



LGBTQIA+

Toolkit



Justice & Compassion Ministries
California-Pacific Conference

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Theological Task

The preamble to our Social Principles state that:

“We pledge to continue to be in respectful conversation with those with whom we differ, to explore the sources of our differences, to honor the sacred worth of all persons as we continue to seek the mind of Christ and to do the will of God in all things.”

Additionally in paragraph 161.11 (f) we affirm that:

“We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. All persons need the ministry of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self.”

Jesus’ message both for the people of his time and for us today is one of caring for and loving the outcast and poor of our society. Jesus actively welcomed all of those who were cast out in by the empirical authorities of his time, ate with them, prayed with them, and worked for their liberation from the structures which caused so much harm.

Our biblical stories of the New Testament and the Hebrew Bible portray God shown again and again as being favorable towards those experiencing oppression and marginalization.

God frees the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

God works through the Apostles to create an equitable community of Christians.

Jesus chooses to be born in a manger, and to

Jesus preaches on a mountain that “blessed are you who”

Throughout the Bible we see God present in the struggle for liberation.

This is our call as Christians, to welcome ALL into our lives, our families, our communities, and our churches.

Worship Resources

Call to Worship:

One: Creating God, blessed are You and blessed is this time and place. Thank You for Your people gathered here.

All: We are here! Being the Church! We have not retreated! We are standing in praise!

One: Reconciling Redeemer, You are the mender of our souls and the healer of our broken bodies. You lift us up, strengthen and sustain, nurture and nourish, heal and help.

All: Holy Fire, ignite a new spark in the heart of each one gathered here.

One: Light our way. Warm our bodies. Inspire our tongues to speak a new word, to shout another praise, and to sing an amazing song that will bring to us life and to You glory

All: Amen

From the More Light Presbyterians Retreat & Mission Weekend New Orleans, LA, 2006

One: The heavens are telling the glory of God!

All: Day to day and night to night, unending is their silent speech of beauty and wonder.

One: How shall we join their joyful witness?

All: With words that proclaim God's inclusive love, with works that bring forth God's powerful justice, with worship that rejoices in God's wondrous presence, now and always. Amen!

By Rev. Ann B Day

One: Precious Lord of the Universe, Divine Creator, we open our hearts and minds to Your Divine Wisdom, Your Unfailing Grace, and Your Unconditional Love.

Many: Source of All Good, we ask that You hear our humble and fervent prayer.

Many: Source of Divine Wisdom, we pray not just for ourselves; we pray and stand in the gap for all who may be reeling from the sting of hatred, prejudice, discrimination and injustice in all of its forms.

One: Beloved God, just now, we honor You in the many names that You are called and we give thanks for Your loving hand in all of our lives.

Many: Source of All Truth, we lift our eyes to the hills from whence cometh our help, and we ask for healing of any and all things within ourselves that out-picture in our world as violence and brutality.

Many: Source of Divine Peace, we speak in unity, praying for acceptance and respect of all of Your children so that we all are free to express our authentic selves, and that we trust and know that we are all inherently good, and whole and perfect, just as You created us to be.

One: God our Creator, we honor Your Divine Essence that is the undeniable truth of who we are.

Many: Our God, we stand on Your promise that You would never leave us nor forsake us.

Many: Our Divine Light, we trust and know that Your unconditional love knows no bounds and our entitlement to it cannot ever be taken from us.

All: We join together in Praise and Thanksgiving, for in this moment we know the Truth of who we are, and Whose we are. We claim our Divine birthright as Your beloved children. We love You, we love ourselves and we love each other. Hallelujah! And So It Is! Amen!

Adapted from Many Voices

Opening Prayer

O God, whom no image can encompass, no definition encircle, and yet who meets us in the gentle touch of love, the beauty of a butterfly's wing, and the laughter of children, help us to move beyond our attempts to limit You, intellectualize You, or to eliminate You from all that is earthy, sensuous, or vibrant, so that we may greet You in every particle of this spectacular universe which You are creating. Amen.

From the More Light Presbyterians Retreat & Mission Weekend New Orleans, LA, 2006

God of wild love and extravagant acceptance, Spirit of boldness and beauty...

You are faithfully present in both the grit and glitter of life, and you are present here with us now. Awaken us to your dream for creation: A world in which every member of the human family is free to flourish however you have made them.

Forgive us for the moments we have held back your ever-flowing current of love, dignity, and justice. Remake us into a people eager to see you in the faces, bodies, and expressions of all people. Remind each of us to step out of the shadows of our lives and shine fearlessly and courageously. Ignite the Divine Light within us to sparkle through the prism of our bodies and brighten every corner of this Earth.

Holy One, You call each of us beloved. Each of us cherished. Each of us desired. Each of us sacred. And so, we give you thanks now and forever.

Amen.

A Communion Liturgy

Beloved children of God, as we gather here this morning, we are the church! In this moment, we respond to the words of Jesus, who tells us: "...where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

And it is with the power of Christ that we proclaim that this table is open to all people — no matter who you are or what you believe or what you've been told.

Here at the Lord's table we remember the simple gathering of a chosen family that came together for a meal that proclaimed a new way of being in this world.

We remember God's radically inclusive love made real in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We remember the One who befriended the forgotten, embraced the outcast, and saw the Image of God in all people. We remember the One who confronted every power that disconnected, marginalized, oppressed, and "other-ed."

It is here at this table that we find hope and imagination to see God's dream and promise of a world of wholeness, and it is here that we receive the nourishment and strength to continue on the paths of justice.

We recall that on the night he was betrayed, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way he took the cup, saying, "This is my blood, my very life, poured out for you. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

God, we thank you for breathing this world into existence and proclaiming from its birth: "It is good." We come to you with gratitude for the endless blessings that we see, feel, and know on our journeys of life. We celebrate the rich diversity of your creation — every beautiful body, every shade of skin, every expression of love.

Through your Spirit, open our hearts to the joy we can find in the midst of life's challenges. Remind us that we are loved — fiercely and forever. And however the world may try to hold us down or tell us who to be, remind us that nothing can separate us from your presence.

And so as we stand before this feast, we pray with the words you taught us to pray:

Our Beloved Creator in heaven, holy is your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever.

Amen.

Beloved children of God, the table is set.

Come and feast with the One who loves you more than you can possibly imagine.

Adapted from St. John's Presbyterian Church in San Francisco, CA.

Music

<https://files.constantcontact.com/68d44d2d001/79fe24cd-158f-4e9a-8f1a-d08d20c572a7.pdf?rdr=true>

Child of God, Mark Miller

All Are Welcome Marty Haugen

"In the Midst of New Dimensions" Faith We Sing #2238

A note about, "In the Midst of New Dimensions:"

This hymn was written by Rev. Julian Rush, a United Methodist minister who served churches in Dallas, Denver, Boulder and Colorado Springs for 17 years, until he acknowledged his own identity as a gay man.

When he came out, the United Methodist church in Boulder decided he was no longer fit to be their minister, and stopped paying his salary. In 1981 Bishop Melvin Wheatley appointed Julian to St. Paul United Methodist Church in Denver. This was a small church, which already had a pastor and had very little money. But they decided to accept the appointment of Rev. Rush as a public gesture of support for the gay community, and as a statement about their commitment to social justice.

In 1984, St. Paul UMC became one of the first three churches in the nation to become a Reconciling Congregation, believing that all persons are children of God and are welcome in the church.

This hymn is Julian's own record of the struggle to be honest and open, even in the face of rejection which came as a result of his integrity. Following the church's inhospitable reaction to Julian, he wrote this loving and affirming hymn. What a powerful lesson for us all about what it means to love God – and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

In the Midst of New Dimensions Lyrics –

In the midst of new dimensions, in the face of changing ways. Who will lead the pilgrim peoples wandering in their separate ways?

[Refrain] God of rainbow, fiery pillar, leading where the eagles soar, We your people, ours the journey now and ever, now and ever, now and ever more.

Through the flood of starving people, warring factions and despair, Who will lift the olive branches? Who will light the flame of care?

Refrain

As we stand a world divided by our own self seeking schemes, Grant that we, your global village might envision wider dreams

Refrain

We are man and we are woman, all persuasions, old and young, Each a gift in your creation, each a love song to be sung.

Refrain

Through the years of human struggle walk a people long despised, Gays and lesbians together, fighting to be realized.

Refrain

Should the threats of dire predictions cause us to withdraw in pain, May your blazing phoenix spirit, resurrect the church again.

Refrain

Activities

(See the Social Justice Toolkit for more ideas.)

Symbols of respect and Inclusion

We see symbols every day—they are all around on buildings, in the street, on schoolyards, on our phones and in digital spaces. Symbols convey ideas, qualities, feelings, objects, opinions and beliefs. Unfortunately, symbols are also used to spread bias and hate. Explore the idea that symbols can be positive (blow kiss emoji), neutral (Instagram logo) or negative (Swastika). Brainstorm symbols that express positive values and concepts such as respect, diversity, inclusion, love, acceptance and friendship. Then use art materials or go online to create symbols that represent these qualities. Finish your project by identifying ways to share the symbols you created with your community and the world in digital and physical spaces.

Discussion Prompts:

- Why are symbols important?
- What symbols have you noticed and are they positive, negative or neutral?
- How can symbols of respect and inclusion make a difference in your community and the larger society?

Balloon Volleyball

This game helps young people to understand how it might feel to be excluded and how to adapt an activity to ensure it is inclusive.

Activity Instructions

Balloon volleyball follows the same rules as regular volleyball.

- Set up a net using string or rope across the middle of the room, at above head height.
- Split the group into two teams and position them on either side of the net. Choose a few players who must sit on the floor for the duration of the game. They must not move from the spot they are in.
- Choose a few players who must sit on chairs throughout the game and the chair must not move. All other players can be standing and move around.
- Now begin the game of volleyball. Play a few rounds and then swap players into different positions.
- You can make the game more challenging by draping a sheet over the rope so the other team can't see the balloon coming.

Once the young people have played a few rounds, gather the teams together and ask them to think about the following questions:

- o Did they feel like they were equally involved in the game when they were sat on the chair or on the floor?
- o Did they find it frustrating when they were in different positions?
- o Was it more challenging when they couldn't see the ball coming?
- o Did they try to include everyone in the team?

Now ask the group to think of a way they could try to make the game more inclusive for those on the floor and chairs. For example, each time the ball comes to your team at least one person standing, one on a chair and one on the floor must touch the ball before it goes back over the net.

What's Going On?

This game helps young people understand how they can support others to be included in a game.

Activity Instructions

- Come up with a game that your young people have not played before. This could be a sporty game, card game or a word game, for example.
- Chose a few young people to wait outside the room or so they are out of earshot.
- Explain the rules of the game to the rest of the group and ensure that they understand the rules.
- The other young people are asked to re-join the group but are not told the rules of the game.
- All the young people should try playing this game. Those that did not hear the rules may find that they are trying to work out the rules as they go along or are breaking the rules.
- After the game is over, explain that some people may struggle to remember or understand all the rules of a game. For example, a young person with autism may struggle with verbal communication, or a young person with a learning disability may find it difficult to remember a long list of rules or instructions.

Reflect as a group on the following questions:

- o What did it feel like to not understand the rules?
- o Was it confusing to find out the rules as you went through?
- o Did those who knew the rules want to tell those that didn't?

- o What other ways could rules or instructions be given when explaining an activity or game
- o How could you support another young person who does not seem to understand the rules?

Tight Hands Game

This is a game where players hold hands in order to exclude others. Your group will experience inclusion and exclusion and will reflect on how it feels.

Activity Instructions

- Begin by explaining that the group will act as if it is excluding someone. Have your group hold hands in a circle.
- One volunteer, the outsider, tries to get into the circle through spaces between people, while everyone else tries to keep him or her out. Remind the group to be gentle when blocking the outsider. [SEP]
- When the outsider gets into the circle, stop the game and ask for another volunteer.
- As a variation you can have two or three outsiders at one time.

After playing several rounds, ask:

- o What did it feel like to be an outsider?
- o Did anyone want to let the outsiders inside the circle?
- o Did you let them slip in? Why or why not?
- o Why is it important to try to include everyone?

The Exclusion Sticker Game

This is a game of forming groups based on one similarity. This activity helps the group to understand the feelings of people who are regularly excluded.

Materials

Enough colored stickers or different colored post-its (small) for each player. There should be 3-6 different colors.

Activity Instructions

This activity has 2 stages:

Stage 1: Inclusion

- Ask the players to form a circle and face the outside of the circle (inside or outside).

- Ask the players to close their eyes and tell them that you will put a colored sticker on their foreheads. Players will see the color of the others' stickers but not their own.
- Ask the players to walk around for 30 to 60 seconds. Tell the players to group themselves with people with the same color sticker. They must do this without speaking. Make sure every person is included in a group (but groups can vary in size).
- Once the groups are formed, start a new game by putting a new sticker on everyone's forehead. This time ask the players to form groups where everyone has a different colored sticker. Again, make sure every person is part of a group.

Stage 2: Exclusion

- Repeat the game a third time, placing new stickers on the players' foreheads.
- This time, distribute the stickers in order to form 2 or 3 groups of around the same size and 1 group of only one child (i.e. one person is excluded from the groups).

Observe the different reactions and ask the following questions:

- o How did you feel when you found a group of people you could join?
- o How did you feel when you couldn't find a group to join right away? Were you afraid that there was no group for you?
- o (To the person who was excluded in Stage 2 of the game) How did you feel when every group rejected you?
- o Have you ever had similar experiences at school, at an after-school group, or with your friends?

Resources

<https://reconcilingworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/BIC-Toolkit-2021-2.pdf>

www.mlp.org/resources

www.outandequal.org/toolkits-guides

<https://www.manyvoices.org/resources/?/worship/>

<https://enfleshed.com/liturgy/lgbtq-related/>

<https://pflag.org/resource/faith-resources-for-christians/>

www.rmnetwork.org