

Growing in Grace and Knowledge

La Sierra University Church • Riverside, California • January 12 to February 2, 2008

Preparing

During the organ prelude, you are invited to reflect on these challenging sentences by Ellen White:

“Whenever the people of God are growing in grace, they will be constantly obtaining a clearer understanding of His Word.

They will discern new light and beauty in its sacred truths.

This has been true in the history of the church in all ages, and thus it will continue to the end.”

—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 706

The years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ.

As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase.

The more [the redeemed] learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character.”

—The Great Controversy, p. 678

Inviting

The pastoral host says:

May the grace of God the Source of all being,
the truth of God the eternal Word,
and the peace of God the ultimate Presence
be with each of you.

The congregation is invited to join the service leader in reading the words in bold type:

And also with you.

The pastor makes announcements as necessary and then says:

Let us thank our generous God,
who offers us both present fulfillment
and an unending future.

Let us own ourselves and all others
as parts of God’s good creation.

Let us respond in gratitude to God
and respect for all creation.

Let us give thanks for holy time,
in which we experience ourselves as gifts
and celebrate the God who gives.

Amen.

The congregation is invited to stand and join the cantor in singing the following words to the tune of hymn 274 (“Munich”):

**O Word of God incarnate,
O Wisdom from on high,
O Truth unchanged, unchanging,
O light of clouded sky.
We praise you for the radiance
that from the hallowed page,
a lantern to our footsteps,
shines forth from age to age.**

Please remain standing as the pastor prays:

Holy God, you created all things good,
you revealed your gift of salvation,
and you continue to share with us
your life, knowledge, and love.
Fill us with a vision of your goodness,
so that we may live
as your grateful and joyful people,
loving and serving you in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Please be seated.

Growing

After time for reflection, the service leader says:

The apostle challenges us today
to “grow in the grace and knowledge
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**“To him be the glory both now
and to the day of eternity.”**

Jesus promised that those who seek will find,
and to those who knock the door will be opened.

**So now we pray for purity of heart
and clarity of mind,
that we may find and understand.**

Jesus also promised that the Spirit of truth
would come to lead us into more truth.

**We pray for openness to that Spirit,
so that we may continue to learn and grow
toward the fullness of grace and knowledge,
and in love, joy, and peace.**

Recognizing how we have been led step by step

by God's Spirit in the past
we look forward to an eternity of advancement
in the height and depth and breadth
of God's truth.

Alleluia! Amen.

Praying

After a time for reflection, the service leader continues:

If we confess our sin,
God who is faithful and just will forgive us
and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

So we join together in confession and prayer.

From lack of reverence for truth,
from calculating or sentimental thinking—

O God, deliver us.

From cowardice that dares not face truth,
from laziness that is content with half-truth,
from arrogance that thinks it has all the truth—

O God, deliver us.

From being content with things as they are
in ourselves, in the church, and in the world,
from confusing faith with good feelings
and love with wanting to be loved—

O God, deliver us.

From everything in us
that hides or distorts the truth of your love—

O God, deliver us.

Amen.

*The cantor sings the following words
to the tune of hymn 316 ("Aurelia"):*

Live out your life within us,
O Savior, King of Kings,
Your love will be the answer
to all our questionings.
Live out your life within us;
in all things have your way.
We the transparent medium
your kindness to display.

*The service leader may remind the congregation
of special blessings and special needs.
and then says:*

I invite you to kneel and join me in the prayer
Jesus taught his disciples:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial,

and deliver us from the evil one.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory

are yours now and forever.

Amen.

Source of all reality, you breathe life
into the human reality you have made
in your own image.

Renew our world with your grace and mercy.

Turn rejection into acceptance, and war into peace.

Loving God, hear our prayer.

Let us each pray for the leaders of nations.

Please pray silently for several moments.

Source of all compassion, you know far better than we
how much your healing touch is needed.

Heal the sick, comfort the sorrowing,

befriend the lonely, inspire the discouraged.

Loving God, hear our prayer.

Let us each pray for someone in special need.

Please pray silently for several moments.

Source of all truth and knowledge,

you have created human minds to seek and know.

Illumine all who, here and elsewhere,

seek to understand the reality you have created

and the truth you have revealed.

Loving God, hear our prayer.

Let us each pray for a student, teacher,
or staff member

in our elementary school, academy, or university.

Please pray silently for several moments.

Gracious God, empower us and all who believe

to hear your word, know your truth,

and live up to our possibilities for good.

Amen.

Please be seated.

Listening

The first reader prays:

Grant, O God, that the word you speak to us today
may take root in our minds, flourish in our hearts,
and bear fruit in our lives.

Amen.

Listen for God's word to you today in the words of

_____, chapter ___, verses __ to __.

After the reading:

This ends the reading.

Thanks be to God for these words.

*After several moments of silence
for reflection on the reading, the pastor says:*

Please join in reading responsively from Psalm _____
on the sheet that accompanied
your worship folder.

*Following the Psalm, and several moments of silence
for reflection, the second reader prays:*

O God, amid all the words
that surround us every day
enable us to hear clearly and distinctly
your own word to us just now.

Amen.

Listen for God's word to you today in the words of
_____, chapter ___, verses __ to __.

After the reading:

This ends the reading.

Thanks be to God for these words.

*After time for reflection, the cantor sings these words
to the tune of hymn 271 ("Bread of Life"):*

Break now the bread of life, Savior, to me,
as you once broke the loaves beside the sea.
Beyond the sacred page, I seek you, Lord;
my spirit longs for you, O Living Word.

Please join the cantor in singing a second stanza:

**Bless now the truth, O Christ, to me, to me,
as you once blessed the bread by Galilee.
Then shall all bondage cease, all shackles fall, and I
shall find my peace, my all in all.**

The service leader says:

I invite you to stand to hear the Gospel.

O God, as we listen to your word,
grant us anew the joy of salvation now,
and the hope of everlasting life.

Amen

Listen for God's word to you today in the words of
the Gospel according to _____, chapter ____.
verses __ to __.

After the reading:

The gospel of Jesus Christ!

Thanks be to God for the gospel.

Please be seated.

Giving

*After several moments of silence
for reflection on the Gospel reading,
the service leader says:*

With gladness let us present to God
the offering of our life and labor.

**Everything in heaven and on earth belongs to God,
so what we give is part of what is already God's.
Amen.**

The offering is received from the congregation.

Singing

The cantor says:

I invite you to stand and join in singing hymn _____.

After the hymn, please remain standing.

Considering

The homilist prays:

O God, do not let us stray from you, the Way,
or misunderstand you, the Truth,
or worship anything other than you, the Life.

Amen.

Please be seated.

*The homilist briefly expounds the meaning
of one or more of the Scripture readings.*

Affirming

After a period of silent reflection, the service leader says:

I invite you to stand
and join in an affirmation of our faith.

**You, O God, have created heaven and earth
and everything in them.**

You have created humanity, male and female,
in your own image.

**You have established Sabbath time,
sign and source of liberation and rest,
of renewal and fulfillment.**

You have called prophets and rulers—
to proclaim truth and enact justice.
 You have become human and lived with us—
**announcing grace, granting freedom,
 and ministering to the poor;**
 empowering women, breaking down barriers,
 and building community;
**Suffering and crucified, risen and glorified,
 ministering now and always on our behalf.**
 You call the church to proclaim your love—
**to accept all people, practice reconciliation,
 and embody hope.**
 You preserve our past—
**keeping rich memories alive,
 making the past present in new ways,
 and ensuring that nothing good is ever lost.**
 You draw us toward our future—
**presenting new possibilities of grace,
 offering new challenges for action,
 and creating new opportunities for joy.**
 We look forward to the redemption of history
 and the defeat of death—
**to the end of enmity
 and the ultimate triumph of love.**
*Please remain standing and join the cantor in singing
 another stanza to the tune of hymn 274:*

**O make your church, dear Savior,
 a lamp of purest gold,
 to bear before all people
 your true light, new and old.
 O teach your faithful pilgrims
 by this their path to trace,
 till doubt and striving ended,
 they meet you face to face.**

Please remain standing.

Reflecting

The pastor says:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart
 and with all your soul
 and with all your strength
 and with all your mind.

Amen.

To God be glory, now and forever!

Alleluia!

After the organ chimes, please be seated,

*Please remain in silent prayer and reflection
 until the conclusion of the postlude.*

Blessing

The pastor says:

May you continue always
 to grow in the grace and knowledge
 of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Thanks be to God! Amen!

Scripture Readings for Coming Sabbaths

Ordinary Time

January 12 (<i>Baptism</i>)	Isaiah 42:1-9	<i>Psalm 29</i>	Acts 10:34-43	Matthew 3:13-17
January 19	Isaiah 49:1-7	<i>Psalm 40:1-11</i>	1 Cor. 1:1-9	John 1:29-42
January 26	Isaiah 9:1-4	<i>Psalm 27-1,4-9</i>	1 Cor. 1:10-18	Matthew 4:12-23
Feb. 2 (<i>Transfiguration</i>)	Exodus 24:12-18	<i>Psalm 99</i>	2 Peter 1:16-21	Matthew 17:1-9

Anticipating the Passion of Christ

February 9	Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7	<i>Psalm 32</i>	Romans 5:12-18	Matthew 4:1-11
February 16	Genesis 12:1-4a	<i>Psalm 121</i>	Romans 4:1-5,13-17	John 3:1-17
February 23	Exodus 17:1-7	<i>Psalm 95</i>	Romans 5:1-11	John 4:5-15