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✿ LITURGIES FOR YEAR A ✿  
VOLUME 2

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Kimberly Bracken Long

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## *Introduction*

**T**he *Feasting on the Word Worship Companion* offers language for the church's worship for every Sunday and holy day in the Revised Common Lectionary for Years A, B, and C. This second volume provides liturgy for Year A, Trinity Sunday through Reign of Christ. It is intended to serve as a supplement to the liturgical resources of denominations and not as a substitute for any of those fine works.

The texts herein were written by people from five ecclesial bodies who share similar convictions about worship and its language, yet pray with distinct voices. Because the writers come from a range of Protestant traditions, the attentive reader will notice some differences in theological background; in every case, however, these texts are grounded in deep and careful theological reflection. We seek to offer liturgy that is accessible yet elegant, in words that are poetic but not overwrought. These texts are written for the ear; we hope they are easily spoken, and their meanings quickly apprehended, in order to encourage full and rich congregational participation in the church's life of prayer.

These words are rooted in Scripture, as the church's liturgies have been for centuries. Using the Revised Common Lectionary as a guide, the writers of this volume offer words for worship that do not merely spring from their own imaginations but are grounded in the Word of God.

### *What This Book Includes*

— Prayers and other liturgical texts—from Opening Words to Blessing—for every Sunday and holy day from Trinity Sunday through Reign of Christ (Year A)

- A collection of greetings to be used at the beginning of a worship service
- Prayers for Communion, or Eucharist
- Questions for reflection on the texts for each Sunday and holy day
- Morning and evening prayers for household use, to be prayed by individuals, families, or groups, based on the week's lectionary readings. (These prayers are written in both singular and plural, so adapt them as needed.) These may be distributed throughout a congregation for use during the week as a way to continue reflecting on the Sunday texts.
- A CD-ROM, which enables worship planners to copy text and paste it in the worship bulletin. Permission is granted to reprint individual prayers and liturgical texts for worship provided that the following notice is included: Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from *Feasting on the Word*® *Worship Companion*. Copyright 2014.

Eucharistic prayers are provided in a separate section in acknowledgment that not all Christian churches celebrate the Lord's Supper every Sunday. In addition, one prayer for general use is provided along with prayers for All Saints and Reign of Christ.

### *How to Use This Book*

One may use this book in a variety of ways. You may use the texts just as they are, or you may adapt them for your context. While new texts are offered for each Sunday, there is value in repeating portions of liturgy so that people might become familiar with them. When worshipers are able to speak the same set of words over a period of time, they are not continually adjusting to new ideas and patterns of speech. You may, for example, use the same prayer of confession for a season, allowing the people to enter more deeply into that prayer over time.

Although a basic fourfold pattern of worship is used here, the elements of worship may not be arranged in the same way they appear in your own church's order of worship. This is not intended to privilege one tradition over another, but simply to arrange the elements in a way that will look familiar to many who use this book.

You will notice that these texts are arranged in "sense lines"—that is, they look more like poems than paragraphs. This is intentional. The eye can pick up phrases quickly, enabling worshipers to pray them with greater understanding. So, if you reproduce any of these texts, please retain the sense lines.

This layout on the page also helps leaders to better speak the texts so that they can actually proclaim (and not just read) the texts, while maintaining eye contact with worshipers.

In cases where a congregational response is used, instructions are often included that will allow the prayers to be led without printing them in their entirety.

This book is full of words. Worship, however, does not happen on a page. As you use these texts, do not just read them. Pray them. Spend time with the words and make them your own so that you may lead with authenticity, wisdom, and a true sense of prayer.

### *A Word about the Lectionary*

During Ordinary Time, or the season after Pentecost, liturgy is provided for both the semicontinuous and complementary streams of the Revised Common Lectionary. Each of these tracks uses the same epistle and gospel reading, but the Old Testament and Psalm lections are different. The semicontinuous track allows congregations to read continually through a book of Scripture from week to week. In the complementary track, the Old Testament readings are chosen to relate to (or complement) the Gospel reading of the day. In both cases, the psalm is understood as a response to the Old Testament reading. Liturgical resources for the Season after Pentecost will appear in the second volume of each year in the lectionary cycle.

Since the numbering of the Sundays after Pentecost varies from year to year, the designation of “Proper” is used here, as it is in the *Feasting on the Word* commentaries. It can be confusing to navigate the various ways churches designate Sundays; a handy resource for viewing all those labels in one place can be found at <http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/>, a user-friendly site provided to the public by Vanderbilt University.

### *Different Voices: The Ecumenical Nature of the Project*

Each writer comes to his or her task having been formed by a particular liturgical tradition. We are Methodist, Episcopal, United Church of Christ, African Methodist Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Lutheran, with a variety of backgrounds and experiences. Working as a team, we chose elements of worship that are common to all of us, as well as some elements that are particular to one church but not necessarily to another. Presbyterians, for

instance, insist on including prayers of confession and prayers for illumination that invoke the Holy Spirit. Lutherans and Episcopalians expect a prayer of the day and include prayers for the departed in the intercessions. Lutherans also commonly use language about law and grace, and declarations of forgiveness sometimes refer to the ordination of the presider. These particularities were retained in order to preserve the ecumenical character of the book.

We use a variety of ways of praying but a consistent pattern of worship elements for each Sunday in the Christian year. Feel free to adapt the forms, change the words, or choose what is best suited for your context.

### *Who We Are*

Just as this book is intended to serve as a companion to *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary*, we seek to be companions along the way with those of you who plan and lead worship.

The core team of writers includes:

**Kimberly L. Clayton**, Director of Contextual Education at Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia; Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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The generosity of many people has helped bring this work to fruition. David Maxwell, executive editor of Westminster John Knox Press, has provided gentle guidance, shown great wisdom, and shared his seemingly boundless good humor. David Dobson, editorial director of WJK, has offered constant support and encouragement. Columbia Theological Seminary provided meeting space, hospitality, and encouragement for the project.

No words are sufficient to describe the depth of God's grace or beautiful enough to address to the creator of the cosmos. We offer these words with the prayer that they might be useful to the church in enabling worshipping communities to stammer forth their thanks and praise.

*Kimberly Bracken Long*



# *Trinity Sunday*

Genesis 1:1–2:4a

2 Corinthians 13:11–13

Psalms 8

Matthew 28:16–20

## **OPENING WORDS / CALL TO WORSHIP**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit  
be with all of you.

*2 Cor. 13:13*

## **CALL TO CONFESSION**

Creation displays the glory of God,  
but our sin keeps us from rejoicing  
in the love God reveals.  
Yet Christ Jesus the Son carried our sins to the cross,  
and the Holy Spirit breathes new life into us  
so that we can praise God,  
our Maker, Savior, and life-giving Lover.  
Let us confess our sins,  
that we may receive such grace.

## **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**Presence, Life, Fire,  
God who is Three in One,  
we confess that we have turned away from you.  
We gaze upon ourselves  
as if we are worthy of worship.  
We take your creation into our hands,  
not to love, but to use and then to discard.  
We go to the people of the land,  
not to serve, but to press them into our service.  
We do not deserve that you would even notice us,  
but we pray for mercy because you are merciful.**

**Flame of Love, purify us from sin;  
Eternal Now, lead us to your truth;  
Risen One, baptize us into union with you.  
Transform us into faithful disciples who worship you alone,  
God who is Trinity. Amen.**

#### **DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS**

The Holy One of Israel,  
the Redeemer of all the world,  
and the Holy Spirit who comes as the breath of new life  
forgets the sins of all who repent.  
I declare to you, therefore, that you are forgiven,  
in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
one God, Mother of us all.

#### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Holiness, Word, Power,  
you reveal yourself  
as one God in three persons,  
a mighty, creative, life-generating dancer  
who invites your creation to join you.  
Catch us up in your love  
and lead us into your world  
to call others to follow you  
with singing and rejoicing. **Amen.**

#### **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

Sing into our ears, O Spirit, the holy word of life.  
Tell us who we are and to whom we belong  
so that we may live with gratitude for all that  
you have done. **Amen.**

#### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

*[A time of silence may follow each petition.]*

In accord with God's command that we hold  
dominion over creation,

*Gen. 1:28*

let us pray for the church, the world, and all  
for whom we are called to be stewards, saying,  
God of all goodness, hear our prayer.

We give you thanks, O God, for our world, which you  
made and renewed  
in the power of Jesus' resurrection.  
Make us wise and careful of your gifts as we live on Earth.  
God of all goodness, **hear our prayer.**

We pray that the love which passes ceaselessly  
between the Father and the Son in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
may renew and deepen the life of each Christian  
and draw us all into your unending life.  
God of all goodness, **hear our prayer.**

For the leaders of the church:  
for Protestants, Roman Catholics, and the Orthodox;  
for Sunday school children and youth;  
for the elderly whose wise counsel is sorely needed in all ages;  
and for all ecumenical endeavors  
that seek to bring us closer to each other and to you.  
God of all goodness, **hear our prayer.**

For Earth and all creatures and plants;  
for healthy water and air and soil;  
for policies and laws that regard our home in God's universe  
as a precious gift.  
God of all goodness, **hear our prayer.**

For our families, our households, and our communities,  
that your life together—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—  
may show us the like importance of each of us,  
and so strengthen us in your grace and truth.  
God of all goodness, **hear our prayer.**

For the sick and those who suffer in any way;  
for those who struggle to pay rent or a mortgage;  
for those who have no home;  
for those who are neglected and abused in our communities;  
for people who long for family and are instead alone;  
for children who do not have a good guide to raise them up;  
and for whatever else you see that we need.  
God of all goodness, **hear our prayer.**

For all those needs still unnamed but placed before you now,  
either silently or aloud . . .

*[A time of silence is kept.]*

God of all goodness, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands we entrust all that is of concern this day,  
sure that you hear our pleas,  
grateful that your will be done on earth as in heaven.  
We pray this in the name of the Savior, Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

#### **INVITATION TO THE OFFERING**

Jesus sends his disciples into the world  
to bless all by his grace.  
With God's love,  
in the Holy Spirit,  
let us make this our offering to God.

#### **PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING/DEDICATION**

For all that you have given us,  
we thank you, gracious God.  
For day and night, evening and morning,  
for land and sea, for fish and birds,  
plants and animals, for humankind,  
and for your Son, who came among us  
with the gift of life abundant.  
Let your Holy Spirit abide in our midst  
and work through our gifts,  
that all people may have joy and peace,  
in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

#### **CHARGE**

*[Pointing to the doors that lead outward]*

The eternal Creator calls us.

The risen Savior sends us.

The dynamic Spirit empowers us.

Go into all the world,  
making disciples for Jesus Christ.

Go in peace!

*Matt. 28:19*

## **BLESSING**

Through baptism, you are one with Christ.  
He will be with you always.  
Through baptism, you have received the Holy Spirit.  
She breathes into you new life.  
Through baptism, you are sealed in the love of God,  
who will keep you forever.

### *Questions for Reflection*

Review how you have learned about Earth throughout your life, giving thanks for each of your teachers and guides. In what ways does your way of living reflect gratitude for Earth? How might you enhance your care for God's creation?

### *Household Prayer: Morning*

God of the living,  
from whom all blessings flow,  
I welcome a new day with thanksgiving  
because you have cared for me  
through the night.  
Wherever you send me today,  
whomsoever I meet,  
be in my going  
and my meeting.  
Grant me wisdom to cherish  
what you give me  
and generosity to share what I receive.  
Fill me with the Spirit  
so that I may show courage, kindness, and a sense of humor  
in the face of the day's hardships.  
In Christ's peace,  
may I withhold harsh judgment  
against those who would do me harm.  
Show me ways that I may serve you  
throughout the day  
and into the night  
so that, waking or sleeping,  
I live for you;  
in the name of the Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Household Prayer: Evening*

Ancient of days,  
these hours of light are passing into darkness.  
Thank you for being with me.  
Let me not forget the joys  
you put in my life today.  
Send your Spirit  
to fill my memories  
with comfort and peace  
as I prepare for the night.  
Where I have failed to please you,  
forgive me for the sake of your Son.  
If I have been of help to others,  
let them give thanks to you.  
May all night songs praise you;  
may we evening singers rejoice  
in your eternal glory.  
And I will celebrate  
with your whole creation  
in the name of Jesus Christ  
when the new day  
that you are bringing dawns. Amen.