

# HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICE SUNDAY

## UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

### Liturgical Elements & Prayers for the Third Sunday after Epiphany

January 27, 2019

*Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10*

*Psalms 19*

*1 Corinthians 12:12-31a*

*Luke 4:14-21*

### GREETING

Today, we observe Health and Human Service Sunday in the United Church of Christ. Alongside many other congregations, we celebrate the UCC's long, faithful heritage of advocating justice and extending care and compassion in Christ's name, here in our congregation, across this nation, and around the world.

For hundreds of years, the UCC and its predecessor denominations courageously founded schools, hospitals and orphanages at times when such services were scarce and needs were great.

Today, more than 400 health care centers, affordable housing and retirement communities, homeless shelters, and service centers for children, youth, families, those with developmental disabilities and acute care hospitals, bear witness to the United Church of Christ's continuing testament of mercy and kindness.

Today, we give thanks for these diverse ministries, and lift them in our collective prayers, as we celebrate the UCC's Council for Health and Human Service Ministries, whose mission is to create a just, caring, and compassionate world. And let us celebrate the many member institutions. Let us remember that they are not an "extension" of the church. They are the church in action! And their bold witness is ours!

### CALL TO WORSHIP

One: When we love God by serving others,  
All: **we fulfill the greatest of the commandments.**

When we share bread with the hungry,  
**then light shall break forth like the morning.**

When we offer care and healing to those who need it,  
**then righteousness shall go before us.**

When we proclaim release to captives,  
**then the good news is revealed.**

When we work to help the oppressed go free,  
**then God's word is fulfilled in our midst.**

When we offer mercy,  
**then the year of God's favor is announced.**

God is the source of your life, in Christ Jesus.  
**Let us rejoice and be glad!**

## OPENING PRAYER

God, who heals, and asks us to heal in your name:  
In Christ, you showed us a more excellent way,  
asking us to follow in the way of justice, kindness and humility.  
We believe the kin-dom of heaven belongs to all who work your will.  
On this Health and Human Service Sunday,  
shape us in the image of Christ, the optimist, the healer, the risk-taker,  
who preached possibility, who lived compassion, who taught mercy.  
Make pure our hearts, that we might serve others and, thus, see God.  
Teach us again what is truly pure and noble in your sight. **Amen.**

## LITANY

One: Let us pray together:

**ALL: In love, God calls us to health and wholeness in our own lives:**

ONE: For all who care for us emotionally, physically and spiritually;  
For all who hold us, encourage us and challenge us,  
who stir us emotionally to make healthy responses  
to the ebb and flow of living;  
For all who provide guidance and support  
for our sexual and mental health,  
**We give you thanks.**

**ALL: In love, God calls us to mission among those in need:**

ONE: For all who offer food or shelter or a listening heart;  
For all who gently hold a troubled hand  
or sit silently in simple accompaniment;  
For all who offer therapy or surgery,  
who bring intervention or enable rehabilitation  
with a full measure of hope,  
**We give you thanks.**

**ALL: In love, God calls us to care for the least among the children of God:**

ONE: For all who honor and care for those who are aging,  
who rock babies and children in need of comfort  
in an unkind and terrifying world;  
For all who offer care in community clinics and at health fairs,  
who diligently work to end epidemics,  
who value the disabled among us;  
For all who see each person's worth  
and actively oppose discrimination,  
**We give you thanks.**

**ALL: In love, God calls us to open our hearts to the meaning of discipleship:**

ONE: Grant that we may have the wisdom and will, O God,  
to embrace the healing and service ministry  
of Jesus Christ and make it truly our own.

**ALL: Inspire us, Holy One, to trust that your healing love  
will use our humble efforts to bring health and wholeness to us  
and to the whole human family.**

## **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

One: In the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.

**All: Holy One, help us recognize that the body does not consist of one member but many.**

**Forgive us when we tell others that we have no need of them because they are not like us.**

**Give us courage when we do not feel that we have anything to offer because we are different from others, or try to exempt ourselves from responding to a neighbor in need because we do not feel equipped for the task.**

**Remind us that when one suffers, we all suffer. And when one is honored, we can all rejoice together.**

**Show us how to work together as one body to support ministries of health and human service in response to need. Guide us in using the gifts that each of us has to help create a just, caring and compassionate world.**

**As the body of Christ, we offer this prayer and commit ourselves anew to caring for one another and for the needs of the world. Amen.**

## **ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

You are the body of Christ and individually members of it. In the name of Christ, you are forgiven and freed to begin anew.

**We all drink of one Spirit, who refreshes and sustains us. Thanks be to God.**

## **CALL TO OFFERING**

*[Note: The words below are designed for use for your regular church offering. However, on Health and Human Service Sunday, some congregations choose to designate a portion of their offering, or make a special gift, to support a UCC-related health and human service ministries near or dear to them. For a list of such ministries, go to [cbhsm.org/find](http://cbhsm.org/find).]*

In 1858, one of our UCC forebears, Pastor Louis Edward Nollau, appealed to his congregation, now known as St. Peter's United Church of Christ in St. Louis, for money to build a home to support young children orphaned by a great cholera epidemic. Later, one member chastised Nollau, insisting the church did not have enough funds for such an ambitious project. To this, the pastor replied. "No, ... But we have the children."

Today, Pastor Nollau's vision, Evangelical Children's Home, is more than 150 years old and has always evolved and adapted to meet the changing needs of children. Now referred to as "Every Child's Hope," ECH has more than 200 employees across Missouri, dedicated to preventing child abuse, treating emotional trauma and mental health issues, and providing critical services to 1,400 youth and children annually — in our name, as members of the United Church of Christ. Pastor Nollau's dream — and the dream of the generous people of St. Peter's Church — lives on.

Today, as you present your offering, I invite you to do so believing that great things are possible for those who see great human need as a call to advance the love and compassion of the church of Jesus Christ. Let us be that kind of church, as our forebears have taught us.

## OFFERTORY PRAYER

God, use these gifts to do wondrous acts of justice and compassion in your name.  
Where people are aging in isolation, growing up in violence, or suffering in silence,  
may our United Church of Christ have the courage to be a witness to a more excellent way.  
Through these gifts, enable us to be your justice, kindness and humility in the world —  
where your realm is made known in love. **Amen.**

## BENEDICTION

Friends, you have heard what is good, and you know it in your heart.  
So let us go from this place,  
believing in the power of one to do great things in the world.  
And let us believe when that amazing grace is multiplied in community,  
all things are possible.  
Go into the world, to be a blessing!  
And may the blessing of our Creator, Redeemer and Comforter  
be always with you. **Amen**

**Liturgical Elements & Prayers for Health and Human Service Sunday 2019** was written by the Rev. Dr. J. Bennett Guess, former CHHSM Vice President, and the Rev. George R. Graham, CHHSM Vice President. The litany was composed by the Rev. William R. Johnson, former CHHSM Vice President for Member Relations, in 2008.



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