

Beside Still Waters

A liturgy of healing prayer
with the laying on of hands and anointing,
based on Psalm 23

Preparation

Written for two leaders (L1 and L2) and a light bearer.

*A place for kneeling around a cross is prepared in the midst of the assembly.
Small shells or bowls of oil are provided for anointing.*

Write this or another simple prayer on 5" x 7" cards and place one near each bowl of oil:

Jesus Christ,
our savior and shepherd,
fill you with love,
mend you with mercy,
and grant you peace.

If this kind of liturgy is new to those gathered, a music leader may explain the nature of the singing (singing in the dark with no paper resource, chants sung repeatedly, etc.) The musician(s) teach any music that cannot easily be learned during the liturgy itself.

GATHERING

People enter in silence and in near darkness. When all are gathered and silence has deepened and taken root, a simple repetitive chant is sung by the assembly. During this chant, a large lighted candle may be carried in and placed in a stand.

Suggestions for an opening chant:

To you all hearts are open (SP 43)

O God, we call (SP 30)

Nada te turbe / Nothing can trouble (SP 29)

- L1 We gather in the name of the triune God,
our healer, our hope, our only home.
- L2 We come to hear the promises of God,
to pray for healing and for one another,
to give and to receive the anointing of oil
and the laying on of hands,
and to be sent into the world
as wounded healers and bearers of Christ's love.
- L1 The room will be quite dark, inviting silence and stillness
as we immerse ourselves in scripture, song, and prayer.
The music during our prayer is simple and quickly learned.
Our singing is a way of breathing prayer to God.
- L2 After the final blessing, you may remain here in prayer.
When you leave, do so quietly.

Brief silence

- L1 The peace of Christ be with you.
And also with you.

- L1 Let us pray. *(pause)*

Lord Jesus Christ,
by your goodness and mercy
you guide your flock
to still waters and green pastures
where we are restored to life,
life abundant in you,
now and all the days of our lives.
Amen.

Silence

WORD

The musicians introduce a simple song or refrain drawn from Psalm 23, such as Still waters (SP 38) or the refrain of Shepherd me, O God (ELW 780). Then the assembly sings it once or twice. The psalm may be spoken or chanted by a cantor. If the psalm is chanted, choose a psalm tone that can follow and lead into the song or refrain.

Refrain

L1 The LORD is my shepherd,
I shall not be in want.
The LORD makes me lie down in green pastures
and leads me beside still waters.

L2 You restore my soul, O LORD,
and guide me along right pathways
for your name's sake.

Though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death,
I shall fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

Psalm 23:1-4

Refrain

L1 You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil,
and my cup is running over.

L2 Surely goodness and mercy
shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell
in the house of the LORD forever.

Psalm 23:5-6

Refrain

Silence

L1 Let us pray. (*pause*)

Lord Jesus Christ,
our good shepherd,
you give us new birth in the waters of baptism,
you anoint us with oil,
and you nourish us at your table with heavenly food.
In your goodness and mercy,
dispel the shadows of evil and death,
and lead us along safe paths,
that we may rest securely in you
and dwell in the house of the Lord,
now and forever,
for your name's sake.¹⁵
Amen.

A time of silence is kept as the word dwells richly in the assembly.

INVITATION TO LAYING ON OF HANDS AND ANOINTING

L2 A reading from James. (*pause*)

Are any among you suffering? They should pray.
Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise.
Are any among you sick?
They should call for the elders of the church
and have them pray over them,
anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord.
The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up,
and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven.
Therefore confess your sins to one another,
and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. James 5:13-16a

L1 Those who desire the prayer of faith and the laying on of hands
are invited to kneel at one of the cushions provided.
All who are drawn to be part of this ministry are asked to watch
so that no one comes forward and is left kneeling alone—
rise and stand beside those who kneel.