

Worship Service Template for PIE Day

About this order of service:

So often we as trans, non-binary, gender queer, queer, Two Spirit, intersex people, and many more, are made invisible in worship. We become part of generic welcome to everyone, or are cast as being welcome “regardless” or “despite” our diversity, not because of it. This is especially true for many racialized and Indigenous LGBTQIA+ people, and LGBTQIA2S+ people with disabilities.

So be creative in how you interpret and contextualize these resources! Customize them for an online service or event - make it your own! Take the time to name us and celebrate us in all our diversity. May these resources and many others challenge us to embrace and en flesh the radical, prophetic, deeply inclusive call of the Good News.

- Affirming Connections and Affirm United/S' affirmer Ensemble
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Affirming Liturgy for National Affirming/PIE Day

by the Very Rev. Gary Paterson

OPENING... mark the beginning of worship in some way

Example: The sound of a Zen bell/gong ringing...

WORDS OF WELCOME

(Defining who you are, perhaps including your vision or mission statement, or some portion of it that works for on-line attention.)

An example:

Welcome to this time of worship at

We are so glad you are here.

We are an open-minded, open-hearted, LGBTQ2S affirming community,
seeking to follow in the way of Jesus,
and engage in the work of compassion, love and justice.

Wherever you are in your faith journey, with whatever questions you carry,
you are welcome here.

Whomever you love, whatever your gender identity, your sexual orientation,
your ethnicity, race or ability,
you are welcome here.

RECOGNITION OF FIRST NATIONS' TERRITORY

We acknowledge that we are living and worshipping on the unceded territory of the People. We seek to walk together, with our Indigenous brothers and sisters in the spirit of justice and reconciliation.

(Given the realities of on-line worship, where people may be connecting from many different places, you might want to invite people to write in the Chat Box an acknowledgement of the Territory where they are living and worshipping.)

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

(It would be good to have this filmed in a household, with a child (children) lighting the candle, with a parent assisting when/if needed, offering these words (adapted from Godly Play):

There once was someone who said such wonderful things and did some amazing things that people couldn't help but follow him. As they followed they asked lots of questions. Once they asked him who he was and he said "I am the Light."

CALL TO WORSHIP

(It is very difficult to make responsive calls or prayers work on-line, and I recommend that the Call be offered by one person – either as a “declaration” or in a conversational style.)

You might use Scripture to shape a call to worship – for example, verses from Isaiah 55, or Psalm 100; or you might explicitly build the call around this being National Affirming Sunday.

For example:

We gather together, on this National Affirming Sunday,
celebrating the all-inclusive love of God –
Worshipping our Maker, who delights in diversity;

Worshipping the Lover, who in Jesus reached out and accepted and embraced everyone, despite all social, class, ethnic and spiritual barriers.

Worshipping the Keeper, the Spirit who continues to break down the walls that divide us. Thanks be to God!

HYMN

As you well know, on-line worship presents challenges for congregational singing. Often it is helpful to sing only two, possibly three verses (depends on whether there's a repeating chorus.) Have a strong "lead singer" (or 2 or 3, at a safe distance from each other); split the screen and have the words printed on one side. As much as possible, choose hymns that are well known to the congregation to encourage people to sing along at home (with the mute button on 😊.)

Possible choice: "**Let Us Build a House**" by Marty Haugen, #1 in More Voices (perhaps singing vv. 1&6).

GATHERING TIME (TIME WITH CHILDREN)

It's hard to know how many younger children are participating in on-line worship – it's not the easiest or engaging of formats for them. But it feels important to acknowledge children's presence with a reflection or a story, perhaps with "wondering questions," one that is clearly accessible for children, and yet also draws in the adults.

One book that I would recommend for this Sunday is A Church for All by Gayle E. Pitman (winner of the Stonewall Book Award) with pictures by Laure Fournier.

Inspired by Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco, and other inclusive churches, this book celebrates a spiritual community that embraces all people – no matter their age, race, class, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

The power of the book is expressed through very simple words, and amazing pictures. For this book to "work," however, you would need to ensure that worshippers can see the pictures – it really is the case here that a picture is

worth a thousand words. The best way is to photograph or scan the pictures and then show them on screen as the story is being read; alternatively, have the book front and centre before the camera, with the words coming as commentary.

Another approach would be to play with the acronym PIE – Public, Intentional, Explicit. The storyteller would be filmed in a kitchen, in the midst of making a Bumbleberry PIE (You might also want to call it a “Jesus Pie.”)

Bumbleberry pie is a Canadian mixed berry pie originating from the Maritimes. It is made of at least three kinds of berries, but generally refers to a mixed-berry pie, as there is no such berry as a "bumbleberry". This pie often also contains apple and/or rhubarb.

In a one big mixing bowl you would add ingredients for the crust – and as you add, say, the flour, you might say, one cup of Justice; a cup of shortening/butter becomes a cup of affirmation; a cup of water is a cup of compassion, a sprinkling of salt for courage; etc. Eventually make the identity between pie crust and church (building, structure etc.)

And then, in a second bowl, you would mix the berries... and use that as a means of identifying the different people who would be mixed together... naming the LGBTQ2SI community, the differences in colour, ethnicity; ability/disability, age differences. The taste, the quality of a bumbleberry pie depends precisely on including a whole variety of berries... and then add a little sugar, the love which sweetens the whole mixture.

And this is where you could step back and talk about Public, Intentional and Explicit.

INTRODUCTION TO SCRIPTURE

An opportunity to do some of the background exegetical work, to enable people to have a better grasp of what they are about to hear, and why it's relevant. Often that work gets done in the sermon *after* people have heard and been puzzled by the Scripture reading. In this case, it could be an explanation of the struggle in the early church to include Gentiles as full members without them first becoming like the “original” members; i.e., Jews

SCRIPTURE READING:

Book of Acts 11:1-10;

possibly **Galatians 2:11-14** (See Appendix re Sermon Notes)

HYMN: possible choice: “**Though Ancient Walls** (“Walls that Divide”) by Farquharson and Klusmeier, # 691 in Voices United, (perhaps singing vv. 1&2).

SERMON: “**All Are Welcome**” (See Appendix below this order of service for a few ideas and suggestions for the Sermon.)

RESPONSE: “**Take, O Take Me as I Am**” (John bell and Graham Maule), More Voices #85

(Both a response to the sermon, with its theme of “take me as I am”, and a good segue into a time of prayer)

*Take, O take me as I am,
summon out what I shall be;
set your seal upon my heart
and live in me.*

PASTORAL PRAYERS

Since this service includes Communion, the prayers of gratitude will be included in the Great Thanksgiving. This Time of Prayer is for petitions and intercessions, concerns of the heart. The prayers will reflect the life of the community – for individuals in need, for pressing justice causes (e.g., for our neighbours to the south, depending on what is happening on the political scene; for a just sharing of COVID vaccine resources) and for issues that are part of the congregation’s justice and outreach (e.g., reconciliation, refugees, environment, homelessness); for issues specific to the reality experienced by the LGBTQ2SI community – within the church, the country, and in other countries in the world.

The prayers should include petitions asking for strength and insight to continue with the Affirming Journey, including the need to be public, intentional and explicit.

This is an excellent time to include screen images that reinforce the impact of the spoken word. Two on-line sites provide legally free images, where copyright issues have been dealt with: unsplash.com; and [creativecommons](https://creativecommons.org/).

THE LORD'S PRAYER

This might be an opportunity to use the version/paraphrase of the Prayer of Jesus written by Jim Cotter, and found in the New Zealand Anglican Book of Prayer – pg. 916 in [Voices United](#).

*Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be.
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:*

*The hallowing of your name echoes through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world!
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on
earth.*

*With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.*

*For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever.
Amen.*

A TIME OF OFFERING

Invitation to give... of one's self, of one's resources, with a clear statement about the gifts each person has and brings. This Time of Offering could

include an invitation to support those organizations in the community that are doing the work of mending and healing God's world; and, an invitation to support the ministry of the congregation, by ... and list the ways that are available.

Depending on your congregation's pattern for communion, you might choose to have a **HYMN** at this point.

I would heartily recommend Shirley Erena Murray's hymn, "**[For Everyone Born,) A Place at the Table.**" It's one of the few hymns to have at least one verse that makes explicit the welcome of Christ to members of the LGBTQ2S community. It may be unfamiliar to your congregation, so have a good soloist sing the verses; however, there is a wonderful chorus which is hard to resist from joining in on.

If you have the United Church Licencing agreement, you will have copyright permission to use this hymn in worship (Hope Publishing Company, 1998)

CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

I would suggest at least two presiders to create balance – gender identity, sexual orientation, ordered/lay etc. And, having two presiders allows for a variety of voices, and for responsive prayer to be led by two people on screen, which might encourage those at home to join in.

Invitation:

A word of invitation to all who are hungry for communion with God, for this is God's table, not ours, and what God has declared "clean" (acceptable) we are not to call "profane" (unacceptable). This invitation to the Table is another opportunity to have P.I.E. become a lived reality, with an intentional naming of the LGBTQ2SI community.

Also... give instruction for how this communion will be shared. That is, remind people that they need to have their own bread/cracker and grape juice/wine/fruit juice available and ready. When prayers have been offered, the presiders will invite all to eat and drink together, on screen and at home;

all share in these actions at the same time. This can offer some sense of the Body acting as one despite our separate locations.

The Great Thanksgiving:

Leader God be with you.

People And also with you.

Leader May God come more fully into our lives.

People May this be so.

Leader Let us offer our lives for transformation.

People In hope and joy, we offer ourselves.

Leader In thanksgiving, let us celebrate Christ in our midst.

People We welcome the Christ who lives within and between us.

Leader: We give thanks... (name gratitude that connects to your faith community. Include reference to the natural world, for flesh and bone, for bodies, in all their wonder and differences; thanks for the gift of sexuality; thanks for the gift of diversity. And again, specifically lift up the gifts of the LGBTQ2SI community.

Move then to give thanks for the witness of our Biblical ancestors),

To Noah and the promise of the rainbow,
For Joseph of the many-coloured coat,
For the deep commitment between Ruth and Naomi,
For the love between David and Jonathan
For Mary's yes and her mysterious pregnancy and her singing of the Magnificat, a dream of God's justice on earth.

We give thanks for the witness of the prophets of today, possible examples:

for poets, like Amanda Gorman, who declaimed at President Biden's Inauguration; for Alexei Navalny in the struggle for freedom in Russia; for Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble (in the United Church of Canada), and its 39 years of work for support, justice and affirmation of the LGBTQ2SI community.

We give thanks for the person of Jesus, his ministry, his teaching – feeding 5000 people gathered in the hills of Galilee, no one excluded; talking to outsiders, like the Samaritan woman at the well; healing the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman, a “foreigner”; calling Lazarus to “Come out!” into a new life of wholeness.

We give thanks for Jesus’ willingness to offer his life... for justice, for love, for us, for God. And we give thanks for God’s gift of resurrection, the promise of new life.

And so, we remember that long ago evening, the last supper that Jesus shared with his friends, He took bread, blessed it, broke it, saying, “This is my body, broken for you. Each time you do this, remember me.” Likewise, after supper, he took the cup, and when he had given thanks he said, “Take, drink. This is the cup of the new covenant, the cup of blessing. Each time you do this, remember me.”

O Spirit, send your power upon us, so that what we say and do here may be a source of life for us, and through us, for all the world.

The body of Christ; bread for the journey.
(Bread eaten by both/all presiders, with an explicit invitation to the online community to do likewise, all at the same time.)

The cup of blessing; the wine of new life.
(Again, done together by all.)

Prayer:

We thank you, O Holy One, for this banquet of love, acceptance and empowerment. May what we have said and done so put its mark upon us, within us, that we might become the persons You would have us be. And may this community of faith affirm the worth, value and beauty of all our neighbours, all our relations, the whole of creation.

Amen.

HYMN:

“Draw the Circle Wide” (Gordon Light), More Voices #145; or possibly, **“Go , Make a Diff’rence** (Steve Angrisano and Tom Tomaszek) More Voices # 209
Another hymn to explore is **“Your Love, O God”** (Anders Frostenson/Lars Ake Lundberg). It is found in The United Methodist Hymnal, # 120. Again, if you are part of the UCC Licencing programme you can use this hymn without infringing copyright laws (Hope Publishing Co.)

It will be unknown to most if not all of your members, but might be worth learning as a congregational hymn, or to have it presented as a solo. Again, there is a powerful chorus where others can join in.

COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION:

Go from this time with open eyes, ears and hearts,
ready to encounter the Holy One
in the daily, in the ordinary, in the flesh.
Go from this time with a daring and tender love,
seeking to mend God’s beloved creation,
wherever and whenever you can.

Know that God who is Love, goes with you,
Within, beside and far ahead of you.
Go into this day, into your life,
trusting that you are held in the loving heart of the Holy Mystery,
now and forever.
Amen.

RESPONSE: “When We Walk from Here” (Linnea Good), Voices United # 298

*When you walk from here, when you walk from here,
Walk with justice, walk with mercy,
And with God’s humble care.*

PIE Day Sermon Thoughts and Possibilities

By the Very Rev. Gary Paterson

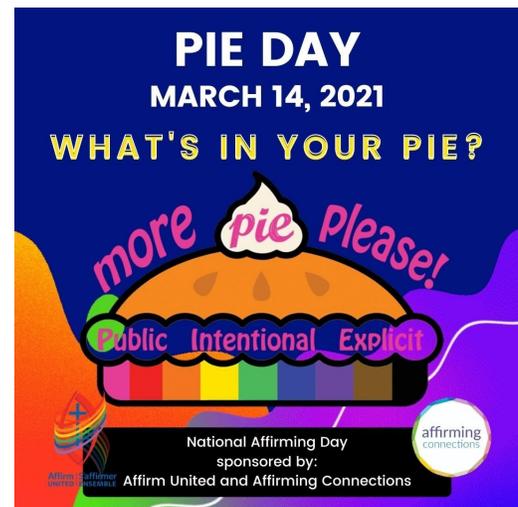
You might begin by unpacking more of the historical context of the time, depending on what was said in the “Introduction of Scripture.”

A major question facing the early church was whether non-Jews could become part of the Christian community without first accepting the Jewish faith. Were circumcision, and abiding by Jewish dietary laws, etc. a necessary “first step?” This may seem like an esoteric argument in our times, but in point of fact, it is very much connected to the reality of Affirming Sunday. Who’s in, who’s out? Who is acceptable, who’s not? And on what basis? Biblical “law”? Social norms? God’s revelation of love?

We humans do not react well to “difference” -- perhaps because of ignorance, fear, or because of our desire to heighten personal status and create “hierarchy.” We seek to exclude “the other.” Our history is full of terrible discrimination based on race, ethnicity, class, religion, etc. In today’s service, National Affirming Sunday, the focus is on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Over and over it seems that social prejudice buttresses itself with religious blessing, and claims that God is judging these differences, so that some groups of people are seen as 2nd class humans.

The passage from Acts focuses on the issue of what food is “clean” or “profane” – drawing on the instructions from the Book of Leviticus, and the details established by Jewish tradition. In his dream, Peter recognizes that God’s grace stands above and beyond all rules that try to define some creatures, some people to be unworthy, and therefore excluded. (And note that the details of this dream are presented a 2nd time in the Book of Acts, in



chapter 11:1-18, reflecting its importance in the development of the early church)

Interesting to note that in Galatians 2:11-14, Paul confronts Peter about his hypocrisy. (It might be useful to have these few verses read out loud... either as a 2nd Scripture reading, or in the body of the sermon.) When on “home turf,” and confronted by the conservative wing of the early Christian church, Peter hesitates to speak up about his theology of inclusion – an example of why PIE is so necessary – today, and back then.

The LGBTQ community can, I believe, claim Peter’s dream, his courage in drawing out the consequences, and then his subsequent ducking and hypocrisy as parallel to their own experience and the reality of church life.

As another part of the sermon, it would be helpful to expand on the understanding that we worship a God who delights in diversity. This can be referenced in the Creation story (Genesis, Job, Psalm 104), to the ministry of Jesus, and to the work of the Spirit. And it is implicit in the passage from Acts – is this truly a gospel for all people?!

Again, this delight in diversity might be contrasted to our human proclivity to react negatively to “difference” and to the “stranger.” We create various rationales for our actions – religious, medical, political. We create walls that divide – this might be an opportunity to include parts (or all) of Robert Frost’s poem, “Mending Wall.”

(Frost’s work is part of the public domain, and so there are no copyright issues.)

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing:
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made,

But at spring mending-time we find them there.
I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:
'Stay where you are until our backs are turned!'
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
Oh, just another kind of outdoor game,
One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
'Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down.' I could say 'Elves' to him,
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'

Another strand of the sermon might include a brief review of the “history” of the LGBTQ2SI community’s struggle for acceptance, in society and in the church. This may well be a worship service when it would be important to invite an LGBTQ+ person to offer personal testimony about his/her/their journey towards affirmation.

For example, here is a description of the witness offered by a gay man in an Affirming Congregation:

This man and his family grew up in a conservative evangelical church community. Like so many LGBTQ individuals he struggled to reconcile the faith that he had been taught, with his growing awareness of his sexual orientation. Finally, after many years of struggle, and self-condemnation; and the non-acceptance or judgment from those within the church community he did share with, he left his church; in fact, he left “the church” and the Christian faith. However, his heart still yearned for the presence of God. A good friend, who knew his story, invited him to check out a nearby Affirming Congregation, which he decided to do. When he sat down, in a back pew, ready, if necessary, for a quick escape, he heard a voice speaking, inside/outside, who knows – “Welcome home; I’ve missed you.” In the midst of his tears he knew that he had arrived, finally; he had indeed come home.

Let me speak more personally. When I was a teen-ager, struggling with my sexuality, in the mid/late sixties, coming to realize that I was at least bisexual, probably a gay person, I was told by the government that I was a criminal; by the medical profession, that I was sick; and by the church, that I was a condemned sinner. When I turned 20 in 1969, the Canadian government took the first step in de-criminalizing homosexuality (“The State has no business in the bedrooms of the nation.”) in 1973, the American Psychiatric Society determined that in and of itself homosexuality was not an illness; it was, in fact, social oppression and prejudice that created “mental health” problems for LGBTQ persons.

In 1988 the United Church, at the 32nd General Council, declared that all people regardless of sexual orientation are welcome as full members of the United Church, and all members are eligible to be considered for ordered ministry. It also affirms that God's intention for all human relationships (both

heterosexual and homosexual couples) is that they be faithful, responsible, just, loving, health-giving, healing, and sustaining of community and self.

Over the years, starting with criminal, sick and sinner, the church has moved to variations on sick and/or disordered; to “don’t ask, don’t tell;” to disabled; to tolerated; to accepted; and finally, to affirmation and celebration.

It is an ongoing journey, and much still needs to be done. Hence the importance of National Affirming Sunday, and being Public, Intentional and Explicit.

Hopefully these suggestions are helpful; blessings in your work of preparing for worship.

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We are grateful to Rev. Gary Paterson for his thoughtful work on this special PIE service template and sermon ideas, and to his home congregation, St. Andrew’s Wesley United Church in Vancouver, whose learnings during their online services have deepened Gary’s experience with providing meaningful services online.