

Worship Service #2

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Paul Roberts

Welcome to this worship service which is offered to your congregation as a gift from the Presbytery of Southern New England. These worship services are designed to be flexible enough to allow your congregation to fit them in where needed, to allow for your pastor or worship leader to be able to take a break, and to continue online worship during this time of Covid-19. Our preachers for these worship services come to us from around the larger church and our focus for these services is to continue our learnings on anti-racism and equity as this is a ministry focus of the Presbytery. Today our worship leader is the Rev. Dr. Paul Roberts, who is the President of Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary in Atlanta, GA. He is also a member of the NEXT Strategy Team. His sermon today is a rebroadcast of a sermon he preached at the 2017 NEXT Gathering in Kansas City, on John 4: 19-26. We say thank you to Dr. Roberts and NEXT for allowing us to rebroadcast this sermon today as part of our summer series for the congregations of the Presbytery of Southern New England. Come let us worship God!

Call to Worship:

The prophet asks: Can our soul-weary bones live again?

O God, you know!

We ask: Can we dance again after mourning, loss and grief?

O God, you know!

The gift is sure and unmistakable:

God's breath poured out as new life for weary souls!

Let us celebrate the gift of God's new life,

And come to worship God in laughter and dancing!

Music: Make Me a Channel of Your Peace Glory to God #753

Make me a channel of Your peace

Where there is hatred, let me bring Your love

Where there is injury, Your pardon Lord

And where there's doubt, true faith in You

Make me a channel of Your peace

Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope

Where there is darkness, only light

And where there's sadness, ever joy

Oh Master, grant that I may never seek

So much to be consoled as to console

To be understood as to understand

To be loved as to love with all my soul

Make me a channel of Your peace

It is pardoning that we are pardoned

In giving to all men that we receive
And in dying that we're born to eternal life
Oh Master, grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul
Make me a channel of Your peace
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope
Where there is darkness, only light
And where there's sadness, ever joy

We Confess our Faith/Belhar:

Our prayer of confession is a portion of the Confession of Belhar which is the newest confession to be added to our Book of Confessions. The Confession of Belhar is a confession from the church of the Global South, originating in the Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa. This was the church formed after apartheid. Apartheid formed a racially stratified society. Those with the lightest skin tones were offered the greatest protection and opportunity. Racial separation was established by law and enforced through violence. Non-white citizens lived with constant and intrusive police presence and interference in the daily functions of life. Those who protested risked punishment, imprisonment, and even death. The roots of apartheid go back in South African culture and church for several centuries. The Dutch Reformed Church embodied racial separation when it formed three "mission" churches in the late nineteenth century, each categorized by its racial identity. The Dutch Reformed Mission Church was formed for people designated as "coloured" (biracial). The church's complicity with racial separation kept Christians from worshipping and coming to the Lord's Table together. The white Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) created an elaborate biblical interpretation and ideology that supported racial separation and then the formal apartheid policies. The Dutch Reformed Church's active participation and theological defense of apartheid moved the global church to name apartheid a status confessionis—a conviction that the Gospel was at stake and thus the faith needed to be proclaimed. Leaders of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church wrestled with this situation theologically and practically. One outcome of their struggles was the emergence of the Confession of Belhar in the early 1980s. The Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA), the church that succeeded the Dutch Reformed Mission Church after apartheid, has offered the Confession of Belhar to the global Reformed family as a gift, believing that the themes of unity, reconciliation, and justice issue a call from God to the whole church toward holy action, transformation, and life.

We believe that God has entrusted the church with the message of reconciliation in and through Jesus Christ, that the church is called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, that the church is called blessed because it is a peacemaker, that the church is witness both by word and by deed to the new heaven and the new earth in which righteousness dwells. And, that God's life giving Word and Spirit has conquered the powers of sin and death, and therefore also of

irreconciliation and hatred, bitterness and enmity, that God's life giving Word and Spirit will enable the church to live in a new obedience which can open new possibilities of life for society and the world. Therefore, we reject and confess our complicity in any doctrine which, in such a situation, sanctions in the name of the gospel or of the will of God the forced separation of people on the grounds of race and color and thereby in advance obstructs and weakens the ministry and experience of reconciliation in Christ. Have mercy us on O God.

Assurance of Pardon:

God's love and mercy knows no bounds. Whoever we are, wherever we have been, whatever we have done, know this, you are loved. You are made new in Jesus Christ. In the Spirit we find our true communion and are whole. Go in peace, knowing you are forgiven. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Music: God Be in My Head (Westminster)

Scripture Reading: Feed from NEXT

Sermon:

Offering/Offering Music: Esto es Digo (Westminster)

For the offering today, you are invited to give through your normal channels of giving to your local congregation. If you wish, you may also give to the Presbytery, to support our anti-racism and reparation work at www.psne.org/donate

Sending/Benediction: Thank you for worshipping with us! Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord!

Closing Music: Lead Me, Guide Me (Westminster) Glory to God #740

Lead me, guide me, along the way,
For if you lead me, I cannot stray.
Lord, let me walk each day with thee.
Lead me, O Lord, lead me.

I am weak and I need your strength and power
To help me over my weakest hour.
Help me through the darkness your face to see.
Lead me, O Lord, lead me.