

A Celebration of the Covenant among Congregations and the Conference

**Call to Worship** adapted from Revelation 1:4-8

One: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

**All: To him who loves us and freed us from our sins and made us a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever.**

One: Jesus comes to us still, so every eye will see him and count on his presence.

**All: "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.**

One: May we experience the ever-present Jesus in this worship and this time of community.

**All: May it be so. Amen!**

**Opening Hymn**

*God of Grace, God of Glory*

**Invocation**

O God, all people are your Beloved, across races, nationalities, religions, sexual orientations and all the ways we are distinctive from one another. We are all manifestations of your image. *We are bound together in an inescapable network of mutuality and tied to a single garment of destiny.*

You call us into your unending work of justice, peace and love. Let us know your presence among us now: Let us delight in our diversity that offers glimpses of the mosaic of your beauty.

Strengthen us with your steadfast love and transform our despairing fatigue into hope-filled action. Under the shadow of your wings in this hour may we find rest and strength, renewal and hope. In Jesus' name. **Amen.**<sup>1</sup>

**Scripture** Psalm 132:13-18, New International Version

For the Lord has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his dwelling, saying, "This is my resting place for ever and ever; here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it. I will bless her with abundant provisions; her poor I will satisfy with food. I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her faithful people will ever sing for joy. "Here I will make a

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<sup>1</sup> [Prayer Resources - United Church of Christ \(ucc.org\)](https://www.ucc.org/prayer-resources)

horn grow for David and set up a lamp for my anointed one. I will clothe his enemies with shame, but his head will be adorned with a radiant crown.”

## **Hymn of Meditation**

*Called As Partners In Christ's Service*

## **Reflection**

Today is PNEC Covenant Sunday. This is the Sunday set aside to help congregations understand more deeply the covenant we share among the settings of the United Church of Christ. We often think of ourselves as autonomous, when in fact, we are interdependent in covenant with each other. The local congregation is the center of our denomination, and as such makes decisions for itself. Yet, it is in relationship with the conference and the national setting which strive to support the local congregations in their work. On this Sunday, we honor that covenant and ask individuals to become a Friend of the Conference. This means that you will donate as an individual to Our Church's Wider Mission. Your congregational budget likely has an amount included for OCWM, but this Sunday we are asking people to become Friends of the Conference and offer an additional gift as an individual. We hope you will consider providing support to the Conference as it strives to support your congregation through programs, search and call, crisis intervention, and ongoing coaching for improving the congregations outreach and ministry. The Generosity Team of the Penn Northeast Conference thanks you for your gift.

## **Prayer for Transformation and New Life (Confession):<sup>2</sup>**

Leader: Creator God, you made us to be neighbors, members of one family blessed with great diversity. You created us to be helpers and friends to one another, entrusting to us your justice and your joy. Yet we have denied justice and joy to many, creating worlds of poverty, pain, lost opportunities, and absence of hope. In so many ways, we break each other's hearts. Still, you do not reject us. We ask your forgiveness and pray to be transformed.

*Brief period of silence*

**All: Loving God, you restore us to each other and to you, mending our hearts and repairing the world. Through the power of your Spirit, you shape us to be for others what Christ is for us: pardon and peace, new life and blessing. We give you thanks for your love, forgiveness, and constant presence. Amen.**

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/justice\\_worker-justice\\_labor-sunday\\_worship-resources/](https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/justice_worker-justice_labor-sunday_worship-resources/)

## **Words of Grace (Assurance of Pardon)**

Pastoral Leader: Scripture tells us if we are "kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, God in Christ has forgiven us". Rest assured, my friends, our sins are forgiven. Amen.<sup>3</sup>

### **Scripture - John 17: 6-26**

I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.

I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them.

And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled.

But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.

I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/after-pentecost-10a-august-6/>

Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. "Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me.

I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

### **Offertory Hymn**

*We Give You but Your Own*

### **Invitation to Generosity**

Luke 6:38 - Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

### **Prayer of Dedication and Thanksgiving - unison**

**Loving Creator, whose reign is everlasting, we offer these gifts with grateful hearts. May they serve to proclaim your truth and extend your kingdom of justice, peace, and love. Transform our offerings and our lives to bear witness to the hope and promise of Christ, our king. In his holy name, we pray. Amen.<sup>4</sup>**

### **Closing Hymn**

*Go Now in Peace*

### **Responsive Benediction** Adapted from 2 Corinthians 13:11-14

One: Finally, siblings, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

**All: Greet one another with a holy kiss. All God's people here send their greetings.**

One: May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and communion with the Holy Spirit be with you all.

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<sup>4</sup> Discipleship Ministries, United Methodist Church