



**Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Theological Education/ Seminary Sunday
Liturgical Resources
September 19, 2021**

Scriptures

Proverbs 31:10–31; Psalm 1; James 3:13–4:3, 7–8a; Mark 9:30–37

Opening Reflection

“Whenever we show others the goodness of God, whenever we follow our Teacher by imitating His posture of humble and ready service, our actions are sacred and ministerial. To be called into the priesthood, as all of us are, is to be called to a life of presence, of kindness.” — Rachel Held Evans, *Searching for Sunday: Loving, Leaving, and Finding the Church* (Thomas Nelson, 2015), p.116

Call to Worship (based on Psalm 1)

Like trees planted by streams of water,
we come into God’s presence,
so that we might flourish and bear fruit.

With joy, let us worship God.

Call to Confession

The psalmist names for us that we are a people who are easily swayed by bad advice, and therefore prone to forget the ways of the Lord. Recognizing this about ourselves, let us confess where we have gone astray, trusting that when we do, we are sure to find mercy.

Prayer of Confession (Responsive)

One: Gracious God,

**All: forgive our foolishness,
for we have sought our own glory
at the expense of our neighbors’ well-being
and stirred up conflict
where we’ve been called to bring peace.**

One: Give us grace to live as you taught us,

**All: that our lives might be known
by a gentleness born of wisdom,
and a humility that reflects Christ’s own heart. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

Scripture assures us that if we draw near to God, then God will draw near to us. And in Jesus Christ, God has done just that. Because of this, we can trust in this good news and be at peace: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! **Thanks be to God!**

Sung Response: GTG Hymn 188, “Jesus Loves Me!” verse 1

Time with Children

This time with children is designed to highlight the training and role of pastors and to affirm the gifts of children.

Props needed: two or three hats or other costume pieces that coordinate with various jobs and your stole (or, if in a more contemporary setting, a microphone and a Bible). You might find these in the church’s own children’s ministry closet, or ask a parent for help in gathering them.

Examples: play stethoscope, play hard hat or reflective construction vest, apron and/or chef’s hat.

Good morning! It is wonderful to see all of you at church this morning. I want to play a game with you. I am going to put on a piece of clothing, and I want you to tell me what job you think I might do if I were to wear that piece of clothing. Ready?

Put on stethoscope. A doctor! That’s right! What do doctors do? (Gather answers and summarize.) Doctors go to school for a long time to learn how to care for people when their bodies are sick.

Put on hard hat. A construction worker! Great job! And what do they do? (Gather answers and summarize.) Everyone who builds new things has to have lots of training from people who know how to operate the machines, and build things safely.

Repeat with each example you’ve gathered, summarizing answers and pointing out the preparation needed for each job.

Put on stole. What about this one? What might someone who wears this do? (Gather answers). A pastor or preacher! Great job. That’s right. Pastors are people who care for God’s people — like YOU! — in churches like this one, by praying for them, and preaching, and teaching, and loving them.

And to get ready to do all of that, pastors go to a school called seminary, where they study the Bible, and learn to lead worship, and all sorts of other things that help them love and care for God’s people.

Today, we are giving thanks for schools that prepare our pastors for their work. And we’re also stopping to remember that each one of you has gifts that you will share with the world as you grow up ... and, actually, that you are already sharing with the world right now.

Let's pray together. I invite you to repeat after me.

Dear God,

Dear God,

Thank you for the gifts you give us,

Thank you for the gifts you give us,

for good work to do in the world,

for good work to do in the world,

and for people who teach us to do it.

and for people who teach us to do it.

Help each one of us,

Help each one of us,

grow into our gifts,

grow into our gifts,

and be brave as we share them with others.

and be brave as we share them with others.

In Jesus' name we pray,

In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen.

Amen.

Prayer for Illumination

Make our hearts fertile ground as we open them to your written word, O God. Let your word take root in us, grounding us yet more deeply in your love for us through Jesus Christ, and helping us to grow as his disciples. **Amen.**

Offering

Today's dedicated offering (or a portion of this offering) will benefit the Theological Education Fund of our denomination. This fund supports our seminaries and seminary students as they prepare for ministry in Christ's church. Offering our support is an act of faith and hope in what God is doing now to prepare leaders for the church. By contributing to the Theological Education Fund, we are helping to cultivate the gifts of leaders who will be attentive to the needs of God's people for years to come.

Freely we have received. Freely, and with great hope, let us bring our whole selves to God.

Litany for Theological Education and Dedication of Offering

Holy God,

you create us with minds to know you

and hearts to love you.

We know that we cannot do these things on our own,

and so we are grateful that you also place us in communities

with those who guide us along the way,

that we might grow in our knowledge and love of you.

For these, your servant leaders,

we give you thanks, O God.

We thank you for storytellers and dreamers
who help us to see our place
in what you are doing in the world,
and who help us to imagine
how we might engage in your justice, compassion, and mercy.

**For these, your servant leaders,
we give you thanks, O God.**

We thank you for those in our midst
whose wisdom is made evident in the way they live,
and not just in what they know,
those children of God who teach with tenderness
and lead with love.

**For these, your servant leaders,
we give you thanks, O God.**

We ask your blessing upon the work of leaders in the church,
for students who prepare for pastoral ministry,
and for those who teach in seminaries
in order to prepare pastors for the challenges of such a call,
so that they might be equipped to lead your people
with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love.

**For these, your servant leaders,
we give you thanks, O God.**

We ask that you would make us mindful
of all those whose generosity has contributed
to our growth in knowledge and love of you, O God —
those we can readily identify,
and those whom we might forget
or may never meet.

We thank you for all those who,
without seeking acknowledgement,
have contributed to growth in your church
through prayer, money, time,
vision, encouragement, and service.

**For these, your servant leaders,
we give you thanks, O God.**

And we thank you, O God,
for the ways that you call each of us to ministry,
and for giving us the gift of your Holy Spirit
to guide, comfort, and challenge us

to live boldly for you in our daily living.
We ask that you would give us your words
to speak with wisdom and joy,
and that you would make us creative and hopeful
in sharing our resources and gifts
with this world that you so love.

The litany may conclude with "Amen," or the Lord's Prayer may follow if that is the church's custom.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Teacher,
who taught us to pray, saying ...

Opening Hymn Suggestions

GTG #12 - Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise
GTG #457 - How Happy Are the Saints of God

Response Hymn Suggestions

GTG #727 - Will You Let Me Be Your Servant
GTG #450 - Be Thou My Vision
GTG #803 - My Shepherd Will Supply My Need

Closing Hymn Suggestions

GTG #726 - Will You Come and Follow Me
GTG #295 - Go to the World!

Liturgical Resource Writer:

We are grateful for the Rev. **Anna Rainey Dickson**, Associate Pastor for Congregational Care at First Presbyterian Church of Charlotte, NC. Ordained in 2011 while serving as a pastoral resident at White Memorial Presbyterian Church in Raleigh, Dickson also served three years as the associate pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Raleigh as well as a parish associate at Myers Park Presbyterian Church in Charlotte. She is a native Charlottean, where she lives with her husband, CJ, and two small children, Margaret and Andrew. She holds a B.A. in Religion from Washington and Lee University and a Masters of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary.



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