General Synod 35: Into the Deep

Closing Worship “Burning Sweetgrass” | Tuesday, July 15, 2025
Kansas City, Missouri

Preludes

This Little Light of Mine

Every Praise

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We Will Be The Light

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One Heart

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Opening Music Silk Poi Dancers- Quixotic

We Are Marching in the Light of God/Siyahamba

Zulu:

Siyahamba, ekukanyen' kwenkos',
Siyahamba, ekukanyen' kwenkos',
Siyahamba, ekukanyen' kwenkos',
Siyahamba, ekukanyen' kwenkos',
Siyahamba, siyahamba, oh,
Siyahamba ekukanyen' kwenkos'.
Siyahamba, siyahamba, oh,
Siyahamba ekukanyen' kwenkos'.

English:
We are marching in the light of God.
We are marching in the light of God.
We are marching in the light of God.
We are marching in the light of God.
We are marching, we are marching, ooh,
We are marching in the light of God.
We are marching, we are marching, ooh,
We are marching in the light of God.

Spanish:
Marchando e la luz de Dios
Marchando e la luz de Dios
Marchando e la luz de Dios
Marchando e la luz de Dios
Marchando, siempre marchando Marchando e la luz de Dios

Call to Worship

One: GOD hear the cries of your people.
(Pause)

One: Holy one, hear the cries of your PEOPLE.
(Pause.)

One: Spirit, witness the whimpers of your PEOPLE.

(Pause.)

One: Jesus, our Jesus—who Cries, with your people. Be with us. Weep with us. Cry with us. For your world, Jesus, is broken and in need of healing. Your world is in bondage, and in need of release. Your world is in sin, and in need of redemption. Come, Lord Jesus, and be with us now.
(Pause. Silence.)

One: Come now, Source of all Blessing, and Source of all Hope, and help us hope in these moments of grief. We weep where rage burns out. We weep when pain filters through our experience. We weep when the earth herself is extracted of her wonder and put for sale. We weep where we are not seen and affirmed in our blessed beings. We plead: Offer us hope. Offer us love. Offer us guidance. Come, Spirit, come.
All: Come through the fire.

One: Let your fires burn through us, too, God; an inferno of feeling, releasing that which we have held pent up through these weeks and months and years. Burn it out. Burn it down.
All: Cleanse through the fire.

One: Let your fires renew the land and spirits, too; a reset to hope. Let the destruction become creation, the trauma become art.
All: Transform through the fire.
One: Let your fires offer warmth—a candle lit for those we've lost, a bonfire burning bright; set out with chairs and loved ones, a hearth fire witnessing to home. Let the fires connect us to our ancestors and the faith they have carried for generations.
All: Love, through the fire.

One: Hear the words of Robin Wall Kimmerman, in Braiding Sweetgrass followed by a moment of silence.
"[the students say] 'If people only knew…' .. If people only knew… then they would what? Stop? I honor their faith in people, but so far the if-then formula isn't working. People do know the consequences of our collective damage, they do know they wages of our extractive economy, but they don't stop. They get very sad, and they get quiet."
Moment of Silence–hold for longer than what is comfortable.

OPENING HYMN

As A Fire Is Meant For Burning

As a fire is meant for burning With a bright and warming flame
So the church is meant for mission, Giving glory to God's name
Not to preach our creeds or customs but to build a bridge of care
We join hands across the nations finding neighbors every where

We are learners; We are teachers; We are pilgrims on the way
We are seekers; we are givers; We are vessels made of clay
By our gentle loving actions, We should show that Christ is light.
In a humble, listening spirit. We would live to God's delight

As a green bud in the springtime is a sign of life renewed
So may we be signs of oneness Mid earth's peoples many hued
As a rainbow lights the heavens When a storm is past and gone,
May our lives reflect the radiance of God's new and glorious dawn.

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Modern Scripture Reading

One: Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Everyone of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.
They aren't drunk. That's an easy dismissal. Plus, it's so early in the morning!
No, THIS, my siblings is prophecy in action. Joel, of our ancestors, told us:
(*check the text* read deadpan to start) In the Last days it will be, God declares....

One: Pour my spirit on all flesh.
The Youngers: The children shall prophesy.
One: The young; we see visions.
The Elders: The old; we dream, dreams.

One: All who labor will call forth a vision of the future! And there will be signs.
All: What are the signs?!

One: Calamities in heaven above! Signs on earth!
Children & Elders: What ARE the signs?!

One: Blood. Fire. Death. Smoke. The sun shall be darkness and the moon shall turn red. All this will happen before the coming of the Lords' Great and Glorious Day. And then!
Elders: What is it?

One: AND THEN! The people will be saved. They will Wake. Up.
.....So that's what Joel said. But, you all, people gathered here, listen closer:
We had Jesus with us here. He told us what is and what could be. And he gave us faith and signs and powers and wonders. He taught us the skills to organize and share what we have and love one another. You all know him. (You know him, right?) Anyway. The State killed him, hung him on a cross. Executed him in the chair, with the needle, for a crime he didn't do.
Youngers: What happened next?
(overlapping echoes:)
One: What happened next?
ALL: What happened next?
One: WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

ON SCREEN *with (PAUSE)*:
"A sweetgrass braid is burned to create a ceremonial smudge that washes the recipient in kindness and compassion to heal the body and the spirit."
Robin Wall Kimmerer

HYMN

Take The Sweet Grass

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Scripture: Acts 2: 14-24
Sermon: Rev. Antony Coleman

Sermon Response
Take The Sweet Grass - Reprise

Pastoral Prayer
God weave us deep into our web of connections.

Pour upon us the responsibility for reciprocity, the mingling of our roots for radical discipleship.

Bring us into the deep, together. Invite us to cast our nets of care into the world, so that we show up in alignment with who you would have us be.

God blend us into each other, offering grace and belonging, and gentleness where there is pain.

God: you call upon us to KNOW our faith, and the Biblical words of Christ and the charge he gives us, so that even when all seems lost, we build a resurrection future, together.

Where we have been burned, wash us in your kindness and compassion, point the way for where hope may be. And when we cannot feel it ourselves, Holy one, hold us to lean on each other, so that we may carry what must be known, for the sake of our great-great-great-grandchildren.

Creator, call upon us to weave our weighty words with wonder and with a wish for a world in right relationship; restoring respect, responsibility and reciprocity as you request of us.

And be with us, breathe with us, and begin again with us, this moment, in commitment to the call of our faith, on this day, and the days to follow.

With that commitment in our hearts, and the liberation of the Word beyond Words before us, we pray together the Jesus Prayer, as reimagined for this day:

JESUS PRAYER
Our Creator, Parent, Mother of us all,
who dwells within and beyond,
Sacred is your name.
May your holy vision for collective flourishing
come to fruition among us.
May your dreams of justice, love, compassion,
and connection be enfleshed on earth.
Provide us today with what we need to be nourished in body, soul, and heart.

Forgive us for the harm we cause as we seek to forgive those who have harmed us.
Lead us away from everything that destroys and liberate us from the hands of evil.
For you are the ultimate source of hope.
You are the ultimate source of healing.
Your power-with exceeds all power-over.
Your presence incites eternal wonder.
All praise to you, our comfort and strength.
Amen.

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JOIN THE MOVEMENT CELEBRATION

Invitation to Commit to the Movement

Movement of Love

We choose a path
By fear or love
Love or hate
Is moving us
So will you be strong?
Can you find some courage now?
It will take everyone
To act now and keep going on -repair what's been done

CHORUS: We are all of us histories
Rooted and mighty trees
We are all of us stories
Coming to life in flowering leaves
We are all of us legacies
Ready to fall and die as seeds

This is our movement of love
Love- to find our way home
Love- to repair what's been done
Love- for salvation

Feet face ahead
Face looking back

Sankofa bird
To guide our path

We were never alone
All our ancestors call to us
God of justice and love
You are in this and holding us

CHORUS

This is our movement of love
Love- to find our way home
Love- to repair what's been done
Love- for our salvation

Offeratory

Prayer of Dedication
All: We offer our gifts to this movement, and we offer ourselves. Not because the Church invited us, but because Jesus did, saying: Take up your Cross, and Follow Me. And truly, we will follow him into the deep, with our resources, our commitments, and our faith. Amen.

CLOSING SONG

Hope Will Not Fail

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Blessing of Benediction:
Go forth from this place with the fires of justice burning within you.
Go forth from this place with a light of hope flickering, to catch and carry.
Go forth from this place to make the whole world an altar, with each light a candle of holy knowing; an offering of peace.
Let your heart fires and hearth fires alight a home of belonging, wherever you go.
And let the Fires of the Holy Spirit call you and guide you, led by Ruah– the very breath of being.
Go, in peace.

GS35 Closing Worship was written by Rev. Dr. Chris Davies, Executive Minister, Programs & Initiatives; Southern New England Conference, UCC

Quixotic Imaginative Experiences, Silk Poi Dancers

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