Liturgy for a New Day

Celebrating Progress Toward LGBTQ+ Justice in The United Methodist Church

We hope this liturgy empowers you and your congregation to celebrate the decisions of this General Conference. Together, we have pushed The United Methodist Church to greater inclusivity. And together, we’ve witnessed history! Please feel free to pick and choose from this menu of liturgy as is appropriate for your congregation.

Note: Calls to worship may also be used as responsive prayers of thanksgiving.
Call to Worship 1

Leader: This is the day that the Lord has made.
Congregation: Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

Leader: Forty years ago, LGBTQ+ United Methodists decided to set a new table. Our siblings created the Reconciling Congregations Program so that congregations and clergy could take a public position to affirm, equip, and advocate for those who are LGBTQ+ and those who work for justice in our denomination.

Leader: And even when we were silent,
Congregations: the rocks and stones cried out.

Leader: At every general conference gathering, God has worked through us and our spiritual ancestors to revise the roles, decide the share, and divide the power. For so long, we have worked and prayed for change, only to face disappointment after disappointment when our denomination failed to affirm the belovedness and giftedness of all of God’s children.

Leader: And as we wandered in the wilderness, our hearts cried out:
Congregation: How long, oh Lord? How long?

Leader: But, beloveds, we never wandered alone. Even when we wept in pain, ripped our clothes in grief, and walked away from the community that had failed us: God was with us. God wept in pain alongside us, even in the stillest moments of the night.

Leader: Weeping may endure in the night,
Congregation: but joy comes in the morning!

Leader: And look upon this fresh morning! Today we celebrate the hard-won decisions of our postponed 2020 General Conference. We celebrate the call of our LGBTQ+ siblings. We celebrate the deletion of punitive measures that punished those who would demonstrate God’s expansive inclusion. We celebrate our denomination’s decision to remove discriminatory language and policies that forced separation when God asked us to draw close to one another.

Leader: Today we celebrate and affirm our call to continue the work of inclusion.
Congregation: We give thanks that you make all things new.

Leader: We pray that the decisions of the General Conference will be the start of a new thing: a new Church where all are beloved.
Congregation: May we become instruments of your divine body as we continue the work of creating a more just and loving world. Amen.
Call to Worship 2
Adapted from Blessing Spilling Over by anna blaedel from enfleshed

Leader: Together, we move in fierce and tender rhythms of care, of solidarity of joyful alliance. We need each other and have each other.

Congregation: We are from each other; may we be for each other.

Leader: Naomi Murakawa asks, ‘Why be a star when you can make a constellation? Alone, dazzling—one can burn so bright. But, beloveds, finding each other, dancing together, we pattern new possibilities.

Congregation: Possibilities beyond pain, beyond fear, beyond aloneness. Possibilities born of laughter and dream, of refusal and resistance and recreation.

Leader: Possibilities that point us towards sweetness and salve. We, surrendering into the sacred patterns that heal and hold us.

Congregation: We, of stardust and spirit and breath. We, of soil and seeds are spells. We, of queer and radical rootedness.

Leader: Breathing together, we conspire together.

Congregation: We, of movement and lineage and aliveness that stretches beyond ages. We, of elder wisdom and generations yet to come.

Leader: We, aligning and realigning into constellations – ancient and emerging – bending our collective life toward freedom.

Congregation: Toward the liberating lifeforce of love. Toward transformation. Toward together.

Leader: Until all of us are free,

Congregation: Until we, we, we are free.

Leader: We join together in that transforming, liberating love as we worship, together, God who IS love. We give thanks for progress in our denominational polity, and we pray that the decisions of this general conference initiate a tsunami of acceptance, love, and transformation as we work to reflect the divine love of our Creator.
Call to Worship 3 (for more divided congregations)

Leaders: This is the day that the Lord has made
Congregation: Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Leader: This morning, we celebrate the work of our General Conference in Charlotte. Almost 800 voting delegates from around the world and many more observers and supporters. We give thanks for the dedication of many that makes our connectional life possible.

Once again, our denomination has shifted

Congregation: We give thanks for the spirit of God moving in our midst.

Leader: Some of us have been longing for change, while others feel anxious in a changing world. Prepare us, oh God, for the transformation within our midst. Help us to come together in Christian unity, keeping our focus on your love and connection rather than on forces of division that seek to destroy your beloved community.

Leader: Draw us in, oh God.
Congregation: Help us to cherish our differences while we learn to live and love. Challenge us to grow in love.

Leader: We enter into a new day with possibility and hope.
Congregation: Transform our hearts so that we may transform your world in light and love. Amen.
Prayer of Lamentation & Celebration

Disaffiliation has traumatized and retraumatized us: the people we love, the congregations where our lives unfold, and the denomination within which we strive for justice. Our wounds are still open. Our grief is still fresh.

A tsunami of anti-trans and anti-LGBTQ+ legislation crashes on the shores of schools, cities, states, and this nation. A disturbing reticence and lethargy sweep the nation. How long, o Lord, how long?

And yet, God knows this. And God delights in us – in our pursuit of the kin-dom. God delights in our experiences of community. God delights when our systems lean, even topple, into justice. God delights in our learning, our growth, and our advocacy.

Accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist and to reconcile where any of God’s beloveds is disregarded, disempowered, or dehumanized. Accept your holy call to individual and collective transformation.

May the decisions of this General Conference be just the start of a more inclusive, more expansive, and more faithful Church.

Congregation: For everyone born, a place at the table. For everyone born, a system that’s fair. For everyone, justice. For everyone, joy.
Affirming our Baptism & God’s Expansive Family

Leader: Beloveds in Christ,
Through the waters of baptism
We are brought into the family of God.
In this family, some are queer, and some are straight.
Some are trans and some are cisgender.
The Body of Christ is rich in divine creativity:
a community of people of many genders and races,
abilities, sizes –
Each a glimpse of God from a different angle.

Congregation: God claims each of us with delight. And we claim one another as companions in faith. We affirm the divine nature of our LGBTQ+ siblings and ask God to keep forming us into advocates for justice, love and inclusion. Amen.
Announcement about General Conference Decisions

Over the last two weeks, members of The United Methodist Church gathered in Charlotte, NC, for the postponed 2020 General Conference. While the General Conference made many important decisions, we want to lift up some specific changes that relate to the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ people into the life of the Church. This General Conference voted to:

- Lift an existing denominational funding ban on supporting LGBTQ+ ministries and affirming LGBTQ+ education
- Strike down a 40-year ban on “self-avowed practicing homosexual” pastors.
- Remove penalties for clergy or congregations holding same-sex weddings
- Initiate a moratorium on all judicial proceedings concerning human sexuality

We give thanks for progress in the pursuit of justice and inclusion. May our connection grow in love, and may we seek new ways to be the body of Christ in a divided world. May this be a new day for those who’ve been harmed by our Church, and a new day for the kin-dom of God.

Sending-Out

This is a beginning. May policy changes beget practice changes. May we strive to live up to your good news of affirmation.

Post us at the open gates of the Church. Lift our hands to bring in your beloveds who have been cold. Excluded.

Let this tidal wave of change wash away the weathered calluses of our hearts. Liberate us from comfort. Comfort those who seek liberation. Meet us on the journey for the transformation of your world and the building of your kin-dom. Amen.