

Dear Church Family,

I want to try something new, which I hope will enhance our Lord's Day worship. Each Sunday, we are presented with four or five Scripture texts in the form of the Call to Worship, Psalter, Hymns, and readings, but no time is given to reflect upon the Scripture or our hymns.

My plan (at least for this Sunday) is to let everyone know what Scripture texts and hymns we will be using in worship. This is simply an experiment, so let me know if you find the following helpful to your Lord's Day worship.

One more note: there may be much more than you want to read on the following pages, if this is the case simply skim this material and only spend time reflecting on what is most meaningful to you.

**PRELUDE:** Our Bell Choir will begin our worship playing ***Come, Christians, Join to Sing***. This is a familiar hymn sung to a Spanish Folk Melody. We will not be singing the Prelude, but the text is as follows:

Come, Christians, join to sing: Alleluia! Amen!  
Loud praise to Christ our King: Alleluia! Amen!  
Let all, with heart and voice, before his throne rejoice;  
Praise is his gracious choice: Alleluia! Amen!

Come, lift your hearts on high: Alleluia! Amen!  
Let praises fill the sky: Alleluia! Amen!  
He is our guide and friend; to us he'll condescend;  
his love shall never end: Alleluia! Amen!

Praise yet our Christ again: Alleluia! Amen!  
Life shall not end the strain: Alleluia! Amen!  
On heaven's blissful shore his goodness we'll adore,  
singing forevermore: Alleluia! Amen!

### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

The Call to worship is from Psalm 16, which is an affirmation of faith in God as our refuge, counselor, and the giver of joyous life. The use of the words "heart," "soul" and "body" emphasizes the response of the psalmist's whole being to God as the source of his joy and security.

Leader: I keep the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

People: **Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure.**

Leader: For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit.

People: **You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**

Psalm 16:7-11

### **OPENING HYMN:**

#### ***O Lord, You Are My God and King***

1 O Lord, you are my God and King, and I will ever bless your name;  
I will extol you every day, and evermore your praise proclaim.  
You, Lord, are greatly to be praised; your greatness is beyond our thought;

all generations shall tell forth the mighty wonders you have wrought.

2 How rich in grace are you, O Lord, full of compassion, merciful,  
your anger always slow to rise; your steadfast love you show to all,  
for you are good in all your ways; your creatures know your constant care.  
To all your works your love extends; all souls your tender mercies share.

3 Your works will give you thanks, O Lord; your saints your mighty acts will show,  
till all the peoples of the earth your kingdom, power, glory know.  
Eternal is your kingdom, Lord, forever strong, forever sure;  
while generations rise and die, your high dominion will endure.

This hymn is a paraphrase of Psalm 145, which is the only Psalm that has in its title the Hebrew word which is translated as "A Song of Praise." The Psalm offers praise for God's greatness, His mighty acts, His compassionate Nature and His kingdom.

The tune is *Jerusalem* was written in 1916 by Hubert Parry during the gloom of World War One. The tune is unofficially understood by many English people as the Brattish National Anthem. Many may recognize the original words to the tune:

And did those feet in ancient time  
Walk upon England's mountain green?  
And was the holy Lamb of God  
On England's pleasant pastures seen?  
And did the countenance divine  
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?  
And was Jerusalem builded here  
Among those dark satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!  
Bring me my arrows of desire!  
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!  
Bring me my **chariot of fire!**  
I will not cease from mental fight,  
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,  
Till we have built Jerusalem  
In England's green and pleasant land.

One more note: The hymn Jerusalem inspired the title of the movie *Chariots of Fire*.

**PSALTER** (First Scripture Reading):

**Psalm 27**

Leader: The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

People: **When evildoers assail me to devour my flesh — my adversaries and foes — they shall stumble and fall.**

Leader: Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war rise up against me, yet I will be confident.

People: **One thing I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.**

Leader: For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will set me high on a rock.

People: **Now my head is lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the LORD.**

Leader: Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me!

People: **“Come,” my heart says, “seek his face!” Your face, LORD, do I seek.**

Leader: Do not hide your face from me. Do not turn your servant away in anger, you who have been my help. Do not cast me off, do not forsake me, O God of my salvation!

People: **If my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will take me up.**

Leader: Teach me your way, O LORD, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies.

People: **Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries, for false witnesses have risen against me, and they are breathing out violence.**

Leader: I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

People: **Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!**

We all may identify with this Psalm that begins as an affirmation of faith **“The Lord is my light and my salvation,”** then recognizing the awesome presence of God, the Psalmist begins to lament, **“Hear, O LORD, when I cry, be gracious to me and answer me.”** The Psalm ends with another affirmation, **“I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.”**

## SECOND SCRIPTURE READING:

## **Matthew 18:21-35**

This text reminds us of the words of the Lord’s Prayer, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” As we will hear in the sermon, our salvation is not dependent upon our ability to forgive, but our ability to forgive is necessary for us to honor God and enjoy life as God intended.

<sup>21</sup> Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?”

<sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

<sup>23</sup> “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup> As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. <sup>25</sup> Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

<sup>26</sup> “At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ <sup>27</sup> The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

<sup>28</sup> “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded.

<sup>29</sup> “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’

<sup>30</sup> “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. <sup>31</sup> When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

<sup>32</sup> “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to.’ <sup>33</sup> Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ <sup>34</sup> In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

<sup>35</sup> “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

## **SECOND HYMN:**

### ***Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive***

1 "Forgive our sins as we forgive," you taught us, Lord, to pray,  
but you alone can grant us grace to live the words we say.

2 How can your pardon reach and bless the unforgiving heart  
that broods on wrongs and will not let old bitterness depart?

3 In blazing light your cross reveals the truth we dimly knew:  
what trivial debts are owed to us, how great our debt to you!

4 Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls and bid resentment cease.  
Then, by your mercy reconciled, our lives will spread your peace.

## **SERMON:**

### ***Kingdom Living: Blessed are the Merciful***

The text for the sermon is the fifth beatitude, “Blessed are the merciful for they will receive mercy.”

## **AFFIRMATION OF FAITH:**

Our affirmation of faith will be an excerpt from The Confession of 1967. This confession was written to guide the church through the turbulent times of undeclared war (Viet Nam) and the Civil Rights Movement. The church has recently adopted the Barmen Declaration which was written in South Africa during Apartheid and the two confessions are very similar.

## **Closing Hymn:**

### ***Help Us Accept Each Other***

1 Help us accept each other as Christ accepted us;  
teach us as sister, brother, each person to embrace.  
Be present, Lord, among us and bring us to believe  
we are ourselves accepted, and meant to love and live.

2 Teach us, O Lord, your lessons, as in our daily life  
we struggle to be human and search for hope and faith.  
Teach us to care for people, for all, not just for some,  
to love them as we find them, or as they may become.

3 Let your acceptance change us, so that we may be moved  
in living situations to do the truth in love;  
to practice your acceptance until we know by heart  
the table of forgiveness, and laughter’s healing art.

4 Lord, for today's encounters with all who are in need,  
who hunger for acceptance, for justice and for bread,  
we need new eyes for seeing, new hands for holding on:  
renew us with your Spirit; Lord, free us; make us one!

The scriptural basis of this text is Romans 15:7, recast as a prayer in the opening two lines of the first stanza. The many implications of living as people who have been accepted by Christ fill the remaining stanzas.

I hope this helps. Let me know.

Steve