Service of Repentance and Action

Call to Worship

*Inspired by the Calling of the Four directions in Native American traditions, this call to worship guides the congregation to face in each cardinal direction as participants prepare for worship.*

*The congregation faces east.*

Leader: As the sun rises in the east,

**ALL: We gather with anticipation, hope, and possibility. Come, Holy One, and rest upon us.**

*The congregation faces north.*

Leader: As we are drawn to the pull of the north,

**ALL: We find the blessings and challenges of living as your called people. Come, Holy One, and guide us forth to action.**

*The congregation faces south.*

Leader: As we are turned toward the south,

**ALL: We acknowledge the unknown and its pull toward change. Come, Holy One, and transform us.**

*The congregation faces west.*

Leader: When the sun sets in the west,

**ALL: Help us to celebrate that which we have done and let go of the things that we will not complete. Come, Holy One, and rejuvenate us for the hard work we must continue to do.**

Suggested Hymns

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/k3xm7zvs1bxxobb/belhar_hymns_from_glory_to_god_web.pdf?dl=0>

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/9461aj8ic67tqjj/belhar_hymns_from_the_blue_hymnal_web.pdf?dl=0>

Call to Confession

God calls us to reconciliation, a word too often tossed around lightly in the Church. Yet without the repair of relationships, there can be no reconciliation. This morning we come to confess the ways that we have fallen short in responding to the needs of people and communities of color. We name this sinfulness so that we can move toward action that rids us of divisions and moves us toward wholeness.

Prayer of Confession

Prayers of confession should be contextual, naming the sinfulness specific to the congregations in which we find ourselves. It would be impossible to write a communal prayer of confession for the whole Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that names the complicity of the denomination while not putting the brokenness on the backs of the people of color who are victims of systemic racism within it; we could not write a prayer to be used in multiple contexts that would accomplish this. Therefore, you are invited to write a specific prayer of confession for the worshipping community in which it will be used.

Below is a sample of a prayer that can be used in a white congregation:

**O God, we come heavy with the burdens of our actions and inactions; the things we have done and the things that we have left undone. Today we lift up the countless stories of racism that rip the fabric of the community to which you call us:**

* **Considering people foreign or strange simply because of the way they speak or do things differently;**
* **Embracing silence following a shooting or brutality toward yet another black or brown body;**
* **Ignoring the brokenness of the prison system that holds captive more people of color than white prisoners;**
* **Participating in the white-dominant culture rather than seeking the good for all people;**
* **Placing the needs of those who look like us above the yearnings of those whom we call “other;”**
* **Willingness to put the hard work of reconciliation primarily on the backs of people of color;**

***Congregation members are invited to lift up examples from their community, throughout the nation, and the world.***

**To name all of the ways we as individuals and the Church as a whole are complicit would take far more than this worship can contain. We acknowledge all of the ways that we fall short to come to the aid of our neighbor, the prisoner, the foreigner, and those who are not “like us.” Remind us that the body of Christ is composed of all people, from all walks of life, and all corners of Creation. Forgiven of our sinfulness from turning away from others, may we be drawn to better reflect your kingdom on earth. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

We are reminded us over and over again that we are God’s beloved children. Our forgiveness is not based on what we do or say, but by the Holy One who loves us beyond death to offer the gift of resurrected life. Embraced by such abundant love, know that you are forgiven. Now, reconciled to one another, may you seek reconciliation and restoration throughout all of Creation.

Suggested Scripture passages

Race is a social construct created by societies to form a hierarchy of cultures and/or ethnicities. It is important to note that the Bible does not address racism directly, but there are several passages that highlight cultural differences and the challenges of building community across differences.

Esther 4

Exodus 20: 1-20

Matthew 15: 21-28

Mark 7:24-30

Ephesians 2: 11-22

Philippians 2: 1-13

Mark 12: 28-34

Matthew 5: 1-12

Micah 6: 6-8

Prayers of the People

This prayer is taken from 2014 following the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO. You are invited to use it the foundation for a prayer that will inspire your congregation and context to move from repair to reconciliation to action.

O God, with heavy hearts we turn to you. Another life taken. Another future robbed. Another young person of color killed. One death that led to injury, violence, and unrest in the days that followed, exposing divisions and systems of injustice. Struggle and confrontation that continues today.

*Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*

Family, friends, loved ones, and neighbors of Michael Brown unable to mourn in peace because their backyards are filled with tear gas, rubber bullets, violence, and military force. Children unable to attend school. A place where the shadows of night bring uncertainty instead of rest. A place that could be our place, too.

*Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*

A time where hands in the air not only mean surrender but solidarity. As differences seek to rule the day, we search for another path, a new way to live in community. Change our hearts and transform them from places that see “otherness” to ones that honor your image in each person. Guide us to use our voices to name the racism still thriving in our midst, striving for systems of accountability that maintain justice for all people. Strengthen us for the difficult, but beautiful, work of dismantling racism and building a community where all are welcomed and honored.

*Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*

There are no excuses. There are no reset buttons. There is just us, your faithful people, seeking ways to bring hope into a time in such desperate need of it. Stir our hearts, free our minds, and guide us to follow your way. Help us to push aside our complacency to make room for your Spirit, calling us forward from this place. Make us instruments of your peace.

*Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*