



## 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Council on Christian Unity

### Worship Resources

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#### **9. Proper 19 in connection with David Kagiwada Sunday and the Beginning of North American/Pacific Asian Disciples Ministry Week** **Sunday, September 12, 2010**

##### **Resources for Today**

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##### **Focus for Today**

The gospel text for today, Luke 15:1-10 (the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin) teach that God is constantly seeking those who are not gathered into the community of the Realm, and that all who repent are welcome in that community. These themes relate to David Kagiwada Sunday and North American/Pacific Asian Disciples Ministries week. God seeks for people of every ethnicity, including those of Asian American origin, to be part of the multicultural Realm of God. While Eurocentric people have often sought to marginalize and even exclude people of Asian origin from the community of the Realm, God not only welcomes people of Asian cultures but actively seeks them. Moreover, the text presses Disciples with European roots to repent of the ways they have ignored, marginalized, demeaned, and otherwise repressed people of Asian origin.

In a recent publication, North American/Pacific Asian Disciples suggest that congregations that are not Asian in orientation engage in the following activities (and in others like them) to encourage solidarity among the Disciples.

- Invite NAPAD members to your church and listen to them talk about their life experiences in America
- Preach on topics such as a multi-cultural society, the gifts from the East, becoming an anti-racist and pro-reconciling church, and the “2020 vision of the Disciples,”
- Have a moment of prayer for NAPAD ministries

- Promote the scholarship funds in memory of David Kagiwada and J. Soongook Choi. Both help support Asian American students in seminary. Both scholarships are explained at [www.napad.net](http://www.napad.net)

This day is named David Kagiwada Sunday in honor and memory of David Kagiwada, a Japanese American Disciple and the first convener of the North American/Pacific Asian Disciples. Kagiwada's life story is summarized on [www.napad.net](http://www.napad.net). A striking element of that biography is pertinent not only to Asian American ministries but to the larger Reconciliation Mission emphasis and offering that takes place later this month. "By drawing upon his own ethnic experiences, David effectively communicated the need for Christians to work actively for justice for *all* peoples." A preacher or congregation who seek a model for reconciling ministry could tell the story of David Kagiwada.

### **Call to Worship**

L: We shall love the Lord our God

P: with all our hearts,

L: with all our soul,

P: with all our strength

L: with all our minds

P: And we shall love our neighbors as we love ourselves

All: So we come to worship God, who is the One who first loved us!

### **Opening Prayer**

Gracious God, you have already found us, even before we knew we were lost.  
You have created a space for us, even before we knew we were shut out.  
You are already prepared to celebrate with your beloved creation, even before  
we know we belong.

So in this hour, let us worship you in spirit and in truth.

Bring us to believe the Good News of your love,  
with our heart, soul, strength and mind,

so we might pour out that love on our neighbors and on our own selves, too.

AMEN

### **Significant Quotes**

#### About Internment in World War II

Racism against people of Asian origin is as old as contact between the United States and Asian cultures. However, the internment of Japanese Americans by the U.S. government in World War II is a paradigmatic instance of racism against people of Asian origin. David Kagiwada spent much of his young adulthood in such a concentration camp. While JoAnne Kagiwada, also a Japanese American, married to David, and a long-time member of the general staff and leader in

the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), did not spend the war years imprisoned, she recalls such camps.

“Entire families were crowded into one-room units in crudely constructed barracks surrounded by barbed wire and sentry towers which were [staffed] by armed guards with their rifles pointed at the residents. The barracks were lined up, row upon row, each holding six families. The dividing walls did not reach the ceilings. Privacy did not exist. Other barracks held communal latrines, communal bathing facilities and communal dining halls. One can see how such dramatic changes in living conditions contributed to the deterioration of traditional family structures. Medical supplies, hospital beds, and doctors and nurses were in short supply. Only a few jobs were available; doctors and other professionals were paid \$19 per month; other jobs paid \$16 per month.” (JoAnne H. Kagiwada, “And Justice for All,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, vol. 56, nos. 1-2 (2002), p. 127)

After the war, Japanese Americans returned to their homes (or found new homes), broke, but determined to rebuild their lives. They found the wartime experience too traumatizing to talk about, even in their immediate households. Consequently, the trauma of the war extracted a huge psychological price not only on the internees but on their children. (*Ibid.*, p. 127)

Eventually, the United States government attempted to redress some of the wrong of the wartime internment by making a monetary payment to most of the internees. While this act was an important symbol, it could not undo the intense damage of the concentration camps. Nor could it erase the anti-Asian stereotypes that still pollute many Eurocentric minds.

Moreover, Kagiwada points out that many people in the larger culture continue to have difficulty accepting the wartime internment. JoAnne Kagiwada recalls a *Newsweek* cover highlighting the “war on terrorism” and a photo of racial profiling. “Making an historical comparison, there was also a photo identified as incarcerated Japanese Americans—perhaps the most notorious example of wartime detention” in our nation’s history. But the photo they used appears to be of a prisoner of war camp. Men with Asian features, eyes downcast, wearing rag-tag military uniforms, are lined up in formation behind barbed wire, a thatched roof in the background. It was not one of the images we usually see—a young child with a shipping tag attached to her lapel, sitting in the midst of a pile of luggage, waiting to be loaded onto the train that would carry her family under armed guard to an internment camp; school children standing in front of makeshift barracks classroom, hands over their hearts, reciting the pledge of allegiance as the stars and stripes are raised up the flagpole. Perhaps the *Newsweek* staff couldn’t believe that our government would ever do anything like that, either” (*Ibid.*, p. 135).

When people of European origin cannot grasp such a public and painful event as the internment of United States citizens of Japanese ancestry in World War II, it is not surprising that Eurocentric people are not aware of our continuing anti-Asian tendencies. The gospel reading for today opens the door for Eurocentric people to repent of our Asian racism past and present.

JoAnne Kagiwada’s description of the Japanese American experience illustrates an important principle: Those who have suffered injustice are often the most capable of alerting the larger culture to particular threats against justice. In language that resonates with the upcoming

emphasis on Reconciliation Mission, Kagiwada says, “Remembering that wartime experience when our civil liberties and constitutional protection were so egregiously abrogated, Japanese Americans, individually and collectively, continue to be vigilant in supporting other communities when their rights are threatened. From the beginnings of the struggle for redress, a primary goal has been to ensure that it will never happen again to any other group of people.” However, she soberly concludes, “We have much to do.” (*Ibid.*, p. 136).

[JoAnne H. Kagiwada, “And Justice for All,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, vol. 56, nos. 1-2 (2002), pp. 126-137].

### Beyond Internment: New Modes of Racism against People of Asian Origin

Sandhya Jha , Minister of Transformation for the Northern California and Nevada Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and April Lewton, past moderator of North American Pacific/Asian Disciples recount that modest progress has been made in relationships among Eurocentric Disciples and racial/ethnic Disciples. With the Reconciliation Mission in mind, they observe:

“Despite much progress, we know boundaries still exist. There continue to be roadblocks that stop us from being able to fully embrace one another’s cultures. They are not concrete though. The challenges of race relations today do not involve immediate physical violence or the palpable dehumanization of Jim Crow or anti-immigrant laws. They are subtle and often done without awareness:

- When do we intentionally attend events that give voice to the concerns of a particular culture or ethnic perspective?
- How often do we reflect on the church meeting we’ve convened (even with a diversity of cultures at the table)?
- Does the silence from one member of the group mean they have nothing to say or rather a cultural value of respecting time before speaking?
- Do we rely on forms of leadership training that might miss out on people with limited English skills or people outside of our (predominantly white) denomination’s higher educational structure?

These barriers are the result of subtle but still present forms of systemic racism. Without addressing these systems head-on, we will never be able to fully appreciate one another’s cultural context. We will all continue to suffer. We must have a better cultural understanding of our systems in place and the areas that could benefit from new perspectives and revolutionary thinking!

We have listened to the biblical story of how Jesus touched and transformed the woman from Samaria and the Roman centurion, or when Peter gave the good news to the Ethiopian. They did not expect these new followers to check their culture at the door. Our generation understands that reality and the next generation will understand it even better. Right now, we are called to wrestle with how we treat one another in a society designed to force us into one mold. We are called to work together by God to embrace all manifestations of humanity with respect and dignity. We

are called because the world is getting smaller. We are called to be in solidarity with the struggles, celebrations and lives of all our neighbors.” [[www.napad.net](http://www.napad.net)]

### **Other Liturgical Material**

In the Disciples’ Preamble to the Design comes the sentence: “In Christ’s name and by his grace we accept our mission of witness and service to all people”. Consider using this for a litany on this Sunday as we seek to be inclusive of NAPAD congregations and of Asian Americans.

L: In Christ’s name and by his grace

P: We do not stand alone, but we stand under the banner of Christ.

L: We accept our mission of witness and service

P: As Christians, we have a particular demand on our lives.

L: We are to give witness and we are to serve.

P: As believers, our words and our actions support each other.

L: Our mission is for all people

P: God’s love has no ethnic bounds.

L: Our service is to all people

P: God’s world includes each person, and every person.

L: So let us affirm our faith:

All: In Christ’s name and by his grace

we accept our mission of witness and service to all people.

L: In the communion of the Holy Spirit,

P: we are joined together in discipleship and in obedience to Christ!

Another way of using this might be with a children’s moment. Play over the sound system a voice saying “Your mission, should you choose to accept it” (from the old “Mission:Impossible” television series). Have a globe or world map and describe the Christian mission is to witness and serve in Christ’s name to the whole world. Highlight the NAPAD churches and the countries from which NAPAD congregants come. Encourage children to recognize our mission is for all people. Invite the congregation to sing, “*Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world*”.

### **Invitation to the Table**

If possible, use an Asian chalice, or consider adding a simple Japanese flower arrangement to the Table for this day.

American history includes a difficult chapter of internment of people of Japanese descent during World War II. In those years, legal, civil and spiritual identities were devalued while Japanese ethnic heritage meant placement in camps.

That treatment is the absolute opposite of the invitation which brings us all to this Table today. There, not only tables, but business and personal relationships were closed because of ethnic identity.

This Table does not belong to a single race or ethnicity. Rather, this is Christ's table. All who recognize Jesus as the Christ are welcome here. All who are hungry are invited to share in bread and in the cup. All who have been excluded by law, tradition or fear will find inclusion because God's love is supreme above all other rules.

So come, for at this Table of the Lord we celebrate with thanksgiving the saving acts and presence of Christ.

### **Notes for Preaching (based on the readings in the Revised Common Lectionary for September 12, 2010)**

#### Luke 15:1-10

We begin nearly every exposition of the texts from Luke with the reminder that the controlling idea in Luke's theological universe is that God is ending the present fractious age and will soon replace it with the Realm of God. For Luke, Jesus is God's agent in announcing the coming Realm and in realizing it in a partial way in his ministry. Under the power of the Spirit, the church is to continue that ministry. Indeed, the church is to be a community whose common life embodies the life of the Realm. A key motif in the text is also a key motif for David Kagiwada Sunday and North American Pacific Asian Disciples: The Realm includes the great reunion of the human family. The church is to represent that reunion. Nevertheless, from Luke's perspective, the Realm will come in its fullness only at the apocalypse when Jesus returns. These themes are in the background of the gospel reading for today.

The congregation to whom Luke wrote (in what we know today as the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts) was distressed and fractious. That congregation was fragmented from within and without over this question: what is necessary for a person to be a full participant in the community, embodying and awaiting the Realm? Luke's congregation was bringing together people of Jewish and gentile origin. Our text today implies that tax collectors and sinners were joining the community. Tax collectors were Jewish people employed by the Roman Empire to collect taxes from their Jewish compatriots. Tax collectors often extorted the population. In this context sinners referred to Jewish people who had violated covenant and were egregious in their unfaithfulness. In the Book of Acts, the tax collectors and sinners largely disappear, and the question of who has a place in the community becomes focused on gentiles.

Some people within the congregation apparently disagreed with one another over the criteria for full participation. Some people within the church, and some conventional Jewish leaders not participating in the church, objected to the presence of tax collectors and sinners in the community. They also complained the church welcomed gentiles without requiring them to be initiated into Judaism.

Luke resolves the gentile issue more fully in the Book of Acts (see Acts 15:22-29, esp. 28-29). In the Gospel, Luke lays the narrative theological foundation on which Acts depends. Luke 15:1-10 (indeed, Luke 15:1-32) establishes why tax collectors and sinners (and others whom they represent) are welcome in the community. In so doing, the text contributes to the rationale for why the church in Acts should welcome gentiles. A movement that could welcome tax collectors and sinners on the basis of repentance during Jesus's earthly ministry can certainly welcome gentiles on the basis of the same repentance when directed to do so by the risen Jesus (Luke 24:46-47) and when empowered to do so by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).

Luke 15:1-2 uses the figures of the Pharisees and scribes to represent the members within Luke's congregation (and the conventional Jewish leaders outside of the congregation) who object to the presence of tax collectors and sinners. These people would later (in the Book of Acts) object to the presence of gentiles.

Luke 15:3-10 tells two parables that contribute to the theological rationale for the church not only welcoming but eating with tax collectors and sinners. As we noted in connection with Luke 14:1, 7-14 on August 28, eating together in antiquity was much more significant than today. Sharing the table for an important meal implied a level of mutual acceptance and even mutual commitment.

The fact that the two parables involve both a man (shepherd) and a woman (in the house) makes a point important to Luke. The writer of the third gospel believed God was restoring the relationship of women and men. Luke often pairs women and men in egalitarian settings (e.g. Anna and Simeon, Priscilla and Aquilla) to demonstrate this restoration is underway.

The structure of each parable is similar. Something valuable is lost. Someone searches aggressively for the missing thing. When the lost is found, a celebration breaks out. The reader immediately recognizes the shepherd in the parable echoes God the great shepherd in the Torah, Prophets and Writings (e.g. Psalm 23; Ezekiel 34). Since the shepherd in the first parable behaves in the same way as God, the reader easily may assume the woman in the second parable does so as well. As is well known today, the Torah, Prophets and Writings had long described God as a woman.

The flock had 100 sheep but only one went missing. In a subsistence agricultural economy every animal is valuable. None-the-less, the shepherd could continue to make a living with 99 sheep. However, the flock is not complete without the missing sheep. This notion is consistent with the end-time theology underlying Luke-Acts that believed that God would not bring the Realm until all of God's purposes were complete.

The woman had ten coins but one went missing. Each coin is worth about a day's wages for a worker. Ten coins meant the ability to survive for ten days. The missing coin could soon threaten the survival of the household.

The shepherd and the woman aggressively search for the missing sheep and the missing coin.

Luke 15:10 gives the distinctly Lukan touch to these parables. “Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Luke assumes that people repent when they come into the community of the Realm (e.g. Luke 3:7-14; Acts 2:38). In Jewish tradition, to repent was to turn away from violating the covenant and to turn toward obedience. This text assumes that tax collectors and sinners stop their violations of God’s purposes and embrace covenantal living in the community of the Realm. A gentile would repent by turning away from idols and turning toward the living God. Repentance moves one away from exploitative and unjust behaviors and toward supportive and strengthening behaviors. Tax collectors, sinners, and gentiles would turn away from complicity with the old age and turn toward the Realm.

If tax collectors and sinners repent, they are prepared for the community of the Realm. In Acts, when gentiles repent, they, too, are welcome in the community of the Realm.

Luke 15:1-10 does not deal directly with matters of ethnicity. The tax collector and the sinners were Jewish. Needless to say, Luke nowhere implies that Jewish people need to give up their Jewish culture in order to come into the community of the Realm. They need only to repent. In Acts, the church welcomes gentiles without asking gentiles to become Jewish. While they do not need to become Jewish, the gentiles do need to repent. According to Acts 15:22-29, they do need to adopt some core Jewish values. (They are to renounce idolatry.) However, the church does not ask them to give up being gentile.

These parables have a double edge. On one side, they say to tax collectors and sinners, “You are welcome in the community of the Realm. Indeed, God is actively seeking you. The flock is not complete without you. You are necessary for this community to be what God wants it to be.” The parable is an invitation to those who are outside the community of the Realm.

On the other side, the parable says to those in the church, “You need to welcome tax collectors and sinners. God has sought them. They have repented. Therefore, they belong in the community of the Realm. If you reject them, you reject God’s purposes, and you need to repent.”

The preacher does need to be circumspect if applying this text to relationship of Asian Americans (or other peoples on the margin) and the church. To be sure, the text witnesses to God’s desire for the community of the Realm to be inclusive. Like the shepherd and the woman, God actively seeks for people of Asian descent to be a part of the community.

However, Luke told these parables to justify the presence of tax collectors and sinners—both moral categories—in the community of the Realm. The categories of race and ethnicity are not moral but cultural. The preacher who wants to move from the text to the idea of the church being like the shepherd and the woman in seeking racial/ethnic people needs to be very careful not to leave the impression that race and ethnicity are in the same moral category as being a tax collector and sinner.

## **Closing Prayer**

Consider using Jaroslav Vajda's hymn, "Go, My Children, with My Blessing" (Chalice Hymnal#431) as your closing prayer. Sing it, or if that is not possible, quote stanza 3:

*Go, my children, fed and nourished, closer to me;  
grow in love and love by serving, joyful and free.  
Here my Spirit's power filled you, here his tender comfort stilled you;  
go, my children, fed and nourished, joyful and free.*

### **Possible Hymns and Songs**

(Numbers in parenthesis are from the Chalice Hymnal)

Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather (278)  
A Woman and a Coin (74) (the Luke 15 text put to music)  
Fill the World with Love (467)  
The Lord's My Shepherd (78)  
God is My Shepherd (79) (from the Scottish Psalter)  
My Shepherd, You Supply My Need (80)  
In All the Seasons Seeking God (607)

### **Additional Resources**

Chalice Hymnal #81, use for opening worship, with James Weldon Johnson's poetry and portions of "My Shepherd, You Supply My Need"

Additional resources are available at

<http://www.discipleshomemissions.org/PDF/NAPAD/KagiwadaSunday.pdf>

Timothy S. Lee tells a concise version of the story of the Asian presence in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in, "From Coerced Liminality to In-Beyond the Margin: A Theological Reflection on the History of Asian American Disciples," in *Becoming the Church God Wants Us To Be: Report on the Consultation on Becoming a Multicultural and Inclusive Church*, edited by Robert Welsh (Council on Christian Unity, 2008), pp. 9-13. After tracing the original Asian community within the Disciples as one of enforced marginality to the presence of Asian communities maintaining their Asian identity as participants in Disciple life, Lee concludes, "Now a Disciple is closer to becoming one who 'overcomes marginality without ceasing to be a marginal person.'"

Sandyha Rani Jha provides a fuller exposition of how Eurocentric Disciples have marginalized people of color, of how people of color have struggled for justice in the Disciples, and of how the Disciples now have an opportunity to become a genuinely multicultural church in her *Room at the Table: Struggle for Unity and Equality in Disciples History* (Chalice Press, 2009).

### **The Writers**

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Ron teaches preaching and Gospels and Letters at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. One of his books—just published—is designed to help Sunday School classes, Bible study groups, and individuals explore the range of what Christians believe about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the church, and God’s purposes in the world: *A Faith of Your Own: Naming What You Really Believe*. In addition to being short and inexpensive, this volume includes questions for discussion at the end of each chapter.