

“Go Forth in Joy”

April 2nd, 2012

Dear Vermont Conference UCC churches.

We are delighted to share with you a complete worship service, designed to correlate with the worship that will take place at the Vermont Conference Annual Meeting on June 2nd and 3rd in Randolph Center.

All pastors are being asked to attend the entire two day conference on Saturday and Sunday. Congregations are invited to join us at Vermont Technical College for Sunday worship at 1:30 pm.

For those remaining in their home churches on June 3rd, we have a prepared a service, which will give you a taste of the conference experience, and allow you to celebrate worship and communion in the absence of your pastor.

Our worship theme this year follows an arc that moves from lament to celebration, ending with the conference theme, “Go out in Joy.” This arc echoes Tom Ehrich’s “New Keys” conference, where participants grieved the loss of old ways of doing church, and explored new models for faithfulness in our time. Worship also takes note of the challenges of Hurricane Irene in our state this year, and the heartwarming responses of neighbors and faith communities.

Cliff Aerie of Oikos Ensemble has been working with the worship committee for Annual Meeting, and he has prepared the drafts, around which the enclosed worship is designed. To give you a feel for the whole meeting, we have combined two services into one. This service can easily be led by lay leaders. You will need both the outline enclosed (Document 2) and the leader readings and planning notes (document 3).

Blessings to you, as you lament, as you celebrate the love of God in Christ,
and as you go forth in joy!

Martha B. Peck
Annual Meeting Planning Committee

Planning Notes and Leader Readings for Common Worship

Adapt this service according to your own needs and normal practices. Or, consider using this Sunday to explore some new ways of doing worship. Instead of a sermon, there are several short scripture readings, and two Grace Note readings. If you are not having communion, allow some periods of silence to reflect on the readings.

We have provided alternate hymns for those who do not use the New Century Hymnal. Again, adapt according to your needs.

This service could be led by as few as two leaders, or as many as eight. Psalm 8 is written for two voices, as is the beginning part of the communion service. Additional leaders, or the same, could read the Jeremiah and Ephesians passages, and the Grace Notes by Langston Hughes and Frederick Beuchner. (See all of these readings at end of planning notes)

Where not otherwise noted, the materials in today's worship service were prepared and/or written by Cliff Aerie, who will be present with the UCC Jazz ensemble Oikos at the Vermont Conference Annual Meeting, helping to lead worship.

What to do if you are having communion and you will not have a clergy person present on June 2nd. This is simple.

Purchase your communion elements early, and ask your minister to bless them, (consecrate them.) This can be done before the bread is cubed and the juice is poured. The prayers in the service have been adapted so that they allude to the elements already having been consecrated.

During "We Share the Feast", break the bread and lift the cup, according to your church's custom, and say, "The body of Christ, broken for you" and "The cup of blessing, given for you. Take and eat; Take and drink"

Leader readings:

Grace Note: "The Weary Blues" by Langston Hughes

Droning a drowsy syncopated tune,
Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon,
I heard a Negro play.
Down on Lenox Avenue the other night
By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light
He did a lazy sway....
He did a lazy sway....
To the tune o' those Weary Blues.
With his ebony hands on each ivory key
He made that poor piano moan with melody.
O Blues!
Swaying to and fro on his rickety stool
He played that sad raggy tune like a musical fool.
Sweet Blues!
Coming from a black man's soul.

O Blues!

In a deep song voice with a melancholy tone
I heard that Negro sing, that old piano moan--
"Ain't got nobody ain all this world,
Ain't got nobody but ma self.
I's gwine to quit ma frownin'
And put ma troubles on the shelf."
Thump, thump, thump, went his foot on the floor.
He played a few chords then he sang some more--
"I got the Weary Blues
And I can't be satisfied.
Got the Weary Blues
And can't be satisfied--
I ain't happy no mo'
And I wish that I had died."
And far into the night he crooned that tune.
The stars went out and so did the moon.
The singer stopped playing and went to bed
While the Weary Blues echoed through his head.
He slept like a rock or a man that's dead.

PSALM 8: For two voices and improvisational jazz ensemble

[NRSV AND ADAPTATION BY CLIFF AERIE]

(music improvisation--- if not using music, adapt the pauses as appropriate)

Voice 1: O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Voice 2: Awesome Creator, how brilliantly you shine in the cosmos.

1: You have set your glory above the heavens.

2: Your glory and majesty transcends our global village.

1: Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,
to silence the enemy and the avenger. *[brief pause]*

2: From the cooing of babies to the giggling laughter of tiny tots your holy countenance
emanates to shatter the oppression of adult tyranny.

1: Babes and infants...

2: Babies and tiny tots...

1: Tiny but powerful words.

2: Powerful enough to shatter the powers of evil.

[pause—music improvisation]

1: When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have
established; *[brief pause]*

2: And so I gaze at your heavens inspired by your artistry—moon and stars, all that you have
created; *[brief pause]*

1: What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

[brief pause]

2: And I wonder who am I that you even think of me? Who am I, an insignificant speck of dust,
that you should care for me? *[brief pause]*

1: Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.

2: But you have formed and fashioned me, and all of humanity, in your divine image, perhaps
even crowned us in honor and glory.

(Musical Improvisation builds to forefront... then diminishes...)

1: You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet,

2: You have given us a world of green and blue to care for, a glorious creation to share with all your creatures:

1: All sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,

2: Animals at pasture and in the wild,

1: The birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

2: Birds of the air and fish of the sea, everything created to roam the land and air and waters

1: O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! *[brief pause]*

2: Yes, you are an awesome Creator, and how brilliantly you shine in the cosmos. Your glory and majesty transcends our global village. *[brief pause]* And we are blessed!

1: We are wildly blessed!

2: Wild blessings, Indeed! *(Musical Improvisation concludes)*

GRACE NOTE: If God Speaks by Frederick Buechner from “The Sacred Journey”

If God speaks to us at all in this world, it is into our personal lives that God speaks. Someone we love dies, say. Some unforeseen act of kindness or cruelty touches the heart or makes the blood run cold. We fail a friend or a friend fails us, we are appalled at the capacity we all of us have for estranging the very people in our lives we need most. Or maybe nothing extraordinary happens at all—just one day following another, helter-skelter, in the manner of days. We work. We remember and forget. We have fun and we are depressed.

And into the thick of it, or out of the thick of it, at moments of even the most humdrum of our days, God speaks... not just through the sounds we hear, of course, but throughout events in all their complexity and variety, through the harmonies and disharmonies and counterpoint of all that happens...

We must learn to listen to the cock-crows and hammering tick-tock of our lives for the holy and elusive word that is spoken to us out of the depths. It is the function of all great preaching, I think, and of all great art, to sharpen our hearing to precisely that end.

Vermont Conference Common Worship
June 3rd, 2012
Go Forth in Joy

I merely took the energy it takes to pout and wrote some blues.
—Duke Ellington

*The Blues are the true facts of life expressed in words and song,
inspiration, feeling, and understanding.*
—Willie Dixon

*In this circle of earthly existence you shine so finely,
It surpasses understanding. God hugs you.
You are encircled by the arms of the mystery of God.*
—Hildegard of Bingen

Just to be is a blessing. Just to live is holy.
—Abraham Joshua Heschel

Gathering Music

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship: An Invitation to a New Day

One: A new day dawns—rise and welcome the morning.

All: God sets a new day before us.

One: Wake up! Pray and give thanks for this morning.

All: A day filled with limitless possibilities.

One: Blessings reach out before you.

All: A day filled with spectacular blessings!

One: Love calls out to embrace you.

All: A day filled with enormous hugs of love!

One: A new day dawns—rise and welcome the morning.

All: A day to sing praises to our wondrous God!

Opening Hymn

“Praise to God”

NCH #5

(or Pilgrim Hymnal #43 Christ whose Glory fills the Skies)

Grace Note
Hughes

“The Weary Blues”

Langston

Prayer for Becoming

Creator God, maker of dancing stars and awesome rainbows, sender of gentle breezes and swirling winds, finder of lost chances and mender of broken dreams, you bless our lives with holy possibilities even when we feel overwhelmed by the events of daily life . . . even when the blues is the only song we sing.

Compassionate God, you know us inside and out. When the heart sighs with grief too large to carry—you are there. When tears flow like an angry stream—you are there. When doubts snare us like a trap—you are

there. When hope dwindles to a thin strand—you are there . . . even when the blues is the only song we sing.

Loving God, you know our comings and our goings. You know when we succeed and when we fail. You know the deepest longings of our hearts. Through it all, your love surrounds us, embraces us, sustains us, and opens our eyes to the wondrous possibilities you place before us—even when the blues is the only song we sing.

Gracious God, in the promise of this moment, move us beyond the blues and help us to embrace the fullness of your love in Jesus Christ.
Amen

Passing the Peace
Grace)

(Play “Amazing

Holy Wisdom/Holy Word

Wild Blessings

Psalm 8 (*adapted*)

[But . . .]

Jeremiah 8: 15 -22

Anguish and

Despair

Offering our Prayers at the Wall

(You have two options here. Ask: What are the situations in your life, the life of the church and the life of the world, that make you sad, that might evoke lament? 1) Have people write words of lament on pieces of paper, and carry them or pass them forward. Pin them on a plain piece of colored poster board, or a piece of artwork that signifies lament. 2) Or, invite people to name laments out loud. Silence in between voices is fine. End with a period of silence before singing the hymn.)

Hymn

“There is a Balm in Gilead”

NCH #553

(or Amazing Grace)

Prayer of Jesus Re-imagined

Our Creator in heaven and earth, holy is your name.

**May your Way be ours, your Mystery revealed,
throughout all the cosmos.**

Provide us bread for our journey this day.

Forgive our missteps, miscalculations and mess-ups

so that we might know how to forgive others who have mistreated us.

Be with us in the struggle of our egos,

and free us from the bondage of powers and principalities.

Let our prayer of praise ring true:

the universe in glorious majesty belongs to You — infinitely!

Amen.

Grace Note

“If God speaks”

Frederick Beuchner

Ephesians 2:17-22

Prayers of Celebration

(Follow the same format you used for laments. Ask: “What are some of the things you celebrate, in your life, in the life of our church and in the life of the world?” Invite people to write out

celebrations on slips of paper and carry them or pass them forward. Attach them to the same plain poster board you used earlier, or to an image that signals celebration. Or do this out loud...)

Hymn (*Choose a chorus of celebration that is well-loved in your congregation*)

Offering

(For today's offering, consider participating in the Vermont Conference Annual Meeting's special offering for Disaster Relief. Or, take a special offering for Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) Identify which offering in your bulletin, and tell people how to make out their checks)

(While the offering is being collected, if you are celebrating the Lord's supper, prepare the communion table, according to the tradition of your congregation)

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

**The blessings we receive from your hand, O God,
remind us of our calling to live as disciples of the Christ,
sharing your bounty of love and grace.
Accept our humble offerings today
as a symbol of our deeper commitment—
to be your hands and feet and voices throughout the globe
as we partner with others to heal a hungry and hurting world.
Give us the courage and conviction
to let our light shine to illuminate your entire global village. Amen.**

Sacrament of Holy Communion

We Are Invited

Leader 1: This is the place; now is the time. Here and now God breaks into our lives and we are invited to share in this feast of love.

Leader 2: In the homes of Peter and Jairus, Martha and Mary, Joanna and Susanna, Jesus was always the guest.

Leader 1: The guest – at the meal tables of the wealthy, where he pled the case of the poor.

Leader 2: The guest – upsetting polite company, befriending the isolated, welcoming the stranger.

People: Jesus was always the guest.

Leader 1: But here, at this table, he is our host.

Leader 2: Here, at this table, he is our hope.

Leader 1: If you seek hope and wholeness in a shattered world, come to the table. Jesus heals broken lives in such a time as this.

People: We seek healing, hope and wholeness.

Leader 2: If you yearn for purpose and direction in life, come feast with us here. Jesus is courage and truth. His way is peace for such a time as this.

People: We seek truth, purpose and direction.

Leader 1: If you hunger for justice, break this bread;

Leader 2: If you thirst for justice drink from this cup.
Leader 1: Jesus hears our cry for peace and reconciliation.
Leader 2: We are welcome here; all are welcome here!
People: Jesus is our host.

We Respond “Santo, Santo, Santo” NCH#793 Traditional,
Argentina

**¡San-to, san-to, san-to, mi cor-a-zón tea-do-ra!
Mi cor-a- zón te sa-be de-cir: santo e-res Dios.**

**Holy, holy, holy, my heart, my heart adores you!
My heart is glad to say the words: you are holy God.**

We Praise God for This Feast

One: Praise God for this feast: for the bread and the cup, for the music and the joy, for the friends near and far who share it with us!

All: Praise God for Jesus: for his passion and his grace, for his daring and his courage, for his forgiveness and his mercy.

One: Praise God for the sweet taste of the realm of God, for the drumbeat of justice, for the promise of peace.

All: For Jesus and this feast of joy, praise God!

We Remember Jesus (unison)

**Merciful and gracious God, you have sent your Holy Spirit to settle on this bread and wine, and filled them with the fullness of Jesus. Now let that same Spirit rest on us, transforming us from the patterns of this passing world, until we are like the One whose food we now share.
Amen**

We Share the Feast

We Offer Thanks (unison)

Amazing and wondrous God, we give thanks for this holy meal shared in your spirit of love. May this bread and cup be more than a foretaste—but an ever-present reminder of Jesus’ call to live out your holy story of redemption and grace. May this feast fill us with renewed courage, commitment and compassion to put fear aside, risk the impossible and transform the world.

Song to Sing “Awake, Awake to Love and Work”

NCH #89

(Pilgrim Hymnal #34)

Benediction (from Isaiah 55)
(Congregation faces towards center)

Left Side: Go forth in joy and be led back in peace

Right side: The mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song.

Left: And it shall be to the Lord a memorial,

Right: An everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

All: Go forth in joy, and be led back in peace. Amen!