

A Liturgy for Our United Outreach Sunday
February 9, 2014
Cliff Hudson

Call to Worship

Come, people of God! Come as one, united in purpose and desire to do God's work faithfully... together. Let's worship God as one people...with joy and in spirit and in truth.

Call to Confession

We must bring all of our being to confession... all that we are, and all that we are not. We are not perfect, but we belong to God. We are sinful, but we have been given the great gift of grace. We are not always obedient, but we can still learn to obey God's commands. In humility, therefore, let us approach God and speak what God already knows: that we need to be forgiven.

Prayer of Confession

Loving God, we fail daily to recognize the ways in which you bless us. Some of our blessings are obvious, but others are not. Yet, we know you bless us and provide for us in ways that are visible as well as invisible. Forgive us, Lord, for our ungrateful hearts and stubborn attitudes. Turn us from our self-centered ways so that we may be of good service to you and the people you love and care for. We pray this in the name of our Savior and Lord, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Here's good news: The apostle John tells us that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from unrighteousness. That's the way forward and upward. Child of God, rise in the knowledge that you are forgiven...and get with the program! Amen.

Prayer for Illumination

God of all time and for all time: Open our minds so that we may understand your word. Open our hearts so that we may learn of your grace and mercy. Open our spirits so that we may respond to the leading of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Scripture Possibilities for the Sermon

- Suggested title: "*Please Stop Giving!*" Text: Exodus 35:20-29, selected; Exodus 36:2-7, selected.

In these verses we are told of Moses' request of the people to provide what was needed to build a suitable house of worship. Because God's people were inspired, they gave with willing hearts. The generosity so overflowed that Moses was forced to issue a command, saying, in essence, "We've more than enough. Please stop giving!"

- Suggested title: "*Theft By Diversion.*" Text: Malachi 3:8-10

This is a stark, vivid text. In it, we are taught that our circumstances are directly proportional to our willingness to give the Lord what is already, by right, the Lord's. As Malachi explains, to withhold what is God's is to commit theft by diversion. Too often, too many people divert what is God's to any number of coffers. The teaching is plain: when we do, we do so at our own peril and cost.

- Suggested title: "*Salt and Light; Light and Salt.*" Text: Matthew 5:13-16

If, as Jesus teaches, we are to be both salt and light to the world, we must take the instructions carefully and willingly. While it is true that we can and should be salt and light as individual Christians, we are far more likely to spread the seasoning and point the beacon if we join together with other Christians in a common cause for the common good. As Cumberland Presbyterian Christians, one of the ways we can do this is by participating in Our United Outreach and making sure our congregations, pastors, and sessions are committed to being that "great city on a hill."

Prayers of the People

Gracious God, we pause this morning to lift up your Cumberland Presbyterian servants in lands far away from us: in Columbia, Cambodia, and Laos; Guatemala, the Philippines, and Japan; in places kept secret for safety's sake, your people are living the gospel and spreading your Good News. Make us mindful, Lord, of our responsibilities to those people who feel led to serve you around the globe and in our town. Remind us to be faithful to all the programs and ministries of your church in our prayers and support of time, talent, and substance. Help us and heal us here and now, O God, so that we may work joyfully and serve you with loyalty and vigor. We pray this in the name of Christ. Amen.

Invitation to the Offering

The challenge is difficult for many of us. We give, but we seek to retain control over the gift. God's word teaches differently. The offering should be a celebration of the joy of giving freely; an act of trust that turns over control of the gift to the Lord's duly authorized agent. As we mingle our dollars with the dollars of others for the greater common good, let us proclaim God's goodness to a needy world.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Generous God, we turn over some of our dollars to you. We give them freely. We give them up joyfully. We ask that you bless, approve, and use this offering to accomplish your will in this world. We pray this, grateful for a chance to be a part of all that you are doing in us, through us, and around us, in the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

Charge and Benediction

Children of God, go forward from this place of worship secure in the knowledge that you are loved and blessed by God so that you may love and bless God's people. Go then, in peace, in the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen!

