

An Immigration Justice Worship Liturgy

For use on World Communion Sunday (Oct. 3rd, 2021) or anytime

Prepared by Rev. Elizabeth Hazel and Bryan Sirchio and the Wisconsin Conference
Immigration Justice Working Group

(To be used as is or edited as needed to serve your local context)

Prelude

Call To Worship (*By Bryan Sirchio, pastor of McFarland UCC in McFarland, WI*)

One: God of justice and compassion, we give thanks for your presence among us here and now. We are grateful beyond words that you always find us, meet us where we are, and guide us into experiences of healing love and homecoming. We praise you and give thanks for the Extravagant Welcome that runs through the entire biblical Story.

Many: *Thank you God for your Welcoming Love.*

One: Today we connect our worship specifically with both the heartbreaking realities and the rich gifts of immigrants and refugees who long to cross our borders and who live among us.

Many: *Thank you God for your Welcoming Love.*

One: We are reminded O God that our spiritual ancestors in Scripture were themselves often refugees, sojourners, and “strangers.” We remember their desperate hunger and thirst in the desert. We remember your constant presence, guidance, and provision, as well as the countless exhortations in Scripture to practice hospitality, welcome the stranger, do justice, and reach out to those most destitute and vulnerable.

Many: *Thank you God for your Welcoming Love.*

One: Holy One, as we worship you now, we ask that you open our hearts, deepen our compassion, and broaden our practices of hospitality. We pray for guidance as we seek to be communities of support, grace, and justice. Teach us how to be in Christ-centered solidarity with all those seeking asylum, fleeing for their lives, and longing for a new start, whether they come to us from the pressure cookers of our Southern U.S. borders, from the recent crucible of Afghanistan, or anywhere on this tumultuous yet beautiful planet.

All: *Thank you God for your Welcoming Love.*

Opening Hymn: “God, You Move Across the Borders” (To the tune of “Come, O Fount of Every Blessing” #459 in NCH)

(Text by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. Used with Permission)

God, you move across the borders with the ones who need to flee.
 You walk with the weary traveler; you go with the refugee.
 You cry out from mass detention; you seek justice, here denied.
 You enfold with great compassion those the nations push aside.

God, you move among the suffering in this time of illness here.
 You work through the people offering care amid the pain and fear.
 In our grief and isolation, in the times it's hard to cope,
 You bring peace and consolation; you bring joy and love and hope.

God, you break down mighty barriers — sins we've sanctioned far too long.
 We have walked on paths of privilege; you have moved to right the wrong.
 You have sent your prophets to us, calling racist ways a sin.
 You have judged us and renewed us; you have shown that love will win.

God, you move across the barriers, offering love in Jesus Christ.
 Through your Son, our Lord and Savior, you have called: "Now share my life!"
 By your Spirit, give us courage; help us boldly move to be
 loving, justice-seeking neighbors building your community.

Possible transitional words for the liturgist: “So often, when we focus on issues like immigration justice, we are understandably quick to talk about the heinous violations of human rights that so many immigrants have endured, or about the injustices and needs that must be addressed. These painful realities and stories are all too real and deserve our attention. But we often fail to remember the amazing gifts and blessings that persons coming to our nation have to offer all of us, and the promises they hold for our collective future. With that in mind, let us now share the following liturgy written by author and UCC minister Maren Tirabassi.”

Celebration of the Gifts of Immigrants *(By Maren Tirabassi. Used with permission)*

For the amazing talents and boundless energies
 that will make this country rich, offered by immigrants.

We give thanks, O God.

For future mathematicians and athletes,
 musicians and artists, inventors, and poets.
 For future neighbors, farm workers,

Devoted parents, team members, and civil servants.

We give thanks, O God.

For doctors who will heal,
 gardeners who will plant beauty,
 teachers in school
 who will open a window on the world,
 caregivers of elders
 with kind hands and patient listening
 to give joy in long, lonely days.

We give thanks, O God.

For the energy of youth and the wisdom of age,
 for traditions of faith, family and culture,
 for new words in a globally-infused language.

We give thanks, O God.

For people coming from every corner of the world
 with their hands and hearts filled with gifts to share ... (*shout out some if you like—your favorite ethnic foods for example!*)

We give thanks, O God.

A Song: “Sanctuary” (*A popular worship chorus composed by John Thompson and Randy Scruggs. The Spanish lyrics and third verse were submitted and written by Ruthanne Landsness of Orchard Ridge UCC in Madison, WI*)

Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true,
 With thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for you.

Señor, trans-fór-ma-me, en un san-tua-rio, pu-ro y san-to para tí,
 A-gra-de-ci-dos, pa-ra ti se-re-mos, san-tua-rio para tí.

God, empower us, to be a witness for you, acting boldly in your name
 Seeking justice, where there is hurting, offering hope where there is pain.

Offering (to be done in whatever manner your local church chooses)

A Time of Prayer (sharing joys and concerns of your local community in your normal manner)

A Pastoral Prayer (submitted by Rev. Elizabeth Hazel of Park Falls, WI)

PASTORAL PRAYER: O God, save us from fear—fear that comes from hearing bad news from too many places at once and that causes us to look for someone to blame for all our problems. Save us from seeking simple solutions that falsely promise to put an end to our worries. Forgive us when we end up blaming the most vulnerable of people who are just asking us for a drink of water—literally, or metaphorically. Keep us from fearing that we will be swamped by other people’s needs or that your unstoppable love will not be enough to sustain us if we reach out to those coming over our borders. O God, help us to see that what you desire is for us to keep growing in love and to reach out with compassion to those who seek our help. Fill us with the courage to stand up for the best part of ourselves, our Christian beliefs and our nation. Through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Scripture Readings:

Leviticus 19:34 (ESV translation): “You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love that one as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”

Hebrews 13: 2 (NRSV): “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

Reflection on the text (A message connected to the theme of immigration. This can be composed by the local church pastor/preacher. We have also provided an excerpt of an address by Rev. Randy Mayer as well as a sermon by Rev. Elizabeth Hazel).

Song: “Whatever Is True” (Phil. 4:8) (By Andra Moran, Christopher Grundy, and the Bridge Congregational Songwriter Workshop) This is a brand new song available on the Convergence Music Project website www.convergencemp.com. Sheet music and a lyric video is available. Congregations that would like to use this song can get this music for free by contacting Bryan Sirchio at bryan@convergencemp.com)

*Whatever is true
 Whatever is kind
 Whatever is noble
 Keep this in mind
 Know you are held
 God’s love keeps you close
 No matter what,
 know you are loved
 Wherever you go*

Open your heart, open your eyes

*The love for a stranger,
love for a neighbor
Seeking the Christ*

The Sacrament of Communion (if desirable)

Prayer of Preparation: *Gracious God, we are reminded today that all persons on earth have a place reserved for them at this Table of radical grace and hospitality. There is One Loaf and One Cup which you offer equally to all, and which connects and unites all persons everywhere. May our commitment to a world in which all persons are equally valued and cherished and respected be renewed as we share this sacrament together. In the Name of Christ. Amen.*

Words of Institution (according to the preference/practice of your community)

Unison Prayer of Thanksgiving: *Thank you Holy One for this Bread and Cup, and for providing for us all. Remind us that we are all one human family. May these elements strengthen us to live out your justice and compassion with deeper resolve, courage, and joy. Amen.*

A Litany of Commitment (Submitted by Rev. Randy Mayer, written by Rev. Loren McGrail)

*Used first during worship at Lyndale United Church of Christ, Minneapolis, MN
February 22, 2009*

One: Caring, Just One, you have created us in your likeness. We are all part of your holy family.

Many: **We commit ourselves to welcome the stranger in our midst not only because we were once strangers but because we are kin.**

One: Caring, Just One, you invite us to offer hospitality because that is where we can find you; where we can find ourselves entertaining angels.

Many: **We commit ourselves to opening our hearts to this reality and basing our social justice work on this principle of divine equality.**

One: Caring, Just One, you have asked us to read the landscape of our fears, the terrain of other peoples' sorrow and turn our borders into bridges of compassion.

Many: **We commit ourselves to not live in fear and work toward the creation of humane borders that acknowledge that no human being is illegal for seeking the right to work and feed their family.**

One: Caring, Just One, you have asked us to stand up to the powers and principalities that destroy human dignity.

Many: We commit ourselves to creating a fair immigration system that recognizes immigrants' full humanity and eliminates barriers to their full participation in our society.

One: Caring, Just One, you have asked us to create just laws for all of your people.

Many: We commit ourselves to voting against punitive legislation that deprives immigrants of due process or civil rights, and in support of laws that protect and ensure these rights.

One: Caring, Just One, you created this world and all that is in it, and it is good.

Many: We commit ourselves to its preservation through changing our lifestyles from ones based on limitless consumption and thus limitless exploitation of others.

All: The Caring and Just One has prepared us to be living sanctuaries for love and justice. May we cross all the boundaries that separate us from our own true self and from others. May we know the joy and suffering of inter-connectedness. May we have the wisdom and courage to say no to unjust laws that deprive people of their dignity and rights. May our solidarity with immigrants be a transforming power in the world. May we work together to restore and rebuild our beloved communities.

Closing Song: "Dream God's Dream" (By Bryan Sirchio) (Sheet music is available at www.convergencemp.com. Contact Bryan at bryan@convergencemp.com and he will send you the sheet music at no charge.

*Dream God's Dream
Holy Spirit, help us dream
Of a world where there is justice
And where everyone is free
To build and grow and love
And to simply have enough
The world will change
When we dream God's dream*

I'm dreaming of a world, where the color of one's skin
Will mean less than what's within the person's heart
A world where water's clean, and where air is safe to breathe
And every child born has enough to eat

Chorus

I'm dreaming of the call God is offering to me
How to use my energy and my best gifts
To do the work of Christ—to say God, please use my life
To spread your healing Love and to live your Truth

Chorus

I'm dreaming of the way that I want my life to go
I've got hopes and I've got goals I'd like to meet
I'm reaching for the stars, but I won't forget the scars
Of Christ who died to show that the Dream's for all

Chorus

Benediction (as is desired/used in your local context)

Postlude