

*Illinois Conference United Church of Christ
57th Annual Celebration
Opening Worship Service*



"a rope that is woven of three strings is hard to break."

Ecclesiastes 4:12

Prelude

Laude to Sta Maddalena

Frayed

Rev. Charlene Hinckley

Song

At the Weaving of Creation

by David Brody

At the weaving of creation all our lives were intertwined,
as with care and contemplation God configured humankind.
So a joyous revolution that erupts and quickly spreads
comes from many contributions of a thousand tiny threads.

We are bound to one another for we are bound to God.
We were made to love each other, for we are loved by God.

But when fear and failure finds us and we will not face our pain,
then the living web that binds us can become a toxic chain.
And the damage done to many come from actions that seem small,
for the damage done to any soon endangers one and all.

We are bound to one another for we are bound to God.
We were made to love each other, for we are loved by God.

Though complicity is varied— who deserves the praise or blame—
still our destinies are married, and our future world the same.
So with each new choice before us— what to love or buy or think—
hear the God of life implore us to recall our common link.

We are bound to one another for we are bound to God.
We were made to love each other, for we are loved by God.

The Lord's Prayer

Rev. Jon Gilbert Martinez

Let us pray together the Lord's Prayer in the language of your heart.



Song

Blest Be the Ties That Bind

Blest be the tie that binds
our hearts in Christian love;
the fellowship of kindred minds
is like to that above.

Before our Father's throne
we pour our ardent prayers;
our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
our comforts and our cares.

We share our mutual woes,
our mutual burdens bear,
and often for each other flows
the sympathizing tear.

From sorrow, toil, and pain,
and sin we shall be free;
and perfect love and friendship reign
through all eternity.

Scripture

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Rev. Emily Mitchell

Two are better off than one, because together they can work more effectively. If one of them falls down, the other can help him up. But if someone is alone and falls, it's just too bad, because there is no one to help him. If it is cold, two can sleep together and stay warm, but how can you keep warm by yourself. Two people can resist an attack that would defeat one person alone. A rope made of three cords is hard to break.

Sermon

Stronger Together

Rev. Molly Carlson
Illinois Conference Minister

Music

Together We're Strong

Tracy Howe

Offering

Medical Debt Relief

Offering Prayer

Rev. Dave Bateman

Ending Ritual

Rev. Santina Poor

Leader: Holy One, remind us that the cords of our being are formed from many single strands: Family, neighborhoods, school, work. Each strand by itself possesses certain strengths, but bound together they become a stronger part of the whole cord.

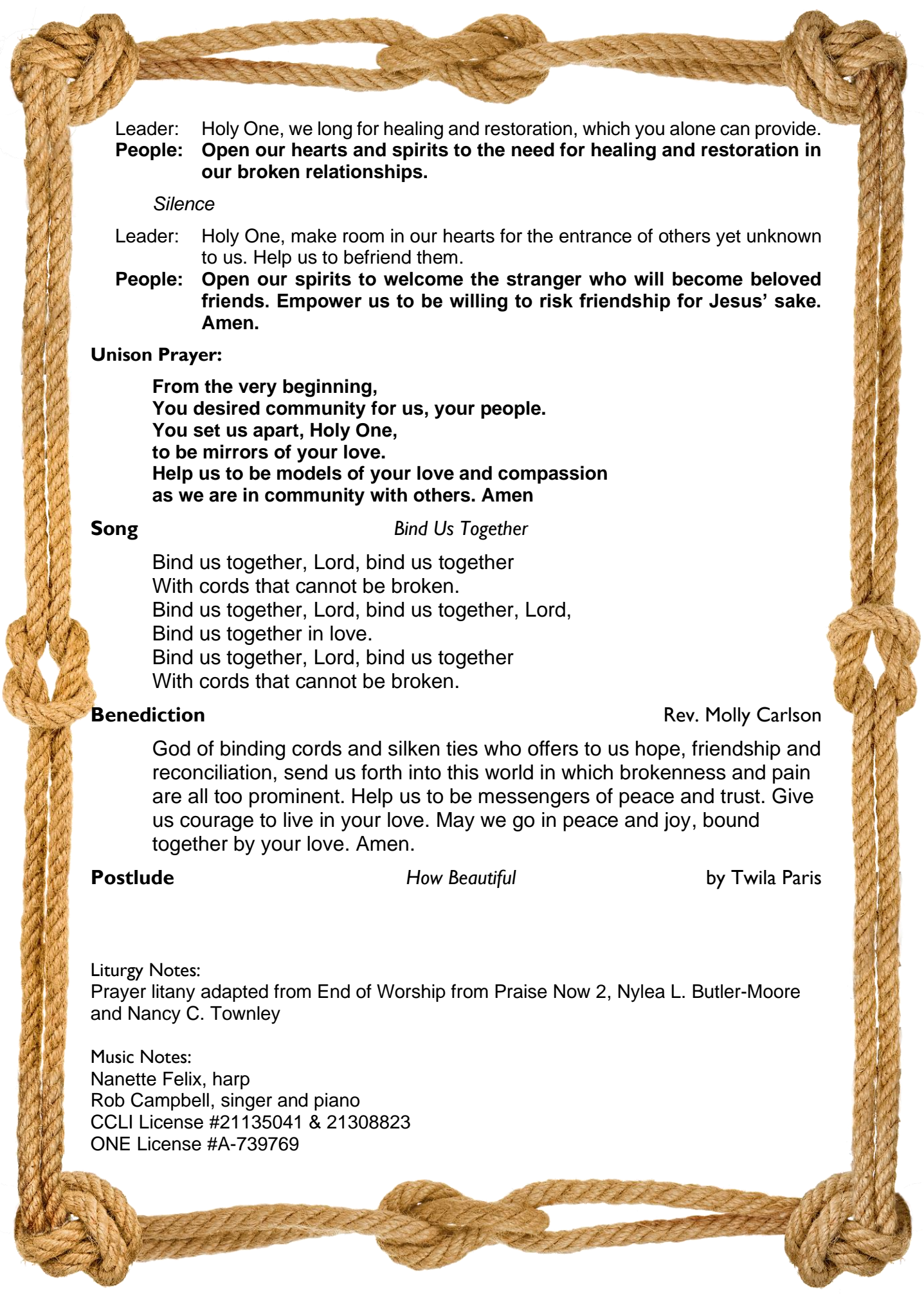
People: Open our memories to the many strands that make up our individual cords.

Silence

Leader: Holy One, sometimes these cords are frayed and tested. Our divisions along race, class, and gender test and pull at the bonds we have formed.

People: Open our memories to times in which we have been tested.

Silence



Leader: Holy One, we long for healing and restoration, which you alone can provide.
People: Open our hearts and spirits to the need for healing and restoration in our broken relationships.

Silence

Leader: Holy One, make room in our hearts for the entrance of others yet unknown to us. Help us to befriend them.

People: Open our spirits to welcome the stranger who will become beloved friends. Empower us to be willing to risk friendship for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Unison Prayer:

**From the very beginning,
You desired community for us, your people.
You set us apart, Holy One,
to be mirrors of your love.
Help us to be models of your love and compassion
as we are in community with others. Amen**

Song

Bind Us Together

Bind us together, Lord, bind us together
With cords that cannot be broken.
Bind us together, Lord, bind us together, Lord,
Bind us together in love.
Bind us together, Lord, bind us together
With cords that cannot be broken.

Benediction

Rev. Molly Carlson

God of binding cords and silken ties who offers to us hope, friendship and reconciliation, send us forth into this world in which brokenness and pain are all too prominent. Help us to be messengers of peace and trust. Give us courage to live in your love. May we go in peace and joy, bound together by your love. Amen.

Postlude

How Beautiful

by Twila Paris

Liturgy Notes:

Prayer litany adapted from End of Worship from Praise Now 2, Nylea L. Butler-Moore and Nancy C. Townley

Music Notes:

Nanette Felix, harp
Rob Campbell, singer and piano
CCLI License #21135041 & 21308823
ONE License #A-739769