



## WITH FRIENDSHIP: REMEMBERING LA AMISTAD

### A LITURGY OF CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE FOR AMISTAD SUNDAY

**A**mistad Sunday is an occasion to honor, emphasize, and underscore the historic commitment of the United Church of Christ to the work of justice and compassion. Beginning in 1839 the work of black and white Congregationalists helped to secure the release of fifty-three captive Africans who struggled courageously for their freedom aboard the slave ship *La Amistad*. The fruits of their labors not only inspired the Christian witness for justice in the mid-1800s but also contributed significantly to building the lasting movement for racial, economic, and social justice in the United Church of Christ. This liturgy includes a call to confession, a unison prayer of confession, an assurance of pardon, and the invitation to share signs of God’s peace.

#### The Call to Confession

One: On this Amistad Sunday we remember the perseverance of the fifty-three captive Africans in 1839 aboard the slave ship known as *La Amistad*. We remember the significance of their historic fight for freedom. Along with the solidarity expressed by New England Congregationalists, that action resulted in the first U.S. Supreme Court decision on civil rights that contributed to the eventual dismantling of slavery. As we confess this day, may the witness of our forebears inspire us to renew our own commitment to justice—trusting in God’s friendship when we act with courage and compassion.

#### Unison Prayer of Confession

Holy God, the ills of this world seem to render us helpless. We are overwhelmed by the magnitude of need around us. Some of us are hungry and homeless. Some do not earn a fair wage. Others cannot find meaningful work. There are wars and rumors of wars. We fear violence in our streets and in our homes. We want peace, but it eludes us. We seek signs of hope, O God. Tell us you are near and save us from despair.



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Today we remember how you were present with the faithful before us. You gave us your rainbow as a sign of your everlasting covenant. To the *Amistad* captives and the abolitionists, you gave the power to resist the evil of slavery. They trusted your presence, and you came to their aid.

Most merciful God, help us this day to know that you are as close to us as our own breath. Bind us together as a community to work for equality and justice. Help us to live in covenant with you, valuing and loving others as we would ourselves. Forgive us when we lose heart. Shape us as a people alive in your spirit. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

### The Assurance of Pardon

One: God hears our prayer.

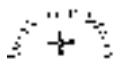
All: This we know is true.

One: God's forgiveness embraces us.

All: This is good news for all.

### The Passing of the Peace

One: Please greet each other with a sign of peace such as a hand shake or embrace and say, *con amistad*, Spanish for "with friendship."



This liturgy was written by the Kathleen C. (K. C.) Ackley, executive for volunteer ministries, Global Sharing of Resources Ministry Team, Wider Church Ministries: A Covenanted Ministry of the United Church of Christ, Cleveland, Ohio. In 2002 Rev. Ackley spent three months working as a volunteer for Amistad America, Inc., aboard the Freedom Schooner *Amistad*. This replica of the actual ship of 1839—built in part with financial support from the United Church of Christ—serves as a floating classroom and visits port cities around the world in order to teach the historic lessons of perseverance, cooperation, leadership, and justice inherent in the *Amistad* event. K. C. Ackley can be contacted at <ackleyk@ucc.org> or 216.736.3214.

For more information about Amistad America, Inc., and the Freedom Schooner *Amistad*, visit their Web site at <www.amistadamerica.org> or contact them by phone at 203.495.1839.

For more information on the justice legacy of the *Amistad* event and its historical significance to the United Church of Christ, contact J. Bennett Guess, minister for communication and mission education, Justice and Witness Ministries, United Church of Christ, at <guessb@ucc.org> or 216.736.3704.

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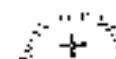
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