

May 14, 2017

My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style. Maya Angelou

Gathering

PRELUDE

Gathering Song O For a World NCH 575

WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS, INVOCATION

Call to Celebration

ONE: Come to this place, knowing that God is here.

ALL: We come to celebrate a spirit of hope.

ONE: Come to this place, a safe place, where God abides with us.

ALL: We come to celebrate a spirit of peace.

ONE: Come to this place to be renewed in faith.

ALL: We come to celebrate a spirit of faith.

ONE: Come, let us celebrate the presence of God among and within us.

Song of Welcome Gathered Here NCH742

Grounding

Opening Prayer

Creator, you have shaped a place for us
made of love and held in grace.

It is filled with the whispers of the ancients
who followed you and sculpted our faith.

Breathe into this place again,
that we may know your way,
your truth, and your life. Amen.

Food for Thought *The earth has been there for a long time. She is mother to all of us. She knows everything. The Buddha asked the earth to be his witness by touching her with his hand when he had some doubt and fear before his awakening. The earth appeared to him as a beautiful mother. In her arms she carried flowers and fruit, birds and butterflies, and many different animals, and offered them to the Buddha. The Buddha's doubts and fears instantly disappeared. Whenever you feel unhappy, come to the earth and ask for her help. Touch her deeply, the way the Buddha did. Suddenly,*

you too will see the earth with all her flowers and fruit, trees and birds, animals and all the living beings that she has produced. All these things she offers to you. You have more opportunities to be happy than you ever thought. The earth shows her love to you and her patience. The earth is very patient. She sees you suffer, she helps you, and she protects you. When we die, she takes us back into her arms.

—*The Pocket Thich Nhat Hanh* , pages 30–31

Moment for Mission Ladies and Gents for Gay Rights

Invitation to Offering

Offertory

Prayer of Dedication

We bring ourselves, Creator God: living stones that you can build into vessels of healing and transformation for our world. Use us, and the gifts we bring, to make a difference in the lives of others. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Song of Thanksgiving Take Oh Take Me

Take O take me as I am

Summon up what I shall be.

Set your seal upon my heart

And live in me.

Words before the scriptures are read:

Whether you take what is written in the Bible as fact, metaphor, myth or story, listen to these words now, for the meaning they might hold for us on this day.

Scriptural Text Acts 7:55–60 **Dramatic reading.** *This text is based on the Common English Bible.*

NARRATOR: Stephen, enabled by the Holy Spirit, stared into heaven and saw God's majesty and Jesus standing at God's right side.

STEPHEN: Look! I can see heaven on display and Jesus standing at God's right side!

NARRATOR: At this, the religious leaders shrieked and covered their ears. Together, they charged at Stephen, threw him out of the city, and began to stone him. The witnesses placed their coats in the care of a young man named Saul. As they battered him with stones, Stephen prayed.

STEPHEN:

I take refuge in you, O God.

Please never let me be put to shame.

Rescue me by your righteousness!

Listen closely to me!
Deliver me quickly;
be a rock that protects me;
be a strong fortress that saves me!
You are definitely my rock and my fortress.
Guide me and lead me for the sake of your good name!
Get me out of this net that's been set for me because you are my protective fortress.
I entrust my spirit into your hands;
you, Lord, God of faithfulness – you have saved me.
My future is in your hands.
Don't hand me over to my enemies,
to all who are out to get me!
Shine your face on your servant; save me by your faithful love! *(Pause.)*
"Lord Jesus, accept my life!"
STEPHEN: Lord, don't hold this sin against them!
NARRATOR: And then he died.

*Scripture quotations in this publication are from the Common English Bible.
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Response: May the Spirit bless us with wisdom and wonder as we ponder the meaning of these words for our lives. Amen

A Chorus of Voices

Message As We Are Rev. Curran
Reichert

Musical Reflection

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

God, we come before you in a spirit of prayer,
knowing that our world is hurting.
We know you have great compassion
for all your people,
and that we are dear to you.
We know you have created a safe place, a refuge,
for those who need it.
Guide us all, we pray.

There is a place for those
who mourn and for those who hurt,
a place of comfort and a place of healing:
for those we have lost to illness,

and those we have never known.
In silence we pray for them.

Hear us.

There is a place for those
who hunger and thirst,
a place of banquets and grace:
for those farmers trapped in unfair trade,
those families dispossessed.
In silence we pray for them.

Hear us.

There is a place for those
imprisoned for belief and justice,
a place of freedom and full lives:
for those mothers of the disappeared,
those fathers exiled.
In silence we pray for them.

Hear us.

There is a place for those
oppressed and downtrodden,
a place of liberation and justice:
for those children of sectarianism,
those families divided.
In silence we pray for them.

Hear us.

Hear all our prayers, loving God,
and according to your justice and grace answer.

We pray in Christ's name. **Amen.**

Going With Gladness

Sending Forth

Singing Forth I'll Fly Away NCH 595