

Order of service with communion



Call to worship

One: Gardeners do not know what will come of the seeds they plant with their hands. Yet they kneel in the dirt, dig with their hands, and bury one seed a time. They come away with dirty fingernails and expectant hearts. When those sprouts emerge,

All: what will the future be like?

One: When any of us suffer, support from others allows us to imagine futures more promising than our present. Hands are held. Stories are heard. Skills are grown. And laughter bubbles up where heartache held strong. When hearts mend and new life blooms,

All: what will the future be like?

One: One plants. Another waters. But God gives the growth. What is the future like when we join together as co-workers in God's service to release the healing waters of God's love throughout our world?

All: Come, join hands. See the fruitful future God brings even now.

Invocation

God of Good Growth,
Prepare the soil of our hearts to receive your life-bearing call that we would invest our gifts with confidence and joy in the fruitful future you bring forth.
We pray in the name of the One who makes all things new. Amen.

Offertory

When violence reigns, disaster strikes, or resources are scarce, a future with hope can seem far away. In those times, our communities can act as sources of critical support. We embody love, the Holy Source of all hope and healing.

Paul writes that we are all co-workers in God's service. We each have gifts to offer that may serve as channels of love and strength to all who find themselves in need of support. We can trust that whatever we offer, God will use our gifts to bring a future with hope.

Through the ministries of this church, and through the ministries supported by One Great Hour of Sharing, we have the opportunity to be part of the hopeful future God is already bringing about. Imagine what the future will be like when we join hands together across

distance, across cultures, and across generations to invest in the growth God promises to bring.

How will we invest our gifts in the future that we build as co-workers in the kingdom of God? We invite you to give generously to One Great Hour of Sharing today, believing in the future growth God brings when we work, plant, and build together.

Prayer of dedication

God of Abundance,
Bless the investments that we commit to your work this day
that our efforts might serve the future thriving of this world you so love. Amen.

Litany

Holy God, who brings sweet growth, teach us to live for the love of what we do not yet see.

Though we may sometimes feel buried in darkness, we trust that your love, your hope, and your healing are always ready to burst forth. Cultivate in us a new imagination for what the future will be like when wounds are healed, relationships mended, and each of us is empowered to fully live into the life you envision for us.

O God, who brings sweet growth, teach us to live for the love of what we do not yet see.

Your life-giving design is visible in the beauty of creation, in the dawning of each day and in the turning of the seasons. Awaken in us a hope that when we plant, when we water, and when we invest in the future you bring we are part of the joyful work of releasing the waters of new life.

O God, who brings sweet growth, teach us to live for the love of what we do not yet see.
Amen.

Hymn suggestions

Seed, Scattered and Sown / CH 395
Cantemos Al Senor (Let's Sing Unto the Lord)~ / CH 60
For the Healing of the Nations / CH 668
In the Bulb There is a Flower / CH 638
Now the Green Blade Rises / CH 230
Spirit / CH 249
For the Fruit of All Creation / CH 714
All Who Hunger, Gather Gladly / CH 419

Communion invitation

One: Dear co-workers in God's service, we are called to the feast prepared by Christ.

All: We come tired and hopeful. We come with laughter and tears. We come broken and blessed. We come to taste God's promise of a world made whole.

One: At this table, we find rest. At this table, we find hope. At this table, we are moved to plant new seeds, to nourish fresh sprouts, and to join in bringing forth all the future growth God is bringing even now.

All: To this table, we bring our dreams, our prayers, and our gifts with hopeful trust in God's holy healing power and love.

Words of institution

On the night that he knew would be his last with them, our Lord gathered his disciples for a feast. They had walked many miles together. They had known trials. They had seen wonders. They would soon need to trust that God is in the business of bringing hopeful futures from even the most painful endings. So after dinner was over, he took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and shared it with them, saying take, eat, do this in remembrance of me. Then he also took the cup, blessed it, poured some wine into it, saying, "take, drink, do this in remembrance of me."

Every time we do this, beloved co-workers in Christ, we too remember that God is in the business of bringing hopeful futures from even the most painful endings.

We eat and drink today to be filled to the brim with that good news. We eat and drink this day to become holy channels of Christ's hope and healing for ourselves and for our world.

Prayer for the bread and cup

God of the table,
you feed the wild birds of the air with fruit-filled branches,
And we flock to your table today longing to taste the hope and healing that you promise.
Nourish us with the bread that sustains our souls in the face of suffering.
Wash over us with holy streams of care, reviving our roots in you.
Bless these elements we share that the future you long for might
burst into bloom in our hearts and in our world.

Thanksgiving prayer

Rain-bringing God,
We give thanks for the gifts of bread and cup
flowing with your promise of a future full of hope.
Carry us forth with courageous compassion
to live for the love of all that we do not yet see.
With trust in your eternal stream of new life we pray.
Amen.

Benediction

As you go from this place,
may holy hope bloom in your heart
that you may find the joy
in serving the promise of the sweet fruit that will fall
when God's new life bursts suddenly forth
in your life and in all the world.

Sending forth

Go forth bearing the good news
that God promises a future full of hope.
Go forth with expectant eyes, watching for the fruit God
will bring. Go in courageous, compassionate peace.

*Written by Katie Shaw Thompson, pastor of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren (Ill.)
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