

RALLY DAY

Rally Day is the celebration of the restarting of Sunday school after a summer hiatus.

Order of Worship

Liturgy from Rally Day varies widely in the Congregational tradition, as does its place in the typical Sunday order. If the entire service is structured around the restarting of Sunday school, a Rally Day prayer and dedication of teachers could be inserted either after the opening prayer is said or after the sermon is delivered. However, if the children are excused to Sunday school during the service, then the worship leader should insert the liturgy during the portion of worship for which the children are present.

Calls to Worship

Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to revere your name.

We give thanks to you with our whole heart, and we will glorify your name together forever.

Help us to teach our children, and our children's children, to meditate on your instruction and give praise to your name.

Help us to teach them through words and actions what it means to follow your Son and embrace the grace you bestowed on us through him. ⁽¹⁾

Father of mercy, Lover of all children, who in their form did send your Son; Gladly we praise you, and with humility we pray for all the children of the earth.

In your compassion, O God, tend to them in sickness, ease their pain, heal their diseases, lighten their sorrows, and free them from all evil.

Power and blessing, grant us now and forever, for we seek to serve them in your name.

May all our labor, crowned by your favor, bear fruit forever to bring glory to your kingdom. ⁽²⁾

A Prayer of Dedication for Teachers and Other Youth Workers

To be said by the minister, teachers and officers:

Eternal God, who is mighty in power but tender in love; we humbly seek to teach the children of this church of your glory and your redemption. Help us to remember your strength, instead of our own weakness. Strengthen us so we may teach in the light of your promises, rather than from the darkness of our frailties.

As we gather before you, we dedicate ourselves to the task you have set before us. We pray for a new power, a greater skill, and a deeper love of teaching, so that we may truly reach the hearts of these, your children. Give to us an understanding of these young souls, a comprehension of their needs, and a revelation of your Holy Spirit. Infect us with a joy for our work, and remind us that as we teach, you teach with us. Give us the

words to say and the thoughts to share. May all our teaching bring glory to your wonderful name; for we pray in the name of the Great Teacher, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. ⁽³⁾

Sources

1. Adapted from Gray, Henry David, *Congregational Worshipbook* (Ventura, CA: American Congregational Center, 1978), 53.
2. Adapted from *A Worship Book for Free Churches* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), 190.
3. Adapted from *A Worship Book for Free Churches*, 190-191.

WORLD COMMUNION

Calls to Worship

O God, we meet again in this familiar place, this strange, familiar place.

Haunted by millions of your faithful who have worshipped you through the centuries.

Thankfully aware of other millions who are worshipping you today.

This very day, this very hour, from Honolulu to Ho Chi Minh City, from Honduras to Hungary.

Help us today to celebrate the tie that binds us to fellow Christians through the ages and throughout the planet.

That our faith may be strengthened, our love empowered, and our witness given wings.

All: Through Jesus Christ, the great Head of the church. Amen. ⁽¹⁾

Prayers

Almighty God, you desire that in every place people should pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument. Today we join our souls with brothers and sisters around the world, all coming to your table together, celebrating your grace and love. Let our observance of communion be a faithful reflection of our peace-seeking and of our striving toward oneness - with one another and with you. Help us in this hour of worship to bury ancient quarrels, to be purged of all envy or resentment, and to reach some concrete resolve toward becoming more useful, more resourceful members of our Lord's body, of his world-wide church, for we pray in his holy name, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen. ⁽²⁾

Sources

1. Sourcebook of Worship Resources, Volume 2 (Canton, OH: Communication Resources, Inc., 1996), 21.
2. Adapted from Sourcebook of Worship Resources, Volume 2, 53.

REFORMATION SUNDAY

Calls to Worship

O God, once again we meet in your house,

A house frequented by the spirits of Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox and other spiritual ancestors.

Let their love for you and their devotion to your Word inspire our worship on the Reformation Day.

In homage to them, let us recommit ourselves as lifelong students of your Word.

Prod us to become informed and dedicated Protestants:

Protesting against entrenched wrong wherever we may find it, but also testifying on behalf of your free offer of salvation through your divine Son.

Let us reaffirm in our worship that we are justified by faith in him,

And help us prove the depth of our faith by working effectively as messengers of his love and compassion. Amen.

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In the name of Jesus, I have Good News for you!

**Let all the people receive this Word!**

We have proof of God's unconditional love for us:

**While we were still sinning, Christ died for us.**

Rarely will anyone die for a good, deserving person:

**But Jesus died for us then and lives for us now. Hallelujah!**

## Prayers

Almighty God, redeeming Lord, renewing Spirit, send your blessing upon your people, that we may grow mature in faith, hope and love. Renew our spirits that we may have the strength of will to work for the renewal of our world. Lead us and equip us to serve those for whom the world has little understanding and less care. Grant us grace to resist evil fearlessly. As you renew us day by day, so through us work to renew hope for the hopeless, love for the unloved and peace to the troubled. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

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## Sources

All of the above are drawn from *Sourcebook of Worship Resources Vol. II* (Canton, OH: Communication Resources Inc., 1996)

## HERITAGE SUNDAY

Traditionally known as “Forefathers' Sunday” it was celebrated on the second Sunday in December, which was the nearest date to the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth. Since many congregations of our Way now observe the liturgical season of Advent, it might be more appropriate to celebrate it any time during the month of November. In fact, taking the whole month of November to emphasize our Congregational Heritage can be an effective tool. Doing a traditional Puritan worship service one Sunday or on Thanksgiving (see the Thanksgiving Service outlines provided) can help the people understand a bit of what life and worship was like. Doing services from the eighteenth, nineteenth, or early twentieth centuries, many worship orders from these time periods are readily available, can also bring the full scope of our Congregational tradition, and the way our worship styles have evolved, to consciousness.

What follows is a worship order for Forefathers' Sunday adapted from Charles Wolcott Merriam's *Church Worship Book* of 1931.

### Organ Prelude

### Hymn of Praise

### Call to Worship and Invocation *(by the minister or minister and choir)*

### Sentences of Praise

*Minister:* O God, we have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us what work you did in their days, in the days of old.

***People:* For not by their own sword did they win this land, neither did their own arm save them; but your right hand, and your arm, and the light of your countenance, because you had pleasure in them.**

*Minister:* Let us call to remembrance the great and good, through whom the Lord has wrought great glory. All these were honored in their generation, and were the glory of their times. Their bodies were buried in peace, but their name lives forever.

***People:* There are some who have left a name behind them, whose remembrance is sweet as hone in all mouths; and there are some who have no memorial, who are perished as though they never been; but their righteousness has not been forgotten and the glory of their works cannot be blotted out.**

*Minister:* The righteous live forevermore; their reward is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the Most High. Therefore, shall they receive a glorious kingdom, and a crown of beauty from the Lord's hand.

***People:*** Blessed be the Lord, the God of our fathers, from everlasting to everlasting. And let all the people say, Amen. Praise the Lord!

### **Prayer of Thanksgiving (unison)**

God of our Fathers, we give thanks to you for those brave souls who dared danger and hardship, persecution and death, that they might win for themselves and for the world, liberty of conscience and freedom to worship God. You guided them through stormy seas to their home in the wilderness. You helped them to plant upon these shores the seeds of civil and religious liberty, whose harvest is our great republic. May their heroic spirit, their devotion to truth, their loyalty to you, and their love of liberty abide in us. Amen.

### **Choir or Children's Sermon**

#### **Call to Confession** *(by the Minister)*

Thus says the high and lofty One, that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy;  
I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to receive the heart of the contrite. Let us pray:

#### **Prayer of Humility** *(unison)*

O Lord, make us more worthy of the heritage of that Pilgrim band, self-exiled from a land of beauty and security, to go out and find a better country, they knew not where they would end up, where their souls might feel at home. We have entered into the fruits of their labors. You have given to us, through them, broader horizons, greater power and knowledge, and kindlier creeds. But, good Lord, preserve us from deserting the rock of faith upon which they built with devotion to duty, and exaltation of the sovereignty of God, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. Forgive us for surrendering to the temporal things which were so secondary to them. Help us to follow the gleam, to launch our Mayflower that we may win triumphs for you and help open new worlds for power and freedom for all of humanity. Amen.

### **Scripture Reading**

#### **The Mayflower Compact** *(read by the Minister)*

In the name of God. Amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign Lord King James, by the grace of God of Great Britaine, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c.

Having undertaken for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian Faith, and honour of our King and Countrey, a Voyage to plant the first Colony in the Northerne parts of Virginia, doe by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves into a civil body politike, for our better ordering and preservation, and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue

hereof to enact, constitute, and frame such just and equall Lawes, Ordinances, acts, constitutions, offices from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the generall good of the Cology; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.

In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names, Cape Cod, 11 of November, in the yeare of the raigne of our soveraigne Lord King James, of England, France, and Ireland 18, and of Scotland 54. Anno Domini 1620.

### **An Historical Appreciation** (*unison*)

We gratefully believe in the heroic trust and patriotism of these Pilgrims and Puritans who laid the foundations for the free school, the free state, and the free church.

We believe in their optimism and pioneer spirit, in their refusal to be bound by precedent, and their firm determination to improve their own lives and better the institutions under which humans live. We believe in their hunger for education, foreseeing that a republic must have the basis of an educated citizenship.

We believe in their confidence in the commonality of all human kind, in their opening the doors of privilege and power to every child, in their rejection of artificial and hereditary standards, and in their welcoming the lowliest to the seats of the mighty on the basis of proven fitness to rule. We believe in their emphasis upon religion, in their obedience to the authority of the Almighty, in their use of prayer as the gateway to power, and the Bible as the guidebook to truth and faith.

### **Hymn**

### **Pastoral Prayer followed by the Lord's Prayer**

### **Choral Response**

### **Prayer of Dedication for Offering** (*by the Minister*)

### **Offertory Music**

### **Doxology**

### **Sentences of Dedication for the People**

*Minister:* In those days came John the Baptist, saying, Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.

***People:* The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord. Make his paths straight.**

*Minister:* And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

***People:* Bring forth therefore fruits appropriate for repentance.**



**Prayer of Dedication for the People** (*unison*)

O Lord, help us like the herald of the Master's coming, to prepare the way of the Lord, and add to the power of your kingdom. May the words of our mouths, the meditations of our hearts, and the influence of our lives tell the story of the risen Lord; with whom is happiness and salvation. Help us not to put reliance upon the external qualities of birth or possessions, but upon faith and kindly deeds. Amen.

**Gloria Patri**

**Sermon**

**Hymn of Peace**

**Silent Prayer and Benediction**

**Postlude**

## THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving Worship in the Manner of the 17th Century

### Gathering

*Until bells became readily available the Church was called together by the town bugler or drummer. In some communities it was not uncommon for the folk to be “drummed into meeting” and to come in all together to the beat of the drum, this was partially to afford protection from attack.*

### **\*Prayer of Intercession and Thanksgiving** *(please stand)*

“First when we come together in the church according to the Apostle's direction (1 Tim. 2:1) we make prayers and intercessions and thanksgivings for ourselves and for all men, not in any prescribed form of prayer, or studied liturgy, but in such a manner, as the Spirit of grace and of prayer (who teaches all the people of God what and how to pray, Rom 8:26-27) helps our infirmities, we having respect therein to the necessities of the people, the estate of the times, and the works of Christ in our hands.” *John Cotton*

*All the people stood for prayer with hands lifted up above their heads, in the manner enjoined in 1 Timothy 2:8. All prayers were extemporaneous, even the “Lord's Prayer” was viewed as a model for prayer only and was not customarily recited until sometime in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.*

### Reading and Exposition of Scripture

#### 2 Corinthians 9

“After prayer, either the Pastor or Teacher, reads a chapter in the Bible, and expounds it, giving the sense, to cause the people to understand the reading, according to Nehemiah 8:8.” *John Cotton*

*Early Congregationalists detested what was called “dumb reading,” or reading without explaining.*

### The Singing of the Psalms

“Before sermon, and many times after, we sing a Psalm. . . those Psalms we sing, both in our public churches and in private.” *John Cotton*

*Following the Reformed practice of the time, Congregationalists in New England sang only the Psalms or the Canticles (texts of the Scripture). The concern was to keep worship as close to that found in the New Testament as possible. This would remain the practice until Isaac Watts, an English Congregationalist, would begin writing hymn texts and introduce their use into Reformed worship. It was also the custom to avoid the use of the “devil's box of whistles” (i.e. the organ). Instrumental music was permitted in the home, but not in the meetinghouse. The first use of instruments was at the Brattle Street Church in Boston in the late 1720s. Singing was led by a “precentor,” who led the singing, sometimes even “lining-out” the text.*

(Pilgrim Hymnal, 1971)

#4 “All People That on Earth Do Dwell” metric setting of Psalm 100

#473 “O Lord, Almighty God, Thy Works” metric setting of a Canticle

### Sermon

“The sermon was the climax of Puritan worship, as the exposition of the Word of God in both condemnation and consolation, expressing the Divine anger and the Divine mercy. Puritan ministers believed that every faithful preacher had to be a Boanerges or son of thunder before he became a Barnabas or son of consolation. . .The enthronement of the sermon in worship is seen in the dominance of the central pulpit on the long wall of practically every Puritan meetinghouse, as well as the symbolism of the open Bible resting on a velvet cushion on the pulpit's edge.” *Horton Davies*

*The sermon was preached in the “plain style” emphasizing the declaration of the text, its explanation, and then its application. It was not uncommon for the sermon to last an hour or more and for people to bring paper and ink to `meeting' in order to take notes. Children were quizzed on the sermon by their parents once they got home. It was also often customary to allow for others to rise and `exhort the brethren' and for the minister to receive questions from the congregation, which he took seated in his chair.*

### Singing of the Psalm

(Pilgrim Hymnal, 1971) #85 “I to the Hills Will Lift Mine Eyes” Psalm 121

#### \*Prayer (please stand)

“The seals of the covenant (to wit, the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are administered by the Pastor or by the Teacher; . . . .Both the sacraments we dispense. . .”

*John Cotton*

*At this point in the service, when appropriate, the Sacraments would be celebrated. Otherwise, a concluding prayer would be said by the Pastor or the Teacher (eventually these two offices would be combined, though some Congregational churches still retain a Teaching Minister). `The Contribution' might also be received at this point, with gifts brought forward household by household and presented to the Deacon at his seat.*

#### \*The Blessing (please stand)

*The Congregation was dismissed with a blessing, the Minister(s) departed first.*

## MEMORIAL DAY – INDEPENDENCE DAY

It is appropriate for the Church to take Civil Holidays into consideration. However, those planning worship on those days should be careful to avoid falling into perpetuating a vague “civil religion.” Hymns, prayers, and readings can fit the occasion without taking the glory from God or detracting from the central message of our Christian faith.

What follows are some suggested resources for Memorial Day and Independence Day.

### Memorial Day: Prayers of Petition and Intercession

O God, our heavenly Father, we bless you again for the remembrance of this day, when, by your providence, and the might of your arm, you made wars to cease; accept our prayers and our thanksgivings. As on this day we remember before you with grateful hearts, all those who fought and died that we may live, we ask you to accept our prayers and make us, we ask you, more worthy of their sacrifice to the “last full measure,” and help us to follow more closely in the footsteps of your blessed Son, that we may stand in your presence someday with them and offer you the praise that is your due. All glory, praise, thanksgiving, honor, and might be to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

### Memorial Day: Litany

O God the Father, almighty and everlasting, from whom we have come and unto whom we return:

**Have mercy upon us, O Lord.**

O God, the Son, captain of the souls of all, who brought life and immortality to light by your grace:

**Have mercy upon us, O Lord.**

O God, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who takes all that Christ did and taught and reveals it to the hearts of all:

**Have mercy upon us, O Lord.**

Let us give thanks to God: For the land of our birth with all its liberties, for all the wonder of our country's story and for our freedom:

**We praise you, O Lord.**

For leaders in nation and state, and for those in times past and even now have labored for the common good:

**We praise you, O Lord.**

For those who in all times and in all places have been true, honest, and brave, and in the ways of the world have lived righteous lives and done good to others in need:

**We praise you, O Lord.**

For those who served their country in the hour of need and especially for those who gave “the last full measure,” dying so others might live:

**We praise you, O Lord.**

O gracious and mighty God, most merciful Father, whose nature and whose name is love, as we give thanks to you for the courage and the strength you gave to your servants, we would remember before you those who mourn them this day. Look in mercy upon them, and as this day brings them memories of those whom they have lost, may it also bring them your precious consolations, awakening in them the sense of communion with eternity, and confirming their assurance of the great day when you will restore to them their own in the presence, and through the power, of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Independence Day: Call to Worship**

*One:* Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!

*Many:* Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.

*One:* You shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you.

*Many:* Our soul waits for the Lord: he is our help and shield.

*All:* We give God glory and rejoice in God's freedom! Alleluia!

### **Independence Day: Collect**

Almighty God, ruler of all nations on the earth: Forgive, we ask you, our shortcomings as a nation; purify our hearts to see and love the truth; give wisdom to all those who govern us and steadfastness to all citizens of this free land; bring us at last to that fair city of peace whose foundations are mercy, justice, good will and peace, and whose builder and maker is you, O Father, and where you live and reign with your Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.