

Poor People's Campaign Disciples Liturgical Tool Kit

Pentecost Sunday

Eighth Sunday of Easter

May 20, 2018

A group of Disciples are working together to provide liturgical resources for our congregations during the six Sundays during the 40-Days of action. Here are some materials for Pentecost Sunday, where we begin Week 2 of the Poor People's Campaign which will be [Linking Systemic Racism to Poverty, focusing Voting Rights, Immigration, Xenophobia, Islamophobia, and the Mistreatment of Indigenous Communities](#), so look for opportunities to address these themes in your worship on Sunday and public witness on Monday. With the prophetic leadership of Rev. Terri Hord Owens and Rev. Dr. William Barber II, God has raised up a holy remnant of Disciples of Christ who are willing to stand in the gap and be repairers of the breach, uniting people across the lines of deep difference to restore the soul of America.

Worship Resources

Song: "Cuando el pueblo de Dios ora"

This song on the Grace of God, unveils God's actions of generosity among the poor, hungry and hurting

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2C5t_8EajA

Prayer: Call to Worship (Stephan Epps)

Come, Holy, Spirit, come.

A testimony of Your Hope, may it come.

Of poor dreams enriched at our borders;

Of poor voters enfranchised at our ballot boxes:

A testimony of Your Presence, may it come.

Of flags of native and foreigner raised together;

Of creeds of separation tossed away:

A testimony of Your Adoption, may it come.

Of indigenous peoples honored as older sisters and brothers;

Of worshippers of different faiths welcomed as extended family:

A testimony of Your Truth, may it come.

Of judgement that condemns sin as injustice;

Of righteousness that saves us from our sin;
Of Spirit that stands against the empire of this world:
A testimony of Pentecost, may it come

Poured into us as a fire
setting ablaze our determination to speak out;
Resting upon us as a beacon
Calling all of God's creatures to be made great again
As equal inheritors of true life and living:

May the testimony of God make us advocates.

With every people, in every nation,
With every breath, in every moment:

Until we learn to stand together, under God

Indivisible,

With Liberty and Justice for all!

Prayer: God of Great Fire (Alan Dicken)

God of great fire! This Pentecost, may your Spirit be ablaze in our hearts. Breathe into the dry bones of our souls that we may stand on our feet in this moment. Breathe into the dry bones of our communities that we may stand for truth in this moment. Breathe into the dry bones of our world that we may stand for your justice always. Sanctify these dry bones that we may do the redemptive work of Jesus Christ in our world today. Amen.

Prayer: O, Great Spirit

[Note: Here is an Indigenous Prayer that may work for this Sunday-- *** Be aware that "brother" instead of "brother and sister" is used in the prayer]

Whose voice I hear in the winds,
And whose breath gives life to all the world,
hear me, I am small and weak,
I need your strength and wisdom.
Let me walk in beauty and make my eyes ever behold
the red and purple sunset.
Make my hands respect the things you have
made and my ears sharp to hear your voice.

Make me wise so that I may understand the things
you have taught my people.
Let me learn the lessons you have
hidden in every leaf and rock.

I seek strength, not to be greater than my brother,
but to fight my greatest enemy - myself.
Make me always ready to come to you
with clean hands and straight eyes.
So when life fades, as the fading sunset,
my Spirit may come to you without shame.

(translated by Lakota Sioux Chief Yellow Lark in 1887)

Quotes

"I prayed for freedom for twenty years, but received no answer until I prayed with my legs," Frederick Douglass

"White people...we need to call out injustice and discrimination and racism wherever we see it—even if that puts rattles in our places of privilege, puts us in awkward situations with other white people, and even if it places us in opposition to our families, and law enforcement and the Government," says John Pavlovitz

<https://johnpavlovitz.com/.../people-of-color-heres-how-you.../...>

"I am the Rev. Terri Hord Owens, General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the US and Canada. I am a Christian minister, and I am a mother. I am here because women, and moms matter. I am here because children matter. I am here because those with disabilities matter. I am here because humanity matters. I cannot claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ and fail to speak up for the rights of all God's creation to have enough!" The Rev. Teresa "Terri" Hord Owens, General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada at the Poor People's Campaign kick-off in Washington DC

<http://disciples.org/from-the-gmp/gmps-remarks-at-40-days-of-advocacy-kickoff-may-14/>

"This is just the beginning. The start of the 40 days. The birth of a multi-year, multi-state, multi-faith movement. Now is the time. One marcher is quiet. The hundreds we saw in

Columbus made some noise. But if we come together now, we have the chance to walk together so that the sound of all our footsteps may grow and rise up to become an overpowering cacophony of hope and joy and love so that the din of racism, poverty, the war economy, and ecological devastation may never be heard in God's creation again." Rev. Alan Dicken, Carthage Christian Church in Ohio. [Note: Rev. Dicken's quote ties into the lectionary readings this week, including the "walking theme" in Ezekiel 37:1-14 and the "all creation groaning theme" in Romans 8:22-27. See the lectionary texts below with a few talking points for your sermon].

<http://disciples.org/ecumenical/ohio-pastor-reflects-on-participation-in-poor-peoples-campaign-a-national-call-for-moral-revival/>

Sermon fodder on Lectionary Texts

First reading

Acts 2:1-21

This Pentecost text is pivotal for Disciples. As we reflect on the birth of the church, this text reminds us that the calling of Disciples is to listen to the languages that we haven't heard before, learn from them, and together be transformed by the Holy Spirit as we collectively struggle for freedom. As we look through the lens of the Poor People's Campaign, we are reminded that we need to listen to the voices of the marginalized and oppressed people in this country in order to really live into our calling as church!

When God's Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, each one spoke in different languages of different *ethnes*, affirming the importance of cultural difference, while challenging the monoculturalism and monolingualism of the Roman Empire.

Our theme for Week 2 of the Poor People's Campaign **is "Linking Systemic Racism to Poverty, focusing Voting Rights, Immigration, Xenophobia, Islamophobia, and the Mistreatment of Indigenous Communities."**

There are so many languages here! Languages of immigrants, languages of Muslim prayers, languages of Jewish traditions, languages of indigenous nations, languages of jazz and blues and hip hop and rap - God's call is for the birth of the church to happen when we listen to all these many languages and hear them all in our own hearts and in the heart of our communities.

[Note: On Tuesday our Muslim Sisters and Brothers began their annual spiritual journey of Ramadan, a season holy fasting and earnest prayer, and almsgiving to the poor.]

Additionally, in the text, we read that the people who were listening to people talking in tongues thought that they were drunk!

Often people think that we're drunk if we are trying to end racism and poverty! Surely we can't be serious to think that we could end racism and poverty in this world?! But no - as Peter says - we are not drunk, we are filled with the Holy Spirit!

As we see in Jesus' inauguration of his ministry, when he quotes Isaiah's prophecy in Luke 4:18-19, when God's Spirit is poured out on a prophet, they are anointed to proclaim "good news to the poor" and work for justice with love in the world:

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,

because he has anointed me

to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners

and recovery of sight for the blind,

to set the oppressed free,

19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (NIV)

As Disciples, we need to follow Jesus who is the Giver of all Good Gifts, giving us the Holy Spirit who energizes us for the work of shalom justice and neighbor love.

Ezekiel 37:1-14

We are living in a time where we see valleys of dry bones all around us. Sometimes those valleys of bones are in our souls. Sometimes in our churches. Sometimes in our communities and in our country!

We think we know about dry bones. We think they are long gone and useless. We think we've seen a lot of dry bones before, so a long time ago, we stopped wasting our time on dry bones.

We forget that God has a plan that can make those dry bones walk! We lean on our own understanding instead of trusting in God's vision, and now we see a world and a church (and often our own hearts) littered with dry bones. But God doesn't see something useless- God sees a chance for something new to walk around!

We see prophets like Rev. Terri Hord Owens and Rev. Dr. Barber who speak the powerful word of God, and like the text says, the bones gain sinews and flesh. But it is only through the **breath of the Holy Spirit that those bones can walk and have life.**

We often talk about the Holy Spirit with words like "breath" so it is interesting to think that here, God calls the prophet to breath new life into dry bones. Are we the dry bones? Is the church? Is the world? - YES!

We need the spirit of God to be breathed into us!

Then we need to breathe the spirit of God into the dry bones of the church!

Then we need the church to breathe the spirit of God onto the dry bones of the world!

Romans 8:22-27; esp. Vs. 22-24

22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved (NIV)

The cry of the poor is echoed in the cry of creation. Paul's Epistle to the Romans develops pneumatology through ecology. Since "the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time," it's vital that we affirm how our profit-driven and exploitive way of life is harming our creation, which we depend on for survival.

The Disciples ministers who participated in the first Moral Monday in New York and in Ohio were frustrated by not being arrested in their states. These frustrations are the

groans of a movement that is not yet fully born. While we didn't accomplish our goals of Nonviolent Moral Fusion Direct Action, through the process, we've become closer in cultivating the bonds of Christian fellowship and revolutionary friendship. All creation is groaning in the pains of childbirth. These are labor pains...the campaign is just starting.

We are woefully familiar with the painful cries we have seen far too many times in many other rallies and protests, whether they are angry over another unarmed black person killed by the state, or lamenting the victims of gun violence at a gay nightclub or at a school. It is good and necessary to feel those pains and to share publicly in the streets. Affirming all of the pain of all people, the Poor People's Campaign is a prophetic intersectional movement to unite the poor across the lines of race and religion in order to end harm against our fellow humans.

The Poor People's Campaign seeks to reframe these cries - no longer are they seen as groans from an individual community. No longer are they seen as wails of lament and loss. They are those things, when heard together, the noise becomes a new kind of sound - the groan of labor pains. We are pushing toward the birth of Beloved Community.

Before her arrest, in Washington DC at the first Moral Monday, our GMP Rev. Terri Hord Owens said, "I cannot stand here and claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ if I don't stand up here now."

Rev. Owens' prophetic leadership is a reminder to all Disciples ministers about what it means to not only preach a Spirit-filled life, but to walk it out and live a Spirit-filled life as well. What a labor pain that is! What a push toward new birth! Sometimes we get caught up in the comfort of the womb, but we as Disciples are being pushed toward new life and new expressions of prophetic and collective courage in the name of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel Reading: John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

In the Gospel of John, the Holy Spirit is presented as our “advocate.” Just as lawyers advocate for us when we are arrested for civil disobedience, the Holy Spirit is our advocate throughout our life, including when we are in a tight-spot.

Jesus Christ models action-oriented love for his disciples. When Jesus shares that he will depart from his disciples, they dig their heels in with anger and grief; however, Jesus reassures them that he must depart, so that he can send his Spirit ~ the Advocate. The Holy Spirit energizes us to do our ministry as Christ’s disciples through preaching, pastoring and advocating for justice.

“All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.” (John 16:15)

All that God has Jesus has, and he gives it all to us. In the Gospel of John there is an abundance of grace.

The Spirit gives to us what Jesus has so that we can fulfill Christ’s mission in the world as the church. Receiving the blessings of the prophetic Black Assembly Churches in the Stone-Campbell Movement, Rev. Dr. William Barber II has followed the leading of God’s Spirit to mobilize a faith-rooted movement to finish Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s unfinished dream ~ the Poor People’s Campaign.

The logic of grace that undergirds this blessing of the Spirit (John 15-16) can be found earlier in the prologue of the Gospel of John: “For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace” (John 1:16; ESV).

Jesus offered abundance of God’s love, “grace upon grace,” so if we are followers of Jesus, we need to offer abundance for whoever is being oppressed (e.g., immigrants, Muslims and Native Americans)

Since God has been gracious unto us, let us offer God’s gracious love to the world, through proclaiming with confidence that through Jesus Christ our sins are forgiven, and we can collectively repent of the sins of systemic racism, poverty, environmental devastation and the war economy through our collective Disciple’s public presence in the Poor People’s Campaign.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Quotes:

“Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice. Justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love.”

“The hottest place in Hell is reserved for those who remain neutral in times of great moral conflict.”

“The moral arc of the universe bends at the elbow of justice.”

“The past is prophetic in that it asserts loudly that wars are poor chisels for carving out peaceful tomorrows.”

“The time has come for us to civilize ourselves by the total, direct and immediate abolition of poverty.”

“The time is always right to do what is right.”