

Resources for Reconciling Sunday 2004 **Watermarked: A Witness of Assurance**



These liturgical resources have been compiled for individual and congregational use in celebration of Reconciling Sunday 2004 and in preparation for the Reconciling Ministries Network's "Watermarked: Witness of Assurance" at General Conference 2004, in Pittsburgh, PA, April 26 – May 7, 2004.

You are invited to use these resources for Sunday morning celebrations, contemporary worship services, "Baptism of the Lord Sunday," reaffirmations of baptism, Wesley's covenant service, bible studies, devotional groups, small group studies. Use them to prepare yourself and/or your congregation, social justice committee, local lgbt faith group, bible study group, GC delegations to participate in RMN's witness of assurance and inclusion at GC 2004. Whether in body or spirit, your presence is requested in Pittsburgh.

Copyright

As a justice seeking organization, RMN encourages worship coordinators, pastors, choir directors and musicians to obtain appropriate copyright agreements and acknowledgements. In several resources, publishers and holding companies have been included.

We are watermarked with the seal of Christ's grace and love! Thanks be to God.

Liturgy Resource Group for GC 2004

Worship Themes/Messages & Bible Studies:

Titles:

- Whosoever...no exceptions
- Can't be refused!
- Go, Baptize...I am with You Always
- Being our Parents' Pleasure
- Buried with Christ,
Risen with Christ,
The down and up of Baptism
- What's to stop us?
- Differences Make the Body Whole
- Clothed in Christ
- One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism
- Color of Baptism (It's Purple)

Scripture References:

- Mark 16:14-18
- Acts 10:44-48
- Matthew 28:19
- Mark 1:9-11, Matthew 3:13-18, Luke 3:21-22
- Colossians 2:6-23
- Acts 8:26-38
- I Corinthians 12-13
- Galatians 3:23-28
- Ephesians 4:16
- Acts 16:11-15 (Lydia & her household is baptized)

Children's Message:

Part 1: Using a high quality (watermarked) piece of stationary:
Ask, "What's written on this sheet of paper?"
Kids will say, "It's blank (or empty)"
Then hold it above a light source (candle or lightbulb)
And ask, "What do you see?"
Children will describe the watermark.
Response:

That's like our baptism. It's not easily seen until it's held up to the light of our living. None the less, it is there. YOU are watermarked, precious in God's sight.

Part 2 (Next week): Hold up same piece of paper. Ask, who can remember what's written on this paper? Hold up a gum eraser. Do you know what this is for?

"It's an eraser" some child will shout out.

What do you do with it/

"You erase pencil marks, etc."

Well, let's see if we can erase the watermark from our paper. (Can't be done.)

That's like our baptism. It can't be erased because God has done it!

Our God's "watermark" is permanent!

Liturgies/Prayers/Readings:

1. *Water Ritual*

Call to Prayer

One: Earth maker, come to our assistance

All: God, make haste to help us.

One: Let justice flow like water.

All: And integrity like an unfailing stream.

One: Rise, gentle flowing God, raise your hand, do not forget the poor.

All: you, yourself, have seen the distress and grief, you watch and take them into your hands.

One: Gentle God, you listen to the wants of the humble, you bring strength to their hearts.

All: Grant them a hearing, judging in favor of the orphaned and the exploited so that earthborn women and men may strike fear no longer.

Prayers of Celebration and Concern

We thank you God for your love which became flesh and lived among us in the person of Jesus Christ.

May we follow your example in loving your people.

We thank you God for the faithful people of faith: Sarah, Deborah, Abraham, Moses, and Ruth. For Teresa of Avila, Catherine of Siena and Ambrose. For Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Kazel, Maura Clarke, Jean Donovan, and Phil Berrigan.

May the shining example of these people of faith encourage us and strengthen us in our journey.

We thank you God for our sisters and brothers who labor with the poor and oppressed at home and abroad, especially those in Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Liberia, Haiti. Let us remember and support them.

Give them the courage and strength to bring justice and peace to our people.

We thank you God for the gift of water: a blessing and a right for all peoples.

May all peoples share access to water and share the benefits of this wonderful gift of life.

We thank you God for the wonderful work you are doing in our world today liberating and freeing others to be fully what you have called them to be.

Help us to be faithful to this inner truth which you have written in our hearts.

We thank you God for and ask your blessing on our sisters and brothers in ministry in all faith-traditions.

May their work bear much fruit.

We thank you God for all our fathers/mothers, grandmothers/fathers, aunts/uncles, sisters/brothers, and nieces/nephews.

May they be faithful to your call for them. And may you grant eternal rest to those whom you have called home.

We thank you God for our many friends in community and in our family with whom we study, live and minister side by side.

May the time we spend with them be a sacred time of sharing and caring.

Reflective Reading

The Spirit of Yahweh hovered over the water. It is this gift of water we celebrate today. No element is mentioned more often in Scripture: water for cleansing, water for baptism, for refreshment and life, water for transition from one stage of life to another, water for blessing. We claim the water of life, whose rush announces the birth of a baby, a water of life that nourishes seeds and plant roots deep in the earth. We celebrate water without which all that lives would shrivel and wither away, water of our life.

Water is the primary substance of the human body; our bodies are 70 percent water. Throughout the world the amount of water each person uses varies. Today one billion people do not have access to safe drinking water. Water covers 70 percent of the earth's surface and yet a little less than one percent of the earth's water is available for human use. These waters show evidence of human toxic lifestyles. It is predicted that by 2020 nearly 50 nations will suffer severe water shortages. In the future water is something nations will go to war over.

We are called to look with new eyes upon the gift of water, to renew waters that have been polluted and contaminated, and to act for justice in the use and distribution of water for all peoples throughout our world. We celebrate our common thirst and the God who gifts us with water; a gift to treasure and to use with care and justice.

Closing Prayer

God of our hope, we give thanks for this day, these people and for the gospel which gives this day meaning and your people direction. Stay close to us. Do not pass from our view lest we lose our way and our heart. Encourage us. Root us in you. Make us so desire your life in us that our only fear is your absence and our greatest joy is your love.

Source: Hill Connections, "Water Ritual": a modified version of a prayer service in More than Words: Prayer and Ritual for Inclusive Communities, by Janet Schaffran, CDP, and Pat Kosal, CSJ.

2. Centering Prayer

Pearly Mist
Twinkling Rain
Dew at night
And morn again;
Water clear,
Water cool;
Sparkling stream,
Shining pool;
Water here,
Water there;
Praise for water
Everywhere! Amen.

- Words of Worship, number 133; <http://www.enk.freeuk.com/religion/prwater.html>

3. *Call to Worship/responsory*

One: God's faithfulness is as high as the clouds.

All: God's love stretches everywhere.

One: God's righteousness is as tall as the biggest mountains.

All: God's love stretches everywhere.

One: God's justice is as deep as the ocean.

All: God's love stretches everywhere.

One: God's love is big enough for everyone.

All: God's love stretches everywhere.

One: Come, let us worship the God whose love knows no bounds.

- Seasons of the Spirit, Congregational Life Advent, Christmas Epiphany 2003/2004

4. *Prayer of Water*

"Be praised my God for Sister Water who is useful, humble, precious and pure." St. Francis

As St. Francis prayed in great gratitude for Sister Water,

We pray in thankfulness for her life sustaining generosity.

Oh, water, in your mysterious beauty you cause the desert to bloom.

One tiny drop spread collected with thousands of drops

Water seeds and future harvest to feed us and all creatures.

One tiny drop multiplied quenches our burning thirst.

Our bodies, like the body of the earth, are over 75% water.

We are a water people.

We are a water planet.

O Compassionate God, Creator who breathed over the waters

We seek forgiveness for our mindless use of water.

We beg for wisdom to know how to conserve and cherish water.

We ask healing for the ways that we disrespect and contaminate our sister.

In this drought time we wait and watch for the gift of rain upon earth.

We watch and wait for the rain of grace into our souls.

Come free us from hatred, greed, fear and our lack of love for your gifts upon earth.

Transform us into living streams of water

Flowing green and moist with life, hope and love for earth and all peoples.

We pray this prayer in the name of God who is gracious Creator, Jesus who is Eternal Word and Spirit who is Wellspring of Wisdom.

- Joan Brown, OSF, Ecological Ministry of the Social Justice Office, Archdiocese of Santa Fe,
National Catholic Rural Life Conference

5. *Resources from Words for Worship by Arlene Marks*

The Signature of Your Image

Creator God, in whose image we are made and whose personal signature is written on the very heart of our being;

Help us to create in this community the climate of love and compassion, understanding and affirmation, that all of us need if we are to grow to our full promise. Amen.

Baptism Prayer

O God, Lord of Life,

We praise you that your Spirit has touched our life, that your presence surrounds us even now.
We speak the words, we do the actions; only you can know the heart; cleanse the soul, seal the commitment.
Grant now that this act of baptism may establish and strengthen _____

And all of us gathered here.

Grant *them/him/her* joy in new relationships;

Sustain *them/him/her* as your *children/child*;

Show your grace in *their/his/her* life.

We thank you also for the church and for these times of sharing faith and trust with each other, in Jesus' name. Amen.

- Harold Bauman, in *Baptism and Church Membership*, MPH, 1979.

6. *Baptism Renewal*

One: From the beginning

All: Water

One: holding us,

All: Until birth,

One: washing us

All: Until clean

One: Filling us

All: Until we can drink no more.

One: Water **All: For Birth**

One: For Baptism **All: For Life**

One: God be with you,

All: And also with you.

One: All water is holy

All: Blessed by the Creator

One: From birth waters to mighty rivers of justice,

All: From a refreshing sip to the renewal of a quiet stream.

One: All water is holy,

All: A sign that we have passed through troubles, been refreshed by a gift we did not earn, sustained by a love poured over us.

One: This water is a rainbow sign of God's continuing love at work in us and through us.

All: Bless us and this gift of water.

One: "Remember your baptism, proclaiming 'I am in Christ and Christ is in me.'"

All: I am in Christ and Christ is in me!

- Water Words, by Larry J. Peacock

7. *Proclamation – Not Over and Done With?*

Baptism is not over and one with

When the pastor pours water on our infant foreheads.

The truth is we are being baptized

By everything that happens to us in life.

We are baptized by trials and difficulties:

In their turbulent waters

We are purified of all that is false and useless.

We are baptized by suffering:
In its murky waters
We grow in humility and compassion.
We are baptized by joy:
In its gurgling waters
We experience the goodness of life.

We are baptized by love:
In its singing waters
We blossom like flowers in the sun.

To be baptized is to be **Christened**,
Which means to be made like Christ.
The sacrament, however, only begins this.
It is like the planting of a seed.
It will take a lifetime for the seed to grow and ripen,
For the image of Christ to be formed in us.
But, formed it shall be!

Hymns & Songs:

The United Methodist Hymnal

“Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters,”
“Praise and Thanksgiving Be to God,”
“Come Let Us Use the Grace Divine,”
“This Is the Spirit’s Entry Now,”
“You Have Put On Christ,”
“We Know That Christ is Raised,”
“Child of Blessing, Child of Promise,”

The Faith We Sing

“Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness”
“Wade in the Water,”
“I’ve Just Come from the Fountain,”
“Wonder of Wonders”
“Baptized in Water”
“God Claims You”
“We Were Baptized in Christ Jesus”
“Come, Be Baptized”
“Water, River, Spirit, Grace”

Spirit Anew: Singing Prayer & Praise, Wood Lake Books, Inc., 1999

“Ocean Is a Call to Worship”
“Water Our Lives”
“Where Streams Run Dry”
“(You Are a) Spring of Water”
“Deep Waters”

Hymnal: A Worship Book, Brethren Press, Elgin, IL, 1992

“Christ Be With Me”

“Come, Holy Spirit, Dove Divine”
“I bind unto myself today”
“All who believe and are baptized”

From other resources

“Passed Thru the Waters,” by Avery & Marsh, 1971
“A Song of the Covenant Community,” Copyright: Hope Publishing Company, 1984
“We Are God’s Work of Art/Somos la Creacion de Dios” Marty Haugen, GIA Publishing, 1991
“Song over the Waters” Marty Haugen, GIA Publishing, 1987
“When John Baptized by Jordan’s River” Hope Publishing, 1984, 2001
“What the Lord Has Done in Me” Reuben Morgan/Hillsong Publishing (Integrity), 1998
“Sing a New Church” Delores Dufner, 1993
“In Water We Grow” Hope Publishing, 1991
“You’re My Water” Scott Evans/David Cooley, 2002; songsofpraise.org/water.html
“Come to the Water” Marsha Stevens
“Water of Life/Agua De Vida” by Jamie Cortez and Bob Hurd, OCP Publications, 1995

Choral Anthems:

“Gather At the River” by Ruth Elaine Schram, Win-Mills Publishing Corp., Warner Bros. Publications, 1996
“River in Judea” lyrics by Feldman Jack
“Water Me,” “We Are Yours” by Jim and Jean Strathdee, Copyright: Desert Flower Music

Wash in the Fountain

WORDS: Rev. David P. Aslesen

MUSIC: Traditional Israeli folk song (TFWS, 2091) KING OF GLORY, 12 12 with Refrain

REFRAIN:

The Water of New Birth has marked us as chosen.

We go among the people claiming the promise.

Jesus the Holy One has baptized and blessed us;

Christ is the Loving One whose grace is abounding. REFRAIN

No one can tell us “no” for we know the gospel;

“YES!” to new life for all, gay, straight, and unknowing. REFRAIN

Unstop the ears of those who hear not the message

We shall be strong, secure, in God’s mighty kindom. REFRAIN

Order the church to be a haven of welcome,

Inviting one and all to wash in the fountain. REFRAIN

Make then a joyful noise, arise, dance and savor

The bounty of good news we offer our neighbors. REFRAIN