



World Council of Churches

Morning Prayer, Ecumenical Centre
Monday, 22 April 2013

Music Preparation

Silence

Welcome

Call to Prayer

One: Morning has broken!

Many: We gather to greet the new day by praising God.

One: God created us for relationship with God, one another, and the earth.

Many: Let us honour those relationships today and every day.

One: We seek to care for our brothers and sisters around the world and for God's good Creation.

Many: Let us honour those relationships today and every day.

One: May we commit to new ways of honouring your Creation as a means of sharing Jesus' transforming love,

Many: And let us seek God's grace, justice and mercy for all.

All: AMEN¹

Song: Thuma Mina 86 *The Lord is my Shepherd* (1-English, 2-German, 3-French)

Prayer:

Creator God, we give you thanks for the great abundance and nourishment that you provide us through your Creation and through your great love. As we come together to worship you, reveal to us ways we can honour you and your created world. Inspire our worship and shape our lives to reveal your glory. **Amen.**²

Song: Agape: 107 Word of Justice

1. *Word of justice, Alleluia, come to dwell here. Maranatha!*
2. *Word of wisdom, Alleluia, come renew us. Maranatha!*

Bible Reading: Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy
shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.

Responsive Reflection on Psalm 23

Refrain

Word of comfort, Alleluia, bring us hope now. Maranatha!

One: The Lord is my shepherd

Many: I shall not want

One: In this world, there is such great want. Many live in need and want because others live based on great greed. Still others find that their basic physical needs are more than sufficiently met, yet a huge void of want remains. What does it mean to declare God as the shepherd who cares for us and for all to the point that needs and wants are all addressed?

Silence

One: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

Many: Green pastures and still waters provided; souls restored.

Refrain

Word of healing, Alleluia, heal our sorrow. Maranatha!

One: Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil

Many: for you are with me

One: The resurrection teaches us that death does not have the final word and therefore is not something that must be feared. The psalmist does not deny the reality of evil or death nor their capacity to cause pain. The God of Life created life and has dominion over death. This same God is with us—in suffering, in want, in death, and in life. In our work and in our living, as we proceed through the darkest valleys, what postures shall we take, what steps shall we make that give witness to our call to be pilgrims who move forward without fear or indeed in spite of it?

Silence

One: With rod and staff

Many: fear is banished—only comfort remains.

Refrain

Word of mercy, Alleluia, live among us. Maranatha!

One: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

Many: you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

One: If fear is the first response to the threats of the dark valleys, retaliation and revenge are natural responses to wrong, offense, and oppression. Yet when in the presence of a table of God's grace and goodness bountiful and overflowing, these impulses are short-circuited, leaving space and grace for fellowship, truth, reconciliation, and a new start marked by forgiveness and peace. Ideologically, politically, or otherwise—who sits across from us—enemy as we have identified them or as they have named themselves, seemingly opposed to all for which we stand and work? Can we see grace abounding and overflowing, leaving space for shalom?

Silence

One: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

Many: They chase after me every day, all the days.

Refrain

Word of gladness, Alleluia, fill our hearts now. Maranatha!

One: I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

Many: We are pilgrim journeying toward this house...our eternal home. Amen.

Refrain

Word of power, Alleluia, live within us. Maranatha!

Intercessions

With brothers and sisters around the world, this week in the ecumenical prayer calendar we pray for the churches and people of Djibouti and Somalia:

God of life, we pray for those in these countries who long for green pastures and quiet streams and for those who seek to serve those in need even as they also must face the darkest valleys in order to live out their callings of service and care. God who provides, provide for those for whom daily bread is a challenge and for those who are displaced and long for home. We pray for Christians in these lands who persevere in spite of being a tiny minority. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

On this day when many celebrate your precious gift of creation, we pray for strength and wisdom to be good stewards. Forgive us for the ways in which we contribute to the disfigurement and destruction of your Creation. Transform our hearts and minds, that we may place the welfare of your earth and your people before our fleeting desires. Embolden us to give voice to the voiceless in our communities and ecosystems, and grant us divine wisdom that we may replace systems of destruction and oppression with systems of justice and sustainability.³ Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

We ask comfort and protection for victims of violence, peace and grace for the sick, the suffering, and the dying. The deepest hurts and needs of those we know and do not know and of which we, ourselves carry, we ask you to gently lift, pouring the soothing balm of your oil of gladness. We are filled with gratitude and so offer our thanks. We are assured of your love and presence and so are bold to ask these things in the name of the risen Christ, accompanying these prayers with the prayer that Jesus taught, in the languages we first learned it, saying...

The Lord's Prayer (each in her/his language)

Song: Lead me, guide me (by Doris M. Akers; verses 1 & 2, refrain)

Symbolic Action of Prayer

The cloths have been placed to represent green pastures and still waters. As we continue to sing the refrain of *Lead me, guide me* you are invited to touch the still waters as a reminder of the waters of your baptism, the clean water to which you have daily access while others must make daily treks to seek out such, and the polluted waterways that diminish life. Finally, you are invited to take the oil and make a mark on your forehead or hand to remind

you of the anointing of the Good Shepherd that marks you as beloved, chosen and called. You may then return to your seat to continue singing and praying.

Blessing

L: Let us ask for God's blessing:

P: **May the boldness of God's Spirit transform us,
may the gentleness of the Great Shepherd lead us,
And may the gifts of God's Spirit equip us and send us forth into the world and all
creation.
Amen.**

Psalm 23:1-4

(New International Version)

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,
he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are
with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

¹ Sunday Morning Sustainability: Eco-justice Impacts and Opportunities Worship Resource, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA Eco Justice Working Group

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³ Inspired by the 2012 Encyclical Letter written by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople

*service prepared by Garland F. Pierce