

CELEBRATING THE MIRACLE

Worship Resources for Addiction Awareness Services

Presbyterians for Addiction Action (PAA)

A ministry network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA)

www.pcusa.org/phewa

SILENT MEDITATION: “Perhaps one of the greatest rewards of meditation and prayer is the sense of belonging that comes to us. We no longer live in a completely hostile world. We are no longer lost and frightened and purposeless. The moment we catch even a glimpse of God’s will, the moment we begin to see truth, justice, and love as the real and eternal things in life, we are no longer deeply disturbed by all the seeming evidence to the contrary that surrounds us in purely human affairs. We know that God lovingly watches over us. We know that when we turn to (God), all will be well with us, here and hereafter.ⁱ

PRELUDE

Greeting: Welcome to worship this Sunday as we gather to celebrate the miracles of recovery. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has set aside a Sunday for congregations to intentionally focus on the issues of addictions. Friends, we have all been touched in one way or another by alcoholism, drug use, or other addictions. We know many people who have found help through 12 step programs. Some of these programs use our buildings. We want to be a support to people in recovery and the programs that help them. We as a worshipping community hope to be part of the spiritual solution of recovery. Our service today uses many of the phrases and readings familiar to people in recovery groups. We pray there will be a special blessing for each one of us as we share in this hour of worship.

SO EXPECT A MIRACLE AND LET US WORSHIP GOD!

INVOCATION: God, as humans, Christians, Presbyterians, people of recovery, help us realize that we are all becoming who you would have us be. It is a process of progress, not perfection. Open our hearts and minds to your will for us. Open our hearts and minds to each other, that through the community of faith, your love will be perfected, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

****OR****

“God, we offer ourselves to you to build with us and to do with us as you will. Relieve us of the bondage of self, that we may better do your will. Take away our difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those we would help, of your power, your love, and your way of life. May we do your will always.”ⁱⁱ
Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP

(Pulpit/Lectern sides of sanctuary or a “Greek Chorus” of participants at front of sanctuary)

We admitted we were powerless, that our lives were unmanageable.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Therefore, we will not fear though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understand God.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of it, it shall not be moved; God will help right early.

We made a searching and fearless inventory of ourselves.
We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Come, behold the works of the Lord; how God has wrought desolations in the earth. God makes wars cease to the end of the earth; God breaks the bow and shatters the spear; God burns the chariots with fire!

ALL: Be still, and know that I am God.
I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth.ⁱⁱⁱ

****OR****

God, we offer ourselves to You,
And ask that You guide us and build us
To serve Your will.
Relieve us of all bondage of self will,
That we may do Your will and live as witnesses
of Your power and Your love.^{iv}

HYMN (See Hymn Source that follows)

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (Unison)

God, we confess that we have not always believed your promises to us. We have failed to realize how much you love us. We have been unable to receive your love. If we stand still for just a short time, it happens. We experience the beauty of the creation, the warmth of the sunshine, the loving presence of family and friends. God, slow us down, so that we might feel your Presence. We want to experience life and love anew. We want to participate fully in your creation. We begin again now in the silence.

****OR****

(Unison) God, we confess our lack of power. We sometimes feel helpless, alone and weak. We realize that we know only a little, and each time we try to do everything on our own, we fail. We need your power. We want to rely on you daily to guide us to do the things that are necessary for our life. We want your power to be ours, so that we can stand strong in your

world. We need to be reassured that death to our old ways need not be feared and that true life is found in YOU.

(A TIME FOR SILENT PRAYER AND REFLECTION)

ASSURANCE

In creation, we see God's power and majesty. In Jesus Christ, we see ultimate love for us in action. In the Holy Spirit, we see ongoing encouragement and power every day. Our God is a great God! Jesus has forgiven our sins and made a right relationship between us, once and for all. God has given us all the gifts necessary to do the work of a believer and experience life fully. Praise God for love and healing!

RESPONSIVE HYMN (See Hymn Source that follows)

SHARING THE PEACE

RESPONSORIAL PSALM or ANTHEM

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE READING

First Lesson: *Ruth 3:1-5, 4:13-17*

Second Lesson: *Hebrews 9:24-28*

Gospel: *Mark 12:38-44*

SERMON: (Refer to Sermon Notes that follow)

LITANY OF COMMITMENT^v

Leader: In view of the social impact of substance abuse, we as Presbyterians accept the challenges of conscience and informed responsibility, for ourselves and others in faith and action.

Congregation: Individuals are asked to prayerfully explore their substance use behaviors and make decisions about personal substance use based on our church's confessions and teachings.

Leader: We will spend time this week in prayer, individually and with members of our households, asking for guidance and support for our family, our congregation, and our denomination.

Congregation: The General Assembly urges the following guide:

Abstinence from manufacture, sale, purchase, possession, or use of illicit drugs. Restraint in use of over the counter drug preparations, caffeine, and the emotional use of food.

Leader: We will reflect on the use of substances in our life and in our household.

Congregation: Study and reaffirmation of General Assembly positions on abstinence and appropriate use of alcohol, as well as the abstinence from tobacco products are encouraged.

Leader: We will share our faith decisions and reflections on substance abuse with others in relationships of trust and respect. The elements of healing include honesty, confession, repentance, forgiveness and faithful action.

Congregation: Recognizing our responsibility to the wider community, we are prepared to confront, challenge and report substance abuse, manufacture, sale, purchase and possession.

Leader: During this week, our prayers will be directed to all who suffer from addictions. We will ask for guidance and direction and we will review our own behavior.

Congregation: In honesty and humility, have you responded to God's love and wisdom for yourself and others regarding the use of alcohol, tobacco and other substances?

All: To heal the hurt of substance abuse, its pain, violence, alienation and despair, we pledge our help to speak aloud the words of grace.
Amen.

HYMN (See Hymn Source below)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE (Joys and Concerns)

God, we give you thanks for this day.

For the opportunity to gather in this place to celebrate the miracles of grace and healing through recovery and talk honestly about addictions.

We give thanks for the many people who work with alcoholics and addicts, their service has made relief from the affects of these spiritual diseases possible for so many. We pray that this church, along with community agencies and 12 step programs, can be a part of the spiritual solution in freedom from substance abuse and compulsive behaviors.

Each one of us has a particular need in this area. Some of us are recovering from addictions or the effects of parental and generational addictions. Some of us struggle with our behaviors of with family members and friends who still suffer. Some of us are interested, concerned, curious. We care about our family, our congregation, our community, our church, our society.

Hear now as we offer prayers of joy and concern for ourselves and others...

God, open our hearts and minds to new awareness, new understanding, new action, that we might experience our own healing more deeply and grow in compassion as we serve others in your world. Amen.

CALL FOR THE OFFERING

THE LORD'S SUPPER [Optional]

HYMN (See Hymn Source below)

CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

God will show us how to create fellowships that support us spiritually. We only need to rely on God.^{vi}

“Abandon yourself to God, as you understand God. Admit your faults to (God) and your friends. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit. May God bless you and keep you – until then.”^{vii}

****OR****

God has shown you what is good.
What does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:8

The Lord bless and keep you.
The Lord be kind and gracious to you.
The Lord look upon you with favor
and give you peace.

Numbers 6:24-26

Amen.

POSTLUDE

RESOURCES FOR THIS SERVICE

Hymn Sources and Suggestions

The Presbyterian Hymnal (Westminster/John Knox Press 1990)

- #210 Our God, Our Help in Ages Past
- #263 Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise
- #264 When In Our Music God Is Glorified
- #271 Many and Great

The Presbyterian Hymnal (Westminster/John Knox Press 1990)

- #272 God of the Sparrow
- #280 Amazing Grace
- #302 I Danced in the Morning
- #315 Every Time I Feel the Spirit
- #319 Spirit
- #332 Life Into Hope
- #333 Seek Ye First
- #339 Be Thou My Vision
- #354 Guide My Feet
- #368 I've Got Peace Like A River
- #369 I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me
- #370 Just As I Am
- #525 Here I Am

Hymns for the Family of God (Paragon Associates 1976)

- # 87 Leaning on the Everlasting Arms
- # 96 I Know Who Holds Tomorrow
- # 98 Great Is Thy Faithfulness
- #101 The Haven of Rest
- #102 Day By Day
- #107 Amazing Grace
- #399 Jesus Calls Us o'er the Tumult
- #408 I Surrender All
- #417 Just As I Am
- #439 Sweet Hour of Prayer
- #466 What a Friend We Have in Jesus
- #591 Just a Closer Walk with Thee
- #631 I Know Whom I have Believed

PRAYERS FOR USE IN RECOVERY

Saint Francis of Assisi Prayer

Lord, make me a channel of thy peace,
that where there is hatred, I may bring love,
that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness,
that where there is discord, I may bring harmony,
that where there is error, I may bring truth,
that where there is doubt, I may bring faith,
that where there is despair, I may bring hope,
that where there are shadows, I may bring light,
that where there is sadness, I may bring joy.

Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be comforted,

to understand, than to be understood,
to love, than to be loved.

For it is by self forgetting that one finds.
It is by forgiving that one is forgiven.
It is by dying that one awakens to Eternal Life. Amen.

A Prayer from Thomas Merton^{viii}

My Lord God, I have no idea where I'm going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am
following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you.
And I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road
though I may know nothing about it.
Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and
in the shadow of death.
I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me
to face my perils alone.

A Word About Prayer by Henri Nouwen^{ix}

"In a situation in which the world is threatened
by annihilation, prayer does not mean much
when we undertake it only as an attempt to influence God,
or as an offering of comfort in stress-filled times.
Prayer in the face of nuclear holocaust only makes sense
when it is an act of stripping ourselves of all false
belongings and we become free to belong to God and
God alone.
... prayer is not primarily a way to get something done.
... prayer is a real act of death and rebirth.
It leads us right into the midst of the world
where we must take action.
Thus the act of prayer is the basis and source of all action.

Prayers from the Alcoholics Anonymous Text^x

THIRD STEP PRAYER (p. 63 AA)

God, I offer myself to you – to build with me and to do with me
as You would. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better

do Your will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Your power, Your love and Your way of life. May I do Your will always. (Amen.)

SEVENTH STEP PRAYER (p. 76 AA)

My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here to do your bidding. Amen.

THE SERENITY PRAYER (as used by 12 step groups)

GOD, GRANT ME THE SERENITY, TO ACCEPT THE THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE, THE COURAGE TO CHANGE THE THINGS I CAN, AND THE WISDOM TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE.

AMEN

SERMON NOTES

Suggested Title: "Forsaking the Familiar to Embrace the Unknown"

I. Scripture and Themes

Ruth 3:1-5, 4:13-17 Loyalty/salvation through courageous action.

Psalms 127 Self will versus letting go and God's will.

Hebrews 9:24-28 Christ as sacrifice / salvation to those who are eagerly waiting / ready.

Mark 12:38-44 Jesus instructs disciples and us to notice and learn from anonymous humble people. Personal surrender to God.

II. Background Information About Recovery.

- A. It begins with admitting there is a problem and getting help. This is called "hitting bottom."
- B. Abstinence/stopping the behavior is necessary. This requires risking new behavior and being in new territory.
- C. Help is needed to maintain abstinence on a daily basis. Admitting that one cannot do this on their own is part of the process. So the shift is from Self Will and isolation

to Community and depending on God. Healing and wholeness is found in community with others.

- D. Twelve step programs use the simple principles of working with a sponsor to go through the steps. This requires trusting another human being with information / secrets. The risk is telling the truth. The result is self awareness and forgiveness.
- E. Through the step work, one gets honest and takes responsibility for her / his life. He / she also stops feeling so alone. Through community with others, one begins to feel God's love. Through feeling loved, one is more available to love others.

III. How These Scriptures Relate to Recovery

- A. Ruth's choice makes no sense, as she relinquishes the familiar for the unknown in a foreign land. Naomi and Ruth represent the bottom of society, yet they follow the love they have for each other and take radical action. Ruth, who would not listen to Naomi's first command, follows the plan for their survival together and a divine blessing through human agents is the result.^{xi}
- B. Psalm 127 speaks to the insanity of anxiety and compulsive activity and recommends trust and confidence in God's power. Allow God to be your foundation and strength rather than reliance on self is the message of the psalm.
- C. In Hebrews 9, Christ is the mediator of a new covenant. His sacrifice puts away sin once and for all so that we can put our sins aside, receive forgiveness, serve the living God and eagerly await Christ's second coming.
- D. The story from Mark of the widow who gives generously out of her poverty is an example of a minor, anonymous character exemplifying the rule of God. Acting with childlike humility, her action expresses her faith.^{xii}
- E. The widow who gives her coins, like Naomi and Ruth, is of the lowest social status. By surrendering all that they have and trusting God, they lose their lives and in the process of faithful action are transformed into God's Word, God's teaching and lesson for us.

IV. Methods of Presenting a Worship Service.

- A. Take the first five steps (see Call to Worship) and apply them to one or all of the scripture readings.
- B. Ask three members of your congregation who are in recovery to share how these scriptures speak to their experience of recovery.

- C. Invite a member of your congregation to share their story of recovery. What it was like. What happened. What it is like now.
- D. Use the “what it was like, what happened, what it is like now” format to tell the scripture story as the character of Ruth, Naomi, Boaz, the widow, a scribe or a disciple.

ENDNOTES

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- ⁱ Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 105, Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. 1993
- ⁱⁱ Modernized version of “The Third Step Prayer,” Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 63, Alcoholics Anonymous World Service, Inc., 1976.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Based on the 12 steps, Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 59 and Psalm 46, Inclusive Language Psalms, The Pilgrims Press, 1987.
- ^{iv} Based on the “Third Step Prayer,” Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 63.
- ^v Based on the 205th General Assembly’s Resolution on Freedom and Substance Abuse, “Pulpit Statement to Presbyterian Congregations,” *Church & Society* magazine, July/Aug. 1993, pp. 37-44.
- ^{vi} Paraphrased use of paragraph 1, Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 164, AA World Service, Inc. 1976.
- ^{vii} Paraphrased from “A Vision for You,” p. 164, Alcoholics Anonymous, AA World Service, Inc. 1976.
- ^{viii} Thoughts in Solitude, copyright 1958, Image Books, Garden City, NY, 1968.
- ^{ix} Nouwen, Henri, from “Prayer in Action,” *Sojourners*, May 1979. People’s Christian Coalition, Washington, DC.
- ^x Alcoholics Anonymous, Third Edition, AA World Service, Inc. 1979.
- ^{xi} Tribble, Phyllis. God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, Fourth Printing, 1985, p. 172.
- ^{xii} Rhoads, David and Michie, Donald. Mark as Story, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1982, pp. 129-133.

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The Twelve Steps of AA

- 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.**
- 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.**
- 3. Made a decision to return our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.**
- 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.**
- 5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.**
- 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.**
- 7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.**
- 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.**
- 9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible except when to do so would injure them or others.**
- 10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.**
- 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God’s will for us and the power to carry that out.**
- 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.**