

# Liturgy

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*Theme: "Together: Living unto the Lord*

*Scripture: Romans 14:1-12*

## ***Call to worship***

One: We welcome all to our worship!

All: Really? ALL?

One: Yes, ALL! The weak in faith, the strong in faith; those who eat meat and those who do not; those who look and speak like us and those that do not; the rich and the poor; those who side with us politically and those who do not. Everybody.

All: Why? Why do we welcome everybody?

One: All are welcome here because God has welcomed them. Come let us worship together.

All: We will worship God together.

## ***Opening prayer***

Oh, God of Welcome,

We join together to worship you. We praise your name together, despite our many differences and despite any distance between us. May we each extend your welcome to friend, neighbor, and opponent alike for this is what you call us to do. God of love, we bow before you and invite your Spirit into our hearts as we join together in worship. Bless our gathering, we pray, in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

### ***Suggested hymns***

“They’ll know we are Christians by our love,”

“In Christ there is no East or West” - *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, #306

“There’s a Wideness in God’s mercy” - *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, #145

“We are people of God’s peace” - *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, #407

“Wonderful grace of Jesus” - *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, #150

### ***Invitation to give***

We live in a time and a world of challenges. COVID-19 has helped us recognize that we are all threatened by the same thing. In this we are together with the entire world. As Christians we are also all together in seeking to share the good news of God’s reign. Let us together give to spread the good news in word and deed to all of our neighbors around the world.

### ***Sermon starter***

We live in very trying times. With each passing day, it seems that there are ever more opportunities for disagreement and division. How do we respond at different stages of the pandemic? What should we think about social unrest? Who should we call upon for leadership? Even with much communal reflection and discussion, these topics can lead us to more questions than answers, and when disagreements occur, it can seem easier to find comfort with like-minded people than find common ground with those who think differently.

In Romans 14:1-12, Paul encourages the church in Rome to address differences and conflict with forbearance. We all belong to the Lord and we will all be accountable to God. Therefore, we should not pass judgement on our brothers and sisters when they make decisions that differ from our own. Again, examples of these differences abound and include:

- responses to COVID-19 restrictions (Is it the weak or the strong who wear masks?)
- theological differences (How do we love those who differ from us in our interpretation of scripture?)
- political differences (How do we function in unity as we approach an increasingly divisive election?)

On these issues and more, it is God to whom we are accountable when we make observations or decisions. William Greenway in *Feasting on the Word* shares:

“If you see any controversy dividing today’s church as a basis for exclusion of fellowship, Paul is speaking to you. Paul is not suggesting that we should stop advocating for our respective views. ...Paul’s concern and passion here is the *spirit* of Christians who are arguing, not the rectitude of their position” (p.62).

As long as this life lasts, tension and conflict will exist. However, through loving one another and surrendering ourselves to the Lord, we can live as the body of Christ in the world. May the words of Paul both challenge and comfort you and your congregation in these (and future) trying times.

## ***Benediction***

We have come together to worship. We go now to live unto the Lord, together in Spirit. May we go in service to our God, to whom every knee shall bow and every tongue give praise, now and forevermore. Amen.

## ***Children's story***

*The Someone New* by Jill Twiss and E. G. Keller

*Written or selected by Carol and Norm Waggy, interim directors of Global Mission for the 2020 Mission Offering of the Church of the Brethren.*