

## **A Liturgy for Stewardship Sunday**

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of which we are a partner denomination**

### **Call to Worship**

One: We come to worship a generous and loving God.

**All: Praise the Lord, O my soul!**

One: We will praise the Lord as long as we have breath.

**All: Praise the Lord, O my soul!**

One: Our hope is in our Lord, our God.

**All: Praise the Lord, O my soul!**

One: We give thanks for the gift of all of God's creation.

**All: Praise the Lord, O my soul!**

One: We give thanks for God's help in times of need.

**All: Praise the Lord, O my soul!**

One: We give thanks for God's mercy in times of trouble.

**All: Praise the Lord, O my soul!**

One: We know that God will be with us always.

**All: Praise the Lord, O my soul!**

*—Based on Psalm 146*

### **Call to Confession**

Together we confess that a generous spirit does not always accompany our acts of giving.

### **Prayer of Confession**

God, forgive us. Our efforts to love you with heart, soul, mind, and strength often fall short. Our lack of trust in you hinders our ability to give ourselves completely to you. We stubbornly deny that you know what is best for us. Our mindset of meagerness keeps us from loving our neighbors, and ourselves. Amen.

### **Assurance of Pardon**

One: God's love—shown to us through Jesus—is greater than our shortcomings. The blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purifies our conscience from dead works to worship the living God.

**All: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Amen.**

## Prayer for Illumination

Almighty God, your word is a treasure of wisdom and knowledge. Help us to hear the word, keep the word, and teach the word. Let it be as clear to us as if we are wearing it on our hands, writing it on our foreheads, and displaying it on our doorposts. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

## Scripture Possibilities for the Sermon

- Love, Trust, and Generosity
- **Deuteronomy 6:1-9** Deuteronomy—in the Greek, *second law*—is a record of Moses’ last words to the Israelites before his death. It combines an account of their 40-year sojourn in the wilderness, a reiteration and expansion of the commandments, and exhortations for living in the Promised Land. In the beginning of chapter 6, Moses underscores remembering, keeping, and teaching these commandments. Jesus references this summary during his ministry: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (v. 5, NRSV).

During the previous four decades, Moses and the Israelites learned out of necessity to trust God for their every need. How would that play out in this new land flowing with milk and honey? Moses may have anticipated what was ahead, and began building a bridge of connection between love and trust. In this new land—whatever the circumstances—trust God as you have done in the past, and love God with all your being.

- **Psalms 146** We find this connection between love and trust in Psalm 146, in which the psalmist writes about praising and trusting God. God is worthy of trust as one who keeps faith forever, executes justice for the oppressed, and gives food to the hungry (v. 6-7, NRSV).
- **Ruth 1:1-8** The story of Ruth is one of love and trust. Her husband’s family left the familiar and traveled to Ruth’s homeland in search of sustenance. By the time the famine ended, only one of them—Ruth’s mother-in-law—remained. Ruth’s deep love for her was evident, as she insisted on staying with her even when faced with a sharp, bitter rebuke. This love was a bridge to Ruth’s trust of her mother-in-law and her willingness to go with her to places unknown.
- **Mark 12:28-34** When asked to name the greatest commandment, Jesus gave a two-part answer, citing what we know as Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 (although his list of how we should love God is slightly different). These commandments, he said, are more important than burnt offerings and sacrifices.

What is Jesus asking of us, and how do we connect these commands to generosity? We begin with a giving of ourselves when we love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength.

We can accomplish this self-giving only when we trust that God knows what is best for us. A generous spirit receives God's blessings with joy and gratitude, creating in us the ability to love our neighbor as ourselves.

### **Prayers of the People**

With all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, let us draw near to the throne of grace with our praise and petitions to the Lord, as we pray together for our world:

**All: Generous God, hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for the church.

Almighty God, we give thanks for the gift of the body of Christ—a tapestry of believers from every nation and tribe on this terrestrial ball. We pray for grace and insight to celebrate our commonality and for pardon when we choose to focus on our differences. We pray for protection for those who face persecution. We pray for sustenance for those who are suffering. And we pray for forgiveness for those who are complacent.

*(time for silent prayer)*

**All: Generous God, hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for creation.

Creator God, we give thanks for our world and its abundance beyond measure. We pray for insight as we fulfill our responsibilities as its caretakers and for pardon for times when we have taken these blessings for granted. We pray for protection for all living things that are endangered. We pray for comfort for all living things that are suffering. And we pray for forgiveness for those who callously disregard their responsibility to our earthly home.

*(time for silent prayer)*

**All: Generous God, hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for this community.

Loving God, we give thanks for the gift of communities—rural villages, suburban neighborhoods, city blocks. We pray for tender hearts as we interact with our neighbors and for pardon for times when we have passed by those in need. We pray for protection for those in our community who are threatened. We pray for comfort for those in our community who are suffering. And we pray for forgiveness for those who seek to tear down our community instead of building it up.

*(time for silent prayer)*

**All: Generous God, hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for all families and those who live alone.

Compassionate God, we give thanks for the gift of families and for the cycle of life. We pray for sensitivity and understanding as we interact with our families and pardon for times when we have excluded those in need of love. We pray for protection for those in our families who face danger. We pray for comfort for those who are experiencing difficult family situations. And we pray for forgiveness for those who have caused sorrow to families through their words and deeds.

*(time for silent prayer)*

**All: Generous God, hear our prayer.**

Patient God, we entrust our prayers to you. Give us insight to understand your leading and guidance as you answer our prayers. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Invitation to the Offering**

God calls us to love with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Our offerings are a symbol of that commitment and one of our contributions to our congregation's witness in our neighborhood, in our region, and in our world. You are invited to give generously.

### **Offertory Prayer**

Gracious and loving God, as a community of faith we share these gifts. We pray that you will bless them, and bless us, as we are the hands of Christ that build your kingdom. We pray that they will bring honor and glory to you as we work together in love. We pray that they will bring comfort and blessing to the needy and oppressed. And we pray that they will be a light to guide all to a closer relationship with you. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

### **Charge and Benediction**

Go now into God's world,  
ready and willing to be loving, trusting, and generous people.  
Go with the assurance that God's Spirit is within you,  
making it evident that you are a child of God  
who cares for all of God's children and desires to bring them to Christ. Amen.