

Worship Resources for VT Conference Worship 2014
Key Scripture: Ephesians 3:14-21 Rooted and Grounded in Love

Note: The following resources were written by the Rev. Martha B. Peck, and permission is granted for further use in VT Conference churches and gatherings, providing attribution is made in the bulletin.

Call to Worship: (one or three voices)

- (1) Three days in the dark, under the ground, Jesus' body was buried
They thought it was all over.
But there in the dark something was about to happen,
something they could not see, and could barely imagine...
 - (2) We've spent six months in the cold, under the snow.
But beneath the surface, the seasons are slowly turning, and life is stirring.
 - (3) The soil and the roots are waiting for
the right time,
the right temperature,
the particular intensity of light, that tells them:
- (All) Come alive! Wake up! Grow!

Unison Prayer of Confession:

**Holy, hidden God, we confess that it has been a long winter.
Our spirits are withered, and our souls are weary.
Easter feels like something that happens to someone else.
Help us to believe that under the surface of
our lives,
our churches,
our world,
in the darkness where we cannot see, new life is stirring
roots are spreading out, sprouts unfurling and reaching for the sun,
From the strong and patient roots beneath us,
bring new life,
bring Easter's exuberance,
bring our faith to flower. Amen.**

Silent Prayer

Words of Assurance: (I Corinthians 2:7,9)

“We speak of God's wisdom, secret and hidden...
No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived
what God has prepared for you in love...”
Beloved in Christ, hidden roots sustain you.
There is untold strength under the surface
just waiting for the right time to emerge.

Roots Litany

Leader: People of God, followers of Jesus, members of the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ, let us celebrate the roots that sustain us:

We are rooted in the faith of New England Congregationalism:

All: **Root us and ground us in your love, O Christ.**

(following lines spoken by people scattered around the room)

- *Our forebears traveled to the New World in search of religious freedom.
- *They believed in a learned clergy who did not oppose faith and science.
- *They founded colleges and universities for women, for people of color, and for the children of farmers and laborers.
- *They sent missionaries around the world to teach literacy, provide health care, improve living standards, and model the love of Christ.
- *They worked to end slavery, and sent their sons to fight and die for its abolition.
- *They affirmed the callings of female ministers and GLBT ministers.

Leader: We are rooted in the strong promises of the Gospel:

All: **Root us and ground us in your love, O Christ.**

(following lines spoken by people scattered around the room)

- *Lo, I am with you always.
- *Peace I leave with you.
- *Do not be afraid.
- *We shall not be moved.
- *Jesus has been raised from the dead. Go and see.
- *Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet believe.
- *As the Father has sent me, so I send you.
- *Lo, I am with you always.

Leader: We are rooted like plants:

All: **Root us and ground us in your love, O Christ.**

(following lines spoken by people scattered around the room)

- *Root systems are often as large, underground, as the trees they sustain above them.
- *In the cycles God has designed, waste is the main source of fertility. Out of death comes life.
- *Root systems anchor the soil and hold it in place.
- *Roots, spreading deep and wide, allow living things to withstand drought, wind, and cold. Each root system is uniquely suited to the growth it supports above ground, and the location where it is planted.

Leader: We are rooted in the distinctive witness of the United Church of Christ

All: **Root us and ground us in your love, O Christ.**

*We are a church of extravagant welcome --

*No matter who you are or where you are in life's journey, you are welcome here.

- * We are a church of continuing testimony ---
- *Never place a period where God has placed a comma.
- * We are a church of changing lives –
- *Christ has come to us and shared our common lot,
conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to himself.

Leader: We gather to celebrate the roots that sustain us, and the holy ground under our feet.
All: **Root us and ground us in your love, O Christ.**

Unison Closing Prayer:

**Because, great God of love, there are deep roots under us,
we will celebrate the complexity hidden in the human heart,
and the diversity which is our strength.**

**Because, Lord Christ of the parables, there are deep roots under us,
we will water the seeds of faith deeply, and wait patiently for growth.**

**Because, Holy Spirit of community, there are deep roots under us,
we will anchor one another in times of doubt and fear,
and trust that all things work for good,
and that nothing is truly wasted in your ecology of life. Amen**

Communion Resources

Unison Prayer of Invocation:

**Risen Christ, Lord of Life:
Dwell in our hearts--- warm and loving.
Ground us in your being-- calm and deep.
Take root in our souls-- urgent and fertile.
Easter in us--green and growing.
Speak to us, shape us, sustain us, and send us. Amen**

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 3:17-19, interspersed with words of Jesus
(for two voices or leader/all)

I pray that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...

Those who love me will keep my word, and I will come to them and make my home with them.
(Jn. 14:23)

...As you are being rooted and grounded in love...

No longer do I call you servants, but I have called you friends.
Love one another as I have loved you. (Jn 15: 12,15)

I pray that you may have the power to comprehend with all the saints....

To you is has been given to know the secrets of heaven. (Mt. 13:11)

...what is the breadth....

Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations. (Mt. 28:19)

... what is the breadth and the length....

Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Mt. 28:20)

... what is the breadth and the length and the height....

Friend, move up higher, for those who humble themselves will be exalted.

(Lk. 14:10-11)

...what is the breadth and the length and the height and the depth....

Put out into the deep water and let down your nets.

(Lk. 5:4)

... and to know the love of Christ, that surpasses all knowledge...

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

(Mk.12:30)

...so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Give and it shall be given to you, a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. (Lk.6:37-38)

Invitation to Communion

Leader: Sisters and brothers, you are invited to the joyful feast of the people of God!

Here is forgiveness for your failures, food for all, and friends to share your journey.

People: **Here is abundance, far more than we can ask or imagine.**

Leader: Beloved in Christ, we are united in our shared hunger and thirst,

in our wonderfully varied sacred callings,

and in our visions of justice, peace, and plenty,

nestled in the harmony of God's creation.

People: **Here is abundance, far more than we can ask or imagine.**

Leader: Come to the table; where earth's sweetness is prepared for you. Come to remember how pain has been overtaken by love; death by life; and sorrow by celebration.

See, the Risen Christ stands among us, arms outstretched in welcome and blessing.

People: **Here is abundance, far more than we can ask or imagine.**

Prayer of Thanksgiving after Communion

Filled with your fullness, Lord, we go forth to feed a hungry world.

Nourished for the journey, we travel in hope and joy.

Anointed by your Spirit, we scatter to fulfill our varied callings.

Rooted and grounded in love, we rejoice in one another,

in the gifts and grit of our beloved churches,

and in new life, springing forth wherever your people trust in you. Amen.