

ANNUAL MEETING MORNING WORSHIP

GATHERING SONG Labyrinth Walk

CALLING IN THE DIRECTIONS AND THE SPIRITS © Dr. Tom Garcia 2024 Used With Permission

[SPEAKER 1] We honor and welcome the Direction of the East, the place of the rising sun, the dawning of a new day, the place of new beginnings.
The energy of Love, Joy, and Compassion.
The energy of the Lover and the Visionary.
The place of Prayer and direct communication with the Creator, and the Kingdom of Air.
Thank you for your blessings and your gifts.

[SPEAKER 2] We honor and welcome the Direction of the South, the place of the midday sun. The time of day and the time in a life when the work gets done.
The energy of Passion, Loyalty, and Innocence.
The energy of the Warrior and the Healer.
The place of Sacred Purpose, and the Kingdom of Fire.
Thank you for your blessings and your gifts.

[SPEAKER 3] We honor and welcome the Direction of the West, the place of the setting sun. A time for Rest, Introspection and Going Within.
The energy of Knowledge, Wisdom, and Truth.
The energy of the Teacher, the Sage, and the Pupil.
The place of Grief, Surrender, and Letting Go, and the Kingdom of Water.
Thank you for your blessings and your gifts.

[SPEAKER 4] We honor and welcome the Direction of the North, the place of the Winter Sun.
The home of the Elders.
The energy of Gratitude, Blessing, and Overseeing the Realm.
The energy of the King, the Crone, the Good Shepherd and the Kingdom of Earth.
Thank you for your blessings and your gifts.

[SPEAKER 5] We honor and welcome the Above, Father Sky, the Sacred Masculine Principle, the energy of Inspiration.
The Home of the Sun, the Wind, the Clouds, the Moon, the Stars, and all the Planets, including our own.
Thank You for the Light that gives us Life.

[SPEAKER 6] We honor and welcome the Below, Mother Earth, the Sacred Feminine Principle.

The energy of Generosity and Abundance, of Stillness and Peace.

The place from which All Things come and to which All Things will return, including our Bodies.

We are reminded to walk gently upon Your Skin with Respect and Reverence.

[SPEAKER 7] We honor and welcome the Within, the place of our Humanity and our Divinity, of Faith and Trust, and with Gratitude for this Vessel through which our Life Force is expressed.

Thank You for this Gift.

[SPEAKER 8] We honor and welcome the Ancestors, those who've gone before us and upon Whose Shoulders we stand. Hear us as we lift their names

Rev. Allen (Al) Hoyt

Rev. Roger S. Burkhart

Rev. William (Bill) McConnell

Rev. Dr. Rhonda MacLeod

Rev. R. David Pruitt

[SPEAKER 9] We honor and welcome the Children, those who will come after us and Who will stand upon our shoulders.

[SPEAKER 10] We welcome the Energies that Guide and Protect us.

We welcome the Nature Spirits, the Spirit of this Land, all Beings

Who reside here, Animate, Inanimate and Other; and the Traditional Owners of this land—Thank You for this gift.

[SPEAKER 11] We welcome the Devas—the Shining Ones—and the Elementals, the Elements of Fire, Air, Water, Earth, and Spirit. We welcome the Mystery--those Things about which we know nothing but are here with us all the same, Thank You.

HYMN - Be not Afraid

SCRIPTURE

*Stand at the crossroads and look;
ask for the ancient paths,
ask where the good way is, and walk in it,
and you will find rest for your souls.*

Jeremiah 6:16

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Steadfast God,
You know us better than we know ourselves,
And so we confess before you and one another:
Too often we avoid those new paths that lead to life,
And stay in those familiar tracks that sap our strength.
We judge, we blame, we isolate;
We are so focused on the road underfoot
That we fail to see you walking with us.**

And so in silence we lay before you our self-loathing and regret.

[Silence]

**Help us, Loving One.
In your mercy, open us to the truth of your love,
That always we walk in good company.
Open our eyes and guide our feet
Along the way of your Love.
Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER ©Neil Douglas-Klotz 2022 *Revelations of the Aramaic Jesus (Used With Permission)*

O Birther! Father-Mother of the Cosmos, focus your light within us – make it useful. Create your reign of unity now – through our fiery hearts and willing hands help us love beyond our ideals and sprout acts of compassion for all creatures. Animate the earth within us: we then feel the Wisdom underneath supporting all. Untangle the knots within so that we can mend our hearts' simple ties to each other. Don't let surface things delude us, but free us from what holds us back from our true purpose. Out of you, the astonishing fire, returning light and sound to the cosmos. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

*Stand at the crossroads and look;
ask for the ancient paths,
ask where the good way is, and walk in it,
and you will find rest for your souls.
Jeremiah 6:16*

PRAYER/PETITIONS

For all the war-torn regions of the world,
for the people of Ukraine, Russia, Israel, Gaza, Iran, Syria, and the Sudan.
May there be peace in the world.

Creator God...

Show us the way.

For the poor, the marginalized, the food insecure, the unhoused;
for the refugee and the migrant.
May we not lose sight of those who need our help.

Creator God...

Show us the way.

For the healing of the earth,
for forests and oceans, mountains and rivers,
for all beings who share this planet with us.
May we walk gently and live justly.

Creator God...

Show us the way.

For our LGBTQ++ siblings; for all who have been pushed to the margins; and
for those who have been harmed by church or culture.
May we create communities of safety, dignity, and joy.

Creator God...

Show us the way.

For the children and the youth,
those growing up in uncertain times,
and those who carry both dreams and burdens.
May they know they are loved, seen, and valued.

Creator God...

Show us the way.

For our elders and wisdom keepers,
for those who have walked many roads before us,
and those who now walk more slowly.
May we honor their gifts and their presence among us.

Creator God...

Show us the way.

For all who struggle in silence—
with anxiety, depression, grief, addiction, or despair.
May there be space for healing, and companions for the journey.
Creator God...

Show us the way.

For our congregations, our clergy, our delegates, and our leaders in the UCC, for all
discerning the future of the Church.
May we be faithful, courageous, and open to transformation.
Creator God...

Show us the way.

For our country; and for those who hold power in our world—political, economic, and
spiritual.
May they lead not with fear, but with humility, justice, and care.
Creator God...

Show us the way.

And for ourselves, as we seek to be bearers of peace,
pilgrims of compassion, and co-creators of another way.
May we trust the Spirit who walks beside us.
Creator God...

Show us the way.

SUNG PRAYER Ploughshare song

SCRIPTURE

*Stand at the crossroads and look;
ask for the ancient paths,
ask where the good way is, and walk in it,
and you will find rest for your souls.*
Jeremiah 6:16

5 DIRECTIONS COMMUNION:

1. WE LOOK BACK – Call to Communion - calling the directions in the conference

And so, all those prayed for, all of us, and more, ALL are called to and invited to this, God's feast of love!

All are welcomed to share in our remembering and giving thanks for God's provision, no matter where your life's journey has been.

Whether your journey to this feast brings you here on line or on site, you are welcome!

Whether your home is in land of northern chill or southern sun, seashore or mountain, farmland or cityscape, or you have no one place to lay your head, you are called to join the feast!

Whether your church home is found in past associations named Carroll-Strafford, Grafton-Orange-Sullivan, Hillsborough, Merrimack, North Country, Rockingham, Southwest, or none of these, you can know the table of God's plenty here today!

Beloveds of God - come, join the feast!

2. WE LOOK WITHIN – EXAMEN - *silence Confession*

Following the call of 1 Corinthians "Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup." we enter into a time of Examen

Place yourself in God's presence. Give thanks for God's great love for you.

Pray for the grace to understand how God is acting in your life.

Review a specific moment when you felt God's stirring and your feelings at the time.

Reflect on what you did, said, or thought in that moment. Were you drawing closer to God, or further away?

3. WE LOOK AROUND –

"Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf." (1 COR 10:17) These words remind us that we live as part of community and covenant. We are one body, and are called to hold each other. During this time, we are invited to take a minute and look around, who is here in our midst and who is missing.

Place the NH Conference in God's presence. Give thanks for God's great love for all.

Pray for the grace to understand how God is acting in the life of the NH Conference.

Contemplate who is represented and who is not— recall specific moments of inclusion and exclusion.

Reflect on who we are as the body of Christ and who we are called to be as we move into greater authenticity

4. WE LOOK AHEAD – what is God calling us to next - (drawing on Jeremiah 6: 16+)

God, you meet us in our lives where and how we are. And, Holy One, you call us to trust and follow You in Your ways of mercy, justice, and steadfast lovingkindness, so that they may be our ways.

Help us, Good Shepherd! You call us to ask about ancient paths and to inquire what are the good, godly ways. And we fear and cling to that which seems familiar and that we think we know. Strengthen us to journey in Your way, step by step, day by day, and when we stray please find us and bring us home to You.

5. WE LOOK UP – Words of institution...

lifting up bread and cup

Hear again the Psalmist proclaim "I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." (Psalm 121) We lift our hearts towards Christ as we remember on the night before he was lifted up Christ gathered at table and shared his final meal with those he held close, those who were faithful to him and those who would betray him. He took the bread, lifted it up and offered thanks to God then shared it saying: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over, he lifted the cup, and after offering a blessing invited all to drink saying "This cup that is poured out is the new covenant in my blood."

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

Pour out your Spirit on us gathered here out of love for you and one another, and on these gifts of bread and cup. Let them be for us the body and blood of Christ so that we may be for the world the body of Christ, liberated by his witness, passion and life. Be with us, fill us and move through us. Amen.

The gifts of God for the people of God. Receive in joy and with thanksgiving!

SPOKEN while giving to folk: the bread of life, the cup of blessing

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

As we have received tangible reminders of God's presence and care through this shared meal of bread and fruit of the vine, let us raise our voices together in thanksgiving to God for these gifts and to ask for God's blessing.

Holy God, we praise You and give You thanks for the infinite ways in which You feed us, care for us, and companion us, no matter who we are or where we are in our lives' journeys.

And as Brother Lawrence prayed so long ago, so do we: "O my God, since You are with us, and as we must now, in obedience to Your commands, apply our minds to outward things, we beseech You to grant us the grace to continue in Your presence; and to this end prosper us with Your assistance, and possess all our affections". We pray in the name of Jesus the Christ, Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.

SINGING Walk Together Children

ANNUAL MEETING CLOSING WORSHIP

Litany of God's Justice and Peace

We are called to proclaim the truth. Let us together proclaim peace with justice, and let us believe: It is not true that this world and its people are doomed to die and be lost—

This is true: There is a future for the children of peace.

It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination, hunger and poverty, death and destruction—

This is true: God will wipe away the tears from all faces and will remove disgrace from those downcast and victimized over all the earth.

It is not true that violence and hatred should have the last word, and that war and destruction have come to stay forever—

This is true: God foils the plans of the nations and thwarts the purposes of the mighty. But the plans of God stand forever, the purposes of the Compassionate One through all generations.

It is not true that we are simply victims of the powers of evil who seek to rule the world—

This is true: God gives strength to the people who hunger and thirst for righteousness sake; God blesses us with peace to resist evil.

It is not true that we have to wait for those who are especially gifted, wise, or strong before we can do anything—

This is true: This is what God has promised: I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old will dream dreams, and your young will see visions. Even on those considered “nobodies,” both women and men, I will pour out my Spirit.

It is not true that our dreams of the liberation of humankind, of justice, of human dignity, of peace, and of the earth's integrity are not meant for this world and for this history of ours—

This is true: The hour comes, and now is, that the true worshippers shall worship God in spirit and in truth. They are the kinds of worshippers God seeks.

So let us dream, let us prophesy, let us see visions of love. And let us seek peace and justice with humility, with joy and faith, and with courage. We are not alone.

--adapted from Allan Boesak, South African liberation theologian

GUIDED MEDITATION and CHARGE

I invite you to settle in.

Feel the chair beneath you.

The ground beneath the chair.

The steady presence of the earth, holding you up.

Let your shoulders drop.
Soften your jaw.
Let your breath lengthen and deepen.

Breathe in.
Breathe out.

You are here.
Now.
This moment.

And in this moment, imagine yourself standing at a crossroads.

A quiet place.
An old path worn smooth by generations who came before.
This is sacred ground. You know this place.
Your soul remembers.

You stand at the place where the ancient paths meet.
Where the prophets once paused.
Where the invitation came:

“Stand at the crossroads, and look.
Ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies;
and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.”

Listen.

There is a stirring on the wind.
Not loud. But insistent.
Something is shifting.

Not a detour.
Not a retreat.
But another way.

A way that rises in the wilderness.
A path that winds through desert places.
A thread of hope that runs like a river through what once felt barren.

It may not look like the way you came.
It may not be the way others expect.
But it is real.
And it is opening before you.

You take a step.
Then another.

Some passages are clear and direct.
Some curve and bend.
Some feel like dead ends.
But none of it is wasted.

Imagine that you are in the labyrinth now.
Not lost.
Held.

Each twist and turn calls for trust.
Each corner invites surrender.
The path leads inward, before it leads outward.
What looks like confusion becomes clarity.
What feels like delay becomes preparation.

Every turn, a teacher.
Every pause, a prayer.
Every breath, a beginning.

You are not the first to walk this way.
The ancestors have gone before you.
The dust of their courage is on your feet.
Their wisdom hums in your bones.
They whisper, "Keep going."

And so we walk—
Not with all the answers.
But with open hearts.
Attuned to the whisper of the Spirit.
Listening for what springs forth.

Now—
As you return to this gathered body, this shared breath—
Let the journey take root within you.

Carry this knowing:
That there is another way.
It may not be easy.
It may not be clear.
But it is blessed.

You were not called to remain still.
You were called to discern.
To dream.
To walk.
To risk.

And so—

As you go from this place,
Go with ears attuned to mystery,
With hearts open to surprise,
With courage to choose love when fear is loud.

Go ready to travel paths not yet paved,
To ask bold questions,
To remember the stories,
To honor what was
And to build what might yet be.

Go—
Not alone—
But with the wisdom of the elders,
The laughter of the children,
The fire of the prophets,
And the deep peace of the Holy One,
Who walks beside you, always.

Amen.