

ALT. LITURGIES

A Resource for the De-Weaponization of Modern
Liturgies, Prayers and Scriptural Interpretations

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Modern Liturgies, Prayers and Scriptural Interpretations*



RACE(ISM)

HETERONORMATIVE(ISM)

SEX(ISM)

ABLE(ISM)

ANTI-SEMITIE(ISM)

LUTHERAN(ISM)

RATIONALE

RACE(ISM)



Racism and xenophobia in our modern times are often grounded in Biblical roots. Infamously, Adolf Hitler even cited the Bible in support for his vision of an elite race. This damage is perpetuated in liturgies and hymns when darkness is demonized, and light is praised. It is the work of not only the Minister, but also the practicing Christian, to identify and replace that language in our Bible, prayers and liturgies which can harm or exclude people based on their race or ethnicity. What follows are samples of these problematic terms, and suggestions for their replacements.

*Image source:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/trending/trending-globally/uk-cathedral-to-to-install-painting-of-the-last-supper-with-a-black-jesus-6485209/>

THE WEAPONIZED BINARY

OF LIGHT & DARK

This is perhaps the most pervasive way in which racism is written into our modern liturgies. In spaces ranging from Evening Prayer to the Season of Advent, and dozens of Hymns, Light is constantly lifted up as the norm to be yearned for, while Dark is pigeonholed as a condition to endure. A counter to this narrative can be found in either abandoning the binary all together, or lifting up darkness as good, powerful and sacred.

ELW EVENING PRAYER, SETTING 1:

Current Language:

Jesus Christ is the light | of the world ...the light no darkness can | overcome.

Alternatives:

Jesus Christ you bring light | to the world...the light that meets darkness | in the night.

Current Language:

Thanksgiving for Light:

*The Lord be with you. **And also with you.***

*Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.***

We give you thanks, O God,

for in the beginning you called light into being,

and you set light in the sky

to govern night and day.

In a pillar of cloud by day

and a pillar of fire by night

you led your people into freedom.

Enlighten our darkness by the light of your Christ:

may your Word be a lamp to our feet

and a light to our path;

for you are merciful,

and you love your whole creation,

and with all your creatures we give you glory,

through your Son Jesus Christ,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

now and forever.

Amen.

Alternatives:

In place of the "Thanksgiving for Light," add a Thanksgiving for Darkness:"

*The Lord be with you. **And also with you.***

*Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.***

We give you thanks, O God,

for in the beginning you dwelt in darkness.

Before all was formed,

and before all was named,

You were present in the vastness that became Creation.

Before Creation was, You were,

and the darkness birthed it all.

Together with all creatures

who call the darkness their home,

we give you thanks

*for the life that thrives in night. **Amen.***

ELW BAPTISM, SETTING ONE, THANKSGIVING OPTION B:

Current Language:

Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Alternatives:

Let your life and actions remind others of God's goodness, bringing Glory to God, and peace to your neighbor.

ELW WELCOME TO BAPTISM:

Current Language:

Merciful God, creator and giver of life, you have called all people from darkness into light, from error into truth, from death into life. Grant grace to name/s and bless them. Raise them by your Spirit. Revive them by your word. Form them by your hand. Bring them to the water of life and to the bread and cup of blessing, that with all your people they may bear witness to your grace and praise you forever through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Alternatives:

Merciful God, creator and giver of life, you have always been with your people by night and by day, in wilderness and Promised Land, in the gift of new life, and through the end of life. Grant grace to name/s and bless them. Raise them by your Spirit. Revive them by your word. Form them by your hand. Bring them to the water of life and to the bread and cup of blessing, that with all your people they may bear witness to your grace and praise you forever through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

IN ANY PRAYER OR LITURGY THAT FRAMES DARKNESS AS EVIL AND LIGHT AS GOOD...

...You may counter this harmful language in these ways:

1. **Simply present darkness as the good**, sacred framework, and light as the one to be endured.*
(Psalm 121 can be helpful with this: "The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.")

*Notice, this does not do away with the harmful binary, but rather upends it. Caution should be taken with this approach, as it still casts one side as better than the other.

2. **Dismantle the binary** altogether, and leave it unclear which reference is the favorable one.

Instead of dark = bad and light = good, it can be said that light exists and dark exists, and God dwells in them both. The Creation story in Genesis displays this well, since God was in the Dark when it all began. The Good News is still conveyed, and no racial prejudice is perpetuated.

THE (MISUNDERSTOOD)

CURSE OF HAM

The “Curse of Ham” represents one of the many examples of a Biblical narrative that is better known for its misinterpretations than it is for its actual source text (See also: [Homosexuality is \[not\] a Sin](#)). It stems from the story in Genesis 9 where Noah curses Canaan (not Ham) for seeing him naked. The first stage of the weaponization of Genesis 9 was likely to “justify” enslaving the Canaanites under the Israelites. More recently, and ongoing today, the Curse of Ham is used to justify the modern-day enslavement of people of African descent. It was also used, to a violently effective degree, in the Rwandan Genocide. This myth hinges on the unfounded claim that Canaan is the “father of the African people,” and thus his curse extends to all people of African descent.

WHAT DOES GENESIS 9 REALLY SAY ABOUT HAM?

In cases of widely misinterpreted texts like this, wherein the predominant narrative about it bears little resemblance to the actual language of the text, the best course of action is to state facts.

Common (mis)Interpretations:

"African skin is dark because Ham was cursed for seeing Noah naked, and this curse lasts to this day."

(Related to this belief is the added notion that Ham's other two siblings, Shem and Japheth, represent all Asian lineage, and European lineage, respectively).

Correction:

In fact, Genesis 9 says nothing of the skin color of Ham, Canaan, nor Noah for that matter. The details of the story in the ninth chapter of Genesis have nothing immediately to do with race or ethnicity; that association was added on by Europeans looking to justify their enslavement of persons from Africa. To make this point perfectly clear, it is important to remember that Ham, Shem and Japheth (the main characters in Genesis 9), are all sons of Noah. They certainly came from the same race, and therefore no blessing or curse placed on one and not the other could justifiably extend to one of their races and not the others'.

<https://www.imb.org/2018/06/12/the-curse-of-ham-genocide/>

<https://www.npr.org/2003/12/15/1548811/the-curse-of-ham-slavery-and-the-old-testament>

Common (mis)Interpretations:

*"The Curse of Ham explains the constant subjugation of the African people and justifies why slavery took/takes place"**

**Please note, these are paraphrases of damaging beliefs about this Scriptural passage; these do not in any way reflect the convictions of the host of this webpage.*

Correction:

Noah cursed Canaan only- not Ham, nor his descendants. According to Jewish tradition, only God would have the power to curse or bless generations, and God is alarmingly absent from this part of the story! In fact, a few verses before this text a blessing was extended to Ham, Shem and Japheth. It would be more logical (and unharmed!) to understand that blessing to extend to Ham's future generations, rather than an abrupt curse uttered by a drunken Noah.

<https://www.imb.org/2018/06/12/the-curse-of-ham-genocide/>

<https://www.npr.org/2003/12/15/1548811/the-curse-of-ham-slavery-and-the-old-testament>

HOW HAVE THESE INTERPRETATIONS OF GENESIS 9 SHOWN UP IN THE WORLD?

The curse of Ham was instrumental in the Rwandan Genocide. Before the Belgians arrived, the Hutus and Tutsis enjoyed a successful social order and understanding amongst themselves. There was no concept of race or hierarchy. The Belgians arrived and, with them, they brought a Biblical (mis)understanding of race which they imposed upon the Rwandan people. The International Mission Board (IMB) writes, “Europeans ascribed biblical explanations to these roles, insisting that they could see in Tutsis’ physical features that they were descendants of Semites. The same ‘science’ that was used to justify slavery also measured nose width and calculated average height in order to demonstrate Tutsi superiority.”

The subtlest suggestion that the Tutsis were superior to the Hutus tipped the scales into a sharp downward slope toward genocide. After decades of political satire, social marginalization and classist separation, the two groups became enemies. Then the Genocide began.

It is clear that the “scholarship” of this myth, if it can be called scholarship at all, only surrounds some of the ugliest chapters of human history. It is a human lie and requires correction at every opportunity.

IN THE SEASON OF ADVENT,

BEWARE OF "CONQUERING THE DARK..."

For a season that is built on the premise of "waiting" for Christmas (read: the Winter solstice, when the days begin to get longer again), it can be easy to slip into language that curses the darkness and frames light as the optimal state of being for which we all are longing. While this works well as a liturgical framework with the actual seasons in mind, it can indirectly weaponize the language of light v. dark.

ELW ADVENT PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION, OPTION I:

Current Language:

Life-giving God, in the mystery of Christ's resurrection you send light to conquer darkness, water to give new life, and the bread of life to nourish your people. Send us forth as witnesses to your Son's resurrection, that we may show your glory to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord. Amen.

Alternative:

Life-giving God, in the mystery of Christ's resurrection you bring light to the earth, water to give new life, and the bread of life to nourish your people. Send us forth as witnesses to your Son's resurrection, that we may show your glory to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord.

See also: *The Weaponized Binary of Light & Dark*

FOR OTHER SUGGESTIONS ON LIGHT V. DARK LANGUAGE...

See also: *The Weaponized Binary of Light & Dark*

HETERO- NORMATIVE(ISM)



Heteronormativity is the upheld assumption that heterosexuality is the norm into which all must strive to fit, or else suffer exclusion. The Church is notorious in perpetuating a heteronormative view of the world. Homophobia is closely related to heteronormativity, because it speaks to the prejudice behind this assumptive norm of heteronormativity and the exclusion it breeds. As is the case with Race(ism), many of the biblical texts that speak to this topic are better

known for their misinterpretations than they are for their source texts. In these dialogues, it is important to be informed on accurate translations and to be mindful of where to draw the line between Scriptural accuracy and agenda-laden tradition.

HOMOSEXUALITY

IS NOT A SIN

Let's start with the big one. It is a widely peddled and loudly touted claim in many denominations of Christianity that homosexuality, particularly the act of penetration between two men, is a condemnable act. However, it is difficult to find much studied proof of this in either the Old or the New Testament. Famously, Jesus said nothing on the topic. The Old Testament and New Testament combined have a mere six verses which explicitly appear to touch on the topic, so conversation on those verse is a good place to start. Note: This section will not explore liturgies so much as it will explore Scriptural interpretations.

GENESIS 19: SODOM & GOMORRAH

Genesis 19: 1-26; NRSV:

The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground. 2 He said, "Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the square." 3 But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. 4 But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; 5 and they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them." 6 Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, 7 and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. 8 Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof." 9 But they replied, "Stand back!" And they said, "This fellow came here as an alien, and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near the door to break it down. 10 But the men inside reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. 11 And they struck with blindness the men who were at the door of the house, both small and great, so that they were unable to find the door.

Sodom and Gomorrah Destroyed

12 Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city—bring them out of the place. 13 For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it." 14 So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, "Up, get out of this place; for the Lord is about to destroy the city." But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting.

15 When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Get up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or else you will be consumed in the punishment of the city." 16 But he lingered; so the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and left him outside the city. 17 When they had brought them outside, they[a] said, "Flee for your life; do not look back or stop anywhere in the Plain; flee to the hills, or else you will be consumed." 18 And Lot said to them, "Oh, no, my lords; 19 your servant has found favor with you, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life; but I cannot flee to the hills, for fear the disaster will overtake me and I die. 20 Look, that city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one. Let me escape there—is it not a little one?—and my life will be saved!" 21 He said to him, "Very well, I grant you this favor too, and will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken. 22 Hurry, escape there, for I can do nothing until you arrive there." Therefore the city was called Zoar.[b] 23 The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar.

24 Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven; 25 and he overthrew those cities, and all the Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. 26 But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

Common (mis)Interpretations:

Genesis is said to condemn homosexuality because the town was destroyed by God after the men tried to rape the Angels who were visiting Lot.

Corrections:

There was no sexual act that actually took place.

The men of the town *tried* to have sex with the visitors to Lot's house, who were not men at all but "ham-mal-'ā-kîm;" "angels."

- So, the only reason this Bible passage is associated with homosexuality is because the angels in the story are assumed to be men and, if the men from the town had their way, they would have had sex with those men. **Since, in fact, these were not men but angels, the angels are being mis-gendered as men**, and great harm comes as a result (Namely, centuries of condemnation of homosexuals). Suddenly, Genesis 19 goes from being a famous "clobber text" against homosexuals, to serving as an apt cautionary tale on the dangers of mis-gendering.

The more likely condemnable acts which brought on the destruction of the town are the following:

- The near gang rape of Lot's daughters, who Lot willfully offered to the ravenous men from town.
- The near sexual act between earthly men and heavenly beings, which is explicitly condemned in Genesis 6.

- The town's failure to be hospitable to the visiting angels and other foreigners (Ezekiel 16).
- Finally, it appears that the town had already fallen out of favor with God before the town's men attempted to attack the angels. The Angels warned Lot, "The outcry to the Lord against [this town's] people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it." **The Angels were sent to warn of the coming destruction (read: raining sulfur) which was in response to something that happened before they got there.** It has nothing even remotely to do anything that happened since the angels arrival, let alone with men having sex with men.

This verse not only does *not* condemn homosexuality, it demonstrates the damage that can be done by assuming someone's gender and drawing conclusions based on that assumption.

On to the next verse!

LEVITICUS 18: 22

Leviticus 18: 22; NRSV:

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.

Common (mis)Interpretation:

This verse is understood to condemn male-male penetration.

Corrections:

While this text does appear to speak more directly to the sexual act of men sleeping with men “as with a woman” (meaning: penetration), there is much more to consider about the context of this verse.

- Leviticus is a list of commands and practices which were intended to set Israelite conduct apart from others’. Thus, it is important to consider this particular verse about men lying with men alongside the other practices listed out in Leviticus. Other commands in the same list as 18:22 include the need for circumcision, the prohibition of having sex during menstruation, and the prohibition of eating pork. All of these things are called “abominations,” and they are distinct from something that is “intrinsically evil like rape and theft.”* In other words, not permitting men to lie with other men was a cultural and religious expectation for ritually clean Jews in the time of Leviticus’ writing, par with avoiding pork. And, it was not a severe infraction like murder or theft; it was just one of many cleanliness expectations at the time. Therefore, **if the reader affords certain modern understandings or leniencies with things like eating pork or having sex during one’s period, they must grant the same contextual leniency to this apparent condemnation of men lying with men.** It is no different.
- Another important framework to consider when reading texts like this in Leviticus and Deuteronomy is the ancient emphasis placed on the value of procreation. There are several laws that have to do with the “proper use of the male seed.”** In the case of a man having sex with a menstruating woman, or men having sex with men, and surely in the case of bestiality (also condemned in Leviticus)...in all of these cases, the man's seed is not “properly” used because it is less likely to lead to procreation. Through this lens, we can understand the discouragement of male - male sex as being rooted in a desire to preserve the ancient value of procreation. Outside of the need to always be procreating (yet another problematic Biblical command in Genesis), this prohibition is obsolete.

Leviticus 18 not only does *not* condemn homosexual sex, but it also places the idea that homosexuality is wrong in the same archaic religious framework as obligatory circumcision and repopulating the Earth after a massive flood that killed everyone except Noah and his family.

*[1] <https://postbarthian.com/2017/10/11/clobber-verses-six-scriptures-cited-gays-lesbians-sex-relationships-lgbtq/>

**Cheryl B. Anderson, *Ancient Laws and Contemporary Controversies: the Need for Inclusive Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 37.

1ST CORINTHIANS 6: 9

1 Corinthians 6: 9; NRSV:

*Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, **male prostitutes**, **sodomites**, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God.*

Common (mis)Interpretation:

*This text often translates the words **μαλακοὶ** & **ἀρσενοκοῖται**, the words in bold red and blue above, into “male prostitutes” and “homosexuals,” or “sodomites.”*

Thus, in the common English translation, it reads as a clear statement that homosexuals will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Corrections:

The actual English word “homosexual” did not appear in the Bible until 1946, and it was in this verse that it appeared. It was a newly released translation of the Revised Standard Version which decided to make the leap from the more literally translated “**effeminate**”/“**soft**” & “**male+bed**,” to the hugely problematic translation of “homosexual.”

- **μαλακοὶ** translates literally as “soft,” “young,” or “effeminate”
 - Generally speaking, this term could refer to someone who was soft in their morals or courage. In an ironic twist, this term has also been used in Paul's writings to refer to individuals who are *too* heterosexual. That is, too easily seduced by women.*
- **ἀρσενοκοῖται** is made up of two root words: “male” and “bed, so it can be understood crudely as “male bedder.” Paul is believed to have made up this word, as it appears no where else in ancient Greek. ** It is unclear if the word is conjugated as the male doing an action, or receiving an action.

With these more accurate translations in mind, and with an eye to other ways these Greek words have been used throughout the New Testament, scholars agree that this verse has less to do with general homosexual acts, and more to do with a specific condemnation of politically or economically motivated child molestation.** Otherwise known as “pederasty,” or, “a man who desires or engages in sexual activity with a boy.”

It was a common practice during the Roman Empire for men of power to have sex with younger men or boys as a means of exerting power and dominance over them. This is far more likely the type of behavior that is being condemned in Paul's writings - not consensual sex between two same-sex partners.

1 Corinthians: 6 includes a list of vices which are frowned upon, and among them is a condemnation of pederasty, or child molestation. Both the grammar and the historical context of the passage suggest that Paul was in no way condemning consensual homosexual relations between adults.

*Cheryl B. Anderson, *Ancient Laws and Contemporary Controversies: the Need for Inclusive Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 37.

**<https://postbarthian.com/2017/10/11/clobber-verses-six-scriptures-cited-gays-lesbians-sex-relationships-lgbtq/>

1 TIMOTHY: 1

1 Timothy: 8-10; NRSV:

Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it legitimately. This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, fornicators, *sodomites*, *slave traders*, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching

Common (mis)Interpretation:

Here again, **ἀρσενοκοῖται** makes an appearance (See 1st Corinthians above), along with another word which has a debated translation: **ἀνδραποδισταίς**.

- **ἀρσενοκοῖται** is often translated as "homosexual," or "sodomite."
- **ἀνδραποδισταίς** is often translated as slave trader.

As can be seen in the above NRSV translation, the two words are often translated as two separate things, seeming to condemn homosexuality and slave trading alongside murder and slavery.

Corrections:

The above discussion of the translation of **ἀρσενοκοῖται** applies to 1 Timothy as well, but the new insight that this verse offers is the immediate juxtaposition of **ἀνδραποδισταίς**.

- **ἀνδραποδισταίς** literally translates as “dealers” or “stealers of people.” Thus, the translation as slave traders seen above.
- Juxtaposed to the Greek **ἀρσενοκοῖται**, which likely refers to the political practice of pederasty (See "1st Corinthians"), it is possible that these two words are intended to be understood together, **condemning the specific practice of sex slavery or human trafficking**.

This seems even more likely when it is acknowledged that Temple prostitutes were common place in Roman times, in the times when Paul wrote.* Sex-trafficked young men were made available for men of authority to exert their dominion over, and slate their desires. This is the behavior that is more likely condemned in these verses from 1st Timothy.

This is not a condemnation of sex or sexual acts among LGBTQIA+ couples, but rather a condemnation of sex trafficking and the rape of young children.

*[1] <https://postbarthian.com/2017/10/11/clobber-verses-six-scriptures-cited-gays-lesbians-sex-relationships-lgbtq/>

It is meaningful to note: With careful study, even the most infamous texts that have been used to condemn the sexual expression of generations can be reframed and salvaged to **empower** the vulnerable and exploited. It is not enough to upend these verses, or “cancel” them. Rather, the work must be done to find the Good News in these verses, and to inject that Good News into circumstances and dialogues that harm the oppressed.

To make a modern comparison...A Genesis 19 that says, “Beware of the harm that comes from mis-gendering!” is the antibody to the viral Genesis 19 which says, “Homosexuality is a sin.” They look similar, **but one defeats the other.**

NOT ALL FAMILIES ARE NUCLEAR

NOR COUPLES STRAIGHT

After exploring some of the Scriptural roots of heteronormativity and homophobia in Christianity, it is important to consider the ways that these assumptions show up in our liturgies and rituals. Marriage Liturgies, Baptismal promises and many images of Creation and Creator subscribe to images and assumptions which can exclude many family structures. Single parent or guardian households, same-sex couples, non-binary partners and all shapes of family and love should be able to see themselves in the language used in public liturgies.

JESUS HAD A STEP DAD, AND MARY'S FAMILY TREE IS ANYTHING BUT NUCLEAR

Nativity Scenes aren't what they seem...

Every Nativity Scene depicts a Holy Family, complete with Mary and Joseph looking down at their new Baby. It is easy to forget, when looking at such a holy scene, that this is not a typical nuclear family with a biological mom and a dad. Joseph is not Jesus' biological father, since it was the Spirit that helped Mary to conceive (Matthew 1:18). Mary is Jesus' biological parent, while Joseph is His Step-Father.

To be clear, this in no way *lessens* the sanctity of that family, nor is it intended to diminish Joseph's role as Jesus' earthly father (nor is it meant to diminish the vital role of *any* adoptive parent or step-parent!). To the contrary, it could be said that this non-nuclear detail about the Holy Family actually *enhances* their sanctity because this makes them more incarnate in this earthly world.

It is a source of comfort that Jesus Christ, Redeemer of the World, comes from a non-nuclear family because from the very beginning, He breaks the "mythical norm"* which seeks to exclude and marginalize God's people. Jesus not only brings about God's love for all of God's people, but He also represents the perfect imperfections of humanity, making His love all the more accessible and present.

*Cheryl Anderson.

Mary's Family Tree is Intentionally Flawed

The Gospel of Matthew includes a genealogy of Mary, the mother of Jesus (notice, it is not a genealogy of Joseph!). The stories attached to the names mentioned in Matthew's genealogy span from incest, infidelity, rape, prostitution and polygomy.

See also: *Sex(ism); Jesus' Family Tree*

ELW MARRIAGE WITHOUT COMMUNION, INTRODUCTION OPTION A:

Current Language:

...The scriptures teach us that the bond and covenant of marriage is a gift of God in which a man and a woman are joined as one, an image of the union of Christ and the church...

Alternative Language:

...The scriptures teach us that the bond and covenant of marriage is a gift of God in which two people made in God's image are joined as one, an image of the union of Christ and the church...

Note: This language appears in many places in the Bible and Marriage liturgies, so one may practice adjustments like this in many other ways.

ELW MARRIAGE WITHOUT COMMUNION, INTRODUCTION OPTION B:

Current Language:

...The Lord God in goodness created us male and female, and by the gift of marriage founded human community in a joy that begins now and is brought to perfection in the life to come...

Alternative Language:

...When the Lord God Created us, They called Themselves "Us," saying "Let Us make humankind in Our image." God is in relationship with Godself, and through the gift of marriage we have the opportunity to feel the depth of that same connection between two people, in love...

IN ALL WEDDING LITURGIES AND SETTINGS:

Instead of he/him; wife/husband, etc:

- *Use the pronouns used by each person to be married*
- *Use pronouns for the Godself which reflect their relationship with God, not yours as the Officiant*
- *If "husband and wife" are not preferred by the couple, use "partner," "spouse," or any other language that is more representative of the people being married.*
- *When introducing the couple at the end, ask what titles and order-of-names is preferred by the couple. Do not assume "Mr. and Mrs. Malefirstname Malelastname" is the only choice.*
- *Encourage the couple, and guide them if they wish, in finding Scriptures or other texts which are sacred to them for the Ceremony. These texts should inform the commitment they're making to God and one another.*

HETERONORMATIVITY:

UPDATED WEDDING RITES

Even some of the most cherished wedding texts and liturgical language can have hints of misogyny and heteronormativity. Assumptions on gender, and the expected submission of the female spouse are two examples that make a frequent appearance in the language found in wedding rites. Fortunately, denominations like the ELCA have wrestled with these issues, and have offered supplemental resources.

ELCA SUPPLEMENTAL MARRIAGE RESOURCE

Supplemental Resources for use within the Evangelical Lutheran Worship Service of Marriage

A Sample introduction, with adapted language:

Introduction C

The minister may introduce the service with these or similar words.

*[Name] and [name] have come to make their marriage vows
in the presence of God and this assembly.*

*The uniting of these two persons in heart, body, and mind
is intended by God for their mutual joy,*

*for the help and comfort they give one another in prosperity and adversity,
and that their love may be a blessing to all whom they encounter.*

*Let us now witness their promises to each other and surround them with our prayers,
giving thanks to God for the gift of marriage and asking God's blessing upon them,
that they may be strengthened for their life together and nurtured in the love of God.*

Link above for the full resource, or copy this URL: https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Supplemental_Marriage_Resources.pdf

A SERVICE OF RENAMING

FOR THOSE WHO TAKE A NEW NAME

The Episcopal Church has a beautiful liturgy for blessing someone who has "taken or been given a new name." It makes reference to the "God of Sarai revealed as Sarah," and seeks to honor the significant moments in which someone might change their name. This can be particularly poignant for those members of the community who have transitioned, or are transitioning gender. Or, for those who feel a new name would better fit their true identity. This same service might also be meaningful for individuals taking their maiden name again, after a divorce.

RENAMING RITE

Service of Renaming From the Episcopal Church (p. 120 of the linked resource)

See below an excerpt:

Opening Acclamation

Presider: Blessed be the God of Sarai revealed as Sarah, Jacob who became Israel, and Simon called Peter.

People: Blessed be the God who comes among us, reconciles us, and sets us free.

Collect

Presider: Blessed are you, God of growth and discovery; yours is the inspiration that has altered and changed our lives; yours is the power that has brought us to new dangers and opportunities. Set us, your new creation, to walk through this new world, watching and learning, loving and trusting, until your kingdom comes. Amen.

Link above for the full resource, or copy this URL:

https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/01/lm_book_of_occasional_services_2018.pdf

SEX(ISM)



It is well engrained in Christianity to call God "He," to assume the head of the household is male, and to perpetually cast down the role and voice of women in society by making them "submit" to the man. It is so pervasive that it is nearly impossible to differentiate between the remnants of patriarchal ancient Jewish society and the Roman Empire from the patriarchal characteristics of our modern society. It is possible, however, to uncover gems of powerful woman

*leadership, and to reveal the surprisingly matriarchal
character of God the Creator and God the Savior.*

*Image source: "Matriarch" by John Nieto

<http://blog.nietofineart.com/southwest-artist-john-nieto-paintings-american-indian-art/>

SEXISM:

UPDATED WEDDING RITES

Even some of the most cherished wedding texts and liturgical language can have hints of misogyny and heteronormativity. Assumptions on gender, and the expected submission of the female spouse are two examples that make a frequent appearance in the language found in wedding rites.

Fortunately, denominations like the ELCA have wrestled with these issues, and have offered supplemental resources.

ELCA SUPPLEMENTAL MARRIAGE RESOURCE

Supplemental Resources for use within the Evangelical Lutheran Worship Service of Marriage

A Sample introduction, with adapted language:

Introduction C

The minister may introduce the service with these or similar words.

*[Name] and [name] have come to make their marriage vows
in the presence of God and this assembly.*

*The uniting of these two persons in heart, body, and mind
is intended by God for their mutual joy,*

*for the help and comfort they give one another in prosperity and adversity,
and that their love may be a blessing to all whom they encounter.*

*Let us now witness their promises to each other and surround them with our prayers,
giving thanks to God for the gift of marriage and asking God's blessing upon them,
that they may be strengthened for their life together and nurtured in the love of God.*

Link above for the full resource, or copy this URL: https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Supplemental_Marriage_Resources.pdf

GOD'S PROUNOUNS:

"US/WE/OURS"

It is not a creative leap, or a liberal stretch to say that God uses pronouns like "Us/We/Ours." In the first moments of God's voice in the Hebrew Bible - the Christian Old Testament - God is speaking on Their own. There is no one else around to speak for, or to refer to God, and so it is a rare opportunity grammatically and narratively to observe how God refers to Godself. What is recorded in Genesis 1 is upheld throughout the Old Testament.

GENESIS 1: 2

Genesis 1: 26; NRSV:

"Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth..."

Immediately in the next verse, the narrator imposes the pronouns he/him/his, "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." (Repeating "he/him" four times here feels a bit like overkill, hitting home the patriarchal agenda right from the start). God refers to Themselves as "Us" again in Genesis 3:22.

Genesis 1:26 offers a rare window into God's self-identified pronouns, and this must not be lost on the reader no matter how many times "He" is repeated. God referred to Themselves as "Us." This is neither male, nor female, nor singular. It is the first person plural, and it reflects the status of a Creator in relationship with Themselves from the very beginning.

DUETERONOMY 6: 4

Deuteronomy 6: 4:

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is One."

This famous prayer, known as the שמע ישראל (Shema Yisrael), is sacred to the Jewish tradition. It is part of Jewish morning prayer.

While this text does not speak to God's pronouns or gender, it does refer to the unifying, comprehensive nature of God in Jewish tradition. Notice, the language does not necessarily say "there is one God." Rather, "God *is* one."

When coupled with the Hebrew word which is translated as "Spirit" in English, this understanding of God as "one" deepens profoundly. רוח (Ruah) means "breath" or "wind," and English translates it most frequently as "Spirit." This is the same "breath" that was breathed into the Valley of Dry Bones in Ezekiel 37, and the same "spirit" which hovered over Creation in the Genesis 1; its the same word. So, if God is present with Creation through breath/spirit/wind/רוח , then They are as ubiquitous as the air.

God's presence is so thoroughly present throughout all of Creation that it could be said that God *is* all of Creation, unified into One. God is One.

Suddenly, the pronouns "Us/We/Ours" are making more sense.

JESUS' FAMILY TREE

IS ALL ABOUT THE WOMEN

There are many, many genealogies listed throughout the Old Testament, but there are only two provided for Jesus in the New Testament. One is in Matthew, and the other is in Luke. Both genealogies break from Jewish tradition in some very important ways, especially as it pertains to the role that women play in Jesus' legitimacy as King, and his alliance with ordinary humans.

MATTHEW'S GENEALOGY

According to Jewish tradition, there are two ways to determine the legitimacy of a King. One is Divine appointment, or prophetic secessionism, and the other is that the King-to-be must have a direct line of relation to King David. As a result, King David's genealogy is the only genealogy in the Bible that is tracked so thoroughly. His family tree is known as the Messianic Line.*

Since direct lineage to King David is required to be King, one can understand why Matthew went through the trouble of sharing Jesus' genealogy at the beginning of his Gospel. The genealogy listed in the Gospel of Matthew seeks to honor the Messianic Line tradition of appraising a King's legitimacy.

However, Matthew's genealogy more specifically traces the lineage of Joseph, not Jesus. And, while Joseph does share a direct relation with King David, through Solomon, Joseph is not Jesus' biological father; he is his adopted father. Thus, Joseph's genealogy is just narrowly irrelevant to the kingship of Jesus Christ.

What Matthew's genealogy does offer to Jesus' legitimacy as Messiah, however, is its unique inclusion of women. It breaks from Jewish tradition to include women in a genealogy, but Matthew seems to have been very intentional about the particular women with whom he decided to break this tradition. Matthew includes Ruth, Rahab and Tamar, as well as Bathsheba in the genealogy for Jesus Christ. Each of these women were Gentiles, and very much *not* of a royal Jewish line.

Ruth, Rahab, Tamar and Bathsheba are not only lifted up as vital contributors to the Messianic narrative by being named in Luke's genealogy of Jesus, but they solidify Jesus' status as a King for the people. These women make Jesus who He is.

*<https://jewsforjesus.org/publications/issues/issues-v05-n06/the-genealogy-of-the-messiah>

LUKE'S GENEALOGY

As mentioned above, according to Jewish tradition, there are two traditions which determine the legitimacy of a King. One is a direct relation to the Messianic Line of King David. The Gospel of Matthew addresses this requirement by providing Joseph's lineage, which traces all the way back to King David, but stops short at Jesus' birth because Jesus was not born of Joseph. This is where Mary saves the day (and humanity).

The other tradition which deems a King legitimate is Divine appointment, and that is precisely what Mary experienced when the angel Gabriel announced God's plans for her and her child. Jesus is a King two-fold because He meets the traditional requirements on both sides of His family: He is related to the Messianic Line through Joseph, His adoptive father, and He was Divinely Appointed through Mary.

Additionally, the family tree that is described in the Gospel Luke describes Mary's lineage - not Joseph's, like in Matthew. This is a counter-cultural move which gives Mary the seat of honor she deserves, as the mother of the Messiah. Jewish tradition only recognizes men in genealogies, and oddly enough, Luke's genealogy still gets away without mentioning any women, including Mary. However, through a careful study of the grammar and the names mentioned, it is clear that it is Mary's family tree that is traced, and not Joseph's.

Because Joseph's Messianic Line stops short at passing on to Jesus by virtue of not being his biological Son, Mary is the reason Jesus' Kingship was legitimate, according to tradition. She bridged the gap between millennia of tradition behind her, and millennia of salvation in front of her. Mary is the reason Jesus was King.

ABLE(ISM)



It is mostly understood that not everyone is able to stand for the Gospel reading, or walk to the Altar for Communion. Churches regularly make necessary accommodations for the inclusion of those individuals. What is less understood, however, and less adjusted for in our practices, is the more subtle ways in which assumptions about abilities can exclude and injure community members. One who has been legally blind for most of their life might feel excluded or hurt by Jesus'

frequent claims that people who didn't understand His words are "blind." People who are deaf or hard of hearing miss out on the full liturgical experience by not hearing the splashing water during the Affirmation of Baptism, or by not being able to hear the chanted Psalm. Work needs to be done not only to physically accommodate the varying abilities one might have in their community, but also to liturgically accommodate the wide spectrum of senses and abilities in the worship setting.

ALTERNATIVES

FOR ABLEIST LANGUAGE

It is largely unavoidable that one will encounter a reference in the Bible that either assumes a fully abled body, or casts a pejorative reference toward someone who is differently abled. Blindness is equated to ignorance or lack of understanding, physical ailments are said to be the result of sins in the past, and Jesus Himself calls His followers to "take up their Cross, and follow Him." Well, what if they aren't able to walk? What follows are suggestions for how to avoid ableist assumptions in our own language.

IN WORSHIP SETTINGS

Current Language:

"Please stand as you are able..."

Alternatives:

"Please take your preferred posture of prayer."

"Please assume a posture of prayer."

"Please prepare your hearts and bodies for prayer."

Current Language:

"Please stand for the reading of the Gospel..."

Alternatives:

"Open your hearts for the reading of the Gospel..."

Current Language:

"Hear our prayer..."

Alternatives:

"Receive our prayer..."

"Accept our prayer..."

IN MISSION/PARTNERSHIP & SERVICE

Current Language:

"Stand up for..."

"Stand beside..."

Alternatives:

"Be in solidarity with..."

"Advocate on behalf of..."

"Advocate for..."

Current Language:

"Walk alongside..."

Alternatives:

"Accompany..."

"Journey with..."

"Live together in..."

EVERYDAY

ALTERNATIVES FOR ABLEIST LANGUAGE

Abelist assumptions and comments are not only an issue in outdated language in hymns and Bible translations; they are pervasive in even the most common of idioms and remarks. Describing circumstances as "crazy," fear as "paralyzing," or a politician as "turning a blind eye" to an issue can all strike a chord with someone who suffers from mental illness, mobility issues or blindness. What follows are a series of suggestions for alternatives to those abelist idioms. These suggestions were compiled generously by Hannah Johnsrud, and are shared here with her consent.

IN EVERYDAY LANGUAGE

Current Language:

"Blind to..."

"Turn a blind eye to..."

"Blinded by (hate/rage/prejudice)"

"Our eyes were opened to..."

"Open your eyes..."

Alternatives:

"Ignorant of"

"Turning their back on"

"Overcome by prejudice"

"Unaware of"

"Pay attention"

Current Language:

"Crippled by"

"Paralyzed by"

Alternatives:

"Crippled by"

"Paralyzed by"

"Frozen by"

"Stopped by"

"Completely stuck"

Current Language:

"Deaf to..."

"Fell on deaf ears..."

"Our ears were opened to..."

Alternatives:

"willfully or deliberately ignorant"

..

“turned their back on”

“refused to listen” / “feigned ignorance” / “Never noticed...”

“We realized...”

Current Language:

“crazy”

“psycho”

“nuts”

“insane”

Alternatives:

“wild”

“unreal”

“mind blowing”

“incredible”

“unheard of”

Current Language:

“lame”

Alternatives:

“boring”

“uninteresting”

“unfortunate”

Current Language:

“Handicapped”

Alternatives:

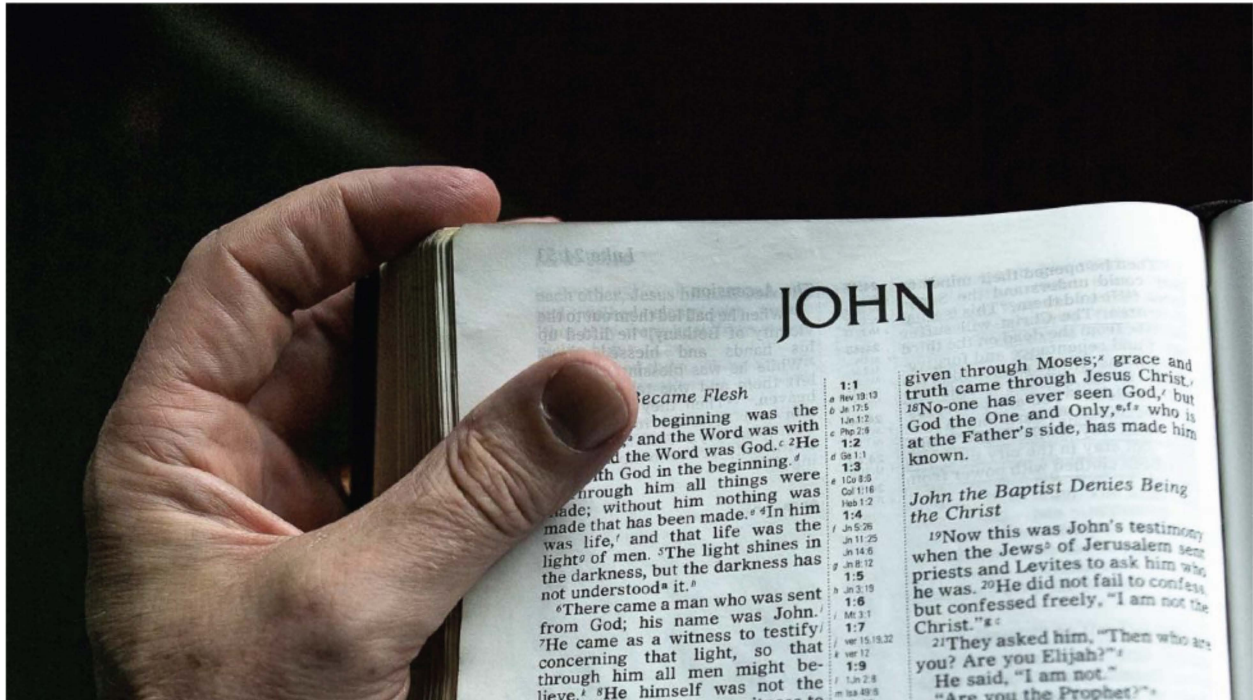
Always use “person first” language, or ASK if you are unsure!

“Person with a disability”

“Differently abled”

Regarding things or places that can be accessible to persons with disabilities, do not call the parking space (for example) “handicapped,” but rather “Accessible.”

ANTI-SEMITE (ISM)



Unfortunately, language from the Bible and Christian tradition has been used by some to promote an Anti-Semitic agenda. This can happen in subtler ways than one might think. Periodically mentioning the "Jews" as the guilty party in Jesus crucifixion, or implying that Jesus is the answer to the Jewish Messianic prophecy are two common ways that Anti-Semitism is prevalent today. What follows are a few suggestions, or reminders, for how to avoid perpetuating these damaging ideologies.

REPLACING

"JEWS" WITH "PEOPLE"

The Gospel of John may very well be responsible for fueling Anti-Semitism throughout the years because of the emphasize it places on, and the frequency with which it mentions, the "Jews." Of course, "Jews" is not in and of itself a negative word or association, but as with any word that generalizes a massive population, care needs to be used in the moments it is applied. In John, and plenty of other spaces including Martin Luther's writings, the Minister and practicing Christian can often correct this by replacing "Jews" with "people."

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

John 18 and 19

The "Jews" are mentioned seven times in John 18, and twelve times in John 19. Since these are the chapters of Christ's Passion - the story of His trial and crucifixion - this places a heavy amount of blame on the Jewish people. These verses have been cited in Anti-Semitic rhetoric, blaming the Jewish people for the death of Jesus.

It is important to avoid perpetuating this problem, and one may do so by replacing "Jews" with "people," especially in the Passion narrative in John.

AVOID SUPER- SESSIONISM

Supersessionism, otherwise known as "replacement theology," is defined as "the traditional Christian belief that Christianity is the fulfillment of Biblical Judaism." This theological practice is harmful to practicing Jewish people because it assumes that they are missing out on the rest of the story. "Jews who deny that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah fall short of their calling as God's Chosen people... [and]...are no longer considered to be God's chosen people in any sense."*

It is not difficult to see why this is a disparaging conviction, and care must be taken to avoid implications that fall into supersessionism.

*<https://www.theopedia.com/supersessionism>

MARTIN LUTHER'S PREFACES TO THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

Luther's Language:

Martin Luther is known for his important role in the Protestant Reformation, but unfortunately he is also known for his contributions to Anti-Semitic rhetoric. One of the several ways he is guilty of this is in his supersessionist thought. In Luther's "New Preface to the Book of Ezekiel," written between 1522 and 1545, he writes, "Thus all the Gentiles who are Christians are the true Israelites and new Jews, born of Christ, the noblest Jew."

It is not difficult to see the way he quickly writes off the modern Jew who does not accept Christ as their savior.

Alternatives:

Practicing Christians and public ministers must take care to avoid placing Jesus Messianic narrative overtop the entire Hebrew Bible. Especially when preaching, one must be careful not to imply that Jesus is the one who all Jews have been waiting for. This writes off a great deal of Jewish theology, and implies that modern Jewish people are incomplete. This is damaging and must be avoided.

ELW BIDDING PRAYER OPTIONS

If one is looking for a positive way to include the Jewish people in the prayers of a Christian service, a good example exists in the Bidding Prayers for this Good Friday setting in the Evangelical Lutheran Worship book.

One petition reads:

Let us pray for the Jewish people, the first to hear the word of God.

Silent prayer.

*Almighty and eternal God,
long ago you gave your promise to Abraham and your teaching to Moses.
Hear our prayers that the people you called and elected as your own
may receive the fulfillment of the covenant's promises.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.*

Amen.

This prayer showcases how simple, and beautiful, it can be to honor the legacy and history of Jewish tradition.

REMEMBER (AND REMIND)

THAT JESUS WAS JEWISH

And brown.

And poor.

And His parents were refugees who couldn't find a place that would take them in.

And His family was thoroughly human. ([See also: Jesus' Family Tree](#))

LUTHERAN (ISM)



The word "liturgy" simply means "order," and in that sense, every worship service has a "liturgy." Provided it avoids any of the pitfalls explored elsewhere in this resource, no single liturgy is inherently problematic or harmful. Even when those liturgies are strung together with song, story and Sacraments - forming religious traditions - it can be a powerful and sacred display of religiosity.

It is when a liturgy or tradition draws predominantly from the vocabulary of only one ethnic or cultural expression over

another that it becomes problematic. For, at that point, people who are not from that cultural expression may experience the elements of liturgy as exclusive or injurious. This is why "Lutheran(ism)" is listed among the "isms" in this resource.

For a multitude of reasons, and centuries of missional history which will not be explored in depth here, Lutheranism as it is expressed in the United States is guilty of over-emphasizing the ethnic and cultural expression of one group of Lutherans more than others. In Church architecture, liturgical language, hymnals and even children's resources, northern European Lutheranism is far too often the primary palate from which these expressions are drawn.

Popular movements like "Decolonize Lutheranism" take on this issue directly, as does Lenny Duncan in his book Dear Church. What follows below is a working list of examples of this nuanced "ism," as well as alternatives to correct for it.

THE ELCA IS THE WHITEST DENOMINATION IN THE UNITED STATES

*We cannot critically explore the character of Lutheranism as an "ism" without first acknowledging one vital statistic about a major denomination of American Lutheranism- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The ELCA is the whitest denomination in the United States. **

Not only is it the whitest denomination, but at 96% white the ELCA is also the second least racially and ethnically diverse denomination in the country. (The National Baptist Convention is 99% African American, making it the least racially diverse than the ELCA by 3%).

Acknowledging the predominant racial and ethnic make up of the denomination is a necessary first step in considering to what degree the Lutheran Church's liturgical traditions perpetuate the apparent exclusion of black, indigenous and persons of color. It also enables the public minister or practicing Christian to consider, in a "chicken and the egg" sort of way, whether overwhelming whiteness begets predominantly European liturgical tradition, or whether predominantly European liturgical traditions beget overwhelming whiteness.

What follows below are resources that can help a community counter the impact of disproportionately European liturgical tradition in their worship space by including liturgical language from other cultural Christian traditions.

**<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/27/the-most-and-least-racially-diverse-u-s-religious-groups/>*

MASAAI CREED

We believe in the one High God, who out of love created the beautiful world and everything good in it. He created Man and wanted Man to be happy in the world. God loves the world and every nation and tribe on the Earth. We have known this High God in darkness, and now we know Him in the light. God promised in the book of His word, the Bible, that He would save the world and all the nations and tribes.

We believe that God made good His promise by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, a man in the flesh, a Jew by tribe, born poor in a little village, who left His home and was always on safari doing good, curing people by the power of God, teaching about God and man, showing the meaning of religion is love. He was rejected by his people, tortured and nailed hands and feet to a cross, and died. He lay buried in the grave, but the hyenas did not touch him, and on the third day, He rose from the grave. He ascended to the skies. He is the Lord.

We believe that all our sins are forgiven through Him. All who have faith in Him must be sorry for their sins, be baptized in the Holy Spirit of God, live the rules of love and share the bread together in love, to announce the Good News to others until Jesus comes again. We are waiting for Him. He is alive. He lives. This we believe. Amen.

SALVADORAN CREED

Salvadoran Creed

L: We believe in God,

C: who created us free and walks with us in the struggle for liberation.

L: We believe in Christ,

C: crucified again in the suffering of the poor, a suffering which calls out to the conscience of people and nations, a suffering which ends in resurrection.

L: We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit,

C: capable of inspiring the same compassion which has led our best brothers and sisters to martyrdom.

L: We believe in the church,

C: called forth by Jesus and the Holy Spirit

L: We believe that when we gather,

C: Jesus is with us, and that Mary his mother is a sign of living faithfulness.

L: We believe in the Christian community

C: where we proclaim our ideals, through which we practice our Christian faith.

L: We believe in building a church

C: where we pray and reflect on our reality, and share in the prophetic, priestly, and pastoral mission of Jesus. We believe that one day all peoples will love under Christ's gentle rule.

L: We believe in unity in the midst of differences. We believe that Christ calls us

C: to communion and to live as sisters and brothers.

L: We believe that we need

C: to love one another, to correct one another compassionately, to forgive each other's errors and weaknesses.

L: We believe that we need

C: to help each other to recognize our limitations, to support each other in the faith.

L: We believe that the poor,

C: the illiterate and the sick, the persecuted and the tortured, are always close to the heart of Jesus. Through them, Christ challenges us to work for justice and peace. Their cause is our cause.

L: We believe that Christ is also present

C: in those who are slaves to their passions, to vices, lies and injustice, to power and money.

L: We pray

C: for the possibility conversion; to love those who slander, persecute and kill, and to help each other so that one day we may all live simply and humbly in the way that the Gospel calls us to live. Amen.

ELW THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE, FORM H

The language of this Thanksgiving at the Table comes from *This Far by Faith: An African American Resource for Worship*. Using language and images from *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, this Thanksgiving from the Table gives a congregation the opportunity to worship in language that is not solely European in origin. This not only breaks the cycle of over-emphasizing European expressions of Christian worship, but it also promises to resonate with community members for whom this language is familiar.

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,
you have brought us this far along the way.

In times of bitterness you did not abandon us,
but guided us into the path of love and light.

In every age you sent prophets
to make known your loving will for all humanity.

The cry of the poor has become your own cry;
our hunger and thirst for justice is your own desire.

In the fullness of time, you sent your chosen servant
to preach good news to the afflicted,
to break bread with the outcast and despised,
and to ransom those in bondage to prejudice and sin.

In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup
we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Remembering, therefore, his death and resurrection,
we await the day when Jesus shall return
to free all the earth from the bonds of slavery and death.

Come, Lord Jesus! And let the church say, Amen

Amen.

Send your Holy Spirit, our advocate,
to fill the hearts of all who share this bread and cup
with courage and wisdom to pursue love and justice in all the world.

Come, Spirit of freedom! And let the church say, Amen

Amen.

Join our prayers and praise with your prophets and martyrs of every age,
that, rejoicing in the hope of the resurrection,
we might live in the freedom and hope of your Son.

Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, now and forever.

Amen.

ELW HOLY COMMUNION SETTING 6

In the words of The Sunday Assembly, "*Holy Communion Setting Six is an African American gospel - and jazz-style setting. Setting Seven includes selections from Central and South America together with music by Latino composers from the United States.*"*

Using these communion settings can stretch you community's liturgical palette by introducing songs, melodies, lyrics and imagery from different parts of the world and nation. Every time this is done, a community becomes less susceptible to the isolation and exclusion that comes from drawing from one solitary cultural tradition.

*LORRAINE S. BRUGH, *SUNDAY ASSEMBLY* (Minneapolis, MN: AUGSBURG FORTRESS, 2016), 61.

THE NORTHERN NORM FORGETS THE SOUTH

In Western Christianity, Christmas is December 25th, which is the "old date" on which the winter solstice was celebrated. It is the "longest night," (in the northern hemisphere), and so it was a time of waiting for the light to come. This doesn't work in the southern hemisphere, since that same date is the longest day for those who live in the southern hemisphere. The same date is literally the sunniest time of year.

Likewise, Easter falls every year on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring solstice - in the northern hemisphere. This makes Easter, the season of new life and resurrection, firmly planted in the spring seasons of the hemisphere that selected these dates for the church calendar. Once again, it is the opposite in the southern hemisphere. In the global south, Jesus' resurrection is celebrated when the fall is beginning.

It is not difficult to see the degree to which the seasonal narrative of the entire southern half of our planet is ignored in the flow of the Christian liturgical calendar.

What follows are a few examples of how a community might reverse this liturgical exclusion by crafting their worship around the southern hemisphere's seasons.

DURING ADVENT, FOCUS ON THE ABUNDANT LIGHT IN THE SOUTH

Instead of longing for light to come in our local spot on the earth (see also: *The Weaponized Binary of Light & Dark*), a congregation might reflect on the abundant light that is blessing the southern hemisphere of our same planet. "We are never truly without light as the people of God," one might declare. "As winter settles in around us, we give thanks for the abundant light that brings forth spring with our neighbors to the south. May we be warmed by this same light as we welcome the Christ child into our lives this Christmas season."

DURING LENT AND EASTER, REMEMBER THOSE WHOSE SEASONS ARE OPPOSITE

In both a metaphorical and a literal sense, not everyone in the world - or in the room - may feel the light and energy of Christ's resurrection during the spring season. In fact, this is acknowledged in some of the existing prayer language in the ELW Easter liturgies.

It can be helpful to reference the half of the globe that is venturing toward their respective falls and winters, because it can ease the pressure for folks who may not feel as "sunny" or "Easter-y" as the predominant narrative of the season would convey. Thus, it is both inclusive and pastoral to reference the different seasonal narrative in the opposite hemisphere because it acknowledges the different reality that exists outside the assumptions of our European liturgies, and it reminds the community that we're never all-at-once shrouded in light, and that is ok.

BLACK

CASSOCKS

In Lenny Duncan's vitally important book, Dear Church, he explores the critical ways in which the ELCA is systemically racist, among other things. From a place of love for the church, Duncan calls for a future informed by the hurt inflicted by the church upon black, indigenous persons of color.

One of the many elements of church life that Duncan explores is the ways in which our liturgies are racist and injurious. "The truth is," Duncan writes, "that our entire liturgy and worship are dripping with the affirmation of whiteness." He voices the threat that he experiences from the white hooded robes that are common place in our churches. Duncan insisted to church leaders that "White, hooded robes were a symbol of terror for black folks..."** And yet, his concerns were not paid attention to. Duncan even received threats for challenging the Lutheran church to consider its identify "separate from any of the white, northern European cultural markers."***
Lenny's response to those threats?*

*"..Now I where a black cassock when I lead worship,
because whiteness does not equal holiness,
and blackness does not equal evil, brokenness, or self-denial.
Black is holy."****

*Lenny Duncan, *Dear Church: a Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the U.S.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019), 45.

***ibid*, 63.

*** *ibid*, 65.

IN WHAT WAYS CAN YOU ENGAGE THE LITURGICAL NORMS IN YOUR SETTING TO AMPLIFY A MARGINALIZED VOICE?

The answer to this question is likely always changing, so it is up to the reader to determine the faithful answer in this setting and time.

IN WHAT WAYS CAN YOU ENGAGE THE LITURGICAL NORMS IN YOUR SETTING TO ADDRESS OR HEAL AN INJURY CAUSED BY THOSE NORMS?

The answer to this question is likely always changing, so it is up to the reader to determine the faithful answer in this setting and time.

ALT. LITURGIES: RATIONALE



The Very Large Array, New Mexico image: <https://public.nrao.edu/telescopes/vla/>

Why make this resource?

To convey the purpose and the value of this online liturgical resource, I'd like to draw from the field of astronomy which can provide us with a rich illustration.

Any singular telescope gathers light from a distant object and focuses that light into the eye of the viewer. The larger the telescope, the more "signal," or light, it is able to condense into an in focus image in the telescope's optics. A 2" telescope may gather enough light to see Jupiter faintly, while a 10" telescope will let you see its moons and color bands. This is a somewhat logical, and perhaps even predictable detail about telescopes.

What is less known about telescopes, however, is that the signal from many telescopes can be combined into one brighter, larger image. Famously, the [Very Large Array in Socorro, New Mexico](#) combines the signal of 27 radio antennas over 22 miles of area into one condensed image. This combined effort creates the effect of a 22-mile-wide telescope gathering light. Telescopes and satellite dishes around the world have been known to join their signal-gathering capabilities together to get a clearer picture of the deepest and farthest away objects in our night sky.

With that practice in mind, consider this resource a "Liturgical Array."

Throughout history, every local attempt to ponder and worship the Divine is akin to a singular glance toward the heavens, gathering light for the consideration of the viewer. Each contribution is equally vital, and every contribution is equally local. Combining these varying local glances, as is the goal of this resource, gathers the wisdom and perspective of *many* local angles into one global view of the Divine.

Informed by a past genocide in the language of this prayer, while humbled by the colonial history behind this particular scriptural interpretation, and held accountable to the injury to the LGBTQIA+ community that is inherent in the translation of this text...the public minister and practicing Christian can lead and experience Christian worship in a form that is sculpted by our shared human history.

No light is wasted this way, and no view distorted to be the biggest or best. All are combined into one "liturgical array," which beholds and praises God with a sharp, collective vision.

Due to the ever-changing nature of human perspective and contextual reality, this work is never done. Thus, it is my hope that this resource can serve as a starting point, or a point of reference for others.



image: <https://www.crosswalk.com/blogs/joe-mckeeever/leading-others-to-faith-with-gratitude.html>

