



Aging Related Liturgical Resources

Introduction

The following liturgical resources were written by Rev. Beth Long-Higgins for use in worship services and special occasions. These materials reflect the vision, mission, and values of United Church Homes, grounded in John 10:10b: 'I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly.' They each reflect an aspect of what it means to age abundantly.

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CALL TO WORSHIP

C1 *(based on Psalm 31: 1-5, 15-16)* 2017

LEADER We seek refuge in you, God: a granite cave for hiding, a high cliff sanctuary of safety.

PEOPLE **May we hide in the crevice of your peace and climb the heights of your love.
Lead us out of our fear to your light.**

LEADER Into your hands, commit our spirits, faithful Creator.

PEOPLE **Even as life leaks away from us, years fading out in sighs, our time is in your grasp.**

LEADER Hour by hour our days are placed into your presence, for you are our God!

PEOPLE **Incline your ear. See our longing to know righteousness. Face us as you deliver us to safety.**

LEADER All who wait for God, be strong, and let your heart take courage.

C2 *(based on Psalm 118:1-7 NIV)* 2018

LEADER God is Good!

PEOPLE **We give God our thanks and praise.**

LEADER God's steadfast love endures forever.

PEOPLE **We cry to God out of fear and anguish.**

ALL **Let us find safety for there is no need of fear, God is with us.**

C3 *(inspired by Psalm 107:1-9. 43)* 2022

LEADER God of all ages, praise to you through all our days.

PEOPLE **Meet us in sabbath rest where we are renewed.**

LEADER Lead us to the source of love that heals life's pain.

PEOPLE **Show us your path even when we cannot see our next step.**

LEADER Calm the fears that keep us awake in the night.

PEOPLE **Comfort us with your grace as we bow our heads before you.**

LEADER Bless us as we eat at your table and dwell in your house.

PEOPLE **May wisdom grow within us as we ponder your loving deeds. Amen**

C4 *(based on Psalm 71)*

2024

LEADER Lets retreat in the presence of the Holy One!

PEOPLE **Solid as the rock beneath our feet, we are assured of God's love.**

LEADER We are not cast away into the anxiety of this time.

PEOPLE **Instead we raise a grateful voice to the Source of all hope.**

LEADER All who are younger and older, give witness to Love's deeds at work in the world.

PEOPLE **Deliver us from fear. Restore us to joy. Hear our songs of praise.**

C5

2025

LEADER Created to age, we come bearing the image of love that is ours to share-

PEOPLE **We embrace the image of God we each carry in the world.**

LEADER Created to create, we open our imaginations to God's will-

PEOPLE **We gather to unite with God's creative energy among us.**

LEADER Created to matter, we seek meaning and purpose in this broken world-

PEOPLE **We seek to know how our lives can make a difference in God's name.**

LEADER Created to connect, we gather in community remembering that we are not alone-

PEOPLE **We celebrate God's calling us together.**

ALL Let us celebrate the presence of God's abundant love at work in this place!

PRAYERS

P1 INVOCATION Unison *(references to Acts 17:22-31)* 2017

God of our ancestors and our God, you inhabited the earth with your people, providing the times for their existence and the boundaries of the places where they have lived. You provided the questions that would lead them to search for you. You presented curiosity in their hearts that they would grope for your hand and discover that you are never far. Even today, you have created us to live and move and have our being in you. We are your offspring, living and growing ever more fully into your likeness. We are your hands and your feet, returning praise and witness to the power of your love at work in this world and the next. Surround us this day that our lives may be inspired with your breath and refreshed with your love. Amen.

P2 INVOCATION Unison *(based Psalm 23:6)* 2018

God of all ages hear our cry for your protective shelter.
You, who insists and urges us to sabbath rest,
 lead us to the source of love that quenches life's thirsts.
Show us the path you lay before us.
Calm the fears that keep us awake in life's darkest hours.
Comfort us with the grace of your presence.
We eat at your table and dwell in your house-
 extend now your kindness even when we are in the presence of our enemies.
Follow us this day, and all the days of our lives as we follow you. Amen.

P3 INVOCATION Unison 2018, ed.

Almighty God, you have walked with every creature since the beginning of time. Your Presence continues to bring wholeness, joy, and divine energies to life itself.

Gift us with your presence as we recognize the divine gifts and graces throughout the life course. Guide us to appreciate the love and ministries offered by those younger and older. We may be of differing ages, O God, but give we are united in giving thanks that we may learn from each other and share our unique gifts gathered through our life experiences. May our diversity of ages bring joy to our gathering, strengthen your church, and enrich the message of your love made known in all creation.
Amen.

P4 INVOCATION Unison *(based on Psalm 23)*

2023

Creator of life and Provider of love call us to you, our spiritual home.
Lead us to Love's source and quench our thirst for meaning and purpose.
Spark the creative way for us to follow when your call invites us to new dwellings.
Calm the fears that keep us awake in night's deepest hours as they interfere with the rest we need.
Extend your kindness through us even when we are in the presence of those we do not trust.
Comfort us with the grace of your presence as moments slow and as days speed by.
Ignite wisdom as we reflect on our experience of life in your care.
Follow us this day, and all the days of our lives as we follow you. Amen.

P5 INVOCATION Unison

2024

Call us out of the depths of scarcity, God of abundant life.
Lead us to the streams of your love—overflowing in possibilities
even as you turn our thoughts of obstacles and challenges into sources of opportunity.
Grounded in the wisdom of generations past, expand our hearts as we reflect on your will.
Guide us as we seek to be stewards of creation, making things ready
for our grandchildren's grandchildren.
Grant us patience as we travel from birth to death,
encountering the mystery of all we do not yet understand.
(continued)

Transform the depths of despair that threaten all hope into visions for a new tomorrow.
Reveal the healing power of your love to repel the world's bitterness and
Revive our hearts to share your love today and through all the tomorrows yet to come. Amen.

P6 INVOCATION Responsive Prayer

2020

LEADER You, who are created in the image of God, young and older alike, gather together!

PEOPLE **We worship this One who is before time and beyond time.**

LEADER Bring the experience of all your days before the One
whose love is as sure as the rising of the sun.

PEOPLE **We present our lives in gratitude and awe for the breath that courses through us.**

LEADER Gather together in the presence of love. Bring your questions and observations,
yearnings and doubts which threaten to unsettle and discourage life.

PEOPLE **We give God our attention as we seek grace to sooth our deepest fears.**

LEADER Give thanks to God of all ages who knits us together in community.

Call to Confession LEADER

No matter who we are, where we have been or how long we have been travelling this journey of discipleship, God calls us again and again into the presence of wisdom and love. As we gather our hearts in this moment, may we be aware of the very help that is offered to weaken the grip of fear and embolden our trust in the source of our strength. Let us pray together:

Prayer of Confession In Unison

Source of All Strength, we pause before you this day to release the fears which consume our imaginations and limit the reach of what is possible. We forget that you created the world out of chaos and that you continue to bring beauty to the most desolate of places. We fail to trust that you continue to bring goodness into being through your spoken word and give shape to companionship through the lives of others.

Help us receive what we need today in order for wisdom to take root and grow. Water the seeds of compassion which have already been scattered at the ground of our being. And ripen the fruit of your harvest that our lives might reflect your purpose and share your meaning with those who share this journey with us. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness LEADER

God has heard the plea of our hearts and received the weight of our fears in order that we might be enlightened to share the gladness of the good news: We are God's people. Created in the image of our maker. Redeemed through the life of Christ. Sustained by the presence of the Spirit through all the days of our life.

PEOPLE Thanks be to God! Amen.

Call to Confession LEADER

Our God is both the center of tradition and instigator of innovation, and we struggle in the tension to hold on to the familiar which gives us comfort, and our yearning for what is not yet as we assume that change threatens our sense of security. Let us confess our wrestling with this tension:

ALL:

God of all the ages, we confess that we hold our own sense of control and certainty tightly. We struggle to open our hearts and hands to let go of the comfort this brings. And yet, we must open ourselves, in order to receive all that we do not yet know, in order to welcome those ideas that stretch our current state of certainty and to anticipate that we are never fully finished growing, changing, learning, maturing.

Surround us as we age and as life continues to change. Ease the growth pains we encounter along the way. Inspire the growth spurts of our mind and spirit. And lead us into the fullness and abundance of your love as your wisdom increases in the world. Amen.

God of smooth skin and gray hair, God of the weary and those who do not stop moving, forgive the many ways we deny the gift of years which we have been blessed to know. We ask for your forgiveness for our attempts to turn back or fast forward time. Forgive us when we cling to someone else’s idea of beauty or the ideal age. Forgive us when we cannot be satisfied with the number of candles atop our birthday cake—some wishing for more, others wanting less. And forgive us when we dismiss the worthiness of others when we place expectations on them based on our assessment of their age.

Invite us into your courageous presence. Remind us of your steadfast love. Empower us to use our voice to reclaim our place as your beloved offspring. And open our eyes to see not the number of years, but the value of each person as we share in the richness of this multi-generational community. Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness LEADER

God does not judge us based on the number of days and years that have brought us to this point. What matters is that we are loved. What matters is that we all belong. Just as we are. Each of us are naturally aging at the right time, just as God intended. May we live then, giving thanks for life to this point in time and rejoice in the anticipation and knowledge that God will be with us from this point on. May we live as God’s forgiven! Amen.

P10 OFFERTORY PRAYER

From earth to the expanses of heaven, your love, O God, multiplies beyond our senses. From the abundance of all we have received, take our gifts offered this day, and enlarge the limits of our wildest imaginations as these gifts ripple the impact of your love in the world.

P11 PRAYER OF DEDICATION

We give thanks this day for the homes where we live in safety and peace,
where we learn and grow,
where we find refuge from life’s storms
and welcome in strangers with hospitable grace.

May these gifts which we lift to you this day, O God,
provide the opportunity for those in the world
who find themselves vulnerable and at risk of homelessness
to be sheltered from creation’s elements
and protected from the isolation and loneliness which harbor despair.

Give us the courage to support those around us
who need the strength and companionship that comes from participating in community.
May our lives give witness to your goodness and mercy, today and forever. AMEN.

P12 Prayer for all ages

2020

God of all ages, who is and was and always will be-- hear our prayer.

You who have called, listened, pushed and pulled us into deeper connection with you:

Hear the cries of our hearts with tender understanding.

Increase the joy that surprises us in things both large and small.

Make accessible the unsurmountable paths before us.

Give us courage to put one foot in front of the other when the way is hard.

Taste the sourness of our hearts and sweeten them with your love.

Feel the loneliness of our days

and fill us with the companionship of your grace through others.

Stir in us the strength for creativity

as you birth beauty and imagination through us into the world.

For this new day in which we are older than we were yesterday--

We give thanks for the opportunity to reflect and grow more fully in your likeness. Amen.

P13 God of the Ages and all Ages A prayer honoring the aging process.

2022

Loving God, in your image you created us—

Human beings in physical bodies destined to change as long as there is life—

These bodies, temples of your spirit,

not able to reverse the experience of time already past but carrying us into the future.

You share curiosity with us, divinely inspired, spurring us to learn,

discovering fragments of the heights and depths of creation and of our place in your world.

You call us to observe your likeness in all creation imagining your will on earth.

You invite us to prepare for our own future selves as we accompany the elders around us.

We give thanks as these elders serve as our mentor guides, encouraging coaches,

and pioneers who travel ahead helping us prepare for our own later age.

May the wrinkles of our skin be maps of our lives lived in faithfulness.

May creaks and aches within these temples, remind us of the mysteries that remain unseen by our eyes, but held in your hands.

And may our awareness of our own mortality, reveal to us clarity of purpose and meaning each day. Remind us, who are created in your image,

that it is the experience that age provides that draws us closer in your likeness.

All praise to you, God of the ages and all ages, present, past and future. Amen.

Put your ear to the ground and listen, gracious God—
Listen to the fears that linger in the corners of our restless minds
 And through long dark nights of winter.
Help us enter into the space you offer for salvation,
 a space like a guest room where we can retreat
 and know that you are the safe-guarding, care-sharing host.
We give thanks for—
 You open your door to the young and older,
 And accompany us each aging day.
 You know all about the day of our births,
 And assure us of your presence in this place and beyond--
 past our last breath of earth's atmosphere
 with promises of your eternal care.
 You created us to change and grow, never the same from one season to the next.
 Help us see these changes of energy and physical being
 as the continuing ripples of birth pangs
 Making us more each day, in your image and likeness
 of wisdom and stature.
 You offer us opportunity to take yesterday's experience and reflections that you might
 Reveal, remold and refashion the truth we need for this day and time.
 You run beside us, as we learn to breathe our praise of you
 Noticing again for the first time,
 That this world is full of your wonders.
 You stare trouble in the face!
 Turn us around so we might see life
 as revealed in the reflections of your grace around us.
Aging together, lives intertwined, your universe and our own lives,
 We offer songs of thanks,
 As with each step we take, we chant the pulse of your love—
 Breathing in and out,
 Moving back and forth,
 Aware of the heavens above and the earth below,
Our lungsful of praises echo back to You--
 The listening Creator who is creating even now.....

LITANIES

Lit1 LITANY OF BLESSING

LEADER In the spirit of Ruth and Naomi, we give thanks for those who know how important it is to travel life in the company of others who show love.

PEOPLE **Blessed be God who does not leave us!**

LEADER In the spirit of the disciples who were commissioned to heal the sick and care for those who are the most vulnerable in our midst, we give thanks for those who offer healing touch to ailing bodies and hope for despairing souls.

PEOPLE **Blessed be God who does not leave us!**

LEADER In the spirit of the saints who have gone before us, we give thanks for their wisdom and presence in our lives as we have grown and aged maturing in our awareness of life's abundance here on earth.

PEOPLE **Blessed be God who does not leave us!**

LEADER May you glorify God through your witness to the good news of the risen Christ and by the generosity of your sharing that gospel in all you do.

PEOPLE **Blessed be God who does not leave us! Amen.**

Lit2 AFFIRMATION OF AGING

2017

LEADER Today, you and I are older than we were yesterday!

PEOPLE **We give thanks for life's lessons in days now past, that have given us opportunity to delve deeper and reach further into the mysteries of God.**

LEADER Tomorrow will offer new possibility for life and love and challenge and joy.

PEOPLE **We give thanks for God's presence as our faith continues to grow and form more fully into the likeness of God as through those faithful ancestors who have gone before:**

LEADER May the God of Noah, provide extended families the opportunity to serve faithfully when all else seems to be lost.

PEOPLE **May the God of Abraham and Sarah give us courage for new adventures in new territories even when our inclination is to laugh in God's face.**

LEADER May the God of Naomi, inspire us to connect with families of our choosing instead of isolation in uncertain lands.

(continued)

PEOPLE **May the God of Moses lead us through the wilderness to be satisfied with the journey which falls short of our destined goals.**

LEADER May the God of Zechariah help us to recognize when we are in the presence of the divine.

PEOPLE **And may the God of Lydia allow us to find ways to create beauty in the world.**

LEADER Even as you grow older with us, Gracious God, may our imaginations continue to expand, our creativity inspire the generations that follow, and our experience provide the groundwork for wisdom's ripened grace in this time and place.

PEOPLE **As long as we have breath and life, may our being return thanks and praise to our God who connects us with all of creation! Amen.**

Lit3 **LITANY OF GRATITUDE** *(based on 2 Corinthians 9:10-15) Written to be led by 2 Leaders* 2014

ONE This Generous God who gives seed to the farmer that in turn becomes bread for your meal is more than extravagant with each of us.

PEOPLE **We are enriched in every way to be generous in every way, so we can return thanks to God our whole lives through!**

TWO These gifts of generosity which come from our Creator are what provide for the roof overhead and the safety and sustenance of our bodies--

ONE This is the One who provides for the enrichment of our minds and the refreshment of our spirits from infancy to the moment of our last breath.

PEOPLE **We are enriched in every way to be generous in every way, so we can return thanks to God our whole lives through!**

ONE We give thanks for the abundant and bountiful gifts of life and for those who have led the way by example and deed.

TWO We give thanks for the opportunity to participate in providing for those who once cared for and taught us, mothers and fathers, elders in the faith, teachers and disciples carrying the gospel to our generation.

PEOPLE **We are enriched in every way to be generous in every way, so we can return thanks to God our whole lives through!**

ONE We give thanks for those who chose to build homes of care and healing for our loved ones and for those who offer gifts of healing and wholeness for those who are most vulnerable and frail.

(continued)

TWO May your delight in giving, transform not only the lives of those who receive the benefits of care, but in turn, convert your life into endless praise.

PEOPLE **We are enriched in every way to be generous in every way, so we can return thanks to God our whole lives through!**

ONE May you glorify God through the witness to the good news of the risen Christ and by the generosity of your sharing that gospel in all you do. Amen.

Lit4 LITANY OF AGING IN COMMUNITY

2020

LEADER Jesus came that we might have life, abundantly. From our first breath to our last.

PEOPLE **Deeply rooted and daily watered we grow through life's seasons. We are invited to know love through the length of our days.**

LEADER When stillness settles around us, may we receive the gift to "be" in the moment.

PEOPLE **When life drums in our hearts, may we have the courage to dance patterns that connect past and future.**

LEADER Like the mentors who apprenticed our own faith, may we connect generations younger than our years to learn to do justice, walk humbly and love kindness into your future.

PEOPLE **Integrating faith passed to us through the ages with our own experience, may wisdom take root and grow us in our time into true elderhood.**

LEADER With words of hope and an ever-expansive perspective of love, may we give witness to your presence in the world.

PEOPLE **We give thanks for the opportunity to age in this new day--**

LEADER Even as we anticipate the challenges and joy that await us tomorrow.

PEOPLE **For we know that we are created God's image just as we are.**

LEADER God's abundant love now and forever.

ALL **THANKS BE TO GOD. AMEN.**

LEADER When youth is the measure of beauty and strength

PEOPLE **Remind us, you created us to age.**

LEADER When the number of years lived limits or denies a person's worth

PEOPLE **Show us again all are worthy of your love.**

LEADER When we are overlooked, unseen, and unheard because of another's judgement of our years

PEOPLE **Help us find our voice with courage and grace.**

LEADER When we do not fully understand the context around us

PEOPLE **Unstop our pride to ask for clarification.**

LEADER When we feel the distance of years between ourselves and others

PEOPLE: **Unite our generations in respect and love.**

LEADER When we come to realize that we cannot do things alone

PEOPLE **Strengthen us to ask for help.**

LEADER And when we ask for help

PEOPLE **Let us recognize the gift this relationship brings.**

LEADER When we fear our future lives

PEOPLE **Reveal your possibilities which lie beyond the horizon of our experience.**

LEADER When we let go of ideas and things past

PEOPLE **Invite us to let come the inspiration of your future.**

LEADER There is much around us which dismisses the honor of lives based on one's age

ALL: In community may we respect and celebrate the elders and youngers-- all who connect generations past with generations to come. May we be bold and claim the richness of life revealed at every age!

LEADER Like the psalmist we are invited to choose to live in God's house our whole lives long. We yearn for that place where we know goodness and mercy -

PEOPLE **We all yearn for a place of safety and security.**

LEADER We expect comfort in this place we call home—a frequent setting for Jesus' ministry: When the younger son returned home, his father threw a party in the family home. (Luke 15:25)

PEOPLE **For home should be the place where we know a sense of belonging.**

LEADER When Jesus saw Zacchaeus in the tree, he was told to come down and take the rabbi to the tax collector's home. (Luke 19:1-10)

PEOPLE **Hospitality offered and received in our home is a sign of trust and respect.**

LEADER When Martha invited Jesus to her home, she knew it would be a place for her to serve. Her sister Mary knew their home to be a place for learning at the teacher's feet. (Luke 10:38)

PEOPLE **Home can be a place to serve and to learn surrounded by family and friends.**

LEADER In the house of Simon and Andrew, Jesus' presence brought about healing for his mother-in-law and in Capernum, after the roof was lifted, the paralytic was welcomed and healed.
(Mark 1:29)

PEOPLE **In private or joined by close friends and neighbors the power of healing can come at home.**

LEADER After the blind man was healed, Jesus directed him to return to his home, apart and away from the sight of the crowds. (Mark 8:22)

PEOPLE **Home can be a place of refuge and reunion.**

LEADER Healing and Hospitality. Safety and Refuge. Reunion and Belonging.

PEOPLE **Learning and Serving. Working and Being - all are marks of a faithful life.**

LEADER Whether a room or a mansion with many spaces, may we find ways that everyone may claim a place they call home.

PEOPLE **For these reasons and more, we give thanks for the ministry of United Church Homes as together we help to provide appropriate spaces for all of God's children to have a place to dwell their whole life long. AMEN.**

LEADER You who are the link between generations past and future, feel the gravity in this present moment of the gift of your own aging process.

PEOPLE **We are the summation of all the ages we have ever been as we anticipate the time yet to come.**

LEADER Feel the structure of the bones and muscles holding you upright in this place.

PEOPLE **In these bodies we experience the passage of time.**

LEADER Look inside. Deeper still. Recognize the source of your life's satisfaction.

PEOPLE **Frustrating and mysterious, our aging journey takes us inward while experiencing the world around us through the senses of our physical selves.**

LEADER Our personal stories formed along the path of our life experience are our most precious possessions.

PEOPLE **We are connected to each other in community, tied together in mutual respect and support.**

LEADER Each have gifts for the building up of the community, gifts which change in focus and nature throughout our lives.

PEOPLE **As we let go of what we used to do, we must let come changes, no less important nor more valuable in the days ahead.**

LEADER Precious are the gifts you share with others—gracious words, acts of kindness, companionship, a listening ear, service to others—out of your faithfulness to God's love.

PEOPLE **In this good age, I rejoice to know that I am a child of God, servant of Christ, equipped by the presence of the Spirit.**

LEADER May you continue to age abundantly in the fullness of God's love.

BENEDICTIONS

B1 *(based on the Vision, Mission and Values of United Church Homes)*

2016

May you go with the infusion of Christ's COMPASSION--

Finding ways to share the gift of HOSPITALITY--

May you celebrate with RESPECT the diversity of perspectives gathered in each place--

Allowing INTEGRITY to provide you courage to live your convictions.

May you be wise STEWARDS of the gifts God has entrusted to your care

And may you be TRANSPARENT allowing others to see God's love at work in you.

We give thanks for your response to this divine calling as we strive to live into God's vision of Abundant life even as we are woven together into community this day! Amen.

B2

2017

LEADER Created in the image of the One who made heaven and earth, who separated darkness and light and who brought order out of chaos-- may we be the bearers of this sacred force in the world.

PEOPLE **From dust to breath and back again, God creates the possibilities of life and love in us all.**

LEADER Jesus came that we may have life and have it abundantly.

PEOPLE **From youth through age to our very last breath, may our lives be encouraged and redeemed through the One who embodied the power of love.**

LEADER And in the presence of the Spirit who brings life to dry bones and who gives birth to love in places that were thought to be barren --

PEOPLE **May we be enriched and reminded that we are people of the resurrection and even death cannot overcome power of love.**

LEADER May you go with the Spirit who creates Abundant Life as we are called to live in Community. Amen.

B3

2025

May the Creator continue to mold us into a community of Love at work in the world.

May the Redeemer call us through all life's stages to come as we are and continue to grow as followers of Christ Jesus.

And may the Spirit surround all our coming and going, that wisdom may more fully be present in the world. Amen.

HYMN

“We Cannot Own the Sunlit Sky/Abundant Life”

ENDLESS SONG

The New Century Hymnal #563

Verse 1 Ruth Duck, 1984;

verses 2-4 Beth Long-Higgins, 2016

We cannot own the sunlit sky, the moon, the wild-flowers growing,
For we are part of all that is within life's river flowing.
With open hands receive and share the gifts of God's creation,
That all may have abundant life in every earthly nation.

We age through life from birth to death, each breath a gift for blessing
To learn to share God's love for all, our prideful will confessing.
Each day we grow to see the world through eyes that blur divisions
That we may live abundant life, love grounding each decision.

Transforming ways we think and act about life's cycles, Aging!
We seek community through love. Wholeness the view we're staging.
Through Christ we offer life in peace, for elders, wise yet lonesome
That all may live abundant life, their hearts to God are open.

Compassion, Hospitality are offered to each elder
With deep respect and honor given, integrity is shouldered.
As stewards careful of life's gifts, we seek to be transparent
That all may have abundant life, with love for all inherent.