

A Liturgy for Denomination Day

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Call to Worship

Leader: Come let us sing for joy to the LORD. Let us shout praises to the rock who saves us.

People: Let's come with thanksgiving and sing praises, because God is great.

Leader: Come let's worship and bow down.

People: Let's kneel before God who made us, whose people we are.

—based on Psalm 29

Call to Confession

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, God calls us to humbly admit our sinfulness and honestly confess our sins. Let us respond to this call so that we may seek and receive God's forgiveness.

Prayer of Confession (unison)

God, you see how we live our lives. We adjust everything possible to meet our desires and preferences, and we try to do the same with our faith: we assume that what we think is what you think, and what we value is what you value; we pick and choose which Bible passages to believe; we interpret difficult scriptures according to what we already believe, rather than listening for your word in them; we condemn those different from us; we resist spiritual growth and abandon spiritual disciplines when they become uncomfortable; we convince ourselves that whatever we're already giving you is enough. Forgive us, God of mercy. Strengthen our faith so that we may try less to make you fit what we believe, and try more to discern and follow your will for our lives and this world that you love. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

By the grace of God and through the work of Jesus Christ be assured of forgiveness and reconciliation, and be at peace.

Prayer for Illumination

Your holy scriptures, O God, are the infallible rule of faith and practice, the authoritative guide for Christian living. By the power of your Spirit, speak to us now through your scriptures as we listen for your word to us.

Scripture Possibilities for the Sermon

- 1 Corinthians 13:1-13
- John 3:16-17 (John 3:16 is called "the gospel in miniature in our 1984 Confession of Faith. 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 is the epistle reading for January 31 in the Revised Common Lectionary. These two passages work well together.)

A Litany for Denomination Day

Our denomination turns 206 years old on February 4. Cumberland Presbyterians come from a long line of God's faithful servants. So, for Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin, who were not content to accept religious teachings as truth simply because of who was doing the teaching,

We give thanks to God.

For John Knox, who founded Presbyterianism in Scotland,

We give thanks to God.

For Reynolds, Gillespie, Rutherford, and others who gathered in 1643 to formulate the Westminster Confession of Faith,

We give thanks to God.

For Francis Makemie, who answered the call to bring Presbyterianism to the colonies that would soon become the United States,

We give thanks to God.

For James McGready, whose Spirit-filled preaching gave birth to the Second Great Awakening in that young country,

We give thanks to God.

For the spiritually starving men and women who flocked to camp meetings to hear the gospel preached in a new way,

We give thanks to God.

For Ewing, King, and McAdoo, who were so passionate about spreading the gospel on the American frontier that they took drastic steps, and accidentally began a new denomination,

We give thanks to God.

For Fussell, Hudgins, Padgett and the many others who refused to let the Cumberland Presbyterian Church die in 1906,

We give thanks to God.

For Hail, Weir, and Gonzalez, who spread Cumberland Presbyterianism across the world; for Beard, Blake, and Reagin whose lives and work dispel the falsehood that Cumberland Presbyterians are shallow thinkers opposed to education,

We give thanks to God.

For Louisa Woosley and Bessie Morris, for Nolin and Dallas-Bonham Presbyteries, whose actions revealed that the gospel will not be bound by gender,

We give thanks to God.

For dedicated laypersons, elders, and ministers through the years who have sustained the resolve of our ancestors and continually moved our church forward,

We give thanks to God.

For this congregation, its founders, its history, its people, its leaders, and its ministries to this community and this world,

We give thanks to God and pray for many more years of ministry.

For this opportunity to celebrate Cumberland Presbyterian heritage, to remember the work that has gone before, and to look toward the future with hope,

We give thanks to God and pray that our resolve will be as strong and our efforts as effective as those we have remembered today.

Prayers of the People

Eternal God, you are wise, powerful, holy, just, good, true, and unchangeable; and we praise you. We also thank you, God, for the blessings you so freely pour over our lives, blessings we don't deserve. (*Enumerate here, or ask the congregation to voice, both general blessings to the world—sunshine and rain, the laughter of a child—and specific blessings within your congregation.*)

We especially thank you for loving us enough to invite us to lay before you those persons and situations that weigh heavily upon our hearts. (*Enumerate here, or ask the congregation to voice, both general concerns in the world—disease, violence, poverty, oppression, persecution—and specific concerns within your congregation.*)

We also thank you, God, for calling us to be your church and equipping us to do ministry in this world. You created the church for mission, to reach out, to glorify you by all we do in Christ's name. You have made us the Body of Christ in the world today. So, calling, equipping, sending God, for the sake of Jesus Christ, call us, equip us, and send us out to share the blessings, meet the needs, and address the concerns we have voiced before you today. Amen.

Invitation to the Offering

Everything belongs to God. God is generous, blessing us richly and entrusting much to our care and use. Let us now return to God a portion of those gifts, bearing in mind that our *Confession of Faith* calls tithing “an adventure of faith and a rich and rewarding practice.”

Prayer of Thanksgiving

We thank you, God, for blessing us with so much. We thank you, God, for expecting so much of us. May the tithes and offerings we return to you now please you, and may they be but a fragment of all of the time, talents, and resources that we joyfully return to you in our daily lives. May how we use the blessing from you that we retain bring you joy as well. Amen.

Charge and Benediction

We have praised God. We have thanked God. We have confessed our sins to God. We have listened for God's word. Now, in the name of Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit, let us go from this place to share God's love with the world. Amen.