

CONVERGENCE MUSIC PROJECT

MUSIC FOR A JUST AND GENEROUS CHRISTIANITY

We Stand With Love – A Gathering for Worship

An Order for Worship created and written by Gary and Lenora Rand,
Co-directors of Pluralguild.com.

With song suggestions from the ConvergenceMusicProject.com,
And a sermon by Lenora Rand.

Opening Responses

One: We come from different places. Different countries. Different streets. Different homes. Different families. Different histories.

We look around and don't see a single face exactly like our own.

All: We come wondering if anyone in the whole world can really understand us and know us and love us.

We come from having enough. And we come from scarcity.

We come from joy. And we come from grief.

We come from hope. And we come from hurt.

We come as "all of the above."

Depending on the day.

Depending on the hour.

We come by ourselves, longing, at least in some small way, for connection.

We come deeply aware of our essential aloneness and scared to let go of it. Yet

also, longing to be together.

Because, look...we're here. We're all here.

We are all here... in this place, right now, by the grace of God.

Singing Together

Only Grace

by The Many (CMP)

Things are broken here.
Things are shared
Things are carried here
Hearts bow in prayer

Chorus:

It is grace, only grace
That brings us here, holds us together here.

It is grace, only grace
That brings us here, holds us all together here.
All together here.

Things are dying here
Things are torn
Things are growing here
And burdens borne.

Chorus

Bridge:

Amazing grace, hear the sound.
Here is where hope is found.

Chorus

Other possible songs from CMP for this moment

Surrounded by Love. Mark Miller

More Than Welcome Here. Richard Bruxvoort Colligan and Bryan Sirchio

Amahoro. Tracy Howe Wispelwey

Opening Prayer

Optional. Extemporaneous.

Singing Response

Possible Short Responses from CMP

Amahoro. Tracy Howe Wispelwey

Open My Heart. Ana Hernandez

Confession

One: Please stand together as we confess our sin before God.

(The gathered stand.)

**All: We confess that we would rather not stand together.
We confess that we would rather sit.**

We prefer to sit because it's comfortable. And because we're tired.
And because we aren't sure where to go, what to do.
And mostly we're afraid of what standing might require of us.

**Sometimes we sit in fear. Sometimes we sit in despair.
And mostly we sit alone.**

We'd rather sit alone because "togetherness" is complicated. Loving is a messy, painful business – it's hard enough to love people who are most like us,
but to love those who are unlike us, that seems impossible.

We sit alone, as if our lives depended on it.

We sit alone in our individual little corners of what we call comfort,
missing out on truly living. We hold onto our lives and we lose them.

**We sit in fear. We sit in despair.
We sit alone. And we know this is no way to live.**

Assurance of Pardon

I invite you to take the hand of the person standing next to you (as awkward and uncomfortable as that may feel), as you hear these words of assurance from Romans 8:38-39.

"For I am sure that neither death or life, angels or rulers, things present or things to come, not powers, or height or depth, or anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

We do not stand alone.

Nothing can separate us from God's love.

Passing of the Peace

Singing Response

There's a Wideness In God's Mercy

(traditional hymn. Suggested tune: In Babilone)

There's a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea.
There's a kindness in God's justice, which is more than liberty.
There is no place where earth's sorrows are more felt than up in heaven.
There is no place where earth's failings have such kindly judgment given.

For the love of God is broader than the measures of the mind.
And the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.
If our love were but more faithful, we would gladly trust God's word,
And our lives reflect thanksgiving for the goodness of our God.

(Frederick William Faber, 1854)

Reading from the Epistles

Romans 12: 9, 14-15, 17-21

(from the Message)

Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good.

Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down. Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone.

If you've got it in you, get along with everybody. Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do. "I'll do the judging," says God. "I'll take care of it."

Our Scriptures tell us that if you see your enemy hungry, go buy that person lunch, or if he's thirsty, get him a drink. Your generosity will surprise him with goodness. Don't let evil get the best of you; get the best of evil by doing good.

Singing Response

Love, Love, Love Love

Love, love, love, love.
Christians, this is our call.
Love our neighbors as ourselves
For God loves us all.

*Traditional. As sung in canon at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CEtDnBNGCQA>*

Gospel Reading

John 13: 3-12, 34-35 (CEB)
(suggested reading with 3 voices)

1. Jesus knew the Father had given everything into his hands and that he had come from God and was returning to God. So he got up from the table and took off his robes. Picking up a linen towel, he tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a washbasin and began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he was wearing.
2. When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"
3. Jesus replied, "You don't understand what I'm doing now, but you will understand later."

2. "No!" Peter said. "You will never wash my feet!"
3. Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't have a place with me."
2. Simon Peter said, "Lord, not only my feet but also my hands and my head!"
3. Jesus responded, "Those who have bathed need only to have their feet washed, because they are completely clean. You disciples are clean, but not every one of you."
1. He knew who would betray him. That's why he said, "Not every one of you is clean." After he washed the disciples' feet, he put on his robes and returned to his place at the table. *A few minutes later, he said to them,*
3. "I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other."

Singing Response

Alleluia

Sermon

Loving is a hard and awkward business. Do it anyway.

(complete sermon follows the order of service)

Song Response

Possible Song Responses from CMP

If We Don't Have Love. Bryan McLaren, Fran McKendree and Ana Hernandez

Amahoro. Tracy Howe Wispelwey

We're Together in This. David Lunsford

Spirit Running. Bryan McLaren

Prayer Ritual

What keeps you from standing with love? Is it fear? Is it confusion? Comfort? Anger? Your sense of rightness? We offer this moment of silence and music for us to reflect on these things.

When you are ready, we invite you to take the pen and strip of cloth you've been given and name what's holding you back. Write it on the cloth and then bring it to the front and hang it on the fishnet hung behind the communion table. Tie your cloth to the net as your prayer of letting go – as the prayer of your commitment to stand with love.

Offertory Song

(presentation of the Elements)

Taste and See by Rob Leveridge (CMP)

Chorus

Taste and see, taste and see
The Lord is good.

To those who search, to those who mourn,
To those who seek a place to lay the burdens borne
Come in and rest, come be made whole,
Come in and feast among the gifts of love with welcome to us all.

Chorus

For those who trust, for those who doubt,
For those whose difference others use to cast them out,
The table's set, the circle's wide
The banquet doors are open, welcoming everyone inside.

Chorus

Bridge:

Now break the bread, and join the body
See kindred fed, your hands extending
Take the cup, and share salvation
Pass the peace to every neighbor and nation!

Another possible "offertory" songs from CMP

The Wine of Sweet Communion. Ken Medema

The Lord's Supper

Welcome

Let us prepare to eat and drink as Jesus taught us:
Coming together as people, who, though
we are not all alike, are all together,
like our prayers are linked together
in a tapestry of many colors.

That is what we come to this table
to take in, along with this bread and wine:
the amazing life-giving truth that
through Christ's love and grace,
there is no "other" there is only "us"
and we are all welcomed and loved.

The Story

Let's remember how Jesus first celebrated this meal of bread and wine with his disciples. It was a night like we all often have when we gather at a table, with friends or family or strangers, when we try to connect and we're misunderstood. When we reach out and get hurt. When what we do as an act of love isn't taken the right way.

In the midst of that moment, Jesus, took a piece of bread and a cup of wine and blessed it and said. "Do this to remember me." Wanting us to know that it is in this very human act of eating and drinking and sitting together at a table, that God is with us, that it is in the daily acts of living our lives that Christ is seen and known and experienced. This is where the hope of the world is, this is what love looks like... these messy, imperfect moments of being together.

So now, following Jesus' example and command, we have gathered to share this bread and wine (grape juice).

The Lord's Prayer

One: Let us pray together the prayer of our Lord.
We will be using a new paraphrase.
Perhaps we can pray it with a new understanding and renewed commitment.

God of Love...

All: Who we experience as mother, father, friend, our deepest longing, our best thought, our greatest hope.

Your love covers the entire earth.
Holding us all in your embrace,

You hold everything together.

We want to know what your vision for the world is - help us.

We want to live in that vision – guide us.

Everything we eat and drink,
Everything that gives us life and joy, it all comes from you

We thank you for your mercy.

You hold nothing back.

**Help us be that open and generous
with others and with ourselves.**

You forgive us constantly.

Help us forgive each other.

Deep in our hearts we believe that this is your world and that you love us all. Help us stand with you and with each other in that powerful love.

And together we will sing

**of your mercy and grace and power.
Forever and ever.**

Amen

Preparing and Blessing the Elements

For the Bread

We break this bread
remembering the brokenness in our world
and declaring that our hope for
wholeness is joining with Christ in love.

For the Cup

We pour this wine,
remembering the pain and bloodshed of our world
and declaring our hope
in the overflowing love of Christ for all of us.

Sharing of Communion

As the elements are served, the servers may say:

This is the body of Christ, broken for the life of the world.
This is the blood of Christ, poured out for the life of the world.

Music for Communion

Find Our Way to Love by The Many (CMP)

(Solo while elements are received)

When I hurt you, I hurt me.
When I push you, I push me.
When I curse you, I curse me.
I weep with you as you weep with me.

When I starve you, I starve me.
When I bomb you, I bomb me.
When I kill you, I kill me.
I die with you as you die with me.

There is no "other."
There's only us on this trembling, tender earth.
And all of heaven is here with us when we find our way to love.
When we find our way to love.

When I hate you, I hate me.
When I lose you, I lose me.
When I find you, I find me.
I live with you as you live with me.

There is no "other."
There's only us on this trembling, tender earth.
And all of heaven is here with us when we find our way to love.
When we find our way to love.

Chorus (everyone joins)
God so loves the world.
God so loves the world.
God so loves ev'ryone of us
So we can find our way to love.
So we can find our way to love.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Singing Together

Holy is Your Name

by The Many (CMP)

You have seen me in my sorrow
You have heard me in my pain
You have known me in my suffering
You have loved me in my shame

Chorus 1
Holy, holy, holy is your name.
Glory, glory, glory to your name.

The angels and the heavens sing
Of the new day that you bring
They sing, "Glory, glory, glory to your name."

You have held me in my questions
You have heard me when I pray

You have looked on me with favor
You have never looked away

Chorus 1

Chorus 2
The proud will fall,
The poor will see
That all hopes not lost,
And grace flows free.

Chorus 1

Chorus 2

Benediction

One: As we go out from this place,
may we know, without a shadow
of a doubt, that we are not alone.
And know that we are desperately loved by God.

In God's embrace,
let us not cower in fear,

All: Let us stand with love.

Let us not huddle in judgment,

Let us stand with love.

Let us not sit in despair,

Let us stand with love.

Let us not walk away in anger,
But by the grace of God,

Let us stand with love.

Sermon

Loving is a hard and awkward business. Do it anyway.

By Lenora Rand

As the story from John 13 goes, on the Thursday night before Jesus was crucified, he and his disciples shared a "Last Supper," then Jesus washed his disciples' feet.

I don't know if you could tell from hearing this passage of scripture read, but this was not a Disney-esque moment. There was no soft-focus going on, no feel-good music swelling.

This whole foot-washing thing was weird. And uncomfortable. For all involved.

As I understand it, in Jesus' time, since everyone wore sandals, foot-washing was common when entering a home, because most people's feet were filthy...think donkey-droppings everywhere, camel-dung-strewn streets. Usually you washed your own feet unless you happened to end up at the home of a rich person who had slaves do it for you.

So when Jesus started washing his disciples feet, the disciples didn't like it so much. It was confusing. He wasn't their servant. It disrupted their cultural traditions. It didn't seem right. They were resistant. It caused tension between them and Jesus.

This is the same night that Jesus issued his "new commandment," when he told them to "love one another as I have loved you." So it felt like Jesus meant for this foot-washing experience to be a big huge, last-shot life experiential lesson in love for them, and for all of us.

Well here's the lesson I took away from it:

Giving and receiving love is a hard and awkward and messy business.

Of course, I know this to be true from my own experience. Maybe you do too.

Here's just one example. I used to come home from work at night and as my way of trying to connect with my husband Gary I'd say, "So what did you do today?" Because I wanted to feel closer to him.

Sure, I kind of noticed that every time I asked that question he'd stiffen up, pull back a little. And either change the subject or answer begrudgingly. But I didn't understand this since I was asking him this perfectly simple question out of love and with the hope of drawing us closer together. So, even though his response or non-response confused and hurt me, I kept asking. Maybe not every night, but at least a couple times a week. And he'd always respond the same way. This went on for a while...ok, 20 YEARS, give or take. Until finally one day I blew up and asked why he was being such an a-hole when I was asking such a perfectly loving friggin question.

We had a "discussion." In which he finally told me (maybe finally understood himself) that every time I asked that question he felt like I was asking for an accounting of his day...in order to decide whether or not he'd done enough. And he never felt like he'd done enough.

Oh. Ooops.

So, no I don't think it was a coincidence that the night Jesus awkwardly washed his disciples feet was also the night he said "Love one another as I have loved you." He didn't say those words in the middle of a Hallmark moment when love was easy and birds were singing and everyone was feeling fine and running in slow motion through fields of flowers. He said it when people were having a very difficult time taking in his love because it didn't fit their picture of what it should look like. And also, possibly a moment, when he was feeling a tiny bit hurt because they couldn't take it in.

Perhaps Jesus chose the weird, uncomfortable, awkward moment with his disciples to make his big statement about how we needed to love one another... this totally non-feel-good moment... because that's what it actually means to love.

Maybe Jesus wanted us to know that love was going to be hard to take in, more often than not. And it was going to hurt like a sharp stick in the eye when we were desperately trying to show our love and the person on the receiving end was unable to receive it, or the way we were trying to show it was totally NOT

what they really needed, and we were going to want to say "What's the point?" and walk out the door and not bother ever again.

I think about this sometimes, as a white person who wants to stand in solidarity with black people and with the Black Lives Matter movement, as a person of privilege who cares about the poor, as a person who lives in relative ease and security who cares about refugees, and injustice and violence and wants to make the world more safe and welcoming to all.

I want to be a person who's helping, who's *loving*...but honestly, quite often, I don't always know how to do that, or if what I do end up doing is "right." And it feels vulnerable, it feels risky, and awkward...I'm afraid that sometimes I'm asking the wrong questions (like I did with my husband), or showing love in ways that don't feel all that loving to the recipients.

And I often find myself thinking I should just stop trying. Because I'm just stumbling and fumbling around here. But this story, what Jesus did in washing the disciples' feet, makes me believe that we shouldn't give up, no matter how weird it feels, or how much it hurts sometimes, no matter how wrong we get it sometimes. We need to keep trying, and also we need to ask the awkward questions, ask people who we are trying to love, does this feel loving to you?

The other lesson in love I took away from Jesus washing his disciples feet was that love is more important than who's right and who's wrong.

Did you notice that everyone was there that night when Jesus knelt to scrub those filthy feet? Everyone. Including Judas who had already set the wheels in motion for Jesus to be crucified. Judas who disagreed with the way Jesus was going about things. Who saw things quite differently and whose actions seemed wrong, on so many levels. Judas was there, and Jesus bent down and lovingly washed his feet too. Jesus didn't argue with him or try to convince him of the errors of his ways, he didn't call him an idiot, and he didn't exclude him from his act of love.

In case you hadn't noticed, we are living in a time when exclusion is everywhere. And while some of us are explicitly building walls or shutting doors or closing borders or drawing lines in the sand, others of us are creating barriers with words. We are living in the Age of I'm Right and You're Not And May The Best Snark Win. Snarkiness is cool, and clever, and it is currency which gets you more followers on Twitter and more likes on Facebook. And truthfully, if you're not

engaging in righteous snarkiness...well you seem kind of dull. And frankly, these days, in the election season we're living through, it often seems like the only sane response.

But does it do any real good? Or does it simply perpetuate the insanity?

Paul, in his letter to the Romans told them the only way to overcome evil is by doing good. And Martin Luther King Jr. preached the same thing in a sermon he gave in 1957, saying, *"Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that."*

"Love one another as I have loved you," Jesus says. Right after washing Judas' feet, at a moment when hate, or at the very least, a really smart-ass dismissive totally deserved comment, might have seemed the most appropriate response.

"Love one another as I have love you," Jesus says. And he calls it a new commandment...like he's acknowledging... even warning them, perhaps... that this is a radical new idea he's giving them. A totally new and possibly crazy direction to follow. It's a new order, a new prescription for how to live.

And isn't always going to be easy. Or clear. In fact it will often be awkward and messy and won't leave you feeling nearly as cool as being right and righteously snarky does."

"But trust me on this," Jesus, with his towel and his basin, and his wet and dirty hands seems to be saying, "Even though it doesn't always feel like it, we're all in this together on this planet and this is the way to real life. So **be brave, and grab a basin and kneel here with me. This is how you stand with love.**"