

Resources for Central District Conference Sunday—

Abounding in Love. . .Abiding in Grace

WORSHIP RESOURCES – Abounding in Love. . .Abiding in Grace

Order of Worship (see below for resources for each of the lettered items in the order)

Gathering Songs (A)

Welcome

Call to Worship/Opening Prayers (B)

Songs of Praise (A)

Offering

Offering Prayer (C)

Scripture (D)

For Children's (E)

Sermon (F)

Response Song OR Communion (G)

Pastoral/Congregational Prayer (end by saying or singing The Lord's Prayer)

Benediction/Sending (H)

CHRISTIAN ED HOUR POSSIBILITIES

****CDC 101 (I)***

****CDC Slide Show of Congregations (J)***

WORSHIP RESOURCES

(A)*Song Suggestions*** (SJ=Sing the Journey, SS=Sing the Story, HWB=Hymnal: A Worship Book)

SJ 3 *Jesus calls us here to meet him*

SJ 4 *You've got a place*

SJ 8 *We are people on a journey*

SJ 14 *Lord Jesus, you shall be my song*

SJ 54 *Longing for light*

SJ 64 *We are the body of Christ*
SJ 73 *The Lord lift you up*
SJ 78 *We will walk with God*
SJ 106 *Just a closer walk with thee*

SS 31 *Jesus, be the center*
SS 34 *You are holy*
SS 30 *Will you come and follow me*
SS 40 *Som 'landela (We will follow)*
SS 55 *Love the Lord your God*
SS 124 *My soul cries out*

HWB

299 *New earth*
306 *In Christ there is no East or West*
363 *Renew your Church*
373 *Thou true Vine, that heals*
418 *Move in our midst*
420 *Heart with loving heart*
439 *I want Jesus to walk with me*
573 *What a friend we have in Jesus*
575 *Precious Lord, take my hand*
580 *My life flows on*

(B) Call to Worship/Opening Prayer

(based on John 15:1-8)

The vine emerges from the earth,
nourished
and nourishing.

Rises without visible connection;
roots hidden,
promise unknown.

Strong to withstand storms,
fragile when plucked too soon.
So it is that we grow...
nourished by invisible connections to the living God,
called to nourish that which is seen and that which is yet buried within.

— written by Katherine Hawker for the Evangelical United Church of Christ. Posted on [Liturgy Outside](#).

Opening Prayer:

God of love,
plant us in the soil of your grace.
Nurture us with the strength of Christ,
the vine of everlasting life.
Enlighten us with the wisdom of your Spirit,

which flows through us today and all days.
Abide in us,
that we may abide in you
and abound in your love.
Amen.

— Adapted from [The Abingdon Worship Annual 2012](#), © 2011 Abingdon Press. Posted on the *Worship Elements* page of the [Ministry Matters](#) website.

Offering Idea- Five Bucks on February Fifth

Consider a special offering to support the ministries of Central District Conference. Maybe this is a “noisy offering” when metal pails are passed through the congregation and coins are loudly dropped into the pail. Maybe “first fruits” gifts are brought forward during the offering time. We invite your creativity. A gift of just \$5.00 per congregational member will help meet the “additional giving” portion of the CDC budget.

(C) Offering Prayer

SJ #147 God of abundance,

 all the things we have were yours before they were ours—
 your gifts to bring us joy and to meet our need.
Let them now become our gifts to others
 to bring them joy and to meet their need.
May we live so that others may have what we have
 for Jesus' sake. Amen.

--From Words for Worship 2, 143

(D) **Scripture

John 15:1-17 NRSV

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. ²He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. ³You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

¹²“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

*(E)**For Children*

Children don't often hear the word ABIDE in everyday conversation. If you will use it frequently in sermon and liturgy today, introduce it at the beginning of worship as the word of the day - a la Sesame Street. Display it on a large poster. Translate it as "stay close to me" and/or "hang tight with me." Illustrate it with reference to reading everything you can and learning all the stats for a favorite athlete to learn to be like him or her or hanging out with an aunt or uncle you want to grow up to be just like. Briefly suggest that today we will be talking about ABIDING with God and Jesus. Identify specific ways we can hang out with God, Jesus and each other, e.g. worshiping, reading the Bible, taking care of people who need our help, etc. Encourage children to listen for ABIDE in the songs and prayers and readings today and to figure out what it means in each place it appears.

The True Vine - for children

Theme: To bear fruit, we must be connected to (abide in) the vine.

Object: A lamp and an extension cord

Scripture: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5 (NRSV)

I am sure that you all know the song, "This Little Light of Mine." I want you to help me sing that song this morning. While we sing it, I'm going to hold this light up and let it shine all around. (Start to sing the song, but stop when you notice that the light isn't shining.) I wonder what is wrong, my light isn't shining. (Someone will probably notice that it isn't plugged in.) Oh, here's the problem, my light isn't plugged in.

Now that we are plugged in, let's try it again. (Sing) Oh, that was much better. The lamp was shining brightly, wasn't it? It's pretty hard for a light to shine when it isn't connected to the power source, isn't it? Well, actually, it isn't just hard -- it's impossible!

In our Bible lesson today, Jesus told his disciples a story to teach them the importance of staying connected to him. Of course Jesus didn't use a lamp to tell his story, because electricity hadn't even been invented yet. Instead, Jesus used an example that his disciples would understand. He used the example of a vine. You know what a vine is, don't you? It is a plant with a lot of branches growing out from it. The branches have fruit on them. If it is a grapevine, the branches should have grapes on them.

Have you ever seen a branch that has been broken off of a tree or a vine? What happens to it? That's right, it withers up and dies. Can it ever have any fruit on it again? No, it isn't any good for anything -- except fire wood.

Jesus said, "I am the vine and you are the branches. If you remain in me, you will have much fruit, but apart from me, you can do nothing." Jesus wants us to produce a lot of fruit. Good fruit like being kind, generous, and faithful. Most of all, he wants us to love others as he has loved us.

Can we do that on our own? No way. Just as the lamp must be plugged in before its light can shine, and just as the branches must be connected to the vine before they can produce fruit, you and I must stay connected to Jesus to produce the good fruit that God expects of us.

Dear God, help us to remember that we need to stay plugged in to Jesus if we are going to produce the kind of fruit you expect. Amen.

(F)Sermon Theme/ Sermon Starter**

See https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1290

<http://www.textweek.com/mkjnacts/jn15a.htm>

<http://www.textweek.com/mkjnacts/jn15b.htm>

(G) Communion Resources

Taken from The Lord's Supper worship resources found in The Leader, Summer 2016

Preparation for communion

God of grace, as we prepare to share in the abundant life Christ offers through bread and wine at your table of love, we pray:

God, you have declared that we are your beloved creation, made in your image. You have formed our minds, our bodies, and our spirits to be good. You have offered us life in abundance. *(pause)*

Loving God,
we give you thanks.

Too often we have failed to see ourselves as your beloved children. Too often we have not cared for your creation. Too often we have neglected your offer of abundant life. *(pause)*

Loving God,
forgive us.

We know love because you loved us first. We flourish in your love, as we express your love among ourselves and with our neighbors. We find safety and peace in the beloved community of faith. *(pause)*

Loving God,
we give you thanks.

Too often we have concealed our sorrow, anger, and pain. Too often we have neglected to offer prayers of kindness, and to give words of hope and signs of care. Too often we have spoken or kept silence in ways that hurt ourselves or another. *(pause)*

Loving God,
forgive us.

God, you have shown us the way of life. We have followed Jesus, who proved what it means to be kind and faithful and strong. You have placed before us the challenge and joy of life. *(pause)*

Loving God,
we give you thanks.

Too often we are tempted to give in to our fears. Too often we are tempted to deny your faithful love. Fear, death, and denial of your love—*(pause)* these we lay down.

We step into life.

The peace greeting

Be assured that God offers us grace. God is for us!

Nothing will separate us, God, from your love in Christ Jesus. And so we accept forgiveness and healing. You set us free, free from the power of sin and death. Jesus, we hear the promise that you spoke: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

As we receive Jesus' promised gift of peace, we commit ourselves to maintaining right relationships with God, with others, and with ourselves. We exchange a gesture of peace, trusting that God's reconciling love is at work in and among us. This may be in places where we see it and in places where it is not yet seen.

The peace of Christ be with you. *(use a mirroring gesture with hands)*

Invitation

Leader: Friends, this is the joyful feast of the people of God!

Voice 1: Many will come from east and west and from north and south and will eat at God's table. (Matthew 8:11)

Voice 2: At the Passover meal in the upper room, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. (Mark 14:22) He said to his disciples in "I have eagerly desired to eat this meal with you." (Luke 22:15)

Voice 3: When our Beloved, the risen Christ, was eating at the table with the disciples, their eyes were opened and they recognized him. (Luke 24:35)

Leader: Jesus says: "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." *(John 6:35)* The risen Christ welcomes us to the feast before us.

Communion thanksgiving prayer

God of heaven and earth, at your invitation all things come into being.

From generation to generation you have cared for all that you created.

For this we adore you.

God of covenant love, even when your people turned from you, you sought and restored them.

For this we praise you.

Finally, you anointed your Beloved Child, Jesus, to redeem and fulfill your purpose for creation.

By your wisdom the Beloved One fed the hungry, healed the afflicted, and was anointed by a woman.

He ate with the scorned, delighted in children, and washed the disciples' feet.

He challenged the powerful and brought good news to the poor.

At the Passover feast, Jesus hosted a holy meal. There he enacted his gift of enduring presence.

When Jesus was handed over, crucified, and killed by the hands of lawless ones, you did not abandon him.

*He freely offered you his life and death on our behalf; through him you reconciled the world to yourself and created a new humanity, the church.

You raised your Beloved Child up; death could not hold him.

You opened your covenant with Israel to all humanity and gave us life everlasting.

By your Spirit, let the bread we break and the cup we share be a communion with the risen Christ and one another.

By your Spirit, bind us in communion with all creation;

By your Spirit, empower us to offer your abundant life to the world you love.

Remembering these gifts of grace, we celebrate and give you thanks.

United with Christ and with all who stand before you in earth and heaven, we worship you, O God, in everlasting praise. Amen.

Words of institution for the bread

Narrator: After the crucifixion of Jesus, two disciples, sad and confused, made their way to Emmaus, their home village, while talking with each other about all the things that had happened concerning the arrest and execution of the one they loved. A stranger met them on the road, and engaged their conversation. Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about the Messiah in all the scriptures, and they were amazed. It was evening, so the disciples invited the traveler to stay with them. When they were at the table together, the stranger took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. At that instant their eyes were opened, they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight. The disciples said to each other, "How our hearts burned within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us! And now we have recognized him in the breaking of the bread. Jesus is here!"

Leader: And so now at this simple table we, too, bless and break the bread. (*lift and break bread*)

We raise the cup. (*lift cup*)

Prayer of thanks for the bread

God of all goodness, we give you thanks for this bread, and for this cup. Thank you for walking with us, feeding us and comforting us.

Our hearts burn within us as we remember Jesus' words. Death could not hold him. He stands here among us and comforts us, saying: "Peace be with you!" In the breaking and sharing of this bread and cup, we recognize the One who loves and gives everlasting life to all. Jesus is among us!

As the bread is given

Server says: The bread of life, *or* Eat this bread and never be hungry, *or* Eat and be nourished by this bread.

Words of institution for the cup

In the same way, he took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; when you drink it together, remember me."

In choosing to entrust his body to those who loved him, Jesus denied crucifixion the ability to destroy him fully. In giving the energy of his veins to many, Jesus denied crucifixion the ability to drain that energy from the world. The presence of his body and the energy in his veins lives on in the relationships of those who share bread and cup together. The one who was crucified lives, and the life he offers abounds. The powers of destruction failed to erase Christ's message of love, for as often as you share this bread and cup, you proclaim that message until he comes.

Prayer of thanks for the cup

God of love,
your faithfulness roots our lives,
holding us with patience and grace.

Thank you for this cup of Christ,
blessed by earth, hand, and heaven.

May your Spirit satisfy us with this cup,
quenching the thirsts of our bodies, minds, and spirits.

As the cup is given

Server says: The cup of salvation, *or* Drink this cup and never be thirsty, *or* Drink and be satisfied by this cup.

Songs

Sung or instrumental music suggestions during distribution

- "Kyrie Eleison" (any edition)
- "Don't Be Afraid" *STJ* 105
- "Peace Before Us" *STS* 16
- "Here, O My Lord, I See Thee" *HWB* 465
- "Let Us Break Bread Together" *HWB* 453
- "Eat This Bread" *HWB* 471
- "O God, Who Gives Us Life" *HWB* 483
- "Sent Forth by God's Blessing" *HWB* 478

Post-communion prayer

(The following can be read as a prayer by a worship leader or read as a litany by the congregation)

Bless the Lord, O my soul. All my inmost being, praise God's holy name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all God's benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who rescues your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion. (*Psalm 103*)

We bless you, O God, for your healing love and your gift of salvation, for your gracious gifts of bread and cup.

We bless you for nourishing us in the love of this community and for sustaining us in hope.

We pray for your strength to prepare us for your service as we offer to you our lives of worship and witness in the world you have made.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Song

Especially appropriate: HWB 483, HWB 478.

(H) Benediction/Sending

Abide in us

Abide in our intellect, that we may think of you.
Abide in our intuition, that we may delight in your glory.
Abide in our speech, that we may honor you.
Abide in our decisions, that we may be just and merciful.
Abide in our actions, that we may participate in your mission
among and beyond us. Amen.

From Words for Worship 2, 84

Go now, and love one another,
because love is from God.
Proclaim God's salvation to every generation.
Remain in Jesus Christ,
and like branches of a vine, draw your life from him.

And may God the vine grower tend you and make you fruitful;
May Christ Jesus abide in you and give you life;
And may the Holy Spirit cast out all fear and fill you with God's love.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
...**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

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(I) "CDC 101" options:

- Invite a CDC Board, Missional Church or Ministerial Committee member, or Conference Minister Doug Luginbill, or a retired CDC pastor to lead the SS hour (*see notes following these pearls*).
- Show a map of the conference
- Share a brief history of CDC (use Joseph Stuckey story (attached) - either tell, invite someone from your congregation to present the monologue
- Describe the structure of the Board of Directors
- Describe the work of the Ministerial Committee
- Describe the work of the Missional Church Committee, including Reign of God grants
- Describe regional gatherings and the annual meeting
- Look at the CDC spending plan
- Describe the relationship of CDC to MC USA
- Talk about the current conference theme of “Abounding in Love. . .Abiding in Grace”

*(J)**CDC Slide Show of Congregations:* This PowerPoint introduces each congregation in the conference with a photo of the church building, a photo of the pastor(s) and the congregation’s location on a map. This is a quick, visual way to see who we are as a conference and where we find ourselves.

OTHER RESOURCES

*Children’s Bulletin/Insert [attached]