#### Gathering Together: Toward a Culture of Mutuality and Full Participation for Persons with Disabilities and Their Allies

## A Worship Based on Romans 12:3–13

*by Tom Reynolds*

### Opening

(*based on Ephesians 4:4*)

One: There is one body and one Spirit,

just as you were called

to the one hope of your calling.

**All: There is one body and one Spirit,**

**just as you were called**

**to the one hope of your calling.**

### Welcome and Honouring of Sacred Relationships

(*Acknowledgement of the traditional lands that the group is meeting on*.)

### Hymn

**“**Come All You People / Uyai mose” (*More Voices* 2)

### Greeting

One: God be with you.

**All: And also with you**

### Passing the Peace

### Gathering Prayer

One: O God, come into our place of worship

this day and enliven us.

**All:Come into each heart,**

**each story,**

**each prayer,**

**each song,**

**each life**

**here today so that we may live**

**and love with purpose,**

**courage, and beauty.**

One: O God, who has created each of us in your image

and made us one body,

each as holy vessels of your presence to one another,

create in and among us a holy place.

**All: Give us hearts and minds, we pray,**

**to be open to human vulnerability,**

**to listen to each other with patient**

**and thoughtful attention and support,**

**to perceive the grace of the differences**

**in our embodied experience,**

**to resist what excludes and diminishes,**

**and to dismantle what acts as barriers to flourishing together in love and justice—**

**whether they be architectural**

**or attitudinal.**

One: O God, help us to trust your Spirit’s work to make us whole,

together in relationships of mutuality and partnership,

in sacred rhythms of giving and receiving.

**All: Gather us together to be your people in the world.**

One: In Jesus’ name we pray.

**All: Amen.**

### Hymn

“Spirit, Open My Heart” (*More Voices* 79)

### Scripture

Romans 12:3–13

### Moment of Silent Reflection

### Prayer

O God, we hear Paul’s words about the many members of the one body, each of which has different purposes and gifts. We hear Paul speaking about mutual affection and outdoing one another in showing honour, contributing to the needs of each othe,r and showing hospitality to strangers. Yet we know how some bodies in our church communities are treated as resident strangers, estranged by others. While Paul states that we function as members of one another, often our communities exclude or silence certain members by creating barriers between those with able bodies and those with disabilities. Created to hold in place a limited and false view of your created image, O God, these barriers create layers of pain and tear us away from each other and from you.

So we hunger for reconciliation, for love, for justice, in right relations with one another. From the violence that ignores or seeks to replace or destroy the stories that sustain people’s integrity and identity as having value and purpose, save us, O God.

From the violence of barriers both physical and in attitudes, save us, O God.

Teach us in the way of respect and compassion, and heal us on a path of radical welcoming for all.

And lead us in hope together into new vistas of righteousness where differences are affirmed and celebrated.

We ask that you hear the prayers of those present today.

(*Silence as individual prayers are offered*.)

### Hymn

**“**Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying” (*Voices United* 400)

### Lord’s Prayer

(a paraphrase)

Our loving creator,

holy mystery

and cradle of all things,

who dwells near us

and gathers up broken hearts

in loving arms;

your comforting presence

inspires gratitude and wonderment.

May your hearth and home

be a place of refuge for all people,

and your tender purposes

come to pass throughout all lands,

as already they are for those who dwell with you.

We ask for sustenance today,

enough for health

and wellbeing,

mindful that often

we crave more than we need

and do not share with others

as readily as we should.

So please look over these

and other shortcomings,

and do not count our wrongdoings against us;

as we, too, look over the wrongs others have done to us

and let go of bitterness and hunger for retribution.

Nurture good in us,

guiding our paths away from things harmful to others

and ourselves,

freeing us from captivity to our own worst desires and

from powers bent on destruction.

For your way is peace and goodness,

and your power is gentle yet strong,

creative and new,

yet faithful and preserving,

holding us ever close both in our weakness

and in our strength.

In you we live,

move,

and have our being,

forever.

Amen.

### Reflection

Holy Conversation—Beginnings of Listening

### Conversations

Share an experience of genuinely being received by another.

Share an experience of genuinely receiving another.

### Hymn

**“**Love Is the Touch” (*More Voices* 89)

### Poem

“If God Invited You to a Party”

(found at [www.dailymotion.com/video/xtcqqr\_if-god-invited-you-to-a-party-by-shams-al-din-hafiz-poetry-reading\_shortfilms](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xtcqqr_if-god-invited-you-to-a-party-by-shams-al-din-hafiz-poetry-reading_shortfilms))

### Hymn

**“**Oh a Song Must Rise” (*More Voices* 142)

### Prayer for the Journey

(adapted from Circle and Cross, p. 54)

One: Holy One, Creator, God of many tribes and nations,

**All: by every name you are known, you bless the earth!**

One: By your spirit and imagination

**All: light the path to right relationships.**

One: Break the stereotypes, banish inaction, bring justice.

**All: End the long apart-ness that has twisted our souls.**

One: Help us see each other clearly

**All: and rejoice in one another’s strength.**

One: Help us hear each other deeply

**All: and join in the friendship dance.**

One: Help us guard each other’s rights

**All: and walk long together in good company.**

One: Help us find your direction for us.

**All: Help us risk building right relationship.**

One: Accompany us as we pledge ourselves…

**All: To honour one another in the stories**

**and ideas we share,**

**seeking to dismantle barriers against**

**the full participation of people with disabilities**

**in the ongoing life of our faith communities,**

**and striving to offer direction to The United Church of Canada**

**in creating a culture of mutuality characterized by**

**loving respect,**

**partnership, and**

**belonging among all.**

One: And give us courage,

creativity,

and commitment for our journey.

**All: Help us keep faith with each other and so with you.**

One: Holy One, Creator,

God beyond tribes and nations,

ability and disability,

Be with us all.

**All: Amen.**

### Hymn

“We Are One” (*Voices United* 402)

*Please credit Tom Reynolds when using this material for worship.*