

A liturgy of Reaffirmation of Baptismal Identity to accompany “Front Porch Conversations”

Our conversations from the porch acknowledge the reality and sin of racism naturally call us to a reaffirmation and acknowledgement of who we are called to be and how we are called to live as a people of faith.

One of the first steps we can take together as followers of Christ and communities of faith within the West Virginia Conference as we wrestle with the sin of racism is to truly reaffirm our Baptisms. The practice of reaffirming our Baptisms is not about the repetition of a religious action or rite but as an act of reclaiming our identity. It is an invitation to remember who we are and to hear God speak our names once again, to hear God call us into accountability to live as a people who renounce evil, profess our faith, and express our loyalty to Christ in every situation in which we find ourselves.

What appears below is a reframing of the current Congregational reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant (UMH page 50) and is inspired by conversations between Bishops Grove, Lyght, Ives, and Steiner Ball. In preparation for our “Front Porch Conversations” Bishop Lyght shared a story about how his parents, most times as he left their house, asked this question, “Who are you?” He would then give them his name and they would respond, “Make sure you remember that.” Remembering who we are every time we leave the house, every morning we wake up, has life transforming power, individually and communally.

This reaffirmation liturgy is created to be used as part of the West Virginia “Front Porch Conversations” discussions and the prayer and discernment process as congregations and individuals write the next chapter(s) or story(stories) in actively working toward the elimination of racism in belief, behavior, action, and policy.

Grace and peace,
Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball

Congregational Reaffirmation of The Baptismal Covenant

Introduction

Who are we?

**We are brothers and sisters in Christ, whom you have called by name:
Called together in the one body where there is no lesser or unneeded part.
We are the community of the baptized and through baptism
we are initiated into Christ's holy Church.
We are incorporated into God's mighty acts of saving power and justice
and given new birth through water and God's Spirit.
All this is God's gift, a gift that freely flows to all who will receive it,
offered to us without price.**

**Through the reaffirmation of our faith
we renew the covenant declared at our baptism,
we acknowledge who God calls us to be:
People who thirst for righteousness.
People who continually offer ourselves to God's transforming action.**

**Through the reaffirmation of our faith
We acknowledge God gathers us as one diverse and beloved community,
We acknowledge God's transforming power and love within and among us,
we affirm our commitment to Christ's holy Church
as a people called to God's Kingdom building work
of planting seeds, along with cultivating and encouraging growth that births new life.**

Reaffirmation of our Baptismal Identity and Profession of Faith

Who are we?

**We are a people who renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness,
reject the evil powers of this world and repent of our sin.
We are a people who realize these are not just words
but a constant call to action.**

Who are we?

**We are a people who accept the freedom
and power God does indeed give us
to resist evil, injustice, and oppression
in whatever forms they present themselves.
We are a people who are called to break down the walls of fear,
build bridges of appreciation and equity,
develop relationships with those who are not like us, and
encourage curiosity, listening, and learning among the rich diversity
of God's peoples in this world.**

Who are we?

**We are a people who confess Jesus Christ as our Savior.
We are people who trust in the grace of Christ.
We are a people who promise to serve Jesus as Lord – not all by ourselves,
but in union with the whole Church which Christ has opened, not just to a few,
but opened to people of all ages, nations, and races.
We are a people who recognize Jesus came into the world not to condemn the world, but
came so that the world might be saved through him.**

Who are we?

**We are a people whose vocation is to love neighbor.
We are called to love the neighbors we know and do not know,
the neighbors with whom we agree, and the neighbors with whom we disagree.
We are a people called to serve as Christ's representatives in this world, working
intentionally on moving ourselves and the communities in which we live and serve toward
anti-racist thought, behavior and policy.**

Who are we?

**We are a people who need to remember our baptism daily.
We are called to daily reaffirm that we are Christ's representatives.
We are called to examine how we do what we are doing as Christ's ambassadors: Who are
we leaving out? Who is not present? Who is potentially harmed by what we think, say, or
do? Is what we are doing and discussing truly about Christ? Do our thoughts, words, and
actions advance the mission of Christ and who we say we are as followers of Christ?**

Who are we?

**We are a people who will strive anew this day and every day
to remain faithful members of Christ's holy church
And serve as Christ's representatives in the world.**

Who are we?

**We are a people who receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the Scriptures
of the Old and New Testaments and make this affirmation anew as we profess our faith
together:**

Do you believe in God the Father?
**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

Do you believe in Jesus Christ?
**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?
**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.**

Thanksgiving Over the Water

Eternal Father:

When nothing existed but chaos,
you swept across the dark waters
and brought forth light.

In the days of Noah
you saved those on the ark through water.
After the flood you set in the clouds a rainbow.
When you saw your people as slaves in Egypt,
you led them to freedom through the sea.
Their children you brought through the Jordan
to the land which you promised.

Send your Spirit and help us remember who we are.

Empower us to grow and live from God's transforming love and power each day.

In the fullness of time you sent Jesus,
nurtured in the water of a womb.
He was baptized by John and anointed by your Spirit.
He called his disciples
to share in the baptism of his death and resurrection
and to make disciples of all nations.

Send your Spirit and help us remember who we are.

Empower us to grow and live from God's transforming love and power each day.

Pour out your Holy Spirit,
and by this gift of water call to our remembrance
the grace declared to us in our baptism.
For you have washed away our sins,
and you clothe us with righteousness throughout our lives,
that dying and rising with Christ
we may share in his final victory.

**All praise to you, Eternal God,
through your Son Jesus Christ,
who with you and the Holy Spirit
lives and reigns forever. Amen.**

Remembering and Reaffirming who we are in and by our Baptism

Who are we?

We are the community of Christ, the baptized!

Remember your baptism and be thankful!

We remember and are thankful!

The Holy Spirit work within you, that having been born through water and the Spirit, you may live as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

May it be so!

Thanksgiving

Almighty God, today we rejoice with You who gave us love of neighbor as our vocation. We rejoice with one another as we remember who we are. We rejoice in the remembrance that we are Your people called to serve as Christ's representatives in this world, called to intentionally move ourselves and the communities we serve toward anti-racist thought, behavior and policy, called to work toward an equitable way of being and living that truly honors the Christ we follow and the body of Christ of which we are all a part.

Through your Spirit, help us to remember our baptismal identity daily.

Help us to live as Christ's representatives in this world.

Help us to examine what we are doing and how we are doing as Christ's ambassadors so that we, in faithfulness and joy, better spread the good news and life-giving justice and joy of Christ to all people. Amen



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