

Epiphany 2008 – Entering the City of God

GATHERING

ENTRANCE

REFLECTION

Though it hardly seems possible now, we cling to the hope that God's City will be established in the gift of the new heavens and the new earth. Our work is to live by the customs of the new City before it has fully come to be. In this way, the church draws the world to God. We hold forth not a condemning, but a welcoming word. All nations are invited to come to this City. And the quality of our interactions as a community will be a stronger witness than our words.

Gerrit Scott Dawson, "Called by a New Name"

Quoted in Voices of the Day (www.sojo.net)

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: We come, hungry for the Good News of Christ.



Voice 1: We come all bundled up,
protecting ourselves from cold winds
and colder shoulders.

Voice 2: We enter this warm place
where we have seen God's love
at work in the world.

Leader: Throw off your cloak;
let the Holy Spirit welcome
you into the City of God.

All: Fling open the gates of your heart!

INVOCATION

HYMN

WORD FOR THE CHILDREN

SILENCE

RESPONSIVE READING

Leader: God of the city, hear our hearts
beating with the life you have given us.

People: In the silence our longings beat their way
to the surface of our hearts.

Leader: Holy One, we want to know
that you hear our deepest longings.

All: Truth of our hearts, we long for the City of God.

SILENCE

PRAYERS

COMMON CONFESSION

Leader: The gates of our hearts are bolted shut.
We are terrified of opening them.

Voice 1: We are frightened of what might come in!

Voice 2: We are concerned about what might get out!

Leader: Even when we open ourselves only a crack, that seems too much.

All: Our walls are high. Our defenses are strong. We are not

living in the City of God.

INDIVIDUAL PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

ASSURANCE

Leader: The Holy One embraces us in the face

of fear inviting us to enter the City of God.

All: Amen

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

UNISON PRAYER

All: Holy One, we come today

to claim our relationship with you.

We pray for the commitment to grow together,

sharing the gifts you give us with others

here and in the wider world.

Give us strength and discipline

to nurture our relationship with You;

to care for every part of Your Creation;

to foster justice and be in solidarity with those
in need;

to work to end all war, and violence, and discord;

and to respond joyfully when you call,

freely giving our selves as you have shown the way.

We open our hearts to you and your Creation
in the name of Jesus, who is the Christ.

Amen.

HYMN

THE WORD

SCRIPTURE

SERMON

SILENT REFLECTION

OFFERING

HYMN

BENEDICTION

Leader: Fling open the gates!

Invite everyone you meet
into your heart, into your life,
into the City of God.

All: Amen