

God's Open Door Policy

a service of worship for peace and reconciliation
—leader's guide—

Call to Worship

ONE: King Ahaz slept with his ancestors, and Hezekiah his son became king when he was twenty-five years old. And Hezekiah did what was right in the sight of God. In the first year of his reign, in the first month, Hezekiah opened the doors of the house of God and repaired them.

MANY: Open the gates of the temple!

ONE: The psalmist cried, "Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to God. This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it."

MANY: Open the gates of righteousness!

ONE: God said of Cyrus, the Persian king, "He is my anointed; I have grasped his hand and will subdue nations before him. I will open doors before him, and the gates shall not be closed."

MANY: Open the doors, and let them not be closed!

ONE: Paul and Silas were sitting in their prison cell, singing and praying, when suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened.

ALL: God of miracles, shake the foundations of the prisons that we build for ourselves and each other. Open the doors of our prejudices, and break the chains which separate us.
Amen.

—by Katie Cook (texts from 2 Chronicles 29:1-3; Psalm 118:19; Isaiah 45:1; Acts 16:25-26)

llamado a adoración

LIDER: Y durmió el rey Acáz con sus padres y comenzó a reinar Ezequías su hijo, siendo de veinticinco años. E hizo lo recto ante los ojos de Jehová. En el primer año de su reinado, en el mes primero, abrió las puertas de la casa de Jehová y las reparó.

GENTE: ¡Abren las puertas de la casa de Jehová!

LIDER: El salmista gritó: "Abridme las puertas de la justicia. Entraré por ellas, alabaré a Jehová. Esta es la puerta de Jehová; por ella entrarán los justos.

GENTE: ¡Abren las puertas de la justicia!

LIDER: Así dice Jehová a su ungido, a Ciro, al cual tomé yo por su mano derecha, para sujetar naciones delante de él; para abrir delante de él puertas, y las puertas no se cerrarán.

GENTE: ¡Abren las puertas y que no se cierren!

LIDER: Pablo y Silas estaban sentados en su celda, orando y cantando himnos a Dios, entonces hubo de repente un gran terremoto de tal manera que los cimientos de la cárcel se sacudían; y al instante se abrieron todas las puertas, y las cadenas de todos se soltaron.

TODOS: Dios de los milagros, sacude los cimientos de las cárceles que nos construimos a nosotros mismos. Sacude los cimientos de las cárceles que nos construimos los unos a los otros. Abre las puertas de nuestros prejuicios y rompe las cadenas que nos separan. Amen.

—por Katie Cook (los textos de 2do de Crónicas 29:1-3; Salmos 118:19; Isaías 45:1; Hechos 16:25-26); traducida por Dra. Linda McManness de La Biblia Reina Valera.

Hymn

"Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life" (#433 in *The Worshiping Church*)

Note: Some alternatives for this and the other hymns are "Amazing Grace" sung beautifully in Cherokee on the Walela album by Rita Coolidge, Laura Satterfield, and Priscilla Coolidge (Triloka Records—www.walela.com), or a hymn from one of the *Ladysmith Black Mambazo* albums (www.Mambazo.com). If you have time, you might prefer to browse the World Music section at your local or online music store. If you'd rather have live singing try Michael Hawn's wonderful collection of worship songs from around the world: Gather into

One: Praying and Singing Globally (*C. Michael Hawn, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003; 278 pages, paperback.*) For your children, Michael Stern's album *All Colors, Shapes and Sizes is a great resource*(*mstern@u.washington.edu.*) The "One World" or "River of Peace" tracks would be appropriate to use with this service.

Pause for Reflection

This reflection is meant to be read silently.

So we have a group of Jesus' followers huddling together on that first Sunday evening. According to the accounts in Luke and elsewhere, these people have heard amazing stories from the Galilean women, and from Cleopas and his companion—and there is indication in Luke that they have heard of Jesus appearing to Simon Peter. Yet they are still afraid of being arrested and killed, so they have locked themselves in. The term "for fear of the Jews" reiterates a theme in John's gospel that scholars say arises from a conflict between the local synagogue and the community, themselves Jews, for whom this gospel was written.

Interpreters have made much of John's emphasis on the locked doors. As careful as John's descriptions usually are, it is interesting to note that there is no mention of how Jesus got inside and among the group. Some say that this was to show that locks and walls couldn't keep Jesus out. Perhaps it was also to show that Jesus didn't want them relying on locks and walls. —Katie Cook, adapted from "What It Means to Believe" (Formations, a Smyth & Helwys adult curriculum, the first Sunday after Easter)

Reading from the Prophets: Isaiah 2:2-4

ONE: In the days to come, the mountain of God's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains; and shall be raised above the hills;

MANY: all the nations shall stream to it.

ONE: Many peoples shall come and say

MANY: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that God may teach us God's ways and that we may walk in God's paths."

ONE: For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

MANY: God shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples,

ONE: they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks;

MANY: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Lectura de los profetas: Isaías 2:2-4

LIDER: Acontecerá en lo postrero de los tiempos, que será confirmado el monte de la casa de Jehová como cabeza de los montes, y será exaltado sobre los cerros,

GENTE: Y correrán a él todas las naciones.

LIDER: Y vendrán muchos pueblos, y dirán:

GENTE: "Vengan y subamos al monte de Jehová, a la casa de Dios de Jacob; y nos enseñará sus caminos, y caminaremos por sus sendas."

—traducida por Dra. Linda McManness de La Biblia Reina Valera. (Spanish translation by Linda McManness, with adaptations from the Reina Valera Bible.)

Meditation on Perceptions: A Dramatic Reading

This is a poem that can be used with or without pantomime interpretation. You can use one reader throughout, or alternate the stanzas between two readers. If you choose to add a pantomime, you will want to position your mimes on opposite sides of the dais or "stage" area. As the poem reveals the closer understanding of the reader for her Navajo brother, ask the mimes to come closer together. Allow them to interpret the thoughts of the poem by means of body language and facial expression. You might consider asking one to dress as a "modern" Native American, and one as a "typical" Caucasian mission trip sponsor. You might also make the costuming more abstract by having one dress in all black (for instance, a black leotard, long black dress, or black suit) and the other in all white—or perhaps one in all green and the other in all red.

I was Introduced to this Indian today—

brown skin, straight black hair,

dark almond-shaped eyes

casual shirt, baggy jeans, loafers and feet

covered with dust

old-model "souped-up" car, dog following

close at heel

hesitant manner, soft voice, man of few words—

And the images conjured by time and text remained unchanged.

I took Notice of this Native American today—
neat and clean, meticulous, ruggedly handsome
youthful, athletic, friendly smile, easy laughter
articulate, thoughtful of speech,
deliberately descriptive
home warm and welcoming—beautiful,
simple, uncluttered
dusty barren blowing surrounded by
magnificent mountains

And there was a sense of conceptions beginning to change.

I listened to the Narrative of this Navajo today—
pride and passion, patience for ignorance,
perseverance for understanding
intelligence gained from written words and
generations of oral observance
knowledge of all living, respect for all earth,
sorrow for selfish waste
complex comprehension of and oneness
with nature
keen interest in others, great insight into souls
universal understanding communicated
through native tongue

And misconceptions and misinformation began to experience change.

I meditated with this holy man of God today—
differences diffused, stereotypes stagnated
ashamed for years of abuse, yearning
for years of harmony
Christian community bridging the canyons
God's creation creating oneness, astounding
beauty all around
comfort of the old gods covered by completeness
of the one God
revealing the truth, rejecting the wrong, setting
all free
one with man, one with nature, one with God

And perceptions are changed forever.

—by Ann Sims

Reading from the Gospels: John 20:19

When it was evening on that first Easter Sunday, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the temple authorities, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." (*paraphrase*)

Sermon

Where Do You Draw the Line? by J. Frederick Ball

(For the sermon text, download the pdf titled "sermon.")

Pause for Reflection

It is a day of resurrection, but for most of Jesus' disciples, it is still a day of confusion. What are all these stories they've heard since morning? What's going on? Do they dare begin to hope? They are huddled together in the upper room, trying to push back the despair they have felt since Friday. Into the midst of this group, Jesus suddenly appears out of nowhere. He says, "Peace be with you." He shows the group the wounds in his hands and side. Then he says, again, "Peace be with you."

The next portion of the story is one that is often overlooked. It has overtones of the commissioning and ascension stories in the other gospels, and also of the coming of the Holy Spirit in the second chapter of Acts. Jesus says, "As I have been sent, so I am now sending you." Then Jesus breathes on them. Like the spirit brooding over the face of the Genesis waters, he breathes on them. Like the spirit blowing with a gale force over the Pentecost crowd in Jerusalem, he breathes on them. May that breath brood over us, to make us new, to make us whole. May that wind blow over us, to make us understand one another, to make us one.

—Katie Cook, adapted from "What It Means to Believe" (Formations, a Smyth & Helwys adult curriculum, the first Sunday after Easter)

Theme Interpretation

This is an activity which can involve the entire congregation, but can also be especially meaningful to children and youth. You will need a door of some sort in the middle of the "stage." It needs to be large enough for the congregation to see, and large enough to encompass a "mosaic" of colorful pieces. (Use as many colors as possible.) You can construct a door of cardboard or light wood, or use a stand to hold a drawing of a door. You will also need pieces of colored paper or cloth, cut small enough to make a "mosaic." You will need a piece for each of your congregation, or—if you ask the youth or children to do it—for each of your participants. You will need seven readers for the prayers below. If you can vary the age and ethnicity of the readers, that would add to

the celebration of diversity. Divide the remaining participants by seven, and assign each group to be associated with one prayer. As each prayer is read, that group will come forward from all over the worship area with their pieces of the mosaic and attach them to the door. The pieces can be attached with double-sided tape. You might want to practice this with a few people, to make sure the pieces stay on the door.

1. The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;
The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.
—Numbers 6:24-26

2. Send Thy peace O Lord, which is perfect and everlasting,
that our souls may radiate peace.
Send Thy peace O Lord, that we may think, act and speak harmoniously.
Send Thy peace O Lord, that we may be contented and thankful for Thy bountiful gifts.
Send Thy peace O Lord, that amidst our worldly strife, we may enjoy Thy bliss.
Send Thy peace O Lord, that we may endure all, tolerate all, in the thought of Thy grace and mercy.
Send Thy peace O Lord, that our lives may become a Divine vision and in Thy light, all darkness may vanish.
Send Thy peace O Lord, our Father and Mother, that we Thy children on Earth may all unite in one family.
—Pir-o-murshid Inayat Khan

3. Om saha navavatu. saha nau bhunaktu.
saha viryam karavavahai
tejaswi navadhitamastu ma vidvisavahai
Om shantih shantih shantih
Om sarvetra sukhinah santu sarve santu niramayah.
Sarve bhadrani pasyantu ma kascid dukkhamapnuyat
Om shantih shantih shantih

Oh Almighty! May he protect all of us!
May he cause us to enjoy!
May we acquire strength together.
May our knowledge become brilliant!
May we not hate each other!
Oh Almighty! May there be a peace! Peace !! Peace !!!
Everywhere.

Oh Almighty! May everybody be happy!
May all be free from ailments!
May we see what is auspicious!
May no one be subject to miseries!
Oh Almighty! May there be a Peace! Peace! Peace!
Everywhere.
—Kathopanisada 2:6:19 (India/1400 BCE)

4. O Lord! Grant Thine infinite bestowals,
and let the light of Thy guidance shine.
Illumine the eyes, gladden the hearts with abiding joy.
Confer a new spirit upon all people
and bestow upon them eternal life.
Unlock the gates of true understanding
and let the light of faith shine resplendent.
Gather all people beneath the shadow of Thy bounty
and cause them to unite in harmony,
so that they may become as the rays of one sun,
as the waves of one ocean, and as the fruit of one tree.
May they be refreshed by the same breeze.
May they receive illumination from the same source of light.
—Adu'l-bahá (Bahai/Persian)

5. Creator, open our hearts
to peace and healing between all people.
Creator, open our hearts
to provide and protect for all children of the earth.
Creator, open our hearts
to respect for the earth, and all the gifts of the earth.
Creator, open our hearts
to end exclusion, violence, and fear among all.
Thank-you for the gifts of this day and every day.
—Alycia Longriver (First Nations/Micmac)

6. I am one with my father and the universe.
I am one with mother earth.
I am one with everyone within the reach of my voice.
And, in this togetherness, we ask the divine intelligence to eradicate all negatives from our hearts, from our minds, from our words, and from our actions.
And, so be it.
—Babatunde Olatunji (African)

7. God, food of the poor;
Christ, our bread,
give us a taste of the tender bread
from your creation's table;
bread newly taken from your heart's oven,
food that comforts and nourishes us.

A loaf of community that makes us human,
joined hand in hand, working and sharing.
A warm loaf that makes us a family;
sacrament of your body,
your wounded people.
—Workers in community soup kitchens in Lima, Peru

Hymn

“They Asked, ‘Who’s My Neighbor?’” (#435 in *The Worshiping Church*)

Note: You might consider some of the alternatives described above.

Benediction

God of Our Ancestors –
Abraham *and* Sarah,
Isaac *and* Rebekah,
Jacob *and* Leah *and* Rachel,

Bring us shalom. Let us not forget those who hurt by turning plowshares into swords and pruning hooks into spears. Let us not forget those who are trampled and left hungry. Help us remember those we overlook and tend to push aside. Help us be aware of when we ignore others’ needs....Bring us shalom.

Bring us shalom. Show us how to honor those with whom we disagree. Teach us what it means to live in true community. Increase our awareness of the subtleties of discrimination. Make us attentive to how hurtful our words can be. Help us remember that apathy is just as harmful as inaction....Bring us shalom.

Bring us shalom. Help us remember the women and children who faithfully followed your call: Rahab, the child king Josiah, Michal, Jephthah’s daughter, the young shepherd David, Jael, the young boy Samuel, and Sisera’s mother...waiting for her fallen son to return....Bring us shalom.

Create in us shalom. Let us live in Christ who welcomes us all, not just the good-looking, popular, or wealthy. May we learn that in Christ we transcend swords and spears, plowshares and pruning hooks. Bring us to abide in you; not just with you. Create with us shalom. Health, wholeness, salvation, justice, peace—shalom and amen.
—by Heidi Baxter

Choral Response

“Hope of the World” (#434 in *The Worshiping Church*)

About the contributors

- **Fred Ball**, who wrote the sermon, is a minister in Little Rock, Arkansas. He works for the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock, as Research Associate for the Severe Barriers Program, which benefits welfare clients throughout the state. He also serves as the Minister General for the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans (OEF).
- **Heidi Baxter** is a divinity student at Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Kansas. She will graduate in the spring of 2004.
- **Katie Cook** is the editor for the Seeds of Hope publications *Sacred Seasons* and *Hunger News & Hope*, and also the editor of *Baptist Peacemaker*, the journal/newspaper of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. She compiled this worship service.
- **Linda McManness** is Associate Professor of Spanish and Portuguese at Baylor University in Waco, Texas and a deacon at her church.
- **Sharon Rollins**, who create the art inside the open doors, is a counselor at Family Counseling and Children’s Services in Waco, Texas and a deacon at her church. Her art is featured in numerous Seeds of Hope publications.
- **Ann Sims** wrote the Meditation on Perception poem, “To Greg, 6/22/03,” during a youth mission trip to the El Nathan Navajo Encampment in Flagstaff, Arizona. Ann, a retired obstetrician-gynecologist, is the Medical Director for the Advocacy Center for Crime Victims and Children in Waco, Texas. She has served in many capacities in her church, including as chair of the deacon body.

“God’s Open Door Policy: A Service of Peace and Reconciliation” was created by Seeds of Hope Publishers and sponsored by the Office of Reconciliation Ministries of the American Baptist Church USA. Liturgy by Katie Cook. (Copyright © Seeds of Hope, Inc. 2004)