



Annual Conference 2024 Opening Worship Service

The SRC Arena at Onondaga Community College
Syracuse, NY
Thursday, May 30, 2024

Annual Conference 2024 Opening Worship Service

Syracuse, NY

Thursday, May 30, 2024

** Indicates an invitation to rise in body or spirit.*

PRE-WORSHIP MUSIC

Holy Water

Goodness of God

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Down to the River to Pray

Bishop: When we were last together in this place—we danced together in the middle of the river. We renewed our Baptismal vows. We passed the mantle of leadership. We allowed the water to begin its process of renewal and redemption. We let go of ‘what was’ as we prepared ourselves for God to lead us into ‘what will be.’ Today is a new day. Today is the day we get to look and see the journey we have been on. We see the hurt and pain. We see the joy and celebration. We understand the loss and grief. We feel the strength and empowerment. Today is the day we get to build our new Altar to God as we remember the mountains and valleys—the walks in the woods and the torrents we crossed.

BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

Early in the morning, all the people set out and came to the edge of the Jordan River, where they camped before crossing over.

A message came to the people: “When you see the Lord your God is on the move, you are to follow. Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before!”

Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves and be ready. For tomorrow, God will do amazing things among you.”

And the priests took up the ark of the covenant and passed in front of the people and went to stand in the river.

As soon as the priests set foot in the Jordan, the waters pile up, standing in a heap. So all the people walked across on dry ground.

Joshua called together people from each of the twelve tribes saying, “Go and heft a stone to your shoulder. This shall serve as a sign to you that the Lord is our help and our guide.”

The twelve tribes brought together the twelve stones and set them up together as an ebenzer.

In the future, when your children ask, ‘what do these stones mean?’ Tell them the Lord has helped us this far and will surely help us again. So as twelve stones can make one cairn, so may God make us one people as we move forward together.

Bishop: The stone—From the beginning of creation to the volcanoes of today, stone/ rock has shaped the physical beauty of our world and has built the foundation of all that is. As Joshua and the 12 tribes of Israel embarked on their new adventure of trusting God, they removed 12 stones from the river. 12 Foundational Pieces 12 Unique Shapes 12 Different Sizes Twelve individual offerings used to build an Altar to God saying: “By this we know that the Living God is among us! When our children ask—‘What do these stones mean?’ We can tell them that this is where Israel crossed over the River Jordan on dry ground!”

Today, out of the Baptismal Waters, we choose 12 stones. Today, out of the Baptismal Waters, we assemble 12 stones—one for each district In the Upper New York Conference. Today, out of the Baptismal Waters, we build an Altar to Praise God for carrying us this far. When our children ask—when the Church of tomorrow asks—‘What are these stones for?’ We can say: “The Living God has lived with us and in us transforming us into something new!!” Praise Be to God! Amen!

OPENING SONG

O God, Our Help in Ages Past

UMH 117

1. O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal home.

2. Under the shadow of Thy throne,
still may we dwell secure;
sufficient is Thine arm alone,
and our defense is sure.

3. Before the hills in order stood,
or earth received her frame,
from everlasting, Thou art God,
to endless years the same.

4. A thousand ages, in Thy sight,
are like an evening gone;
short as the watch that ends the night,
before the rising sun.

CALL AND RESPONSE

Leader: Today we gather to worship and give thanks for God’s unfailing presence and guidance in our lives.

All: Today we choose to worship and give thanks to God.

Leader: Today we stand before God as Joshua and the tribes of Israel stood before God beside the River Jordan. They chose to trust in God’s faithfulness.

All: Today we choose to trust in God’s faithfulness.

Leader: Just as the Israelites placed twelve stones to symbolize their journey of faith, we build this ebenezer as the symbol of our journey.

All: Today we choose to journey with God.

Leader: Today as we gather in God’s presence may God’s Spirit fill this place and may our hearts be transformed by God’s love and grace.

All: Today we choose God’s transforming Spirit.

Leader: Today we choose the God of our ancestors.

All: Today we choose to move forward with the Lord.

OPENING PRAYER

ALL: O God, of our past and of our future, we come before you to offer our gratitude for all that was and all that we have been. We commit to follow you to what will be, to the invitation you offer us this day. As those who have gone before faithfully followed, we will follow where you lead. As those who have gone before trusted your promise, we trust the promise that you lift before us. As those who have gone before committed to a life of faith, we commit our faithfulness to you. Be present in this community of faith this day, helping us to listen for the newness that you offer us, helping us to hear and respond to your call to newness. May we joyfully move forward into the promises and possibilities; may we continue to trust and journey with you. We offer our gratitude and our faithfulness to you this day. In the name of the One who woos and invites and transforms. Amen

SONG

This I Believe (The Creed)

Verse 1:

Our Father everlasting
The all creating One
God Almighty

Through Your Holy Spirit
Conceiving Christ the Son
Jesus our Saviour

Chorus 1:

I believe in God our Father
I believe in Christ the Son
I believe in the Holy Spirit
Our God is three in One

I believe in the resurrection
That we will rise again
For I believe in the Name of Jesus

Verse 2:

Our judge and our defender
Suffered and crucified
Forgiveness is in You

Descended into darkness
You rose in glorious life
Forever seated high

Chorus 1:

I believe in God our Father
I believe in Christ the Son
I believe in the Holy Spirit
Our God is three in One

I believe in the resurrection
That we will rise again
For I believe in the Name of Jesus
x2

Bridge:

I believe in You
I believe You rose again
I believe that Jesus Christ is Lord
x2

Chorus 1:

I believe in God our Father
I believe in Christ the Son
I believe in the Holy Spirit
Our God is three in One

I believe in the resurrection
That we will rise again
For I believe in the Name of Jesus

Chorus 2:

I believe in life eternal
I believe in the virgin birth
I believe in the saints' communion
And in Your holy Church

I believe in the resurrection
When Jesus comes again
For I believe in the Name of Jesus
For I believe in the Name of Jesus

PRESENTATION OF SCRIPTURE

Philippians 3:13-14

MESSAGE

Claiming God's Future with Hope and Joy

SONG OF RESPONSE

Raise a Hallelujah

Verse 1

I raise a hallelujah
In the presence of my enemies
I raise a hallelujah
Louder than the unbelief

Verse 2

I raise a hallelujah
My weapon is a melody
I raise a hallelujah
Heaven comes to fight for me

Chorus

I'm gonna sing
In the middle of the storm
Louder and louder
You're gonna hear my praises roar
Up from the ashes hope will arise
Death is defeated the King is alive

Verse 3

I raise a hallelujah
With everything inside of me
I raise a hallelujah
I will watch the darkness flee

Verse 4

I raise a hallelujah
In the middle of the mystery
I raise a hallelujah
Fear you lost your hold on me

Chorus

I'm gonna sing
In the middle of the storm
Louder and louder
You're gonna hear my praises roar
Up from the ashes hope will arise
Death is defeated the King is alive

Bridge:

Sing a little louder (Sing a little louder) x3

Bridge 2

Sing a little louder
In the presence of my enemies
Sing a little louder
Louder than the unbelief
Sing a little louder
My weapon is a melody
Sing a little louder
Heaven comes to fight for me
[REPEAT]
Sing a little louder

Chorus x2

Ending

I raise a hallelujah x3

OFFERING

Engage Fund

OFFERING PRAYER

COMMUNION

Bishop: God has helped us and God continues to be present with us; as we stand on the bank of the river, God invites us to the table; God invites us to journey forward into that new land as God walks with us on this journey. God says, "Come, come and meet the risen Christ at this table".

As God is present with us, we remember the promises of God, God's steadfast love, that love which carries us through the waters on dry ground, that love which woos us to continue this journey of faith and hope. We give our thanks and praise to this God of love and we remember all that God has done and all that God continues to do. In the beginning, God created; God continues to create. God has walked with us throughout the ages, and despite our failure, God continues to walk with us; the God who was, before the beginning and the God that will be, after the end.

God of the journey, we lift our voices to you in thanks and praise; we join our voices with all those who have gone before:

**Holy are you Lord God,
All of creation displays your glory.**

Hosanna!

Blessed are you, O God, and blessed is the One who comes in your name,

Hosanna!

Holy are you Lord and holy is your son Jesus, the Christ, who came to us as one of us, who lived among us and walked with us, seeking to teach us to live into the fullness of that image in which we were created. In that moment when he was betrayed by those closest to him, he remained faithful. He gathered them together around the table and called them friend. And then he took the bread, lifted it to Heaven, gave thanks to you, O God, broke the bread, and gave it to each of them, saying:

“Take, eat, this is my body given for you; whenever you do this, remember me.”

Then he lifted the cup to Heaven, gave thanks to you, O God, and gave it to each of them, saying:

“Drink this, all of you, this is my blood poured out for you; whenever you do this, remember me.”

Let us remember Christ and the gift that was freely offered for us. Let us lift our voices in thanks and praise, as we proclaim the wondrous mystery of our faith:

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

Pour out your Spirit, O God, on those gathered here and on these gifts of bread and cup that they might be for us the living presence of Christ. Make us one with Christ and with one another until Christ comes again in the fulfillment of all things.

Through Jesus, the Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory are yours almighty God, now and forever. Amen.

COMMUNION SONG

I Come Expecting Jesus

Chorus:

I come expecting Jesus
to meet me in this place
I come expecting to receive
His mercy and His grace

When I eat the bread and drink the wine
It will be a holy moment in time
I come expecting Jesus
to meet me in this place
[REPEAT]

Verse 1

Before us the table is spread
Here waits the wine
and here waits the bread
This passage of hope
the bread and the cup
Here where our souls are fed

Chorus

Verse 2

Remember the price that He
paid
This beautiful gift that He gave
Come and receive
the healing He freely gives

Here where His love awaits

Chorus

Ending

I come expecting Jesus
to meet me in this place
I come expecting Jesus
to meet me in this place

Bishop: We have been fed at this table, we are ready now to continue the journey, we are ready now to move toward the newness and promise of God.

CLOSING SONG

More Than Conquerors

Verse 1

When my hope and strength is gone
You're the One who calls me on
You are the life
You are the fight that's in my soul

Verse 2

Oh Your resurrection pow'r
Burns like fire in my heart
When waters rise
I lift my eyes up to Your throne

Chorus

We are more than conquerors
Through Christ
You have overcome this world
This life

We will not bow to sin or to shame
We are defiant in Your name
You are the fire that cannot be tamed
You are the power in our veins
Our Lord our God our conqueror

Verse 3

I will sing into the night
Christ is risen and on high
Greater is He
Living in me than in the world

Verse 4

No surrender no retreat
We are free and we're redeemed
We will declare
Over despair You are the hope

Chorus

Bridge x3

Nothing is impossible
Ev'ry chain is breakable
With You we are victorious

You are stronger than our hearts
You are greater than the dark
With You we are victorious

Chorus 2

We are more than conquerors
Through Christ

You have overcome this world this
life

We will not bow to sin or to shame
We are defiant in Your name

You are the fire that cannot be
tamed
You are the power in our veins

Our Lord our God

Chorus

BENEDICTION

Worship Team

Rev. Nancy Dibelius, chairperson
Rev. Chad Sayers
Pastor Rebekah Solar
Pastor Kevin Kitto

Music Team

Nairobi Smith, music director
Iain Cockram
Brendan Fox
Pastor Kevin Kitto
Marietta Kitto
Pastor CJ Rolle
Noah Stierheim

Special thanks to all who have helped with this service in any way.

