

A Liturgy for Youth Sunday

February 14, 2016

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Call to Worship

Leader: We gather as the body of Christ to worship.

People: One body with many members.

Leader: Not all members have the same function,

People: Yet we are members one with another.

Leader: As an earthly body, we span five generations:

Children & Youth: Generation Z!

Young Adults: Millennials!

Adults: Generation X and Baby Boomers!

Senior Adults: and the Greatest Generation!

People: We all are God's people.

Leader: God calls us here to be reconciled to one another and to God.

*Children & Youth: We may be young, digital communicators,
but we are also self-educators, collaborators, and volunteer minded.*

*Young Adults: We may be spontaneous, tech-savvy, and risk-takers,
but we are also passionate and mission-minded, with a global view.*

*Adults: We may be skeptical, self-reliant, conservative, and goal-oriented,
but we are also community-minded and adaptable.*

*Senior Adults: We may be conventional, formal, and achievement-oriented,
but we also believe in the equality of all people.*

Leader: We may notice differences among us,

Children & Youth: Yet God includes each of us

Young Adults: in God's covenant of grace and God's family.

Adults: God gifts each of us for contributions to be made to this faith community,

Senior Adults: as well as the larger body of Christ.

People: One body with many members, called to worship and serve, side by side, in unity.

Leader: Thanks be to God. Let us worship!*

Call to Confession

Joshua and Caleb pled with the Israelites to trust and follow God into the land of milk and honey to which God led them, but the people were caught up with the sights and sounds of the new world in which they found themselves and listened to voices other than God's. Joshua and Caleb tore their clothes in repentance and humility. Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before God.

Let us approach God in repentance and humility as we confess our sin.

Prayer of Confession (unison)

God, just as the Israelites rebelled against you, so do we. Just as they lacked faith in you, and feared the uncertainties of their future in the Promised Land, we place limits on your infinite power and take things into our own hands.

As the Israelites mistrusted the leadership and guidance of Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb, we mistrust our brothers and sisters, whom we claim to love.

Forgive us for being unfaithful, prideful, vengeful, greedy, and unloving. Now, merciful God, hear our silent confessions. *(Pause for a time of silent confession.)*

Assurance of Pardon

Friends, the psalmist writes about God and our sin in this way:

The Lord made known God's way to Moses, God's acts to the people of Israel.
The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
God will not always accuse, nor will God keep God's anger forever.
God does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is God's steadfast love toward those who fear God; as far as the east is from the west, so far God removes our transgressions from us.

By your confession and repentance, God forgives you and makes you new. Thanks be to God!

—Based on Psalm 103:7-12

Prayer for Illumination

God, our teacher and guide, through the revelation of your word, show us the fruit of the land that lies before us. Make us hyper-sensitive to your voice and reveal your message to us so that we clearly hear you. Prompt us to, not only follow where you lead, but also step faithfully and courageously into the new situations that await us. Shine your light on our reservations so that we cannot hide and withdraw, using obstacles and challenges as excuses to avoid boldly following you. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

Scripture Possibilities for the Sermon

The youth of the Church are not the future of the Church. They are vital members of the body of Christ. God includes youth in the covenant of grace and we baptized them into our faith communities (*COF 3.06, 5.19*) Youth are gifted for service in the body and with the body now.

Joshua's relationship to Moses, as his young assistant (Exodus 33:11) reveals a healthy picture of young members working alongside experienced members in the leadership of God's people. Moses recognizes he needs someone to eventually assume his role and also that the people need someone whom they will follow and respect, so he asks God for direction. He shares responsibilities with Joshua (Numbers 27:20, 32:28) until it is time for Joshua to assume full leadership (Deuteronomy 31:7). And when he does, the people fully accept Joshua and were in awe of him, just as they were of Moses (Joshua 4:14).

This smooth transition is no accident: working intergenerationally, trusting God, sharing the load, choosing a humble, wise and faithful successor, including the people, and communal participation in the commissioning.

Sermon Ideas:

1. Just like Joshua, young people are a gift to the Church and are able to share in her leadership and service. (Exodus 17:9, 24:13, 33:11; Numbers 11:28, 13:8, 16; Numbers 13:25-33; 14:1-45; 27:12-23; 32:28; Deuteronomy. 31:1-8, 14; 32:44; 34:9; Joshua 4:14)
2. We are "well able" to go where God leads, even when it is at the urging of a young member of the Church. (Numbers 13:25-33)
3. We should be strong and bold when we proceed in a new direction (that may be the suggestion of a millennial or Z) because if we are with God, God goes before us, and will not fail us. (Deuteronomy 31:1-8)
4. Young leaders may be filled with God's wisdom and we should heed their voices, discerning the voice of God through them. (Deuteronomy 31:14-15, 23; 34:9)
5. Fear, or lack of trust in God, breeds discontent, anger, and revenge among the body, within oneself, and with God. Discerning the voice of God from conflicting voices of religious leaders is not easy when one is not living within the will and guidance of God. (Numbers 13:25-14:10)
6. Forgiveness does not remove consequences. (Numbers 14:13-25)
7. The collaborative effort of Moses, Joshua, and the Israelites with God at the center for the care and future of God's people. (Numbers 27:12-23; Deuteronomy 31:1-8)

Prayers of the People

Like Moses interceded for the Israelites, we intercede for many on this earth and plead your mercy, Lord:

- For victims of terrorism and violence around the world, we pray for faith rather than fear and love rather than hate.
- For refugees seeking safety and a home, much like the Israelites, we pray for hospitality, compassion, and generosity.
- For the national leaders, governments, people, and the processes by which we choose our future leaders, we pray for ethical actions that consider all humanity.

- For those seeking justice through immigration, the criminal justice system, an employer, or from a neighbor, we pray for understanding and wisdom so that your will may be done on earth.
- For those longing for freedom from oppression or equality where gender, sex, race, or socioeconomics prevents it, we pray for forgiveness, reconciliation, and love of neighbor.
- For this congregation and your church, we pray for submission to your will, unity within the body, and acts of love and compassion for the least of these.
- For people and situations burdening our hearts and minds today, we pray... (*individual concerns may be named at this time, ending with the Lord's Prayer.*)

Invitation to the Offering

When we trust God, we are able to go where God leads, to do what God calls us to do, and to give freely of ourselves without reservation. The Israelites were “well able” to assume the Promised Land, but they listened to the naysayers. God invites you to freely give gifts of yourself and your resources as tithes and offerings.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Gracious God, thank you for your provision that sustains and blesses our lives. Please accept these gifts given by your people. Please guide us in utilizing these gifts to hasten your reign on earth and to seek your guidance in doing so. Amen.

Charge and Benediction

As Moses prepared the Israelites for his death and for his assistant Joshua to become their leader, he charged both the people and their new leader. If Moses were giving this charge today, it might sound like this, “Don’t be afraid. God’s bigger than anything or anyone you will face. God goes before you and beside you. Trust God. Be encouraged. God will not abandon you or let you down.” Go in peace. Go with God. Amen.

—based on Deuteronomy 31:6,8

*(Sources: *Generation Z*, <http://www.businessinsider.com/afp-generation-z-born-in-the-digital-age-2015-2>; *Generation Z/Boomlets*, <http://www.marketingteacher.com/the-six-living-generations-in-america/>; *Generations*, <http://www.socialmarketing.org/newsletter/features/generation3.htm>; *Generations X,Y,Z and the Others*, <http://inc.com/evan-burns/7-millennial-traits-that-baby-boomer-employers-need-to-learn.html>; *What is the Social Identity of the G.I. Generation?*, <http://www.trinity.edu/mkearl/socpsy01/music/gi%20social%20identity.htm>; *Generation X, Generation Y, Generation Z, and the Baby Boomers*, <http://www.talentedheads.com/2013/04/09/generation-confused/>; *Generation X*, http://www.valueoptions.com/spotlight_YIW/gen_x.htm; *Baby Boomers*, http://www.valueoptions.com/spotlight_YIW/baby_boomers.htm; *List of Generations Chart*, http://www.esds1.pt/site/images/stories/isacosta/secondary_pages/10%C2%BA_block1/Generations%20Chart.pdf)