

Below are some resources to use for common elements prepared by the Rev. Dr. David Bahr, pastor of Park Hill Congregational UCC, Denver. Please feel free to follow the familiar patterns of worship in your congregation.

Invitation to Worship—excerpt from the UCC Statement of Faith¹

One: This month is the 60th anniversary of the founding of the United Church of Christ. This is what united us:

All: God calls us into the church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship,

One: to be servants in the service of others,

All: to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil,

One: to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table,

All: and to join him in his passion and victory.

One: God promises to all who trust,

All: forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace,

One: courage in the struggle for justice and peace,

All: God's presence in trial and rejoicing,

One: and eternal life in God's realm which has no end. This is what united us then,

All: And it is still what unites us now. Let us worship God!

Invocation²

One: Let us pray.

All: God of city dwellers, mountain skiers and highland farmers, God of developing nations and of industrial powers, God of laborers and of administrators, your people speak many languages and experience you in many ways. From the mountains and streams of Colorado to the arches and peaks of Utah and the high plains of Wyoming, let us experience your presence in our church today and throughout the Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Church of Christ. Help us to hear you today and to discern your will for our lives. Amen.

Opening Hymn – Holy, Holy, Holy – #277 in the New Century Hymnal

Gospel Reading – Matthew 28: 16-20

¹ Adapted by David Bahr

² From 2015 Rocky Mountain Conference Worship in a Box

Scripture Text for Sermon – Genesis 1:1-2:4

Options:

1) Read the whole Genesis passage

2) Or read only Genesis 1: 1-2 and then use James Weldon Johnson's *The Creation* below as a creative alternative to tell the rest of this very familiar story. It could be read by one person or by multiple readers.

3) Read both the whole passage and the James Weldon Johnson piece

***The Creation* by James Weldon Johnson, from "God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse,"**

1927:

(This version uses female pronouns for God. Please use what is appropriate for your congregation.)

God stepped out on space,

And looked around and said:

"I'm lonely-

I'll make me a world."

And far as the eye of God could see Darkness covered everything,

Blacker than a hundred midnights down in a cypress swamp.

Then God smiled,

And the light broke,

And darkness rolled up on one side,

And the light stood shining on the other,

And God said: *"That's good!"*

Then God reached out and took the light in Her hands,

And God rolled the light around in Her hands Until She made the sun:

And She set that sun a-blazing in the heavens.

And the light that was left from making the sun,

God gathered it up in a shining ball and flung it against the darkness,

Spangling the night with the moon and stars.
Then down between the darkness and the light
God hurled the world;
And God said: "*That's good!*"

Then God herself stepped down
And the sun was on Her right hand,
And the moon was on Her left:
The stars were clustered about Her head,
And the earth was under Her feet.
And God walked, and where She trod Her footsteps hollowed the valleys out
And bulged the mountains up.
Then She stopped and looked and saw that the earth was hot and barren.
So God stepped over to the edge of the world
And She spat out the seven seas;
She batted Her eyes, and the lightnings flashed
She clapped Her hands, and the thunders rolled
And the waters above the earth came down,
The cooling waters came down.

Then the green grass sprouted,
And the little red flowers blossomed,
The pine tree pointed his finger to the sky,
And the oak spread out his arms,
The lakes cuddled down in the hollows of the ground,
And the rivers ran down to the sea;
And God smiled again,
And the rainbow appeared,
And curled itself around Her shoulder.

Then God raised Her arms and She waved Her hand Over the sea and over the land,

And She said: *"Bring forth! Bring forth!"*

And quicker than God could drop Her hand,

Fishes and fowls

And beasts and birds

Swam the rivers and the seas,

Roamed the forests and the woods,

And split the air with their wings.

And God said: *"That's good!"*

Then God walked around,

And God looked around,

On all that She had made.

She looked at Her sun,

And She looked at Her moon,

And She looked at Her little stars;

She looked on Her world With all its living things,

And God said: *"I'm still lonely."*

Then God sat down On the side of a hill where She could think;

By a deep, wide river She sat down;

With Her head in Her hands,

God thought and thought,

Till She thought: *"I'll make me a human!"*

Up from the bed of the river

God scooped the clay;

And by the bank of the river She kneeled Her down;

And there the great God Almighty
Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky,
Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the night,
Who rounded the earth in the middle of Her hand;
This Great God,
Like a mammy bending over her baby,
Kneeled down in the dust
Toiling over a lump of clay
Till She shaped it in Her own image;
Then into it She blew the breath of life,
And the human became a living soul.
Amen. Amen.

Sermon – (See Sermon Document)

Hymn – *Called as Partners in Christ’s Service* - #495 in the New Century Hymnal

Offering Prayer³

God of all things bright and beautiful, all things great and small, all things wise and wonderful, we thank you. We pray that with these gifts and offerings you will multiply them into works of compassion and justice for your creation – for all things bright and beautiful, all things great and small, all things wise and wonderful. You are the God of all. Amen

Closing Hymn – *O For a World* – #575 in the New Century Hymnal

Or – Lead On Eternal Sovereign - #573 in the New Century Hymnal

Benediction—UCC Statement of Mission⁴

As we leave this place, empowered by the Holy Spirit, let us remember our calling:

³ David Bahr

⁴ From 1987 Conference on Mission, Houston, Texas, adopted by General Synod XVI – a joint statement developed by liberal and conservative members of the UCC; adapted by David Bahr

- To praise God, confess our sin, and joyfully accept God's forgiveness;
- To proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our suffering world;
- To embody God's Love for all people;
- To hear and give voice to creation's cry for justice and peace;
- To name and confront the powers of evil within and among us;
- To repent our silence and complicity with the forces of chaos and death;
- To preach and teach with the power of the living Word;
- To join oppressed and troubled people in the struggle for liberation;
- To work for justice, healing, and wholeness of life;
- To embrace the unity of Christ's church;
- To discern and celebrate the present and coming reign of God.

With the peace of Christ, go now into all the world. Amen.