

Liturgy for the Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia May 17, 2023

"Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me". Matthew 10, 40

*Prepared by the Faith Gender Sexuality Commission
of the Baptist, Methodist and Waldensian Churches (Italy) and by REFO*

HYMN / MUSIC

Greeting

Opening

L: Poised on the edge between the already and the not yet, we come searching for you, Our God.

Assembly: You whisper promises made of love and acceptance and give us full impetus for our present; you stand full of joy before us, you walk beside us and guide us.

L: We are witnesses of the God who gives us peace

Assembly: And who bestows justice by loving us

L: We are witnesses of the God who set us free from oppression and violence

Assembly: And who created us in God's image and likeness

L: We are witnesses of the God who has restored our dignity

Assembly: May the name of Christ endure forever, shining its light everywhere on this earth. Amen

Psalm 139 (a two-voice reading)

¹O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

²You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.

³You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord,
you know it completely.

⁵You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.

⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

**⁷Where can I go from your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?**

**⁸If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.**

⁹If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
¹⁰even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.

**¹¹If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night,"**

**¹²even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.**

¹³For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

**¹⁴I praise you,
for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well. Amen**

Let us gather our thoughts for prayer

Our God, you who are father and mother,
God of all ages and of all peoples,
God of all time and beyond time:
envelop us in your love as a mother embraces her child;
sing softly to us like a father humming a lullaby.
You know the joys and sorrows of our hearts,
our efforts for change and our resistance to it.
Help us to make your ways become our ways,
Your peace, our peace.
Your justice, our justice.
Spirit of life, today we ask you
to know how to enjoy who we are.
Help us forgive others and ourselves,
because your grace is sufficient for all of us.
The universe was born out of your creativity,
And in your love, we are sustained. Amen.

HYMN / SONG

Confession of sin

I beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (*Ephesians 4, 1 - 3*).

Moments of silence for individual prayer, accompanied by music

Let us pray

Our God, you have given us your Word
to guide us on the path of truth; forgive us,
because we follow our own ways.

Our God, you have given us your Word
to feed our hungry souls; forgive us,
because we look elsewhere for our food.

Our God, you have given us your Word
to make us strong; forgive us,
because we rely on our own strength alone.

Our God, you have given us your Word
to comfort us in our afflictions; forgive us,
because we do not know how
to yield ourselves into your arms.

Our God, you have given us your Word
for our salvation and everlasting happiness; forgive us,
because we attach so little importance to it.
Abide with us in Christ, we pray. Amen

HYMN / SONG

Assurance of forgiveness

A new heart I will give you,
and a new spirit I will put within you;
and I will remove from your body the heart of stone
and give you a heart of flesh.
I will put my spirit within you,
and make you follow my statutes
and be careful to observe my ordinances.

(*Ezekiel 36, 26-27*)

Let us receive forgiveness in Christ!
With Christ, we are called to build new bridges
made of love between us, and between us and God.
Together with Christ
we can create a new heaven and a new earth. Amen

HYMN / SONG

Confession of faith

God, Father and Mother of us all,
just as you came searching for me
in the depths of my loneliness,
give me the strength to overcome my selfishness
that I may go out towards the people I meet,
while recognizing them as creatures just like me.

Jesus, my brother and friend,
just as you came to heal the wounds
of my body and my spirit,
give me the strength to meet the other,
in their suffering humanity and in their need of help,
granting us to support each other along the path of life.

Spirit of God, victorious strength of life,
just as you have come to renew my life,
grant me humility to recognize the other
in my sister and brother,
with whom you call me to experience
God's community as the kingdom of heaven. Amen

BIBLE READINGS

Preaching:

“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me”.

(Matthew 10, 40)

HYMN / MUSIC

Intercessory prayer

God of wisdom and care,
we pray for all those you call to share with you
the work of transforming the world,
that girls and boys,
women, men,
and non-binary people
might live, work, and learn together
with respect and dignity.

For health workers and social workers,
that accompany body transformations:
God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those who create laws,
for those who have political responsibilities;
we pray that they may create structures
that protect and promote the well-being
of every human being:

God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those involved in the care of faith communities,
that shape beliefs about the worth of women,
of men and of queer people:

God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those who care for and defend
the richness of diversities:

God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those who work in shelters and prisons
Seeing first-hand the tangible damage
caused by violence:

God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those promoting restorative justice programs,
who give hope where violence has destroyed many lives:

God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those who create support groups,
safe spaces where deep rooted problems
can be named and addressed:

God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For activists who are committed
to fighting gender discrimination:

God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

**Hear our prayers, O God,
for you will not cease from your healing work
until you have wiped away the tears from every face,
through Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Grant us to address you every day of our lives
with these words:

Our Father

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.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory
are yours now and forever. Amen.

HYMN / SONG

Let us welcome God's **blessing**:

May our feet leave traces of hope in the dust.
May we hear the heart of those next to us
beating in the dark.
May our hands reach out like doors that open.
May our mouths transmit
what we have been granted to receive.
May our ears grasp the life stories we encounter.
And may the grace of God be with us now and always.