SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER: AWAKENING... TO MINISTRY
(FESTIVAL OF GOD’S CREATION)

FULL SERVICE

ENTRANCE

The service begins with lights dimmed. Spotlight or screen image of a locked door or a series of closed doors. Words may be spoken or, if possible, projected onto the image of the closed doors.

Sunday evening:
The doors where the disciples were shut tight because of fear...

Solo: “How Can It Be” CCLI # 7023294 OR

Solo/Ensemble: “Trouble in My Way” “Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee” Africana Hymnal 4118 Africana Hymnal 4092 (ZSS 120)

Prayer of Illumination
Author of faith, to you we lift our weary, longing eyes. Our fear would close us down to your love and your call on our lives. Even now, send your Spirit among us. Break into our shut-up hearts, unparalyze our fear-filled minds, and unclasp our clenched hands, that we may hear your words of life and truly live. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

WORD AND RESPONSE

Reading John 20:19-23

Sermon Awakening... to Ministry

Call to Ministry

Deacon or Pastor:
While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. While they were still cowering in fear,
Christ announced peace to his disciples and sent them as the God had sent them in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Christ announces peace to us and sends us, in our fear and despite our sins, as agents of forgiveness, healing, and peace. This is the foundation of ministry in Jesus.

And so, the peace of Christ be always with you. 
**And also with you.**

_The people exchange the peace of Christ with others around them._

Solo/Ensemble: “Peace” CCLI# **5720246** (video: [https://is.gd/2jFAKm](https://is.gd/2jFAKm)) OR

“Your Grace and Mercy”
“Peace, Salaam, Shalom” Africana Hymnal, 4116 (ZSS 128)
_Worship & Song, 3181_

**Prayers of the People**  
_Deacon, Prayer Leader, or Pastor:_  
ALLELUIA! Christ is risen!  
**All:** Christ is risen, indeed. Alleluia!

Let us pray with and for the church and the world, saying, “Lord, have mercy.”

With all who are afraid this day because of health, or lack of resources, or threats to their lives or the lives of those they love, we stretch our hands to you:

**Lord, have mercy.**

With all who need you to enter their situation at this moment and speak “Peace,” we stretch our hands to you:

**Lord, have mercy.**

With all who have been wounded by others in this world, justly or unjustly, we stretch our hands to you:

**Lord, have mercy.**

With all who rejoice in your resurrection, and with all who mourn those who have died, we stretch our hands to you:
Lord, have mercy.

For all who bring peace or work for peace and justice in the world, we stretch our hands to you:

Lord, have mercy.

With all whom you have sent into the world, in every land and nation, we stretch our hands to you:

Lord, have mercy.

Breathe afresh on us, that we may receive of the Holy Spirit as we stretch our hands to you, praying:

The Lord’s Prayer (in your first language).

THANKSGIVING [AND COMMUNION]

The Offering
    Music During the Offering
    “We Give You Thanks” CCLI# 7019310 OR
    Solo and Congregation: “My Tribute” Africana Hymnal, 4080

The Great Thanksgiving
    Music During Communion
    Thanksgiving after Communion UMH 11

SENDING FORTH
    “Send Me Out” CCLI #5621778 OR
    “Let Our Earth Be Peaceful” Worship & Song, 3159

Deacon or Pastor:
Go in peace, filled with the Holy Spirit and the mercy of the Risen Christ. Alleluia! Alleluia!
Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

MUSIC NOTES

How Can It Be
This modern song is quite simple and, especially as a solo, can be an effective way of embodying a possible response shown by the disciples in this week’s scriptural
narrative. As a solo, the range is certainly manageable, and the instrumentation can vary. A couple of characteristics in the song, however, need to be discussed in your worship planning teams: 1) The self-referential means of addressing God, and 2) the amount of language about sin while never calling it by name. Addressing God self-referentially (i.e., “you plead my cause, you right my wrongs”) is not a problem unless this is the only way of addressing God. In other places in worship, seek variety in the means of reference by addressing God and God alone, or God in the persons of the Trinity. In relation to sin, the words of this song give flesh to what sin can look like, but it never calls sin by name. However, it opens the door to talk about sin, our brokenness, and our relationship with God. Take advantage of this opportunity to do some theological education in your church, and allow the music to inform your congregation.

**Trouble in My Way**

Simple songs often have the most powerful effect upon worship, and they can influence the congregation long after corporate worship has concluded. Set in a very common call-and-response format, “Trouble in My Way” offers a melody for a leader and choir, preferably *a cappella*. It is very easy to overthink songs like this one, but it is also of utmost importance to make sure those leading (both the leader and those responding) are clear on their vocal parts. The congregation will very likely join in singing both leader and response parts, which is definitely acceptable. Insert hand claps on counts 2 and 4 as desired.

**Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee**

This setting of a Charles Wesley hymn is known as “long meter” or “Old Dr. Watts” in African American church music. It is not the same definition of “long meter” as referred to in poetic meter terminology; rather, it is a defining performance practice in worship in black churches in which the melody is “lined out” in a very slow, improvisatory style. The voices lead and determine the overall melodic arc, complete with ornamentation, while the instruments (usually a band or at least a rhythm section) follow just behind the rhythm of the singers. This practice can be incredibly powerful if capable and understanding voices are leading, and in settings where this is unfamiliar, practice over time may be needed. Explore the cultural dynamics of other churches in your area by having combined services together in which these kinds of defining cultural songs can be shared. [History of Hymns](#)

**Peace**

By clicking the link found in the worship order, you will find this modern worship song as recorded by Miriam Webster. We encourage the use of this song as a solo, but it would be manageable to sing with a praise team as well. The text relates especially well with the greeting of Jesus to his disciples: “Peace be with you.” An ideal key for this setting is F, and it can be accompanied by band or even solo piano. One thing to note, however, is that CCLI does not have a lead sheet for this score. It may require aural learning unless you can find a written score.

**Your Grace and Mercy**
In a thematic emphasis very similar to the well-known hymn, “We’ve Come This Far by Faith,” this singable, memorable song echoes the same sentiment of God’s faithfulness within the repeated line, “your grace and mercy brought me through.” Make sure when singing this song not to go too fast (notice that the suggested metronome marking is 44---slightly slower is also ok). For authentic performance practice, it would also be encouraged to clap on all offbeats (2,3,5,6,8,9). A possibility with this song would be to create a medley by singing the refrain of "Blessed Assurance" in the key of C with this song (or sing “Your Grace and Mercy” in the key of D).

**Peace, Salaam, Shalom**

Discipleship Ministries' Former Director of Music Resources, Dean McIntyre, created this effective, simple song with a haunting melody. *Salaam* is the phonetic rendering of the Arabic word for “peace,” and *Shalom* is the Hebrew equivalent. Every phrase uses all three words, as cohesive and inseparable as the persons of the Trinity, and each successive melodic sequence rises in the same way as prayers for peace until the final statement. Find ways to use this as a liturgical piece, even outside of worship, by creating prayers or readings with “Peace, Salaam, Shalom” as a sung response. If you do not have *Worship & Song* in your church, you can also find the hymn setting [here](#).

**We Give You Thanks**

For an example of a modern song that provides more expansive language in reference to God, “We Give You Thanks” offers a number of different images: Creator, Provider, Redeemer. Make note that only two persons of the Trinity are mentioned (Covenantal God, Jesus), with no reference to the Spirit. However, the means of grace are present in this song as a way to offer thanks and infer the work of the Spirit. Some of the intervals between the end of one phrase and the beginning of another are tricky, but if your music leadership is confident, this should not be a hurdle as the congregation joins in singing. The ideal key for congregations is D. It gets slightly low at places, however, so consider having a female soloist sing the bridge in a lower range or a tenor sing an octave higher.

**My Tribute**

The chorus of this song by Andraé Crouch can be found in *The United Methodist Hymnal*. However, if you have never encountered the verses, find this in *The Africana Hymnal* and assign the verse to a soloist, inviting the congregation to sing the chorus only. Your congregation is very likely familiar with Fanny Crosby’s “To God Be the Glory,” but this work presents thankfulness in a slower, thoughtful, and very different way. If your pianist is able to improvise, give him or her the freedom to do so with this selection and fill out the accompaniment. A full band or rhythm section can also make the singing of this hymn memorable. [History of Hymns](#)

**Send Me Out**

Steve Fee has created a great song that calls us to be the hands and feet of Christ as we are sent forth from worship. The rhythm is a bit tricky, so the music leadership will need to be particularly familiar with the song before attempting to lead it.
However, the rhythm is accessible enough with repetition to be teachable for a congregation to learn. The ideal key is G, and the best accompaniment is a band with soloist or vocal praise team.

**Let Our Earth Be Peaceful**

Recalling Jesus’ greeting, “Peace be with you,” Shirley Erena Murray’s hymn prays for peace and calls us to be faithful in working for peace. Carlton Young’s tune, RAYMOND, is particularly peaceful, and the presence of some slight dissonance in the jazz harmonies are most effective and poignant in this simple tune. A large jump exists in the third short phrase, but support from a worship leader, sopranos, or even an instrumental accompaniment such as a flute or violin can add confidence to the congregational singing.

**PREACHING NOTES**

Over the next three weeks we will be talking in this short series for the Easter Season about Awakening: Awaking to our ministry as disciples of Jesus Christ. Awakening to the nourishment we receive for this ongoing work through the sacrament of Holy Communion. And Awakening to what it means to live fully as baptized members of Christian community.

*Are we fully awake in our practice of Christian discipleship? Or are there some things we still need to work on?*

It’s a pattern I have observed in United Methodist congregations across the connection. Somewhere near the start of worship, perhaps after the prelude, the pastor or another worship leader stands and greets the gathered worshiping community with an enthusiastic “Good Morning!” Then he or she invites those in the congregation to greet their neighbors, welcome their visitors, and “pass the peace of Christ.”

Passing the peace of Christ is part of the weekly worship ritual in many United Methodist congregations. Discipleship Ministries has even created a short [video](#) from the “Chuck Knows Church” series on passing the peace in worship.

In some churches, the invitation to pass the peace functions primarily as an extended time of congregational greeting. In one church, people turn to the people seated immediately around them and say “Good Morning,” shake hands, or even embrace their neighbors. In another church, people leave their pews and wander around the sanctuary greeting their fellow worshipers with handshakes and hugs until the pastor or another worship leader is able to regain control of the service. And in many churches, the people actually do greet one another with words specifically about peace:

Peace be with you.
And also with you.
But as we begin the work of Easter Awakening it is important for us to be reminded that sharing the peace of Christ is not just a fancy way to invite people to greet one another in worship.

Sharing the peace is part of our identity as disciples of Jesus Christ.

To use the title of a Debbie Reynolds movie, as followers of Jesus Christ we might say of our ritual of passing the peace that “It Started with a Kiss.” We’ve all observed our European brothers and sisters greeting one another with kisses on each cheek, right? And we’ve witnessed the French performing the “faire la bise,” in which the two people quickly touch cheeks on each side, but actually kiss the air, not the cheeks. Our neighbors across the pond all do this, although it is more common in Eastern, Central and Southern Europe, and especially Mediterranean cultures, than in northern Europe.

This practice of greeting with a kiss to each cheek is not only widespread and common in many cultures in our day and time. It is a practice that goes very far back in human history.

Cheek kissing was a common form of greeting in the ancient Mediterranean world, including among our Jewish and Christian forebears. The New Testament attests to the early Christian community taking this common practice and giving it new meaning, much in the way they took objects common to daily life (wine, bread, water) and attaching ritual meaning to them, rendering the sacramental out of what once was profane. The kiss of peace or passing of peace fits into this category. It is not a sacrament. But neither is it simply a form of ordinary secular greeting when it is shared in the context of Christian community.

In the New Testament writings of Paul, we read these familiar words: “Greet one another with a holy kiss” (Romans 16:16, I Corinthians 16:20, 2 Corinthians 13:12) or “Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss (1 Thessalonians 5:6). In I Peter 5:14, it is phrased in a slightly different way: “Greet one another with a kiss of love.”

Candler School of Theology professor Ed Phillips is perhaps the world’s foremost authority on the subject of holy kissing. It was the focus of his doctoral dissertation. Under the topic “Holy Kiss” in The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002, 267-268), Dr. Phillips shares the history of this ritual act, which I will here summarize.

The ritual kiss actually functions in many different religious groups, from the ancient world to the modern day. Artwork throughout human recorded history has included scenes of people blowing kisses to the gods. Icons in the Eastern orthodox tradition show enormous wear from the generations of worshipers who expressed adoration by kissing these holy objects.

The practice of kissing was likely initiated by the disciples of Jesus, who offered their ritual sign of peace and reconciliation not to the gods, but to one another. Phillips says
that in the Jewish world, male kissing was normally limited to family members. The fact that the disciples adopted this practice among persons, both male and female, who were not related by blood signified a new kind of family made by the covenant with Christ. Likewise, Judas’s use of the kiss as a sign of betrayal suggests that the kiss of peace was an expected greeting in the burgeoning community of Christ. Similarly, Phillips notes in his article that the greeting of “Peace be with you,” combined with “breathing on them” in today’s text from the Gospel of John, may in fact allude to this same practice. Was the “breathing” actually an air kiss? An ancient “faire la bise” from Jesus to his frightened disciples?

By the second and third centuries, the kiss of peace had evolved from being a way of greeting brothers and sisters in Christ to a ritual act of worship. At this point in history, the kiss was offered in conclusion to a time of prayer. But by the fourth and fifth centuries the practice had become associated with the ritual of the Eucharist. This continued until the end of the first millennium, by which time the practice had declined as a congregational act, and was instead picked up as a form of adoration by individuals by the kissing of objects: altars, statues, church doors, special tablets. While the kissing of holy objects, especially icons, continues in the eastern tradition even today, in the west, the practice of holy kissing was dropped entirely by the sixteenth century. It never emerged as a practice among Protestant Reformers.

It was not until the twentieth century, after Vatican II, that this ancient ritual practice began to re-awakened. But it emerged in a new form. In most churches today there is no kissing involved. Rather, we exchange handshakes or hugs instead of kisses. And we call it an “exchange of peace.”

In the United Methodist tradition, the passing of peace serves as a reminder that those who came to the table are called to be reconciled with their neighbors. We retain this language in our current eucharistic prayer in the United Methodist Church, for example, in the invitation to the table for “A Service of Word and Table I”: “Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another.” After we offer our corporate prayer of confession and are pardoned, we are invited to immediately turn and express signs of God’s peace to those around us.

I wonder, though, how many of our congregations take this call to be at peace with our neighbors seriously. Especially since in many congregations, the sharing of God’s peace has been eliminated from the service of Holy Communion and reassigned to the time of greeting at the opening of the service. And to make matters even more complicated, this newer practice of greeting one another with words of peace at the start of worship has become a matter of dispute, especially among congregational developers. Why? It has become an issue of hospitality, because it can make visitors feel left out. Further, it is viewed by some as an unwanted invasion on people’s personal space.
But if we can back up to the beginning, when “It Started with a Kiss,” and for the moment put these other matters aside, what is critical about the lesson for today is to realize that offering peace is our first commission from Jesus regarding what it means to be his disciples. Sharing the peace is an act of ministry. It is not a sacrament, but it is sacramental. And unlike the sacraments, it is something that all followers of Jesus are given the authority to do and are commissioned by Jesus to do. Unlike in the Roman Catholic tradition, it isn’t up to the ordained priest to give absolution. United Methodists believe it is incumbent upon us ALL to give absolution. And Jesus has given every single one of us not just a mandate to forgive, but the authority to offer forgiveness.

Consider the story for today. What do we see? People hiding. People who are literally locked in a closet, like you do when a tornado is headed your way. People who are hiding because they are afraid to live in the light of day.

It is into this scene of fear and hiding that Jesus appears and offers a Holy Kiss: “Peace be with you.”

The good news is that Jesus Christ appears. He rises from the dead and walks directly into this place of hiding and terror as one who has not just been wounded (as he shows them his hands and side), but as one who had just literally been murdered by the very people from whom the disciples are hiding. He strolls right into their hiding place and speaks love directly into the face of their terror and hatred and fear.

And it is from this place that he gives them, and all of us, the authority to do exactly what he is doing: “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

He gives us authority to offer forgiveness. He gives us a mandate to offer peace to others. He commissions us all for this work of ministry. And in doing these things, he awakens us more fully to the ministry of discipleship to which he is calling us.

*Peace be with you. I am sending you as God has sent me, to go forth and minister into the midst of the fearful, the hiders, the closeted, the condemned, the ostracized, the haters and the hated. I am sending you, as God has sent me, to breathe peace into these places of darkness.*

Jesus sends God’s people out into the world to do what he has done. He sets us up here to have great responsibility for one another’s care and for one another’s very lives.

So let us hear Jesus speaking his words of comfort and commission to us when he says, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” Let us be awakened to a renewed understanding of what it means to share the peace of Christ. Let us understand that when we offer peace to someone, it is not the same as saying “Good Morning.” It isn’t the same thing as greeting people or welcoming a visitor to worship.
This is the good news offered to us directly from Jesus! He is proclaiming power and blessing us for its distribution to the world. And he is showing us that when we do this, when we extend the hand of peace and reconciliation in Christ’s name, we offer God’s peace out of our own places of woundedness and brokenness.

We offer ourselves as part of Christ’s risen body, yes.

But we must not forget that are also a part of Christ’s wounded body. We are willing to bear the wounds of Christ not as a sign of dishonor or shame, but as a sign of who we are in the risen Lord. We have been wounded, but we have been renewed—born again—to be victorious in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is why it is so critical that we don’t come into the community of faith holding grudges. We don’t come to the table holding grudges. And we don’t go to our graves holding grudges.

No. We let all things go in the name of Jesus Christ. We speak the saving power of forgiveness through our words and actions. We come to all of these spaces and to all of God’s people, bearing the wounds of our Savior and responding not with anger, fear, and judgment, but rather, by reaching out with open hands, open hearts, and open minds to offer God’s invitation of peace and reconciliation.

As we awaken to our ministry of discipleship, let us hear Jesus speaking to us. Let us hear him calling us and commissioning us, everywhere and always, to breathe God’s reconciling love into this world.

**PLANNING NOTES**

**AWAKENING: TO MINISTRY**

**Reading Notes**
NRSV texts, artwork and Revised Common Lectionary Prayers for this service are available at the Vanderbilt Divinity Library.

Leccionario en Español, Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes.

Lectionnaire en français, Le Lectionnaire Œcuménique Révisé

**Calendar Notes**
SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER: AWAKENING... TO MINISTRY

Colors are white or gold, and flowers may continue to abound today and throughout the Great 50 Days of Easter Season until its final celebration on Pentecost, when the colors are red.
April
April 23  Festival of God’s Creation
          New Mini-Series Begins: Easter Season: Awakening...
April 25  World Malaria Day
April 30  Native American Ministries Sunday

May
All Month  Christian Home Month
          Asian Pacific American Heritage Month
May 4     National Day of Prayer (USA)
May 5     May Friendship Day
May 8-14  Christian Family Week
May 14    Festival of the Christian Home/Mother’s Day (USA)  New Mini-Series Begins: Easter Season: Becoming...
May 21    Heritage Sunday
May 24    Aldersgate Day
May 25    Ascension Day
May 28    Ascension Sunday (if transferred)
May 29    Memorial Day (USA)

June
June 4    Day of Pentecost (Easter Season Concludes)
June 11   Trinity Sunday, Peace with Justice Sunday
          New Series Begins: From Chaos to Community
June 18   Father’s Day (USA)
June 19   Juneteenth

July
July 4    Independence Day

August
All Month  Back to School Resources

September
All Month  Season of Creation (2017 resources forthcoming)
September 4 Labor Day (USA)
September 15-
October 15 Hispanic Heritage Month (USA)

October
All Month  A Season of Saints (2017 resources forthcoming)
October 1  World Communion Sunday
October 6-8 Children’s Sabbath (2017 resources forthcoming)
October 15 Laity Sunday (2017 resources forthcoming)
October 31 Reformation Day (500th Anniversary)

For Your Planning Team: AWAKENING... TO MINISTRY

Today marks the kickoff of the first of two three-week miniseries. “Awakening...” focuses on the meaning and grounding of ministry, Holy Communion, and baptism. The second
miniseries, “Becoming…”, starts in three weeks and focuses on claiming our spiritual gifts and callings and becoming one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world in the name of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. Easter season culminates with Pentecost and a service of commissioning persons into the ministries to which they have discerned they are called.

Be sure to use today to draw attention to the weeks coming ahead, particularly in this miniseries. In effect, you’ll have three “launch Sundays” during the Easter Season. The first was last Sunday, launching the entire season. The second is today, launching this miniseries in particular. The next will be in three weeks, launching the second miniseries.

So remember these **three keys to an effective series launch**.

1. **Start strong.** Strong doesn’t necessarily mean loud or even upbeat. It means compelling. Our order of worship today begins with lights dimmed and images of doors shut and locked. Whether you choose the modern worship song or the Africana hymns, the opening songs reinforce the awareness of doubt, fear, trouble, and wonder. The intention in visual effects and in music is to help the congregation connect in a sensory way with the fear the disciples felt as they locked themselves into an upstairs room just before Jesus appeared to send them into ministry.

2. **Offer an overture** in some way, something that lays out the theme and previews the journey ahead. You might do that today in onscreen announcement sets shown before and after worship, or in your bulletin, calling attention to it in pre-worship announcements. Your prelude might also include musical cues from the services coming up.

3. **Articulate the series promise.** The series promise for this miniseries fulfills one of the two ancient purposes for Easter Season: doctrinal formation of the newly baptized. This series in particular will help the newly baptized and the whole congregation become more deeply grounded in what it means to be in ministry, to live out our baptismal calling, and to celebrate Holy Communion together.

**Additional Resources**

*2014 Planning Helps for The Second Sunday of Easter*

*Ecumenical Prayer Cycle:* Djibouti, Somalia

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**FORMATION GROUP NOTES**

Formation groups through Easter Season, starting today, have a historically different role than either during Lent or Holy Week. Lent was about establishing holy habits. Holy Week was about abiding with Christ and one another to face his death and all that it
means for us, for the earth, and for the universe. Easter Season is about “mystagogy” or “learning the mysteries.” This learning comes in two forms: doctrinal formation (what are theological and doctrinal grounds of ministry, Eucharist, and baptism) and ministry formation (claiming our ministry and beginning to practice it in ways that enable us to be one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world).

Each week’s group meetings during Easter Season point forward to the coming Sunday. For this week, your groups will explore together the meaning of Holy Communion.

Here is a suggested agenda for this week’s first Easter Season Formation Group meeting.

1. Brief, informal time of gathering (10 minutes or so) with snacks to share

2. Formal gathering-- seated in a circle in chairs or around a table-- with requests for prayer for the coming week (10 minutes)-- and prayer led by the group leader or unison in the group. If the latter, one practice I’ve found useful in leading such groups is immediately after a person shares, the whole group pauses, then says in unison, “Into your hands, O God, we commend our sister/brother/sibling(s) Name(s).” Proceed to the next person and repeat until all who wish to offer requests for prayer have had the opportunity to do so. The group leader may be last.


This booklet offers answers to many questions group members may have about Holy Communion. An additional online FAQ is available here: https://gbod-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy/kintera-files/worship/FAQ_Meaning_of_Communion_FINAL_JUNE_2015.pdf

Leaders: You may use this booklet, the presentation slides from our webinar, “Holy Communion in the Bible and The United Methodist Church,” or if you have additional time for your meeting, you may view the webinar together and then discuss it. You may find the webinar and the presentation slides here: https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/holy-communion-in-the-bible-and-the-united-methodist-church

4. Gather in a circle or huddle, lay hands on one another, one by one, and pray in unison, “X, may you continue to grow in Christ in the days ahead.”
5. Thank all for coming, and send the group out to keep learning and living the baptism they have received.
THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER: AWAKENING... TO TABLE
(NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRIES SUNDAY)
FULL SERVICE

ENTRANCE

A large dining table should be placed in front of the Lord’s Table (if possible), but not obstructing it. Three chairs or stools may be placed around it, one in the center, one on each side (left and right).

The service begins with drumbeats (Native American or Djembe) at a walking pace. Invite a Native American drummer if you choose the Native American option. A procession of worship leaders, older adults, and children travels through the congregation during the singing.

“Shawnee Traveling Song”
“We Walk His Way” (Ewe Thina)

The oldest adult in the procession joins hands with the youngest child, comes to the center of the worship space, and leads the congregation in the prayer for illumination.

Prayer for Illumination

Eldest and youngest, together:
Let us pray.

ALL:

Great Spirit, Creator,
walking with us on the way,
you open us and all our senses
to knowledge and awe
through all you have made.
Open us now to wisdom
in the proclaiming and hearing
of your Word. Amen.

WORD AND RESPONSE

Choir or ensemble: “Hamba Nathi” (1x)

Download: https://is.gd/ESjP1w
YouTube: https://is.gd/Lmd4hv
About this song: https://is.gd/Ckkr6d

As the choir or ensemble sings, a Facebook Live feed (or a prerecorded video) may appear on the screens. The video shows two people walking toward the church, but still at some distance from it (the church may not be seen in the first clip). Voiceover (new translation by Taylor Burton-Edwards, based on Luke 24:13-32):
Now there were two disciples on that day who were walking toward the village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about all that had taken place.

*Screen goes dark. All sing, softly and somewhat more slowly:*  
“Hamba Nathi”

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Walk with us, our redeemer, we pray
Walk with us, our redeemer, we pray
Walk with us, our redeemer, we pray
Walk with us, our redeemer, we pray
Redeemer, redeemer, redeemer we pray
Walk with us, our redeemer, we pray
Redeemer, redeemer, redeemer we pray,
Walk with us, our redeemer, we pray.
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*Live feed now shows three people approaching the doors of the church.*

Voiceover: While they were talking and trying to understand what it all meant, Jesus himself came near and started journeying with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

Jesus: What are these concerns you are going back and forth about as you’re walking?

Voiceover: They just stood there, looking sad.

Cleopas: Are you the only person around Jerusalem who doesn’t know the things that happened there these past few days?

Jesus: What things?

Cleopas: What happened to Jesus of Nazareth, a man, a prophet, who was powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.

Other disciple: And how the chief priests and rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death and crucified him.

Cleopas: We were hoping he was the one who was coming to deliver Israel. But now it’s been three days since the day all that happened.

Other disciple: And then, some of the women of our number, they arrived at his tomb early this morning, and when they didn’t find his body, came to us and said they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive.

*Arriving at the doors of the worship space:*
Cleopas: So some of the others went to the tomb and found it as the women had said. They didn’t see him there.

Entering the worship space. Live feed ends. Invite congregation to turn to follow the journey of the readers now among them.

Jesus: O how unaware and slow of heart to believe everything the prophets spoke! Wasn’t it necessary for Messiah to suffer and then go into his glory?

Voiceover: So beginning with Moses, and the prophets, he started to interpret for them everything that had been written about him.

They were now approaching Emmaus, and Jesus was going ahead as if to journey on further. But the disciples urged him.

Cleopas and the other: Hey! Stay with us!

Cleopas: It’s already evening. The daylight is over.

Voiceover: So he went to stay with them.

All sing, softly but livelier
(Xhosa version)  “Hamba Nathi”

Stay with us, our redeemer, we pray
Stay with us, our redeemer, we pray
Stay with us, our redeemer, we pray
Stay with us, our redeemer, we pray
Mkhululi, Mkhululi, Mkhululi wethu
Mkhululi, Mkhululi, Mkhululi wethu
Redeemer, redeemer, redeemer we pray,
Stay with us, our redeemer, we pray.

During the singing, the readers take seats around the table, Jesus in the middle. On the refrain, he takes bread, breaks it, and gives it to them.

Voiceover: Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him! Just then, he vanished.

Cleopas: Weren’t our hearts burning as he talked to us on the road?

Other disciple: Yes, and as he opened the Scriptures to us!

All sing, several times, full voice and speed  “Hamba Nathi”

Walk with us, our redeemer, we pray
Walk with us, our redeemer, we pray
Walk with us, our redeemer, we pray
Walk with us, our redeemer, we pray
Mkhululi, Mkhululi, Mkhululi wethu
Mkhululi, Mkhululi, Mkhululi wethu
Redeemer, redeemer, redeemer we pray,
Walk with us, our redeemer, we pray.

Sermon

THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION

Call to the Table
*Deacon or Worship Leader:*
In the midst of our intense conversations
in the social bubbles we create for ourselves
Christ comes among us,
and walks with us,
listens to us,
and opens our consciousness
to recognize him,
and his claim on us,
anew.

We confess our ignorance,
our slowness of heart,
and our sinful neglect
of what Jesus, Moses, and the prophets
have taught us.

Silence

*Pastor:*
This moment is like the evening,
the daylight, and our sin, in God’s mercy,
gone.

And Jesus
stays with us.

The peace of Christ be always with you.
And also with you.

The peace is exchanged and the offering is collected.
Offering Music: “Christ Beside Me”  
*The Faith We Sing*, 2166

**The Great Thanksgiving**  
*A Native American Celebration of Holy Communion*  
(starting with the Song of Praise) OR  
*BOW 66-67*

*The pastor breaks the bread in the sight of the people, then serves the servers, who serve the people.*

Music During Communion

“Love Has Come”  
CCLI# 5423196  
*Worship & Song*, 3008 OR

“Open the Eyes of My Heart”  
*(Choir) “Daw-Kee, Aim Daw-Tsi-Taw”*  
*United Methodist Hymnal*, 330

“Heleluyan”  
*United Methodist Hymnal*, 78

“Here, O My Lord, I See Thee”  
*United Methodist Hymnal*, 623

**Thanksgiving after Communion**  
*Deacon or Pastor and People:*

*Risen Jesus,*  
thank you for you joining us in our journeys,  
giving us yourself in bread and cup.  
and opening our awareness.  
We have seen, felt, and tasted  
your presence.  
Now send us forth in the power of the Spirit  
to carry your presence  
to all we go to see. Amen.

**SENDING FORTH**  
*“Hamba Nathi”*

You walk with us, to freedom you lead,  
You walk with us, to freedom you lead,  
You walk with us, to freedom you lead,  
You walk with us, to freedom you lead.

To freedom, to freedom, to freedom you lead,  
To freedom, to freedom, to freedom you lead,  
To freedom, to freedom, to freedom you lead,  
To freedom, to freedom, to freedom you lead.

*Deacon or Pastor:*

At that very moment, they got up and turned back toward Jerusalem, and they found the
eleven gathered together, and they said:

**All:** He was made known to us in the breaking of the bread!

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

“Hamba Nathi” (Reprise, in Xhosa)
  Hamba nathi, Mkhululi wethu,
  Hamba nathi, Mkhululi wethu,
  Hamba nathi, Mkhululi wethu,
  Hamba nathi, Mkhululi wethu.
  Mkhululi, Mkhululi, Mkhululi wethu,
  Mkhululi, Mkhululi, Mkhululi wethu,
  Mkhululi, Mkhululi, Mkhululi wethu,
  Mkhululi, Mkhululi, Mkhululi wethu.

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**MUSIC NOTES**

**Shawnee Traveling Song**
  The purpose of the “Shawnee Traveling Song” is very similar to what I have encountered with the songs of Taizé. Even though the nature of these songs is different, the transcendence of singing them is shared among them. The words of songs from Taizé serve as the prayer themselves, but singing them so repetitively allows different prayers to form in their singing. In this Shawnee song, the sung syllables have no meaning, but as we see in *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, “sometimes the best way to think deep thoughts is to occupy a part of the mind with the trivial” (BOW, 197). Sing this song at a walking pace, with the quarter note = 60 beats/minute. The song itself is to be sung cyclically, so I recommend singing/shouting only the last measure at the very end. You may find yourself in a trance as your mind thinks on deeper things while singing at this lilting pace.

**We Walk His Way (Ewe Thina)**
  Before singing this South African song, the choir must be prepared to sing a *cappella*. Instruct the basses to sing first, adding the tenors, altos, and sopranos, on successive times through, with the congregation singing whatever part feels best to them. The use of drums (particularly djembe or something similar) is effective here, along with some encouraged movement while singing. Do not get too complex with movements, as this can discourage a choir or congregation, but do not sing it rigidly. As is recommended this week, “Ewe Thina” makes a marvelous procession as the walking is embodied in the singing. If a *cappella* singing is not an option, accompany with light piano or guitar, preferably just playing on certain beats, not doubling the melody.

**Hamba Nathi**
Whereas this song exists in the public domain, a variety of translations have been printed and copyrighted. However, the version we recommend for you at the link in the worship order is free to use. Here is a pronunciation guide for the Xhosa:

\[ \text{Hahm-bah nah-tee (m)koo-loo-lee weh-too} \]

Do not put too much emphasis on the (m) sound of Mkhululi. Again, just as was the case with “Ewe Thina,” make sure the choir is prepared to sing \textit{a cappella}, if possible. I have heard a variety of settings of this song, some with straight eighth notes and others with a slight swing rhythm. I have also encountered varying pronunciations of “Mkhululi,” sometimes ending in an “oo” vowel, other times ending in “eh,” and still other times ending in a schwa (“uh”). Whatever way you choose to sing it, do it with confidence after having done some of your own research. If \textit{a cappella} is not an option, accompany with light piano or guitar, but try to at least find some drums to accompany this lively song.

**Christ Beside Me**

BUNESSAN is a favorite tune in many congregations, and it provides a warm, reassuring setting for the text of this hymn. Just as Christ walks alongside the disciples on the roadway, we sing of Christ’s presence with us—“Christ all around me”—as the friend who accompanies us along the road as we live in wonder at the resurrection. This would also be a great tune to have a children’s choir lead in worship, with plenty of visual motions for Christ above, below, beside, and all around. Accompany with a solo treble instrument, whether it is a violin, flute, or even played on a flute stop on the organ.

**Love Has Come**

Best used as a solo, “Love Has Come” offers a song in which the congregation can sing the chorus and bridge. I would not recommend the verses for congregational singing because of a lack of melodic contour and rhythmic syncopation. The chorus and bridge, however, are accessible, and the bridge has a building, repetitive quality that can be used to foster singing in the midst of the distribution of Holy Communion. It might even be appropriate for the worship leader to add text (not by projection or in print) by calling out new bridge texts that are somewhat more Wesleyan in relation to the ongoing understanding of salvation through sanctification. One option would be, “Spirit, fill my heart.” Allow the worship team to be creative in coming up with options, but realize that it is not legal to alter the songs in print or on screen. The Communion distribution is a perfect time to approach texts with a call-and-response format because people are moving with no books, bulletins, or other materials in hand. The ideal key for congregational singing is G.

**Open the Eyes of My Heart**

Paul Baloche created this popular song in the late 1990s, and it has maintained staying power to the present day. If planned creatively, it uses repetition without being redundant and creates a choir from within the congregation as the heavenly chorus of “Holy, holy, holy” is sung. In that section, it is also possible to create a one-measure vocal round (underneath the written chord changes) to create a texture with an echoing
effect. The round can be divided between women/men, adults/children, or even just the seating arrangement in the worship space. The ideal key for this song is E. There is a slight variation between I/We, but a great practice in singing this song is inserting a prayer in which we pray for God to be revealed in our prayers, our discernment, and other endeavors. “I want to see you” can be interpreted as being somewhat shallow, but allowing that statement to lead into a prayer in which God’s call, plan, or will becomes evident to the gathered people is something altogether different. Hymn Study

Daw-Kee, Aim Daw-Tsi-Taw
This setting of a Kiowa prayer is beautiful and often ignored by many congregations because of the difficulty of the Kiowa text. I encourage its use, however, as a vital way of expressing Native American hymnody in the local church. We must find ways to reconnect with native peoples in our areas, and singing these songs helps us in the broadening of awareness to native communities and the United Methodist presence and history within them. This is a very accessible choral setting that features very well written voice leading for all parts. Allow each phrase to breathe by not rushing or singing too metrically. Introduce the melody with a flute and/or a solo voice on the phonetic Kiowa transcription, and have the choir and/or congregation sing in either Kiowa or English. If you feel insecure about singing the original text, that is understandable, especially since Kiowa is an oral language with no written components. However, I encourage you to sing it in the Kiowa with confidence, and offer that respect to native communities.

Heleluyan (Alleluia)
All United Methodist churches should be singing this song regularly, not only because it is a song of native Muscogee (Cree) peoples, but because it is a simple, memorable, and very usable statement of Alleluia. Depending on the setting and liturgical context, this work can be sung as an a cappella, unison song; it can be accompanied by a simple piano, guitar, or organ accompaniment; or it can even be sung as a 1- or 2-measure 2-3 part canon. A drum beat is most welcomed here, with a quarter note, 2 eighth notes, and 2 quarters in each measure (Rhythmically: 1, 2 AND 3, 4).

Here, O My Lord, I See Thee
The nearness of Christ at the Communion Table is the focus of this hymn, and on the day when we encounter the narrative of the meal in Emmaus, this hymn is the ideal choice. The text is profoundly intimate, and it creates a yearning to stay at the table, knowing that when the meal is over, “too soon we rise; the symbols disappear.” However, as Laurence Hull Stookey wrote in Calendar: Christ’s Time for the Church, this meal itself can be seen as “the intersection of time and eternity” (Stookey, 1996, p. 17), for there remains at the conclusion of the hymn a “sweet foretaste of the festal joy.” The ideal accompaniment for this chorale setting is organ, but a reimagined accompaniment with piano and/or guitar can also be very effective. History of Hymns
Last week in the first sermon of this miniseries on “Awakening,” we talked about awakening to ministry. Specifically, we talked about awakening ourselves to the holy work of sharing peace and offering forgiveness. We talked about how this work is for us all. Absolving others is not relegated only to ordained priests. Offering forgiveness is not sacramental work. Jesus gives the authority to offer this ministry to all people who would take up their own cross and follow him.

This week we are awakening to the meaning of the sacrament of Holy Communion.

INSERT SIDEBAR
Do you and your congregation want to learn more about Holy Communion in the United Methodist Church? A great way to learn more is to download and study the PDF, *The Meaning of Holy Communion in the United Methodist Church* by E. Byron Anderson, or order booklet copies for your members to study together. This new resource includes “Frequently Asked Questions” gleaned from Discipleship Ministries Facebook pages on worship. Available in English, Spanish, and Korean.

END SIDEBAR

Often, when we think about stories from the Scriptures that speak to the practice of the Lord’s Supper, we may limit our range to the traditional texts associated with the holy meal: the institution narratives (Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; and Luke 22:7-23). These three gospel writers, along with the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), give an account of how Jesus gathered in the Upper Room with his disciples on the night he was betrayed, possibly as part of the annual celebration of Passover. At the meal, he took bread, gave thanks to God, broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take, eat. This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And after the supper was over he took a glass of wine, gave thanks to God, gave it to his disciples and said, “Drink from this, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you. Drink this in remembrance of me.”

But there are other stories from Scripture besides these well-known ones that inform our practice of Holy Communion. These include the story of Jesus feeding the multitudes (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44 and 8:1-10; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13, 25-59); John’s account of the risen Lord Jesus preparing fish for the disciples on the shores of Lake Galilee (John 21:4-14); and today’s story of the risen Lord Jesus appearing to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. It is to this story and how it awakens us to greater understanding of our holy meal to which I would like to turn our attention.

I have to confess that this is my very favorite story in the whole Bible. It is not only central to my personal understanding of the sacrament of Holy Communion, but it is central to my understanding of Christ’s presence with us in the power of the Holy Spirit.
A few years ago, I had the privilege of hearing Dr. Heather Murray-Elkins speak at a minister’s convocation in my conference. I remember being struck by something she said when she was talking about United Methodists and the Lord’s Supper. She talked about how in today’s world, so many families no longer gather around a table to share a meal on a regular basis. Maybe with all of the newfound interest in cooking and services that deliver ingredients and instructions on how to cook them to our doorsteps and the rise of take-home meals in grocery stores, this is changing. But I suspect that even if some families still engage in this practice, it may not happen more than once a day.

Gone are the days of my mother’s childhood when she and her siblings would be late for school because they were reading Upper Room devotions at the family breakfast table. Gone are the days when all family members are expected to be home for dinner every evening at 6:00 p.m. Gone are the days when hands are held and meals are blessed before stories of the day’s events. Gone are the days when my husband and I even sit down at our smaller kitchen table to dine. Our table has been in the refinishing shop for six months and we’ve barely missed it. It is so much easier to plop down in front of the television with just the two of us here.

Okay, so maybe I’m wrong about this. Maybe there are lots of families where the dinner hour is still protected. I hope I am wrong. Please write to me and tell me how wrong I am!

But Dr. Murray-Elkins’s point was not simply to grouse about how sad it is that the world has changed and families no longer sit down together around tables to eat. Her point was to suggest that the whole basis for understanding what is going on at the Lord’s Table is dependent upon everyone having a baseline established through regular prayer around the family dining table.

The prayer that Jesus offered at the Last Supper was not a new prayer that he made up on the fly to fit the context. He took an old form, a Jewish blessing that would have been used in family homes, and he adapted it. In doing this, he gave it an entirely new meaning. Jesus took ordinary staple foods—bread and wine—and by adding holy words and ritual actions—take, bless, break, give—turned a regular meal into a sacrament.

Notice that this fourfold pattern of take, bless, break, and give appears not just in the familiar narratives on the Last Supper, but also in the feeding of the multitudes and around the table in Emmaus: “When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him” (Luke 24:30, NRSV).

BEGIN SIDE BAR
And he said, ‘Bring them here to me.’ Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds (Matthew 14:18-19, NRSV).
It was in the ritual pattern of taking, blessing, breaking, and giving that the multitudes were fed. It was in the ritual pattern of taking, blessing, breaking, and giving that the disciples’ eyes were opened and their minds awakened so that they were able to recognize who was sitting at their dining room table. It was the ritual action of take, bless, break, give that made their hearts burn anew about the words he had spoken as they walked along the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus.

Now I don’t know about you, but I am fifty-one years old, and I grew up not on the current eucharistic prayer in our hymnal, “Word and Table I,” but on the previous prayer, based largely on the liturgy penned by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer for the Church of England in 1552. It took me a long time to get used to the “new” version. That is, until I realized that the “new” version was actually much older than the version I’d grown up on from the 1968 hymnal.

Our current Prayer of Great Thanksgiving reflects decades of work undertaken by Methodists in conversation with our ecumenical partners following the sweeping changes of Vatican II. Our current pattern reflects the shape that we see in the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Ron Anderson writes,

Traveling the road to Emmaus, the disciples are joined by the risen Christ. Jesus interprets the Scriptures to them and then eats with them. It is in the breaking, blessing, and sharing of bread that the disciples’ eyes are opened and they recognize Jesus. The disciples return to Jerusalem, proclaiming the good news of Jesus’ resurrection. . . .

Within [the] basic pattern of Word and Table, the pattern for the service of the Table reflects the four-fold shape we see in the accounts of the meals Jesus shared with his disciples: Jesus 1) takes the bread and cup, 2) blesses God or gives thanks to God, 3) breaks the bread and pours the cup, and 4) gives the bread and cup to his disciples. The church through the centuries has understood Jesus’ command to “do this” to include not only the breaking and giving of the bread and cup but also the taking and blessing or giving thanks to God for what the church has received and continues to receive from God in creation, redemption, and sanctification. In taking and blessing (thanksgiving), we prepare the table and ourselves to share the gift God provides to us in Jesus Christ. On the one hand, this is as simple as setting the table as we would for any meal. On the other hand, this preparation involves the preparation of our hearts and minds, so that we may know that Christ is present with us in our sharing of the bread and cup with one another. In breaking and giving (communion) we are confronted with the practical necessity of breaking the bread in order to share it with one another. We are reminded that, as Jesus broke the bread in anticipation of the breaking of his body for the world, Jesus continues to offer his broken body to us for our healing and the healing of the world (E. Byron Anderson, *The Meaning of*
Anderson’s words are helpful in reframing my own understanding of Holy Communion from approaching the table in childhood having just said the prayer of humble access, which in the hymnal of my childhood was offered immediately before coming forward to the altar rail.

BEGIN SIDEBAR
The Prayer of Humble Access

We do not presume to come to this thy table,  
O merciful Lord,  
trusting in our own righteousness,  
but in thy manifold and great mercies.  
We are not worthy  
so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy table.  
But thou art the same Lord,  
whose property is always to have mercy.  
Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord,  
so to partake of this Sacrament of thy Son Jesus Christ,  
that we may walk in newness of life,  
may grow into his likeness,  
and may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.  
END SIDEBAR

Saying this prayer right before receiving had the effect of focusing my thoughts on my individual sins and my personal unworthiness. In my child's mind, going to the Lord’s Table was about my unworthiness to receive. Eating the bread and drinking from the little cups of grape juice on my knees before the altar rail positioned me so that I was looking down. It made me feel small and sinful during Communion. If I dared look up, I saw a man in a black robe looking down at me sternly and seriously. Even though that man was my father, it felt to me like in that moment he was standing in for Jesus and judging me for my sinfulness. I'm not sure everyone experienced it this way. I'm only saying that was my personal experience.

I can't help but contrast how I felt as a child with the way I feel now when I go forward to share in the Great Thanksgiving. Even the name of the prayer helps set a different tone: The Great Thanksgiving. I appreciate the focus on confession and pardon at the beginning of the ritual. I am grateful for the reminder, as we talked about last week, that I need to be reconciled with my neighbors before coming to the Table of the Lord. I experience the prayer as joyful and hopeful and focused not just on my personal sin, but on the call to offer myself sacrificially, in praise and thanksgiving, to Christ’s ongoing work in the world. I love hearing the presider pray that we may be made One by the Spirit of Christ and his redeeming love. And receiving the elements from a standing position, with my head up and my eyes forward to meet the gaze of the person who is
giving the bread and wine creates in me a deep sense of connection to my brothers and sisters in Christ through the holy meal.

So that’s my experience. The more important question now is: What is yours? Has your experience of Holy Communion changed over the years, or has it largely remained the same? If it has changed, what brought about that change? How can you communicate what Holy Communion means to you and help others in your congregation to share about their experience of our sacred meal?

Having been challenged by Luke’s story and awakened in our own understanding of the Lord’s Supper, let us prepare to come to the Table of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**PLANNING NOTES**

**AWAKENING… TO TABLE**

**Reading Notes**

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


**Calendar Notes**

**THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER: AWAKENING… TO TABLE**

Colors are white or gold, and flowers may continue to abound today and throughout the Great 50 Days of Easter Season until its final celebration on Pentecost, when the colors are red.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>April</th>
<th>Festival of God’s Creation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 23</td>
<td>New Mini-Series Begins: Easter Season: Awakening...</td>
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<td>April 25</td>
<td>World Malaria Day</td>
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<td>April 30</td>
<td>Native American Ministries Sunday</td>
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<th>May</th>
<th>Christian Home Month</th>
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<tr>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>Asian Pacific American Heritage Month</td>
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| May 4   | National Day of Prayer (USA) |
| May 5   | May Friendship Day           |
| May 8-14| Christian Family Week        |
| May 14  | Festival of the Christian Home/Mother’s Day (USA) |

**New Mini-Series Begins: Easter Season: Becoming...**
May 21  Heritage Sunday
May 24  Aldersgate Day
May 25  Ascension Day
May 28  Ascension Sunday (if transferred)
May 29  Memorial Day (USA)

June
June 4  Day of Pentecost (Easter Season Concludes)
June 11  Trinity Sunday, Peace with Justice Sunday
          New Series Begins: From Chaos to Community
June 18  Father’s Day (USA)
June 19  Juneteenth

July
July 4  Independence Day

August
All Month  Back to School Resources

September
All Month  Season of Creation (2017 resources forthcoming)
September 4  Labor Day  (USA)
September 15-:
October 15  Hispanic Heritage Month  (USA)

October
All Month  A Season of Saints (2017 resources forthcoming)
October 1  World Communion Sunday
October 6-8  Children’s Sabbath (2017 resources forthcoming)
October 15  Laity Sunday (2017 resources forthcoming)
October 31  Reformation Day  (500th Anniversary)

For Your Planning Team: AWAKENING... TO TABLE

In the second service of a three-part series, as in the second note of a triplet in music, a
major function of the service is to carry forward the energy and feel of the first service
into the third.

The suggested way of reading today’s gospel lesson and the accompanying songs, with
their embodiment of and focus on walking with Jesus, convey that “carrying forward”
purpose of a second service. So does the celebration of Holy Communion itself,
whether you use the Native American or our Book of Worship form of the Great
Thanksgiving in the service order. In Holy Communion, we encounter Jesus in bread
and cup, and are sent from that encounter to be his body in the world, which is the point
of our ongoing discipleship and growth in holiness of heart and life.

A word the wise: Rehearse!
*The reading today* has lots of literally moving parts. There are multiple readers. You
may be using either recorded video or livestreaming. So you have several readers (who
should ideally be “off book,” not reading!), tech staff (sound, video, and computer), and perhaps a need for a backup plan if the weather doesn’t cooperate with a livestreamed version. Be sure you have run through the entirety of the reading with all people present (including your tech crew) multiple times before you try it live (for real) in worship.

Work out kinks in timing and in tech so the whole reading flows smoothly from beginning to end. Focus especially on the transitions (between voiceover and readers, and from outside to inside). A rule of thumb here-- get it right three times in a row the night before and then at least the last time you run it before the service. Then you’ll be most likely to be ready when service time comes.

If you’re running into major weather issues, or running it live doesn’t seem to be going well outdoors, then make video of everything until the entrance into the worship space, then run only the parts inside the worship space live. Give yourselves plenty of time and grace to do this. Though the reading lasts less than two minutes, expect to take at least two hours in rehearsal and/or video recording/production.

**The Native American Service of Holy Communion** may be unfamiliar to everyone. Not only the words may be unfamiliar, but the cadences, the actions, the gestures, and the pacing are different. Pastor, don’t presume you can make it work right the first time on Sunday morning during the service by just reading the words. This would be a dishonor to this rite and to our Native American United Methodist sisters and brothers who created it. What I tell my seminary students when I teach them how to preside at Holy Communion is to practice the words and gestures of the Great Thanksgiving they will use five times the night before in the space where they will presiding, and then an additional three times that Sunday morning before worship. Plan to do at least that if you will use this text.

**Additional Resources**
*2014 Planning Helps for The Third Sunday of Easter*

**Ecumenical Prayer Cycle:** Ethiopia, Eritrea

**FORMATION GROUP NOTES**

Formation groups through Easter Season, starting today, have a historically different role than either during Lent or Holy Week. Lent was about establishing holy habits. Holy Week was about abiding with Christ and one another to face his death and all that it means for us, for the earth, and for the universe. Easter Season is about “mystagogy” or “learning the mysteries.” This learning comes in two forms: doctrinal formation (what are theological and doctrinal grounds of ministry, Eucharist, and baptism) and ministry formation (claiming our ministry and beginning to practice it in ways that enable us to be one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world).

Each week’s group meetings during Easter Season point forward to the coming Sunday.
For this week, your groups will explore together the meaning of the baptism they have received or come to reaffirm.

Here is a suggested agenda for this week’s first Easter Season Formation Group meeting.

1. Brief, informal time of gathering (10 minutes or so) with snacks to share

2. Formal gathering-- seated in a circle in chairs or around a table-- with requests for prayer for the coming week (10 minutes)-- and prayer led by the group leader or unison in the group. If the latter, one practice I’ve found useful in leading such groups is immediately after a person shares, the whole group pauses, then says in unison, “Into your hands, O God, we commend our sister/brother/sibling(s) Name(s).” Proceed to the next person and repeat until all who wish to offer requests for prayer have had the opportunity to do so.

3. Teaching and Conversation-- (45 minutes)-- For this week, we also have two choices for your session time. Give each participant a copy (or a link) to our new resource, “The Meaning of Baptism in The United Methodist Church” by Dr. Mark Stamm. You may then either discuss the main points of this new resource, or view the webinar “Baptism and the Bible in The United Methodist Church.” If you do the latter, give each participant a copy of the Participant Handout to make notes of key ideas or questions they wish to raise. This webinar is 36 minutes long. This will give you time for about 10 minutes of conversation at the conclusion of the webinar or interspersed throughout it. If you find you have questions you can’t answer, contact me, and I’ll be glad to respond (worship@umcdiscipleship.org or via Facebook, Taylor W. Burton-Edwards).

4. Gather in a circle or huddle, lay hands on one another, one by one, and pray in unison, “X, may you continue to grow in Christ in the days ahead.”

5. Thank all for coming, and send the group out to keep learning and living the baptism they have received.
FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER: AWAKENING... TO BAPTISM
(APRIL PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH BEGINS)
May 7, 2017

FULL SERVICE

ENTRANCE
The main baptismal font is front and center, in view of all.

During the singing, worship leaders and others process with large bowls of water to be placed on stands around the worship space.

“The Lord Is My Shepherd”
“I Will Trust in the Lord”

CCLI# 180857
United Methodist Hymnal, 464 OR

“Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather”
“Rise to Greet the Sun”

United Methodist Hymnal, 552 United Methodist Hymnal, 678

Prayer of Illumination
In you, O God, is our trust.
And we shall never trust in vain.
Lead us and guide us in your truth.
Your word is truth.
Open every pathway of perception,
that we may know and follow in your way. Amen.

OR

Book of Worship 471

WORD AND RESPONSE
Reading
John 10:1-10

Sermon
Awakening... to Baptism

Reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant

Introduction
All standing in body and/or spirit.
Sisters and brothers in Christ:
through the sacrament of baptism
we pass as through a gate
from death to life,
from confinement to freedom,
from danger to safety,
from contamination to cleansing, 
by water and the Spirit, 
by prayer and the laying on of hands.

Today we come to these waters 
in grateful remembrance of all God has done for us 
by bringing us through the gate of baptism, 
and to renew our commitments 
in each other’s presence 
and with each other's touch, 
to Christ who has raised us, 
to the Spirit who has cleansed us, 
and to the Creator who is making all things new.

Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith

And so I ask you, will you turn away from 
the powers of sin and death?

We renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, 
reject the evil powers of this world, 
and repent of our sin.

Will you let the Spirit use you as prophets to the powers that be?

We accept the freedom and power God gives us 
to resist evil, injustice, and oppression 
in whatever forms they present themselves.

Will you proclaim the good news 
and live as disciples of Jesus Christ, 
watching over one another in love?

We confess Jesus Christ as our Savior, 
put our whole trust in his grace, 
and promise to serve him as our Lord, 
in union with the church which Christ has opened 
to people of all ages, nations, and races!

Will you be living witnesses to the gospel, 
individually and together, 
wherever you are, 
and in all that you do?

We will remain faithful members of Christ's holy church 
and serve as Christ’s representatives in the world.
Will you receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?

We affirm and teach the faith of the whole church as we put our trust in God, the Father Almighty. in Jesus Christ, his only Son. and in the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever.

Thanksgiving Over the Water

The Spirit of the Lord is with us. Even so, come Lord Jesus!

Let us pray.

Shepherd of our souls, we give you thanks.

Your justice never fails. Your mercy is everlasting. You lead us into green pastures, and bring us back safely to the sheepfold. You restore our souls.

When we have wandered and strayed, you forgive us, and lead us home.

When we have polluted our lives, or failed to resist evil, or failed to confess your name and your way, you cleanse and correct us.

When we are threatened by enemies, without or within, you protect us from harm, known or unknown to us.

*The pastor offers gestures of calling upon the Holy Spirit to come upon the people and the water.*

*The people are invited to offer the same gestures as they respond.*
So now, in these moments, come upon us, Holy Spirit!
*Come upon us, Holy Spirit!*

Come upon these waters.
*Come upon these waters.*

Let these waters be to us a sign of your mercy.
*Let these waters renew our hunger for righteousness and justice.*

Let these waters declare to us the resurrection power of Jesus.
*Let these waters make us long for your coming reign.*

Most Holy God, Abba, Creator!
*Glory to you!*

Jesus Christ, Gate of Life, Lord!
*Glory to you!*

Spirit of fire, Spirit over the waters, Spirit of holiness!
*Glory to you!*

Eternal God, One in Three and Three in One!
*All glory is yours, now and forever. Amen!*

*All who are baptized and have renewed their vows are invited to come to one of the fonts to use the water as each sees fit. Then another at the font lays hands on their head and says:*

Remember you are baptized, and be thankful!

*Persons may place their offerings in baskets near the fonts after using the water.*

Music during Reaffirmation and Offering “Come to the Water”  
W&S 3114

OR

(Choir/Ensemble) “Come, All of You”  
UMH 350

“Touch the Earth Lightly”  
W&S 3129

THANKSGIVING [AND COMMUNION]
*Deacon or Pastor:*

Gate of the Sheepfold,  
you have opened the way for us to enter your fold,  
and you continue to call us, care for us, and send us.  
*We hear your voice,*
and we rejoice.

Guardian of our way,
you warn us of danger
and defend us from harm.
Thank you, our Guardian.
We hear your voice,
and we trust you.

Jesus, Good Shepherd,
you have called us by name
and called us to follow you
into good pasture.
Thank you, Good Shepherd.
We hear your voice,
and we follow.

The gifts collected at the various fonts may be brought to the Lord’s Table, lifted high, while all sing:

Doxology CCLI #4255578 OR
Doxology UMH 94 OR
Doxology (Asian-American) BOW 180

OR

[The Great Thanksgiving BOW 66-67]

Music During Communion
“The Bread of Life for All Is Broken” UMH 633
“Dear Lord, Lead Me Day by Day” UMH 411

Thanksgiving after Communion UMH 11]

SENDING FORTH

“Love Let Loose” CCLI # 7045834
YouTube: https://is.gd/fsnM77 OR

“Christ Loves the Church” UMH 590

Deacon or Pastor:
Jesus, the Good Shepherd,
calls you by name
and sends you into the world.
Jesus, our Guardian and Gate, protects you on the way, and with each other’s loving care restores what the thief would take from you.

Jesus, into whose death and resurrection we have been baptized, continues to offer us new life in the Spirit, as we go.

So go in peace, filled with the love and abundant life of the Risen Christ.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

**MUSIC NOTES**

**The Lord Is My Shepherd**

This song by the late Keith Green is intended for solo purposes only because of the nature of the vocal melody, the rhythms, and the long spaces between phrases. It can be a powerful statement of the 23rd Psalm, but it can also be a great way for worship bands to immerse themselves in a longer, alternative song form.

**I Will Trust in the Lord**

A standard in African American hymnody, this hymn of trust is also a statement of faith. This hymn highlights the distinct characteristic of songs as a means of teaching and building theological vocabulary among churches. “I will trust in the Lord till I die” is a very bold proclamation, and one that merits some discussion in how it affects the prayer life of Christians who sing these words. You can approach this hymn with a more traditional spirit, as arranged in *The United Methodist Hymnal* by William Farley Smith, but it is important to keep the pulse heavy and steady at the piano or organ. Swinging the eighth notes is a good practice here. However, if you would like an alternative approach to a more modern, jazz-influenced accompaniment, I recommend using the arrangement found in the collection, *Swing a New Song to the Lord*, which can be purchased here. This setting is a quicker tempo and uses some elements of funk, which also add to the intensity of the accompaniment. The vocal melody from *The United Methodist Hymnal* can be sung with this same accompaniment, without the swing feel.

**Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather**

This beautiful text and tune have found a marked place in *The United Methodist Hymnal* as a proclamation of our unity in Jesus, boldly acknowledged in this hymn as the Way, Truth, and Life. The tune is very singable, but even though it is strophic
(contains the same music for each stanza), it is also through-composed, which means there is no repetition within each stanza. This can make it more difficult for congregations to learn, so church musicians need to find a creative way to teach it. If your congregation is very skilled at reading music, the hymnal may be enough. However, an alternative possibility would be for the congregation and choir to sing a drone (a sustained note throughout the hymn) on a C and G while a soloist sings the stanzas. You can create a brilliant texture here by also adding a flute or solo string instrument (violin or cello) on the melody with handbells playing a random ring or an arranged rhythm incorporating the following bells: B♭, C, D, F, and G. The beautiful thing about many pentatonic Asian melodies is the options available for creating a memorable and interesting accompaniment. Should you choose to accompany with the TOKYO tune found in the hymnal, notice the wind-chime quality by the lower notes in the right hand of the accompaniment. History of Hymns

Rise to Greet the Sun
Another great pentatonic melody, this hymn by Chao Tzu-ch’en offers similar possibilities to the hymn, “Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather.” This hymn, however, is a little easier to sing because there is a small amount of repetition between the first and second phrases--just enough to help the ears of the congregation. See the previous hymn for possibilities for accompaniment (the same can apply here, but on a drone of F and C with handbells on F, G, A, C, and D). One notable handbell setting of this hymn that can be used to accompany congregational singing can be found here. History of Hymns

Come to the Water
Composed by a veritable “who’s who” of modern worship songwriters, this call to the waters of baptism also mingles with the allusions to the waters of justice and mercy. The verses conjure up both the hope of the work of the Spirit as a help in times of trouble and the expectations of the baptized. “Come to the water” is not just an invitation, it becomes a realized understanding of the responsibility of discipleship. The melody is quite singable, and the pre-chorus (“Oh, let justice roll…””) effectively drives energy into the chorus, which is as exciting to sing as it is memorable. The ideal accompaniment is a band or rhythm section, but a solo piano or guitar with light percussion will also work.

Come, All of You
In the continuing trend of pentatonic tunes for this day, “Come, All of You” is another example of a through-composed tune. I would recommend this hymn to be sung on this day by a soloist in the key of F, with an immediate transition into “Touch the Earth Lightly.” The melody line will get lower than is usually recommended for congregational singing, but a soloist with a low range would be able to make this successful. It might even be a great approach to have the soloist sing one stanza only, with an instrument following one time through before transitioning to the next hymn.

Touch the Earth Lightly
A perfect pairing of text and tune, Shirley Erena Murray’s hymn and Swee Hong Lim’s tune (AI HU) embody the image of a light touch. When leading this hymn, it is imperative for the worship/music leader and/or choir to sing dolce, that is, very sweetly. Invite the sought timbre and effect by serving as a shepherd and guiding people in singing the music. This hymn uses opposing images of death and life, desolation and hope, to create a dramatic effect of paradox, even embodying the death and life found in the waters of baptism. Accompany gently on organ, piano, or guitar.

Doxology (Crowder)

David Crowder has taken a traditional hymn text and tune and added a refrain that incorporates vocal flourishes on the word “Amen.” Building upon the OLD 100TH tune, your congregation will be able to sing this doxological hymn, even if it only the praise team who sings the Amens. However, it is singable enough that the congregation will more than likely sing them after a couple of repetitions on the stanza. I recommend accompanying this with any number of instruments, with the piano and/or guitar being primary, in the key of G.

Doxology (Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow; LASST UNS ERFREUEN)

This doxology has been found in The United Methodist Hymnal since its printing, and is often referred to as “Number 94” or “the new doxology.” Despite the historic tune and the fact that the text has now been contained in Methodist collections since 1989, there is a certain newness to this that continues to make it speak boldly as a statement of praise. Gilbert H. Vieira sought to create a work of praise that embraced the fullness of the Trinity without an overwhelming number of masculine references. Each person of the Trinity is instead called by name: God (The covenantal God, or YHWH), Jesus Christ, and Holy Spirit. Many instrumental settings of LASST UNS ERFREUEN can be found with a variety of publishers, so finding options for musicians, from organists to handbells to bands, should be quite accessible.

Asian-American Doxology (Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow)

What a wonderful way to offer praise to God in a simple, a cappella setting! This should be taught to congregations without the use of a printed format. The best approach to teaching it would be in a call-and-response style in two-measure phrases. The leader must be very confident and deliberate, especially considering the constant rhythmic shift from 7/8 to 6/8. Do not let these time signatures intimidate you, however, because the tune is worth singing and, in the right hands, can be very celebratory in worship. Also allow it to be a cyclic song, singing it three times as another way to frame the theological concept of the Trinity. Including a hand drum would also be appropriate as a rhythmic accompaniment.

The Bread of Life for All is Broken

The melodic contour of this particular hymn is very lyrical, and it encourages good singing even in its compositional style. The notes appear to be graceful amidst the simple harmonies, despite the through-composed melodic form. Do not sing the rhythm too rigidly because the nurturing character of the tune will not have the opportunity to shine through. Add a solo treble instrument such as a recorder for textural variety. Any
of the pentatonic approaches to accompaniment of the other hymns this week can also be used in the singing of this hymn.

**Dear Lord, Lead Me Day by Day**

This Philippine folk melody creates a beautiful setting for this discipleship prayer. There is no avoiding struggle or adversity in this hymn; rather, the prayer is to give strength and wisdom in trying times. The refrain and last stanza combine to make a beautiful song of praise that connects the church and the world. The best accompaniment for this hymn would be a folk guitar, but it obviously works well with piano and/or organ, too. Provide a contrast between the stanzas and the refrain to allow the prayers of the stanzas to function as an intimate prayer, while the refrain creates more of a joyous statement of praise and thanksgiving. On the last stanza, be sure to sing with confidence and joy so the first line of that stanza is authentic!

**Love Let Loose**

Don’t let the techno pop setting of this video make you think this song is inaccessible! It would be easy to take that approach with hearing a song like this, but I assure you that many of these songs originated with a guitar or piano in the songwriting process. I encourage using a guitar with light percussion and other instruments as available to accompany this song. For congregational singing, offer this in the key of F for the range comfortable for most churches. I would discourage singing the word “wild” with two syllables (as in “wi-yuld”) as it is done in the video. One syllable for “wild” and one for “fire” are all that is necessary.

**Christ Loves the Church**

It is difficult to find a statelier hymn than this creation by Brian Wren and Jane Marshall. This hymn setting seems to resemble “Lift High the Cross,” which is often used as a processional. However, the call is placed here upon the body of Christ to be the church in the world, and so it can fittingly be placed as a closing hymn for that reason. Be sensitive in the leading of this hymn to find an appropriate gesture before the beginning of the second phrase. The quarter rest can be somewhat deceptive in the singing of this hymn because it is the only phrase that begins with a rest. Because of the inherent strength in the tune, the ideal accompaniment is organ.

**PREACHING NOTES**

As we finish up our three-week mini-series on Awakening, at first glance you may be wondering what in the world the story of the Good Shepherd has to do with awakening to baptism. And certainly this reading is not a text that is traditionally connected to
baptism. There is no water imagery. There is no use of the word “baptism.” No one is baptized.

But I want to suggest that as we consider what it means to awaken to baptism, that baptism is not a singular event for any of us. Baptism is a way of life.

I remember when my husband and I first got married, a wise friend counseled us that we each needed to choose every single day to be married to each other. Marriage, the friend said, is a choice we make. Loving our partner is a choice we make. Good marriages don’t just happen on their own, and one partner alone cannot make a marriage good. It takes both spouses choosing each day to love their spouse, and choosing each day to nurture him or her, and choosing each day to be married to one another.

I think our baptismal covenant is rather like a marriage covenant in this way. We may or may not remember the actual event of our baptism. But at some point, we start taking responsibility for our vows, whether they were reaffirmed by others while we were infants, or we made them on our own as youth or adults. Either way, each of us must make a decision to live as baptized members of the community of faith. We have to make that choice intentionally. We have to make that choice every single day.

Mark Stamm, in his new booklet, *The Meaning of Baptism in the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2017), writes that in the Pentecost story, the author of Acts says “And that day about three thousand persons were added” (Acts 2:41, NRSV) to the community of Christians through baptism. Stamm goes on to observe:

> When I recount this story to my students, I often pause here and facetiously say, “And then they all went home and said, ‘what a wonderful and transforming religious experience that was!’” When they’re paying attention, they protest, saying, “That’s not what happened at all,” and they are correct. Those first Christians became a new community, one that “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts. 2:42). Theirs was a community in which the work of the Spirit was manifest. They cared for one another, sharing their lives on multiple levels, and that sharing overflowed, drawing others into their fellowship. The remainder of Acts provides the continued narrative of that overflow and by the grace of God received in baptism, we continue writing new chapters.

How are you writing new chapters into the unfolding story of the grace of God, received in baptism, through your personal life and relationships, in your church, in your community, and in the world?

Just like in a marriage, one partner in the baptismal covenant alone cannot make the relationship work. It takes other disciples, other members of the body, choosing every day to live in covenant with other baptized members, to make a Christlike community of
faith. Being a baptized disciple of Jesus Christ is a communal act. We live out our faith and practice our discipleship within a community of other Jesus-followers. Baptism is an ecclesial act. That is why in The United Methodist Church we do not hold “private” baptisms. The saving grace of Christ Jesus, marked in our baptism, is lived out through our participation in community with God’s people. In the words of Mark Stamm,

...baptism saves us, but not in the strictly personalized way that some may have taught or believed. Through the Baptismal Covenant and the community of faith, God draws us beyond preoccupation with our own needs and destiny, and gives us a place in God’s ongoing project of blessing the world and calling it to justice and love (Stamm 26).

When we pass through the waters of baptism, we die to our old, individualized way of being and rise with Christ into a new and different way of being in the world. We are born again into the body of Christ. We emerge not as our old, self-preoccupied selves, but as anointed disciples called to bless the world as we stand up for justice and love. We become part of the flock, under the protection and guidance of our shepherd Jesus.

This is where the passage on the Good Shepherd from the tenth chapter of the Gospel according to John helps to awaken us to a deeper meaning of our baptism. Baptism is an issue of identity, both personally and ecclesially. And here, I want to focus specifically on the communal aspect of Christian identity.

*When people visit your worship service, how clear is it that your primary identity is in your relationship with the Triune God? What makes that identity clear? How is that identity communicated? How are you as a congregation marked unmistakably as members of the flock of Jesus Christ when compared to other groups in your community? I ask you to think about these questions because I believe reflecting on what sets us apart as followers of Jesus Christ is critical work for the church today.*

In this passage, the shepherd seeks to hold the sheep together—all the sheep, including those with darker coats, and those who have been crippled, blinded, wounded, ostracized, attacked—as one beloved community. The identity of this flock is made known by the very clear relationship between the sheep and their shepherd. Likewise, the identity of the church is made evident by its clear, unmistakable relationship to the teachings and practices of its shepherd Jesus.

The good news in this passage is that our Good Shepherd Jesus calls out to each of us by name and goes ahead of us into every situation in which we find ourselves. Our Good Shepherd Jesus protects us from the thieves and the bandits—systemic powers and principalities—who would seek to destroy God’s mission to this world. Our Good Shepherd Jesus leads us forward through the ages in that very same mission, sometimes directing us to go into difficult situations and dangerous pastures, to reach out in love and justice to all God’s people, and to welcome all God’s children into the loving protection of the sheepfold. Our Good Shepherd sees what we cannot see for
ourselves: he knows not just the names of those who are already part of the flock, but
the names of those who have yet to join the flock.

In order to fully grasp the meaning of Jesus as our Good Shepherd, it is important to
understand the role of the shepherd in the world of Jesus. I find the work of Rob Fuquay
helpful in his book, *The God We Can Know: Exploring the “I Am” Sayings of Jesus*

In the time of Jesus, sheep pens were made out of rocks. A pen generally had only one
entrance. When the sheep were being herded through the entrance and into the pen,
the shepherd would literally lay hands on each member of the flock. He would run his
hands through their wool to make sure there were no injuries or burrs or other things
that needed attention. Oftentimes, the doorway to the sheepfold didn’t have a gate or
any other type of physical barrier, so after checking the sheep, the shepherd would
position himself physically across the opening. He would literally be the gate to the
sheepfold, placing his body where he could keep the sheep from escaping, and thieves,
bandits, and animals that might do them harm, from coming in. The shepherd literally
was the gate (paraphrased from Fuquay, 55-57).

Jesus is the gate for his flock, the church. He is our gate. He is our protector, our trusted
shepherd, the caregiver of not just our bodies, but our souls.

But we are not sheep. We are human beings, created in the image of God. And so, by
the power of the Holy Spirit, our Lord Jesus has entrusted some of this work to us. He
has commanded us to care for one another, to love one another as God has loved us.

As members of the flock of Jesus Christ, the church, we watch over one another in
Christian love. We keep our eyes open for injuries or troubles faced by our sisters and
brothers so that, if needed, we may attend to their needs and offer assistance, so that
all are able to grow and thrive in service to God and to the world. In the Wesleyan
tradition, this is the work of accountable discipleship groups, class leaders, spiritual
directors, and others whom we trust and who may be in a better position to see us as
we are.

In a similar way, we watch over others in prayer, continually lifting their needs for
healing, justice, peace, and restoration—all forms of God’s salvation—to the One who
saves.

I turn again to the words of Mark Stamm:

> We take up the baptismal calling of the church to intercede for the world, and to
continue to live more deeply into the mind of Christ. In the lifelong pilgrimage with
the church begun in baptism, we discover again and again that our purpose in life
is deeply tied up with giving ourselves in service to others. In baptism, we step
into the flow of living water, and in it we experience, now, already, a foretaste of
heaven (Stamm, 13).
Over these past three weeks, we have been awakened to a deeper sense of God’s call on our lives to ministry, to the table of the Lord, and to living into our baptismal covenant. In a moment, we will have an opportunity to respond to this awakening by reaffirming our baptismal vow together.

This may be the end of this miniseries, but the season of Easter and the work of learning to live as disciples marches on. Next week, we begin a new Easter Season miniseries: “Becoming.”

Over the four remaining Sundays in the Great Fifty Days of Easter, as we prepare for Pentecost, we will consider more deeply the commending words found in our Prayer of Great Thanksgiving and how as disciples of Jesus Christ we are becoming more fully one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry, flowing out into all the world.

We hope that as you close your sermon and this short series, that you will make a special invitation to those who are present to invite others to join you in the continuing journey of discipleship.

PLANNING NOTES
AWAKENING... TO BAPTISM

Reading Notes
NRSV texts, artwork and Revised Common Lectionary Prayers for this service are available at the Vanderbilt Divinity Library.

Leccionario en Español, Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes.

Lectionnaire en français, Le Lectionnaire Œcuménique Révisé

Calendar Notes
FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER: AWAKENING... TO BAPTISM

Colors are white or gold, and flowers may continue to abound today and throughout the Great 50 Days of Easter Season until its final celebration on Pentecost, when the colors are red.

May
All Month Christian Home Month
Asian Pacific American Heritage Month
May 4 National Day of Prayer (USA)
May 5 May Friendship Day
May 8-14 Christian Family Week
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>May 14</td>
<td><strong>Festival of the Christian Home/Mother’s Day (USA)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>New Mini-Series Begins: Easter Season: Becoming...</strong></td>
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<td>May 21</td>
<td><strong>Heritage Sunday</strong></td>
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<td>May 24</td>
<td><strong>Aldersgate Day</strong></td>
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<td>May 25</td>
<td><strong>Ascension Day</strong></td>
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<td>May 28</td>
<td><strong>Ascension Sunday (if transferred)</strong></td>
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<td>May 29</td>
<td><strong>Memorial Day (USA)</strong></td>
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<td>June 4</td>
<td><strong>Day of Pentecost</strong> (Easter Season Concludes)**</td>
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<td>June 11</td>
<td><strong>Trinity Sunday, Peace with Justice Sunday</strong></td>
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<td>June 18</td>
<td><strong>Father’s Day (USA)</strong></td>
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<td>June 19</td>
<td><strong>Juneteenth</strong></td>
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<td>July 4</td>
<td><strong>Independence Day</strong></td>
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<td>August 4</td>
<td><strong>Back to School Resources</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td><strong>Season of Creation (2017 resources forthcoming)</strong></td>
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<td>September 4</td>
<td><strong>Labor Day (USA)</strong></td>
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<td>September 15</td>
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<td>October 15</td>
<td><strong>Hispanic Heritage Month (USA)</strong></td>
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<td>October 1</td>
<td><strong>World Communion Sunday</strong></td>
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<td>October 6-8</td>
<td><strong>Children’s Sabbath (2017 resources forthcoming)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>October 15</td>
<td><strong>Laity Sunday (2017 resources forthcoming)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>October 31</td>
<td><strong>Reformation Day (500th Anniversary)</strong></td>
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**For Your Planning Team: AWAKENING... TO BAPTISM**

**In This Series**
Series end is also segue to a new series.

Remember these keys for an effective series end.

1. **End strong.** In a three-week series especially, you’re running more of a sprint than a marathon. And sprinters know how to add the extra energy at the end of the race to finish as strong as possible. Baptismal reaffirmation is a powerful way to end this series today.

2. **Segue well.** The end of one series should flow directly into the next. So today we reaffirm baptism and our place as sheep in the Good Shepherd’s sheepfold. Next week,
we begin a new series on who we are becoming as those who have been baptized and have recommitted our way to the life and direction of the Triune God. We also shift emphasis from the historic Easter Season priority of doctrinal formation (learning or deepening our learning of core doctrines) to that of ministry formation (discerning the Spirit’s gifts and calling for our life and ministries as disciples of Jesus). So even as today ends this series, baptismal reaffirmation also provides the basis for the launch of the next one beginning next week.

3. **Preview what’s next.** This isn’t quite the full “overture” for a series opening, but you might think of it as a “teaser trailer.” If you have a video of your worship service, particularly the Great Thanksgiving at Holy Communion, you may have video of your pastor praying “By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world…” If you don’t have existing video, it’s not hard to create. Simply get the Lord’s Table prepared as for Communion, and have your pastor pray that part of the Great Thanksgiving as she would on Sunday morning, and record that. Follow this video with a simple appearance of the word *Becoming*, followed by a fade-in of the next four phrases: *one with Christ, one with each other, one in ministry, and flowing into all the world*; and you’ll have your preview video. Use it in your announcement loop this week and throughout the next series, put it on your website, post it to YouTube, and use social media to share the link.

**Logistics for This Service**

“Queue management” is the fancy term for keeping groups of people from waiting in too long lines. It’s also the critical additional piece to focus on in this service, as you have folks moving to seal the act of reaffirming their baptismal vows and placing their offerings.

You may have only one font. But today, we suggest you prepare multiple “font and offering stations” either in front or around your worship space.

Determine the **number of stations needed** by rehearsing the actions (using the water and placing gifts in the basket without rushing) with your ushers and other station attendants. Time this with people of varying age and mobility. If you determine 4-5 persons per minute can use the water and place their gifts, and you want to allocate 8 minutes for this part of the service, then you will need one station for every 32-40 people. (4-5 people per minute X 8 minutes = 32-40 people per station).

Determine the **location of stations** by working out where people are seated and the paths they can take to a location and then back to their seats without creating either bottlenecks or crashes. This will depend entirely on your particular worship space and how people are seated in it. Use your ushers and other station attendants to help verify where you think stations might actually work.

Finally, **rehearse**! Ushers need to get from wherever they are to the places where they’ll help conduct traffic. Station attendants need to get from wherever they are to their stations. And ushers will need to collect offerings from the stations and bring them to the
front at the end of this action, all in a coordinated way. So, pastors, ushers, and station attendants, rehearse these actions well before the service so everyone knows where they’re going, what they’re doing there, and where they’re going next, so that everything flows smoothly.

**Additional Resources**

*2014 Planning Helps for The Fourth Sunday of Easter*

Ecumenical Prayer Cycle: Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda

**FORMATION GROUP NOTES**

Each week’s group meetings during Easter Season point forward to the *coming* Sunday. For this week, your groups will explore what it means that having been made “one with Christ” they are also gifted by the Holy Spirit.

Suggested Agenda

1. Brief, informal time of gathering (10 minutes or so) with snacks to share.

2. Formal gathering-- seated in a circle in chairs or around a table-- with requests for prayer for the coming week (10 minutes)-- and prayer led by the group leader or unison in the group. If the latter, one practice I’ve found useful in leading such groups is immediately after a person shares, the whole group pauses, then says in unison, “Into your hands, O God, we commend our sister/brother/sibling(s) Name(s).” Proceed to the next person and repeat until all who wish to offer requests for prayer have had the opportunity to do so.

3. Teaching and Conversation-- (35 minutes)-- Use Session 1 and 2 from our “DIY Tools for Spiritual Gifts Discernment and Ministry Deployment” ([https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/diy-tools-for-spiritual-gifts-discernment-and-ministry-deployment](https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/diy-tools-for-spiritual-gifts-discernment-and-ministry-deployment)) for your session tonight. Your time will be best spent by dividing it into two segments, about 15 minutes for biblical reflection and 20 minutes to share results of the spiritual gifts assessment and their answers to the questions (1-9) listed in session 1.

You are encouraged to send the link to the ELCA Spiritual Gifts Assessment ([https://web.archive.org/web/20110320200601/http://archive.elca.org/evangelizingchurch/assessments/spiritgifts.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20110320200601/http://archive.elca.org/evangelizingchurch/assessments/spiritgifts.html)) and encourage them to complete this before your session, then bring the results (top 5 and bottom 5 gifts) to your meeting time rather than using meeting time to complete the assessments. (Note: The ELCA survey has been in archive format for over six years now, but it still works!)

During the coming week, encourage group members to complete the Jung Personality
Type Inventory (see assignment for session 3 on the DIY Spiritual Gifts resource) and bring results from that survey to next week’s formation group meeting.

4. Gather in a circle or huddle, lay hands on one another, one by one, and pray in unison, “X, may you continue to grow in Christ in the days ahead.”

5. Thank all for coming, and send the group out to keep learning and living the baptism they have received.