



The United Church of Canada

Saskatchewan Conference

418A McDonald Street
Regina, SK. S4N 6E1
Phone: (306) 721-3311

Fax: (306) 721-3171

e-mail: ucskco@sasktel.net

January 20th, 2009

Greetings from the Affirming Ministries Committee!

Saskatchewan Conference Affirming Ministries Sunday - March 1st, 2009 (Lent 1, Year B)

Affirming Ministry Sunday is specifically chosen to be in the season of Lent. A Season that encourages time for self-reflection and prepares us for the Easter Transformation - similar to the Affirming Ministry Process. It is with great gratitude that the Affirming Ministry committee thanks Margaret McKechny for creating this worship resource. St. Thomas Wesley (an Affirming Ministry in Saskatoon) hosted Affirm United's 2008 Annual Conference and AGM. Many across Canada were touched and inspired by the worship created by Margaret and lead by both her and several members of St. Thomas Wesley. (found online at http://www.affirmunited.ca/english/2008AGM.htm#Worship_Services). The Affirming Ministries Committee hopes that your congregation will be as inspired as we are by the worship leadership offered by Margaret McKechny in using this worship resource.

Although this resource is specifically prepared for the scripture readings of the Sunday declared *Affirming Ministry Sunday* –many have chosen to use the materials on other Sundays of their choice (i.e. that fit better with other activities within your community or some congregations have chosen to use these resources when ministry personnel are away and Lay people are conducting a service). We encourage you to use the resource in whole or in part.

Affirming Ministry Sunday 2009 resource includes: liturgy, prayers, hymn suggestions, message dramatization and additional communion service. These are based on the scripture readings: Genesis 9:8-17, Psalm 25:1-10, and Mark 1:9-15. There also is an alternate short drama based on Mark 5:1-8

The worship service resource material is available on the Saskatchewan Conference web-site at www.sk.united-church.ca/Resources/Worship/Services/Services.htm. If you do not have access to the web-site please contact the conference office and they will send a copy of the resource material to you.

As a committee we are eager to receive feedback from congregations and ministry people regarding this resource. Any comments and feedback would be greatly appreciated. Send your comments directly and in confidence to daniel dumont@live.com (with subject line: AMC Sunday 2009) or send to Saskatchewan Conference Office, ATTENTION: Affirming Ministries Committee. Your assistance would be helpful.

May your journey through the Season of Lent be a meaningful time of reflection.

Blessings,

Daniel Dumont, Convenor
Affirming Ministries Committee



Mission and Service Fund

Worship For Affirming Sunday 2009

I THE GATHERING:

CALL TO WORSHIP:

One: Come- worship the One who calls us into a relationship of love, more intimate than our dearest friendship, more lasting than the tides of the ocean and more beautiful than the span of heaven on a clear night.

**All: For I have formed you, my beloved one, says our Creator,
and I walk beside you each moment.**

One: I have called you by name, you are mine.

**All: For you are my chosen people, even before your
first babble sounds, I knew your thoughts.**

One: You are precious in my sight and honoured, says God.
May we accept the invitation to know this ancient love - completely.

PRAYER OF APPROACH/ INVOCATION PRAYER: (Unison)

Creating God, what did we do to earn your love? When we wake up in the morning you are there to greet us, when our lives are filled with grief and angst, you wrap us round in your arms of light. Before we were born you envisioned our lives fulfilling your purpose and you gave us the skills to do so. When we came to birth you echoed our birth cries with murmurs of joy resounding through the universe. Open our hearts to receive this everlasting love, and teach us to respond in praise. AMEN.

HYMN: Let Us Build A House #1 More Voices. Or...

Come Touch Our Hearts #12 MV or...

Come In Come In And Sit Down #395 VU or..

Open My Eyes, That I May See #371 VU

TIME FOR ALL AGES:

Recommend the book; "And Tango Makes Three"

II WE PREPARE TO HEAR GOD'S WORD:

CALL TO CONFESSION: #400 Voices United

**God, listen to your children praying,
God, send your Spirit in this place;**

**God, listen to your children praying,
send us love, send us power, send us grace!**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION: (Unison)

Lover of beauty and of the winter sky, with sunrises deep red fading into yellow, frost that plays at the edge of the window's light and jewels that dance in the new fallen snow, remind us again of how much you are in love with variety. In the arid desert, cactus blooms of every colour follow the rain, life clings to the edge of the deep ocean volcano, new stars burst forth with vibrancy and energy, lichen of every colour - line the earth of the tundra. There are birds to sing and turtles to crawl, worms to till the ground, lady bugs to fly away home and butterflies that move from pupae to flight.

If we take delight in these great and playful works that came from your deepest dreams, why do we object when human beings are made with the same array of difference? Different colours of skin and hair, voices high and low - some to sing and some to shout for freedom. A full spectrum of sexual diversity: straight, gay, and some whose bodies erase strict gender lines. Some celebrate the Spirit in drums, others make statements with turbans and burke, still others worship in silence.

We turn to all that is filled with grace and reverences the sacred to remove our prejudices, and draw us in by the Spirit's voice to that place of acceptance that allows us to grow. AMEN.

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S PRESENCE:

Behold Behold I Make All things New #115 More Voices – sung twice

OR

And When You Call For Me #96 More Voices - Sung twice

II WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

THE SCRIPTURE READINGS :

Genesis 9:8-17

Psalm 25:1-10

Mark 1:9-15

Sermon/Theme Time (See Resource Section)

“The Breaking of Covenant”

III WE RESPOND IN FAITH

HYMN: I Have Called You By Your Name #161 More Voices or

I Was There To Hear Your Borne Cry, #644 VU

Draw The Circle Wide #12 More Voices

OFFERTORY

WE PRESENT OUR OFFERING:

What Can I Do # 191 MV

Or ... #540 VU

**Grant us, God, the grace of giving,
with a spirit large and free,
that ourselves and all our living
we may offer faithfully.**

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

One: Our Mother and Creator, we give you thanks that you have made the human race with many diverse gifts. Children with intellectual differences often come to us with a kind of honesty and openness that catches us unaware. May we not back away but reach out that we might learn new ways of being.

All: **We pray for people whose lives are disturbed by mental illness. Help us to be advocates who understand the unnecessary stigma such illness brings, teach us ways to communicate our compassion.**

One: In a society that worships the cult of youth, teach us - O Source of Compassion to respect the wisdom of our elders, to challenge the competitive atmosphere often set up for young adults in the market place, and to be aware of the special

gifts and needs difference brings. May we offer what we can in a way that respects each one's dignity and independence.

All: From the depth of goodness itself, you created people who are gay, bisexual, and transgendered, and called them your beloved ones. May we challenge homophobia where we see it, and openly voice our desire for continued equality in marriage and for a full respect for all human rights, both in Canada and around the world. We pray for people in other countries whose lives are endangered simply for being gay or supporting gay persons. May we sound the gospel call - to love your neighbour as you love yourself.

One: We remember before you, Source of healing, those in the midst of us who have special needs: who are isolated, ill, experiencing grief or worry. Especially we name_____. Trusting the holy in all that is, we ask for them to be filled with light and love, that they may know the blessing of the wholesome energy of this universe and be grounded in the love abundant in Earth. .

Our Mother & Father....

ALTERNATE PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING.

(Written for Affirm United National Conference 2008)

A PRAYER IN PRAISE OF DIVERSITY :

Everyone: O Beautiful Gaia #41 MV (Chorus only) as refrain

One: In the grace of difference, you O God, have determined that each orchid opening to the morning light differs from every other, every infant and creature born has a unique cry – known to its mother. No fingerprint matches another, each curled eyelash is different, skin colours are rich and varied. There are dozens of shades of green, red or blue, as many tones as the ear can hear, shapes and patterns yet to be invented. Diversity coaxes the emerging of limitless beauty, still being defined.

Everyone: O Beautiful Gaia #41 MV (Chorus only) as refrain

One: We know the smell of a warm cinnamon bun, the scent of the first lilac, of one we love. Our senses distinguish the heavy scent of clover and wolf willow, the freshness of an ocean breeze, the cleansing breath of spruce and pine.. the fecund odour of a summer marsh. Each of our senses is capable of fine discriminations. We cannot imagine a world with one scent, one colour, only one note sounding. Goodness unfolds in a myriad of ways.

Everyone: O Beautiful Gaia #41 MV (Chorus only) as refrain

One: Creatures crawl in the grass, soar on wings tiny and transparent or large and powerful. Life continues in ocean depth, arctic tundra, desert sand, mountaintop and rain forest, as you have determined, O Creating One. We can not number the species, plants, trees or insects, nor comprehend their adaptive ways. Humans speak thousand of languages and embrace many cultures, music, rhythms and emotional expression. The survival of all creation depends on the preservation of diversity.

Everyone: O Beautiful Gaia #41 MV (Chorus only) as refrain

One: Yet this amazing diversity is sustained by its interdependence. Each unique manifestation depends on the contribution of the other to the whole. So it is with the human race, O God, as we love the differences that define us, we will understand the meaning of right relationship with oneself, with others, and with the Earth itself. Teach us the openness that strengthens relationship. AMEN

IV. SENDING FORTH

HYMN My Love Colours Outside The Lines #138 More Voices or..

Walls That Divide #691 Voices United

BENEDICTION**AN ORDER OF WORSHIP FOR AN AFFIRMING SUNDAY COMMUNION SERVICE****I THE GATHERING:****CALL TO WORSHIP:**

One: Blessed Creator, who spread your goodness upon the table
of the earth, and invited us to the banquet, be present among us now .

All: Source of ancient love, whose cup of blessing falls in the rain, flows in the rivers and awakens the human mind to wonder, be our host as we gather for this sacred meal.

One: Like the richness of the soil, that brings forth blossom and grass, orchid and towering pine, root us deep in your integrity and beauty, that we might worship.

All: Then surprise us, as the dawn that suddenly scatters the dark, with the delight of your being in the midst.

PRAYER OF APPROACH/ INVOCATION PRAYER: (Unison)

For the gift of your spirit set deep within us, we give you thanks, O God. For voices that sing, hands that pray, feet that walk in your way, and minds that see visions we give thanks. That you have seen fit to reveal yourself in such diverse ways in humanity - we give thanks. Teach us to worship in ways that are inclusive of different ways of understanding, mindful of the needs of bodies that behave in differing ways. In each nuance of the human - your way is revealed. As we come together in community to celebrate bread and cup, around a common table, may we truly share the love with which you brought us to birth.

AMEN

HYMN: Come Touch Our Hearts #12 MV

I Have Called You By Your Name #161 More Voices

Come In Come In And Sit Down #395 VU

II WE PREPARE TO HEAR GOD'S WORD:

CALL TO CONFESSION:

Bread For the Journey #202 MV sung twice

PRAYER OF CONFESSION: (Unison)

Dreamer of Earth, so in love with variety, where two flowers are never the same, and every species of bird has its distinct melody, teach us to appreciate this same gift among the people of Earth. We are born with in a variety of cultures, grow to love different landscapes and diverse expressions of music. We love one another in differing ways, express our sexuality diversely.

Our bodies are also born with gifts, talents and troubles that effect each one in varying ways. Forgive us for the hierarchy we have placed on illness, where the larger portion of research dollars often goes to physical illnesses such

as cancer, while brain research and physical exigencies that cause mental differences are underfunded. We often find it awkward to discuss mental and psychological symptoms that are present in depression, schizophrenia, and anxiety. Many with mental health disorders become homeless or revolve through doors that do nothing to comfort them. Teach us ways to remove the stigma of these difficult life issues, as we become more affirming of all your people, O God.

AMEN.

III LISTENING FOR GOD'S WORD

THE SCRIPTURE READINGS:

Genesis 9:8-17

Psalm 25:1-10

Mark 1:9-15

Sermon/Theme Time (See Resource Section)

“The Breaking of Covenant”

IV WE RESPOND IN FAITH:

HYMN; Long Before My Journey's Start #63 MV

OR

When We Gather at the Table #198 MV

OR

One Bread, One Body #467 VU

OFFERTORY

WE PRESENT OUR OFFERING:

What Can I Do # 191 MV or..

Bread For The Journey #202 More Voices

- sung twice or....

Tune: Aurelia #331 Voices United

(from Touch Holiness – Ruth C Duck)

**Refreshed by living waters
renewed by living bread**

may we your sons and daughters
 by your own hand be led.
 Accept the gifts we offer;
 receive the lives we owe.
 Unite us in your service;
 may seeds of justice grow!

V. SERVICE OF THE TABLE

THE INVITATION

One: Beloved in this feast, we gather, remembering we are one world community, one loaf.

All: We taste of the radical love that brought the universe into being.

One: We seek to deepen our faith, rooting our souls in the goodness that is in all things.

All: In these sacred moments, we touch the awe and mystery that is all creation. Thanks be to God.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

One: In an instant, O God, you initiated the long journey of the universe: the eternal circles of life expanding and returning, the primal light and goodness that would be within all things. Every detail unique yet interdependent: form and motion, consciousness, intelligence, and ways of being – all emerging from your intention.

All: And in a moment of time, you set the human race in the midst. You gave us a soul capable of loving, and of comprehending beauty. You instilled in our mind the passion to seek justice, the will to pray, opened us to awe and filled our thinking with fresh questions. Mindful that we should not be alone, you created a yearning for community.

One: Then with the wind of the spirit, you scattered the essence of what it means to be human in bodies as diverse as the snowflakes: each one different and each one beautiful. Then you called us beloved ones.

All: From you, came the gift of collective wisdom to guide us: child and middle age, artist, scientist, strong or challenged bodies, lovers of land

and sea, poet, carpenter, weaver, potter, merchant and mother. In this rich diversity of human life, we glimpse the depth of your soul.

One: This span of human life weaves its wondrous journey accompanied by the creatures of the earth: migrating birds on the wing, tortoise on land and sea, black panther, rhinoceros, inchworm, warbler, and star fish. All nurtured by the Earth and given life by the sun, born to give praise to your name.

All: **Lest we miss the miracle of grace that is our living, you set Jesus Christ in the midst, to reveal the fullness of humanity, and proclaim your will. In solidarity with those on the margins, declaring God's reign of justice, and with a spirit of deep compassion, he broke bread. This is my body, my life energies, which I give to you.**

One: Then Jesus took a cup, a symbol of living in gratefulness and thanksgiving, and a reminder of the love in all creation, that is poured out so freely among us. The cup becomes a perpetual memorial of the disgrace of unjust suffering and of the need for a loving redemption to be liberated to flow freely among us.

All: **As we share this cup and this bread, we take into ourselves, the gifts of this Earth with thanksgiving. We drink of a love that is ancient and deep, which brought the whole universe into being and sustains us in our living. Refreshed by this God given grace, we pledge ourselves anew to the pursuit of justice for all people and the provision of sanctuary for the creatures of this earth. The bread of life, thanks be to God.**

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD **May the hardened edges of our heart be broken open to receive an ancient and tender love. Take eat – the bread of life.**

THE POURING OF THE CUP: **All creation was born from wellspring of love that is poured out in all things. Take and drink – thanks be to God.**

THE DISTRIBUTION

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Blessed Creator, for these gifts of the Earth that become sacred symbols of oneness and brokenness, life energies and love poured out, we give thanks. May this ancient ritual awaken in us an awareness of an immeasurable love, that permeates every corner of the universe with light and energy, yet comes to us in this awesome mystery unfolding among us. Strongly rooted and growing in the light of your love, we resolve to seek justice even when it is costly, to reverence the gifts of creation and to become an open community, inviting all to the table

who desire to live in God's way. May all we seek be of goodness and compassion, multiplied by your love. AMEN.

VI. SENDING FORTH

**HYMN: My Love Colours Outside The Lines #138 More Voices or
 Jesus, Jesu, Fill Us With Your Love #593 VU
 Long Before the Night #282 VU**

BENEDICTION: Halle Halle Halle

RESOURCES FOR SERMON/THEME TIME

SERMON TIME: “The Breaking of Covenant”

Preparation Needed - Purchase greenware from pottery supply place or make vessels from modeling clay available at craft stores. (You can find clay that will dry without a kiln and can be broken) Paint on rainbows – or each one in a different colour, or whatever pattern you choose. A wheelchair is also needed.

The breaking of the greenware is very effective, and impacts the meaning of breaking covenant. You will need something to catch the broken pieces.

For person 5, a simple First Aid kit (white box with a red cross on it) would be an asset. The repeated narrator’s verse may be read as the vessels are broken.

Narrator

God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: 9:13 I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.9:14 When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, 9:15 I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh...

A covenant was a sacred agreement between two parties, in this case – the Creator of all – humanity and Earth’s creatures. We know well its sign, the rainbow. A sign we lovingly adopt for its intent that all be included. Proudly claimed by folks of the GLBTQ community, the rainbow flag is a source of pride.

But being human as we are, we often break our side of the covenant. Let us examine some of the ways we do so.

Person 1:

I ended up in this wheelchair at 32, after a car accident. It was a long road to rehabilitation, two years of rehab, and always more doctors appointments. I was kept very busy. The United Church I belonged to was good, they kept contact fairly regularly. When I was able to come back to church I did. It was so good to be there, welcomed back by everyone. But then they started to treat me differently.

No one asked me to read scripture anymore – the pulpit was up the steps. So what if I read it from the floor! I used to be in all the dramas. It was assumed I couldn’t be. Why not adapt a part? At fund raisers – dinners, I was never given a job. Just invited to come. As if I couldn’t make phone calls, take tickets.

But the most difficult was the lack of understanding. I was no different – except for my legs. But they treated me differently.

I now know why there are so few handicapped folks in churches. Often little effort is made to be totally inclusive.

(Pick up greenware)

I break this (plate, mug, vessel) for all those who've wanted to be just like everyone else in the church, but were only partly allowed in.

Narrator: God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: 9:13 I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.9:14 When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, 9:15 I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh..."

Person 2:

As a person in the midst of a gender reassignment, I knew I needed to find an affirming congregation in my new location.

I found one and began to sing in the choir. I had agreed with the minister and a few others that my story would be told by me, when I was ready.

It was awkward singing with the men after so many years as a soprano, but it worked out okay and I was thrilled.

My partner and I began to make friends. Accepted as a heterosexual couple for the first time we were thrilled.

But suddenly we had all the privileges of a heterosexual couple, along with hearing homophobic remarks, that we felt too vulnerable to challenge.

We felt guilty – did we belong? Belonging to the “accepted crowd” made us feel like imposters, and afraid because we didn’t know if our story was safe.

We really just wanted to be like everyone else: known for the music we loved, the movies we loved, the hiking trails we liked, books we read. We wanted our ideals and political understandings known. But - would be accepted if “They Knew”.

One day we were all going to an event where we had to show our I.D. I hung back – when I got to the line – the person announced loudly – “What are you trying to pull? This isn’t you, this is a women’s I.D. I’m going to call security. You must go.”

The place fell silent.

First a woman stepped up – if he goes I go. Then a man - me too. Soon they were all around me. “He goes. We go, you have no right to treat him this way.”

I started to weep and couldn’t stop. For the first time in my life, I was accepted as I was. I break this vessel for all those who live isolated, without support, dealing with difficulty gender issues in a culture of shame.

I break this vessel for those who never encounter the support that I have.

Narrator: God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: 9:13 I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.9:14 When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, 9:15 I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh..."

Person 3:

My son is schizophrenic. I speak most of my days caring for him. It means I don’t get out in to the community much, I tried curling, but if Sean was having a bad day I couldn’t go – so I gave it up.

The medicines he needs are only partially covered and there are costly trips to the city to see the psychiatrist. I can’t work a regular job and so my resources are limited.

I need to have people to talk to. I try to be a regular church attender but it is becoming difficult. I guess people don’t know what to say to me. Kindly meant, they often suggest I shouldn’t be doing so much for my son, or they give advice which amounts to saying that he should just “pull himself up by the bootstraps.” or I should put him in a home.

There is no place for someone like my son. Believe me I’ve tried them all.

I’m disappointed the church is not more of an advocate for me. No one has ever suggested bringing in a speaker about schizophrenia, or pushing for better health care coverage.

They don't understand Sean, many are afraid of him. They have no idea the hell he goes through.

I guess people with depression or bipolar disorders often wish the same as I.

Isn't Sean a child of God too?

It's really difficult when they read the stories in church about people possessed with demons who were healed. If that were literally true – why isn't Sean healed? I've prayed, begged for years. No one explains those stories didn't really happen, They were metaphors. It leaves the impression that if Sean still has schizophrenia we weren't doing something right. It's a 'not so subtle' form of discrimination.

I break this vessel for those who feel outside the circle of God's love because of mental illness.

Narrator: God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: 9:13 I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.9:14 When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, 9:15 I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh..."

Person 4: Perhaps my story seems trivial set among the others. I was commissioned by the United Church two years ago. Finally this year I have been able to be settled. I am an openly lesbian woman and I want myself and my partner to feel welcome. I want us to be in a congregation where we can celebrate marriage with others like ourselves, who choose to make a lifelong covenant.

Congregations still have to be screened to see who will accept a lesbian couple. What happened to the resolve of 1988? There are still very few Affirming Congregations, so you feel like you have to be watching over your shoulder.

And as for the issue of equal rights in marriage, some congregations feel it should not be forced on them, and that they need time to think about it. What's the matter, hasn't twenty-one years been long enough? What is so wrong about people wanting to love each other for a lifetime? Isn't that what the bow in the clouds is really about – an eternal covenant? How can we claim it for ourselves then say that, in the way we live out our lives, to make an eternal covenant is only for a select few?

I break this vessel for all those within the United Church and within other denominations who do not feel safe to be who they are.

Narrator: God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: 9:13 I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.9:14 When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, 9:15 I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh..."

Person 5.

I want to tell you the story of Patricia Buffalohead.

"I am an Anishinabe woman, I grew up with the Beaver Lake Band, Treaty 6 area.

When I was five years old, my grandmother showed me her World War II First Aid Kit, a little white box with a red cross on it. (Place box on pulpit) My grandmother said that in Treaty Six it was guaranteed that a "medicine chest will be kept at the house of each Indian agent for use and benefit of the Indians. "She told me the sad story of how our ancestors had come through a plague of small pox, which traditional medicines could not heal. Unwilling to see such suffering again, the native people had negotiated a promise of assistance in the case of "pestilence" or a "famine."

That little "medicine kit" was **part of the cost of the land, our land.** It was supposed to grow as the cost of the land grew, so my people would have the health care they needed free of charge. The Canadian government fought it in the courts, but the ruling was upheld. We were entitled to health care.

The key word here is "**entitled**" – something given for the price of the land. There is no charity here. My people wanted a continuous land base stretching from Manitoba into Alberta, so we could continue our life. We got little pieces here and there, *and we got health care.*

And now we hear what people say - you know: freeloaders, no goods. We kept our part of the covenant. You too, are part of that treaty. How will you keep the covenant?

I break this vessel for broken treaties.

Narrator: God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: 9:13 I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.9:14 When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, 9:15 I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh..."

AN ALTERNATIVE SCRIPTURE AND SHORT DRAMA:

(You will need some chains and it works well if the chains drop on something that echoes the sound, like a cookie sheet upside down or piece of tin.)

A reading from Mark

Mark 5:

5:1 They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes.2 And when he had stepped out of the boat, immediately a man out of the tombs with an unclean spirit met him.3 He lived among the tombs; and no one could restrain him any more, even with a chain;4 for he had often been restrained with shackles and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the shackles he broke in pieces; and no one had the strength to subdue him.5 Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always howling and bruising himself with stones.

6 When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and bowed down before him; 7 and he shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Child of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." 8 For he had said to him, "Come out, you tormenting spirit!" 9 Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion; for we are many."

(Chains can be wrapped around the forearms of both arms and should hang down some.)

Person in chains: What do you want? Who are you? Are you another one of them coming to pin labels on me? Isn't it enough that I am forced to live in this hell hole of a place?

Jesus: What is your name?

Person in chains: There are legions of them; hundreds of names: Faggot, welfare bum, scum bucket, lunatic, rag head, slant eyes, nigger, dirty Indian. bitch, broad, street walker, dyke.

What are you going to call me? (silence)

Jesus: I call you - beloved one.

Liturgy and resources written by Margaret Morgan McKechney©

Permission granted for use in worship services.

Scripture readings for Affirming Sunday March 1, 2009

Genesis 9:8-1

9:8 Then God said to Noah and to his descendents with him, 9:9 "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, 9:10 and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. 9:11 I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." 9:12 God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: 9:13 I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.9:14 When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, 9:15 I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. 9:16 When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." 9:17 God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

Psalm 25 Reprinted from Voices United

To you, O God, I lift my soul; my God, in you I trust.

Let me not be put to shame, nor let my foes gloat over me.

Let none who wait for you be shamed;

let them be shamed who wantonly break faith.

Show me your ways; teach me your paths.

Lead me in your truth and teach me;

for you are God my saviour.

For you I wait all the day long. R

Remember your mercy, O God, and your steadfast love,
for they are as old as time.

Do not remember the sins and offences of my youth.

According to your steadfast love remember me,

for your goodness' sake, O God! R

You are upright and good, O God,
therefore you show the path to those who go astray.

You guide the humble to do what is right,

and teach the lowly your way.

All your ways are loving and sure

for those who keep your covenant

and commandments. R

Mark 1:9-15

1:9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 1:10 And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove. 1:11 And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Child, the Beloved One; with you I am well pleased." 1:12 And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. 1:13 He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild birds and animals; and the angels waited on him. 1:14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, 1:15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the reign of God, has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."