

A SERVICE OF WORSHIP  
HONORING THE RICH HERITAGE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

for Evangelical United Church of Christ  
K. Hawker, June 2007

**PRELUDE**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

(www.stillspeaking.com)

God of exquisite beauty,  
You spin the universe and weave the planets.  
You gather the continents and pour out the seas.  
You call all things into being and proclaim them 'good.'

**Make us to celebrate Your creation.**

God of tender care,  
You reach out when Your people tear apart all you have made.  
You come to us again and again,  
offering Your healing and reconciliation and redemption.  
You walk the earth as one of us, yearning to know and be known.

**Make us reach back to You, claiming your saving grace.**

God of unimaginable creativity,  
You blow through our lives---making new what was old and dead.  
You come to each one of us and to all of us,  
challenging our assumptions and our fears.  
You ignite our imaginations and push us towards fullness of life.

**Make us open ourselves to your Holy Spirit.**

Creating, Saving, Liberating God, in our worship and our living,  
make us to be more like You---  
extravagantly welcoming and loving all that is yours. Amen.

**\*HYMN**

"God is still speaking,"

tune: Morecambe  
Deborah L. Patterson

**There is a comma, where we fear a pause,  
life rushes onward, past the grave and cross.  
God is still speaking -- still and quiet voice --  
more truth to break forth, giving each a choice.**

**Look to the morning past the dark of night.  
We say with courage, "All will be made right."  
Love is The Way, not doctrine made of stone:  
God is unfolding truth, not we alone.**

**We are God's people, spirit, dust and bone.  
Truths we hold dear were yesterday unknown.  
In our tomorrows there will surely be  
visions to challenge us, new shores to see.**

## The Official Story

Fifty years ago, on June 25, 1957, two historic bodies joined hands and hearts to form the United Church of Christ. The General Council of Congregational Christians Churches (the union of the Congregational Churches and the Christian Churches in 1931) and the Evangelical and Reformed Church (the union of Evangelical Synod of North America and the Reformed Church in the United States in 1937) covenanted together at the first General Synod of the United Church of Christ in Cleveland, Ohio. First we tell the official story.

### READING

Genesis 1:1-5

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, <sup>2</sup>the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup>Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

### PRESENTATION

The Congregationalists

The Congregationalists came first, some arriving on the Mayflower and others founding the Massachusetts Bay Colony. English followers of Calvinist teachings, these ancestors had a passion for local autonomy (congregationalism). Hallmarks of this tradition are a commitment to education (founded much of what we know as the education system in our nation) and a passion for justice (ordaining the first woman, the first openly gay man, and the first African American).

We bring the fruit of education  
symbolized in the gift of a bible  
which is to be read with the best of our scholarly tools.

### RESPONSE 27

"From All that Dwell Below the Skies"

tune: Lasst Uns Erfreuen  
Isaac Watts

**From all that dwell below the skies,  
Let the Creator's praise arise; Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Let the Redeemer's Name be sung,  
Through every land, by every tongue. Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Al-le-lu-ia!**

### PRESENTATION

The Reformed

The Reformed Church in the United States carried out the tradition of the German version of the Calvinist (or Reformed) movement. Its roots trace mostly to 18<sup>th</sup> century immigrants from areas near the Rhine River in Germany who settled in Pennsylvania, northern Maryland, and eastern Ohio. Many of these Germans served as soldiers and chaplains in the Revolutionary War and it was Zion German Reformed Church in Philadelphia that hid the Liberty Bell throughout the war. Immersed in the Heidelberg Catechism and a passion for orderly worship, this stream was influential in liturgical reform.

We bring the fruit of orderly living  
symbolized in the gift of the bread  
which has been faithfully harvested, kneaded and baked into loaves.

### RESPONSE 22

"Praise to the Lord"

tune: Lobe den Herren  
Joachim Neander

**Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the source of creation!  
Who as on eagle's wings saves us from aimless dejection.**

**All your who hear, now in God's presence draw near;  
Praise God in glad adoration.**

**PRESENTATION**

Sharing a passion for independence with the Congregationalists, the Christian churches emerged in the wake of the Great Awakening in America. Revivalists the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century stirred new energy into the religious experience particularly along the American frontier. "No creed but Christ" was the motto and no name but "Christian" was used. This movement is also represented in the current Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the more conservative Christian Churches, and the Churches of Christ.

The Christians

We bring the fruit of revival  
symbolized in the gift of water  
which washes our bodies and nourishes our souls.

**RESPONSE 597**

"Shall We Gather at the River"

tune: Hanson Place  
Robert Lowery

**Shall we gather at the river,  
Where bright angel feet have trod,  
With its crystal tide forever—Flowing by the throne of God?  
*Yes, we'll gather at the river,  
The beautiful, the beautiful river;  
Gather with the saints at the river  
That flows by the throne of God.***

**PRESENTATION**

Another wave of German immigrants came to America in the late 1800s settling in the Midwest, largely along the Missouri and Mississippi River valleys. Their religious tradition was a blend of Luther's structure and Calvin's spirit, the product of the Pietistic and Rationalist movements in Prussia. A passion for service prompted these ancestors to found institutions still serving the most vulnerable in our community today: Emmaus Homes, Evangelical Children's Home, and Deaconess Foundation (whose assets were from the hospital of the same name).

The Evangelicals

We bring the fruit of piety  
symbolized in the gift of juice  
is the sweet nectar which comes from the vine.

**RESPONSE 49**

"Ask Me What Great Thing I Know"

tune: Hendon  
Johann Schwedler

**Ask me what great thing I know,  
That delights and stirs me so?  
What the high reward I win? Whose the name I glory in?  
Jesus Christ, the Crucified.**

**CHANCEL STEPS**

**The Forgotten Story**

(note: This information in this section comes largely from the Hidden Histories of the UCC, edited by Barbara Brown Zikmund.)

Along the margins and hidden behind the text we find more stories that tell about the passions and the diversity of our denomination. There are four strands and much more. Many of these

stories have been largely forgotten, but they are an essential part of who we are today. Here are a few of the hidden histories.

#### READING

John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup>in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

#### PRESENTATION

Japanese American Congregationalism

Already by the 1870s many Japanese immigrants were arriving along the west coast of the United States. When Japanese Christians first approached Third Congregational Church in San Francisco they were told that the church didn't have 'room' for so-called 'Orientals'. By 1890 a Japanese Christian organization was formed and the growing number of Japanese Christians prompted the Congregational Home Mission Society to begin working to form Japanese American Congregational churches. Between 1885 and 1926, 15 Japanese American Congregational congregations were formed. Following the tragic history of the Internment of Japanese Americans during WWII, many of these churches served as shelter for those attempting to return their homes. Only a few of these congregations still exist.

We bring the fruit of racism endured  
symbolized in the gift of a peace crane  
with a prayer for peace in this next generation.

#### RESPONSE 5

"Praise to God"

tune: Sakura  
Nobuaki Hanaoka

**Praise to God, praise to God, for the greenness of the trees,  
for the beauty of the flowers, for the blessing of the sky,  
for the greatness of the sea.  
Praise to God, praise to God, now and for-ev-er-more.**

#### PRESENTATION

Hungarian Reformed (Calvin Synod)

When Hungarian immigrants began appearing at the (German) Reformed Churches in Cleveland to receive communion, the Reformed pastors decided to help the Hungarians form their own congregations. With help from the Reformed Church, the Hungarians formed worshipping communities and a Classis in 1896 that was still connected with the "mother church" in Hungary, a relationship which continued until after WWI. The Hungarian churches joined the Reformed Church after the war and became known as Calvin Synod. Even today Calvin Synod has a distinct governance and worship life based largely on the Heidelberg Catechism. This still active group of churches form the only non-geographical Conference in the United Church of Christ.

We bring the fruit of ethnic pride  
symbolized in the gift of the Heidelberg Catechism  
with a prayer to remember our ancestors.

#### RESPONSE 445

"Lift Your Heads, O Martyrs Weeping"

tune: Magyar  
Karoly Jeszensky

**Lift your heads, O martyrs, weeping,  
God our Maker still does reign!  
You are daily in God's keeping, God is with you in your pain.  
Rise and be of valiant heart, and with courage bear your part;  
Soon again God's arms will fold you to God's loving heart and hold you.**

**PRESENTATION**

Afro-Christian Convention

Even before the Emancipation Proclamation, freed Blacks in Chesapeake, Virginia who had been influenced by the religious movements around them formed the "Providence Church" in 1852. After the war, from the scorched earth of slavery, newly freed Blacks began founding communities and institutions independent of their former oppressors. The independence of the Christian movement was appealing and as several Afro-Christian churches were formed, some of the churches forming the Afro-Christian Convention and others the Church of God in Christ. As the Congregationalists and Christians drew together, the Afro-Christian Convention and many of the Black Congregationalists formed the Convention of the South. Differences in education and economics proved to be significant barriers. The Afro-Christian churches retained an independent identity and governance until the formation of the United Church of Christ. Few of these congregations remain in the United Church of Christ.

We bring the fruit of freedom too long denied  
symbolized in the gift of a cross  
with a prayer in solidarity with all who know the bitterness of oppression.

**RESPONSE 85**

"I Woke Up This Morning"

Traditional

**I woke up this morning with my mind, stayed on Jesus.  
Woke up this morning with mind, stayed on Jesus.  
Woke up this morning with mind, stayed on Jesus,  
Hal-le-lu, hal-le-lu, hal-le-lu-jah!**

**PRESENTATION**

German Congregationalists

Life on the American frontier forced many immigrants to find new ways to experience and express their faith. The American Home Missionary Society, representing four denominations but funded primarily by the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists, worked to form congregations during the westward expansion in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The flexibility of Congregationalists proved to be an asset on the frontier and several German immigrant conversions resulted in the development of a German Congregational communities. With an influx of German immigrants from the Volga region of Russia, the German Congregationalist movement gained strength. In 1883 the General Evangelical Church Assembly of German Congregationalists was formed, later becoming the General Conference of German Congregational Churches which joined the United Church of Christ at its inception.

We bring the fruit of adaptability  
symbolized in the gift of butterfly  
with a prayer for new beginnings.

**RESPONSE 12**

"I Sing the Mighty Power of God"

tune: Ellacombe  
Isaac Watts

**I sing the mighty power of God that made the mountains rise.  
That spread the flowing seas abroad, and built the lofty skies  
I sing the wisdom that ordained the sun to rule the day;  
The moon shines full at God's command and all the stars obey.**

**The Still Speaking Story**

The story which was told in 1957 was the beginning to a story still unfolding. Committed to diversity, the face of the United Church of Christ, and this particular congregation, has continued to change. We come not only from the four strands and from the hidden histories, but also from the full spectrum of religious expression.

## READING

Arthur Waskow

In the beginning, darkness covered the face of the deep.  
Then the rushing-breath of life hovered over the waters.  
Let us breathe together.  
Let us catch our breaths from the need to make, to do.  
Let us be conscious of the Breath of Life.  
We breathe out what the trees breathe in.  
We breathe in what the trees breathe out.  
Together we breathe each other into life.

**Blessed is the One within the many.  
Blessed are the Many who make one.**

## PRESENTATION

no church tradition

Some of us grew up with no formal church experience. We learned the stories of faith when we visited our friend's church, we learned about preachers from the televangelists, and if we learned church music at all it was from our music teachers. In school we learned that God loves America, that it was God's intention that the European settlers move westward, and that our allegiance to the flag is Godly. We are the products of civil religion and cultural-Christianity, yet still a bit skittish of organized religion.

We bring the fruit of skepticism and inquiry  
symbolized in the gift of a magnifying glass  
to honor the importance of our questions.

## RESPONSE

"Morning has Broken"

Eleanor Farjeon

**Morning has broken, like the first morning  
Blackbird has spoken, like the first bird  
Praise for the singing, praise for the morning  
Praise for the springing fresh from the word**

## PRESENTATION

free church traditions

Many of us grew up in the diverse if spirited free church traditions which prospered during the turn of the past century. We are Baptist, we are Methodist, we are Disciples. We were proud in our ignorance of the creeds and our knowledge of the bible. We went to Vacation Bible School and Sunday School, we were 'saved', and we were immersed in the waters of baptism.

We bring the fruit of passion  
symbolized in the gift of a flame  
to honor those who have held the light for us.

## RESPONSE

"Standing on the Promises"

R. Kelso Carter

**Standing on the promises of Christ my King,  
Through eternal ages let His praises ring,  
Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing,  
Standing on the promises of God.  
*Standing, standing, Standing on the promises of God my Savior;  
Standing, standing, I'm standing on the promises of God.***

**PRESENTATION**

liturgical traditions

Many of us remember our First Communion, rosary beads, and Confession, we are Roman Catholic. Some of us learned Luther’s Small Catechism, we were Confirmed, we are Lutheran. Some of us learned the creeds and smelled incense on the high Holy Days, we were Episcopalian and Orthodox. We learned the rules, we followed the rules, we left the rules behind. But the tradition is in our bones.

We bring the fruit of ritual  
symbolized in the gift of a prayer beads  
to honor the importance of the senses that we bring to worship.

**RESPONSE 775**

“Eagles Wings”

Michael Joncas

**And God will raise you up on Eagle’s wings,  
bear you on the breath of dawn, make you to shine like the sun,  
and hold you in the palm of God’s hand.**

**PRESENTATION**

other religious traditions

Some of us embrace religious expressions which predate even Christianity itself. We read the stories of the Torah, we honor the changing of the seasons, we learn the four noble truths. We cherish what we experience in this congregation we call home, at the same time we celebrate our home in other faith traditions. We are Jewish, we are Wiccan, we are Buddhist.

We bring the fruit of diversity  
symbolized in the gift of a Menorah  
to honor our the value of our differing experiences.

**RESPONSE 24**

“Yigdal Elohim Chai”

tune: Leoni  
Moses Maimonides

**The God of Abraham praise, all praises to God’s name,  
who was and is and is to be fore’er the same!  
The One eternal God, before what now appears;  
the First, the Last: beyond all thought through timeless year.**

**The Feast**

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

**TABLE FELLOWSHIP**

**INVITATION**

**BLESSING (*People’s response in bold*)**

We remember the story Jesus’ friends tell.  
They say that it was night of celebration, a Passover feast,  
and also a night of betrayal,  
when Jesus took the bread leftover on the table  
blessed it and broke it and shared it, saying,  
“My body will be broken like this bread,  
but when you eat this bread and remember me  
you will become one in my body.”

On the same night in much the same way  
they say that he took the cup after supper saying,  
“My very lifeblood will be poured out like this wine,

but as often as you drink this cup and remember me, I will be in you.”

**Come, Holy Spirit, Come.**

**Bless this bread and bless this fruit of the vine.**

**Bless all of us in our eating and drinking**

**that our eyes might be open;**

**that we might recognize the risen Christ in our midst**

**indeed, in one another. Come, Holy Spirit, Come.**

**TABLE PRAYER AND PROCESSION TO THE TABLE**

*The Congregation is invited to come forward by the center aisle...*

*partaking of the bread and cup, sharing offerings,*

*and/or lighting candles in prayer at the altar.*

**\*OUR LORD’S PRAYER**

David Haas

*We sing our Lord’s Prayer during the processional.*

**Refrain:**

***Our father who art in heaven, oh, hallowed be thy name.***

***Our mother who art in heaven, oh, hallowed by thy name.***

**Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive, as we forgive, those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil  
for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours forever.**

**\*STATEMENT OF FAITH** (*People’s response in bold*)

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit,  
*God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God,  
and to your deeds we testify:*

**You call the worlds into being,  
create persons in your own image,  
and set before each one the ways of life and death.**

*You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.  
You judge people and nations by your righteous will  
declared through the prophets and apostles.*

**In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth,  
our crucified and risen Savior,  
you have come to us and shared our common lot,  
conquering sin and death  
and reconciling the world to yourself.**

*You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit,  
creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ,  
binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.*

**You call us into your church**



**to accept the cost and joy of discipleship,  
to be your servants in the service of others,  
to proclaim the gospel to all the world  
and resist the powers of evil,**  
*to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table,  
to join him in his passion and victory.*  
**You promise to all who trust you  
forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace,  
courage in the struggle for justice and peace,  
your presence in trial and rejoicing,  
and eternal life in your realm which has no end.**  
*Blessing and honor,  
glory and power be unto you.*  
**Amen.**

\*HYMN 182

"We Have Come"

tune: Hyfrydol  
Carl Daw, Jr.

**Strengthened by this glimpse of glory,  
fearful lest our faith decline,  
We like Peter, find it tempting  
to remain and build a shrine.  
But true worship gives us courage  
to proclaim what we profess  
That our daily lives may prove us  
people of the God we bless.**

\*BENEDICTION

\*POSTLUDE