

Our Words of Faith –Cherished, Honoured, Living
Order of Service and commentary

Martha Dawson offers this service as a suggestion and possible format for a service that surveys our faith in song and “statements”. The readings are from the lectionary for September 4, 2011 so will likely have to change. As written it takes one hour. There are some historical references that may not have meaning for you and your congregation. Just play with it!

PRELUDE

WELCOME – Halle, halle, halle VU 958 (sing twice)
Halle halle was sung at St. Pauls’s frequently as an opener in the mid eighties. It was one of the first songs during which we were encouraged to clap enthusiastically and the children loved it.

GREETINGS – We greet one another in the friendship of our community and the peace of Christ.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE - We light the Christ candle as a symbol of God’s Spirit at work in us and the world,
May its light brighten our spirits, may the light of God shining through us brighten our world.

EXPLANATION OF THE SERVICE – Arose from a suggestion by June Powell that we have a focus on singing the old songs. That idea grew into a retrospective on our Church history in song and in statements of faith. In early 2012 there will be a remit or plebiscite from GC on adding three documents on faith and belief that have been developed by the Church since the original 20 Articles of Faith that were included in the Basis of Union and agreed to by the three founding denominations. Our Church Council will have an opportunity to vote. I have chosen passages from the original Articles of Faith, the Faith Statement of 1940, The New Creed and The Song of Faith completed in 2006 to highlight some parts of the service today and to give you a sense of the style and character of each. There is a study

document on the United Church web site “Our Words of Faith – Cherished, Honoured and Living

*Written by Henry van Dyke American professor of English and a theologian “Joyful, joyful we adore thee” appeared in the Presbyterian hymnal in 1911. **Our opening prayer comes from a traditional Tanzanian prayer translated by Howard S Olsen a modern Evangelical Lutheran pastor. Please be seated after Joyful joyful and contemplate silently the words of “Listen God is calling”

*CALL TO WORSHIP Joyful, Joyful We Adore You VU 232

**OPENING PRAYER

(Read in silence with music accompaniment)

Listen, God is calling, through the word inviting,

Offering forgiveness, comfort and joy. MV 97

...Offering courage, excitement and energy

Offering knowledge and wisdom

We answer in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray...

The Lord’s Prayer

A TIME FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART – Love in abundance from the 23rd Psalm and Shel Silverstein

The 23rd Psalm is one of the best know and loved passages or words from the Bible at least by grown ups. It begins with the words “The Lord is my shepherd I have everything I need” and it talks about God taking care of us protecting us and giving us what we need. The writer of the Psalm says “my cup runs over” Lets see what that looks like (demonstrate with the help of the kids water overflowing a cup) Discuss - can love overflow? can we have too much love? We do not need to be careful of spilling etc.

Introduce Shel Silverstein’s poem “I know you little, I love you lots, My love for you would fill ten pots...15 buckets...16 cans...3 teacups and 4 dishpans. Talk about items and actions that show love and how they would fill the containers . The children take a sheet with the poem on it to their seats to illustrate and colour

When I went to Sunday school the latest in visual support was a set of rollers on a frame with the words to prayers and other key passages and items printed on them which could be pulled down like a blind - among them the 23rd Psalm and “Shall we gather at the river”. I don’t remember what that song meant to me then other than I liked the tune and the picture that the words made. “Gather with the saints” resonates with me now - gather with the people of God who lived before now; those who live now and those who are not yet born – all who are prepared to be in fellowship with one another and God to create God’s kingdom.

SONG – Shall We Gather at the River VU 710

^A Song of Faith was written with an understanding that each generation has fresh perspectives, challenges, and mission. It is not a statement for all time, but for this time.

A Song of Faith is not meant to define what we believe but to call forth from each of us a response. . .

^PRAYER FOR AND ASSURANCE OF GRACE (words from “A Song of Faith”)

Made in the image of God,
we yearn for the fulfillment that is life in God.
Yet we choose to turn away from God.
We surrender ourselves to sin,
 a disposition revealed in selfishness, cowardice, or apathy.
Becoming bound and complacent
 in a web of false desires and wrong choices,
 we bring harm to ourselves and others.
This brokenness in human life and community
 is an outcome of sin.
Sin is not only personal
 but accumulates
 to become habitual and systemic forms
 of injustice, violence, and hatred.

We are all touched by this brokenness:

the rise of selfish individualism
that erodes human solidarity;
the concentration of wealth and power
without regard for the needs of all;
the toxins of religious and ethnic bigotry;
the degradation of the blessedness of human bodies
and human passions through sexual exploitation;
the delusion of unchecked progress and limitless growth
that threatens our home, the earth;
the covert despair that lulls many into numb complicity
with empires and systems of domination.
We sing lament and repentance.

.Words of Assurance. (All)

Yet evil does not—cannot— undermine or overcome the love of God. God forgives, and calls all of us to confess our fears and failings with honesty and humility. God reconciles, and calls us to repent the part we have played in damaging our world, ourselves, and each other. God transforms, and calls us to protect the vulnerable, to pray for deliverance from evil, to work with God for the healing of the world, that all might have abundant life. We sing of grace.

AMEN

The words we have just spoken were written in 2006. Words of our next song were written in 1758

SONG - Come O Fount of Every Blessing VU 559 (remain seated)

SCRIPTURE LESSONS from today's lectionary

Song - Come let Us Sing VU 222 – based on Psalm 149 (please stand if you are able)

Romans 13: 8 – 14

Matthew 18: 15 – 20

Reading from The Articles of Faith XVIII

Article of Faith 18 speaks to our scriptures today

2.18 Article XVIII. *Of Church Order and Fellowship.* We believe that the Supreme and only Head of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ; that its worship, teaching, discipline, and government should be administered according to His will by persons chosen for their fitness and duly set apart to their office; and that although the visible Church may contain unworthy members and is liable to err, yet believers ought not lightly to separate themselves from its communion, but are to live in fellowship with their brethren, which fellowship is to be extended, as God gives opportunity, to all who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

REFLECTION

On God....words from the Song of Faith

God is Holy Mystery,
beyond complete knowledge,
above perfect description.

Yet,
in love,
the one eternal God seeks relationship.

So God creates the universe
and with it the possibility of being and relating.
God tends the universe,
mending the broken and reconciling the estranged.
God enlivens the universe,
guiding all things toward harmony with their Source.

Grateful for God's loving action,
We cannot keep from singing.

Song – God of the Sparrow VU 229 vs 1, 4, 5, & 6 (remain seated)

On Jesus....Words from the Statement of Faith 1940 Part 2

II. Jesus Christ

We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, Who, for us men and our salvation became man and dwelt among us.

We believe that He lived a perfect human life, wholly devoted to the will of God and the service of man. We believe that in Him, God comes face to face with men, so that they learn that God loves them, seeks their good, bears their sorrows and their sin, and claims their exclusive faith and perfect obedience.

We believe that in Jesus Christ God acted to save man, taking, at measureless cost, man's sin upon Himself; that the Cross reveals at once God's abhorrence of sin and His saving love in its height and depth and power; and that the Cross is for all time the effectual means of reconciling the world unto God.

We believe that Jesus was raised victorious over death and declared to be the Son of God with power; and that He is alive for evermore, our Saviour and our Lord.

So we acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Son of God Incarnate, the Saviour of the world.

I danced in the morning was written by Sydney Carter in 1963 - one of the "new" songs in our then "new" red Hymn Book which came into use in 1971

Carter says of this song "by Christ I mean not only Jesus; in other times and places; other planets there may be other Lords of the Dance but Jesus is the one I know first and best."

Song - I Danced in the Morning VU 352 vs 1, 2 & 5 (remain seated)

On the Holy Spirit ...words from the Song of Faith

We sing of God the Spirit,
faithful and untameable,
who is creatively and redemptively active in the world.

The Spirit challenges us to celebrate the holy
not only in what is familiar,
but also in that which seems foreign.

We sing of the Spirit,
who speaks our prayers of deepest longing
and enfolds our concerns and confessions,
transforming us and the world.

Song - Open my eyes VU 371 (remain seated) written in 1895 by Clara Scott is a rather beautiful hymn and does not appear in either the blue Hymnary or the red Hymn Book

THE OFFERING

Minute for Mission – Letter from the UC regarding the Famine in the Horn of Africa

There is a second offering this first Sunday of the month for local outreach

The Invitation – From a Song of Faith
We are called together by Christ
as a community of broken but hopeful believers,
loving what he loved,
living what he taught,
striving to be faithful servants of God
in our time and place.

We make our offerings in response

Dedication -
Grant Us God the Grace of Giving VU 540

PRAYER Please turn to Let us build a house in More Voices #1 We will be singing vs 3,4, and five as a response to the prayers

Sharing of Celebrations and Concerns
Prayers for the people

We pray for those in our community whom we have named aloud or in our minds and all those who are seeking healing or comfort. We pray for those suffering staggering loses of shelter, food or security. Those who live in the midst of war or famine

Let Us Build a House vs 3

We pray that we might be agents of change and healing wherever we find ourselves. We pray for the leaders of our world that they may be inspired by principles of justice and fairness to bring change and peace

Let us build a house vs 4

We thank you for the good things that happen in our lives. Help us to see the miracles that happen all around us daily – the new beginnings, celebrations, quiet times and children. Let us feel your presence

Let us build a house vs 5

Closing Hymn Leaning on the Ever Lasting Arms written in 1887 by Anthony Showalter with lyrics by Elisha Hoffman and inspired by the words of Deut. 33: 27 This hymn does not appear in any of the UC hymn books but in a supplemental song book_”Songs of the Gospel” It remains in popular culture - most recently sung in the 2010 movie “True Grit” See the bulletin insert for words. Please stand as you are able.

COMMISSIONING

A New Creed VU 918

Three fold “Amen”

POSTLUDE