

OPENING SONG

Leader: The Angels of God guard us through the night.

People: and quieten the powers of darkness.

Leader: The Spirit of God be our guide

People: to lead us to peace and to glory.

Leader: It is but lost labor that we haste to rise up early,
and so late take rest, and eat the bread of anxiety.
For those beloved of God are given gifts even while they sleep.

Silence

Leader: My sisters and brothers, our help is in the name of the eternal God,

People: who is making the heavens and the earth.

Leader: Dear God,
thank you for all that is good,
for our creation and for our humanity,
for the stewardship you have given us of this planet earth,
for the gifts of life and of one another,
for your love which is unbounded and eternal.

O thou, most holy and beloved,
my Companion, my Guide upon the way,
my bright evening star.

We repent the wrongs we have done:

Silence

Leader: We have wounded your love.

People: O God, heal us.

Leader: We stumble in the darkness.

People: Light of the world transfigure us.

Leader: We forget that we are your home.

People: Spirit of God, dwell in us.

Leader: Eternal Spirit, living God,
in whom we live and move and have our being,
all that we are, have been, and shall be is known to you,
to the very secret of our hearts
and all that rises to trouble us.
Living flame burn into us,
cleansing wind, blow through us,
fountain of water, well up within us,
that we may love and praise in deed and in truth.

INVOCATION

Leader: Eternal Spirit, flow through our being and open our lips

People: that our mouths may proclaim your praise.

Leader: Let us worship the God of love.

People: Amen. Amen.

PSALM "THE CREATION" (A POEM BY JAMES WELDON JOHNSON)

Leader: And God stepped out on space,
And he looked around and said:
I'm lonely—
I'll make me a world.

**People: And far as the eye of God could see
Darkness covered everything,
Blacker than a hundred midnights
Down in a cypress swamp.**

Leader: Then God smiled,
And the light broke,
And the darkness rolled up on one side,
And the light stood shining on the other,
And God said: That's good!

**People: Then God reached out and took the light in his hands,
And God rolled the light around in his hands
Until he made the sun;
And he set that sun a-blazing in the heavens.
And the light that was left from making the sun
God gathered it up in a shining ball
And flung it against the darkness,
Spangling the night with the moon and stars.
Then down between
The darkness and the light
He hurled the world;
And God said: That's good!!**

Leader: Then God himself stepped down—

And the sun was on his right hand,
And the moon was on his left;
The stars were clustered about his head,
And the earth was under his feet.
And God walked, and where he trod
His footsteps hollowed the valleys out
And bulged the mountains up

**People: Then he stopped and looked and saw
That the earth was hot and barren.
So God stepped over to the edge of the world
And he spat out the seven seas—
He batted his eyes, and the lightnings flashed—
He clapped his hands, and the thunders rolled—
And the waters above the earth came down,
The cooling waters came down.**

Leader: Then the green grass sprouted,
And the little red flowers blossomed,
The pine tree pointed his finger to the sky,
And the oak spread out his arms,
The lakes cuddled down in the hollows of the ground,
And the rivers ran down to the sea;
And God smiled again,
And the rainbow appeared,
And curled itself around his shoulder.

**People: Then God raised his arm and he waved his hand
Over the sea and over the land,
And he said: Bring forth! Bring forth!
And quicker than God could drop his hand,
Fishes and fowls
And beasts and birds
Swam the rivers and the seas,
Roamed the forests and the woods,
And split the air with their wings.
And God said: That's good!**

Leader: Then God walked around,
And God looked around
On all that he had made.
He looked at his sun,
And he looked at his moon,
And he looked at his little stars;
He looked on his world
With all its living things,
And God said: I'm lonely still.

**People: Then God sat down—
On the side of a hill where he could think;
By a deep, wide river he sat down;
With his head in his hands,
God thought and thought,
Till he thought: I'll make me a man!**

Leader: Up from the bed of the river
God scooped the clay;
And by the bank of the river
He kneeled him down;
And there the great God Almighty
Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky,
Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the night,
Who rounded the earth in the middle of his hand;
This great God,
Like a mammy bending over her baby,
Kneeled down in the dust
Toiling over a lump of clay
Till he shaped it in is his own image;

**People: Then into it he blew the breath of life,
And man became a living. soul.
Amen. Amen**

A READING FROM THE PROPHET ZECHARIAH 4: 1-10A

The Messenger-Angel again called me to attention. It was like being wakened out of deep sleep.

The Angel said, “What do you see?”

I answered, “I see a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top. Seven lamps, each with seven spouts, are set on the bowl. And there are two olive trees, one on either side of the bowl.”

Then I asked the Messenger-Angel, “What does this mean?”

The Messenger-Angel said, “Can’t you tell?”

“No,” I said.

Then the Angel said, “This is God’s Message to Zerubbabel*^{*}: ‘You can’t force these things. They only come about through my Spirit,’ says God-of-the-Angel-Armies. ‘So, big mountain, who do you think you are? Next to Zerubbabel you’re nothing but a molehill. He’ll proceed to set the Cornerstone in place, accompanied by cheers: Yes! Yes! Do it!’”

After that, the Word of God came to me: “Zerubbabel started rebuilding this Temple and he will complete it. That will be your confirmation that God-of-the-Angel-Armies sent me to you. Does anyone dare despise this day of small beginnings?”

***pronounced “za-roo-ba-bel”**

HYMN “PONDERING THE SMALL WAYS” (ON READING ZECHARIAH 4-10) WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

Leader: We ponder you in your greatness.

People: We bless you in your wonders of creation.

Leader: We magnify you for your miracles of deliverance

People: We relish the news of your gift of newness given us in Jesus of Nazareth.

Leader: We make our doxology as large as we can,
in order to match your massive presence in the world.
But then, in slow times and in lesser venues,
we know you to be the God of small things.

**People: One widow and one orphan
One touch of healing
One lunch turned to much food
One small temple for a small people in a small city,
One small scroll to power the small city.**

Leader: On good days we are among those who do not occupy ourselves
With things too great and too marvelous.

**People: It is enough that short of glory and magnificence,
You hang in to make small places your venue for governance.
We are grateful for your “tidbits” that bespeak life among us.**

ANTIPHON

**People: Preserve us, O God, while waking,
and guard us while sleeping,
that awake we may watch with Christ,
and asleep may rest in your peace.**

SONG OF SIMEON

**People: Praise be to God, I have lived to see this day.
God’s promise is fulfilled, and my duty done.**

**At last you have given me peace,
for I have seen with my own eyes
the salvation you have prepared for all nations -
a light to the world in its darkness,
and the glory of your people Israel.**

**Glory be to God, sustaining, redeeming, sanctifying,
as in the beginning, so now, and forever.
Amen.**

Leader: God, have mercy.

People: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: God, have mercy.

THE PRAYER JESUS TAUGHT

**People: Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Mother and Father of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:
The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples
of the world!
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.
With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and forever. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Leader invites the people to offer their own prayers in the chat box or silently at home.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE CONCLUDING PRAYER

Leader: Spirit of truth:
Guide us into all the truth;
Consume the lies that shroud the world in hate;
Pray in us with sighs too deep for words;
And let the victim's voice ring out with hope for a new world;
Through Jesus, the Christ, who goes to the right hand of God.

People: Amen

The leader and people pray responsively.

Leader: I will lie down in peace and take my rest,

People: for it is in God alone that I dwell unafraid.

Leader: Let us bless the Earth-maker, the Pain-bearer, the Life-giver,

People: let us praise and exalt God above all for ever.

Leader: May God's name be praised beyond the furthest star,

People: glorified and exalted above all for ever.

The leader selects and starts one of the following three prayers:

PRAYER 1

Leader: Be present, Spirit of God,

**People: within us, your dwelling place and home,
that this house may be one where
all darkness is penetrated by your light,
all troubles calmed by your peace,
all evil redeemed by your love,
all pain transformed in your suffering,
and all dying glorified in your risen life. Amen**

PRAYER 2

Leader: God our Creator, our center, our friend,

**People: we thank you for our good life,
for those who are dear to us,
for our dead, and for all who have helped and influenced us.
We thank you for the measure of freedom we have,
and the extent to which we control our lives;
and most of all we thank you for the faith that is in us,
for our awareness of you and our hope in you.
Keep us, we pray you, thankful and hopeful
and useful until our lives shall end.
Amen.**

PRAYER 3

Leader: Lord, it is night.

People: The night is for stillness.

Let us be still in the presence of God.

It is night after a long day.

What has been done has been done;

what has not been done has not been done;

let it be.

The night is dark.

Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives

rest in you.

The night is quiet.

Let the quietness of your peace enfold us,

all dear to us,

and all who have no peace.

The night heralds the dawn.

Let us look expectantly to a new day,

new joys,

new possibilities.

In your name we pray. Amen.

SENTENCE OF THE DAY

Leader: The blessing of God, the eternal goodwill of God, the shalom of God, the wildness and the warmth of God, be among us and between us, now and always.

CLOSING SONG: WE REMEMBER

**We remember how you loved us to your death
and still we celebrate, for you are with us here;
and we believe that we will see you when you come
to your glory, Lord.**

We remember, we celebrate, we believe.

Leader: The divine Spirit dwells in us.

People: Thanks be to God.

To all attending: Please unmute your sound and say “farewell” or “goodnight” or “peace” to those who have worshipped with you this evening. Then, go in peace.