

Week 4
"En-Couraged"

Music for Gathering

[see music document for a list of secular songs about change that could be played as people gather]

Welcome

[after a general welcome statement and announcements, if any…]

Leader: This is the last week of our worship series on change. As we have seen, there are a lot of spiritual considerations to make before we even take the first step of change. We have been reminded that our Creator God made us for change, that we are being made new always from the inside-out, and that our job sometimes is just to let go into trust that God is with us through the loss and rediscovery that is this process of change.

Enter the Play Zone

[as theme music begins underneath]

Leader: Sometimes it can feel like such a big task to take the first small step. But then we see encouragement on all sides and it gives us courage to do what we can do to move forward. And that's what friends are for!

Theme Song

"Change is Good"

[scores and recordings are in your downloads]

Leader: It takes courage to change, to break out of whatever narrow paths we might find ourselves in. Just like Peter, if we are going to change, we have to take the first uncertain steps out of the boat onto the water and into the unknown. Luckily, we too have Jesus' redeeming help and support, his hand reaching out to us, if we start to sink or lose our way.

Opening Prayer

Let us pray together:

Encouraging God,
we hear your invitation into the future
and we look to you for courage.
Open us to know your presence as we
embark together on new adventures.
Calm our fears, and animate our spirits
for ongoing discovery.
Amen.

Opening Hymn/Song

"God of Grace and God of Glory"
Chalice 464, ELW 705, GTG 307, LW 398, NCH 436, UMH 577, VU 686, W&R 569
or
"Step by Step"
Songselect #696994

Peace

The peace of Christ be with you!
And also with you!
I invite you to pass the peace with those around you.
[Use a gesture or spoken phrase familiar to your congregation, or teach the ASL for "Peace and Play."]

Story for All Ages

[See the Children's Time document for this script.]

Contemporary Reading

In an article in 1991, Marion Wright Edelman recalled hearing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. speak at Spelman College when she was a young lawyer. "One of the things I liked about him was that he didn't pretend to be a great powerful know-it-all. I remember him discussing openly his gloom, depression, his fears, admitting that he didn't know what the next step was. He would then say: 'Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.'"

Here is a poem called "Start Close In" by David Whyte (YouTube video of the poet reciting HERE):

Start close in,
don't take the second step
or the third,
start with the first thing
close in,
the step you don't want to take.

Start with the ground you know,
the pale ground beneath your feet,
your own way to begin the conversation.

Start with your own question,
give up on other people's questions,
don't let them smother something simple.

To hear another's voice,
follow your own voice,
wait until that voice becomes a private ear
that can really listen to another.

Start right now
take a small step you can call your own
don't follow someone else's heroics,
be humble and focused,
start close in
don't mistake that other for your own.

Start close in,
don't take the second step
or the third,
start with the first thing
close in,
the step you don't want to take.

What's your first step? The one you don't want to take?

A Word in Music

"Be the Change" [for choir]
or
"Never Once" [for band]
Songselect #5997055

Ancient Reading

Matthew 14: 22-31a (The Message)

As soon as the meal was finished, [Jesus] insisted that the disciples get in the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he dismissed the people. With the crowd dispersed, he climbed the mountain so he could be by himself and pray. He stayed there alone, late into the night.

Meanwhile, the boat was far out to sea when the wind came up against them and they were battered by the waves. At about four o'clock in the morning, Jesus came toward them walking on the water. They were scared to death. "A ghost!" they said, crying out in terror. But Jesus was quick to comfort them. "Courage, it's me. Don't be afraid."

Peter, suddenly bold, said, "Master, if it's really you, call me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come ahead." Jumping out of the boat, Peter walked on the water to Jesus. But when he looked down at the waves churning beneath his feet, he lost his nerve and started to sink. He cried, "Master, save me!" Jesus didn't hesitate. He reached down and grabbed his hand.

Sermon

[See notes in the Sermon Fodder document and Discussion on the WDS website.]

Play-Doh Contemplation

[It will be a good idea to have some "background" music during this exercise. Even though I'm calling this "contemplation," feel free to choose more lighthearted instrumental music to make it feel fun…or even move from playful in the first part to contemplative in the second part.]

Leader: Each week, we have a time of contemplation as an opportunity to shape Play-Doh as we think about change in our own lives. Today I invite you to use the Play-Doh to create a footprint, a shoe, a walking stick, a suitcase…anything that represents embarking on a journey to you. As you create it, think about one step that you have been contemplating taking that requires change in your life. Allow the shaping of the clay to be your petition of prayer to God for the courage and encouragement you need.

[When it is time to move on, move into the "Ready for a Change" song and Prayers.]

Prayers of the People

"Ready for a Change"

Take this broken spirit, create in me a clean heart,
heal this wounded healer and point me to the good road.
Lord, I'm ready for a change, only you can make me change,
Lord, I'm ready for a change, only you can make me change,
only you can make me change, Lord, I'm ready for a change.

Wipe away these tears, Lord, and end my night of weeping,
wash away the old ways, replace my pain with your joy!
Lord, I'm ready for a change, only you can make me change,
Lord, I'm ready for a change, only you can make me change,
only you can make me change, Lord, I'm ready for a change.

Give my life a new start, and plant in me a fresh
seed that grows and blossoms into the fruit of blessing.

[Continue with prayers as are familiar to your community, and/or feel free to use these intercessory categories, reordering them or adapting the categories for your context.]

For all who are experiencing change as a result of civic policies and laws,
may they be supported in their search for good outcomes and resolutions.
From our community and beyond, we name these persons…
[lift up people and places being affected by institutional or political unrest, as appropriate]

For all who are experiencing change in their sense of identity or work,
may they know their sacred worth no matter the chaos of unsettled circumstances.
From our community and beyond, we name these persons…
[lift up people who are undergoing life changes, as appropriate]

For all who are experiencing change in their sense of home,
may they be welcomed into safe and vibrant communities of belovedness.
From our community and beyond, we name these persons…
[lift up people who are moving, who are displaced, who are suffering lack of a home, as appropriate]

For all who are experiencing change in their health,
may they feel the healing power of love and care.
From our community and beyond, we name these persons…
[lift up people with health concerns, as appropriate]

For all who are facing change in their lives,
may they, may we, find the strength and courage to move forward.
For our community and beyond, we name these things…
[lift up any issues that your community, your church, is in the midst of dealing with, as appropriate]

In this silence we offer to you the deepest yearning of our hearts…

Silence

God of Next Steps,
when we just can't muster our courage
and shut ourselves off from those who encourage us,
forgive us and remind us that we are forgiven.

When we choose comfort over needed confrontation
that could move the world closer to justice,
forgive us and remind us that we are forgiven.

When we stand in the way of other's forward motion,
and forget to be the encouragers you would have us be,
forgive us and remind us that we are forgiven.

We pray this in the name of Jesus, who came to change our hearts for good…

The Lord's Prayer

Sung Response

[sung]

Wipe away these tears, Lord, and end my night of weeping,
wash away the old ways, replace my pain with your joy!
Lord, I'm ready for a change, only you can make me change,
Lord, I'm ready for a change, only you can make me change,
only you can make me change, Lord, I'm ready for a change.

Offering the Possibilities and Praise

[The call for offering would be a good time to highlight a new ministry or collaboration with another organization for change in your community.]

Song of Commitment/Doxology

"Jesus We Are Here"
GTG 392, MV 189, FWS/STF 2273, W&R 659
[Try this easy song of commitment, or use a doxology familiar to your community.]

Jesus, we are here, Jesus, we are here
Jesus, we are here, we are here for you!

Offering Prayer

Holy God,
We offer these gifts
and the gift of courage to go where you call us.
May all these gifts be multiplied for all those who need
our every effort and movement for change.
Bless all of this to your glory
and to the work of making the world a better place for all.

[insert Communion here if needed]

Closing Hymn/Song

"We Are Marching in the Light of God"
Chalice 442, ELW 866, GTG 853, FWS/STF 2235b, NCH 526, VU 646
or
"Every Move I Make"
Songselect #1595726

Benediction

From the Gospel According to Elmo's friends,
"Take the first step
and soon you'll see
just how brave your heart can be!"

Remember that you are never alone in the journey of change–we're all on it with Jesus who says, "Come on ahead!" and then moves with us each step of the way.

Go into the world knowing
that the Potter God is still shaping and reshaping you as you were made to do;
that the Teacher Jesus is inviting you to a change of heart,
making it all so very possible;
and that the Adventurous Spirit is luring you to
more play and curiosity in your precious life.

Go in peace,
stay in courage,
Amen!

Music for Going Out

[Let the Postlude in this series send people out in joy!]