



Community of Christ

Sacred Togetherness – A New Journey

“Community of Christ,” your name, given as a divine blessing, is your identity and calling. If you will discern and embrace its full meaning, you will not only discover your future, you will become a blessing to the whole creation. Do not be afraid to go where it beckons you to go. —Doctrine and Covenants 163:1

The *Year A 2019-2020 Worship Resource* text opens with these words, “The desire for vibrant worship resonates with congregations throughout the church...People in the church have given themselves and others permission to explore and experience widely varied styles of music, drama, preaching, prayer, and meditation.” Little did we understand where our 2020 journey would take us.

We care for each one in our congregations, and in this caring, we moved our worship and fellowship to online and other ministry forums. Yet, we yearn for a time when we will come together again. Caution and extreme care are still needed; every congregation will make decisions for what is in the best interest of their seekers, friends, and members following the [guidelines of the church](#).

In this time of discovery, Presiding Evangelist Jane Gardner writes, “What if we approached every in-person gathering as the exception rather than the rule? What if these gatherings were woven into the fabric of our community as very special times of togetherness? We may be tempted to try and return to ‘what we have always done,’ but this moment in history feels like we are poised to ‘discern and embrace’ deeper insights into our sacred calling of community.”

When the time is right to gather again physically, Worship Ministries has created elements that can form a six-week journey of new beginnings. The suggested elements can be incorporated into your worship experiences as we begin a time of Sacred Togetherness—A New Journey. You may choose to use a few in worship planning or incorporate all the elements each week. If you choose to use only a few, consider the Sharing element along with some hymns and prayers. Be intentional in your community worship gatherings. Where is your congregation being led at this time?

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Focus Scripture: Doctrine and Covenants 163:1, "Community of Christ," your name, given as a divine blessing, is your identity and calling. If you will discern and embrace its full meaning, you will not only discover your future, you will become a blessing to the whole creation. Do not be afraid to go where it beckons you to go.

Focus Song: "We Are One in the Spirit," CCS 359, © protected

Worship Suggestions for Post-Quarantine Gatherings

Theme	Gathering Scripture	Prayer	Prayer Song	Prayer for Peace	Scripture of Community Purpose	Song of Community	A Time of Sharing	DGR Statement**	Closing Prayer
Celebrate Sacred Togetherness	Psalm 100	Pastoral Prayer that includes: praise of God who has been present in these challenging times; expression of gratitude for that Presence and the many ways we have seen God at work in our world and the silver linings amidst the darkness; naming and praying for specific concerns and troubles that have occurred lately in the community; expressing hope for the future based on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; affirming eternal life that goes beyond the present moments	"There's an Old, Old Path," CCS 244, public domain	Light the peace candle. Watch video followed by a prayer offered by a child. https://www.cofchrist.org/resources?tags=English-Home-Resource#/579/jack-and-jenn-pursue-peace-on-earth	Galatians 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.	"Bear Each Other's Burdens," CCS 274, public domain	Give participants time to reflect on their experience with the pandemic, quarantine, and isolation; OR ahead of time ask 3-4 individuals or families to share their experience. What significant moments of difficulty and blessing have been important on their spiritual journey? Be sure to include participants from online and in-person groups. OPTIONAL: Conclude the sharing with a time of praying for one another.	During the Disciples' Generous Response, we focus on aligning our heart with God's heart. Our offerings are more than meeting budgets or funding mission. Through our offerings, we are able to tangibly express our gratitude to God who is the giver of all. As we share our mission tithes, either by placing money in the plates or through eTithing, use this time to thank God for the many gifts received in life. Our hearts grow aligned with God's when we gratefully receive and faithfully respond by living Christ's mission.	Benediction: Numbers 6:24-26 The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.
Recognize Our New Journey	Psalm 95:6-7	Intercessory prayer for the needs within the congregation, our cities, and the world.	"Spirit of the Living God," CCS 567, © protected	Light the peace candle. Watch video followed by a prayer offered by a person who has received healing and wholeness. https://www.cofchrist.org/resources?tags=English-Home-Resource#/930/peace-through-all-people	Doctrine and Covenants 164:9a, adapted Our divinely led faith adventure with God is eventful, challenging, and surprising; and we are poised to fulfill God's ultimate vision.	"How Many Times We Start Again," CCS 560, © protected	Following the Spirit is a life-giving journey of calling, hope, and possibility. Sometimes we don't understand where our journey takes us, but we are grateful for God's Spirit with us in all life's situations. Challenge and blessing await all who awaken to the Spirit's invitation. In this new world, where are we being called in mission? <i>Ask 1 or 2 people or families to respond to one of these questions:</i> * I saw God this week when... * I saw God this week in... * The Spirit's invitation to me is...	Touched by God's Generosity: An Invitation When our lives are touched deeply by God, we want to be more Christ-like in our living. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we acknowledge God's grace and love in our lives. Accepting God's gifts means offering our whole life to Christ as faithful disciples. As we share our mission tithes, either by placing money in the plates or through eTithing, use this time to thank God for the many gifts received in life.	Pray for open eyes, listening ears, and intentional actions while discovering our New Journey. Conclude with the Mission Prayer: "God, where will your Spirit lead today? Help me be fully awake and ready to respond. Grant me courage to risk something new and become a blessing of your love and peace. Amen."

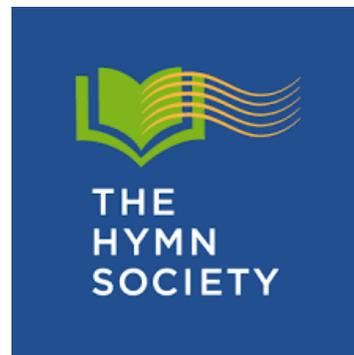
Theme	Gathering Scripture	Prayer	Prayer Song	Prayer for Peace	Scripture of Community Purpose	Song of Community	A Time of Sharing	DGR Statement**	Closing Prayer
God Moves in Us	Psalm 77:11-15	Prayer of gratitude, remembering our heritage, both individually and as a denomination. Offer thanksgiving for God being with us.	"Great Is Thy Faithfulness," CCS 11, © protected	Light the peace candle. Watch video followed by a prayer offered by a teacher or counselor. https://www.cofchrist.org/resources?tags=English-Home-Resource#/2232/transforming-lives-in-highland-park	Doctrine and Covenants 164:9d If you truly would be Community of Christ, then embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ.	"Holy Spirit, Come with Power," CCS 46, public domain	We move into our new future in faith. The past several months have brought frustration, fear, and concern. Today, in spite of these feelings, we say out loud, "We live in hope!" We are called to live out the mission and passion of Jesus. When we think we're ready to settle back in to "normal," God speaks these words, "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope." (Jeremiah 29:11) <i>Ask 1 or 2 people or families to respond to one of these questions:</i> * I saw God this week when... * I saw God this week in.... * The Spirit's invitation to me is...	You are invited to a journey of whole-life stewardship in response to God's amazing generosity in your life as we seek to build communities of joy, hope, love, and peace. As we share our mission tithes, either by placing money in the plates or through eTithing, use this time to thank God for the many gifts received in life.	Pray recognizing that God is always with us when we move out in new faith journeys. Conclude with the Mission Prayer, "God, where will your Spirit lead today? Help me be fully awake and ready to respond. Grant me courage to risk something new and become a blessing of your love and peace. Amen."
Move Forward!	Psalm 121	Read Psalm 121 again as a prayer. This time, project images that illuminate the text, for example, "hills," "heavens," "earth," "shade," "daybreak," "night," "moon," "doorways," "walking about," "busy pedestrian traffic," and so forth. Repeat the images and encourage participants to meditate on them and offer silent prayers. Conclude by reading verse 8.	"Into my Heart," CCS 573, © protected	Light the peace candle. Watch video followed by a prayer offered by a healthcare professional or first responder. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqZCIR5i1vo	John 1:14 (<i>The Message</i>) The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us and moved into the neighborhood.	"The Trees of the Field," CCS 645, © protected	The Spirit is saying to us, "Move forward!" - in your neighborhoods, with strangers and all those yearning for a spiritual home. Nurture and empower disciples to help change the world. Have no doubt in these unusual times, God is up to something. We are tasked with discerning God's future, our future. God is here. And we, God's ordinary people, can listen for God's direction. We join with God on this journey of exploration and mission. <i>Ask 1 or 2 people or families to respond to one of these questions:</i> * I saw God this week when... * I saw God this week in.... * The Spirit's invitation to me is...	All that we are and all that we have are gifts from God. We seek to share generously what we have received as an act of faith and thanksgiving for all that God has provided. With Jesus Christ as our model, we are called to use all our gifts - time, talent, treasure, and testimony - in service to God and others. As we share our mission tithes, either by placing money in the plates or through eTithing, use this time to thank God for the many gifts received in life.	Pray to be the hands and feet of Jesus in our communities as we move forward. Conclude with the Mission Prayer, "God, where will your Spirit lead today? Help me be fully awake and ready to respond. Grant me courage to risk something new and become a blessing of your love and peace. Amen."
Keep Going!	Psalm 29:1-4, 11	Share the Lord's Prayer as a unison reading.	"Amazing Grace," CCS 19, public domain	Light the peace candle. Watch video followed by a prayer offered by someone holding the office of deacon, teacher, or priest. https://www.cofchrist.org/resources?tags=English-Home-Resource#/1821/unity-through-song	Isaiah 43:18-19 Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.	"Sizohamba Naye/We Will Walk with God," CCS 377, © protected	The good news is that God is doing a new thing. We are invited to notice where that is happening and join in the movement. Our challenge is to remain open even during the uncertainty in our world. We are called to be disciples who listen, act with compassion, and work for justice. We are invited to authentically and vulnerably love our neighbors. We are the hands and feet of Jesus. Where and to whom are we being called in this new world? <i>Ask 1 or 2 people or families to respond to one of these questions:</i> * I saw God this week when... * I saw God this week in.... * The Spirit's invitation to me is...	To be generous for the sake of others, we must grow in our capacity to share our gifts from God. As God's generosity transforms us, we want to use our life to serve others. As we share our mission tithes, either by placing money in the plates or through eTithing, use this time to thank God for the many gifts received in life.	Pray recognizing challenges on our journey and frustrations with life; however, affirming that it is God who continues with us on our journey. Conclude with the Mission Prayer, "God, where will your Spirit lead today? Help me be fully awake and ready to respond. Grant me courage to risk something new and become a blessing of your love and peace. Amen."

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Imagine and Discover the Journey Ahead	Psalm 96:9, 11-13	Prayer of blessing on the people of the congregation, our cities, and the world.	"God Forgave My Sins in Jesus' Name," CCS 627, © protected	Light the peace candle. Watch video followed by a prayer offered by an evangelist or pastor. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijpl68Xl1OI	Doctrine and Covenants 163:1 "Community of Christ," your name, given as a divine blessing, is your identity and calling. If you will discern and embrace its full meaning, you will not only discover your future, you will become a blessing to the whole creation. Do not be afraid to go where it beckons you to go.	"Blest Be the Tie that Binds," CCS 325, public domain	Apostle Ron Harmon wrote, "Imagine the possibility of a Big Idea -the idea that re-discovering the power of loving community can change our world. Not just any community, but community shaped by Christ's radical invitation, selfless love, and transforming peace. This is no ordinary idea. This is God's dream for our world - Zion, where we "strive to be visibly one in Christ, and among whom there are no poor or oppressed." (Doctrine and Covenants 165:6a) <i>Ask 1 or 2 people or families to respond to one of these questions:</i> * I saw God this week when... * I saw God this week in.... * The Spirit's invitation to me is...	We serve through tithing of our time, talent, treasure, and testimony. We describe this as whole-life stewardship. Being good stewards of our lives is our ultimate calling as generous disciples. As we share our mission tithes, either by placing money in the plates or through eTithing, use this time to thank God for the many gifts received in life.	Pray for being able to imagine a world of peace and become the change that is needed. Ask for courage and wisdom to live and testify of Jesus' message in our daily lives. Conclude with the Mission Prayer, "God, where will your Spirit lead today? Help me be fully awake and ready to respond. Grant me courage to risk something new and become a blessing of your love and peace. Amen."

**DGR Statements are excerpted from *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4 ed.

ECUMENICAL CONSULTATION ON RESUMING WORSHIP: GUIDANCE ON SINGING TOGETHER July 2020

The Center for Congregational Song (CCS) has been participating in an ecumenical consultation led by United Methodist, Lutheran, and Episcopal liturgical scholars, medical experts, and in consultation with the CDC to create a document entitled “Resuming Care-filled Worship and Sacramental Life During A Pandemic.” CCS Director Brian Hehn was one of the dozens of theologians, pastors, ministry leaders, and public health experts involved in the process of developing this document. The full 36-page document can be found [here](#).



While singing is not recommended at this time, there are many other ways to worship together and make music together. In times such as these, we are called as leaders of the church to think creatively about how to serve God and God’s people. Unlike the NATS/ACDA webinar, the document does not include any specific timeline on when singing might or might not resume again. The science is changing too rapidly to do that with any certainty.

The section on singing and music is as follows

SINGING AND MUSIC

Music is a gift from God given to all creation. It is a means of connecting with God and with one another, and of unifying our thoughts and understanding, our heartbeats and breath. Whether by singing, playing, moving, or listening, music is an integral part of the majority of Christians’ worship life. Praising the Lord is a scriptural mandate (see Psalm 150) and singing is a primary way most Christians have “praised the Lord” together. However, we are now coming to grips with this disconcerting fact: The coronavirus is spread through moist breath. Several recent studies have found that forceful, sustained breathing, such as during singing and playing brass and wind instruments, appears to pose a greater danger of spreading the coronavirus than ordinary speaking at low volume. These findings lead us to recommend the following during the pandemic:

- Refrain from congregational and choral singing.
- Encourage the congregation to participate in music with body percussion such as clapping, tapping their thighs, and stomping.
- Refrain from using any musical instruments that require breath (wind instruments, brass instruments, anything into which one blows to produce sound).
- Use all other instruments (keyboard, percussion, string).
- Avoid sharing instruments and take care to disinfect instruments before and after use.
- Limit the size of ensembles (4 or fewer) and maintain a 6-foot distance between performers with face coverings on.
- Employ silence effectively. Consider using American Sign Language to sing a hymn or song silently.
- Keep up to date with ongoing research on the use of music during the pandemic. Here is a curated (and constantly updated) list of resources and updates about congregational singing and COVID-19: <https://thehymnsociety.org/covid-19/>.