

Sources:

Call to Worship – from Worship Resources of the United Church of Christ – US (http://www.ucc.org/justice_worker-justice_labor-sunday_worship-resources)

Prayer of Confession – from Penitential Prayer of the Migrant Sunday Liturgy Guide, of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (2017)

Assurance of Pardon – from National Farm Worker Ministry (<http://nfwm.org/education-center/faithbasedresources/prayers/>)

Pastoral Prayer – comes from the Prayer of the Faithful/Intercessions of the Migrant Sunday Liturgy Guide, at the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (2017)

MORE THAN LITURGY:

INVITATION TO PARTNERSHIP WITH UCCP MIGRANT MINISTRY



This liturgy is prepared by the **Rev. Cathy Chang**. She is a Presbyterian Church (USA) mission co-worker working in partnership with the UCCP Migrant Ministry with the UCCP national office. She, her husband Juan and daughter Aurelie moved to Quezon City in March 2016. Special thanks to Rev. Nonie Aviso, Program Coordinator of the Middle Luzon Jurisdictional Area, and Ms. Chay Inocentes, Program Assistant, for their assistance in preparing it. Thank you also to Lorraine Kamatoy for her assistance with the cover design .

As an extension of the UCCP Migrant Ministry, she is working with partners such as Migrante International, National Council of Churches in the Philippines, and Churches Witnessing with Migrants (<http://nccphilippines.org/cwmm/>). She is also seeking to facilitate partnerships with other Asian churches and organizations, as well as between these partners and U.S. church entities. Some parts of this liturgy are reflective of these pre-existing and evolving partnerships between UCCP and other organizations.

While the main partners of Migrante International and CWMM are focused in the National Capital Region, these partners now desire to expand their awareness, advocacy, and actions in other parts of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. In solidarity with these partners, as a fuller expression of the pastoral needs of OFWs and their families, as well as the human rights issues of OFWs, Cathy is inviting deeper engagement with UCCP church workers, local churches, conferences, jurisdictional areas, and other entities.

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**Migrant Worker Sunday:
Liturgy for UCCP Sunday Worship Services
November 19, 2017**

We praise God who journeys with people for freedom and peace

Prelude

Thoughts to Ponder

One must have courage to leave home and loved ones to go to a strange place and be alienated from all that is familiar. You can never be sure of your fate out there. Be assured of your faith in a God of time and space who journeys with you.

† Call to Worship

Leader: God of Life,

People: you are as near to us as our breath.

Leader: Touch our eyes,

People: that we may see you in one another.

Leader: Open our ears,

People: that we may hear your voice in the cries of the oppressed.

Leader: Enter our hearts,

People: that we may be filled with your love toward all people.

Leader: Come, O God of life and breath and wholeness.

All: Be with us now. Show us the way to new life and grant us the courage to be people of your Way.

† Opening Hymn

♪ **WORSHIP THE LORD, WORSHIP THE FATHER** ♪ *HFJ#314*

Refrain: *Worship the Lord, worship the Father, the Spirit, the Son
Raising our hands in devotion to Him who is one.*

*Raising our hands as a sign of rejoicing
And with our lips our togetherness voicing
Giving ourselves to a life of creativeness
Worship and work must be one. (Refrain)*

*Praying and training that we be a blessing
And by our workmanship daily expressing
We are committed to serving humanity
Worship and work must be one. (Refrain)*

*Hold me with thy powerful hand;
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven
Feed me till I want no more;
Feed me till I want no more.*

*Open now the crystal fountain
Where the healing waters flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through:
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer;
Ever be my strength and shield;
Ever be my strength and shield.*

*When I reach the River Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death, and hell's destruction
Land me safe on heaven's side:
Songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever sing to you;
I will ever sing to you.*

† Benediction

Go out into the world in peace.

Have courage.

Hold onto what is good.

Return no one evil for evil.

Strengthen the faint-hearted.

Support the weak.

Help the suffering.

Honor all persons.

Honor all creation.

Love and serve the Lord,

rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And may the love of God,

the Light of Christ,

and the power and communion of that Spirit

be with us all. Go in peace. Amen.

†

Hymn of Petition:

♪ O GOD IN HEAVEN ♪ HFJ#50

O God in heaven, grant to your children
Mercy and blessing, songs never ceasing
Grace to invite us, peace to unite us
O God in heaven, author of love.
Jesus Redeemer help us remember
Your pain and passion, your resurrection,
Your call to follow, your love tomorrow
Jesus Redeemer, savior and friend.
Spirit unending, give us your blessing,
Strength for the weary, help for the needy,
Hope for the scornful, peace for the mournful
Spirit unending, comfort and guide.

We commit ourselves anew to work for God's kingdom on earth

Call to Offering

With joy, to the God who is the giver of all good things, let us offer up to God the gifts of our lives and our livelihoods

† Doxology

*Praise God the Source of Life and Birth,
Praise God the Word who came to earth
Praise God the Spirit, Holy Flame,
All honor, glory to God's name. Amen.*

Prayer for the Offering

Lord God, who pours out blessings upon us, we give you thanks for all that you bestow upon us. We acknowledge your faithfulness and goodness to us. As grateful as we are for blessings, make us people who seek to be blessings. We re-dedicate our lives and our livelihoods to your glory, as we work towards the fullness of life for all. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Hymn of Faith:

♪ GUIDE ME, O MY GREAT REDEEMER ♪

1. *Guide me, O my great Redeemer,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but you are mighty,*

*Called to be partners with God in creation
Honoring Christ as the Lord of the nation,
We must be ready for risk and for sacrifice
Worship and work must be one. (Refrain)*

We confess our sins before a loving and forgiving God

Prayer of Confession

God, you have created every person in your image, every person exists with an inherent dignity and worth, yet sometimes we have been blind to the divine image in the other, especially in those who are outsiders to our nation, culture or class.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

God, you call us to welcome the stranger in our midst, to extend the kind of hospitality that will transform the stranger into friend, the outsider into neighbor, yet too often we have raised walls of animosity to those who seek shelter among us, especially those driven by war, oppression and economic exploitation to seek life in a strange and foreign place.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

God, you call us into a community working for the common good of all people, making choices that bring hope, justice, truth and freedom to our world, yet sometimes we have failed out to speak against injustice and lift up the oppressed.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Assurance of Pardon

Our God is a God of grace and transformation. When we ask, God will give us the courage and strength to live out our faith in the workplace and the marketplace, as well as in the sanctuary.

† Scripture Lessons

Psalm 137:1-6 (NRSV)

By the rivers of Babylon –

**There we sat down and there we wept
When we remembered Jerusalem.**

**One the willows there
we hung our harps.**

**For there our captors
asked us for songs,
and our tormentors asked for mirth,
saying,**

“Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”

**How could we sing the Lord's song
in a foreign land?**

**If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my hand wither!**

**Let my tongue cling to the roof of
my mouth**

if I do not remember you,

if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy.

Reflection: This Psalm evokes the pain and loss from the Babylonian exile, prominently centered around the destruction of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was formerly the center of the peoples' faith in God, reminding them of God's faithfulness. Like the destruction of Jerusalem, I wonder if the faith of our migrant workers is seemingly lost, when they work in countries where their faith is no longer the main part of their lives. Some might enjoy days off for worship and fellowship, or others might not even enjoy those extra blessings: in this new work setting, their faith does not find the same full expression as when they were with their own faith communities in the Philippines. Like the Babylonian captors who desired to listen to songs of mirth, perhaps the foreign employers only seek the satisfaction of workers through smiles and “Yes, sir/ma'am.” Yet these songs of mirth belie the mixture of emotions beneath the surface.

is ever a stranger to you and no one is ever far from your loving care. You created us each in your own divine image. In your compassion O God, defend those who have been forced by poverty and unequal development, to seek work in distant lands. Sustain families that are separated and forced apart. Bring dignity to those who are subject to oppressive work conditions called on to do the dangerous, disgusting and demeaning jobs that the affluent disdain. May your divine image be recovered in every person. In your power, O God, pull down those systems of labor oppression that destroy the humanity of workers. Empower us, O God, to challenge economic systems that treat people like commodities and perpetuate global inequality.

Jesus Christ, you have known what it means to be a refugee fleeing the terror of persecution. You had nowhere to lay your head, and still you are the one who provides a refuge for all who are homeless and oppressed. In your kindness, watch over those who are driven by conflict and war to escape their homelands. We ask you, Jesus Christ, as our loving brother, to weave together and heal broken lives, broken families and broken bodies. We ask that you bring home to peaceful lands, those exiles whose hearts long for return. May we follow faithfully your life lived in openness and hospitality, to the stranger and outcast. Melt the hardened hearts of governments and nations, who would turn away the refugee, and who erect barriers to those who seek asylum.

Holy Spirit, like a dove you settle upon those who are weak and fill them with power. Confound the plans of the powerful and lift up the lowly. You bring the power to break chains and usher in the time of freedom. In your power, O Spirit, release those who have been bound as slaves and trafficked against their will to foreign places, those who have through force or deception found themselves in hopeless places of seemingly no return. We ask release for those children and women who have been trafficked into sexual exploitation, for those children and adults who have been sold into labor servitude. May your justice and judgment reign upon those who trade in the lives of the innocent.

Reflection: 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation with leaders such as Martin Luther. Many celebrations have already happened throughout the year, while others are still in the works around the world. While Luther did not claim the book of James as one of his favorites because it seemed long on works and short on grace, there is still a profound challenge for today's hearer: Is there consistency between our life and faith?

Whether you are the overseas worker, or the family member or friend who is left behind in the Philippines, James calls us to joy in the face of trials. Joy does not seem like anyone's first response but rather sadness, frustration or anger, especially when we remember the OFWs who sacrifice their safety in difficult and dangerous work conditions, and families of OFWs who still languish in prison because of protracted legal proceedings like Mary Jane Veloso.

Our trials in life should not cause us to be passive, but rather active with God's sustaining power: this is the source of our joy. With this joy amid trials, any changes that we seek to make in our lives, in the lives of our families, in the lives of our country, are also the power to work towards the fullness of life here in the Philippines, as well as freedom and dignity for all of us.

Message

The church worker who provides the Message is highly encouraged to preach from any or all of the designated Scripture lessons.

Testimony

In addition to the church worker who will provide the Message, there are two suggestions in this part of the liturgy. The first recommendation is to invite an overseas Filipino worker to share about their experiences. The second suggestion is to invite the spouse or other immediate family member to share about their experiences. These testimonies help to concretize the experiences of OFWs and their families, for the whole congregation.

Pastoral Prayer

Creator God, all things come from you and to you all things return, no one

While today's Babylonian exiles may remind us of the experiences of our overseas Filipino workers, I imagine that exile also includes the experiences of family members who are left behind in the Philippines. Without the presence of a family member or loved one, these remaining families and friends might also mourn a time when there were more joyful expressions of worship, together in the Philippines.

While the pain and loss of separation for both workers and their families seems too much to bear, all still remember God's faithfulness. In this memory is their hope for life in the midst of exile.

1 Peter 1:1 (NRSV)

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia

Reflection: The letter and the recipients of this letter are customary for the beginning of a letter, during the years of the early church. Unlike other letters in the New Testament with clear and credible author, and specific audience, this letter seems to serve a more general purpose.

From this traditional letter comes a more contemporary challenge to today's situation in the Philippines and throughout the countries that receive the labor and services of our overseas Filipino workers. Like Peter who wrote to multiple people in various locations, here is the challenge for today's church workers and church leaders: When preaching and teaching, when leading the flock that is entrusted to your care and leadership, God also stretches you to consider that you are also sent as an "apostle" to minister to the people in the pews, as well as the overseas Filipino workers who seek to be reunited with family members and friends in these same pews for holidays and other special occasions.

James 1:1-4 (NRSV)

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings: My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.