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:

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*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,
and what life now looks like in his name. Amen.

SENDING FORTH
He Lives UMH 310 or
O Praise the Name (Anástasis) CCLI# 7037787
Deacon or Pastor:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Go in the name of Jesus to testify in word and deed of his resurrection!

People: Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!

MUSIC NOTES

Camina, Pueblo de Dios (Walk On, O People of God)
Many people now know of the work of Cesareo Gabarain because of his hymn, “Tú Has Venido a la Orilla” (Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore). “Camina, Pueblo de Dios” is just as interesting and engaging, although in a different character. Gabarain lived in Spain, so the image of walking, as in the Camino de Santiago de Compostela (The Way of St. James) was surely at the forefront of his own spiritual journey. Walking has a rhythm, and the rhythm in this hymn text and tune is somewhat defiant. Engage the congregation by walking in place or, if they are willing, walking around the worship space in an orderly fashion while singing the tune. The recommended tempo would be somewhere around dotted quarter note = 68. Accompany with a piano, guitar, or rhythm section with plenty of percussion (shakers, congas, etc.). If the Spanish is too difficult, consider teaching only the refrain in Spanish. It is also possible to have a soloist sing the stanzas while the congregation sings the refrain only, whether in Spanish or English. History of Hymns

We Are Called
This hymn by David Haas begins with an invitation, “Come! Live in the light,” that is offered not just to the congregation, but to all who would hear the good news of Christ’s resurrection. It is a good reminder that when we engage congregations in singing, the invitation to sing must be done with a spirit of sharing and encouraging. If the key seems to be a little bit too high, it would be possible to easily transpose to Ab without having to work too hard. However, if playing with guitar, it might be best to leave in the key of A. The inclusion of triplets in the accompaniment highlight the need to swing the rhythms throughout, and the recommended tempo is around quarter note = 92. It is also difficult to figure out what to do with the last note of this song because it lasts so long on the page. I would recommend not holding longer than two measures. This will also give the worship leader time to gesture in a welcoming fashion at the beginning of the next stanza, rather than simply ending the refrain with a desperately needed breath before continuing. The recommended accompaniment is piano and/or guitar, or a small band. However, it is also possible to sing with organ! History of Hymns

Mighty to Save
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.
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 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
I 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](https://library.vanderbilt.edu).


**Calendar Notes**

| 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 Epiclesis. 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

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.

For the past two football seasons, starting in the fall of 2016, Americans have witnessed a public action that has galvanized the nation. The action I am referring to is the growing number of football players who have chosen to take a knee in protest during the singing of the national anthem at the start of games. Initially this movement grew as an effort to protest police brutality and racial inequality in the United States. Inspired by the protests against police brutality after the deaths of several black men through shootings by police, San Francisco 49ers quarterback, Colin Kaepernick first protested by remaining
seated during the singing of the national anthem in the 2016 preseason. Over the 2016 season and into 2017, the protesters grew in numbers, and the form changed from remaining seated to taking a knee.

Some have judged these players as unpatriotic. There have even been a few who suggested that anyone who takes a knee during the singing of the anthem at a football game should be fired or not allowed to play.

But I want to suggest that no matter what our personal feelings are about this action, as followers of Jesus Christ we should defend the right of individuals to protest against injustice. These players are protesting with their bodies. They are refusing to be silent about something they feel is harmful to God’s people. They are refusing to be complicit in killing Jesus. They are showing that their allegiance is to justice over and above their allegiance to any flag, symbol, or nation.

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 him 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.

How do we participate in killing Jesus? 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 of some of my neighbors, because of my own preconceived notions and prejudices?
- Have I contributed to his death 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 may participate in things that kill Jesus, but 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 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](http://example.com).


Calendar Notes

**April**

April 15  [Native American Ministries Sunday](http://example.com)

April 22  [Festival of God’s Creation](http://example.com)

April 25  [World Malaria Day](http://example.com)

**May**

*All Month*  [Christian Home Month](http://example.com) (2018 Theme: Families Called to Peace, forthcoming)

[Asian Pacific American Heritage Month](http://example.com)
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 and 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 (RSV)

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
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. Correcting gender identity 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.

Lectionnaire 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)