

"BLESSING THE SACRED IN OUR LIVES"

*"The blessing of persons or objects is not done for the purpose of making them holy,
since all that God has created is good and is holy." (Edward Hays)*

PRELUDE "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing"

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Grace Wallace, COSSO Coordinator

INTRODUCTION

Rev. Dr. Rebeka Maples, COSSO Spiritual Formation Director

PRONOUNCING A BLESSING

(adapted Prayers for the Domestic Church)

Receiving and offering a blessing is a gift of acceptance of God's presence in our lives. So before we start, close your eyes and receive this blessing, remember your call to ministry.

Lord, our God, blessed are You, who have invited each of us into a life of sacred service to You and the Church.

May we find that our ministry has special meaning because of the life we share together as local pastors and spiritual leaders in your church.

May happiness be ours, and may our sorrows be brief.

May your Word be a lantern to guide us and strength for our lives.

Rekindle our call to ministry with renewed hope and courage for our work and ministry with all God's people.

We pronounce this blessing in your name, through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(Each makes sign of the cross on our forehead, or bow in thanksgiving, use water from the baptismal fount, place your hand on the person's head.)

HYMN

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow"

UMH 95

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from James 5:14-16)

Leader: Are any among you in need of a blessing?

All: Call the elders of the church and have them pray over us, and anoint us with oil in the name of the Lord.

Leader: The prayers of faith will bless you, and the Lord will raise you up.

All: May the Lord bless us with understanding.

Leader: Are any among you in need of forgiveness?

All: We will confess our sins and pray for one another.

Leader: May the Lord bless us and guide us, that we may be a blessing to others.

BLESSING PRAYER

(adapted from BOW prayer 509)

O God, you divided the waters of chaos at creation. In Christ, you calmed storms and raised the dead. Tame the earthquake, wind, and fire, and all forces of nature that shock us with their power. Keep us from calling disaster your justice. Help us, in good times and in distress, to trust your mercy and lean on your grace. O God, bless the people of the world and the leaders of our nations with the strength of your Spirit, this day and forever. We pray this in your holy name. Amen.

BECOMING A BLESSING

(adapted from R.C. Mitchell & G.A. Ricciuti, Birthings and Blessings)

Leader: God has no hands but ours, no bread but the bread we bake, no prayers but the ones we make, whether we know what we are doing or not. *(Barbara Brown Taylor)*

All: All created things are drenched in God's blessing.

Leader: Having received God's blessing, we now take the time to bless ourselves.

Touch your eyes with your hands saying:

All: Bless my eyes that I may see clearly.

Touch your mouth saying:

All: Bless my mouth that I may break the silence and speak the truth.

Touch your ears saying:

All: Bless my ears that I may listen to the words, thoughts, and feelings of myself and others.

Touch your heart saying:

All: Bless my heart that I may be calm and move gently on my way.

Leader: Touch (or turn toward) an object or person near you saying:

All: Bless you for being present in my life today.

Leader: Today we share blessings. We know that food alone is never enough for life. We need a circle of friends, the warmth of the Spirit, and the presence of God's love. As we bless our graduate and share the blessing of bread and cup at the Lord's table, we also share in the blessing of the Course of Study community and those with whom we are in ministry.

All: Bless our time together that we may be a blessing to others.

HYMN

"Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow"

UMH 95

MINISTRY OF THE WORD

GOD'S WORD

Matthew 5:9 NRSV

MEDITATION *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God."*

Dr Glen Messer

Dr. Glen Messer received his M.Div. and Th.D. from Boston University. From 2012-2016 he served as associate ecumenical staff officer for theology and dialogue with the UMC Council of Bishops Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships.

HYMN

"Irish Blessing - May the Road Rise to Meet You"

THE GRADUATION CELEBRATION

WORDS Rev. Dr. Joon-Sik Park, Director of COSSO

Director: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

ALL: And also with you.

Director: Let us pray together:

Eternal God, by your grace you have brought us together in your Church, which is the body of Christ. Grant your continuing grace to all who are called to leadership in your Church, that they may with diligence and faithfulness fulfill their ministries; and grant that we your people may follow where you lead, and serve you faithfully in the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Presentation of Graduate

Director: Who are presented for graduation from the Course of Study?

COS Coordinator: I present this candidate for graduation:

Jackie Chambers

Director: We now offer our blessings and prayers for this graduate. I invite you to offer your prayers and blessings in the chat.

Blessing of the Graduate

Director: (name) In the name of Almighty God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, we celebrate your graduation from the Course of Study. We commend you to your ministry as a Local Pastor and pledge our continued prayers.

Spiritual Director: (name) May the Holy Spirit guide and strengthen you, that in all things you may do God's will in service to the church, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Coordinator: Your certificate will be mailed as a sign of your completion of COS.

Prayer

COS Coordinator: Gracious God, we thank you for calling faithful servants to be Local Pastors in your Church. We humbly place this graduate in your care. Give her courage, patience, and vision, and bless her with caring communities; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Director: And now, remember your call. Preach the Good News. Shepherd the flock of Christ. And in all things, give God the glory, now and always.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I declare that you have graduated from the Course of Study.

Please unmute and cheer as we congratulate our graduate.

GRADUATION HYMN

"Here I Am Lord"

UMH 593

ORDER FOR HOLY COMMUNION

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing,
always and everywhere to give thanks to you,
Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth.
Your prophets told us of the day
when justice shall roll down like waters
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream,
when nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

TAKING THE BREAD

(lift bread) On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread,
gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:
"Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."

(lift cup) 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 my blood of the new covenant,
poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,
we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

BLESSING THE BREAD AND CUP

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us
and on these gifts of bread and juice.
Make them be for us (enough for our journey with Christ)
the body and blood of Christ.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ,
one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world,
until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at the heavenly banquet.
Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church,
all honor and glory is yours, Almighty God, now and for ever. Amen.

BREAKING THE BREAD & SHARING

We break this bread
to share in the body of Christ.

**Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.** (break and eat bread)

This cup is poured out for God's holy people.

Thanks be to God. (drink the juice)

UNISON PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Lord, we have broken your bread
And received your life.
By the power of your Spirit
keep us always in your love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

BLESSING FOR THE JOURNEY

The third time Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from death, he said, do you love me more than all else?

Yes, Lord, you know that we love you.

Then he said, take care of my lambs, and asked them again, do you love me?

Yes, Lord, you know that we love you.

He said, take care of my sheep, and asked them again, do you love me?

Lord, you know everything, you know that we love you!

Then go, and take care of my sheep.

Alleluia! We have seen the Lord!

Peace be with you.

BLESSING IN UNISON (from Numbers 6:22-27)

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord shine upon you, and be gracious to you;

The Lord turn toward you, and give you peace;

The Lord bless us and the world around us,

Today and all days. Amen.

POSTLUDE "The Lord Bless You and Keep You"

SOURCES:

Barbara Brown Taylor, An Altar in the World (NY: HarperCollins, 2009).
R.C. Mitchell and G.A. Ricciuti, Birthings and Blessings (NY: Crossroad, 1991).
Edward Hays, Prayers for the Domestic Church (KS: Forest of Peace, 1998).
Rock Travnika, The Blessing Cup (Cincinnati: St Anthony, 2002).

Communion Sources:

United Methodist Hymnal (13-16)
St Andrews Holy Cross, Basildon, Essex, England (<https://standrewholycross.org/a-service-of-holy-communion-for-ordinary-time/>)

SOME IDEAS FOR SHARING BLESSINGS

The world is in dire need of blessings and we are always in need of prayer. Just as there are many ways of praying, there are many ways of offering blessings. Every-thing and every-one is in need of a blessing.

A BLESSING BOWL or CUP

(adapted from The Blessing Cup)

Write a blessing you received or a prayer request (a name or concern) on a strip of paper. Roll or fold it and place it in a Blessing Bowl (in church or group setting) or keep it in your own Blessing Cup. Add more blessings or prayers to your cup or the bowl throughout the week. Unfold them later, pray for others or read and remember the blessings.

Blessing the Blessing Bowl

Loving God, we ask your blessing on us as we dedicate this cup/bowl, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Blessing Prayers

Choose a strip of paper from the Blessing Bowl and pray for that person or concern, or give God the glory for a special blessing.

Choose at least one person whom you will pray with this week. Share some concerns and then just pray, a short blessing prayer, a petition of prayers, a thanksgiving prayer – it doesn't matter. God hears our prayers and has mercy on us. All we need to do is "show up."

Okay let's stop now as we offer a blessing to God and the world. Of course, God doesn't need our blessing, a blessing prayer is our way of giving thanks to God and calling forth God's continued blessings on us and the world. (Numbers 6:24-26)

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.

SHARING THE BLESSING

(from Prayers for the Domestic Church)

Receiving a blessing is a gift of acceptance of God's presence in your life. As ministers/servants in the church we are in need of blessings. Choose a partner and offer this blessing to each other. Remember your belovedness (or call to this holy vocation) and receive this blessing as it is pronounced over you (adapt it with your own words or inspiration). You may use water from the baptismal font, or place your hand on or over those to be blessed.

Lord, our God, blessed are You, who have invited *(name)*

Into a life of sacred service to You and the Church.

God of Abraham, Moses, Ruth and Esther, and all whom you have called to special service for You, bless, now, our *sister/brother* in Christ.

We, who are fellow pilgrims on her/his journey, rejoice today in *her/his* rededication to a life of holiness and service.

May you, our *sister/brother*, find that your ministry has special meaning because of the life we share together as Local Pastors (followers of Christ).

May happiness be yours; may your sorrows be brief and always a part of your growth in Christ.

May this rededication rekindle again your service in the church, and may the love of God shine forth from you.

We prayerfully ask this day, that God would bless you with renewed hope and courage for your work and ministry with God's people.

We bless you, (name), in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

(the sign of the cross may be traced on the person's forehead, or a handshake of goodwill may be offered)

THE WISDOM OF PRONOUNCING BLESSINGS

"a blessing does not confer holiness, what God has made is already holy... a blessing puts you as close to God as you can get" (Barbara Brown Taylor)

As people who are blessed to be a blessing, Every thing and every one needs a blessing. So let's practice giving blessings. Who knows it might become a habit, and that could lead us to meet the Divine at every turn and in every face in our lives.

I now invite us to practice pronouncing blessings:

1) First, find some object (not a person, that's much easier).

2) Then find a scripture passage, if you don't have a bible with you, you can use the hymnal.

What you need to do is get to know your object, so find it and read a psalm or scripture passage to it out loud – don't worry it's going to seem weird, but we are all going to be doing it so it won't matter.

3) Next, pay attention to your object – think about it, because it does have a story – who made it, where did it come from? What is its purpose?

4) Now, you are ready to bless it. Use your own words and do it in your own way, because remember, the world is in need of blessings. You can make the sign of the cross on it or over it, bless it with water from the baptismal font, lay hands on it, kneel in front of it, whatever it seems to need today, it will tell you...

5) And when you are done, just spend a few minutes and share your blessing experience with one or two other people – what did it feel like? Did it seem strange or awkward?