



Worship Service
World Development and Relief 2011: “More than Aid”
By Danielle Ayana James



Gathering Song

Gather Us In (*More Voices 7*)

(Play without formal introduction to gently invite congregants into worship.)

Greeting

The grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.
And also with you.

Call to Openness

Ask two individuals to offer this call. Each should stand in a different part of the worship space. They might use their arms and stance to communicate a spirit of openness.

Voice 1

It has happened again!

Another day has come to rejoice in God! Another day to rejoice in how God is moving throughout the world. Let us open ourselves to the presence of God in all.

Voice 2

It is happening!

We gather as people of witness, bound to one another through our actions, prayers, and service. Some of us come with joy. Some of who come are facing devastating reality. In this community and around the world, we look to God for hope and strength. When any members of God’s creation hurt, we are called to listen. Our neighbours cry out to us. Let us open ourselves to solidarity with God and one another.

Voice 1

It is happening!

We believe in God's mission of love for all and so we call care for action. We pursue justice. We form partnerships. We create friendships. We pray and sing in every language. God is on the move! God is renewing people of all nations!

Voice 2

It will happen!

God will renew us all! God will strengthen our relationships! We will soar, dance, and run to God's blessed kin-dom.

People of God, lift your hearts in trust of God's mission of abundant life for all!

We lift up our hearts to soar with compassion and justice.

Take one step forward in partnership with others for healing and justice.

We will take one step forward, and then another.

Arise! Let worship be our way of life.

Let us worship God with all that we are!

Light the Christ Candle

Arise, Your Light Is Come (*Voices United* 79, verses 1 and 4)

OR

Song of Praise

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

Opening Prayer

Risen Christ, you guide us to strengthen others, to nurture hope, and to embody compassion. We cannot turn away from cries of need. We yearn to reflect your transformative ways. Open us to the needs of today and to plans for tomorrow.

O God, in this new day, let your forgiveness and joy flow through us. Hold us when we are weary. Turn us afresh to you and to our neighbours. Bind us to your heart of justice! Empower us to build community. Awake us, God, to your call in our lives.

Spirit, enliven us! Take up residence in our acts of mission and in the lives of our global neighbours. We look to you to accomplish through us the work of one action, one response, that grows through relationships of love.

**We open ourselves to your leading. We place our trust in your unfolding mission.
Amen.**

Let us express our understanding of God's mission by voicing the words of A New Creed.
(*Voices United*, p. 918)

Children's Focus

You may wish to use the WDR children's resource or a portion of it. You can find it at: www.united-church.ca/funding/msfund/about/wdr#resources. Click on "WDR Resources" under the heading "WDR Resources," and then scroll about halfway down the page.

OR

Tell or read the story of Ruth and Naomi. Then, ask

- How did Ruth help Naomi?
- How did Naomi help Ruth?
- How do we help people?
- How does the church help people?
- Sometimes the church helps through WDR. Explain WDR briefly, according to the age group you have.

We Are Connected Communities

Voice 1

Crises are part of the ebb and flow of our lives. Sometimes they are the effect of a natural disaster. Sometimes crises result from oppressive, unjust health or agricultural practices, or diminished access to education.

Voice 2

We are connected to God's family around the world. The hope and strength of our neighbours compel us to respond both immediately and by helping with long-term development through global partnerships and friends. This is the ministry of the World Development and Relief Fund. Both the immediate and the long-term are vital for the Church's expression of God's mission. We are called to ongoing justice-making, kingdom-seeking relationships.

May God shape us as a people renewed in strength and lift us to respond with more than aid.

Voice 1

Let us pray. Travel with us, Holy One. Enable us to walk day by day in your truths of community sharing and development. Give us the wisdom that grounds good relationships so partnerships can be celebrated in times of urgency and in times of peace.

The Word Launches Hope

Prayer of Illumination

Unwearying God, take our sighs of yearning into your heart.
Let your Word shape them into actions of love.
Breathe them on us and give us hope.
We listen, to be joyfully commissioned. Amen.

Prophets Speak the Word

Isaiah 40:1, 3–5, 27–31

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church
Thanks be to the Spirit of Life.

Sermon

Introduction

- earthquakes in the Caribbean
- flooding in Asia
- famine in southern Africa
- hurricanes hitting global coastlines

Talking Points for the Sermon

- the urgency of crises every day around the world
- empathy deepens
- God's people need to help now
- "Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God" (Isaiah 40:1)
- the prophet spoke in a time before Israel experienced the devastation
- it was pre-emptive comfort, speaking of a wholeness that would come because God was entrusting the people to be active in hope and not lose heart; God's daring comfort
- God was on the move, urging the people of Israel to prepare their lives, hearts, and spirits
- in all that might come they were not to lose hope
- endurance for the run of life
- perseverance
- they were not to forget the radical, tireless comfort of God

*Do you not know? Have you not heard?
God will not grow tired or weary.
God gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.
Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings as eagles.
They will run and not grow weary.
They will walk and not grow faint.*

Suggested Examples

1. In the streets of Haiti after the earthquake the sun set as singing rose. People sang out with God's comfort, declaring hope, resilience, and confidence in God; they called to the Spirit's strength within God's people.
2. God's soaring comfort is also seen in partners' work—like that of ACT Alliance (www.actalliance.org)—to
 - get emergency aid on the ground in Chile
 - deliver food to rural parts of Haiti
 - supply bricks for rebuilding in flood-devastated regions of Pakistan
3. Those in need are God's people. There is no "us" and "them," only "all of us." God has already given us the task of comfort—to be the people of active hope.
4. We will be as an eagle in flight, moving as one: An eagle has over 7,000 feathers. Each feather has individual beauty and strength, but when the feathers work together the eagle can rise on the wind, swoop, fly, and fulfill its identity as part of beautiful creation. The feathers are connected, but there is also space between them for the wind to rush through. The force the feathers create moves the soaring body so it can accomplish its tasks.
5. We are as feathers, connected to others, lifted by the Spirit, and moving God's body in fulfillment of its task. We give to lessen the pain, in ongoing support of one another.
6. World Development and Relief
7. God calls and commissions us to run boldly and soar mightily.

Conclusion

Rejoice in the good news of an eagle that soars. A church that understands the value of each member. Where each is valued as part of the whole, where each contributes to the active hope and love of neighbours, where when one is weak another will not let him or her fall. The Spirit blows and the global church—God’s people—begins to climb on the wind. Hope spreads forth as on eagle’s wings. We work together no matter what.

Stronger and stronger. Soaring.

Silence

(3–5 minutes)

OR

Response

You might try repeating this phrase: “Soaring Spirit, build strength and wholeness through us.”

We Respond as Soaring People: Litany of Solidarity

We offer a litany of solidarity—a prayer of formation.

(This litany is based on the Guiding Principles of Partnership developed through consultation by The United Church of Canada, 2008.)

The whole church is involved in God’s vision of wholeness. The churches of the North, South, East, and West work together in creative partnerships for the things of God.

May we hear God’s call to work together.

We resist the urge to do God’s work. We resist old patterns of relating to our neighbours. We resist the temptation to do it our way and instead listen with humility and open hearts.

May we hear God’s call us to remain open to the needs of others.

Power and decision-making can define the look of development, solidarity, and partnership. But sharing, surrender, and Spirit are God’s resources. These are our tools for working with others in right relationships.

May we hear God’s call to share our resources to strengthen others.

Living with disagreements, differing goals, and various understandings of faith is part of serving with our neighbours. As their stories become part of ours, we dare to engage differences with respect, and appreciate striving toward the common goal set in Christ.

God calls us to more than give aid. God calls us into messy relationships of discovery, love, and possibility.

Shalom of God

With an open heart Jesus steps into the space between “us” and “them,” reminding us of God’s universal mission of peace.

We are called to practise peacemaking. Let us greet one another as sisters and brothers.

The Shalom of God be with you.

And also with you.

Hymn of Rejoicing

Come All You People (*More Voices 2*)

Offering Invitation

Leader

Responding to present needs and for the ministries that encourage wholeness, we give to the work of God’s people throughout the world.

Special WDR Message

The United Church is in partnership with over 140 partners around the world. World Development and Relief is a designation within the Mission and Service Fund. Through our partner organizations, WDR supports long-term development work and short-term responses to crises. We offer thanks for the ways in which our partners are present before, during, and after emergencies. We offer thanks for the work they do to change the conditions that make some people more vulnerable to emergencies than others. God’s grace and love for the world is present in their work. We are part of this by offering more than aid.

Offering Presentation Hymn

Sisters Let Us Walk Together (*More Voices 179*)

Prayer of Dedication

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

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

(*Sung before and played softly as the prayer is offered*)

Lord hear the prayers of your church:

For those who live in the aftermath of crisis. Where tears of grief and wounds of heartache need your healing balm. Where people give their resources and lives to caring for those who cry out. Where hope is a way of life because your Spirit connects neighbours to neighbours in love.

Lord, hear our prayers. Renew us in strength. Help us to soar in love for all.

For the partnerships that exist throughout your church. The creative collaborations and alliances that make emergency response more effective. For long-term relationships and community development offered through WDR and the Mission and Service Fund. In gratitude for lives awakened to your presence and touched by love.

Lord, hear our prayers. Renew us in strength. Help us to soar in love for all.

In thanksgiving for the mission you have given your church to love our neighbours as ourselves. For the joy of aligning with others in justice, healing, reconciliation, and new ventures in Christ. For the learning fostered when humility, patience, and prayer are central. We give you thanks.

Lord, hear our prayers. Renew us in strength. Help us to soar in love for all.

For the Spirit that rustles our feathers and propels us in ways of the Kingdom. For the Christ who taught us to expand the neighbourhood beyond ourselves. For the Creator who is a mystery of loving community, in whom our lives are blessed. We give thanks.

Lord, hear our prayers. Renew us in strength. Help us to soar in love for all.

Parting Hymn

Dance with the Spirit (*More Voices* 156)

Commissioning and Benediction

May expansive Love rise within your life.

May the touch of a neighbour expose you to the Christ.

Remain committed to one another in renewed hope, for the Church of God soars whenever we are open to the Spirit's mission.

Amen. (*Voices United* 974)