

# Religion and the Common Good

2021 Henderson Summer Leadership Conference

Tuesday Opening Worship

with Rev. Liddy Barlow  
Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania



# Creating sacred space

Grace and peace, and welcome back! I'm Rev. Liddy Barlow from Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania, one of the planning partners of this year's event. Welcome to day two of the Henderson Summer Leadership Conference. Whether you hung on every word of yesterday's sessions, if you listened in a little bit when you could, if you missed it and are just joining us today: you are welcome here. This time, this space: it is made for you, a refuge from your regular whirl, a place of hope, challenge, and encouragement. And now, a place to worship God.

# Creating sacred space

- As we begin, we make ourselves ready – and we make our space ready. If you're able, clear some space around your screen. Perhaps light a candle, or set a holy object. Do what you can to make this a place apart. Your to-do list will find you later: for now, make room to find where God is waiting in plain sight.
- In this space, we set our feet on the floor, we relax our shoulders and straighten our backs, and we dare to take a breath. As we breathe in, we receive the peace Christ gives. As we breathe out, we release our anxiety, fear, and worry. Let's try it. Breathe in peace. Breathe out worry. 3x.

# Acknowledging the land

- Grounded on this land, we acknowledge all those who have called this place their home. Today, I join this gathering from Pittsburgh, home of the Osage and Shawnee peoples, and I recognize their continued connection to this land. If you would like to recognize the first peoples of the land where you are, visit [native-land.ca](http://native-land.ca).
- Let's call ourselves to worship now, using the words on your screen. I invite you to speak these words aloud, even as you keep your mute button on, and I'm glad to have Joanne Spence joining me in leadership.

# Call to Worship

One: Listen! Out of Zion comes forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Many: **We hear the call, and stream toward God's holy mountain.**

One: From every direction, seekers come: the weak and the strong, the privileged and the powerless.

Many: **We come as we are, walking in the name of the Lord our God.**

One: Let us stand before God with open hearts, ready to receive challenge, comfort, and wisdom.

Many: **We will worship God, Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit.**

Hymn: “The Mountain of God,”

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ren\\_fY3QP7A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ren_fY3QP7A)

“The Mountain of God,” music and lyrics copyright 1996 by Phil Campbell-Enns.

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# *A reading from the prophet Micah*

In days to come

the mountain of the Lord's house  
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,  
and shall be raised up above the hills.

Peoples shall stream to it,

and many nations shall come and say:

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,  
to the house of the God of Jacob;  
that he may teach us his ways  
and that we may walk in his paths.”

# *A reading from the prophet Micah*

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,  
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

He shall judge between many peoples,  
and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away;  
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
and their spears into pruning hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war any more;



# *A reading from the prophet Micah*

but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees,  
and no one shall make them afraid;  
for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.

For all the peoples walk,  
each in the name of its god,  
but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God  
forever and ever.

# *A reading from the prophet Micah*

In that day, says the Lord,  
I will assemble the lame  
and gather those who have been driven away,  
and those whom I have afflicted.  
The lame I will make the remnant,  
and those who were cast off, a strong nation;  
and the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion  
now and forevermore.

# Homily

- We have all been telling the stories of our “pandemic lasts.”
- Now we are slowly beginning to have “pandemic firsts.”
- My first dinner with people other than my family was under a tent at the Turkish Cultural Center, a small community iftar during Ramadan.
- Rabbi Jeff Myers said it reminded him of Sukkot: rabbi who survived a terror attack, hosted by political refugees from Turkey – under their own vine and fig tree, with no one to make them afraid.
- Micah adds on to Isaiah’s vision this piece about vines and fig trees. Washington quoted it in his letter to the Hebrew congregation of RI.

# Homily

- Washington imagined the idea of religious liberty, where people would not be persecuted for their beliefs or practice.
- Today we have a more expansive vision: tents with open sides where all can enter, Micah's vision of all walking in their name of their own god, arm in arm in the same direction. This is not easy.
- But I have hope. Sofa Spirituality brings people together to experience a window into neighbor's faith and a mirror to reflect on their own. The story of a Buddhist monk inspires a Jewish participant to return to a spiritual practice that carries meaning for her.

# Homily

- That's the thing about vines: they grow from our neighbor's rooftop to our own. And when we are connected to the vine: we bear fruit.
- All of us are just beginning to write our pandemic firsts. May they be firsts of collaboration and celebration with all our neighbors as we stream toward the mountain of God together.

# Prayers of the People

One: God of the nations, all peoples turn toward you like flowers reaching toward the sun. Bless humankind in our rich diversity, our varied beliefs, our differing understandings. Bring harmony among believers of all the world's religions: let our differences lead us to curiosity and friendship, not to violence and mistrust. Grant every tradition its own vine and fig tree, where its people can flourish unafraid. Keep us faithful to our own path of Christian discipleship, following Jesus as peacemakers and good neighbors. Lord, in your mercy,

**Many: Hear our prayer.**

# Prayers of the People

One: God of the outcasts and strangers, bring all your people, with no exceptions, into the family of faith. Gather those who have been driven away by our prejudice, pettiness, and fear. Gather people who are sick and people who are poor; people facing addiction and incarceration; people living with disabilities; people who face racism, sexism, xenophobia, or homophobia. Grant to these the places of honor at your table. Help us to extend your wide welcome to every one of your children. Lord, in your mercy,

**Many: Hear our prayer.**

# Prayers of the People

One: Loving God, we place in your hands all the concerns on our hearts this day. We pray your mercy for those entrusted to our care: our families, congregations, neighborhoods, those we serve. We ask for your peacemaking presence in places of violence and conflict, from city streets to distant battlefields. We pray for healing for those who face illness, relief for those in pain, and peace for those who mourn. We turn our anxieties and troubles over to you, trusting that you hear our every prayer. Lord, in your mercy,

**Many: Hear our prayer.**



# Prayers of the People

One: Endlessly creative God, we give thanks for this opportunity to gather across distance and to exercise our imaginations. Bless our learning and our connections today at the Henderson Summer Leadership Conference. Bring us the challenge, inspiration, ideas, and respite that we are seeking. Be with our speakers, filling their words with new resonance and insight. Help the echoes of this day to ring throughout our ministries in the days to come. Lord, in your mercy,

**Many: Hear our prayer.**

# Prayer of Our Savior

Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be your name,  
Your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours

Now and for ever.

Amen.

Video: “Many Gifts, One Spirit” -  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDoj4i9kDUY>

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# Benediction

Though we move on different pathways, we are walking to your throne.

Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord.

And as we walk arm in arm, may the blessing of God, Creator Christ and Holy Spirit, rest upon you and remain with you this day and every day.

Amen.