

HOLY CONFERENCING IN OUR CHURCHES

GATHERING REFLECTION FOR HOLY JUSTICE

*The Lord has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.
--Micah 6.8 NIV*

*The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.
--Martin Luther King, Jr. paraphrasing
a sermon by Theodore Parker*

CALL TO GOD'S JUSTICE IN HOLY CONFERENCING

Presider: In the beginning, God created everything and said that it was 'good'.
Even today, God shares with us all that is good in this world. God is good!

People: **All the time!**

Presider: All the time!

People: **God is good!**

Presider: For the sake of all that is good, God affords us the compliment and privilege of
requiring our full participation.

*DS/Presiding Elder lights a candle or a similar gesture of holy invitation while
those gathered sing this hymn or a similar, meaningful hymn.*

*Other hymns might be: 'What Does the Lord Require' #441 UMH
'What Does the Lord Require of You' #2174 FWS*

'How Shall I Come Before the Lord'

Will finest gifts bring God's delight? Will wealth bring favor in God's sight?

What must we be? What must we do? What does the Lord require of you?

--#3124 W&S (Tune: GIFT OF LOVE)

Presider: What does God require of us?

People: **To act justly...**

Presider: What does God require of us?

People: **To love mercy...**

Presider: What does God require of us?

People: **To walk humbly with our God.**

'How Shall I Come Before the Lord'

**Let justice shine in all our ways. Let loving kindness rule our days,
that, as this earthly path we trod, we shall walk humbly with our God.**

--#3124 W&S adapted

Presider: I hereby call the Church Conference of [*church name*] into session and ask for
your response.

People: **We are here as a United Methodist community of God to account for our ministries, to order our life together, and to resolve that in the year ahead we will answer the call of Jesus Christ to his disciples, leading this church into active ministries of love, truth, and justice.**

Presider: Knowing that we are all called to ministry together, lay and clergy alike, let us enter into the business of your Church Conference.

DISCERNMENT OF GOD’S JUSTICE

1. Election of Secretary

A volunteer needs to take handwritten or typed minutes.

2. Approval of Minutes of 2018 Church Conference

3. Approval of Audit/Fund Balance Report from 2018

Holy Conferencing Ministry Questions

DS/Presiding Elder has the option of asking these or similar questions for conversation.

Presider: In two to three words, what is God longing for and working toward for a more just world? What acts of justice has God required of us?

Scriptural Prayer

Reader: This is what the Lord Almighty said: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another.’

People: **Amen.** *--from Zechariah 7 (NIV)*

4. Trustee Report

- a. Has the congregation received any bequests from a will? Bequests from wills that have been received since the last Church Conference must be accepted by vote.
- b. Has the congregation used any capital/principle from investments/endowments for operating expenses this year? If so, for what purposes and how much?
- c. Has the congregation spent any funds realized from the sale of a parsonage? If so, for what purpose and how much? Was this done with permission from the DS?

5. Staff / Pastor Parish Relations Report

Approval of Compensation for Pastor and Other Staff Appointed by the Bishop

The pastor’s base compensation, housing exclusion, and reimbursement amount must be separately included in the vote and should be reported that way by the SPRC chair.

6. Finance Report

Update on Year-to-Date Finances

Approval of 2020 Budget if prepared

As needed an update on mission shares will be provided.

Holy Conferencing Ministry Question
DS/Presiding Elder has the option of asking these or similar questions for conversation.

Presider: How have we loved, received, or offered mercy this past year?
 What gestures of mercy has God required of us?

Scriptural Prayer

Reader: Let us never neglect “the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness.”

People: **Amen.** *--from Matthew 23 (NIV, adapted)*

7. Lay Leadership / Nominations Report
 Election of Church Leaders and Trustees
All leadership/nomination reports shall be completed by the time of church conference.
8. Lay Servants / Lay Speakers / Certified Lay Ministers Reports
 Approval and reaffirmation of any in these categories
Each lay servant / speaker / minister should have paperwork completed and signed by the pastor. The paperwork should include three copies to be signed—1 for the lay person, 2 for the district. They should be submitted separately from a CC booklet.
9. Candidates Reports
 - a. Reaffirmation of Candidates for Ministry
 - b. Examination and Paper Ballot Vote for any New Candidate for Ministry *The DS must be notified of new candidates when the Church Conference schedule is set.*
 - c. Examination and Recommendation of Candidates for Church Related Vocations
10. Clergy Reports
 - a. Retired Minister(s) Report
 - b. Extension Minister(s) Report
 - c. Pastor’s Report(s) with Membership Report
11. Other business or additional remarks

Holy Conferencing Ministry Question
DS/Presiding Elder has the option of asking these or similar questions for conversation.

Presider: How have we walked humbly with God this past year?
 How are we required to walk humbly in the coming year?

Scriptural Prayer

Reader: Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, we clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness & patience.

People: **Amen.** *--from Colossians 3 (NIV, adapted)*

TABLE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD'S MICAH 6.8 PEOPLE

DS/Presiding Elder prepares the communion table while those gathered sing the following hymn or a similar, meaningful hymn.

'How Shall I Come Before the Lord'

**How shall we come before the Lord and bow ourselves with hearts outpoured?
And shall we come with offering? What shall we give? What shall we bring?**

--#3124 W&S adapted

Presider: We approach this sacred meal with hearts for justice and in a spirit of humility, praying that God will hear us, show mercy to us and through us, and receive us.

SILENT PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND PREPARATION

All are welcome to the bread and cup of communion who desire to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God in Christ Jesus even as we care for each other and all the world.

On the night in which Jesus gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, O God, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is no longer just bread. This is my life which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is no longer just a cup of wine. This is my life in the new covenant, poured out for you & for many for forgiveness. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, we remember. We offer ourselves in joyful and sacrificial service, just as Christ offered himself.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us, and on these gifts of bread & juice from the vine. Make them be for us Christ, that we may be for the world Christ, redeemed & set free.

In this freedom, make us one with each other, one with Christ Jesus, and one in ministry to all the world. Renew our communion with all your saints, especially those whom we name before you aloud and in our hearts.

Holy Conferencing Communion Question

DS/Presiding Elder has the option of asking this or a similar question for conversation.

Presider: Who has passed into glory in the last year?

We remember them by name.

Hold a moment of silence after those gathered share the names of those who have passed into glory in the past year.

Scriptural Prayer

Reader: Remember, Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old.

People: **Amen.**

--from Psalm 25 (NIV)

Presider: Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, strengthen us to fulfill your ancient requirements of us anew in your world as we pray:

People: **O God, just as the disciples heard Christ's words of promise and began to eat the bread and drink the wine in the suffering of a long remembrance and in the joy of a hope, grant that we may hear your word, spoken in each thing of everyday affairs:**

**Coffee, on our table in the morning;
the simple gesture of opening a door to go out, free;
the shouts of children in the parks;
a familiar song, sung by an unfamiliar voice;
a friendly tree that has not yet been cut down.**

**May simple things speak to us of your mercy and tell us that life can be good.
And may these sacramental gifts make us remember those who do not receive them:
who have their lives cut every day, in the bread absent from the table;
in the door of the hospital, the prison, the welfare home that does not open;
in sad children, feet without shoes, eyes without hope;
in war hymns that glorify death;
in deserts where once there was life.**

Christ was also sacrificed; and may we learn that we participate in the saving sacrifice of Christ when we participate in the suffering of his little ones. Amen.

--Rubem Alves

LORD'S PRAYER

BREAKING BREAD AND SHARING CUP

DS/Presiding Elder serves the bread and cup while those gathered sing the following hymn, 'Eternal God Transcending Time' #3030 W&S, or a similar, meaningful hymn.

'We Are Called'

Come! Live in the light! Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!

We are called to be light for the kingdom, to live in the freedom of the city of God!

Refrain **We are called to act with justice, we are called to love tenderly,
we are called to serve one another, to walk humbly with God!**

Come! Open your heart! Show your mercy to all those in fear!

We are called to be hope for the hopeless so all hatred and blindness will be no more! *Refrain*

Sing! Sing a new song! Sing of that great day when all will be one!

God will reign, and we'll walk with each other as sisters and brothers united in love! *Refrain*

--#2172 FWS

GOING FORTH IN GOD'S JUSTICE

FORMAL MOTION TO ADJOURN THE CHURCH CONFERENCE

Presider: As our time together comes to an end,
I declare this Church Conference adjourned.

People: **We look to the future filled with God's hope for the kingdom
where righteousness is RIGHT IN US and holy justice JUST IS!
Thanks be to God!**

BLESSING

Presider: Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.

OUR WORSHIP IS OVER. OUR SERVICE BEGINS.

NIV = New International Version Bible translation

UMH = United Methodist Hymnal 1989

FWS = Faith We Sing

W&S = Worship and Song

The Reflection's second quote is Martin Luther King, Jr.'s paraphrasing of a portion of Theodore Parker's sermon entitled "Of Justice and the Conscience" printed in a collection in 1853. Martin Luther King, Jr. first employed his version of the saying in a periodical article in "The Gospel Messenger" in 1958.

The Call is inspired by Genesis 1 and Micah 6.8

Some of the transitional language for this document was taken from the script written by Marcia McFee for the Church Conference season of 2016.

The Great Thanksgiving is Jill Colley Robinson's adaptation of 'Word and Table: Service I, For All Saints and Memorial Occasions' in The United Methodist Book of Worship by Abingdon Press ©1992, combined with an adaptation of 'A Service of Word and Table V With Persons Who Are Sick Or Homebound' in The United Methodist Hymnal by Abingdon Press ©1989.

The prayer at the conclusion of the communion liturgy, called 'Bread and Justice' is by Rubem Alves, Brazil, 20th c. found on #639 UMH.

The Blessing has been attributed to John Wesley, or as being in the spirit of his teaching and preaching. This attribution has been contested, but another source has not been identified.