

Theological Education Sunday

September 17, 2017

Lectionary-Based Liturgical Resources

**Created by Rev. Lindsay Conrad, Associate Pastor
First Presbyterian Church, Burlington, North Carolina**

Note: you may observe this special day on any day suitable for your congregation

Suggested text for your church bulletin, e-newsletter or printed newsletter

Today we celebrate Theological Education Sunday in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Please join us today in praying for the Church's future ministers, and look for opportunities to mentor those among us who may be considering a call to seminary. The Church supports future ministers who are Presbyterian students at PC(USA) seminaries through The Theological Education Fund (TEF). Recently housed at the Presbyterian Foundation, the TEF channels gifts of Presbyterians and their congregations to Presbyterian seminaries and, thereby, invests in the future of Christ's church. To donate and find out more about the Theological Education Fund here: <https://www.presbyterianfoundation.org/tef>

For free downloadable bulletin inserts: <http://www.presbyterianfoundation.org/tef>

Scriptures

Genesis 50:15-21; Psalm 103; Matthew 18:21-35; Romans 14:1-12

Opening Reflection

We learn by heart in order to take to heart the saving mystery we celebrate. But learning by heart, listening with the ear of the heart, and taking to heart the mystery of Christ are the work of a lifetime, not a lesson to be mastered in a short course of a single day's participation.

- Mary Collins

Call to Worship

Psalm 103:1-2

Bless the Lord, O my soul,

and all that is within me, bless God's holy name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul,

and forget not all God's blessings

Opening Hymn Suggestions:

When the Morning Stars Together - Glory to God 689

O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing - Glory to God 610

Confession Sequence

Call: Joseph's brothers ask the question that reaches the pit of our stomachs when we think about confessing, forgiving, and reconciling with one another: "What if they still hold a grudge against us?" We are truly sorry, and if we are honest with ourselves, that lingering suspicion haunts our hearts and minds in our relationship with God, and our relationships with one another. So we practice here - week after week - the act of confessing, of asking for forgiveness, of laying our hearts on the line so we may hear again the good news of Christ's work in and among us.

Prayer -

**For all that we have done,
and all we've failed to do;
forgive us Mighty Christ,
and turn us back to you.**

**Lighten our burdens and lessen our load,
so we might also find room to forgive ourselves
as we forgive those who have sinned against us.**

**Turn us again into confessional people
that we may be reminded of your love that washes over a multitude of sins
and works heavily and heartily to make us whole again.**

(silence)

(Kyrie recommendation: You are the Lord, Giver of Mercy - Glory to God 437)

Assurance - Beloved, hear the good news. There is no grudge held against you concerning your relationship with God. The power of God's forgiveness overcomes even death. And the charge of Jesus beckons the continual forgiving until all is made whole again. Hear and believe the good news. Through Jesus and because of Jesus, we can be forgiven and at peace with God and one another.

(Gloria Patri recommendation: Bless the Lord My Soul - Glory to God 544)

Time with Children

Who knows what they want to be when they grow up? (wait for responses)

Wow! You all have big dreams! Did you know that all those dreams require special school or training?

Let's talk about a few:

To be a police officer, you have to go to police academy where you learn the laws and how to protect people and what it means to be a good citizen.

To be a teacher, you have to get through college and then take extra classes to earn a Masters degree in teaching so you can know how to learn and grow with your students.

To be a pilot you have to go to a special flying school where you learn how to operate a plane and communicate with towers of people and navigate the world from above the clouds.

For all these dreams to come true, we have a lot to learn.

And today, we are talking about a special kind of learning for some special kinds of jobs.

Do you know they are/I am (point to pastor/s)? (A PASTOR!)
And what about (insert Christian Educator's name)? (A TEACHER! FAITH FORMATION MINISTER!
CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR!)
And what about (insert youth director)? (YOUTH PASTOR!)

Did you know that we all had to have special education to be able to love and lead this church and have these jobs? It's called THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION.

That's a big word, isn't it? Theological. Do you know what that means?

"Words about God." We went to school to get "Words about God" education.

We learned how to read and teach and preach words about God that are very old and very new and everything in between!

Today is a special day in the church called Theological Education Sunday, and we give thanks for the schools and the people who are doing the work to prepare the pastors and educators and directors who love and serve and lead us in our churches.

So, we're going to do something special when we pray together this morning. I'm going to ask all our pastors and Christian educators and youth directors and seminary students and seminary professors to come and gather with us this morning. We are going to pray for you. Please come sit on the steps here.

Alright kids, gather around, hold the hands of these people and put your hands on their shoulders, and let's all (whole church) pray together by repeating after me.

THANK YOU GOD.

THANK YOU GOD.

FOR ALL THE WAYS WE CAN LEARN TO SERVE YOU.

FOR ALL THE WAYS WE CAN LEARN TO SERVE YOU.

AND THANK YOU TODAY,

AND THANK YOU TODAY,

FOR THE SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS THAT GROW OUR CHURCH LEADERS.

FOR THE SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS THAT GROW OUR CHURCH LEADERS.

SO THEY CAN SHARE WORDS ABOUT GOD WITH US.

SO THEY CAN SHARE WORDS ABOUT GOD WITH US.

IN THEIR WORDS AND IN THEIR ACTIONS.

IN THEIR WORDS AND IN THEIR ACTIONS.

HELP US REMEMBER.

HELP US REMEMBER.

TO ALWAYS PRAY FOR THEM.

TO ALWAYS PRAY FOR THEM.

AND FOR OUR CHURCH.

AND FOR OUR CHURCH.

IN JESUS'S NAME WE PRAY.

IN JESUS'S NAME WE PRAY.

AMEN.

AMEN.

Prayer for Illumination

Sink these old words of promise and truth into our hearts, O God,
that we may be inspired to love into a new life,
to forgive as if our lives depend on it,
and to look with greater hope toward the reconciliation of the world.
Through the witness of the great Reconciler Jesus the Christ we pray, Amen.

Hymn of Response suggestions:

Come! Live in the Light! - Glory to God, 749

Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive - Glory to God, 444

God, How Can We Forgive - Glory to God, 445

Prayers of the People

We never stop learning from you, O God.

For the challenge and the gift of being your people,
we give you thanks and praise.

We thank you for never ceasing to challenge us to forgive,
through stories of families reconciling,
to parables of endless forgiveness.

Enlarge our hearts,
so we might practice your same capacity for forgiveness,
for reconciliation, for love and justice to be present,
in our lives, in the lives of those we love,
in our church, in our community,
and out into our world.

We never stop learning from you, O God,

So, we thank you for the charge of always learning and growing in our faith,
and for all the ways you have granted us that possibility
through the ministry of theological education.

Thank you for seminaries and their students,
for their faculty and staff,

for boards and trustees and everyone behind the scenes,
for the resources and structures in place
that we may never stop learning to speak words about God -
as agents of justice in our communities,
as agents of peace in war-torn places,
as agents of love and compassion in every moment of every day.

We never stop learning from you, O God.

So we know without question
that our job and privilege is to approach you
with every burden on our hearts
and on the hearts of your people.

So hear now the cries of your beloved -
the broken families,
the troubling diagnosis,
the turn to hospice care,
the stress and stumbling of a new school year,
the loss of jobs and quality of life,
the searing pain of loss,
and the quiet cries that are lifted up in sighs too deep for words...

Multiply these cries, O God,
and bind them to the cries of all nations and people
bleeding and hurting and calling out for you.
Bind us to your heart and let us know your care
for each of us and all of us.

And since we never stop learning from you, O God,
charge us this day to do the good we can with the gifts you have given us -
to practice forgiveness in our homes and workplaces,
to share of our food and our faith and our wealth,
to pray for one another and especially those who lead us.

We never stop learning from you, O God,
so continue to charge us with your will and your Word,
that we may know by heart how to walk in your way.

We pray all these things and more with the words you have embedded into our hearts so we may
always know what to pray as your foolish and faithful disciples saying... (Lord's Prayer)

Offering

Psalm 103:1-2

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me, bless God's holy name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all God's blessings— Amen.

Litany for Theological Education and Faith Formation

In your holy wisdom, you granted us the gift of minds that are always seeking to know you more. By that blessing comes our responsibility to continually turn to you in prayer for all the ways in which we can expand and enlighten our hearts and minds. Hear us as we pray.

Teach us, guide us, make us one.

For the great gift of all the minds and bodies that have instilled in us the value of education, and for all the ways we have misused our education for status over service. Bless our seminaries across the country, and make them always wellsprings of humble and generous servants.

Teach us, forgive us, make us one.

For the tireless work of leaders in the church, and for the seminaries and services of theological education that continue to provide outlets for all people seeking to answer Your call through faithful inquiry, dedicated learning, and lingering hard questions.

Teach them, bless them along the way, make us one.

For the ways we can contribute to the ever growing need in our world to learn of your love and benefit from your compassion. Make us ever mindful of the generosity that spurs growth in your church through prayer, money, time, instruction, and worship. Keep in our hearts all those who contribute to the beauty of your Church through every seen and unseen aspect of theological education and hear us as we name in gratitude - those serving as trustees and board members of our seminaries, those providing healthy meals to our seminary students, those providing continuing education and mental/spiritual health care and counseling, mentoring churches and administrators, groundskeepers and seminary presidents. Make us ever grateful of the people, seen and unseen, who have made the people who lead our churches who they are.

Teach us all, keep us in your spirit of generosity, that we may be one.

Amen.

Closing Hymn Suggestions:

Sing to God, with Joy and Gladness - Glory to God, 657

Lord, When I Came into This Life - Glory to God, 691

Take, Thou Our Minds, Dear Lord - Glory to God, 707

About the Author

Rev. Lindsay Conrad is Associate Pastor for Young Adults, Mission and Congregational Care at First Presbyterian Church in Burlington, North Carolina. She earned her Master of Divinity at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Born and raised in Lynchburg, Virginia, Lindsay believes in following Christ's example of serving those who are in need. She has a passion for working with individuals who are in poverty, who are hungry, homeless, and unable to afford housing. While in Ann Arbor, she organized activities for Local Missions providing opportunities to engage church members in their communities. Lindsay writes that she is "called to bridge the gaps between people who live on the streets and people who gather for worship Sunday after Sunday."



Rev. Lindsay Conrad

About the Theological Education Fund

The Theological Education Fund is the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s best hope of ensuring the church of Christ is prepared to serve long into the future. The fund is housed at the Presbyterian Foundation and is the sole source of denomination-wide funding for seminaries from the PC(USA).

We rely on donations from Synods, Presbyteries, congregations and individuals to continue our legacy of support. Gifts to this fund help ensure every church has a seminary-trained pastor.

Seminaries are good stewards of the funds we provide. Research shows that 91 percent of Presbyterian seminary graduates are employed in the fields they've been called to serve in within one year. Presbyterian seminary graduates also have less debt than their peers at other seminaries, giving them more flexibility to follow the call of God, no matter where it might lead.

We need these graduates – and need more to see a clear path to seminary. Out of the current clergy serving in Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations, 85 percent will likely retire in the next decade. The next generation of seminarians is energized, enthusiastic and ready to serve, and it is our vision to use the Theological Education Fund to buoy their service to the church.

Any gift is welcome! Once our donations are collected each year, the Committee on Theological Education proportionately allocates the funds to ensure each school receives a fair share.

If you'd like to know more about the Theological Education Fund, contact Rev. Dr. Lee Hinson-Hasty, Senior Director, Theological Education Funds Development at lee.hinson-hasty@presbyterianfoundation.org.



Rev. Dr. Lee Hinson-Hasty