Finding the Words:
Words for Worship

CBF LITURGY AND WORSHIP AIDS

SEASON OF LENT, MARCH 1, 2026

Liturgical Color: purple, red, linen, blue

Lectionary readings:
Genesis 23:1-4a
Psalm 121
Romans 4:1-5, 13-17
John 3:1-17
(Luke 5:29)

Opening quote: (for bulletin or screen)
I'm gonna sit at the welcome table one of these days.
-African American Spiritual

Call to Worship:
One [consider inviting a child or youth to lead the litany]: I lift my eyes to the hills—where will help and welcome be found?
All: Our help comes from the Lord, the creator of all that is.
One: I lift my eyes to the hills—where will help and welcome be found?
All: Our welcome comes from the Lord, who only rests when we feel safely home.
One: I lift my eyes to the hills—where will help and welcome be found?
All: Our help comes from the Lord, who keeps us; our welcome comes from the Lord, who keeps our going out and our coming home.

Invocation:
Welcoming God, all through holy scripture you are welcoming your people safely home, watching over their going out and returning again, creating more space at your table. That sort of welcome never wears out or reaches its boundaries, and we are welcomed as we return again to our home in you. What peace to know that your table will always have plenty of good room for everyone to pull up a chair.
Amen.

Invitation: [offered in explanation by a youth or a children's/youth minister]
During this season of Lent, the children and families of the church invite us all to journey together through a cumulative project here in [or near, to suit your situation] our sacred space. We will be "making room" for the Christ in our lives. During this service, we will ask everyone to join the young people in finding a colored paper and pen [give guidance on where on each row these supplies are located] and think of a way that you have been welcomed to Jesus' table, or a way you might welcome someone else to share the table of Jesus with you. [whisper]...*It might even be a way someone has shared their OWN table with you, or a way you could share YOUR table with someone else!* How could we share welcome with another person, like Jesus did?
Near the end of our service we will collect these papers and the children will add them to our faith family's Lenten "house" project. We are looking forward to seeing it take shape over these weeks of waiting for Easter, and are grateful that our church will be joining with us to create something special!

Call to Confession:
If Lent can be seen as a journey toward our heart's true home in Christ, confession and repentance can be seen as steps of reorienting on that journey, examining our steps, turning, continuing.
Family, God calls us to confession this day. How will we respond?

Prayer of Confession:

Loving God, we confess that we have sinned
In our thinking, our speaking, and our doing—
Both in acts we've committed and
acts we've withheld.
We have not loved anyone with our whole heart—
Not you, not our neighbor, not ourselves.
In your mercy, God,
Forgive us, set us back on the path, and draw us more fully into the life of love you dream for us.

Assurance of Pardon:

Family of faith, hear the good news and believe—in the love of God, demonstrated for us in the person of Jesus the Christ, you live forgiven and free!

Pastoral Prayer/Prayers of the People:

Loving God, when we lift our eyes to the hills, wondering where our help comes from, you answer your people with help and hope, with wisdom and welcome. And so, because the world is big, and her problems fearsome and complex, we join our voices with our family of faith, eyes to the hills, and pray, trusting that you still hear, and love.

For those who are hurting, who we call by name—friends and family doing their best and feeling not enough, struggling with challenges that feel too big and many with depleted resources and failing hope. And so, because the world is big, and her problems fearsome and complex, we join our voices with our family of faith, eyes to the hills, and pray, trusting that you still hear, and love.
[pray for each other in the way usual for your faith family]

For needs in our community—for the ways we want to help our neighbors, and can't find a way; for the ways we should help our neighbors, and can't find the love; for the ways we could lift each other up, and be lifted up, and choose not to. And so, because the world is big, and her problems fearsome and complex, we join our voices with our family of faith, eyes to the hills, and pray, trusting that you still hear, and love.
[pray in the way usual for your faith family]

For those who have accepted positions of influence or power in our government—the courage to lead with honesty, compassion, justice, and heart for the common good—and for those who with their voices and votes hold their leaders to account. And so, because the world is big, and her problems fearsome and complex, we join our voices with our family of faith, eyes to the hills, and pray, trusting that you still hear, and love.
[pray in the way usual for your faith family, or omit if this is not a typical part of your prayers at this time]

For the world— for her hurting and her hopefulness, for her meanness and her mercy, for her longing and her light. And so, because the world is big, and her problems fearsome and complex, we join our voices with our family of faith, eyes to the hills, and pray, trusting that you still hear, and love.
[pray in the way usual for your faith family for the troubles of the world]

For our own lives—uncertain, unfinished, uneasy. And so, because the world is big, and her problems fearsome and complex, we join our voices with our family of faith, eyes to the hills, and pray, trusting that you still hear, and love.

We pray today with the gathered family of faith around the world, in the way Jesus taught his disciples to pray, saying:
Our Father, which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name;
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
[or And forgive us our debts
As we forgive our debtors.]
And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory
Forever. Amen.

Congregational Response: [offered in explanation by a youth or a children's/youth minister]
The table, whether it is in a kitchen, or here in our sanctuary, is a symbol of welcome. Today during worship we have all thought about a way someone might have offered us a "place at the table", or a way we might have welcomed someone else to pull up a chair at ours. Hopefully we have written one of those ways down on the colored paper on our row. If you'll pass those toward [the end of your row/center aisle/side aisle/etc], [children and youth/volunteers] will be by to collect them, and they will be used as part of our Lent-long congregational "Making Room" sanctuary devotion.
[Volunteers move into place to collect slips of paper and take to "home" area]

Offertory Prayer:
Giving God, in imitation of you, we offer what we have—our time, our talents, our treasure. We offer also the gift of welcome, of a seat at the table, for those yearning to experience your love through us.
Amen.

Benediction:
Beloved, as you go, go welcomed and welcoming, knowing there is plenty of good room at the table of the kindom!

Hymn suggestions:
Plenty Good Room—text African American Spiritual, [I would not be a sinner]
Jesus, Lover of My Soul—text C. Wesley, ABERYSTWYTH
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling—text C. Wesley, BEECHER
Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above—text J. J. Schütz, trans F. E. Cox, MIT FREUDEN ZART

Art suggestions:
Born Again, Lauren Wright Pittman, US, 2016
https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=57087

“Making Room” sanctuary devotional project:
Each worship service will provide an opportunity for the children to lead the way in the creation of a Lent-long all-church project of contemplation and devotion in the form of an art project located somewhere in or near the sanctuary. Children may participate during their children’s period, and help with collecting the adults’ contributions later in the service.

The project will begin with the outline of a house (or for those ambitious and crafty, a framehouse!), and each service an addition will be made to the house. The objective is not a work of polished art, but an act of communal contemplation.

This art project will coordinate with the CBF children’s and family Lenten devotional series, “Making Room at Home for Jesus”, which can be accessed at *www.cbf.net/lent* in both English and Spanish. Our hope is that children’s ties to worship will be strengthened as they participate and lead meaningfully in the Lenten journey at home and at church.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leigh Anne Armstrong is a chaplain, liturgist and songwriter and a longtime member of Auburn (AL) First Baptist Church.