

A Liturgy for Our United Outreach Sunday
February 7, 2016
Cliff Hudson

Call to Worship

The people of God are called to a time of worship. This is our time to listen carefully to God's voice with our hearts, minds, and spirits and to respond to God's amazing grace in new and tangible ways. Let's worship our God with all that we have and all that we are!

Call to Confession

Our time of confession is a priceless gift. It helps us to look at ourselves honestly and realize just how badly we need God's grace, guidance, and direction. It focuses us and helps us find the center of our relationship with God. In short, confession is really, really good for the soul. Let's confess our sins to God in the midst of the family of faith.

Prayer of Confession (unison)

Loving God, we admit we have failed to take careful inventory of the ways you have blessed our lives both past and present. We receive your gifts, but we sometimes do not acknowledge them. You provide for us, but we hide and hoard rather than re-direct our blessings lovingly and lavishly. Forgive our timid thoughts and actions, dear Lord! Instead, place within us a portion of your generous spirit, and lead us to a full understanding of our responsibilities as Christians. This we ask in both boldness and humility, for the sake of your Son, our Savior, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

First God forgives... then God forgets. Our sins, once confessed, are forever erased from the record because of the saving, redeeming power of God through Christ. Take a moment today to thank God for your salvation, made possible by God's grace. Thanks be to God!

Prayer for Illumination

Open our eyes, Great God, so that we may see the truth. Open our spirits, Great God, so that we may understand what we are about to hear through the power of your Holy Spirit. Open our ears, Great God, so that we may truly hear not only your word, but the message it contains for each of us. Great God, please add your blessing to the reading of your word. Amen.

Scripture Possibilities for the Sermon

(With thanks and appreciation to Dr. Harold Jones, Tennessee-Georgia Presbytery)

- Suggested sermon title: "The Wise Bring Gifts"
- Texts: Malachi 3:6-9; Matthew 2: 1-12

Using these two texts, craft a sermon that compares and contrasts the conditions and people in both. Malachi's challenge was to a people who weren't looking for anything special from God and acted like it. The "wise men," as they are called, were indeed looking for something very special from God and when they saw it, they acted upon it. They gave sacrificially and joyfully. The people in Malachi's time lessened themselves into a lower common denominator of penuriousness, fear, and selfishness. They weren't hurting God one bit, but they were surely hurting themselves!

Prayers of the People

Today, Lord, this day that you have made, contains both challenge and opportunity for each of us and for your people called Cumberland Presbyterian. We give you thanks for the ministries you have assigned to our Church and we praise you for the challenge and opportunity each of our ministries contain. Just now, Lord, we pray for our missionaries in diverse places and for the good people who work tirelessly behind the scenes to support and nurture them. Again, Lord, we pray for all the ministries you have given to us, and the people who implement them. Convince us, Lord, that it is good and valuable service to support the ministries, programs, and agencies of our Church through our gifts to Our United Outreach. Motivate us and empower us, Lord, to see more clearly and give more generously and sacrificially. It is in your name we pray, Lord. Amen.

Invitation to the Offering

Why do we give, anyway? Some give because they believe they are supposed to. Some give generously and others give grudgingly. Many others have come to know the sheer joy and pleasure of joining with God and God's people in combining dollars together to do God's work. While the work of God takes many, many forms, there is great satisfaction for those who give of their time, talents, and treasure faithfully and systematically. Let's worship God through our giving.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Thanks to you, Mighty God, for giving us another opportunity to invest a proper proportion of our resources to the work you command us to do and to support. We acknowledge the many ways you bless us constantly and ask that this offering be acceptable in your sight. Amen.

Charge and Benediction

The God who blesses us also challenges us: go forward from this place, count your blessings, but use them wisely. Go then, blessed child of God, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.