Worship Service Template for PIE Day

*By former Moderator the Very Rev. Gary Paterson. Originally written for pieday.ca. Used with permission.*

## About This Order of Service

So often we as trans, non-binary, gender queer, queer, Two Spirit, intersex people, and many more, are made invisible in worship. We become part of generic welcome to everyone, or are cast as being welcome “regardless” or “despite” our diversity, not because of it. This is especially true for many racialized and Indigenous 2SLGBTQIA+ people, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people with disabilities.

So be creative in how you interpret and contextualize these resources! Customize them for an online service or event―make it your own! Take the time to name us and celebrate us in all our diversity. May these resources and many others challenge us to embrace and enflesh the radical, prophetic, deeply inclusive call of the Good News.

―*Affirming Connections and Affirm United/S’affirmer Ensemble*

# A**ffirming Liturgy for National Affirming/PIE Day**

*by the Very Rev. Gary Paterson*

## Opening

Mark the beginning of worship in some way. Example: The sound of a Zen bell/gong ringing.

## Words of Welcome

(*Defining who you are, perhaps including your vision or mission statement, or some portion of it that works for on-line attention. An example:*)

Welcome to this time of worship at….  
We are so glad you are here.  
We are an open-minded, open-hearted, 2SLGBTQIA+ affirming community,  
seeking to follow in the way of Jesus,  
and engage in the work of compassion, love, and justice.  
Wherever you are in your faith journey, with whatever questions you carry,  
you are welcome here.  
Whomever you love, whatever your gender identity, your sexual orientation,  
your ethnicity, race or ability,  
you are welcome here.

## Recognition of Indigenous Territory

We acknowledge that we are living and worshipping on the unceded territory of the…People. We seek to walk together with our Indigenous brothers and sisters in the spirit of justice and reconciliation.

(*Given the realities of online worship, where people may be connecting from many different places, you might want to invite people to write in the chat box an acknowledgement of the territory where they are living and worshipping.*)

## Lighting of the Christ Candle

(*It would be good to have this filmed in a household, with a child or children lighting the candle, with a parent assisting when/if needed, offering these words adapted from* [*Godly Play*](https://godlyplay.ca/)*:*

There once was someone who said such wonderful things and did some amazing things that people couldn’t help but follow him. As they followed they asked lots of questions. Once they asked him who he was, and he said “I am the Light.”

## Call to Worship

(*It is very difficult to make responsive calls or prayers work online, and I recommend that the Call be offered by one person―either as a “declaration” or in a conversational style.*

*You might use scripture to shape a call to worship―for example, verses from Isaiah 55 or Psalm 100; or you might explicitly build the call around this being National Affirming Sunday. For example:*)

We gather together, on this National Affirming Sunday,  
celebrating the all-inclusive love of God―  
Worshipping our Maker, who delights in diversity;  
Worshipping the Lover, who in Jesus reached out and accepted and  
embraced everyone, despite all social, class, ethnic and spiritual barriers.  
Worshipping the Keeper, the Spirit who continues to break down the  
walls that divide us. Thanks be to God!

## Hymn

As you well know, online worship presents challenges for congregational singing. Often it is helpful to sing only two, possibly three verses (depends on whether there’s a repeating chorus.) Have a strong “lead singer” (or two or three, at a safe distance from each other); split the screen, and have the words printed on one side. As much as possible, choose hymns that are well known to the congregation to encourage people to sing along at home (with the mute button on 😊.)

Possible choice: “Let Us Build a House,” *More Voices* 1 (perhaps singing vv. 1 and 6).

## Gathering Time (Time with Children)

It’s hard to know how many younger children are participating in online worship―it’s not the easiest or engaging of formats for them. But it feels important to acknowledge children’s presence with a reflection or a story, perhaps with “wondering questions,” one that is clearly accessible for children, and yet also draws in the adults.

Play with the acronym PIE―Public, Intentional, Explicit. The storyteller would be filmed in a kitchen, in the midst of making a bumbleberry pie (You might also want to call it a Jesus pie.)

Bumbleberry pie is a Canadian mixed berry pie originating from the Maritimes. It is made of at least three kinds of berries, but generally refers to a mixed-berry pie, as there is no such berry as a bumbleberry. This pie often also contains apple and/or rhubarb.

In one big mixing bowl you would add ingredients for the crust―and as you add, say, the flour, you might say, one cup of justice; a cup of shortening/butter becomes a cup of affirmation; a cup of water is a cup of compassion; a sprinkling of salt for courage; etc. Eventually make the identity between pie crust and church (building, structure etc.).

And then, in a second bowl, you would mix the berries and use that as a means of identifying the different people who would be mixed together, naming the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, the differences in colour, ethnicity; ability/disability, age differences. The taste, the quality of a bumbleberry pie depends precisely on including a whole variety of berries…and then add a little sugar, the love that sweetens the whole mixture.

And this is where you could step back and talk about Public, Intentional, and Explicit.

## Introduction to Scripture

An opportunity to do some of the background exegetical work, to enable people to have a better grasp of what they are about to hear, and why it’s relevant. Often that work gets done in the sermon *after* people have heard and been puzzled by the scripture reading. In this case, it could be an explanation of the struggle in the early church to include Gentiles as full members without them first becoming like the “original” members; i.e., Jews.

## Scripture Reading

Acts 11:1-10; possibly Galatians 2:11‒14 (see “PIE Day Sermon Thoughts and Possibilities” on the [PIE Day worship page](https://united-church.ca/worship-special-days/pie-day), united-church.ca/worship-special-days/pie-day)

## Hymn

Possible choice: “Though Ancient Walls (“Walls that Divide”) by Farquharson and Klusmeier, *Voices United* 691 (perhaps singing vv. 1 and 2).

## Sermon

“All Are Welcome” (see “PIE Day Sermon Thoughts and Possibilities” on the [PIE Day worship page](https://united-church.ca/worship-special-days/pie-day), united-church.ca/worship-special-days/pie-day)

## Response

“Take, O Take Me as I Am,” *More Voices* 85  
(Both a response to the sermon, with its theme of “take me as I am,” and a good segue into a time of prayer)

## Pastoral Prayers

Since this service includes Communion, the prayers of gratitude will be included in the Great Thanksgiving. This Time of Prayer is for petitions and intercessions, concerns of the heart. The prayers will reflect the life of the community―for individuals in need, for pressing justice causes (e.g., for our neighbours to the south, depending on what is happening on the political scene; for a just sharing of COVID vaccine resources) and for issues that are part of the congregation’s justice and outreach (e.g., reconciliation, refugees, environment, homelessness); for issues specific to the reality experienced by the 2SLGBTQIA+ community―within the church, the country, and in other countries in the world.

The prayers should include petitions asking for strength and insight to continue with the Affirming Journey, including the need to be public, intentional and explicit.

This is an excellent time to include screen images that reinforce the impact of the spoken word. Two online sites provide legally free images, where copyright issues have been dealt with: unsplash.com; and creative commons.

## The Lord’s Prayer

This might be an opportunity to use the version/paraphrase of the Prayer of Jesus written by Jim Cotter, p. 916 in *Voices United*.

## A Time of Offering

Invitation to give…of one’s self, of one’s resources, with a clear statement about the gifts each person has and brings. This Time of Offering could include an invitation to support those organizations in the community that are doing the work of mending and healing God’s world; and, an invitation to support the ministry of the congregation, by… and list the ways that are available.

Depending on your congregation’s pattern for communion, you might choose to have a hymn at this point. I would heartily recommend Shirley Erena Murray’s hymn “(For Everyone Born,) A Place at the Table.” It’s one of the few hymns to have at least one verse that makes explicit the welcome of Christ to members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. It may be unfamiliar to your congregation, so have a good soloist sing the verses; however, there is a wonderful chorus which is hard to resist from joining in on.

## Celebrating the Sacrament of Communion

I would suggest at least two presiders to create balance―gender identity, sexual orientation, ordered/lay etc. And, having two presiders allows for a variety of voices, and for responsive prayer to be led by two people on screen, which might encourage those at home to join in.

### Invitation

A word of invitation to all who are hungry for communion with God, for this is God’s table, not ours, and what God has declared “clean” (acceptable) we are not to call “profane” (unacceptable). This invitation to the Table is another opportunity to have P.I.E. become a lived reality, with an intentional naming of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

Also…give instruction for how this communion will be shared. That is, remind people that they need to have their own bread/cracker and grape juice/wine/fruit juice available and ready. When prayers have been offered, the presiders will invite all to eat and drink together, on screen and at home; all share in these actions at the same time. This can offer some sense of the Body acting as one despite our separate locations.

### The Great Thanksgiving

Leader God be with you.  
**People And also with you.**Leader May God come more fully into our lives.  
**People May this be so.**Leader Let us offer our lives for transformation.  
**People In hope and joy, we offer ourselves.**Leader In thanksgiving, let us celebrate Christ in our midst.  
**People We welcome the Christ who lives within and between us.**

Leader We give thanks… (*name gratitude that connects to your faith community. Include reference to the natural world, for flesh and bone, for bodies, in all their wonder and differences; thanks for the gift of sexuality; thanks for the gift of diversity. And again, specifically lift up the gifts of the 2SLGBTQIA+* *community. Move then to give thanks for the witness of our Biblical ancestors*),  
To Noah and the promise of the rainbow,  
For Joseph of the many-coloured coat,  
For the deep commitment between Ruth and Naomi,  
For the love between David and Jonathan  
For Mary’s yes and her mysterious pregnancy and her  
singing of the Magnificat, a dream of God’s justice on earth.

We give thanks for the witness of the prophets of today, possible examples:  
for poets, like Amanda Gorman, who declaimed at President Biden’s Inauguration; for Alexei Navalny in the struggle for freedom in Russia; for Affirm United/S’affirmer Ensemble (in the United Church of Canada), and its 39 years of work for support, justice and affirmation of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

We give thanks for the person of Jesus, his ministry, his teaching – feeding 5000 people gathered in the hills of Galilee, no one excluded; talking to outsiders, like the Samaritan woman at the well; healing the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman, a “foreigner”; calling Lazarus to “Come out!” into a new life of wholeness.  
We give thanks for Jesus’ willingness to offer his life for justice, for love, for us, for God. And we give thanks for God’s gift of resurrection, the promise of new life.

And so, we remember that long ago evening, the last supper  
that Jesus shared with his friends,  
He took bread, blessed it, broke it, saying, “This is my body, broken for you. Each time you do this, remember me.” Likewise, after supper, he took the cup, and when he had given thanks he said, “Take, drink. This is the cup of the new covenant, the cup of blessing. Each time you do this, remember  
me.”

O Spirit, send your power upon us, so that what we say and do here may be a source of life for us, and through us, for all the world.

The body of Christ; bread for the journey.  
(*Bread eaten by both/all presiders, with an explicit invitation to the online community to do likewise, all at the same time.*)

The cup of blessing; the wine of new life.  
(*Again, done together by all.*)

### Prayer

We thank you, O Holy One, for this banquet of love, acceptance  
and empowerment. May what we have said and done so put its  
mark upon us, within us, that we might become the persons You  
would have us be. And may this community of faith affirm the  
worth, value and beauty of all our neighbours, all our relations,  
the whole of creation.  
Amen.

## Hymn

“Draw the Circle Wide,” *More Voices* 145; or possibly “Go ,Make a Diff’rence,” *More Voices* 209. Another hymn to explore is “Your Love, O God” (Anders Frostenson/Lars Ake Lundberg). It is found in *The United Methodist Hymnal,* 120.

It will be unknown to most if not all of your members, but might be worth learning as a congregational hymn, or to have it presented as a solo. Again, there is a powerful chorus where others can join in.

## Commissioning and Benediction

Go from this time with open hearts,  
ready to encounter the Holy One  
in the daily, in the ordinary, in the flesh.  
Go from this time with a daring and tender love,  
seeking to mend God’s beloved creation,  
wherever and whenever you can.  
Know that God who is Love, goes with you,  
Within, beside and far ahead of you.  
Go into this day, into your life,  
trusting that you are held in the loving heart of the Holy Mystery,  
now and forever.  
Amen.

## Response

“When We Walk from Here” (Linnea Good), *Voices United* 298

*We are grateful to the Rev. Gary Paterson for his thoughtful work on this special PIE service template, and to his home congregation, St. Andrew’s Wesley United Church in Vancouver, whose learnings during their online services have deepened Gary’s experience with providing meaningful services online.*

More resources and videos are available at [pieday.ca](https://pieday.ca/).