

PRAIRIE HORIZONS WORSHIP

Prairie Horizons was the title of the Annual Gathering of Saskatchewan Conference, 2014. The service outline that follows was adapted from worship used at this gathering and is recommended for situations that focus on an intercultural context.

The worship includes the idea of using extracts from *Seeing Christ in Others: An Anthology for Worship, Meditation & Mission*, edited by Geoffrey Duncan (UCPH, 1998), available from UCRD. Worship planners might use the worship resources indicated from this book or select choices of their own.

Gathering Song

"Come Now, O God of Peace" (VU 34)

Call to Worship

(spoken from outside the circle)

(each reader walks to the centre, gives her or his speech, and then pours their "tears" into one of four bowls positioned on the table)

Samaritan Woman

Can you hear my voice? I am she who came to the well at mid-day. It was too hot to be hauling water at that time of day; but I did not dare go with the other women at dawn when it was cooler. Their hostile stares and cold shoulders made it clear that I was not welcome.

I was unused to kindness, so I didn't know how to respond to him at first. But there was no judgment in him, only compassion. And for the first time, I felt that someone else was really seeing me. It was scary and beautiful, and it changed my life forever.

My tears of alienation were transformed that day to tears of joy.

Ethiopian Eunuch

Can you hear my voice? I am he who was at the centre of power, but always an outsider. Before I was old enough to have a say, I was made a eunuch and sent to serve the queen.

I know what they say about me—that I'm not a real man. I pretend not to notice, but it hurts. The truth is, I do feel less than whole—like part of me is missing and everyone can tell. Friends say I shouldn't complain, that I have it easy living at the royal court and overseeing the treasury. They don't understand what it feels like to know that no matter how high my position, I will always be looked down on by others.

I never expected Stephen to agree to baptize me. I never imagined my emptiness could be filled. My tears of shame were washed away in that muddy river water as he welcomed me into the Body of Christ.

Zipporah

Can you hear my voice? I am Zipporah, Moses' wife, who was sent away with my sons to my father's house when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt. Did he send us away to protect us? To keep us out of harm's way while he confronted Pharaoh and then the army of Amalek? Or was it that he was embarrassed to acknowledge us in front of his people since we're not Hebrews?

Whatever his reasons, it has always made me feel like I'm not really one of them, you know what I mean? Sure, I'm part of the community now, but I always feel like a stranger among them—like they have all gone through this incredible experience together and I wasn't part of it. I am respected, as Moses' wife, but I just don't feel really accepted.

My tears come silently, when there is no one else to see.

Refugee

Can you hear my voice? I am a refugee. In my home land, I was persecuted for being a Christian. When the government thugs came for me in the middle of the night, I had to flee with only the clothes on my back.

I have finally been able to create a new life in a new country and a new land. Even though I lament all that I left behind, I give thanks that here I am free to practise my faith without interference.

But it is hard. Everything is so different here. Even the rituals and songs we sing at church are unfamiliar. After three years, I still feel like a stranger in my own congregation. I am so lonely. My tears keep me awake at night longing for a place that is truly home.

First Nations Person

Can you hear my voice? I am a First Nations person. I have always followed the Christian path since my mom went to the church-run Residential School. For years, I knew nothing of our Traditional ways or my Cree language. But recently I am beginning to learn. It feels like a part of my spirit that was caged has finally been set free.

My Christian faith is still very important to me. But now, when I go to church, it is like stuffing my spirit back into that cage. Everything is done by the White people's rules...in the White people's language. My minister said we can include an Aboriginal prayer on First Nations Sunday, when it is appropriate.

My tears burn with anger at the way my people continue to be treated as outsiders in our own land.

Black Canadian

Can you hear my voice? I am a Black Canadian. My family has lived in Canada for seven generations. I have been a member of the United Church my whole life. So why do I feel like an outsider in my own church? I am so tired of folk asking me where I come from. I'm from here!

I know they're not trying to be rude; but that just makes it worse. It's a constant reminder that in their minds Whiteness is normal and everything else is other. I wish that for just one day the tables could be turned; then I think they would understand and think twice before making assumptions.

My tears come from my frustration that this is still an issue in 2014.

(the following is read or spoken by the Black Canadian from the centre of the circle)

"The preacher was more than ordinarily eloquent and everyone, but everyone, was moved to tears. Well, not everyone exactly, because..."ⁱ
(or a reading of your community's choosing)

(silence)

Song

"There's a River of Life" (MV 160)

Prayer

"God, be with those who explore in the cause of understanding..."ⁱⁱ
(or a prayer of your community's choosing)

Song

"Jesus Christ Is Waiting" (VU 117) or "Spirit of Life" (VU 381)

Reflection

"When it comes down to it, the wineskins must change..."ⁱⁱⁱ
(or a reading of your community's choosing)

(light oil lamp)

Embodied Prayer

Nuer-Dinka *(four colours of the Medicine Wheel are brought in and laid on table)*
Piny/Piny = earth Mac/Mac = fire Piiw/Piu = water Yiee/Alir = air

Song

"My Love Colours Outside the Lines" (MV 138)

Scripture

Genesis 9: 8–17 (in French) *(four more colours are brought in)*

Song

"We Are All One People" (MV 141)

(silence)

Prayer of Jesus

(each speaks in her/his words/language)

Song

"When a Poor One" (VU 702)

Scriptures

(read from outside the circle)

Deuteronomy 10: 17–19

Jeremiah 17: 7–8

Mark 1: 4

Acts 2: 44–46

The voice of one who enjoys power and privilege now, but remembers what it was like to be an outsider...

A reading from **Deuteronomy 10:17–19**

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them with food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

(After the reading, come into the circle, pick up two coloured cloths, and start circling the centre table. As the quote from Jean Vanier is read, each leaves walking up a different aisle and places cloths on one of the rear tables.)

The voice of Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche International...

"I begin to discover something..."^{iv}

(or a reading of your community's choosing)

The voice of a people living in exile, holding on to hope and striving to be faithful in a strange land...

A reading from **Jeremiah 17:8**

They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.

(After the reading, come into the circle, pick up two coloured cloths, and start circling the centre table. As the quote from Jean Vanier is read, each leaves walking up a different aisle and places cloths on one of the rear tables.)

The voice of Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche International...

"I begin to discover something..."^v

(or a reading of your community's choosing)

The voice of one on the edges of society, inviting people into a new understanding of themselves.

A reading from **Mark 1:4**

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

(After the reading, come into the circle, pick up two coloured cloths, and start circling the centre table. As the quote from Jean Vanier is read, each leaves walking up a different aisle and places cloths on one of the rear tables.)

The voice of Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche International...

"I begin to discover something..."^{vi}

(or a reading of your community's choosing)

The voice of a community practising a counter-cultural ethic of interdependence.

A reading from **Acts 2:44-46**

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts.

(After the reading, come into the circle, pick up two coloured cloths, and start circling the centre table. As the quote from Jean Vanier is read, each leaves walking up a different aisle and places cloths on one of the rear tables.)

The voice of Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche International...

"I begin to discover something..."^{vii}

(or a reading of your community's choosing)

Song

"Canticle of the Turning" (*More Voices* 120) or "Uyai Mose" (*More Voices* 2)

Scripture

Luke 1:46–55

(the four bowls of "tears" are carried up the aisles and placed on rear tables)

Asperges

(from four worship centres located outside of circle; could be done while singing)

Song

"When a Grain of Wheat" (*More Voices* 125)

or "Let Us Build a House" (both languages)

Closing Prayer

Listening to the silenced,

ceding place to those without power,

grieving the loss we did not care about,

becoming flesh for those whose flesh is torn,

we are called the body of Christ,

broken for the love of the world,

bloodied on behalf of the wounded,

poured out to make others whole.

We commit our way to the troubling peace of Christ.

Amen.^{viii}

Commissioning

"Don't hide: don't run, but rather discover..."^{ix}

(or a reading of your community's choosing)

Benediction

Sung Amen

i "Religion" by Bishop B. D. Mondal of Bangladesh in *Seeing Christ in Others: An Anthology for Worship, Meditation and Mission*, ed. Geoffrey Duncan (United Church Publishing House, 1998), pp. 142–3.

ii "God Be with Those Who Explore" by Michael Leunig of Australia in *Seeing Christ in Others: An Anthology for Worship, Meditation and Mission*, ed. Geoffrey Duncan (United Church Publishing House, 1998), p. 10.

- iii "New wine under the skin" by Duncan Tuck of England; taken from *Seeing Christ in Others: An Anthology for Worship, Meditation and Mission*, ed. Geoffrey Duncan (United Church Publishing House, 1998), p. 204.
- iv "Brought to Life" by Jean Vanier in *Seeing Christ in Others: An Anthology for Worship, Meditation and Mission*, ed. Geoffrey Duncan (United Church Publishing House, 1998) p. 53.
- v "Brought to Life" by Jean Vanier in *Seeing Christ in Others: An Anthology for Worship, Meditation and Mission*, ed. Geoffrey Duncan (United Church Publishing House, 1998) p. 53.
- vi "Brought to Life" by Jean Vanier in *Seeing Christ in Others: An Anthology for Worship, Meditation and Mission*, ed. Geoffrey Duncan (United Church Publishing House, 1998) p. 53.
- vii "Brought to Life" by Jean Vanier in *Seeing Christ in Others: An Anthology for Worship, Meditation and Mission*, ed. Geoffrey Duncan (United Church Publishing House, 1998) p. 53.
- viii From *Hallelujah! Resources for Prayer and Praise*, World Council of Churches, 2013.
- ix "Don't Hide" by Peter Millar of Scotland in *Seeing Christ in Others: An Anthology for Worship, Meditation and Mission*, ed. Geoffrey Duncan (United Church Publishing House, 1998) p.12.