

NEW SANCTUARY MOVEMENT WORSHIP RESOURCES
Samples provided by Ainsworth United Church of Christ

1. Words of Meditation
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1. WORDS OF MEDITATION

WORDS OF MEDITATION by Oliver Schreiner

I DREAMED I SAW A LAND. AND ON THE HILLS WALKED BRAVE
WOMEN AND BRAVE MEN, HAND IN HAND. AND THEY LOOKED INTO
EACH OTHER'S EYES, AND THEY WERE NOT AFRAID.

AND I SAW THE WOMEN ALSO HOLD EACH OTHER'S HANDS.

AND I SAID TO HIM BESIDE ME, "WHAT PLACE IS THIS?"

AND HE SAID, "THIS IS HEAVEN."

AND I SAID, "WHERE IS IT?"

AND HE ANSWERED, "ON EARTH."

AND I SAID, "WHEN SHALL THESE THINGS BE?"

AND HE SAID, "IN THE FUTURE."

WORDS OF MEDITATION By Howard Thurman

THERE IS SOMETHING SO PRIVATE AND PERSONAL ABOUT AN
ACT OF THOUGHT THAT THE INDIVIDUAL MAY VERY EASILY SEEM TO
BE A PRIVATE ISLAND ON A BOUNDLESS HUMAN SEA. TO

EXPERIENCE ONE'S SELF IS TO ENTER INTO A SOLITARY WORLD THAT IS ONE'S UNIQUE POSSESSION AND THAT CAN NEVER BE COMPLETELY AND UTTERLY SHARED.

HERE IS THE PARADOX: A PERSON IS ALWAYS THREATENED IN ONE'S VERY GROUND BY A SENSE OF ISOLATION, BY FEELING ONE'S SELF CUT OFF FROM OTHERS. YET ONE CAN NEVER SEPARATE ONE'S SELF FROM THE OTHERS, FOR MUTUAL INTERDEPENDENCE IS CHARACTERISTIC OF ALL OF LIFE.

WORDS OF MEDITATION By Julia Equivel

WE LOVE YOUR PATHS THAT LEAD TO OUR HOUSE, O GOD, AND SIMPLE ROADS, DUSTY, NEGLECTED, BORDERED BY SIMPLE HOUSES. UNDEVELOPED ROADS MARKED BY THE FOOTPRINTS OF WORKING PEOPLE: BUILDERS OF BROAD HIGHWAYS, FANCY HOUSES, GARDENS, AND PARKS. WE LOVE THOSE PATHS OPEN TO THE RAIN AND THE GOODWILL OF THEIR DISCONTINUED RESIDENTS. PATHS THAT LEAD US TO THE ILLITERATE WOMAN, TO THE CHILD WHO DROPS OUT OF SCHOOL, AND TO THE OLD MAN WHO SELLS ICE CREAM FROM HIS WORN-OUT CART.

WE LOVE THOSE PATHS UNIMPRESSIVE, UNATTRACTIVE THAT LEAD US TO YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS, BECAUSE, YOU, POOR WITH THEM SPEAK TO US FROM THEIR INDIGENCE AND VIOLENTLY SHAKE LOOSE ALL OUR ASSURANCES, BINDING US INSEPARABLY INTO THE SECRET TENDERNESS OF YOUR UNKNOWN SUFFERING. AND SO WE KNOW WE ARE YOUR FRIENDS BECAUSE YOU REVEAL YOUR SECRETS TO US, THE SECRETS OF LOVE WITHOUT MEASURE.

2. CALL TO WORSHIP

CALL TO WORSHIP

ONE: In the midst of loneliness and despair, even then your voice echoes through our souls calling us to serve your people.

MANY: THE ANGUISHED SCREAMS THAT FLOW FROM THE BORDERS OF MANY NATIONS SEEKING REFUGE, YOU SAY ARE CALLING US TO MINISTRY.

ONE: In the midst of our search for goodness and joy, meaning and integrity, still you call us to seek the lost and forlorn.

MANY: THE MOURNFULL WIMPERS AND AGONIZING STARES SHOUTING AT US FROM THE VERY MIDST OF OUR URBAN GREATNESS, YOU SAY IS OUR CALL TO HEAR ONE ANOTHER.

ONE: As we struggle to find surcease from the agony of our commitments longing for comfort and pause, yet you insist claiming us as your healing hands.

MANY: HEAR THE SOBBING MOANS OF MOTHERS AND FATHERS CROSSING NATIONAL LINES IN AFRICA, ASIA, LATIN AMERICA, THE PACIFIC, EUROPE, AND NORTH AMERICA, SEEKING LIFE FOR THEIR CHILDREN AND LOVED ONES, YOU SAY ARE THE SUMMONS OF YOUR VOICE.

ONE: As we strive to ease our burdens on the fields of our delight, you continue to call us to labor unrewarded from the forgotten and the unlived.

MANY: THE GREIVING SOUNDS COMING FROM THE MOUTHS OF BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHOSE LIVES ARE RENT ASUNDER BY HUMANS UNWILLING TO LOVE YOUR OWN, YOU SAY, ARE THE LONELY WHISPERS OF YOUR SPIRIT CALLING US TO CLAIM OUR FAMILY.

ONE: As we listen to the orchestral sounds of your creation, the music of life demanding life, we plainly hear your calling voice urging us toward justice and peace, freedom and respect, love and unity, joy and faith.

CALL TO WORSHIP

ONE: The need to care for and the need to be cared for is another expression of the same basic idea. Such needs are organic whether psychological or spiritual.

MANY: THEREFORE, WHENEVER THE INDIVIDUAL IS CUT OFF FROM NOURISHMENT FROM OTHERS, THE RESULT IS A WASTING AWAY, A STARVATION, A FAILURE OF ONES'S LIFE TO BE SUSTAINED AND NOURISHED.

ONE: The human spirit cannot abide the enforced loneliness of isolation. We literally feed on each other.

MANY: WHERE THIS NOURISHMENT IS NOT AVAILABLE, THE HUMAN SPIRIT AND THE HUMAN BODY – BOTH SICKEN AND DIE.

ONE: The purpose of all arrangements and agreements under which people live in society is to nourish one another with one another.

MANY: LIFE FEEDS ON LIFE; LIFE IS NOURISHED BY LIFE. IT IS LIFE'S EXPERIENCE WITH ITSELF THAT ESTABLISHES THE GROUND FOR ETERNAL LIFE.

CALL TO WORSHIP

ONE: God of life, prepare our hands for a touch, a new and different touch.

MANY: PREPARE OUR HANDS FOR A TOUCH, A TOUCH OF ENCOUNTER. A TOUCH OF AWAKENING, A TOUCH OF HOPE.

ONE: Many are the worn-out gestures, many are the useless excuses for avoiding brothers and sisters.

MANY: GIVE US DARING TO CREATE NEW FORMS OF COMMUNITY, NEW LINKS OF AFFECTION. BREAKING AWAY FROM OLD WAYS OF RELATING, ENCOURAGING TRUE, MEANINGFUL WAYS TO MOVE INTO CLOSENESS.

3. INVOCATIONS

INVOCATION (Unison)

AS WE ARE TOGETHER, PRAYING FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, LET US TRULY BE WITH EACH OTHER. LET US PAY ATTENTION TO ONE ANOTHER'S BREATHING. LET US BE AT PEACE WITH OUR BODIES AND OUR MINDS. LET US BE AWARE OF THE SOURCE OF BEING, COMMON TO US ALL AND TO ALL LIVING THINGS. EVOKING THE PRESENCE OF THE GREAT COMPASSION, LET US FILL OUR HEARTS WITH OUR OWN COMPASSION – TOWARDS OURSELVES AND TOWARDS ALL LIVING THINGS.

LET US PRAY THAT ALL LIVING THINGS REALIZE THAT THEY ARE ALL BROTHERS AND SISTERS, ALL NOURISHED FROM THE SAME SOURCE OF LIFE. LET US PRAY THAT WE OURSELVES CEASE TO BE THE CAUSE OF SUFFERING TO EACH OTHER. LET US PLEAD WITH OURSELVES TO LIVE IN A WAY WHICH WILL NOT DEPRIVE OTHER BEINGS OF AIR, WATER, FOOD, SHELTER, LIBERTY, OR THE CHANCE TO LIVE.

WITH HUMILITY, WITH AWARENESS OF THE EXISTENCE OF LIFE, AND OF THE SUFFINGS THAT ARE GOING ON AROUND US, LET US PRAY FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF JUSTICE AND PEACE IN OUR HEARTS AND ON EARTH. AMEN.

INVOCATION (Unison) From the Congregation of Abraxas

GREAT MYSTERIES OF DAWNING, WE THANK YOU FOR THE REFRESHMENT YOU PROVIDE DAILY; AND FOR THE RENEWING CYCLE OF YOUR DREAMS WHICH SHELTER OUR FANTASIES, NOURISH OUR VISION, AND PURGE OUR ANGERS AND FEARS. WE BLESS YOU FOR PROVIDING NEW BEGINNING WHOSE PERENNIAL GRACE IS TANGIBLE HOPE FOR ALL PEOPLE ON EARTH.

WE PRAISE THE GIFT OF ANOTHER MORNING, AND PRAY THAT WE MAY BE WORTHY BEARERS OF ITS TRUST IN THE MOMENTS TO COME. MAY LIFE PROTECT US AND SURPRISE US AND BE NO MORE HARSH THAN OUR SPIRITS MAY BEAR UNTIL WE REST AGAIN IN THE VAST EMPTINESS OF YOUR EVERLASTING ARMS.

INVOCATION (Unison)

WE GIVE THANKS, OUR GOD, FOR BRINGING US TOGETHER TO DISCERN YOUR WILL AND OUR PATH; FOR THE MINGLING OF MINDS AND HEARTS; FOR THE ENGAGEMENT OF PROVACATIVE THOUGH AND EXPANSION; FOR THE GREAT VARIETY OF GIFTS, SKILLS, AND TALENTS REPRESENTED HERE TODAY. LET YOUR HOLY SPIRIT FLOW INTO OUR LIVES THAT ALL OF OUR ABILITIES MAY BE USED TO FULFIL YOUR PURPOSES AND EXTEND TO THE REALM OF OUR SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST. AMEN.

4. AFFIRMATION

One: We are called to proclaim the truth. Let us together this day proclaim the truth about human worth and dignity. And let us believe; it is not true that this world and its people are doomed to die and to be lost

MANY: THIS IS TRUE: THERE IS A FUTURE FOR THE CHILDREN OF TODAY!

One: It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination, hunger and poverty, death and destruction.

MANY: THIS IS TRUE: THE SOVEREIGN LORD WILL WIPE AWAY THE TEARS FROM ALL FACES AND WILL REMOVE THE DISGRACE OF PEOPLE ON EARTH!

One: It is not true that violence and hatred should have the last word and that war has come to stay forever.

MANY: THIS IS TRUE: THE LORD OUR GOD OILS THE PLANS OF THE NATIONS AND THWARTS THE PURPOSES OF THE PEOPLE, BUT THE WILL OF GOD STANDS FIRM FOREVER, THE PURPOSES OF THE HART OF THE LORD OUR GOD THROUGH ALL GENERATIONS.

ALL: *SO LET US DREAM, LET US PROPHECY, LET US SEE VISIONS OF LOVE, AND LET US PLAN FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE WITH HUMILITY, WITH JOY AND FAITH, AND WITH COURAGE.*

5. PRAYER OF DEDICATION

LOVING AND GRACIOUS GOD, WE OFFER YOU THESE GIFTS WITH EYES OPENED TO HUMAN NEED; EARS TUNED TO EVERY CRY OF DESPAIR; HEARTS SYMPATHETIC TO THE PLIGHT OF OTHERS; FEET READY TO GO OUT OF THE WAY TO HELP; AND HANDS READY TO REACH OUT TO SHARE. AMEN.

6. HYMNS / SONGS

PROCESSIONAL HYMN No. 402 "De colores"

HYMN OF MEDIATION No. 389 "Un mandamiento nuevo"

RECESSIONAL HYMN No. 437 "We Shall Not Give Up the Fight"

PROCESSIONAL HYMN No. 310 "It's the Old Ship of Zion"

INTROIT "Would You Harbor Me?"

PROCESSIONAL HYMN No. 519 "Not My Brother, Nor My Sister"

RECESSIONAL HYMN No. 526 "Siyahamba' ekukhanos' kwenkhos"

GIFT OF MUSIC "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round"

COMMUNION HYMN: "Somos pueblo que camina" ("We Are People on a Journey")

RECESSIONAL HYMN: "Guide My Feet"

OFFERTORY HYMN: "This Land is Your Land"

Deportee (Words by Woody Guthrie, Music by Marty Hoffman)

The crops are all in and the peaches are rotting
The oranges are packed in their creoste dumps
They're flying them back to the Mexican border to
Spend all their money to wade back again

CHORUS:

Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye Rosalita
Adios mis amigos, Jesus y Maria
You won't have a name when you ride the big
Airplane and all they will call you will
Be...Deportee

Some of us are illegal and others not wanted
Our work contracts out and we've got to move on
Six hundred miles to the Mexican border they chase us
Like outlaws, like rustlers, like thieves

Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye Rosalita
Adios mis amigos, Jesus y Maria
You won't have a name when you ride the big
Airplane and all they will call you will
Be...Deportee

(Instrumental Bridge)

The sky plane caught fire over Los Gatos canyon
A fireball of lightning that shook all the hills
Who are all these friends who are scattered like
Dry leaves the radio said they were
Just...Deportees

Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye Rosalita
Adios mis amigos, Jesus y Maria
You won't have a name when you ride the big
Airplane and all they will call you will
Be...Deportee

Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye Rosalita
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7. SCRIPTURE

HEBREW TESTAMENT Pg. 107 Leviticus 19:33-34

GOSPEL READING Pg. 29 Matthew 25:35-40

GOSPEL READING: Matthew 25:31-40

8. CALL TO CONFESSION / REFLECTION

Call to Confession: Written by Gerald Paoli

Good Morning,
Today I would like us to begin to consider what our role might be in the New Sanctuary Movement. We hear every day of new laws that will make life much more difficult for immigrants who come from the south to earn a meager living for their families. And I'm sure we have all heard about the building of a wall on our southern border. This wall will cause even more deaths because it makes that trip through the desert much longer and therefore very dangerous.

The readings today speak of the beauty of creation, in them we can hear the Goddess Wisdom cry out "When you find me, you find life, to say nothing of God's good pleasure. But if you wrong me, you damage your very soul; when you reject me, you're flirting with death."
Today's texts also speak of suffering and how to deal with a future that will surely be filled with suffering.

These readings raise questions for me, especially "What are we as a congregation going to do about the suffering of our immigrant brothers and sisters?" Will we be wise, please God and help create a just system where all can share in the beauty and bounty of creation? Will we walk with our immigrant sisters and brothers when they are torn

from their families, when they are abused at their workplaces, when they are treated as less than human and hunted like animals by the authorities and vigilante groups?

We are called to step up our solidarity from marching in the streets together to **true solidarity** where we take on some real risks on behalf of immigrants. Protesting is not enough.

Only when we are willing to suffer along with the oppressed will we create life-giving change. If we allow suffering to go unnoticed, be unheard, to exist in silence – then we are complicit in the evil that is causing it.

There is no virtue in simply suffering, but suffering for a just cause is what we are called to do as Christians.

When integrating lunch counters in Memphis in the early '60s, Civil Rights Leader Bernard Lafayette said "Our capacity and willingness to suffer outweighs ant power of the police force, the lawmakers, their jails, or even their dogs." This is That Force that is More Powerful that **can** change the world. Let us listen to that wisdom. Let's really drink it in!

In reality, I am asking us to inconvenience ourselves only a little compared to the daily suffering in the lives of immigrants. I am asking us to really listen to the needs of this community, to really hear and then use our privilege to give voice to the voiceless. I am asking us to learn how to be the allies that they want us to be. I am asking us to help give hope to a population that we have taken for granted far too long – and I promise you that if we do this work, the reward will be ours, we will know what it means to live in God's grace. In this process of service to others we will be saved ourselves.

And finally I am asking that you please join us for a discussion about the New Sanctuary Movement after coffee hour today as we continue the work of living our faith in action and birthing God's love and light.

Let us join together now in our **prayer of confession**:

Creator God, we often feel hopeless when we see suffering all around us. Forgive us when we tell ourselves we are powerless in the face of overwhelming systems of oppression. Help us realize that this is the sin of complicity. Holy Spirit of Wisdom teach us, so we may know that you have already given us the

means to transform this suffering into healing. Your radical all inclusive love and grace shared through us with all peoples can birth a new world. Give us courage to be one beloved community, with each sharing in the struggles and joys of one another.

Words of Assurance: Romans 5:1-5

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

9. SERMON

Sermon notes: "Welcoming the Stranger"

The Rev. Cecil Charles Prescod

(Delivered at Ainsworth United Church of Christ: April 22, 2007)

The danger for Christians is to approach the scriptures with a preset view of what it claim, thus insuring that one will find biblical justification for one's perspective. The challenge for all Christians is to see the bible as a judge and a guide. Karl Barth, one of the most influential theologians of the 20th century, noted that when we read scriptures we should do so with the attitude that we are entering the "strange new world in the Bible".

We are well familiar how the Bible has been used to justify the enslavement of kidnapped Africans, torture of suspicious heretics, wars of aggression, the harassment, beating, and killing of sexual minorities, and other countless atrocities. Thus, it is important for Christians to approach the biblical witness with an awareness of our inability to grasp the mystery of God without divine assistance, and an affirmation that we search scriptures to discover the gospel of Jesus Christ, indeed to encounter Jesus Christ, the subject of Scriptures and the object of our worship. The United Church of Christ affirms in its constitution that Jesus Christ is the sole head of the church. Thus, we read the biblical sources through the lens of the person and work of Jesus, whom we call Lord and Saviour.

One historical observation is helpful as we seek to understand what God is calling us to do. In the midst of Nazi Germany, a group of church people, fearful of how the church's teaching was being corrupted by an extreme nationalism which placed the perceived interest of the state above the clear witness of Jesus Christ, came together and "acknowledged that Jesus Christ, as he is attested to us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God whom we have to hear, and whom we have to trust and obey in life and in death." Furthermore, they proclaimed "We reject the false doctrine that the Church could and should recognize as a source of its proclamation, beyond and besides this one Word of God, yet other events, powers, historic figures and truths as God's revelation." They recognized, at the risk of personal security and comfort, that they were called to bear witness in word and deed to Jesus Christ, the author and pioneer of their faith, by resisting those who sought to create barriers to God's justice and limits to God's love. These faithful Christians' statement (known as the Barmen Declaration) remind us that we are called to unwavering obedience to the way and will of Jesus Christ as he is testified in Scriptures.

When we enter into the strange new world in the Bible we encounter a world view which affirms the divine initiative to create community out of chaos. God pronounces the creation "Good" and calls us to nurture community. As a series of reflections on God and humanity, the scriptures tell the story of an ever searching God seeking and establishing community which reflects the divine will for wholeness, peace, and justice. Unlike many metanarratives, the bible focuses upon those who are at society margins, and affirm the worthiness of all. The Rev. Joan M. Maruskin, in a manuscript entitled, **The Bible as the Ultimate Immigration Handbook** states that the "*The Bible begins with the migration of God's Spirit and ends with John in exile on the Isle of Patmos. Between those two events, the uprooted people of God seek safety, sanctuary, and refuge, and the living God gives directions for welcoming the stranger*".

Indeed, welcoming the stranger is a central theme of biblical hospitality. From the early chapters of Genesis, where the criminal migrant Cain is protected, to Noah and his family, who are migrants because of a flood, to Abram and Sarai, who leaves their home and become migrants in and out of Canaan, to the tales of their descendents who because of harsh labor conditions are forced to leave Egypt in search of a promised land, we are reminded that the people

of God are people who are migrants, who are called to welcome the strangers with biblical hospitality.

The example of the called to radical hospitality is uniquely portrayed In Genesis 18. There God appears to Abram as three strangers near the oaks at Mamre. Abraham extends a welcome to these strangers, by offering them food and water. This becomes a model of the hospitality that is called for throughout the biblical witness.

The escape from Egypt is horror filled episode in the life of God's people. Promised security, but finding no security, the people wander for forty years in the desert. Uncertain of where they are going, the people are comforted only by their awareness of God's abiding presence. When God's wandering people find a land to settle in, God reminds them that they are called to exercise radical hospitality. "When a stranger dwells among you in your land, do not taunt him. The stranger who dwells with you shall be like a native among you, and you shall love him like yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt—I am the Lord, your God" (Leviticus 19: 33-34- New Revised Standard Version).

The command to welcome the stranger is not an option for the people of God. It originates from a profound self understanding that the God who has received and cares for us, calls us to receive and care for other. We are called to remember and relive our history of wandering, and welcome the wanderer into our midst. : "You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 23:9-NRSV).

The five books of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms affirm how the people of God are to treat the refugee. The command is clear and consistent and is summed up in **Deuteronomy 10:17-19**, "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt "(NRSV).

The two books in the Bible that is named after women, Ruth and Esther, are stories of migrants and refugees. The theme of hospitality to the stranger runs through the scriptures in various ways. In all ways, the clear teaching is the call to welcome the stranger. Period.

The idea that God calls us to build community by welcoming the strangers is central to the life and teachings of Jesus. Time and time again, Jesus calls those who are rejected and scorned by society, into a new community, the kingdom of God, which affirms the worthiness of all and excludes no one. The poor, women, children, the sick, are all welcomed; indeed they are offered a special invitation into Jesus' community. But it is not only the 'deserving' poor he welcomes, Jesus' eats at the table of the collaborators, washes the feet of those who will betray him, promises thieves that they will enter God's kingdom, and is not embarrassed to be associated with drunkards and gluttons. Jesus' radical inclusiveness leads to his trial and execution by those who were charged with maintaining social order. Jesus' resurrection and the testimony of his witnesses' points to the conviction that God's inclusive community that welcomes all is a model of community that continues today.

The church is a community for all people. The apostle reminds us of our radical calling when he affirms in First Corinthians that we are called into one body, and that all members of the new community is important. "So then, the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' Nor can the head say to the feet, 'Well, I don't need you!' On the contrary, we cannot do without the parts of the body that seem to be weaker, and those parts that we think aren't worth very much are the ones which we treat with greater care, while the parts of the body which don't look very nice are treated with special modesty, which the more beautiful parts do not need. God himself has put the body together in such way as to give the greater honor to those parts that need it. And so there is no division in the body, but all its different parts have the same concern for one another. If one part of the body suffers, all the other parts suffer with it. "(I Cor. 12.21-26-NRSV).

Reaching out to the stranger, is not something we do because we want to be neighborly (although that should be enough of a reason), rather, we reach out to the stranger because, by definition, the household of God is made up of the disposed, the disinherited.

The writer of Ephesians reminds that community that the church is made up of people who were formerly separated by ethnicity, social status, and gender, and is called to manifest their common calling in Christ. All are welcomed into the new community.

"But don't take any of this for granted. It was only yesterday that you outsiders to God's ways had no idea of any of this, didn't know the first thing about the way God works, hadn't the faintest idea of Christ.

You knew nothing of that rich history of God's covenants and promises in Israel, hadn't a clue about what God was doing in the world at large. Now because of Christ—dying that death, shedding that blood—you who were once out of it altogether are in on everything.

The Messiah has made things up between us so that we're now together on this, both non-Jewish outsiders and Jewish insiders. He tore down the wall we used to keep each other at a distance. He repealed the law code that had become so clogged with fine print and footnotes that it hindered more than it helped. Then he started over. Instead of continuing with two groups of people separated by centuries of animosity and suspicion, he created a new kind of human being, a fresh start for everybody.

Christ brought us together through his death on the cross. The Cross got us to embrace, and that was the end of the hostility. Christ came and preached peace to you outsiders and peace to us insiders. He treated us as equals, and so made us equals. Through him we both share the same Spirit and have equal access to the Father.

That's plain enough, isn't it? You're no longer wandering exiles. This kingdom of faith is now your home country. You're no longer strangers or outsiders. You belong here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He's using us all—irrespective of how we got here—in what he is building. He used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now he's using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together. We see it taking shape day after day—a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home" (Ephesians 2.11-22-The Message).

In a world characterized by division, the church is called to live and proclaim unity. In a world that preaches separateness, we are guided by a biblical message of welcome and inclusion. Two millennia after the descent of the Holy Spirit on a disparaged group of individuals created a community that challenged and transformed an empire, God is calling us to live out in word and deed the United Church of Christ's Statement of Faith that God bestows upon us the Holy Spirit, "creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races."

May God grant us the grace to live out our sacred calling to welcome the stranger.

10. PANEL ON DISCERNMENT: BECOMING A SANCTUARY CHURCH

THE CONGREGATION IN DIALOGUE

- 1. What challenges do we face in becoming a Sanctuary Church?**
- 2. What blessings come from being a Sanctuary Church?**
- 3. What would I be willing to do to help and protect a family facing deportation?**