

Theological Education Sunday
September 20, 2020
Liturgy Resources
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Suggested text for your church bulletin, e-newsletter or printed newsletter

Today we celebrate Theological Education Sunday in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The Church supports PC(USA) seminaries. We are grateful for their ministry of theological education. The Theological Education Fund, housed at the Presbyterian Foundation, is the primary source of this support. 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. Find out more about the Theological Education Fund at presbyterianfoundation.org/tef.

Meditation prompts at the beginning of worship:

1. "I think us here to wonder, myself. To wonder. To ask. And that in wondering bout the big things and asking bout the big things, you learn about the little ones, almost by accident. But you never know nothing more about the big things than you start out with. The more I wonder, the more I love." ~Alice Walker, [The Color Purple](#)

2. "...have you ever found God in church? I never did. I just found a bunch of folks hoping for him to show. Any God I ever felt in church I brought in with me. And I think all the other folks did too. They come to church to share God, not find God."~ Alice Walker, [The Color Purple](#)

There will be elements of this liturgy that address the current "new reality" of worship encountered by many communities in response to COVID-19.

As a professor of Worship, Preaching, and New Testament the practical shape of this liturgy is what Dr. McQueen has named the "Liturgical Arc of Worship." In this liturgical arc, the liturgy hopes to create space for persons to enter from where they are to have an authentic encounter with the Divine.

Notes on Psalm 105: Psalm 105 is a teaching Psalm that is a recital of God's saving acts of Israel. The New Oxford Annotated Bible commentary shares that this Psalm not only teaches the history of Israel but that in the teaching the history is re-called, as opposed to only remembered. The saving acts of God are to be remembered and called out to spark praise, honor, and to fuel ongoing commitment to the covenant relationship with God through the generations.

It is suggested that the Psalm be read before the call to worship to reinforce that we as persons of the Reform traditions worship and act in response to the word.

Invitation/Call to Worship

One: How glorious it is to be in the temple of God, for indeed the whole world is God's tabernacle.

All: We are welcomed by God into this special place of worship not surrounded by walls.

One: What a revelation! The church we are in today has been here all along because we the people are the church!

**All: For where we worship, God is there also. It has been said that even if we lay silent that rocks themselves will cry out! It is those very rocks upon which God's true church is built and we will cry out saying,
"Thanks be to God for all of our blessings!"**

Invitation to Confession

God gives us moments in worship to pause. Our confession is one of those times for us to do so. Let us pause and reflect on how we want God to work with us, with the sins of our human nature.

Prayer of Confession

Holy God hear the prayers of our confession today. We see the state of the world and often find fault with world leaders and systems of oppression. How often we wring our hands about the illness and sickness in the world, and ask the question, "But what can we do?" How often, we think to ourselves and rarely say out loud, "Why is God bringing about such suffering in times like these?"

In this moment as we pause and reflect, help us to discern where just a portion of the responsibility may lay with us. Help us to be accountable for not binding up the ills of this world as you have given us authority to do. Let us look at how we treat our bodies when you ask us to call them our temples. Bring to us an understanding that your ways are not our ways, and help us you, yes, but to have faith in your will and in your ways.

Help us to heal these human thoughts, doubts, and fears. For if we all help keep our corner of the world in faith and prayer, maybe, just maybe we will see your brilliant world and not our own gloomy vision of the world.

Silent prayer

An Assurance of Pardon

God takes the complicated notion of our humanity and tells us to have no fear. For after all, our sins and our confusions are forgiven. Through the grace and mercy of Christ we are made anew. And the Holy Spirit will continue with us for our progress and joy in faith.

Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Amen.

Time with Children

This lesson is based on the parable from today's scripture.

You may use props, if you'd like them: *Loaves of bread, sliced enough to make sandwiches for each child and a few extra.*

How much do you think it cost to buy this loaf of bread? Let's count how many young people are here today.

How many pieces of bread do we need to make sure that everyone can enough for a sandwich? We may have bread left over for sandwiches tomorrow but the fair thing would be that we all get at least one sandwich, would you say that?

That's what this parable is about, the workers who came early thought it was more important they get more money for the work they did. But the boss wanted to make sure that everybody had enough, at least enough to buy bread for the day. In fact, the boss was doing his best to feed as many people as he could with the money he had.

Did you know that when pastors go to school, we do our best to support them so that they can come back and feed the community? No, they don't feed them from their refrigerators! They give from their heart the love of Jesus, who is the bread of life for us. They learn how to do their best to give of their gifts, just like the boss in our story. That way, everybody gets to come together and share God's love like a great feast. And that's the biggest secret of all to this story. The boss gives to the worker, the worker gives to his family, the family gives thanks for all.

Let's do a repeat-after-me prayer:

Dear God
Thank you
For those who want everyone, to be cared for.
Thank you
For our pastors.
Help them
To keep learning to share your gifts.
Help us, to support everybody who hears your voice, to *be* pastors.
May we all come together, and give you thanks.
Amen.

Prayer for Illumination

Holy Spirit, continue to unveil for us the gifts of our sacred texts. Feed us your revelation by morning and by evening. Amen.

A call and blessing of the offering

Some congregations take up an offering for the Theological Education Fund.

Today's offering (or a portion of this offering) is for the Theological Education Fund of our denomination. This Fund provides sustaining support, both financially and communally to theological institutions and their students.

May we give with the cheerfulness of those on the journey of theological education. Bless this offering as a testimony of our faith in your church and its ministers. Amen.

Litany for Theological Education Sunday

Giving thanks for those associated with seminaries and preparation for ministry (Adapted from the African American Heritage Hymnal Litany for Christian Education)

Christian Education is our invitation to equip God's people with the teachings of Jesus, who has commissioned us to go into all the world, making disciples, teaching them to observe the lessons from his time on earth and beyond. (see Matt. 28: 19)

Guide us with your wisdom, to encourage those who seek to know you and to make known the gospel of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Help us to nurture and instruct in God's ways and grant us grace to fulfill this high calling.

Holy God, author of law and giver of grace,

Beginning with the study of the Holy Scripture, may we explore your love and justice in the life of our church, higher education, and graduate theological education.

Thank you, for all those who taught us your Word and made your teachings real for us.

Grant us the holy imagination to further explore your calling on all of our lives.

Still our hearts to hear your call, and we will answer, "Here, I am, it is I."

Give us the courage to commit to "Hold your people in our hearts."

Create in us a humble heart so that as leaders we will not be haughty or boastful.

Give us an ever widening embrace to welcome all who seek to serve you.

May our intellect not outweigh our compassion.

Give your example of abiding presence and guidance as gifts to those who teach in seminaries.

We seek your blessing on this process of answering your call from the pew to the pulpit.

We give you thanks for the fortitude and courage to stand for justice, rightness and love in the midst of upheaval and spiritual yearning. Your grace is sufficient and we pray it emboldens communities, teaches, students, and churches in partnership with theological institutions.

Suggested Hymns:

Opening Hymn

I Sing The Mighty Power of God	GTG 32
For the Beauty of the Earth	GTG 14
Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken	GTG 81

Hymn after sermon:

When the Poor Ones (Cuando el pobre)	GTG 762
For Everyone Born	GTG 769

Closing Hymn:

Our Hope, Our Life (Psalm 49)	GTG 847
Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart!	GTG 804

The Reverend Derrick McQueen, Ph. D., serves as the Pastor of St. James Presbyterian Church in Harlem, NYC, New York. A graduate of Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, he holds a Masters Degree in Worship and Arts, and a doctorate in Homiletics and New Testament. He is a multi-media artist, singer, activist, and enjoys cooking.

St. James Presbyterian Church is the oldest African American Presbyterian congregation in New York City and is the child of Shiloh Presbyterian Church founded in 1822 as an African American abolitionist church and resettlement community for self-freed and former slaves.