Sunday, March 13, 2016

CELEBRATE!!!

PRESBYTERIAN COMMITTEE ON THE SELF-DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE SUNDAY

For resources visit pcusa.org/sdop: hymns, liturgical suggestions, stories about community partners and more!

**Promote Justice* **Build Stronger Communities* **Seek Economic Equity*

A ministry of the:

PRESBYTERIAN COMMITTEE ON THE
Self-Development of People

"People Investing in People"

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

502.569.5781 www.pcusa.org/sdop

SELF-DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE MINISTRY

When Jesus read the scriptures in the Nazareth synagogue (Luke 4:14–21), he chose verses from Isaiah as his text: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

Jesus of Nazareth befriended and assisted poor and oppressed people, and taught his followers the same responsibility. Through the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People (SDOP), the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) lives out the primary responsibility taught by Jesus and demonstrates its solidarity with poor people here in the United States and around the world.

Self-Development of People affirms God's concern for people by participating in the empowerment of economically poor, oppressed and disadvantaged people by establishing partnerships with low-income community groups.

SDOP Core Focus:

**Promote Justice*

Amos 5:24 – "Let justice run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream"

**Build Stronger Communities*

Isaiah 65: 21-22 "And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands."

**Seek Economic Equity*

Matthew 20: 1-16 "As a symbol for God, a landowner is persistently seeking laborers for his vineyard. What he promises each, regardless of how long they work, is enough wage to provide for life. This is not a parable about how to run a business but a parable that exposes the radical generosity of God and God's deep concern that everyone be able to sustain life."

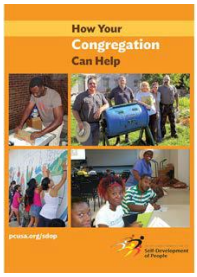
SDOP HYMNS

Two hymns celebrate SDOP's ministry. The first was written in 1996 by Jane Parker Huber; the second in 2008, by John A. Dalles. Both are included here, with permission to reproduce for ONE-TIME worship use.

IN YOUR CONGREGATION

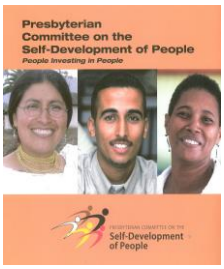
- Invite participants of a nearby SDOP project to offer a "Minute for Mission" during your Sunday worship service. Contact the National SDOP office to learn of community partners that may exist in your area
- Share SDOP partners stories as a "Minute for Mission," or as part of the Sunday morning sermon
- If your Presbytery has a SDOP Committee (call the national office to find if a committee exist in your Presbytery/Synod), invite one of its members to speak during your worship service. Call the national office to learn if there are national committee members in your area who could be invited to speak to your congregation.

FREE SDOP RESOURCES



- On the SDOP website pcusa.org/sdop, you'll find stories about SDOP community partners, and a variety of resources, including *SDOP: Sermons and Liturgy* (which you can use to plan your Sunday worship service), and *How Your Congregation Can Help*.

- The following print resources can be ordered by calling the Presbyterian Distribution Center at 800-524-2612:



  - SDOP booklet *People Investing in People* PDS #25422-12-002
  - Informational Brochure (6 pages) PDS #25422-14-001

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING (OGHS)

The Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People's primary source of income is approximately one-third of the One Great Hour of Sharing. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and the Presbyterian Hunger Program are the other programs receiving a portion of the offering.

We encourage all Presbyterians to generously support the One Great Hour of Sharing. The three OGHS ministries depend on your contributions!

Promote Justice

Damayan

When Lydia Catina-Amaya left her home in the Philippines, she had dreams of becoming a missionary in the United States. Encouraged by what she thought was a Christian organization, Catina-Amaya soon found herself in a situation she could not escape. She was lured into becoming a domestic worker for a family in New York City. Her "employer" took her passport and papers and promised that if she stayed, she could reach her goals within two years. That would not be the case. Catina-Amaya became one of thousands of export workers from her country, caught in a human trafficking nightmare.

"It was a 24-hour job with no days off. Going out by myself was hard, and I made very little money. I didn't know what my rights were or where to turn. There was no one to trust." Getting involved with Damayan changed Catina-Amaya's life.

Since its inception, Damayan has recovered more than $600,000 in stolen wages for individual workers, assisted over three dozen trafficked workers, reunited families, and recruited more than a thousand domestic workers and other low-wage worker members.

"We could not have been blessed like this without that very first and subsequent grants received from the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People" says Linda Oalican, Damayan, Executive Director/Founding Member.

Amos 5:24 – "Let justice run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream"

Build Stronger Communities

We the People of Detroit

"We the People of Detroit" is about building strong, healthy communities in Detroit, Flint and around the world. These group members are mobilizing to keep water flowing in their homes and the homes of economically poor residents throughout Detroit. At the same time with compassion and love they have reached out to their brothers and sisters in Flint who are faced with no water. Though their resources are limited they were among the first organizations to send a supply of bottled water to residents in Flint.

As an organization "We the People of Detroit" was asked to represent Detroit at The World Water Justice Council. Detroit is the only city at the Council; all other entities at the table are countries.

"We the People of Detroit" initiated a research project studying the devastating impact of shutting off water. "We were able to do the research thanks to the resources provided by the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People which allowed us to leverage partnerships with seven universities, five of them in the state of Michigan." – Monica Lewis Patrick

> Isaiah 65: 21-22 "And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands."

Seek Economic Equity

West Africa Initiative (WAI)

Communities in Liberia and Sierra Leone are being transformed. Over 10,000 people, in forty-five communities, now have sufficient food for their families as well as opportunities for economic empowerment through the West Africa Initiative. The Initiative is a joint venture by Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, and Presbyterian Hunger Program.

From Thomas Hacker, Country Coordinator, "WAI Liberia extends their many thanks and appreciation to members of the Presbyterian Church (USA) for your support given us even in the midst of the Ebola Crisis. It is our prayer that God continues to strengthen the Presbyterian Church as you help improve the livelihood and education of our farming families."

As credible community based organizations, WAI partners played significant roles in the efforts to contain Ebola including establishing hand washing stations, supporting dry season farming thereby enabling community food security, providing micro-credit for members and school supplies for children.

> Matthew 20: 1-16 "As a symbol for God, a landowner is persistently seeking laborers for his vineyard. What he promises each, regardless of how long they work, is enough wage to provide for life. This is not a parable about how to run a business but a parable that exposes the radical generosity of God and God's deep concern that everyone be able to sustain life."

WORSHIP RESOURCES FOR SDOP SUNDAY

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Let us pray for those in the world who are suffering, in places nearby and in far-away countries.

People: God of mercy, hear our prayers

Leader: For those whose lives and futures are uncertain

People: God of creation, hear our prayers

Leader: For the people where poverty is widespread and whose citizens long for relief and the opportunity to develop their own solutions;

People: God of justice hear our prayers

Leader: For those who seek comfort and hope in the face of despair;

People: God of healing and compassion, hear our prayers

Leader: For the people who face discrimination and lack of opportunity;

People: God of empowerment, hear our prayers

Leader: For those in places where needs are unimaginably great and sufferings are unspeakable;

People: God of peace, hear our prayers

All: God of life, help us to be your messengers for unity and love in all that we do, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

INVOCATION

God of justice, compassion and peace, we come before you this morning in a spirit of gratitude and praise. As we gather in our communities of faith, we give thanks for the gifts of calm hearts and still minds, given to us through the presence of your Holy Spirit, as we hear your message and receive your guidance. Remind us, Lord, of our connectedness and our responsibilities to each other. As we gather in worship, may your divine love inspire us to lead lives of peace and justice, and may your Holy Spirit bring hope and empowerment to communities of need everywhere, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

CALL TO CONFESSION

Offered by: Larry Low (National Committee member)

Our Lord Jesus said:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,

and with all your soul, and with all you mind.

This is the greatest and first commandment.

And a second is like it:

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

PRAYER OF CONFESSION:

God of all nations, we praise you that in Christ the barriers that have separated humanity are torn down.

In Jesus, you have shown us how to be generous.

Yet, we confess to you our share of the guilt for a world filled with injustices, poverty and great suffering.

Forgive us for our self-centeredness, and grant that both our church and our nation may respond in kind to the cries of those in need.

For the sake of Jesus Christ…….. AMEN

ASSURANCE OF PARDON:

Hear the good news of the Gospel:

The God who challenges us is also the God who encourages us…..

The God who confronts us is also the God who accepts us…..

Be assured that God is with us, accepting, guiding, and forgiving.

Thanks be to God……. AMEN

SERMON

A New Thing: A Lectionary-Based Celebration of the Self-Development of People Sunday

Lectionary Scriptures: Isaiah 43:16–21; Psalm 126; Philippians 3:4b–14; John 12:1–8

The Reverend Shavon Starling-Louis – Co-Pastor at Providence Presbyterian Church, RI **(National Committee member)**

Today, we join with many around the nation and world to celebrate the ministry of the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People, also known as SDOP. As we continue in this Lenten season, we prepare our hearts for the impending journey of Holy Week—that spiritually turbulent trek that begins with the bright jubilations of Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem and ends with the dismal and unjust criminalization, conviction, and crucifixion of our Lord. Then, by God's grace alone, there will be resurrection.

Not yet in the glow of Eastertide, we face anew the striking beauty found in acts of praise and love for God as well as the grotesque brokenness of acts propelled by fear and selfishness. We bend our ears to voices from the past and from the present, while straining to hear the cries of those yet to come.

The lectionary offers four voices from the past to inform our reflections and actions today: Isaiah the prophet, the psalmist the poet, Paul the apostle, and John the Gospel writer. These individuals dared to share their testimony. They dared to use their gifts—their voices, minds, hearts, hands, and very spirits—to witness to the works of God in their communities.

Like us, they stood knee deep in the muddy waters that separate faith and fear. God was truly with them. This is evidenced by their very real encounters with God. And yet at the very same time they each were sent into vulnerable positions where they experienced doubt, pain, and loneliness. Entrusted, however, with the good and faithful news, they were propelled by the Spirit of the Lord to be bold. They heralded the great good truth that God is with all of us.

And because God is truly with us, we too are called to be faithful and loving in our relationship with God, self, and neighbor.

Isaiah, speaking for the Lord, reminds us of the creative spirit and infinite possibilities of God in the world. In the time of exile, Isaiah was called to prophesy as a mouthpiece for God who invites the people, including us today, to be open to new ways of being faithful. God declares, "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert" (43:19).

God is always able to do more than we imagine.

And in these troubled times of ours, it is indeed hard to imagine. Fear pervades our congregations. We are terrified that we don't have enough or that we simply aren't good enough. In these times, we are invited, as an antidote, to perceive the creative movement of God. And God is surely moving through SDOP.

At its core SDOP is counter cultural. SDOP intentionally believes in and follows the direction of people who are regularly marginalized. It believes that people in disadvantaged communities are in the best position

to be vessels of healing and justice. It insists that the people of underprivileged communities should always have primary leadership roles in the development and betterment of their own communities.

SDOP doesn't think it has the answers; it trusts that the people most affected by the problems of poverty do. It simply seeks to provide the support of others who may have greater resources.

In this way, God has made, through SDOP, a path—a river even—in the wilderness.

What if our congregations thought this way about mission? How would it affect our community partnerships? How would it affect the way we all choose to participate in mission both locally and internationally? God is doing a new thing—do you not perceive it?

The psalmist certainly does. The psalmist invites us to remember our dreams of joy, to cry tears for the brokenness around us, to trust God with those tears, and to respond with hope.

"We were like those who dream," the psalmist writes. "Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy. . . . The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced. Restore our fortunes, O Lord. . . . May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed of sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves (Ps. 126:1–6).

In this time of Lent, our tears are real. It can indeed be a sorrowful road as we reflect on the suffering of Christ for our sake and on all the suffering of today's people. Praise God that we too can come to God with the fullness of life—with tears in our eyes, lumps in our throats, and dreams for a better day in our minds. We are faced daily with the broken and sinful nature of prejudices that condition us to fear our brothers and sisters.

Ever does God's grace overcome these barriers. I think, for instance, of New York City where community members created the Brandworkers Group to advocate for their employment rights with the support of SDOP in 2014.

The apostle Paul had a dream. He wanted to aid the spiritual and communal growth of the church in Philippi. He wrote to them as he awaited trial by Caesar in Rome. It would have been easy for persecution and fear to quiet Paul's ministry, but instead Paul speaks by letter to a church much like us today. This church was a collection of diverse people called together by the Holy Spirit—all imperfectly but faithfully discerning their mission.

Unfortunately, even in the early church, contests for power and influence were damaging and distracting. Paul reminds them and us that our earthly accomplishments don't equate with faithfulness. Instead the Philippian community is invited to look forward and not to rest on its merits.

We too have a heavenly call—a call that originates not in our limitations, but that begins and ends in Christ. We must press toward the day when all things are made new in the full consummation of Jesus Christ.

We proclaim the good news—the now and not-yet of Christ's reign—when we press forward in works of reconciliation and healing. This willingness to use our God-given gifts for the betterment of the community is at the root of the work of SDOP, and it's at the root of our Christian identity.

Paul knew this as he wrote from his house arrest in Rome. And by the grace of God, you and I are reminded of the truth of our call as well.

When we share in the suffering of others in our midst, we are living into our identity with Christ who suffered the greatest for all. Likewise, when we give to the One Great Hour of Sharing, we share in the sufferings of those in our world both near and far by sharing our gifts.

Lastly, the Gospel writer John helps us to see the beauty of deep generosity that goes far beyond money and springs forth from faith and love of Christ.

"Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair," John writes. "The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume" (12:3).

Judas takes offense at Mary's actions and attempts to berate her, but Jesus was not having it.

Jesus says, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me" (12:7–8).

Mary sits in for all of us who are to come and kneel before the feet of Jesus, holding back nothing, giving our very best. This is beautiful.

And in Jesus' defense of Mary's perplexing offering, we find a challenge for us today when Christ says "You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

Brothers and sisters, the poor are with us, and just as Mary fulfilled her call in her deeply generous offering, it's time for us to give to the poor in our midst. The ministry of SDOP has a call to support the efforts of disadvantaged people who come together to alleviate and bring beautiful justice to places of grotesque oppression and poverty.

When you think about the work you and your congregation are doing, would you describe them as beautiful acts of generosity, hospitality, and dignity? If not, how is God calling you to think differently about your mission and ministry?

Friends, God is doing a new thing. And this new thing will need the dreams and tears of those in places of need and heartache. And in this new thing, God is beckoning each of us to push forward toward resurrection and new life.

Praise be to God for the Isaiahs, the psalmists, the Pauls, the Johns, organizations such as Brandworkers Group, ministries such as SDOP, long-standing programs such as One Great Hour of Sharing, and all the congregations and neighbors—and for you, my brothers and sisters. Together we are invited to reflect on and act in response to our heavenly call to use our gifts faithfully for the betterment of all of God's people, especially the poor who are with us.

Having travelled this Lenten journey together may we be ever ready to perceive this new thing.

In the name of our Creator, Liberator, and Sustainer. Amen. God bless.

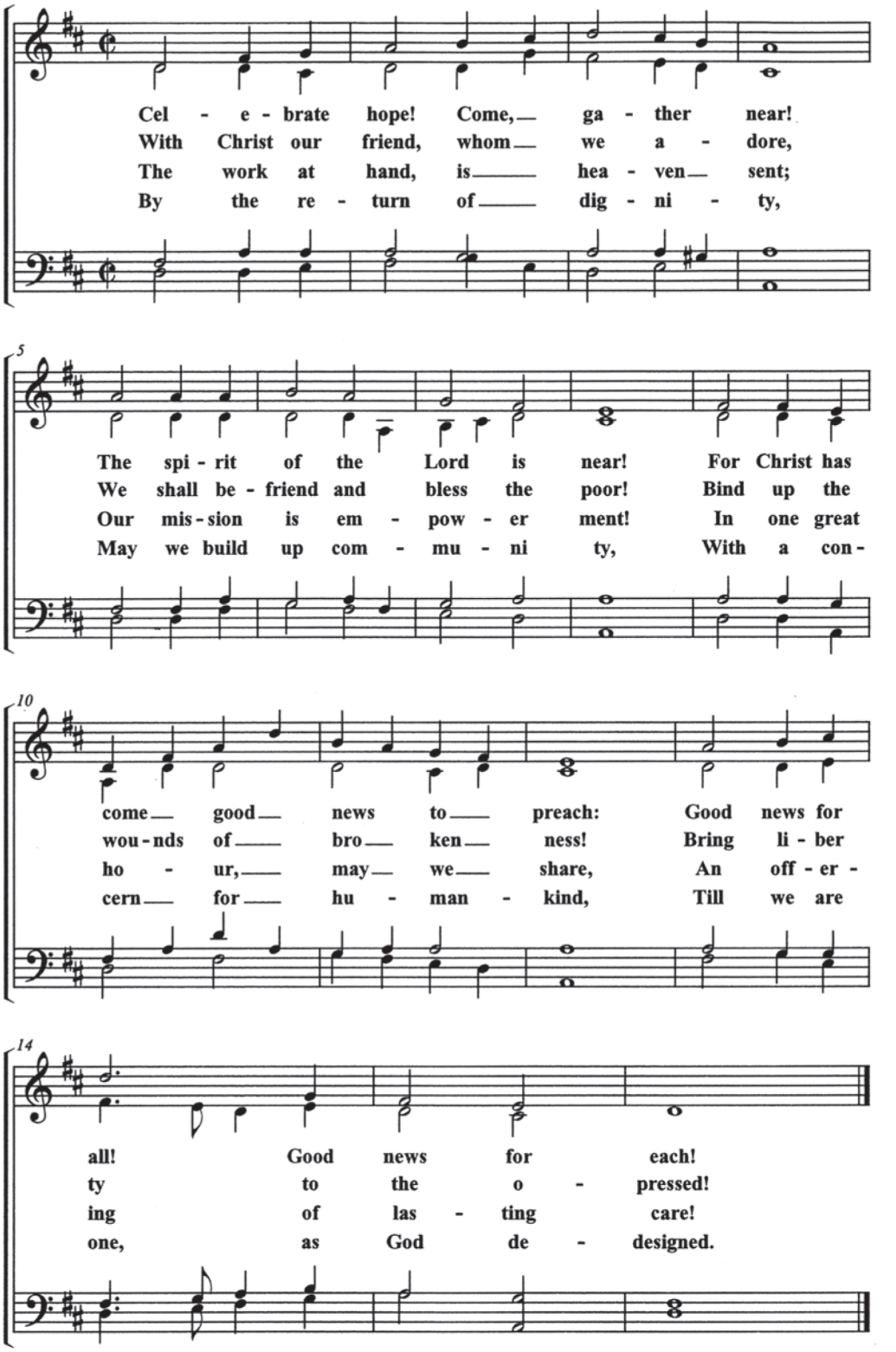
CHARGE

Go now in peace. Be a servant to those you know and love, and to those who are strangers. Be a witness to God's compassion for all people. Be a worker for God's justice, and a partner in the self-development of people.

BENEDICTION

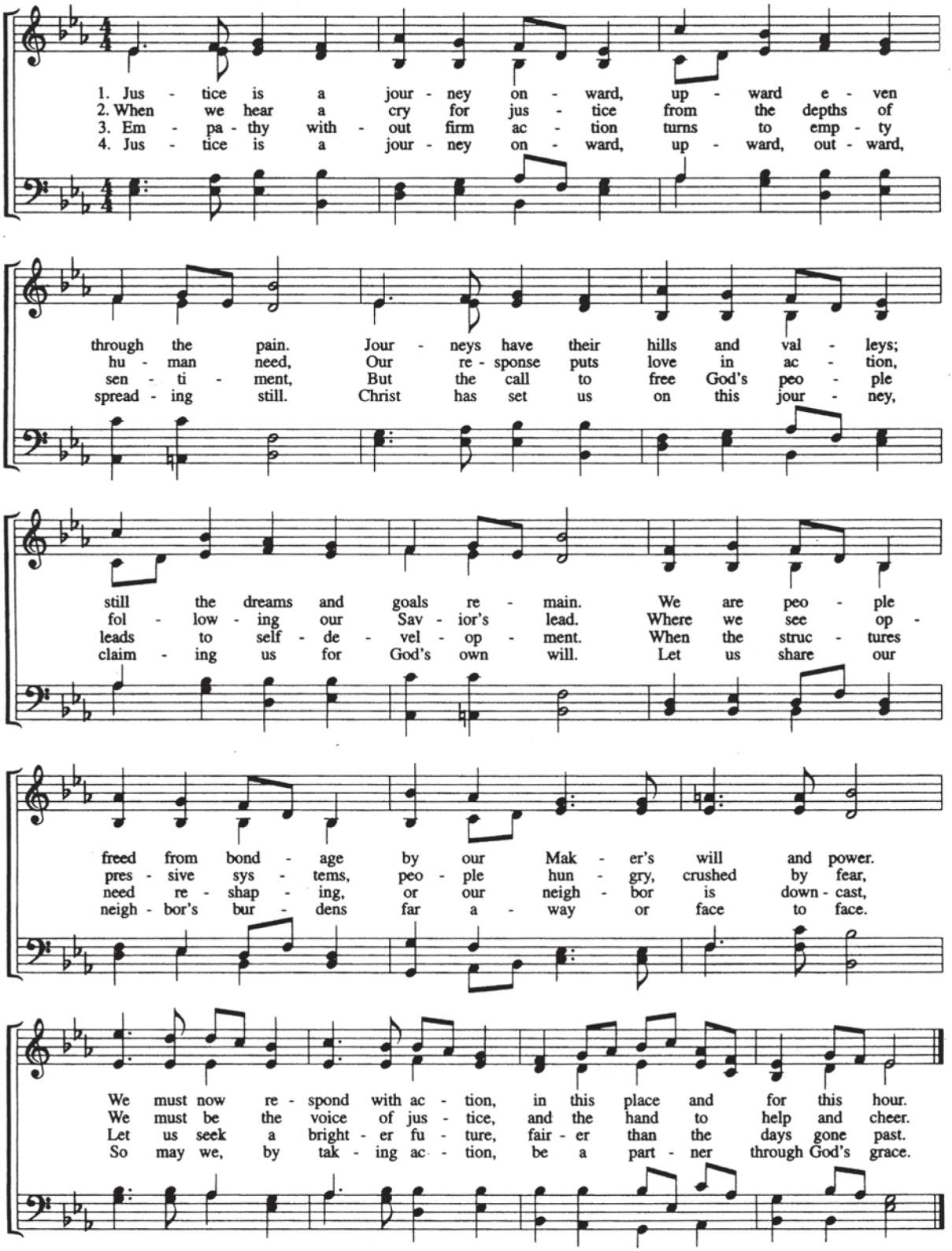
Go now in the name of God, in whose image we all made; in the name of Jesus Christ, who knew everyone as a neighbor; and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, who gives equal comfort to those who have all that they need and those who need much. Amen.

CELEBRATE HOPE!

John A. Dalles **DUKE STREET**

© 2008 John A. Dalles

JUSTICE IS A JOURNEY ONWARD

AUSTRIAN HYMN 8.7.8.7 D

Jane Parker Huber, 1994

Franz Joseph Haydn, 1797