

**A Liturgy for Seminary Sunday**  
**September 27, 2015**  
**Jay Earheart-Brown**

Seminary Sunday is a day designated by the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church to highlight the work of Memphis Theological Seminary and the Program of Alternate Studies in providing theological education for the women and men who are called to ordained and lay ministries within the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The following suggested worship elements are intended to give ideas for pastors and worship planners to use in worship on that Sunday. Please feel free to adapt any of the resources here suggested to the needs of your local worshipping community of faith. You may contact the Advancement Office at Memphis Theological Seminary for bulletin inserts about the work of MTS/PAS and offering envelopes for the collection of a special offering to support these vital ministries in our church.

**Call to Worship**

Leader: If we have died with Christ, we will also live with him;

**People: If we endure, we will also reign with him;**

Leader: If we deny him, he will also deny us;

**People: If we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.**

Leader: Then let us present ourselves to God as ones approved by Christ,

**People: Workers who are not ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth.**

(2 Timothy 2:11-13, 15)

*Or:*

Leader: How beautiful on the mountains  
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,

**People: Who brings good news;**

Leader: Who announces salvation;

**People: Who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”**

Leader: Break forth together in singing you ruins of Jerusalem.

**People: All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.**

(Isaiah 52:7, 9a, 10b)

**Call to Confession**

This is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. I will forgive their evil deeds, and I will remember their sins no more. In penitence and faith, let us confess our sins to almighty God.

**Prayer of Confession**

Forgive us, O God, for our intellectual laziness. We fail to study your word as we should. We don't honor the men and women you have called to serve in our midst as leaders and teachers and pastors. We look for instant gratification of our needs and desires, when we should discipline ourselves as people of your covenant. Forgive our foolish ways, and by the power of your Spirit, cultivate in us a teachable spirit, so that we may grow in grace and faith, all our days, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. Amen.

### **Assurance of Pardon**

Hear the good news! Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ and Christ died for us, Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us. Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old life has gone; a new life has begun. Friends, believe the gospel: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven. Amen.

### **Scripture Possibilities for the Sermon**

- Romans 10:11-17—How can they believe unless someone is sent to proclaim Good News
- Matthew 28:16-20—The Great Commission
- Proverbs 1:1-7—Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, but fools despise instruction
- Colossians 3:12-17—Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly

### **Prayers of the People**

*(any of the following petitions can be included with other prayers for the sick, dying, and people in any other need)*

God of all wisdom and learning, we pray for those who teach at Memphis Theological Seminary and in the Program of Alternate Studies. Give them wisdom to know your ways, and energy to teach with passion the women and men under their instruction. Save them from the pursuit of empty knowledge, and kindle in them a love for your word and your sacred teaching. May your Spirit inspire in them the love and devotion to your way that adds depth and devotion to knowledge, and crown all their learning with the love of Jesus Christ.

Guide the students who are studying to prepare themselves for the office of ministry in your church. Give them energy and endurance to persevere in their work, so that they may be well equipped servants, powerful proclaimers and teachers of your gospel of salvation for the whole world. Help them learn to lead, with humility and grace, as co-workers with all the faithful in your mission to reconcile all people to you.

Bless all who administer our educational programs: trustees, administrators, accountants, directors, those who care for facilities, and all who work in Memphis Theological Seminary and

the Program of Alternate Studies with your guidance and mercy. May they share their gifts from you for the purpose of building up the whole body of Christ.

By your Holy Spirit, continue to call men and women to service in your church. Help us to create the kind of community where those who are called to such service may hear that call, and respond in faith. Help us to honor those who are called to ministry with our prayers, our support, and our encouragement, so that your church may be strengthened for its work.

### **Invitation**

If you give a regular invitation to discipleship during worship, consider focusing the invitation this Sunday on God's call to service as pastor, educator, youth worker, missionary, or some other form of vocational ministry. Emphasize the church's need for leadership, and God's call to women and men, young and old.

### Suggested Hymns and Songs

Here I Am, Lord  
Lord, You have Come to the Lakeshore  
Jesus Calls Us  
More About Jesus  
Open My Eyes that I May See  
O Zion, Haste, Thy Mission High Fulfilling

### **“God of the Prophets” (Denis Wortman, 1884, alt.)**

*Can be sung to the tune “National Hymn” (God of our Fathers)*

God of the prophets, bless the prophets' heirs,  
Elijah's mantle o'er Elisha cast;  
Each age in turn for solemn tasks prepares,  
make each one nobler, stronger than the last.

Anoint them prophets, make their ears attend  
To thy divinest speech; their hearts awake  
To human need; their lips make eloquent  
Right to enthrone and every evil break.

Send them, apostles, heralds of thy cross;  
Forth may they go to tell all realms thy grace;  
Inspired of thee, may they count all but loss,  
And stand at last with joy before thy face.

**“Fields are Ripe” (Jay Earheart-Brown, 2015)**

*Can be sung to the tune “Ebenezer” (Come, Thou Fount)*

Fields are ripe, Lord, for the harvest, but the laborers are few;  
People lost and wandering helpless, with no shepherd, leader true;  
Hungry children need direction, broken families cry in pain,  
Give us passion for your mission, missionaries once again.

So we pray, God, send us pastors, faithful workers for your field.  
Raise them up, Lord, and prepare them, by your Spirit, fruit to yield  
For your Kingdom and your glory, for your church, we call to you:  
Send your Spirit, send us leaders, send us men and women true.

Give us vision for the lost and lonely people in our world.  
Grant us leaders, blessed with wisdom, Spirit-led and Spirit-filled.  
Fields are ripe, Lord, we implore you, send us workers, strong and true  
That your church may grow and prosper, giving glory unto you.