

More Light Sunday 2021
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More Light Sunday 2021

Full Script

Welcome

Rev. Larissa Kwong Abazia & Rev Alex Patchin McNeill

Larissa: Hello everyone! On behalf of the board and staff of More Light Presbyterians, I welcome you to this time of worship for More Light Sunday! I am Rev. Larissa Kwong Abazia, and I am a Co-Moderator of the More Light Presbyterians Board of Directors.

Alex: And I am Rev. Alex Patchin McNeill, executive director at More Light Presbyterians.

We are honored to be worshipping with you for your More Light Sunday. Throughout this service you will hear from a diversity of worship leaders from across the More Light community whose prayers, music, and sermon reflect on the themes of chrysalis and transformation.

Larissa: As we prepared for More Light Sunday we listened deeply to where the Spirit was calling us and noticed that over the past months we have felt this murmur, this hum, this movement of the Spirit, wrapping around us as a chrysalis envelops a caterpillar, drawing us into a cocoon not to hide or escape, but to be transformed.

Alex: As we worship together, you might notice the webbed cocoon at the top of your screen inviting you to reflect -- where are you transforming and where are you invited to be transformed? Like the not-yet butterfly, whose body dissolves entirely from its first form into the winged beauty it will become, this holy work of life and growth brings complete transformation.

Larissa: Throughout the service you'll also see water in a variety of forms. And that is to remind us all of our baptism, a sign and seal that we are God's beloveds, even when we are in that cocoon, even when we cannot see where we are going. So, as we worship together today and as we go out into the world this week and in the weeks to come, remember the water lapping at the shore of your life, remember your baptism, and remember that you are held and loved.

Gathering and Call to Worship

Rev. Shanea D. Leonard

Siblings, let us center our hearts in this moment.....

We enter into this sacred space and place of worship realizing that we do not come alone. Though we may be one in body we are joined in spirit by those whom have gone before and paved the way for us to be here today. We enter into this most holy space on the shoulders of the ancestors. We pour libations and lift their names as we remember and affirm them at this time. And so we share just a few: Marsha P. Johnson, James Baldwin, Langston Hughes, Audrey Lorde, Bayard Rustin, Silvia Rivera, Harvey Milk, Bessie Smith, A. Phillip Randolph, Gilbert Baker, Steve Endean, and so many countless others. I invite you to also offer the names of those whom have paved the way for you to be where you are at this time.....In the spirit of Sankofa we say we are because they were.....

Furthermore, we recognize and affirm that even this land that we have come to know as home is stolen land. And despite the various means of how we all arrived, this will forever be Turtle Island and the home of many known and forgotten indigenous people. And so we

acknowledge this land as hallowed and belonging to the Iroquois, the Delaware, the Sioux, the Makiah, the Chickasaw, the Cherokee, the Navajo, the Dakota, and so many other peoples. We give a moment of silence as we remember the pain and tribulation suffered and yet the strength and richness of cultural heritage.....

And so with the fortitude of Turtle Island and the legacy of our ancestors present, we enter the space with reverence, openness, expectation, and hope. God is with us as we sing praises, lift prayers, smile, laugh, and share together. God is with us as God has called us fully into our beings and who we are, to live and be free and whole. And so we gather.... We gather in the spirit of celebration of pride in who we are. We gather in spirit of koinonia in community. We gather with the essence of love and family. We gather to surrender to the move of the Spirit and the evidence of Christ in our midst. For this is the day that the Lord has made, let's us worship and rejoice together. Ashe and Amen

Opening Music

In My End is My Beginning, Rachel Kroh

arr. Slats Toole

In my end is my beginning. In my beginning is my end.

Prayer for Honesty and Reconciliation

Rev. Ashley DeTar Birt & Rev. Jess Cook

Ashley: God of Connection

We know we are created to be in relationship with each other as we are created to be in relationship with you

We know we belong to each other as we belong to you

And yet so often we forget each other, forget ourselves, and, in turn, forget what you have created us for

We come together today, as a group, as individuals, knowing that one cannot thrive without community and that community cannot heal without honesty from its individuals

In this spirit, let us come together as a community of individuals, and be honest with each other.

Jess: We confess that we too often desire "normal" knowing normal is not a thing that exists.

We are impatient, pushing process and progress for the sake of process and progress, NOT for the sake of justice or kindness.

We allow shame to rule us, partitioning off parts of ourselves instead of celebrating our abundance.

We lack imagination, refusing to open ourselves to the possibility that there CAN be another way to do things, another way to exist together.

Rather than listening and learning, we assume we know better. Or, we assume we know nothing and can never be taught.

We choose rugged individualism over the vulnerability of authentic community.

Ashley: We who are people of color:

Please respect the authorship of all parts of worship.

often internalize the narratives white supremacy feeds us about ourselves, believing lies and stereotypes over the truth of our beauty, wisdom, strength, and power.

We forget the beauty of our bodies and the resilience of our spirits.

Jess: We who are white confess:

That we often take the easy out over the messy through.

We prioritize silence and reductive narratives over complexity, truth, and clarity.

We maintain a lack of imagination, refusing to take seriously that another way is possible.

We prioritize our need for comfort over the lives of the disempowered.

We choose convenience over action, ignorance over understanding.

We ignore our history, without recognizing or caring how doing so imperils our future.

We forget our value is in our belovedness.

Both: **In all of these things, O God:**

We forget we are made for joy

We forget we are made for pleasure

We forget we are made for relationships.

Ashley: We who are cisgender confess:

That we often take the convenient way out over the righteous way through.

We prioritize ignorance and silence over education, solidarity and truth.

We maintain a lack of imagination, refusing to acknowledge life beyond the binary.

We prioritize our need for comfort over the lives of the ones who have created and led the movement.

We choose convenience over action, ignorance over understanding.

We ignore our history, without recognizing or caring how doing so imperils our future.

We forget our value is in our belovedness.

Jess: We who are trans and gender independent:

often internalize the narratives hetero-patriarchy feeds us about ourselves, believing lies and stereotypes over the truth of our beauty, wisdom, strength, and power.

We forget the beauty of our bodies and the resilience of our spirits.

Both: In all of these things, O God:

We forget we are made for joy

We forget we are made for pleasure

We forget we are made for relationships.

Ashley: Let us now take time to be honest with God and ourselves about the truths in our lives that we need to acknowledge.

- Silent prayer -

Assurance

Jess: Friends, As God's beloveds,
We are made for joy.
We are made for pleasure.
We are made for relationships.
We belong to one another,
Just as certainly as we all belong to God.
Know that you are loved.
Know that you are forgiven.
Know that you are valued, that you are worthy and be at peace.
Amen.

First Reading

2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27

Rev. Lee Catoe

After the death of Saul, when David had returned from defeating the Amalekites, David remained two days in Ziklag.

David intoned this lamentation over Saul and his son Jonathan. (He ordered that The Song of the Bow be taught to the people of Judah; it is written in the Book of Jashar.) He said:

Your glory, O Israel, lies slain upon your high places!

How the mighty have fallen!

Tell it not in Gath,

proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon;

or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice,

the daughters of the uncircumcised will exult.

You mountains of Gilboa,

let there be no dew or rain upon you,

nor bounteous fields!

For there the shield of the mighty was defiled,

the shield of Saul, anointed with oil no more.

From the blood of the slain,
from the fat of the mighty,
the bow of Jonathan did not turn back,
nor the sword of Saul return empty.
Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely!

In life and in death they were not divided;
they were swifter than eagles,
they were stronger than lions.

O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
who clothed you with crimson, in luxury,
who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.

How the mighty have fallen
in the midst of the battle!
Jonathan lies slain upon your high places.

I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;
greatly beloved were you to me;
your love to me was wonderful,
passing the love of women.

How the mighty have fallen,
and the weapons of war perished!

Meditation on Psalm 130

Amy Kim Kyremes-Parks

Music

In My End is My Beginning, Rachel Kroh

arr. Slats Toole

In my end is my beginning. In my beginning is my end.

Second Reading

Mark 5:21-43

Rev. Eric Thomas

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered round him; and he was by the lake. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, 'My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.' So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, 'If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.' Immediately her haemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my clothes?' And his disciples said to him, 'You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, "Who touched me?"' He looked all round to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.'

While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?' But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, 'Do not fear, only believe.' He allowed no one to follow him except

Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, 'Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.' And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha cum', which means, 'Little girl, get up!' And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Sermon **Experience Soul Break. Then Kiki.** **Rev. Annanda Barclay**

Musical Response ***In My End is My Beginning, Rachel Kroh*** **arr. Slats Toole**
 I am Here in the Heart of God, Erin McGaughan **arr. Chanda Rule**
 Performed by Slats Toole

I am here in the heart of God, God is here in the heart of me. Like the wave in the water and the water in the wave, I am here in the heart of God.

I am here in the breath of God, God is here in the heart of me. Like the wind in the springtime and the springtime in the wind, I am here in the breath of God.

I am here in the mind of God, God is here in the mind of me. Like the earth in my body and my body in the earth, I am here in the soul of God.

In my end is my beginning. In my beginning is my end.

Affirmation of Faith **Rev. Katie/Moe Mulligan**

Minute for Mission **Rev. Alex Patchin McNeill**

Hello everyone, it is great to be with you for worship! Thank you for the opportunity to share a bit more about More Light Presbyterians -who we are, what we are up to, and why the world needs you to keep shining a beacon of God's liberating love in your communities.

I'm Rev. Alex Patchin McNeill and I have had the honor of serving as More Light Presbyterians' executive director since 2013. We are a national organization supported by over 300 member churches, 20 campus groups, and thousands of individual members.

At More Light Presbyterians, relationships are at the heart of our ministry. Our 40+ years of organizing experience has shown us that relationships are the key to changing hearts and minds towards greater inclusion, towards inviting LGBTQIA+ people to see themselves reflected in the image of God, and as key to working with people of faith leaders to nurture spaces where God's love is known by all.

Over the past 15 months of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been building on MLP's long history of nurturing communities that transcend isolation by offering spaces online for relationships to flourish through online worship, live virtual workshops, and individual pastoral care on the phone and on Zoom. We are emerging from this pandemic with the clarity of the

ongoing deep need for community that spans the distance. We are also clear that white supremacy and the backlash to gains in racial and LGBTQIA+ justice is still ongoing, and that our faith communities have a role to play in disrupting cycles of oppression and injustice.

More Light Presbyterians seeks to be an actively antiracist organization with an intersectional approach to justice for LGBTQIA+ people guided by a God of abundance, seeking liberation, and finding kinship with one another. We are thankful that many in the MLP community are awake to these realities and long for education, encouragement, and empowerment to proactively face and disrupt these realities head on.

At More Light our ministry is to provide resources of support and education to meet people where they are, and create a bridge to relationships of deeper connection to God, to one another, and to the work ahead. We do that through take home webinars called Teach-Ins on topics from transgender inclusion, affirming LGBTQIA youth, and an intersectional approach to racial justice, a Weekly Liberation bible study on facebook live, VPS and pre-recorded worship services.

We invite you to deeper community and connection with us. You can be part of More Light as simply as following us on social media @morelightpresby on Instagram and Twitter, and More Light Presbyterians on Facebook. You can also join us as an individual member by signing up for our email list on our website: www.mlp.org, we'll send you words of encouragement, and you'll be the first to know about resources we are developing to support our community.

While much has changed over the past 8 years in the landscape of LGBTQIA+ inclusion since I've been serving More Light Presbyterians, the fact still remains that faith communities continue to be a life-saving, space of support, celebration, and powerful witness to threats against justice. Thank you for who you are and all you do to share God's love! We are grateful to be in partnership with you. And now let us continue to worship God together.

Prayers of the People

Brooke Scott & Rev. Pepa Paniagua

God of change and new beginnings, we come to you from our various places, to meet with you, to hear from you, and to seek our own transformation. We are drained, we are stubborn, we are wounded, we are stuck - we are like worms and caterpillars trying to find our way to the skies but are unwilling and unable to see beyond our own short sighted vision.

We ask that you breathe new life into all of us who are tired and weary for good reasons - who have been stretched beyond our capacity and resources, who feel like we cannot sing another song or say another word. We pray for those who throughout this pandemic have suffered in body or in spirit, those who have lost loved ones or cared for those who are ill, those who have been separated from loved ones, who have lost jobs and opportunities. We ask that you wrap your arms around all of us who have endured deep isolation, upheaval, and uncertainty through this past year - that you be our peace and refuge. We are also desperate for the world, the church, our communities to change, and for others to take up this work with us. The temptation is to stay wrapped in the safety of the cocoons of our own making- help us to recognize that the cocoon is just the beginning.

We know that we are called to be transformative agents in your world, we are called to be bold, we are called to be proud, we are called to live out loud who you created each of us to be- but we cannot do that if we stay where we are.

As we begin to come out of this pandemic, help us to follow your call out of the muck and mess of the cocoon, however safe it may feel, so we might venture to stretch our wings. We ask that you allow each of us to be transformed in new ways. Heal us from self-hatred and apathy - help us to see ourselves as you see us - as glorious and beloved children of God - help us to stand firmly against what all systems of oppression would have us think. We pray for those for whom transformation and emerging as their true selves is not possible...be it due to circumstances, expense or safety, and we pray that they would know that they are seen and affirmed by You. Heal us mind, body, and spirit. Restore our resolve, our joy, our compassion, our energy, our hunger for justice/liberation & our hope for a good future.

We pray for the Church - for the last year, we have come face to face with the ways that we have harmed our neighbors and the land that you created. As we emerge from this deep crystalis moment, we ask that you heal our dry places, help us to hold fast to what we have seen and heard from the most marginalized among us. As our church doors slowly begin to open again, help us to never be satisfied with normal again. We ask that you heal the places where we have been silent or harmful to one another, the places where we have put doctrine over people, the places where our solidarity has been half-hearted. Help us to recall the rainbow- the sign you chose of your covenant with all people, promising to never again destroy humanity- and when we see the prism of colors flying in a flag or arched across the sky, may we remember that we are called to live out of that same promise. Help us all to remember that you are not a God who delights in the death of the living, and open our hearts and minds to be more faithful to your calls of inclusion, celebration, and true welcome at your table.

Help us, through the power of your Holy Spirit, to uproot and undo the trappings of white supremacy, patriarchy, queerphobia, ableism, and capitalism that have kept us in bondage & have kept us from truly loving our neighbor. We ask that you heal and restore our imaginations for newness and abundance. Whet our appetites for what our buildings and pews could look like, how we could serve better, and how our mission can stretch beyond the church walls. Help us to take your messages of freedom and justice from font and table all the way to the neighborhood, to the street corner, to the courtroom, and to the government offices. Remind us that we are each image bearers who reflect who you are to the world in our own unique identities - queer, lesbian, gay, bi, straight, asexual, Black, Brown, Indigenous, Asian, Latinx, white, cisgender, trans, nonbinary, gender fluid, intersex, disabled, able-bodied, and identiies that are still emerging from the fullness of who you are--all of us who have been created in love, and declared good.

Help us all hold onto to the truth of what is good and let go of what would bind us to the way things have always been, help us be people who are reformed and always reforming, even when it is painful...for it is in the pain, that growth and change happens, where caterpillars are transformed into butterflies. God, help us recognize our own wings, wings given to each of us with space enough for all of us to fly. Help us take flight together, painting a new picture of what your church and world can look like- with wings spread wide casting a prism of every color

and shade through which all might see Your reconciling vision for the liberation of all of Your people.

May we all be guided by the vast abundance of your love and grace and God, in all of your divine queerness, help each of us fly free shining Your light into the world.

Communion

Rev. Lydia Tembo & Rev. Ashley McFaul-Erwin

prayer by Jess Cook

INVITATION

"The Dream Keeper," by Langston Hughes

Lydia: Bring me all of your dreams,
You dreamers,
Bring me all of your
Heart melodies
That I may wrap them
In a blue cloud-cloth
Away from the too-rough fingers
Of the world.

Ashley: Friends,

Wherever you are, know that you are all invited to this feast of communion.
You are invited to bring your dreams and your musings, your fears and your anger,
your resentment and your despair.
You are invited from your sofas, your desks, your porches, your kitchens.
You are invited to the space where these tables become THIS table.
You are invited to bring your whole self,
to be together as part of this beloved community,
of the living, breathing Body of Christ.
So, come.
Eat. Drink. And live.

Ashley: The Lord be with you.

Both: **And also with you.**

Ashley: Lift up your hearts.

Both: **We lift them up to God.**

Ashley: Let us give thanks to God.

Both: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Lydia: God of creation,
we give you thanks that in the beginning you created all that is, seen and unseen.
Dawn and dusk, mountains and valleys, plants and animals,
men, women, and non-binary people,

all created in your image,
all created in love.
And you declared it all good.
You instilled in us a sense of curiosity and wonder,
a desire to be in community with one another
and with the world around us.
You have loved us through the wilderness,
Even when that wilderness was of our own making.
You have loved us even when we haven't been able to love ourselves.
And you have called us your beloveds-
Even when we ran, or were pushed away,
You have called us still, often making a way out of no way.

Both: In all that we do, remind us we are yours.

Ashley: We thank you for Jesus Christ,
whose life and ministry
embodied your abundance for all of us.
Through his life and death
Christ showed us that true strength comes not from power, but from love.
He modeled how to love and forgive even those who offer neither love nor forgiveness
in return.
The atrocity of Jesus' death, transformed
through the miracle of his resurrection,
shows us, O God, that you are always
preparing the way toward freedom
just beyond the boundaries of our imagination.

Both: **We remember his life, the atrocity of his death,
and we bear witness to resurrection all around us.**

Lydia: We thank you for the Holy Spirit, weaving us together as your Body in the world.
The Spirit enlightens us with her holy imagination,
inviting us to co-create a world where all people are known and loved,
where the sick are healed, the hungry are fed,
where freedom is more than an ad campaign,
and where every child is born into a world waiting to love them into the fullness of their
being.
We thank you for the invitation to do this work,
and for your sometimes heavy hand on our shoulder.
We thank you for the Spirit's presence found in the many shoulders we have leaned on,
and through the mighty shoulders on which we stand.

We are weary. As we grow weary, remind us
that we are held, that we are holy,
and that we belong to one another just as fully as we belong to you.

Both: **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the power and the kingdom and the glory forever. Amen

Ashley: So, now, as you pick up the bread before you. Take it and hold it, feel the texture of the bread in your hands. And as you do so, remember that, on the last night of his life Jesus gathered with the people who knew him best, and they shared a meal. Amidst the chaos of the world, the room where Jesus and the disciples sat was calm, filled with the smells of good food and laughter shared among chosen family.

And it was in this setting, among the scrappy group of folks who'd said yes to the invitation to follow him, that Jesus leaned into the vulnerable space and asked to be remembered.

Taking the bread, Jesus blessed and broke it and gave it to them saying: Take, eat. Whenever you do this, remember me. Remember my body - my flesh and my bones. remember my actions – what I stood for, and what I refused to accept.

Lydia: And now, as you take the cup, and you see its color and smell the aroma, remember that Jesus also took the cup; and, pouring it, he said: Take, drink. Remember my blood, shed unjustly because I refused to give in to a death-dealing status. Whenever you do this, remember me.

[break bread and dip it in the cup]

Prayer After Communion

Ashley: Gracious God,
you are the author and giver of all good things.
We give you thanks and praise for the gift of life,
For the meal we shared, and for the gift of remembering that we
Are your people.

Keep us nourished by this meal,
And by this community.
Keep us grounded in the ways in which you feed us,
And in the ways we are all hungry.

We pray these things through Jesus Christ. Amen

Benediction

Rev. Annanda Barclay