**Jan 14/ Martin Luther King Sunday/ Light**

"Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." MLK Strength to Love, 1963

Throughout Epiphany the lessons are on light, we are called to follow the light of the world.

Since the beginning of time, God has brought forth light in the darkness. In the Old Testament the light moved the Israelites through the desert, the prophets pointed to the light in times of trouble and when Jesus came to the earth, all the world was illuminated by his light.

Today the people of God and the world so desperately need the light offered by our Lord.

*John 1:1-9; 29-34*

*Genesis 1:1-5*

**Call to Worship**

Leader: In the very beginning, God separated the darkness and the light. God called the Light "Day" and the Darkness, God called "Night".

**People: We were once people who dwelled in darkness, but God has given us the true Light, Jesus Christ.**

Leader: God has blessed us and adopted us as God’s own beloved children, through the sacrament of Baptism.

**People: The water of baptism brings to us healing and reconciliation; it is a symbol of nourishment and cleansing.**

Leader: This day is the day of the remembrance of Jesus’ Baptism.

**People: As we hear the words of his baptism, let us be reminded of our own adoption by God and celebrate the joyous connection to the Almighty God.**

Ministry Matters, Nancy C. Townley

**Offering**

God who hears us  
 when we cry out from the depths  
 of pain, loneliness, violence, and despair,  
 help us to be more like You:  
 fully alert to the cries of others,  
 quick and able to meet their needs.  
 Please use these offerings   
to enhance our ability,  
 as Your body on Earth,   
to listen and respond to Earth's cries.  
 In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

*Radical Gratitude*, [http://rg.nwumf.org](http://rg.nwumf.org/)

**Prayer of Confession**

Almighty God, we confess that we are often swept up in the tide of our generation.

We have failed in our calling to be your holy people, a people set apart for your divine purpose.

We live more in apathy born of fatalism than in passion born of hope.

We are moved more by private ambition than by social justice.

We dream more of privilege and benefits than of service and sacrifice.

We try to speak in your name without relinquishing our glories, without nourishing our souls, without relying wholly on your grace.

Help us to make room in our hearts and lives for you.

Forgive us, receive us, and reshape us in your image. Amen.

BOW #479,Lydia S. Martinez, Hispanic, U.S.A., 20th Cent.

(A Time of Quiet Reflection)

**Words of Assurance**

If we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**The Great Thanksgiving Prayer,**

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

**People: And also with you**

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

**People: We lift them to the Lord.**

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**People: It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

Pastor: It is right, and a good and joyful thing, to give thanks to you at all times and in all places, loving and mighty God, Creator of heaven and earth.

Because in Jesus Christ our Lord you have received us as your sons and daughters, made us citizens of your kingdom, and given us the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth.

And so we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with everyone in heaven, who forever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

**All: Holy, Holy My heart adores you. My heart is glad to say the words you are holy Lord.**

Pastor: Holy and gracious God, in your infinite love you made us for yourself; when we had wandered far from you and fallen into sin, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, and to reconcile us to you through his perfect sacrifice.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Savior Jesus took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his friends, and said, “Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

After supper, he took the cup; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, “Drink this, all of you. This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed

for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.”

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

**All: Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

We celebrate your loving mercy, O God, with praise and thanksgiving. Remembering how Jesus died, and rose again, and ascended to you in heaven, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the holy food and drink of new and unending life in your Son. Sanctify us also, that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and be strengthened to serve you together in peace. At the last day, bring us with all your saints into the never-ending joy of your kingdom. All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever. Amen.

Adapted from text: adapted Book of Common Prayer/Episcopal Church

<https://www.trinitywallstreet.org/sites/default/files/miscellaneous/915am%20Service%20Bulletin%201.15.17.pdf>

**Music Suggestions:**

"Lift Every Voice and Sing" See the history behind this hymn <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-lift-every-voice-and-sing>

**Research Briefs:**

How do we allow the light to shine in us so that we may see strangers as people who are touched by the true Light? The answer to this is to begin in the beginning. Before any problem ever presented itself, the Word had been spoken and the Light had dawned. All our sin, all our problems are significant. At the same time, they are only plot twists in the grand narrative of the gospel which promises the triumph of the Light and grants us grace to live as those who believe God is the one who in Jesus Christ, has "turned on the light." Phillip Jameison

"Words which do not give the light of Christ increase the darkness." Mother Teresa

"We do not draw people to Christ by loudly discrediting what they believe, by telling them how wrong they are and how right we are, but by showing them a light that is so lovely that they want with all their hearts to know the source of it." Madeleine L'Engle, 20th century

John talks of light and darkness-a direct reference to the Hebrew story of creation-a story written down by a company of priests exiting 70 years of Babylonian enslavement and oppression.

In the Hebrew story darkness (desolation, death, and destruction) surrounded the world. The spirit of God entered the darkness and hovered over the deep (according to Babylonian worldview the deep was the very source of their oppression-it was the home of the Gods that created the Hebrews to be enslaved). Like a hen broods over her eggs God hovered over the deep, as if ready to do battle with the chaos and agony of oppression. And how did God act?

God spoke: "Let there be light!" (Genesis 1:3) and there was and God saw that it was good. And light cut the darkness. God placed boundaries on the darkness. Every community has areas of 'darkness' in which people struggle to have their most basic needs met. Are you familiar with those areas of need in your community? Lisa Sharon Harper

To individuals and to nations both, Jesus says the same thing. Turn away from madness, cruelty, shallowness, blindness. Turn toward that tolerance, compassion, sanity, hope, justice that we all have in us at our best. We cannot make the Kingdom of God happen, but we can put out leaves as it draws near. We can be kind to each other. We can be kind to ourselves. We can drive back the darkness a little. We can make green places within ourselves and among ourselves where God can make his Kingdom happen. Frederick Buecher *Secrets in the Dark*

**Sermon Thoughts:**

Hate seems to shout out and so easily capture our attention. Hate tries to smother our hope and the light. However, the gospel reaffirms the promise that God's light can break forth from even what seems to be total darkness.

In the gospels, in the sacred stories of our faith, in the lives of the prophets from long ago and in our times, the light does not come from the outside – but it is within. We as the church help uncover the light, we point to the light, we help sustain the light that lives within.

Although the Light was not understood that did not deter the Light of God to shine through the darkness of the world. John the Baptist testified to the light, we too are called on to help our congregations to believe that God's light has not faded – even in these challenging times.

As Christians we are the bearers of the light, our words and actions are the only way a chaotic world can come to know the love of God. Yet it is so easy to be consumed by the news, by politics, by our need and even the dark places in our own lives. We need to re-center ourselves in practices that draw us closer to the light.

Exposing ourselves to the light can be daunting, it can amplify our sins and our fears. Cultivation a life of prayer, confession and thanksgiving will create a space to deal with our brokenness. Coming together as a community of faith, regularly being together for worship and in small groups helps us to be with other bearers of light.

**Bright Spots/ Sent:**

Where in your congregation or community do you see the light of God shining?

How can the people in your congregation best be carriers of light in the places that are dark in your context?

**"Idea Box: some half-baked ideas to help you tell your story":**

* Showcase a candle inside of a broken piece of pottery. (light comes from the broken places)
* The *Blue like Jazz* story of the confession booth at Reed College. (Click [here](http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2005/summer/4.62.html) or google “blue like jazz confession booth excerpt")
* Like it or not, confession is step one in making room for the light. (that’s not an idea; it’s just a fact)
* Letting in the light actually kills bacteria, but it can be a little like putting alcohol on a cut.
* Tom Hanks in Apollo 13: thanks to darkness, I saw the light (click [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QqxRBHoQB0))

**Jan 21/Jesus Baptism/ My Beloved**

In all three synoptic gospels the voice from the heavens claims Jesus as the beloved of God. In baptism we are claimed as a child of God, therefore beloved too. "Define yourself radically as one beloved by God." Brennan Manning

*Matthew 3:13-17*

*Isaiah 42: 1-9*

**Blessing the Baptism**

As if we could call you

anything other than

beloved

and blessed

drenched as we are

in our love for you

washed as we are

by our delight in you

born anew as we are

by the grace that flows

from the heart of the one

who bore you to us.

Jan Richardson, http://paintedprayerbook.com/

**Call to Worship**

Leader: We come today to remember.

**People: We come to remember Jesus' baptism and ours with thanksgiving**

Leader: We come today to remember. . .

**People: The day that the heavens opened, when the Holy Spirit's dove rested on Jesus and a heavenly voice declared God's pleasure.**

Leader: We come to remember . . .

**People: That the One greater than John, greater than all of us is coming again.**

**ALL: We come to worship and give thanks that we are known, and loved, and precious in God's sight.**

Rev. Dr. Safiyah Fosua

**Offering and Dedication:**

Faithful God,

Bless us in our baptismal calling

to be in ministry of showing hospitality to others.

We offer the gifts that we have been given to be used

not for conquest and dominance,

but for use in liberating the poor and hurting people

who pray for our liberation as well as their own.

Receive and multiply our gifts for life-giving ministry. Amen.

<http://www.ucc.org/worship_worship-ways>

**The Great Thanksgiving**

Friends, this is the joyful feast of the people of God. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit at the table in the kingdom of God. This is the Lord’s table. Jesus invites all who seek to trust him to share in the feast which he has prepared. Let us come to his table now with hope and confidence as God’s children.

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

**People: We lift them up to the Lord.**

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Pastor: It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. Before the mountains were brought forth, or you had formed the earth, from everlasting to everlasting, you alone are God. You created light out of darkness and brought forth life on the earth. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**All: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,**

**heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ, in whom you have revealed yourself, our light and our salvation.

In his baptism and in table fellowship he took his place with sinners. Your Spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people.

By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:

"Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:

"Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

**Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever. Amen.

**Prayer after Communion**

O God, we thank you for uniting us by baptism in the Body of Christ, and by this meal filling us with joy and hope. Grant that in the days ahead our lips which have sung your praises may speak the truth, our eyes which have seen your love may look with compassion on the needs of the world; our hands which have held this loaf and this cup may be servant hands for Jesus Christ; in whose name we ask it all. Amen.

Blended from Service of Table Disciples of Christ and The Great Thanksgiving Baptism of the Lord UMC

**Music Suggestions:**

“Let It Rain” Michael Farrin

“Open Up the Heavens” Meredith Andrews

“Child of God” Mark Miller

“The Summons” The Faith We Sing #2130

**Research Briefs:**

**Insight on the Beloved child of God from the lens of a team of Hispanic Worship Leaders:**

*Rejoice in Worship - Creating Awareness of Our Wesleyan Heritage as Experienced Through the Sacramen*

Our Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to observe Baptism as a regular part of the life of the church. Since these two were instituted by our Lord himself, and because of the grace they confer, they are called sacraments.

By baptism we who are "by nature born into sin" are admitted into Christ’s church and become part of his body.

In baptism we are made children of God and heirs to the kingdom of heaven. This means that by the act of baptism we confess that we accept Christ as Sovereign and Savior of our lives. From that moment on, God recognizes us as God's children; our sins are erased and we are a new creation in Christ Jesus.

In baptism we receive our name. As a good parent, God knows each child by name, so that in baptism we become part of the family of God. In some cases, a person who is baptized as an adult takes a new name as a testimony to a new relationship through faith in Jesus. Our name is important in our social life and in the church.

In baptism we are received as members of Christ’s church. Baptism is a call to testify. We are chosen "to proclaim the mighty acts of God who called us out of darkness into his own marvelous light." Baptism calls us to witness to our faith.

Rev. Ariel Zambrano. Rejoice in Worship, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/rejoice-in-worship-creating-awareness-of-our-wesleyan-heritage-as-experienc>

“Over the years, I have come to realize that the greatest trap in our life is not success, popularity, or power, but self-rejection. Success, popularity, and power can indeed present a great temptation, but their seductive quality often comes from the way they are part of the much larger temptation to self-rejection. When we have come to believe in the voices that call us worthless and unlovable, then success, popularity, and power are easily perceived as attractive solutions.

The real trap, however, is self-rejection. As soon as someone accuses me or criticizes me, as soon as I am rejected, left alone, or abandoned, I find myself thinking, "Well, that proves once again that I am a nobody." ... [My dark side says,] I am no good... I deserve to be pushed aside, forgotten, rejected, and abandoned. Self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the "Beloved." Being the Beloved constitutes the core truth of our existence.” Henri JM Nouwen

One of the mistakes that most Christians and our culture often make when we read the Bible is that we think that the Bible only has one beginning. In fact, it's a book that has dozens of beginnings, maybe hundreds, and many of them echo this same theme. God creates order out of chaos.

That's not a bad way to think about the significance of John the Baptist, who appeared in the wilderness shouting, demanding that people rise up to take responsibility for their lives and for the state of the world. John didn't show up in a world where everything was going fine. It was a world scarred and disfigured by the oppression of the many by the few, by state-sponsored violence, by greed, by the exploitation by the powerful of the powerless. John showed up there, standing in the waters of the Jordan excoriating people to see the *tohu va-vohu (*the condition of the earth before God said, "Let there be light"), to see the chaos around them and to make a change.

And then Jesus wades in next to him. Can you focus your mind's eye on that moment, see with me that instant there in the rippling waters of the Jordan, where Jesus stood and looked down and saw his own reflection on the face of the deep? It was creation happening all over again. The wind blew down that river as John scooped up the water and poured it over Jesus' head. A voice broke the silence, "You are my child, with you I am well pleased."

And just as before, there was light in the darkness. As it was in the beginning, here God was in the world, wresting order from chaos. This time it was by proclaiming good news to the poor and release to every captive. God was in the world to speak peace to the world's strongest army, to feed the hungry as others hoarded their excess, to restore dignity to all in a world that afforded dignity to some and stripped it from others, to forgive us our sins and free us for love.

The Rev. David Lewicki <http://day1.org/3456-as_it_was_in_the_beginning>

**Sermon Thoughts:**

As Jesus followers we are called to see all people as beloved children of God. God wants all to know they are loved and precious. The righteousness of God manifests itself in love, in Jesus. When Jesus meets John at the edge of the Jordan, he desires to be baptized. John has been baptizing for the forgiveness of sin – Jesus is sinless and not in need of forgiveness. Yet Jesus presses, "it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Jesus stands in unity with all people. In our baptism we too are united.

In baptism we as a church affirm those who we baptize as beloved children who God has given over to our care. As a congregation we promise to care for them so they may grow in their faith. How does the community support those who are baptized in their care.

In a study (Sticky Faith) on what keeps young adults connected to the church the results were definitive - it wasn’t great programs, or expensive facilities. The study indicated that a child or a teen need at least five interested adults in their church community in order for them to really connect with their faith and feel a part of the church. This was not one lone study - over the years since that study, countless other studies have confirmed the same.

Through our actions as a congregation, in a real way we tell each and every young person that we love them, and more importantly that God loved them first and will love them all the days of their lives, and even beyond. That is the promise of the font, and it is one that we can all be a part of in our lives together.

But Jesus' ministry moved beyond those who already claimed themselves to be the chosen of God's. Jesus came for all. In the Isaiah passage the servant won’t "disregard the small and insignificant." Who were the ones the Jews saw as insignificant? Who are those we as a church deem unimportant?

**Bright Spots/ Sent**

Where in your congregation or community do you uplift people as beloved children of God? How can the people in your congregation hear their call to righteousness? How will you be bearers of light, help open the eyes of those blind to justice and proclaim freedom to those imprisoned by hopelessness?

**“Idea Box: Some half-baked ideas to help you tell your story”**

* Ask kids to join up front. “Who here has ever done something that wasn’t very nice?” Any kid who raises their hands gets ‘banished from the church.’ (this obviously has to be explained to kids beforehand). “Sorry Tommy, those are the rules. Everyone say goodbye to Tommy!” - Make the point that we would NEVER say this to our kids, so why do we believe it about ourselves?
* Consider the sheep (which people are often described as in scripture): Sheep are slow, brightly colored, and have not a single weapon. Sheep's only natural defense is to know their shepherd, his voice, and their own name. In other words, as followers of God, our chances of survival increase exponentially if we can do 2 things:
* Know your Name (Child of God)
* Know your Shepherd (Jesus)
* The problem is, there’s a lot of noise out there calling you different things, so we’ll have to train our ears for that shepherd who calls us children of God. I hear voices every day that explain (very well, I might add) how we:
  + Will never live up to the standard
  + Will never be lovable
  + Aren’t smart enough
  + Aren’t talented enough
  + Aren’t holy enough
  + I hear voices that explain why others aren’t lovable, and make great cases for why I’m exempt from loving them…
* Possible close to the sermon: "So let’s look at our days, our friends, our words, our habits. Whose voices are we listening to? And what have they been calling us? Are they calling us 'Children of God'? I wonder if we need to retrain our ears to hear our shepherd over all the other voices - so that no matter how much noise there is, we could still hear: 'You are a child of God.' Let’s try an experiment: I’m going to count to three, and all at the same time, could everyone call out…
  + "Their favorite ice cream: 1, 2, 3, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_" (should be indecipherable)
  + "Their favorite movie: 1, 2, 3, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_" (should be indecipherable)
  + "The name of the Son of God who chose to take on a body and put on sandals and walk with us in obedience all the way to the cross in order to remind us that we are, in fact, children of God” (should be a clear ‘JESUS’). “Despite all the noise out there, you are a child of God. May we here that message and feel the permission to act like one.”

**Jan 28, Reaffirmation of Baptism Day**

**Doing a New Thing**

There are times in life we need a fresh start. Many new year practices and resolutions are about making a change. Today's ritual signifies a new day for the believer, your past no longer defines us. “A new heart for a New Year, always!” Charles Dickens

*Ezekiel 36.24–28*

*Psalm 139:13-16*

*Galatians 3:23-29*

**Call to Worship**

God's voice speaks to our chaos, echoing in our empty hearts.

Gathering us together to remember our baptism and to feast at the Table.

God's voice flows like the living waters of grace, our new name, 'Beloved,' resounding in our souls.

God's voice stirs the waters of baptismal hope, calling us to be bearers of peace to a world of broken hopes.

Thom M. Shuman <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/2007/01/baptism-of-lord-c.html>

**Offering Invitation**

Gestures of gratitude are a demonstration

that a blessing or benefit has been received.

We heard a call, dropped our nets and came to this place to find new life.

The gifts we give today are but tokens of the blessings of the new life we live in Christ.

Bring your gifts with joy for they remind us of

just how blessed we are to know this love

that flows so generously from the spirit of God.

<http://www.ucc.org/worship_worship-ways>

**Call to Confession:**

People of God, we desire to be refreshed, renewed and changed. Let us listen again to God’s calling our names to encourage us and strengthen our resolve to be God’s people in faithfulness and peace-loving justice.

**Prayer of Confession:**

O God, we hear your voice and we see the way of Jesus set before us. But it’s hard, dear God, to try again and again to live up to our baptismal vows and maintain our resolve to be your people in the world. In repentance we ask you to forgive us. Set us once again on a holy path that leads to you. Amen.

**Assurance of God's Call:**

Friends, God hears our prayers and sets before us the way of Jesus. God calls us and gives us enough grace and mercy to follow the way. Thanks be to God.

<http://www.ucc.org/worship_worship-ways>

**Great Thanksgiving**

Pastor: May the God of glory be with you!

**People: And also with you!**

Pastor: People of God, offer your hearts to God.

**People: We give them to the One who comes to redeem us.**

Pastor: Sing songs of praise and joy, Children of God.

**People: We lift our voices to the One who journeys with us through the waters of baptism and who feeds us at the Table of hope.**

Pastor: With the waters of baptism reminding us of your love for us, Heaven's Voce, we lift our praises to you. Before you breathed the Word which tamed chaos, you named us your children, heirs of all the goodness you desired for us. You sang to us in Eden's fields, inviting us to glorify you forever. Yet, we walked into the shadows of the world, leaving the songs behind. You persisted in your hopes for us, knowing that where no life is anticipated, no hope is expected, no future is seen, there you gather us up to carry us into your kingdom.

So, with angel choirs in every region, with shepherds who caroled a homeless family,with those who came home singing from exile, we lift our voices in joy and hope:

**People: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Pastor: Holy are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Bearer of grace and Singer of truth. When we lost our voice to sin, you sent your Word to teach us new hymns of joy and praise. When our feet were muddy from playing in life's puddles, he stepped into the Jordan, to make us clean. When our ears were filled with the lies of the world, he spoke the truth of your hopes for us. When we were about to die, he came running to us, defeating sin and death, marking us as your own with the kiss of the Holy Spirit.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:

"Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:

"Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

As we remember Christ's baptism, as we recall his life and ministry, as we follow him through death into the resurrection of new life, we proclaim that mystery called faith:

**People: Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father now and forever. Amen.

**Prayer After Communion**

Holy Spirit, fill us with the Bread of forgiveness and the Cup of hope. Flow through us with baptismal waters, so we might become a river of reconciliation; grant us your peace, so we might carry it to others; set our hope on Christ, so we might build such hop in our neighborhoods and communities.

And then, when the river of time stops flowing, and we gather around your Table, we will join our voices as one people, singing "Glory!" to God, Child, and Spirit, God in Community, Holy in One. Amen.

Adaptation of prayer by Thom M. Shuman <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/2007/01/baptism-of-lord-c.html>

**Music Suggestions:**

“This is the Day of New Beginnings”

“Grace Alone” The Faith We Sing #2162

**Research briefs:**

With baptism taking such a prominent role today, where will you place your font? If your font is tiny, how might you obtain a larger bowl or fountain or even trough (trimmed in white) to draw attention to the centrality of baptism not only this day, but for the whole of discipleship to Jesus? How will you illuminate the font (perhaps with a Paschal candle at its side?) to draw even more vitual attention to it? And how will you place the font relative to pulpit and Lord's table so as to show the relationship between the three -- font as entrance, pulpit as ongoing instruction in the Way, and Table as foretaste of the heavenly banquet here and now?<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship/lectionary-calendar/baptism-of-the-lord>

In our epistle for this Sunday, St. Paul names the deep divisions of his society -- between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female -- and names the truth, that in Christ these divisions are to be overcome. Poverty. Racism. Sexism. Religious Bigotry. There are many such powers in this world, a thousand varieties of hardness of heart that shut out some people, and shut us in just as surely. But in Christ we are all children of God through faith -- none less worthy of good food and clean water, shelter, medicine, or education, of love and hope.

In Christ we are empowered to name that truth and called to name and confront the powers that obscure it. And as we follow Jesus, as we participate in his ministry of healing and reconciliation in the world, we find that the outcast restored is not the only one saved. We were made for the unity with one another and with God that was and is Christ's mission, and the healing of a breach with a sister or brother is restoration for the whole Body.

Have you experienced that? Have you caught a glimpse of what it might be like for each one of us when all of us live as God's children? Declare how much God has done for you. Declare what Jesus is doing for the poor and outcast. If you find yourself feared as they were -- name that too, as you pray and work for reconciliation. You are of the Body of Christ, sharing in Christ's power to heal, Christ's mission, and Christ's wholeness. Faith has come, and with it the hope and love that sees every child as a child of promise.

Sarah Dylan Breuer http://www.sarahlaughed.net/lectionary/2007/06/index.html

**Sermon thoughts:**

In Galatians, Paul points to a welcoming community of God. This is not a community separated by old classes, instead the baptism of Jesus made them one. The church is set apart to do a “new thing”, we are reminded of this as we reaffirm our baptism, as we yearn to be more like Christ.

Today in the reaffirmation of our baptism we point to our unity. This call to unity is not the same as politicians calling for “bipartisanship”; or is it the same as universities or businesses calling for “tolerance.” Those words simply overlook differences that will inevitably lead to division. Our call to unity is a call to warmly love one another, a respect that is evident despite our differences.

**Bright Spots/ Sent:**

Paul wrote this letter out of the immediate needs in this faith community. Where in your congregation or community do you need a change of heart? Are there places where our thinking must change? Our behavior must change? Our commitments need changing?

The reaffirmation of baptism points to a spiritual renewal in the life of the believer. How can the people in your congregation come together to be the leaders in their families, in their friendships, their workplace, community, our nation and the world in heart changing activity? What does that look like for you?

**“Idea Box: Some half-baked ideas to help you tell your story”**

- Kintsugi - show images of Kintsugi to show that we are more beautiful put back together than apart

- “Remember whose you are!” (a thing parents yell to kids as they leave…and something we should remember ourselves)

- Find a cute and cuddly picture of a sheep laying down with a wolf - (reference to Isaiah 11:6) Then find a picture of an actual ferocious wolf. Remind people that unity isn’t easy and cute. It’s a difficult lifelong commitment.



**REAFFIRMATION OF BAPTISM**

Alternative: Order of Worship by Marcia McFee (adapted)

**Congregational Introit** *“I Want Jesus to Walk with Me”*  
**Call to Worship**

Leader: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, The love of God  
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is with us! **People: Praise the Living God!**

**Hymn of Praise** “See How Great a Flame Aspires” UMH 541

**Dramatic Reading**

Reader: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness.

*(Thunder and rainstorm sound effect Projected words: “This is the Water”)*

This is the water on which God breathed and the Spirit brooded when God began creating us... All creeping things, all races, male and female.

This is the water that drove up the trunk of the tree whose branches bore the fruit we weren’t to taste.

This water covered the earth deeper than the Himalayas when God wanted to start over. This is the foot of the rainbow that’s meant to tell us God won’t destroy the creation again.

This is the water of the River Jabbock where Jacob still wrestles with God.

This is the well where Joseph was left for dead by his jealous brothers.

This is the water that opened at Moses’ command when God led God’s people out of slavery. This is the water by which Miriam and the women danced the rhythms of liberation.

This water sprung from rocks in the desert when the people started whining to go back to the way things used to be.

These are the salty tears King David shed when Nathan accused him of the worst sin. These are the tears he shed when he pleaded God for forgiveness, and got it.

These are the waters of Babylon by which our ancestors sat down and wept, their harps and tongues silent for homesickness.

And this is the water that broke in a barn in Bethlehem.

Out of this water John pulled a stunned Jesus in the River Jordan, the day they saw the dove and heard from deep within the Voice that said, “YOU ARE MY BELOVED. IN YOU MY HEART SINGS FOR JOY!”

This is where those men heaved and hauled nets, until love came to town and called them to even harder work for even less pay.

This is the water that became wine at a wedding in Cana.

Peter sauntered on this water, and then sank, and then was rescued, setting the pattern of a disciple’s life.

This is the well in Samaria where Jesus chatted, unchaperoned, with a so-called disreputable woman. This is the living water that quenched her thirst forever, and restored her dignity.

This is the spittle that came from his mouth when he restored hearing to those who could not hear, when he restored sight to those who could not see.

This is the water he used to cut the wine at his last meal. These are the tears that fell that last night in the garden.

This is the sink that Pilate used to wash his hands when he passed the death sentence.

These are the wet faces of the women whose grief at the cross could not be quenched.

This is what Jesus thirsted for at the hour of his death.  
 This is the tomb from which Christ blasted... This is the opening, this is the way.

This is the water that binds us to him when shame and sin and death are destroyed... This is the water that reminds us who we are, and whose we are.

*Pastor pours water into font*

“Come to the Waters”

Sisters and brothers in Christ: Through the Sacrament of Baptism we are initiated into Christ’s holy church. We are incorporated into God’s mighty acts of salvation and given new birth through water and the Spirit. All this is God’s gift, offered to us without price.

“Come to the Waters”

Today we come to the waters, to renew our commitments in each other’s presence to Christ who has raised us, the Spirit who has birthed us, and the Creator who is making all things new.

**Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith**

*Reader invites all to turn to the west*  
 *Pastor:* And so, I ask you, will you turn away from the powers of sin and death?

**People: We renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of our sin!**

*Reader: invites all to turn to the east*  
 *Pastor:* Will you let the Spirit use you as prophets to the powers that be?

**People: We accept the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves!**

*Reader invites all to turn back to the center. Candle may be raised.*

Pastor: Will you proclaim the good news and live as disciples of Jesus Christ, his body?

**People: We confess Jesus Christ as our Savior, put our whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as our Lord, in union with the church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races!**

*Water may be raised.*

Pastor: Will you be living witnesses to the gospel, individually and together, wherever you are, and in all that you do?

**People: We will remain faithful members of Christ's holy church and serve as Christ's representatives in the world.**

*Bible is raised:*

Pastor: Let us join together in professing the Christian faith as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

Do you believe in God the Father?

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.**

Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, [who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,**  
 **born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father, and will come again to judge the living and the dead.]**

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, [the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.]**

**Thanksgiving over the Water**

Elder: The Spirit of the Lord is with us. Almighty God, the life you birthed in us by baptism into Jesus Christ will never die. Your justice never fails. Your mercy is everlasting.

**People: Your healing river flows. Your Spirit blows where you will. We cannot stop you, God!**

Pastor: Come upon us, Holy Spirit!

**People: Come upon us, Holy Spirit!**

Pastor: Come upon these waters.

**People: Come upon these waters.**

Pastor: Let these waters be to us drops of your mercy.

**People: Let these waters remind us of your righteousness and justice.**

Pastor: Let these waters renew in us the resurrection power of Jesus.

**People: Let these waters make us long for your coming reign.**

Pastor: Most Holy God, Abba, Father!

**People: Glory to you!**

Pastor: Jesus Christ, Savior, Lord!

**People: Glory to you!**

Pastor: Spirit of fire, Spirit over the waters, Spirit of holiness!

**People: Glory to you!**

Pastor: Eternal God, One in Three and Three in One!

**People: All glory is yours, now and forever. Amen!**

Pastor: You are invited to come forward, to touch the water, and to “remember your baptism and be thankful!”

Music for the journey:  
 “*Holy Spirit, Come to Us,” FWS 2118 “Come and Fill Our Hearts,” FWS 2157 “Jesus Remember Me,” UMH 488 “Water, River, Spirit, Grace,” FWS 2253*

**Invitation**

Christ our Sovereign invites to his table all who love him, who seek to live into the fullness of God’s love, and seek to live in peace with one another.

Therefore, as a watermarked people, inspired by the witness of the liberating love of Christ and the saving grace of God, let us share signs of peace and reconciliation.

**Great Thanksgiving**

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Almighty God, Creator of all that is: sun, moon and stars that shine on each of us around this planet, flora and fauna that bud and bloom with the diversity of climates, human and animal species in colorful array.

You formed each in your image, a convergence of miracle and mystery. and called it all good. Unable to comprehend such grace, we turn from you. But your love overcomes our fear and we are met time and again with your abiding presence.

And so, with all creatures of this earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. Your Spirit anointed him, as we will be anointed now to service as his Body, to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people.

He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit. When the Lord Jesus ascended, he promised to be with us always, in the power of your Word and Holy Spirit.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: “Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

*[lift cup]*

When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:

“Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

And so, in remembrance of your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ’s offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

Through your Son Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit in your holy church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever. **Amen!**

Let us pray that prayer Jesus taught us, saying...

**The Breaking of the Bread the Receiving of the Cup**

May this table of Jesus, our Host, become many tables that we host so that all may be fed.

*[break bread]*

May this bread that we break become lives opened and shared freely.

*[pour cup]*

May this fruit of the vine that we pour become love that flows extravagantly across divides.

**Giving of bread and Cup**

**The Prayer After Communion**

**Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us. Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your spirit, to give ourselves for others, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.**

**Sending Forth**

Pastor: Go forth in peace to serve God and your neighbor in all that you do.

**Amen.**

Pastor: The grace of the Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
 and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
 be with you now and always. **Amen.**

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