

A LITURGY FOR NEW YEAR'S EVE FOR FIRST FREE CHURCH

PREPARE

- If able, gather around a table with friends and family
- Make sure everyone has a copy of the printed or digital liturgy
- Assign readers for the introduction, Scripture readings, and closing prayer, inviting all to pray the bold words.

READ

Introduction

We serve a God who creates; a God who re-creates, a God who renews, who restores, who refreshes, who revives, who resuscitates, and even resurrects; A God Who Makes Things New.

He is a God whose steadfast love never ceases, whose mercies never fail; in fact, they are made new every morning, with the dawning of every single new day. God says, "Behold, I make all things new."

As we enter into a new year, we want to focus our hearts and minds on the God who makes new and on the new life He has given us in Jesus Christ.

Through Jeremiah, God promised to make a new covenant with His people.

Through Isaiah He declared, "Behold, I am doing a new thing."

To make this a reality, God sent His Son.

Jesus came with a new teaching; teaching with authority. Even His enemies said, "This is new; this is unprecedented; no one ever spoke like this man."

He said there's a new birth. Will you be born again and live like a child?

He said the new wine of the Spirit could not be contained in the old wineskins; new wineskins would be needed; the kind that could stretch and make space for our souls fermentation — spiritual transformation.

He said there's a new commandment: love one another in a way that looks like washing each others feet.

Paul would describe this new birth as the creation of a new self that is clothed with Christ and led by God's Spirit; the old self dies and is buried; the new self is raised to walk in newness of life – just like a newborn baby.

The old things have passed away, behold new things have come!

We share in the blessings of God's new covenant, with a better priest, a better sacrifice, and better promises.

In Christ we have a new mindset, a new agenda, a new way of being human.

We have the hope and promise of a new heaven and a new earth, the new Jerusalem, where we will receive a new name and sing a new song. The former things will be no more.

The One who sits on the throne says, "Behold, I am making all things new."

A Reading from Psalm 8

Lord, our Lord,

how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory

in the heavens.

Through the praise of children and infants

you have established a stronghold against your enemies,

to silence the foe and the avenger.

When I consider your heavens,

the work of your fingers,

the moon and the stars,

which you have set in place,

what is mankind that you are mindful of them,

human beings that you care for them?

You have made them a little lower than the angels

and crowned them with glory and honor.

You made them rulers over the works of your hands;

you put everything under their feet:

all flocks and herds,

and the animals of the wild,

the birds in the sky,

and the fish in the sea,

all that swim the paths of the seas.

Lord, our Lord,

how majestic is your name in all the earth!

A Reading from Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:
a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.

What do workers gain from their toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God.

A Reading from Revelation 21:1-7

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

DISCUSS

Q1: Looking back on 2023, invite the Holy Spirit to bring to mind one or two moments that felt like gifts from God. (Take a couple minutes to focus and remember before sharing).

Q2: How about one or two things you had to grieve in 2023, or are still grieving?

Q2: What are your hopes, dreams, or goals (or resolutions) for 2024?

Q3: If you had to have a goal or dream for 2024 that only God could accomplish, what would it be? (Examples: seeing my sister come to know Jesus, starting a non-profit, etc.)

PRAY

*God of new beginnings, God of sacred endings,
we gather today in the fresh light of morning,
in this in-between time and space,
unsure of what the future holds...
awaiting transformation, renewal, the chance to begin again.*

Our times are in Your hands, O God / give us hope for the journey.

*We have traveled through dangers seen and unseen,
we have tiptoed through dark nights of the souls
and wrestled against powers that should have kept us down.*

Our times are in Your hands, O Lord / give us courage for the journey.

*Encourage us to be ever mindful of Your Still Speaking Voice;
to dance without fear when the morning has come,
and to know that with the coming of Your Light
fear must release its death-grip on our lives.*

Our times are in Your hands, O God / give us light for the journey.

*Today we stand in this present moment,
Lamenting the broken places in our city, our country, and our world,
angered by the polarizing division of politics, exasperated with the go-nowhere arguments,
repenting of the places we've allowed racism, greed, and apathy to run wild,
and grieving the growing numbers of deaths by gun violence, mental illness,
and an epidemic of loneliness.*

Our times are in Your hands, O God / give us justice for the journey.

*The future stretches out before us full of mystery and full of surprise.
We need You, God of New Beginnings, to set the course,
and guide our feet in the way of righteousness.*

**Our times are in Your hands, Triune God
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: You alone give new life. Amen.**