

A LITURGY FOR SEPARATION¹

OPENING WORDS

Moderator

There are times when pilgrims' paths diverge though we continue to walk in The Way.
We come to such an intersection today, where we lament the loss of one another.
Yet we remain hopeful of our call to serve separately for the good of God's reign in Christ Jesus.

We mark this change as we mark all change: reiterating the promise that the eternal God is our dwelling place, and underneath all are the everlasting arms. (Deut. 33:27a)

Our help is in the name of the LORD, **who made heaven and earth.** (Ps. 124:8)
In life and in death **We belong to God.**

PRAYER

LAMENT (Adaptation of Psalm 137)

By the waters of the Puget Sound we sit and weep
when we remember Olympia Presbytery
Here we were planted, here we grew,
here we multiplied, thirty, sixty a hundred fold
But now our numbers have dwindled,
from death, from distraction and now disagreement
Those with whom we labored **now feel they no longer can do so**
*Those with whom we labored **changed what we agreed to work on***
Those with whom we labored **are taking what belongs to the group**
*Those with whom we labored **are forcing us to pay for what we built***
Those with whom we labored **are magnifying a secondary issue**
*Those with whom we labored **are minimizing an important issue***
Though our gathering today is dressed in kindness and cordiality
Beneath these clothes our hearts burn with anger, with judgment and frustration
How can we sing the songs of the LORD in this strange land?
If we forget your kingdom, Oh Lord
May our musicians forget their skills
May the roofs of our buildings crumble
If we do not remember you
If we do not consider you our highest joy

HYMN *O God Our Help in Ages Past.* PH 210

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home.

A thousand ages, in thy sight, are like an evening gone;
short as the watch that ends the night, before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever rolling stream, soon bears us all away;
they fly forgotten, as a dream dies at the opening day.

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come;
be thou our guide while life shall last, and our eternal home.

CONFESSION OF SIN:

Almighty God, Maker of all things, **have mercy on us.**
Jesus Christ, Redeemer of the world, **have mercy on us.**
Holy Spirit, Giver of life, **have mercy on us.**
Let us discern in silence the presence and nature of our sins

Side 1: I confess to God Almighty, before the whole company of heaven, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned by my own fault, in thought, word, and deed. I pray God Almighty to have mercy on me, forgive me all my sins, and bring me to everlasting life.

Side 2: **May Almighty God have mercy on you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins and give you time to amend your life.**

Side 1: Amen.

Side 2: **I confess to God Almighty, before the whole company of heaven, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned by my own fault, in thought, word, and deed. I pray God Almighty to have mercy on me, forgive me all my sins, and bring me to everlasting life.**

Side 1: May Almighty God have mercy on you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins and give you time to amend your life.

Side 2: **Amen.**

¹ This liturgy was adapted from "Liturgies for times when churches are leaving the denomination" a document created by the PC(USA) Office of Theology and Worship.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON Psalm 103:8-12

The Lord is merciful and gracious; slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. God will not always accuse, or stay angry forever. The Holy One does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. As high as the heavens above the earth, so great is God's steadfast love toward the reverent. As far as the east is from the west, so far does God remove our transgressions from us. Beloved, believe the good news of the gospel: In Jesus Christ you are forgiven. **Thanks be to God!**

SCRIPTURE READINGS ACTS 15:36-41

SPACE FOR SILENT REFLECTION

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH *(in unison)*

We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,

We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PARTING RITE AND COMMENDATION

Like Peter and Paul, Paul and Barnabas, and the first ecumenical council of the first-century church, we have reached the point at which we feel called to continue our faith journeys separately. Though our paths diverge, we acknowledge that

There is one body and one Spirit, just as [we] were called to the one hope of [our] calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. (Eph. 4:4-7)

As we part, we do so with mercy, recognizing the grace entrusted to each in our Lord Jesus Christ and extending to one another the right hand of fellowship.

(Representatives from the Presbytery and Departing church come forward with the right hand of fellowship extended. Appropriate gifts may be exchanged for the common good of ministry in Christ.)

Presbytery Leaders:

In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ, we commend to almighty God our brothers and sisters in Holy Spirit.

Leaders of departing congregation:

In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ, we commend to almighty God our brothers and sisters in Holy Spirit.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSIONS

Let us pray. Mighty God, in Jesus Christ you reconcile all people through your body tortured on a cross. Raise us to new life in you. As we scatter to spread the good news, in different places, heal the scars of our division. Bind up the wounds of the brokenhearted and gather us all beneath your healing wings of compassion that we may each and all stand as witnesses to your great love in Jesus Christ. Here us now as we pray for one another. *(Space is given people to pray)*

*After an appropriate time, close with **The Lord's Prayer***

HYMN *God Be With You Till We Meet Again*

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God be with you till we meet again, loving counsels guide, uphold you,
With a Shepherd's care enfold you, God be with you till we meet again.

God be with you till we meet again, unseen wings protecting hide you,
Daily manna still provide you, God be with you till we meet again.

God be with you till we meet again, when life's perils thick confound you,
Put unfailing arms around you, God be with you till we meet again.

God be with you till we meet again, keep love's banner floating o'er you,
Smite death's threat'ning wave before you, God be with you till we meet again.

CHARGE AND BENEDICTION:

Moderator

As we depart, may we do so like the disciples released from the fear of the upper room with the words of our risen Lord ringing in our ears, "Peace be with you! As the Father sent me. I am sending you." May we go in love, may we go in faith, may we go in hope, may we go in joy and may we go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord be kind and gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

Amen. (Num. 6:24-26)

DEPARTURE TO SERVE IN PEACE *Signs of Peace may be exchanged upon departure*