

Circle of Hope: Powered by Witness and Service
Opening Worship
New England Annual Conference
Thursday, 1:30pm
Scripts for Leaders
“Listen”
Opening of Conference and
Act of Repentance



Jesus taught in parables, in stories, including the parable of the sower that offers images of the kind of conditions in which things cannot grow, in which things cannot flourish and increase and yield their most. And Jesus reminds us that we must listen deeply in order to learn and to change. In our opening worship, we engage in the beginning of an Act of Repentance regarding the church’s history of the oppression of indigenous persons. This service is not a one-time ritual that brings this tragic history to a close, rather it is part of the process of repentance that requires action beyond this day. For this worship, it is an act of listening, of acknowledging, and a commitment to continue learning, healing and “turning around” our actions and policies as a church and in our local communities.

WE GATHER AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

Music as People Gather

Opening Song
“And Are We Yet Alive”

Greeting One Another

Invocation

All stand and face the center.
A Paschal Candle is at the center platform.

[Marcia sings and speaks...]
Gathered here in the mystery of this hour...

And so we gather again...
year after year our paths draw us back to this body, this circle of family...

Gathered here in one strong body...

ever since humans have been humans, they have gathered around...
circling a fire, circling a table, circling a room...

*and we have told stories that shape who we are together.
We witness through our stories to who we have been, who we are and who we hope to be.
We have told stories that bind us together and call us to serve the whole for yet another year.*

Gathered here in the struggle and the power...

Indeed every time we gather there is struggle and there is power as the circle invites us to see one another truly. And see ourselves in each other.

But without the struggle, the circle would not be one of hope.

For we hope that what we see now is not all there is...

Indeed God reminds us that this is not all there is...

Jesus, the Anointed One, is the embodiment of "this is not all there is..."

And we ask the Spirit to show us, move us, draw our circles ever wider into Holy Possibilities.

Spirit, draw near.

The chant continues...

Gath-ered here in the mys-tery of this hour, gath-ered here in one strong
bod - y, gath-ered here in the strug-gle and the power, Spir - it draw near.

Preparation

"Who is My Mother, Who is My Brother?" FWS 2225, vs. 1,3,4

**Who is my mother? Who is my brother?
all those who gather 'round Jesus Christ:
Spirit-blown people, born from the Gospel
sit at the table, round Jesus Christ.**

**Love will relate us color or status
can't segregate us, round Jesus Christ:
Family failings, human de-railings
[facing repentance], round Jesus Christ.**

Bishop Devadhar prays

[the singing continues]

**Bound by one vision, met for one mission
We claim each other, round Jesus Christ:
Here is my mother, here is my brother,
kindred in Spirit, through Jesus Christ.**

Call to Worship

[led by Pat Parent]

Alosada, alomigoma wigwam Dabaldak.
A quisilo whiho wogan agema, whila askamiwi.
Let us go into the house of the Lord,
and honor His name forever.

WE PROCLAIM THE WORD OF GOD

“Listen to the Word” (GTG #455)

**Listen to the word that God has spoken,
listen to the One who is close at hand;
listen to the voice that began creation;
listen even if you don’t understand.**

A Story

“Creator Had a Purpose”
Pat Warrior Woman Parent

Sung Response

**Listen to the word that God has spoken,
listen to the One who is close at hand;
listen to the voice that began creation;
listen even if you don’t understand.**

Another Story

Mark 4:3-9

'Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.' And [Jesus] said, 'Let anyone with ears to hear listen!'"

Sung Response

**Listen to the word that God has spoken,
listen to the One who is close at hand;
listen to the voice that began creation;
listen even if you don't understand.**

[continue in a round]

Word

Thomas White Wolf Fassett

Voices

the verses of "Dust and Ashes"

are interspersed with video packages of local native people telling their stories

**Dust and ashes touch our face,
mark our failures and our falling.
Holy Spirit, come, walk with us tomorrow,
take us as disciples, washed and wakened by your calling.
Take us by the hand and lead us,
lead us through the desert sands,
bring us living water,
Holy Spirit, come.**

Video package (William Apes story and live comment read by someone)

Dust and ashes soil our hands—

greed of market, pride of nation.
Holy Spirit, come, walk with us tomorrow,
as we pray and struggle through the meshes of oppression.
Take us by the hand and lead us,
lead us through the desert sands,
bring us living water,
Holy Spirit, come.

Video package (from GC)

Dust and ashes strew our past -
trails of torture, tears and plunder.
Holy Spirit, come,
walk with us tomorrow.
Cleanse and knit together
wounds that sin has torn asunder.
Take us by the hand and lead us,
lead us through the desert sands,
bring us living water,
Holy Spirit, come.

WE RESPOND TO THE WORD OF GOD AMONG US

Naming

O Holy God,

All: We name before you a heart-breaking list of wrongs committed by our ancestors against native peoples through imperial ambitions of colonial powers the world around,

through genocidal policies and massacres, the destruction of traditional forms of relationship to the earth,

through the transfer of massive tracts of territory for roads, railways, water, mining, timber and the privileging of Anglo-European companies, farmers and ranchers with leases of native land.

We speak of a range of methods devised to destroy the culture of native people:

strategies of assimilation and Westernization; national education and job training programs committed to the removal of native people from their tribes;

schools and curricula designed to divest indigenous people of their appearance, language and ways of life,

and even today the taking of children from native families by states to obtain millions of dollars in federal spending.

All: Neither our government nor our economy is innocent.

Our faith traditions are complicit—indeed, often actively engaged in the violations and even the cultural and physical genocide of native peoples.

The church engaged in abusive and exploitative practices of its own. While some in the church protested its transgressions against indigenous people, the dominant pattern has been one where by both its silence and its active support the church has participated in the violation, the exploitation and even the killing of indigenous people.

Evangelistic efforts legitimated colonization and manifest destiny; church schools and educational efforts took native charges from their extended family relationships and stripped them of their culture.

In some cases these very schools committed acts of physical, sexual and mental abuse.

Our congregations and ministries benefited from native lands acquired unjustly when it was not a result of outright confiscation;

these and other injustices and wrongdoings stand as a painful testimony to the sin of the church.

All: Yet, O God, keep us from a cheap confession of our ancestors' wicked ways

that ignores the present-day privilege from which we profit at the ongoing expense of native lives,

*that attempts to achieve a false righteousness of forgiveness for sin we did not commit,
that congratulates ourselves with the convenient fiction that we are different,
that seeks to escape from just compensation in the name of a false reconciliation.*

All: Today, many of us worship You, O God, on land captured from native peoples.

Our homes, our places of work, our schools, our hospitals and institutions of care, stand on land taken or stolen.

In our attempts to escape from complicity in the evils done to our native brothers and sisters, we ask that your judgment knife through our blurred vision and enable us to see that their blood cries up from the ground to us.

All: O Holy God, we ask for no peace derived from a false sense of forgiveness where there is no repentance,

where there is no turning around of our lives,

where there is no moving in a new direction of rectification and justice.

All: Convict us, O God, by your judgment that we may hear your word to change, and grant us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may be empowered to repent, to turn around, and to participate in the new creation brought by our Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

At the end we sing "Dust and Ashes" vs. 4. The theme of "paths of resurrection" begins a stylistic musical change and the music begins to be hopeful.

**Dust and ashes choke our tongue
in the wasteland of depression.
Holy Spirit, come, walk with us tomorrow,
through all gloom and grieving to the paths of resurrection.
Take us by the hand and lead us,
lead us through the desert sands,
bring us living water,
Holy Spirit, come.**

[music continues underscoring... voices "holy spirit come" descant improv]

Response

District Superintendents, supported by the Bishop, made these statements:

In an attempt to “begin the courageous conversations that can help spark positive change”*, we each commit to:

- Learn all we can about the history of Native and indigenous peoples in our area and beyond.
- Share what we learn with others. Spread the word, talk with family, friends and co-workers about history; help educate town leaders, civic organizations and community members; host educational awareness events.
- Continue to explore our own privilege, prejudices and assumptions about Native peoples.
- Look for ways to become an ally to Native and indigenous peoples.
- Learn about who we are and from where we have come, and honor our own heritage.
- Speak up.

**Adapted from <http://mainewabanakireach.org/start-the-conversation/>, suggestions by REACH Community Relations Coordinator Arla Patch*

On behalf of the New England Conference, we will:

- Build relationships with Native peoples based on equality within the conference and beyond:
 - We will commit to listen and learn rather than teach and lead
- Build trust by respecting Native expressions of Spirituality:
 - We will commit to involve Native Americans in planning and/or leading activities such as Native American Sunday for our local church worship services, Native American Camp experiences at our camp and retreat ministries, and educational opportunities.
- Help keep Native culture alive.
 - With dignity and respect, we will commit to provide opportunities for children and youth to experience and explore the indigenous culture.

As a Conference, we:

- Affirm our commitment to empowering the presence of Native and indigenous people in the life of the New England Annual Conference.
- Strengthen awareness and support of Native American Ministries Sunday in the New England Conference.
- Strengthen and be supportive of the New England Committee on Native American Ministries (CONAM).
- Support General Advances and church-wide funding for 22 Native ministries.

- o Commit ourselves to resourcing and development of new Native and indigenous ministries
- o Commit to developing relationships of mutuality with Native peoples in local contexts.
- o Continue to provide education for non-Native people about why the Act of Repentance is important.

(Adapted from the Council of Bishop's Statement)

In partnership with Native ministry leaders and resource people throughout the Connection, the New England Conference will support:

- o Developing new Native and indigenous leaders across the Connection including an increased number of people nurtured for service in congregational, annual conference, jurisdictional and central conference, and general church ministries, including the episcopacy.
- o Support General Church initiatives related to land and treaty rights, support for tribal sovereignty and cultural preservation; better health care and education for Native people and the safety of Native and indigenous women.

(Adapted from the Council of Bishop's Statement)

Offertory

“Kyrie Eleison”

*(need SATB conference ensemble to do this that can rehearse
Tuesday night and/or Wednesday am)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PpForskd19Y>

WE MOVE FORWARD INTO GOD'S REDEMPTIVE FUTURE

Ritual of Commitment

Marcia: This day we begin a journey. To listen is to begin to care—to not just hear, but to hold, to tell, to learn more, to offer acknowledgment and confession.

We cannot do all of this here in this moment, this night.

But we can pick up a stone from the River of Life.

Stones that were once hurled in ways that hurt,
can become listening Story Stones that lead to life.

Stones are considered by some native peoples to be the grandfathers and mothers,
witnesses to our actions through time.

Indeed our sacred texts talk about how the stones will cry out if injustice is hushed up.
We can take these back to our churches as a symbol and covenant to continue to listen
and to walk the journey of healing with one another.
They can become witnesses to our actions, advocating and working for native rights.
You are invited to come to the center aisle and get a stone that reminds us to listen and to act.

Ritual of gathering the stones/caring for the stories.

(River stones in the aisles and at center table)

*... people come to the river to gather a stone to take back to their people, to use and multiply in a
service at their church as they study and worship together further.*

Meditative music accompanies this action (Native American flute player?).

As it seems that this action is finished, words on the screen...

Bishop Devadhar leads the people in speaking their commitment:

**As the people of the New England Conference of the United Methodist Church,
we commit to this journey begun in this endeavor.
To the generations before us—the cloud of witnesses to this Act—
to the generation of peoples living now,
to the next generation who will hear of our promises this night,
and unto the “seventh-generation” and beyond,
we offer our commitment this night to this journey—to walk hand-in-hand
with the indigenous and native peoples of this world,
with the strength we have through Jesus Christ our Savior,
in the power of the Holy Spirit, and for the glory of our God.**

[“Heleluyan” song led by Pat]

Words for the Journey

[several readers - diversity in ethnicity and geography]

Reader 1: [W]e now go out into the different directions
to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

Reader 2: We go out to correct what we did wrong,
what others did wrong,
and sometimes to take the blame for another's mistake as Jesus did for us.

Reader 3: We go out to stand up
for the powerless, the voiceless, and those invisible.

Reader 4: Gracious God, let your mercy and grace fall on us and give us courage to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

**All: Creator God, as we walk from this place
with renewed strength for the journey before us,
let us follow the path of Jesus
as the Spirit guides our steps.**

Reader 5: Help us to make wise choices in the days ahead, to serve those in need, and to remember our place in the circle of life.

**All: Remind us to listen to our elders,
to teach our children the traditions of our people,
to respect one another and all creation.**

**As we wait for the day
when we will be reunited with you and those who have gone before us,
keep our hope alive
and our footsteps on the path toward home.**

Reader 6: As we depart from one another, remember, Creator God was here before we came and will be here after we depart. Creator God came in with us and will stay with us when we depart. We are all connected to each other and to our Creator.

All: All praise to Creator God! Amen.

Postlude

Worship Notes:

We are grateful for the work of Pat Warrior Woman Parent and CONAM in helping to coordinate elements of this worship. This service is based in part on the Act of Repentance designed for the General Conference 2012 by:

General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns Act of Repentance Task Force:

Co-Chair: Rev. Carol Lakota Eastin
Co-Chair: Dr. Blenda Smith
Member: Rev. Michele Bartlow
Member: Rev. Dr. Youngsook Charlene Kang
Member: Mr. Lee Scott
Member: Ms. Michelle Thorne
Member: Mr. Charles Brower
General Secretary, ex officio: Rev. Dr. Stephen Sidorak, Jr.
Associate General Secretary, ex officio: Rev. Betty Gamble
Dr. Marcia McFee, Worship Director, GC 2012

“Gathering Chant” New Century Hymnal, 742. © 1990 Phil Porter, used with permission.

“Who Is My Mother, Who Is My Brother” The Faith We Sing, 2225. Words by Shirley Erena Murray; Music by Jack Schrader © 1992 Hope Publishing Company. Used by permission, OneLicense # E-803249.

“Listen to the Word that God Has Spoken” Glory to God Hymnal, 455. Words and Music Anon. Canadian.

“Creator Had a Purpose” by Pat Parent in the style of n’ditlogits, Abenaki storytellers.

“Dust and Ashes” Upper Room Worshipbook, 172. Words by Brian Wren © 1989 and new verse © 2011 Hope Publishing Company; music by David Haas © 1991 GIA Publications, Inc. Used by permission, OneLicense # E-803249.

“Kyrie Eleison” (Have Mercy) Words and music by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend. Order choral version at JWPepper.com.

“Heleluyan” Words and music Trad. Muskogee (Creek) Indian; transcription by Charles H. Webb.

Words for the Journey (from Native American Great Thanksgiving, by the Native American Writer’s Group of the Open Source Liturgy Project (General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church). Used by permission.