness I pass on without reserve;\*  
I do not hide her gifts.  
For Wisdom is an unfailing treasure for mortals:\*  
those who receive her are friends with God.

**Scripture** Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. ...The wisdom from above is first pure, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.  
James 3:13, 17-18

**Meditation** “Do not think that saintliness comes from occupation; it depends rather on what one is. The kind of work we do does not make us holy, but we may make it holy.”  
Meister Eckhart (1260-1329)

*What work will we do today? How will we make it holy?*

**Prayers** Breath of God, inspire us with your guidance.  
**Come to us, Holy Spirit, and be present with us.**  
Wisdom of God, guide us to works of goodness and mercy.  
**Come to us, Holy Spirit, and be present with us.**  
Spirit of God, teach us to be faithful.  
**Come to us, Holy Spirit, and be present with us.**

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer** Gracious God: give us deeper reverence for the truth and such wisdom in the use of knowledge that your kingdom may be advanced and your name glorified; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**<sup>46</sup>

**Going Out**

Wisdom knows and understands all things,  
and she will guide us in our actions.

**Perseverance/Renewal** *Sext*

(Traditional hour: mid-day)

*As we pause to feed our bodies in the middle of the day, we pause also to feed our souls by vowing again to live faithfully.*

**Opening** We long for glory.  
**Transform us with your glory.**

**Prayer** Holy One, you know our needs before we ask: Grant that we may persevere in our prayers for the needs of all creation, and renew our trust in your loving care for us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Praise** *Songs of Thankfulness and Praise*  
 (Music, if desired, may be found in *The Hymnal 1982*, #135.)

*Verse 1*

*Verse 2*

Songs of thankfulness and praise,  
 Jesus, Lord to you we raise,  
 manifested by the star  
 to the sages from afar;  
 branch of royal David's stem  
 in your birth at Bethlehem;  
 anthems be to you addressed,  
 God in flesh made manifest.

Manifest in Jordan's stream,  
 Prophet, Priest, and King supreme;  
 and at Cana, wedding guest,  
 in your Godhead manifest;  
 manifest in power divine,  
 changing water into wine;  
 anthems be to you addressed,  
 God in flesh made manifest.

Words (alt.): Christopher Wordsworth (1807-1885)

**Scripture** On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee. ...When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." ... Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." [The water became wine.] Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.  
 John 2: 1-5, 7-11

**Meditation** "In the name of God, stop a moment, close your work, look around you."  
 Leo Tolstoy<sup>47</sup>

*What can we let go this hour, and how will it free us to use our gifts with greater joy?*

**Prayers** When we labor and are laden with worries and cares,  
**Refresh us, O Christ.**  
 When our hands are not ready to accept help,  
**Renew our trust, O Christ.**  
 When we grow weary of loving others,  
**Love us, O Christ.**  
 We offer you the cares of our hearts:

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

As we lift our hopes and joys to you,  
**Hear us, O Christ. Amen.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

O God of steadfast love, at the wedding in Cana, your Son Jesus turned water into wine, delighting all who were there: Transform our hearts by your Spirit, that we may use our gifts to show forth the light of your love as one body in Christ. **Amen.**<sup>48</sup>

**Going Out**

We long for glory:  
Transform us with your glory.

**Love** *None*

(Traditional hour: afternoon)

*As shadows lengthen, we are filled by the day's encounters; now, more than ever, we accept the depth and breadth of God's grace.*

**Opening** Beloved, we are called to be your children:  
**May we delight in your love.**

**Prayer** God, you draw us into your love through baptism: Teach us to abide in the knowledge of your love and to share that love with all your creation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Praise** *You, O Christ*<sup>49</sup>  
You, O Christ, are the One:\*  
the might and goodness of fatherhood.  
You are the One:\*  
the wisdom and kindness of motherhood.  
You, O Christ, are the One:  
the light and grace of all blessed love;\*  
you are Trinity; you are Unity.  
You, O Christ, are the One;\*  
the high sovereign goodness of all manner of things.  
You are the One who makes us to love;\*  
you are the One who makes us to long.  
You, O Christ, are the One:\*  
the endless fulfilling of all our true desires.

**Scripture** When Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."  
Matthew 13:15-17

**Meditation** "I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine, and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness...."  
Thomas Merton<sup>50</sup>

*How would our day be different if we could see every person as God's beloved child?*

**Prayers** God our Creator and Lover,  
**Fill our hearts with your love.**  
God our Savior and Lord,  
**Fill our home with your love.**  
God our Sustainer and Advocate,  
**Fill our community with your love.**  
God the Holy Trinity,  
**Fill all the world with your love.**

*Here, the people may make particular intercessions and thanksgivings.*

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

O God most holy, in Jesus Christ you have laid a foundation upon which to build our Lives: Help to follow your perfect law of love, that we may fulfill it and observe it to the end. **Amen.**<sup>51</sup>

**Going Out**

Beloved, we are called to be your children:  
**May we delight in your love.**

**Forgiveness** *Vespers* (Traditional hour: dusk/end of the day)

*As we turn on lamps at dusk, we greet the evening by welcoming God to abide with us anew.*

**Opening** The Savior of the nations has come,  
He who lights our way and heals us.

**Prayer** Set us free, O God, from the bondage of our sins, and give us the liberty of that abundant life, which you have made known to us in your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

**Praise** *Many Are the Light Beams / Muchos Resplandores*  
(Music, if desired, may be found in *Wonder, Love and Praise*, #794.)

*Verse 1*

Many are the light beams from the one light.  
Our one light is Jesus.  
Many are the light beams from the one light;  
we are one in Christ.

*Verse 2*

Many are the light beams from the one light.  
Our one light is Jesus.  
Many are the light beams from the one light;  
we are one in Christ.

*Verso 1*

*Muchos resplandores, sólo una luz;  
Es la luz de Cristo  
Muchos resplandores, sólo una luz;  
Que nos hace uno*

*Verso 2*

*Muchas son las ramas, un árbol hay,  
y su tronco es Cristo.  
Muchos son las ramas, un árbol hay,  
y en el somos uno.*

Words: Anders Frostenson (1906-2006); trans.: Pablo Sosa (b.1933)

**Scripture** On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.  
Matthew 2:11-12

**Meditation** “The wise men cannot return to their own country by the same way they used to come to Bethlehem. While they cannot go the same route because of Herod, we cannot go the same way once we have met Christ. We emerge from our encounter with Christ as changed people. We cannot follow the same path as before. Like the wise men, we must seek out Christ, but we will always leave as transformed people.”  
Richard Meux Benson<sup>52</sup>

*Where do we seek transformation? Where do we need to offer another way to someone else?*

**Confession** Holy One, we encounter you in our lives and try to follow faithfully,  
**but so often we get lost or turn away.**  
We try to love our neighbors and ourselves,  
**and even, by your grace, to love our enemies, but we fail.**  
We take the wrong path and stray from the way of your love.  
**Forgive us, Lord, and guide us back to you.**

**Assurance of Pardon**

We turn to you, God of Love, and  
we accept your grace.  
We accept your pardon.  
We accept the gift of a new path,  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Prayers**

Among the lowly you were born.  
    **Lord Jesus, save us.**  
The wise and powerful bowed down before you.  
    **Lord Jesus, teach us.**  
You have come to lead us to holiness.  
    **Lord Jesus, guide us.**  
You ask us to call on you, and so we offer these prayers:

*Here, the people may make particular intercessions and thanksgivings.*

**Lord Jesus, hear us.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Jesus, you revealed yourself to the world so that all people might look to you and be saved: may we know the wholeness that you bring. Be our light in the darkness that we may not stumble, and lift us up again if we fall; all this we ask in your name. Amen.

**Going Out**

The Savior of the nations has come  
to light our way and heal our wounds.

**Trust** *Compline*

(Traditional hour: night/bedtime)

*We sum up this day with a bedtime prayer to examine our conscience and offer our actions to God.*

**Opening** Do not fear, for I have redeemed you.  
**You call us by name, and we are yours.**

**Prayer** O God of all the prophets, you knew us and chose us before you formed us in the womb: Fill us with faith that speaks your word, hope that does not disappoint, and love that bears all things for your sake, until that day when we shall know you fully, even as we are known by you. **Amen.**<sup>53</sup>

**Praise** *The Song of Simeon* (*Nunc dimittis*; Luke 2: 29-32)<sup>54</sup>

Lord, you now have set your servant free \*  
to go in peace as you have promised;  
For these eyes of mine have seen the Savior, \*  
whom you have prepared for all the world to see:  
A Light to enlighten the nations, \*  
and the glory of your people Israel.

**Scripture** Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. ... Suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid."  
Matthew 17:1-2, 5-8

**Meditation** *Candelmas*

With certitude  
Simeon opened  
ancient arms  
to infant light.  
Decades  
before the cross, the tomb  
and the new life,  
he knew  
new life.  
What depth  
of faith he drew on,  
turning illumined  
towards deep night.

Denise Levertov<sup>55</sup>

*How will we let go of fear and draw on our faith as Simeon did?*

**Prayer** Son of God, in the light of faith, we offer our prayers:  
**May we follow closely your lead.**  
For all who face the darkness with fear this night,  
**Redeem our fears with hope and confidence.**  
For all the places in this world that yearn for new life,  
**Grant the light of your saving grace.**

For all the joys and concerns of our hearts:

*Here, the people may offer particular intercessions and thanksgivings.*

Hear us, teach us, restore us,

**And may your light shine in our hearts and in all the world.**

**The Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Be our light in the darkness, O Lord, and in your great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of your only Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**<sup>56</sup>

**Going Out**

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you.  
**You call us by name, and we are yours.**

**Watch** *Vigils*

(Traditional hour: late night)

*Like nuns and monks at prayer, we can listen in the stillness of the night to hear God's call.*

**Opening**            Darkness is not dark to you;  
                              **the night is as bright as the day.**

**Scripture**            O tarry, and await God's pleasure; be strong, and let your heart take comfort;  
                              Wait patiently for God.  
                              Psalm 27:18 (St. Helena Psalter)

**Meditation**        *How does God's faithfulness sustain me? How do I remain faithful?*

**Prayer**                Guide us waking, O God,  
                              and guard us sleeping,  
                              that, awake, we may watch with Christ,  
                              and, asleep, we may rest in peace. **Amen.**<sup>57</sup>

**Going out**            Darkness is not dark to you;  
                              **the night is as bright as the day.**

# Lent

Figuring out how to keep a holy Lent can be a challenge, but if we move beyond the popular conceptions (and misconceptions), Lent holds the possibility for real change—or to use the church’s word, conversion—in our lives, as well as for rich and lasting spiritual growth. The word “lent” comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *lencton*, referring to the springtime of the year when the days grow longer and warmer and brighter. It is during the weeks of Lent that (at least spiritually) we begin to emerge from our protective winter burrows, to stretch our legs and sniff the air for signs of new life.

This is not to say that Lent is a season of giddy celebration, but rather that joy in the new life we have found in the Christian faith should never be overwhelmed by our struggles to live out that faith or our awareness of the ways we fall short. The ultimate purpose of Lent is to strengthen our spiritual lives. In Lent we step back and consider the ways we need to repent, to turn around—to be converted.

During Lent we as individual Christians and as a church—the Body of Christ—consider our spiritual health. How are we living the gospel in our lives, our homes, our churches, our towns, our schools, our places of work? What areas of growth or signs of renewal should we celebrate with gratitude and joy? In what ways have we fallen short, grown stagnant or cold-hearted, or failed to love God by embracing new life when we encounter it? These are the kinds of questions we ask ourselves during the weeks of Lent.

**Praise** *Lauds*

(Traditional hour: dawn/waking up)

Laudate, omnes gentes, laudate Dominum! [*Sing praises, all people, sing praises to the Lord!*]

*We greet the new day by praising the Creator (the ancient name for this hour, Lauds, means "praise").*

**Opening**            Bless the Lord,  
                              **O my soul.**

**Scripture**            O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you.  
                              Psalm 63:1<sup>58</sup>

**Meditation**        God has given to the earth the breath that feeds it. God's breath vibrates in yours,  
                              in your voice. It is the breath of God that you breathe.  
                              Theophilus of Antioch<sup>59</sup>

*How will God breathe through me this day?*

**Prayer**                Lord, you beat in our hearts and thrive in every cell of our bodies.  
                              All that we are leaps for delight. Wherever we go, we know we shall find you  
                              there. **Amen.**<sup>60</sup>

**Going Out**         Bless the Lord,  
                              **O my soul.**

**Discernment** *Prime*

(Traditional hour: morning/start of the day)

*As we begin the day, we focus on our calling to live faithfully, for who knows what today holds?*

**Opening** Show our hearts your way,  
and we shall follow.

**Prayer** O God of love, you are the true Sun of the world, evermore risen and never going down: We pray you to shine in our hearts and drive away the darkness of sin and the mist of error. We pray that we may, this day and all our lives long, walk without stumbling in the way you have prepared for us, which is Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God in glory everlasting. **Amen.**<sup>61</sup>

**Praise** *Lead Me, Guide Me*  
(Music, if desired, may be found in *Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, #194.)

Lead me, guide me along the way,  
for if you lead me, I cannot stray.  
Lord, let me walk each day with thee.  
Lead me, O Lord, lead me.

I am lost if you take your hand from me,  
I am blind without thy light to see.  
Lord, just always let me thy servant be.  
Lead me, O Lord, lead me.

Lead me, guide me along the way,  
for if you lead me, I cannot stray.  
Lord, let me walk each day with thee.  
Lead me, O, Lord, lead me.

Words and Music: Doris Akers (1923-1995)

**Scripture** Is not this the fast that I chose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am."

Isaiah 58: 6-9a

**Meditation** "We live in a time of struggle between truth and lies, between sincerity, which almost no one believes in still, and hypocrisy and intrigue. Let's not be afraid, brothers and sisters; let's try to be sincere, to love truth; let's try to model ourselves on Christ Jesus. It is time for us to have a great sense of selection, of discernment."  
Oscar Romero<sup>62</sup>

*How will we practice Christ Jesus' way of love, justice and truth this day?*

**Affirmation** We believe that Jesus took the form of a slave,  
so we commit ourselves to serve others.

We believe that God is love,  
so we commit ourselves to reconciliation.  
We believe that Jesus gives us his Spirit,  
so we commit ourselves to his work in the world.  
We believe that God is the light of life,  
so we commit ourselves to bearing God's light in our world.  
We believe that the Spirit speaks through us,  
so we commit ourselves to proclaim the good news of abundant life in  
the world God loves.

**Prayers**

Loving God, we want to be faithful, and so we pray:  
For reconciliation between the violated and the violent,  
    **That we may rest in the peace of God.**  
For generosity between rich and poor people everywhere,  
    **That we may share the abundance of God's creation.**  
For the growth of love between broken peoples and nations,  
    **That we may shape our common life as God's kingdom.**  
For mutual respect between immigrants and insiders,  
    **That we may welcome God's image in all who come to us.**  
For protection for the weak and humility for the strong,  
    **That we may serve others as God in Christ serves us.**

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

For all the joys and concerns of our hearts,  
    **That we may live with gladness and trust.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, in you we live and move and have our being: We humbly pray  
you so to guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and  
occupations of our life we may not forget you, but may remember that we are ever  
walking in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.<sup>63</sup>

**Going Out**

Show our hearts your way,  
**and we shall follow.**

**Wisdom** *Terce*

(Traditional hour: mid-morning)

*Having asked for direction and guidance, we pray now to equip ourselves properly for the journey ahead.*

**Opening** Know the grace of God  
and live joyfully this day of salvation.

**Prayer** God of Heaven and earth, your wisdom stretches around the world, ordering all things for good: Free us from anxiety and understand us like a friend, that we might share the good news of your friendship with all people; through the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

**Praise** *Come, heavenly comforter*

Come, heavenly comforter  
and spirit of truth,  
Blowing everywhere  
and filling all things.  
Treasury of blessings  
and giver of life:  
Come and abide in us;  
cleanse us from every impurity,  
and, in your great goodness, save us.<sup>64</sup>

**Scripture** As we work together with Christ, we urge you not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you." See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!

2 Corinthians 6:1-2

**Meditation** "We can all please God. We must only choose well. Many go abroad to study, pursuing knowledge far from home, but the kingdom of God is always here and now, wherever you are, within you. Precisely because the kingdom is within, and God is our friend, our salvation only requires that we be willing."

Athanasius of Alexandria<sup>65</sup>

*In what ways are we willing to accept the wisdom of God's guidance today?*

**Prayers**

Christ in my mind	that I may see what is true;
Christ in my mouth	that I may speak with power;
Christ in my heart	that I may learn to be loved;
Christ in my hands	that I may work with tenderness;
Christ in my soul	that I may know my desire;
Christ in my arms	that I may reach without fear;
Christ in my face	that I may shine with God. <sup>66</sup>

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer** Wisdom is brilliant; she never fades. By those who love her, she is easily seen; by those who seek her, she is readily found. She is a breath of God's power, an image of God's goodness, the eternal light and mirror of God's glory. Now let Wisdom do all things, renew all things, and pass into holy souls everywhere to make them friends of God. **Amen.**<sup>67</sup>

Going Out

Know the grace of God  
and live joyfully this day of salvation.

**Perseverance/Renewal** *Sext*

(Traditional hour: mid-day)

*As we pause to feed our bodies in the middle of the day, we pause also to feed our souls by vowing again to live faithfully.*

**Opening** Renew and strengthen us, eternal God,  
as we prepare for resurrection.

**Prayer** Merciful God, your strength and courage pour forth to sustain the witness of your faithful people: Awaken in us the humility to serve wherever creation is broken and needy, that we may follow in the way of our brother, Jesus, die as he did to all that separates us from you, and be raised, as he was, to new life. **Amen.**<sup>68</sup>

**Praise** *A Song of the Wilderness* (Isaiah 35:1-4)<sup>69</sup>  
The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, \*  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
It shall blossom abundantly, \*  
and rejoice with joy and singing.  
They shall see the glory of the Lord, \*  
the majesty of our God.  
Strengthen the weary hands, \*  
and make firm the feeble knees.  
Say to the anxious, "Be strong, do not fear! \*  
Here is your God, coming with judgment to save you."

**Scripture** "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."  
Matthew 25:37-40

**Meditation** "Do you wish to honor the body of the Savior? Do not despise it when it is naked. Do not honor it in church with silk vestments, while outside you are leaving it numb with cold and naked. He who said, 'This is my body,' and made it so by his word, is the same that said, 'You saw me hungry and you gave me no food. As you did it not to the least of these, you did it not to me.' Honor him then by sharing your property with the poor, for what God needs is not golden chalices, but golden souls."  
John Chrysostom<sup>70</sup>

*Who are the hungry and naked in our daily world, and how will we relieve their suffering?*

**Prayers** God of hope, help us who struggle in our daily work.  
When we lose our purpose, **renew our hope in you.**  
When we bow to hatred, **renew our trust in you.**  
When we despair of bliss, **renew our joy in you.**  
When we take offense at others, **renew our life in you.**  
When we compromise our values, **renew our faith in you.**  
When we cherish regrets, **renew our freedom in you.**  
When we surrender to despair, **renew our hope in you.**  
As we accept your renewing love, we offer our prayers to you:

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

Hold us, and all people, in your loving care,  
**and may we be hope for others.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

God of hope, from you come every blessing and all peace: Show us that, in the midst of our struggles, you are with us. Give us the abundance of your grace that we may do the work you give us to do and that we may be for the world a sign of your presence; through Christ, the Way and the Truth. **Amen.**

**Going Out**

Renew and strengthen us, eternal God,  
**as we prepare for resurrection.**

**Love** *None*

(Traditional hour: afternoon)

*As shadows lengthen, we are filled by the day's encounters; now, more than ever, we accept the depth and breadth of God's grace.*

**Opening**            May our sacrifice be love  
as we practice mercy on earth.

**Prayer**             God of love, the day is long and its burden is heavy: Give us grace to see your hand at work in the lives of those around us so that adversity will not overwhelm us, nor resentments possess us. Remain with us, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen.**

**Praise**                 *Love Bade Me Welcome*  
Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,  
Guilty of dust and sin.  
But quick-eye'd Love, observing me grow slack  
From my first entrance in,  
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning  
If I lack'd anything.  
A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here:  
Love said, You shall be he.  
I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,  
I cannot look on Thee.  
Love took my hand and smiling did reply,  
Who made the eyes, but I?  
Truth, Lord, but I have marred them: let my shame  
Go where it doth deserve.  
And know you not, says Love, Who bore the blame?  
My dear, then I will serve.  
You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat.  
So I did sit and eat.  
George Herbert<sup>71</sup>

**Scripture**            Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.  
I John 4:7

**Meditation**        “We cannot know whether we love God although there may be strong reason for thinking so, but there can be no doubt about whether we love our neighbor or not. Be sure that, in proportion as you advance in affection for sisters and brothers, you are increasing your love of God.”  
Teresa of Avila<sup>72</sup>

*Who is hard to love just now? What would it cost us to love that one?*

**Prayers**             O God, you beckon us with promises of love;  
**Fulfill our desire for you.**  
You pursue us even when we flee from you;  
**Bring us to our right minds.**  
You delight in us and show us your compassion;  
**Make us mindful of the deep need in the world.**

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

You give us the gift of your unbounded love;  
Pour out your love on all the world.

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer** Merciful God, return us now to working and relating in our world; return us, stimulated by hope, strengthened by faith, and directed by love. Thus, we are heartened to reconcile all people, created, redeemed, and sustained by you. In the name of Christ. **Amen.**<sup>73</sup>

**Going Out** May our sacrifice be love  
as we practice mercy on earth.

## Forgiveness *Vespers*

(Traditional hour: dusk/end of the day)

*As we turn on lamps at dusk, we greet the evening by welcoming God to abide with us anew.*

**Opening**           Wherever we stray,  
                          lead us back to the rock of your love.

**Prayer**             Holy God, in love you created us and called our being “good.” With open hearts, we praise you for your unfailing love. With open hands, we offer you our labors. Bless and guide us now as our day turns toward evening; through your grace, may we share with others the love we receive from you. In the name of God our Creator, Jesus our brother, and the Spirit who lights our way. **Amen.**

**Praise**                 *A Song of Christ’s Goodness*<sup>74</sup>  
Jesus, as a mother you gather your people to you; \*  
                          you are gentle with us as a mother with her children.  
Often you weep over our sins and our pride, \*  
                          tenderly you draw us from hatred and judgment.  
You comfort us in sorrow and bind up our wounds, \*  
                          in sickness you nurse us and with pure milk you feed us.  
Jesus, by your dying, we are born to new life; \*  
                          by your anguish and labor we come forth in joy.  
Despair turns to hope through your sweet goodness; \*  
                          through your gentleness, we find comfort in fear.  
Your warmth gives life to the dead, \*  
                          your touch makes sinners righteous.  
Lord Jesus, in your mercy, heal us; \*  
                          in your love and tenderness, remake us.  
May your love prepare us for the beauty of heaven.  
(Anselm of Canterbury)

**Scripture**           Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the LORD. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. For the LORD will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.  
Isaiah 51:1, 3

**Meditation**        “This only do I ask of thy extreme kindness. That thou convert me wholly to thee and thou allow nothing to prevent me from wending my way to thee.”  
Saint Augustine

*What will we set aside now that blocks our way to God?*

**Confession**         Lord Jesus, you come into our lives  
                          when we are least prepared for you.  
As you enfolded your betrayers,  
                          so embrace us who struggle to love.  
Reconcile us with our sisters and brothers,  
                          and, for the sake of your love,  
                          forgive us all our sins.

**Assurance of Pardon**           Psalm 103:11-13<sup>75</sup>  
As far as the heavens are high above the earth,  
so great is your loving response to those who are humble;

so far does your enduring strength  
uphold those who face the darkness within.  
As parents are concerned for their children,  
so you come to those who reach out in faith.

**Prayers**

For all we have accomplished this day,  
For now, when we turn from labor to home,  
For those tasks we left undone this day,  
For those wounds we gave or received this day,  
For our hopes and concerns for tomorrow,  
For the gift of our presence this hour,  
For trust that God's love is all we need,

**we bless God's name.  
we bless God's name.  
we invite God's love.  
we invite God's love.  
we seek God's grace.  
we seek God's grace.**

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

For these praises and preoccupations of our hearts,  
**we find our hope in God.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Holy One, we bless your name and thank you for the gift of this day:  
May the Light of the world guide us, the Life of the world refresh us, and the  
Hope of the world be our companion, that we may be the reconciling power of  
Christ in the world. We ask this for your mercy's sake. **Amen.**

**Going Out**

Wherever we stray,  
**lead us back to the rock of your love.**

**Trust** *Compline*

(Traditional hour: night/bedtime)

*We sum up this day with a bedtime prayer to examine our conscience and offer our actions to God.*

**Opening** Give us the grace to rely on you:  
**may we always trust in your goodness.**

**Prayer** Enduring presence, goal and guide, you go before and await our coming. Only our thirst compels us beyond complaint to conversation, beyond rejection to relation. Pour your love into our hearts that, refreshed and renewed, we may invite others to the living water given to us in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**<sup>76</sup>

**Praise** *O God of gentle strength*  
(Music, if desired, may be found in *Wonder, Love and Praise*, #s770 & 771.)

O God of gentle strength, your love embraces me.  
Within the sureness of your care my heart rests willingly.

Your waters of rebirth have claimed us as your own.  
As members of one body, we shall never be alone.

And when life's challenges eclipse our minds with doubt,  
let holy wisdom spark a flame to drive the darkness out.

Where will the journey lead? The path may be obscure.  
But promised hope of things unseen will keep our footing sure.  
Words: Patricia B. Clark (b. 1938)<sup>77</sup>

**Scripture** Thus says the LORD God, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength. Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for the LORD.  
Isaiah 30:15a, 18

**Meditation** The birds have vanished into the sky,  
and now the last cloud drains away.

We sit together, the mountain and me,  
until only the mountain remains.  
Li Po, 8th-century poet

*What do we need to trust this fully in God's grace?*

**Prayer** Patient and compassionate God,  
We so want to trust in your love.  
**Hear our longing.**  
We hope for healing in our lives and the lives of others:

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

Hear our prayers.  
**Heed our holy desires.**  
We confess our impatience and anxiety.  
**We seek your grace.**

**The Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

O Lord and Ruler of our life: Deliver us from the spirit of sloth, idle talk, faint-heartedness, and lust for power; and grant unto us, your servants, a spirit of integrity, humility, patience and love. Sovereign God, grant us the ability to see our own faults and not to judge another's; for you are blessed to the ages of ages. **Amen.**<sup>78</sup>

**Going Out**

Give us the grace to rely on you:  
**may we always trust in your goodness.**

**Watch** *Vigils*

(Traditional hour: late night)

*Like nuns and monks at prayer, we can listen in the stillness of the night to hear God's call.*

**Opening** Be present with me, Holy One,  
as I watch with you.

**Scripture** O my strength, I will watch for you; for you, O God, are my stronghold.  
Psalm 59:9

**Meditation** *Where do I need God's strength?*

**Prayer** Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night,  
and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ;  
give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted,  
shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. **Amen.**<sup>79</sup>

**Going Out** Be present with me, Holy One,  
as I watch with you.

# Holy Week

The theme of Holy Week is Jesus' passion: his suffering and death on the cross. The rites of Holy Week are at the very heart of the Christian year, indeed of our Christian faith. And for many of us they are, year after year, the most meaningful and life-changing services of the church.

It is vital to keep a broad perspective during this week. We walk through the days of Jesus' suffering and death because we believe they had a purpose—the salvation of the world. We believe Jesus' death conquered death itself for us all: that is the only reason why the Friday on which he died can be called “good.” Even while we are sobered by the solemn reading of the gospel stories describing Jesus' death and deeply saddened by the ongoing violence in our world, from that day in Jerusalem to this Good Friday, we hold on to the faith that in Jesus God has brought about a new creation, and death itself has been conquered. “We have been buried with him by baptism into death,” wrote the apostle Paul soon after Jesus' death, “so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

**Praise** *Lauds*

(Traditional hour: dawn/waking up)

Laudate, omnes gentes, laudate Dominum! [*Sing praises, all people, sing praises to the Lord!*]

*We greet the new day by praising the Creator (the ancient name for this hour, Lauds, means "praise").*

**Opening**            Come darkness or light  
                          I call on your name, holy Lord.

**Scripture**            I love you, O God, because you have heard the voice of my supplication.  
                          Psalm 116:1a

**Meditation**        *What do I offer God at this hour?*

**Prayer**                O Holy One, whatever comes this day, let me seek you with confidence and trust.  
                          Amen.

**Going Out**         Come darkness or light,  
                          I call on your name, holy Lord.

**Discernment** *Prime*

(Traditional hour: morning/start of the day)

*As we begin the day, we focus on our calling to live faithfully, for who knows what today holds?*

**Opening** You have called us in righteousness.  
Let us respond with justice.

**Prayer** God of steadfast love, light of the blind and liberator of the oppressed, we see your holy purpose in the tender compassion of Jesus, who calls us into new and living friendship with you: May we who take shelter in the shadow of your wings be filled with the grace of his tender caring; may we who stumble in selfish darkness see your glory in the light of his self-giving; we ask this through him whose suffering is victorious, Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**<sup>80</sup>

**Praise** *You Laid Aside Your Rightful Reputation*  
(Music, if desired, may be found in *Wonder, Love and Praise* #734.)

1. You laid aside your rightful reputation  
and gave no heed to what the world might say;  
served as a slave and laid aside your garments  
to wash the feet of those who walked your way.

2. You touched the leper, ate with those rejected,  
received the worship of a woman's tears:  
You shed the pride that keeps us from the freedom  
to love our neighbor, laying down our fears.

3. Help us to follow, Jesus, where you lead us  
to love, to serve, our own lives laying down;  
to walk your way of humble, costly service,  
a cross its end, a ring of thorns its crown.

4. Draw us to love you and with your love transform us:  
the love we've seen, the love we've touched and known;  
enlarge our hearts and with compassion fill us  
to love, to serve, to follow you alone.

Words: Rosalind Brown (b. 1953)

**Scripture** Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights;  
I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.  
He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street;  
a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;  
he will faithfully bring forth justice.

Isaiah 42:1-4

**Meditation** We must get ready then. Our journey requires a rejuvenated faith.  
We must set high standards. We must rely on the gospel to guide us.  
It will help us to follow Christ and grow better acquainted with him so  
we are prepared to live with Jesus in his heavenly kingdom.  
from The Rule of St. Benedict

*Where does our faith need rejuvenation today? How will we let the gospel guide us?*

**Affirmation**  
As children of God, we affirm:

That God, who is Love, created all and called it good,  
that God is present with all of creation, and that,  
in darkness and in light, God is faithful;  
therefore we, too, seek to be faithful.

That Jesus came to show us Love with a human face,  
that he taught justice and reconciliation and suffered on our behalf,  
and that through his faithful example, he embodies hope;  
therefore we, too, seek to be people of justice, reconciliation, and hope.

That the Holy Spirit guides and accompanies us,  
that this same Spirit offers wisdom and discernment,  
and that, when we are open, the Spirit can always find a way;  
therefore, we seek to be people filled with God's Spirit:  
discerning, loving and transforming our world.  
**Amen.**

**Prayers**

Jesus, faithful servant of God,  
sometimes it is difficult for us to know how to be faithful:  
**Help us discern your will and follow you with gladness.**  
Jesus, faithful servant of God,  
on this most holy of weeks, we see the brokenness of our world:  
**Help us be people who faithfully bring forth justice.**  
Jesus, faithful servant of God,  
we know the world longs for healing:  
**Help us be people of hope and bearers of light.**  
Jesus, faithful servant of God,  
we want to be the people you long for us to be:  
**Help us walk in your way of love.**

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Loving God, as we seek to know and follow you more faithfully, we pray you will  
open and fill our hearts with the love and knowledge of your Son, Jesus. May we  
see ever more clearly what it is you call us to, and may we respond with lives of  
joy and justice. **Amen.**

**Going Out**

You have called us in righteousness.  
**Let us respond with justice.**

## Wisdom *Terce*

(Traditional hour: mid-morning)

*Having asked for direction and guidance, we pray now to equip ourselves properly for the journey ahead.*

**Opening**            Teach us to seek your wisdom  
as we embrace the folly of your love.

**Prayer**             Holy and immortal God, from earliest times you have named us and called us into Discipleship: Teach us to follow the One whose light scatters the darkness of our world, that we may walk as children of the light. **Amen.**<sup>81</sup>

**Praise**                *Faithful Cross, Above All Other (Crux fidelis inter omnes)*  
(Music, if desired, may be found in *Wonder, Love and Praise*, #737; *The Hymnal 1982*, #166.)

Faithful cross, above all other:  
one and only noble tree!  
None in foliage, none in blossom,  
none in fruit thy peer may be:  
sweetest wood and sweetest iron,  
sweetest weight is hung on thee.

Bend thy boughs, O tree of glory!  
Thy relaxing sinews bend;  
for awhile the ancient rigor  
that thy birth bestowed, suspend;  
and the King of heavenly beauty  
gently on thy arms extend.

Words: *Venantius Honorius Fortunatus* (540-600?); trans. after John Mason Neale (1818-1866)

**Scripture**            For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

1 Cor. 1: 18-19, 25

**Meditation**        To make of his story something that could neither startle, nor shock, nor terrify, nor excite, nor inspire a living soul is to crucify the Son of God afresh.

Dorothy Sayers (1893-1957)

*Where do we seek courage and wisdom to proclaim the gospel in its fullness?*

**Prayers**             God of mercy,  
**Make us wise with your foolish love.**  
God of salvation,  
**Open our eyes again to see the power of your grace.**  
God of all who seek to follow,  
**Guide us in your faithful way.**

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Christ our Lord, you refused the way of domination and died the death of a slave: May we also refuse to lord it over those who are subject to us, but share the weight of authority so that all may be empowered; in your name. **Amen.**<sup>82</sup>

**Going Out**

Teach us to seek your wisdom.  
**as we embrace the folly of your love.**

**Perseverance/Renewal** *Sext*

(Traditional hour: mid-day)

*As we pause to feed our bodies in the middle of the day, we pause also to feed our souls by vowing again to live faithfully.*

**Opening** Be pleased, O God, to deliver us.  
**Make haste, Holy One, to help us.**  
(Psalm 70:1)

**Prayer** Blessed Savior, at this hour you hung upon the cross, stretching out your loving arms: Grant that all the peoples of the earth may look to you and be saved; for your tender mercies' sake. **Amen.** <sup>83</sup>

**Praise** *Take My Hand, Precious Lord*  
(Music, if desired, may be found in *Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, #106; *Wonder, Love and Praise*, #800.)

Precious Lord, take my hand,  
lead me on, let me stand,  
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;  
through the storm, through the night,  
lead me on to the light,  
take my hand, precious Lord,  
lead me on.

When my way grows drear,  
precious Lord, linger near,  
when my life is almost gone;  
hear my cry, hear my call,  
hold my hand, lest I fall,  
take my hand, precious Lord,  
lead me on.

When the darkness appears  
and the night draws near,  
and the day is past and gone;  
at the river I stand,  
guide my feet, hold my hand,  
take my hand, precious Lord,  
lead me on.

Words: Thomas A. Dorsey (1899-1993)

**Scripture** For I [Paul] received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.  
1 Corinthians 11:23-26

**Meditation** "The soul must live in hope."  
Beatrijs of Nazareth (1200-1268), *Seven Manners of Living*

*Where do we need nourishment and hope this hour? This week?*

**Prayers**

Precious Lord, you know what it means to carry a heavy load:

**Help us entrust our burdens to you.**

Holy Lord, you walked many a winding road:

**Help us see all parts of our lives as sacred.**

Gracious Lord, so many hunger and thirst in our world:

**Strengthen us for service, so we may be bread and wine for others.**

Precious Lord, as we return to the work of this day:

**Take our hands and lead us on.**

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Eternal God, in the sharing of a meal, your Son established a new covenant for all people, and in the washing of feet he showed us the dignity of service: Grant that by the power of the Holy Spirit these signs of our life in faith may speak again in our hearts, feed our spirits, and refresh our bodies. **Amen.**<sup>84</sup>

**Going Out**

Be pleased, O God, to deliver us.

**Make haste, Holy One, to help us.**

(Psalm 70:1)

**Love** *None*

(Traditional hour: afternoon)

*As shadows lengthen, we are filled by the day's encounters; now, more than ever, we accept the depth and breadth of God's grace.*

**Opening** You lavish love upon us.  
**Make us people of extravagant love.**

**Prayer** Holy God, lover of our souls, we come before you as people created by and for love: Gather us in this time to hear again your word of love, to renew our trust in its breadth and depth. In the sacrifice of your love for us, may we find renewal and be your love in the world. **Amen.**

**Praise** *My Song Is Love Unknown*  
(Music, if desired, may be found in *The Hymnal 1982*, #458.)

My song is love unknown, my Savior's love to me,  
love to the loveless shown that they might lovely be.  
O who am I that for my sake my Lord  
should take frail flesh, and die?

He came from his blest throne salvation to bestow,  
but men made strange, and none the longed for Christ would know.  
But O my friend, my friend indeed,  
who at my need his life did spend.

Sometimes they strew his way, and his strong praises sing,  
resounding all the day hosannas to their King.  
then "Crucify!" is all their breath,  
and for his death they thirst and cry.

Why, what hath my Lord done? What makes this rage and spite?  
He made the lame to run, he gave the blind their sight.  
Sweet injuries! Yet they at these themselves displease,  
and 'gainst him rise.

Here might I stay and sing, no story so divine;  
never was love, dear Christ, never was grief like thine.  
this is my friend, in whose sweet praise  
I all my days could gladly spend.  
Words (alt): Samuel Crossman (1624-1683)

**Scripture** Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made with pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.  
John 12:1-3

**Meditation**      Look  
what happens to the scale  
when love  
holds  
it.  
It  
stops  
working.  
Kafir (c.1440-1518)<sup>85</sup>

*Where might we “waste” love this week?*

**Prayers**            Jesus, Holy One of God,  
**You embodied love for us.**  
Jesus, Holy One of God,  
**You accepted love from all who offered.**  
Jesus, Holy One of God,  
**We acknowledge our need for your love.**

Teach us, we pray:  
**The courage to both give and receive love,**  
**the humility to admit when we have not loved well, and**  
**the faith to trust that your love is enough.**

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

**Lord’s Prayer**

**Prayer**            Holy Spirit, fill us with godly love. Free us from all that resists loving and being  
loved. Empower us to love as Jesus did. In his gracious name we pray. **Amen.**

**Going Out**      You lavish love upon us.  
**Make us people of extravagant love.**

**Forgiveness** *Vespers* (Traditional hour: dusk/end of the day)

*As we turn on lamps at dusk, we greet the evening by welcoming God to abide with us anew.*

**Opening** In the fullness of our humanity,  
heal us, gracious Savior.

**Prayer** Troubled God, in every generation you call your people to contend against the brutality of sin and betrayal: Keep us steadfast even in our fear and uncertainty, so that we may follow where Jesus has led the way. **Amen.**<sup>86</sup>

**Praise** *As in That Upper Room, You Left Your Seat*  
(Music, if desired, may be found in *Wonder, Love and Praise*, #s 729, 730.)

As in that upper room you left your seat  
and took a towel and chose a servant's part,  
so for today, Lord, wash again my feet,  
who in your mercy died to cleanse my heart.

I bow before you, all my sin confessed,  
to hear again the words of love you said;  
and at your table, as your honored guest,  
I take and eat the true and living bread.

So in remembrance of your life laid down  
I come to praise you for your grace divine;  
saved by your cross, and subject to your reign,  
strengthened for service by the bread and wine.

Words (alt): Timothy Dudley-Smith (b. 1926)

**Scripture** At that moment, while Peter was still speaking, the cock crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times." And Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Luke 22: 60b-62

**Meditation** [God says]: "No matter what you have done, I love you for your own sake. Come to me with your misery and your sins, with your trouble and your needs, and with all your longing to be loved. I stand at the door of your heart and knock. Open to me, for I thirst for you."

Mother Teresa (1910-1997)<sup>87</sup>

*Where do we long to be loved and forgiven at this hour?*

**Confession** We are human: we strive to love, but we often fail.  
Jesus, we confess that we do not always answer  
when you call us to bear your light in the world.  
Although we long for love, too often we fail to accept it or to offer it.  
Help us let go of our failings.  
Renew our hearts.  
Fill us anew with your love. Amen.

**Assurance of Pardon**  
God says to us, "I love you for your own sake."  
Know that you are loved and forgiven.

Jesus invites us to pick up our lives anew  
And walk in love.

**Prayers**

God of extravagant love,  
**Transform us with the freedom of forgiveness.**  
God of unbounded, sacrificial love,  
**Teach us to give ourselves in joyful service.**  
God whose love persists even in the darkest hour,  
**Deepen our faith, renew our spirits and strengthen our confidence in you,  
that we may truly learn to walk in self-giving love.**

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Christ our victim, whose beauty was disfigured upon the cross: Open wide your arms to embrace our tortured world, that we may not turn away our eyes, but abandon ourselves to your mercy. **Amen.**<sup>88</sup>

**Going Out**

In the fullness of our humanity,  
**heal us, gracious Savior.**

**Trust** *Compline*

(Traditional hour: night/bedtime)

*We sum up this day with a bedtime prayer to examine our conscience and offer our actions to God.*

**Opening** Into your hands we entrust our souls,  
**for you have redeemed us, O God of truth.**

**Prayer** Christ our God, your love is poured out in death for our sakes; Hold us in your embrace as we wait for Easter's dawn. Comfort us with the promise that no power on earth, not even death itself, can separate us from your love; and strengthen us to wait until you are revealed to us in all your risen glory. **Amen.**<sup>89</sup>

**Praise** *I Want Jesus to Walk with Me*

(Music, if desired, may be found in *Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, #70; *Wonder, Love and Praise*, #805.)

I want Jesus to walk with me;  
I want Jesus to walk with me  
All along my pilgrim journey.  
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

In my trials, Lord walk with me;  
In my trials, Lord walk with me;  
When the shades of life are falling,  
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

In my sorrows, Lord walk with me;  
In my sorrows, Lord walk with me;  
When my heart within is aching,  
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

Text: traditional

**Scripture** Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

Luke 23:46a

**Meditation** Little by little, God grows us ever more in grace because God wants to be seen and sought. God wants to be awaited and trusted.

Julian of Norwich (1342-1420), *Revelations*

*Jesus entrusted his soul to God's care. What should we entrust to God this hour?*

**Prayers** Holy God, friend of the friendless,  
**Deepen our trust in your faithfulness.**  
Jesus, our brother, loving even unto death,  
**Walk with us as we grow in trust and love.**  
Holy Spirit, source of all life,  
**Give us eyes that see your glory**  
**and hearts that long for your grace.**

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Eternal God, rock and refuge, with roots grown old in the earth, riverbeds run dry, and flowers withered in the field, we wait for revival and release: Abide with us until we come alive in the sunrise of your glory. **Amen.**<sup>90</sup>

**Going Out**

Into your hands we entrust our souls,  
**for you have redeemed us, O God of truth.**

**Watch** *Vigils*

(Traditional hour: late night)

*Like nuns and monks at prayer, we can listen in the stillness of the night to hear God's call.*

**Opening** Lord Jesus, as I watch and pray,  
remain here with me.

**Scripture** Jesus said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake."  
Mark 14:34

**Meditation** *What will I watch and pray about this hour?*

**Prayers** Jesus, alongside your suffering, you also bear my wounds. I offer you all the grief and worries I carry at this hour: may they be transformed by your love. **Amen.**

**Going Out** Lord Jesus, as I watch and pray,  
remain here with me.

# Easter

Easter, the oldest celebration of the Christian year, is not a single day but an entire season: Easter lasts fifty days, from Easter Day (the Sunday of the Resurrection) through the Day of Pentecost. The season also includes the feast of the Ascension, when the resurrected Jesus ascended to heaven and was seen on earth no longer. Throughout the year every Sunday—even during Lent—is considered a little Easter, a mini feast of the resurrection on what Christians have called the first day of the week. The primary theme of Easter is the resurrection: on this day Jesus was raised from the dead, overcoming the power of death and the grave. We celebrate that we, too, are raised to everlasting life with him in our baptism.

At Pentecost we celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the ongoing life of the Holy Spirit in the church today. It is the Holy Spirit who breathes life into the Body of Christ, the church; it is the Holy Spirit who provides the gifts and guidance needed to sustain our life. At every Eucharist we pray that the Holy Spirit will sanctify the bread and wine of communion to be “the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him.” We also pray that the Spirit will “sanctify us also” so that we may receive the Eucharist with faith and serve God “in unity, constancy, and peace.” It is the Holy Spirit who makes God present and alive in our hearts.

**Praise** *Lauds*

(Traditional hour: dawn/waking up)

Laudate, omnes gentes, laudate Dominum! [*Sing praises, all people, sing praises to the Lord!*]

*We greet the new day by praising the Creator (the ancient name for this hour, Lauds, means "praise").*

**Opening** Alleluia! Christ is risen!  
**Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

**Scripture** If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!  
2 Corinthians 5:17

**Meditation** *Today, how will I live joyfully in God's new creation?*

**Prayer** As the morning approaches, I pray:  
Risen Lord, be my light, my life, and my hope.  
Come: enlighten my darkness and bring me life by your life. **Amen.**

**Going Out** Alleluia! Christ is risen!  
**Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

**Discernment** *Prime*

(Traditional hour: morning/start of the day)

*As we begin the day, we focus on our calling to live faithfully, for who knows what today holds?*

**Opening** Alleluia! O God, may the empty tomb  
fill our hearts with faith. Alleluia!

**Prayer** Jesus, our way, our truth, and our life: As the gift of this new day unfolds, open our hearts and minds to you, that we may see you clearly and follow where you lead; to you, risen Savior, we offer praise, now and always. **Amen.**

**Praise** *A Song of Our Adoption* (Ephesians 1:3-10)<sup>91</sup>

Blessed are you, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, \*  
for you have blessed us in Christ  
with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.  
Before the world was made, you chose us to be yours in Christ, \*  
that we should be holy and blameless before you.  
You destined us for adoption as your children through Jesus Christ, \*  
according to the good pleasure of your will,  
To the praise of your glorious grace, \*  
that you have freely given us in the Beloved.  
In you, we have redemption through the blood of Christ, \*  
the forgiveness of our sins,  
According to the riches of your grace\*  
which you have lavished upon us.  
You have made known to us, in all wisdom and insight,\*  
the mystery of your will,  
According to your good pleasure which you set forth in Christ,\*  
as a plan for the fullness of time,  
To gather together all things in Christ,\*  
things in heaven and things on earth.

**Scripture** The angel said to the women at the tomb, "I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said."  
Matthew 28:6

**Meditation** *The Trouble with Easter*

But ... I want the tomb full, like temple or tent --  
with the Holy enshrouded in fabric un-rent.  
Yes, I want death preserved in sweet-smelling spice;  
not my neighbor perspiring the aroma of Christ.  
Julia McCray-Goldsmith

*How will we together embrace the gift of life in all its fullness today?*

**Affirmation**

Christ Jesus, though in the form of God,  
did not exploit equality with God  
but emptied himself,  
in the form of a slave,  
born in human likeness.  
And being found in human form,  
he humbled himself

and became obedient to the point of death—  
even death on a cross.  
Therefore, God also highly exalted him  
and gave him the name  
that is above every name,  
so that at the name of Jesus  
every knee should bend,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
and every tongue should confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:5-11

**Prayers**

In the work we do this day,  
**May the Spirit of the risen Christ teach us.**  
In the challenges we face this day,  
**May the Spirit of the risen Christ guide us.**  
Through the people we meet this day,  
**May the Spirit of the risen Christ renew us.**

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

As we respond to the hungers and hurts of this world,  
**May the Spirit of the risen Christ strengthen us.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Jesus, our friend and savior: Guide us in this new day, that we may know God's desire for us and gain strength and courage to live as beloved children of God; in whose name we pray. **Amen.**

**Going Out**

Alleluia! O God, may the empty tomb  
fill our hearts with faith. Alleluia!

**Wisdom** *Terce*

(Traditional hour: mid-morning)

*Having asked for direction and guidance, we pray now to equip ourselves properly for the journey ahead.*

**Opening** Alleluia! Risen Lord, come be with us,  
and teach our hearts to live in you. Alleluia!

**Prayer** Jesus, divine companion: As the day unfolds, give us strength to understand and eyes to see, as you teach us to walk the soft earth, related to all that lives. **Amen.**<sup>92</sup>

**Praise** *A Song of Wisdom* (Wisdom 10:15-19, 20b-21)<sup>93</sup>

Wisdom freed from a nation of oppressors \*  
a holy people and a blameless race.  
She entered the soul of a servant of the Lord, \*  
withstood dread rulers with wonders and signs.

To the saints she gave the reward of their labors, \*  
and led them by a marvelous way;  
She was their shelter by day \*  
and a blaze of stars by night.

She brought them across the Red Sea, \*  
she led them through mighty waters;  
But their enemies she swallowed in the waves \*  
and spewed them out from the depths of the abyss.

And then, Lord, the righteous sang hymns to your Name \*  
and praised with one voice your protecting hand;  
For Wisdom opened the mouths of the mute \*  
and gave speech to the tongues of a new-born people.

**Scripture** We have been buried with Christ by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.  
Romans 6:4

**Meditation** "I asked my Lord, and he listened to me."  
St. Scholastica (d. 543)

*Where do we ask for God's wisdom today?*

**Prayers** Risen Christ, open our hearts to your grace and truth.  
**May we walk in newness of life.**  
Teach us to love others in the power of the Spirit.  
**May we walk in newness of life.**

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

Strengthen us as witnesses to your love.  
**May we walk in newness of life.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

God our Deliverer, by water and the Holy Spirit we have been buried with Christ and raised to the new life of grace: Give us inquiring and discerning hearts, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. **Amen.**

**Going Out**

Alleluia! Risen Lord, come be with us,  
and teach our hearts to live in you. Alleluia!

**Perseverance/Renewal** *Sext*

(Traditional hour: mid-day)

*As we pause to feed our bodies in the middle of the day, we pause also to feed our souls by vowing again to live faithfully.*

**Opening** Alleluia! Risen Lord,  
deepen our desire for you. Alleluia!

**Prayer** God of steadfast love: Turn our hearts to you, that we may once again delight in your goodness and rejoice in the good news of the risen Christ; in whose name we pray. **Amen.**

**Praise** Psalm 118:19-24  
Open for me the gates of righteousness;  
I will enter them; I will offer thanks to the Lord.  
“This is the gate of the Lord;  
the righteous shall enter through it.”  
I will give thanks to you, for you answered me  
and have become my salvation.  
The same stone that the builders rejected  
has become the chief cornerstone.  
This is the Lord’s doing,  
and it is marvelous in our eyes.  
On this day that the Lord has acted,  
we will rejoice and be glad in it.

**Scripture** Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint Jesus. ... They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back.  
Mark 16:1,3-4

**Meditation** “It is my deepest belief that only by giving our lives do we find life.”  
Cesar Chavez<sup>94</sup>

*What enables us to give our lives for others?*

**Prayers** Lord Jesus, you rise triumphant over death and the grave:  
**Christ our life, save us.**  
Christ, the Lord of life, raise us to new life:  
**Christ our life, save us.**

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

In a world where so many suffer because of hunger and injustice:  
**Christ our life, save us.**

**Lord’s Prayer**

**Prayer** Living God, long ago, faithful women proclaimed the good news of Jesus’ resurrection, and the world was changed forever: Teach us to keep faith with them, that our witness may be as bold, our love as deep, and our faith as true. **Amen.**<sup>95</sup>

**Going Out** Alleluia! Risen Lord,  
deepen our desire for you. Alleluia!

**Love** *None*

(Traditional hour: afternoon)

*As shadows lengthen, we are filled by the day's encounters; now, more than ever, we accept the depth and breadth of God's grace.*

**Opening** Alleluia! Come to us, O risen Lord,  
and enliven us with your eternal love. Alleluia!

**Prayer** Loving God, we no longer look for Jesus among the dead, for he is alive in our world, our church and our hearts. Renew and strengthen us in the risen life we share in Christ, in whose name we pray. **Amen.**

**Praise** *A Song of Faith* (1 Peter 1:3-4,18-21)<sup>96</sup>  
Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, \*  
by divine mercy we have a new birth into a living hope;  
Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, \*  
we have an inheritance that is imperishable in heaven.  
The ransom that was paid to free us \*  
was not paid in silver or gold  
But in the precious blood of Christ, \*  
the Lamb without spot or stain.  
God raised Jesus from the dead and gave him glory \*  
so that we might have faith and hope in God.

**Scripture** Now, after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping.  
Mark 16:9-10

**Meditation** "For the garden is the only place there is, but  
you will not find it  
Until you have looked for it everywhere  
and found it nowhere that is not a desert."  
W. H. Auden, from *For the Time Being*

*Through what desert experiences have we found God's garden?*

**Prayers** Merciful God, you have not abandoned us to the grave.  
**Guide us with your steadfast love.**  
In your presence there is fullness of joy.  
**Guide us with your steadfast love.**

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

You send us into the world to tell the story of your divine mercy.  
**Guide us with your steadfast love.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer** Jesus, strong deliverer and our lover, as you sent Mary Magdalene to tell the good news of your resurrection, so fill and embolden us with your love that we may be your faithful witnesses in the world today. In your name we pray. **Amen.**

**Going Out** Alleluia! Come to us, O risen Lord,  
and enliven us with your eternal love. Alleluia!

**Forgiveness** *Vespers* (Traditional hour: dusk/end of the day)

*As we turn on lamps at dusk, we greet the evening by welcoming God to abide with us anew.*

**Opening** Alleluia! By death, Christ tramples death.  
**On those in the tombs, he bestows new life. Alleluia!**

**Prayer** God of victory over death, your Son revealed himself again and again to convince his followers of his glorious resurrection: Grant that we may know his risen presence, in love obediently feed his sheep and care for the lambs of his flock, until we join the hosts of heaven in worshipping you and praising the one who is worthy of blessing and honor, glory and power, for ever and ever. **Amen.**<sup>97</sup>

**Praise** Light of the World *Phos hilaron*<sup>98</sup>  
Light of the world, in grace and beauty,  
Mirror of God's eternal face,  
Transparent flame of love's free duty,  
You bring salvation to our race.  
Now, as we see the lights of evening,  
We raise our voice in hymns of praise;  
Worthy are you of endless blessing,  
Sun of our night, lamp of our days.

**Scripture** Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep."  
John 21:16

**Meditation** "The future will be different if we make the present different."  
Peter Maurin<sup>99</sup>

*How will we make the future different by caring for others now?*

**Confession** *During the joyful season of Easter, the Confession of Sin is omitted in order for worship to emphasize the celebration of redemption and new life that are characteristic of this season.*

**Assurance of Pardon** We know that our old self was crucified with Christ so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. ...So you must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.  
Romans 6:6, 11

**Prayers** Jesus, in your life we receive life:  
**Raise us to the new life of grace.**  
You look with compassion on our human failings:  
**Raise us to the new life of grace.**  
We proclaim the hope of your resurrection as we offer you these prayers:

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

You make us bearers of hope in a world of suffering and despair:  
**Raise us to the new life of grace.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know you as you are revealed in Scripture and the breaking of the bread. Grant this for the sake of your love. **Amen.**<sup>100</sup>

**Going Out**

Alleluia! By death, Christ tramples death.  
**On those in the tombs, he bestows new life. Alleluia!**

**Trust** *Compline*

(Traditional hour: night/bedtime)

*We sum up this day with a bedtime prayer to examine our conscience and offer our actions to God.*

**Opening** Alleluia! May God, who raised Jesus from the dead,  
grant us a peaceful night and a perfect end. Alleluia!

**Prayer** God, you sent your Son into the world that we might live through him: May we abide in his risen life so that we may love one another as he first loved us, and know the fullness of joy. **Amen.**

**Praise** Psalm 113<sup>101</sup>  
Hallelujah! Give praise, you servants of God;  
praise the Name of the Most High.  
Let God's Name be blest,  
from this time forth for evermore.  
From the rising of the sun to its going down  
let God's holy Name be praised.  
God is high above all nations,  
and God's glory above the heavens.  
Who is like our God, who sits enthroned on high,  
but stoops to behold the heavens and the earth?  
God takes up the weak out of the dust  
and lifts up the poor from the ashes.  
To set them up on high,  
with the rulers of the people.  
God makes the woman of a childless house  
to be a joyful mother of children.

**Scripture** May the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever and ever.  
Hebrews 13:20-21

**Meditation** "A characteristic of the great saints is their power of levity. The angels fly because they can take themselves lightly."  
G. K. Chesterton<sup>102</sup>

*As this day closes, what burdens can we lay down?*

**Prayers** O God of peace, in our disappointments and in our triumphs,  
Let us rest secure in your loving arms.  
In our certainty and in our confusion,  
Let all people rest secure in your loving arms.

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

As we await a new day,  
Let all creation rest secure in your loving arms.

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer** All shall be Amen and Alleluia.  
We shall rest and we shall see. We shall see and we shall know.

We shall know and we shall love. We shall love and we shall praise.  
Behold our end, which is no end. **Amen.**

Saint Augustine<sup>103</sup>

**Going Out**

Alleluia! May God, who raised Jesus from the dead,  
**grant us a peaceful night and a perfect end. Alleluia!**

**Watch** *Vigils*

(Traditional hour: late night)

*Like nuns and monks at prayer, we can listen in the stillness of the night to hear God's call.*

**Opening** Alleluia! O risen Christ,  
**watch with me. Alleluia!**

**Scripture** Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."  
John 20:19b

**Meditation** *How will I accept Christ's peace this night?*

**Prayer** All praise to thee, my God, this night  
for all the blessings of the light;  
keep me, O keep me, King of kings,  
beneath thine own almighty wings.<sup>104</sup>

**Going Out** Alleluia! O risen Christ,  
**watch with me. Alleluia!**

## Ordinary Time: Creation

The Season after Pentecost is not actually a season with a single common focus, but is simply the weeks between the Day of Pentecost and the First Sunday of Advent. It is often called “Ordinary Time.” These weeks hold both the slower pace and peaceful quality of summer months and the quicker pace and flurry of activity in the early fall. These are our “ordinary” days, in which we live the Christian faith in our daily lives.

During these weeks, as the liturgical scholar Leonel Mitchell puts it, we celebrate “the time in which we actually live—the period between the Pentecost and the Second Advent.” Two thousand years after the first Pentecost, the church still lives in this “in between” time before the fulfillment of time in Christ’s second coming. You might also hear these weeks called “the long, green season,” referring both to the green color of the vestments and altar hangings for these weeks as well as to the summertime of year in which many of the weeks fall in the northern hemisphere.

After Pentecost we settle into the growing season, nourishing the seeds planted at Easter and putting down roots in our faith.

**Praise** *Lauds*

(Traditional hour: dawn/waking up)

Laudate, omnes gentes, laudate Dominum! [*Sing praises, all people, sing praises to the Lord!*]

*We greet the new day by praising the Creator (the ancient name for this hour, Lauds, means "praise").*

**Opening**            This is the day that the Lord has made;  
I will rejoice and be glad in it.

**Scripture**            O Lord, how manifold are your works!  
*Psalm 104:27*

**Meditation**        *How will I use the gift of this new day? How will I notice the glory of creation?*

**Prayer**                I ask all blessings.  
I ask them with reverence,  
of my mother the earth,  
of the sky, moon, and sun my father.  
I am old age: the essence of life,  
I am the source of all happiness.  
All is peaceful, all in beauty,  
All in harmony, all in joy. Amen.<sup>105</sup>

**Going Out**         This is the day that the Lord has made;  
I will rejoice and be glad in it.

**Discernment** *Prime*

(Traditional hour: morning/start of the day)

*As we begin the day, we focus on our calling to live faithfully, for who knows what today holds?*

**Opening**            Holy God, you are always with us.  
Open our eyes to your presence.

**Prayer**             God of faithful surprises, throughout the ages you have made known your love and power in unexpected ways and places: May we daily perceive the joy and wonder of your abiding presence and offer our lives in gratitude for our redemption. **Amen.**<sup>106</sup>

**Praise**                *Benedicite Omnia Opera*  
All you works of God, bless your creator;  
**praise her and glorify her for ever.**

Let the wide earth bless the creator;  
let the arching heavens bless the creator;  
let the whole body of God bless the creator;  
**praise her and glorify her for ever.**

You returning daylight, bless your creator;  
twilight and shadows, bless your creator;  
embracing darkness, bless your creator;  
**praise her and glorify her for ever.**

Let all who live and grow and breathe  
bless our creator,  
**praise her and glorify her for ever.**  
Janet Morley<sup>107</sup>

**Scripture**           I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit because, apart from me, they can do nothing. You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.  
John 15:5, 16a

**Meditation**        People say that walking on water is a miracle, but to me, walking peacefully on the earth is the real miracle.  
Thich Nhat Hanh<sup>108</sup>

*How will we walk in peace today?*

**Affirmation**        We believe in God, the creator of all life and beauty,  
                              who blesses our journey.

We believe in Jesus Christ,  
                              who lived as a friend and savior to all he met as he traveled,  
                              and who ate and laughed, wept and celebrated with them in love.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
                              who rides on the gentle breeze,  
                              who strengthens our bindings, and  
                              who offers hope eternal.

We believe in the church,  
which stands open to all travelers,  
and bears witness to the everlasting love of God.<sup>109</sup>

**Prayers**

As we turn to the tasks before us this day,  
**Fill us, gracious Lord.**  
In making faithful choices, great and small,  
**Guide us, gracious Lord.**  
As we seek to notice and serve those in need,  
**Teach us, gracious Lord.**

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

As we offer our lives to you,  
**Hear us, gracious Lord.**  
With our hearts ready to serve,  
**Accompany us, gracious Lord.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Generous Giver, you pour forth your extravagant bounty without measure upon your whole creation: Teach us such generosity, that the fruits of our spirits and the works of our hands may build your commonwealth of blessing. **Amen.**<sup>110</sup>

**Going Out**

Holy God, you are always with us.  
**Open our eyes to your presence.**

## Wisdom *Terce*

(Traditional hour: mid-morning)

*Having asked for direction and guidance, we pray now to equip ourselves properly for the journey ahead.*

**Opening** Let all who desire wisdom  
walk in love.

**Prayer** Holy Lord, giver of all wisdom: Set for us this day the banquet of your word; invite us to feast on the genius and beauty all around us. Then, turn us in humility toward the poor, the oppressed and the weak; we ask this in the name of Jesus, who is Wisdom for ever and ever. **Amen.**<sup>111</sup>

**Praise** *A Song of Pilgrimage* (Ecclesiasticus 51:13-16, 20b-22)<sup>112</sup>

Before I ventured forth, even while I was very young, \*  
I sought wisdom openly in my prayer.  
In the forecourts of the temple I asked for her, \*  
and I will seek her to the end.  
From first blossom to early fruit, \*  
she has been the delight of my heart.  
My foot has kept firmly to the true path, \*  
diligently from my youth have I pursued her.  
I inclined my ear a little and received her; \*  
I found for myself much wisdom and became adept in her.  
To the one who gives me wisdom will I give glory, \*  
for I have resolved to live according to her way.  
From the beginning I gained courage from her; \*  
therefore I will not be forsaken.  
In my inmost being, I have been stirred to seek her; \*  
therefore have I gained a good possession.  
As my reward, the Almighty has given me the gift of language, \*  
and with it will I offer praise to God.

**Scripture** But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.  
James 3:17-18

**Meditation** “Focus on Wisdom and do not be distracted. Watch the patterns of creation, and you will awaken to grace and tranquility.”  
Proverbs 3:19-22<sup>113</sup>

*How will we remain focused today so as to receive wisdom from creation?*

**Prayers** O God, in peace, you have prepared our path for today.  
**Help us to trace it in peace.**  
If we speak,  
**Remove lies from our lips.**  
If we are hungry,  
**Rid us of complaint.**  
If we have plenty,  
**Flatten the pride in us.**  
We offer these prayers of our hearts to your wise guidance:

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

May we pass through the day, calling on you,  
**O Lord, who knows no other Lord. Amen.** <sup>114</sup>

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Holy One, in love you created us and called it good: Grant us the deep wisdom of your love that, wherever this day leads, our lives may remain rooted in your goodness; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

**Going Out**

Let all who desire wisdom  
**walk in love.**

## Perseverance/Renewal *Sext*

(Traditional hour: mid-day)

*As we pause to feed our bodies in the middle of the day, we pause also to feed our souls by vowing again to live faithfully.*

**Opening** God's power, working in us,  
**does more than we imagine: Glory to God!**

**Prayer** Creating God, your reign of love makes all things new: Plant seeds of confidence and gladness in our hearts so that, trusting in your word, we may live no longer for ourselves but for him who died and was raised for us, Jesus Christ, our Lord.  
**Amen.**<sup>115</sup>

**Praise** *For the Beauty of the Earth*  
(Music, if desired, may be found in *The Hymnal 1982*, #416.)

For the beauty of the earth,  
For the beauty of the skies,  
For the love which from our birth  
Over and around us lies:  
Christ our God, to thee we raise  
This our sacrifice of praise.

For the beauty of each hour,  
Of the day and of the night,  
Hill and vale and tree and flower,  
Sun and moon and stars of light:  
Christ, our God, to thee we raise  
This our sacrifice of praise.  
Words: Folliot Sandford Pierpont (1835-1917)

**Scripture** So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.  
Galatians 6:9-10

**Meditation** "Care ... rests upon genuine religion. Care allows creatures to escape our explanations into their actual presence and their essential mystery. In taking care of our fellow creatures, we acknowledge that they are not ours; we acknowledge that they belong to an order and harmony of which we ourselves are parts. To answer to the perpetual crisis of our presence in this abounding and dangerous world, we have only the perpetual obligation of care."  
Wendell Berry<sup>116</sup>

*At this hour, how is God calling us to care for creation?*

**Prayers** O God, whose Spirit moved upon the waters,  
we remember those who live in lands of drought or flood,  
whose harvest is not-enough or not-at-all.  
**Today, they sow in tears:  
soon, may they reap with shouts of joy.**

We remember those whose water supply is polluted by negligence or need,  
those to whom water brings disease, poisoning or radiation,  
whose gift of life is cursed by death.

Today, they sow in tears:  
soon, may they reap with shouts of joy.

We remember ourselves:  
We devastate the waters and the fruits of the earth,  
and we are unwilling to form one circle  
with our brothers and sisters around the world.

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

And we ask, Merciful Creator,  
**to shed their tears**  
**that soon we may all reap with shouts of joy.**<sup>117</sup>

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**            Source of life and blessing,  
of garden, orchard, field:  
Root us in obedience to you  
and nourish us by your ever-flowing Spirit  
that, perceiving only the good we might do,  
our lives may be fruitful,  
our labor productive,  
and our service useful,  
in communion with Jesus, our brother. **Amen.**<sup>118</sup>

**Going Out**        God's power, working in us,  
**does more than we imagine: Glory to God!**

**Love** *None*

(Traditional hour: afternoon)

*As shadows lengthen, we are filled by the day's encounters; now, more than ever, we accept the depth and breadth of God's grace.*

**Opening** As you have loved us,  
**may we love one another.**

**Prayer** O Tree of Calvary, send your roots deep into my soul. Gather together my frailties – my soiled heart, my sandy instability and my muddy desires – and entwine them with the strong roots of your arboreal love. **Amen.**<sup>119</sup>

**Praise** Lord God, we praise you for those riches of our creation  
that we will never see:  
For stars whose light will never reach the earth;  
For species of living things that were born,  
that flourished and perished  
before humankind appeared in the world;  
For patterns and colors in the flowers,  
which only insect eyes are able to see;  
For strange, high music  
that humans can never hear.  
Lord God, you see everything that you have made  
and behold that it is very good.

Anonymous<sup>120</sup>

**Scripture** I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

John 13:34-35

**Meditation** “Isn’t that what friendship is all about: giving to each other the gift of our belovedness?”

Henri Nouwen<sup>121</sup>

*Where do we need to offer and receive the gift of our belovedness? How can we treat the earth as beloved?*

**Prayers** As the day lengthens, O Christ,  
**Teach us to walk in your love.**  
While we strive to be faithful in word and deed,  
**Teach us to love one another.**  
While we live as part of your creation,  
**Teach us to love this good earth.**  
While we offer our prayers this hour:

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

With grateful hearts,  
**Teach us to trust in your love.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer** Gracious Lord, the air sings with songs of glory, water flashes silver with creation, and the forests bloom with leaves for healing nations: May your light and love

fill our hearts and souls and minds, that we may share your love with the world.  
**Amen.**<sup>122</sup>

**Going Out**

As you have loved us,  
**may we love one another.**

**Forgiveness** *Vespers*

(Traditional hour: dusk/end of the day)

*As we turn on lamps at dusk, we greet the evening by welcoming God to abide with us anew.*

**Opening** If anyone is in Christ,  
**there is a new creation.**

**Prayer** Creating God, your reign of love makes all things new: Plant seeds of confidence and gladness in our hearts, so that, trusting your word, we may live no longer for ourselves but for him who died and was raised for us, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**<sup>123</sup>

**Praise** *Doxology*<sup>124</sup>  
May none of God's wonderful works keep silence,  
night or morning.  
Bright stars, high mountains, the depths of the seas,  
sources of rushing rivers:  
May all these break into song as we sing  
to Creator, Savior and Holy Spirit.  
May all the angels in the heavens reply:  
Amen! Amen! Amen!  
Power, praise, honor and eternal glory to God,  
the only giver of grace.  
Amen! Amen! Amen!  
Anonymous (third century)

**Scripture** So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.  
2 Corinthians 5:17-18

**Meditation** "We should be clear about what happens when we destroy the living forms of this planet. The first consequence is that we destroy modes of divine presence."  
Thomas Berry<sup>125</sup>

*What will we do today to preserve God's work in creation?*

**Confession** We confess  
that we have considered the earth to be our own,  
believing God gave us dominion and, thus, absolute control over it.  
We affirm that  
"the earth is the LORD's and all that is in it,  
for he has founded it on the seas and established it on the rivers." (Psalm 24:1-2)  
We repent.  
We know we need to change our understanding of creation,  
taking our share of responsibility for its care and protection.  
We believe  
that the Spirit, God's recreating power,  
is active in us and in the world.  
God, Creator of all,  
may humankind be freed from greed, which is destroying the earth;  
and may your courageous churches take up causes against the forces  
that threaten life.  
Amen.<sup>126</sup>

**Assurance of Pardon**

God does not deal with us according to our sins,  
nor repay us by the measure of our failings.  
As vast as the distance from one end of creation to another,  
God's love for us is even greater.  
As far as east is from west,  
from greater than this distance does God remove our sin from us.  
**Thanks be to God.**<sup>127</sup>

**Prayers**

Holy One, we praise you for the wonders of your creation:  
**Make us joyful and faithful stewards.**  
As the day grows long,  
**Bless us with the gift of laying down our burdens.**  
And not ours only:  
Help us lift the weights we have placed on others and on your creation.  
We offer these prayers of our hearts:

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

Create in us, again and always, your heart of grace.  
**May we rest on the sure foundation of your love.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Give us strength to understand and eyes to see;  
teach us to walk the soft earth as related  
to all that lives. **Amen.**<sup>128</sup>

**Going Out**

If anyone is in Christ,  
**there is a new creation.**

**Trust** *Compline*

(Traditional hour: night/bedtime)

*We sum up this day with a bedtime prayer to examine our conscience and offer our actions to God.*

**Opening** The Lord almighty grant us a peaceful night  
and a perfect end. Amen.

**Prayer** God our desire, whose coming we look for, but whose arrival is unexpected: Here in the darkness make us urgent to greet you, and open yourself to our longing that we may be known by you through Jesus Christ, Amen.<sup>129</sup>

**Praise** *Lifetime Psalm<sup>130</sup>*  
Praise my soul, our good Lord.  
Sing songs to God's name,  
for God has brought my life  
into fresh waters when I was thirsty.  
God has fed me with the Bread of Life  
when I was starving.  
God has sustained me along all my days  
and never has put me to shame.  
Praise my soul, our good Lord,  
for such abundant goodness.

**Scripture** Blessed are those who trust in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought, it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.  
Jeremiah 17:7-8

**Meditation** "Fish cannot drown in water, birds cannot sink in air, gold cannot perish in the refiner's fire. This has God given to all creatures: to foster and seek their own nature."  
Mechthild of Magdeburg (13th century)

*What has God given us today to help us be more fully ourselves?*

**Prayer** Creator God,  
you call us to love and serve you with body, mind, and spirit  
through loving your creation and our sisters and brothers.  
Open our hearts in compassion and receive these petitions  
on behalf of the needs of the church and the world.

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer** Holy One, you planted us by living water, that we might be rooted in righteousness. You call us to be holy as you are holy. Assured of your love, help us cast aside all fear, so that we may love our neighbors as ourselves. Amen.<sup>131</sup>

**Going Out** The Lord almighty grant us a peaceful night  
and a perfect end. Amen.

**Watch** *Vigils*

(Traditional hour: late night)

*Like nuns and monks at prayer, we can listen in the stillness of the night to hear God's call.*

**Opening** All creation longs for grace:  
**I wait in hope.**

**Scripture** Be still, then, and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations;  
I will be exalted in the earth.  
Psalm 46:11 (BCP)

**Meditation** *How will I be still and trusting this night?*

**Prayers** Hidden God, ever present to me  
may I now be present to you,  
attentive to your every word,  
attuned to your inspirations,  
alert to your touch.  
Empty me that I may be filled with you alone. **Amen.**<sup>132</sup>

**Going Out** All creation longs for grace:  
**I wait in hope.**

# Ordinary Time: Rest

**Praise** *Lauds*

(Traditional hour: dawn/waking up)

Laudate, omnes gentes, laudate Dominum! [*Sing praises, all people, sing praises to the Lord!*]

*We greet the new day by praising the Creator (the ancient name for this hour, Lauds, means "praise").*

**Opening** I begin this day with joy:  
**God is good.**

**Scripture** God saw everything that God had made, and, indeed, it was very good.  
Genesis 1:31

**Meditation** *How will I receive God's goodness today?*

**Prayer** Holy Creator, help me to embrace this day with open arms and to share your good gifts with gladness and generosity. **Amen.**

**Going Out** I begin this day with joy:  
**God is good.**

**Discernment** *Prime*

(Traditional hour: morning/start of the day)

*As we begin the day, we focus on our calling to live faithfully, for who knows what today holds?*

**Opening** We are called in the morning  
to turn our hearts to you.

**Prayer** God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardships as the pathway to peace; taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; trusting that God will make all things right if I surrender to God's will; that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with God for ever in the next.  
**Amen.**<sup>133</sup>

**Praise** Rejoice, people of God!  
Celebrate the life within you,  
and Christ's presence in your midst!

Our eyes shall be opened!  
The presence will have new meaning,  
and the future will be bright with hope.

Rejoice, people of God!  
Bow your heads before the One  
who is our wisdom and our strength.

We place ourselves before our God,  
that we may be touched and cleansed  
by the power of God's Spirit.<sup>134</sup>

**Scripture** Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.  
Luke 12:27

**Meditation** "The final fruitfulness of work is actually found by choosing and living its exact opposite—the cessation of work—or the Sabbath rest. Unless approximately one-seventh of life is also ceasing from work, putting spaces, paragraphs, and parentheses around my efforts, work always becomes compulsive, addictive, driven, unconscious, and actually counter-productive for the self and for those around us. We also need not to work."  
Richard Rohr<sup>135</sup>

*Today, how will we cease from work?*

**Affirmation**

We believe in God, who loves us and wants us to love each other.  
This is our God.

We believe in Jesus, who cared for children and held them in his arms.  
He wanted a world where everyone could live together in peace.  
This is Jesus Christ.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, who keeps working with us until  
everything is good and true.

**This is the Holy Spirit.**

**We can be the church, which reminds people of God because we love each other.  
This we believe. Amen.**<sup>136</sup>

**Prayers**

As we begin our day,  
**Give us your peace.**  
As we pause this morning,  
**Give us your peace.**  
As we do the work you have given us to do,  
**Give us your peace.**  
For all places of need in this world,  
**Give us your peace.**  
In trusting you, O God, to care for your children,  
**Give us your peace.**  
As we seek wholeness,  
**Give us your peace.**

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

As we reflect on your presence,  
**Let us be peace for others.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Holy One, we are too often blinded by trivial matters. Lord, may our attention be diverted now from these things, and may we become as little children, trusting and seeking with love to cross bridges that we have not crossed in the past. **Amen.**<sup>137</sup>

**Going Out**

We are called in the morning  
**to turn our hearts to you.**

**Wisdom** *Terce*

(Traditional hour: mid-morning)

*Having asked for direction and guidance, we pray now to equip ourselves properly for the journey ahead.*

**Opening** Listen and hear:  
**Be still and know.**

**Prayer** O Holy Wisdom, direct us on your path. Make us worthy of your teachings and open our hearts to accept your embrace, that we may serve you in peace and grace.  
**Amen.**

**Praise** *A Song of Pilgrimage* (Ecclesiasticus 51:13-16, 20b-22; metrical paraphrase)<sup>138</sup>  
(Music, if desired, may be found in *Wonder, Love and Praise*, #906.)

Even when young, I prayed for wisdom's grace;  
in temple courts I sought her day and night,  
and I will seek her to the very end;  
she is my heart's delight.

My foot has firmly walked the path of truth;  
with diligence, I followed her design.  
My ear was open to receive her words;  
now wisdom's skill is mine.

Glory to one who gives me wisdom's prize;  
I vowed to live according to her way.  
She gave me courage from the very start;  
she will not let me stray.

Something within my being has been stirred;  
my seeking brought a gift beyond compare:  
the gift of language loosed my halting tongue;  
God's praise is now my prayer.

Words: Patricia B. Clark (b. 1938)

**Scripture** Resting your thoughts on Her [Wisdom] – this is perfect understanding. Staying mindful of Her – this is perfect calm. She embraces those who are ready for Her, revealing Herself in the midst of their travels, meeting them in every thought.

Wisdom of Solomon 6:15-16

**Meditation** In the new light  
of each day's questions,  
I am never prepared.  
Today, again, I have nothing  
to offer but a handful  
of old prayers, worn down  
by the relentless abrasion  
of doubt, and a fragment  
of dream that plays on in my head  
only half remembered. Still,  
the doves coo and circle  
through the pines  
as they do when I pass  
each morning. Their sorrow  
is so nearly human, it rings  
sweet with regret. By dusk,

the trees will bow down, and I, too, will  
make my appeal, will find  
again your mercy,  
your solace.

Elizabeth Drescher<sup>139</sup>

*How will we embrace Wisdom's light and love this morning?*

**Prayers**

Holy Wisdom, we rest in your goodness:

**Guide us with your grace.**

For your Church we ask:

**Guide us with your grace.**

For our world we ask:

**Guide us with your grace.**

For our communities we ask:

**Guide us with your grace.**

And for ourselves: When we speak,

**Guide us with your grace.**

When we desire,

**Guide us with your grace.**

When we are afraid,

**Guide us with your grace.**

We offer these prayers of our hearts to you:

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

As we journey this day,

**Guide us with your grace.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Grant us, Lord, your wisdom as we face the questions of this day. Reveal to us the faithful path, and, O Holy Wisdom, may we make you our heart's illumination.

**Amen.**

**Going Out**

Listen and hear:

**Be still and know.**

## Perseverance/Renewal *Sext*

(Traditional hour: mid-day)

*As we pause to feed our bodies in the middle of the day, we pause also to feed our souls by vowing again to live faithfully.*

**Opening** My grace is sufficient for you,  
**for power is made perfect in weakness.**

**Prayer** Grant us, O God, not to be anxious about earthly things but to love things heavenly and, even now, while we are placed among things that are passing away, to hold fast to those that shall endure; through Christ our Lord, **Amen.**<sup>140</sup>

**Praise** *Peace before Us*  
(Music and additional verses, if desired, may be found in *Wonder, Love and Praise*, #791.)

### *Verse 1*

Peace before us, peace behind us,  
Peace under our feet.  
Peace within us, peace over us,  
Let all around us be peace.

### *Verse 2*

Light before us, light behind us,  
Light under our feet.  
Light within us, light over us,  
Let all around us be light.

### *Verse 3*

Love before us, love behind us,  
Love under our feet.  
Love within us, love over us,  
Let all around us be love.

### *Verse 4*

Christ before us, Christ behind us,  
Christ under our feet.  
Christ within us, Christ over us,  
Let all around us be Christ.

Words: David Haas (based on a Navaho prayer)

**Scripture** When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. My speech and my proclamation were not with the persuasiveness of wisdom but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

1 Corinthians 2:1,4-5

**Meditation** “Whenever I am weak, then I am strong.”  
St. Paul (2 Corinthians 12:10b)

*How do we find strength manifested in weakness?*

**Prayers** In our daily tasks,  
**God surrounds us.**  
In our successes and failures,  
**God surrounds us.**  
In our joys and sorrows,  
**God surrounds us.**  
With the healing of our world,  
**God surrounds us.**  
We pray for all who celebrate, or seek, or need God’s love:

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

As we continue our day,  
God surrounds us in hope.

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**            O Holy One, we keep still; we listen.  
We hear you say, "I am your strength."  
And we say to you, "You are our redeemer." **Amen.**<sup>141</sup>

**Going Out**        My grace is sufficient for you,  
for power is made perfect in weakness.

**Love** *None*

(Traditional hour: afternoon)

*As shadows lengthen, we are filled by the day's encounters; now, more than ever, we accept the depth and breadth of God's grace.*

**Opening**           What we offer is enough:  
**God's love covers all.**

**Prayer**             Creator and lover of our souls: Teach us to release our burdens and accept your love. May your love be the deepest reality of our lives, and may we offer real love to others. **Amen.**

**Praise**             *A Song of God's Love* (1 John 4:7-11)<sup>142</sup>

Beloved, let us love one another, \*  
for love is of God.  
Whoever does not love does not know God, \*  
for God is love.  
In this, the love of God was revealed among us, \*  
that God sent his only Son into the world,  
so that we might live through Jesus Christ.  
In this is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us \*  
and sent his Son that sins might be forgiven.  
Beloved, since God loved us so much, \*  
we ought also to love one another.  
For if we love one another, God abides in us, \*  
and God's love will be perfected in us.

**Scripture**         Come to me, all of you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.  
Matthew 11:28

**Meditation**      "Wasn't I Real before?" asked the little Rabbit.  
"You were Real to the Boy," the Fairy said, "because he loved you. Now you shall be Real to everyone."  
Margery Williams, *The Velveteen Rabbit*<sup>143</sup>

*What does it take to offer real love to another? How shall we do that today?*

**Prayers**           May the longtime sun shine upon us.  
**God's love is in us.**  
May God's love shine on all people.  
**God's love is all in all.**  
May all people know God's love.  
**God's love fills us all.**

Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.

May the pure light of God's love  
**Lead us to love others.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

O love of God, how strong and true! Eternal, and yet ever new;uncomprehended and unbought, beyond all knowledge and all thought: bless us with your love, that, in loving others we may honor you. **Amen.**<sup>144</sup>

**Going Out**

What we offer is enough:  
**God's love covers all.**

**Forgiveness** *Vespers*

(Traditional hour: dusk/end of the day)

*As we turn on lamps at dusk, we greet the evening by welcoming God to abide with us anew.*

**Opening** Holy One, lift our burdens,  
for your yoke is easy.

**Prayer** O God, as the showers renew the earth, bathe us in your healing power. Stretch out your hand, that we may live and know that you alone are God, in whose faithfulness we have life all our days. **Amen.**<sup>145</sup>

**Praise** *A Song of Our True Nature* (Julian of Norwich)<sup>146</sup>

Christ revealed our frailty and our falling,\*  
our trespasses and our humiliations.  
Christ also revealed his blessed power,\*  
his blessed wisdom and love.  
He protects us as tenderly and as sweetly when we are in greatest need;\*  
he raises us in spirit  
and turns everything to glory and joy without ending.

God is the ground and the substance, the very essence of nature;\*  
God is the true father and mother of natures.

We are all bound to God by nature,\*  
and we are all bound to God by grace.

And this grace is for all the world,\*  
because it is our precious mother, Christ.

For this fair nature was prepared by Christ for the honor and nobility of all,\*  
and for the joy and bliss of salvation.

**Scripture** Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. By this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

1 John 3:19-20

**Meditation** “Where there is no love, put love, and you will draw love out.”

St. John of the Cross

*Where have we neglected to put love? Where do we ask that love be drawn from us?*

**Confession** Most loving God,  
we confess that we have not loved  
in thought, word, or deed.  
We have not loved you or our neighbors or ourselves.  
We are sorry.  
Remind us that you love us unconditionally  
and help us to rest in your love.<sup>147</sup>

**Assurance of Pardon**

Loving God, have mercy on us, forgive us for forgetting to love, and renew our ability to give and receive love in all that we do. **Amen.**<sup>148</sup>

**Prayers**

Gracious Lord, whenever we err,  
**Fill our hearts with your love.**  
When we wound or are wounded,  
**Fill our hearts with your love.**  
When tempted to judge,  
**Fill our hearts with your love.**  
Wherever there is hurt, loss, or despair,  
**Fill our world with your love.**

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

Make us faithful instruments of your peace.  
**May we fill our world with your love.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. **Amen.** <sup>149</sup>

**Going Out**

Holy One, lift our burdens,  
**for your yoke is easy.**

**Trust** *Compline*

(Traditional hour: night/bedtime)

*We sum up this day with a bedtime prayer to examine our conscience and offer our actions to God.*

**Opening** As a loving mother comforts her child,  
**so I will comfort you.**

**Prayer** O God, at the setting of the sun, we place our trust in you. As the night draws near, we give thanks for your presence with us. Help us entrust our lives to you with the delight and confidence of one who loves and is beloved. Through Jesus, our faithful Savior. **Amen.**

**Praise** *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*  
(Music, if desired, may be found in *Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, #196.)

What a fellowship, what a joy divine,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms;  
What a blessedness, what a peace is mine,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

*Refrain*  
Leaning, leaning,  
safe and secure from all alarms;  
Leaning, leaning,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

O how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms;  
O how bright the path grows from day to day,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms. *Refrain*

What have I to dread, what have I to fear,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms;  
I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms. *Refrain*  
Words: Elisha A. Hoffman (1839-1929)

**Scripture** My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise my love, my fair one, and come away."  
Song of Solomon 2:10-13

**Meditation** "The measure of love is to love without measure."  
Saint Francis de Sales

*What "measure" will we release in order to embrace God's love this hour?*

**Prayers** The cares of our hearts  
**We entrust to you, O God.**  
The needs of your Church  
**We entrust to you, O God.**  
The wounds of the world  
**We entrust to you, O God.**

The hopes we carry  
We entrust to you, O God.  
The deep desire for peace  
We entrust to you, O God.

*Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.*

With all our lives and all our holy longings  
We praise you and trust your love for us,  
O Lover of our souls. Amen.

**Lord's Prayer**

**Prayer**

Gracious God, support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in your mercy, grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. Amen.<sup>150</sup>

**Going Out**

As a loving mother comforts her child,  
so I will comfort you.

**Watch** *Vigils*

(Traditional hour: late night)

*Like nuns and monks at prayer, we can listen in the stillness of the night to hear God's call.*

**Opening**            God of love,  
                              when I rest, I feel you near.

**Scripture**            I will dwell in your house forever;  
  I will take refuge under the cover of your wings.  
                              Psalm 61:4

**Meditation**        *Consider the promise that God's love is ever with you.*  
How does it feel to rest in that care?

**Prayers**             Spirit of comfort and longing,  
                              enfold my fear,  
                              unclothe my pride,  
                              unweave my thoughts,  
                              uncomplicate my heart,  
                              and give me surrender:  
                              that I may tell my wounds,  
                              lay down my work,  
                              and greet the dark. **Amen.**<sup>151</sup>

**Going Out**         God of love,  
                              when I rest, I feel you near.

## Appendix

### The Lord's Prayer

*Two translations of the Lord's Prayer are in use in the Episcopal Church today. The form on the left has been in use since the first American Prayer Book, adopted in 1789. The form on the right was produced during the 1970s by the ecumenical International Consultation on English Texts, which was convened to produce agreed versions of texts at a time when many churches in many countries were producing modern-language liturgies.*

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
Forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your Name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever. Amen.

*In the earliest editions of the Book of Common Prayer (published in England during the sixteenth century), the Lord's Prayer ended with "deliver us from evil." It appears again this way in the services of Noonday Prayer and Compline in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer:*

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
Forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your Name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
and deliver us from evil.

## Notes

### Advent

- 1 The seasonal introductions are taken and adapted from *Welcome to the Church Year: An Introduction to the Seasons of the Episcopal Church* by Vicki K. Black (Morehouse Publishing, 2004). Used by permission.
- 2 Sam Portaro, *Daysprings: Meditations for the Weekdays of Advent, Lent and Easter* (Boston: Cowley Publications, 2001), p. 6.
- 3 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, proposed by the Consultation on Common Texts (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), p. 31.
- 4 Canticle R, A Song of True Motherhood, Julian of Norwich, *Enriching Our Worship 1*, p. 40.
- 5 Robert Ellsberg, ed., *All Saints: Daily Reflections on Saints, Prophets, and Witnesses for Our Time*, p. 148.
- 6 Janet Morley, "Collect for 6 before Christmas," *All Desires Known* (exp. ed.) (Morehouse Press, 1992), p. 4.
- 7 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 34.
- 8 The Song of Mary (*Magnificat*), *Enriching Our Worship 1* (New York: Church Publishing Inc., 1998), p. 27.
- 9 Wendell Berry, excerpted from "Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front," in *Collected Poems: 1957-1982* (New York: North Point Press, 1985), p. 152.
- 10 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 34.
- 11 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 29.
- 12 Revised lyrics for this familiar tune, written by Philip A. Cunningham & Ken Meltz, at Boston College's Center for Jewish-Christian Learning may be found at <http://www.bc.edu/research/cjl/cjrelations/resources/education.html>
- 13 Janet Morley, "Christmas 2," *All Desires Known*, p. 6.
- 14 Canticle P, *Enriching Our Worship 1*, pp. 38-39.
- 15 J Philip Newell, *The Book of Creation*, pp. 11, 13.
- 16 The concluding stanza, "Make us holy," from Institute for Spirituality, CPSA, as found in *An African Prayer Book*, Desmond Tutu, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1995), p. 80.
- 17 Janet Morley, "Advent 3," *All Desires Known*, p. 5.
- 18 Excerpted from The Song of Hannah, 1 Samuel 2: 1-8, as found in *Enriching Our Worship I*, p. 31.
- 19 Marilyn Chandler McEntyre, "What to do in the darkness," as found in Holly W. Whitcom, *Seven Spiritual Gifts of Waiting* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Books, 2005), p. 38.
- 20 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 33 (alt.).

### Christmas

- 21 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 38.
- 22 The Song of Mary, *Enriching Our Worship 1*, p. 27.
- 23 Miriam Therese Winter, from "A Psalm for Midwives," as found in *Midwives of an Unnamed Future: Spirituality for Women in Times of Unprecedented Change*, eds. Mary Ruth Broz and Barbara Flynn (Skokie, Ill.: ACTA Publications, 2006), p. 19.
- 24 Malinia Devananda, "A Woman's Creed," as found in *Lifting Women's Voices: Prayers to Change the World*, Margaret Rose, Jenny Te Paa, Jeanne Person and Abigail Nelson, eds. (New York: Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society/Morehouse Press, 2009), pp. 371-372 (alt.).
- 25 Adapted from a prayer by Geoff Lowson/USPG, as found in *From Shore to Shore: Liturgies, Litanies and Prayers from Around the World* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2003), p. 55.
- 26 Janet Morley, "Collect for Christmas 1," *All Desires Known*, p. 6.
- 27 Dom Helder Camara (1909-1999) was Roman Catholic Archbishop of Recife, Brazil. See: Vicki Kemper and Larry Engel, "Dom Helder Camara: Hope against Hope," in *Cloud of Witnesses*, Jim Wallis and Joyce Hollyday, eds. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1991), p. ???
- 28 J. Philip Newell, *The Book of Creation* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1999), p. 10.
- 29 From *The Way of Perfection* by Teresa of Avila, as found in *Midwives of an Unnamed Future*, p. 171.
- 30 Based on 1 John 3:18-4:21.
- 31 As quoted in *A Keeper of the Word: Selected Writings of William Stringfellow*, Bill Wylie-Kellermann, ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eedrmans, 1994), p. 314.
- 32 Adapted from Psalm 108.
- 33 Based on Luke 6:20-22.
- 34 Collect for the Second Sunday after Christmas Day, *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 214.
- 35 Collect for the First Sunday after Christmas Day (alt.), *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 213.
- 36 Dorothy Soelle, from *On Earth as in Heaven* (Westminster John Knox Press, 1983), p. 641.
- 37 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 46.

### Epiphany

- 38 Adapted from Joan Chittister, *Life Ablaze: a Woman's Novena* (Franklin, Wis.: Sheed & Ward, 2000), p. 34.
- 39 "Brightest and best," alt. words by Reginald Heber (1783-1826), musical settings in *The Hymnal 1982*, pp. 117 and 118.
- 40 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 56.
- 41 Order of St. Helena, *St. Helena Psalter*, pp. 35-36
- 42 Terry Tempest Williams, "Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place," as found in *The Sacred Earth: Writers on Nature and Spirit*, Jason Gardner, ed. (Novato, Ca.: New World Library, 1998), p. 42.
- 43 United Church of Canada ([www.united-church.ca/beliefs/creed](http://www.united-church.ca/beliefs/creed)), 1994.
- 44 Lancelot Andrewes (adapted).
- 45 "Canticle 26," The European Province of the Society of St Francis, *Celebrating Common Prayer*, (London: Mowbray, 1995).
- 46 The Church of Ireland, *The Book of Common Prayer* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2004) p. 140 alt.
- 47 As printed in *Canticles of the Earth: Celebrating the Presence of God in Nature*, F. Lynn Bachleda, ed. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004), p. 3.
- 48 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 56.
- 49 Order of Saint Helena, *Saint Helena Breviary* (New York: Church Publishing, 2006), p. 10.

- 50 Thomas Merton, "at the corner of Fourth and Walnut," a journal entry on Merton's mystical experience in Louisville, Ky., as quoted in *All Saints: Daily Reflections on Saints, Prophets, and Witnesses for Our Time*, Robert Ellsberg, ed., p. 539.  
 51 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 66.  
 52 Adapted from Richard Meux Benson, *Benedictus Dominus* (London: JT Hayes, 1870), p. 48.  
 53 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 61.  
 54 From the service of Evening Prayer, *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 120.  
 55 Denise Levertov, *The Stream & the Sapphire: Selected Poems on Religious Themes* (New York: New Directions, 1997), p. 11.  
 56 Collect for Compline, *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 133.  
 57 Antiphon for Compline, *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 134.

### Lent

- 58 St. Helena Psalter.  
 59 Theophilus of Antioch, *Three Books to Autolychus*, I, 7, cited in Olivier Clement, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism*, trans. T. Berkeley (London: New City Press, 1993), 73.  
 60 From "Nicaragua," as found in *From Shore to Shore: Liturgies, Litanies and Prayers from Around the World*, Kate Wyles, ed. (London: SPCK, 2003), p. 92.  
 61 Erasmus of Rotterdam, 1466-1536.  
 62 Oscar Romero, from *Through the Year with Oscar Romero* (Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2005), p. 56.  
 63 Prayer for Guidance, *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 100.  
 64 *Music for Liturgy, 1999* (San Francisco: St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church), p. 20.  
 65 From *The Life of St. Anthony*, as found in *Following Christ: A Lenten Reader to Stretch Your Soul*, by Carmen Acevedo Butcher (Brewster, Mass.: Paraclete Press, 2010), p. 93.  
 66 Adapted from Janet Morley *All Desires Known* (Morehouse Publishing, 1994), p. 73.  
 67 Sara Miles, based on Wisdom of Solomon 7, 2007.  
 68 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 88.  
 69 Canticle D, A Song of the Wilderness, *Enriching our Worship 1*, p. 32.  
 70 John Chryostom, "Homily 50 on Matthew."  
 71 George Herbert, *Love (III)*.  
 72 Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*, trans. by the Benedictines of Stanbrook (1921), revised and edited by Fr. Benedict Zimmerman (1930), reprinted (2003) by Kessinger Publications, p. 109.  
 73 Adapted from *A Litany For The World We Live In*, quoted in *Bread of Tomorrow: Prayers for the Church Year*, Janet Morley, ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), p. 63.  
 74 Canticle Q, *Enriching Our Worship 1*, p. 39.  
 75 Nan Merrill, *Psalms for Praying*, p. 211.  
 76 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 82.  
 77 Patricia B. Clark, 1995 (music may be found in *Wonder, Love and Praise II*, #s 770 and 771).  
 78 Adapted from the Prayer of Saint Ephrem, c. 373.  
 79 2nd Prayer for the Presence of Christ, *Book of Common Prayer*, p.124.

### Holy Week

- 80 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 96.  
 81 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 97.  
 82 Janet Morley, "Collect for Passion Sunday," *All Desires Known*, expanded ed. (Morehouse Publishing, 1992), p. 12.  
 83 Collect from Prayers for Noonday, *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 107.  
 84 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 99.  
 85 Daniel Landinsky, trans., *Love Poems from God: Twelve Sacred Voices from the East and West* (New York: Penguin Compass, 2002), p. 238.  
 86 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 98.  
 87 As found in *Bread and Wine: Readings for Lent and Easter* (Farmington, Penn.: The Plough Publishing House, 2003), p. 189.  
 88 Janet Morley, "Collect for Good Friday," *All Desires Known*, p. 13.  
 89 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 95.  
 90 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 102.

### Easter

- 91 Canticle K, *Enriching Our Worship 1*, p. 36.  
 92 Native American source, as cited in *From Shore to Shore*, p. 97.  
 93 Canticle A, *Enriching Our Worship 1*, p. 30.  
 94 As quoted in *All Saints: Daily Reflections on Saints, Prophets, and Witnesses for Our Time*, Robert Ellsberg, ed., p. 180.  
 95 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 112.  
 96 Canticle M, *Enriching Our Worship 1*, p. 37.  
 97 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 117.  
 98 *Enriching Our Worship 1*, p. 23.  
 99 As quoted in *All Saints: Daily Reflections on Saints, Prophets, and Witnesses for Our Time*, Robert Ellsberg, ed., p. 203.  
 100 A Collect for the Presence of Christ, *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 124.  
 101 *St. Helena Psalter*.  
 102 As quoted in *All Saints: Daily Reflections on Saints, Prophets, and Witnesses for Our Time*, Robert Ellsberg, ed., p. 235.  
 103 Saint Augustine, as found in *An African Prayer Book*, Desmond Tutu, ed., p. 33.  
 104 Thomas Ken, from *The Hymnal 1982*, p. 43.  
 105 Navajo prayer (anon.), as found in *Canticles of the Earth: Celebrating the Presence of God in Nature*, F. Lynne Bachleda, ed.

- (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004), p. 83.  
 106 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 135.

### Ordinary Time: Creation

- 107 Janet Morley, excerpted from *All Desires Known*, p. 37.  
 108 Thich Nhat Hahn, from *Love in Action: Writings on Nonviolent Social Change*, as found in *Canticles of the Earth: Celebrating the Presence of God in Nature*, F. Lynn Bachleda, ed. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004), p. 4.  
 109 *From Shore to Shore*, p. 68.  
 110 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 170.  
 111 Adapted from J. Frank Henderson, *A Prayer Book for Remembering the Women* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2001), p.119.  
 112 Canticle B, *Enriching our Worship 1*, p. 30.  
 113 Rabbi Rami Shapiro, trans. *The Divine Feminine in Biblical Wisdom Literature: Selections and Annotated & Explained* (Woodstock, Vermont: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2005), p. 169.  
 114 Adapted from “You have prepared in peace the path,” as found in *An African Prayer Book* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), Desmond Tutu, ed., p. 119.  
 115 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 148.  
 116 Wendell Berry, from *Another Turn of the Crank*, as found in *The Sacred Earth: Writers on Nature and Spirit*, Jason Gardner, ed. (Novato, Ca.: New World Library, 1998), p. 115.  
 117 Adapted from a prayer written by Clare Amos/Methodist Church in the UK, as found in *From Shore to Shore: Liturgies, Litanies and Prayers from Around the World* (London: SPCK, 2003), p. 83.  
 118 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 85.  
 119 As found in *From Shore to Shore*, p. 79.  
 120 As found in *Canticles of the Earth: Celebrating the Presence of God in Nature*, F. Lynn Bachleda, ed. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004), p. 19.  
 121 Henri Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1992), p. 30.  
 122 Adapted from *From Shore to Shore: Liturgies, Litanies and Prayers from Around the World* (London: SPCK, 2003), p. 98.  
 123 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p.148.  
 124 This version is slightly altered from *Canticles of the Earth: Celebrating the Presence of God in Nature*, F. Lynn Bachleda, ed. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004), p. 13.  
 125 Thomas Berry, as found in *The Sacred Earth: Writers on Nature and Spirit*, Jason Gardner, ed. (Novato, Ca.: New World Library, 1998), p. 121.  
 126 Adapted from the confession in “For the Healing of Creation: An order of service to celebrate creation,” as found in *From Shore to Shore: Liturgies, Litanies and Prayers from Around the World* (London: SPCK, 2003), pp. 39-40.  
 127 Based on Psalm 103:10-12.  
 128 Native American prayer, as found in *From Shore to Shore: Liturgies, Litanies and Prayers from Around the World* (London: SPCK, 2003), p. 97.  
 129 Janet Morley, *All Desires Known*, p. 25.  
 130 Adapted from a prayer of the church in Uruguay, as found in *From Shore to Shore*, p. 91.  
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 132 Patricia B. Clark, *Women's Uncommon Prayers; Our Lives Revealed, Nurtured, Celebrated* (Morehouse Publishing, 2000), p. 222.

### Ordinary Time: Rest

- 133 Reinhold Neibuhr is credited as the author of the first form of this prayer, expanded by William Griffith Wilson, founder of Alcoholics Anonymous; known as “the serenity prayer,” it is widely used by AA and other groups based on AA’s 12-Step program (this version altered with inclusive language).  
 134 From the Methodist Church in Guatemala, as found in *From Shore to Shore*, p. 57.  
 135 *The Tasks Within the Tasks: A Spirituality of Work and Non-Work*, Richard Rohr, [http://www.cacradicalgrace.org/resources/rg/2007/01\\_Oct-Dec/task.php](http://www.cacradicalgrace.org/resources/rg/2007/01_Oct-Dec/task.php)  
 136 Prepared by children for the 1991 World Council of Churches’ Assembly in Canberra, as found in *From Shore to Shore*, p. 67.  
 137 Adapted from statement by Samuel M. Tickle, as found in *Race and Prayer*, Malcolm Boyd, ed. (Harrisburg: Morehouse, 2003), p. 122.  
 138 Metrical paraphrase of Canticle B (*Enriching Our Worship*), text by Patricia B. Clark. as found in *Wonder, Love and Praise*, #906.  
 139 Elizabeth Drescher, “Morning Song,” as found in *Women's Uncommon Prayers* (Harrisburg, Morehouse, 2000), p. 26.  
 140 Collect for Proper 20, *Book of Common Prayer* (alt.), p. 234.  
 141 Adapted from Sallie Cheavens Verette, “Silent Prayer,” in *Women's Uncommon Prayers*, p. 224.  
 142 Canticle N, *Enriching Our Worship 1*, pp. 37-38.  
 143 Margery Williams, *The Velveteen Rabbit* (New York: Doubleday, 1922, 1991), pp. 28-29.  
 144 “O love of God, how strong and true” (first phrase of this prayer), hymn text by Horatius Bonar (1808-1889), as found in *The Hymnal 1982*, pp. 455 - 456.  
 145 *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 144.  
 146 Canticle S, *Enriching Our Worship 1*, p. 40.  
 147 Adapted from the *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 116.  
 148 Adapted from the *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 117.  
 149 Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi.  
 150 Collect for Evening, *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 833.  
 151 Janet Morley, *All Desires Known* (Harrisburg: Morehouse, 1992), p. 85.