

HOLY WEEK: LOVE LEADS THE WAY

Series Overview

Holy Week is the heart of the church's ritual, theological, and missional life. Everything we do in worship, doctrine and mission is grounded in, leads to, and springs from this week. The life and mission of Jesus meet their fullest test. Jesus stares directly into the face of the structures of sin and the powers of death and remains true to his calling and the work of God's kingdom. Jesus is executed by crucifixion. Three days later, God raises Jesus from death in sure and certain pledge of raising all who are found in him. Everything is here. Life, sin, love, death, life and love overcoming sin and death. This week remembers, enacts, and participates in the hope of the renewing of all creation, starting with our lives and loves, here and now.

That is why these eight days from Passion/Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday include more worship services for the whole congregation than any other time of the Christian year. Many United Methodists will participate in at least five distinct services during these eight days: Passion/Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, a sunrise service on Easter Sunday morning, and a "main" Easter Sunday service. Some United Methodists join the larger church in adding two more to this calendar: a Holy Saturday vigil of silence and lament ([some on Twitter, at #holysat18](#) at 10 a.m. ET on March 31) and the [Great Vigil of Easter](#), on which the later development of sunrise services is based.

The sheer number of services is impressive, and for worship planners and leaders, a bit daunting every year. But what's more significant is the intensity of the journey these services take us through. Hope, community, betrayal, trial, execution, death, burial, watching at the grave, and the disturbing or even terrifying surprise of resurrection and an empty tomb meet us through this week. And in gathering to observe them all, we open ourselves to the many ways the Holy Spirit has been active, is active, and will be active in the church and world throughout history, in our own lives, and in the lives of those who follow us in seeking to live the way of Jesus in generations to come.

As United Methodists who follow in the footsteps of the Wesleys, we know the power of such ritual in gathered community through this week will take deeper root in our own lives if we also practice the means of grace of family and private prayer. That is why our series of resources for Holy Week also includes guidance for ways to observe family or private prayer using the lectionary readings for each day, Monday through Wednesday.

And throughout this Holy Week, we are following up specifically on our Lenten theme of Rehab in a particular way. Rehab in nearly every form is about helping us get in touch with our bodies either more deeply or to restore our touch with our bodies after a crisis has severed or seriously impaired the connection. As Christians baptized into the apostolic faith, we affirm "resurrection of flesh," to translate the Greek of the Apostles Creed most directly. This is a radically incarnational affirmation of the goodness of creation and the ways our bodies are mediators of divine grace and truth to ourselves and others, just as the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We await the fullness of

what resurrection of flesh means and will mean for us all, but we have all experienced a taste of it already through the Lenten journey of spiritual Rehab we have walked together. And we will experience it even more as we continue that journey through the week now before us.

If we will take it, and take it seriously, and take the journey together with the body of Christ, Christ leading the way for us.

Our Rehab so far brings us to this very point. We have gotten back in touch with our bodies, with the goodness and truth, as well as the distortions and self-deceptions, they and we are capable of. We are prepped now to walk through the most painful part of this journey with Jesus and each other, his final days of challenge, suffering, torture, pain, agony, loss, and death. When we consider what is coming, we can choose to stay in touch with all we are experiencing, individually and together, or to disconnect, shut down our feelings. Rehab has been teaching us to stay connected, to experience it all, to take it all in, be moved by it, and trust ourselves to God's grace and each other through it.

And to do so confident that love leads the way... even through this.

The Main Services

Palm/Passion Sunday recapitulates the beginning and the end of Christ's final week in Jerusalem. We move from a triumphal procession and its stirring of hope as our entrance rite to hearing of a very different kind of procession, a forced march with a crucifix, to conclude it.

Holy Thursday, or Maundy Thursday, marks the last conversation Jesus has with his disciples, a conversation grounded in what he calls a new commandment (*mandatum* in Latin, hence our English word "Maundy"). He illustrates and underscores the new commandment by washing their feet: "Love one another as I have loved you."

Good Friday, or Holy Friday as it is known in nearly every non-English-speaking culture, we witness the execution of Jesus, recognize our ongoing complicity with the powers of death, and are called to enter the Great Silence of all creation in response to the death of its God and Maker.

Easter Sunrise is an early morning service built on the framework of the Great Vigil of Easter. It moves from contemplation to celebration.

Easter Sunday is the principal Easter Sunday morning service of word and sacrament celebrating the resurrection of Jesus and kicking off the Easter Season of 50 days (through the Day of Pentecost).

The Weekday Devotionals

Monday through Wednesday resources are designed to help you and those with whom

you choose to gather to spend time with the scriptures for each day, particularly the gospel reading, and to get deeply in touch with the events of that day through a particular sensory mode. Monday will be about hearing. Tuesday will be about seeing. Wednesday will be about physical sensation, including touch.

Links to Additional Services

Holy Saturday is a daytime (late morning, early afternoon) service of silence before the tomb of Jesus, occasionally punctuated by readings from Scripture and prayer. For more about this service, and a link to complete script you may use with whomever you gather or on Twitter (including hashtags and audio links to the readings), see “[Holy Saturday: The Great Silence.](#)”

The Great Vigil of Easter reflects the most ancient and continuing practices of Easter worship from the early Church to today. Like Holy Week in general, this service has everything: Fire, Word, Water, and Table. We have many resources to support it. If you have never offered such a service before, consider taking a group from your church to another one (notably Episcopal, Roman Catholic, or Lutheran) with long experience in doing so. Then bring the wisdom of your experience to the resources offered by United Methodists and the awareness of your particular context to design your own service for next year.

[Book of Worship Service](#)

[Brief Service](#) (Taylor Burton-Edwards)

[Preparing for the Easter Vigil](#) (Dwight W. Vogel)

[Reflecting on the Easter Vigil](#) (Dwight W. Vogel)

HOLY WEEK: LOVE LEADS THE WAY
PALM/PASSION SUNDAY
March 25, 2018

FULL SERVICE

ENTRANCE

The service begins outdoors, weather permitting. Gather in a narthex or fellowship hall for the opening of this service if necessary.

People are given palm branches or fronds as they enter and invited to wave them during the singing and while processing into the worship space.

King of Kings

TFWS 2075

(3X, starting slowly, increasing speed each time)

Reading

Mark 11:1-11

Processional to Doors of the Worship Space

King of Kings (Reprise)

Clergy enter the doors of the worship space and stand in the doorway. A lay leader stays on the other side, with the people.

Psalm

Psalm 118: 1-2, 19-29

Lay Leader: Open to me the gates of righteousness
that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.

Pastor: This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it.
(Lay Leader and People enter the space.)

Procession into the Worship Space

King of Kings (Reprise)

The lay leader turns to face the congregation upon arrival at the front of the worship space. The pastor continues to face the Lord's table.

Lay Leader: I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.
The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

People: This is the Lord's doing. It is marvelous in our eyes!

All: This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

All Glory, Laud and Honor
He Has Made Me Glad

UMH 280 OR
TFWS 2270 (2X)

Pastor (facing the Lord's table, back to the people, arms raised):
Save us, we beseech you, O Lord!
O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!

People:

**Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
We bless you from the house of the Lord.**

Lay Leader (*facing the people*):

The Lord is God, and has given us light.

Bind the festal procession with branches up to the altar.

Children may place palm branches immediately in front of the Lord's table.

Pastor (*facing table*):

You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;
you are my God, I will extol you.

Pastor (*turns, facing people*):

O give thanks to the Lord, for God is good;

People: God's steadfast love endures forever!

Refrain of All Glory, Laud and Honor OR
He Has Made Me Glad

UMH 280
TFWS 2270

WORD AND RESPONSE

Brief Word about the Psalm and Procession

(See Sermon Notes for detail)

Hosanna

W&S 3079 st 1-2

Reading

Philippians 2:5-11

Sermon

"The Physicality of Holy Week"

Hosanna

W&S 3079 st 3-4 (sung slowly)

THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION

Invitation

Jesus Christ invites to his table
all who seek to walk with him
in harmony with all people,
whether in triumph,
in humility,
or the many ways our world creates
to crucify.

So that we may come to his table,
let us confess how we have walked in ways
that lead to decay, destruction, and death.

Confession of Sin

**We know how Jesus leads his followers,
and where he leads.**

Left Side:

He leads crowds to marvel at your love.

Right Side:

We lead crowds to marvel at our power.

High voices:

**He proclaims good news
to people who are sick, poor and outcast.**

Low voices:

**We proclaim good news
to people who are well, wealthy and well-connected.**

Younger voices:

His way does not flinch in the face of violence that may destroy him.

Older voices:

Our way embraces violence to protect ourselves from destruction.

ALL:

We have gone astray.

**We seek your grace,
to turn, cleanse, and forgive us
our transgression.**

**Set us again to be led by love
that springs from your throne
and makes all things new. Amen.**

Silence

Pastor:

**It is the sure and certain will and delight of our God
that the mind which was in Christ Jesus
be also in us.**

**In the name of Jesus,
receive God's forgiveness, cleansing and restoration.**

People:

**In the name of Jesus,
receive God's forgiveness, cleansing, and restoration.**

Hosanna in the highest. Amen.

Pastor:

You are at peace with God in Jesus Christ.
Share Christ's peace now with one another,
and the fruits of your loving labor with all the world.

The people exchange the peace of Christ as the offering is collected.

Music during the Offering and Peace

Of the Father's Love Begotten
Lead Me to the Cross

UMH 184
CCLI# 4785828

The Great Thanksgiving

W&T IV, paraphrased (Taylor Burton-Edwards)

Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts. *The pastor may lift hands and keep them raised.*

We lift them in the Spirit's love.

Let us give thanks to our Triune God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and good
at all times and in all places
to give you thanks,
Holy and Eternal One,
full of compassion, and abounding in steadfast love,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

He was in every way tempted as we are, yet did not sin.
By his grace we have been given power to triumph over every evil,
no longer living for ourselves,
but for him who died for us, and rose again.

Therefore we exalt you and glorify you,
joining our voices
with the chorus of angels and archangels,
and all the company of heaven
who forever declare your praise:

The pastor may lower hands. The people say:

**Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts:
Heaven and earth are full of your glory!
All glory be to you, Most High!
Blessed is the Lamb who comes in your name.
Hosanna in the highest!**

The pastor may raise hands.

Almighty God, full of mercy,
you gave your only Son, Jesus Christ,
to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption.
By offering himself there, once for all,
he broke the power of sin and death,
and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

**And so we offer and present to you ourselves,
our souls and bodies,
in this holy and lively sacrifice of thanksgiving,
remembering before you all you have done to save us
in the way Jesus instructed his disciples:**

When, on the night that he was betrayed,
he took bread, gave thanks to you,
broke it, and gave it to them, saying,
**"Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me."**

Then, after supper, he took the cup;
gave thanks to you,
and gave it to them, saying,
**"Drink from this, all of you;
this is my blood of the New Covenant
poured out for you and for many;
whenever you do this, do it in remembrance of me."**

The pastor may hold hands, palms down, over the bread and cup.

Hear us, most merciful God,
and bless and sanctify with your Word and Holy Spirit
your people gathered here and these gifts of bread and wine.

Make us who receive them

to be partakers in the divine nature.

**Empower us to walk in newness of life,
that we may grow into Christ's likeness,
and forever dwell in him, and he in us.**

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
by whom, and with whom,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honor and glory are yours,
One God throughout all ages. **Amen.**

BREAKING THE BREAD

The pastor, still standing behind the Lord's table facing the people, breaks the bread and then lifts the cup, in silence or with appropriate words.

Then the congregation may say or sing:

**Lamb of God, you have borne the sin of the world,
have mercy upon us.**

**Lamb of God, you have borne the sin of the world,
have mercy upon us.**

**Lamb of God, you have borne the sin of the world,
grant us your peace.**

GIVING THE BREAD AND CUP

When the bread is given, one or both of the following sentences are said:

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, given for you,
the pledge of everlasting life.

Eat in remembrance that Christ gave himself for you,
and feed on him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving.

When the cup is given, one or both of the following sentences are said:

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, given for you,
the pledge of everlasting life.

Drink in remembrance that Christ gave his life for you,
and be thankful.

Music during Communion

What Wondrous Love is This
Beneath the Cross of Jesus
Salvation Story

UMH 292, st. 1-3
UMH 297
[\(DOWNLOAD\)](#)

OR

Come Save
The Wonderful Cross
Salvation Story

CCLI# 5474578
CCLI# 3148435
[\(DOWNLOAD\)](#)

Thanksgiving after Communion

Pastor and People:

**Triune God,
you have fed us with the body and blood of Christ,
uniting us with you,
and setting us on your way in peace.
In the power of the Holy Spirit,
send us forth to take up our cross
and follow where Jesus leads. Amen.**

SENDING FORTH

Silent Procession by Worship Leaders (choir, band, clergy) to the Doors

Reading

Mark 14:1-15:39

Deacon or Pastor:

Go in peace.

The people depart in silence.

MUSIC NOTES

King of Kings

This short, cyclical canon is a wonderful addition to the congregational singing repertoire and a prime example of lively music in the *klezmer* style. The tune of this short text is a Hebrew folk song, but its bouncy rhythm and wailing character allow this work to give life to singing in worship. For the purposes of worship this week, we encourage you to begin slowly and allow it to gradually speed up as the procession begins and energy increases. Since it would begin outside (or at least in another location in the church building), I would recommend accompaniment with portable instruments such as a tambourine or hand drum, and a melodic instrument such as a recorder or clarinet. You will find that the clarinet, especially played one octave higher, will add to the Eastern European flair of the *klezmer* style. If you choose to sing in

canon, be sure to have choir members and/or melodic instruments supporting both parts 1 and 2. Also be sure to engage any dancers--whether children, youth, or adults--within your congregation to lead the procession! Their energy will help participants respond positively to this ritual action.

All Glory, Laud, and Honor

The very tune of this hymn is a regal pairing with the text by Theodulph of Orleans as translated by John Mason Neale. Because it is one of the most used hymns on Palm Sunday across many Christian traditions, there are also plenty of resources available for a variety of musical settings. See websites of the following publishers to learn more about what might be available for handbells, instrumental music, and/or adult, youth, and children's choirs:

- Handbellworld.com
- Choristersguild.org
- jwpepper.com

Other websites also feature settings of this hymn, too, so do your homework! Find an arrangement that can work for your setting. If singing without multiple instruments, organ makes the best accompaniment to keep the character bold. Find a 2-octave handbell setting of ST. THEODULPH [here](#) (keep in mind that this is not a suitable key for congregational singing. It is intended for handbells only). For a vocal descant for this hymn, click [here](#).

[History of Hymns](#)

He Has Made Me Glad

This hymn of praise includes texts from Psalm 100 and 118, the latter of which is recommended as a part of today's lectionary scriptures. Be aware, though, that as the title indicates, masculine language is contained throughout. In order for the character of this congregational song to find fullness, the tempo must be kept lively and no slower than quarter note = 112. Any combination of instruments--from organ/piano to full band and any ensemble in between--can support the singing. If you are in the search for another setting of Psalm 118:24 and are used to singing "This Is the Day," "He Has Made Me Glad" can serve as a substitute.

Hosanna

Jim Strathdee has created this simple, call-and-response song that contains the language of Palm Sunday and commitments to welcome and follow Christ. The tune is very gentle and lilting, but the first stanza of "Hosannas" can be sung with more fervor if desired. Melodically, it slightly resembles the well known song, "Frère Jacques," and it is equally as easy to sing. Accompany with piano or organ, but if you know the Strathdees, you will also know that guitar and a possible solo wind instrument in this folk style is also welcomed.

Of the Father's Love Begotten

Singing plainchant in The United Methodist Church has not traditionally been a popular form of congregational singing, but utilizing plainchant melodies and also bring a great deal of creativity to the worship service. I have sung this with congregations and

all ages of choirs, and it is always a favorite. However, there is a little bit of skill required in leading it. Looking at the setting of it in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, it would be very easy to play and sing it rigidly. I would advocate singing it in unison with a D or D/A pedalpoint from the organ or piano. Add in a random ring from handbells using D, F#, A, and B, or if your organ has a zimbelstern, feel free to use it as a part of the accompaniment. If instrumental accompaniment is used, only include a pedalpoint and the melody with no additional harmony. Sing each phrase freely, and take enough time to get a good breath at the end of each measure. Alternate the singing between women and men, or alternating sides of the sanctuary seating. Using plainchant in creative ways can add a spark to your worship services that chorale-style hymn settings simply cannot do. If desired, click [here](#) for another setting using a traditional Polish tune.

[History of Hymns](#)

Lead Me to the Cross

Using this song from Hillsong Music Publishing creates an ideal pivot point in this service as the movement turns from palms to passion. Even though this song can be used congregationally, it is also appropriate in this style to have it sung as a solo or piece with band and praise team. Accompaniment can vary from solo piano or guitar to full band. Regardless, do not double the melody with the instrumental accompaniment. Allow the voice to stand alone, with other vocalists on melody and harmony. A trend in many live performance and concert venues today is for the audience/congregation to join in a repetitive vocal ostinato during the bridge. It would be possible for the congregation to sing the “to your heart” line and for the soloist to ornament the melody above that line. Even if this is a solo work, put in the time to find ways to engage the congregation past mere listening.

What Wondrous Love

This familiar American folk tune and shape-note melody can be presented in a variety of ways, from a chorale-like setting in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, to a darker, more minimalist approach with singing akin to the plainchant before (D/A pedalpoint and unison melody). If this is the way you plan to sing this hymn, begin with a solo voice for a stark quality that sits in paradox to the “wondrous love” of the hymn itself. Since this is a largely pentatonic melody, it is also possible to sing in canon, with 2 or 3 parts entering one measure apart. Accompany with piano, organ, guitar, or string and wind instruments, or sing a cappella. This hymn, as is the case with many shape-note compositions, is quite versatile. [History of Hymns](#)

Beneath the Cross

Written by nineteenth-century Scottish hymn writer, Elizabeth Clephane, this hymn offers comfort at the cross of Jesus and continues the move toward the passion narrative. Jesus is seen as the “mighty rock within a weary land,” “a home within the wilderness,” and “a rest upon the way.” Singing this during Holy Communion creates a space for grace and offers a gaze toward the crucifixion. Accompany with organ or piano. However, for those churches with bands, you may be surprised how many in your congregation know this hymn. Because the tune centers on a few primary chords,

it is easy to accompany this with a simple lead sheet. For a simple 2-octave setting of this hymn arranged by Dean McIntyre, click [here](#). [History of Hymns](#)

Come Save

We cannot ignore the irony of the chants of “Hosanna” at the beginning of this service. Singing this hymn at the end of this service allows us to revisit those chants and more deeply understand what would eventually happen when Jesus was crucified. The tune is very singable, but it might involve some teaching--maybe in previous weeks or other venues within the church. The verses themselves are fairly repetitive, but it might be ideal to welcome the congregation to sing only on the chorus if it is unfamiliar. Accompany with piano, guitar, or full band. The ideal key is D minor.

The Wonderful Cross

One of the reasons “The Wonderful Cross” is so popular is because of its inclusion of a long-favorite hymn, “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.” Similar in style to “Amazing Grace/My Chains Are Gone,” Chris Tomlin and others have continued the tradition of using a familiar hymn and adding a chorus. This hymn in particular is very simple because it only contains the original stanzas of the hymn and the new chorus, with no bridge or additional material. It can be accompanied by a variety of instruments from piano/organ to full band, and the ideal key is D. Make sure not to double the melody in the chorus with the instrumental accompaniment. The syncopation found in that section can easily become bogged down and clumsy when that occurs. For more commentary from a Wesleyan perspective, be sure to visit the [CCLI Top 100 project](#) and search for this song.

Salvation Story

I have created this new hymn as a way to trace the path of the salvation narrative through scripture. It is a simple song that was composed on the planning retreat for the Holy Week resources and contains two choruses, one for use on Palm Sunday and one for Easter Sunday. From creation to exile, this short song moves toward a chorus of Hosannas and Alleluias. Accompaniment can be as simple as a solo guitar or piano, or as complex as a full band. Ideal key can range from D to E, depending on the singing range of your congregation. The score is presented in Eb. Download Salvation Story [here](#).

PREACHING NOTES

Brief Commentary on Psalm 118:

As we begin the liturgical marathon of Holy Week, let us be led not by fear, but by love. We enter into the week, and we enter into the story, bearing witness as Jesus passes by. But we don't just watch. We go with him, in body, heart, mind and spirit.

Here in the Psalm we move our bodies into a festal procession to the altar of sacrifice: “The LORD is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar” (Psalm 118, 27. NRSV). In the Epistle we join our voices in

an ancient hymn, singing to keep our voices in steady rhythm with our Lord and with each other as we begin the walk through Holy Week. In the Gospel we bear witness to a literal parade of onlookers. We enact the ritual as we envision the crowds of people throwing their cloaks on the ground before the passing king, and waving evergreen branches as they shout “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” (Mark 11:9b-10, NRSV).

Let us join in the celebration! Let us walk with Jesus! Let us shout Hosanna as we bid welcome to the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

And most of all, let us join with him—physically, spiritually, emotionally, completely—in the journey he calls us to take with him.

Sermon Notes on Mark 11:1-11

For the past year I have been encouraging those who occupy United Methodist pulpits across the United States, and indeed, around the globe, to talk about the reality of the world we are living in today. This means talking about politics, and racism, and misogyny, and gender identity, and homosexuality, and sexual harassment, and the environment, and poverty, and gun control, and hunger, and war, and the growing division between the warring factions in our world, in our local communities, in our congregations, in our families, and in our denomination.

Lots of times when I have these conversations with pastors, they respond that while this seems like a good idea in theory, the reality is they can't say certain “trigger” words from their pulpits. They talk about how important it is to not reveal their own opinions and beliefs about politics or potentially divisive issues. Some even say that talking about politics has no place in worship. I do not agree. I think it is critical that we speak truth to power from our pulpits. It is necessary right now. And there are ways to do it well, just as there are things that are not appropriate. I have offered webinars. I have written sermon notes with suggestions about how to incorporate difficult conversations into preaching. I have partnered with colleagues to talk about how to create brave spaces for difficult conversations to take place.

So today I want to encourage those of you who step up to take the pulpit on Sunday mornings. I know that you wrestle with preaching on these difficult and politicized topics. I know that you lose sleep on those Saturday nights, and worry if your parishioners will miss your message. But take courage and take authority in your pulpit! Be ready for the hard conversations that may follow. Leave your office door and your heart open to someone who may come to you, angry or confused. Do not be dismayed as we delve into the idea that there is no possible way to ignore the political implications of the act of Jesus Christ riding into Jerusalem on a donkey.

Charles L. Campbell states it plainly when he writes that Mark's version of the story of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the back of a colt is "one of the wildest and most politically explosive acts of Jesus' ministry. The story is a reminder of the political challenge of Jesus' ministry, as well as the political character of Christian praise. The event should not be limited to an opening processional in which people smile at cute children waving palm branches" (Charles L. Campbell, *Exegetical Perspective on Mark 11:1-11 for Palm Sunday, Year B. Feasting on the Word, Year B, Volume 2, WORDsearch Edition.*)

Campbell suggests that we should pay close attention not only to the final part of the story, in which Jesus rides into Jerusalem amidst the crowds of people who throw palm branches and cloaks along his path, but also the careful, and intentional preparation that leads up to this moment. For Campbell, the planning reveals as much as the actual ride.

Campbell characterizes Jesus' actions as an orchestrated "lampoon" of the political establishment in Jerusalem intended to turn worldly notions of power upside down. It is a public act of subversion. And clearly it worked. For after his procession it would be only a few days before Jesus was arrested, tried, convicted, and executed for his treasonous act.

Campbell paints a picture of how Jesus' parody of worldly kingship would have played out for the crowds. Beginning on the Mount of Olives, which is the traditional place from which people expected the final military campaign for Jerusalem's liberation to begin, Jesus doesn't adorn himself with armor or mount a war horse. He chooses instead to ride this traditional war path astride a colt. Campbell imagines Jesus as a full grown man sitting awkwardly on top of a pile of old clothes on a pony, with his legs dangling down and possibly even dragging on the ground. He comes not as a military hero, but as one of the poor, the downtrodden, the vulnerable. Through this act he communicates his intent to both the political powers and those they oppress. Physically, spiritually, emotionally, and personally he aligns himself with the least among us. He chooses not just to stand with the poor, but to join with them in their walk, no matter where the road leads.

And he calls his disciples to join him in this march. Physically.

It's no wonder they were terrified. It's no wonder that as the week played out they would come to deny knowing him, and then lock themselves in a room and hide in order to save themselves after his execution.

Jesus' action that we gather to enact this morning is not of a pretty parade scene with children smiling and laughing and singing and waving palm branches in a sanctuary. This action is political. It is bold. It is divisive. It is physical. And it is deadly.

Politics is physical. Loving others is physical. Talking, hurting, disagreeing, shedding tears, becoming angry, putting boots on the ground to go into the military, or the mission field, or to march in protest on behalf of another—these acts involve our bodies.

BEGIN SIDEBAR

James K.A. Smith on Cultural Liturgies

By Dawn Chesser

Scholar James K. A. Smith argues that human beings are fundamentally liturgical animals; that is, humans are creatures that, like any other animal, are formed and shaped first and foremost by their physical actions or habits. The things humans *do*, the regular practices in which they participate, fundamentally shape how they see the world and choose to live. Smith further argues that humans are shaped most profoundly by what they love, and what they love, in turn, gives shape to who they become. Smith suggests that the worship of God in the context of an embodied Christian community shapes us profoundly by pointing us to love God in Jesus Christ as our primary relationship. Throughout his work Smith stresses the “power of practices—communal, embodied rhythms, rituals, and routines that over time quietly and unconsciously prime and shape our desires and most fundamental longings.”^[1]

The formation of a Christian identity is not, for Smith, primarily an intellectual pursuit in the present age. He proposes that for the body of Christ to function (and, indeed, survive) in the context of a postmodern worldview, we must intentionally displace “our naive ‘intellectualism’ (whereby we mistakenly assume that we *think* our way into action)” with a newfound appreciation of “the *bodily basis of worship*.”^[2]

At the heart of Smith’s argument is the “conviction that our incarnating, accommodating God meets us *in and through*” our creaturely conditions: our embodiment, our finitude, our sociality, the complexity of our being-in-the-world, and the different ways we intend our world by the way we live in it.^[3] In Smith’s mind, God incarnate is the ultimate accommodation to our human condition. He is seeking to push against earlier philosophical worldviews that would begin with “I think therefore I am,” and replace them with “I do, therefore I am.” His basic premise is that what we *do*, how we act, and how we live, are in fact not consequences of intellectual formation, but rather they are products of repeated embodied ritual action. Smith’s goal is to help those of us living within a postmodern philosophical worldview understand that faith in God is not a matter of learning right thinking through intellectual pursuit. Rather, faith in God is the result of what we *do*, particularly what we do in the regular ritual practice of physically gathering for worship. This, says Smith, is what fundamentally shapes us as Christian people.

Smith wants to push against the popular notion, espoused primarily by the church growth movement, that the purpose of attending worship on Sunday morning is to hear an inspiring sermon or enjoy a great musical concert. Certainly those things may occur in the context of worship. But the primary purpose of worship is to shape individuals into

the body of Christ for the transformation of the world.^[4] Worship is thus, for Smith as for others, primarily about liturgical formation.

Smith concludes from his discussion of philosophy in a postmodern world that when the worship of God is reduced to a commodity that exists primarily for the benefit of giving something to those who are attending (such as information, entertainment, a nugget of inspiration, or a feeling of being forgiven of sin because we have consumed bread and wine that reminded us of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross), then its primary purpose shifts from being for God to being entirely for us. What did I receive from the service? Was I inspired? Did the pastor say something that made me angry or represent a viewpoint different from my own? Did I get some good advice that was relevant for my own personal life and situation? Did the sermon make me laugh or cry? Did it make me feel spiritually fed? Were my fundamental values and lifestyle choices affirmed? Did I enjoy the style of music or was it not suited to my particular taste?

Smith wants to reframe the popular notion that effective worship means drawing crowds by focusing on pleasing the customer. He does this by insisting that worship is not a commodity to be consumed; it is not a show or a genre of entertainment. He argues that worship is in fact more akin to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting than it is a theater production. For Smith, the worship of God is not fundamentally about *receiving* something. Rather, it is the *participation in worship with others* that creates an experience in which the Spirit of Christ is made manifest in the body that gathers in his name.

END SIDEBAR

Loving others in the way of Jesus is embodied. It is political. It is active.

Being the body of Christ is physical because Jesus is physical. He is God in flesh. Emmanuel. God with us. Physically dead, physically raised, physically present with us in the faces and bodies of the poor, the downtrodden, the oppressed, the hurting, the dying, and the recovering. Physically present on the faces of people being deported, or living in war zones and refugee camps. Physically present in the terrified bodies of people running from gunspray at a country music concert. Physically present in the raised arms of people protesting in the streets. Physically present in the world and in the body of Christ as we seek to love God, love our neighbors, and love ourselves.

As disciples of Jesus Christ we must embrace Jesus' call to embody our love through our physical actions. We can't refuse. We can't deny. We can't close our eyes or look away. We can't back off out of fear. We must follow Jesus straight through the screaming crowds as he confronts the power structures of the world that would place its treasures in the hands of a very few while leaving the majority of God's creatures suffering.

As we begin the walk of Holy Week with our Lord, let us focus on the importance of the physical: fully embodying the rituals of our faith tradition in both ancient and modernized ways. As we listen to the story of our Lord's passion, let us enter fully into the physicality

of suffering and death, that we may also enter fully into the physicality of resurrection come Easter morning.

[1] James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 4.

[2] *Ibid.*, 21.

[3] *Ibid.*, 33.

PLANNING NOTES

HOLY WEEK: LOVE LEADS THE WAY

Palm/Passion Sunday

Reading Notes

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

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

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

Calendar Notes

Holy Week: LOVE LEADS THE WAY Palm/Passion Sunday

The most intense week in the Christian year begins today.

The color may change today from purple to red. Red continues to be used through Holy Thursday/Maundy Thursday.

Starting with Good Friday and until the first service of Easter you celebrate, there should be no color. It is customary to “strip the sanctuary” immediately following or just before the sending from the Holy Thursday/Maundy Thursday service, removing not only all paraments, but all other adornments from the worship space. This includes all altarware, banners, flowers, candles, and any items on the Lord’s table. If there is a permanent cross on the walls, they are customarily covered (not merely draped), typically in black. So are processional crosses if you intend to use them during this time.

March

All Month: [Women’s History Month](#)

March 25 [Passion/Palm Sunday](#)
Holy Week Series Begins
March 29 [Maundy/Holy Thursday](#)
March 30 [Good Friday](#)
March 31 [Holy Saturday](#) (until Sundown)
Easter Eve/[Easter Vigil](#) (after Sundown)

April

April 1 [Easter Day](#)
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](#) (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 17 [Father's Day](#) (USA)
June 19 [Juneteenth](#) (USA)

July

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

August

All Month [Back to School Resources](#)

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 [World Communion Sunday](#)
October 14 [Children's Sabbath](#)
October 21 **Laity Sunday (2018 Resources forthcoming)**
October 31 [Reformation Day](#)

For Your Planning Team:

Holy Week: LOVE LEADS THE WAY

Palm/Passion Sunday

In This Series

Holy Week begins, now.

This is the most intense week in the Christian year. It confronts us with the violence we inflict upon each other and our faithlessness toward God, juxtaposed dramatically against the love of God and the hope God's kingdom offers our world.

Additional resources support the journey Monday through Wednesday with whomever you gather, whether family at home, friends at school or work, or just you before God with the scriptures for each day. Your Lenten formational groups may wish to use these resources as part of a daily gathering, whether in person or online if in person meetings are not possible for you.

Today

We hear and feel the juxtaposition of violence, love, and hope dramatically in the contrast between the processions that begin and end this service.

We begin with Jesus's procession into Jerusalem, met with both joyous expectation by some, and curious or hostile wonder by others. We conclude with the reading of Matthew's account of Jesus's procession to his place of execution and what unfolds there.

Likewise, musically, we begin with upbeat singing at the processional into the worship space, move toward meditation on the cross at communion, and conclude with a silent dismissal. We recommend that musical instruments be used more sparingly from now until your first Easter service, whether the Great Vigil, Easter Sunrise, or Easter morning.

This service has a lot of moving parts, especially at the beginning and end. Take time to rehearse especially the opening processional logistics in both places they may originate--whether outdoors or at an alternate indoor location. Figure out where leaders need to stand and how the flow of people will work. Consider affixing markers on the ground or in the hallway to identify where specific leaders will begin and stop along the way (especially pastor and lay leader).

As you determine where to begin the procession, be mindful of sound and accessibility. If you do not have adequate provision for sound amplification outdoors, be sure the pastor and lay leader are prepared to project well. Persons with significant mobility challenges may be invited to go directly to the worship space if needed, bypassing the opening processional. If you have a

way for these persons still to see and hear the processional (a good use for Skype or Facetime or similar person to person video connections) be sure to provide it, either individually, or to screens if you have them. We do not recommend Facebook Live or other public streaming apps unless you have licensing to allow the streaming of any and all copyrighted content (songs or liturgical texts) you may be streaming.

Additional Resources

[2015 Planning Helps for the Palm/Passion Sunday](#)

[Ecumenical Prayer Cycle](#): Use link to find current listings as posted.

HOLY WEEK: LOVE LEADS THE WAY

Weekday Devotional Guides for Holy Week

MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK

Hearing the Passion

Prayer for Monday in Holy Week Book of Common Prayer (Public Domain)

Almighty God, whose dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The Gospel [John 12:1-11](#)

The First Reflection

There are many kinds of sensory details in this story: the texture of the alabaster jar, the smell of the ointment, the touch of Mary applying it to Jesus.

But today, focus deeply on the sounds, those named, and those you can imagine you would hear if you were in the scene: the sound of the alabaster jar opening, the sound of the ointment as it was applied, not just the words but the sounds of the echoes in the room as Jesus and Judas spoke, and the sounds of the chief priests planning to put Jesus to death. Become aware of how all the sounds speak, how they orient you and others present in space and time. Give yourself time to write down all you heard, then share what you heard with those with whom you are sharing this time of reflection.

The Prophet [Isaiah 42:1-9](#)

The Second Reflection

After reading or hearing the words of the prophet, what else do you now hear in the gospel reading? Give yourself time to write down your additional reflections, then share what you heard with those with whom you are sharing this time of reflection.

The Intercessions [Prayers of the People at Morning Prayer](#) (BOW, alt)

Together, let us pray
for the people of this congregation... **Hear us, and help us hear and love.**
for those who suffer and those in trouble... **Hear us, and help us hear and love.**
for the concerns of this local community... **Hear us, and help us hear and love.**
for the world, its peoples, and its leaders... **Hear us, and help us hear and love.**
for the earth you have given to our care... **Hear us, and help us hear and love.**
for the Church universal—its leaders, its members, and its mission...
Hear us, and help us hear and love.

in communion with the saints.... **Hear us, and help us hear and love.**

In the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray:

The Lord's Prayer

Prayer for Monday in Holy Week Book of Common Prayer (Public Domain)

Almighty God, whose dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Offer signs of peace to one another, and part in silence.

TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK
Seeing the Passion

Prayer for Tuesday in Holy Week Book of Common Prayer (Public Domain)

O God, by the passion of your blessed Son you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life: Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ, that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The Gospel

[John 12:20-36](#)

The First Reflection

The request of the non-Jewish leaders was to see Jesus. What do you see as you watch Jesus and the others in this scene?

Today, focus deeply on the sights in this story, those named, and those you can imagine you would see if you were in the scene. Become aware of all these sights speak, how they orient you and others present in space and time. Give yourself time to write down all you heard, then share what you heard with those with whom you are sharing this time of reflection.

The Prophet

[Isaiah 49:1-7](#)

The Second Reflection

After reading or hearing the words of the prophet, what else do you now hear in the gospel reading? Give yourself time to write down your additional reflections, then share what you heard with those with whom you are sharing this time of reflection.

The Intercessions

[Prayers of the People at Morning Prayer](#) (BOW, alt)

Together, let us pray

for the people of this congregation... **See us, and help us see and love.**
for those who suffer and those in trouble... **See us, and help us see and love.**
for the concerns of this local community... **See us, and help us see and love.**
for the world, its peoples, and its leaders... **See us, and help us see and love.**
for the earth you have given to our care... **See us, and help us see and love.**
for the Church universal—its leaders, its members, and its mission...
See us, and help us see and love.
in communion with the saints.... **See us, and help us see and love.**

In the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray:

The Lord's Prayer

Prayer for Tuesday in Holy Week Book of Common Prayer (Public Domain)

O God, by the passion of your blessed Son you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life:

Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ, that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Offer signs of peace to one another, and part in silence.

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK
Sensing the Passion

Prayer for Wednesday in Holy Week Book of Common Prayer (Public Domain)
Lord God, whose blessed Son our Savior gave his body to be

whipped and his face to be spit upon: Give us grace to accept joyfully the sufferings of the present time, confident of the glory that shall be revealed; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The Gospel

[John 13:21-32](#)

The First Reflection

Today, focus deeply on the physical sensations-- touch, the feel of the textures and the movement of giving bread, the sensations in the gut when one is deeply troubled-- those named, and those you can imagine you would feel if you were in the scene. Become aware of how all these physical sensations, these felt things, speak, how they orient you and others present in space and time. Give yourself time to write down all you sensed in touch, motion, tightness, or pain, then share what you sensed with those with whom you are sharing this time of reflection.

The Prophet

[Isaiah 50:4-9a](#)

The Second Reflection

After reading or hearing the words of the prophet, what else do you now sense in the gospel reading? Give yourself time to write down your additional reflections, then share what you sensed with those with whom you are sharing this time of reflection.

The Intercessions

[Prayers of the People at Morning Prayer](#) (BOW, alt)

Together, let us pray

for the people of this congregation... **Sense us, and help us sense and love.**

for those who suffer and those in trouble... **Sense us, and help us sense and love.**

for the concerns of this local community... **Sense us, and help us sense and love.**

for the world, its peoples, and its leaders... **Sense us, and help us sense and love.**

for the earth you have given to our care... **Sense us, and help us sense and love.**

for the Church universal—its leaders, its members, and its mission...

Sense us, and help us sense and love.

in communion with the saints.... **Sense us, and help us sense and love.**

In the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray:

The Lord's Prayer

Prayer for Wednesday in Holy Week Book of Common Prayer (Public Domain)

Lord God, whose blessed Son our Savior gave his body to be whipped and his face to be spit upon: Give us grace to accept joyfully the sufferings of the present time, confident of the glory that shall be revealed; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one

God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Offer signs of peace to one another, and part in silence.

**HOLY WEEK: LOVE LEADS THE WAY
HOLY THURSDAY/MAUNDY THURSDAY**

FULL SERVICE

ENTRANCE

The service begins as a meal blessing. All are seated at dinner tables supplied with

loaves of bread (including gluten-free alternatives) and pitchers of water.

Sung Blessing at the Beginning of the Meal Text: Taylor Burton-Edwards
TUNE: AR HYD Y NOS (UMH 688)

Loving One who tends creation, blessed be your name.
With all praise and adoration, blessed be your name.
You have brought us here, together,
bound us in one heart forever
in your mercy, failing never. Blessed be your name.

Jesus, filled with great compassion, blessed be your name.
Feed us truth, our lives refashion, blessed be your name.
In this bread we give each other,
Friend or stranger, sister, brother,
Make us one with all who suffer. Blessed be your name.

Break bread and give it to one another. Tune continues to play.

Spirit, breathing life through water, blessed be your name.
Cleanse and keep each son and daughter. Blessed be your name.
In the pouring, glasses clinking,
In refreshment we are drinking,
May we feel our interlinking. Blessed be your name.

Pour water from the common pitcher to serve one another. Tune continues to play.

Triune God, Eternal, Holy, blessed be your name.
You bless all, the high and lowly. Blessed be your name.
Grateful for the meal before us,
Raise we up our voice in chorus,
Knowing always you are for us. Blessed be your name.

MEAL

A meal is served and eaten. After dishes are cleared, new pitchers of water, several towels, and a basin are brought to each table.

WORD

Jesus, United By Thy Grace
There's a Spirit of Love in This Place

UMH 561, st 1-3
W&S 3148, st 1

Reading

John 13:1-7, 34-35 (3X)

*The reading is offered three times, with substantial pauses between readings.
During the first reading, listen for what image or words most capture your attention.
During the second reading, ask God to show you what to do with that.
During the third reading, decide what you will do.*

After the third reading, share at your table what you will do in response to what you have heard.

Jesus, United By Thy Grace
There's a Spirit of Love in This Place

UMH 561, st 4-6
W&S 3148, st 2

WASHING

Use the pitcher and basin at each table to wash each other's hands or feet, at the discretion of the receiver.

Music during the Washing

Jesu, Jesu

The Servant Song

Ubi Caritas

UMH 432

TFWS 2222

TFWS 2179

PRAYING

Deacon or Lay Leader:

As Jesus prayed the night he washed his disciples' feet, so we now pray:

make us one, as you are one, Triune God.

For boldness to speak and live the truth,
protection in the face of harm,
and mercy to forgive all who harm us:
make us one, as you are one, Triune God.

For growth in holiness through your word,
commitment to compassion and justice for all people,
and love for one another as you have loved us:
make us one, as you are one, Triune God.

With all among whom you send us,
people who are sick, homeless, or in prison,
with leaders and those with means and influence,
and with those who reject or do not know your love:
make us one, as you are one, Triune God.

FIRST DISMISSAL AND THE STRIPPING OF THE SANCTUARY

Deacon or Pastor:

Let us go forth in love and peace.

The deacon or pastor lead a procession to the worship space.

All may be seated in silence.

Persons so designated assist to remove all unattached adornments from the worship space, and to cover crosses or other attached elements in simple black cloth. The Lord's table, pulpit, and font should be bare.

Here is a suggested removal order.

Processional Cross(es)

Candle holders and candles (unattached)

Chalice and paten

Altar Bible (if present)

Paraments and altar cloths

Banners

Flowers

Other items

SECOND DISMISSAL

When the last item is removed or non-removable items are covered, the deacon or pastor may signal the congregation to stand, and lead the people to exit the worship space in silence.

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MUSIC NOTES

Loving One Who Tends Creation

This hymn by Taylor Burton-Edwards speaks to the gentle spirit of singing the blessing for the meal. Eating was clearly a matter of holy importance to Jesus, a sacred time where people are fed and spirits are nourished. AR HYD Y NOS is a perfect pairing for this text, for multiple reasons. First, a distinctive triptych of rhyming lines are created in the middle of the hymn, and the melodic line requires this form. Second, the tune itself is nurturing in its very melody and structure. This tune was originally paired with the hymn, "God that Madest Earth and Heaven," which is a nighttime blessing. Thus, it possesses a gentle spirit to serve as an evening prayer. I would recommend accompanying with fingerpicked guitar if able, or a keyboard with a gentle touch. In addition, add a solo wind or string instrument on a beautiful descant, such as the one contained in *Music Supplement II* of *The United Methodist Hymnal*.

Jesus, United By Thy Grace

This hymn by Charles Wesley contains two distinct sections, which are divided here to surround the scripture reading. The first three stanzas focus upon the need to help one another as a responsibility of discipleship and the prayer to make us attentive to the needs of others. The last three stanzas are centered upon Wesley's inclusion of the word "lodestone," which is another word for a magnet. In this last section, the image of the lodestone is used purposefully as a way to demonstrate the power of God's love to hold us together and draw us closer and closer to God. If you will be offering this service in an area outside of the sanctuary (due to the meal), I would encourage the use of a piano and/or guitar to accompany. Common meter (CM) offers a short form that is common to many hymns (see "Amazing Grace," No. 378, or "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing," No. 57, for well-known examples), but the tunes for these texts generally do not offer repetition within the stanzas because of their brevity. If the ST. AGNES tune is unfamiliar to your congregation, make sure the song leader sings with a sensitivity and awareness of each phrase. Singing musical phrases that offer direction (usually through a slight *crescendo* and *decrescendo*) can actually assist the congregation in learning a new tune. Another option would be to choose a more familiar tune for this occasion.

SIDEBAR: Choosing Alternative Tunes for Hymns

The success of a hymn's use within your congregation can be reliant on a number of factors, one of the most important of which being the use of a well-matched tune to the hymn text. Below are a few important things to consider when choosing a tune that is different from the tune printed in *The United Methodist Hymnal* or other resource.

- **Determine the meter of the hymn, and find a matching tune using the metrical index.** Determining the meter of a hymn is easy--simply look to the bottom right corner of the page. The meter is listed below the tune name, which is printed in all capital letters. Match the numbers or letters there with the information contained in the metrical index, which in *The United Methodist Hymnal* can be found on p. 926. A variety of hymn tunes with the same meter can be found under the corresponding numbers or letters.
- **Assess the metrical compatibility with the text you have chosen.** Not all hymns in a given poetic meter match with the rhythm of a corresponding musical meter. One common example of this is on the word "Jesus," which oftentimes does not line up correctly with tunes that place the rhythmic emphasis of the word on the second syllable. This is one of the greatest challenges with Charles Wesley's texts (For an example, see "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing," No. 57, stanza 3, in which the second syllable of "Jesus" is placed on a downbeat.)!
- **Consider the character of the hymn and its use in worship, and select a tune according to the intended worship dynamic.** Obviously, you might not

want to choose a hymn tune with a bright, joyous mood for Good Friday unless you want to get a call from your Staff-Parish Relations Committee. The flow and direction of narratives and work within the worship service help dictate the inclusion of tunes and how they sensitively portray the texts. Be considerate of the emotional power of music and how it is a vehicle for the work of the Holy Spirit.

By following these brief tips, you can enhance worship services within your church, offer a creative spark to a well-known text, and even introduce texts that are printed with completely unfamiliar tunes. Sometimes it is best to teach a new tune, but in other instances, a time for teaching might not be a primary goal. Know your congregation, and plan the singing of hymns intentionally and creatively!

END SIDEBAR

There's a Spirit of Love in This Place

One of the greatest elements of this work by Mark Miller is the conversational nature of the melody in concert with the text. In singing the words, we acknowledge the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. Sung around tables, the hymn draws us close together as we prepare to hear the words of scripture and reflect upon it. You will enjoy this gentle creation. The ideal accompaniment in this setting would be a piano. I would be tempted, however, to add a simple, pulsing, low-pitched drum (djembe or bass drum) quietly on beats 1 and 3 and the upbeats preceding them. This will create a "heartbeat" that can bring people into a united rhythm together. [Hymn Study](#)

Jesu, Jesu

Of all the hymns on servanthood, Tom Colvin's "Jesu, Jesu" is one of the most prominent among them--specifically because of its inclusion of footwashing imagery. In addition, this singable, lilting hymn offers a prayer for us to serve as Jesus did and gives us the ability to sing the prayer with a narrower, lower range than most hymns. Of note is the discussion about the pronunciation of "Jesu." Despite the fact that I cannot find a standardized pronunciation of this word across multiple resources, I would recommend "Yeh-soo," although using a "J" sound might also be deemed appropriate. Accompaniment works best with a guitar and light percussion, although any combination of instruments can be used. If your percussionists are capable of playing polyrhythms underneath (3 beats against 2, for instance), it will help capture the Ghanaian character of the tune. [History of Hymns](#)

The Servant Song

Singing this hymn allows worship participants to assume the posture of servanthood by asking permission to serve, agreeing to walk the road of discipleship together, and making commitments to support one another. The tune is very singable for the most part, with the one possible exception being measure 5. Make sure you have prepared your choir accordingly on this one measure since it is also the highest part of the melody. The majority of the melody includes stepwise motion, with this one measure being the exception. Encourage the congregation by being confident in your leading and not straining on the high Eb. Since this is accompanying a ritual action

(washing), you may want to hum the melody or have piano, organ, or a solo instrument play the melody before singing begins. [History of Hymns](#)

Ubi Caritas

Many composers have been drawn to this Latin text over the centuries, and Jacques Berthier and the Taizé Community have provided a simplicity to the text that will linger long after the service ends. The intent with many of these short, cyclical choruses from Taizé is for the song to become the prayer. Therefore, sing it numerous times and allow the words to become a part of the worshiping subconscious. Whereas many would advocate for the singing of the song in Latin, the brothers of Taizé recommend singing their songs in the language of the community. However, should you choose to sing in Latin, follow these pronunciations:

Oo-bee cah-ree-tahs eht ah-mohr
Oo-bee cah-ree-tahs Deh-oos ee-bee ehst.

All the “s” sounds are pronounced unvoiced (an “s,” not a “z”), and the vowels should be pronounced with no diphthongs. For a thorough analysis of “Ubi Caritas” in a translation from Latin into hymn form (“Where Charity and Love Prevail, *The United Methodist Hymnal*, No. 549), click [here](#).

PREACHING NOTES

There is no sermon in this service. The word is proclaimed, and the people respond, sharing their commitment to follow what the Spirit has led them to do in response.

PLANNING NOTES

HOLY WEEK: LOVE LEADS THE WAY

Holy Thursday/Maundy Thursday

Reading Notes

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

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

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

Calendar Notes

Holy Week: LOVE LEADS THE WAY

Holy Thursday/Maundy Thursday

Red continues to be used through the end of this service, when all paraments, altarware, and other adornments are removed.

March

All Month: [Women's History Month](#)
March 29 [Maundy/Holy Thursday](#)
March 30 [Good Friday](#)
March 31 [Holy Saturday](#) (until Sundown)
[Easter Eve/Easter Vigil](#) (after Sundown)

April

April 1 [Easter Day](#)
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](#) (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 17 [Father's Day](#) (USA)
June 19 [Juneteenth](#) (USA)

July

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

August

All Month [Back to School Resources](#)

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 [World Communion Sunday](#)

October 14 [Children's Sabbath](#)

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

October 31 [Reformation Day](#)

For Your Planning Team: Holy Week: LOVE LEADS THE WAY

Maundy Thursday

In This Series

This is the second major service in Holy Week.

This is the most intense week in the Christian year. It confronts us with the violence we inflict upon each other and our faithlessness toward God, juxtaposed dramatically against the love of God and the hope God's kingdom offers our world.

Today

On Palm/Passion Sunday we glimpsed the processions that marked the beginning and the end of the events of this week in the life of Jesus. Today we find ourselves in the midst of these events. Sunday was about movement, getting to a destination, or the hope of getting there. It was about our feet in motion. Today is about presence, community, our feet or hands held and lovingly washed by another. We wash our feet (or hands) because we have been on the move, and now are ready to sit down and be together, united with Christ and one another.

We have structured this service differently from a traditional service in the worship space. If you want a more traditional service for use in your worship space, we highly commend the version in the Book of Worship, [351-354](#).

We have built this service around a shared meal. It is a service of word, washing, and watching, modeled on the actions of Jesus with his disciples before his betrayal as recorded in the gospel of John. It does not include Eucharist. If you wish to include the Eucharist, do so after the Washing and before the first dismissal. The Book of Worship provides a [Great Thanksgiving for Holy Thursday](#). You may also use the [Great Thanksgiving for Maundy Thursday in an Alternative/ Emergent Mode](#).

SIDEBAR: HOLY THURSDAY, NOT SEDER

While we have built this service around and after a shared meal, **we implore you not to treat this shared meal as in any way a Seder**. It is not. The Book of Worship has this to say about Christians observing a Seder, particularly on this day and at this time of the year (p 350):

“United Methodists are encouraged to celebrate the Seder *as invited guests in a Jewish home or in consultation with representatives of the Jewish community*, thus respecting the integrity of what is a Jewish tradition and continuing the worthy practice of Jews and Christians sharing at table together. **Celebrating the modern meal without a Jewish family as host is**

an affront to Jewish tradition and sometimes creates misunderstanding about the meaning of the Lord's Supper” (emphasis added).

For additional historical reflection on the impropriety of Christians observing a Seder themselves, see [“2 Things to Do, 2 Things to Quit Doing in Maundy Thursday Services.”](#)

END SIDEBAR

Logistics: In the Dining/Washing Space

This service is about love, mutual care, and unity in Christ. Be sure to express that love in tangible ways. Have greeters posted at the doors, just as you would in your regular worship space. Take time during the meal to thank your kitchen staff and table staff for their role in helping the meal and the service flow smoothly.

Be sure to consult with your kitchen/catering volunteers about the best way for them to enable persons to get their meals and clear the tables efficiently in the space you have available. And rehearse your table staff (those who will bring out the second pitchers of water, the basins, and the towels to each table) so this operation can happen quickly and smoothly. If your space and crowd are small enough, it may be possible for each table to send someone to a central location to pick up these items. For larger gatherings, it may be essential to have dedicated table server teams for this to be handled efficiently.

There is one more team that will be essential for this service to conclude well: the altar guild or an extended altar guild who will “strip the sanctuary.” If they desire to remove items in a certain order, it will be important for them to organize how they will do so, and rehearse these actions (even if in mime) before the service so this action proceeds with the intended solemnity.

Additional Resources

[2015 Planning Helps for Holy/Maundy Thursday Ecumenical Prayer Cycle](#)

HOLY WEEK: LOVE LEADS THE WAY

HOLY FRIDAY/GOOD FRIDAY

FULL SERVICE

ENTRANCE

Silent Procession

Reading

Hebrews 10:16-25

The Reproaches

Adapted from [Book of Worship 363-365](#)

O my people, O my Church,
what have I done to you, or in what have I offended you?
I led you forth from the land of Egypt
and delivered you by the waters of baptism,
but you have prepared a cross for your Savior.

**People of God,
don't look away.
Refuse to avert your eyes or attention.
Behold joy and suffering in the world today.**

2) I led you through the desert forty years and fed you with manna;
I brought you through times of persecution and of renewal
and gave you my body, the bread of heaven;
but you have prepared a cross for your Savior.

**People of God,
don't look away.
Lift your eyes and see the promise:
The body of Christ, broken for you;
The blood of Christ, shed for you.**

3) I made you branches of my vineyard
and gave you the water of salvation,
but when I was thirsty you gave me vinegar and gall
and pierced with a spear the side of your Savior.

**People of God,
don't look away.
See streams of filthy water flowing through refugee camps
flowing alongside faucets of lead-laden water from pipes in Flint,
and wells providing fresh water in desert places.**

4) I went before you in a pillar of cloud,
but you have led me to the judgment hall of Pilate.
I brought you to a land of freedom and prosperity,
but you have scourged, mocked, and beaten me.

**People of God,
don't look away.
Refuse to avert your eyes from the pain.
See the suffering in the world today
rising up against the riches of capital gain.**

5) I gave you a royal scepter, and bestowed the keys to the kingdom,
but you have given me a crown of thorns.
I raised you on high with great power,
but you have hanged me on the cross.

**People of God,
don't look away.
Refuse to avert your eyes from the thorns.
See the sharp tines circling his head
as blood flows down, tears flowing red.**

6) My peace I gave, which the world cannot give,
and washed your feet as a servant,
but you draw the sword to strike in my name
and seek high places in my kingdom.

**People of God,
don't look away.
Refuse to avert your eyes from the pain.
See the suffering in the world today
in the ancient lands of Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Palestine.
See the faces of God's people.**

7) I accepted the cup of suffering and death for your sakes,
but you scatter and deny and abandon me.
I sent the Spirit of truth to lead you,
but you close your hearts to guidance.

**People of God,
don't look away.
Refuse to avert your eyes from the pain.
See the suffering in the world today
in the for-profit deportation detention center in Lumpkin, Georgia.
and others, like it, kept far from cities, away from view.**

8) I called you to go and bring forth fruit,
but you cast lots for my clothing.
I prayed that you all may be one,
but you continue to quarrel and divide.

**People of God,
don't look away.
Refuse to avert your eyes from the pain.
See the suffering in the church today,
self-inflicted, but no less cruel.
See the bruises we inflict on the faces of God's people.**

9) I grafted you into the tree of my chosen people Israel,
but you turned on them with persecution and mass murder.
I made you joint heirs with them of my covenants,
but you made them scapegoats for your own guilt.

**People of God,
don't look away.
Refuse to avert your eyes from the pain.
See the suffering in the world today
in the scars of survivors, and the fresh wounds or graves
of marginalized, blamed, and scapegoated peoples.**

10) I came to you as the least of your brothers and sisters.
I was hungry but you gave me no food,
thirsty but you gave me no drink.
I was a stranger but you did not welcome me,
naked but you did not clothe me,
sick and in prison but you did not visit me.

**People of God,
don't look away.
Refuse to avert your eyes from the pain.
See the suffering in the world today
in those against whom we build walls
of concrete, wire, or laws.**

A brief silence follows.
THE LORD'S PRAYER *

Silence

Prayer for Healing

**We draw the sword to claim high places for ourselves.
We scourge, mock, and beat you, Jesus.
We prepare a cross for you.
We hang you on it.
We pierce your side with the spear.
We willfully break the fellowship you prayed to be one.
We make scapegoats of people we deem other.
We create or refuse to end malnutrition, contamination of water,
poverty, sickness, inhospitality, and imprisonment.**

Silence

**Jesus, keep us near the cross,
that we may be drawn back to you,
and be healed. Amen.**

*The people may turn to one another, saying to each:
May Jesus draw you to himself,
and heal you.*

WORD AND RESPONSE

Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross

UMH 301

The Passion of Jesus Christ, according to John

[Book of Worship 355-361](#)

The readings are from the United Methodist service of Tenebrae. Candles need not be used in this service. Silence follows all readings. Sung responses follow some readings. A more extended silence follows readings 14 and 16 prior to a sung response.

After Reading 1

Go to Dark Gethsemane

UMH 290 st 1

After Reading 3

Go to Dark Gethsemane

UMH 209, st 2

After Reading 9

To Mock Your Reign, O Dearest Lord

UMH 285 (all stanzas)

After Reading 10

All may stand as able.

Ah, Holy Jesus

UMH 289, st 1-2

After Reading 14

Long Silence

Go to Dark Gethsemane

UMH 209. st 3

After Reading 16
Long Silence
Were You There

UMH 288, st 5

Silence

The Lord's Prayer

SENDING FORTH

The worship leaders may process in silence to the doors.

Deacon or Pastor:

Go in peace.

The people depart in silence.

MUSIC NOTES

Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross

This hymn occupies some serious real estate in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, particularly because it is on the opposite page as "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today," which is sung in almost every United Methodist church on Easter morning. Fanny Crosby has penned one of the most well-known works in any hymnic repertoire with this poem, which places the singer at the foot of the cross, considering the crucifixion and its expression of God's love for humanity and each of us. One of the best ways to experience this hymn in worship is to sing it *a cappella*. The simple harmony and the musical movement toward the climax in the second measure of the refrain make it a congregational favorite. It is easy, however, when singing without instrumental accompaniment, for the tempo to drag and become problematic. Make sure your choir is well rehearsed in maintaining the rhythm--not just in your choir room, but in the sanctuary as well! The acoustics learned in one room rarely translate to another. [History of Hymns](#)

Go to Dark Gethsemane

This classic passion hymn transports the singer to the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed before his arrest, as recounted in Matthew 26. This chorale setting is beautiful, but it also adds a certain amount of discomfort that you may not be aware of. Regardless of where in the range the tune ends a phrase, the next phrase always begins on the original Eb. This may not sound very significant, but the return to Eb is so relentless that by the end of singing the melody on four stanzas of this hymn, you will have sung that one note 48 times! In most tunes, beginning notes of phrases will either be close to the end of the previous phrase, or there will at least be some variety in the location within the voice. Only after singing the REDHEAD 76 tune will it become apparent that this compositional approach is atypical. In the case of this service, however, you will note the use of the hymn interspersed between readings, so the

relentlessness may not be felt in quite the same way. The favored accompaniment with this hymn is organ. [History of Hymns](#)

To Mock Your Reign, O Dearest Lord

Fred Pratt Green has crafted a hymn full of imagery that centers upon the objects given to Jesus as he was ridiculed as a king: a crown of thorns, a purple cloak, and a sceptered reed. Make note, however, that this hymn draws upon multiple Gospels and, therefore, creates its own standard of how the story was told. None of the scriptures referenced in this hymn (Matthew 27:27-31, Mark 15:16-20, John 19:1-5) contain all of these items exactly as described by the hymn writer, but they do help us create an image of what Jesus' time with Pilate and the Roman soldiers might have been like. There are a variety of ways to accompany KINGSFOLD--with organ, piano, guitar, or other instrumental ensemble (as in Rory Cooney's "Canticle of the Turning" from GIA Publications, Inc., giamusic.com). Be sure, however, to focus on the percussiveness of the consonants. Fred Pratt Green gives the congregation words to sing in ways not many other writers have been able to duplicate. [History of Hymns](#)

Ah, Holy Jesus

One of my favorite settings of HERZLIEBSTER JESU is an organ work by composer Helmut Walcha that resembles a march to the gallows. It achieves a level of darkness, minimalism, and sorrow not reached by many other settings. Another beautiful setting for choir arranged by Hal Hopson can be found through GIA Publications, G-5791. However, the traditional setting by Johann Crüger in *The United Methodist Hymnal* offers a haunting, sorrowful look at the crucifixion as well. The hymn text by Johann Heermann offers a set of questions in stanzas 1 and 2 that interrogates Jesus in the same way one would expect at a trial. In answering these questions in stanzas 3-5, we find that we are truly the ones on trial. For the purposes of this service, we recommend singing stanzas 1 and 2 to coincide with Jesus' experience with Pilate and the frantic crowd. If using the traditional setting from the hymnal, the ideal accompaniment is organ. Leading with an *a cappella* choir is also appropriate.

Were You There

Time is shifted in the singing of this African American spiritual, in which the singer asks in stanza 5, "Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?" Though it is not possible for us to have physically been present, this spiritual uses anamnesis to bring the past into our present day. Many congregations are familiar with this spiritual and can sing it fervently. However, it is also a wonderful spiritual for a soloist. How it is presented in different settings may vary from community to community. Be sure to take your time, not singing too quickly. A slightly *rubato* (played and sung freely) approach to the music is encouraged, with an absence of firm beats within the music. The ideal accompaniment is either organ or piano. [History of Hymns](#)

PREACHING NOTES

There is no sermon, nor need for sermon, in this service.

PLANNING NOTES

HOLY WEEK: LOVE LEADS THE WAY

Holy Friday/Good Friday

Reading Notes

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

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

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

Calendar Notes

Holy Week: LOVE LEADS THE WAY

Holy Friday/Good Friday

No color. No banners. No candles.

We face together the horror of the execution of Jesus, and enter the silence of his tomb.

March

All Month: [Women's History Month](#)
March 30 [Good Friday](#)
March 31 [Holy Saturday](#) (until Sundown)
Easter Eve/[Easter Vigil](#) (after Sundown)

April

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Easter Series Begins
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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 17 [Father's Day \(USA\)](#)
June 19 [Juneteenth \(USA\)](#)

July

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

August

All Month [Back to School Resources](#)

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 [World Communion Sunday](#)

October 14 [Children's Sabbath](#)

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

October 31 [Reformation Day](#)

For Your Planning Team: Holy Week: LOVE LEADS THE WAY

Holy Friday/Good Friday

In This Series

This is the third major service in Holy Week.

This is the most intense week in the Christian year. It confronts us with the violence we inflict upon each other and our faithlessness toward God, juxtaposed dramatically against the love of God and the hope God's kingdom offers our world.

Today

The service we have designed begins with the opening of a reading from the Easter Vigil (Ezekiel 37), ending with the image of a valley of dry bones (verse 2). It is a stark, physical, visceral image of the power of death. As such it sets the tone for what follows.

The Reproaches (found in the Book of Worship, 363-365, or as adapted here) are intended to be hard to hear. They reflect the real violence we do are are complicit in, against Jesus, and against one another. Do not avert your congregation from them. Everything until now has prepared you for this stark encounter, this mirror that unmasks

the worst of who we are. And this, in turn, prepares us for the starkest encounter of all, with the execution of Jesus. We do not commend sung responses for the Reproaches in this service. Read them. Give silence after each for people feel their penetrating sting. From these stripes we are invited to receive God's healing.

The greater amount of time in this service is spent listening and responding in silence or occasionally in song to the story of the arrest, trial, execution, and burial of Jesus from John's gospel. John's gospel has been associated with the Good Friday liturgy in the West since at least the fourth century. The version we commend is that in the Book of Worship's Tenebrae service, a translation made especially for our Book of Worship by J. H. Charlesworth. His translation, while staying within the classic linguistic tradition of the Revised Standard Version, carefully and appropriately avoids the anti-Jewish readings of the Gospel of John present in the RSV and perpetuated in the NRSV. We strongly encourage you to use this version.

Because there is so much reading in this service, it is essential you have skilled readers. Take whatever time you need to train and rehearse the readers in their readings. Poor reading takes focus away from what is being read to the inadequacies of the reader. Strong reading enables the reader to vanish and the Word to shine through the words read.

Holy Communion is not observed on Good Friday. Holy Communion is celebrated in light of the resurrection of the Crucified One. On this day, and on Holy Saturday, we place ourselves before Christ crucified, dead, and buried. That is why Christian liturgies, East and West, including our own Book of Worship, have provided no Great Thanksgiving for Good Friday.

If you choose to include a sermon in this service, we commend you place it after the act of healing and before the reading of the passion, as indicated. This is a day when the ritual and the passion narrative speak more than adequately without further interpretation.

Logistics: Reading and Leading

The structure of this service is primarily that of a vigil, a service of readings and silence or prayers/hymns. If your congregation, clergy, lay readers, or other worship leaders are unaccustomed such services as The Easter Vigil or the Advent or Christmas Service of Lessons and Carols, they may also be unaccustomed to the manner of reading that makes such services work well. If so, encourage them to watch a well-run service of lessons and carols, such as this one, from [Myers Park UMC](#). Pay particular attention to the readings. Note the readings are offered at a deliberate pace, with careful articulation of syllables, and with an expressive but not "dramatic" voicing. Again, as noted above, the intention is not to draw attention to the reader, as inarticulate or overly dramatic reading will do, but to the readings themselves. Finally, arrange for all readers to practice their reading in the space and with the sound system as it will be in the service before the service takes place.

Leading a service such as this also takes careful attention. While Holy Friday/Good Friday includes substantial reading, the ground of this service is silence. One might call it a service of silence occasionally punctuated by scripture, prayer, and song. But the ground is silence, not speaking. That's why it starts with a silent procession.

Do not avert your bodies from the silence. Enter it. Deeply.

Silence in an assembly begins not at the mouth, but in the body, in a stillness of body and breath. Many who attend these services in our churches may not have this as a discipline. But those who lead worship can embody and model it. Your grounded, non-anxious, and non-verbal leadership of stillness, deliberate (never-rushed) movement, and settled, slow breathing will catch on with those who observe your leadership without you needing to call attention to it or explain it. If such leadership is unfamiliar to you and other worship leaders, be sure to practice in the worship space beforehand, and to take time to still your body, your mind, and your breathing before you begin to lead.

Do take time to practice such presence before seeking to lead this service. There is a difference between solemnity and severity. Aim for solemnity, and practice being able to stay in this state. You may want to invite one or two observers to help coach you as you practice leading so you can get a better feel for when and how you embody solemnity well, as opposed to slipping into severity.

Additional Resources

[2015 Planning Helps for Holy/Good Friday Ecumenical Prayer Cycle](#)

**HOLY WEEK: LOVE LEADS THE WAY
SUNRISE SERVICE on EASTER MORNING
BAPTISMAL REAFFIRMATION**

FULL SERVICE

ENTRANCE

The service begins outdoors, weather permitting.

Light a large bonfire, and gather around it for this service. Place a font near the fire. For larger gatherings, place multiple fonts around the fire. If weather does not permit, consider gathering in a narthex or fellowship hall for the opening of this service, but in view of a tended bonfire, if at all possible.

Amazing Grace, My Chains Are Gone W&S 3104, st 1, chorus 2x OR
Amazing Grace UMH 378, st 1

Reading Ezekiel 37:3-14

Amazing Grace, My Chains Are Gone W&S 3104 using words from
Amazing Grace UMH 378, st 3 OR
UMH 378, st 3

WORD AND RESPONSE

Easter Proclamation 3X

Pastor or Worship Leader: Alleluia! Christ is risen!

All: The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia!

Reading Romans 6:3-11

Amazing Grace, My Chains Are Gone W&S 3104, chorus

[Sermon Optional, but if you do choose to preach, be very brief.]

Reaffirmation of Baptism [New Reaffirmation Spanish](#) OR
Baptism [Baptismal Covenant 1](#)
[New Baptism](#)

Music during Reaffirmation
Baptized in Water TFWS 2248
We Were Baptized in Christ Jesus TFWS 2251
Christ Has Risen TFWS 2115

SENDING

The Easter Song W&S 3090

Reading

Mark 16:1-8

The Easter Song

W&S 3090 ("Joy to the World" 2x)

Deacon or Worship Leader:

Go in peace to love and serve the Risen Lord. Alleluia. Alleluia!

People: Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

MUSIC NOTES

Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)

A current trend in modern worship music involves taking a pre-existing strophic text and adding a new refrain (which is actually not new at all--see "Marching to Zion," *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 733, a very popular example in which Robert Lowry did the very same thing in 1867 to a text of Isaac Watts, "Come, We That Love the Lord"). This practice pays homage to the hymns of the past while adding a bit of character from current approaches to songwriting. I still marvel at how well Chris Tomlin and Louis Giglio took "Amazing Grace," which many would consider to be "untouchable" because of its popularity, and had a result so successful. This work is accessible to congregations of all shapes and sizes, and people will sing it. Be sure, however, that this doesn't completely replace the singing of "Amazing Grace." While congregations do appreciate and sing this song, it should not take the place of this monumental hymn every time the message of "Amazing Grace" is needed. Accompaniment can be simple to more complex, from piano alone to full band. Many interpretations of this call for the last stanza to be accompanied by piano alone, even if using a band. Ideal key is Eb, which is what is printed in *Worship & Song*, although D or E can also work if needed.

[Hymn Study](#)

Amazing Grace

As mentioned above, sometimes "Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)" simply cannot replace the singing of this classic hymn. Sung in a variety of different styles across the globe, use whatever style and accompaniment seem appropriate this week. Feel free to use a traditional style as written, but don't be afraid if this is the week the random bagpiper in your congregation wants to play along. Or you may prefer to change the harmonies just a bit and provide a more chromatic, gospel accompaniment with slight swing rhythms and a heavy, slow tempo. Rest assured that the focus of the hymn is on God's grace, and this can be expressed in a number of ways. For a choral setting that can be used to support congregational singing, click [here](#).

Baptized in Water

One of the greatest elements of this hymn is the opening of each stanza. The marriage of this text and tune creates an upward motion that resembles the arising movement out of the waters of baptism. In this instance, the newly baptized spring forth from the water, boldly willing to accept the call to Christian discipleship. One criticism is the low ending of each stanza on the words, "God's praises we sing." My suggestion would be for the cantor or worship leader to at least sing B-A-B-C on the last four notes

of the last stanza to remain in a joyful range of praise. If you are a fan of the Cat Stevens version of “Morning Has Broken,” you can purchase the piano score for it [here](#) (make note that you must follow the copyright regulations set forth by musicnotes.com when using their scores) and play the famous opening before the first stanza, and possibly between stanzas as well. Ideal accompaniment is organ, piano, or guitar, but any variety of instruments work well. [History of Hymns](#)

We Were Baptized in Christ Jesus

Hymn writer John Ylvisaker (probably most famous for his hymn, “I Was There to Hear Your Boring Cry”) embraces the folk idiom of the 1960s and 1970s with many of his works. The melody of this particular hymn can vary from gentle and nurturing to joyous and bold, depending on the accompaniment. I would recommend a different approach in style between stanzas 2 and 3, at which point the hymn pivots into a *Gloria Patri*. Before this pivot, try a softer organ registration or a gentle accompaniment on guitar or piano, and transition to something more regal and *pesante* on stanza 3. If outside, as recommended in this service, however, feel free to accompany on guitar throughout!

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, he 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 create 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.

The Easter Song

This most interesting song from 1971 has found its place in Contemporary Christian music as one of the top songs from that genre in the twentieth century. One of the greatest arrangements and recordings of this song was released by the *a cappella* vocal group, GLAD. The song brings those in worship into the resurrection story and, in its somewhat through-composed form, creates a musical narrative that progresses along with the story. A wonderful choral setting of the work with accompaniment is found in *Worship & Song*, and a setting with optional handbell accompaniment can be found [here](#). Accompaniment can vary, but piano offers the best option.

PLANNING NOTES

HOLY WEEK: LOVE LEADS THE WAY

Sunrise Service on Easter Morning

Reading Notes

The Easter Sunrise Service, per se, appears to be primarily an American Protestant and largely Evangelical Protestant invention. While Moravians lay claim to the first Sunrise Service (in 1732), that service bears little resemblance to more typical Sunrise Service practices that developed later, and likely independently, in other traditions. No proper readings are assigned to it in the Revised Common Lectionary because the service does not have wider ecumenical or historical grounding. The service we have provided for Easter Sunrise this year borrows from the established readings for [Easter Vigil, Year B](#) (Ezekiel 37, Romans 6, and Mark 16). The service is also loosely structured based on the Easter Vigil.

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

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

Calendar Notes

Holy Week: LOVE LEADS THE WAY Sunrise Service on Easter Morning

The sanctuary is restored to its full glory, colors are white or gold, and flowers may abound today and throughout the Great 50 Days of Easter Season until its final celebration on Pentecost, when the colors are red.

This particular service is generally held outdoors or in an indoor location other than the main worship space. Whether outdoors or indoors at an alternate location, bring plenty of flowers, especially white or gold flowers, and if you are an ordained deacon or elder and wearing your stole, be sure to bring out your best white or gold one.

April

- April 1 [Easter Day](#)
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](#) (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 17 [Father's Day \(USA\)](#)
June 19 [Juneteenth \(USA\)](#)

July

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

August

All Month [Back to School Resources](#)

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 [World Communion Sunday](#)

October 14 [Children's Sabbath](#)

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

October 31 [Reformation Day](#)

For Your Planning Team: Holy Week: LOVE LEADS THE WAY Sunrise Service on Easter Morning

Today

The tide has turned from death to resurrection, from sorrow to amazement, from despair to rejoicing. Christ is risen. Death is conquered. Christ is risen. Sin's power is gone. Christ is risen. New creation had dawned.

As mentioned in the Reading Notes above, we have designed this service roughly on the model of the Easter Vigil, the historic and ecumenical (East and West, Roman and Protestant) first of three services (masses) for Easter. The Easter Vigil itself is an extended service of four movements: Fire, Word, Water, and Table. We use three of those basic elements here.

The Fire Movement in the Easter Vigil begins with a bonfire outdoors from which is lit the Paschal Candle which will be used throughout Easter Season and at all baptisms and Christian burials throughout the succeeding year. We allude to that by suggesting this service be celebrated around a bonfire outdoors and the possibility of everyone holding candles lit from it.

The Word Movement in the Easter Vigil is an extended set of readings recounting the history of

God's saving acts leading up to the time of Jesus. The five great themes of that history are Creation, Exodus, Kingdom, Exile, and Restoration. For this service, we use two of the readings from the Easter Vigil in this part of the service, Ezekiel 37 (which points to both Exile and Restoration, and which began our Good Friday service) and Romans 6.

Romans 6 is the most complete description of the theology of baptism in the New Testament. It is used in the Easter Vigil as a strong tie to the third movement, Water. Historically and ecumenically, it is at the Easter Vigil on Saturday night that baptisms are performed, rather than at one of the other two services on Easter Day, though baptism is considered appropriate on every Sunday in Easter Season. We have provided primarily for a service of baptismal reaffirmation for this service, though we have provided a link for a full baptismal service as well. United Methodists have outstanding resources for the Easter Vigil, relatively few still use it, and those that do find these services are often not well-attended. And though we have a more frequent practice of Sunrise services, those are also typically far less well-attended than the principal service of Easter Sunday. If you desire, you could of course do a full service of baptism as part of this service.

We do not try to include the fourth movement, Table, as part of this service, leaving that for the principal service of Easter Sunday, which follows.

Logistics: Wows, Kapows, Vows, and Towels

Since this service may be observed in a setting other than your typical worship space, and especially if it is outdoors, be sure, as with the opening of the Palm/Passion service, to rehearse your blocking as worship leaders beforehand, to provide for access for persons with mobility issues (or a legal way for such persons to see and hear if they cannot safely get physically to where you are gathering), and that you have provided for sound that enables all to hear. That way everyone can say "Wow" at the bonfire and above all at the resurrection of Christ and the reaffirmation of baptism (or baptism) we celebrate in this service.

This service involves a bonfire. Bonfires take time and in some instances clearance from local officials to construct. Check with your local authorities (often your neighborhood fire department will be able to guide you) and get all needed clearances well ahead of time-- preferably weeks ahead of time. These things can take longer than you imagine.

Remember as you offer either baptism or baptismal reaffirmation that while some parts of the service in our ritual are adaptable, the vows are set by Discipline (Par. 217) and are alterable only by General Conference. The "New Service of Reaffirmation" suggested in this service (whether in English or in Spanish or both) uses those established vows verbatim, but frames them with new questions and places them in full on the lips of those who reaffirm. You may adapt the framing questions in ways most appropriate to your context. The vows themselves, however, must remain unchanged.

Finally, a reminder to your team. Whether you do baptism or reaffirmation, people will get wet! So be sure to provide towels for those who may need them! And if you are doing baptism or receiving members, have someone with dry hands to handle the certificates and perhaps another person with dry hands to handle the ritual for you during the baptismal rite itself.

Easter People Raise Your Voices
Thine Be the Glory
The Strife is O'er

UMH 304 st 1
UMH 308 st 1
UMH 306 st 1. with final Alleluia

OR

Christ is Risen (Maher/Fieldes)
Christ Is Risen (Riddle)

CCLI # 5242683
CCLI# 5351347

THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION

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 on this day of days,
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 Mary Magdalene 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

Agnus Dei (Smith/Third Day)

Death Was Arrested

Salvation Story

CCLI# 626713

CCLI # 7046448

[\(DOWNLOAD\)](#) OR

Choral: Salvation Is Created

Salvation Story

He Lives

[Choral Wiki #11972](#)

[\(DOWNLOAD\)](#)

UMH 310

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 Mary,
in hearts, and hands, and voices,
that day has dawned,
and we have seen the Risen Lord. Amen.**

SENDING FORTH

Did You Feel the Mountains Tremble

Christ is Alive

CCLI # 1097028 OR

UMH 318

Congregational Easter Postlude

[Hallelujah Chorus](#)

Deacon or Pastor:

Go in peace, filled with the love and power of the Risen Christ. Alleluia! Alleluia!
Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

MUSIC NOTES

Up from the Grave He Arose

Oh, the drama! There are few hymns that evoke such dramatic experiences and responses as this longtime favorite by Robert Lowry. Especially as recommended in this service, singing the stanzas apart from the refrain allow the story to unfold without the constant appearance of the refrain. I encourage you to sing the stanzas slowly and softly, but approach the refrain triumphantly, with a more lively tempo. Accompany with piano, organ, or ensemble. A brass choir or quintet works particularly well with both the stanzas and the refrain, in their respective characters. Segue immediately into “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today.” [History of Hymns](#)

Christ the Lord Is Risen Today

Charles Wesley’s hymn far surpasses the reach of The United Methodist Church, as many churches in other denominations include this Easter classic as a part of their hymnic repertoires. This hymn creates the standard to which all other Easter hymns are written, with its proclamation of the risen Christ, scriptural references, and the exciting and melismatic (numerous notes on one syllable) Alleluias. Make sure to pull out all the stops for this hymn--organ, brass, orchestra, percussion, piano, or whatever you have at your disposal. Many concertato settings for choir and congregation are also available from a variety of publishers, so you will be able to find a setting that is right for you. If you would like a way to make the hymn interactive and different for your context, take a couple of stanzas and sing by dividing the room in half, with one side of the room singing the first two measures of each line, and the other side singing all the Alleluias. Work to find ways to make its singing diverse and engaging! [History of Hymns](#)

Confessing in Song

This section features a number of hymns moving strictly one to another after one stanza of each. I recommend an organ or piano to move quickly through these, and below you will find a quick means of transitioning from one key to the next below. If you are keen with improvisation, feel free to do so with your own creativity! These are merely suggestions.

The Day of Resurrection (Db)

Db--Fsus--F as a dominant chord into “Easter People, Raise Your Voices”

Easter People, Raise Your Voices

Bb--Gm--A as a dominant chord into “Thine Be the Glory”

Thine Be the Glory--The Strife Is O’er, the Battle Done

Both of these selections are in D, and no transition is needed. However, I would recommend having an antiphonal choir begin the Alleluias of “The Strife Is O’er” from the back of the room, with brass, as the congregation sings the last word of “Thine Be the Glory.”

Christ Is Risen (Maher)

Matt Maher has created an interesting song that departs from traditional hymns, but the language of the sting of death and victory of hell (the grave) is still present here. He finishes the questioning of sin and death by offering an invitation to the church to “stand in the light.” This song is possible to be sung with piano or guitar only, but full band is preferable, especially on Easter Sunday. The original key (Gb) is good for singing, but is not the best for many bands. In addition, the bridge gets quite high for almost all congregations to sing. Singing this in E puts a lot of notes around the vocal break for most people, so my recommendation is the key of D, but this, in turn, makes the rest of the song quite low.

Christ Is Risen (Riddle)

I am especially grateful that Jeremy Riddle created a hymn that speaks to the theological understanding that Christ was raised by the power of God. Many modern songs label Jesus as having conquered the grave, but as we see in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, Jesus was *raised* from the dead (“He has been raised”) by the power of God. Riddle’s setting of this is bold, big, and dynamic. There are a couple of issues that need to be considered, however: syncopation and vocal range. If you are using vocal or lead sheets from CCLI, the melody is highly ornamented to match what Riddle has sung. Find a way to normalize the rhythms and make them more singable in your context. You know what your congregation is or isn’t capable of doing, so sing the adjustments accordingly. For vocal range, the recommended key is G, but note that the Alleluias in the bridge can get quite high if sung according to the CCLI score. Plan accordingly as to how your band will approach the singing of this song--which parts are congregational and which are not.

God of Wonders

Taylor Burton-Edwards has skillfully weaved in added text to this song to be sung this week in the Eucharistic prayer. Have the band, piano, guitar, or other accompaniment instruments enter softly under the last statement before “God of Wonders” in the spoken liturgy to ensure a seamless segue into this response. It would be a good idea to rehearse this with the presider to make sure the timing is correct. The intent is to sing the chorus from this song, and then follow it with this text, sung to the same melody and rhythm:

*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!*

The first syllable of “Hosanna” would involve using a slur to move between both notes of “Lord of” in the original chorus. The key of G works best with this song and is what is printed in *Worship & Song*.

Agnus Dei

This modern worship music song has become a classic. I recall first hearing it sung by the band Third Day in the 1990s, and I developed a deep love for it during my college years. The text invokes the image of the choir of angels in Revelation 5:12,

singing, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (NRSV) If using percussion with this song, make sure the drums do not play the triplet rhythms every time. Too much of the wavering rhythmic patterns can make the congregation a bit “seasick.” Continue a four-beat pattern instead. The ideal key for congregational singing is the original key of A, and accompaniment can range from solo piano or guitar to full band.

Death Was Arrested

A relative newcomer to Easter music, this new song from 2015 uses a lilting, folk-quality tune to do something many modern worship songs do not: It addresses sin as sin, not as “shame.” I think you will find that the song is quite singable, despite the presence of so many syncopated rhythms. If accompanying with piano, do not double the melody. Allow the voice to lead through the tricky rhythms. Accompanying with a folk ensemble (guitar, violin, string bass, other string instruments) will add to the character of the tune. The ideal key is A.

Salvation Story

I have created this new hymn as a way to trace the path of the salvation narrative through scripture. It is a simple song that was composed on the planning retreat for the Holy Week resources and contains two choruses, one for use on Palm Sunday and one for Easter Sunday. From creation to exile, this short song moves toward a chorus of Hosannas and Alleluias. Accompaniment can be as simple as a solo guitar or piano, or as complex as a full band. Ideal key can range from D to E, depending on the singing range of your congregation. The score is presented in Eb.

Salvation Is Created

This choral work by Pavel Chesnokov is a classic example of Russian choral singing, featuring very low bass parts and lush harmonies, particularly in the tenor and bass sections. The women’s parts vary in range, but sopranos must expect to sing high and low. This is a beautiful work if you have a choir able to sing it. If a *cappella* singing is not an option, accompany lightly with organ to support the voices. Never let the organ come remotely close to overpowering the voices. Both files found on the site at the link in the body of the worship service will work appropriately.

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 Easter 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.

Did You Feel the Mountains Tremble

The 1990s produced a number of modern worship songs we continue to sing today, and this particular song has been sung by churches, youth ministries, and other places throughout the church for years. A number of rhetorical questions are sung at the beginning of the song to offer some imagery-driven considerations before offering an imperative to “fling wide” the gates of heaven and allow the Spirit of God to flow throughout the world, bringing hope and an end to injustice. Many bands I have heard sing this song do so in the original key of D, but there is a big hiccup when you arrive at the chorus if this is the chosen key. The melody is too high for congregations to sing, and most will either quit singing or awkwardly leap down an octave once they notice it is too high. Save them the trouble and make the invitational choice to sing this in the key of Bb. The verses themselves may be low, but it is worth it to make sure the congregation can sing the entire song with confidence.

Christ Is Alive

Closing the service with this hymn offers a great opportunity to musically model the resurrection by strategically offering upward modulations (key changes) within this hymn. I would suggest beginning the hymn in C. Then allow the choir and congregation to sing stanza 2 *a cappella*, and have the organ begin an improvised modulation to the key of D for stanzas 3 and 4. At the conclusion of stanza 4, instruct the organ to modulate again to the key of Eb, with the brass joining on the last stanza. This is a high key for this hymn, but TRURO is known well enough in most churches that this should be possible. Plus, the vowel formations within the words, “till earth and all creation ring” (the highest point of the melody) help support this upward movement naturally. A well written alternate harmonization and soprano descant are also contained within *The United Methodist Hymnal Music Supplement*. [History of Hymns](#)

PREACHING NOTES

One of the first times I ever had the pleasure of hearing Rev. Nadia Bolz Weber speak, she talked about the resurrection as a physical thing. I remember her saying that if resurrection wasn't about a real, physical body rising from actual death to actual life, then she didn't have an interest in being part of Christian faith. Or something like that. I don't remember exactly. I just remember being struck by her absolute conviction that resurrection was about a physical body coming back to life.

Later I did some research and came across some sermons she has posted online where she explained more about her beliefs. For example, in her [“Sermon on Earthly Things, Wombs, and the Resurrection,”](#) she writes about her personal struggle with the part of the Apostles' Creed where we confess our belief in the resurrection of the body. In her meditation on the story of Nicodemus, she tells about a pastor whose unwavering beliefs gave shape to her own theological conviction: that resurrection is not simply a metaphor, nor is faith simply an intellectual exercise. For Nadia, Christianity is material. It is physical. There is no separation between the realms of spirit and earth. For it is through the materials of this world that we experience the spiritual world. The core ritual practices of the faith require physical things: water, wine, bread, oil. In the language of

the church, when we surround ordinary things with holy words, these ordinary things are made extraordinary. Wine and bread become the sacrament of Holy Communion. Water and oil become the means through which we baptize people into the faith.

As we've been talking about all week, Christianity is at its heart a physical practice. And nowhere is this central tenet of the faith made more clear than on Easter morning.

As I read the story of the first Easter according to the Gospel writer John with fresh eyes this year, having spent months writing about bodies and rehab and healing and recovery and hope, perhaps it should not be surprising that this year I was struck by the physicality of the empty tomb. Especially Mary's response to it.

There is running. There is frantic screaming. There is bending and peering into the darkness. There are linen cloths. There are tears. There are conversations with ethereal beings. And then there is Jesus, standing there physically before her, speaking her name.

Mary's encounter with the risen Lord is not an idea, or an allegory, or a metaphor. It is a physical experience. And it is life changing, not just for Mary, but for the other disciples, and for all who would come to follow Jesus, including you and me.

As I write these words I am sitting in my mother's room at an in-patient rehabilitation facility in Fort Smith, Arkansas. I am writing while my mother is doing physical therapy nearby in the gym.

My mother came here yesterday, after she was released from a nine-day stay in the hospital, where she had been suffering from congestive heart failure. It's ironic that on the heels of the last series that I wrote, our Lenten series entitled "Rehab," and indeed, in this, the final series I will write in my position as Director of Preaching at Discipleship Ministries, for Easter, that I am now involved in my own experience of rehab.

BEGIN SIDEBAR

The Evil Spirit known as La La Land

By Dawn Chesser

My mother has Alzheimer's Disease. Mornings and late afternoon are the hardest times for an Alzheimer's patient. My mom refers to the feeling of not knowing who she is or where she is as being in "la la land." It is frightening for her. She hates it. But she's aware of when it is happening, when it begins to overtake her.

Being in la la land is, at least for the time being, a temporary state for my mom, although I know as her disease progresses, she will spend more time in la la land than in the

reality we still share for the better part of the day. So for the periods in which she is lucid, and laughing, and like herself, I'm immensely grateful. It is sacred time.

Some things seem to help her move more quickly from la la land into reality: a shower and doing her hair, getting dressed, singing hymns, reading scriptures, praying, listening to music that she used to play on the piano—Bach, Beethoven, Pachelbel, Schumann—eating her favorite butter cookies, the light crispy ones with almond and lemon flavoring and a pecan on top.

END SIDEBAR

BEGIN SIDEBAR

On Recognizing Privilege, Part II

By Dawn Chesser

My mother is one of the lucky ones. She has Medicare coverage, provided courtesy of the United States government. She has supplementary insurance. She has a husband who loves her fiercely and would do anything for her. She has a family to help. She has financial resources. She has friends. She has love to lift her and privilege to carry her along through the process of recovery.

But even as I write about my mother's experience I am acutely aware that there are many here who do not have all of the privileges my mother enjoys to help them along. While privilege has afforded each patient here the opportunity to rehabilitate in a modern, clean, bright, spacious facility staffed by a full array of nursing care, therapists, administrators, cooks, janitors, and various other caregivers who seem to enjoy one another and the work of caring for people, in most cases patients here spend long days alone. While the staff is amazing, and genuinely caring, they have many patients and limited time to spend with each one.

I know from years and years of serving as a parish pastor that many care and rehabilitation facilities are not like this one, and caregivers may not be equally kind to everyone.

All sorts of things get in the way of our ability to love one another as God loves us. We get caught up in our own needs and fears, our vision limited by our prejudices and judgments, our racism and misogyny, our wounds from our life experiences that have never fully healed. It clouds our ability to see some people as fully human, fully beloved children of God. We think that some of God's children deserve more than others. We judge that this child of God has worked harder than that one, and so has earned the right to enjoy a nicer hospital, or rehabilitation facility, or nursing home. This child of God was a good mother, so now as she faces old age and declining health, her daughter sits with her, while the child of God across the hall sits alone. Is it her fault? Was she a lesser parent?

Perhaps her daughter or son doesn't have the ability to take time off from work. Maybe she doesn't have any children or a spouse. Maybe her family lives far away. Maybe

they are estranged. Maybe they don't care. Maybe they are sick themselves. Maybe she is all alone in the world during her winter years.

Such is the case for so many elders in our communities today. We have much to learn from cultures that place a high value on caring for the elderly and infirm. What are we doing as church communities to assist families in this crucial ministry?

END SIDEBAR

Scholar Jane Kopas has written insightful work about Jesus' encounters with women in the Gospel according to John, some of which pertains to today's text about Mary Magdalene. Her goal is not to compare men's experiences with women's, or to promote the experiences of one gender over another, but rather to observe the patterns of Jesus' experiences with women in order to extrapolate meaning. As she puts it, "The women-encounters are neither indictments of men as men nor glorifications of some kind of mystique of women. They are simply John's presentation of how he and the church viewed the God-human dialogue" (Jane Kopas, "Jesus and Women: John's Gospel," *Theology Today* 41 [1984] 201-205).

Kopas characterizes Jesus' encounters with women in terms of relationships and communication. The relationships are with Jesus, and the communication is between each woman and God. In her article, Kopas explores these meetings as models for redemptive encounter between God and human beings.

In the article, Kopas works her way through several stories about women from John's Gospel. These include: the encounter between Jesus and Mary, the mother of Jesus, at the wedding in Cana; the meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well; the meeting with the adulterous woman; the death of Lazarus; the washing of Jesus' feet at Passover; the women waiting at the foot of the cross; and the text for today concerning Mary Magdalene's encounter with the risen Lord on the first Easter morning.

While space does not allow for me to go through her comments in detail, the general observation Kopas makes is that each of these encounters between Jesus and a woman in John's gospel follows a pattern of invitation and response that leads to transformation. For Kopas, the communication occurs not primarily as a result of content of the conversation, but rather, through the dynamics of relationship that rise to the surface in each encounter. She suggests that these encounters with women reveal communication from God to people that occur not through the spoken words or intellectual interpretation, but rather, through embodied experience. Kopas explores these communication events in terms of vulnerability, suffering, letting go of control, and commitment.

For example, Kopas suggests that because of the relatively low socio-economic status of women in the ancient world, it is a given that whenever Jesus has an encounter with a woman there is a power dynamic at work in which the woman is vulnerable. There is no judgment implied here. It is simply a fact of life that women were not considered equal to men in the world in which Jesus lived and taught. As such, the vulnerability of

women is always a factor that is present in a one-on-one encounter between a woman and a man. Kopas sees this not as a negative thing, but as an opportunity for redemption *because* of this situation. She suggests that as a result of their social vulnerability, women were immediately more willing to take risks, and were therefore more open to the potential for healing than men. Kopas sees this dynamic as an opportunity for spiritual healing to take place. As she reflects on what this dynamic means for us today, she writes:

Vulnerability in a spiritual sense is not merely the capacity to be wounded, but the capacity to receive love and thus to be healed. Why does this capacity seem so slow in manifesting itself in many of the followers of Jesus? Perhaps one becomes so familiar with fear and the avoidance of threatening areas that it seems preferable to live with the pain one already bears than to risk intimacy with another whose love or condemnation may make the pain more unbearable. So one chooses the anesthesia of withdrawal from intimate relationship through the distractions of work or entertainment or superficial relationships. Only in the presence of another who gazes on my vulnerability with awe and gentleness instead of disdain do I experience the intimacy that heals. If I can let go of the instinct to protect myself from a closeness that seems more than I can absorb, I can come to realize that I do not lose myself but find myself in the acceptance of weakness. It is at those moments that I also experience the peculiar grace of realizing that the places I flee from the love of others are often the places I flee from the love of God (Kopas, 203).

I moved away from my parents when I was eighteen years old and I never returned home. Not even for summers. For most of my adult life I have lived hundreds of miles from where my parents live. Although I talk to them on the phone nearly every day, the times I have been physically present with them has been limited to a few weeks a year.

Being with my parents all day long, every day, as we go through this time of crisis, healing and transition, is changing our relationship. I am learning things about them that I never knew, and they are learning new things about me. Because my mother is sick with Alzheimer's disease, much of what I am learning is coming not from the words she speaks, but from the physical things we are doing in which we both must be vulnerable and open to one another in new ways. I am seeing her naked, aging body as a thing of profound beauty as I learn to help her bathe. I am drying her hair and styling it the way she likes so that when she looks in the mirror she recognizes the person looking back at her. I am reassuring her when the evil spirit she calls "la la land" begins to take over her consciousness every afternoon when the sun starts to go down. The redemption of God's Spirit is made palpable and real through vulnerability in relationship, through invitation and response. Kopas suggests that we encounter the very presence of Christ in such moments of non-verbal communication, when in the midst of our vulnerability we are yet able to be open to the healing love of God shown through touch, care, waiting and commitment.

When it comes to Mary Magdalene's encounter with Jesus at the empty tomb, Kopas understands the relational communication as an encounter of commitment. Here she means something specific.

The clear vision of what is entailed in a commitment would be a contradiction of the commitment, for to be committed is to take a stand and to affirm a value that can only be known in living it out. When I look at the value, it is demanding and noble. When I live it out in the concrete, it may become burdensome and imbedded in ambiguity. Can I live with ambiguity and even failure, convinced the commitment is true? Even beyond that, can I accept with joy that there is no alternative to commitment (Kopas, 205)?

My father raises canaries. He says that the most difficult part of canary care is trimming the bird's nails. You have to catch the bird and gently cradle it in your palm and your last three fingers, while holding each ankle one at a time between your forefinger and thumb. You then cut each toenail, not too short and not too long. It is a carefully executed process. You can't clutch the bird because that will scare it. But you also can't hold it so loosely that it tries to get away.

Such is the case with Mary Magdalene on the morning of the first Easter. Encountering Jesus was, for Mary Magdalene, sort of like holding a canary. When she saw the risen Lord, her first inclination was to run to him and clutch him in her arms and never let him get away. But in her heart she knew, as did he, that he could not stay. He told her he was going to the Father. It was a delicate moment, for both of them. But in that delicate encounter, in that relationship of trust, God created plenty of space around them, enough for Mary to be able to wait without fear, and to know that the Lord had risen indeed, as he had promised. She stayed with him as long as he was present. And then, when he was gone, she went and told the others what she had seen, and what Jesus had said to her.

Kopas offers this theological explanation of the encounter between Jesus and Mary Magdalene at the tomb:

The last encounter with a woman recorded by John is the incident where Mary Magdalene meets Jesus in the garden without recognizing him at first (Jn. 30:14-18). She has remained, waiting after Peter and John have left the tomb. In her waiting, she is gifted with the presence of Jesus. If she is truly to receive his presence as gift, she must not cling to him because, as he tells her, he must return to the Father. It becomes apparent that seeking is not the whole story. The discovery of God's transformative presence occurs in my attentive waiting as well as in seeking. Moreover, the gift is most fully appreciated when I do not try to clutch it but return to an attitude of waiting (Kopas, 205).

Maybe God is like us and we are like birds. God cradles us gently in the palm of his hand, holding us neither too tightly nor too loosely. God promises to raise us up, on

Eagle's wings, and bear us on the breath of dawn, and make us shine like the sun, and hold us securely, now and forevermore.

Likewise, maybe holding on to the risen Christ during the season of Easter is like holding a canary. We must not clutch him or hold on too tightly. But we also must not lose sight of him or let him go altogether.

As we move into these great fifty days of the Easter season let us follow the lead of Mary Magdalene. Let us commit to the practice of waiting and holding Christ loosely and gently. May we trust in his promise that he will not leave us, and that he is coming again to us again. May we wait with patience and let love lead the way, all the way to the celebration of Pentecost, and on through the remainder of the year, and to the end of this life, all the way through to the life that is to come.

PLANNING NOTES
HOLY WEEK: LOVE LEADS THE WAY
EASTER SUNDAY

Reading Notes

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

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

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

Calendar Notes

Holy Week: LOVE LEADS THE WAY

Easter Sunday: The Dawning

The sanctuary is restored to its full glory, colors are white or gold, and flowers may abound today and throughout the Great 50 Days of Easter Season until its final celebration on Pentecost, when the colors are red.

April

April 1 [Easter Day](#)
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)

May 3 [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 17 [Father's Day \(USA\)](#)
June 19 [Juneteenth \(USA\)](#)

July

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

August

All Month [Back to School Resources](#)

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 [World Communion Sunday](#)
October 14 [Children's Sabbath](#)
October 21 [Laity Sunday](#) (2018 Resources forthcoming)
October 31 [Reformation Day](#)

**For Your Planning Team: Holy Week: LOVE LEADS THE WAY
Easter Sunday**

In This Series... and the Next!

Today marks at once the conclusion and climax of the Holy Week series, and the kickoff to our Easter Series.

Our Easter Season series includes two three-week miniseries: “In the Name of Jesus Christ,” grounds us in what it means to live and act in the name of Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord. “And in the power of the Holy Spirit” helps us connect with the power we are given “to be for the world the body of Christ redeemed by his blood.” The series culminates with Pentecost and a service of commissioning persons into the ministries to which they are called. Be sure to use today to draw attention to the weeks coming ahead.

Today

As of the conclusion of the service on Holy Thursday, our worship life had moved toward starkness and silence, the silence of death.

Today, that all changes. Every stop is be pulled out. Everything removed is returned to its place. Flowers may abound. Music may become lavish. Today, we move from sorrow to rejoicing, from silence to loud praise, from death to life. And love leads the way. In the words of the Orthodox Easter Troparion alluded to in today’s suggested Great Thanksgiving, “Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, to those in the tombs restoring life.” And we rejoice.

Today’s service begins by walking with Mary Magdalene on her journey from grief and fear to boldly proclaiming the resurrection of Christ to his other disciples. The sermon follows the Easter Proclamation and singing, and concludes with Mary’s proclamation followed by more singing in which we confess and declare the resurrection together.

From the singing we move immediately into a joyous Great Thanksgiving. The service concludes with more bold Easter music and a sending forth with joy. It is customary in many churches to conclude such Easter services with the singing of the Hallelujah Chorus. A link to a score you may freely reproduce for congregational singing is included.

Logistics:

In its structure, today’s service is fairly straightforward. The one unusual structural element is the gospel reading occurs over a period of time, through an extended entrance to the sermon and just beyond. If you have a deacon, the deacon should be the reader of all but the final verse, which is the domain of the preacher for the day. If you do not have a deacon, invite a lay leader to join your processional party and offer the readings along the way. Since reading will occur from several places, make sure the reader either has a wireless microphone (lavalier or headset, if possible) or can project so all can hear.

The most complicated logistics for Easter services may be music. Many congregations have additional instruments or instrumental ensembles, particularly brass, as part of Easter celebrations. Some of these instrumentalists may not know your worship space well. Be sure to greet these persons and orient them to the space well. Since they may very well be playing during communion, also be sure to send a team of servers to them during or after the distribution so they may receive communion if they wish. Wind and

brass players, as well as singers, will not be able to receive while they are playing or singing! But the server team may remain near them so they may receive as soon as it is convenient for them to do so.

Additional Resources

[2015 Planning Helps for Easter Sunday](#)
[Ecumenical Prayer Cycle](#)