



*Created by Room for All with contributions by Rev. Katherine Lee Baker and Rev. Jeremy Bork*

Based on Revised Common Lectionary Texts for  
Sunday June 18, 2023 – *Third Sunday after Pentecost*

Genesis 18:1-15, (21:1-7) • Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19 • Exodus 19:2-8a  
Psalm 100 • Romans 5:1-8 • Matthew 9:35-10:8, (9-23)

### **LECTIONARY NOTES FOR CONSIDERATION**

Genesis 18 tells the familiar story of Sarah laughing at God’s promise to give her and Abraham children. Don’t jump to the easy conclusion that Sarah doesn’t have enough faith or is the “bad guy” in this story. Queer your perspective: is it possible Sarah’s is an experience outside the gender norms? She shouldn’t be able to have kids, biologically. In a similar way, LGBTQIA+ folks have been often made to believe that their bodies, needs, and identities are impossible to love or include. When God comes to us and tells us something we believe is impossible, isn’t a scoff or a laugh the reasonable answer? How do we unmake the false belief that some of us are worthless to God, or our bodies and identities can never fulfill God’s promises?

Matthew 5 pictures Jesus deputizing the disciples to cleanse lepers, cast out spirits, and face persecution in Christ’s name. Too often LGBTQIA+ people hear this passage and are compared to the lepers and those with unclean spirits; “God brings in the outsider! God heals those who are broken or ill!” Imagine a different perspective, in which LGBTQIA+ people are compared to the disciples: those sent into unsafe conditions to spread a message of radical love. Can we imagine that unclean spirits and leprosy are perhaps not LGBTQIA+ identities, but maybe more analogous to the sins of homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia (and misogyny, ableism, racism, etc)? Think outside the box here, and if you’re cisgender, heterosexual, white, and or male, consider what groups you’re inclined to compare to the lepers, and which groups are the disciples.

**CALL TO WORSHIP** (Option 1 - based on Psalm 100)

Leader: Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!

**All: Worship the LORD with gladness; come into God's presence with singing!**

Know that the LORD is God.

**It is She who made us,**

And we are Hers;

**We are God's people,**

and the sheep of Their pasture.

**Enter His gates with thanksgiving,**

Enter God's courts with praise.

**Give thanks to God!**

For the LORD is good; God's steadfast love endures forever, and God's faithfulness to all generations.

**CALL TO WORSHIP** (Option 2 – based on Psalm 116:1-2, 12-14)

Leader: I love the Lord,

**All: Because the Lord has heard my voice and my supplications.**

I love the Lord,

**Because the Lord has listened when I call.**

What shall I return to the Lord for all Their bounty to me?

**I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord!**

What shall I return to the Lord for Their faithfulness to me?

**I will give praise to the Lord in the presence of all Their people!**

Come, let us worship the Lord!

**LITANY OF THANKSGIVING FOR ROOM FOR ALL**

Leader: Scripture shows us,

**All:**

**Some are thrown out of God's house.**

Even in the church of Jesus Christ,

**Even in the Reformed Church in America,**

Some have been thrown out of God's house.

**Some have felt thrown out through isolation,**

Some have left in righteous anger,

**Some have been made to feel that God has left their house of worship.**

By the work of the Holy Spirit our Advocate, Room for All advocates:

**Not to speak its own thoughts,**

but whatever it hears, whatever is heard;

**to speak the stories from siblings in Christ who are marginalized because of their sexual orientation or gender identity:**

Stories that God ultimately rejects them;

**We hear this story.**

Stories that who they are and whom they love are disordered and sinful;

**We hear this story.**

Stories that they are disease-makers, and deserving of disease;

**We hear this story.**

Stories that they make up their experiences;

**We hear this story.**

Stories of further exclusion because of race and ethnicity;

**We hear this story.**

Stories of exclusion because of disabilities, both visible and invisible;

**We hear this story.**

Stories of "Now is not the time for this fight for justice."

**We hear this story.**

With these stories and so many others,

we are called to advocate alongside those seeking justice because truly,

**There is Room for All in God's house.**

Holy Spirit our Comforter and Advocate,

**Preserve and protect our work and Room for All's work. May the lives of each of God's children flourish and grow in all their diversity. May we hear these stories and continue on the path toward justice. Amen.**

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION** (Option 1 – based on Genesis 18 and Psalm 116)

Leader: Spirit of welcome, hospitality, and hope.  
We confess that we have taken ourselves too seriously, laughed in the face of your promises, and failed to champion your grace.  
We have so easily misplaced our trust, too sincerely relied on our own stories, and (without much thought) given into the overwhelm of feeling hampered and helpless.  
Remind us, once more, that you receive our cry and our supplications.  
Help us to return to your sacred truth, focus on your precious vision, and cultivate your tender love.  
May we live as your holy people, faithful witnesses, and imperfect laborers seeking to reconcile your whole world back to you.

All: Amen.

**WORDS OF ASSURANCE** (Option 1 – based on Genesis 18 and Psalm 116)

Leader: Our God is a God who conspires goodness for us –even when it seems strange, unlikely, and downright hilarious.  
Our God is a God who never ceases believing in us, receiving us, and redeeming us –even when it feels inconceivable.  
May we ever and always return to this truth, vision, and love (time and time again). For these are our vows we share together as God’s people.

All: Amen.

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION – LITANY** (Option 2 – based on Exodus 19:2-8a)

Leader: We gather, Lord  
All: **At the foot of the mountain**  
We gather, Lord  
**Under the shadow of your wings**  
And we confess, oh God, that we have failed  
**We have failed to obey your commands**

We have failed to keep your covenant  
**We confess, oh God, that we have failed**  
In ways too numerous to count.  
**Have mercy on us, oh Lord.**

### **WORDS OF ASSURANCE** (Option 2 – based on Romans 5:1-5)

Leader: Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

**All: Through God we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand!**

We boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God!

**We also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,**  
endurance produces character,

**and character produces hope,**

and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

**Amen.**

### **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

Leader: Guide us, Oh Lord, by your Word and Holy Spirit, that together we may uncover your truth for your beloved people.

**All: Amen.**

### **PASTORAL PRAYER**

Leader: Generous God, your steadfast love endures forever and your faithfulness to all generations. In response, you invite us to hold the needs of others as dear to us as our own needs.

**All: Loving our neighbors as ourselves, we offer our prayers...**

When we find ourselves lost in the wilderness, wondering when the wandering will end, speak to us the truest promises of your love and presence. Still all those other voices so we might hear yours alone.

**May we know and believe we are your treasure.**

Through dreams and visions, you broaden the horizon and hope of your people, that we may discover the meaning of your covenant, even during trial and exile. You have compassion on the harassed and helpless. You are near to the brokenhearted. You receive without judgment and give without payment.

**Soften us to do the same.**

O God, we know the harvest is plentiful. There is more work to be done for justice and inclusion than we can bear. Transform our feelings of “it’s too much” into “we are the ones we’ve been waiting for.” And when we need the right words to speak against the horrors happening in our communities, this country, and the world, fill us with unwavering wisdom, courage, and grace.

**Silence is no longer an option.**

When we are faced with the refusal to be heard or understood, transform us to embody lovingkindness unconditionally. Help us to be co-creators of that sacred space where travelers can find refuge, whether it is a rest stop on a weary soul’s journey or a new home for a wanderer. Embolden us to shake the dust off the sole of our feet and any shame from our soul within...

**So together we might cultivate a world where everyone belongs.**

Hear our prayers that we may love you with our whole being and continue to willingly share the concerns of our neighbors.

**Amen.**

### **CHILDREN’S MESSAGE**

You might choose to read aloud [\*Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag\*](#) by Rob Sanders, Illustrated by Steven Salerno

**—and/or—**

Ask the group: What is a symbol?

Hold up the Symbols of Hope Printout (attached at the end of this resource packet), and ask: Here are some symbols we might recognize. How does seeing these symbols give us hope?

Harvey Milk was a Jewish man from New York, who moved to San Francisco, California and became one of the first openly gay people to be elected to office in the United States. He knew that symbols carried a lot of meaning, and with his artist friend, Gilbert Baker, dreamed up the rainbow flag to give hope to people who were scared to help them find a loving, welcoming community.

“You have to give them hope,” he said in 1978. “Hope for a better world, hope for a better tomorrow, hope for a better place to come to if the pressures at home are too great. Hope that all will be all right.” —Harvey Milk

In Romans 5, we hear about hope: “We boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God! We also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope...” And this is the part I especially want you to remember— “...and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”

Every June, and all through the year, the rainbow flag serves as a symbol of hope and celebration of the LGBTQIA+ community. Flying or displaying that flag is one way that we can show that God’s love, and our church has room for all.

Will you pray with me?

*Beloved God, who loves us all, thank you for your good plans in the uncertainty of life. Please help us on the days we find it hard to be hopeful, and abide with us as we share our hope with others. Amen.*

### **AFFIRMATION OF FAITH\***

Leader: Joyfully we confess our faith in God’s sovereignty in determining God’s call on our lives, including how we express our personal identities, using the words of Psalm 139:

**All: “We praise you, O God, because each of us is fearfully and wonderfully made! For it was you who formed my inward parts. You knit me together in my**

**mother's womb. Wonderful are your works, I know that very well! My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.**

We therefore affirm that God alone prescribes who we are to be. In response to God's proclamation, we form our identity in relationship with God. Just as God determines whether we are right or left-handed, God weaves our gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation into our very being. No elements of our personal identity are more inextricable!

People whose identities do not conform to dominant societal norms— lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transgender, asexual, and gender non-conforming identities—are gifts of God to humanity.

They reveal that God's astonishing and diverse creativity surpasses our limited human understanding. Therefore, it is a sin to disparage people if they do not conform to society's heterosexual norms and binary assignments of gender. The Bible affirms that God alone has primary authority over the gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation that God has ordained for each of us.

**Each person's unique expression of our God-given identity reflects the mysterious perfection in which we were made.**

In our Christian witness, we believe it is fitting to proclaim God's primary authority in determining each person's gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation.

**No human being should attempt to prescribe personal identity for another.**

We acknowledge that it takes tremendous faith in God for people to express God-given identities that diverge from societal norms.

**The pastoral role of the church is to affirm each person's God-given identity and to uphold our faith in God's primary authority over who we are to be.**



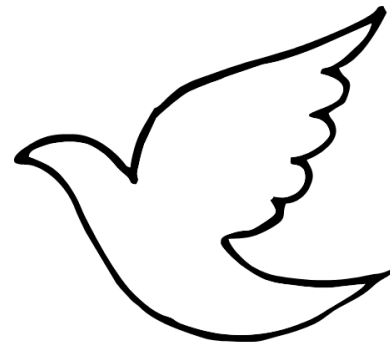
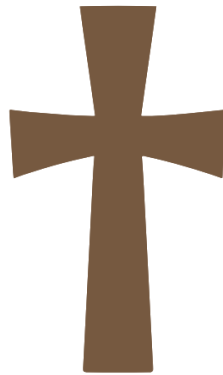
## **HYMNS, ANTHEMS, MUSIC**

- [Lectionarysong.blogspot](#) has a list of songs, hymns, and music which tie into the lectionary texts for June 18, 2023.
- [Songs written specifically for Room for All](#)
  - “Room for All” by Lorraine Nelson Wolf
  - “God’s Love is Wide” by Rev. Emily and Matt Ratering-Youngberg
  - “I Lift Up My Heart” by Paul Janssen
- [PDF music for LGBTQIA+ affirming songs](#)
- The Hymn Society has published 50+ LGBTQIA+ affirming selections in [Songs for the Holy Other](#)

\*The Affirmation of Faith comes from a document created by Rev. David Groeneveld, Rev. Elizabeth Estes, Rev. Stephanie Kaper-Dale, Rev. George Montanari, and Rev. Samir Youssef with contributors Rev. Jeff Knol and Arthur Peslak.

Adapted from “Affirmed and Celebrated: A Reformed Theology of Inclusion,” a report by Classis of New Brunswick, found in the RCA’s 2021 GS Workbook, <https://www.rca.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Appendix-Affirmed-and-Celebrated-2019.pdf>

# SYMBOLS OF HOPE





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