

EASTER SEASON 2018 IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST and BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Series Overviews

Easter isn't just a single day in the Christian Year. It's a season of 50 days, starting with celebration of the resurrection of Jesus celebrated on Easter 1, and concluding with the celebration of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that catalyzed the birth of the church on Pentecost (the 50th day!).

The seasons of the Christian Year were created by the early church to support its underlying mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ who is transforming the world. ([See this article for more on this theme](#)). During Lent the church forms persons in the habits, the core behaviors, of discipleship. During Easter, the church forms people in the key doctrines of the faith and prepares persons to claim the gifts of the Spirit for their ministry as Christ's disciples and apostles to the world. Put another way, if the 40 days of Lent are Rehab, the 50 days of Easter are boot camp preparing persons to live out the gifts and ministries the Spirit has birthed in them in the name of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.

The first three readings from Acts in Year B are drawn from the same story of two apostles (John and Peter) who bring healing to a person born with a serious disability and thereby delivering him from a life doomed to being a beggar, all in the name of Jesus. Healing is at the core of the ministry of Jesus, then and now. Our first Easter series, "In the Name of Jesus" explores the core dynamics of testimony, faith, and God's saving power made available to all in his name.

In the Name of Jesus...

Week 1: April 8 Testimony... To the Resurrection

Acts 4:32-35

Week 2: April 15 Faith... That Makes Us Strong

Acts 3:12-19

Week 3: April 22 Salvation Comes

Acts 4:5-12

The readings in Acts from that point forward reveal the heart and diversity of the power of the Holy Spirit at work through and beyond the communities of disciples of Jesus. They make clear just how broad, deep, and high God's saving love reaches and seeks to reach through us, and so support the work of formation groups throughout these weeks to help persons, especially the newly baptized or confirmed, discern their

spiritual gifts and identify directions for ministries they will begin pursuing after their commissioning into ministry in the name of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit at this season's culmination, Pentecost. You may find our [DIY Tools for Spiritual Gifts Discernment and Ministry Deployment](#) a helpful resource for the formational work you do in small groups in parallel with these Sunday celebrations.

This year's Pentecost, the 50th Day of Easter Season, corresponds with Heritage Sunday in The United Methodist Church. And this year's Heritage Sunday marks the 50th year of The United Methodist Church. The first Christian Pentecost happened in a way that many present felt to be a time of chaos, of reckoning, of things falling apart. It seemed like the Day of the Lord coming with vengeance. We find ourselves in such a chaotic moment in the life of the United Methodist Church. In the midst of what some took as chaos and vengeance, Peter stood among the other apostles and proclaimed to a perplexed crowd that indeed the Day of the Lord had come, but it was a Day of Salvation, a Day of Jubilee, the 50th year when debts would be cancelled, lands restored, and visions and dreams of hope coming from the most unlikely people. This wasn't chaos. It was birth.

And on that day over 3000 people were born again in the waters of baptism.

May our 50th year celebration as The United Methodist Church on this Pentecost Sunday in 2018 be such a day of Jubilee, a day of birth and launching of many ministries formed through the weeks of Easter rejoicing and preparation.

And in the Power of the Holy Spirit

Week 1: April 29 We Join the Outsiders...

Acts 8:26-40

Week 2: May 6 The Outsiders Join Us...

Acts 10:44-48

Week 3: May 13 Leaders Are Raised Up

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

Week 4: May 20 Pentecost: Proclaim Jubilee!

Acts 2:1-21

**EASTER 2
IN THE NAME OF JESUS:
Testimony to the Resurrection**

April 8, 2018

FULL SERVICE ORDER

ENTRANCE

*The service begins with the ringing of a bell or the clamor of a gong.
The pastor stands in the back of the worship space, in front of the choir or musical ensemble, and announces:*

Pastor: Alleluia. Christ is risen!

People: The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

The deacon or pastor then goes on to announce the number of people who have been fed, sheltered, or otherwise assisted (and how they have been assisted) through the church's outreach ministries to date this year, and encourages giving to support these ministries. Ushers collect an offering for these ministries during the opening processional hymn.

Camina, Pueblo de Dios (Walk On, O People of God) UMH 305
We Are Called TFWS 2172 OR

Mighty to Save W&S 3038

Prayer for Illumination

(after "We Are Called")

**Risen Savior, you have called us,
and we walk on with you.
Open our eyes and our hearts
to hear the witness of your people,
and follow where you lead. Amen.**

(after "Mighty to Save")

**Jesus, you conquered the grave,
and we are singing for your glory.
Author of Salvation, speak now through these scriptures,
that we may be the compassion and love for others
that you are for us. Amen.**

WORD AND RESPONSE

Reading

[Acts 4:32-35 \(NRSV\)](#)

Sermon

Testimony to the Resurrection

Confessing in Song

The deacon, pastor, or others may prepare the Lord's table, and the regular offering may be collected during the singing.

Christ Is Risen UMH 307 OR

We Believe CCLI# 6367165

THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table [UMH 8](#)
Confession, Pardon, and Peace [UMH 8](#)

The Great Thanksgiving [BOW 66-67](#) OR

Pastor:

Alleluia. The risen Christ is with us.

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Death is conquered! Sin's power is broken.

Praise to you, Conquering God!

We have seen your glory.

And we are yours!

We are yours, all yours, blessed Triune God,
all our lives, all our thanks, all our praise,
we give it all to you, with all our bodies, and minds, and voices.

Yours, all yours!

Yours the blessing, yours the praise,
from the unimaginable silence before creation,
beyond the farthest reaches of time and space our instruments may ever find,
from infinity to infinity, everlasting to everlasting,
you are God, boundless in love and power.

We stand in awe, trembling in the light of your glory!

What are we that you should notice us?
What are we that you should love us?
What are we what you should call us into covenant with you,
a covenant we continually broke,
and you continuously sustained.

Mercy! How full of mercy!

How can we but praise you,
joining our voices with the song of angels and saints,
seraphim and martyrs,
strangers and family in every generation:

Refrain from "God of Wonders" W&S 3034 or CCLI#3118757

then sing to the same tune

Jesus Christ who comes in our God's name, you are worthy, worthy!
Lamb of God who died and rose again, you are worthy, worthy!
Hosanna now we sing! Hosanna now we sing!

You are holy, O God!
Holy!

You are worthy, O Christ!
Worthy!

Worthy in your birth! Worthy in your living!
Worthy in your loving! Worthy in your serving!

Worthy when you preached good news
that God's kingdom has drawn near
and gather disciples, then and now, to learn and show the world
what life in God's reign means:
healing for the sick.
new life for the dead,
cleansing for the lepers,
freedom for the possessed,
new birth, new hope, new creation breaking in for all.

Worthy! Worthy! Worthy above all!

Worthy too, the night we betrayed you,
when you took the bread, blessed it and broke it,

and gave it to your disciples.
Worthy when you told them,
"This is my body broken for you. Remember me."

We remember.

Worthy when you took the cup,
praised God and shared it,
and worthy when you said,
"This is my blood of the new covenant for you.
Remember me."

We remember.

And in this season of seasons,
we proclaim above all,
worthy were you when the angels rolled away the stone,
and you came forth from the tomb,
trampling down death by death
and to all in the graves
restoring life.

We remember, and we praise you with our lives.

We remember, and we praise you with our lives
and these gifts of bread and wine,
proclaiming with one voice the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Even so, come upon us, Holy Spirit.

Come upon us, Holy Spirit.

Come upon these gifts.

Come upon these gifts.

Make them be for us Christ's body, Christ's blood.

Make us one body in Christ enlivened by his blood.

One in heart, one in mind, one in you, Holy Spirit,
as you move us to pray for the church and the world:

A deacon or worship leader:

That we with Peter and John and all your apostles may proclaim the gospel boldly: **Hear us, O God.**

That we may offer your healing for all who are sick, or torn, or weary:
Hear us, O God.

That many dead and left for dead may be raised, and death's power vanquished:
Hear us, God.

That all who are unclean may receive your cleansing grace:
Hear us, O God.

That all who are possessed, oppressed, distressed, depressed and downcast may be set free at last. **Hear us, O God.**

Pastor:

Even so, come and fill this feast, Holy Spirit,
this day, and every day until that day
when we eat it new at the marriage supper of the Lamb
and our Easter rejoicing shall know no end.

**All blessing, honor, glory and power
be yours, Holy Triune God,
now and forever.
Amen!**

The pastor breaks the bread in the sight of the people, then serves the servers, one of whom also serves the pastor. The people are then served.

Music During Communion

Make Us One TFWS 2224

Bind Us Together TFWS 2226

Thanksgiving after Communion

Deacon or Pastor and People:

**Triune God,
you have fed us with the body and blood of Christ,
uniting us with you,
filling us with the power that raised Jesus from the dead.
Send us, rejoicing, to declare with all your people,
in hearts, and hands, and voices,
the resurrection of Jesus,**

Because of the power of atmospherics in worship, falling into a pit of despair and not coming out is always a risk. Knowing this, it is important to remind the congregation that God knows our despair and works in the midst of it. We all are guilty of “fears and failures,” and the knowledge that Jesus is Lord can redeem even the most hopeless situations. This song is most powerful when accompanied by a full band, but a solo piano or smaller ensemble also works well.

Our CCLI Top 100 vetting team offered a critique of this song for use in conversations among worship planning teams, with the primary concerns being that the actions of the Resurrection are a little confused here. Upon consulting Paul’s letters, we find that God the Father raised Christ the Son from the dead, and this song paints Jesus as the one who “conquered the grave.” This may be a small point, but it was offered as a concern because of the way in which songs affect the theological vocabulary of the church. Receiving a high score, it was still recommended for use in worship, and the yellow rating was given to encourage conversation about it in the local church.

Christ Is Risen

Brian Wren has written a celebration of Christ’s resurrection to the tune commonly associated with the Christmas carol, “Infant Holy, Infant Lowly.” If your congregation sings both hymns, it becomes a way of providing a focus upon both the incarnation and resurrection. When singing, maintain the lilting character of the tune by placing stronger emphasis on the first beat of each measure. However, it is possible to still celebrate and keep a light, sensitive touch. More movement and direction is created when beginning the phrase “In the desert all-surrounding” softly and building through the ending. Congregations will become more engaged, and the texts are more memorable when you create ways for the people to be involved in music-making, not just singing pitches without nuance! Accompaniment is ideal with organ or piano, although many handbell settings also exist for this tune that might provide some inspiration in how to involve handbells in the accompaniment. One final tip: the meter is listed as 447.447 D, which will only include one tune for use in the metrical index of *The United Methodist Hymnal*. Also look to 87.87 D tunes for many distinct possibilities if you need another option.
[History of Hymns](#)

We Believe

At first glance, it may appear that the range of this song makes it unsingable by your congregation. However, there is a way to do it! My recommendation is to sing in the key of F, with the chorus down one octave from what is written in the vocal sheet found on the CCLI website. This puts the song within a comfortable range. A soloist from the band can offer the verses and invite the congregation to join in singing on the choruses and bridge. Accompany with piano, guitar, or band.

Make Us One

The Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir and its director, Carol Cymbala, have long been a well-known fixture in contemporary gospel music. This short work in *The Faith We Sing* is a very singable chorus that needs to be sung quite slowly to allow the harmonies to develop completely and the vocal line to soar with sensitive phrasing. I recommend a

metronome marking of quarter note = 48. Accompany on piano, organ, or rhythm section.

Singing this in conjunction with “Bind Us Together” will help focus on the scripture passage of the believers being “of one heart and soul.” Singing this while gathering at the table is a beautiful way of living as community.

Bind Us Together

This song offers a prayer for God to bind the church together with “cords that cannot be broken.” Singing this imperative statement creates an atmosphere of welcome, love, and unity if the church embodies the prayer. One note on the text: even though the theme is unity, the address in the song is a little ambiguous with allusions to one God, “King,” and body. It may come across in a Trinitarian spirit, but it is not actually Trinitarian. The CCLI Top 100 vetting team has uncovered a trend of using “King” language as a default in relation to Jesus, so it can be assumed that the “King” reference is to Jesus. There is no language in relation to the Holy Spirit. This is only highlighted to encourage conversation among your planning teams, and it is not enough reason to not sing the song. These kinds of considerations need to be discussed in your planning, and we encourage you to pursue these kinds of issues deeply, thoughtfully, and sensitively. The tune can transcend one genre or another, so accompaniment can vary between piano, organ, and rhythm section. Alternative, chromatic harmonies may also be substituted for a gospel feel.

He Lives

A favorite among many congregations, this Easter hymn calls us to rejoice in the resurrection of Christ, even in the midst of weariness and tragedy. Oftentimes, congregations will balk when asked to sing above a D on the staff, but I have found “He Lives” to be an exception as the congregation will heartily sing a high F (with the added fermata, too) at the end of the refrain. Accompany with organ or brass ensemble if one is present for your worship services. The tempo will vary from context to context, depending on the style of music in the service. Whether fast or slow, make sure it has a joyful quality. [History of Hymns](#)

O Praise the Name (Anástasis)

The tune of this text is hauntingly similar to Twila Paris’s “Lamb of God” (TFWS 2113), and it makes a great song to sing during the Easter season. CCLI Top 100 Vetting Team member Nelson Cowan also made the very helpful discovery that the verses of this song are in long meter (88.88), and it is altogether possible to sing them with another tune and not include the chorus. If using the tune written for the text, however, note that it does have a fairly wide range. I would recommend lowering the key to Bb to accommodate for the higher tessitura of the chorus. Accompany with piano, guitar, or band.

PREACHING

Today we begin the first of two mini-series that will take us through the great fifty days of Easter. In the first series, “In the Name of Jesus,” we will be focusing on what it means to claim the power of the name of Jesus as his followers. We will journey with the first disciples through the early chapters in the book of Acts, following them as they plant the very first Christian church and identifying how claiming the name of Jesus was the source of their strength, healing power and salvation.

Then, in our second series, “And the Power of the Holy Spirit,” we will explore what it means to be a church powered by the very Spirit of Christ. All of this will culminate on the final day of the season as we celebrate the name of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit that gave birth to the church on the day of Pentecost.

It is important to note that in these two series, although we are continuously in the book of Acts, we are not reading continuous texts. Rather, the lectionary has us moving back and forth between earlier chapters and later chapters. This creates a bit of a challenge, because the stories we will hear read in church each week are not necessarily told in the same sequence that they occur in the Bible.

For example, we start out today, the first Sunday in our series, at the end of chapter four. Next week we will back up into chapter three, and then in the following weeks read selections from chapters four, eight, and ten. When we get to week seven we go all the way back to chapter one before closing out the season in chapter two on Pentecost.

Because of all this skipping around, I think it is important to place the reading for today in the larger framework of the story told in Acts, and to orient ourselves to the book as a whole as we begin this series.

Acts tells the story of the period after the resurrection of Jesus, when his followers established the church of Jesus Christ in his name. If I were going to give Acts a subtitle, it would be “The Book of Acts: Signs and Wonders.” The picture of the developing church painted by the author is of a growing community of believers powered by the Holy Spirit, and witnessed in the visible signs and wonders offered through the teachings and healings of the apostles.

Chapter three tells the story of the healing of an individual that was well-known to the people of Jerusalem. He was a lame beggar who had been working his corner by the Beautiful Gate for as long as anyone could remember. Every day sympathetic people would assist him, helping him to lay by the gate so that he could ask for alms from the people going into the temple to pray. On this particular day, Peter and John passed by this man on their way into the temple. He asked them for alms. Instead of giving him some spare change, they stopped what they were doing to talk with him. Peter told him he had no silver or gold to give him, but he had something better: the healing power of Jesus Christ. He proclaimed that in the name of Jesus, the man should stand up and walk. Peter reached out his hand to help the man up. Miraculously, the man was able to

not only get to his feet, but to leap and dance and praise God! All the people who knew this man, who had seen him asking for alms every day, who had known him to have been lame from birth, and who now saw him leaping and dancing and praising God, came running to Peter and John to ask them how the man had been healed.

So Peter took the opportunity to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ to the people who had witnessed this healing. He told the crowd of people about how the God of their ancestors, the God Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, had come to them as a human being in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He told of how some had recognized him, but others had rejected him and handed him over to Pilate, who had tried and convicted him and ordered him to be hung on a cross to die. But then God had raised this same man, Jesus, from the dead, and they, the disciples, were witnesses to this miracle. They proclaimed that it was by faith in his name, in the name of Jesus, that the man who had been lame from birth was now healed and enabled to leap and dance and praise God.

Peter then invited the people to repent of their sins, repent of their unbelief, and open their ears to the proclamation of the prophets to understand that Jesus was the promised messiah from God for whom they had all been waiting.

The priests in the temple became annoyed that Peter and John were teaching about the resurrection of Jesus and proclaiming the healing power of his Spirit, so they had them both arrested. But the people who heard the sermon, about five thousand, believed in the name of Jesus.

Peter and John continued to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to the high priests of the nation of Israel with boldness, and the priests recognized that the healing of the lame man was an undeniable miracle. They also recognized this power as a threat. But all they could really do was let Peter and John go, and order them to stop teaching about Jesus.

It was the healing of the lame beggar at the Beautiful Gate that began to draw more and more people to recognize the power of the name of Jesus. This first group of believers are the ones the author of Acts writes about in today's scripture lesson from the end of chapter four, where the whole group has become, in essence, one body in Christ. And it is this same healing power that has enabled them to be of one heart and soul, and for no one to have more possessions than others, but rather, to hold all their assets in common, sharing what they had so that no one in the community would be without. Especially folks like the lame beggar. They pooled their resources to care for each other, and gave whatever they had leftover to those around them who were in need.

Signs and wonders.

A few months ago the *Washington Post* published a feature [story](#) about retirees who were working into their seventies and even eighties because their social security checks do not provide enough income to meet even basic needs. The article was really about pensions, and the changing state of what companies have historically done to provide

for their employees in retirement. Specifically, it was about the replacement of traditional pension programs with voluntary retirement savings accounts over the past three decades. One man in the story, who had worked for McDonnell Douglas, lost all of his pension when the company closed the plant at which he had worked for most of his career. Many of the other workers had lost not only their pensions, but their homes and everything they had accumulated over a lifetime of working, and been forced to declare bankruptcy. None of them had invested in retirement savings accounts because they believed that between their pensions and social security they would have enough to live on in retirement. According to the article, the situation of former McDonnell Douglas employees is not unique:

Even as late as the early 1990s, about 60 percent of full-time workers at medium and large companies had pension coverage, according to the government figures. But today, only about 24 percent of workers at midsize and large companies have pension coverage, according to the data, and that number is expected to continue to fall as older workers exit the workforce.

In place of pensions, companies and investment advisers urge employees to open retirement accounts. The basic idea is workers will manage their own retirement funds, sometimes with a little help from their employers, sometimes not. Once they reach retirement age, those accounts are supposed to supplement whatever Social Security might pay. (Today, Social Security provides only enough for a bare-bones budget, about \$14,000 a year on average.)

The trouble with expecting workers to save on their own is that almost half of U.S. families have no such retirement account, according to the Federal Reserve's 2016 Survey of Consumer Finances (See Peter Whorisky, *Washington Post*, "I Hope I can Quit Working in a Few Years: A Preview of the U.S Without Pensions," December 23, 2017).

One of the things we wrestled with as we read this scripture lesson together was our own positions of privilege. Of the members of the worship team at Discipleship Ministries, three of us are ordained clergy, and our fourth member is in seminary preparing for ordination at some point in the near future. We recognized that as preachers employed by the church, some of us have guaranteed appointments. Three of us have access to employment that includes benefits: health insurance, life insurance, paid vacation and sick leave, a pension program, 401k's to save for retirement, and good wages. One of us no longer does.

We live in a time in history when we probably won't have to work until we die. We plan to work until retirement. And the truth is, we don't give all we can because we have to plan for our retirement years.

But we all know people who have given all they could. We know people who have left everything for Jesus, who have chosen to live in communes, and who have taken enormous risks in the name of their faith in Jesus Christ.

Jackson spoke of his friend Chris who works for [Jubilee Partners](#). Through this organization, Chris and his family have chosen to live in an intentional Christian service community in Georgia, where they have dedicated their lives to offering hospitality to refugees arriving in the United States.

I thought about my friend Scott, who joined a Mennonite mission group, [Christian Peacemakers](#) Team, after he graduated from college. His service through this organization affected him so deeply that he ended up going to seminary and now serves the homeless population in a large city in the western United States.

Throughout history, whenever the church historically has become aligned with worldly power there have arisen people who chose to leave behind the ways of the world in order to live in intentional missional communities. This is what gave birth to religious orders. It is what is now influencing Christians across the nation to join in Missional ministries and intentional Christian communal living.

Even if we do not choose to leave behind our materialism entirely and join a Christian Intentional Missional community, we can still make choices in our everyday lives to live on less so that we may give more to support those who are in need around us.

- How is your church encouraging and enabling its members to be more intentional about their giving?
- What are you doing to help young people who are interested in devoting their lives to Christian mission to find organizations through which to serve?
- What opportunities for Christian service are there in your community?

Most of us will not sell all our possessions and join a commune. But we all have opportunities every day to see the lame beggars in our midst. They may not be lying by the Beautiful Gate every day. They may not be standing on a street corner with a “Homeless, please help me” sign in their hands. You may not pass them at the same spot every morning when you go to get your coffee at Starbucks. But there are people who are struggling to make ends meet, people who are in need of God’s healing touch, all around us. All we have to do is look around and see them.

For the past two weeks I’ve been spending my days writing from a rehabilitation clinic in Fort Smith, Arkansas. My mother is here healing and getting stronger after a nine-day hospitalization with congestive heart failure. Since she also suffers from moderate stage Alzheimer’s disease, either my father or I stay by her side all the time. She has virtually no short term memory, so we stay with her to help remind her where she is, and what she is doing here.

Spending time here as afforded me the opportunity to meet some amazing men and women who work at this facility. These skilled nurses, nurse practitioners, therapists, administrators, cooks, janitorial staff, and other healthcare professionals have become like extended family to us. I have learned about their lives and their families and they

have learned about mine. I've been deeply touched by their genuine care and sense of God's calling to this work of bringing healing and hope to the mostly elderly population of people staying here.

I have learned that many of these people work very long hours, often well over eight hours a day, and six days a week, for not very much pay and far too few benefits. All of these amazing, loving, caring, dedicated people give their lives in service to the elderly, but work at a for-profit rehabilitation facility that fails to pay them a living wage. They are not alone.

There are so many people in the United States today that work for low pay at companies that seem to make their owners and shareholders wealthier and wealthier, while their hardworking, dedicated employees are overworked, underpaid, and receive few to no benefits. I know there are many people without a place to call home who work forty hours a week. These people stay in homeless shelters, with family members or roommates or parents, and they go to work every morning in restaurants, nursing care facilities, and other places of employment that pay less than a living wage.

This situation is getting worse in our nation and around the globe. Low wages in the United States disproportionately affect women and children, especially women of color.

How did we get here? What are we doing about it? How are we witnessing to the resurrection of Jesus Christ in places where people have little hope that anything is ever going to change for them? What are we doing as communities of faith to share the promises, signs and wonders that the early church knew and witnessed? What are we doing to change the situation for the working poor around the globe? How can we, as United Methodists, be of one heart and soul regarding the need to serve the poor, not only in our own communities, but around the world?

PLANNING NOTES

Reading Notes

NRSV texts, artwork and [Revised Common Lectionary Prayers](#) for this service are available at the [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](#).

Leccionario en Español, [Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes](#).

Lectioinaire en français, [Le Lectionnaire Œcuménique Révisé](#)

Calendar Notes

April

April 8 **Easter Series Begins**

April 15 [Native American Ministries Sunday](#)

April 22 [Festival of God's Creation](#)

April 25 [World Malaria Day](#)

May

All Month [Christian Home Month](#) (2018 Theme: Families Called to Peace, forthcoming)

[Asian Pacific American Heritage Month](#)

May 3 [National Day of Prayer](#)

May 4 [May Friendship Day](#) (UMW/CWU)

May 7-13 [Christian Family Week](#) (2018 resources forthcoming)

May 10 [Ascension Day](#)

May 13 [Ascension Sunday](#)

[Festival of the Christian Home/Mother's Day](#) (USA)

May 19-20 [Change the World Weekend](#)

May 20 [Day of Pentecost](#)

[Heritage Sunday](#)

May 24 [Aldersgate Day](#)

May 27 [Trinity Sunday](#)

[Peace with Justice Sunday](#)

May 28 [Memorial Day](#) (USA)

June

Pray for annual conferences convening throughout the month, for all receiving new appointments or assignments, for those leaving existing appointments or assignments, and for congregations and other ministries receiving new leadership.

June 3 **June Worship Series Begins: "Transitions"**

June 17 [Father's Day](#) (USA)

June 19 [Juneteenth](#) (USA)

July

July 1 **July Worship Series Begins: "Healing Hands"**

July 4 [Independence Day](#) (USA)

August

August 5 **August Worship Series Begins: "Life Together"**

All Month [Back to School Resources](#)

August 5 **August Worship Series Begins: "Life Together"**

September

All Month [Season of Creation](#) (2018 Discipleship/UMCom Series coming soon)

September 3 [Labor Day](#) (USA)

September 15-

October 15 [Hispanic Heritage Month](#) (USA)

October

October 6 **October Series in Job** (in development)

[World Communion Sunday](#)

October 14 [Children's Sabbath](#)

October 21 [Laity Sunday](#) (2018 Resources forthcoming)

October 31 [Reformation Day](#)

For Your Planning Team: In the Name of Jesus...

In the Series

Easter Day itself launches a whole season, 8 Sundays, 50 days of celebrations of life in the Risen Jesus. Today launches the first of two mini-series (“In the Name of Jesus...,” “And in the Power of the Holy Spirit”) that comprise the twin foci of Easter Season, doctrinal formation and ministry formation.

The two series are unified as one season by maintaining a common structure throughout. Every service across these 7 succeeding Sundays of Easter begins with an act of Entrance that announces and recognizes the ways in which the scripture for that day is being lived out in your congregation here and now. Every service across these 7 succeeding Sundays includes a sung act of confessing the faith in ways appropriate to that Sunday. And every Sunday includes a Great Thanksgiving that incorporates the prayers of the people as part of the Eucharist. As we note in the rubrics, these intercessions are most appropriate for a deacon to lead, if a deacon is available. ***If your congregation does not have a deacon on staff, start a relationship with a deacon in your area who may be available. You’ll be glad you did!***

The basic structure of the services remains constant across the 7 weeks. But each series incorporates a different “base model” for the Great Thanksgiving, and in each service the Great Thanksgiving, the Prayer of Thanksgiving after Communion, and the Sending Forth (also most appropriate for a deacon to lead) is customized for the theme of that day.

Planning for This Service

While Easter Day functions as the launch day for the whole season-- and we hope you will have previewed this season and diligently invited folks to join you for the whole season during those big Easter Day services, which should help blunt the “Low Sunday” phenomenon you might otherwise expect today!-- today’s service is the launch for this first three-week mini-series, “In the Name of Jesus.”

Series launch always needs to create a kind of overture for the series, articulate the series promise, and get the service and the series moving forward in a powerful way.

We’ve created an entrance that boldly announces the ways in which the kind of ministry of healing outreach in the name of Jesus that put John and Peter on public trial are still happening among you, in and through the ministries you are part of as a Christian congregation where you are. The idea for this action-- and similar actions every Sunday during this season-- is bold, joyous proclamation. This is not reading a list, much less stumbling through it. Christ is risen and at work among you. This is cause for celebration! If your deacon, pastor, or other person making this announcement is not accustomed to joyous proclamation (and even if they are!) ***be sure to rehearse exactly***

how you'll do this in the worship space the night before and then again before worship that morning until you can get just the right voicing so this comes off as joyous, proclamatory, and celebrative, and not “hammy.” I recommend that you have one or two other people when you rehearse this to give you feedback until you all agree you've gotten the whole action (including the voicing) just right.

This service also incorporates an offering in support of your named outreach ministries in conjunction with the processional song(s). Be sure your ushers are prepared and in place for **two** offerings this morning. You will still have a “regular” offering later in the service.

This service (as all services in this season) then moves from song directly into a unison prayer for illumination followed by the reading of scripture. Because the act of entrance is chosen to correspond with the central theme of the scripture and the service for each of these Sundays (today is testimony to the ongoing outreach of the Risen Lord), you want these three elements (song, prayer, and reading of scripture) to flow seamlessly into one another. Do not pause between them more than needed to catch breath or change positions (from standing to sitting for the reading of the scripture), and do not try to explain why you're doing what you're doing. Just do it. Trust the ritual as designed to do what it intends to do-- maintaining these as one continuous flow.

And just as you need to pay attention to the way the opening announcement/ proclamation of outreach is made, so your reader for Acts, today and every Sunday, needs to be on the spot, start right after all are seated, and read in a way that conveys the joyous testimonies of the apostles to the healing work of the risen Christ on that day long ago. A strong reading here will strengthen the beginning of the preaching, which should match the ending of the reading in the energy, tone, and seriousness of the content. ***Do not break the flow with casual small-talk, welcomes, introductions, or jokes.*** Keep the flow going as the sermon begins, and carry it from there to its conclusion in the sung affirmation of faith that follows.

If your deacon or other leader is not accustomed to leading intercessions as bidding prayers with congregational response, be sure she or he has had time to practice the voicing of these as the pastor practices the voicing of the Great Thanksgiving. This Great Thanksgiving for this first series, continuing in the model used in the Easter service last week, is interactive in structure and joyous in its proclaiming. An energy of confident joy should be evident in leading both the Great Thanksgiving proper, and in the voicing of the intercessions by the deacon. The intercessions build in energy from beginning to end, until the final intercession. Here, think freedom rallies and our sisters and brothers in the black churches in the US as you lead in offering these words-- this week and throughout this series.

Just as the man otherwise doomed to a life of begging in our story throughout these three weeks found the ability to leap and dance in the name of Jesus, so may your leadership of these services in this series be inspired by the love and power found in that same name that brings life, and joy, and peace, and renewal to all creation.

Finally, somewhere in the sending, or in the bulletin, or in your announcement slide set, and through social media or email during the week, be sure to remind folks that next week's service begins with rite of laying on of hands and anointing for healing. Give the advance notice so you'll get more response (and fewer puzzled or alarmed looks!) when you begin next week's service this way. Tell folks to come prepared, if they wish to come forward with requests for healing for themselves or others, that you and others will listen to the names of the people, then lay hands on them and anoint them. Simple, brief, powerful-- in the name of Jesus!

Additional Resources for this Service

[2015 Planning Helps for these readings](#)

[Ecumenical Prayer Cycle](#): (Click link to find countries for this week when they are posted)

**Easter 3
In the Name of Jesus Christ:
Faith... That Makes Us Strong
April 15, 2018**

FULL SERVICE ORDER

ENTRANCE

*The service begins with the ringing of a bell or the clamor of a gong.
The pastor stands in the back of the worship space, in front of the choir or musical ensemble, and announces:*

Pastor: Alleluia. Christ is risen!

People: The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

The pastor then invites all seeking prayer for healing to come to the front/altar rail. The pastor, with others who have a ministry of healing in the congregation, hears brief requests, lays hands, [anoints with oil], and prays for healing for those who seek it (using the resources of [BOW 620 or 621](#)) while the congregation sings:

Christ Has Risen

TFWS 2115

Healer of Our Every Ill

TFWS 2213 OR

More than Conquerors

CCLI# 7014648

Prayer for Illumination

(after "Healer of Our Every Ill")

**Risen Savior, whatever our infirmity,
our health and our strength are in you.
Open our minds and our hearts
to the witness of your people
to your healing love,
and to offer or receive it with compassion
as you lead. Amen.**

(after "More than Conquerors")

**Conquering Lord Jesus,
your resurrection power in our lives
breaks every bond.
Speak now through these scriptures,
and strengthen our faith in your name,
that we may be channels of your healing
for all. Amen.**

WORD AND RESPONSE

Reading [Acts 3:12-19 \(NRSV\)](#)

Sermon Faith That Makes Us Strong

Confessing in Song

The deacon, pastor, or others may prepare the Lord's table, and the regular offering may be collected during the singing.

Cristo Vive UMH 313 OR
Apostle's Creed CCLI# 1544739

THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table [UMH 8](#)

Confession, Pardon, and Peace [UMH 8](#)

The Great Thanksgiving [BOW 66-67](#) OR

Pastor:

Alleluia. The risen Christ is with us.

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Death is conquered! Sin's power is broken.

Praise to you, Conquering God!

We have seen your glory.

And we are yours!

We are yours, all yours, blessed Triune God,
all our lives, all our thanks, all our praise,
we give it all to you, with all our bodies, and minds, and voices.

Yours, all yours!

Yours the blessing, yours the praise,
from the unimaginable silence before creation,
beyond the farthest reaches of time and space our instruments may ever find,
from infinity to infinity, everlasting to everlasting,
you are God, boundless in love and power.

We stand in awe, trembling in the light of your glory!

What are we that you should notice us?
What are we that you should love us?
What are we what you should call us into covenant with you,
a covenant we continually broke,
and you continuously sustained.

Mercy! How full of mercy!

How can we but praise you,
joining our voices with the song of angels and saints,
seraphim and martyrs,
strangers and family in every generation:

Refrain from "God of Wonders" W&S 3034 or CCLI#3118757

then sing to to the same tune

Jesus Christ who comes in our God's name, you are worthy, worthy!
Lamb of God who died and rose again, you are worthy, worthy!
Hosanna now we sing! Hosanna now we sing!

You are holy, O God!
Holy!

You are worthy, O Christ!
Worthy!

Worthy in your birth! Worthy in your living!
Worthy in your loving! Worthy in your serving!

Worthy when you preached good news
that God's kingdom has drawn near
and gather disciples, then and now, to learn and show the world
what life in God's reign means:
healing for the sick,
new life for the dead,
cleansing for the lepers,
freedom for the possessed,
new birth, new hope, new creation breaking in for all.

Worthy! Worthy! Worthy above all!

Worthy too, the night we betrayed you,
when you took the bread, blessed it and broke it,

and gave it to your disciples.
Worthy when you told them,
"This is my body broken for you. Remember me."

We remember.

Worthy when you took the cup,
praised God and shared it,
and worthy when you said,
"This is my blood of the new covenant for you.
Remember me."

We remember.

And in this season of seasons,
we proclaim above all,
worthy were you when the angels rolled away the stone,
and you came forth from the tomb,
trampling down death by death
and to all in the graves
restoring life.

We remember, and we praise you with our lives.

We remember, and we praise you with our lives
and these gifts of bread and wine,
proclaiming with one voice the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Even so, come upon us, Holy Spirit.

Come upon us, Holy Spirit.

Come upon these gifts.

Come upon these gifts.

Make them be for us Christ's body, Christ's blood.

Make us one body in Christ enlivened by his blood.

One in heart, one in mind, one in you, Holy Spirit,
as you move us to pray for the church and the world:

A deacon or worship leader:

That we with Peter and John and all your apostles may proclaim the gospel boldly: **Hear us, O God.**

That we may offer your healing for all who are sick, or torn, or weary:
Hear us, O God.

That many dead and left for dead may be raised, and death's power vanquished:
Hear us, God.

That all who are unclean may receive your cleansing grace:
Hear us, O God.

That all who are possessed, oppressed, distressed, depressed and downcast may be set free at last. **Hear us, O God.**

Pastor:

Even so, come and fill this feast, Holy Spirit,
this day, and every day until that day
when we eat it new at the marriage supper of the Lamb
and our Easter rejoicing shall know no end.

**All blessing, honor, glory and power
be yours, Holy Triune God,
now and forever.
Amen!**

The pastor breaks the bread in the sight of the people, then serves the servers, one of whom also serves the pastor. The people are then served.

Music During Communion

Author of Life Divine W&S 3166 AND/OR
The Blood Will Never Lose Its Power ZSS 204

Thanksgiving after Communion

Deacon or Pastor and People:

**Triune God,
you have fed us with the body and blood of Christ,
uniting us with you,
filling us with the power that raised Jesus from the dead.
Send us, rejoicing, to declare boldly with Peter,
in hearts, and hands, and voices,
that in the name of Jesus, and by faith in his name,
you raise us to new life
in this life. Amen.**

SENDING FORTH

Easter People, Raise Your Voices UMH 304 or
Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone) W&S 3104
Deacon or Pastor:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Go in the name of Jesus to bring strength and healing to all.

People: Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!

MUSIC NOTES

Christ Has Risen

Continuing the tradition of the Easter proclamation, “Christ is risen!”, John Bell of the Iona Community and Wild Goose Resource Group has created a hymn that embraces this Easter greeting. Each stanza begins with the words, “Christ has risen.” Ever the wordsmith, Bell gives the congregation the opportunity to sing words that don’t appear in hymns often--“messed or mangled,” “all who find religion strange”--each word with its own prophetic power as it is sung. The juxtaposition of the text and tune creates an interesting commentary in combining such an edgy, modern text, with an old, shape-note tune. However, HOLY MANNA creates a lively setting for the text, and particularly frames the end of the first stanza well with the melodic line in the last phrase: “Christ is risen, God is here!” The exclamation isn’t lost within the tune here, and the pairing of text and tune is well chosen. Accompany with organ, piano, guitar, or even a full band. The wonderful element of shape-note, pentatonic (5-note) hymn writing is the adaptability of the tune to fit any context.

Healer of Our Every Ill

Marty Haugen has created a text and tune that both provide comfort and yearning in equal measure. Words such as “fears and sadness” and “pain” echo the cry of those who suffer, but the refrain and tune are filled with hope. I would recommend taking a slight lift at the end of the fourth measure of each stanza (after the words “gladness,” “unfolding,” “brother,” and “healing”) to allow time to aurally shift from the F natural to the F# in the next measure. If the text is to offer a word of hope, the singing must embody that as well. Use a legato, lyrical approach when singing and inviting the congregation to sing. It is also possible for a soloist to sing the stanzas with the congregation on the refrain. Accompany with piano, organ, or guitar.

More than Conquerors

The Rend Collective has created a song that incorporates the message of Romans 8:37: “...In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (NRSV). Like many of their compositions, the tune has a driving, defiant rhythm to support the *Christus Victor* approach of the text. Music and worship leaders are presented with the opportunity to add a healthy dose of percussion to accompany singing, and polyrhythm is a distinct possibility (in this case, 2 against 3). If you have access to the vocal or lead sheets through CCLI’s SongSelect, you will notice a recommended tempo of dotted quarter = 105. If you compare this to the recording by Rend Collective, you will also notice that their performance tempo is much slower,

around 70 bpm. The accompaniment possibilities here are endless, but guitar and percussion would be a great place to start. Piano and tin whistle would also be great!

Cristo Vive (Christ Is Risen)

An interesting work within *The United Methodist Hymnal*, this bold song proclaims the risen Christ while also offering a paraphrase of the familiar scripture from Luke 24:5, “Do not look among the dead for one who lives forevermore.” Keep a driving rhythm on the first and second beats of each measure, with the eighth notes slightly separated. The effect will be dramatic against the usual connectedness of much congregational singing. The melody is actually in E dorian mode, which will not make a great difference until the two C# notes near the end of each stanza. Prepare your choir for these so they can lead confidently. Accompany with guitar, piano, organ, and percussion.

Apostle’s Creed

The chorus of this song is the best part for the congregation to sing together. Since the song is almost completely Christocentric (not much fleshing out of doctrine related to God the Father and the Holy Spirit), I would recommend singing the chorus as a response to each section of the Apostles’ Creed, with a soft instrumental under the recitation of the creed itself. It could be a powerful way to combine singing with the internalization of this historic statement of faith. If the entire song is used, I would recommend a soloist on the verses. The original key of G is a good setting to keep the congregation in a singing range that is celebratory and well supported. Accompany with piano, guitar, or full band.

Author of Life Divine

Singing this short Charles Wesley hymn may very well make you wish it had more than two stanzas. In this case, however, the brevity adds to the poignancy of the text. The image of the “Author of Life” is used in the scripture this week from the book of Acts, and the hymn recalls the mystery of the meal and the image of the veil Moses used when communing with God. The tune has somewhat of a mysterious character, especially in the first half of each stanza. Accompany with a piano, guitar, or organ and a solo string instrument (violin, cello, etc.) if one is available. The Singer’s Edition of *Worship & Song* also includes a duet part that can effectively add to the nuance of the singing of this hymn. When singing during the receiving of Holy Communion, added improvisation on the tune or the incorporation of another hymn will most likely be necessary because of the brevity of the hymn. [History of Hymns](#)

The Blood Will Never Lose Its Power

A powerful gospel hymn from Andraé Crouch, this modern classic will also “never lose its power.” It can be found in the UM collection, *Zion Still Sings: For Every Generation*. Singing this hymn this week effectively connects the power of communion with the healing power of faith in Jesus Christ. If it is unfamiliar to your congregation, this work also makes a powerful solo to be combined with the ritual action of the Eucharist. Do not sing too fast—take enough time to let the melody be lyrical and introspective. Improvisation on the melody is encouraged if a soloist or song leader is capable. Accompany with piano or a full gospel band with rhythm section.

Easter People, Raise Your Voices

The beauty of this hymn is that it helps us understand Easter as a vital part of who we are. Claiming the title “Christian” also comes with the understanding that we are “Easter people” who see Resurrection as a daily reality. This celebratory hymn can be sung boldly with the REGENT SQUARE tune, and there are many settings and accompaniments written on this tune for organ, piano, and other instrumental ensembles. *The United Methodist Hymnal Music Supplement* contains an alternate harmonization, descant, and Bb trumpet part for this hymn. Sing boldly at a tempo with good forward momentum (~96 bpm). [History of Hymns](#)

Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)

One of the reasons this song sits at or near the top of the CCLI Top 100 is because of its melody, which has found its way into the hearts of people around the globe. The text sings like a modern-day Psalm, with elements of time and eternity throughout the song, and the tune carries with it a large amount of aural recognition (the tune is very memorable) and is quite singable. The melodic lines have a variety of contours, with the chorus serving as the climax. The range reflects this change of dynamics throughout the song, and the congregation will be quick to sing along. The ideal accompaniment is a full band, but a solo piano or rhythm section will also suffice. The ideal key for congregational singing is Eb or F.

PREACHING

Last week I wrote about the story that sits at the center of this three-week series, which tells of a man lame from birth who sat at the Beautiful Gate near the entrance to the Temple. From this spot, every day for his entire life, he worked as a beggar, asking for alms from people passing by the gate on their way to pray in the Temple.

When Peter and John passed by this man, instead of ignoring him or refusing to look at him or dropping a few coins in his bag, Peter stopped and spoke to the man. He proclaimed the power of the name of Jesus and ordered the man to stand up and walk. Giving him his hand, Peter pulled the man to his feet and the man began to walk, and then leap, and then dance and sing praises to God. All who witnessed this miraculous healing were curious about the power that healed this man who had been lame from birth.

It was at this point that Peter stood up and began to proclaim the Good News of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the power of faith in his name to make believers strong, and the power of Christ to heal not just the lame man, but everyone who repents and turns to God.

- Do we believe in the power of faith to make us strong and to heal us? I know we probably say we do, but do we really believe it?
- Have we experienced it for ourselves?

- Have we been transformed by this power so much that we found ourselves compelled, like the early believers, to repent, turn towards God, and receive baptism (or remember our baptisms with thanksgiving) in the name of Jesus?

It is important to understand that although Peter may come across as harsh to our modern ears, ultimately this text is not about assigning blame for the execution of Jesus. It is about proclaiming salvation in Christ to all people. Yes, some of those who hear Peter preach may have been involved in killing Jesus, even if only by remaining silent in the face of injustice. But the bottom line in Peter's message is that salvation, healing and refreshment can come to anyone who has ears to hear the Good News, just as it did to the lame man.

This is not an ancient world version of self-help. It does not point us to some magic words that we can say to feel better about our guilt. It is recognizing that at the very heart of our humanity, we are all in the same boat. Rich, poor, male, female, heterosexual, homosexual, transgender, Greek, Muslim, Jew, white, brown, black, Hispanic, Arab, Caucasian, or Asian.

The hard truth is that we are all in this together. It's a sinking ship that we built and we can't get out of it. We keep building it. We won't stop building it unless we are forced to.

And yet, refreshment is still available to us.

Over the past two months, we have seen people, led by students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, and young people from places with high levels of gun violence like Chicago and South LA, protest current gun laws. They have organized student walk-outs. On March 24, they led hundreds of rallies and marches to raise awareness of gun violence and speak for stronger gun control. The leaders are young people who have survived mass shootings or who have lost family members. They do not want another school, church, concert, theater, or work place to experience what they experienced. They are refusing to be silent about something that they feel is harmful to God's people.

What if the disciples had refused to be silent? What if they had put their bodies in the way? What if they had thrown themselves down on the ground and blocked the path to Calvary? Would it have made some people angry or afraid? Would there have been many who disagreed with them for speaking out against those who would have Jesus eliminated as a threat to their own power? Or might it have inspired others to rise up against the injustice against Jesus?

Of course, we don't know the answers to any of these questions because that's not how the story goes. No one stood with Jesus. Peter denied knowing him. Judas betrayed him. His closest followers ran and hid so they would not be implicated as coconspirators in his "crime." And in the end, the powers failed to kill Jesus because God raised him from the dead.

Ask yourself and those around you:

- How have I harmed my neighbor today, intentionally or unintentionally?
- How have I done harm to those whom God loves today?
- Have I neglected some of my neighbors because of my own preconceived notions and prejudices?
- Have I done harm by passing by the beggar and looking the other way?
- Have I been silent in the face of injustice, and therefore become complicit through actions, effectively killing the Spirit of our Lord and Savior and what he came to teach us about what it means to be God's people?

Recognizing, confessing, and repenting of our sin is important.

The good news is that on the other side of death is resurrection. We have an opportunity for redemption. For in Christ, God offers us mercy and grace, no matter what the magnitude of our sin. It is important to ask ourselves, "How am I living into Peter's invitation to repentance, confession, and pardon?"

Peter seems to be pointing out that we have all done harm, by our actions and inactions. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We are all culpable. And Peter himself was culpable. He keeps asking, "What have we done?"

What had Peter done? We know the answer. He didn't try to stop the crucifixion. He stood by in silent submission as the powers closed in around his teacher and savior. He denied Jesus three times. He hid in the Upper Room.

And here, in this difficult and heartfelt sermon, he is acknowledging this truth about himself. He is saying, "Look what WE did!" He knows he can't lay blame on anyone in Jerusalem without laying blame on himself as well.

We have to keep turning the question back on ourselves. The things we accuse the disciples, or the Jewish authorities, or the Roman officials of—those are on us too.

But there's something else in this lesson for us that we need to hold on to, even as we confess our sins. The Good News Peter proclaims to those gathered at the Beautiful Gate all those millennia ago is for us too! The same refreshing, the same salvation that is offered to them is also offered to us! Praise God for salvation offered to us in Jesus Christ our Lord! Praise God for the power of healing. Praise God for the power of God's unending grace that saves us all.

PLANNING NOTES

Reading Notes

NRSV texts, artwork and [Revised Common Lectionary Prayers](#) for this service are available at the [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](#).

Leccionario en Español, [Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes](#).

Calendar Notes

April

- April 15 [Native American Ministries Sunday](#)
- April 22 [Festival of God's Creation](#)
- April 25 [World Malaria Day](#)

May

- All Month** [Christian Home Month](#) (2018 Theme: Families Called to Peace, forthcoming)
- [Asian Pacific American Heritage Month](#)
- May 3 [National Day of Prayer](#)
- May 4 [May Friendship Day \(UMW/CWU\)](#)
- May 7-13 [Christian Family Week](#) (2018 resources forthcoming)
- May 10 [Ascension Day](#)
- May 13 [Ascension Sunday](#)
- [Festival of the Christian Home/Mother's Day \(USA\)](#)
- May 19-20 [Change the World Weekend](#)
- May 20 [Day of Pentecost](#)
- [Heritage Sunday](#)
- May 24 [Aldersgate Day](#)
- May 27 [Trinity Sunday](#)
- [Peace with Justice Sunday](#)
- May 28 [Memorial Day \(USA\)](#)

June

Pray for annual conferences convening throughout the month, for all receiving new appointments or assignments, for those leaving existing appointments or assignments, and for congregations and other ministries receiving new leadership.

- June 3 **June Worship Series Begins: "Transitions"**
- June 17 [Father's Day \(USA\)](#)
- June 19 [Juneteenth \(USA\)](#)

July

- July 1 **July Worship Series Begins: "Healing Hands"**
- July 4 [Independence Day \(USA\)](#)

August

- All Month** [Back to School Resources](#)
- August 5 **August Worship Series Begins: "Life Together"**

September

- All Month** [Season of Creation](#) (2018 Discipleship/UMCom Series coming soon)
- September 3 [Labor Day \(USA\)](#)
- September 15-
October 15 [Hispanic Heritage Month \(USA\)](#)

October

October 6 **October Series in Job (in development)**

[World Communion Sunday](#)

October 14 [Children's Sabbath](#)

October 21 **Laity Sunday (2018 Resources forthcoming)**

October 31 [Reformation Day](#)

For Your Planning Team: In the Name of Jesus... Faith that Makes Us Strong

Planning for This Service

The primary task of week 2 in any series is to take the energy from the opening and move it in the direction it needs to go next. And this week that direction is up (in terms of power) and down (in terms of depth).

This week's entrance includes an act of healing for all who desire it for themselves or others. For this to work powerfully, it needs to flow smoothly and not create long lines. This means you will need multiple stations. Expect each healing encounter to take an average of 20-30 seconds, so two per minute. If you plan for 5 minutes for this action, each station can receive 10-15 people. Determine the number of people you believe may respond, then create the number of stations (and persons to host those stations) needed.

Once you have the number of stations you need, recruit station hosts (lay or clergy), and train them for their work. Then work with the head usher to coordinate where the stations should be to facilitate the best flow of people to stations. The head usher will then work with the usher team to determine their plan for guiding people to the nearest convenient station.

Before Sunday, preferably Saturday evening, rehearse this entire action, in two parts. With the attendants for the healing stations, rehearse how they will get to their stations, then how they will offer prayer, laying on of hands, and anointing until they are all confident in their actions. Then, have the station hosts function as the congregation, and rehearse with the usher team how the congregation will get to and from the nearest convenient station until the ushers are confident in what they're doing.

The rest of the service flows in much the same ways, with the same kinds of requirements for voicing, as last week's service. See last week's planning notes for details of ways to prepare leaders for each element.

Additional Resources for this Service

[2015 Planning Helps for these readings](#)

[Ecumenical Prayer Cycle](#): (Click link to find countries for this week when they are posted)

**Easter 4
In the Name of Jesus Christ:
Salvation Comes
April 22, 2018**

FULL SERVICE ORDER

ENTRANCE

*The service begins with the ringing of a bell or the clamor of a gong.
The pastor stands in the back of the worship space, in front of the choir or musical ensemble, and announces:*

Pastor: Alleluia. Christ is risen!

People: The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

The pastor then leads a procession of all who have been baptized, confirmed, or joined the church by profession of faith within the past year to the front of the worship space, where the baptismal font [and Paschal candle, lit] is located in a central aisle. Their names should be printed in the bulletin or onscreen.

Raised, He's Been Raised from the Dead AH 4069 AND/OR
Easter Alleluia (st. 1-2) W&S 3088 OR

My Savior Lives CCLI# 4882965

Prayer for Illumination

(after "Easter Alleluia")

**Risen Savior, thank you for the living witness
to your saving power in the lives of these
we now name before you:
(List of first names).**

**Now open the hearts and minds
to the reading of the scriptures,
that all here may know and feel
the fullness of the salvation
found in your name. Amen.**

(after "My Savior Lives")

**Jesus, our Savior,
you are the way.**

**Thank you for showing the way
and being the way
especially for (list of first names).**

Speak now to us through these scriptures,

that we may be bold witnesses of salvation
in your name. Amen.

WORD AND RESPONSE

Reading [Acts 4:5-12 \(NRSV\)](#)

Sermon Salvation Comes

Confessing in Song

The deacon, pastor, or others may prepare the Lord's table, and the regular offering may be collected during the singing.

Bless That Wonderful Name/
Blessed Be the Name (Medley) AH 4008/UMH 63 OR

This I Believe CCLI# 7018338

THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table [UMH 8](#)
Confession, Pardon, and Peace [UMH 8](#)

The Great Thanksgiving [BOW 66-67](#) OR

Pastor:

Alleluia. The risen Christ is with us.

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Death is conquered! Sin's power is broken.
Praise to you, Conquering God!

We have seen your glory.
And we are yours!

We are yours, all yours, blessed Triune God,
all our lives, all our thanks, all our praise,
we give it all to you, with all our bodies, and minds, and voices.

Yours, all yours!

Yours the blessing, yours the praise,
from the unimaginable silence before the big bang,
beyond the farthest reaches of time and space our instruments may ever find,
from infinity to infinity, everlasting to everlasting,

you are God, boundless in love and power.

We stand in awe, trembling in the light of your glory!

What are we that you should notice us?
What are we that you should love us?
What are we what you should call us into covenant with you,
a covenant we continually broke,
and you continuously sustained.

Mercy! How full of mercy!

How can we but praise you,
joining our voices with the song of angels and saints,
seraphim and martyrs,
strangers and family in every generation:

Refrain from "God of Wonders" W&S 3034 or CCLI#3118757

then sing to to the same tune

Jesus Christ who comes in our God's name, you are worthy, worthy!
Lamb of God who died and rose again, you are worthy, worthy!
Hosanna now we sing! Hosanna now we sing!

You are holy, O God!
Holy!

You are worthy, O Christ!
Worthy!

Worthy in your birth! Worthy in your living!
Worthy in your loving! Worthy in your serving!

Worthy when you preached good news
that God's kingdom has drawn near
and gather disciples, then and now, to learn and show the world
what life in God's reign means:
healing for the sick,
new life for the dead,
cleansing for the lepers,
freedom for the possessed,
new birth, new hope, new creation breaking in for all.

Worthy! Worthy! Worthy above all!

Worthy too, the night we betrayed you,
when you took the bread, blessed it and broke it,
and gave it to your disciples.
Worthy when you told them,
"This is my body broken for you. Remember me."
We remember.

Worthy when you took the cup,
praised God and shared it,
and worthy when you said,
"This is my blood of the new covenant for you.
Remember me."
We remember.

And in this season of seasons,
we proclaim above all,
worthy were you when the angels rolled away the stone,
and you came forth from the tomb,
trampling down death by death
and to all in the graves
restoring life.

We remember, and we praise you with our lives.

We remember, and we praise you with our lives
and these gifts of bread and wine,
proclaiming with one voice the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Even so, come upon us, Holy Spirit.
Come upon us, Holy Spirit.

Come upon these gifts.
Come upon these gifts.

Make them be for us Christ's body, Christ's blood.
Make us one body in Christ enlivened by his blood.

One in heart, one in mind, one in you, Holy Spirit,
as you move us to pray for the church and the world:

A deacon or worship leader:

That we with Peter and John and all your apostles may proclaim the gospel boldly: **Hear us, O God.**

That we may offer your healing for all who are sick, or torn, or weary:
Hear us, O God.

That many dead and left for dead may be raised, and death's power vanquished:
Hear us, God.

That all who are unclean may receive your cleansing grace:
Hear us, O God.

That all who are possessed, oppressed, distressed, depressed and downcast may be set free at last. **Hear us, O God.**

Pastor:

Even so, come and fill this feast, Holy Spirit,
this day, and every day until that day
when we eat it new at the marriage supper of the Lamb
and our Easter rejoicing shall know no end.

**All blessing, honor, glory and power
be yours, Holy Triune God,
now and forever.
Amen!**

The pastor breaks the bread in the sight of the people, then serves the servers, one of whom also serves the pastor. The people are then served.

Music During Communion

Broken for Me	ZSS 199
O Living God	W&S 3089 OR
Christ, We Are Blest	W&S 3174 OR

Thanksgiving after Communion

Deacon or Pastor and People:

**Triune God,
you have fed us with the body and blood of Christ,
uniting us with you,**

**filling us with the power that raised Jesus from the dead.
Send us, rejoicing, to declare boldly with Peter,
in hearts, and hands, and voices,
the salvation found in Jesus Christ
now and in the age to come. Amen.**

SENDING FORTH

Easter Alleluia (st. 3-5) W&S 308 OR
Our God's Alive CCLI# 6190356

Deacon or Pastor:

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Go forth to declare salvation in Jesus' name.

People: Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!

MUSIC NOTES

Raised, He's Been Raised from the Dead

This song from *The Africana Hymnal* is an exciting way to celebrate the season of Easter, especially at the beginning of worship. The piano score would be considered intermediate level, so be sure the pianist has plenty of time to look at it if practice time is required. In the 6/8 meter, invite the choir and/or congregation to clap on beats 2, 3, 5, and 6 to create a percussive, idiomatic feel for the song. Soloists and/or choir can sing the stanzas while the congregation joins in the refrain, or the congregation can sing the work in its entirety. Ideal accompaniment would be a gospel band of piano, bass, drums, and possibly even guitar and organ. However, a solo piano would also work. The voices will be required to lead since the piano score does not include the melody.

Easter Alleluia

We offer this title up this week as a possibility to follow "Raised, He's Been Raised from the Dead," although the pieces themselves are idiomatically quite different. Despite the fact that both are in 6/8 meter, the O FILII ET FILIAE tune definitely sounds and sings much more like the Renaissance tune it is. If your congregation is up from moving from gospel to Renaissance, however, jump in! This can also be a standalone piece for choirs and congregations as a processional. Whereas many people would automatically move to organ as accompaniment here, I would recommend strummed guitar, tambourine and/or hand drum, and recorder or flute. This will allow the tune to dance more while also providing energy to the pulse. The congregation will be able to sing the whole work in its entirety, but it is also easy to teach the refrain and have a soloist or choir sing the stanzas. Especially if this is offered as a processional, the refrain is easy enough to learn and sing while walking!

My Savior Lives

The tempo and melody of this song make it very energetic, and we encourage its use here to begin worship. The ideal key for congregational singing is A, although the original key of B could work in many contexts as well. The primary consideration for

worship planners and leaders here is the variation in perspective. The song itself begins with “our” language and even uses the words “everyone together,” but quickly changes to “I” language. My recommendation here would be to encourage everyone to sing with “our” language in the song. Make note, however, that it is illegal to change words in song texts without the permission of the copyright holder. A simple instruction of “we will sing the words ‘we’ or ‘our’ every time ‘I’ is used” should suffice, whether that be spoken or included in a bulletin or slide. This might seem clumsy at first, but congregations can get used to these kinds of dynamics, and they are important!

Bless That Wonderful Name

This energetic song from *The Africana Hymnal* gives the congregation words of emphatic praise to bless the name of Jesus. The piano part is quite challenging, but it would also be possible to sing this song a cappella with percussion and hand claps. The piano adds another layer of interest, but singing it without harmonic instrumentation can also work well. If possible, clap on the offbeats and add some stomps on beats 1 and 3. For a more challenging clapping pattern, try stomping on the beats, with claps on the offbeats. Divide the vocal parts included in the collection as SAT, with any basses doubling the soprano part or singing falsetto with the tenors. If accompaniment is used, instrumentation can range from solo piano to full gospel band/rhythm section.

Blessed Be the Name

For the purposes of this service, it would be most helpful within the medley to sing this in the key of F (down a minor third). It would be possible to continue the tempo of “Bless That Wonderful Name” and segue to this song seamlessly. If accompaniment is used, it would also be possible to repeat this chorus, ascending keys each time. Another approach would be to divide the congregation and sing this in a round, beginning each part offset by either 2 or 4 beats (when the first part reaches count 3, or when the first part begins the second measure).

This I Believe

Hillsong has crafted a wonderful liturgical piece that is intended to function as a credo, paraphrasing and rearranging the parts of the Apostles’ Creed. Remarkably, they crafted it into a song that has a “Verse-Chorus-Bridge” form. One of the only concerns is the deconstruction of the Apostles’ Creed into a series of statements that are not orderly and systematic in presentation. In other words, the attributes of the three persons of the Trinity are scattered throughout the song. However, the creed’s form has been replaced by the form of the song structure, and this might provide enough to help internalize this historic statement of belief. The melody is simple and repetitive enough, but also motivic, so the congregation should be able to learn it with little effort. Accompaniment can vary from solo piano or guitar to full band. Again, if accompanying with piano, do not double the melody. Allow the voices to lead the rhythm to avoid bogging down the rhythm.

Broken for Me

This work is a wonderful addition to the communion congregational song repertoire because the music itself is somewhat meditative, with a four-measure chord sequence

that remains the same throughout. The melody is simple, and even though there is a small amount of syncopation, it is consistent and repetitive, which will add to the effectiveness of the singing. Accompany with piano or rhythm section and keep the tempo relaxed. Add additional vocal harmonies as desired, especially on the refrain.

O Living God

The SHENANDOAH tune tends to pluck at the heartstrings of many people in the US today. It is a nineteenth century song with a soaring, lyrical melody just waiting to be sung. The text and tune setting in *Worship & Song* is good for congregational singing, but it can also work effectively as a solo or an a cappella choral piece. There are many options in singing this song, so use your creativity to adapt accordingly for your setting. Whatever the approach, maintain a slow enough tempo so the phrases can be very legato and rubato. A crescendo is effectively used in the first four measures, as well as in the phrase “O Lord, almighty God,” with a *subito piano* phrase to end each stanza.

Christ, We Are Blest

This hymn by Steve Garnaas-Holmes contains text that represents the fullness of the Eucharistic rite—Gathering, remembrance, community (and Christ’s incarnation), and leaving to serve others. As Christ has risen, so we rise to go forward and live as Easter people. The SLANE tune is very familiar in many churches because of its use with the hymn “Be Thou My Vision.” Accompany with organ, piano, guitar, flute, or even a tin whistle. The folk nature of this tune makes it an effective hymn to follow “O Living God,” and the tunes become a great juxtaposition of folk hymnody between Europe and North America. [Hymn Study](#)

Our God’s Alive

Again setting a defiant tone, this song is a bold addition to the close of the service. The risen Christ is presented as the victor over the grave, and Jesus passes on to us the same boldness in the present reality of the resurrection. This song would be a great segue into the next series as we explore the power of the Holy Spirit—the source of our strength and courage. The ideal key for congregational singing is D minor, and the ideal accompaniment would be a full band, although a solo guitar could also work.

PREACHING

“What’s in a name?” wrote William Shakespeare in 1597. “That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet.” In the case of this quote, Juliet is speaking these words about her one true love, Romeo. In the play, Juliet does not know Romeo is eavesdropping on her lament as she wrestles aloud with the problem of his name: not Romeo, but Montague, the sworn enemy of her own family, the Capulets.

O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name.
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I’ll no longer be a Capulet.

Tis but thy name that is my enemy.
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.

The scripture lesson for today, which wraps up our first series for this Easter season, centers on the power of a name. In this case, it's the name of Jesus that, according to the disciples, through the power of the Holy Spirit provides healing and salvation for all who believe in him.

The setting for this conflict continues to center on the story we have been talking about for the past three weeks: the incident in Acts in which, by the power of the name of Jesus, Peter has brought healing to the lame beggar by the Beautiful Gate. Because so many people knew this man, and had passed by him as they made their way to the Temple to pray every day, and because they had witnessed the power of Christ that was in Peter and John to heal him, trouble had arisen for these early church planters. Trouble, in the form of Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John and Alexander, all of whom belonged to the high-priestly family. These priests were powerful and influential men to the Jewish worshipers who came to pray at the Temple.

You remember from the last couple of weeks that the healing of the lame beggar had not gone unnoticed by the temple worshipers, nor the temple authorities. The people who witnessed the man who had been lame from birth walking, leaping, dancing and praising God, asked by what power Peter had been able to heal the man. And Peter gave a sermon about the death and resurrection of Jesus, telling them that the healing in Jesus' name that had come to the beggar was also available to all of them.

Many people responded to this Good News by repenting of their sins and asking for baptism in the name of Jesus. This aroused the concern of the temple priests, who confronted Peter and John, arrested them, and ordered them to stop preaching about Jesus in front of the temple. But Peter and John refused to back off. So today we find them in another confrontation with the temple priests.

The priests ask them a specific question: "By what power or by what name did you do this [heal the lame beggar]?" Power and name are directly linked by those in power.

Names are significant. They can designate important people and things, and they can also designate those who are unimportant. For example, in the Bible, there are many people, who remain nameless. There are women who are known not by their own name, but by the name of their father or husband. The Samaritan woman at the well is unnamed. The unimportant status of the lame beggar is made evident by the fact that he has no name, but the gate he sits by every day does. We know him as the beggar associated with the Beautiful Gate.

We also know that some are important because they do have names. The twelve disciples each have a name. Certain prominent early female church leaders who are also thought to have been disciples have names. The dear friends of Jesus, Mary,

Martha, and Lazarus, are named. Jesus' name is connected to the names of prominent people through his lineage.

In our world today the same sorts of things happen. The names of people who are wealthy and powerful show up to mark their importance. The names of corporate owners adorn buildings. Companies are named for their founders. Bridges and highways are named for prominent individuals from the community.

Names can also be used to denigrate people. Bullies will often brand individuals with a disparaging nickname, refusing to acknowledge the identity of their nemesis in an attempt to embarrass and cause harm.

People sometimes change their names in order to mark a new start. In some religious traditions, the act of Christening or baptism involves giving a new, specifically Christian name to mark the person's initiation into the body of Christ. Transition often involves claiming a new name, and sometimes people choose to call themselves by a new name as a mark of transition. My eldest son Gill (his middle name) now goes by his first name, William. He chose to re-name himself when he graduated from high school and moved out of my house, marking his independence and adulthood.

Giving names to the unimportant, the oppressed, the victims of injustice, is a way of reclaiming their identity and personhood. This is in part what is behind the "Black Lives Matter" initiative to say the names of black men and women who have lost their lives in part because of racial injustice.

When I was at the 2017 Women's March on Washington, I remember being struck by a call-and-response performance by Janelle Monae. Ms. Monae had invited the mothers of several black men whose names rose to national prominence because they were shot and killed by police officers to join her in the performance. These mothers who had lost their sons were invited to join their voices with hundreds of thousands of women, men and children who had descended on Washington D.C. the day after the inauguration of Donald Trump as president of the United States. As Ms. Monae called us, the people in the crowd, to join her in the chant, "Say his name!" each mother, one by one, stepped up to the microphone to say the name of her deceased son. It was a powerful act of remembering and naming, and marking as important each person who had lost his life in a violent and unjust manner.

In today's scripture lesson there seems to be a great deal of importance placed on the name of Jesus. Not just importance. Power. There is power in the name of Jesus. Saying his name points everyone to the importance of Jesus, not just as a man, but as the promised one sent from God. Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who is identified in Peter's sermon as "the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone" (Psalm 118:22).

"In the name of Jesus" speaks to his power, now residing through the work of the Holy Spirit in the disciples. For Peter and John, to do something in the name of Jesus is to do

the same as what Jesus did. It is to claim the power of his name, and the power he held, as their own. It is to trust that the same power that lived in him now lives in the church established in his name. It is to believe salvation is in the name of Jesus Christ.

We may love to sing that there's something about that name, and yes we need to say his name. But as disciples we do more than say his name. We claim the power that lived in him for ourselves, and we use that power to offer healing and hope in his name. We use that power to transform the world and make it a better place for all of God's people. We offer salvation in Jesus Christ.

Do we believe that this same power, the power given by the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus, that enabled Peter to heal the lame beggar, now resides in us? Do we believe that claiming that name and that power is our path to salvation? Do we understand that it isn't just about saying the name, but also claiming the same power?

I have written in this space over the past few weeks about my mother's struggle with Alzheimer's disease. One of the most devastating consequences of this disease, which affects some 5.5 million Americans and for which there is currently no cure, is the loss of names. My mom is in early moderate stage, and she is starting to lose names. The nature of the disease is that there are periods when she is fairly lucid and pretty much like her old self: her sense of humor remains intact, she remembers who she is and where she is, and she enjoys the same activities she always has.

Other times—especially mornings—she finds herself completely lost. She doesn't recognize the house she has lived in for nearly twenty years. She can't remember the names of her children or grandchildren. She doesn't know what she is doing or what is wrong with her. Sometimes she can't recall my name even though I'm sitting in front of her. She is slowly losing her ability to recognize her family.

On more than one occasion she has expressed devastation over not being able to remember the names of her own children. She is aware of what that loss means, and it hurts. It is in those moments, as I contemplate that these days in which she recognizes me and remembers my name are numbered and sacred, that I know I must believe in the power of the Holy Spirit to help us through this time of sorrow and change. I'm still her daughter Dawn whether she remembers me or not, and she's still my beautiful mother Mazie. My dear friend Claire, who is a deacon who works as a chaplain, has been reminding me for years to be thankful for each day with my mom, because with Alzheimer's Disease, today is always the best day you will have with the patient.

Salvation in the name of Jesus Christ doesn't always look the way we wish it did. Sometimes salvation comes in the small things, the glimpses of God's spirit in a touch, in a moment of normality, or in something completely unexpected.

I'm thankful for salvation in the name of Jesus Christ each day, even the ones that are hard. I'm thankful for the power of the Holy Spirit that is sustaining my family through the prayers of the faithful near and far. I'm thankful for the church that I attend on Sundays,

and for the opportunity to be reminded of who I am in Christ. I'm thankful that when my mom no longer says my name, or anyone's name, that power and bond we have in Christ will keep us connected in ways that reach beyond words or names. And I'm thankful that one day, on the other side of this disease, and this life, both mine and my mom's, we will be united around the banquet table of the Lord, healed and made whole by the savior we both love.

The good news is that the power of Jesus Christ is with us. His spirit resides in us, the body of Christ. His spirit gives us not just power to heal, but to be transformed by the power of love when we proclaim his name and love one another as he loved us. Salvation comes in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

This brings us to the end of our first mini-series of this Easter Season, "In the Name of Jesus." Next week we will begin our second series, "And in the Power of the Holy Spirit," as we continue our study of the early church as recorded in the book of Acts. As you close the series be sure to invite people to come back next week, and give a preview of where you are heading for the remainder of the Easter season.

PLANNING NOTES

Reading Notes

NRSV texts, artwork and [Revised Common Lectionary Prayers](#) for this service are available at the [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](#).

Leccionario en Español, [Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes](#).

Lectonnaire en français, [Le Lectionnaire Œcuménique Révisé](#)

Calendar Notes

April

April 22 [Festival of God's Creation](#)

April 25 [World Malaria Day](#)

May

All Month [Christian Home Month](#) (2018 Theme: Families Called to Peace, forthcoming)

[Asian Pacific American Heritage Month](#)

May 3 [National Day of Prayer](#)

May 4 [May Friendship Day](#) (UMW/CWU)

May 7-13 [Christian Family Week](#) (2018 resources forthcoming)

May 10 [Ascension Day](#)

May 13 [Ascension Sunday](#)

[Festival of the Christian Home/Mother's Day](#) (USA)

May 19-20 [Change the World Weekend](#)

May 20 [Day of Pentecost](#)

[Heritage Sunday](#) (forthcoming)

May 24 [Aldersgate Day](#)

May 27 [Trinity Sunday](#)

[Peace with Justice Sunday](#)

May 28 [Memorial Day \(USA\)](#)

June

Pray for annual conferences convening throughout the month, for all receiving new appointments or assignments, for those leaving existing appointments or assignments, and for congregations and other ministries receiving new leadership.

June 3 **June Worship Series Begins: "Transitions"**

June 17 [Father's Day](#) (USA)

June 19 [Juneteenth](#) (USA)

July

July 1 **July Worship Series Begins: "Healing Hands"**

July 4 [Independence Day](#) (USA)

August

All Month [Back to School Resources](#)

August 5 **August Worship Series Begins: "Life Together"**

September

All Month [Season of Creation](#) (2018 Discipleship/UMCom Series coming soon)

September 3 [Labor Day](#) (USA)

September 15-

October 15 [Hispanic Heritage Month](#) (USA)

October

October 6 **October Series in Job (in development)**

[World Communion Sunday](#)

October 14 [Children's Sabbath](#)

October 21 **Laity Sunday (2018 Resources forthcoming)**

October 31 [Reformation Day](#)

**For Your Planning Team: In the Name of Jesus...
Salvation Comes**

In the Series

Today's series finale also functions as segue into the next series, "And in the Power of the Holy Spirit." With this new series also comes the start of formation groups to help persons discern their gifts for ministry and the ministry/ministries into which they may be commissioned at Pentecost. You may even want to begin those groups this week, before next Sunday. We commend using [DIY Tools for Spiritual Gifts Discernment and Ministry Deployment](#) as guide for each session.

So today end this series well, with confident, bold celebration of Christ's power to save

at work in and around you. The opening action of this service and the prayer for illumination highlight persons who have experienced God's saving love within your congregation during the past year. If you have fewer than three persons in these categories since this time last year, move the timeframe back until you have at least three. Be sure to invite these persons to be in worship today, and note they'll be recognized at the opening of worship. This could be a good opportunity to **call and visit** with newer members who have not been in worship lately and help them reconnect. Note I said "**call and visit.**" Ministry with persons who have become inactive is one on one work, not through social media, email blasts or newsletters, or the US Mail. Call, visit, initiate the connection from your side, and see what response may be possible for them at this time. You are not in charge of their response. You are in charge of making sure there is an appropriate point of reconnection and invitation.

The music and language in the ritual provided for this service already creates a bit of a segue to the next series. Be sure to highlight the upcoming series, "And in the Power of the Holy Spirit" through multiple means in worship and throughout the coming week. And be sure your formation group leaders are ready, eager, and scheduled to work with those they may see starting next week.

Planning for This Service

Additional Resources for this Service

[2015 Planning Helps for these readings](#)

[Ecumenical Prayer Cycle](#): (Click link to find countries for this week when they are posted)

Easter 5
And in the Power of the Holy Spirit:
We Join the “Outsiders”
April 29, 2018

FULL SERVICE ORDER

ENTRANCE

*The service begins with the ringing of a bell or the clamor of a gong.
The deacon or lay leader stands with the pastor in the back of the worship space, in front of the choir or musical ensemble, and announces:*

Deacon or Lay Leader: Alleluia. Christ is risen!
People: The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

The deacon or lay leader then announces and displays or calls attention to printed or artistically rendered images of occasions where the church or church members have engaged in ministry alongside people who are significantly different from them during the past year. Church members engaged in these ministries, and those alongside whom they worked, if present, or able to be virtually present via online platforms, may be invited to stand as each ministry occasion is named.

Filled with the Spirit’s Power UMH 537
Sois la Semilla (You Are the Seed) UMH 583

Take It to the Streets CCLI# 4835981

Prayer for Illumination
(after “Sois la Semilla”)
**Holy Spirit, you sent the deacon Philip
to join the chariot of an unclean man
in whom you were already stirring
to establish your church in Ethiopia.
Stir our hearts as we hear your Word
that we may join as faithfully with all
to whom you send us. Amen.**

(after “Take It to the Streets”)
**How did we become your miracles, Holy Spirit?
Open our lives to the witness of your word
read and preached today,
until we know the answer,
and we can only take your mercy, grace, and kindness to the streets. Amen.**

WORD AND RESPONSE

Reading [Acts 8:26-40 \(NRSV\)](#)

Sermon We Join the “Outsiders”

Confessing in Song

The deacon, pastor, or others may prepare the Lord’s table, and the offering may be collected during the singing.

You’ve Got to Move AH 4077
This Little Light of Mine AH 4150 or UMH 585 OR

We Believe? (by ensemble) CCLI# 7021409
Lyrics: <http://www.theliturgists.com/gardenlyrics>
Music video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TL9BLS60b2Q>

THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table [UMH 8](#)
Confession, Pardon, and Peace [UMH 8](#)

The Great Thanksgiving [BOW 66-67](#) OR
The pastor lifts hands in prayer and invites all to join in this posture of prayer.

Holy Wisdom is with us.
We praise you, Christ Crucified.

Holy Spirit breathes in us.
Spirit of Power, Spirit of Life!

Holy Source of All draws near.
In you alone we boast!
With all creation we sing:

Holy Holy Holy UMH 21 or other setting

Holy are you, O God,
ever creating,
giving us the power to repent,
and setting the captive and colonized free.
Holy are you, O God.

Holy are you, O God,
enfleshed in Jesus,
delivering us from the power of sin and death,

empowering us by the Spirit,
and sending us into your mission in the world
where you are already acting.

Holy are you, O God.

Holy the food Jesus gave,
when on the night of his betrayal
he took bread, blessed it and broke it,
and gave it to his disciples.

Holy the words he spoke then,
and your Spirit speaks still:

"This is my body broken for you. Remember me."

Holy the drink Jesus offered,
when that same night he took the cup,
thanked you and shared it.

Holy the words he spoke then,
and your Spirit speaks still:

"This is my blood of the new covenant for you. Remember me."

We remember you,
Source, Wisdom and Spirit of Holiness.
We praise you not only with our lips
but with our lives:

**Jesus Christ,
crucified, you called and claimed us,
risen, you have raised us,
coming again, you make all things new.
Even so, come Lord Jesus! Hallelujah!**

Even so, come and fill this feast, Holy Spirit,
Spirit of Power, Spirit of Life.

Come upon us and these gifts of bread and wine.

Make them be for us what Jesus says they are,
Christ's body, Christ's blood.

**Make us become what Jesus prays we are,
one body in him empowered and enlivened by his blood.**

Deacon, Lay Leader, or Pastor:

One in service, one in witness, one in compassion,
and one even now in prayer, saying:

Lord, have mercy.

One with all persons kept in poverty or slavery,
with all who are in fear from abusers, terrorists, and oppressors,
with all who face addiction of any kind,
and with all who are targeted for unjust treatment because of who they are;
Lord, have mercy.

One with the earth, and all creatures upon it,
the riches in its depths,
and the fragility of its air and water;
Lord, have mercy.

One in prayer for leaders in religious, political, economic, and social life;
and for all who work to sustain and protect our lives
as military, civilian workers, and first responders;
Lord, have mercy.

One with families, friends, and neighbors,
near and far, like us and different from us;
with all who need your healing power,
Lord, have mercy.

So may this food and drink be holy,
and nourish us in holy conversation this day
and every day
as on that day we feast with him
in new creation.

**And now and ever,
all glory to you,
Holy Spirit, Holy Wisdom, Holy Source
of all that was, and is, and is to come.
Amen.**

The pastor breaks the bread in the sight of the people, then serves the servers, one of whom also serves the pastor. The people are then served.

Music During Communion

I Come with Joy UMH 617 AND/OR
You Feed Us, Gentle Savior W&S 3169

Thanksgiving after Communion

Almighty God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery

in which you come alongside us
and enter our chariots
and show us the way.
Send us now in the strength of your Spirit
to join others along their way
and open to them yours.
Amen.

SENDING FORTH

Whom Shall I Send
Every Move I Make

UMH 582 OR
CCLI# 1595726

Deacon or Pastor:

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Go outside to join God's mission already in progress.

People: Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!

MUSIC NOTES

Filled with the Spirit's Power

Beginning with this hymn this week will allow the church to have the opportunity to focus on the Spirit as we move into the second of a two-part series focusing on the power of the Holy Spirit. Combining it with "Sois la Semilla" creates a way of "preparing the ground within us" to ensure fruitfulness for the seed. If your congregation does not use hymnals, make note that this hymn will be difficult to sing. Considerations will need to be made (licensing and/or permission procured) in order to print words and music for the congregation to use when singing. Another option would be to sing with the tune FINLANDIA (UMH 534) by singing this text to lines 1, 2, 3, and 6 from *The United Methodist Hymnal*. The ideal accompaniment is organ. [History of Hymns](#)

Sois la Semilla (You Are the Seed)

Cesareo Gabaraín has created a beautiful song that sings of the presence of Christ in each of us. By using images of the seed, dawn, flame, and life, we sing of the fruits of ministry by working to gather in the harvest. These images are especially rich when sung as a means of spurring us to live what we pray in the world. The imperative is given to "go to the world" and "be a loyal witness," so sing this song of sending forth confidently, knowing the mission field that lies ahead. The tune itself allows a number of ways to accompany, including piano, organ, guitar, percussion, or a combination of all of the above. The most important part of singing this song is keeping the tempo lively enough to fit four measures in each musical phrase. This is a song of celebration, so don't turn it into a dirge! [History of Hymns](#)

Take It to the Streets

This modern worship song represents where we are called to move in the power of the Holy Spirit. With a driving rhythm and a quick tempo, this song can serve as an energetic way to enter worship. The original key is too high, however, and needs to be lowered to the key of G. The bulk of the melody is written in three notes, so make note

that the limited tessitura can be harmful to the voice and cause unnecessary fatigue if too high. Accompany with solo guitar with percussion or full band.

You've Got to Move

This short, rhythmic song is an example of a “ring shout,” which is an African American tradition of singing that involved music, dancing, and shouting, all while standing in a ring. The melody of a song would be sung and improvised upon while drums were played, hands clapped, and feet shuffled to embody the ecstatic nature of the song. It is clear why it was selected for this Sunday, with the theme built upon the imperative, “Move.” If you have the opportunity to consult the recording that comes with *The Africana Hymnal*, it will be helpful because it helps teach the performance practice of the singing and clapping together. If the clapping as written on the score is too difficult for your congregation, it is also possible to proceed with other options:

Clap in a half-note pattern (the slower pattern on the recording) throughout on beats 1 and 3.

Have the congregation clap in a half-note pattern on beats 1 and 3 while the choir or a selected group claps the more syncopated pattern from the score.

For more information on a ring shout, be sure to watch the video, [Reflect, Reclaim, Rejoice: Preserving the Gift of Black Sacred Music](#) or read the small-group study of the same title.

For use this week, I would also suggest singing this short song in the key of E minor, which will make an easy transition to “This Little Light of Mine,” which is in the key of G as printed in *The Africana Hymnal*.

This Little Light of Mine

This spiritual is a favorite among many congregations, but the often preferred melody and accompaniment is the one found in *The Africana Hymnal*, 4150, as suggested in the worship order. As with many spirituals, even a solo piano can play this accompaniment with some light improvisation (it doesn't take much!) to jazz it up a bit. It will also work with a band accompaniment. Some of the most creative endeavors are when bands reimagine how to sing an older hymn or song in a new way. To guarantee authentic performance practice, appoint capable clappers in the congregation and the choir to clap on beats 2 and 4 of each measure. The ideal key is G.

We Believe

A new setting by The Liturgists, this would be a great opportunity for a band or small ensemble to learn a new song with great possibilities for liturgical use. The recording shows a song that is an amalgam of traditional sounds (organ and handbells) with electronic dance music. Once it becomes more familiar with the congregation, it would be possible to have them sing along on some of the more repetitive sections. Make note that the song is not available on CCLI Songselect, and you will only be able to find the

lyrics and recording by following the links in the worship order for this week. Don't let this fact influence you to not use it, however. It is possible to learn from the recording!

I Come with Joy

I have experienced the singing of this hymn in many settings, and the greatest criticism I have is how slow organists and pianists often play the tune DOVE OF PEACE. A tempo too slow will remove all joy from its singing! It should never be played and sung under 64 bpm per dotted quarter note. The tune is almost pentatonic, which makes it very malleable for creative approaches to singing. It would be possible to sing it in a canon, and if your church has access to Orff instruments for children, youth, and adults, it is also possible to accompany with any number of instrumental combinations and repetitive ostinatos. [History of Hymns](#)

You Feed Us, Gentle Savior

Many people know MERLE'S TUNE because of its use in Advent with the text "Blessed Be the God of Israel" (UMH 209). The tune embodies the gentleness required to sing this text and both supports and encourages singing effectively throughout. Steve Garnaas-Holmes begins with the actions of Christ toward us: "You feed us," "You bind us," and "You call us... and send us." What more can we expect from such a gracious host at Christ's table? Accompany with organ or piano, but know that a lightly plucked guitar can also accompany well in this key.

Whom Shall I Send?

Fred Pratt Green never minced words when it comes to the shortcomings of humanity and our bent toward sinning. Even though many congregations would prefer to sing "Here I Am, Lord" to encounter this question from God, it is important to make sure to sing this hymn from time to time to remember the difficulty with choosing the way of the cross. The ideal accompaniment with this tune is organ. Be sure to keep the tempo in a range (110-120 bpm) that allows for breathing and support for four-measure phrases.

Every Move I Make

Children, youth, and adults everywhere will know this song. Many have sung it in worship, youth events, or even camping ministries. The energy in this tune is evident, and there are also popular variations on hand motions for sections of the song. Accompany with a band, solo guitar, or keyboard.

PREACHING

Recently Discipleship Ministries adopted a new campaign slogan, "See All the People." I appreciate many things about this campaign: the catchiness of this phrase, drawn from a simple children's rhyme, the call upon disciples in the United Methodist Church to see those in need, those who might look different, those whom some have rejected. The encouragement to move our ministries outside the walls of our churches and into the places in our communities where people gather.

The campaign is about doing more than seeing all the people. It is about calling upon disciples, like Philip, to jump into the heart of whatever situation we find people. Jump in there, even if it is messy. Jump in there, even if it is dangerous. Jump in there, even if it is costly to us. Jump in there, even if some might judge it to be irreverent or unholy. Get in there with the lost, the lonely, the forgotten people of the world. Go physically into the places and spaces people who don't yet know the saving love of Christ inhabit and share the good news!

We've heard the story read, but let's take a moment to review so that, as we begin this second series of the Easter Season, we are clear on the issues at stake for Philip. (Note that this is not Philip the Apostle. This is Philip the Evangelist, who was chosen along with Stephen and the rest of the "seven" to care for the poor in Jerusalem [see Acts 6].)

An angel of the Lord directs Philip to leave Jerusalem and go to Gaza. Yes, THAT Gaza, which is located in the part of the Palestinian Territories known today as the Gaza Strip.

BEGIN SIDEBAR
Christians in Gaza
By Dawn Chesser

One of the things people who have not traveled to the Holy Land may not realize is that if you are a Christian living in what we call the lands of Israel and Palestine, you are most likely of Palestinian descent. Most Christians in Palestine live in the West Bank today. But a small number of Christians live in the Gaza Strip as well.

Today there are about 1300 Christians living in the Gaza Strip. These faithful disciples of Jesus Christ worship in three communities of faith. The Orthodox Palestinians worship at the Church of Saint Porphyrius, a community that dates back to the twelfth century. Roman Catholics attend Holy Family Catholic Parish. And there is one Evangelical Protestant congregation, the Gaza Baptist Church.

There is also a hospital, Al-Ahli Al-Arabi Arab Evangelical Hospital, that serves people of all religious traditions. This hospital was established by the Anglican church, and contains an Anglican chapel.

Christians in Gaza are free to practice their religion and the Palestinian state respects the observance of Christian holy days. While there has been some violence against them, for the most part Christians in Gaza get along well with their Muslim neighbors.

End Sidebar

So Philip headed out. On the road to Gaza he came upon an Ethiopian eunuch who happened to be the treasurer of the queen's court who was returning from a visit to the temple in Jerusalem. This eunuch is Jewish, a product of the strong Jewish community

in his home country of Ethiopia (a faith community that continues to thrive to this day). This is why he is reading the book of Isaiah.

Now this in itself is worth pondering. He is clearly an educated man. Not only is he in charge of the entire treasury of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, but he is literate and he possesses a personal copy of the Hebrew scriptures. But as a eunuch, this would have been a person who was ritually unclean and therefore prohibited from entering the Temple. My colleague Jackson Henry noted that the eunuch must have been a man of great faith, to have gone all this way to visit the temple where he could not go in. No one would have talked to him there because he was unclean.

This is the scenario, then, in which Philip, at the Spirit's prompting, stops his journey in order to ask if the eunuch understood what he was reading in the book of Isaiah, and the eunuch invited him to climb into the chariot to join him in an impromptu Bible study.

Recently my twenty-two-year-old son has been wrestling with who he is and what he believes. As my son, he grew up in the church, was shaped by the teachings of Jesus Christ, and attended church every Sunday. But like so many other young people, once he left home he stopped going to church. Often when he comes to visit me, or when I go to visit him, he asks me hard questions about my faith. I have written about this before in this space.

As I have been dealing with my mother's declining health and the crisis that it has brought in our family, both of my sons have been calling me to offer their support. The status of my parents has caused my younger son to ponder anew the aging process of his own parents, and his own eventual death.

The first week I was here he asked me to watch a movie that featured the Jewish tradition as central to the characters' lives and the plot of the story. After I watched it, he wanted to talk about Judaism and how it was different from Christianity.

Then, after reading a preview of my preaching notes for Easter and the Easter season, he asked me why Christians believed that Jesus was God, when other religious traditions don't consider their primary teachers to be God incarnate. Yesterday he called me to ask me what I believed about salvation.

I'm glad my son asks me these hard questions. I told him I was happy to talk about these things with him, but that I also thought it would be helpful for him to find a local church where he could explore his questions with others who are seeking to grow in their faith and understanding. Even as I suggested that, I wondered if he would be able to find a community in which his hard questions would be not just welcomed, but engaged, and in which no one would try to spoon-feed him answers or try to lead him to Christ in a way that does not respect his journey so far or the beliefs with which he is wrestling.

At the opposite end of my youngest son for me right now in terms of difficult conversations stand my mom and dad. Both are facing the hard realities of their changing situation and declining health. My mom was recently hospitalized with congestive heart failure. She spent nine days in the hospital and almost three weeks in a rehabilitation facility. Because she also suffers from moderate stage Alzheimer's disease, and has little command of her working memory, she was constantly confused about where she was, what had happened, and who everyone around her was (including her family at times). She was, in a word, scared. She asked multiple times every day if she was dying. My father and brother and I patiently explained that she was sick, but she was getting better and was not going to die. And then we'd add, "Well, not today we don't think. I mean, we are all going to die."

On several occasions, during periods of more lucidity, she and I had longer conversations about dying. I reminded her of her faith and the things she's said to me in the past about her beliefs. I shared my own beliefs about death and dying. But none of this alleviated her fears. And the truth is, I'm scared too. I don't have any answers. I have hopes. I have the promises of Jesus. I have faith that the Holy Spirit connects us in mysterious ways, and that this connection continues into the life that is to come. But I don't know what any of that means.

Is it okay to say that as pastors? Is it okay to admit we don't have all the answers? It is perhaps more helpful to just engage in the questions people have right where they are? Can we try to be open and listen as people reach to find their own answers?

The fact that we have Philip reaching out to respond to the eunuch, who is an unclean man, is radical. And the fact that Philip not only talks to him, but climbs into the chariot with him, is an act of radical discipleship. He risks his own ritual cleanliness by putting himself in close proximity to the eunuch. It is through this act of radical outreach with no concern for what it might cost him that the eunuch is transformed.

Being available for impromptu Bible studies is a witness to the faith. Being willing to climb into the chariot with the "unclean," the confused, the different, the lost, the hurt, the doubters, the cast-off, the angry, the needy, the scared, the dying, and indeed, any person who looks or feels or believes or acts differently from the way we do is a very real and present need in our communities. And it is a witness to the faith.

How often do we do this? How frequently do we risk putting our bodies, our reputations, our health and well-being, our time, our faith, our own long-held beliefs on the line in order to respond to the need of another?

SIDEBAR: A Model of the Catechumenate
by Taylor Burton-Edwards

Cata what? It's pronounced cat-uh-KYOO-min-et. It's one of those Greek words we English speaking folk never quite translated, but simply transliterated into English, much

as we did with the words baptism, Eucharist, deacon, and bishop. You might see another Greek word we didn't translate in English inside this one if you look closely, the word "echo." "Katechein" in transliterated Roman script, means most literally, "to echo back."

Catechumenate was the name early Christians gave to their process for helping newcomers to the way of Jesus discover what it means to follow him. It's described in varying degrees of detail, beginning as early as the late first century, and culminating in what would become fairly standardized across the early church as a three year process of formation in the way of Jesus. The heart of the work of the catechumenate, as a process of formation, is to come alongside another seeking Christ, and walk with them and guide them, until their lives start to "echo back" Jesus.

Neither the verb (katechein) nor the noun form (in English, catechesis) appear in this week's story of Philip with the Ethiopian official. But Christians have seen in it from early times a pattern for the process they would use. The Spirit moves first, both in the one seeking (the Ethiopian official) and in the one who would be his catechist, or guide (Philip). We Wesleyan Christians might call this a sign of prevenient grace. It's really important, though, to recognize this point. The Spirit is already at work. We do not "make disciples." We foster their development.

And we do this exactly as this story unfolds it. We do not focus on telling. Our first move is not to give any prepared speech. It is to "come alongside and join" the place where the seeker is. Coming alongside means matching the pace, approaching with peace, getting in sync with the journey of the other person. Philip doesn't come with a prepared message. He comes with a listening heart. He hears the Ethiopian official reading from Isaiah. He asks (not tells, asks) how the official understands it, looking for the echo of Christ within him. The official doesn't understand it, and himself asks for "someone to guide me." Note this. The official asks for guidance. It isn't pushed on him. He asks for it.

And then Philip, at the official's invitation, stepping over into the chariot, sits with him.

They're sitting together now, and the official asks his question more succinctly. It's in response to the question of the official, and starting with the scripture the official has identified, that Philip announces to him the good news about Jesus.

He didn't evangelize and leave. They continued "journeying down the road" (vs 36) for some time after this. We don't know how long or how their conversation went from there. The point is the journey continued, they were traveling the road side by side for a time, and then, then they came to water. And the official asked whether he could be baptized. And he was, and went on his way, rejoicing.

Why do we have this story? At least two reasons, I think. One is to connect the foundations of Ethiopian Christianity, which was already a vibrant and growing movement by the time Luke wrote Acts, to the evangelistic work of a deacon from the

first Christian congregation in Jerusalem. And the other is to say something important about the character of evangelism and formation, especially among people who may appear to the “sending” culture different, exotic, or even unclean (as this man did, being a eunuch-- meaning he did not fit any binary standard of gender or sex).
END SIDEBAR

As Philip and the eunuch study the passage together, Philip is able to open the scriptures to the eunuch in a new way, through the lens of his own faith experience through Jesus Christ.

The Spirit leads Philip to assume the posture of Jesus. He gets into the chariot with the guy. He sees him. He touches him. He engages the questions he has about the scriptures. He doesn't reject him, as all the others have done, probably all his life. He accepts him, listens to him, and offers himself in loving response without a specific purpose or agenda, other than to share his thoughts and his personal experience.

We too have to be willing to join the Spirit in its work, going where she leads us and listening deeply with not our own ears, but Christ's. The sign of God is when we are led where we did not plan to go. Bold discipleship means puts ourselves at the disposal of the Holy Spirit for as long as we are needed, only to be snatched away to another part of our journey when this same Spirit leads us to serve somewhere else.

Say the name. See the person. Befriend the marginalized. Welcome the unclean. Embrace those whom society has rejected for whatever reason. That's the power of the Spirit of Christ we see here.

Who are we refusing to touch, see, embrace, love, accept, welcome? Who is the world rejecting that we can, in the power of the Spirit, reach towards? How can we, like Philip, offer the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ (however it is understood) to those who come to us seeking to study and have conversation about the challenges of life in all the ways they present themselves?

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is the one true church, apostolic and universal, whose holy faith let us now declare. . .

PLANNING NOTES **Reading Notes**

NRSV texts, artwork and [Revised Common Lectionary Prayers](#) for this service are available at the [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](#).

Leccionario en Español, [Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes](#).

Lectionnaire en français, [Le Lectionnaire Œcuménique Révisé](#)

Calendar Notes

May

All Month [Christian Home Month](#) (2018 Theme: Families Called to Peace, forthcoming)

[Asian Pacific American Heritage Month](#)

May 3 [National Day of Prayer](#)

May 4 [May Friendship Day](#) (UMW/CWU)

May 7-13 [Christian Family Week](#) (2018 resources forthcoming)

May 10 [Ascension Day](#)

May 13 [Ascension Sunday](#)

[Festival of the Christian Home/Mother's Day](#) (USA)

May 19-20 [Change the World Weekend](#)

May 20 [Day of Pentecost](#)

[Heritage Sunday](#)

May 24 [Aldersgate Day](#)

May 27 [Trinity Sunday](#)

[Peace with Justice Sunday](#)

May 28 [Memorial Day](#) (USA)

June

Pray for annual conferences convening throughout the month, for all receiving new appointments or assignments, for those leaving existing appointments or assignments, and for congregations and other ministries receiving new leadership.

June 3 **June Worship Series Begins: "Transitions"**

June 17 [Father's Day](#) (USA)

June 19 [Juneteenth](#) (USA)

July

July 1 **July Worship Series Begins: "Healing Hands"**

July 4 [Independence Day](#) (USA)

August

All Month [Back to School Resources](#)

August 5 **August Worship Series Begins: "Life Together"**

September

All Month [Season of Creation](#) (2018 Discipleship/UMCom Series coming soon)

September 3 [Labor Day](#) (USA)

September 15-

October 15 [Hispanic Heritage Month](#) (USA)

October

October 6 **October Series in Job** (in development)

[World Communion Sunday](#)

October 14 [Children's Sabbath](#)

October 21 **Laity Sunday** (2018 Resources forthcoming)

October 31 [Reformation Day](#)

For Your Planning Team: And in the Power of the Holy Spirit...

Series Map

Week 1: April 29 We Join the Outsiders...

Acts 8:26-40

Week 2: May 6 The Outsiders Join Us...

Acts 10:44-48

Week 3: May 13 Leaders Are Raised Up

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

Week 4: May 20 Pentecost: Proclaim Jubilee!

Acts 2:1-21

This Series

While the last series was a continuing celebration of the ministry of the Risen Jesus and in his name, this series, launching today, is intended to be more than celebration. It is also intended as challenge and support. It challenges us to let the Holy Spirit do the Spirit's unique work in and through us. And it support us, primarily through formation groups that meet each week as convenient for members and leaders, in helping people discern their Spiritual gifts and callings for ministry in Christ's name and the Spirit's power. [DIY Tools for Discernment of Spiritual Gifts and Ministry Deployment](#) provides for 4 such sessions for small group work over the coming weeks. This series culminates on Pentecost in an act of commissioning of persons who have discerned their ministry into the ministries they have discerned, and a celebration of both the birthday of the whole church, and the 50th anniversary of the founding of The United Methodist Church.

The basic structure for the services in this series is not substantially changed from those of the previous series. The intent is to give a general cohesive feel to the whole of Easter Season, which is one season.

What does change is the base Eucharistic Prayer and the form of intercessions at the epiclesis we are using. The Great Thanksgiving for this series is focused a bit more on the work of the Holy Spirit, and characterized by more use of expansive language for God in recognition of the diversity of gifts of the Spirit and the diversity of peoples among whom the Spirit sends and empowers us to serve. Once again, it will be important for the pastor and deacon (or other intercessor in the absence of a deacon) to rehearse this prayer and set of intercessions together so they are ready to lead it confidently, smoothly, and powerfully from the very first time in today's service.

As with all series openings, be sure to provide the series outline and call attention to where you're going as part of what you do in today's service, whether in the bulletin, in announcement loops on screens, or through social media.

Planning for This Service

Today's service provides you a unique opportunity to invite persons with whom you are in ministry as a congregation, but who may not attend your congregation or any other congregation, to be recognized with those who connect with them through your church's ministries, as part of the very opening of the service. This requires advance planning, careful attention to invitation, and even more careful attention to hospitality. Be ready for folks you may not see on Sunday morning to be with you today, expect them, welcome them, and ***make them feel at home, not on display.***

The very best way to invite newcomers is for someone who already knows them to invite them. Work with your ministry and outreach leaders to identify who knows these persons best because of their work with them over time, and have these people issue a personal invitation to worship today, making it clear they'll get a special welcome from the whole congregation.

Hospitality doesn't end with the sending forth! Also make plans for a big reception or dinner after worship to continue to extend the welcome to your guests and their families.

Additional Resources for this Service

[2015 Planning Helps for these readings](#)

[Ecumenical Prayer Cycle](#): (Click link to find countries for this week when they are posted)

WORD AND RESPONSE

Reading [Acts 10:44-47 \(NRSV\)](#)

Sermon And the Outsiders Join Us

Confessing in Song

The deacon, pastor, or others may prepare the Lord's table, and the offering may be collected during the singing.

Welcome W&S 3152
Draw the Circle W&S 3154 OR

The River Is Here CCLI# 1475231

THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table [UMH 8](#)
Confession, Pardon, and Peace [UMH 8](#)

The Great Thanksgiving [BOW 66-67](#) OR

The pastor lifts hands in prayer and invites all to join in this posture of prayer.

Holy Wisdom is with us.
We praise you, Christ Crucified.

Holy Spirit breathes in us.
Spirit of Power, Spirit of Life!

Holy Source of All draws near.
In you alone we boast!
With all creation we sing:

Holy Holy Holy UMH 21 or other setting

Holy are you, O God,
ever creating,
stirring in the souls
and bringing among us
those we least expect.
Holy are you, O God.

Holy are you, O God,

enfleshed in Jesus,
delivering us from the power of sin and death,
empowering us by the Spirit,
and interrupting our talk and explanations
with unmistakable signs of your saving power.
Holy are you, O God.

Holy the food Jesus gave,
when on the night of his betrayal
he took bread, blessed it and broke it,
and gave it to his disciples.
Holy the words he spoke then,
and your Spirit speaks still:
"This is my body broken for you. Remember me."

Holy the drink Jesus offered,
when that same night he took the cup,
thanked you and shared it.
Holy the words he spoke then,
and your Spirit speaks still:
"This is my blood of the new covenant for you. Remember me."

We remember you,
Source, Wisdom and Spirit of Holiness.
We praise you not only with our lips
but with our lives:

**Jesus Christ,
crucified, you called and claimed us,
risen, you have raised us,
coming again, you make all things new.
Even so, come Lord Jesus! Hallelujah!**

Even so, come and fill this feast, Holy Spirit,
Spirit of Power, Spirit of Life.
Come upon us and these gifts of bread and wine.

Make them be for us what Jesus says they are,
Christ's body, Christ's blood.
**Make us become what Jesus prays we are,
one body in him empowered and enlivened by his blood.**

Deacon, Lay Leader, or Pastor:
One in service, one in witness, one in compassion,
and one even now in prayer, saying:

Lord, have mercy.

One with all persons kept in poverty or slavery,
with all who are in fear from abusers, terrorists, and oppressors,
with all who face addiction of any kind,
and with all who are targeted for unjust treatment because of who they are;
Lord, have mercy.

One with the earth, and all creatures upon it,
the riches in its depths,
and the fragility of its air and water;
Lord, have mercy.

One in prayer for leaders in religious, political, economic, and social life;
and for all who work to sustain and protect our lives
as military, civilian workers, and first responders;
Lord, have mercy.

One with families, friends, and neighbors,
near and far, like us and different from us;
with all who need your healing power,
Lord, have mercy.

Pastor:

So may this food and drink be holy,
and nourish us in holy conversation this day
and every day
as on that day we feast with him
in new creation.

**And now and ever,
all glory to you,
Holy Spirit, Holy Wisdom, Holy Source
of all that was, and is, and is to come. Amen.**

The pastor breaks the bread in the sight of the people, then serves the servers, one of whom also serves the pastor. The people are then served.

Music During Communion

All Who Hunger TFWS 2126 AND/OR
Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ ZSS 206

Thanksgiving after Communion

Almighty God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery

by which you feed all who come to you
your very life.
Send us now in the strength of your Spirit
to proclaim the resurrection
and expect your power to surprise us
every time.
Amen.

SENDING FORTH

Welcome W&S 3152 OR

Welcome to the Place of Level Ground CCLI# 5636024

Deacon or Pastor:

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Stay here a while to welcome all whom the Spirit has brought together this day,
then go outside to see whom God will bring next!

People: Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!

MUSIC NOTES

We Are the Church

Many congregations are familiar with this song of unity, which allows the church to claim its nature as the body of Christ. Written by Avery & Marsh in the 1970s, this song focuses on the people of the church, not the location or building. One particular item to note: It is common for pianists and organists alike to begin playing the refrain much too fast, only to discover the error when the church tries to sing the stanzas. The song is entirely syllabic (one syllable per note), which the refrain remedies by having rhythmic sequences with longer notes added. The stanzas, however, are almost entirely eighth notes, and the text can become very difficult to sing if the tempo is too brisk. A recommended tempo for congregational singing would be no faster than 100 bpm. Keyboard instruments or guitars can work for accompaniment, but you may have to experiment some in your space to determine whether the keyboards or voices are best to lead through the difficult sections. For those leading singing, make sure your facial and body gestures reflect the joy of the text!

All Praise to Our Redeeming Lord

A number of approaches are offered for singing this Wesley hymn, and the use of the previous hymn might dictate which approach you will use. If you desire a contrasting style, singing the ARMENIA or GRÄFENBERG tunes might be a great fit. However, if you would choose to continue in the same key and with a similar character, you might find AZMON more appealing. Your context and use will determine which tune is best. The ideal accompaniment for any of these tunes is organ or piano.

Spirit Break Out

Prominent British songwriter and minister of the Church of England Tim Hughes is a part of the team that wrote this song, which is a simply constructed verse/chorus work with a driving beat around 75 bpm. The text is trinitarian (relatively rare among modern worship songs), with different portions directed toward “Our Father,” “King Jesus,” and “Spirit.” Accompany with a band, guitar, or piano. The original key of B will work, but there are only a few notes that make up the entire song, so the tessitura sits in the same part of the voice throughout. For this reason, you might want to lower a step or two.

Welcome

Laurie Zelman and Mark Miller’s hymn, “Welcome,” gives us what Laurence Hull Stookey has referred to as the “intersection of time and eternity” (Calendar: Christ’s Time for the Church, p. 17) by connecting the past, present, and future with the eternal time of the reign of God. This hymn is rich with imagery of the table being prepared, shared, and extended into the world. If your congregation is unfamiliar with this hymn, my suggestion would be to teach it over time by asking them to sing the refrain (and taking the time to teach it to them before worship) the first time you encounter it during the Eucharist. Continue singing it in following weeks as you gather around the table, and have soloists sing the stanzas. Over time, the congregation will associate the hymn with the Eucharist and will be able to sing it as they build their liturgical memory. When accompanying on piano, which in this case is not easy, I would recommend not playing the melody because it can easily complicate the singing. Improvise on the chords of the song and allow the voices to carry the melody.

Draw the Circle Wide

Gordon Light and Mark Miller have collaborated together on this modern classic, which is increasingly popular with adult and youth choirs from its publication as an anthem from Abingdon Press. It is found in hymn format in *Worship & Song*, and it is especially poignant when paired close to “Welcome” (as recommended above) because the imagery of the open table is expanded here as the congregation prepares to leave the worship space. If you have a choir in your church, be sure they rehearse this well enough in advance to learn all four parts on the choruses. Invite the congregation to embody the song, too, by forming a circle inside and/or outside the space and joining hands, always leaving one space open for someone to be welcomed into the fold. This song can easily be accompanied by piano, small instrumental ensemble (any combination of piano, guitar, bass, light percussion, or wind/string instruments), or full band and praise team. [History of Hymns](#)

The River Is Here

The image of a river plays a prominent role in scripture, especially at the conclusion of the Book of Revelation. Rivers are sources of life—they enable life, but they also support life. Vast communities of creatures can be found in the water together, and this image supports the incorporation of welcoming all to the table. The repetition of the rhythm makes the text and tune accessible and easily learnable. The original key of G is ideal, and it is easily supported by a full band, but a solo guitar would also work. Add percussion if it is available.

All Who Hunger

The key word in the title and the beginning of every stanza of this hymn is “All.” It is not a mistake that Sylvia Dunstan placed this word so prominently in this work. Other words are used repetitively in key places, too: “Come,” “Here,” and “Taste.” The very text and tune pairing evokes the taste of bread and the scriptural image of manna in the wilderness. HOLY MANNA is a pentatonic hymn tune, which means it is possible to be very creative with the accompaniment. Either accompany as is with organ or piano, sing in a round, or if you have Orff instruments or handbells, create a repetitive ostinato. Even if singing in canon is not an option where you are, if a solo instrumentalist is available, simply have them play in canon as the congregation sings. Accompaniment with guitar would also be a great option. [History of Hymns](#)

Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ

Included in the collection, *Zion Still Sings: For Every Generation*, this Fred Kaan text pairs wonderfully with a Jamaican folk melody to emphasize the importance of everyone’s talents and presence. A welcoming song, the rhythm also bounces and injects some gentle vivaciousness into the communion rite. Choral settings from [JW Pepper](#) and handbell arrangements of this from [HandbellWorld.com](#) are also available if desired. The ideal accompaniment is piano, but organ settings are available as well.

Welcome to the Place of Level Ground

This modern song offers an invitation for all to come to a place where the love of God makes the rough places plain, the high are brought low, and the last are first. Level ground is where all people meet and encounter the living Christ. Singing this song at the close of worship also reminds us that we are to discover places where level ground exist outside of the church. If those level places do not exist, then we are to be about the work of justice in the world. The structure of this song is quite simple, but it can be difficult to teach (the chorus, for instance, has one five-measure phrase and one seven-measure phrase that can prove difficult to internalize with ear or voice). One way to make the song accessible is to teach the congregation the three notes on “Jesus Christ” and cue them to sing when that occurs. The original key of E is ideal for congregational singing.

PREACHING

The Holy Spirit is a mysterious thing. It’s like the wind—it blows where it will. It’s like water—it can’t be controlled. It falls on people without warning. For some, like those in today’s reading from Acts, it comes through hearing the word. For others, it is seen in acts of miraculous healing. And there are those who experience the Holy Spirit through the voices of the faithful speaking in tongues and extolling God.

Whatever the Spirit is, one thing is for certain, and that is that she inspires transformation in people who experience her. It is life-changing to encounter an act of the Spirit. It can’t be summoned or contrived. It is always unexpected. Sometimes the

Spirit comes in such strange and mysterious ways that we may find it difficult to explain it to others. But we know it is real because we experienced it.

I have written over the last weeks about my presence with my mom and dad during a recent health crisis. A lot of what I've written has focused on her struggle with Alzheimer's disease. But what caused me to go to Arkansas to be with them was not her dementia. What drove me there was congestive heart failure.

I have been to Arkansas a lot in the past year. I was there in early December of 2017, to support my father after a recent diagnosis with cancer. (He's doing well and expects to be able to manage his disease.) When I visited in early December my mom was already complaining that she couldn't breathe.

My mom's dementia causes her a great deal of anxiety. Sometimes she has panic attacks which cause her to think she can't breathe. She has had this problem on and off for quite some time. She had talked to her doctor about it and he had examined her and found no physical reason for her problem in the past. So when my mom complained of not being able to breathe in December, I assumed, along with my dad, that it was a problem in her mind.

I returned at the end of December for a family holiday gathering at which my entire family was present. My two adult sons stayed in my parents' home with them. We had a big family party at the end of the year. My mom and dad attended, and although mom seemed confused, none of us thought she was physically ill. She continued to say she couldn't breathe, and we continued to treat her complaint as a product of anxiety.

I went back to my home in Tennessee on December 31. My eldest son and his fiancé stayed on a couple more days before they returned to their home. On the last day they were at my parents' house sitting in the library talking to my parents when a traumatic thing happened.

I mentioned in my notes on Easter Sunday that my father keeps canaries. He has had many canaries over the years. Most were named "Lucky Fibre," after the make-believe superhero that my father became in play during his childhood years growing up in south Alabama. There were a few canaries with other names: "Wilson," who was a roller (rollers sing in a certain kind of way), named for Arkansas artist Roller Wilson. Frank Sinatra. (No further explanation required.) But the latest bird, a very young, bright yellow canary, obtained in August 2017, remained nameless in late December. They had grown accustomed to calling him "Bird."

Bird was in love with my mother. They had a special relationship. Bird's attachment to my mom was unusual, and unlike any other canary they've ever owned. If my mom was out of the room, Bird would sing at the top of his lungs, seemingly summoning her to him. When she came in she would whistle at him and he would sing back to her, like a conversation. She'd bring him bits of apple. He would sit and stare at her in her rocking chair. It was like he was obsessed.

When others came into the room, Bird would get louder. It was as if he was trying to drown out the competing voices in an attempt to hear the voice of his one true love, my mom. This is just what was going on the last day my son and his fiancé were there. The four of them were sitting in the library talking, and Bird was trying to drown out their conversation by singing as loud as he could.

But then they noticed Bird had gone silent. Mom whistled. No response. So dad went to investigate. He found Bird upside down on his water dish with his head underwater, dead. He had drowned.

We now know that it was probably during this time that my mom was building up fluid around her heart and lungs as she went into congestive heart failure. She literally was having great difficulty breathing. When she was finally hospitalized, later that week, they removed a liter and a half of fluid from her right lung alone. It took nine days in the hospital to get all the fluid out of her body.

I am convinced that Bird knew my mother was drowning in her own fluid buildup, and that he drowned himself in a desperate attempt to communicate this to our family. Maybe that sounds crazy. It probably is. But I believe Bird drowned himself to try to save my mother's life.

Canaries have been used by humans as sentinel species for the past hundred years. Sentinel species are organisms, usually animals, that detect risks to humans by providing advance warning of an impending danger. Far back in history humans have observed the activities of animals in order to divine threats to their safety and well-being. In the case of canaries, it was around 1913 when coal miners began taking canaries into mines with them in order to detect carbon monoxide and other gases that could be hazardous to humans. The birds, who were more sensitive to the gases than humans, would become sick, enabling the miners to escape or protect themselves from the deadly fumes.

Bird was, for me, a channel through which the saving power of the Holy Spirit came to my mother. I wouldn't call his method of death a baptism, but it does seem ironic to me that he immersed his head in his water dish and drowned, in a room filled with people, while my mother was drowning from congestive heart failure.

Can we say things like that without sounding crazy? I usually don't, although in recent months I seem to be more mystically-inclined than I have been in the past. And let's be honest: the Holy Spirit is crazy-inducing.

People are slain in the Spirit and fall to the ground and writhe. They speak gibberish. They dance. They convulse. They interpret events in ways others find questionable, but they believe with their whole hearts. Such is the case with my interpretation of Bird's untimely death.

Sometimes when I write or preach, I find myself letting go and just letting the Spirit flow through me. When that happens my fingers can hardly keep up with the typing. If I'm preaching, I feel overcome with a sense of wonder, energy and confidence. Artists and musicians are especially sensitive to the Spirit's work in this way I think. You can tell when musicians let go of their own self-consciousness and allow all of their emotions to flow through their music. You can see the same thing in a great work of art. It is like catching a glimpse of God's very being.

Having faith that the Holy Spirit is with us is surely a little bit crazy. Isn't that why they call it a leap? Maybe not every act of the Spirit is as crazy as my story about Bird, but we who have experienced her power know for certain that the Holy Spirit is crazy-inducing, all-encompassing, and very, very real.

I've been watching the Olympic ice skaters as I've been writing these notes, and you can see this phenomenon there as well. The really excellent skaters are able to just put their trust completely in what they've trained their bodies to do and let the music take their artistry and athleticism to a higher level. It's true of all greatness in human beings. We become better than we could ever be on our own when we channel the power of the Holy Spirit.

We've all had these experiences, when we've let go of our self consciousness to the point that we feel like we have become vessels for the work of something more than ourselves, something wonderful and holy. This, to me, is what it means to be open to the Holy Spirit.

And it overcomes people. It just simply does. You can't stop it or tell it what to do. It goes where it will, like the wind, like the water.

As we studied this story together and talked about it, Jackson Henry marveled at the question, "Can anyone withhold the water?" He said he has always wondered if anyone is in a position of authority to withhold the water. Can we keep it from someone? Is it possible?

And the answer is, no, we can't. It is overflowing. It is unstoppable. We can't keep this water from overflowing.

We build dams. We try to hold back the water. But we can't. We know that. Dams fail. The water is too strong. It goes where it will. It isn't for us to control. "Can anyone withhold the water?" No, because it isn't ours to withhold. The waters of baptism, the waters of God's immersive love, are for everyone. It flows where it wants.

Is there anyone upon whom the winds of God's love are not blowing? Is there anyone to whom God is not making an offer of grace and acceptance? The Good News of Jesus Christ is that the answer is a resounding NO! Because God's love is for everyone, without exception, even on the Gentiles. It's not up to us to decide. It's up to us to welcome all who love Jesus to come to his table and feast.

Is there anything that prevents a person from being baptized? Is there anyone who can prevent a soul that has received the Spirit from confessing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Would you try to prevent someone from being baptized? Would you try to put your own constraints and regulations, your own sense of what is right and holy, on them, before you'd take them to the waters for which they so desperately thirst?

I hope and pray that your answer is no. And I hope and pray that the United Methodist Church will not get in the way of the Holy Spirit's work either. Because we will fail if we do. The Spirit goes where she will. She is like wind. She is like water. We can't stop her and we shouldn't try.

"Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"

No. For I am convinced, as Paul puts it so beautifully in his letter to the Romans, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39 NRSV).

PLANNING NOTES

Reading Notes

NRSV texts, artwork and [Revised Common Lectionary Prayers](#) for this service are available at the [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](#).

Leccionario en Español, [Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes](#).

Lectonnaire en français, [Le Lectionnaire Œcuménique Révisé](#)

Calendar Notes

May

All Month [Christian Home Month](#) (2018 Theme: Families Called to Peace, forthcoming)

[Asian Pacific American Heritage Month](#)

May 7-13 [Christian Family Week](#) (2018 resources forthcoming)

May 10 [Ascension Day](#)

May 13 [Ascension Sunday](#)

[Festival of the Christian Home/Mother's Day](#) (USA)

May 19-20 [Change the World Weekend](#)

May 20 [Day of Pentecost](#)

[Heritage Sunday](#)

May 24 [Aldersgate Day](#)

May 27 [Trinity Sunday](#)

[Peace with Justice Sunday](#)

May 28 [Memorial Day \(USA\)](#)

June

Pray for annual conferences convening throughout the month, for all receiving new appointments or assignments, for those leaving existing appointments or assignments, and for congregations and other ministries receiving new leadership.

June 3 **June Worship Series Begins: "Transitions"**

June 17 [Father's Day \(USA\)](#)

June 19 [Juneteenth \(USA\)](#)

July

July 1 **July Worship Series Begins: "Healing Hands"**

July 4 [Independence Day \(USA\)](#)

August

All Month [Back to School Resources](#)

August 5 **August Worship Series Begins: "Life Together"**

September

All Month [Season of Creation \(2018 Discipleship/UMCom Series coming soon\)](#)

September 3 [Labor Day \(USA\)](#)

September 15-

October 15 [Hispanic Heritage Month \(USA\)](#)

October

October 6 **October Series in Job (in development)**

[World Communion Sunday](#)

October 14 [Children's Sabbath](#)

October 21 **Laity Sunday (2018 Resources forthcoming)**

October 31 [Reformation Day](#)

November

November 1 [All Saints Day](#)

November 4 [All Saints Sunday](#)

[Daylight Saving Time Ends \(USA\)](#)

A Season of Saints (2018 Resources Forthcoming)

November 11 [Organ and Tissue Donor Sunday](#)

[International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church](#)

[Veteran's Day \(USA\)](#)

[Extended Advent Begins](#)

November 18 [Bible Sunday](#)

November 18-25 [National Bible Week \(USA\)](#)

November 22 [Thanksgiving Day \(USA\)](#)

November 25 [Christ the King/Reign of Christ Sunday](#)

[United Methodist Student Day \(offering\)](#)

**For Your Planning Team: And in the Power of the Holy Spirit...
Outsiders Come In**

Planning for This Service

The second service of a series picks up the level of energy where the previous one left off, and directs it where it needs to go through this service to the one to follow.

This service begins with a quick, confident act of recognition of all persons who have started a connection with the congregation or its ministries during the past year. Last week focused primarily on outreach ministries to people who are different from the dominant culture and socio-economic location of people in your congregation. This week focuses on people who are finding a home among you recently primarily in worship, Christian formation ministries, and other ministries of the church. Some folks you recognized last week may be included in this week's recognition as well.

Once again, contact everyone who has had a contact with worship or other ministries of your church during the past year. Identify who has the strongest relationship with them in your congregation, and where possible have those persons make a personal invitation to worship this week, noting they'll be welcomed, and there will be a reception or dinner after church they're especially invited to share.

Somewhere in the sermon, in announcement slides, or via social media, make the connection that the Spirit is always working to send Christians out to everyone, everywhere, and to bring people into the fellowship of the church from everywhere. That is the link between last week and this, and it aptly describes the heart of the work of the Spirit in the salvation of the world. ***However you make this connection, make it more than an observation or an explanation.*** Make it compelling, to the point, and powerful.

Additional Resources for this Service

[2015 Planning Helps for these readings](#)

[Ecumenical Prayer Cycle](#): (Click link to find countries for this week when they are posted)

Easter 7
And in the Power of the Holy Spirit:
Leaders Are Raised Up
May 13, 2018

FULL SERVICE ORDER

*The service begins with the ringing of a bell or the clamor of a gong.
The lay leader and pastor stand in the back of the worship space, in front of the choir or musical ensemble, and announce, together:*

Alleluia. Christ is risen!

People: The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

The lay leader then invites everyone currently serving as a named officer or leader of any ministry to stand, be named, and greeted with applause and thanks to God from the congregation before all stand to sing:

Come, Holy Ghost, Our Souls Inspire UMH 651 OR

Agnus Dei CCLI# 626713

Prayer for Illumination

(after "Come, Holy Ghost")

**Holy Spirit, you constantly prepare us
for the day we will be asked to lead
within the body of Christ.**

**Prepare us again as we hear your word
that we may faithfully and joyfully respond
to your call to lead when it comes. Amen.**

(after "Agnus Dei")

Holy, holy are you Lord God Almighty.

We bow before your glory.

Alleluia.

**Send again your Spirit among us
as your word is read
and your truth proclaimed
that we may know and trust
those who lead among us now,
or may soon be called to lead,
and follow where they lead toward you. Amen.**

WORD AND RESPONSE

Reading [Acts 1:15-17, 21-26 \(NRSV\)](#)

Sermon Leaders Are Raised Up

Confessing in Song

The deacon, pastor, or others may prepare the Lord's table, and the offering may be collected during the singing.

God, the Spirit, Guide, and Guardian UMH 648 OR

I Will Follow CCLI# 5806878

THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table [UMH 8](#)

Confession, Pardon, and Peace [UMH 8](#)

The Great Thanksgiving [BOW 66-67](#) OR

The pastor lifts hands in prayer and invites all to join in this posture of prayer.

Holy Wisdom is with us.

We praise you, Christ Crucified.

Holy Spirit breathes in us.

Spirit of Power, Spirit of Life!

Holy Source of All draws near.

In you alone we boast!

With all creation we sing:

Holy Holy Holy UMH 21 or other setting

Holy are you, O God,
ever creating,
and ever preparing your people
and guiding us by your Spirit
for the work that lies ahead.

Holy are you, O God.

Holy are you, O God,
enfleshed in Jesus,
delivering us from the power of sin and death,
and empowering by your Spirit,
those you call to lead us.

Holy are you, O God.

Holy the food Jesus gave,
when on the night of his betrayal
he took bread, blessed it and broke it,
and gave it to his disciples.
Holy the words he spoke then,
and your Spirit speaks still:
"This is my body broken for you. Remember me."

Holy the drink Jesus offered,
when that same night he took the cup,
thanked you and shared it.
Holy the words he spoke then,
and your Spirit speaks still:
"This is my blood of the new covenant for you. Remember me."

We remember you,
Source, Wisdom and Spirit of Holiness.
We praise you not only with our lips
but with our lives:

**Jesus Christ,
crucified, you called and claimed us,
risen, you have raised us,
coming again, you make all things new.
Even so, come Lord Jesus! Hallelujah!**

Even so, come and fill this feast, Holy Spirit,
Spirit of Power, Spirit of Life.
Come upon us and these gifts of bread and wine.

Make them be for us what Jesus says they are,
Christ's body, Christ's blood.
**Make us become what Jesus prays we are,
one body in him empowered and enlivened by his blood.**

Deacon, Lay Leader, or Pastor:
One in service, one in witness, one in compassion,
and one even now in prayer, saying:
Lord, have mercy.

One with all persons kept in poverty or slavery,
with all who are in fear from abusers, terrorists, and oppressors,
with all who face addiction of any kind,

and with all who are targeted for unjust treatment because of who they are;
Lord, have mercy.

One with the earth, and all creatures upon it,
the riches in its depths,
and the fragility of its air and water;
Lord, have mercy.

One in prayer for leaders in religious, political, economic, and social life;
and for all who work to sustain and protect our lives
as military, civilian workers, and first responders;
Lord, have mercy.

One with families, friends, and neighbors,
near and far, like us and different from us;
with all who need your healing power,
Lord, have mercy.

Pastor:

So may this food and drink be holy,
and nourish us in holy conversation this day
and every day
as on that day we feast with him
in new creation.

**And now and ever,
all glory to you,
Holy Spirit, Holy Wisdom, Holy Source
of all that was, and is, and is to come. Amen.**

The pastor breaks the bread in the sight of the people, then serves the servers, one of whom also serves the pastor. The people are then served.

Music During Communion

Become to Us the Living Bread UMH 630 AND/OR
For the Bread Which You Have Broken UMH 615

Thanksgiving after Communion

Almighty God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery
by which you nourish all your people
with eternal life.

Send us now in the strength of the Spirit
to walk with Christ and one another
in leadership or service
as you call us. **Amen.**

SENDING FORTH

Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart UMH 500 OR
With All I Am CCLI# 4257734

Deacon or Pastor:

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Rejoice that God supplies the leaders we need
when we need them,
from among all of us
who walk with Jesus and his disciples.
So go, and keep walking with Jesus and each other.

People: Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!

MUSIC NOTES

Come, Holy Ghost, Our Souls Inspire

VENI CREATOR is one of the most well known melodies throughout the history of the ecumenical church, but it may well be unfamiliar to your congregation. Both the text and tune of this work are historic, but a proper tune for your setting will make this Pentecost hymn more poignant. If your church is familiar with this tune, that is wonderful! If another is needed, you might want to try DUKE STREET (No. 101) or HURSLEY (No. 339) from *The United Methodist Hymnal*. Because of syllabic emphasis at the beginning of each stanza, my preference between these two is HURSLEY (339). Accompany with organ or piano.

Agnus Dei

This modern worship music song has become a classic. I recall first hearing it sung by the band Third Day in the 1990s, and I developed a deep love for it during my college years. The text invokes the image of the choir of angels in Revelation 5:12, singing, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (NRSV) If using percussion with this song, make sure the drums do not play the triplet rhythms every time. Too much of the wavering rhythmic patterns can make the congregation a bit “seasick.” Continue a four-beat pattern instead. For maximum effect, begin with a soft “Alleluia,” and work toward a climax at the chorus. The ideal key is A. The ideal key for congregational singing is the original key of A, and accompaniment can range from solo piano or guitar to full band.

God, the Spirit, Guide, and Guardian

Written as an ordination hymn, this work by Carl P. Daw, Jr. emphasizes first the work of God the Spirit in consecration and commissioning people for ministry. What this creates, in effect, is an alteration of the usual Trinitarian form of many hymns and a reversal of the order of divine address (Spirit, Savior, Creator). The last stanza addresses the entire Trinity. HYFRYDOL certainly gives a formal air to the text, and it is recommended with organ or piano accompaniment. However, with an 87.87 D tune, there are many other options as well, which can be found on pages 928-929 of *The United Methodist Hymnal*. [History of Hymns](#)

I Will Follow

With a quasi-paraphrase of Ruth 1:16, this modern song takes the words of Ruth and creates a mashup of sorts by placing her words alongside ours as we answer the call of Jesus to discipleship. Chris Tomlin is well known for singing in keys inaccessible to many, but the original key of Bb may work in your setting, depending on the singing ability of the congregation. If the key needs to be lowered, Ab or G would also be very accessible. The rhythms are syncopated, but are consistent throughout, so internalizing the rhythms is not incredibly difficult. Accompaniment would be best with full band or solo guitar.

Become to Us the Living Bread

The images of bread, wine, and table serve as the framework for this Eucharistic hymn, which is a congregational prayer to support the presider's words of the epiclesis ("Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here..."). The joy contained in this sung prayer is well matched with the GELOBT SEI GOTT tune, which has a dancing quality to it if accompanied thusly. Singing the melody a cappella, either in unison or parts, would also be a powerful statement as people gather at the table. This would require preparation for the congregation beforehand, however, and it might be a good hymn to sing for a number of weeks when the church gathers for communion to build a congregational memory and appreciation of the text and tune. If not accompanying with organ or piano, consider a hand drum, guitar, and flute to create a Renaissance-like character.

For the Bread Which You Have Broken

This beautiful tune from Taiwan opens up many creative ways to sing this hymn by Louis F. Benson. Many congregations may know the setting of this on the previous page, UMH No. 614, but the melody of BENG-LI creates a mysterious, flowing line that meanders along throughout an F-Major pentatonic scale. This five-pitch scale can be found throughout Asian music, as well as other folk music around the world. You may choose to accompany the tune with organ or piano just as I-to Loh composed, but you may also experiment with a unison melody and an improvised accompaniment using the notes of the F pentatonic scale (F, G, A, C, D). Almost any combination of notes works to accompany. Also feel free to add a finger cymbal on count 4 of measures 4 and 8.

[History of Hymns](#)

Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart

This hymn represents a personal longing for the Spirit to enter our hearts and "teach" us—to feel the nearness of God, the struggles of our souls, the patience of an unanswered prayer, and to love God more dearly. MORECAMBE is a beautiful tune that your congregation should know, especially in its musical passion in the last two lines as it moves to the climax at the beginning of the final line. However, if your church is not familiar with this tune, another option would be to use the tune FINLANDIA ("Be Still My Soul," "This Is My Song,"), and sing the last two lines twice to complete the stanza for that tune. [History of Hymns](#)

With All I Am

The congregation is best served in this song to learn and sing the chorus while a soloist sings the verses. This song is a classic example of how notes on a page can actually complicate music-making at times. The congregation will learn the chorus much better with words only, allowing their ears to guide them. The syncopated rhythms, while not difficult, will only visually complicate things. The third phrase of the chorus (“You’re the reason that I live”), however, should be an important part of teaching the tune. Singing the first two phrases will entice the congregation to leap from D to B, rather than the D to A included in the third phrase. It can be taught, but it may take some time at the beginning of worship. Placing unfamiliar music at the end of a service is tricky because the end of the service sends people out into the world and the rest of their week. Songs placed here don’t need to always be familiar, but if they are not known by the congregation, teaching time before the service begins can be valuable for the flow of worship. The song is best accompanied by full band, solo piano, or solo guitar.

PREACHING

Emma Gonzalez. Remember her name.

Emma is a senior at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. She is a survivor of the February 14 massacre at her school, and just one of the many young people from her community who have turned into an activist advocating for stricter gun control laws. Overnight she has become a leader, a national voice for change. She is eighteen, with close-shaved hair, a powerful voice, the courage of a soldier, and wisdom beyond her years. She is part of a movement that is rising up out of the ashes of the latest mass killing at the hands of an individual armed with a semi-automatic weapon.

It has been inspiring and humbling to watch the young people from Parkland take on a problem that we adults have failed to solve. I don’t know about you, but I am glad to hand over the reins to these emerging leaders. They are my hope for a better future.

A few years ago I volunteered to teach the youth Sunday School class on a temporary basis after the sudden departure of the youth director. I hadn’t been going to the church for very long and didn’t know the kids. But I have to say, those six months or so that I spent with the youth Sunday School students at Kern Memorial United Methodist Church have had a lasting effect on me.

In the beginning I ordered some curriculum and tried to lead the group in discussions about controversial topics. It didn’t go all that well, so I invited my young adult son, who was a student at the University of Tennessee and an environmental activist, to come and talk to the group about his concerns. That went better.

Having not yet found the right fit in terms of study topics, finally I asked the group what they were interested in talking about. Several of the girls suggested that I read the popular dystopian novels with female heroes that inspired them, and then we could

have a discussion: *The Hunger Games* trilogy, *Divergent*, and other young adult novels of this type. And so I did.

We had several discussions about why these books had been so impactful, especially for young women in the group. I had not ever read any of this type of literature before. But I loved these novels. I read the entire *Hunger Games* trilogy and then watched the movies that had come out. I'm currently reading the *Divergent* series.

If you've read these books or seen the movies, you know that the hero in both sagas is a courageous and powerful young woman. In the *Hunger Games* the heroine is named Katniss. Over the course of the story, Katniss emerges as the leader of a resistance movement against the corrupt government and the wealthy and elite members that benefit from their rule while the majority of people suffer lives spent in hard labor and poverty.

In the story, children and teenagers are forced to engage in a futuristic version of Roman gladiator-style combat: they fight to the death for the entertainment of the masses.

I was struck as I watched Emma Gonzalez [speak](#) at a rally for gun control in front of the federal courthouse in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, a few days after the massacre, by how much her courage, poise and dignity reminded me of Katniss. In her eleven minute and forty second speech, she called upon not just the crowd in front of her, but the nation, to change the laws in order to prevent another massacre. She rallied the gathered body to join her in a call and response. She said some hard things. She refused to back down to those with power, money, and control. She had clearly done her homework. Her speech was thorough, heartfelt, and challenging. It is my opinion that we adults should be listening to Emma and her co-leaders in this movement.

Recently my father made a comment that he felt that he was fortunate because he had studied at Duke Divinity School during what he considered to be the peak academic years of the institution's history. He was a student there in the early sixties. It is true that he was able to study with some great theologians from his day: Frank Baker, Robert Cushman, Frederick Herzog, Thomas Langford, Ray Petry, Waldo Beach. A great lineup of scholars, many of whose work I have read.

But as I've thought about my father's comment I'm aware that missing from the list are the women and racial minority scholars—persons who were also missing from the student body. At the time my father went to seminary, only fifty-eight years ago, all of the professors and students were caucasian. And in my father's class all of the Divinity School students were male. It was indeed a critical time in the institutional history of Duke, but perhaps what made it important had less to do with the fine professors than the students. This was a turbulent time in the American south. It was a time of change for our nation as the civil rights movement emerged. During the late fifties and into the early sixties at Duke University, multiple student petitions were drawn up demanding that the Board of Directors desegregate the school. Young people led the way to

bringing about necessary change to their campus and community. It is no wonder that my father remembers his time at Duke with such reverence. I can only imagine what the conversations in the classrooms during those years must have been like.

I went to seminary at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in the early nineties. I was not a teenager, but I was in my mid-twenties, as were many of my classmates. I was fortunate to study with Rosemary Radford Ruether, Rosemary Skinner, Linda Vogel, and Lallene Rector, and other amazing female scholars who helped shape my sense of myself as a woman in ministry. I was exposed to American history told from the perspectives of both whites and non-whites, women and men, Western European and the wider global community. During my time at GETS, the LGBT movement was just starting to gain some momentum, but there was still a great deal of discrimination. Emerging theologies coming out of the so-called third world were shaping our conversations. Sexual harassment, when it happened to the women I knew, was swept under the rug. It was a turbulent time in its own way, and I'm grateful for the variety of theological perspectives to which I was exposed through my education as a young woman. I was well-prepared for leadership in some ways, and not so well-prepared in others.

Maybe there's a pattern here.

It seems like whenever a society comes to the brink of necessary change, God raises up the needed leadership. Often these leaders come from the ranks of the rising generation. They may or may not have a formal education. They may or may not have been prepared. They may or may not look like leaders from the past.

How old were the disciples? I googled this question but couldn't find anything definitive. I've never really thought about it before, and I don't remember ever studying this. I was taught that Jesus was likely in his early thirties when he began his public ministry. Most scholars seem to think that his students—his disciples—were younger, most likely under the age of twenty. I imagine then that they must have been teenagers or young adults.

In today's scripture lesson we find the newly-minted young church leaders in need of a replacement for one of the twelve male disciples who will not be continuing in his role: Judas. The new leader is to be chosen from among the many followers of Jesus who had been with him for his entire ministry.

Now let me just say here that although the church has tended to focus on the twelve male disciples, and one later honorary disciple named Paul, scholars believe there were more than twelve men who accompanied Jesus on his journey from the point of Baptism by John to his ascension, and who witnessed his resurrection. Not all of them were male. Women such as Mary Magdalene, Mary and Martha, and other women likely accompanied Jesus throughout his entire ministry. Women such as Phoebe and Lydia and others founded and led early church communities. Women played a critical role in the development of the Christian faith.

But the grip of the patriarchy of the wider culture apparently seized the church quite early, and so the replacement disciple was chosen from among the men.

Did the eleven disciples choose the replacement based on his gifts for ministry? Did they make their decision because of his resume, or credentials, or education, or because of previous leadership experience, or a certain skill set, or age, or race, or hair color? No. Apparently, by the time the church was starting to develop leaders, the only thing that prevented a person from being a disciple was gender. The eleven male disciples proposed two candidates from among the men. They prayed for the Lord to show them the one that was chosen, and then they cast lots. The lot fell on Matthias and so he was added to the eleven.

How willing are we to trust in God's provision for God's church? My guess is not very. We have so many hoops people have to jump through in order to become official leaders in the church that it has become more of a way of fencing people out than trusting God to raise up leaders from our midst.

I'm not suggesting that the church doesn't need leaders with training and education and experience. But I am saying that having the right credentials doesn't always add up to good leadership. Sometimes God raises up leaders out of a crisis. Sometimes the leaders God has provided have a theological perspective we don't agree with, or a lifestyle we have deemed sinful, or they are the wrong gender or ethnicity or body size, or they seem awfully young and inexperienced. Sometimes we dismiss God's call on a person to lead because of our own flawed human beliefs and prejudices.

The good news of this story is that the Lord knows the hearts of God's people. Ministry requires many different kinds of leadership, and God prepares many different kinds of people to lead. Leaders are both lay and clergy. They are young and old. They consist of those formally educated and skilled and unskilled workers. They are male and female and LGBTQ. They are lifelong church goers and persons whom God has raised up suddenly to respond to a particular need. They are born in wealthy nations and in war-torn nations and in refugee camps. They are experienced and inexperienced.

Our job is to prepare as best we can to receive the leaders God has identified. Let us pray that God will show us the ones God has chosen. Let us trust in God's provision for God's church. And let us not allow ourselves and our own narrow viewpoints get in the way of listening to and following those whom God has selected.

PLANNING NOTES **Reading Notes**

NRSV texts, artwork and [Revised Common Lectionary Prayers](#) for this service are available at the [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](#).

Leccionario en Español, [Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes](#).

Calendar Notes

May

All Month [Christian Home Month](#) (2018 Theme: Families Called to Peace, forthcoming)

[Asian Pacific American Heritage Month](#)

May 7-13 [Christian Family Week](#) (2018 resources forthcoming)

May 10 [Ascension Day](#)

May 13 [Ascension Sunday](#)

[Festival of the Christian Home/Mother's Day](#) (USA)

May 19-20 [Change the World Weekend](#)

May 20 [Day of Pentecost](#)

[Heritage Sunday](#)

May 24 [Aldersgate Day](#)

May 27 [Trinity Sunday](#)

[Peace with Justice Sunday](#)

May 28 [Memorial Day](#) (USA)

June

Pray for annual conferences convening throughout the month, for all receiving new appointments or assignments, for those leaving existing appointments or assignments, and for congregations and other ministries receiving new leadership.

June 3 **June Worship Series Begins: "Transitions"**

June 17 [Father's Day](#) (USA)

June 19 [Juneteenth](#) (USA)

July

July 1 **July Worship Series Begins: "Healing Hands"**

July 4 [Independence Day](#) (USA)

August

All Month [Back to School Resources](#)

August 5 **August Worship Series Begins: "Life Together"**

September

All Month [Season of Creation](#) (2018 Discipleship/UMCom Series coming soon)

September 3 [Labor Day](#) (USA)

September 15-

October 15 [Hispanic Heritage Month](#) (USA)

October

October 6 **October Series in Job** (in development)

[World Communion Sunday](#)

October 14 [Children's Sabbath](#)

October 21 **Laité Sunday** (2018 Resources forthcoming)

October 31 [Reformation Day](#)

November

November 1 [All Saints Day](#)

November 4 [All Saints Sunday](#)

[Daylight Saving Time Ends](#) (USA)

[A Season of Saints \(2018 Resources Forthcoming\)](#)

November 11 [Organ and Tissue Donor Sunday](#)

[International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church](#)

[Veteran's Day](#) (USA)

[Extended Advent Begins](#)

November 18 [Bible Sunday](#)

November 18-25 [National Bible Week](#) (USA)

November 22 [Thanksgiving Day](#) (USA)

November 25 [Christ the King/Reign of Christ Sunday](#)

[United Methodist Student Day](#) (offering)

For Your Planning Team: And in the Power of the Holy Spirit... Leaders Are Raised Up

Planning for This Service

We come to the midpoint, and therefore a turning point, in this series. These past two weeks we've focused on the Spirit moving to connect insiders and outsiders with the ministry and life of the body of Christ. This week and next the emphasis shifts from that movement to the empowering of the people in the body of Christ for ministry in the church and the wider world.

Today's service focuses on and begins with the empowering of your congregation's identified leaders for ministry and mission, persons typically chosen for office by your committee on lay leadership and affirmed by vote of your charge conference. This is not a day for installing these leaders, but simply for recognizing them in a brief and powerful way at the beginning of worship as a prelude to the reading of God raising up Matthias to replace Judas to continue the work of the original 12 apostles.

So, be sure to have contacted all of your elected leaders, encourage them to attend, and let them know they'll be greeted and a reception held in their honor after worship today. ***Pastor, contacting these leaders and inviting them is primarily your task, shared with your lay leader.*** Again, take the time to make these contacts and invitations personal-- by phone call, or visit where that would be helpful-- not by group text, email, or social media. This will enhance the bonds of trust and mutual respect among you, your lay leader, and the elected leaders of your congregation.

Additional Resources for this Service

[2015 Planning Helps for these readings](#)

[Ecumenical Prayer Cycle](#): (Click link to find countries for this week when they are posted)

WORD AND RESPONSE

Reading

[Acts 2:1-21 \(NRSV\)](#)

Narrator: When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Congregation: *(all at once, each individual choosing any of the following, and repeating it at his or her own rate, at least seven times)*

Engkeo apo too nevmatos moo epee pasan sarkan (Greek)

Eshpoq et ruachi al kal basar (Hebrew)

Nipi poluta ka oom ishilombish ma ai isht (Choctaw)

Na ibubuhos ko ang aking Espiritu sa lahat ng laman: (Tagalog)

Nitawamwagia watu wote Roho yangu (Swahili)

Kuv yuav hliv kuv tus Ntsuj Plig rau saum ib tsoom neeg sawvdaws (Hmong)

Derramarei do meu Espírito sobre toda a carne (Brazilian Portuguese)

Nakotondisa moto nyonso na Molimo na ngai (Lingala)

E ninini iho au i ko'u Uhane maluna o na kanaka a pau (Hawaiian)

Silence

Narrator:

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.

Amazed and astonished, they asked,

All: Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?

Left Side: Parthians, Medes, Elamites,
Right Side: residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia,
Choir/Band: Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of
Libya belonging to Cyrene,
Pastor: and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs
All: in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power."

Narrator:
All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another,

All: "What does this mean?"

Narrator: But others sneered and said,
Back half of the worship space: "They are filled with new wine."

Narrator:
But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them,

Peter:
"Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning.

No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.

And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

Sermon Proclaim Jubilee
Confessing in Song

The deacon, pastor, or others may prepare the Lord's table, and the offering may be collected during the singing.

Spirit of Faith, Come Down UMH 332* OR

[Perfect Us in Love](#)

Commissioning of Laypersons into Ministry

Persons being commissioned in this service move toward the font, leaving the font visible for all to see. Children should also be invited to be able to see this action and participate in the laying on of hands.

The pastor begins, addressing the congregation:

My brothers and sisters in Christ:

Today we give thankful witness

to the work of the Holy Spirit

in the lives of these who are gathered around this baptismal font.

By water and the Spirit, they have been made new creatures in Christ.

In the Spirit and with this body of Christ,

they have discovered their gifts for ministry,

connected with the passion for service that God has placed in each of their hearts.

The Spirit moves in them,

and living water is ready to gush from their bellies,

in their ministries among us.

Truly, the Spirit of the Lord is in this place.

So, lift up your hearts and hands and voices!

We lift them to you, Lord!

Give thanks to our Triune God!

Thanks and praise are yours forever!

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One,

you have poured out your mercy upon us.

You have opened eyes that were blind to the harvest around us.

You have opened ears that were deaf to the cries of people

who are sick, or poor, or imprisoned.

You have opened minds that perceived only what others were missing

to realize the deep giftedness of all people.

You have opened hearts that were hardened to your compassion for all your creatures.

You have opened hands that are now ready to serve you,

laborers into your fields white to harvest.

Blessing and honor and glory are yours,

now and forever!

Those being commissioned may be invited to state their name and offer a brief (one sentence) description of the ministry they will offer. A fuller written description of the ministry may be provided in the bulletin or worship program. After each person shares, the congregation may respond:

Thank you, God, for (Name) and for the ministry (she/he/they) will offer.

The pastor asks all candidates to face the door leading out of the sanctuary. From behind, the pastor lays hands on the shoulders of the person being commissioned., children also lay hands, and the pastor invites the congregation to stretch their hands in prayer toward the person being commissioned. When all are ready, the pastor continues:

Come, Holy Spirit!
Come, Holy Spirit!

Fill your servant, (Name), with grace and truth,
with wisdom and strength,
with every spiritual gift
to engage this ministry in Christ's name and your power.

Come, Holy Spirit!
Come, Holy Spirit!
Fill us with your love for (Name),
that we may support (him/her/them) in this ministry
with our prayers, counsel, encouragement,
and all things needed
that your will be done in (him/her/them) and through us.
Let your living waters flow!

After each person is commissioned, each may use the water in the font as a sign of reaffirming his/her baptismal calling.

After all are commissioned, the service continues with the Invitation to the Table.

THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table [UMH 8](#)
Confession, Pardon, and Peace [UMH 8](#)

The Great Thanksgiving [BOW 68-69](#) OR
The pastor lifts hands in prayer and invites all to join in this posture of prayer.

Holy Wisdom is with us.
We praise you, Christ Crucified.

Holy Spirit breathes in us.
Spirit of Power, Spirit of Life!

Holy Source of All draws near.

In you alone we boast!

With all creation we sing:

Holy Holy Holy

UMH 21 or other setting

Holy are you, O God,
ever creating,
and ever moving among your people,
raising up the lowly,
amplifying the voices of the marginalized,
the dreams of people long oppressed,
and through them declaring jubilee,
release and restoration for all.

Holy are you, O God.

Holy are you, O God,
enfleshed in Jesus,
showing the way,
teaching the truth,
living the life of your Spirit
in the face of ridicule, rejection, and execution,
and rising to announce your kingdom's triumph over all.

Holy are you, O God.

Holy the food Jesus gave,
when on the night of his betrayal
he took bread, blessed it and broke it,
and gave it to his disciples.
Holy the words he spoke then,
and your Spirit speaks still:
"This is my body broken for you. Remember me."

Holy the drink Jesus offered,
when that same night he took the cup,
thanked you and shared it.
Holy the words he spoke then,
and your Spirit speaks still:
"This is my blood of the new covenant for you. Remember me."

We remember you,
Source, Wisdom and Spirit of Holiness.
We praise you not only with our lips

but with our lives:

**Jesus Christ,
crucified, you called and claimed us,
risen, you have raised us,
coming again, you make all things new.
Even so, come Lord Jesus! Hallelujah!**

Even so, come and fill this feast, Holy Spirit,
Spirit of Power, Spirit of Life.
Come upon us and these gifts of bread and wine.

Make them be for us what Jesus says they are,
Christ's body, Christ's blood.
**Make us become what Jesus prays we are,
one body in him empowered and enlivened by his blood.**

Deacon, Lay Leader, or Pastor:
One in service, one in witness, one in compassion,
one in doing and speaking up for justice,
and one even now in prayer, saying:
Lord, have mercy.

One with all persons kept in poverty or slavery,
with all who are in fear from abusers, terrorists, and oppressors,
with all who face addiction of any kind,
and with all who are targeted for unjust treatment because of who they are;
Lord, have mercy.

One with the earth, and all creatures upon it,
the riches in its depths,
and the fragility of its air and water;
Lord, have mercy.

One in prayer for leaders in religious, political, economic, and social life
that there may be justice and peace among all peoples;
for all who work to sustain our lives as teachers, health care workers, civil
servants, and builders and maintainers of roads, homes, and sources of power,
and for all who protect our lives as military, police, and first responders;
Lord, have mercy.

One with families, friends, and neighbors,
near and far, like us and different from us;
and with all who need your healing power,
Lord, have mercy.

Go forth,
and declare the jubilee
the Day of the Lord
still brings to all.

Go forth,
and be Pentecost
in the name of our Triune God,
One and Holy!

People: Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Postlude [Psalm 19 \(Marcello\)*](#)

MUSIC NOTES

Note: A number of the hymns and the postlude in this service, as indicated by asterisks, are chosen because they were used in the Uniting Service of The United Methodist Church in 1968. This year's Heritage Sunday marks the 50th anniversary of The United Methodist Church.

O Church of God, United

Confessing Jesus Christ as our Savior “in union with the church” means that especially our act of singing together is an act of unity as we all become proclaimers in the holy act of hymn singing. This hymn highlights the way we are united in our love of Christ, “though creeds and tongues may differ.” ELLACOMBE serves as an ideal tune for this message, though it is also appropriate to sing the text to AURELIA, which will then evoke the thematic nature of the hymn, “The Church’s One Foundation” and connect the two together. Accompany with organ, piano, and even brass if you have access to those instruments in your community. This joyous tune is effectively accompanied by handbells as well, and several arrangements of the ELLACOMBE tune for handbells can also be found [here](#). Sing this hymn boldly! [History of Hymns](#)

Come People of the Risen King

One consistent element of the writing of the Gettys and Stuart Townend is the use of metric writing in strophic form. This modern hymn is written in what would be considered a “Verse/Chorus” form, but the meter stays fairly consistent through the verses. In addition, these writers obviously understand the relationship between accessible melodies and rhythms and good, well-supported congregational singing. This hymn is fairly accessible to most congregations, especially if you have the appropriate licensing to print the entire vocal score. It is possible to sing with a band, but it is just as well accompanied by organ or piano.

Breath of God, Breath of Peace

Adam Tice and Sally Ann Morris have risen in prominence because of their text and tune collaborations in recent years. The interplay between words and music is very

interesting and is characterized by long, lyrical lines and interesting harmonic progressions. The text focuses upon different aspects of God with each stanza: Breath, Word, and Voice. Because of these short, repetitive phrases and clear framework, this hymn would also be a great option for children to learn and lead the congregation in singing. A great, simple choral setting of this work from GIA Publications is also available [here](#). This edition also contains a part for organ or electronic keyboard that can be paired with the piano score. [History of Hymns](#)

Spirit of God

For the purposes of this service, this would be a great option for a soloist to sing as a sung prayer of illumination. The range and rhythm might make it difficult for congregational singing, but it can still be an effective part of the service. If a female voice or a baritone who is leading, you might need to lower the key a good bit. If you have a tenor who could sing it, however, the original key might be appropriate. This would also make a good tenor/alto duet in the original key.

Spirit of Faith, Come Down

This Pentecost hymn by Charles Wesley is an invitation for the Spirit to come down and “reveal the things of God.” This hymn witnesses to the power of the Holy Spirit in one another and the world. If your congregation is unfamiliar with the BEALOTH tune, it is also appropriate to use DIADEMATA, which is likely to be more common and aurally recognizable. [History of Hymns](#)

Perfect Us in Love

This Charles Wesley text has its roots in the Hymns and Sacred Poems (1742), but the opening stanza of this setting by Taylor Burton-Edwards has often been overlooked in hymnals because of a syllabic issue in the fourth line related to the word “perfect.” We have found a way to work through this and present it to you here as a lead sheet, with a choice of either using the tune ST. AGNES (without the refrain composed by Taylor) or the new tune PERFECT US. This hymn can serve as a wonderful prayer related to sanctification and the journey toward Christian perfection. Accompany with a piano, guitar, or small instrumental ensemble. Be sure not to make the accompaniment too complex, or the gracefulness found in its simplicity will be muddled. The ideal key is D. The refrain alone would also make a great prayer response for your church, regardless of style of worship. View and download [Perfect Us In Love \(Burton-Edwards\)](#)

Come, Let Us Use the Grace Divine

Charles Wesley penned this classic hymn to lift up the covenant made between God and God’s people. A number of instrumental arrangements of the KINGSFOLD tune can be used, with a particular harmonization of interest found in *The United Methodist Hymnal Music Supplement II*, No. 103. Do not sing this tune too slowly, as it will lose energy and make the phrases too difficult to sing. To find a good tempo, consider that the musical phrase containing the text, “Come, let us use the grace divine, and all with one accord,” should be comfortably singable in one breath. The ideal accompaniment can vary since E minor is a great key for a number of instruments, including organ, piano, guitar, and wind instruments. [History of Hymns](#)

Jesus, We Look to Thee

This hymn text of Charles Wesley is available for free download from hymnary.org, and we recommend singing it with the tune ST. THOMAS (UMH, No. 540) as it was used in the 1968 uniting service of the United Methodist Church. Accompaniment with organ is ideal, but you might find some creative handbell options [here](#) for other ways to accompany. An alternate harmonization and vocal descant is included in *The United Methodist Hymnal Music Supplement*. It would also be possible to transpose the descant up one whole step for use with a Bb trumpet.

For All the Saints

A hymn well known and recognized for its frequent use on All Saints Sunday, this text and tune possess and command authority in the regal nature of their combination. Note that there are six stanzas for this hymn, so consider which ones might be appropriate for its use in the worship service. Many experienced organists already know this, but for those intimidated by the accompaniment for organ, this tune can be played entirely by the right hand and feet. The third line of the tune includes some optional left-hand notes, but they are not required. Whether organ or piano, be sure to play boldly and at a tempo in which the congregation can sing four-measure phrases comfortably. A suggested tempo would be at or near 104 bpm. A number of settings of this tune are also available for a variety of instruments, and you can find an arrangement for organ, brass, and tympani [here](#). If you have a need to sing this hymn a whole step lower in F Major, you can find a pdf or Sibelius file [on our site](#). [History of Hymns](#)

PREACHING

It started with a tornado warning.

I arrived in Fort Smith, Arkansas, the morning of January 21, 2018. I went straight to the hospital to see my mom, who had been there for a week, suffering from congestive heart failure. That afternoon the sky started to turn dark. When I went out in the early evening to take my suitcase to the house and pick up some dinner for my father and me to eat in the hospital room it was pouring down rain. I mean buckets. I could barely see to drive.

I made my way slowly back to the hospital. I'd been back for about thirty minutes when a nurse came into our room and told us we all needed to move into the hallway because a tornado warning had been issued. So we helped my mother into a wheelchair and rolled her into the hall. The hospital staff brought chairs for everyone to sit in and all of us, patients, staff and visitors, tried to make light of the situation. I kept an eye on the radar on my phone, reporting the latest developments to the people around us. We talked about how strange it was to have a tornado warning in January. After about forty-five minutes the warning expired and we heard the all-clear to return to our rooms. Fortunately, no tornadoes touched down in the area.

I start these notes with this story because in the season of Easter, it is from the beginning of our journey that our ending comes. On the first Sunday in this season, a week after Easter, we heard about the first gathered community of the church. The first congregation was a small group of men and women who had committed to a shared life and purpose:

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet and it was distributed to each as any had need" (Acts 4:32-35 NRSV).

My colleague Taylor Burton-Edwards calls this vision of the early faith community "the church in the flow state." It is an idealized picture of what life in the body of Christ can look like, at its very best. It is a vision of discipleship that is characterized by selflessness, grace, power, boldness, devotion, compassion, and an unyielding commitment to justice.

We began the season with the church in a "flow state" and here we close the season by celebrating Pentecost with a church in flow state. Here the flow state is not calm, selfless, and quiet. But it is like the other description because we are back to seeing unmistakable signs of the Holy Spirit. The gathering is filled with power: fire, water, chaos, darkness, blood and smoky mist. And we witness a gathering of people hearing the Good News of the resurrection of Jesus Christ proclaimed in ways everyone can understand—each in his or her own language.

How do we get our church today in flow state? How do we claim the power of the Holy Spirit anew? How do we capture the sense of selflessness, grace, devotion, compassion and commitment to justice, and also fuel ourselves with the amazing power experienced by the people who had come from all the ends of the earth to gather in Jerusalem for the celebration of Pentecost, and upon whom the Holy Spirit was poured out so that everyone was transformed?

Today, in addition to Pentecost, we United Methodists are marking the fiftieth anniversary of the United Methodist Church as we celebrate Heritage Sunday. It was on April 23, 1968, that the Methodist Church and the Evangelical Brethren Church officially joined together to become the United Methodist Church. As United Methodists we have traditionally celebrated this day each year on the third Sunday in May, to correspond with Aldersgate Day.

Aldersgate Day is celebrated on May 24 (or the Sunday closest) to commemorate the day in 1738 when John Wesley experienced assurance of his salvation. Wesley reluctantly attended a group meeting that evening on Aldersgate Street in London. As he heard a reading from Luther's Preface to the

Epistle to the Romans, he felt his "heart strangely warmed." Wesley wrote in his journal that at about 8:45 p.m. "while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

Charles Wesley only a few days before had also had a conversion experience in the same place. The building where the meetings took place no longer exists. Aldersgate Street has been shortened by common Methodist usage to simply Aldersgate. The word has come to represent both the place and the experience. (<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/what-is-aldersgate-day>)

The theme for the 2018 celebration of Heritage Sunday is "Proclaim Jubilee!" Jubilee is about reconciliation, forgiving of debts, release from slavery, and restoration of lands to their rightful owners so that all can move forward together in a spirit of peace.

It seems ironic, then, that as we celebrate fifty years as a denomination that we are awaiting a special called general conference this coming February to determine the fate of our union. Will there be a celebration of 51 years next May, or will we be unable as a body to find a way to reconcile, forgive the debts of those with whom we disagree, restore our lands to their rightful owners, and find a way forward together?

Pentecost is about the moment the church was born. It is about what the church of Jesus Christ is supposed to be. It is about the church in flow state. It is about the Holy Spirit bringing people together as one in spite of their differences: different cultures, different languages, different traditions, different beliefs, different interpretations, different theologies. Pentecost is about being unified in words, and in a salvation that is for all people.

And so we come to the end of the series, and the end of the season of Easter with the celebration of the church's beginning, we go forth rejoicing with great hope, proclaiming salvation for all people! Praise be to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit!

PLANNING NOTES **Reading Notes**

NRSV texts, artwork and [Revised Common Lectionary Prayers](#) for this service are available at the [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](#).

Leccionario en Español, [Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes](#).

Lectonnaire en français, [Le Lectionnaire Œcuménique Révisé](#)

Calendar Notes

May

All Month [Christian Home Month](#) (2018 Theme: Families Called to Peace, forthcoming)

[Asian Pacific American Heritage Month](#)

May 19-20 [Change the World Weekend](#)

May 20 [Day of Pentecost](#)

[Heritage Sunday](#)

May 24 [Aldersgate Day](#)

May 27 [Trinity Sunday](#)

[Peace with Justice Sunday](#)

May 28 [Memorial Day \(USA\)](#)

June

Pray for annual conferences convening throughout the month, for all receiving new appointments or assignments, for those leaving existing appointments or assignments, and for congregations and other ministries receiving new leadership.

June 3 **June Worship Series Begins: "Transitions"**

June 17 [Father's Day \(USA\)](#)

June 19 [Juneteenth \(USA\)](#)

July

July 1 **July Worship Series Begins: "Healing Hands"**

July 4 [Independence Day \(USA\)](#)

August

All Month [Back to School Resources](#)

August 5 **August Worship Series Begins: "Life Together"**

September

All Month [Season of Creation](#) (2018 Discipleship/UMCom Series coming soon)

September 3 [Labor Day \(USA\)](#)

September 15-

October 15 [Hispanic Heritage Month \(USA\)](#)

October

October 6 **October Series in Job (in development)**

[World Communion Sunday](#)

October 14 [Children's Sabbath](#)

October 21 **Laity Sunday (2018 Resources forthcoming)**

October 31 [Reformation Day](#)

November

November 1 [All Saints Day](#)

November 4 [All Saints Sunday](#)

[Daylight Saving Time Ends \(USA\)](#)

A Season of Saints (2018 Resources Forthcoming)

November 11 [Organ and Tissue Donor Sunday](#)

[International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church](#)

[Veteran's Day \(USA\)](#)
[Extended Advent Begins](#)
November 18 [Bible Sunday](#)
November 18-25 [National Bible Week \(USA\)](#)
November 22 [Thanksgiving Day \(USA\)](#)
November 25 [Christ the King/Reign of Christ Sunday](#)
[United Methodist Student Day \(offering\)](#)

**For Your Planning Team: And in the Power of the Holy Spirit...
Proclaim Jubilee!**

Planning for This Service

Today's service of Pentecost, the 50th day of Easter Season, (pentekosta is Greek for 50th) culminates both this series and the Easter Season with rich celebration of the many gifts and ministries the Spirit has poured out upon us, both within this congregation (recognized in the commissioning of laypersons to their ministries discerned through the formation group process these past weeks) and as members of The United Methodist Church, whose 50th anniversary we also recognize and celebrate this Heritage Sunday.

You will need to do some preparation of the video to use it properly in worship. The timings indicate which clips you may take from the video (using a typical video editor) or audio (using an audio editor on the video) or transcribe and perform live in worship. Video may be your best bet to get the full experience of that day at the opening of worship today, these 50 years later. If you don't have a display to show these clips, borrow one-- the simplest would be for someone simply to bring in a large flat panel TV. If you don't have a way to make the clips, find a congregation or anyone with video editing skills in your area to help you. This is a day for exceptional things.

The reading of scripture today has a strong role for congregational participation. Together you will recreate the experience of many voices in many languages declaring the word of God at once. The languages chosen are intentionally "foreign" to most US Christians, though they are among the many spoken by United Methodists in this country and around the world. Tagalog, Lingala, Swahili, and Portuguese are among the most spoken languages outside the US. Before worship begins, encourage congregation members to pick the one version they will speak, and simply to say it boldly and confidently as they can, seven times, when the time comes. It doesn't matter if they "get it right." It matters that they do it! The phonetic pronunciations provided will help.

Plan to discuss the logistics of the commissioning with your ushers so they are prepared with how to direct persons non-verbally (few things ruin strong ritual action more than giving stage directions before or after them!). And rehearse this action with all those being commissioned at this service 30 minutes or more prior to its start.

Stay in touch with the leader(s) of the formation group(s) to get the names of all the people being commissioned, and make sure there is at least a double invitation to all of

them to be part of the service-- one from the group leader, and one from the pastor. Again, these invitations should be personal, by phone or visit. Each person's gifts and ministries are unique. Invite each uniquely.

After worship, continue the celebration with a birthday party-- for the whole Church, as Pentecost marks its birthing, for The United Methodist Church, in this 50th year since its creation, and of the new ministries into which persons have been commissioned in this service. This may mean at least three birthday cakes!

Finally, remember that series end marks also the opportunity to invite persons to the series next to come.

Here's a map for our next series, "Transitions," a title chosen because many of us are making transitions during this month-- through weddings, or graduations, or changes in appointments, or just beginning the "summer" as opposed to the school year.

Transitions

Week 1: May 27 Life in the Trinity: Prologue to Post Pentecost
Romans 8:12-17

Week 2: June 3 WHAT? (is changing, is God doing)
I Samuel 2:1-10

Week 3: June 10 WHY? (when transition is unwanted)
I Samuel 8:4-11, 16-20

Week 4: June 17 WHO? (will lead us?)
I Samuel 15:34-16:13

Week 5: June 24 HOW? (will our next stage go? will our new leader lead?)
I Samuel 17:32-49

Additional Resources for this Service

[2015 Planning Helps for these readings](#)

[Ecumenical Prayer Cycle](#): (Click link to find countries for this week when they are posted)