

The U.C.C. Stewardship Council in the past published "Connections" magazine. In many issues were include Worship Resources. They have been collected and presented below for your use in congregational worship.

Issue: Spring 1998

Ready-to-Use Worship Resources

A Responsive Call to Worship

L: God of creation and all beginnings!
We gather this day grateful
for the gift of faith;

P: Breathe your spirit within us,
And gift us with voices to name you.

L: God of resurrection and new life!
We bring the hope of yearning hearts,
grateful that you have named us as Your own;

P: Breathe your spirit through us,
And gift us with hearts that honor you.

L: God of sustenance, in all our goings and comings!
We yearn to taste the artistry of Your love,
which anoints us with light and shadow;

P: Breathe your spirit upon us,
And gift us with the beauty of your name!

--Rev. Mark S. Burrows, Associate Professor of the History of
Christianity, Andover Newton Theological School

Call to Community

All: The Creator takes one pebble. Binds it to another, and
then another, and another. In this manner, a rock is
formed, and then a mountain, and then a world.

Men: The Creator takes one feather, binds it with another,
and then another, and another. In this manner a wing is
formed, and then a body, and then an eagle.

Women: In this way, all things are formed. Small joined with
small, to make a greater, and then a greater, and yet a
greater, to make a whole, where before naught existed.

Men: In this manner, we build, from one person, working
with another, and another, and yet another, an order,
where before, was human chaos.

Women: We work together, toward a common goal. Joining hands.
One with another, and then another. In this manner a
couple is formed, and then a family, and then a
community.

All: We must not fear to depend on one another. Be strong
enough, to let others depend on us. Together we can
soar, like feathers, tossed to the raging wind. Such is
the way that we must be. It is good.

--Michael D. Avritt, San Felipe Pueblo

A Prayer of Confession

We come before You, O Holy One, just as we are: sometimes filled
with great hope and faithful dreams; often stumbling with
uncertainties and doubt; always aware of the suffering that
inflicts our community and our world, and torn by the grief that
troubles our peace. (silence is observed) Gather us into the
heart of Your presence with a mother's strong care; welcome us
home with a father's tender embrace; and call us once again into
the joy of Your presence.

A Responsive Prayer of Confession

People: We come before You
having stumbled and fallen
in our lives, but knowing
that no matter where
we have wandered, in confidence
or in fear, we find You with us
as light for our path
and as a presence hidden
in the dark shadows
of our doubt and despair;
come to us now, we pray,
and call us home to our hearts
where already You await
our return. (silence is kept)

Leader: We are bold to pray
this day, and ask You to
come, O Holy Spirit, come!
Come among us
as the Great God of surprises,
as the One who desires
to make all things new,
even us!
Come within us
as a burning fire,
to illumine us
with Your holy dream

of a world where
the justice of each
establishes peace for all.
Come and dazzle us
by the vision
of Your artistry,
that we might grace
Your church
with traces
of Your presence,
that we might be lovers
with You of all
that sustains life
in this world. Amen.

--Rev. Mark S. Burrows, Associate Professor of the History of
Christianity, Andover Newton Theological School

A Prayer of Praise

We praise You
that You are the Truth
we find in our living,
and in our dying,
truth woven
into the sacred fabric
of our yearning
and shaped by
the soft contours
of our noblest desires!
We praise You
that You are patient
with our clumsy ways
of seeking and naming You,
You who once chose
to reveal Yourself
in the silent eloquence
of falling flame
and violent wind
before burning
the story of salvation
upon the apostles' tongues,
those early witnesses
among whom we stand
as we praise You
for Your great and saving acts
in Your people Israel,
and in the Crucified and Risen One,
Jesus the Christ.

--Rev. Mark S. Burrows, Associate Professor of the History of
Christianity, Andover Newton Theological School

A Prayer of Longing

O God of our hopes, help us live by Your hope.
O God of love, help us live by Your love.
O God of wisdom, help us live by Your truth.

Even as you have elected us to be your people,
may we elect you to preside among us,
 that justice might abound where evil prevailed,
 that reason might shine where fear has made us blind,
 that the spirit of service would melt the bondage of pride,
 that the little circle of our friends become
 the Great Republic of your peace.

May it be so and may it be soon. Amen.

--Dr. William Everett, Professor of Christian Social Ethics,
Andover Newton Theological School

Offertory Prayer

Giving God, our hands translate thanksgiving from the abundance of our lives to the substance of our faith. May we be blessed to know that these gifts serve as testimony to our stewardship and help us discover courage and hope in the fullness of life's great adventure. We pray in the name of One who came to show us the Way, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. Amen.

Invitation to the Offering

C.S. Lewis once said, "I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare." In the spirit of knowing our lives as an adventure in faithful giving, may we launch new dreams and visions for the Church of Jesus Christ today.

Unison Offertory Prayer

As a steward, my life is dedicated to nurturing creation, sharing substance, offering abundance, cultivating Christ in community, tending time, honoring history, growing in grace and gratitude for God's gifts. What I offer today is but a shadow of my faithful intent, merely a portion of my life surrendered in trust. Grant me, O God, the courage to see beyond things to the glory of true sacrifice. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

--William Cunitz, Vice President and Adjunct Faculty, Stewardship Studies, Andover Newton Theological School

A LITANY Inviting Each Other To Give

One We are created in the image of God -

All The generous God who has given us life and all that sustains
and enriches it.

One In baptism, God claims us.

All God claims us to be disciples of Jesus who have compassion
for all,

who work for justice and peace,
who reach the lonely, sick and troubled,
who feed the hungry.

One Each time we gather at the Lord's table

All We are called anew to be a community of God's people,
engaged in God's mission.

One Therefore, disciples, will you each give as you need to give
and as others need to be helped?

All We not only give these gifts; we invite each other to be
giving disciples. Amen.

(Adapted from "The Theological Expression" from the resolution of
General Synod 21, "Toward a New Vision of Giving.")

A Prayer of Blessing and Thanksgiving

We give thanks, our God, for all the good gifts around us:

For the partnership of minds and hearts across cultures
and continents;
for the words of wisdom and experience that call us to new
insights and new duties;
For the struggles of your sons and daughters to build a
church as wide of heart as that of its founder;
For [name of church or place], and all who have loved and
sustained it down the years.

We give thanks, our God, for all the good gifts around us:

for faith that seeks knowledge;
For knowledge that directs actions;
For actions that seek peace and justice;
And for courage that sustains us on the journey. Amen.

--Rev. Elizabeth Nordbeck, Dean, Andover Newton Theological
School

A Benediction

Send us into the world's turbulence
as instruments of Your peace,
and send us as agents
of Your justice,
that all might know
the truth of Your ways;
send us as artists
who bear the joyful burden

of Your creativity,
that we might bring light
into the darkness,
and hope among the despairing.
And grant us the joy of fellowship,
with Your Spirit and with one another,
this day and forever. Amen!

--Rev. Mark S. Burrows, Associate Professor of the History of
Christianity, Andover Newton Theological School

Issue: Fall 1995

A Stewardship Worship Package (Open Any Time)

We have all heard that stewardship is about time, talent, and treasure, even though many of us are guilty at one time or another of separating out "treasure" and giving it emphasis. But stewardship is about giving the self, managing and directing one's life and resources. The worship materials below are stewardship resources that communicate this. That's why they are for use on any Sunday of the year, because stewardship is not an event or a drive--or even a committee. It's a way of living life.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Come, let us worship God. What shall we bring before the God of compassion?

Response: We bring our bodies and spirits--broken and in need of healing.

Leader: What shall we bring before the God of eternal vision?

Response: We bring our dreams and our hopes to be fulfilled.

Leader: What shall we bring before the God of everlasting love?

Response: We bring our gratitude and possessions.

Leader: What shall we bring before the God of all good gifts?

Response: We bring ourselves. May our offerings be holy and acceptable to God.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Gracious God, we are so often content to sink into the background when you have called us to be bold in the faith. We are so often willing to accept mediocrity, so often hesitant to risk. Even though we are quick to say that you will keep us safe from harm, we cling to the trappings of this world as if they, and not you, were our God. Forgive our apathy. Forgive our fear. Strengthen our resolve. Kindle within us the fire of your Holy Spirit; in Jesus' name we pray.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Living and loving God, how awesome are your ways! In a world that continues to explode in violence, you are present, showing forth your love. In countries where political power erupts in war, you are present, leading the battle for peace. In cities terrorized by crime, you are present, proclaiming your justice for all. In a household or in a church divided by conflict or mistrust, you are present, making reconciliation possible. No matter the brokenness, O God, in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, you are present, establishing your rule. For your living presence among us and your love that never ceases, we give you thanks. We thank you also for those people throughout history who have served as instruments of your peace. May the same Spirit who helped them to be faithful in their stewardship of humanity help us as we sow seeds of hope in our day; in the name of the Spirit of the Living God, we pray.

LITANY OF GIVING

One: Because you gave the very breath of life,

All: We give our thanks to you, O Lord, with every breath.

One: Because you nurtured life with human love,

All: We bring you all of our relationships for your blessing.

One: Because you gave the rich and living earth,

All: We offer you, our Maker, the first fruits of our fields.

One: Because you gifted us with time to be,

All: We bring our moments and our days as gifts again to you.

One: Because you gave us skills to work and create:

All: We bring you what we make with our hands and the money we earn with our skills.

One: Because each one of us has gifts and skills, some recognized, some talents hidden,

All: We offer you what each of us can see, and make, and do. Enable us to see more clearly what these gifts may be.

One: Because you freely offered us redeeming love,

All: We bring the gift of love in gratitude to you.

All: From gift to gift, from grace to grace, our gifts are only gifts of yours returned. Receive them in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

CALL TO OFFERING

Listen to the words of Paul to the Corinthians:

We want you to excel also in this generous undertaking. For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has -- not according to what one does not have. Thanks be to God for God's indescribable gift!

- 1 Corinthians 8:7b, 12, 9:15 (NRSV, inclusively adapted)

OFFERING PRAYER

Creating and redeeming God, you have given us so many gifts. We bring you the gifts of our hands. We pray that they may bear the gift of ourselves, our wealth, our various special gifts and skills, and the gift of our commitment to share your great good news through Jesus Christ, in whose name and spirit we pray. Amen.

CHARGE AND BLESSING

Go with joy, celebrating the love of Christ; and in so doing, give yourself to others. Share fervently, be extravagant. Go from this place knowing that God is with you, and that God's love is for ever and for evermore.

HYMN

The Gift of Giving

to the tune, "Erie" ("What a Friend We Have in Jesus" or "Hymn to Joy")

Each of us has special talents,
Little things that we do well.
These become our ways of sharing,
These the stories that we tell.
Some possess the gift of teaching,
Some the gift of ministry.
Others have the gift of leading,
Different gifts for you and me.

Do you have the gift of giving,
Sharing that which you possess
With great ease and with great gladness?
Joyful giving God will bless.
Our Creator and our Savior
Each had many gifts to give.
They have set a high example,
Showing us the way to live.

God gave treasures of the kingdom.
Jesus died to set us free.
Blessings shared with all God's people.
Blessings shared abundantly.
We accepted gifts they gave us.
Now, we pass them on with love.
Yes, we have the gift of giving,
Given us from God, above.

Lyrics by Jane G. Kowall, a member of Faith United Church of Christ, Richmond Heights, Ohio. Copyright © 1995 Verbal Eyes Music, Richmond Heights, OH. Used by permission.

*The Litany of Giving is by David L. Beebe, a member of the Stewardship Council staff.
Other worship materials are from Stewardship 1994, a publication of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).*

Issue: Summer 1996

Ready-To-Use Worship Resources

Stewardship and Mission: these are concepts that should be present in every worship service, every Sunday. Worship is an opportunity to teach that stewardship is about money, but it's also about so much more: values and priorities, caring for people more than things, opening the heart and hand. Mission is about food pantries and digging wells in countries overseas, and it's about remembering God's graciousness, acting on belief, seeking ways to give and share.

Designed to be used at any time during the year, this selection of worship materials from a variety of sources can help you broaden the understanding of stewardship and mission among your members.

Call to Worship

Leader: Come steward friends and present yourselves before your God!

People: We present ourselves before God, to honor and praise the Savior of our people.

Leader: Remember this day the stories of your ancestors, all those whom our God has delivered from despair to hope.

People: Gratefully we recall the goodness of God to our mothers and fathers and to our own generation.

Leader: Celebrate now the gifts of God, new each morning!

All: We rejoice in this great day and all that our God has made!

Prayer of Confession

Let us confess our sins before God and one another.

Almighty and merciful God, you created and are creating still.
In your presence our limits lie stark before us.
We confess our unclean lips, our cold hearts, our turning away
from neighbors, our broken promises, and our unrepentant hours.
Forgive us, O Holy One.
We confess that we have squandered the gifts you have given.
We have neglected the land.

We have grasped for goods.
We have loved power more than people.
Forgive us, O Holy One.
Cleanse from us the illusion of innocence.
Come into our hearts and make us new again.
We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen

Unison Prayer of Confession

Almighty and most patient God, we come before you,
Mindful of the "things" in our lives
that we spend so much time and energy gathering,
holding, and storing.

(SILENCE)

How protective of them we have become.
How much we assume their importance for our living.

(SILENCE)

Help us, gracious God, to recognize instead
the value of spiritual treasures.
Teach us to be generous with those treasures,
that the lives of others might be enriched.
We pray in the name of Christ. Amen.

Prayer for Those in Need

We bring before you, O God, the troubles and perils of people and nations, the sighing of prisoners and captives, the sorrows of the bereaved, the necessities of strangers, the helplessness of the weak, the despondency of the weary, the failing powers of the aged. O God, draw near to each, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Strength. Amen.
(Saint Anselm 1033-1109)

Offertory Prayers

I. Blessed are they who give today the products of their sweat to God so that the poor may also be satisfied, and that God's purpose may flourish on earth as it has been fulfilled in heaven. The little that thy people can get is what they have offered. May their love and compassion feed their needs in the name of Jesus. Amen.
(Solomon Siyakisa Mlambo, student at Mt. Silinda High School, Chipinge, Zimbabwe)

II. Here it is, God, the money we are able to give for your church's work today, along with our images of a better and valuable world. Let this not be the end of our stewardship this week. In our life with family and friends, in our work, and in our play, may we be aware of your presence and your claim in our lives. May we know that you ask not ten percent, but one hundred percent of us. Lead us in the direction of joyful giving and joyful living.

Prayers of Petition

O God:

Enlarge my heart, that it may be big enough to receive the greatness of your love.

Stretch my heart, that it may take into it all those who, with me, around the world, believe in Jesus Christ.

Stretch it, that it may take into it all those who do not know him, but who are my responsibility because I know him.

And stretch it, that it may take in all those who are not lovely in my eyes, and whose hands I do not want to touch; through Jesus Christ, my Savior. Amen. (Africa)

Grandfather, Great Spirit,

You have always been, and before you nothing has been.

There is no one to pray to but you.

The star nations all over the heaven are yours, and yours are the grasses of the earth.

You are older than all need, older than all pain and prayer.

Grandfather, Great Spirit, fill us with light.

Give us strength to understand and eyes to see.

Teach us to walk the soft earth as relatives to all that live.

Help us, for without you we are nothing. Amen.

(Dakota tribe, U.S.A.)

Call to Worship is by Jane Fidler-Hoffman, Ohio Conference.

Prayer of Confession is from the *Book of Worship, United Church of Christ*, United Church of Christ Office for Church Life and Leadership, New York, 1986.

Unison Prayer of Confession is by Henrietta Stith Andrews, Western Reserve Association, Ohio Conference.

Prayer for Those in Need is from *The New Century Hymnal*, The Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, OH, 1995.

Offertory Prayer I and Prayers of Petition are from *Gifts of Many Cultures: Worship Resources for the Global Community*, by Maren C. Tirabassi and Kathy Wonson Eddy, United Church Press, Cleveland, OH, 1995.

Offertory Prayer II is from Mayflower United Church of Christ, Minneapolis, MN.

Issue: Spring 1997 (Child Welfare)

READY-TO-USE WORSHIP RESOURCES

Prayer for Child Welfare

O God, hear us as we pray for all the children of our nation and of the world.

For those especially do we pray who are being brought up in homes where there is no beauty or joy or love; for those who suffer through deprivation, want, and sickness for whom no proper care is offered; for those who suffer in mind and soul through fear and bitterness.

Bless all efforts that are made in behalf of child welfare.
Awaken those who are in positions of power and responsibility to
a deeper consciousness of the rights and needs of children.

Wipe out from the souls of all neglected children the scars of
suffering, misery and fear; give back to them the courage, the
confidence, and the untroubled joy which should be theirs.

And grant to all who tend and teach children the love and patient
wisdom that they need.

For Jesus' sake who gave to children his blessing, and said 'Of
such is the kingdom of heaven.' Amen.

(From the Congregational Christian Council for Social Action,
Dec. 1936)

Prayers of Intercession

Leader: Eternal God, we know that you are ever-present, waiting
for us to turn to you. By asking you to "kum ba yah,"
to "come by here," we really seek a more profound
awareness of your presence as we pray. Infuse us with
your spirit, Lord, and in your mercy.

People: (sing:) Kum ba yah, my Lord, kum ba yah. Kum ba yah,
my Lord, kum ba yah. Kum ba yah, my Lord, kum ba yah.
O Lord, kum ba yah.

Leader: Someone's crying, Lord. A baby born too soon, too
small, too sick. A child, aching with hunger. A
teenager, who lost a friend to gunfire. A parent, who
can't afford to take her sick child to the doctor.
Someone's crying, Lord. In your mercy, Lord.

People: (Sing "Kum ba yah")

Leader: Someone's singing, Lord. A child whose parent praised
her good job on homework. A teenager who feels valued
by his parents and teachers. A parent lulling his
child to sleep. Someone's singing, Lord, with
thankfulness for your love. In your mercy, Lord.

People: (Sing "Kum ba yah")

Leader: Someone's praying, Lord. A child whose parents are
fighting. A teenager who fears she may be pregnant. A
parent who can't see how to make ends meet. Someone's
praying, Lord, that your justice and mercy will spread
through our land. In your mercy, Lord.

People: (Sing "Kum ba yah")

Leader: Someone in need of your guiding presence asks you to
come by here, Lord. Elected officials, as they make
decisions that will affect millions of children and
families. Parents, as they seek to nurture strong
values in their children. Those serving children and
families, as they try to discern the right action to

take. In your mercy, Lord.

People: (Sing "Kum ba yah")

Leader: Someone's standing, Lord. Today, children, men, and women are standing up, standing out, standing together, to give all your children a Head Start, a Healthy Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start.

People: (Sing:) Stand with us, my Lord, stand with us. Stand with us, my Lord, stand with us. Stand with us, my Lord, stand with us. O Lord, stand with us.

A Litany For the Children

Leader: We give thanks for the revelation of God's love for children when Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me."

People: We thank you, O Lord.

Leader: We give thanks for the gift of our children, because they are our future and our hope.

People: We thank you, O Lord.

Leader: For Christ's tender compassion toward children, for his burning indignation against those who do them wrong, for his deep and overflowing love, and for his message of children's nearness to the God of all creation,

People: We thank you, O Lord.

Leader: For the beauty of children and their joy in all beautiful things, for their merriment and laughter, and for the joy and light they bring into the world,

People: We thank you, O Lord.

Leader: For their enthusiasm, their abounding energy and their love of the heroic and adventurous, for their candid, generous trust in those around them, and for their quick response to calls to love and to serve,

People: We thank you, O Lord.

Leader: For all the children of ___ (name of town or city) ___, that they might be blessed with all good things: good families, good homes, good clothes, good food, and good schools,

People: Hear us, we pray, O Lord.

Leader: For all the children of this neighborhood, that they might enjoy the same opportunities, promise and hope that all young people should,

People: Hear us, we pray, O Lord.

Leader: For an end to violence on children's television programs and as a theme in children's toys,

People: Hear us, we pray, O Lord.

Leader: For freedom from violence and the removal of guns from our streets and homes, that all the children may live in safety,

People: Hear us, we pray, O Lord.

Leader: Forget not the children, O Lord.

People: Remember the little ones.

Leader: Heavenly God, you did not prevent the little children

from coming to you. Help us to pull down the barriers to progress and opportunity. We pray that our actions and words may reflect love for all your children, and not merely a privileged few. Grant us to love all our children and always put them first in our hearts and deeds, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Dear God, I thank You for the gift of this child to raise, this life to share, this mind to help mold, this body to nurture, and this spirit to enrich.

Let me never betray this child's trust, dampen this child's hope, or discourage this child's dreams.

Help me dear God to help this precious child become all You mean him to be.

Let Your grace and love fall on [her] like gentle breezes and give [her] inner strength and peace and patience for the journey ahead.

A Prayer for the Breaking of Bread

God of the Universe, lover of children, guarantor of justice, be with us in this breaking of bread and time of fellowship, so that we might be further sustained in our struggle for peace and justice on behalf of children everywhere. Refresh us with your spirit as we share this meal together, uniting us as one in spirit, one in truth, and one in heart with every child.

If you give someone a fish, they will have a meal.
If you teach that person to fish, they will have a living.
If you are thinking a year ahead, sow seed.
If you are thinking 10 years ahead, plant a tree.
If you are thinking 100 years ahead, educate the people.
By sowing seed once, you will harvest once.
By planting a tree, you will harvest tenfold.
By educating the people, you will harvest forever.

--anonymous Chinese poet, 420 B.C.

Sending Forth

May we go forth to turn our hearts and hands and prayers to restoring hope for the future of our children and toward the healing of our nation. Then, truly, shall we raise up the foundations of many generations, and our light will shine for the in the darkness.

Source Notes

The Prayer for Child Welfare is from Social Action, a publication of one of the UCC predecessor agencies, the Congregational Christian Council for Social Action, Dec. 1936. The Prayers of Intercession and the Sending Forth are by Shannon Daley-Harris, Children's Defense Fund. A Litany for the Children is by the Rev. Chris Rose, Grace Episcopal Church, Hartford, CT. "Dear God, I thank You for the gift" is from Guide My Feet, by Marian Wright Edelman. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995. A Prayer for the Breaking of Bread is by the Rev. Dwayne A. Dawson, All Saints Episcopal Church, Pasadena, CA.

Except for the Prayer for Child Welfare, all worship suggestions and resources are excerpted or adapted from the 1996 Children's Sabbath Resources of the Children's Defense Fund.

Issue: Fall, 1998

WORSHIP RESOURCES

Pastoral Prayer for Ordinary Time

God of all good gifts, we give you thanks and praise.

For the light you have given,
light at morning and evening,
light for seeing, light for walking,
for the lights of knowledge, and of faith,
the light of guidance, the light of wisdom,
the light of truth,
For the light you have given, we give you thanks and praise.

For the dark you have given,
the dark where birth comes from,
the dark where we are renewed each night,
the dark of marvelous dreams,
the rich dark of solitude and prayer,
the darkness of the Word on the page,
the dark that shades us, the safe shadow of your wings
where your people sing for joy,
For the dark you have given, we give you thanks and praise.

For the work you have given,
the work together and the work alone,
the work of thought and the work of our bodies,
the work of justice and the work of love,
the work that gives a life,
and the work which costs a lifetime,
For the work you have given, we give you thanks and praise.

For the grace you have given,
the grace of Water, Word, and Table,
the grace of sister and brother,
the grace which calls us away,
and the grace which calls us home,
For the grace you have given, we give you thanks and praise.

Whatever we do in faith, hold it in your own hands.
Whatever we do in hope, see it through with your own eyes.
Whatever we do in love, keep it holy in your own heart.
Build us, we pray, into a holy city, a city of refuge,
a city of safety, a city of justice, a city of rejoicing,
a city of peace.
Befriend us now and forever,
Guard and defend us now and forever,
We ask it in Jesus' name, who taught us to pray and to say ...

--Dow Edgerton, Chicago Theological Seminary

Prayer of Consecration and Commissioning

O Great One,
Spirit of the Living God,
Fiery, sweeping, power of love,
Rest your love upon each one now.

Rest your love upon each woman,
Upon each man,
Upon your sons and daughters of this passage.

Move with them,
Move with them in their journey from here -
To where your call leads them,
Move with them to some yet, un-lived life, wrapped in mystery.

Give them something for their journey.
Give them language,
To speak love in a thousand ways,
A liberating love,
far wider than we've imagined.

Speak your Word, O Great One,
A Word-made-Flesh.

Speak your Word through them -
Body and soul,
In-touch,
With the ordinary,
With the broken,
With the lost.

Speak your liberating Word-made-Flesh in them,
Like Jesus,
Loving the ordinary,
Healing the broken,
Finding the lost.

Rest your love upon each one, O Great One,
Spirit of the Living God,
Fiery, sweeping, power of love.

--Rev. Norma Rae Hunt, Dean of Admissions and Student Life,
United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

A Prayer of Ordination, A Prayer for All

Most gracious and holy One
You have called us and blessed us,
You have named us one by one.
Help us to know that you who made us are God indeed,
That we might gladly accept this marvelous gift of life
And encourage others to do the same.

May we listen for your holy whisperings,
Especially in the voices of those who are silenced.
Help us call out the names of the ones who suffer,
To say what we hear,
And tell what we see.
Then grant us courage to speak boldly and with heart.

May we be persistent
To do what we must, forthrightly and with wisdom.
Let us forget about those who have much
And take pleasure in simple living.
May we strive not for perfection,
But for compassion
So we might grow in confidence and in faith.

Teach us to listen to the stirring of our own longings
For there we will discover You again
And be led into gladness.
There we will grow and change with grace
Into an even deeper sense of joy.

Grant that we might live and die in peace
Knowing that your love will surround completely,

For there is no place that you are not.
Be with each one of us now
And may your blessing go with us in the days ahead.
Amen.

--Sharon Thornton, Visiting Professor of Pastoral Theology at
Pacific School of Religion

A Prayer for the Seminaries of the United Church of Christ
Seminary Sunday - October 18, 1998

Gracious God, we celebrate the richness and diversity of your world. We rejoice that you have called the church to be in the world and have set before it a noble mission. We praise you for all the ministries of the church which enable it to faithfully respond to the leading of your spirit.

This day we are especially grateful for our seminaries and the role they play in the life of the church. Guide them as they seek to nurture your call to men and women to serve you. We pray for the faculties, staffs and seminarians who gather together to form communities of study, worship, fellowship, and service. Send your divine insight and guidance to those who seek an imaginative awareness of you, Holy God. Offer your presence to each person who seeks a deeper knowledge and relationship with you. Extend your sustaining grace to all who explore the art of ministry, that they may become leaders of compassion and proclamation.

We also pray for local congregations and individuals who carry a special passion for the teaching office in the life of the church. Give strength and courage to all who teach. Inspire all of us to nurture and support those who teach.

And so it is that we hold before you all those who serve and grow at the United Church of Christ seminaries. May they be empowered to continue the good work you have set before them. May they seek always to instill in all who enter their classrooms and chapels both devotion and commitment to your gospel and your church. Amen.

--Dr. Claude Dencler, Vice President for Development and
Seminary Relations at Lancaster Theological Seminary

The prayers in this section are reprinted from a booklet produced by the seven seminaries of the United Church of Christ and distributed to delegates and visitors at General Synod 21 in 1997.

Issue:

Ready-to-use Worship Resources

These worship materials are designed to be used by congregations addressing themes of renewal, transformation, or growth.

Litany in Preparation for Worship

Leader: We are a people on a journey.

People: Gathering wisdom from our experience.

Leader: Seeking to be renewed by the gifts of God's spirit.

People: Being empowered by belonging to a nurturing community of faith.

Leader: Growing in discipleship that is guided by the life of Christ.

People: Come, let our songs, prayers, and thoughts be attuned to the presence of God, who is the power of new life.

Prayers

We have never gone this way before. We do not want to let go of the familiar and face the unknown. We are resistant to change. Go with us God. Be bread for the journey. Be water for our thirst. Be music for the march. Then we shall dare to ask your leading our lives. Amen.

- *Christina Hutchins, Adjunct faculty in homiletics at Pacific School of Religion, Ph.D. student in philosophy of religion at the Graduate Theological Union*

Prayer of Confession

Sustaining God, keeper of the night and light of our mornings, hear our prayer as we open our heart to your tender mercy. You call us to become pilgrims, to follow you on the journey of faith. We would find it easier to follow if so much were not at stake! But you promise that you will be with us and that our needs will be met. When we cling to our possessions, trusting in them for security, you lead us into unfamiliar places, asking that we trust in you. Your way is challenging; forgive us our complacency. Your love makes demands; forgive us our anxiety. Guide us with your mercy and forgive our hesitant steps toward the promise of a new dawn. Amen.

- *Pat de Jong, Senior Minister, First Congregational Church in Berkeley, and trustee of Pacific School of Religion*

We come together as a community of faith to worship You, to rekindle our spirits, to seek healing in our places of brokenness. Help us in the process of speaking and listening to examine our inner selves with discernment and honesty. Grant us the wisdom to uncover those places within that are unfinished, that are out of step with our sacred calling, that are a source of pain and hurt to others.

In our life with You, nurtured by the presence of Your spirit, we begin to see more clearly the pathway of our journey. You awaken in us the yearning to move beyond the resting spots where we have grown comfortable and resistant. Whatever our age or condition, there is more for us to learn and master of the life of faith. Help us therefore to keep our eyes on the horizon and to embrace the opportunities to grow closer to You and to each other. Amen.

- *Riess Potterveld, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Pacific School of Religion*

Spirit of the Living God, be with our kaleidoscopic church. We are many-colored and multi-shaped, with fragments that focus and re-focus again, always in different patterns as we turn to the light of Your presence. Help us to love all the patterns and turnings, and to trust in the beauty of a wholeness we rarely see. Amen.

- *Christina Hutchins*

We pray that you, O God, will bring into our hearts and minds, our plans and actions, our hopes and prayers, a greater love for all people. Break the silence of prejudice, the isolation of ignorance, the false sense of security in earthly things and erase the fear that prevents relationship. Create in us a new heart and a fresh desire to be your people. Amen.

- *Dan Chambers, Associate Minister, First Congregational Church of Berkeley, CA*

God of work and love, of play and rest and joys of awakening, we give you thanks for the gift of life itself. Make us alive when we are dead. Give new life out of your love for us. Turn our grief to dancing, our sleep to dreaming, our awakenings into the stirring of your love through our lives. Send your Spirit to invigorate, empower and enliven us that we may discover your presence, heal and reach towards other lives and future days. Amen.

- *Christina Hutchins*

Great God of the old and the new, take our lives and make them like new wine. Refresh our spirit. Disturb our apathy. Strengthen us with your courage, for we seek to be new people. Be with us as we worship, for your presence gives us joy. Pour through our work and play all the days of our lives. Amen.

- *Christina Hutchins*

Benediction

Where faithful people gather
To hear the holy word
There is a spirit running
That will not be deterred.

It dances through our dreams
Upending all our sorrows
Our fears and selfish schemes
Disrupting stable patterns
Undoing normal ways.

This graceful Spirit beckons
And threatens to amaze, astonish and confound
By swirling life in tumult
That blessings may abound.

And so for faithful people
Who call on Jesus' name,
In Christ you will find comfort
But won't remain the same.
The spark of love ignites,
it warms and flames with danger
Burns hot as it delights.

There is no cold salvation.
It sears our blood and bone.
New life's an act of passion,
A gift of flesh not stone,
To open up our lives
In joy and liberation,
So all creation thrives.

- Mary Susan Gast, Conference Minister, Northern California Nevada Conference, UCC

These worship resources have been prepared by faculty and staff of the Pacific School of Religion, a UCC seminary in Berkeley, California, and by area UCC clergy.