

Preparing to love and serve our neighbors



"Free, Indeed" by the Rev. Laura Gentry. Used with permission.

Opening responses

Iona Abbey Worship Book

Leader: In quietness and darkness, in peace and confusion, Jesus Christ wants to make his home and meet his friends. He is the light of life:

ALL: HE IS THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD.

Leader: In him there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant,

ALL: ALL ARE ONE IN JESUS CHRIST.

Leader: He is the light of life:

ALL: HE IS THE HOPE OF THE WORLD.

Leader: In him there is neither black nor white, neither north nor south:

ALL: ALL ARE ONE IN JESUS CHRIST.

Leader: He is the light of life:

ALL: HE IS THE HOPE OF THE WORLD.

Leader: In him there is neither male nor female, neither master nor servant:

ALL: ALL ARE ONE IN JESUS CHRIST.

Leader: He is the light of life:

ALL: HE IS THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD.

Leader: In him there is neither rich nor poor, neither middle class nor working class:
ALL: ALL ARE ONE IN JESUS CHRIST.

Leader: He is the light of life:
ALL: HE IS THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD.

Song

“Help Us to Help Each Other”

#362 Hymnal, A Worship Book

Help us to help each other, Lord,
each other’s load to bear,
that all may live in true accord,
our joys and pains to share.

Help us to build each other up,
your strength within us prove.
Increase our faith, confirm our hope,
and fill us with your love.

Together make us free indeed --
your life within us show,
and into you, our living Head,
let us in all things grow.

Drawn by the magnet of your love
we find our hearts made new.
Nearer each other let us move,
and nearer still to you.

Words: Charles Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1742, rev., *Hymns for Today's Church*, 1982, ©1982
Hope Publishing

Tune: BALLERMA, Francois H. Barthelemon; adapt. by Robert Simpson, *A Selection of Original Sacred Music*, 1833

Scripture

Acts 2:42-47

RSV

And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and

having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Reflection

Reflect silently for several minutes, then respond to the following questions:

- What do you notice about the Acts reading? (*Speak words or phrases aloud into the circle.*)
- How does this passage speak to you about Christian community? About befriending your neighbors? Where does it call you to action? (*Turn to someone next to you and discuss each for three or four minutes.*)

Visual reflection

Study the image on p. 1, then turn to someone on your other side and discuss:

- What do you see in the five frames?
- How does the image enhance your understanding of the Scripture lesson?
- What does the image tell you about being a neighbor in your community?

Prayers

ALL: God of signs and wonders, of body and bread, you have modeled for us your generous love, in the gift of your son Jesus Christ. Remake our hearts, so that we may reflect your generosity, gladly sharing our possessions, our food, our worship and our lives with our neighbors. Move us from complacency to compassion and from apathy to action. Open our minds that we may learn from those who are different from us, so that together we might be the body of Christ. In your name we pray. AMEN.

Song

"Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service"

#581 *The United Methodist Hymnal*

Lord, whose love through humble service
bore the weight of human need,
who upon the cross, forsaken,
offered mercy's perfect deed:
we, your servants, bring the worship
not of voice alone, but heart,
consecrating to your purpose
every gift that you impart.

Still your children wander homeless;
still the hungry cry for bread;
still the captives long for freedom;
still in grief we mourn our dead.
As, O Lord, your deep compassion
healed the sick and freed the soul,
use the love your Spirit kindles
still to save and make us whole.

As we worship, grant us vision,
till your love's revealing light
in its height and depth and greatness
dawns upon our quickened sight,
making known the needs and burdens
your compassion bids us bear,
stirring us to tireless striving,
your abundant life to share.

Called by worship to your service,
forth in your dear name we go
to the child, the youth, the aged,
love in living deeds to show;
hope and health, good will and comfort,
counsel, aid, and peace we give,
that your servants, Lord, in freedom
may your mercy know, and live.

Words: Albert F. Bayly, 1961, alt., © 1961 Oxford University Press

Tune: BEACH SPRING, attr. to B.F. White, 1844; harm. by Ronald A. Nelson, 1978, © 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship

Closing responses

Philippians 2:1-3

RSV

Leader: So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,

ALL: COMPLETE MY JOY BY BEING OF THE SAME MIND, HAVING THE SAME LOVE, BEING IN FULL ACCORD AND OF ONE MIND.

Leader: Do nothing from selfishness or conceit,

ALL: BUT IN HUMILITY COUNT OTHERS BETTER THAN YOURSELVES.

Blessing

“When We Breathe Together”

Jan Richardson, *Circle of Grace*

Leader:

This is the blessing
we cannot speak
by ourselves.

This is the blessing
we cannot summon
by our own devices,
cannot shape
to our own purposes,
cannot bend
to our own will.

This is the blessing
that comes
when we leave behind
our aloneness,
when we gather
together,
when we turn
toward one another.

This is the blessing
that blazes among us
when we speak
the words
strange to our ears,

when we finally listen
into the chaos,

when we breathe together
at last.

AMEN.

The logo for Faith & Leadership features a vertical blue bar to the left of the text. The text is arranged in two lines: "Faith &" on the top line and "Leadership" on the bottom line, both in a serif font.

Faith &
Leadership

www.faithandleadership.com