

Where You Are

Part 1: Embracing the Familiar

INTRODUCTION

Ordinary Time is more than marking the weeks until the next big event. It is a way of walking with Jesus and growing into our faith as we are making and being made into disciples. This Ordinary Time, you are invited to look at where you are – as individuals and as a community. We want to do that in two parts. We begin with what is familiar, what we see every day, and what we do week by week—the familiar, and maybe the over-familiar. We need to look at what we’ve seen so much that we don’t see it anymore. But we need to look; we need to see because this is where we are.

Second Sunday after the Epiphany – *What Concern Is That?*

January 19, 2025

[John 2:1-11](#)

Color - Green

WORSHIP PLANNING

Where is our mission field? That’s the question behind this week’s theme for Ordinary Time. And the quick answer is, right where you are. Sometimes we are called to the wider world, to venture out into unknown places to make disciples. But most of the time, we are called to be at work in the community that surrounds us. We are called to be witnesses to the grace and goodness of God where we live, work, and play.

The question Jesus asks in our text this week is not a throwaway. It is one we need to sit with as we gather for worship this week. “What concern is that to us?” Can we reflect on the world around us as we gather for worship? Can we see all the people the issues they face, and the struggles that beset them and us? Together, we ask, “What concern is that to us? Or for what should we be concerned? What do we have the capacity to respond to, to resource, to encourage and equip not just ourselves but the wider community?”

Worship this week opens us to the needs that surround us. We aren’t neglecting our membership when we do this, because we are a part of the world we are examining. And we are supplying a mission focus to our discipleship as we gather for worship. Perhaps your congregation has a clear grasp on their mission focus, in which case worship is a celebration of what has been and is happening in the life of the church. Here is a chance to hear from the leaders of that focus and the volunteers who provide the labor. Here is a chance to hear the stories of the impact on the community. And to give God thanks for such clarity and effort.

On the other hand, your congregation may be in a discerning moment. Worship, then, is an opportunity to listen to the nudges that come from the Spirit to those who feel called to be at work. It could be an opportunity to explore possibilities, to look for needs, to evaluate resources and energy. Pray for discernment. Sing songs that invite God to open our eyes. Provide liturgy that offers the community for service and the will to follow through. Offer not as a collection of individuals, each given separate tasks,

but as a body with a united focus and shared vision for what might be. Here is a chance to discover what concerns are before us.

PREACHING NOTES

The wedding at Cana, the first of Jesus' "signs," as John calls them, is appropriate for the season after Epiphany, or Ordinary Time. Let me say at the outset that this passage is about Jesus. Everything that happens is done in relation to him. The story tells us of his mission and his purpose. These verses give us insight into the nature of this person we call Christ. That is what John wanted to do above all else: tell us about Jesus. So, a true study of this passage would focus on Jesus, on what he said and why he said it, on what he did and what it meant that he did it, and on the implications of all these things. I'm not going to do that here. Instead, I'm going to take a moment and look at Mary.

First, did you notice she doesn't get a name here? Only a role, "the mother of Jesus." John never calls her by name in his gospel. From beginning to end, she is nothing more than "the mother of Jesus" (or she is nothing less than...). Often, when someone's name is left out of the story, it is a slight; it diminishes that person somehow. However, from John's point of view, it is an honor in the first place. It is a way of elevating her to a special level. Unique among all of Jesus' followers - the mother of Jesus. Second, John's theology says we are all defined in relation to Jesus. In John's mind, it is an honor to be so identified with Jesus that your name isn't needed. The disciples strove to be defined as disciples, but sometimes they were obstacles ("Get behind me Satan"); sometimes they were reluctant; sometimes they were just Peter and James and Andrew - identified only in relation to themselves and thereby missing something important.

But Mary, in John's book anyway, is nothing but "the mother of Jesus." Nothing less. But she has a role in this particular story. Mary identifies the problem; instead, Mary states the obvious. As John writes: "When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.'" Is this a "duh" kind of statement? Is it the typical biblical habit of repetition? No wine, "no wine!" Or is something else going on here?

Now, I should take a moment and deal with Jesus' response. I don't really want to, to be honest, but I probably should. "Woman," he said. "Woman!" It offends us, even when the translators and biblical scholars scramble to tell us that this is indeed a respectful form of address and that we shouldn't take it the way it reads. OK, maybe so. But still, they will also admit, it is a form of distancing. Not "mom," but "woman." And then, "What concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." Excuse me?

In John's remembrance, Jesus was focused on one outcome. Over and over, he remembers Jesus saying, "It is not my hour." A lot of the things he does, he seems to do while saying, "No, not yet. Not this. Not that." All that he does, and he does a lot (John says the world couldn't hold the books if everything Jesus did was written down), pales next to the thing he came to do. When does he finally say, "This is it. My hour has come"? When he faces the cross. So, this wine moment is not *that moment*. But it is a moment worth 180 gallons. Apparently. "What concern...?" About 180 gallons worth, I guess.

Here's another general Gospel of John tip - it is hardly ever about the miracles. That's why John calls them "signs." They point to something else. So, what's left? The party? The fact that what Jesus perhaps reluctantly makes is really good stuff? The rather odd little concluding verse - "and his disciples believed

in him.” (Does that mean they didn’t before? Or just sorta did and now really do? Or what?) Is John’s point really about Mary, after all? Is the point that our call, as followers of Jesus, is to say, “They have no wine.” Maybe in the face of need, great or small, our task is not to ask who is to blame or who might benefit from this terrible situation, but to state the obvious and then be about the business of meeting that need. Mary simply said two things: “They have no wine” and “Do whatever he tells you,” and a miracle happened. Awareness, faith, and a commitment to see change happen— that’s what Mary had, maybe because of her relationship with Jesus.

What is our concern? That is the driving question of our discipleship. It is not really about what Jesus’ concern might have been in this text but about what our concern might be. And in an overfamiliar world, what are we overlooking? What obvious truth, obvious reality, is staring us in the face? And too often, we believe that it isn’t our concern (whatever it is). Someone else will do this. Someone else will meet this need. It is too risky to wade in these waters, too political, too woke, too right-wing. This is not our concern. But ... they have run out ...

LITURGICAL RESOURCES

Call to Worship

Be still for a moment. What do you hear? What do you smell? What do you feel under your feet?
Beloved, God is here.

In the familiar and unfamiliar, God is here with us.

Take a moment to look around. Whom do you notice? Who isn’t here that you expected to see?
Whether this community feels brand new or familiar to you, God is here.

In the familiar and unfamiliar, God is here with us.

Take a deep breath. We share this air, this space, this worship home together. In our breathing and worshipping in this time and place, God is here.

In the familiar and unfamiliar, God is here with us.

God *is* here. May we pay attention and discern how God brings us together in the familiar and the unfamiliar to be and become the Body of Christ.

May we notice and join in God’s work of forming us for community as we worship today. Amen.

Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, August 2024.

Opening Prayer

God, our God,

As you were with the wedding party in Cana of Galilee, be with us here today. The wine of our lives and souls has run out. Fill this place with the presence of your Holy Spirit. Fill the water pots of our souls this day with new and fresh wine from your wine cellar. The wine of yesterday is gone; it is stale; it is old. Today, God, send your anointing power in this place and in the lives of your people that we may find

strength to hold on and hold out. Help us to know that the best wine is yet to come, and we can taste and see your goodness. Show yourself to be powerful, empowering, and awesome this day and for all times to come. In the name of Jesus the Christ, we pray. Amen.

Written by Bryan K. Fleet, in *The Africana Worship Book, Year C* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 200), 124.

Prayer of Confession

Lord, we need a miracle today.
Like Jesus changing water into wine
at the wedding feast in Cana,
we need a miracle today.
We are tired, Lord, of the hurts of this world.
We are discouraged
in the face of injustice, war, poverty, and indifference.
We need a miracle today, Lord.
Your steadfast love, like a mighty mountain
will not be moved.
Your gifts, as many as the mighty winds,
cannot be counted.
Your glory, like a mighty torch,
will not be put out.
Lord, crown us with your love.
Show us your glory,
that in you we may be moved
to acts of kindness, love, justice, and mercy.
Lord, we need a miracle today. Amen.

Written by Erik Alsgaard and posted on the *Worship Elements* page of the **Ministry Matters** website, <http://www.ministrymatters.com/>. Re-posted on the re:Worship blog at <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/01/confession-john-2-1-11.html>.

Benediction

Go now, with your trust in Christ
who has quenched your thirst with the wine of God's love.
Do not be silent about God's faithful love,
but shelter in the warmth of God's wings
and keep your hearts honest.

And may God rejoice over you and call you “My Delight”;
May Christ Jesus bring out the best in you, to his glory;
And may the Spirit equip you all with gifts for the common good.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
In the name of Christ. Amen.

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Third Sunday after the Epiphany – *As Was His Custom*

January 26, 2025

[Luke 4:14-21](#)

Color - Green

WORSHIP PLANNING

Why do we do what we do week after week? There is power in ritual; there is presence in repeated action, in habits that build up. We often talk about habits as bad things, things we need to curtail or quit. But there can be good habits too, holy habits, we might call them. Certainly, attending gathered weekly worship is one of those habits to celebrate.

We might give some attention to the *why* of worship this week as we hear that Jesus attended prayers in the synagogue as a habit. Why do we gather for worship when we can worship on our own? When we do gather, why do we pray prayers of confession? Why do we pray prayers of intercession? Why do we sing? Why is there preaching and reading of scripture? All the things that we have done out of habit are good things, but they should not be unthinking things. We need to remember together why we do what we do.

One reason for reflecting on practice is so that we can tell the story when we invite others to join us. Adding some depth to the practices can help us converse with those who are unfamiliar with what we do. We are working on our testimony as we examine the meaning behind the practices of our faith.

Let our worship develop holy habits so that we, too, can gather—as is our custom.

PREACHING NOTES

Luke says that Jesus had to wrestle with how he was going to perform this ministry and determine what kind of Messiah he was going to be. The time in the wilderness [at the beginning of chapter four](#) was about deciding, wrestling, if you will, with the possibilities in front of him. Give the people what they want; that was within his power. Turn this stone into bread; feed them; get to them through their bellies, through their hungers. Feed them, and they’ll follow you anywhere. “No,” he says, “There is more to it than that. I want to feed the hungers they forgot they had.”

“OK, then, show them strength. Flex your muscles; play the power card, the authority card. People are drawn to power, like bees and honey. Be strong, and they’ll fall at your feet.”

“No,” he says, “True power is not of this world. Power belongs to God;; we live in humility; we live vulnerably because that’s what living is— risking, letting go, surrendering.”

“Hmm. Ok then, go for the sensation”; it was whispered in his ear, the miracles, death-defying acts of derring-do. “Folks go for that; give them a show: you’ll have to fight them off with a stick.”

“No,” he says, shaking off these thoughts as he shakes off his raging hunger in the wilderness. “No, you can’t live by miracles; you can’t sustain a faith based on miracles. No, that won’t work.”

What’s left? How will he run this traveling salvation show? “I know what I’ll do,” he thought. And he came back from the mountains, got a drink of water and a Slim Jim, and wandered into the synagogues and town centers. “Word spread,” Luke says, and the early reports were positive. Everyone spoke well of him. He taught something different, something new but old at the same time. He taught ancient truths in a new language, as one with authority. He spoke plainly, but he told the stories; he offered a simple truth but drew it in pictures that seemed familiar to everyone.

But what was that truth? What did he teach? It wasn’t until he strolled home that Luke tells us the essence of his message. He ambled into the synagogue where he sat as a boy in Sabbath school, reciting lines and repeating answers to old questions and maybe asking an impertinent question now and again. They had gotten the news; his reputation preceded him. So, he was invited to teach. Called to the front, he was handed the scroll—Isaiah, the biggest one, the heaviest one. He was told to read. Luke says he looked for the bit he wanted. This wasn’t an accident; it just happened to come in when the lectionary had the right text. No, he searched for it. He found the place after an uncomfortable silence had filled the room, and he began to read. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.” Well, of course, it was. Luke told us that in verse fourteen! He was throwing off Spirit-sparks wherever he walked. It surrounded him like a cloud, preceding him like headlights on bright. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach.”

Yeah, well, that Isaiah, he was quite a guy. He had quite a message, didn’t he? Jesus read it through. And they all sighed contentedly. “Yeah, those were the days,” they thought. “When old Isaiah stood there declaring the Word of the Lord, people took notice; you better believe it. God was closer then, when people like Isaiah were around, proclaiming, setting free, opening eyes, saying God is close, real close, pay attention and see. Those were the days.”

Jesus let the scroll roll up in his hand like a window blind and then handed it to the dazed attendant, and then he sat down—not because he was done. That’s what it sounds like to us. But no, rabbis taught sitting down. You stand to read out of respect for the Word, but then you sit to explain and expound and apply. You sat down, and we had the Word for lunch. We chewed it over and approached it from every perspective we could think of—the historical (What did he mean and what was going on at the time?); the literary (What devices was he using to help them hear and see? Is this poetry or prose?); the contextual (Who were the listeners at the time? How did they hear these words); the theological (How does this tell us more about God according to thinkers over the years?). They expected a lecture on the text when Jesus sat down.

Instead, they got a nine-word sermon: “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” That’s it. I can’t imagine they were thrilled by that. Of course, this passage is about Jesus. He declared his ministry priorities, his core values. He trotted out his mission statement, laid it out for all to see and hear. “In your hearing,” he said. That means that, yes, this is about Jesus, but it is also about you. It’s about me. We have signed up for something bigger than we knew. When we decided to be within hearing distance of Jesus, we entered into a whole new world, a whole new understanding of our own lives and the mission to which we have signed on. It’s about us as much as it is about him. Because we claim to hear; we claim to follow. We may be afraid of the call, afraid we aren’t up to it, afraid it is more than we knew. But it is about us. It is about loving as he loved, loving enough to make a difference in the world (not just in us, but in the world).

So how do we get closer to being like Jesus? Closer to loving as he does? We make it a habit. “Jesus went to the synagogue,” Luke tells us, “as was his custom.” It is just what he did. Maybe we can conquer our fear of following if it just becomes a habit. We don’t stop to think whether we should follow; we just do . . . as is our custom.

“Follow me,” he says. Wouldn’t consider anything else, Lord; just wouldn’t.

LITURGICAL RESOURCES

Call to Worship

Children of God, we gather to worship, to sing and proclaim with joy the good works God is doing in our midst.

We gather to worship, as is our custom.

We also gather today to pray for our families, our community, and our world. To name the challenges that press in around us, to lament the suffering in our world, to declare our trust in God in the midst of hardship.

We gather to worship, as is our custom.

We, like those in Nazareth, gather to hear and receive the Word of God proclaimed among us. To encounter the life-giving message of God’s love redeems us to be bearers of love and freedom in this world.

We gather to worship, as is our custom.

Children of God, listen. Pay attention. Ready your hearts. God is here. Jesus has come among us. The Spirit brings the Word to life in our midst. Are you ready?

We gather to worship, as is our custom. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, August 2024.

Opening Prayer

We thank you, O God, for calling us into your church to be your people. “We have gathered, God of grace and wisdom, because we have heard your call. You have reached out to us in Jesus Christ; you have touched us with your Spirit, and we have turned toward you, seeking to love as we have been loved. We call upon your holy name: empower us to worship and serve you, walking gently on this earth, through the grace of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Written by Ruth C. Duck in *Touch Holiness: Resources for Worship, Updated*, eds. Ruth C. Duck and Maren C. Tirabassi (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2012), 38-9.

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Prayer of Confession

God, we do not understand Jesus, the prophet.

We do not want to get our hands dirty with the poor,
the oppressed, the prisoners.

Forgive us for being insulated and isolated.

Open our hearts to the poor

and help us to love them as you love them,

working to bring in the good news of the reign of God.

In Christ’s name, we pray. Amen.

Posted on ***Waiting for Water: Liturgy for The Easter Journey 2013***

<http://storage.cloversites.com/waitingforwater/documents/Liturgical%20resources%202013%2010%2018%2012.pdf>. Re-posted on the re:Worship blog at <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2016/01/prayer-of-confession-luke-4-14-30.html>.

Benediction

May the Holy Spirit bless you with inspiration to recognize and pay attention to all the ways the Word of God springs to life around you in the familiar rhythms and customs of your day, so that you may find and bring God’s love, peace, and hope wherever you go. Amen.

Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, August 2024.

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany – *In Your Hometown*

February 2, 2025

[Luke 4:21-30](#)

Color - Green

WORSHIP PLANNING

For some, worship is withdrawal from the world around them, a sanctuary into which all that they wrestle with throughout the week doesn't enter. Certainly, there can be a need to clear one's mind and heart to properly be present for worship, which is one of the purposes of the prayer of confession at the beginning of worship. We do not, however, worship in a vacuum, cut off from the cares and concerns of the wider world. So, how can worship prepare us to engage in the task of transforming the world?

Developing a habit for regular gathered worship is an essential part of our growth as disciples and our witness to the world around us and an effective foundation for the work of transformation.

Understanding the reasons for what we do when we gather might help us recognize when our worship is focused inward on our own community to the exclusion of an outward awareness of God at work in the wider world. Examine the language of our liturgy and our music when we gather. Who is being included? Who is being affirmed and encouraged? And who is being left out? Jesus got into trouble in our text for this week when he tried to get the people to worship a bigger God than they were used to.

This final week in part one of the series "Where You Are" is about the familiar that might have become unfamiliar. Many in our habit-formed worship experience may have lost track of the context within which we worship. We excel in personal spiritual growth, perhaps; but at times, we neglect our engagement with the world God loved so much. We're good at individual study and reflection, but not as keen on building relationships with the wider community that surrounds us. Worship can be an opportunity to raise our vision from internal introspection to a wider view of God at work in the world.

But perhaps your community is well connected and involved in the community. Then this can be a celebration of those ties, and stories can be told of how bridges across differences have been built and relationships continue to be made. Even the most outwardly focused congregations need encouragement to continue the mission with love and service. It is a reminder that this town, this city, this community with all its struggles and resources is our hometown too.

PREACHING NOTES

Everything was going so well. Jesus makes his proclamation, preaches his nine-word sermon, and the applause rains down. I know, that isn't the way you remember the story. Wasn't he rejected? Didn't they say he was just a hometown boy getting too big for his britches? Well, not exactly. Not at first. Look again. "All spoke well of him." They thought, "Wow! A hometown boy made good. He's one of us! He's ours. Aren't we special? Aren't we cool?" That little phrase at the end of verse 22 wasn't disparaging; it was pride. "He's like us."

If Jesus has stopped there, it would have been a glorious homecoming. They would have slapped him on the back, invited him to dinner, and talked about the good old days when he was a boy and things were so much better back in the Nazareth that used to be, once upon a time. Jesus would have been a minor

celebrity, and they'd all wave to him in the Walgreen's parking lot and want to sit by him in the bleachers at the high school basketball games. He could have done well back there in the little town.

But he didn't stop talking. He had a bigger vision than one small town in the hill country of Galilee. So, he says, "I know you want me to settle down here, because here is where all the people that matter are. I know you don't understand why anyone would want to leave Nazareth and go on to other towns and other countries. But you don't need me here. You won't hear me here."

Wait, he said that? "No prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown." Different translations have us remember those words in different ways. But what does it mean? Why did he say it? Because he knew what was underneath their approval. And he knew they didn't want to hear what he came to say. He came to say they were important - that much they heard. God is going to get the kingdom going right here, in Nazareth. That'll show the folks down the road, in the next county, in the next country. God's kicking things off right here! Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. Yee haw. He came to say that they were important, but that they weren't the only important ones in the world. He came to say that God thinks even the stranger, even the foreigner, even the enemy is important—important enough to save, important enough to love.

This has been God's plan from the beginning, Jesus says. You remember Elijah? You remember that story of the widow? God thought she was important, saved her, blessed her, loved her. She wasn't one of us. You remember Elisha? You remember that guy, that foreign general guy, with the skin problem? That guy was an enemy, a conqueror of people like you. God healed him. God blessed him. God loved him. Get this, he was Syrian.

Syrian? Wait a minute here, Jesus. A refugee from Syria? He might want to hurt us. He might hate us. He might tell us he's running for his life, but maybe it is just a plot to catch us with our guard down. Maybe he isn't really sick. Maybe they aren't really refugees. Maybe they haven't lived their whole lives in fear for their lives, surrounded by war and killing and living in an unjust system that doesn't value them as human beings but as pawns in a terrible game of power. Maybe we should protect ourselves first and think of ourselves first.

How dare you, Jesus, tell us to love even those who are different from us. Heck, we struggle to love the others in our pew; don't go asking us to love across the boundaries that are there to keep us safe. No wonder they got angry. No wonder they turned into a mob. You can't blame them, really. Jesus was inconveniencing them something awful. Asking them to make accommodations, to change ingrained habits, to think differently about who and what a neighbor really is—that's crazy talk. So, they drove him out of town; they wanted to toss him off a cliff. But he left. He had places to go, a Word to proclaim, a world to save. He went on his way.

That is perhaps the saddest verse in the whole Bible. It's evidence that God doesn't force us to change, to grow, to love as Jesus loves. God doesn't demand that we become something more, something riskier, something with the potential to change the world for the better; it be more like it was supposed to be in the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth and said it was good! It was good. We don't have to be a part of making it good. But Jesus isn't hanging around. He says follow me, and he goes on his way.

He leaves them all. Except us, we think. Except me. We don't want to hurl him from a cliff. We're hurling ourselves, one another, those unlike us, the enemy, the bad seed, the outsiders. We'll toss them aside. We'll shout them down; we'll rise in anger. And in so doing, we grab him by the lapels and, in our anger, him to the edge. And maybe if we're lucky, our eyes will open enough to see him, face bloodied by our hatred, and we'll stop ourselves and try it his way. When we see the pain in his eyes and hear his whispered words, "Are there none who will not hate?" And we respond, "None of them," except ... will we? Can we be the exception in a hate-filled world? "None of them, except ____." Fill in the blank. Please? Before he goes his way and leaves us to it.

LITURGICAL RESOURCES

Call to Worship

Children of God, we come to worship today with expectations: how we expect to feel, what we expect to experience, songs we expect to sing, or prayers we expect to pray. We find comfort in the familiar.

We come to worship, expecting God to meet us here.

Sometimes what feels familiar grows stale. We stop noticing the power of our prayers. We hear but don't listen to the Word. We sing without letting the music seep into our hearts. Yet, God is still here, moving and working among us.

We come to worship, expecting God to meet us here.

We may meet God in a familiar voice speaking a hard word, in a song we love that pierces our hearts, in a prayer that we receive in a new way. Because God is here, moving and working among us.

We come to worship, expecting God to meet us here.

Children of God, come! Let us worship, ready to embrace God's Word already at work among us, even when we are challenged to recognize God in the familiar and unfamiliar alike.

We come to worship, expecting God to meet us here. Thank be to God! Amen.

Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, August 2024.

Opening Prayer

In a cynical and despairing world, O God,
give us a quietly prophetic voice
to proclaim your hope.

In a violent and angry world, O God,
give us a quietly prophetic voice

to proclaim your peace.

In a dismissive and disinterested world, O God,
give us a quietly prophetic voice
to proclaim your compassion.

In a lonely and inhospitable world, O God,
give us a quietly prophetic voice
to proclaim your love.

In a grieving and weeping world, O God,
give us a quietly prophetic voice
to proclaim your joy.

May we be so captivated by your hope, O God,
that we cannot help but to whisper,
to sing, and to enact,
the message of your reign
which is always coming into our world;
And may our quietly prophetic lives
be channels of your restoring grace
wherever we may go.

Amen.

Written by John van de Laar and posted on [Sacredise.com](https://sacredise.com). Re-posted on the re:Worship blog at <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/search/label/Epiphany%204%20C>.

Prayer of Confession

God, you share with us words of hope, words of Good News.
But sometimes, we are unable to hear them

because the source is too familiar.
You call us to share the Good News with those around us.
But sometimes we are unable to share,

because the people know us too well.
You encourage us to send messengers to other places

where they will be heard better.
But we can be jealous,

wanting the Good News to be for us, not them.

In the multitude of ways, we can and have subverted

your message of freedom and healing,

in all the ways we have kept the Jubilee year from happening,
we have left the path of true wisdom

and call upon your Grace to lead us back on track.

...time of silent prayer...

Words of Assurance

This is the time of God's favor,
God's grace continues to proclaim
release to the captives,
Good News to the poor
and freedom to the oppressed.

We live as loved, forgiven, and free people
through the grace of God!
Hallelujah! Amen.

Adapted from Rev Gord on his blog, **Worship Offerings**, <http://worshipofferings.blogspot.ca/>. Re-posted on the re:Worship blog at <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2019/01/prayer-of-confession-sharing-good-news.html>.

Benediction

May God our Creator renew in us the creative Spirit
that brings healing and life to our world.

May Jesus the Christ uphold us in grace and love.

May the Holy Spirit fill us with courage
to be bearers of God's song of hope in our hometown and beyond. Amen.

Adapted from the Pilgrim Uniting Church website. <https://pilgrimwr.unitingchurch.org.au/?p=256>.