

A Public Witness of Hope

A litany and prayers for rehung
a Pride flag or re-dedicating faith
community signage after acts of
vandalism and violence

ReconcilingWorks
LUTHERANS FOR FULL PARTICIPATION



A Litany and Prayers for Rehanging a Pride Flag or Re-Dedicating Faith Community Signage

Created by ReconcilingWorks for Reconciling in Christ Partners and all faith communities, this litany and accompanying prayers are intended for use after acts of vandalism, hate, or violence. They offer an opportunity to lament what has been harmed, reaffirm your commitment to LGBTQIA+ inclusion and racial justice, and publicly renew your witness to God's expansive love and the dignity of every person.

Gathering Song Suggestions:

- ACS 1027 Don't Be Afraid
- ACS 1033 Nothing Can Trouble *(Spanish translation available)*
- ACS 1037 Christ, Our Peace

Opening Invocation

Leader: We gather in the many names of the Blessed One, Creator, ✚ Redeemer, and Sustainer.

All: Amen.

Litany of Lament and Forgiveness

Leader: Gracious God, we pour out our prayers to you. We are crying out for justice, yearning for what is right, longing for your peace. Come abide with us, O God, and give strength to those who are troubled by acts of violence against our community.

All: Abide with us.

Leader: We feel the pains of anger, suffering, sorrow, and shame in the face of actions driven by hatred. We need healing for our souls and our bodies as we recover from the shock of hatred and intolerance made visible.

All: Heal us.

Leader: Guide as we remain steadfast in our witness to a loving and compassionate God, full of mercy and lovingkindness for all people.

All: Keep us steadfast.

Leader: O God, you call us to embody your love for us in our love for our neighbors. You call us to forgive others when their words or actions harm us. You call us to forgive even our enemies, even those people who seek to harm us. Your Word teaches us that they are also God's beloved children. But this is hard, so very hard, and we are so weak. Give us strength to seek justice that includes mercy, if those who carried out these actions are identified and held accountable. We do not know what motivates them, so help us to understand the sources of the ignorance and indifference that leads them to violent hatred.

All: Help us to forgive people, O God, when their ignorance and indifference causes us harm.

(Pause for silence and reflection.)

Option 1: Responsive Prayer for Rehanging a Pride Flag¹

Leader: Let us pray . . . God of abiding love, we take this sacred pause to acknowledge our outrage, our fear, and our lack of trust in our community.

(Pause of silence and reflection.)

God, we call out to you. We were betrayed, violated, and vandalized. But you remind us not to be afraid, to hold on to you and each other. We are people of the resurrection and trust that where there was death, life will be restored.

(At this time, any parts of the vandalized flag should be held if available.)

Let these shredded and bruised fabrics, symbols of your diverse and colorful creation, make us whole in the love made known through Jesus.

People of God, as you are comfortable in body and spirit, hold up your hands as a sign of blessing and adoration.

(At this time, any new flags are held up to the community.)

Let your holy wind replenish and dance with these precious yet bold threads. Let the symbols they hold be a sign to all those who are weary that they find safety here in your embrace.

(At this time, the new flag is affixed.)

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Give us strength to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with you, God, now and forever.
We say,

All: Amen.

Option 2: Responsive Prayer for Re-Dedicating Public Signage

Leader: God of endless compassion, we turn now to acknowledge our shock, pain, anger, and dismay. We grieve in the aftermath of the damage inflicted upon the sign that identifies us as a faith community where all are welcome with no exceptions.

All: Console us.

(Images of the damage or remnants of what was destroyed may be displayed.)

Leader: People in this community carried out this act, attempting to erase us from the public square or frighten us into silence. Many of us have asked again and again for the strength to resist our impulses towards responding out of our fear and anger or misguided beliefs in the need for justice without mercy for those responsible, for revenge.

All: We ask you again to strengthen us.

Leader: And with your strength supporting us, we find we can respond as your children, reclaiming our identity and public witness through new signage.

(Worship leaders may invite all present to place their hands on the sign or images of signage may be displayed if not outside.)

Leader: We ask for your blessing on this visible sign of our welcome to all people. We listen as our Welcome Statement is read out loud . . .

[One person or several people can take turns reading out loud the Welcome Statement for your faith community.]

Leader: Let us pray . . . O Creator, you transcend human distinctions of gender in your identity, and you embrace all of God's beloved children with unconditional and asymmetrical love. Through the generations you have called upon us to widen our awareness of human diversity. We gather here before you in our various gender identities, sexual orientations, and gender expressions, all of us one in Christ Jesus. Bring our society to peacefulness and compassion. Give courage and healing to those who express outwardly who they are and whom they love as gifts from you. Open the church to their witness. We ask that with your creative Spirit you cultivate new relationships, mend old wounds, and nurture communities of respect, for the sake of the one who embraces all persons in love, Jesus Christ, our Savior.

And all God's people say: **Amen.**

Charge and Blessing

Leader: Go out into the world in peace and with courage. Hold on to what is good and return no one evil for evil. Strengthen the fainthearted, support the weak, and help the suffering. Honor all people as you love and serve God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

All: Thanks be to God.

Leader: The Creator blesses us and keeps us. The Creator's face shines on us with grace and mercy. The Creator looks upon us with favor and ✝ gives us peace.

All: Amen.

Charge and Blessing [Alternate]²

Leader: It has been said that "All are welcome" means the gates are wide for wolves and sheep to enter in, defeating the purpose of the gate. If it is not safe for sheep, then you may find only wolves.

(Pause for silence and reflection.)

Leader: Blessed are you, who name the codes and platitudes the church uses to comfort the comfortable.

All: You who have been welcomed, but as portions of yourself, as fragments of a person, into limitations of sacred love.

Leader: Blessed are you, who challenge simple binaries with good theology and the image of God.

All: Your courage and faith magnify the Creator's delight for our true and unique selves, a gift to the church and the world.

Leader: Go in peace, be bold in the confidence in God's love and grace.

All: Thanks be to God.

Sending Song Suggestions:

- ACS 1041 God Is Love
- ACS 1035 Though the Earth Shall Change

² From *Speak It Plain: Words for Worship and Life Together* by Meta Herrick Carlson. Copyright ©2020 Purchase of Meta's book comes with permission to reproduce portions intended for group use.

- ACS 1075 O God, We Call
- ACS 1079 Open My Heart
- ACS 1018 Deep Peace

Additional Resources

The brief list of resources below provides additional prayers, litanies, liturgies, and songs that may be useful for this community gathering as well as others.

Call and Response: Litanies for Congregational Prayer

Author Fran Pratt

Outpost Press (December 10, 2018)

A compilation of modern call and response litanies intended for congregational use. Whether your community is liturgical and looking for fresh language or contemporary and looking to incorporate liturgical elements, this volume contains relevant, reflective prayers that call congregations deeper into the story of Divine Love. Written with attention to beauty, theological resonance, and justice-mindedness, these prayers probe the depths of what it means to live out faith in today's context. People of faith from various traditions can find helpful language for integrating spirituality and contemporary life in this rich trove of communal prayers.

Liturgies from Below: Praying with People at the End of the World

Author Claudio Carvalhaes

Abingdon Press (August 4, 2020)

It's been said that prayer is the vocabulary of faith. This book offers a wealth of resources from forgotten places to help us create a new vocabulary for worship and prayer, one that is located amidst the poor and the major issues of violence and destruction around the world today. It is a collection of prayers, songs, rituals, rites of healing, Eucharistic and baptismal prayers, meditations, and art from four continents: Asia-Pacific Islands, Africa, Americas, and Europe.

Speak It Plain: Words for Worship and Life Together

Author Meta Herrick Carlson

Fortress Press (December 1, 2020)

This resource delivers prayers, blessings, litanies, and liturgies for key moments in corporate worship and intimate gatherings of God's people. This collection is intended as a companion to other resources already being used for planning worship and living together in a Christian community. Meta Herrick Carlson invites pastors and other leaders to pay attention to the great theology that sometimes is hidden beneath our high church language, patriarchal customs, and insular questions. Her language models healthy boundaries and marks life events, such as separation or divorce, political or civic grief, and anointing people in transition. She hopes her prayers and litanies will help you speak it plain, that the weight of unspoken trauma will lose its power, the people will reclaim the work of the people, and the assembly will be inspired to deeper connections between worship and the questions we are asking today.

The book includes prayers for many occasions, seasonal blessings, and a variety of litanies and liturgies for use in various worship settings and special services. Selections intended for group use with group responses will be available for download for all purchasers of the book.

All Creation Sings: Evangelical Lutheran Worship Supplement

Augsburg Fortress (2020)

All Creation Sings (ACS) goes hand in hand with *Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW)* to support the church's mission of worship in word and sacrament that leads to service and justice in the world. This resource invites us to expand our song and prayer with timely attention to the health of our planetary home and the human community within it. Included are 200 hymns and songs, more than 30 multilingual, and many new since *ELW* was released. This body of song supports the rhythms of the whole church year and gives enlarged expression to themes of healing and wholeness, creation care, justice, and peace, praise, and lament. Here are two new communion services, one presented in Spanish and English, the other offering options for evening use. Also included are a contemplative service of word and prayer as well as more than 50 additional prayer resources, rounding out nearly 70 pages of liturgy content.