

A Liturgy for Unity Sunday
December 24, 2017
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Lighting the Advent Candles

The peoples who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
Those who lived in a land of deep darkness,
On them light has shined.

—Isaiah 9:2

Call to Worship (responsively)

The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it,
the world, and those who live in it;
for it is the LORD who founded it upon the seas,
and established upon the rivers of the deep.
Who is this glorious sovereign?
The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.

—Psalm 24:1,10

Opening Hymn

God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens

Call to Confession

The proof of God's amazing love is this:
While we were sinners Christ died for us.
Because we have faith in God,
We dare to approach our Lord with confidence.

Prayer of Confession (responsively)

Merciful God, we are people who still love darkness rather than light;
Instead of living in the light that brings us to unity;
Because of our prejudice, we justify living separated.
Come and renew us, Loving God.

We search for knowledge and see ourselves blameless,
But loads of information doesn't help us come closer to our brothers and sisters in Christ.
Come and restore us, Reconciling God.

We experience your redeeming love and occasionally we are friendly with someone else;
But we do not stand firmly enough to include our brothers and sisters with the same faith.
Come and heal us, Merciful God.

Even though our Lord Jesus prayed for his disciples to become completely one in you,
We, your disciples, divide your body and neglect your church and your community.
Shine upon us with your grace, Lord Jesus Christ, light of the world. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

The good news is this—Jesus came into the world to save us—to save us from our prejudice and gave us the revelation that brings us closer to God and our brothers and sisters in Christ. Jesus’ eternal love surpasses any deed of ours and covers all of our sins. In Jesus we are accepted, included, and formed into a community with all of the redeemed of the Lord coming from the all corners of the earth! Amen.

Hymn

In Christ There is No East or West

Prayer for Illumination

Prepare our hearts, O God, to accept your word.
That listening to you we open our arms and lives to embrace your will.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Scripture Possibilities for the Sermon

- Psalm 24
- 1 Corinthians 1:10-13
- John 17:20-24

Children’s Message

Supplies: A prism and a flashlight or a window from which a light ray comes in.

Ask the children about the color of the light they can see. All answers are right. Many can say that the color of the light is white, yellow, it is brilliant, etc. Then, position the prism in such a way that it intercepts the light of the flashlight or the ray of sunlight. Ask the children if the light that comes through the prism has other colors. All answers are right, blue, red, yellow, green, etc.

The light color we see is the sum of all colors. If we decide not to accept one of the colors of the light, the light wouldn’t be light anymore. God made the light that helps us to admire all God’s creation and help us not to stumble when we move. Jesus is the light of the Church. Jesus died for ALL the people in ALL the churches including the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America. The Church will reflect Jesus’ light better when we become truly united.

Let’s pray: Thank you God for your Church in every place. Thank you for the Cumberland Presbyterian Church that is found in many countries and for our Cumberland Presbyterian Church and Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America, found here in this country. Amen.

Hymn

*Bind us together Lord
Lord of the Church, We Pray for Our Renewing*

Prayers of the People

Besides a prayer filled with thanksgiving, intercessions, and supplications add the following:
“Remember, O Lord, your Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America, and Cumberland Presbyterian Church, to deliver them from all evil, and to make them one, perfect in your love; and gather together from the four winds the sanctified Church into your kingdom, which you have prepared for her. For yours are the power and the glory forevermore.” Amen.

—adapted from the Didaché, c. 120

Charge

Go forth in the name of the Lord.

This is God’s charge:

To give your allegiance to Jesus Christ
and to love one another as commanded.

Benediction

May the God of hope fill you with all peace in believing,

So that you may abound in unity and hope

By the power of the Holy Spirit.

Alleluia! Amen.

—based on 1 John 3:23