

Reconciling Sunday 2007

Faith, Hope, Love



Each year we ask that a special Sunday will be set aside to celebrate your congregation's commitment as part of the Reconciling Ministries Network. Some congregations celebrate on their Reconciling anniversary, during Pride month in June, or another significant time for them. Our tradition is to recommend the fourth Sunday in January ~ this year that will be **January 28th**.

We are excited about the 2007 Convocation to be held at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. The theme of convo is ***Faith, Hope, Love***.

Faith as our steady trust in God, knowing God has a purpose and a plan.

Hope as our confidence in the future, allowing our vision to shape our actions.

Love as the extravagant, abundant grace of God

and the sharing of love with our neighbor now.

This packet includes worship suggestions: scriptures, prayers, children's messages, hymns, communion liturgy, and a readers theater. Choose pieces that benefit your congregation.

**Please Note: Bulletin insert is enclosed ~ ½ sheet:
one side for convo, other side RMN sign up.
Special offering envelopes are available. Use the form below.**

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*Whether in body or spirit, your presence is requested in Nashville at **Faith, Hope, Love**.*

Yes, We are celebrating Reconciling Sunday! Please send:

Name of Church: _____

Address _____

Date of our Reconciling worship service: _____

Number of offering envelopes _____

Mail to RMN, 3801 N. Keeler Ave., Chicago, IL 60641
or call the office (773/736-5526) or email meg@rmnetwork.org

Suggested Scriptures

1 Corinthians 13 ... And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three;
and the greatest of these is love.

Hebrews 4:14-16 ... let us approach the throne of grace with boldness...

Hebrews 11 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen

Mark 12: 29-34 Jesus teaches the first and greatest commandment

John 13:34-35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

John 21:15-17 Jesus and Peter: "Do you love me?... then feed my sheep."

Calls to Worship:

One: Gather us in, O God, we who are a grand spectrum
of your children.

**All: Prisms that catch your light with furtive wanting
and give it back in a variety of blended hues.**

One: Gather us in, O God, as dancing colors of a rainbow
in the sky.

All: For our very being is the fulfillment of your promise.

(Foundry UMC, Washington, Shaping Sanctuary 97)

One: The declaration that we are a welcoming congregation is a declaration that we are
ready to be surprised.

All: We are willing to say that we don't know which persons God may bring to us.

One: We are willing to say that we don't know which gifts these persons may bring to our
faith community.

All: We are willing to say we have things to learn.

One: We will learn from the spiritual journeys of people who are different from us.

All: We will learn from people who suddenly seem like different people.

May God open our minds and our hearts.

(Rev. Sandra K. Johnson, HRC Living Openly brochure, adapted)

Community Blessing

God of Presence and Promise, pour out your spirit upon our pastors and upon this community as we recommit ourselves to the work of compassion and justice-love in the world. Accompany us in our continuing struggle to follow in the way of Jesus' life-risking love and bless us each day with enough hope to dream, enough courage to speak the truth, enough compassion to touch, enough passion to insist on justice, and enough strength to stand for integrity. Amen.

(Shaping Sanctuary, page 215)

Opening Litany:

1 Corinthians 13

Voice 1: What's the "good word" we have for the world?
What do we say through the worship and witness of our church?

Voice 2: We say, "We believe in God, known in Jesus Christ."
We say, "Let there be justice and peace."

Voice 1: We say, "Come, accept the cost and joy of discipleship."
We say, "Our congregation is Reconciling."

All: It is good to voice our beliefs and commitments.
But say what we will, even in angelic tones,
if we do not love each other, our talk is cheap.
We shall sound to the world like clanging symbols.

Voice 2: We thank God for the joy of learning!
We are curious about the world within us,
the world around us and the worlds beyond us.
We wonder about the Creator of it all.
Exploring tradition, scripture and experience,
we pray and reason together.
Our faith seeks understanding.

All: It is good to grow in knowledge and wisdom.
But even if we knew everything,
even if we have mountain-moving faith,
if we do not love each other,
we have gained nothing.

Voice 2: What does love ask of us?

All: Love asks that we be patient and kind
as we build an inclusive faith community,
that we abandon arrogance,
that we risk new things,
that we not delight in the failings of others,
that we rejoice in discerning and living God's truth.

Voice 2: Love is strong!
It believes and hopes and endures.
But sometimes even love falters.
Then we may forgive and accept forgiveness,
so that love may be renewed.

Voice 1: Sustained by God's Spirit,
Three things abide within and among us,
Faith, hope, and love.

All: And the greatest of these is love.
(Ann B. Day, Shaping Sanctuary 264)

Prayers of the People

One: You are above us, you are beneath us. You are beside us, you are within us as you...

All: Companion us on our journey, O God.

One: When we are afraid to ask for help, when we are too proud to acknowledge our weakness and pain, when we feel unworthy because of what others say against us or when we do the same diminishing our self worth,

All: Companion us on our journey, O God.

One: We thank you for the sanctity of our bodies, the miracle that we are. May we always look at ourselves with tenderness. May we honor the temple in which you dwell.

All: Companion us on our journey, O God.

One: We pray for those who lead us. Those in government and those in our community. Give them clear vision to lead us in the way of freedom, peace and love. Raise up among us your wisest and most loving children to lead us. Keep us mindful that they need our support and energy to create a world that you envision.

All: Companion us on our journey, O God.

One: We pray for our sisters and brothers who are living with dis-ease. We pray for those whose minds are filled with fear. Send your Spirit to fill them with healing and give us grace to carry them when they are too weak to go on alone. (The people may add their intentions silently or aloud for those who are ill.)

All: Companion us on our journey, O God.

One: We pray for those who have died and gone before us leading the way. We miss their presence next to us. We entrust them into your ever-loving care knowing we all share the journey with you. We remember especially this day: (the people may add their intentions silently or aloud for those who have died.)

All: Companion us on our journey, O God.

One: We celebrate our uniqueness, our worth as daughters and sons. We are your prophets and your clowns, your dreamers, your sages and your mystics. We are fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters. We are Black and White. and all hues between. We are Lesbian and Gay, Heterosexual and Bi-sexual, Transgender, and questioning. We are celibate. We are partnered and single by choice, death or divorce. May we always know you are our companion on our journey, O God.

All: Amen. *(Shaping Sanctuary, page 237)*

Suggested Hymns

United Methodist Hymnal

111 How Can We Name a Love (Brian Wren)
198 My Soul Gives Glory to My God
488 Jesus, Remember Me
546 The Church's One Foundation

115 How Like A Gentle Spirit
405 Seek Ye First
508 Faith, While Trees are still in Blossom

The Faith We Sing (TFWS)

2172 We Are Called
2224 They'll Know We Are Christians by our Love
2238 In the Midst of New Dimensions

Shaping Sanctuary (SS)

276 All Are Welcome
340 Come to the Table (Julian Rush)
358 Ours the Journey

** Note: 2238 of TFWS is an adaptation of the Reconciling hymn "Ours the Journey" found in SS. This is a song and tune we hope every member of our Reconciling family will come to know.

New words to old tunes:

You Planted Us in Hope by Ruth Duck
tune: Terra Beata (*This is My Father's World*)

You planted us in hope; we are your living vine.
O God, revive your people now; O Sun, let your face shine.
O holy gard'ner, tend your work in us begun.
Lift heads bent low in fear and shame and turn them t'ward the sun.

God, free us to attend the hidden wounds we bear,
the deeply rooted hurt and rage that keep us in despair.
Then, that we yet may grow, send soft, refreshing rain:
the Spirit working in our hearts who shares our joy and pain.

God, free our hearts to know you love us as we are.
The vine you plant is dear to you no less the shining star.
Through Christ alive in us may gifts of grace increase,
that we may harvest righteousness and bear the fruit of peace.
Welcome God's Tomorrow: 38 Hymn Texts by Ruth Duck

(RMN is registered with Onelicense and covers permission to use this Ruth Duck text for this event.
If you are also registered we would recommend reporting your use as well.)

Rise Up Shining by Laura Dillon ©2003 (permission granted for your congregation)
suggested tune: Hyfrydol (*Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus*)

Rise up shining, sons and daughters summoned as the light of earth!
All, created in Love's image, manifest creation's worth.
Gay and lesbian, straight or searching, bi, transgendered: called by name.
Blessed uniqueness, sacred bodies each enkindled by God's flame.

This one speaks prophetic challenge, that one hears a priestly call.
Singer, healer, counselor, teacher: of Christ's body members all.
Shall the Church judge who the Giver graces with each vital skill?
Shall we not affirm and nourish all who seek to do God's will?

Listen to your sister's story, look into your brother's heart.
Understanding births compassion, welcome makes a Christly start.
Dialogue, not condemnation, shatters ignorance and fear.
Jesus' way of bold inclusion builds a bridge to Love's frontier.

Communion Liturgy

(The congregation responds with the bold phrases.)

Jesus loves us all

OH YES

After all our debates and wordy proclamations

YES

After finger pointing and Bible bashing

OH MY

After flowing tears and broken hearts

TOO MANY

After bitter decisions and shattered promises

AGAIN AND AGAIN

Jesus waits for us, longs for us.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU

Jesus opens the door

OPENS THE DOOR

Reminds us there are no locks in the new reign

NO LOCKS!

No dead bolts, no barred windows

IT'S TRUE

Just an open door, a door that Jesus holds open

YES LORD

An open door

YES

And a table

ALL RIGHT

With a feast for poor and rich

YES

For black, brown, yellow, white and red

THAT'S RIGHT

For gay and lesbian, bisexual and transgender, straight or a little bent

FOR ALL

For those happy to be so oriented and those struggling to be happy

ALL RIGHT NOW

A feast for all

YES

But you can't eat the bread with a closed fist

NO WAY

You can't drink the cup with tight lips

THAT'S RIGHT

Jesus offers a helping hand

THANK YOU JESUS

Ready to wash our feet

CAN IT BE

Ready to break the bread

FOR ALL

Only Jesus is strong enough to change hearts

IT IS SO

Only God is gracious enough to forgive

THANK YOU

Only the Spirit moves us to inclusion
COME HOLY SPIRIT

Come through the door
ALL ARE WELCOME

Come to the table
ALL ARE WELCOME

Stand together with those excluded
WE ARE STANDING

Stand with those bent over, beaten down
WE ARE STANDING
Stand with the forgotten and the voices not heard
WE ARE STANDING

We are standing with all those battered in Iraq
END THE FIGHTING

We are standing with Palestinians and Israelis
LET THERE BE PEACE

Come to the Table
WE ARE COMING

Open all the doors
YES LORD

Come to the table
WE ARE COMING

Words of institution and invitation

On the night of betrayal, behind closed doors,
Jesus took bread, the common food of people everywhere,
and he gave thanks to God the bountiful Creator.
He tore the bread, knowing the brokenness in the world
and feeling the pain to come, and he gave it to his friends.

Take, eat, this is my body given for new life, new hope, open doors.

Jesus took the cup, lifted it up, thankful for the gift of sun and rain which
gives us food and drink.

He gave it to all at the table.

Drink from this all of you, for you are all welcome at the table.
My life is poured out for you, so you may be whole, forgiven and
empowered to live in my new reign on earth.

Come with open hands and open hearts.
Whether you believe a little or a lot.
Come to the table.
Whether you have been shunned or applauded.
Come to the table.
You are all welcome.
Come to the feast.

Larry J. Peacock, New England Annual Conference
June 2006

Children's Time

Children's book—And Tango Makes Three by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell

Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2005

Summary: "At New York City's Central Park Zoo, two male penguins fall in love and start a family by taking turns sitting on an abandoned egg until it hatches." True story.

Video-- That's a Family!

A film for kids about family diversity. 35 minutes. www.womedia.org
<http://www.womedia.org/thatsafamily.htm>

Children's Message

1. Love makes a family ~ Be ready with examples of different families.

Highlight families of your congregation.

"I lived with my grandparents when I was growing up."

Single parent, step-parents, aunts and uncles, neighbors

Families with children. Families without children.

Siblings, step-siblings, foster siblings...

Ask the children who is in their families.

Finish with God's family. Everyone is a member of God's family.

We are all sisters and brothers in God's eyes.

2. Love is an action verb.

Verbs are words that describe things we do.

Running, playing, laughing, sitting, watching, talking...

Ask for more examples.

Some things we do take a lot of action, some are more like resting.

What about ~

Climbing a tree?

Playing tag?

Sleeping?

Riding a bike?

Reading a book?

Listening to music?

Waiting?

Jesus says we should love our neighbor.

Would loving our neighbor be resting or action?

What could we do to love our neighbors that would take some action?

Statement of Welcome

*This is not my house.
This is God's house.
I cannot tell God
who is welcome and who is not.*

This is not my table.
I do not sit at the head as host.
It is the table of Christ. He is host.
I cannot tell the Host who can sit here and who cannot.

*This is not my food on this sacred table.
I did not prepare it. It is not my blood, my body.
It is the very life of the Christ laid out there.
I cannot tell Him, this one who constantly ate with sinners and outcasts,
who is worth to partake of it and who is not.*

The doors of God's House are open to all who need shelter,
who crave the fellowship and friendship of God,
and even to those who hate God or cannot bring themselves to trust that
God exists or could care for them. Anyone, everyone
is welcome as honored guests in God's house.

*This table of Christ is long and it has many chairs.
There is always room for one more,
for those craving the fellowship of the sacred table,
a place to belong, to be somebody to Somebody.
Anyone, everyone has a place at the table of Christ.*

This food, simple yet divine, is bountiful, abundant, ample for all,
especially those who are hungry and thirsty for what mere bread and drink
cannot supply.
Anyone, everyone has a plate and a portion served by the very hand of the
Christ.
No one is sent away hungry or thirsty here.

*Lord, who am I that you swing open your door and embrace me?
Who am I that you escort me to your table and pull out a chair for me?
Who am I that you would provide such wondrous and costly food?
And how can I but humbly bow my head at such grace and, like you,
embrace all your guests, all who, like me, are unworthy of your house,
unfit for your table and food?*

Bass Mitchell, reprinted from A Reconciling Cookbook, RCP, 1999

Good News About Good News: A Readers' Theatre for Four Voices

[The piece is designed for female Voices 1 and 3 and male Voices 2 and 4.

The following is just a portion of the piece that can be found in complete form in *Shaping Sanctuary*.]

Reader 1: The Bible is a love story that teaches people to love God, to love each other, and to love themselves. Jesus said,

Reader 2: Love God with all your heart

Reader 3: and with all your soul

Reader 4: and with all your mind.

Reader 1: Jesus wants us to love God with all of ourselves.

Reader 2: He wants us to love every part of ourselves – including our sexuality.

Reader 1: Jesus refused to accommodate traditions that excluded whole groups of people, such as the Samaritans and Gentiles. He loved the powerless:

Reader 3: women and children and beggars.

Reader 2: He valued compassion and reconciliation above the law.

Reader 4: He healed people in the Sabbath, he touched lepers, he broke bread with outcasts.

Reader 1: Jesus' life also suggests that he has a strong love and understanding for individuals who do not fit the sexual norms of their times.

Reader 3: As psychotherapist and former Jesuit, John J. McNeill, reminds us, Jesus' mother Mary was a member of the sexually disenfranchised. To all appearances, she was an unwed mother and thus liable to the sever penalties of Jewish law.

Reader 2: Jesus urged his friends to redefine the family. For Jesus, family was more than biological kin. In Luke, Jesus states,

Reader 4: My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.
(Shaping Sanctuary, page 257)

FAITH

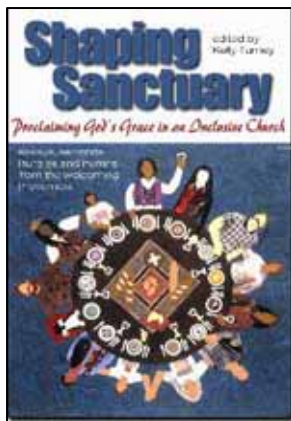
“Pride is Faith in our Belovedness” Chris Glaser (*Open Hands, Summer 2001*)

“The world is uncomfortable with our pride. A straight minister took me aside to tell me he had been honored by being invited to preach at an interfaith Gay & Lesbian Pride service in his hometown. He said he had no problems with the gay and lesbian part. But he had always been taught that pride is a sin!

I described to him the relatively recent movement to address issues of self-esteem and self-worth among those who have been shamed emotionally, spiritually, and sexually. I explained that among those of us who are lesbian and gay, bisexual, or transgender, our “sin” may not be pride, may not be thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought. Our “sin” may be a failure to value who we are, beloved children of God. And like most sin, or ways of “missing the mark,” it is a collective sin, a communal missing the mark. All of culture has conspired to tell us we are less than we are, to shame us, to deny our cultural and spiritual integrity and inheritance.

Thus it’s no mistake that, to counteract this cultural and religious message, Pride festivities evolved. Pride festivities do not celebrate that we are more than we are. Pride festivities celebrate that we are no less than we are.

And we can take humble pride that our Queer difference has made all the difference that we offer the world and the church. Our difference has given us spiritual gifts that we offer the church.”



Shaping Sanctuary: Proclaiming God's Grace in an Inclusive Church

edited by Kelly Turney

Soft-cover, over 300 pages with six-to-eight week study guide, index and resource lists.

Artwork by Jan Richardson

Cost: \$14.00 plus \$4 shipping.

Shaping Sanctuary: Proclaiming God's Grace in an Inclusive Church

provides inclusive worship materials (essays, liturgies, hymns, new words to familiar hymn tunes and a study guide) that value the diversity

of sexuality and embody incarnation. When reviewing this volume, Professor James B. Nelson, author of *Embodiment* and *Body Theology*, said this work may well help the church "rediscover its soul."

The book has also been said to be a gift to the church, but for the church to truly benefit from the gift, we must make use of this resource and distribute to the broadest possible audience.

To order: <http://www.rmnetwork.org/papers/shaping.php>

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