

Churches Uniting In Christ

OPENING PLENARY WORSHIP

June 8, 2023



Reconciling the Baptized, Seeking Unity with Justice

Mother Bethel
African Methodist Episcopal Church
Philadelphia, PA

Churches Uniting in Christ Liturgy (Adapted)

Prelude

Introductory and Penitential Rites

*Processional Hymn of Praise

All Are Welcome

1. Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:

Refrain

All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

2. Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus: *Refrain*

3. Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat:
a banquet hall on holy ground
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us: *Refrain*

4. Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger: *Refrain*

5. Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter: *Refrain*

Declaration of Purpose

One: We gather to praise God who in Christ Jesus chose us before the world was founded.
We gather because God has dedicated us to be without blemish and full of love.

All: We come to ask God's Holy Spirit to be with us as we seek forgiveness for the sin of division.
We come to pray for the full, visible unity of the one Body of Christ.

One: Led by the Holy Spirit, we have become Churches Uniting in Christ. In this relationship with one another, we can speak the Christian faith more clearly. With fresh courage, we can oppose the powers that divide our churches and oppress the people of our land.

All: We ask for wisdom and perseverance as we work to reconcile our separated Ministries so that they will be united as one ministry of Jesus Christ.

Prayer of Confession

The Rev. Maria Rjeltveit

One: Let us confess our sins before God and one another, Holy God, we have promised to love you with heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

All: We confess to you and to each another that we break the promises and violate this covenant of love. We confess that we are diminished by pride and separation. We acknowledge the sinful divisions of our churches which keep our ministries unreconciled. We admit our failures in mission of justice and love. We confess that we support systems of racism and other oppression that despoil your incarnate image and violate creation. Merciful God, forgive us. In Jesus Christ, transform our hearts to obey your commandments, restore our love for one another, and proclaim your glory. Ever-living God, our Judge and Healer, have mercy on us.

One: Lord, Have Mercy

All: Christ, Have Mercy

One: Lord, Have Mercy

Declaration of Forgiveness

One: Everyone who is in Christ has become a new creation. The old is gone, the new has come: God through Christ has reconciled the world and gives us the ministry of reconciliation. Friends, believe the Good News that comes from God: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

All: Thanks be to God. Amen.

Liturgy of the Word

Prayer for the Day

Rev. Mark Pettis

One: Eternal God: Proclaim your word in the reading of scripture. Speak to us in the meditations of our hearts. Reveal yourself in the faithfulness of our lives. Through Jesus Christ we pray.

All: Amen.

First reading from the Bible

The Rev. Michael King

The Word of God from the book of Wisdom 9:1, 7-18

¹ O God of my ancestors and Lord of mercy, who have made all things by your word,
⁷ You have chosen me to be king of your people and to be judge over your sons and daughters. ⁸ You have given command to build a temple on your holy mountain, and an altar in the city of your habitation, a copy of the holy tent that you prepared from the beginning. ⁹ With you is wisdom, she who knows your works and was present when you made the world; she understands what is pleasing in your sight and what is right according to your commandments. ¹⁰ Send her forth from the holy heavens, and from the throne of your glory send her, that she may labour at my side, and that I may learn what is pleasing to you. ¹¹ For she knows and understands all things, and she will guide me wisely in my actions and guard me with her glory. ¹² Then my works will be acceptable, and I shall judge your people justly, and shall be worthy of the throne of my father. ¹³ For who can learn the counsel of God? Or who can discern what the Lord wills? ¹⁴ For the reasoning of mortals is worthless, and our designs are likely to fail; ¹⁵ for a perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthy tent burdens the thoughtful mind. ¹⁶ We can hardly guess at what is on earth, and what is at hand we find with labour; but who has traced out what is in the heavens? ¹⁷ Who has learned your counsel, unless you have given wisdom and sent your holy spirit from on high? ¹⁸ And thus the paths of those on earth were set right, and people were taught what pleases you, and were saved by wisdom.

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

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 133

One: How good and how pleasant it is,

All: when kindred live together in unity!

One: It is like fine oil upon the head, flowing down upon the beard,

All: upon the beard of Aaron, flowing down upon the collar of his robe.

One: It is like the dew of Hermon flowing down upon the hills of Zion.

All: For there the Lord has commanded the blessing: life forevermore.

Second Reading from the Bible

The Rev. Dr. Betsy Miller

The Word of God from the book of Colossians 3:18-4:18

¹⁸Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly. ²⁰Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord. ²¹Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart. ²²Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not only while being watched and in order to please them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the

Lord. ²³Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, ²⁴since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ. ²⁵For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done, and there is no partiality. ¹Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, for you know that you also have a Master in heaven. ²Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. ³At the same time pray for us as well that God will open to us a door for the word, that we may declare the mystery of Christ, for which I am in prison, ⁴so that I may reveal it clearly, as I should. ⁵Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. ⁶Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone. ⁷Tychicus will tell you all the news about me; he is a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow servant in the Lord. ⁸I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts; ⁹he is coming with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you about everything here. ¹⁰Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, as does Mark the cousin of Barnabas, concerning whom you have received instructions if he comes to you, welcome him. ¹¹And Jesus who is called Justus greets you. These are the only ones of the circumcision among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. ¹²Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you. He is always wrestling in his prayers on your behalf, so that you may stand mature and fully assured in everything that God wills. ¹³For I testify for him that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. ¹⁴Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you. ¹⁵Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters in Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. ¹⁶And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you read also the letter from Laodicea. ¹⁷And say to Archippus, see that you complete the task that you have received in the Lord. ¹⁸I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

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

Thanks be to God.

A Reading from the Gospel

Rev. Christian Choi

The Word of God from the Gospel according to Luke 7:36-50

³⁶One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. ³⁷And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. ³⁸She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. ³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him--that she is a sinner." ⁴⁰Jesus spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Teacher," he replied, "Speak." ⁴¹"A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt." And Jesus said to him, "You have judged rightly." ⁴⁴Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶You did not

anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." ⁴⁸Then he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." ⁴⁹But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

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

Thanks be to God.

Sermon

The Rt. Rev. Jeffrey N. Leath

Affirmation of Faith

Rev. Dr. Andrew L. Foster III

The Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin
Mary,
and was made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;**

**he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father.**

**With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Prayer is offered with intercession for

The Universal Church, its members, and its mission

The Nation and all in authority

The welfare of the local community

Those who suffer and those in any trouble

The departed (with commemoration of a saint when appropriate)

One: Holy God, the earth you created in beauty now languishes in pain, waiting for its redemption. The peoples of the earth, whom you created to live together in peace and joy, now experience violence and despair. Transform us and our Churches Uniting in Christ that we may become your ministers to this world and its people.

All: Make us bold in our struggle against cruelty. Give us courage and endurance to accept no peace where there is oppression, and to work for justice, God's Shalom, and the common good. Help us speak to the conscience of our country and its institutions. Use us to heal the brokenness in life. Renew our joy so that all creation can sing again the glad songs with which the world began.

One: All this we pray through Jesus Christ, through whom you make all things new,

All: Amen.

Special Music The Mother Bethel Praise Ensemble

Peace

Rev. Paul S. Tché

Liturgy of the Table The Rt. Rev. Julius Harrison McAllister, Sr.

Offering and Preparation of the Table

One: My sisters and brothers, we have confessed the gospel of Christ and the new life that God has lavished upon us. Let us now glorify God with gifts that we share with one another and with the whole world.

Great Thanksgiving Prayer

One: God be with you,

All: And also with you.

One: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them to God,

One: Let us give thanks to God most high

All: It is right to give God thanks and praise,

One: All praise to you, God our Creator, for by your Word and Spirit you made the heavens and the earth, filled them with life and declared everything good. All praise to you, God our Redeemer, for sending prophets, apostles, teachers, and martyrs, inspired by your Spirit to speak the word of life, and when the time was right, for becoming fully human in Jesus Christ. All praise to you, God our Helper; as wisdom, you inspire us to speak the truth; as power, you strengthen us to do justice. With your sons and daughters of faith, in all times and places, and with all the heavenly host, we praise you with joy.

All: Holy, holy, holy God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory, Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of our God. Hosanna in the highest!

One: Loving God, in gratitude we remember that on the night before the crucifixion, Jesus took bread and after giving thanks to you broke it and gave it to the disciples, saying: "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way after supper Jesus took the cup and after giving thanks, gave it to them and said: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." In gratitude for what Christ has done for us, we proclaim our hope.

All: Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life, Jesus, come in glory.

One: Holy God, send your Holy Spirit upon us and these gifts, that all who eat and drink at this table may be one body and one people, a living sacrifice in Jesus Christ. Through this meal unite us with the risen Christ so that we may give ourselves for the life of the world. Through us bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed. Give us the power to work for justice that all the world may be filled with peace and joy. This sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving we offer you, eternal God, through Jesus Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

One: With the confidence of the children of God, let us pray:

All: 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 forever. Amen.

Breaking the Bread

One: The bread we break is the communion of the body of Christ.

All: We who are many are one body for we all share in the one bread.

One: The cup of blessing for which we give thanks is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

All: We who are many are one body for we all share in the one cup.

Communion of the People

One bread, one body

Refrain

One bread, one body, one Lord of all;
one cup of blessing which we bless,
and we, though many throughout the earth,
we are one body in this one Lord.

1. Gentile or Jew, servant or free,
woman or man, no more. *Refrain*

2. Many the gifts, many the works,
one in the Lord of all. *Refrain*

3. Grain for the fields, scattered and grown,
gathered to one for all. *Refrain*

Prayer after Communion

One: God of glory,

All: you nourish us with bread from heaven. Fill us with your Holy Spirit, that through us your light may shine into all the world. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Concluding Rites

The Commission and the Blessing

Rev. Phil Tom

One: Let us go from this place in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

All: Amen.

One: May God bless us with strength to seek justice.

All: Amen.

One: May God bless us with wisdom to care for the earth.

All: Amen.

One: May God bless us with courage to live together in unity.

All: Amen.

One: May the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

All: Amen.

Recessional Hymn

The Church's One Foundation

1. The church's one foundation
is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
she is his new creation
by water and the word.
From heav'n he came and sought her
to be his holy bride;
with his own blood he bought her,
and for her life he died.

2. Elect from ev'ry nation,
yet one o'er all the earth,
her charter of salvation
one Lord, one faith, one birth:
one holy name she blesses,
partakes one holy food,
and to one hope she presses,
with ev'ry grace endued.

3. Though with a scornful wonder
this world sees her oppressed,
by schisms rent asunder,
by heresies distressed,
yet saints their watch are keeping;
their cry goes up: "How long?"
And soon the night of weeping
shall be the morn of song.

4. Through toil and tribulation
and tumult of her war,
she waits the consummation
of peace forevermore;
till with the vision glorious
her longing eyes are blest,
and the great church victorious
shall be the church at rest.

5. Yet she on earth has union
with God, the Three in One,
and mystic sweet communion
with those whose rest is won.
Oh, blessed heav'nly chorus!
Lord, save us by your grace,
that we, like saints before us,
may see you face to face.

Postlude

*A special Thank you to Dr. Kathleen Scheide, our Organist and to
the Mother Bethel Praise Ensemble!*

Service Participants

Rev. Christian Choi
Presbyterian Church USA

Rev. Dr. Andrew L. Foster III
The United Methodist Church

Rev. Dr. Jefferson-Snorton
Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

The Rev. Michael King
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

The Rt. Rev. Jeffrey N. Leath
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

The Rt. Rev. Julius Harrison McAllister, Sr.
African Methodist Episcopal Church

The Rev. Dr. Betsy Miller
Moravian Church Northern Province

Rev. Paul S. Tché
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

The Rev. Maria Tjeltveit
The Episcopal Church

Rev. Phil Tom
International Council of Community Churches

Rev. Mark Pettis
United Church of Christ

Mr. Abraham Wright
Churches Uniting in Christ, President

This liturgy for the ten churches engaged in Churches Uniting in Christ has been revised for local and regional worship services. It originated from the National Act of Worship Inaugurating CUIC. This version can be found at churchesuniting.org, however in response to the 2015 CUIC plenary a section under “Declaration of Purpose” referring to reconciliation of ministry has been removed.

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Rev. Dr. Mark K. Tyler and the people of Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church for graciously hosting our event and providing a warm and welcoming space for us to gather.



*Scripture quotations from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989
Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in
the USA. All rights reserved. Used by permission. OneLicense.net License #A-
722449/CCLI #11167262*