



Covenanting Liturgy

March 18, 2026

CCS and Rev. Marlene Britton

Welcome – *Ian McLean, Central Council Co-chair*

Land Acknowledgement – *Lori Stewart, alumni and former staff*

Call to Worship – *Karlene Kimber, Central Council Co-chair*

Holy One, in your great Spirit, the tapestry of our diverse hues comes together as the fullness of your expression.

In you, we are different, and we are one.

We sometimes forget our belonging in you. Our humanity fails us when we wrongfully “other” people with slanderous accusations and assumptions, forgetting that we are all kin, and that many among us are guests on these lands.

As we strive to be a beloved community, help us to embody the kind of community that celebrates our diverse origins as an affirmation of your embodied Spirit in us. Amen.

by Bob Fillier, originally published for [40 Days of Engagement on Anti-Racism](#) in 2025

Scripture Reading – 2 Cor 4:7-10 – *Ted Dodd, former staff*

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. ⁸We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. ¹⁰We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

Reflection on Ubuntu and Ashe – *Marlene Britton, Principal of CCS*

COVENANTING RITUAL

Question to Community - *Rev. Jennifer Janzen-Ball, representing the UCC*

Friends all, we are invited into a covenantal relationship with God and the Rev. Marlene Britton. Through this act of covenanting, we seek ways to faithfully deepen our commitment to serve God and live into our call to embody God's love in the world. As the Centre for Christian Studies community, we are all a part of supporting and embodying its noble, challenging, and inspiring mission. As students, volunteers, graduates, friends, and staff we offer our gifts in a variety of tasks and relationships that shape the Centre and its mandate.

I ask, will you the congregants both in-person and online, commit yourselves to this community of learning and its work of preparing for ministries of justice and education?

All: Ashe! We will, God being our helper.

Question to Principal - *Rev. Canon Nancy Ford, representing the ACC*

We, the Central Council, affirm that you, Marlene have been called to the position of Principal of the Centre for Christian Studies. Do you commit to respectfully and wholeheartedly serve amongst our council, committees and community?

Marlene: Ashe! I do, God being my helper.

Question to Staff - *Ian McLean, Central Council Co-chair*

Will you, Scott, Janet, Marcie, Alcris and Robyn, welcome Marlene as part of the staff team at CCS, embrace her gifts, her hopes, and her vision for this school? Will you recognize that her presence and participation will change the shape of the body and help us grow in new ways? Will you support and assist her in this journey?

Staff team: Ashe. We will, God being our helper.

Question to Staff and Principal together - *Karlene Kimber, Central Council Co-chair*

As a staff team, will you commit yourselves to mutual accountability, working in a spirit of trust and respect? Will you be a compassionate presence for the students and wider CCS community, encouraging them as they grow and learn, and respecting them as individuals with needs, gifts, and dreams?

Staff team & Marlene: Ashe. We will, God being our helper.

Question to Central council - *Rev. Jennifer Janzen-Ball*

To Central council, HR Committee, Staff Support and Elders' Circle, will you commit yourself to offering support, guidance and encouragement to Marlene in her new role?

Central Council, etc.: Ashe. We will, God being our helper.

A period of silence follows.

Prayer - Rev. Canon Nancy Ford

Loving God, help us to grow with each other, to love each other, to support each other, that by our common life in this community we may come to know and serve you and all our sisters and brothers, in Jesus name, we pray. AMEN

The Presentation of Symbols

Appropriate symbols of diaconal ministry may be presented. (Words are adapted from an address given in 2002 by Louise Williams, then president of DIAKONIA World Federation of Diaconal Associations).

Members of staff present a towel and basin. *Marcie Gibson online, Alcris Limongi in person.*

The Greek word *diakonia* is often used in the New Testament for serving at table. Jesus cared about the nurturing and feeding of people in body and spirit. He understood the meaning of community gathered at table. To do *diakonia* is to follow the example of this table server.

God calls us all into ministry.

We gather around this table.

May there be welcome and hospitality.

May this day nurture and feed us in body and spirit.

Students present a Bible. *Ally Phillips online, Cassandra Golondrina in person*

From the fourth century, reading the gospel was seen as a diaconal task. Sometimes the deacon also preached, and almost always the reading of the gospel was associated with the diaconal role of teacher. Part of the diaconal task is not just to tell the Jesus stories, but to help people tell their own stories of their pain and suffering, of their joys and triumphs, of deaths and resurrections, of God at work among them.

We give thanks for the personal stories lived with commitment and courage,
with faith and vision,
with passion and compassion,
with joy and blessing.

Members of Central Council present a door key. *Linda Ervin online, Stacy Stanley-Young in person*

When the early church was under persecution, the deaconesses and deacons stood at the door when the community gathered. They stood, as it were, at the boundaries between church and world. They were positioned at the edges; some would say the cutting edge. We might call such *diakonia* today ministries of outreach and hospitality and interpretation and mediation and reconciliation, bringing distant parties together, arranging welcome spaces, making the word come alive in languages that people can understand.

For all those involved in teaching and learning at the Centre for Christian Studies,

We offer prayers, O God.

For the students, staff, and friends of the Centre for Christian Studies,

For all people engaged in theological education and formation for ministry.

We offer our thanks for their gifts and commitment.

We offer our prayers for their openness and wisdom.

Alumni of the Centre present a candle. *Deb Kigar online, Ken DeLisle in person*

Part of the vision that we in the diaconate see is that this ministry belongs to all the people of God, not just us. Sometimes we do *diakonia* in the name of the people of God. Sometimes we teach, equip, liberate others for this ministry in the world. Always we are a sign, a living reminder that God calls us all, the people of God, into *diakonia*.

May all these be signs of the ministry which is upheld by the Centre for Christian Studies and shared by all the people of God.

All: Ashe and Amen. May we find joy together in the service of Christ.

Blessing – *Marlene Britton*

Holy Trinity, who are the architect of beauty, unity and peace, weave the threads of connection among us. Make ubuntu real to us. In the spirit of togetherness, may we embrace diversity, continuously learn with purpose, and be the agents of meaningful change. Bind our hearts in a shared purpose, and let our collective strength be a testament to the power of ubuntu.

All: Ashe. May it be so.