Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023

This planning guide is not meant to be a "one size fits all" approach to the new hymnal. But it is a starting point that we hope worship planners will find useful. See sections titled “OPTIONAL NEW HYMNS PERHAPS REQUIRING INTRODUCTION,” “NOTES FOR CONSERVATIVE,” and “NOTES FOR AMBITIOUS” for resources to enable easy customization to better fit local circumstances. These sections (for each Sunday) are especially helpful in how they alert planners about hymns/songs that require advance preparation. It's never best to pick a new hymn tune and hope for the best!

Series Theme

Christian Worship provides an updated three-year lectionary for the Christian calendar along with appointed prayers, psalms, and gospel acclamations. Thematic Sundays are a chief feature of the new lectionary. All the resources share a common focus. The Gospel sets the theme for the day and largely matches the Gospel selections in other three-year lectionaries. The First Reading features more Old Testament narratives that match the theme of the Gospel. The Second Reading no longer comes from sets of continual readings but is a selection from New Testament epistles that supports the Sunday’s Gospel. The Prayer of the Day, Psalm of the Day, Gospel Acclamation, and Hymn of the Day are appointed to match the Sunday theme. (From *CW: Commentary on the Propers*.)

The themes below for each day reflect (or are identical to) those found in *CW: Commentary on the Propers*. The explanations below usually quote or adapt material from this source. But the published Commentary provides much additional material, including (in part): 1) a more thorough description of the day’s theme, 2) far more analysis of each reading (also the appointed psalm), occasional reference to the original languages, and 3) the Prayer of the Day (which cannot be included in the online planner due to copyrights).

Note a difference between the explanations below and the longer ones in the published Commentary: those found in this planner quickly and briefly show connections between readings and the theme of the day. The longer versions provide more depth for worship planners and preachers.

Readings

*** Readings with a triple asterisk are the recommended preaching text. Some hymn choices are made with this preaching text in mind. The Preacher Podcast usually follows these suggestions.

Additional Hymn Suggestions

Additional hymn suggestions are available in *Christian Worship: Service Builder* and in *Christian Worship: Planning Guide*, available from NPH: https://online.nph.net/church-supplies/categories/hymnals-songbooks/christian-worship-suite.

CW: Planning Guide includes several hymn indexes, including an exhaustive Scripture index for the hymns.

Supporting Musical Arrangements

Choral and keyboard music supporting new hymns may be found at NPH (online.nph.net) by searching on ‘cw21choral’ or ‘cw21keyboard.’

Note: The abbreviation “GA” stands for Gospel Acclamation.

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023

First Sunday in Advent - 11/27/2022

SERIES THEME

COME, LORD JESUS!

The Latin word adventus means "coming." The last words in Scripture are "Come, Lord Jesus!" Thus, the season of Advent begins with the end in mind. We enter a new Church Year with our eyes fixed on the End—capital "E"—when Jesus Christ will come and destroy this sin-broken world.

If that is what Jesus and his angels are coming to do—destroy the universe with fire (2 Peter 3)—why would we cry out, "Come, Lord Jesus"? Because we know that Jesus has come into our world once before. The Son of God became the Son of Man. From the manger to the cross, Jesus did everything necessary to redeem mankind. As this new Church Year walks us through the entire life of Christ, we see God's promises of deliverance fulfilled… God's plan of salvation completed. And so, when Christ comes again, while the universe will be destroyed, we know God's people will be ushered into a new, glorious, everlasting kingdom.

Advent is necessary to prepare us for Christmas. It enables us to understand the true significance of Christmas. For Advent allows us to see that because of what Christ did when he came the first time, believers need not fear when he comes again. Instead, we yearn for it. Come, Lord Jesus!

THEME OF THE DAY

COME, LORD JESUS! - AS KING

Why would the Church Year begin with a gospel reading that describes an event near the very end of Jesus' life—his entry into Jerusalem at the start of Holy Week? Because the events of Palm Sunday serve as a perfect summary of the entire plan of salvation.

It is an odd sight, this man riding into Jerusalem on a baby donkey, to cheers and the celebratory waving of palm branches. Understandably, many asked, "Who is this?" The answer: This is not just a rabbi. This is the King of all Creation. This is God Almighty wrapped in flesh. Yet, he does not enter Jerusalem with all his glory and power on display. The King hides all that and rides into Jerusalem so that he might also be our priest and sacrifice.

This is a King unlike any other ruler who has ever lived. For he is infinitely greater than all other kings, while simultaneously being infinitely humbler. This King is willing to trade his golden crown for one made of thorns. This King comes not demanding our service but to serve us. You look at how good, how loving is this King, and you ask that question upon which eternity hinges. "Who is this?" As we march through this new Church Year, the answer becomes crystal clear. This King is the Savior of the nations.

FIRST READING

*** Isaiah 2:1-5 – In the future, when our King comes again, he will transform this world.

SECOND READING

Philippians 4:4-7 – Our present life is transformed from worry to joy and hope because of the King who came.

GOSPEL

Matthew 21:1-11 – The King of all Creation comes to us in total humility, willing to do everything necessary to save us from our sin.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 3 Gloria was introduced starting November 7, with Sanctus and Agnus from Setting 2. That or similar will continue through this Sunday.

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
548 - The King of Glory Comes

or

309 - The Advent of Our King

Psalm of the Day:
24A

or

24H

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 3

Hymn of the Day:
301 - Savior of the Nations, Come

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
305 - Lift Up Your Heads, You Mighty Gates

Closing Hymn:
524 - Rejoice, the Lord Is King

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
915 - Hosanna to the Living Lord (opening);

Notes for the conservative service:
915 - would require intro, not critical to sing it if first reading is sermon text; prob a better choice if Gospel were sermon text; Gospel was sermon text in Year C

Notes for the ambitious service:

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023

Second Sunday in Advent - 12/4/2022

SERIES THEME

COME, LORD JESUS!

The Latin word adventus means "coming." The last words in Scripture are "Come, Lord Jesus!" Thus, the season of Advent begins with the end in mind. We enter a new Church Year with our eyes fixed on the End—capital "E"—when Jesus Christ will come and destroy this sin-broken world.

If that is what Jesus and his angels are coming to do—destroy the universe with fire (2 Peter 3)—why would we cry out, "Come, Lord Jesus"? Because we know that Jesus has come into our world once before. The Son of God became the Son of Man. From the manger to the cross, Jesus did everything necessary to redeem mankind. As this new Church Year walks us through the entire life of Christ, we see God's promises of deliverance fulfilled… God's plan of salvation completed. And so, when Christ comes again, while the universe will be destroyed, we know God's people will be ushered into a new, glorious, everlasting kingdom.

Advent is necessary to prepare us for Christmas. It enables us to understand the true significance of Christmas. For Advent allows us to see that because of what Christ did when he came the first time, believers need not fear when he comes again. Instead, we yearn for it. Come, Lord Jesus!

THEME OF THE DAY

COME, LORD JESUS! - AS JUDGE

When Jesus comes back as judge, everyone will face a binary outcome. Either they will be judged righteous and experience the peace and joys of Paradise. Or they will be judged wicked and suffer unquenchable fire (Matthew 3).

John the Baptist's job was to point to the only way to prepare for a judgment, one where the stakes are that high. Repent! And look to the Lord Jesus. For when Jesus came into our world the first time, it was not as judge, but as Savior. All those whose faith is in Christ have already been judged righteous.

Please, take these words to heart: the reign of God draws near, and his judgment is inevitable. As John the Baptist once said, "All people will see God's salvation." The only question is if one sees Christ's second coming with joy or regret. For those who fail to repent, the coming of the Judge brings certain doom. But his people will see that Judge like a banner on the hilltop, rallying us to his glorious side.

FIRST READING

*** Isaiah 11:1-10 – From the family tree of Jesse, father of King David, another King would come to judge the world with righteousness and establish an everlasting kingdom.

SECOND READING

Romans 15:4-13 – God's people face the coming judgment not with fear but with hope because God has raised up the Root of Jesse as our Savior.

GOSPEL

Matthew 3:1-12 – To prepare us for the coming judgment, God sent John the Baptist, a voice in the wilderness, calling all to repent.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Today the Setting 3 Sanctus and Agnus Dei will be introduced

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
311 - Dawning Light of Our Salvation

or

321 - God's Own Son Most Holy

Psalm of the Day:
130A

or

130G

or

325 - My Soul in Stillness Waits

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. And all people will see God's salvation. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 3

Hymn of the Day:
316 - On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
* 312 - Comfort, Comfort All My People

Closing Hymn:
304 - What Hope! An Eden Prophesied

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
311 - Dawning Light of Our Salvation

Notes for the conservative service:
311 - Dawning Light of Our Salvation

Closing: 326 - O Jesus, Grant Me Hope and Comfort

304 is tight with the sermon text and should be sung, could move to opening hymn if desired.

Notes for the ambitious service:
311 - Dawning Light of Our Salvation - should be introduced with cantors

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023

Third Sunday in Advent - 12/11/2022

SERIES THEME

COME, LORD JESUS!

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If that is what Jesus and his angels are coming to do—destroy the universe with fire (2 Peter 3)—why would we cry out, "Come, Lord Jesus"? Because we know that Jesus has come into our world once before. The Son of God became the Son of Man. From the manger to the cross, Jesus did everything necessary to redeem mankind. As this new Church Year walks us through the entire life of Christ, we see God's promises of deliverance fulfilled… God's plan of salvation completed. And so, when Christ comes again, while the universe will be destroyed, we know God's people will be ushered into a new, glorious, everlasting kingdom.

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THEME OF THE DAY

COME, LORD JESUS! - AS MESSIAH

Humanity wants a made-to-order Messiah. We want the Savior we want. The Jews wanted a political Messiah who would remove Roman oppression and reestablish the kingdom of Israel. The generic Christian of today wants a Messiah who is a good teacher and an inspiration for brotherly love.

Even faithful Christians face the temptation of a made-to-order Messiah. We want a Messiah who isn't bothered by the sin that keeps cropping up in our life, who doesn't call for total dedication but is fine if we only want a relaxed association with him. We want a Messiah who dispenses blessings liberally, to ensure that our life is blessed, as we would like to define it.

That is not the Messiah who came. Jesus defies the expectations of Israel, the world, and us. Jesus reminds us that "blessed" is a term that he defines, and it begins with not rejecting the Messiah because he fails to meet our expectations. One proof that Jesus is the Messiah is that he fulfilled every prophecy. Therefore, blessed people respond to adverse circumstances with patient waiting and confidence that, at just the right time, their Messiah will fix all that is broken in their lives.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 35:1-10 – The prophet foretold that the coming of the Messiah would change everything.

SECOND READING

James 5:7-11 – Knowing what we do about the Messiah's coming kingdom, we want it now. God's encouragement, however, is for us to be patient.

GOSPEL

*** Matthew 11:2-11 – Jesus deals gently with those whose present circumstances lead them to doubt that he is the Messiah.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
307 - When the King Shall Come Again

Psalm of the Day:
146A or B

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 3

Hymn of the Day:
324 - O Lord, How Shall I Meet You

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
812 - Christ, the Sure and Steady Anchor

Closing Hymn:
519 - There Is a Redeemer

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
812 - Christ, the Sure and Steady Anchor

Notes for the conservative service:
812 - this would benefit from introduction but it's not a difficult hymn tune and st. 1 especially fits with the gospel sermon text

Notes for the ambitious service:

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023

Fourth Sunday in Advent - 12/18/2022

SERIES THEME

COME, LORD JESUS!

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If that is what Jesus and his angels are coming to do—destroy the universe with fire (2 Peter 3)—why would we cry out, "Come, Lord Jesus"? Because we know that Jesus has come into our world once before. The Son of God became the Son of Man. From the manger to the cross, Jesus did everything necessary to redeem mankind. As this new Church Year walks us through the entire life of Christ, we see God's promises of deliverance fulfilled… God's plan of salvation completed. And so, when Christ comes again, while the universe will be destroyed, we know God's people will be ushered into a new, glorious, everlasting kingdom.

Advent is necessary to prepare us for Christmas. It enables us to understand the true significance of Christmas. For Advent allows us to see that because of what Christ did when he came the first time, believers need not fear when he comes again. Instead, we yearn for it. Come, Lord Jesus!

THEME OF THE DAY

COME, LORD JESUS! - AS IMMANUEL

This time of year it is so easy to get caught up in the beautiful trappings of Christmas and forget why this birth had to take place. Mankind fell into sin. Sin brings an awful burden. Hatred and oppression. Suffering and pain. Guilt and shame. The devastation of death. These are all natural consequences of sin. And what can we do about any of it? Nothing of substance. We can numb ourselves to pain, but we cannot avoid it. We can fill our life with distractions in an attempt to forget about our guilt. But our conscience is always nagging. And death… no one avoids that.

Man can do nothing to shake off the burden of sin. Therefore, the Church prays that God would come in power to remove that burden for us. Since the Garden, there has been only one plan to do that: God would take on flesh and blood. To do what mankind could not do—remove all the burdens of sin—God became man. When you look into the manger, what do you see? A baby? Yes. But, more. That is Immanuel, "God-with-us." The Son of God became Mary's son, so that he could do for us what we could not do for ourselves.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 7:10-14 – The Lord promised that deliverance would come through the gift of Immanuel. And how would we recognize him? He would be born of a virgin.

SECOND READING

Romans 1:1-7 – After thousands of years of God's promises, St. Paul sees them all fulfilled in Christ. Jesus is Immanuel, true God and true man.

GOSPEL

*** Matthew 1:18-25 – In faith, Joseph accepted that within the womb of his bride-to-be was Immanuel—the very Son of God, the promised Savior from sin.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 3 Sanctus and Agnus Dei reintroduced/reinforced

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
322 - Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

Psalm of the Day:
89A

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 3

Hymn of the Day:
327 - O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
* 496 - Jesus! Name of Wondrous Love

* 320 - As Angels Joyed with One Accord

Closing Hymn:
330 - Peace Came to Earth

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
330 - A supplement hymn, last hymn on Advent 4 as a Christmas hymn, but tightly bound to the theme of Advent 4

Notes for the conservative service:
322 - RESTORATION tune is new to CW, but should be familiar to some from "Come, Ye Sinners Poor and Needy"

Notes for the ambitious service:

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023

Nativity of our Lord - Christmas Eve - 12/24/2022

SERIES THEME

A SAVIOR IS BORN

The first Christmas sermon was preached to a small congregation consisting entirely of shepherds. The preacher was an angel. The message of his sermon? "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you."

That is a heavy word: Savior. It says as much about us as it does about this child. If the angel had said "a teacher has been born" or "a mentor has been born," it would mean that within us exists the potential to fix all that is wrong with the world. It would mean we just need a bit of help: a coach, a mentor, a source of inspiration. But the angel said, "A Savior has been born." If one needs saving, it means he is totally helpless—completely lost—doomed, without outside intervention. That is how God the Father viewed us: helpless, lost, doomed. So, he sent more than a coach. He sent his only Son to be our Savior.

After December 25 the secular world is done with Christmas. But for the Church, the season of Christmas has just begun. For twelve glorious days—The Twelve Days of Christmas—we will ponder the nativity of the Son of God. We will celebrate what that nativity means. A Savior is born!

NOTE: In a worship folder, it might be wise to list all the themes, highlighting each successive week's theme. This lets people see the larger arc of the series.

A Savior is Born to Change the World
A Savior is Born to Dwell Among Us
A Savior is Born to Be the True Son
A Savior is Born for All the Nations

THEME OF THE DAY

A SAVIOR BORN TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Families cherish their Christmas traditions. Year after year, they decorate the tree with the same ornaments, play the same music, bake the same Christmas cookies. Without asking, family members know when they will open presents. If you try to change your family's Christmas traditions, you just might pick a fight! When it comes to family Christmases, people generally don't like things to change.

Because our celebration of Christmas is so steeped in unchanging traditions, it might be easy for us to miss that the Nativity of the Son of God meant radical change for the world. The birth of the Christ child meant that nothing in the world would ever be the same. We even divide history into the events that occurred "Before Christ" (BC) and after "Anno Domini" (AD), Latin for "Year of our Lord."

Christmas traditions are wonderful. But make no mistake about it. Christmas is all about change. The Lord God came to change the world by becoming part of the world. Because we are part of the world, that means Christmas changes us too. This Christmas Eve, we see how.

FIRST READING

Micah 5:2-5a – The prophet foretold that out of a little town called Bethlehem would come one who would bring peace to the world.

SECOND READING

Titus 2:11-14 – The grace God showed us in sending his Son not only changes our lives now but also changes our eternal destiny.

GOSPEL

*** Luke 2:1-20 – This child's birth changed man's relationship with God. Sinful man is hostile to God. Because of what this child would do, a holy God is now at peace with man.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
local choices

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
346 - Angels We Have Heard on High

Psalm of the Day:
96

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
service may or may not include GA

Hymn of the Day:
329 - All My Heart Again Rejoices

additional hymn for Family Service: 340 - Away in a Manger

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
353 - Joy to the World

Closing Hymn:
337 - Silent Night

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

Notes for the conservative service:
Traditional favorites have been chosen, subject to adjustment for the various services.

Notes for the ambitious service:

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023

Nativity of our Lord - Christmas Day - 12/25/2022

SERIES THEME

A SAVIOR IS BORN

The first Christmas sermon was preached to a small congregation consisting entirely of shepherds. The preacher was an angel. The message of his sermon? "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you."

That is a heavy word: Savior. It says as much about us as it does about this child. If the angel had said "a teacher has been born" or "a mentor has been born," it would mean that within us exists the potential to fix all that is wrong with the world. It would mean we just need a bit of help: a coach, a mentor, a source of inspiration. But the angel said, "A Savior has been born." If one needs saving, it means he is totally helpless—completely lost—doomed, without outside intervention. That is how God the Father viewed us: helpless, lost, doomed. So, he sent more than a coach. He sent his only Son to be our Savior.

After December 25 the secular world is done with Christmas. But for the Church, the season of Christmas has just begun. For twelve glorious days—The Twelve Days of Christmas—we will ponder the nativity of the Son of God. We will celebrate what that nativity means. A Savior is born!

THEME OF THE DAY

A SAVIOR BORN TO DWELL AMONG US

For centuries on Christmas Day the Church has read chapter one of St. John's Gospel. There, in just a few simple words, Scripture describes the indescribable: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14). The word God had spoken in the Garden, promising to send a Savior who was part of mankind, came true. God himself became flesh and blood—to be born under law, to suffer, and to die that he might redeem us.

The Greek word translated "made his dwelling" can also be translated "pitched his tent." That word describes a temporary dwelling place. God came into our broken world to dwell for a time, so that one day we might go to God's perfect home and dwell for all eternity.

Unlike those Christmas Eve shepherds, we cannot see Christ with our eyes. Yet still he dwells among us. For he is the Word made flesh. As we listen to the Word today, we truly are hearing the voice of Christ. As we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we partake of his true body and blood. In Word and sacrament, still today, our Savior dwells among us, feeding our faith, preparing us for our true home.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 52:7-10 – The prophet foretold that the Lord would dwell among us, laying bare his arm, rolling up his sleeves and doing what was necessary to bring the good news of salvation to the ends of the earth.

SECOND READING

*** Hebrews 1:1-9 – In the past God sent angels and prophets as messengers to his people. In these latter days, God speaks to us through his Son who came to dwell among us.

GOSPEL

John 1:1-14 – The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
local choices

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
354 - O Come, All Ye Faithful

Psalm of the Day:
98

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
service may or may not include GA

Hymn of the Day:
358 - Of the Father's Love Begotten

or

366 - O Rejoice, All Christians, Loudly

or

352 - Joy Has Dawned

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
347 - Angels from the Realms of Glory

Closing Hymn:
350 - Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
352 - Joy Has Dawned

Notes for the conservative service:
The Hymn of the Day (358) is perhaps not a universal favorite but fits well with the sermon text selected. The Alt HotD (366) may still be fairly well known and has an easier chorale type setting than the version in CW 93.

Notes for the ambitious service:
Or the new Getty hymn (352) has a straightforward melody that even if new shouldn't require very much in the way of introduction.

First Sunday after Christmas - 1/1/2023

SERIES THEME

A SAVIOR IS BORN

The first Christmas sermon was preached to a small congregation consisting entirely of shepherds. The preacher was an angel. The message of his sermon? "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you."

That is a heavy word: Savior. It says as much about us as it does about this child. If the angel had said "a teacher has been born" or "a mentor has been born," it would mean that within us exists the potential to fix all that is wrong with the world. It would mean we just need a bit of help: a coach, a mentor, a source of inspiration. But the angel said, "A Savior has been born." If one needs saving, it means he is totally helpless—completely lost—doomed, without outside intervention. That is how God the Father viewed us: helpless, lost, doomed. So, he sent more than a coach. He sent his only Son to be our Savior.

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THEME OF THE DAY

A SAVIOR IS BORN TO BE THE TRUE SON

Christmas holidays mean family time. Extended family travel and visits. Meals are prepared, gifts given, memories are made. The memories might not all be good. Sometimes, Christmas dinners end in fights. Sometimes, hurt feelings keep family from coming together during the holidays. The painful reality is that we sinners fail our families, and our families fail us.

God knows what that's like. He, too, wanted his children to be everything he hoped for them to be. But he was sorely disappointed. That's why he made a plan. God the Father sent Jesus to be the son that he always wanted—reciprocal in love, perfect in obedience, unwavering in devotion. Jesus came to be everything that God wanted from us.

By coming to be the true Son of the Father, Jesus gives us rights to be redeemed sons and daughters—sons just like Jesus with the rights, the relationship, and the privileges of heirs.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 63:7-9 – The kindness of the Lord is seen in this. When his children turned away from him, he sent a Savior to redeem them.

SECOND READING

Galatians 4:4-7 – Since we have been redeemed by God's true Son, we are now able to call God "Father."

GOSPEL

*** Matthew 2:13-23 – God's plan was to save the world by having his true Son serve as our substitute, dying on the cross. And so God saves his true Son from an early death.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 3 (a small group may still sing the "verses" of the Gloria as the congregation sings the refrain?) and non-communion ending of the service; or this service might be a good place for a break and just have a service of the Word in which 349:1,2 could serve as a song of praise to replace the Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
333 - O Little Town of Bethlehem

Psalm of the Day:
2

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Sing to the Lord a new song; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 3

Hymn of the Day:
355 - Let All Together Praise Our God

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
364 - Love Has Come

Closing Hymn:
334 - I Stand beside Your Manger Here

or

356 - God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
364 - Love Has Come

Notes for the conservative service:
364 is a new text, but the carol tune of "Bring a Torch, Jeanette Isabella" should be familiar to many and may not require introduction

Notes for the ambitious service:

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023

Epiphany of our Lord - 1/6/2023

SERIES THEME

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THEME OF THE DAY

A SAVIOR IS BORN FOR ALL THE NATIONS

The twelve days of Christmas culminate with the celebration of the Epiphany of our Lord. We commemorate the day when magi from afar worshiped the Christ Child. Before that day, Jesus had been worshiped by individuals of Jewish descent: the shepherds, elderly Simeon, the prophetess Anna. But Scripture said the coming Savior would be God's gift to all nations. Epiphany proves that God keeps his promises, as he miraculously led foreigners to worship their Savior. Thus, Epiphany is sometimes called the Gentile Christmas. (The celebration of Epiphany likely precedes that of Christmas. Evidence of the Festival of Epiphany dates to Clement of Alexandria at the end of the second century.)

Epiphany continues to play out to this very day. God worked through a special star to bring the magi into the presence of their Savior—for Christ's glory and the magi's blessing. Likewise, God has controlled time and space to bring you into the presence of your Savior—for Christ's glory and your blessing. Thus, the magi were only the first in a long line of Gentiles who would join Israel in worshiping Jesus as King. Indeed, a Savior is born for all the nations! Come, let us adore him!

FIRST READING

Isaiah 60:1-6 – The prophet foretold that one born king of the Jews would draw kings from distant nations to the light of his glory.

SECOND READING

Ephesians 3:2-12 – St. Paul explains that people of all nations are united together as complete equals in the Savior's kingdom of grace.

GOSPEL

*** Matthew 2:1-12 – Magi from the east were the first in a long line of Gentiles who would join Israel in worshiping Jesus as King.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
CW 21 Evening Prayer??

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
371 - A Child Is Born in Bethlehem

or

376 - Rise Up and Shine

Psalm of the Day:
72

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
evening service may or may not include GA

Hymn of the Day:
370 - How Lovely Shines the Morning Star

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
372 - As with Gladness Men of Old

Closing Hymn:
374:1,2,4 - The Star Proclaims the King Is Here

or optional evening hymns if this service is held on Friday night

791 - Round Me Falls the Night

793 - Jesus, Tender Shepherd, Hear Me

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
371 - A Child Is Born in Bethlehem

791 - Round Me Falls the Night

793 - Jesus, Tender Shepherd

Notes for the conservative service:
376 - optional opening hymn sings the OT lesson and is familiar with the FOREST GREEN tune

Notes for the ambitious service:
371 - is a new text, but the carol tune of "Bring a Torch, Jeanette Isabella" should be familiar to many and may not require introduction

If this service is held on Friday night, the two evening hymns would likely need introduction. 791 (new tune for old text) would require introduction. 793 is a straightforward melody with refrain and may need some but perhaps not as much introduction.

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023

First Sunday after Epiphany - Baptism of Our Lord - 1/8/2023

SERIES THEME

JESUS APPEARS

The Gospels tell only a little about Jesus' life as an infant. Then, St. Luke briefly discusses the desire of the boy Jesus to be in the temple. Then, Scripture falls silent, telling us nothing about almost two decades of Jesus' life. For most of Jesus' adult life, he lived quietly in Galilee, practicing the carpentry he had learned from his adoptive father, Joseph. Jesus had no followers. Jesus was not famous. But at the exact time God the Father had appointed, Jesus left that obscurity behind. The word epiphany means "appearance." In the Season of Epiphany, we watch Jesus begin his public ministry. Jesus makes his first appearances. And in those appearances, it quickly becomes clear that this is more than a random carpenter's son. As Jesus appears, we see exactly who he is and what he came to do.

Our worship for three weeks will follow this pattern:

Jesus Appears as the Anointed One
Jesus Appears as the Lamb of God
Jesus Appears as the Light in the Darkness

THEME OF THE DAY

JESUS APPEARS AS THE ANNOINTED ONE

"Christ" is not Jesus' last name, of course. It is a title. The Greek word "Christ" and the Hebrew word "Messiah" both mean the same thing—"The Anointed One." Anointing was the practice of pouring liquid (typically oil) over the head of someone to signify selection for some special task. However, when the Lord anointed heroes to do his saving work, what he poured over them was his Spirit.

For centuries people of faith had patiently waited for the promised Messiah, the servant of God who would bring the salvation we so desperately need. The time had come for Jesus to be revealed as the fulfillment of that divine promise. So, Christ our Lord came to the Jordan River to be baptized, that he might be recognized by John and revealed to Israel. At his baptism Jesus was anointed—marked as God's special servant and empowered by the Spirit of the Lord.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 42:1-7 – The Lord promises to put his Spirit on the Messiah, empowering the Anointed One to free us from our sins. We see this promise fulfilled when Jesus is baptized.

SECOND READING

*** Acts 10:34-38 – As Peter told others how God had anointed Jesus, through that good news the Holy Spirit was poured out upon Peter's listeners.

GOSPEL

Matthew 3:13-17 – In the waters of the Jordan, Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 3 - non Communion - keep learning Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
384 - Hail to the Lord's Anointed

Psalm of the Day:
45

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 3

Hymn of the Day:
377 - To Jordan's River Came Our Lord

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
374:1,2,4,5 - The Star Proclaims the King Is Here (if unused previous week)

or

685 - Through Simple Water Drawn and Poured

Closing Hymn:
950 - Lord, Bid Your Servant Go in Peace

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
385 - Christ Begins

379 - Christ, Your Footprints - new tune for Supplement hymn

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:
385 should have cantor intro, or cong on refrain only at first, or prior learning of some sort

Baptism hymns such as 647 or 682 (both new tunes needing intro) and 679 are also options for this day.

Second Sunday after Epiphany - 1/15/2023

SERIES THEME

JESUS APPEARS

The Gospels tell only a little about Jesus' life as an infant. Then, St. Luke briefly discusses the desire of the boy Jesus to be in the temple. Then, Scripture falls silent, telling us nothing about almost two decades of Jesus' life. For most of Jesus' adult life, he lived quietly in Galilee, practicing the carpentry he had learned from his adoptive father, Joseph. Jesus had no followers. Jesus was not famous. But at the exact time God the Father had appointed, Jesus left that obscurity behind. The word epiphany means "appearance." In the Season of Epiphany, we watch Jesus begin his public ministry. Jesus makes his first appearances. And in those appearances, it quickly becomes clear that this is more than a random carpenter's son. As Jesus appears, we see exactly who he is and what he came to do.

THEME OF THE DAY

JESUS APPEARS AS THE LAMB OF GOD

For centuries the priests of Israel offered sacrifices to God for sin. Over and over blood flowed, testifying that the penalty of sin was death. But over and over a substitute stood in the place of the sinner. Countless animals died under the priestly knife as generations of the faithful brought lamb after lamb to the temple.

This week we see the Lamb that God himself was bringing to the temple. This was the Lamb that God himself would sacrifice. In the great act that would remove our condemnation, the Messiah took our sins, stood in our place, and died as the substitute for sinful mankind. This was the fulfillment of the entire sacrificial system. Every lamb and goat and bird pointed to God's Lamb who takes away our sin.

The heart that sees his Savior willingly becoming the Lamb cannot help but take this news of salvation to the ends of the earth.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 49:1-6 – The Servant of the Lord would suffer, but in that suffering God would display his splendor to the entire world.

SECOND READING

Colossians 2:6-15 – The Lamb of God needed to be flesh and blood, so that he could be sacrificed. And because that Lamb was the Son of God, it is a sacrifice valuable enough to forgive us all our sins.

GOSPEL

*** John 1:29-41 – As the last and greatest of the prophets, John the Baptist succinctly summarizes God's plan of salvation by pointing to Jesus and calling him the Lamb of God.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 3 - Target date for assembly singing the entire Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
380 - Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun

Psalm of the Day:
40

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Jesus Christ is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 3

Hymn of the Day:
375 - Arise and Shine in Splendor

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
*525 - The Lamb and

*530 Praise Be to Christ

or

*629 O God from God

Closing Hymn:
929 - May the Peace of God

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
Though categorized in Lent, 403 Lamb of God would work well with preaching on the gospel. If we weren't learning Setting 3 right now, this hymn could serve as an Agnus

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:
781 Lord, as the Day Begins clearly references "take away our sins" - new melody needs intro

Third Sunday after Epiphany - 1/22/2023

SERIES THEME

JESUS APPEARS

The Gospels tell only a little about Jesus' life as an infant. Then, St. Luke briefly discusses the desire of the boy Jesus to be in the temple. Then, Scripture falls silent, telling us nothing about almost two decades of Jesus' life. For most of Jesus' adult life, he lived quietly in Galilee, practicing the carpentry he had learned from his adoptive father, Joseph. Jesus had no followers. Jesus was not famous. But at the exact time God the Father had appointed, Jesus left that obscurity behind. The word epiphany means "appearance." In the Season of Epiphany, we watch Jesus begin his public ministry. Jesus makes his first appearances. And in those appearances, it quickly becomes clear that this is more than a random carpenter's son. As Jesus appears, we see exactly who he is and what he came to do.

THEME OF THE DAY

JESUS APPEARS AS THE LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

The prophet Isaiah vividly described humanity as "people walking in darkness." We are completely enveloped by sin and suffering and death. Worse, when we honestly assess the content of our minds and hearts, we find darkness there too. However, the prophet also foretold that within this deep darkness, a light would shine. The light would be so brilliant that it would be impossible to miss. As Jesus began his teaching and preaching ministry, that prophecy was fulfilled.

Today Jesus continues to shine his light by preaching repentance and the good news of the nearing kingdom. He invites us to live a life that is illuminated by him. He calls us to walk in the light of love for God and for the brothers and sisters around us. Our Savior is the Light of the world, and so we shine his reflected light onto everyone around us.

FIRST READING

*** Isaiah 8:19-9:4 – The prophet foretold that the people walking in darkness would see a great light.

SECOND READING

1 John 2:3-11 – God's children are found walking in the light of Christ and reflecting that light by living in love for God and one another.

GOSPEL

Matthew 4:12-23 – As Jesus began his preaching ministry in a world filled with unbelief, the prophecy was fulfilled. A brilliant light shined through the darkness.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 3 - Final time for assembly to sing the entire Gloria; then next Sunday move to a different setting since Setting 3 has been in play for quite a while.

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
381 - The People Who In Darkness Walked

Psalm of the Day:
27

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 3

Hymn of the Day:
904 - O Christ, Our True and Only Light

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
515 - Christ Is the World's Light

Closing Hymn:
528:1,6 - Christ, the Word of God Incarnate

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
382 - The People Who Walked in Darkness - new hymn that needs intro

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:
382 The People Who Walked in Darkness - if this is chosen, prob not also use 381

27D We Are Singing could be used as an opening or closing hymn in addition to the appointed psalm of the day

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany - 1/29/2023

SERIES THEME

THE SAVIOR'S SERMON

The Greek word epiphany means “appearance.” In the first half of this church season called Epiphany, we saw Jesus appear on the scene, beginning his ministry. He calls his disciples. It is not long before large crowds start following Jesus around Galilee. So, in the second half of this season Jesus is going to teach us what it means to be one of his followers.

Jesus does this through the most famous sermon of all time. It is not delivered while standing in a pulpit but while sitting on a hill. Elevated above the crowd, Jesus’ voice would carry through the air. His followers hung on his every word as the Christ talked about living an authentic Christian life. It is called the Sermon on the Mount.

Our worship the next few weeks will follow this pattern:

Trust in God’s Strength
You Are . . . So Be
Live a Holy Life
Love Your Enemies

THEME OF THE DAY

TRUST IN GOD’S STRENGTH

Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount with a series of blessings. “Blessed are…” Jesus says, again and again. In the Latin Vulgate, these all begin with the word “beati” which translates as “blessed” or “happy.” Thus, this portion of the sermon is often called “The Beatitudes.” It had to give Jesus’ listeners pause. For what Jesus calls blessed, the world never would. The world praises the strong and the self-sufficient. Jesus calls blessed what others would see as weak or stupid. But, like any good preacher, Jesus is trying to drive home one crucial point. The weaker you are, the more ready you are to rely on God’s strength. The more difficult your present circumstances, the likelier you are to yearn for future reward.

All the readings for today teach this truth. We have no real strength or wisdom of our own. But we don’t need it. Because God’s strength is enough to give the kingdom of heaven to the humble and poor in spirit.

FIRST READING

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:11-13 – The LORD promises that those who are humble, who trust in his strength rather than their own, will not be put to shame.

SECOND READING

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 – Paul points the Corinthians to themselves as an example of how God’s strength is made perfect in weakness.

GOSPEL

*** Matthew 5:1-12 – In the Beatitudes Jesus shows us the outcome of a life that is lived trusting in God’s strength.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 4 (incl gradual introduction of new Kyrie and new (but similar/familiar) Gospel Acclamation)

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
562 - Jesus Paid It All

or

572 - Not What My Hands Have Done

Psalm of the Day:
1

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 4

Hymn of the Day:
690 - Blest Are They

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
813 - He Will Hold Me Fast

Closing Hymn:
923 - Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

or

926 - Lead Me, Lord

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
562 - Jesus Paid It All

572 - Not What My Hands Have Done

827 - optional closing - Rejoice, My Heart, Be Glad and Sing

829 - optional third hymn - Take Heart

926 - Lead Me, Lord

Notes for the conservative service:
572 - Not What My Hands Have Done - pretty easy tune, piano or organ

562 - Jesus Paid It All - easy sing, familiar to some

813 - He Will Hold Me Fast

Notes for the ambitious service:
827 - Rejoice, My Heart, Be Glad and Sing - new but not difficult tune for Gerhardt text

829 - Take Heart - a nice new hymn waiting to be discovered/learned

Psalm 31D could be sung as a hymn of trust

926 Lead Me, Lord - Sing this twice (when first while being learned), first by cantor/choir, then assembly.

Fifth Sunday after Ephphany - 2/5/2023

SERIES THEME

THE SAVIOR'S SERMON

The Greek word epiphany means “appearance.” In the first half of this church season called Epiphany, we saw Jesus appear on the scene, beginning his ministry. He calls his disciples. It is not long before large crowds start following Jesus around Galilee. So, in the second half of this season Jesus is going to teach us what it means to be one of his followers.

Jesus does this through the most famous sermon of all time. It is not delivered while standing in a pulpit but while sitting on a hill. Elevated above the crowd, Jesus’ voice would carry through the air. His followers hung on his every word as the Christ talked about living an authentic Christian life. It is called the Sermon on the Mount.

THEME OF THE DAY

YOU ARE . . . SO BE

Imagine a beautiful guitar, carefully crafted out of the finest mahogany and steel strings. Now imagine that fine instrument is never played. It is placed atop a bookshelf and never touched. It just collects dust. Tragic, right? What a thing is finds fulfillment when that thing does what it was made to do. Of what use is a guitar that makes no music? What would be the point of turning on a lamp and then throwing a heavy blanket over it. It might still be a lamp, but it provides no light. (It only serves as a fire hazard!) Form and function are intimately connected.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches that the same is true of discipleship. He wants us to see that being a disciple and acting as a disciple are intimately connected. When God called us to faith, he declared that we were something new: light, salt, his children. Jesus now encourages us to be what God says we are, so that God might bless the world through us. As Jesus speaks to us, he means to mold our will to his own.

FIRST READING

Exodus 19:1-8 – God made Israel, a nation of slaves, his special people. He wanted Israel to be the kingdom of priests he had called them to be.

SECOND READING

*** 1 Peter 2:9-12 – St. Peter encourages us to be what God has declared us to be: members of a royal priesthood, citizens of a holy nation.

GOSPEL

Matthew 5:13-20 – Jesus declares that his disciples are blessings to this dark, decaying world. He calls us to be what he says we are.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 4

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
630 - Thy Strong Word (primary Hymn of the Day moved forward to opening hymn - selected stanzas if desired)

Psalm of the Day:
18A or 18C

(Psalm of the Day 112 - both psalter selections currently restricted, but perhaps check back in Service Builder; 112B is a nice tune worth learning)

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 4

Hymn of the Day:
854 - Church of God Elect and Glorious (alternate Hymn of the Day - tight connection to suggested preaching text)

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
* 668 Jesus Comes Today with Healing

Closing Hymn:
736:1,5 - Lord, You Call Us as Your People

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
772 - O God Most High

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:
772 - O God Most High - a Nation hymn with a new-to-WELS tune but it quotes salt and light

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany - 2/12/2023

SERIES THEME

THE SAVIOR'S SERMON

The Greek word epiphany means “appearance.” In the first half of this church season called Epiphany, we saw Jesus appear on the scene, beginning his ministry. He calls his disciples. It is not long before large crowds start following Jesus around Galilee. So, in the second half of this season Jesus is going to teach us what it means to be one of his followers.

Jesus does this through the most famous sermon of all time. It is not delivered while standing in a pulpit but while sitting on a hill. Elevated above the crowd, Jesus’ voice would carry through the air. His followers hung on his every word as the Christ talked about living an authentic Christian life. It is called the Sermon on the Mount.

THEME OF THE DAY

LIVE A HOLY LIFE

The word “holy” comes from an Old English word, “halig” which means “whole” or “healthy.” We have a holy God. He wants us to live a holy life, one that is wholly dedicated to him, one that is spiritually and emotionally healthy for us. So, as Jesus continues his Sermon on the Mount, he makes a crucial point that not all his followers (including present day followers) understand well. Jesus came to free us from sin. He did not come to free us to sin. God commands that we live a holy life. He provides dire warnings to remind us just how holy he wants us to be. Today we face a rapid decline in public morals and private piety. Yet, Jesus calls his followers to be different. He urges personal purity.

After examining our lives, we can only despair over our lack of holiness. So, the Gospel Acclamation reminds us to flee to Christ who loves us despite our failures and who sacrificed himself for unholy people. Secure in his grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit, each day we strive to live the holy lives to which we have been called.

FIRST READING

2 Samuel 11:1-17,26,27 – King David committed adultery first in his heart, then in the flesh. David’s example illustrates the danger of unrepentant sin. It is the antithesis of a holy life.

SECOND READING

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 – Christians sincerely desire to live for Christ. St. Paul explains how. We seek to control our body in a way that is holy.

GOSPEL

*** Matthew 5:21-37 – What a high bar Jesus sets! He calls us to be holy in our relationships with our brothers, our adversaries, our bodies, our spouse, and our God.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 4 with non-communion ending

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
735 - Before You I Kneel

Psalm of the Day:
119A

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 4

Hymn of the Day:
696 - Take My Life and Let It Be

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
697 - May We Your Precepts, Lord, Fufill

Closing Hymn:
835 - Precious Lord, Take My Hand

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
735 - Before You I Kneel

701 - Order My Life, Lord, as You Will

Notes for the conservative service:
635:1,8,9,3 (5th and 6th commandments) could be used if desiring to reinforce sermon text

701 - Order My Life, Lord, as You Will

Notes for the ambitious service:

-

SERIES THEME

THE SAVIOR'S SERMON

The Greek word epiphany means “appearance.” In the first half of this church season called Epiphany, we saw Jesus appear on the scene, beginning his ministry. He calls his disciples. It is not long before large crowds start following Jesus around Galilee. So, in the second half of this season Jesus is going to teach us what it means to be one of his followers.

Jesus does this through the most famous sermon of all time. It is not delivered while standing in a pulpit but while sitting on a hill. Elevated above the crowd, Jesus’ voice would carry through the air. His followers hung on his every word as the Christ talked about living an authentic Christian life. It is called the Sermon on the Mount.

THEME OF THE DAY

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

Throughout Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount he describes life in the Messiah’s kingdom. It seems completely upside down. He talked about the meek being the ones who will inherit the earth. He said that those who are poor in spirit are actually the most blessed by God.

Now today he tells us to love our enemies. It seems counterintuitive and a recipe for being treated like a doormat. Why would Jesus ask us to do this? It’s simple. We belong to him and are meant to be like him. Christ calls us to love our fellow man, even when they’re against us, because that is exactly how he loves the world. It is how he loves us, even when we treat him like an enemy. It is as simple as this. A heart that belongs to Christ is a heart that is like Christ’s. And a heart that is like Christ’s has no room for vengeance but is filled with love for all.

FIRST READING

*** 1 Samuel 26:7-25 – King Saul had exiled and attempted to kill David—all without cause. David trusted that his reward was with God, and that freed him to be able to love even his enemy Saul.

SECOND READING

Romans 12:9-21 – St. Paul teaches that Spirit-wrought Christian love is infinitely greater than worldly love. Unbelievers love their friends. Believers love even their enemies.

GOSPEL

Matthew 5:38-48 – Jesus’ command to love is so broad and sweeping that no one is to be excluded from our love, not even our enemies.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 4

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
732 - In Unity and Peace

Psalm of the Day:
Psalm 119:33-40 (119B)

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 4

Hymn of the Day:
729 - Son of God, Eternal Savior

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
*659 - Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior

Closing Hymn:
768 - Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

Notes for the conservative service:
634:1,9,3,4 (5th commandment) could be used if desiring to reinforce sermon text

Notes for the ambitious service:

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023

Last Sunday after Epiphany - Transfiguration - 2/19/2023

SERIES THEME

THE GLORY OF THE LORD

The Festival of the Transfiguration of our Lord

Throughout his ministry Jesus said astounding things and did astounding things. Yet, he looked like a normal man. The prophet said, "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2). This would all change one day atop a high mountain. There, Jesus gave his disciples—gave his Church—a glimpse of the glory he set aside to be our Savior. And the voice of the Father thundered from the heavens, just as it did at Jesus' baptism, announcing Jesus' true identity to the world—the glorious Son of God.

And so the Transfiguration of our Lord serves as a one-week bridge between the season of Epiphany, where Jesus is revealed as the true Son of God, and the season of Lent, where we witness what the Son of God came to do.

On the Mount of Glory, St. Peter declared, "It is good for us to be here." Indeed! For here we see the God of Majestic Glory, who became a man to suffer and die for us, just as Moses and the Prophets had foretold. Oh, how much this glorious God loves us!

THEME OF THE DAY

Stand alone day - The promo text is same as previous column.

FIRST READING

Exodus 24:9-18 – On Mount Sinai Moses saw the glory of the Lord as a terrifying fire. On the Mount of Transfiguration Moses saw the glory of the Lord as the Savior who takes our fear away.

SECOND READING

*** 2 Peter 1:16-21 – St. Peter testifies to the reliability of the Christian faith. Peter was an eyewitness to the majesty and glory of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

GOSPEL

Matthew 17:1-9 – The transfiguration of our Lord.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Consider using either setting of Morning Prayer; otherwise Setting 4 non-communion, being the last time the Gloria will be sung for a while. Hymns are chosen assuming setting 4 and can be adjusted if MP is used

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
389 - How Good, Lord, to Be Here

or

392 - This Brightness, Lord, What Shall I Say

Psalm of the Day:
Psalm 2

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. A cloud covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!” Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 4

Hymn of the Day:
388 - Down from the Mount of Glory

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
639 - God Has Spoken by His Prophets

Closing Hymn:
977 - Alleluia, Song of Triumph (Farewell to Alleluia - Service Builder only)

or

522 - Beautiful Savior

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
385:3,4 are the Transfiguration verses of this hymn

Notes for the conservative service:
522 could be the closing hymn if Farewell to Alleluia has been used frequently in the recent past. 522 offers a break from that this year.

Notes for the ambitious service:

Ash Wednesday - 2/22/2023

SERIES THEME

OUR GREATEST NEEDS

What do you really need right now? To answer that question, one must first define what a "need" is. We understand that a "need" is greater than a "want." If you lack something you want, life goes on just fine. If you lack something you need, that presents a problem. Thus, to correctly answer that question, "What do you really need right now," ultimately one must understand their greatest problems.

Mankind's greatest problems are universal. We all live under the curse of sin. That sin makes us utterly helpless in our natural state. Natural man is confused, unable to make sense of life. Left in sin, man is doomed to death, and not just physical death. After one's heart stops comes another type of death that is infinitely worse, an eternal nightmare.

Lent is the season of the Church Year where we wrestle with our greatest needs. Lent also demonstrates that in Christ, all our greatest needs are met. Here is what the Spirit makes clear this season. If you lack Christ, you have nothing. If you have Christ, you have everything you truly need.

Our worship in Lent will follow this pattern:

Ash Wednesday – A Wholly Humbled Heart
First Sunday in Lent – A Champion for the Defeated
Second Sunday in Lent – A Gift for the World
Third Sunday in Lent – Water for the Thirsty
Fourth Sunday in Lent – Sight for the Blind
Fifth Sunday in Lent – Life for the Dead
The Sunday of the Passion – A Greater Type of King
Holy Thursday – Blessed Communion
Good Friday – The Perfect Sacrifice
Holy Saturday / The Great Easter Vigil – Sabbath Rest

THEME OF THE DAY

A WHOLLY HUMBLED HEART

To understand our greatest needs, we need to understand our greatest problems. So, here is the irony. One of our greatest problems is we do not think we have many problems at all. This can be especially true of those who are religious. We look to our religious activity—our regular time in prayer, our generous offerings, our volunteerism—as proof that we are just fine, certainly better than most. This belief is reinforced when others notice all the good we do and praise us for it.

Ash Wednesday is the antidote to pride. If we are so good, then why are we slowly turning back into dirt? Ash Wednesday teaches the sobering truth that one day soon, people won't see the best version of ourselves, but the dead one. "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return." That Ash Wednesday refrain echoes the funeral rite that will one day be spoken over us all: ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

On this first day of Lent, God intends to give us what we badly need—a wholly humbled heart that looks to Christ in contrition and true repentance. Such a heart will produce piety without any of the posing and pomp that pride tries to inject.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 59:12-20 – True humility comes from understanding the multitude of our offenses. True faith looks to the Redeemer who will come to the penitent.

SECOND READING

***2 Corinthians 7:8-13a – St. Paul teaches the blessing of godly sorrow that flows from a wholly humbled heart.

GOSPEL

Matthew 6:1-6,16-21 – Jesus warns that pious looking actions done in hope of being praised by others will not receive commendation from the Heavenly Father. True piety is born of humility.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
The Service - with Evening Hymn Tunes may be used. That setting is in Service Builder. Ash Wed Confessional Rite may be inserted.

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
393 - Savior, When in Dust to You

or

657 - Baptismal Waters Cover Me

Psalm of the Day:
Psalm 51A

or B or C depending on musical forces

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Additional Settings - Set 2

Hymn of the Day:
650 - From Depths of Woe, Lord God, I Cry

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
*Psalm 51D

Closing Hymn:
823:1,2,5 Jesus, Priceless Treasure

or

615 - Jesus, Thank You

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
652 - Lord, Have Mercy

615 - Jesus, Thank You

Notes for the conservative service:
652 - if not used enough in the past to be familiar, a soloist should introduce and alternate

Notes for the ambitious service:
615, if selected, should likely have someone to sing the verses.

First Sunday in Lent - 2/26/2023

SERIES THEME

OUR GREATEST NEEDS

What do you really need right now? To answer that question, one must first define what a "need" is. We understand that a "need" is greater than a "want." If you lack something you want, life goes on just fine. If you lack something you need, that presents a problem. Thus, to correctly answer that question, "What do you really need right now," ultimately one must understand their greatest problems.

Mankind's greatest problems are universal. We all live under the curse of sin. That sin makes us utterly helpless in our natural state. Natural man is confused, unable to make sense of life. Left in sin, man is doomed to death, and not just physical death. After one's heart stops comes another type of death that is infinitely worse, an eternal nightmare.

Lent is the season of the Church Year where we wrestle with our greatest needs. Lent also demonstrates that in Christ, all our greatest needs are met. Here is what the Spirit makes clear this season. If you lack Christ, you have nothing. If you have Christ, you have everything you truly need.

THEME OF THE DAY

A CHAMPION FOR THE DEFEATED

Our modern English word "champion" comes from an old English word that meant "warrior." In ancient times, when two armies gathered to fight, sometimes as a prelude to the battle—and sometimes in place of the battle—each army would pick a mighty solider, and these two men would fight each other. These elite warriors, these champions, would represent their people in battle. They would meet in the middle of the field. With everyone watching, they would fight to the death.

Today we are reminded of an ancient war that began in Eden. The perfect peace and prosperity of Paradise was lost when a fallen angel convinced mankind to follow the demons in rebelling against their Creator. When Adam fell, he condemned the world to darkness and death. The enemy of God claimed that the children of men now belonged to him. God was having none of it. He promised he would send forth his champion, his Son. And so, today we see a battle of champions. The demons send forth their strongest warrior—Satan. God sends forth the best of men, Jesus Christ. Jesus does what Adam and we could not. In crushing the devil, Jesus meets one of our greatest needs.

FIRST READING

Genesis 3:1-15 – God promised to send a champion who would do what we could not, defeating our greatest enemy.

SECOND READING

Romans 5:12-19 – Adam's defeat meant death for all. Christ's victory brings life for all.

GOSPEL

***Matthew 4:1-11 – The champion of the demons and the champion of mankind do battle. Jesus Christ wins.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 2 without the Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
556 - All Mankind Fell in Adam's Fall

Psalm of the Day:
46A

or

46C or 46E if cantors are available

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
We do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses; we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 2

or

Additional Settings - Set 2

Hymn of the Day:
863/864 - A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
*574 - The Tree of Life

Closing Hymn:
842 - Jesus Still Lead On

or

829 - Take Heart

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
829 - Take Heart

Notes for the conservative service:
Though choosing Setting 2 without the Gloria means that none of its main canticles will be used on non-communion Sundays, it is selected for a string of five Sundays in Lent.

Notes for the ambitious service:
829 - Take Heart would require one stanza intro by soloist or choir

Second Sunday in Lent - 3/5/2023

SERIES THEME

OUR GREATEST NEEDS

What do you really need right now? To answer that question, one must first define what a "need" is. We understand that a "need" is greater than a "want." If you lack something you want, life goes on just fine. If you lack something you need, that presents a problem. Thus, to correctly answer that question, "What do you really need right now," ultimately one must understand their greatest problems.

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THEME OF THE DAY

A GIFT FOR THE WORLD

When assessing the seriousness of need, one factor is how widespread that need is. A homeless individual needs food. During a famine, an entire nation needs food. It is substantially easier to meet the needs of the former than the latter! The more widespread a need, the greater the need.

When Jesus said, "*No one* can enter the kingdom of God," he declared that the need for salvation is universal. He rightly condemned humanity as a whole. There is no one on the face of the earth who can make the case that they deserve God's blessing. Yet, ages ago, God declared that all nations would be blessed. God has declared his love for the world and promised he would save the world. God's gift of salvation is meant for all people.

Some interpret this to mean that all people will be saved in the end. This is not true. The gift of salvation is meant for the world; however, it is received by faith. "Whoever believes in him…" the Gospel says. However, the good news is that faith is also God's gift, imparted through that gospel.

FIRST READING

Genesis 12:1-8 – The LORD promised Abram that one of his descendants would be a gift for the world. The LORD also gave Abram the gift of faith to believe that promise.

SECOND READING

Romans 4:1-5,13-17 – Abraham provides an example of how salvation is not earned but received as a gift through faith.

GOSPEL

***John 3:1-17 – By sharing the gospel of God's love for the world, Jesus gave the gift of faith to a Pharisee named Nicodemus.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 2 without the Gloria (non-communion ending)

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
613 - The God of Abraham Praise

Psalm of the Day:
121A

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 2

or

Additional Settings - Set 2

Hymn of the Day:
570 - God Loved the World So That He Gave

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
523 - How Deep the Father's Love for Us

Closing Hymn:
627 - To God be the Glory*

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
877:1-4 - Reformation Song

684 - Father Welcomes

Note that both of these would be new and 523 at the 3rd hymn spot is also new, so maybe go with 523 and 627

Notes for the conservative service:
*If 627 is used, presiding minister may want to point out the word order change in st. 1 that is different than CW 93—so loved he the world. This word order change was to align with all other hymnals. CW93's change was unique to CW93. Some may not want to pick 627 during Lent if the "Praise the Lord" refrain is to alleluia-ish.

Notes for the ambitious service:
877:1-4 - Closing Hymn if desired for second reading

684 - if desired for Gospel

Third Sunday in Lent - 3/12/2023

SERIES THEME

OUR GREATEST NEEDS

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THEME OF THE DAY

WATER FOR THE THIRSTY

A person can survive between one and two months without food. But a person can survive only two to three days without water. Water is one of our greatest needs. Research shows that even slight dehydration will adversely affect your mood, memory, and motor coordination. Become seriously dehydrated, and life ends quickly. This helps us understand what Scripture means when it says things like, "My soul thirsts for God" (Psalm 42:2). If one is separated from God, he is adversely affected. If he remains separated from God, he will die an agonizing eternal death.

Not all admit it; yet it remains true for all. Everyone has a deep spiritual thirst. In our heart of hearts, we all long for everlasting life. Unbelievers try to satisfy that deep thirst with worldly things, a strategy doomed for failure. Believers look to the One who has promised, "Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst." Jesus meets our greatest needs. He alone possesses the water that satisfies those who are spiritually parched. He alone grants eternal life.

FIRST READING

Exodus 17:1-7 – The children of Israel wanted to stone Moses because they were thirsty. So God, in his grace, gave this underserving people water from a stone.

SECOND READING

***Romans 5:1-8 – We were like people dying of thirst who were powerless to help themselves. But God's love has been poured out into our hearts like living water.

GOSPEL

John 4:5-26 – Jesus calls a Samaritan woman to faith, providing living water for her thirsty soul.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 2 without the Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
526 - What Wondrous Love Is This

or

913 - Come Away from Rush and Hurry

Psalm of the Day:
95A

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.”

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 2

or

Additional Settings - Set 2

Hymn of the Day:
703 - I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
*677 - The Death of Jesus Christ, Our Lord

Closing Hymn:
533:1,4 - Jesus, Lover of My Soul

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
913 - Come Away from Rush and Hurry

532 - As the Deer Runs to the River

Notes for the conservative service:
913 fits the service theme well but should be introduced if selected.

Notes for the ambitious service:
532 is perhaps intermediate difficulty as far as the new tune and should definitely have cantor help, but it certainly covers the first reading and the gospel. Planners can decide if it fits with the Romans reading suggested as the sermon text. Certainly fits if preacher picks a different reading.

Fourth Sunday in Lent - 3/19/2023

SERIES THEME

OUR GREATEST NEEDS

What do you really need right now? To answer that question, one must first define what a "need" is. We understand that a "need" is greater than a "want." If you lack something you want, life goes on just fine. If you lack something you need, that presents a problem. Thus, to correctly answer that question, "What do you really need right now," ultimately one must understand their greatest problems.

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THEME OF THE DAY

SIGHT FOR THE BLIND

We know that unbelief will have consequences in the future—eternal separation from God. But unbelief also has consequences now. It makes you blind, in a sense. The unbeliever is unable to see the world as it really is. That which is harmful the unbeliever considers good; that which is good he considers meaningless. The unbeliever cannot see the danger that lurks behind temptation. He cannot see the blessing contained in God's Word. The unbeliever cannot see the tragic fate that lies in his future, and he certainly cannot see the Savior.

The Old Testament said that restoration of sight to the blind was one of the works of the Messiah. In his ministry, Jesus healed those who were physically blind. But even if our eyes work just fine, we still need Jesus to give us spiritual vision. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." Christ comes to shine his light into our darkened eyes that we might see him and live. Jesus meets our greatest needs. He provides sight for the spiritually blind.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 42:14-21 – God promises to lead the blind to safety and turn their darkness to light.

SECOND READING

Ephesians 5:8-14 – Those who have seen the light of Christ strive to leave deeds of darkness behind.

GOSPEL

***John 9:1-7,13-17,34-39 – Jesus miraculously enables a man who had been born blind to see the Christ both physically and spiritually.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 2 without the Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
576 - Amazing Grace

Psalm of the Day:
27C

or

Hymn 825

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 2

or

Additional Settings - Set 2

Hymn of the Day:
515 - Christ Is the World's Light

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
713 - I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

Closing Hymn:
517:1,3 - Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

Notes for the conservative service:
515 may have been first used in January. May still benefit from a cantor or choir helping.

Notes for the ambitious service:

Fifth Sunday in Lent - 3/26/2023

SERIES THEME

OUR GREATEST NEEDS

What do you really need right now? To answer that question, one must first define what a "need" is. We understand that a "need" is greater than a "want." If you lack something you want, life goes on just fine. If you lack something you need, that presents a problem. Thus, to correctly answer that question, "What do you really need right now," ultimately one must understand their greatest problems.

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THEME OF THE DAY

LIFE FOR THE DEAD

The author and poet George Eliot once wrote, "Our dead are never dead to us, until we have forgotten them." The Roman philosopher Cicero said much the same. He wrote, "The life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living." What second rate comfort! But that is the best the unbelieving world can offer—the sappy sentiment that our dead loved ones somehow "live on" in our memories. It is a sad way to attempt to cope as you walk through the cemetery.

Jesus provides a better solution to death. He promises life. One day Jesus will give your faithful dead back to you—to love and to laugh and to hug and to dance. Body and soul, living and walking in the new heaven and the new earth. How do we know Jesus can and will keep that promise? Because the Son of God descended into the darkness of death himself and emerged on Easter Sunday as the first fruit of the resurrection of all God's people. In the creed we confess, "I believe in the resurrection of the body." Yet again, Jesus satisfies our greatest needs.

FIRST READING

***2 Kings 4:17-37 – God wants us to know that whoever believes in him will live, even though he dies. He enables the prophet Elisha to prove that to a grieving mother.

SECOND READING

Romans 8:11-19 – The Father promises to raise his children from the dead and make them heirs of everlasting glory.

GOSPEL

John 11:17-27,38-45 – A corpse responds to the empowering command of Christ. This greatest miracle of his ministry proves that Jesus is the Lord of life.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 2 without the Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
846 - I Know of a Sleep in Jesus' Name

Psalm of the Day:
130A

130C and 130G may become popular choices but attention would need to be given to overall length of service on a communion Sunday

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will live, even though they die.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 2

or

Additional Settings - Set 2

Hymn of the Day:
571 - O God O Lord of Heaven and Earth*

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
*836 - I Walk in Danger All the Way

Closing Hymn:
502 - Children of the Heavenly Father

or

544 - I Am the Bread of Life

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
544 - I Am the Bread of Life

Notes for the conservative service:
571 was selected last year in the Year C planner and is the appointed hymn of the day but may still benefit from introduction; *perhaps consider substituting another hymn for it (723) only if introducing I Am the Bread of Life, or in consideration of service length on this communion Sunday

Notes for the ambitious service:
While the first reading is the suggested sermon text, 544 covers the gospel reading; use cantors for the verses of this new hymn. With the Gospel reading from John 11, this would be a good Sunday to introduce 544, since otherwise the Bread of Life John Gospels won't come along till Year B

Palm Sunday/Sunday of the Passion - 4/2/2023

SERIES THEME

OUR GREATEST NEEDS

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THEME OF THE DAY

A GREATER TYPE OF KING

Pick any head of state: the president, a prime minister, a king. Hopefully, they care about the people over whom they have authority. But even if they care, they live and operate above the people. The British royals live in a palace, not a three-bedroom ranch. The President does not fly coach. He sits in a recliner on Air Force One. There's nothing wrong with this. Those offices are worthy of high respect. The point is these rulers live and operate above us. If a thief is breaking into your home, call 911 and see if your governor shows up. Your governor doesn't even know your name! But, cut him some slack. He is only human.

Jesus is not. Jesus is the King of kings, God and man in one person. He knows you intimately. More! He is willing to do absolutely anything necessary to serve and protect you. We see that this Holy Week. It begins with Jesus riding a donkey colt into Jerusalem—as the prophet foretold. As this week nears its end, Jesus is given a crown of thorns. He carries a cross out of Jerusalem and is nailed to it. Placed on his cross was this sign: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." The sign was partially right. Jesus is a king, just not of the Jews. He's our King, infinitely mightier than any ruler in history, while also being infinitely humbler. King Jesus has come to save us. Those other heads of state can serve as blessings. But this is the greater type of king that we need most.

NOTE: The theme for this day—A Greater Type of King—can be utilized in two ways: as the theme for a Palm Sunday service or as the theme for the Sunday of the Passion. The promotional text works either way, drawing the connection between Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem as the Savior King that Zechariah had promised, and the "King of the Jews" sign placed atop the cross.

If the congregation chooses to observe Palm Sunday with three readings, introductions for three readings are provided.

However, the CW lectionary provides another option. It has reintroduced the 500-year-old practice of appointing the Triumphal Entry as the Gospel reading for Advent 1. Why does that reading serve well there? Because Palm Sunday serves as a microcosm of the salvation story that unfolds during the festival half of the Church Year. We see the King of kings humbling himself and willingly riding to his death. All else—the angelic choir of Christmas Eve, the voice of the Father thundering at Christ's baptism, the signs and wonders, Christ's bold preaching, his transfiguration—leads to this week. Reading the Palm Sunday account on Advent 1 reminds us where the path of the Church Year ends. This is why so many Advent hymns contain Palm Sunday references.

This subsequently allows for the focus of the sixth week of Lent to be broadened: the Sunday of the Passion. The portions of the Gospels that tell of Jesus' suffering and death are typically read during midweek Lenten services. But if many in your congregation do not attend those, it is possible they never hear about the passion story in its entirety. The Sunday of the Passion places the entire passion story in front of God's people in one service.

Watch for a Year A Sunday of the Passion service folder to be released no later than January 20, 2023.

FIRST READING

Zechariah 9:9,10 – The prophet Zechariah foretold of a Savior King who would rule with gentleness and bring peace to the ends of the earth.

SECOND READING

Philippians 2:5-11 – There is none greater than King Jesus. Yet there is none humbler than King Jesus.

GOSPEL

***Matthew 21:1-11 – Look at how King Jesus humbly enters the royal city of Jerusalem. He comes in the name of the Lord to save us.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
This service can be imported into Service Builder. Apart from that, this Planner does not provide hymn suggestions. Service Builder can also insert the Palm Sunday Procession with Palms at the front end of Sunday of the Passion.

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:

Psalm of the Day:

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:

Gospel Acclamation setting:

Hymn of the Day:

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:

Closing Hymn:

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:

Holy Thursday - 4/6/2023

SERIES THEME

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THEME OF THE DAY

BLESSED COMMUNION

We often think of the word communion as a synonym for the Lord's Supper. "I took communion" means "I received the Lord's Supper." Yet, the Latin word communionis means "community" or "association" or "sharing." (In the creed, we speak of "the communion of saints.") When people come together and share their lives with one another, the result is blessing—a blessed communion. And when God comes to us and shares himself with us, the result is eternal life.

But is that really possible? How can a holy God associate with people who sin every day? In a miraculous meal, God lets us share in his own flesh and blood, the very blood that was shed to atone for our sin. We celebrate this feast for the forgiveness of sins and restored unity with our Father—a blessed communion with God. But there's more! As we share this meal together, the Lord who loved us unites us in love for one another—a blessed communion with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Community is often celebrated with food. When people love one another, they enjoy gathering around the dinner table. On this Holy Thursday, Jesus invites us to his table. He serves us Supper. He serves us himself. And in doing so, Jesus creates a blessed communion.

FIRST READING

Exodus 24:1-11 – Israel had promised to obey God's Law. They did not. So how were these lawbreakers able to commune with a holy God? They were sprinkled with the blood of the covenant.

SECOND READING

***1 Corinthians 11:23-28 – St. Paul maintains that every time we celebrate the sacrament we feast on the flesh and blood of God for the forgiveness of sins and restored unity with our Father.

GOSPEL

John 13:1-15,34 – Just as Christ loved us with service and sacrifice, so he commands us to love one another as part of a blessed communion.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
options: The Service (with hymn tune canticles for evening)
Setting 2 or 3
all without Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
417 - It Was a Dark and Dismal Night

or

416 - When You Woke That Thursday Morning

Psalm of the Day:
116A

may be familiar from CW:Supplement

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Lenten Acclamation with Seasonal Verse from Setting 2 (as in hymnal)

or

Additional Settings - Set 1 (with proper verse, as in Service Builder)

Hymn of the Day:
659 - Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior

or

665 - What Is This Bread (connection with sermon text which is the Verba)

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
*671 - Your Body Given for Me, O Savior

and/or

*674 - The Infant Priest Was Holy Born

Closing Hymn:
673 - O Lord, We Praise You

or a favorite evening hymn if deemed appropriate

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
669 - In This Holy Blest Communion

671 - Your Body Given for Me, O Savior

Notes for the conservative service:
417 has been retuned but tune is very familiar; appointed Hymn of the Day with 8 sts could be moved to Distr Hymn if desired.

416 is a CWS text retuned to JOYOUS LIGHT which may be familiar and is an easy tune

Notes for the ambitious service:
If used, 669 with unknown tune would perhaps best be sung by cantor/choir in its entirety during distribution

671 is the last five stanzas of 670 with a different tune that was in CW93

Good Friday - 4/7/2023

SERIES THEME

OUR GREATEST NEEDS

What do you really need right now? To answer that question, one must first define what a "need" is. We understand that a "need" is greater than a "want." If you lack something you want, life goes on just fine. If you lack something you need, that presents a problem. Thus, to correctly answer that question, "What do you really need right now," ultimately one must understand their greatest problems.

Mankind's greatest problems are universal. We all live under the curse of sin. That sin makes us utterly helpless in our natural state. Natural man is confused, unable to make sense of life. Left in sin, man is doomed to death, and not just physical death. After one's heart stops comes another type of death that is infinitely worse, an eternal nightmare.

Lent is the season of the Church Year where we wrestle with our greatest needs. Lent also demonstrates that in Christ, all our greatest needs are met. Here is what the Spirit makes clear this season. If you lack Christ, you have nothing. If you have Christ, you have everything you truly need.

THEME OF THE DAY

THE PERFECT SACRIFICE

The Old Testament sacrificial system demonstrated both God's holiness and his mercy. God is holy. So when there was sin, there had to be punishment. Blood had to be shed. But God is merciful. So it wasn't the sinner's blood, but the blood of a substitutionary sacrifice. Throughout the Old Testament almost every time God describes the type of sacrifices he would accept, he includes the phrase "without defect or blemish." Sacrificial animals could not be sickly or deformed but were to be ideal specimens in the prime of their life. This was to illustrate an important truth of our salvation. Only someone who is perfectly sinless can save a sinner. A mother cannot pay for her daughter's sin, for that mother is not "without defect or blemish." That mother has sin of her own. Salvation requires a perfect savior.

Though Jesus faced endless temptation, "He did not sin." Jesus was the first and only human being who lived a perfect life. Therefore, he is the only person who didn't deserve to die. Yet, today Jesus dies on a cross. "He was pierced for our transgressions," Scripture says. Note the singular "he" and the plural "our." If Jesus were just a perfect man, his sacrifice would only have been enough to pay for the sins of one sinful man. But Jesus is more than a perfect man. He is the perfect Son of God. That is divine blood pooling at the foot of the cross. That makes his death valuable enough to pay for the sins of the entire world. Jesus looked at a world full of sinners. He saw that we needed mercy. He fulfilled our greatest need by becoming the perfect sacrifice.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 – Christ suffered and died for only one reason. He dared to pick up our transgressions and carry our iniquities.

SECOND READING

Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9 – Jesus is the perfect priest who offered up the perfect sacrifice so that we might now approach God's throne with confidence.

GOSPEL

***John 19:17-30 – Even as he is being tortured to death, Jesus shows perfect love for his mother by providing for her future and perfect love for us by fulfilling all the Scriptures.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
local choice

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
423 - The Power of the Cross

Psalm of the Day:
22A

or

22B if cantor/choir sings verses

or

22D

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Lenten Acclamation with Seasonal Verse from Setting 2 (as in hymnal)

or

Additional Settings - Set 1 (with proper verse, as in Service Builder)

Hymn of the Day:
422 - A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
434 - Upon the Cross Extended

Closing Hymn:
405 - On My Heart Imprint Your Image

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
423 - The Power of the Cross

615 - Jesus, Thank You

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:
615, if selected, should likely have someone to sing the verses, but note that 423 is also newish.

Vigil of Easter - 4/8/2023

SERIES THEME

OUR GREATEST NEEDS

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THEME OF THE DAY

SABBATH REST

When God handed down the Law through Moses, he declared that no work was to be done on the seventh day of the week. Saturday was to be a day of sabbath (Hebrew for "rest"). God knew that humans need periods of physical and mental rest. But our greater need is for spiritual rest. We need to pause other activity and listen to the gospel. We need to stop thinking about our work and instead think of the work Christ has done for us, work that makes it possible for us to have a loving relationship with our holy God in spite of our daily sins. This need is so great that God commanded us to keep the Sabbath Day holy, to let nothing interfere with our pursuit of that spiritual sabbath rest.

In the early church, the Saturday of Holy Week was called the "Great Sabbath." That day was used for meditation, fasting, and reflection in preparation for Easter. Since the days of Constantine (300AD), believers would gather on holy Saturday evening in vigil. A vigil is defined as "the act of keeping awake at times when sleep is customary." So, the great Easter Vigil acknowledges that we need spiritual rest infinitely more than physical rest. Tonight, we gather to bask in the warming light of God's love, to hear the story of salvation told in the Scriptures, to remember the cleansing we received in Baptism, and to celebrate the feast Christ instituted on Holy Thursday. By these means, Christ drives away all our fears. He assures us of his presence and his love. Thus, he meets one of our greatest needs—the need for sabbath rest.

NOTE: This worship series obviously can be utilized without having an Easter Vigil. This theme and explanatory text is offered for congregations that wish to hold the Vigil.

While it is called the Easter Vigil, it would not be part of the upcoming Easter worship series. Traditionally, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Vigil comprised the Triduum, the final "three days" of the forty days of Lent; hence, their connection to the Lenten worship series.

You can find a fuller explanation of the Easter Vigil in the Commentary on the Propers for Year A. A customizable order for the Easter Vigil can be found in Christian Worship: Service Builder. See also https://worship.welsrc.net/download-worship/service-folders-triduum. Note that the service historically does not include a sermon. Instead, it includes:

- *The Service of Light – This is a type of gathering rite that utilizes the new paschal candle. Printed explanations in the worship folder can help people understand the significance and symbolism of that special candle.*
- *The Service of Readings – This is a series of Scripture readings, typically followed by a canticle or hymn.*
- *The Service of Baptism – This portion provides opportunity for remembrance and renewal of baptism. It can serve as a time of Christian initiation (i.e. adult or youth confirmation).*
- *The Service of Holy Communion – The Lord's Supper is celebrated.*

FIRST READING

See sample services mentioned at left under Series Theme.

SECOND READING

GOSPEL

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:

Psalm of the Day:

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:

Gospel Acclamation setting:

Hymn of the Day:

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:

Closing Hymn:

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:

Resurrection of our Lord - Easter Dawn - 4/9/2023

SERIES THEME

HE LIVES!

Life is full of either/or moments where you face an unavoidable choice between two alternatives. Some of those moments are relatively insignificant. Either I have the chicken, or I have the fish. Other times, they shape the course of your life. Either I accept this new job offer, or I keep my current job for the remainder of my career. Either I accept his marriage proposal, or…. Some either/or moments are bigger than others.

Here is the biggest either/or of them all. Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. One might ask, "How does that either/or affect me?" Because Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and Savior from sin. He said the proof is that he would rise from the dead. "The Son of Man must suffer many things … be killed and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31). Thus, if Jesus remains dead, he is both failure and fraud. However, if Jesus rose from the dead, he proves he is who he claimed to be—the Messiah. And he did what he came to do—save us.

Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. That means, either Jesus is a complete waste of your time, or he is your only hope for salvation. If Jesus is still dead, it is completely logical that you should want nothing to do with him. If Jesus rose, it is only logical that he becomes the center and greatest priority of your life. Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. This season of Easter is a 50-day-long celebration of the fact that the Holy Spirit has answered that either/or for us. We believe this life-changing truth. Christ is risen! He lives! Throughout this season, we explore what that means. Our worship follows this path:

Easter Dawn – He Lives to Dry Tears and Remove Fears
Festival of the Resurrection – He Lives to Take Me from Death to Life
Second Sunday of Easter – He Lives to Give Me Proof and Peace
Third Sunday of Easter – He Lives to Restore My Hope
Fourth Sunday of Easter – He Lives to Be My Good Shepherd
Fifth Sunday of Easter – He Lives to Be the Only Way to Heaven
Sixth Sunday of Easter – He Lives and Calls Me to Live for Him
Festival of Ascension – He Lives to Rule All Things for the Church
Seventh Sunday of Easter – He Lives to Give Me Eager Expectation of Glory

THEME OF THE DAY

HE LIVES TO DRY TEARS AND REMOVE FEARS

Walk through a cemetery at dusk. What do you feel? Is it sadness as you think of loved ones now gone? Is it fear as you sense that it will not be long before you too are buried deep in the ground? Those are natural emotions. For in the normal realm of human existence, dead is dead. Someone dies, and all you have are pictures and memories. Every day that goes by only brings you one step closer to the end of your story. So, it is natural that mortals would walk through a cemetery with tears and fears.

But Jesus lives. That changes things. Jesus is the resurrection first fruits for the harvest of humanity. Dead is not dead forever. Death is not final at all! The one brought low by his mortality will be raised immortal! So, your deceased Christian loved ones are not gone. You will see them again, hug them again. When you walk through the doorway of death, that is not the end. It is the beginning. When we face death knowing that Christ is risen, we experience a completely different set of emotions—for he lives to dry tears and remove fears.

FIRST READING

***Isaiah 12:1-6 – We rightly cried and feared at what our sins had done. But when Jesus rose, he proved the payment for sins is complete. The time for crying is over. Now it is time to rejoice.

SECOND READING

1 Corinthians 5:6b-8 – In response to the forgiveness won by our Passover Lamb, we repent of all wickedness and make our entire Christian life into an Easter celebration.

GOSPEL

John 20:1-18 – The living Lord appears to Mary to dry her tears and take away her fears.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 3
or
local adaptation of communion service if service length is a consideration
This Is the Feast (938 or 963) may replace Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
442 - Christ the Lord Is Risen Today; Alleluia

or

451 - See, What a Morning

Psalm of the Day:
30A, B, or C

30D would need cantor/choir help

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Set 1

Hymn of the Day:
443 - Awake, My Heart, with Gladness

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
*675 - At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing

Closing Hymn:
810 - The First Song of Isaiah (if First Reading is sermon text)

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
451 - See, What a Morning

Notes for the conservative service:
810 can only be sung from the hymnal; builder will be permanently blocked due to copyright holder

Notes for the ambitious service:

Resurrection of our Lord - Easter Day - 4/9/2023

SERIES THEME

HE LIVES!

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THEME OF THE DAY

HE LIVES TO TAKE ME FROM DEATH TO LIFE

A dead Jesus would do no one any good. But a resurrected Jesus? That would change everything; that would make Easter the most important event that has ever happened. Today God wants us to know with certainty that Jesus lives. Because if Jesus lives, then so will his believers. God had told his Church what was going to happen. Jesus told his disciples what would transpire in Jerusalem. The disciples were slow to believe the Easter truth. But God ensured that his people had witnesses to proclaim that Jesus lives again. He suffered and died according to Scripture (Second Reading), he fulfilled the sign of Jonah (First Reading), and it was attested to by angels (Gospel).

Christ is risen indeed! Mankind is redeemed! Jesus has removed the fear of eternal death. Jesus has transformed physical death. It is not punitive. For the believer, it is the pathway into Paradise. Jesus has made us spiritually alive by giving us faith in his resurrection. Jesus lives! So, in every possible way, Jesus takes us from death to life.

FIRST READING

Jonah 2:2-9 – Jesus compared himself to only one Old Testament prophet, the one who escaped certain death after three days in the belly of a fish.

SECOND READING

1 Corinthians 15:1-11 – For God to take us from death to life, Jesus needed to be resurrected. Anything else would mean our faith was in vain.

GOSPEL

***Matthew 28:1-10 – The women go to Jesus' tomb, hearts full of disappointment. A dead Jesus does no one any good. But they would learn from the angel that Jesus had crossed over from death to life.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 3
This Is the Feast (938 or 963) may replace Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
438 - Jesus Christ Is Risen Today

Psalm of the Day:
OP

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Set 1

Hymn of the Day:
439/440 Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands (selected stanzas?)

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
460 - Alleluia, Alleluia! Hearts to Heaven

Closing Hymn:
441 - I Know That My Redeemer Lives

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
447 - Christ Is Risen, He Is Risen Indeed

453 - The Tomb Is Empty

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:
453 - The Tomb Is Empty

Second Sunday of Easter - 4/16/2023

SERIES THEME

HE LIVES!

Life is full of either/or moments where you face an unavoidable choice between two alternatives. Some of those moments are relatively insignificant. Either I have the chicken, or I have the fish. Other times, they shape the course of your life. Either I accept this new job offer, or I keep my current job for the remainder of my career. Either I accept his marriage proposal, or.… Some either/or moments are bigger than others.

Here is the biggest either/or of them all. Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. One might ask, "How does that either/or affect me?" Because Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and Savior from sin. He said the proof is that he would rise from the dead. "The Son of Man must suffer many things … be killed and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31). Thus, if Jesus remains dead, he is both failure and fraud. However, if Jesus rose from the dead, he proves he is who he claimed to be—the Messiah. And he did what he came to do—save us.

Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. That means, either Jesus is a complete waste of your time, or he is your only hope for salvation. If Jesus is still dead, it is completely logical that you should want nothing to do with him. If Jesus rose, it is only logical that he becomes the center and greatest priority of your life. Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. This season of Easter is a 50-day-long celebration of the fact that the Holy Spirit has answered that either/or for us. We believe this life-changing truth. Christ is risen! He lives! Throughout this season, we explore what that means.

THEME OF THE DAY

HE LIVES TO GIVE ME PROOF AND PEACE

Thomas had been taught and trained by Christ himself. He heard Jesus predict his death and resurrection. Yet, even after hearing the eyewitness testimony of friends, who all saw the resurrected Jesus, Thomas had doubts: "Rising from the dead. That can't be possible!"

Today is a day of great comfort for any follower of Jesus who wrestles with doubt concerning Christ's promises or doubts about God's Word. Jesus does not come to rebuke Thomas' weak faith. Jesus comes to strengthen Thomas' faith, giving him proof of the mind-bending reality of the resurrection—to let him feel it, touch it, explore it. Jesus didn't reject Thomas. Jesus engaged Thomas and gave him peace.

Still today, Jesus comes to his disciples in Word and sacrament. The living Lord speaks to us. He lets us partake of his true body and blood. When we show weakness of faith, he does not reject us. Just as he did with Thomas, Jesus engages us, giving us proof and peace.

FIRST READING

Acts 2:14a,22-32 – The living Lord appeared to many eyewitnesses so that they might testify to the truth of Jesus' resurrection. Through their testimony, God gives his Church proof and peace.

SECOND READING

***1 Peter 1:3-9 – St. Peter points to the resurrection as proof of the hope we have regardless of the outward circumstances of our life.

GOSPEL

John 20:19-31 – Jesus gave the proof that led to peace for Thomas, peace that could only be found in his Lord and God.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 3
This Is the Feast (938 or 963) may replace Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
448 - Now Let the Heavens Be Joyful

Psalm of the Day:
16

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Set 1 or 2

or Setting 3

Hymn of the Day:
456/457 O Sons and Daughters of the King

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
511 - Crown Him with Many Crowns

Closing Hymn:
800:1,4,5 - How Firm a Foundation

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
448 - Now Let the Heavens Be Joyful

or

453 - The Tomb Is Empty

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:
453 - The Tomb Is Empty

Third Sunday of Easter - 4/23/2023

SERIES THEME

HE LIVES!

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Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. That means, either Jesus is a complete waste of your time, or he is your only hope for salvation. If Jesus is still dead, it is completely logical that you should want nothing to do with him. If Jesus rose, it is only logical that he becomes the center and greatest priority of your life. Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. This season of Easter is a 50-day-long celebration of the fact that the Holy Spirit has answered that either/or for us. We believe this life-changing truth. Christ is risen! He lives! Throughout this season, we explore what that means.

THEME OF THE DAY

HE LIVES TO RESTORE MY HOPE

Imagine someone you love is near death. Their only hope of survival is a risky brain surgery, one so complicated only one surgeon in the state will attempt it. The surgery is scheduled. But as that doctor drives to the hospital, he is killed in a car accident. Any hope you had for your loved one's salvation died along with that surgeon.

That is how Jesus' disciples felt after his death. "We hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel," they said (Luke 24:19). Their hope for a better life died along with Jesus. They had let their personal wants and expectations cloud their view of Scripture which said that the Messiah's death and resurrection were actually the source of all hope! So, the living Lord appeared to his disciples. He explained. He opened their minds to the truth of God's Word. And in doing so, he restored their hope.

There is little worse than a feeling of hopelessness. Christ's disciples have victory over that feeling. He died, but he is dead no longer. The one who can heal us and give us life to the full lives! He lives to restore our hope.

FIRST READING

Acts 2:14a,32-41 – The message of Christ crucified and Christ risen gives the certain hope of forgiveness to sinners.

SECOND READING

1 Peter 1:17-21 – Our hope is to one day join our Savior in the glory of heaven. Until that day, we live in this world as strangers who are focused on going to our true home.

GOSPEL

***Luke 24:13-35 – For two disciples Jesus explained that all the Scriptures showed that the Christ had to die and rise. Jesus restored their hope.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 3
This Is the Feast (938 or 963) may replace Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
452 - The Strife Is O'er, the Battle Done

Psalm of the Day:
116

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us? Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Set 1 or 2

or Setting 3

Hymn of the Day:
459 - Christ the Lord Is Risen Again

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
*512 - All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name

Closing Hymn:
454:1,2,5 - Alleluia! Jesus Is Risen

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
454:1,2,5 - Alleluia! Jesus Is Risen

Notes for the conservative service:
454 is a CW 93 tune but maybe still a little unfamiliar

Notes for the ambitious service:

Fourth Sunday of Easter - 4/30/2023

SERIES THEME

HE LIVES!

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Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. That means, either Jesus is a complete waste of your time, or he is your only hope for salvation. If Jesus is still dead, it is completely logical that you should want nothing to do with him. If Jesus rose, it is only logical that he becomes the center and greatest priority of your life. Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. This season of Easter is a 50-day-long celebration of the fact that the Holy Spirit has answered that either/or for us. We believe this life-changing truth. Christ is risen! He lives! Throughout this season, we explore what that means.

THEME OF THE DAY

HE LIVES TO BE MY GOOD SHEPHERD

Every culture has the concept of an ideal citizen, someone who typifies its values. For much of the United States' history, the ideal citizen was the American farmer: hardworking, innovative, vital to our collective well-being. Even some of our first presidents were farmers.

For the people of Israel, the farmer wasn't their ideal citizen. It was the shepherd. Sheep were an invaluable source of clothing and food. But they were hard to keep in the Judean countryside. Its sparse grasslands are intermixed with desert. For sheep, food is sparse, but predators are plenteous. The survival of sheep was dependent on their shepherd. There he is. Weather-beaten. Sleepless. Armed. In the dusk, he scans the land, counting his sheep, making sure they are all accounted for, every one of them on his heart. You see why Jesus chose the shepherd to illustrate how he cares for us. He feeds us with his Word. He protects us from that roaring lion, Satan. Jesus is leading us into the green pasture of eternal life. For centuries, the Church has observed this Fourth Sunday of Easter to celebrate that he lives to be our Good Shepherd.

FIRST READING

Acts 2:42-47 – The early Church was marked by devotion to apostolic teaching and genuine love for one another. And the Good Shepherd's flock grew.

SECOND READING

***1 Peter 2:19-25 – St. Peter calls us to follow our Shepherd and Overseer, even if it means that we suffer for doing good.

GOSPEL

John 10:1-10 – Jesus is not only our Good Shepherd. He is the gate through which we enter into the green pastures of salvation.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 3
This Is the Feast (938 or 963) may replace Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
471 - Now All the Vault of Heaven Resounds

Psalm of the Day:
23

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Set 1 or 2

or Setting 3

Hymn of the Day:
552 - The King of Love My Shepherd Is

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
554 - The Lord's My Shepherd

Closing Hymn:
625 - Splendor and Honor

or

793 - Jesus, Tender Shepherd, Hear Me

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
554 - The Lord's My Shepherd

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:

Fifth Sunday of Easter - 5/7/2023

SERIES THEME

HE LIVES!

Life is full of either/or moments where you face an unavoidable choice between two alternatives. Some of those moments are relatively insignificant. Either I have the chicken, or I have the fish. Other times, they shape the course of your life. Either I accept this new job offer, or I keep my current job for the remainder of my career. Either I accept his marriage proposal, or…. Some either/or moments are bigger than others.

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THEME OF THE DAY

HE LIVES TO BE THE ONLY WAY TO HEAVEN

The gospel is the most inclusive message in the world. The benefits of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are meant for every man, woman, and child who ever lived. The gospel is also the most exclusive message in the world, for it maintains that salvation can only be found in one place—the person of Jesus Christ. Just listen to how Jesus speaks: "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6). Jesus doesn't say, "I will show you the true way to eternal life." The prophets and apostles could say that. But Jesus says, "*I am* the way. *I am* the truth. *I am* the life you crave." And note that definite article: "the," not "a"! Jesus is not *a* way into heaven. He is *the* way. There is no other way than through faith in the One who died and rose again.

The unbelieving world finds this claim—that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven—to be the most offensive teaching in all of Scripture. Yet this is the very truth upon which Christ builds his Church.

FIRST READING

Acts 4:8-12 – St. Peter told the Jewish leaders that the man they had crucified was raised to life and therefore is the only man in whom salvation is found.

SECOND READING

1 Peter 2:4-10 – The claim that Jesus is the only way to heaven is like a stone over which unbelievers stumble. But that truth is the cornerstone on which Christ builds his Church.

GOSPEL

***John 14:1-11 – Jesus teaches that the only way to draw near to God the Father is through God the Son.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 3
This Is the Feast (938 or 963) may replace Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
516 - Christ Be the Way in Whom We Walk

or

521:1,4,5 - Christ the Eternal Lord

Psalm of the Day:
118

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Set 1 or 2

or Setting 3

Hymn of the Day:
469 - Welcome, Happy Morning

or

809 - Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
*466 - Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia

Closing Hymn:
924:1,3,6 - Abide, O Dearest Jesus

or

461 - He Is Arisen! Glorious Word

or

470:4 - Like the Golden Sun Ascending

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
516 - Christ Be the Way in Whom We Walk

Notes for the conservative service:
516 - Repton is a new tune, three times in the new hymnal, needs introduction

Notes for the ambitious service:

Sixth Sunday of Easter - 5/14/2023

SERIES THEME

HE LIVES!

Life is full of either/or moments where you face an unavoidable choice between two alternatives. Some of those moments are relatively insignificant. Either I have the chicken, or I have the fish. Other times, they shape the course of your life. Either I accept this new job offer, or I keep my current job for the remainder of my career. Either I accept his marriage proposal, or…. Some either/or moments are bigger than others.

Here is the biggest either/or of them all. Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. One might ask, "How does that either/or affect me?" Because Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and Savior from sin. He said the proof is that he would rise from the dead. "The Son of Man must suffer many things … be killed and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31). Thus, if Jesus remains dead, he is both failure and fraud. However, if Jesus rose from the dead, he proves he is who he claimed to be—the Messiah. And he did what he came to do—save us.

Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. That means, either Jesus is a complete waste of your time, or he is your only hope for salvation. If Jesus is still dead, it is completely logical that you should want nothing to do with him. If Jesus rose, it is only logical that he becomes the center and greatest priority of your life. Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. This season of Easter is a 50-day-long celebration of the fact that the Holy Spirit has answered that either/or for us. We believe this life-changing truth. Christ is risen! He lives! Throughout this season, we explore what that means.

THEME OF THE DAY

HE LIVES AND CALLS ME TO LIVE FOR HIM

"The LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die'" (Genesis 2:16,17). In giving that command, God showed love to man by making it clear that it is lethal to live contrary to God's will. In giving that command, God provided man with the ability to demonstrate love for God—through obedience. True love involves obedience. Jesus did not simply say he loved his heavenly Father. He proved it by obeying his Father, even when that obedience meant dying on a cross for our sake.

Love for God who lives in us leads us to a life of obedience. The God who lives in us calls us to live for him. It is as simple as that. Love for our risen Lord means obedience to his commands.

FIRST READING

***Acts 17:22-31 – To the people of Athens St. Paul proclaims that living as the offspring of the one true God means living a life of repentance and obedience.

SECOND READING

1 Peter 3:13-22 – St. Peter teaches that love for God means obedience to his commands even if that obedience brings suffering into our lives.

GOSPEL

John 14:15-21 – Jesus explains that those who love him will obey his teaching. Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit who gives us the power to live for Christ.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 1
This Is the Feast (938 or 963) may replace Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
449 - This Joyful Eastertide

or

539 - O Lord, My Rock and My Redeemer

Psalm of the Day:
66

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 1

Hymn of the Day:
557 - Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
606 - Alleluia! Sing to Jesus

Closing Hymn:
617 - Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
451 - See, What a Morning

539 - O Lord, My Rock and My Redeemer

Notes for the conservative service:
451 may require introduction if selected

539 would need introduction

Notes for the ambitious service:

Ascension of our Lord - 5/18/2023

SERIES THEME

HE LIVES!

Life is full of either/or moments where you face an unavoidable choice between two alternatives. Some of those moments are relatively insignificant. Either I have the chicken, or I have the fish. Other times, they shape the course of your life. Either I accept this new job offer, or I keep my current job for the remainder of my career. Either I accept his marriage proposal, or…. Some either/or moments are bigger than others.

Here is the biggest either/or of them all. Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. One might ask, "How does that either/or affect me?" Because Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and Savior from sin. He said the proof is that he would rise from the dead. "The Son of Man must suffer many things … be killed and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31). Thus, if Jesus remains dead, he is both failure and fraud. However, if Jesus rose from the dead, he proves he is who he claimed to be—the Messiah. And he did what he came to do—save us.

Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. That means, either Jesus is a complete waste of your time, or he is your only hope for salvation. If Jesus is still dead, it is completely logical that you should want nothing to do with him. If Jesus rose, it is only logical that he becomes the center and greatest priority of your life. Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. This season of Easter is a 50-day-long celebration of the fact that the Holy Spirit has answered that either/or for us. We believe this life-changing truth. Christ is risen! He lives! Throughout this season, we explore what that means.

THEME OF THE DAY

HE LIVES TO RULE ALL THINGS FOR THE CHURCH

We understand why God became man in the person of Christ. The Savior needed to be able to suffer and die to atone for mankind's sin. What is fascinating is that when the work of redemption was completed, the Son of God did not set aside his humanity. The God-man ascended into heaven. It is a human, our brother, who sits on heaven's throne.

The ascension marks the completion of Jesus' earthly mission, but it does not signify the end of his work. While on earth, Jesus had set aside so much of his divine power. But Jesus now picks all that power back up again. He ascended to exercise his limitless authority for the Church as we carry out our mission to be Christ's ambassadors of grace to the world. He lives! And he is in absolute and perfect control, ruling over Creation for the eternal well-being of his friends. And that is what we are!

The Festival of the Ascension is one of the oldest and most joyful celebrations in the Christian Church. It will be observed by Christians until Christ returns to take us to be with him.

FIRST READING

Acts 1:1-11 – Jesus tells his disciples that although he going to ascend, they will not be left alone. He promises to send the Holy Spirit to them and to us.

SECOND READING

Ephesians 1:15-23 – St. Paul teaches that Jesus ascended so that he might fill all creation with his presence and his power. Nothing is outside his control.

GOSPEL

***Luke 24:44-53 – Jesus ascends, and instead of being sad, his disciples are filled with joy. They understood that Christ's ascension marked his coronation as the King.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 1
This Is the Feast (938 or 963) may replace Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
549 - Across the Lands

Psalm of the Day:
47

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 1

Hymn of the Day:
472 - A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
476 - On Christ's Ascension I Now Build

Closing Hymn:
700 - Draw Us to Thee

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
549 - Across the Lands

473 - Look, Ye Saints, the Sight Is Glorious

Notes for the conservative service:
549 should be easy enough but may benefit from intro

Notes for the ambitious service:

Seventh Sunday of Easter - 5/21/2023

SERIES THEME

HE LIVES!

Life is full of either/or moments where you face an unavoidable choice between two alternatives. Some of those moments are relatively insignificant. Either I have the chicken, or I have the fish. Other times, they shape the course of your life. Either I accept this new job offer, or I keep my current job for the remainder of my career. Either I accept his marriage proposal, or…. Some either/or moments are bigger than others.

Here is the biggest either/or of them all. Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. One might ask, "How does that either/or affect me?" Because Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and Savior from sin. He said the proof is that he would rise from the dead. "The Son of Man must suffer many things … be killed and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31). Thus, if Jesus remains dead, he is both failure and fraud. However, if Jesus rose from the dead, he proves he is who he claimed to be—the Messiah. And he did what he came to do—save us.

Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. That means, either Jesus is a complete waste of your time, or he is your only hope for salvation. If Jesus is still dead, it is completely logical that you should want nothing to do with him. If Jesus rose, it is only logical that he becomes the center and greatest priority of your life. Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. This season of Easter is a 50-day-long celebration of the fact that the Holy Spirit has answered that either/or for us. We believe this life-changing truth. Christ is risen! He lives! Throughout this season, we explore what that means.

THEME OF THE DAY

HE LIVES TO GIVE ME EAGER EXPECTATION OF GLORY

The Church waits. The Church in Jerusalem waited for ten days between Christ's ascension and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. The Church today waits through the millennia between Pentecost and Christ's second coming. We are waiting for the gifts that Jesus promised. We live in eager expectation of glory!

That glory is not dimmed by early suffering. Rather, our current sufferings only remind us of the glory that awaits us. We are simply following in Christ's footsteps. First comes the cross, and then comes the crown. Knowing what is coming lets us view our current troubles are light and momentary. They cannot mute the joy of living in eager expectation of glory.

While we wait in the time between Christ's ascension and return, we live knowing that we will suffer persecution for our faith in Christ, but God will work it for glory.

FIRST READING

Acts 1:12-26 – Matthias is chosen to join the apostles, who served as eyewitnesses of Christ's resurrection. Through their testimony, God gave his Church the expectation of future glory.

SECOND READING

1 Peter 4:12-17; 5:6-11 – The God of all grace has called us to future glory. Until that time, he encourages us to bring all our anxiety and cares to him.

GOSPEL

***John 17:1-11a – Just hours before he would be tortured and killed, Jesus says those events would lead to glory, both his and ours.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 1
This Is the Feast (938 or 963) may replace Gloria

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
597 - Now Thank We All Our God

Psalm of the Day:
124

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 1

Hymn of the Day:
446 - Jesus Christ, My Sure Defense

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
721 - What a Friend We Have in Jesus

Closing Hymn:
876 - Fight the Good Fight

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:

Day of Pentecost - 5/28/2023

SERIES THEME

HE LIVES!

Life is full of either/or moments where you face an unavoidable choice between two alternatives. Some of those moments are relatively insignificant. Either I have the chicken, or I have the fish. Other times, they shape the course of your life. Either I accept this new job offer, or I keep my current job for the remainder of my career. Either I accept his marriage proposal, or…. Some either/or moments are bigger than others.

Here is the biggest either/or of them all. Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. One might ask, "How does that either/or affect me?" Because Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and Savior from sin. He said the proof is that he would rise from the dead. "The Son of Man must suffer many things … be killed and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31). Thus, if Jesus remains dead, he is both failure and fraud. However, if Jesus rose from the dead, he proves he is who he claimed to be—the Messiah. And he did what he came to do—save us.

Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. That means, either Jesus is a complete waste of your time, or he is your only hope for salvation. If Jesus is still dead, it is completely logical that you should want nothing to do with him. If Jesus rose, it is only logical that he becomes the center and greatest priority of your life. Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. This season of Easter is a 50-day-long celebration of the fact that the Holy Spirit has answered that either/or for us. We believe this life-changing truth. Christ is risen! He lives! Throughout this season, we explore what that means.

THEME OF THE DAY

HE LIVES TO POUR OUT HIS SPIRIT

Fifty days after the Passover, God's Old Testament people celebrated Pentecost (Greek for "fifty"). Pentecost commemorated the gathering of the harvest and was also used to remember the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai, the start of the Church of Israel. Christ chose Pentecost to be the birthday of his New Testament Church too. By pouring out his Holy Spirit, Christ empowered the Church to gather in the great harvest of souls won by the Son.

Pentecost is the third great festival of the Church, along with the Nativity and the Resurrection. The early church fathers mention the Festival of Pentecost often enough to lead many to believe it was celebrated annually already at the time of the apostles. Pentecost closes the fifty-day period after Easter and ends the festival half of the church year. The Church dresses in red this day to remind us of the tongues of fire that marked the Spirit's gift, as well as the blood of the martyrs which was the seed of the Church.

FIRST READING

Acts 2:1-21 – In the Old Testament, God poured out his Spirit onto the prophets so they could reveal his will. On Pentecost, Jesus poured his Spirit onto the Church so they could proclaim his gospel to the world.

SECOND READING

***1 Corinthians 12:3-11 – When God pours out his Spirit it is not only for the benefit of the individual believer. God gives his Spirit to us so that we might be of benefit to the entire Church.

GOSPEL

John 7:37-39 – Jesus promised that those who were spiritually thirsty would be filled with living water. Jesus kept this promise when he poured out his Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 2

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
479 - God's Holy Spirit Came

Psalm of the Day:
104

consider 104B or 104D

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people, and kindle in them the fire of your love. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Day of Pentecost - Additional Settings - Set 1

Hymn of the Day:
585 - Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
*477 - O Day Full of Grace

Closing Hymn:
596:1,4 - To God the Holy Spirit Let Us Pray

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
587 - Come Down, O Love Divine

Psalm 104B or 104D

596 - melody slightly different than in the past

Notes for the conservative service:
Acclamation Day of Pentecost Set 1 (Lawton/Moldenhauer) would be new; alternatively consider Fest Set 1 or 2, also in "Additional Settings" in builder

Notes for the ambitious service:
962 - Hail Thee, Festival Day replace Gloria?

First Sunday after Pentecost - Holy Trinity - 6/4/2023

SERIES THEME

(STAND ALONE weekend)

THEME OF THE DAY

GOD IN THREE PERSONS, BLESSED TRINITY

In the first half of the Church Year (Advent through Pentecost) we look at the life of Christ—his birth, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension, and the sending of the Holy Spirit. In the second half of the year, we look at the teachings of Christ. We begin by looking at one of the most mind-blowing truths: that God is triune.

Already in the very first chapter of the Bible we read, “Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image…” (Genesis 1:26). Note the singular “God” and the plural “us.” Scripture teaches us that there is only one God but that he exists as three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is triune (three-in-one). This teaching is not some logical exercise or philosophical excursion. The doctrine of the Trinity is central to our salvation. The triune God is our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Lose this doctrine, and as the Athanasian Creed says, you lose it all. A Jesus who is less than God is also less than a Savior.

So often, when life gets hard, we get frustrated. We don’t understand how God is working always for our good. But the doctrine of the Trinity teaches us we cannot even comprehend God’s existence. How then, could we ever comprehend all his workings? On this Holy Trinity Sunday, let it be enough to know that all three persons—Father, Son, and Spirit—love us with an everlasting love.

FIRST READING

Genesis 1:1-2:3 – The triune God demonstrates his power at Creation.

SECOND READING

***2 Corinthians 13:11-14 – By sharing his grace, love, and fellowship, the Trinity gives us unity and peace.

GOSPEL

Matthew 28:16-20 – Jesus calls us to do ministry in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 2

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
483 - Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty

Psalm of the Day:
8

or

8E

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Fest Set 3 in Additonal Settings

Hymn of the Day:
586 - Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
612 - How Great Thou Art

Closing Hymn:
928 - May the Grace of Christ Our Savior

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:
Psalm 8E would require introduction

Second Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 5) - 6/11/2023

SERIES THEME

THE HOLY MINISTRY

"Ministry" simply means "service." Throughout history, God has called individuals to serve God's people by sharing God's Word. Many today feel they do not need to be part of a church, do not need Christian preaching and teaching. "I can be a believer without any of that." Well, if that is true, then why does Jesus' bother to keep calling ministers to share his gospel: pastors, teachers, missionaries, etc.? Clearly, Jesus himself believes ministry is necessary. He knows what we need better than we do.

We call it "holy ministry" because the Holy Spirit does his work through his ministers. As ministers proclaim God's Word, the Spirit unleashes his power. We also call it "holy ministry" because through gospel ministry our faith is sustained, which is what makes us holy in God's eyes. Our worship for the next three weeks follows this path:

Second Sunday after Pentecost – The Holy Ministry Is Filled with Sinners Called by God
Third Sunday after Pentecost – The Holy Ministry Demonstrates Compassion for God's People
Fourth Sunday after Pentecost – The Holy Ministry Preaches Christ Despite Persecution

THEME OF THE DAY

THE HOLY MINISTRY IS FILLED WITH SINNERS CALLED BY GOD

They never forgot their past. Moses never forgot how, in a fit of anger, he killed a man. Paul never forgot how he had savaged the Church of God, overseeing the persecution and execution of Christians around Jerusalem. Matthew never forgot how, as a tax collector for the Roman Empire, he was distained as a swindler and traitor to his people. These men never forgot their past.

But God did. God forgave them all their sins and called them into gospel ministry. The holy ministry is not filled with perfect people. The holy ministry is filled with sinners whom God has called out of his boundless mercy. The holy ministry is God's gift to the Church. But it is also God's gift to ministers, who certainly do not deserve the privilege of being God's public servants. God calls sinful and weak individuals into the ministry, so that as his kingdom advances, we give credit where credit is due—to the Holy Spirit.

FIRST READING

***Exodus 3:1-15 – Moses asked a good question: "Who am I to bring the Israelites out of Egypt." Answer: the one the LORD himself had chosen for that holy ministry.

SECOND READING

1 Timothy 1:12-27 – To demonstrate mercy and patience, God called the Paul, the self-identified "worst of sinners," into the holy ministry.

GOSPEL

Matthew 9:9-13 – Jews considered tax collectors to be among the worst of sinners. To demonstrate grace, Jesus called one of them to be his disciple.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 2

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
738 - The Son of God, Our Christ

Psalm of the Day:
119C

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Matthew 9:12,13

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 2

Hymn of the Day:
578 - Chief of Sinners Though I Be

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
575 - By Grace I'm Saved

or

710 - Beneath the Cross

Closing Hymn:
615 - Jesus, Thank You

or

896 - Dear Lord, To Your True Servants Give

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
615 - Jesus, Thank You

710 - Beneath the Cross

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:

Third Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 6) - 6/18/2023

SERIES THEME

THE HOLY MINISTRY

"Ministry" simply means "service." Throughout history, God has called individuals to serve God's people by sharing God's Word. Many today feel they do not need to be part of a church, do not need Christian preaching and teaching. "I can be a believer without any of that." Well, if that is true, then why does Jesus' bother to keep calling ministers to share his gospel: pastors, teachers, missionaries, etc.? Clearly, Jesus himself believes ministry is necessary. He knows what we need better than we do.

We call it "holy ministry" because the Holy Spirit does his work through his ministers. As ministers proclaim God's Word, the Spirit unleashes his power. We also call it "holy ministry" because through gospel ministry our faith is sustained, which is what makes us holy in God's eyes.

THEME OF THE DAY

THE HOLY MINISTRY DEMONSTRATES COMPASSION FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

"When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them" (Matthew 9:36). The Greek word translated "compassion" refers to a type of love that almost overwhelms one's emotions. Imagine a father looking at his little girl lying in a hospital bed near death. The father's heart aches. That father would allow the surgeon to cut any organ out of him, without anesthesia, and transplant it into his daughter, if that's what it took to save his little girl's life. That's the idea behind the Greek word for "compassion." Jesus looks at the people and is willing to do anything for them—to make any sacrifice, even the ultimate one at the cross.

In that same compassion, the Lord of the Church raises up ministers. As those ministers share his grace and mercy, Christ saves eternal lives. More, he fills those ministers with his Spirit, so that they also feel compassion for God's people.

FIRST READING

Numbers 27:15-23 – Moses' life and ministry were coming to an end. God in compassion for his people had Moses appoint Joshua to take his place.

SECOND READING

1 Corthnians 4:1-7 – The congregation in Corinth was troubled and divided. Paul wrote them, not out of anger, but out of compassion—not to shame them, but to warn them.

GOSPEL

***Matthew 9:35-10:8 – Jesus had compassion on the people, and he appointed the twelve to demonstrate compassion through their holy ministry.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 2

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
716 - O Christ, Who Called the Twelve

Psalm of the Day:
100A or 100B

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Matthew 9:38

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 2

Hymn of the Day:
897 - Lord Jesus, You Have Come

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
736 - Lord, You Call Us as Your People

Closing Hymn:
735 - Before You I Kneel

or

927:1,2 - Lord, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
736 - Lord, You Call Us as Your People

735 - Before You I Kneel

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 7) - 6/25/2023

SERIES THEME

THE HOLY MINISTRY

"Ministry" simply means "service." Throughout history, God has called individuals to serve God's people by sharing God's Word. Many today feel they do not need to be part of a church, do not need Christian preaching and teaching. "I can be a believer without any of that." Well, if that is true, then why does Jesus' bother to keep calling ministers to share his gospel: pastors, teachers, missionaries, etc.? Clearly, Jesus himself believes ministry is necessary. He knows what we need better than we do.

We call it "holy ministry" because the Holy Spirit does his work through his ministers. As ministers proclaim God's Word, the Spirit unleashes his power. We also call it "holy ministry" because through gospel ministry our faith is sustained, which is what makes us holy in God's eyes.

THEME OF THE DAY

THE HOLY MINISTRY PREACHES CHRIST DESPITE PERSECUTION

From its birth the New Testament Church has been persecuted. The religious leaders in Jerusalem tried to stamp it out, but they only succeeded in spreading Christianity throughout Judea and Samaria. The Roman Empire persecuted Christians with stakes and lions, yet God's Church exploded with growth in those early centuries. In Martin Luther's day, both pope and emperor sought to stop the gospel movement that was spreading from Germany. But God was a mighty fortress for the Church.

Still today the Church is persecuted. Every day thirteen Christians worldwide are killed because of their faith. Another twelve are arrested or imprisoned simply because they profess faith in Christ Jesus. In the U.S. we have freedom of religion enshrined as a constitutional right, but that is no guarantee for a life free of persecution. Until Judgment Day, some will attempt to shout down the truth of Christ. We will be persecuted. That won't stop us. The holy ministry preaches Christ despite persecution. Christ never promised his Church that ministry would operate unopposed. But he did promise to give courage to his witnesses.

Note: June 25th is also the date for the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession. Simply by using that historical account for an illustration, one could easily incorporate that into this broader theme about persecution of the Church.

FIRST READING

Jeremiah 20:7-13 – For prophesying God's truth Jeremiah had been beaten and put in stocks. Yet Jeremiah refused to remain silent.

SECOND READING

***2 Timothy 4:1-8 – Paul taught that many people in this world cannot bear sound doctrine. Instead, they persecute it.

GOSPEL

Matthew 10:5a, 21-33 – Jesus guaranteed that when we carry out gospel ministry in his name, there will be many that hate us for it.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 2

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
621 - Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven

Psalm of the Day:
91

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 2

Hymn of the Day:
823 Jesus, Priceless Treasure

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
*797 - I Know My Faith Is Founded

Closing Hymn:
884 - Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
911 - God, We Sing Your Glorious Praises

894 - We Praise the Christ for Martyred Saints

Notes for the conservative service:
894 requires introduction

Notes for the ambitious service:

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 8) - 7/2/2023

SERIES THEME

DEFINE CHRISTIAN

Ask ten different people to define Christian and you may get ten different answers. One might say, "A Christian is someone who believes in Jesus." Okay. But the demons believe that Jesus exists and is the Son of God. So is that definition adequate? Another person might have a more negative view. He says, "A Christian is someone who believes he is better than others." Is that completely false? And if you aren't humble, does that mean you aren't Christian?

In our next worship series Christ himself defines the term Christian and describes what Christians do. We will be struck by how often we do not do all those things. There likely are times when people could look at our behavior and assume we were unbelievers. Yet throughout this series Jesus will demonstrate that ultimately a Christian is one who runs to Christ for forgiveness precisely because he has failed to live like what he is—a Christian. As we receive the mercy of Christ, it moves us to strive with all our being to better fit Christ's beautiful definition, doing all the things Jesus says that Christians do. Our worship follows this path:

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost – The Christian Loves God above All
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost – The Christian Finds Rest in Jesus
Seventh Sunday after Pentecost – The Christian Is Planted by the Word
Eighth Sunday after Pentecost – The Christian Lives as Wheat among Weeds
Ninth Sunday after Pentecost – The Christian Seeks Spiritual Wealth
Tenth Sunday after Pentecost – The Christian Trusts God to Provide
Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost – The Christian Answers Doubt with Faith

THEME OF THE DAY

THE CHRISTIAN LOVES GOD ABOVE ALL

Not all love is good. It is self-destructive to love bad things. However, it is just as harmful to love good things in a bad order. For example, it would seem to be a good thing that a man loves his dog. But if he loves his dog more than he loves his wife, his "love" for both is disordered. That is not in the best interests of the man, his wife, or even his dog. For love to be healthy, it needs to be properly ordered.

The Christian loves God above all things. For the Christian understands that everything in this present world is transitory. Relationships fail. Empires fall. Accomplishments are quickly forgotten. But nothing about God is transitory. God's love is eternal. He promises the Christian everlasting life. And so the Christian struggles not simply to avoid loving bad things. The Christian struggles to love God above all other good things too. Because the Christian understands that God is of ultimate value.

FIRST READING

Exodus 32:15-29 – Aaron's feeble excuses for why the Israelites fell into idolatry remind us of our own shallow rationalizations for failing to love God above all things.

SECOND READING

1 Timothy 6:11-16 – St. Paul describes the man of God in action, struggling to love God above all things.

GOSPEL

***Matthew 10:34-42 – Jesus calls us to love him above all—more than family or friends, more than personal safety or even life itself.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 2

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
704 - Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus

Psalm of the Day:
27

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 2

Hymn of the Day:
702 Come, Follow Me, the Savior Spake

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
711 - Jesus Calls Us o'er the Tumult

Closing Hymn:
710 - Beneath the Cross of Jesus

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
710 - Beneath the Cross of Jesus

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 9) - 7/9/2023

SERIES THEME

DEFINE CHRISTIAN

Ask ten different people to define Christian and you may get ten different answers. One might say, "A Christian is someone who believes in Jesus." Okay. But the demons believe that Jesus exists and is the Son of God. So is that definition adequate? Another person might have a more negative view. He says, "A Christian is someone who believes he is better than others." Is that completely false? And if you aren't humble, does that mean you aren't Christian?

In our next worship series Christ himself defines the term Christian and describes what Christians do. We will be struck by how often we do not do all those things. There likely are times when people could look at our behavior and assume we were unbelievers. Yet throughout this series Jesus will demonstrate that ultimately a Christian is one who runs to Christ for forgiveness precisely because he has failed to live like what he is—a Christian. As we receive the mercy of Christ, it moves us to strive with all our being to better fit Christ's beautiful definition, doing all the things Jesus says that Christians do.

THEME OF THE DAY

THE CHRISTIAN FINDS REST IN JESUS

Without rest, we suffer. Studies show that after 36 hours without sleep, most people will experience extreme fatigue and hormonal imbalances, resulting in decreased attention, poor decisions, and even speech impairment. Other studies show if someone takes no breaks during their workday, their productivity is lower than those who do take periodic breaks. We need rest.

Christians know they need more than sleep or breaks. We need more than physical rest. We need spiritual rest. The Christian knows that the only place to find that type of rest is Jesus. Jesus provides more than a pause in work, more than enjoyable recreation. Jesus provides the removal of our sins, the cleansing of our guilty conscience, and a gentle new yoke of discipleship. In Jesus, the Christian finds rest from his burdens, rest from his battles, and rest forever in heaven.

FIRST READING

Exodus 33:12-23 – The Lord gives Moses spiritual rest by promising that his Presence will go with Israel and allowing Moses to see a glimpse of his glory.

SECOND READING

Romans 7:15-25a – Jesus Christ gives spiritual rest to the one who wants to do what is good yet cannot carry it out.

GOSPEL

***Matthew 11:25-30 – Jesus invites those who are weary and burdened to come to him for rest.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 4

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
833 - I Run to Christ

Psalm of the Day:
62

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 4

Hymn of the Day:
706 Come unto Me, Ye Weary

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
*814 - Just as I Am, without One Plea

Closing Hymn:
818 - My Soul Finds Rest in God Alone

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
818 - My Soul Finds Rest in God Alone

833 - I Run to Christ

834 - Still, My Soul, Be Still

Notes for the conservative service:
834 would need introduction; other two new ones might have been sung before (818) or are pretty easy (833)

Notes for the ambitious service:

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 10) - 7/16/2023

SERIES THEME

DEFINE CHRISTIAN

Ask ten different people to define Christian and you may get ten different answers. One might say, "A Christian is someone who believes in Jesus." Okay. But the demons believe that Jesus exists and is the Son of God. So is that definition adequate? Another person might have a more negative view. He says, "A Christian is someone who believes he is better than others." Is that completely false? And if you aren't humble, does that mean you aren't Christian?

In our next worship series Christ himself defines the term Christian and describes what Christians do. We will be struck by how often we do not do all those things. There likely are times when people could look at our behavior and assume we were unbelievers. Yet throughout this series Jesus will demonstrate that ultimately a Christian is one who runs to Christ for forgiveness precisely because he has failed to live like what he is—a Christian. As we receive the mercy of Christ, it moves us to strive with all our being to better fit Christ's beautiful definition, doing all the things Jesus says that Christians do.

THEME OF THE DAY

THE CHRISTIAN IS PLANTED BY THE WORD

Planting seed by hand can seem magical. In your hand the seed looks insignificant and lifeless. Yet you put the seed into the soil, and the natural process of life begins. All by itself, the seed germinates and sprouts and reaches to the sun. Except when it doesn't! Plant multiple seeds and often only some, perhaps just a small amount, will sprout. As these few sprouts grow, birds and pests and weeds and weather attack. The reality is that once the seed leaves your hand, you are at the mercy of forces beyond your control.

Today, God uses that experience from nature to explain the supernatural process by which God calls humans to faith through the gospel. The Christian is planted by the Word. The Christian can plant the seed of the gospel into the soil of another's heart. What happens after that is completely beyond our control. Yet God promises us that his Word always accomplishes his good purposes. God's Word is powerful, all on its own, without our help.

FIRST READING

***Isaiah 55:6-11 – God's Word always works—a seed that produces the fruit that God earnestly desires.

SECOND READING

1 Corinthians 3:5-11 – We sow the seed of God's Word, but only God can make that seed grow.

GOSPEL

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 – Jesus pictures ministry as a sower scattering seed to all with no regard for where it might land.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 4

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
981 - In This Place Your Word Is Planted (SBO)

Psalm of the Day:
65

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. My word will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 4

Hymn of the Day:
644 Almighty God, Your Word Is Cast

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
712 - Delay Not! Delay Not

Closing Hymn:
925 - On What Has Now Been Sown

or

640 - God's Word Is Our Great Heritage

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

Notes for the conservative service:
981 is service builder only

Notes for the ambitious service:

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 11) - 7/23/2023

SERIES THEME

DEFINE CHRISTIAN

Ask ten different people to define Christian and you may get ten different answers. One might say, "A Christian is someone who believes in Jesus." Okay. But the demons believe that Jesus exists and is the Son of God. So is that definition adequate? Another person might have a more negative view. He says, "A Christian is someone who believes he is better than others." Is that completely false? And if you aren't humble, does that mean you aren't Christian?

In our next worship series Christ himself defines the term Christian and describes what Christians do. We will be struck by how often we do not do all those things. There likely are times when people could look at our behavior and assume we were unbelievers. Yet throughout this series Jesus will demonstrate that ultimately a Christian is one who runs to Christ for forgiveness precisely because he has failed to live like what he is—a Christian. As we receive the mercy of Christ, it moves us to strive with all our being to better fit Christ's beautiful definition, doing all the things Jesus says that Christians do.

THEME OF THE DAY

THE CHRISTIAN LIVES AS WHEAT AMONG WEEDS

The wheat that grows in the Middle East is a variety that looks much like wild grass or weeds. It is difficult to tell wheat and weeds apart until shortly before harvest time, when the wheat stalks develop a head containing the kernels of grain. Try and pull the weeds out of a wheat field and you will likely pull up a fair amount of wheat accidentally. So you need to wait for the harvest to separate wheat from weeds.

This week Jesus uses that image to illustrate life this side of heaven. Christians are pictured as wheat planted by the Lord. Evil and unbelieving evildoers are pictured as weeds. We might want God to take care of evil now—to pull up all the weeds. But he tells us to wait for the harvest. God is going to fix the problem of evil in this world, but it might not be today or even tomorrow. What does God want us to do while we wait? He wants us to live like wheat among weeds, serving the purpose for which he planted us. That means being faithful, fruitful, and mindful of the coming harvest.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 44:6-11 – Like wheat among weeds, Christians live surrounded by evil in this world. But God promises that the presence of evil in this world does not mean that God doesn't care for us.

SECOND READING

Romans 1:18-25 – Jesus' parable about the wheat and weeds could give the impression that God is ambivalent about evil. But God's wrath is real and will be fully revealed at the harvest.

GOSPEL

***Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 – The Lord has a plan to separate wheat and weeds. Christians will be perfectly separated from every evil at the final harvest.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 4

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
873 - Rise, My Soul, to Watch and Pray

Psalm of the Day:
19

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 4

Hymn of the Day:
491 Come, You Thankful People, Come

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
*641 - Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide

Closing Hymn:
605 - From All That Dwell below the Skies

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 12) - 7/30/2023

SERIES THEME

DEFINE CHRISTIAN

Ask ten different people to define Christian and you may get ten different answers. One might say, "A Christian is someone who believes in Jesus." Okay. But the demons believe that Jesus exists and is the Son of God. So is that definition adequate? Another person might have a more negative view. He says, "A Christian is someone who believes he is better than others." Is that completely false? And if you aren't humble, does that mean you aren't Christian?

In our next worship series Christ himself defines the term Christian and describes what Christians do. We will be struck by how often we do not do all those things. There likely are times when people could look at our behavior and assume we were unbelievers. Yet throughout this series Jesus will demonstrate that ultimately a Christian is one who runs to Christ for forgiveness precisely because he has failed to live like what he is—a Christian. As we receive the mercy of Christ, it moves us to strive with all our being to better fit Christ's beautiful definition, doing all the things Jesus says that Christians do.

THEME OF THE DAY

THE CHRISTIAN SEEKS SPIRITUAL WEALTH

What do you consider your life's priorities? If you made a list, what would be near the top? Faith, family, and friends would probably head the lists of many. Financial security and health would be right up there. Reputation and recreation would likely make the cut. But perhaps a more interesting question than "What do you consider your life's priorities?" is "Which of the items on that list would you be willing to sacrifice to save your top priority?" What if you had to give up the whole list—family, friends, finances, health, reputation, recreation—to save just one priority: faith?

This week we are given an honest assessment of what really matters in life. The kingdom is worth everything. Worldly wealth can buy the things of this world, the type of things that rust and decay, things that will not last. True wealth is spiritual wealth. It can be found only in God and his eternal blessings for us in Christ. The Christian seeks first spiritual wealth and will sacrifice anything to obtain it.

FIRST READING

1 Kings 3:5-12 – The Lord offered to give Solomon anything he wanted. Solomon requested the spiritual wealth of a believing heart that could discern right form wrong.

SECOND READING

1 Timothy 6:17-21 – Paul warns against the two pet sins of those who have worldly wealth: arrogance and false hope.

GOSPEL

***Matthew 13:44-52 – Through a series of parables Jesus teaches the value of spiritual wealth.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 4

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
620 - O Worship the King

Psalm of the Day:
63

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 4

Hymn of the Day:
859 Your Kingdom, O God, Is My Glorious Treasure

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
539 - O Lord, My Rock and My Redeemer

Closing Hymn:
827 - Rejoice, My Heart, Be Glad and Sing

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
539 - O Lord, My Rock and My Redeemer

827 - Rejoice, My Heart, Be Glad and Sing

Notes for the conservative service:
827 - new tune but pretty easy to pick up

Notes for the ambitious service:
539 should be introduced with cantor assistance; might have been used May 14.

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 13) - 8/6/2023

SERIES THEME

DEFINE CHRISTIAN

Ask ten different people to define Christian and you may get ten different answers. One might say, "A Christian is someone who believes in Jesus." Okay. But the demons believe that Jesus exists and is the Son of God. So is that definition adequate? Another person might have a more negative view. He says, "A Christian is someone who believes he is better than others." Is that completely false? And if you aren't humble, does that mean you aren't Christian?

In our next worship series Christ himself defines the term Christian and describes what Christians do. We will be struck by how often we do not do all those things. There likely are times when people could look at our behavior and assume we were unbelievers. Yet throughout this series Jesus will demonstrate that ultimately a Christian is one who runs to Christ for forgiveness precisely because he has failed to live like what he is—a Christian. As we receive the mercy of Christ, it moves us to strive with all our being to better fit Christ's beautiful definition, doing all the things Jesus says that Christians do.

THEME OF THE DAY

THE CHRISTIAN TRUSTS GOD TO PROVIDE

The hardest times to trust in God are the times we need him most. It's easy to trust God when your job is great, your health is fine, your relationships are strong, your family is well. It's easy to trust God when the sun is shining, but what happens when your life is suddenly overshadowed by dark days?

When tragedy or conflict affect us, we may wonder if God continues to care and provide for us. At those times the Christian focuses on certain foundational facts. The Christian was chosen, predestined, and adopted as God's dear child. God has provided the Christian with innumerable spiritual blessings and promises the Christian an eternity of glory, peace, and joy. If we look at those spiritual blessing God provides to us, how could we doubt that he will, at the right time, give us everything we truly need? The Christian trusts God to provide.

FIRST READING

***1 Kings 17:1-6 - – Elijah told a wicked king God would send years of drought and famine. In those dark times, the Lord provided food for his faithful prophet.

SECOND READING

Ephesians 1:3-10 – Before the world was formed, God chose us to be his beloved children. This is why we can trust God to provide.

GOSPEL

Matthew 14:13-21 – Jesus graciously and abundantly provides for the needs of a great multitude.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
The Service (hymn tune canticles)

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
708 - Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Psalm of the Day:
136

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Additional Settings in Service Builder

Hymn of the Day:
603 All Praise to God Who Reigns Above

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
549 - Across the Lands

or

517 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness

Closing Hymn:
509 - Feed Your Children, God Most Holy

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

Notes for the conservative service:
509 has Bach harmonization in pew.

549 quotes the Gospel and may have been used for Ascension. Could be selected again to reinforce new tune.

517 quotes the Gospel and may have been used at Lent 4.

Notes for the ambitious service:

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 14) - 8/13/2023

SERIES THEME

DEFINE CHRISTIAN

Ask ten different people to define Christian and you may get ten different answers. One might say, "A Christian is someone who believes in Jesus." Okay. But the demons believe that Jesus exists and is the Son of God. So is that definition adequate? Another person might have a more negative view. He says, "A Christian is someone who believes he is better than others." Is that completely false? And if you aren't humble, does that mean you aren't Christian?

In our next worship series Christ himself defines the term Christian and describes what Christians do. We will be struck by how often we do not do all those things. There likely are times when people could look at our behavior and assume we were unbelievers. Yet throughout this series Jesus will demonstrate that ultimately a Christian is one who runs to Christ for forgiveness precisely because he has failed to live like what he is—a Christian. As we receive the mercy of Christ, it moves us to strive with all our being to better fit Christ's beautiful definition, doing all the things Jesus says that Christians do.

THEME OF THE DAY

THE CHRISTIAN ANSWERS DOUBT WITH FAITH

Wherever faith clings to the promises of God, doubt is always lingering in the back of our mind, constantly asking the serpent's garden question, "Did God really say?" How striking to think that one must have faith in God before it is even possible to doubt him!

It is not uncommon that, in times of aversity, doubt rears its ugly head—doubts about God's care, God's promises, God's providence. In those times, the true answer to doubt is not found in some great miracle that removes adversity, but in the still small voice of our Savior God whispering to us in his Word. Through that Word Christ reaches out to us with nail-scarred hands, proof of his great love. Jesus gently says, "Why did you doubt?" Our faith is restored. The Christian answers doubt with faith because Jesus makes it so.

Optional to include with series theme:
This Sunday concludes a seven week focus on the characteristics of a Christian. After growing in our faith regarding the holy ministry and the characteristics of a Christian, next week begins an emphasis on Jesus' church.

FIRST READING

1 Kings 19:9-18 – The Lord answers Elijah's doubt not with a great show of power but with the gentle whisper of God's gracious promise.

SECOND READING

***Romans 8:28-39 – Paul teaches that in all things, good times and bad, we can trust that God is carrying out his perfect plan for his glory and our salvation.

GOSPEL

***Matthew 14:22-33 – In the account of Peter walking on the water, we see how quickly doubt challenges faith. And we see how graciously Jesus responds to our doubt.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
The Service (hymn tune canticles)

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
984 - A Vicious Storm, a Raging Sea (SBO)

or

805 - Eternal Father, Strong to Save

Psalm of the Day:
73

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Additional Settings in Service Builder

Hymn of the Day:
847 Be Still, My Soul

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
*819 - If God Himself Be for Me

Closing Hymn:
832 - Immovable Our Hope Remains

or

849 - Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
802 - All Is Well

832 - Immovable Our Hope Remains

875 - What Threat of Harm Can Hinder Me

845 - What God Ordains Is Always Good (Bauder)

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:
802 requires introduction - prob cong sings only refrain

832 requires introduction

875 would require introduction

845 would require introduction

Twelth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 15) - 8/20/2023

SERIES THEME

THE CHURCH GOD WANTS

"I want a church that…" How would you complete that statement? Would you focus on size—big or small? Would you think more about style—formal versus laid back? Is it certain desired church programs that come to mind? What exactly do you want in a church?

In this worship series, we see that that is not the right question. Scripture says Jesus bought the Church with his blood. So, the right question then becomes: what does God want in a church? You might find a church that runs all the youth programs you want or has a vibe that you enjoy or is in your ideal location. But if that church is not doing what Christ wants it do, then it really is not a spiritually healthy place to be. So, let us think about the church God wants. What does it look like? What are its priorities? What does it all do? Our worship follows this pattern:

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost – A Church for All People
Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost – A Church That Really Knows Jesus
Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost – A Church That Takes Up Its Crosses
Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost – A Church Willing to Say Hard Things
Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost – A Church That's Quick to Forgive

THEME OF THE DAY

A CHURCH FOR ALL PEOPLE

"All are welcome!" Is that true at our church? Historically, it rarely is true. In the gospels, the average Jewish person would have thought it odd, even offensive, if someone who wasn't an Israelite walked into their place of worship. Taking it a step further, some of the Jewish religious leaders would imply that church was meant for those who zealously followed religious customs and traditions. Those were "good church folk." So church was meant for people of the right heritage and who behaved the right way. What about us? Is it conceivable that a stranger could walk into our church and for some reason you would ask yourself, "What is someone like that doing here?" Or, just perhaps, you are asking that question about yourself? "There are some seemingly godly people here. I'm not like them. Do I really belong?"

Today, Jesus shows us that God wants church to be for all people. All of us—regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, or social status—have the same problem of sin. And we all have the same Savior. Therefore, anyone who comes to Christ's Church and cries out, "Lord, have mercy!" is more than welcome.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 56:1, 6-8 – Through Isaiah the LORD told the world that all God-fearing people would have a place in the house of his Church.

SECOND READING

Ephesians 2:13-22 – Christ takes foreigners and strangers and, upon the foundation of God's Word, builds them into a holy temple—his Church.

GOSPEL

***Matthew 15:21-28 – In the face of Jesus' test a Canaanite woman demonstrates great faith, proving that God's Church is meant for all people.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
The Service (hymn tune canticles)

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
914 - Christ Is Our Cornerstone

Psalm of the Day:
67

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Additional Settings in Service Builder

Hymn of the Day:
855 The Church's One Foundation

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
768 - Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace

Closing Hymn:
860 - In Christ There Is No East or West

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 16) - 8/27/2023

SERIES THEME

THE CHURCH GOD WANTS

"I want a church that…" How would you complete that statement? Would you focus on size—big or small? Would you think more about style—formal versus laid back? Is it certain desired church programs that come to mind? What exactly do you want in a church?

In this worship series, we see that that is not the right question. Scripture says Jesus bought the Church with his blood. So, the right question then becomes: what does God want in a church? You might find a church that runs all the youth programs you want or has a vibe that you enjoy or is in your ideal location. But if that church is not doing what Christ wants it do, then it really is not a spiritually healthy place to be. So, let us think about the church God wants. What does it look like? What are its priorities? What does it all do?

THEME OF THE DAY

A CHURCH THAT REALLY KNOWS JESUS

Jesus asked, "Who do you say that I am?" Make no mistake. That is the most important question in the world. And it is a question every human must answer. A complimentary answer can still be dead wrong. Some in Jesus' day thought he was John the Baptist or the prophet Elijah come back from the dead. Complimentary, but dead wrong. Today plenty of people believe Jesus existed. They believe he was a wise teacher or a role model for love. Complimentary, but dead wrong if missing the main point.

Jesus is both Lord and Savior, the Messiah, the Son of the living God. This truth is the core of saving faith. It is the central message God has called our church to proclaim. What does God want in a church? He wants a church that really knows Jesus.

FIRST READING

***Exodus 34:5-9 – God proclaimed to Moses what he was like. Likewise, the Church's job is to proclaim to the world who Christ is and what he is like.

SECOND READING

Romans 10:5-13 – St. Paul teaches that those who know in their heart that Jesus is both Lord and Savior will be saved. They really know Jesus.

GOSPEL

Matthew 16:13-20 – The truth upon which God builds his Church is this: Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 3

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
869 - Onward, Christian Soldiers

Psalm of the Day:
138

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 3

Hymn of the Day:
510 In Christ Alone

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
*899 - Lord Jesus Christ, Our Savior-King

Closing Hymn:
607 - Ten Thousand Reasons

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
607 - Ten Thousand Reasons

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023

Fourtheenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 17) - 9/3/2023

SERIES THEME

THE CHURCH GOD WANTS

"I want a church that…" How would you complete that statement? Would you focus on size—big or small? Would you think more about style—formal versus laid back? Is it certain desired church programs that come to mind? What exactly do you want in a church?

In this worship series, we see that that is not the right question. Scripture says Jesus bought the Church with his blood. So, the right question then becomes: what does God want in a church? You might find a church that runs all the youth programs you want or has a vibe that you enjoy or is in your ideal location. But if that church is not doing what Christ wants it do, then it really is not a spiritually healthy place to be. So, let us think about the church God wants. What does it look like? What are its priorities? What does it all do?

THEME OF THE DAY

A CHURCH THAT TAKES UP ITS CROSSES

Some churches teach that if one follows God, God responds by granting prosperity and peace. Today Jesus teaches that is nonsense. The Son of God tells us that if we are his disciple, if we are part of his Church, we will have to bear crosses. Believers will suffer in this world, oftentimes for no other reason than they are believers. It is painful to struggle against the temptations and priorities of this world. It can be agonizing to face the same scorn and ridicule Jesus faced.

Why bother? We carry our crosses in gratitude for Jesus carrying his cross, one too heavy for us to bear because it was weighted down with our sin. We carry our crosses because we know that in those moments of struggle, we are forced to turn to Christ and rely on his strength. The church takes up its crosses, because this is the Christian path, the one Jesus himself walked: first the cross, then the crown.

FIRST READING

Jeremiah 15:15-21 – When the prophet Jeremiah grew tired of carrying his cross and complained, the LORD called on him to repent and promised salvation.

SECOND READING

Romans 8:18-25 – St. Paul teaches God's Church that no cross can compare with the crown of glory that is waiting.

GOSPEL

***Matthew 16:21-26 – Jesus calls his Church to walk in his path: first comes the cross, then comes the crown.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 3

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
600 - All Praise to Him

or

601 - All People That on Earth Do Dwell

Psalm of the Day:
31

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 3

Hymn of the Day:
694 Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
831 - Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me

Closing Hymn:
867 - Afflicted Saint, to Christ Draw Near (esp v. 4)

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
600 - All Praise to Him

867 - Afflicted Saint, to Christ Draw Near

Notes for the conservative service:
600 - may not need introduction but prob wouldn't be a bad idea to introduce a stanza

867 is simple tune and may not need intro

Notes for the ambitious service:

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 18) - 9/10/2023

SERIES THEME

THE CHURCH GOD WANTS

"I want a church that…" How would you complete that statement? Would you focus on size—big or small? Would you think more about style—formal versus laid back? Is it certain desired church programs that come to mind? What exactly do you want in a church?

In this worship series, we see that that is not the right question. Scripture says Jesus bought the Church with his blood. So, the right question then becomes: what does God want in a church? You might find a church that runs all the youth programs you want or has a vibe that you enjoy or is in your ideal location. But if that church is not doing what Christ wants it do, then it really is not a spiritually healthy place to be. So, let us think about the church God wants. What does it look like? What are its priorities? What does it all do?

THEME OF THE DAY

A CHURCH WILLING TO SAY HARD THINGS

Imagine, late one night, you notice the house across the street is on fire. You see no activity inside. You say to yourself, "Pounding on the door in the middle of the night might scare the family. I'm sure they'll realize what's going on eventually." Ridiculous! You would never do that! To let a family sleep while flames surround them would be cruel. Your inaction would make you a killer. The truth is you would pound on their door at 3:00 AM, screaming. You would throw a brick through their front window if that was what it took to warn them. You would not care if it startled the family. This is a matter of life and death! Love compels you to do whatever it takes.

God wants the people of his church to be willing to say hard things to people when that is what is necessary to save them from an even worse type of fire. Warning against sin is not easy. It upsets people, even offends them. But saying hard things is the loving thing to do when it is a matter of eternal life and death.

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 33:7-11 – The LORD told the prophet Ezekiel if he didn't warn the Israelites about their sin, he was going to hold Ezekiel accountable for their blood.

SECOND READING

***Galatians 2:11-16 – Paul is put in the uncomfortable position of having to confront Cephas (also known as Peter). In doing so, Paul wins Peter over to the truth of the gospel.

GOSPEL

Matthew 18:15-20 – Jesus teaches us how to lovingly practice Christian discipline as we seek to win our straying brother or sister over.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 3

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
839 - Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me

Psalm of the Day:
32

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. God wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 3

Hymn of the Day:
654 Jesus Sinners Does Receive

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
*559 - If Your Beloved Son, O God

Closing Hymn:
926 - Lead Me, Lord

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
926 - Lead Me, Lord

Notes for the conservative service:
926 would be good to learn as a repertory closing hymn for a congregation; for introduction, its brevity means it could be sung twice with cantor/small group singing the first time

Notes for the ambitious service:

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proepr 19) - 9/17/2023

SERIES THEME

THE CHURCH GOD WANTS

"I want a church that…" How would you complete that statement? Would you focus on size—big or small? Would you think more about style—formal versus laid back? Is it certain desired church programs that come to mind? What exactly do you want in a church?

In this worship series, we see that that is not the right question. Scripture says Jesus bought the Church with his blood. So, the right question then becomes: what does God want in a church? You might find a church that runs all the youth programs you want or has a vibe that you enjoy or is in your ideal location. But if that church is not doing what Christ wants it do, then it really is not a spiritually healthy place to be. So, let us think about the church God wants. What does it look like? What are its priorities? What does it all do?

THEME OF THE DAY

A CHURCH THAT'S QUICK TO FORGIVE

"Pay it forward." That phrase means that when someone does something for you, instead of paying that person back directly, you pass along kindness to another person instead. Doing something kind for someone else is a way of thanking the person who originally did something kind for you.

Today God applies that concept to forgiveness. God forgave our countless sins. He was willing to pay an incomprehensible price—the death of his Son. Obviously, we will never have occasion do the same for God. We will never have to forgive God because everything he does for us shows perfect love and care. God never wrongs us. But others may do us wrong. Others may cause us pain. And when we are quick to forgive, it is one way we thank God for being so quick to forgive us. This is what God wants in his Church—people who, like him, are quick to forgive.

FIRST READING

***Genesis 50:15-21 – Joseph's brothers had treated him badly. Joseph was quick to forgive them and free them from the prison of their past.

SECOND READING

Ephesians 4:29-5:2 – St. Paul teaches that kindness, compassion, and forgiveness are marks of God's Church.

GOSPEL

Matthew 18:21-35 – Through a parable Jesus teaches that the ability to forgive others comes when the Spirit enables us to understand how much God has forgiven us.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 3

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
579 - His Mercy Is More

Psalm of the Day:
103

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Bear with each other and forgive one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 3

Hymn of the Day:
587 Come Down, O Love Divine

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
733 - Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive

Closing Hymn:
731 - Oh, How Good It Is

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
579 - His Mercy Is More

731 - Oh, How Good It Is

Notes for the conservative service:
579 - may be good to introduce; make sure to clarify music path, per note in hymnal pew edition

731 - prob doesn't need introduction anymore

Notes for the ambitious service:

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 20) - 9/24/2023

SERIES THEME

TELL US A STORY

Much of what Jesus has to say to you and me is contained within his parables. Parables are simple little stories that contain profound truths about life and eternity. For the believer, a parable takes a challenging spiritual fact and makes it clear. However, since the parable conveys spiritual truth, for someone without faith, the story remains only that—a story. Therefore, our prayer for this worship series is that Christ would send us his Holy Spirit, so that we might receive the peace and power Jesus offers us in his parables. Tell us a story, Jesus! Our worship follows this path:

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost – A Story of Perplexing Generosity
Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost – A Story of Spiritual Insincerity
Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost – A Story of Reckless Patience
Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost – A Story of Insane Rejection

THEME OF THE DAY

A STORY OF PERPLEXING GENEROSITY

Give a single bag of M&Ms to two four-year-olds and tell them to share. You will witness counting done with accountant-like precision. Each child will get an equal amount of candy because that is fair. Human beings have an incredibly strong sense of fairness. That is why it can be so perplexing when we see how God dispenses blessing and grace. We see people who mock God who are more prosperous than believers. We see people who convert on their deathbed, and Scripture tells us they obtain the same salvation as someone who has been Christian all his life. How is that fair?

Through a simple story, Jesus teaches us a profound truth. We need to stop expecting God to be fair. God is not fair. He does not give us what we deserve, and that's called mercy. In fact, he gives us what we don't deserve, and that's called grace. No, God is not fair. He is breathtakingly generous.

FIRST READING

Jonah 3:10-4:11 – Jonah is perplexed by the generous forgiveness God showed to the people of Nineveh.

SECOND READING

Romans 9:6-16 – God is perplexingly generous. He shows mercy and grace to those he chooses, regardless of any merit or worth.

GOSPEL

***Matthew 20:1-16 – Jesus tells us a story of God's perplexing generosity.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 1

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
577 - Magnificent, Marvelous, Matchless Love

or

536 - Jesus, Ever-Abiding Friend

Psalm of the Day:
115

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 1 or additional settings

Hymn of the Day:
572 - Not What My Hands Have Done

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
**558 Salvation unto Us Has Come

Closing Hymn:
582:1,4 - Not unto Us

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
536 - Jesus-Ever-Abiding Friend

577 - Magnificent, Marvelous, Matchless Love

Notes for the conservative service:
**For convenience sake, this longer Hymn of the Day has been optionally moved to the distribution hymn

536 could prob get by without an introduction

577 - needs introduction, and care taken in helping congregation follow the music path

Notes for the ambitious service:

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 21) - 10/1/2023

SERIES THEME

TELL US A STORY

Much of what Jesus has to say to you and me is contained within his parables. Parables are simple little stories that contain profound truths about life and eternity. For the believer, a parable takes a challenging spiritual fact and makes it clear. However, since the parable conveys spiritual truth, for someone without faith, the story remains only that—a story. Therefore, our prayer for this worship series is that Christ would send us his Holy Spirit, so that we might receive the peace and power Jesus offers us in his parables. Tell us a story, Jesus!

THEME OF THE DAY

A STORY OF SPIRITUAL INSINCERITY

You have maybe heard the accusation or perhaps even made it yourself: "He's so fake!" That charge claims someone's friendliness or kindness is a sham. Such insincerity bothers us. We would generally rather someone be honest about how they feel about us than be fake.

Through a story Jesus teaches us that God feels the same. God doesn't want us to simply go through religious motions like some sort of show. He sees right through that. God's desire is that our repentance would demonstrate sincere sorrow over sin. God wants us to see the grace and forgiveness he has shown us in Christ, and in response, to love him back deeply and sincerely.

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32 – The prophet Ezekiel gives a strong warning to Christians who have grown dismissive of their sin. God wants sincere repentance that leads to true obedience.

SECOND READING

Philippians 2:1-11 – Moved by Christ's love and empowered by the Spirit, we sincerely attempt to imitate the selflessness and humility of Jesus.

GOSPEL

***Matthew 21:23-32 – Through a story Jesus teaches that sincere love for God involves not just saying what God wants to hear but doing what God wants done.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Morning Prayer or Morning Prayer (alt)
(Sat) Evening Prayer or Evening Prayer (alt)

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
Morning - 779 - I Sing as I Arise Today

(Sat) Evening - 789 - All Praise to Thee, My God This Night

Psalm of the Day:
25

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you will not despise. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Additional setting (if used)

Hymn of the Day:
547 At the Name of Jesus

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
Morning - Te Deum

Evening - Magnificat (p. 218)

or

956 - Holy Is your Name

or

975 My Soul Will Magnify the Lord (SBO)

Closing Hymn:
Morning - 365 - Lord, You Were Rich beyond All Splendor

or

496:1,5,6 - Jesus! Name of Wondrous Love

Evening - 783 - Abide with Me

or

793 - Jesus, Tender Shepherd, Hear Me

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
Magnificat p. 218 - cong can sing refrain, cantor or presiding minister verses

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 22) - 10/8/2023

SERIES THEME

TELL US A STORY

Much of what Jesus has to say to you and me is contained within his parables. Parables are simple little stories that contain profound truths about life and eternity. For the believer, a parable takes a challenging spiritual fact and makes it clear. However, since the parable conveys spiritual truth, for someone without faith, the story remains only that—a story. Therefore, our prayer for this worship series is that Christ would send us his Holy Spirit, so that we might receive the peace and power Jesus offers us in his parables. Tell us a story, Jesus!

THEME OF THE DAY

A STORY OF RECKLESS PATIENCE

Patience is a virtue. But can too much patience be a vice? If you are too patient, waiting to see if that pain in your stomach goes away with time, you might make a problem worse. If you are too patient with an incompetent employee, you will lose productivity before the inevitable—his firing—occurs anyway. Too much patience would seem not to be a virtue, but reckless behavior.

Yet that is exactly what God demonstrates to a rebellious human race—reckless patience. Through a story Jesus teaches exactly what God's patience means for us.

Note to the preacher: "Reckless" can have negative connotations. Common synonyms are: negligent, thoughtless, careless, imprudent. Those concepts may come to mind first. However, other synonyms for "reckless" are: bold, courageous, resolute, valiant. That is what is meant here. You see it in the owner of the vineyard. The tenants either abused or killed what seems to be seven or more servants. Who would respond to that by now sending his son? A father who is reckless with his patience.

This provides the preacher an opportunity to contrast the parable with reality. In the parable, one could make the case that the father was reckless in the sense of imprudent. These tenants are pure evil. Why would he think they would treat his son any differently than his servants? But God the Father knew exactly what would happen when he sent his Son. He knew Jesus would be worse than stoned to death. For the Father to send the Son and for the Son to go: that demonstrated a recklessness in the sense of courageous or resolute. There was courage needed by both. And that courage was there, because both were perfectly resolute in their desire to save tenants like us.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 5:1-7 – The LORD Almighty pictures his patient love for Israel as an owner of a vineyard patiently waiting for a good crop of fruit.

SECOND READING

Philippians 3:12-21 – Through Christ we have already attained the kingdom of heaven. God patiently waits for us to respond to his grace by living drastically different lives than the people of this world.

GOSPEL

***Matthew 21:33-43 – Jesus tells us a story of God's reckless patience.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 1

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
Psalm 118F - I Will Not Die But Live

or

920 - Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation

Psalm of the Day:
80

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 1 or additional settings

Hymn of the Day:
862 Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
*676 - Take and Eat

Closing Hymn:
932 - Sent Forth by God's Blessing

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 23) - 10/15/2023

SERIES THEME

TELL US A STORY

Much of what Jesus has to say to you and me is contained within his parables. Parables are simple little stories that contain profound truths about life and eternity. For the believer, a parable takes a challenging spiritual fact and makes it clear. However, since the parable conveys spiritual truth, for someone without faith, the story remains only that—a story. Therefore, our prayer for this worship series is that Christ would send us his Holy Spirit, so that we might receive the peace and power Jesus offers us in his parables. Tell us a story, Jesus!

THEME OF THE DAY

A STORY OF INSANE REJECTION

There are invitations we might be tempted to reject: an invitation to an event you are not interested in, an invitation to a party that takes place at the same time as something else you want to do. There are other invitations which people would say you've lost your mind to reject: an invitation to go on a free tropical vacation, an invitation to go backstage and meet your favorite musical group, an invitation to the Super Bowl. We get so many invitations. Some we accept; others we reject.

Where does God's invitation to participate in his heavenly banquet rank? Scripture often pictures eternal life as a joyful party, full of friends and family, laughter, and the finest foods. Through a story Jesus teaches us how insane it would be to reject God's gracious invitation to that eternal celebration. More, Jesus tells us what we need to get into that best of all banquets.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 25:6-9 – The prophet Isaiah describes the heavenly banquet, where death and tears will be no more. How does one get in? Through faith in God and his salvation.

SECOND READING

Romans 1:16-17 – We are saved through faith alone. May we never reject this gospel truth.

GOSPEL

***Matthew 22:1-14 – Jesus tells a story of those who insanely rejected a king's gracious invitation.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
The Service (hymn tune canticles)

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
902 - Spread Abroad, O Mighty Word

Psalm of the Day:
84

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Additional Settings in Service Builder

Hymn of the Day:
573 Jesus, Your Blood and Righteousness

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
568 - His Robes for Mine

or

Psalm 67F

Closing Hymn:
884 - Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
568 - His Robes for Mine

Notes for the conservative service:
568 should be introduced

884 also closing hymn at Pent 2

Notes for the ambitious service:

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 24) - 10/22/2023

SERIES THEME

GODLY GOVERNMENT

NOTE: This is a standalone weekend. Thus, this serves as a good weekend if a congregation wants to have some sort of special Sunday: stewardship emphasis, mission festival, Fall outreach weekend, etc. The worship planner could set these Propers aside and pick whatever free texts serve the purpose of that weekend. If your church isn't doing that, these texts serve well for this standalone weekend. In politically divided times, they drive home what God says about his providence in establishing government.

THEME OF THE DAY

GODLY GOVERNMENT

"Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established" (Romans 13:1). Note the absolute language: *no* authority. None. Stated positively, *every* government and *all* government authority figures have power only because God gave it to them. Therefore, as citizens of the United States, we don't support the government because those we voted for were elected or because we approve of the current tax policy or even because freedom of religion is enshrined in the First Amendment. We support our government simply because it was instituted by God. Jesus himself taught that we owe respect and obedience to our government, even when it doesn't align with our political preferences.

Christians sometimes struggle with this. We see that government and rulers can be evil. Certainly, if government asks us to sin, "we must obey God rather than human beings" (Acts 5:29). But the existence of corrupt government and evil rulers does not negate what Scripture says to be true. "There is no authority except that which *God has established*." Therefore, when we talk about "godly government" we are not saying that the only legitimate governments are those who do what is perfectly godly. We are confessing our belief that the King of kings is in perfect control of all the governments of this world, and that he works in all things—including tyrants and dictators—for the eternal good of his dear children.

FIRST READING

Daniel 1:3-21 – Daniel and his friends faithfully served the government that God had placed over them—even though this was the government that had conquered their city and carried them off into exile.

SECOND READING

***Romans 13:1-7 – St. Paul leaves no loopholes. Everyone is to submit to the governing authorities precisely because they have been established by God.

GOSPEL

Matthew 22:15-22 – Jesus teaches we are to give the government what belongs to the government. But we are not to give to the government what belongs only to God.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
The Service (hymn tune canticles)

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
772 - O God Most High, Your Saints Below

or

616 - Hallelujah! Sing Praise to Your Creator

Psalm of the Day:
96

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. In Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Additional Settings in Service Builder

Hymn of the Day:
619 Praise the Almighty; My Soul, Adore Him

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
*671 - Your Body, Given for Me, O Savior

Closing Hymn:
774 - God Bless Our Native Land

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
616 - Hallelujah! Sing Praise to Your Creator

Notes for the conservative service:
616 - not too difficult but perhaps introduce st. 1

Notes for the ambitious service:

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023

Reformation Day - 10/29/2023

SERIES THEME

THE TIME IN BETWEEN

In the great timeline of human history, there are only two ultimately significant points: the first time Christ came to our world to win salvation by his life, death, and resurrection; and the second time Christ will come to consummate his everlasting kingdom. We live in the time in between those two points. It is a time of tension. We know that peace and perfection are ours already because of what Jesus did the first time he came. Yet we do not enjoy a peaceful and perfect existence now already. We will not know such a life until Christ comes again. And so we wait and watch, living in the time in between. As the church year draws to a close, Scripture points us toward the end of time when Christ will come again. Until then Christ teaches us how to live in the time in between.

Reformation (observed) – A Time for Steadfast Faith
All Saints' Day (observed) – A Time to Focus on Future Glory
Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost – A Time for Watchfulness
Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost – A Time for Faithful Service
Last Sunday of the Church Year – A Time to Yearn for the End

Notes about this series:

In 2023, Advent begins as late as it possibly can, with the First Sunday in Advent falling on December 3. That places the Fourth Sunday in Advent on December 24. Hypothetically, there would be Advent worship that morning and Christmas Eve worship that afternoon/evening. Some worship planners may choose not to do that, understanding that perhaps many/most would not attend both services on December 24. That leaves two options. One could omit the Fourth Sunday in Advent, perhaps moving the readings for that day to the Third Sunday in Advent. Some congregations, who find the season of Advent to be one that unchurched are more likely to visit (because they think of it as being "Christmassy"), may wish to begin the season of Advent when it often beings—the final Sunday in November. If that is the case, the recommendation would be to use the readings for the Last Sunday of the Church Year on the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, turning "The Time In Between" into a four-week series.

The Foundation worship plan for this year chooses to follow the recommended readings for the Last Sunday of the Church Year, which focus on Judgment Day. Christ the King is an alternate focus with an entirely different set of readings. The reason this worship plan chooses to focus on Judgment Day on the final Sunday, rather than Christ the King, is because on the First Sunday in Advent for Year B, the worship plan will also use the recommended readings, which includes Mark 11:1-10 where Jesus enters Jerusalem as a king. In summary, the proper for those Sundays discusses Judgment Day on the Last Sunday of the Year and Christ as king on Advent 1, while the alternate readings reverse those themes. It is advised to use either the proper or the alternate readings on both weeks. If one chooses to use the alternate readings, the worship planner could easily fit it into this broad theme: "A Time to Worship the King." Or it could serve as a stand-alone Sunday.

THEME OF THE DAY

A TIME FOR STEADFAST FAITH

Jesus told his followers, "You will be hated by everyone because of me" (Matthew 10:22). Satan and the world hate Christ and anyone who confesses faith in Christ. So, the time in between Christ's first and second coming is going to be perilous for believers. A good example—Martin Luther. All that priest wanted was to share the pure gospel with the world. For trying to do that, both political and religious leaders attempted to end his life. The Festival of the Reformation emphasizes the true Church's unfailing reliance on the Word of God and unflinching testimony to that Word even in the face of harsh persecution. Today we pray that the Lord would keep us steadfast in the faith and give us the peace of knowing that our lives are safe in his hands.

FIRST READING

***Daniel 6:10-12, 16-23 – Even though it potentially meant death by lion, Daniel got on his knees and prayed to the Lord as he always had, demonstrating steadfast faith.

SECOND READING

Romans 3:19-28 – God justifies those who have been given the gift of steadfast faith in Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL

Matthew 10:16-23 – Our trust in Jesus doesn't mean absence of persecution, but faithfulness despite it.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 2

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
810 - The First Song of Isaiah

or

866 - If God Had Not Been on Our Side

Psalm of the Day:
46

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 2 or additional settings

Hymn of the Day:
864 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
561 - Before the Throne of God Above

Closing Hymn:
877 - Reformation Song

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
561 - Before the Throne of God Above

877 - Reformation Song

Notes for the conservative service:
877 would likely still benefit from introduction. 561 may be okay without.

Notes for the ambitious service:

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023

All Saints' Day - 11/5/2023

SERIES THEME

THE TIME IN BETWEEN

In the great timeline of human history, there are only two ultimately significant points: the first time Christ came to our world to win salvation by his life, death, and resurrection; and the second time Christ will come to consummate his everlasting kingdom. We live in the time in between those two points. It is a time of tension. We know that peace and perfection are ours already because of what Jesus did the first time he came. Yet we do not enjoy a peaceful and perfect existence now already. We will not know such a life until Christ comes again. And so we wait and watch, living in the time in between. As the church year draws to a close, Scripture points us toward the end of time when Christ will come again. Until then Christ teaches us how to live in the time in between.

THEME OF THE DAY

A TIME TO FOCUS ON FUTURE GLORY

Childbearing is an excruciating process. Yet each day countless women, wanting a baby, willingly become pregnant. This shows that pain can be endured if we know it is temporary and that happier times come immediately after. Likewise, the time in between Christ's first and second coming are going to be full hardship, especially for believers. How do we bear it? We remember that this is temporary. Happier times are coming!

That truth is made crystal clear on this All Saints' Day. On this day we remember every saint who has gone before us—all those who had faith in the Lamb of God: the heroes of faith in Scripture; our faithful Christian family members, now fallen asleep. They all endured hardship and pain. But no more. Now they enjoy perfect glory, peace, and joy. As we journey through this time in between, how do we endure? We remember all the saints. We focus on the future glory that waits for us.

FIRST READING

***Revelation 7:9-17 – St. John's vision lets us see all the saints in heaven so that we might remember the future glory that waits for us.

SECOND READING

1 John 3:1-3 – In love God the Father adopted us as his children, making us heirs of future glory.

GOSPEL

Matthew 5:1-12 – Sorrow, hardship, and persecution are temporary. Future glory and eternal blessings are coming, a gift from God to all his saints.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 2

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
837 - When Will I Walk

or

882 - What Joy to Join the Chorus

Psalm of the Day:
149

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. They are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 2 or additional settings

Hymn of the Day:
880 For All the Saints

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
*883 - Behold a Host Arrayed in White

Closing Hymn:
889/890 - Jerusalem the Golden

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 27) - 11/12/2023

SERIES THEME

THE TIME IN BETWEEN

In the great timeline of human history, there are only two ultimately significant points: the first time Christ came to our world to win salvation by his life, death, and resurrection; and the second time Christ will come to consummate his everlasting kingdom. We live in the time in between those two points. It is a time of tension. We know that peace and perfection are ours already because of what Jesus did the first time he came. Yet we do not enjoy a peaceful and perfect existence now already. We will not know such a life until Christ comes again. And so we wait and watch, living in the time in between. As the church year draws to a close, Scripture points us toward the end of time when Christ will come again. Until then Christ teaches us how to live in the time in between.

THEME OF THE DAY

A TIME FOR WATCHFULNESS

Imagine you are planning to take the family out to dinner. You all have to wait on someone to get ready. Minute after minute passes. What can happen in that situation? It is easy to focus on something else and completely forget the original goal. When that family member is finally ready, you've become immersed in a movie. Or perhaps, as you were waiting, you grew drowsy and fell asleep.

As we wait for Christ to return, as day after day passes, it can be easy to get distracted, to lose vigilance, to become spiritually drowsy. God forbid that Christ should return and find us spiritually asleep. Today we are reminded that the time in between Christ's first and second coming is a time for watchfulness. The Church prayers, "Lord God, keep us every watchful for the coming of your Son that we may sit with him and all your holy ones at the marriage feast in heaven."

FIRST READING

Isaiah 52:1-6 – The nation of Israel was sleepwalking through life, exhausted by their present problems. "Awake!" the prophet cries. Israel is to watch for the coming redemption.

SECOND READING

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 – St. Paul teaches how we should wait for Jesus to return. Be watchful. Don't fall asleep. Live as children of the light.

GOSPEL

*Matthew 25:1-13 – The wise, those who are watching and ready for the Bridegroom, enter into the great wedding banquet.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 2

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
870 - O Church, Arise

or

493 - Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers

Psalm of the Day:
90

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 2 or additional settings

Hymn of the Day:
486 Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
713 - I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

Closing Hymn:
884 - Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See

or

492:1,4,5 - A Few More Years Shall Roll

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
870 - O Church, Arise

492 - A Few More Years Shall Roll

Notes for the conservative service:

Notes for the ambitious service:

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 28) - 11/19/2023

SERIES THEME

THE TIME IN BETWEEN

In the great timeline of human history, there are only two ultimately significant points: the first time Christ came to our world to win salvation by his life, death, and resurrection; and the second time Christ will come to consummate his everlasting kingdom. We live in the time in between those two points. It is a time of tension. We know that peace and perfection are ours already because of what Jesus did the first time he came. Yet we do not enjoy a peaceful and perfect existence now already. We will not know such a life until Christ comes again. And so we wait and watch, living in the time in between. As the church year draws to a close, Scripture points us toward the end of time when Christ will come again. Until then Christ teaches us how to live in the time in between.

THEME OF THE DAY

A TIME FOR FAITHFUL SERVICE

As we wait for Christ to return, we are not to be sedentary. The reason Christ has not yet returned is that there is still work to be done. And Christ carries out his good work through us, his Church. So, until Christ comes again and says, “Stop!” believers will be busy with faithful service. Christ has given every believer gifts and talents. And when Christ entrusts us with those gifts and talents, he calls us to use them all for his glory. In the time between Christ’s first and second coming, we use everything the master has given us to live according to his will and to carry out his mission.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 1:10-18 – How did Israel respond to all of God’s gifts? With grudging service, which is not faithful service. How does God respond to Israel? By promising to make them as pure as newly fallen snow.

SECOND READING

Romans 12:1-8 – When we keep God’s mercy in view, we understand and appreciate the gifts he gives us in Christ, and we use those gifts faithfully.

GOSPEL

***Matthew 25:14-30 – Through a parable Jesus calls his followers to faithful service in grateful response to the gifts that the master has given and in joyful anticipation of the master’s impending return.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 2

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
734 - How Clear Is Our Vocation, Lord

or

739 - Forth in Your Name, O Lord, I Go

Psalm of the Day:
128

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 2 or additional settings

Hymn of the Day:
751 O God, Your Hand the Heavens Made

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
735 - Before You I Kneel

Closing Hymn:
930 - Go, My Children, with My Blessing

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
734 - How Clear Is Our Vocation, Lord

735 - Before You I Kneel

Notes for the conservative service:
734 - REPTON may still need introduction

Notes for the ambitious service:

Worship Plan - Church Year A

2022-2023

Last Sunday of the Church Year - 11/26/2023

SERIES THEME

THE TIME IN BETWEEN

In the great timeline of human history, there are only two ultimately significant points: the first time Christ came to our world to win salvation by his life, death, and resurrection; and the second time Christ will come to consummate his everlasting kingdom. We live in the time in between those two points. It is a time of tension. We know that peace and perfection are ours already because of what Jesus did the first time he came. Yet we do not enjoy a peaceful and perfect existence now already. We will not know such a life until Christ comes again. And so we wait and watch, living in the time in between. As the church year draws to a close, Scripture points us toward the end of time when Christ will come again. Until then Christ teaches us how to live in the time in between.

THEME OF THE DAY

A TIME TO YEARN FOR THE END

Consider the Christian man whose body aches from both the cancer and the chemo. Look at that faithful old woman, back arched by time, fingers twisted by arthritis, eyes close to blindness. These believers may pray for death, precisely because they know that for the children of God, death is not the end of life. Death is the end of sorrow and pain. They yearn for the end of those things, and the beginning of their perfect eternity with Jesus.

We have come to the end of the Church Year. It is time to talk about the end of this world on Judgment Day. That day does not scare the believer. The first time Christ came he saved us from our sin and the accusations for the devil. The second time Christ comes, he will save us from everything else. On that day, disease, gone. Abuse, gone. Heartache, gone. Even death is ended. None of those things will exist ever again. But we will exist forever with our Lord Jesus. Until then we live in the time in between. As we look at all Christ did at his first coming, we yearn for him to come again to end this broken world and to usher all the saints into everlasting glory.

FIRST READING

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 – The prophet Daniel sees a vision of the Last Judgment that is filled with fire and thrones and books…and a Savior who will establish an everlasting kingdom.

SECOND READING

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 – St. Paul gives us the encouragement that when Christ comes again he shall raise the dead, and death shall be forever ended.

GOSPEL

***Matthew 25:31-46 – Jesus describes the end of days, when he shall come in glory and separate sheep from goats.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Conservative:
Setting 2

Ambitious:

Opening Hymn:
494 - See, He Comes, the King of Glory

or

492 - A Few More Years Shall Roll

Psalm of the Day:
95

Gospel Acclamation Proper Verse:
Alleluia. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Alleluia.

Gospel Acclamation setting:
Setting 2 or additional settings

Hymn of the Day:
487 Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending

Third Hymn or Distribution Hymn:
547 - At the Name of Jesus

or

840 - All Men Living Are but Mortal

Closing Hymn:
850 - It Is Well with My Soul

Optional New Hymns, perhaps requiring advance preparation/cantors:
494 - See, He Comes, the King of Glory

492 - A Few More Years Shall Roll (if not used two weeks prior; if used, this reinforces the tune)

Notes for the conservative service:
494 would need introduction

Notes for the ambitious service: