

Liturgy written or adapted by Helms Jarrell for Beloved Community Charlotte

Here's some background for writing your own Land Acknowledgement and Call to Worship

Start by centering us. Help us to pay attention to our surroundings and acknowledge God as Creator.

Example: God invites us to experience and bear witness to the belovedness of all creation. We bear witness in these moments to the beauty and wonder of this place. The trees around us, providing the very breath we breathe. Within the intertwined community of this watershed and landscape are creatures and creation of a wildly imaginative and mysterious God.

Acknowledge the history of this place

Example: We bear witness to that which is deep in the soil, the history of this place and the people that inhabited it. We honor and recognize the Catawba and Sugaree peoples. We also recognize that many enslaved and indentured peoples were forced to dedicate their labor to the construction of what is now Charlotte, NC. To these peoples and their descendants, we acknowledge their indelible mark on the space in which we gather.

Say why this all matters to us and what we hope to do about it.

Example: We yearn to know and share in the mystery of God's unending love. In recognizing that this land is colonized indigenous territory that has been crafted through slave and indentured labor, it is our collective responsibility to critically interrogate the histories of these events, and to honor, protect, and sustain this land.

Draw us back to the reason why we are here.

Example: Through acknowledgement, confession, and repair, we take responsibility for embodying God's holy peace. This is why we are gathered, to actively participate in and embody God's restorative healing and unending love.

The following are Land Acknowledgements and Calls to worship that we use at BCC in 2022-2023

Date(s) used: Aug 14, 2022; June 9, 2024

Written by helms jarrell

Themes: history, repentance, native peoples, oppression, watershed, connectedness

We pause to pay attention to our surroundings and acknowledge God as Creator.

God invites us to experience and bear witness to the belovedness of all creation. We bear witness in these moments to the beauty and wonder of this place. The trees around us, providing the very breath we breathe. Within the intertwined community of

this watershed and landscape are creatures and creation of a wildly imaginative and mysterious God.

We acknowledge the history of this place

We bear witness to that which is deep in the soil, the history of this place and the people that inhabited it. We honor and recognize the Catawba and Sugaree peoples. We also recognize that many enslaved and indentured peoples were forced to dedicate their labor to the construction of what is now Charlotte, NC. To these peoples and their descendants, we acknowledge their indelible mark on the space in which we gather.

We proclaim the reason why this all matters to us and what we hope to do about it.

We yearn to know and share in the mystery of God's unending love. In recognizing that this land is colonized indigenous territory that has been crafted through slave and indentured labor, it is our collective responsibility to critically interrogate the histories of these events, and to honor, protect, and sustain this land.

We remember the reason why we are here.

Through acknowledgement, confession, and repair, we take responsibility for embodying God's holy peace. This is why we are gathered, to actively participate in and embody God's restorative healing and unending love.

Date Used: Sept 25, 2022

Table Meditation

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread. Luke 24: 30-35

Date Used: Oct 23, 2022

Table Meditation

1 Corinthians 11: 23-26

For I received from the Holy One what I also handed on to you, that Christ Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant.. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim Christ's death, burial, and resurrection until he comes again.

Date(s) Used: Not yet

Adapted from Breath of Life Bible Study Curriculum, created by Mom's Clean Air Force : https://www.momscleanairforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/BibleStudy_CommunityRX-compressed.pdf

Theme: creation, soil, self care, love, manifesting community care

Date used: 9/11/22

Stewardship is the process we use to care for the gifts God gives us. Creation is more than a gift—she is literally a part of us. Her soil colors our body; her air animates our soul; and we are to love all of these manifestations of this great creation. God created a diverse earth that responds to God's love with built in seasons of growth, rest, and regeneration. In the beginning we were asked to love earth as God loved us. Because we are infused with Creation, the way we care for Creation is a reflection of how we care for ourselves. Self care has become a concern in our communities partially because we have neglected the invitation to grow, rest, and regenerate within a practice of love. Christ, as Source of Life, gathered his disciples and reminded them to love one another as He loved them. Caring for the earth is an extension of God's commandment to take care of ourselves. When we care for Creation, we are caring for the dust from which our bodies were molded and the air God blew into those bodies to give them life. As believers, we often sacrifice ourselves to care for others. Women do this often as they sacrifice for the nurturing of children and the community at large. You are challenged to extend stewardship to yourselves and as you do so, extend it to Creation care. It is within this magnificent creation that we gather and reflect on practices of love. May we be made whole within ourselves and our community to act stewardly, not only to others, but to ourselves and the earth as an extension of ourselves and of God.

Date(s) used: 10/23/2022

Adapted from Breath of Life Bible Study Curriculum, created by Mom's Clean Air Force : https://www.momscleanairforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/BibleStudy_CommunityRX-compressed.pdf

Themes: breath, breathing, pollution, creation

To accompany breath prayer:

Holy Gracious and Loving God, we are in awe of this beautiful planet You asked us to care for. We wish everyone were blessed to enjoy the scent of fresh blossoms in the air and dew on the grass. We need Your wisdom in restoring battered ecosystems. We need Your discipline in transforming our lifestyles and Your courage in crafting new policies so that everyone can breathe freely Your breath of life. Amen.

Date(s) used: not yet

Adapted from Breath of Life Bible Study Curriculum, created by Mom's Clean Air Force :

https://www.momscleanairforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/BibleStudy_CommunityRX-compressed.pdf

Themes: garden, redemption, dominion, earth, stewardship, community care.

A Gospel of the Garden

All: “When God coupled the earth with the breath of eternity, our souls and the soil were fused and our destinies perpetually intertwined. While many of us have been taught that human beings have dominion over the Earth, we have not understood that what we do to Mother Earth, we do to one another and to God.”

A volunteer: Let us celebrate the earth’s biodiversity -- all of the different kinds of organisms living within a given area including plants, animals, and fungi -- provides a template for cultural diversity when we stop to listen and learn the lessons of the garden. Please take a moment and collect things from the earth and bring them to the central table.

[Pause to collect and place on the table.]

A volunteer: May these objects remind us that Christ redeems humankind back to union with God, Christ redeems land to its diversity, water to its purity, and air to its life giving force. God did not segregate beautiful trees from food-producing trees, nor were food crops segregated from other kinds of plants. Fertilization and pollination occurred naturally. The diversity of native plants kept insects within balance. All that was required was pruning, harvesting an abundant yield, and restoring fertility to the soil. We were given a system of naturally recurring abundance. Maintaining that principle of abundance is a bedrock of our faith and our health.

All: “When God coupled the earth with the breath of eternity, our souls and the soil were fused and our destinies perpetually intertwined. While many of us have been taught that human beings have dominion over the Earth, we have not understood that what we do to Mother Earth, we do to one another and to God.”

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Themes: cosmic weaving, stillness, peace

God of Creation, of cosmic networking and weaving, We ask that you continue to weave wisdom into our personal and national choices; May we cultivate Nature’s power with respect so that she cultivates our humility; May her beauty cultivate our joy -- her stillness ignite our peace -- And her seasons ripen our patience; May Nature bring forth our fruit of the Spirit, even as we harvest from her. Amen.

Date(s) used: not yet

Adapted from Breath of Life Bible Study Curriculum, created by Mom's Clean Air Force : https://www.momscleanairforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/BibleStudy_CommunityRX-compressed.pdf

Themes: I am because we are, wisdom, we, interconnectedness, Beloved Community,

Volunteer 1: The African proverb "I am because we are; we are therefore I am" provides a continuous source of reflection on the truth of our interconnectedness. One of the requirements of living in this truth is to take more time and more words to create a harmonious space for all of our relations to dwell together.

Volunteer 2: The blessing is that as we shift from "I" to "we," we become ready for unity of the beloved community. Martin Luther King Jr. offered us a vision of the beloved community as an end goal of social justice work. Ellen Davis in the Green Bible echoes that thought,

All: "Because we have no life apart from the health of soil, water [and air], we must care for it as one would care for a beloved family member." Divine Wisdom is the thread that weaves God, humanity, and Creation together and she is the relationship transformer as well. She was there in the beginning before the ecosystems of mountains, seas, and fields were formed. Wisdom worked beside God. She rejoiced with God, rejoiced in Creation, and delighted in the human race.

Volunteer 2: Ecosystems include a complex web of relationships between elements of God's creation. Specific birds feed on specific insects, who feed on plants native to specific soils and climates. These are relationships developed over thousands of years that maintain habitats that maintain clean air and are fueled by the proximity of ancient aquifers.

Volunteer 1: When we dismantle ecosystems, there seems to be a corresponding dismantling of a fair work ethic, demise in physical health, and a disconnect in the original joy between God, humanity, and Creation.

All: "The heavens are the Lord's Heavens, but the Earth he has given to human beings" (Psalms 115:16). Creation is groaning with all of humanity to birth a new reality -- one that is free from the slavery of corruption and human selfishness. We come today to listen and learn from Divine Wisdom so that we might reunite ourselves with God's creation and truly be Beloved Community.

Adapted from Breath of Life Bible Study Curriculum, created by Mom's Clean Air Force : https://www.momscleanairforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/BibleStudy_CommunityRX-compressed.pdf

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Themes: breath, present moment awareness, spacial awareness, filling us.

Close your eyes and count to 20. What do you smell? How does it feel on your skin? Take a moment and discuss what you smelled and felt with your group, describing it with adjectives and adverbs.

OPENING PRAYER

Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit surround with your presence

Fill our hearts with joy

Create a sacred space of love

Be With Us

Adapted from Breath of Life Bible Study Curriculum, created by Mom's Clean Air Force :
https://www.momscleanairforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/BibleStudy_Communit_yRX-compressed.pdf

Themes: Declaration of Rights of Mother Earth

Date used: 9/11/22

Universal Declaration of Rights of Mother Earth

Preamble

We, the peoples and nations of Earth: considering that we are all part of Mother Earth, an indivisible, living community of interrelated and interdependent beings with a common destiny; gratefully acknowledging that Mother Earth is the source of life, nourishment and learning and provides everything we need to live well; recognizing that the capitalist system and all forms of depredation, exploitation, abuse and contamination have caused great destruction, degradation and disruption of Mother Earth, putting life as we know it today at risk through phenomena such as climate change; convinced that in an interdependent living community it is not possible to recognize the rights of only human beings without causing an imbalance within Mother Earth; affirming that to guarantee human rights it is necessary to recognize and defend the rights of Mother Earth and all beings in her and that there are existing cultures, practices and laws that do so; conscious of the urgency of taking decisive, collective action to transform structures and systems that cause climate change and other threats to Mother Earth; proclaim this Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth, and call on the General Assembly of the United Nation to adopt it, as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations of the world, and to the end that every individual and institution takes responsibility for promoting through teaching, education, and consciousness raising, respect for the rights recognized in this Declaration and ensure through prompt and progressive measures and mechanisms, national and international, their universal and effective recognition and observance among all peoples and States in the world.

Adapted from Breath of Life Bible Study Curriculum, created by Mom's Clean Air Force :
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Themes: Declaration of Rights of Mother Earth

Universal Declaration of Rights of Mother Earth

Article 1. Mother Earth

(1) Mother Earth is a living being. (2) Mother Earth is a unique, indivisible, self-regulating community of interrelated beings that sustains, contains and reproduces all beings. (3) Each being is defined by its relationships as an integral part of Mother Earth. (4) The inherent rights of Mother Earth are inalienable in that they arise from the same source as existence. (5) Mother Earth and all beings are entitled to all the inherent rights recognized in this Declaration without distinction of any kind, such as may be made between organic and inorganic beings, species, origin, use to human beings, or any other status. (6) Just as human beings have human rights, all other beings also have rights which are specific to their species or kind and appropriate for their role and function within the communities within which they exist. (7) The rights of each being are limited by the rights of other beings and any conflict between their rights must be resolved in a way that maintains the integrity, balance and health of Mother Earth.

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Themes: Declaration of Rights of Mother Earth

Universal Declaration of Rights of Mother Earth

Article 2. Inherent Rights of Mother Earth

(1) Mother Earth and all beings of which she is composed have the following inherent rights: (a) the right to life and to exist; (b) the right to be respected; (c) the right to regenerate its bio-capacity and to continue its vital cycles and processes free from human disruptions; (d) the right to maintain its identity and integrity as a distinct, self-regulating and interrelated being; (e) the right to water as a source of life; (f) the right to clean air; (g) the right to integral health; (h) the right to be free from contamination, pollution and toxic or radioactive waste; (i) the right to not have its genetic structure modified or disrupted in a manner that threatens its integrity or vital and healthy functioning; (j) the right to full and prompt restoration for violations of the rights recognized in this Declaration caused by human activities; (2) Each being has the right to a place and to play its role in Mother Earth for her harmonious functioning. (3) Every being has the right to wellbeing and to live free from torture or cruel treatment by human beings.

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Themes: Declaration of Rights of Mother Earth

Universal Declaration of Rights of Mother Earth

Article 3. Obligations of human beings to Mother Earth

(1) Every human being is responsible for respecting and living in harmony with Mother Earth. (2) Human beings, all States, and all public and private institutions must: (a) act in accordance with the rights and obligations recognized in this Declaration; (b) recognize and promote the full implementation and enforcement of the rights and obligations recognized in this Declaration; (c) promote and participate in learning, analysis, interpretation and communication about how to live in harmony with Mother Earth in accordance with this Declaration; (d) ensure that the pursuit of human wellbeing contributes to the wellbeing of Mother Earth, now and in the future; (e) establish and apply effective norms and laws for the defence, protection and conservation of the rights of Mother Earth; (f) respect, protect, conserve and where necessary, restore the integrity, of the vital ecological cycles, processes and balances of Mother Earth; (g) guarantee that the damages caused by human violations of the inherent rights recognized in this Declaration are rectified and that those responsible are held accountable for restoring the integrity and health of Mother Earth; (h) empower human beings and institutions to defend the rights of Mother Earth and of all beings; (i) establish precautionary and restrictive measures to prevent human activities from causing species extinction, the destruction of ecosystems or the disruption of ecological cycles; (j) guarantee peace and eliminate nuclear, chemical and biological weapons; (k) promote and support practices of respect for Mother Earth and all beings, in accordance with their own cultures, traditions and customs; (l) promote economic systems that are in harmony with Mother Earth and in accordance with the rights recognized in this Declaration.

Adapted from "Opening the letter"

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nf3AxVOAP_HV7nPwi3540-EsCMOiUZx6/view

Themes: Invocation, creation, healing, benediction

Date used

Our loving Creator,

We know that where two or more of us are gathered that You are in our midst. Thank You for Your presence with us today—for exercising our ability to listen to the places where Your wondrously-made creation groans for healing and care. Bless us now as we leave so that we may continue to grow in our ability to see and serve You

**as members of Your sacred creation.
In Christ's name, Amen.**

Adapted from "Opening the Letter"

Themes: Romans 8, creation groaning

Date used

Reader #1

Romans 8 declares, "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God ...creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God."

All: God's creation will be set free from its bondage.

Reader #2

But today, "God's creation delivers unsettling news. Earth's climate is warming to dangerous levels."

All: God's creation will be set free from its bondage.

Reader #3

"90 percent of the world's fisheries have been depleted." All: God's creation will be set free from its bondage.

Reader #4:

"Coastal development and pollution are causing a sharp decline in ocean health."

All: God's creation will be set free from its bondage.

Reader #5:

"Shrinking habitat threatens to extinguish thousands of species."

All: God's creation will be set free from its bondage.

Reader #6:

"Over 95 percent of the United States' forests have been lost."

All: God's creation will be set free from its bondage.

Reader #7:

"Almost half of the population of the United States lives in areas that do not meet national air quality standards."

All: God's creation will be set free from its bondage.

Reader #8:

Romans 8 also declares, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, for redemption ..."

All: O God, You set all captives free, Awaken our senses so that we might know creation's

groanings, beauty, and longings. Enliven our wills so that we might hunger to work with You for the liberation of Your whole creation. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Adapted from “Opening the Letter

Themes: invocation

Date used

Our Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer,
Please open our hearts to hear Your calling in our
lives—so that we may rejoice in finding the place where
the deep gladness that You create within us meets the
deep hungers and “groanings” of Your world. And, in
finding this place, please equip us for living joyfully into
our vocations—into serving and preserving all that You
hold dear.
In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Adapted from “Opening the Letter

Themes: doxology

Date used

Doxology

(Sung to the tune of the traditional doxology known as
“Old Hundredth,” which begins “Praise God, from whom
all blessings flow...”)

Praise God Cre-a-tor of all things,

For Your glor-y cre-a-tion sings.

We praise You with hearts, minds, and hands

Re-storing wa-ters, air, and lands.

A-men.

Adapted from “Opening the Letter

Themes: Earth is sacred, call to worship

Date used:

Call to Worship

(Adapted from the “Call to Action” section of God’s
Earth Is Sacred.)

Leader: Siblings in Christ, let us join together as one loving expression of the Creator,
Sustain-
er, and Restorer of all creation.

All: Come, let us worship God with the fullness of our lives!

Leader: Beloved, may our worship help us to become living reflections of the true

Gospel: “for

God so loves the cosmos.”

All: Come, let us worship God with the fullness of our lives!

Adapted from “Opening the Letter”

Themes: invocation, Creation’s splendor

Date used:

Creator, Sustainer, and Restorer of all Creation, “We stand [before You,] with awe and gratitude, as members of Your bountiful and good creation.” “We rejoice in the splendor and mystery of countless species, our common creaturehood, and the interdependence of all that You make.” We praise You for revealing glimpses of Your glory and grace through the “windows” of Your creation. With awe and gratitude, joy and praise, we open our full lives to You. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

There are a few more litanies in the Opening the letter resource. Find them here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nf3AxVOAP_HV7nPwi3540-EsCMOiUZx6/view

We pause to pay attention to our surroundings and acknowledge God as Creator.

We acknowledge the history of this place

We proclaim the reason why this all matters to us and what we hope to do about it.

We yearn to know and share in the mystery of God’s unending love. In recognizing that this land is colonized indigenous territory that has been crafted through slave and indentured labor, it is our collective responsibility to critically interrogate the histories of these events, and to honor, protect, and sustain this land.

We remember the reason why we are here.

Through acknowledgement, confession, and repair, we take responsibility for embodying God’s holy peace.

God bless to us our bread. Give bread to those who are hungry and hunger for justice to those who are fed. God bless to us our bread.

Prayers to include in the cup. Everyone reads one aloud.

Used on March 11, 2023

God, we pause to pay attention to our surroundings and acknowledge you as Creator. Forgive us for the times when we forget that we are connected to Your creation.

We acknowledge the history of this place. Help us to know how to best honor and recognize the people who came before us: The Catawba and Sugaree peoples who were exploited and the enslaved and indentured peoples who were exploited in the name of so-called progress. Help us to remember their stories so that we will not repeat them.

We rejoice in the splendor and mystery of countless species. Today, we especially name some of the endangered species of our state:

The carolina Northern Flying Squirrel, The humpback whale, The red wolf
The gray bat, The leather back turtle.

These creatures are a part of our common creaturehood and the interdependence of all that You make, O God.

God, More than 1 in 7 children in America experience food insecurity. Guide us so that we may distribute your abundance to all children, O God.

1.5 million school aged children experience homelessness. Work through us to house the houseless, O God

God, it cannot be your desire for 1909 children to be arrested each day in America. God, abolish injustice, now, we pray.

A beloved abolition movement leader from Charlotte, Jaime, is imprisoned for protecting the Weelaunee forest and is facing major charges of domestic terrorism. We pray for the forest and for Jaime to be restored to freedom of movement and life.

Our schools are struggling with lack of teachers, being threatened to restrict children's education, and with no superintendent on the horizon. God, show us the answers to this terrible problem.

Our public transportation system is wavering- the third executive leader to leave in 5 months. Public transportation is essential in a city like ours. God, provide your guidance here.

Used Feb 26, 2023

Water Gazing

I'd like to ask everyone to get a cup of water. Yes, hydration!

Now, let your gaze rest on the surface of the water in your other cup.

[slow] Water represents life. It represents cleansing and refreshment, birth, and fertility. Under you right now is an undercurrent of water, beneath the ground, bringing life to plants and animals all around you. Every creature, every organism, within the watershed of your place exists within an interconnected basin. Each and everyone is dependent on the health of the whole. And you are a part of the interconnected lifegiving whole.

[slow] Our disjointed lives and disconnectedness can lead us to being in lack of touch with our immediate surroundings. Maybe even during this contemplative moment, you'll get distracted or bored, maybe you'll become anxious or restless. When those moments come, take a moment to place your gaze back onto the surface of the water. Look at the reflections of light, give thanks for the life giving source, remember your cosmic connection to place, creatures, and people around you and allow the water to bring you a sense of grounded centeredness.

If you'd like, you could even dip the tip of your finger into the cup. Feel the cool sensation on your skin. Let this be a tactile reminder that you are alive and you are connected. [pause]

we name the bodies of water near us that supply our drinking water and the waters that nourish the ground: The Catawba, Sugar Creek, Irwin Creek, Mtn. Island Lake, Paw Creek, Lake Wylie, Lake Norman.

We acknowledge our place and the interwovenness we have to creation around us.

(Concluding with an adaptation of The Lord's Prayer written by Dr. Yolanda Norton)

Our Mother, who is in heaven and within us, We call upon your names. Your wisdom come. Your will be done, In all the spaces in which You dwell. Give us each day sustenance and perseverance. Remind us of our limits as we give grace to the limits of others. Separate us from the temptation of empire, But deliver us into community. For you are the dwelling place within us the empowerment around us and the celebration among us now and forever. Amen

5 min version

Take a moment to settle in. Find a comfortable position for yourself where you can be alert but relaxed. Take a few breaths together. Bring your attention to the soles of your feet, feel them as they rest on the ground. Feel the work they are doing and their connection to the ground.

Imagine that you are standing or sitting outside. That the walls of this home are gone, that there is no church on the corner, no Tuckaseegee road. Instead, all around you are giant oak trees, and maples and poplars, stretching over a hundred feet tall and with trunks so large that you can't wrap your arms around them. They are just starting to spread out their spring leaves. (1:10) There are paths through the trees used for travel and hunting game. There is corn and squash growing on the banks of streams and rivers planted by the yeh is-WAH h'reh, or "people of the river" who would later be called the Catawba who have been in this area for around 200 generations. It has only been in the past 15 or so generations that Europeans have been here. The Catawba continue to retain land and rebuild in the region.

The land in this area didn't lend itself to planting indigo and sugar, like in the coastal plains North Carolina. Europeans still brought enslaved people who cleared the forests and leveled land for development and other agriculture. As the land was transformed into grids of ownership, smallpox pandemics began to lay into the Catawba. After the Revolutionary war, the land held by the Catawba was cut back to one square quarter of a mile in the unratified Treaty at Nations Ford, which is less than the Enderly Park neighborhood where we are currently. (2:00) Meanwhile, many enslaved people used the war to escape and disrupt the slavery economy. Many also joined the British army who promised emancipation.

A rural community, Enderly Park's growth was sparked with the establishment of a US Military base, Camp Greene in 1917. If you follow Tuckaseegee Road south you would have entered the base. Houses and farms followed the short-lived base and the community was mostly white, blue-collar and middle class with home purchases supported by federal subsidies from the GI Bill and the federal housing authority loan programs.

In 1959, the federal government terminated the tribal status of all native nations. In just over a decade, the Catawba began organizing to reinstate their federal status. In 1993

they won status and a land claim just over the border in South Carolina, with pockets of land in this area as well. (3:00)

In the 1960s, big plans were laid to transform downtown Charlotte through a federal program called urban renewal, which would allow white suburban residents easier access to city centers while tearing down Black neighborhoods which were deemed slums. The Brooklyn neighborhood was home to about 9,000 African American residents and one person remembered how residents were so upset about the plans, always out on the streets speaking against it. Brooklyn was cut up by putting in the 277 and the 77, which you probably drove on from Davidson. Displaced residents need new places to live, so white realtors started practicing something called blockbusting on the westside of Charlotte. They would call white homeowners and try to get them to sell their homes because they said Black people were moving in. They'd then either flip the homes and sell them above market-rate or use them as over-priced rentals. By the 1980s, Enderly Park was predominantly African American.

Today, Enderly Park is facing change again. The Urban Displacement project, which maps how vulnerable neighborhoods are to displacement (4:00) puts Enderly Park at the highest precarity. As Charlotte grows and people look for low land value with a mostly renter community, Enderly Park becomes more and more attractive. Despite this, key anchors hold their place; active neighborhood organizations, prized fruit trees, multiple places of worship, a community center and QC Family Tree, where you are now. (4:20)

Now I invite you to bring your attention back to your feet and how all of this history flows through the ground where you are. From the Oak trees to the maps of homeownership rates and everything in between. Now shift your attention to how you made your way here. What histories and experiences shape how you came to be sitting in this living room today. Out of the infinite threads that created the conditions for you to be here today, what are the ones that are most important?

Take one more breath together.

We ring the bell, O God, because You are worthy of praise, of confession from every tongue, of worship from every living thing. We light the candle because You created, and call us to be creative in seeking justice. Like the ringing of the chime and the heat of the flame, You live and move and call us to action with You as co-creators of Your way and realm of love.

Come one and come all, Let us praise God together.

THE PRACTICE

Set Up

- This is a feeling and embodiment exercise, not a thinking or imagining one.
- Stand, if accessible. Alternatively, sit or lie down with your spine easily extended and your arms and legs uncrossed.
- Keep your feet hip distance apart.
- Give yourself a stretch, and allow your breath to deepen.
- Soften your gaze or close your eyes.
- Soften your knees, belly and jaw.

Entrust yourself to the support of your skin

- **With each inhale** entrust yourself more and more completely to your skin.
- As your breath deepens, let yourself feel and rest further in the unconditional support of your skin as a container, filter, connector, discerner, and feeler.

Entrust yourself to the support of the earth

- **With each exhale** entrust the weight of everything within your skin to the earth below.
- Let yourself, and all that you carry, feel and rest in the unconditional support that the earth is always providing. Consider dropping roots that grow longer and stronger with each exhale, anchoring you deeper in the earth's support.

Entrust yourself to your natural design to protect what you love

- Staying anchored by your roots, **use your breath** to entrust yourself to the length of your body, entrusting yourself to your natural design to “grow tall” or “rise up” in the face of obstacles and opportunities to protect what you love.
- Expand your length from your tailbone to top of head, in your arms, legs, feet, and hands. Let your weight hang off your skeleton. Rest in your natural design to embody dignity.

❖ *Pause here. Let your eyes gently open; staying connected with yourself as you expand your connection to all that is around you; and **notice a sensation**. Sensations are generally located in a particular part of your body (i.e. hands, chest, left leg) and characterized by qualities of temperature (i.e. warm, cool, neutral), texture (i.e. sharp, round, hard), AND/OR movement (i.e. pulsating, radiating, swirling). There are always a million sensations going on in our body, and there are often one or two asking for your attention. **Take a moment to identify one sensation asking for your attention by noting, 1) its location, and 2) one or two of its qualities.***

[NOTE: the pause above is only needed when you are teaching this to people for the first time. Once they are familiar with the practice of sharing a sensation you can skip this pause.]

Entrust yourself to the support of the past

- ***Using your breath***, fill into the backside of your body (torso, limbs, and head), entrusting yourself to all that is behind you, all of your experience and ancestors, all of those who have come before you, clearing the path for you to actively protect what you love in the present.
- Feel and rest in the support that comes from all that is at your back. Draw on the wisdom that comes from the good and challenging experiences behind you.

Entrust yourself to the unknown of the future

- ***Using your breath***, fill into the front side of your body (torso, limbs, and head) entrusting yourself to the huge opportunity that comes with the unknown and unfixed nature of the future, embodying “I don’t know” as a place of power. Feel the trust that future generations have in you to protect what you love.
- Let the future come to you and unfold in its own time and way. Meet it with presence. Withstand the need to know or control how it is going to turn out.

Entrust yourself to your natural design to take up space

- ***Using your breath*** expand into your width (across the broadness of your feet/stance, legs, hips, waist, chest, shoulders & arms, neck & head), entrusting yourself to your natural design to take up space, to impact and be impacted by those around you, allies and adversaries alike.
- Give yourself permission to be exactly as you are, a perfectly imperfect being. Feel and let yourself be supported by the perfect imperfection of all that is around you.

Entrust yourself to the resiliency that lies at the intersection of difference

- **Take a few breaths** entrusting all the dimensions/directions (skin, weight, length, depth, width) to each other.
- Let these dimensions impact and be impacted by one another. Feel how your willingness to take up space impacts your trust in the past and future, or how the support of earth impacts your ability to protect what you love. Entrust the hugeness of this to your skin. Notice how your anchored roots allow you to lean forward or back or grow tall with more ease. Rest in the complexity of all these dimensions and trust yourself to your design.
- Be aware of every dimension as an expression of and resource to your dignity.
- Be aware of your natural design to embody the complexity and contradiction within and around you. Let your body express that with ease and grace.
- Find a way to rest and trust into the natural resiliency and safety that comes at the intersection of difference.

❖ **NOTICE A SENSATION:** It may be the same one as before, a different one, or maybe the original one has changed.

SHARE YOUR SENSATION & LET YOURSELF BE IMPACTED

These prayers were written for LGBTQ Pride Month worship at [St. John's Presbyterian Church](#) in San Francisco, CA.

An Opening Prayer for Pride

**God of wild love and extravagant acceptance...
Spirit of boldness and beauty...**

**You are faithfully present in both the grit and glitter of life,
and you are present here with us now.
Awaken us to your dream for creation:
A world in which every member of the human family is free
to flourish however you have made them.**

**Forgive us for the moments we have held back
your ever-flowing current of love, dignity, and justice.
Remake us into a people eager to see you
in the faces, bodies, and expressions of all people.
Remind each of us to step out of the shadows of our lives
and shine fearlessly and courageously.**

**Ignite the Divine Light within us to sparkle through the prism
of our bodies and brighten every corner of this Earth.**

**Holy One, You call each of us beloved.
Each of us cherished.
Each of us desired.
Each of us sacred.
And so, we give you thanks now and forever.**

Amen.

A Communion Liturgy for Pride

Beloved children of God, as we gather here this morning, we are the church! In this moment, we respond to the words of Jesus, who tells us: "...where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

And it is with the power of Christ that we proclaim that this table is open to all people — no matter who you are or what you believe or what you've been told.

Here at the Lord's table we remember the simple gathering of a chosen family that came together for a meal that proclaimed a new way of being in this world.

**We remember God's radically inclusive love made real in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
We remember the One who befriended the forgotten, embraced the outcast, and saw the Image of God in all people.
We remember the One who confronted every power that disconnected, marginalized, oppressed, and "other-ed."**

It is here at this table that we find hope and imagination to see God's dream and promise of a world of wholeness, and it is here that we receive the nourishment and strength to continue on the paths of justice.

We recall that on the night he was betrayed, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way he took the cup, saying, "This is my blood, my very life, poured out for you. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of

me.”

God, we thank you for breathing this world into existence and proclaiming from its birth: “It is good.”

We come to you with gratitude for the endless blessings that we see, feel, and know on our journeys of life.

We celebrate the rich diversity of your creation — every beautiful body, every shade of skin, every expression of love.

Through your Spirit, open our hearts to the joy we can find in the midst of life’s challenges.

Remind us that we are loved — fiercely and forever.

And however the world may try to hold us down or tell us who to be, remind us that nothing can separate us from your presence.

And so as we stand before this feast, we pray with the words you taught us to pray:

Our Beloved Parent in heaven, holy is your name.

*Your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.*

Give us today our daily bread.

*Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.*

*Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.*

*For the kingdom, the power and the glory
are yours, now and forever.*

Amen.

Beloved children of God, the table is set.

Come and feast with the One who loves you more than you can possibly imagine.

Creative Contemplation prompts: Find a creative medium with which folks can contemplate the following

- What are the seeds that have been planted? What are the weeds that have been cleared?
- Who are the leaders you have come from?
- How did you get radicalized?
- What is the struggle you come from? How does your culture- food, spirituality, music, art- reflect the struggle?
- What can I learn and take back? What can I unlearn and take back?
- You haven't yet met all the people that are going to love you.
- How does liberation take shape?
- What is getting in the way of raising our children to thrive?
- "The ancestors want to speak to you through the noise, but they refuse to raise their voices, they will only whisper." ~ Starsky Wilson.
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