**Laity Sunday 2016 Worship Resources**

**Disciples Called to Action: Living Vital Worship**

**Suggested Date: October 16, 2016**

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*Abbreviations:*

*UMH=United Methodist Hymnal*

*TFWS=The Faith We Sing*

*W&S= Worship & Song*

**The Order of Worship**

**ENTRANCE**

**Suggested Hymns:**

“Now Thank We All Our God” (UMH 102)

“10,000 Reasons” (Available from [ccli.com](http://us.ccli.com/))

“How Great Is Our God” (Worship & Song 3003)

**Prayer of Illumination**  
Use the forms of this prayer appropriate to the song you selected above.

**Leader:**  
All praise and thanks are yours, Eternal Triune God,  
and to you we give all glory!   
  
OR  
  
O Lord, we bless your name, your holy name,  
pouring out our songs and our lives before you.

OR  
How great are you God! Name above all names,  
and worthy to be praised.  
Our hearts sing to you today  
as we will sing to you for eternity.  
  
THEN:  
We thank you for the privilege  
of gathering together before you,

standing before your throne,  
as your people, your church,   
set free by your Word made flesh  
from the power of sin and death.

THEN, ALL SAY EITHER:  
  
**All praise to you, O God!**  
OR  
  
**We bless your name, o God!**  
or   
  
**How great are you, God!**  
THEN, **Leader:**  
  
Holy Spirit, now move among us  
through the words you have inspired,  
and the testimonies of our lives.  
  
Move among us, and help us remember who we are,  
your church,   
gathered from people of every age   
in every tribe, every nation,   
every language and every culture,  
and made one people together  
in Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen**.

**Hymn 558 (UMH): “We Are the Church,” Stanzas 1 & 2**

**WORD AND RESPONSE**

**Message Theme: Living…Vital…Worship!**

*Four laity may offer the message.*

* Worship As Love: Matthew 22:37-39   
  (The Great Commandment—**To put love of God and neighbor** above all else)

“Love the Lord,” W&S #3116

* Worship As Discipline: Matthew 16:24   
  (The Great Commitment—**To embody God’s love** individually)

“Take Up Thy Cross:” Words: UMH 415   
 Tune: GIFT OF LOVE UMH 408

* Worship As Justice: Micah 6:8  
   (The Great Requirement—**To live God’s love** through our actions)

“What Does the Lord Require of You?” TFWS 2174

* Worship As Evangelism: Matthew 28:19-20   
  (The Great Commission—**To take God’s love** into the world)

“Go Ye, Go Ye into the World,” TFWS 2239  
  
**Prayers of the People (Skip if using “**[**A New Great Thanksgiving for Laity Sunday**](http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/a-new-great-thanksgiving-for-laity-sunday)**”)***The four lay preachers may become the leaders of the intercessions, or other laity may be chosen to lead the prayers.***Pastor**:We will go, Lord, into the world,  
telling and retelling the story with other believers,  
taking the gospel and making disciples  
among all the peoples with whom we come in contact.  
We will go, knowing *you* will be with us.

So as we go, and before we go, we pray for the church and the world. ***Lay leader 1***:For our unity and the unity of your whole church in your mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world  
***People: Hear us, O God.***  
   
***Lay leader 2:*** With leaders at every level of our common life— villages, towns, states, nations, corporations, and international associations—that there may be peace and justice for all people  
***People: Hear us, O God.***   
***Lay leader 3***: For the earth, that we may be and inspire others to be good stewards of all of the gifts of your creation  
***People: Hear us, O God.  
   
Lay leader 4:*** With all who need your healing and deliverance, from physical or mental illness, isolation, deprivation, violence, and any form of oppression  
***People: Hear us, O God.***   
**Pastor:** Hear us, O God, and make us also to be agents of your unity, justice, care, and healing. **Amen.**

**THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION**

***When not celebrating Holy Communion:*Invitation to Thanksgiving  
Leader:**  
We will go, Lord, into the world,  
telling and retelling the story with other believers,  
taking the gospel and making disciples  
among all the peoples with whom we come in contact.  
We will go, knowing *you* will be with us.  
  
You, O God, to whom we would   
in these moments,

pour out our lives in service   
and in thanksgiving.   
  
But we know the barriers that stand in our way.

We cannot pour ourselves out to you fully as individuals  
with unconfessed sin in our lives.  
  
We cannot pour ourselves out to you fully as your body  
when we are in conflict with others.  
  
So hear our confession,  
forgive and deliver us,  
and give us courage to offer your peace  
to one another.  
  
**Confession of Sin**  
**Leader:**  
We have sinned against you and each other, Lord.  
We have not lived worshipfully.  
Lord, in your mercy, ***hear our confession.****Silence*  
We have not loved you wholly.  
We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
We have not lived worshipfully.   
Lord, in your mercy, ***hear our confession.***  
*Silence*  
We have not denied ourselves and taken up our own cross daily.  
We live not lived worshipfully.  
Lord, in your mercy, ***hear our confession.***  
*Silence*  
We have not loved kindness, pursued justice, or walked humbly with you.  
We have not lived worshipfully.   
Lord, in your mercy, ***hear our confession.****Silence*  
  
We have not shared the good news with our lips or in our lives.  
We have not lived worshipfully. Lord, in your mercy, ***hear our confession.***  
*Silence***Pastor/Leader**: The saying is sure: If we confess our sins, God is merciful and just and forgives us our sins, and cleanses us from all unrighteousness.   
  
In the name of Christ, you/we are forgiven.  
 **People/Leader to Pastor and Each Other: In the name of Christ, you/we are forgiven.  
All: Glory to God! Amen!**  
**Pastor/Leader**: As forgiven and reconciled people, share Christ’s peace with one another.  
The peace of Christ be always with you.   
**And also with you.***The people share the peace of Christ with one another.**After a suitable period of time, the pastor may continue:***Pastor/Leader**: Forgiven and reconciled to God and one another,  
let us offer our gifts and our thanks to God!**Thanksgiving Songs *During the Collection:***

“Thank You, Lord,” UMH 84  
***At the Presentation of Gifts:***“We Bring the Sacrifice of Praise,” TFWS 2031

Pastor: Accept our sacrifices of thanksgiving and joy, O Lord,   
 as, by your Spirit, we remember and proclaim who we are!**Continue with Sending Forth  
  
 *OR***

***When celebrating Holy Communion:*   
  
Invitation to the Table (UMH 12)  
Confession of Sin (UMH 12)  
Act of Pardon (UMH 12)   
Sharing of Peace (UMH 12)  
Offering (UMH 13)  
Great Thanksgiving:** [**A Great Thanksgiving for Laity Sunday**](http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/a-great-thanksgiving-for-laity-sunday) **or** [**A New Great Thanksgiving for Laity Sunday**](http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/a-new-great-thanksgiving-for-laity-sunday)

**SENDING FORTH**

**Song of Sending**: “We Are the Church,” UMH 558, Verse 5 only

**Blessing and Benediction**

**Leader**: Go into the world, denying yourself,   
 and proclaim God’s love,   
 justice and good news,  
 in word and deed  
 to all you see.  
  
**Pastor**: For the blessing of God,  
 Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
 is with you, now and always.

**Leader**: So let the church sing: (TFWS 2072,“Amen,” tune and words only)  
**Amen. Amen. Amen, Amen, Amen!**

**For Leaders and Planners**[Worship Leader Notes](#worship_notes)[Music Leader Notes](#music_notes)[Preaching Notes](#preaching_notes)**Worship Leader Notes**

**About the Prayer of Illumination**  
The prayer of illumination acts as a kind of “bearings” in this service, shifting the energy from the act of entering toward an act of centering on the hearing the word of God as it will come to us through Scripture and testimony.

This is accomplished only partly by the *words* of the prayer. It is *primarily* accomplished by how the prayer is led. It’s important to ***start*** not only with similar words as the ending of the song you have just sung, but also at ***the same volume***, ***the same speed***, and ***the same level of energy*** (whether the boldness of “Now Thank We All Our God” or what may be the more intimate tone of a final verse of “How Great Is Our God” sung *a capella* and relatively slowly) as whatever came immediately before. As the words of the prayer will shift focus from praise of God to gathering ourselves to listen to God, it’s just as important that your voice and phrasing through the prayer do the same, shifting its volume, speed and energy in anticipation of what comes next—singing the first two stanzas of “We Are the Church.”   
  
Likewise, consider accompanying the prayer with background music that starts on the chord progression of the first song you sang, and moves to the chord progression of “We Are the Church.”

**About the Acts of Thanksgiving**  
Acts of thanksgiving, although stated as an integral part of our Basic Pattern of Worship, are an uncommon or commonly truncated element when Communion is not celebrated. Today is an opportunity to model and explore what they can be if you are not celebrating Holy Communion.  
  
**About the Invitation to Thanksgiving**  
An act of invitation to thanksgiving is probably needed in most settings, much as the Prayer for Illumination, to help transition the energy from listening, commitment, and prayer in the previous movement (Word and Response) toward the energy of offering ourselves to God in thanksgiving for all God has done and is doing and will do to save us and renew the universe.  
  
The principles of transition are the same. Match the contents, volume, speed, and energy of what came before, then move them to what is needed for what comes next.  
  
In this case, “Go Ye, Go Ye into the World” is already a rather energetic song, made more engaging if it has been sung in a round for the final verse as suggested above. Still, it is a song of exhortation, urging people to act. Part of that action has been our prayers for the church and the world.   
  
Now we move from prayer to thanksgiving, still in the spirit of going in the awareness that Christ goes with us. Exhortation (the song), prayer (the prayers we have just prayed), and thanksgiving are all different kinds of energy. Give attention not only to the words used in the invitation to thanksgiving, but to the kind of energy with which these words are spoken.  
  
**About the Pardon before the Acts of Thanksgiving**  
Anyone, lay or clergy, may lead an act of confession and pardon. If the leader of the act of pardon is the pastor, use “you are forgiven.” If the leader is a layperson, use “we are forgiven.”   
  
**About Serving Communion**  
One of the ways to maintain the flow of the service when you celebrate Communion is to ensure you have an efficient way to serve the elements. You don’t have to make people wait in long lines or for long periods of time in their seats. The typical amount of time for people to be able to receive both bread and cup without a sense of rush is 10-12 seconds. This means you can easily serve five to six people per minute. Calculate the number and placement of serving stations to allow all in your congregation who wish to receive to do so within five minutes, if possible.

**Music Leader Notes**

**“Now Thank We All Our God” UMH 102**

This hymn is one of the greatest chorales in the history of the church. Written between the years of 1636 and 1647, it is commanding in its presence by using traditional Baroque harmony and voice leading in a homophonic setting. Each voice part is interesting in its own way, with plenty of opportunities for “melodic” singing, even if it is not the melody. The best musical terms recommended to use when singing this are *maestoso* or *pomposo*, which both point to a very stately approach. It is very regal in its composition, so sing it boldly.

If you feel led to take a different approach, however, I have often been influenced by the singing of this tune on the radio show, *A Prairie Home Companion*. It can easily be adapted to fit within a folk band setting in the key of D. Try singing it a little up-tempo with a unison melody, accompanied by acoustic guitar and, if you have access to them, a fiddle, snare drum, and maybe even an accordion. Any of these instruments sound great together, or you may be inspired to add other instruments, or create your own ensemble. Either way, when using a band, one of the best practices on this chorale is to make measures 4 and 8 fit within a 6/4 time signature (holding the note with the fermata for 3 full counts).

[**“10,000 Reasons” (“Bless the Lord”) ccli.com**](https://us.songselect.com/songs/6016351/10-000-reasons-bless-the-lord)

Having quickly moved into the hearts and voices of so many worshipers around the world, Matt Redman’s “10,000 Reasons” has brought new life to the singing of the Psalms, especially Psalms 103 and 104. It can be quite easy to play on the piano and can be led with that one instrument alone. It can also be accompanied by a full band, but one of the best characteristics of this song is its adaptability to any context and setting.

If you are looking for a creative way to sing this song, one of the successful practices is to pair it with one of the Psalms mentioned above and transition to the last half of the refrain as the sung response between stanzas of the Psalm. After the final refrain of the song, instruct the pianist and/or band to continue playing softly underneath the reading or chanting of the Psalm, and crescendo into the second half of the refrain at the appropriate time, as indicated by the red “R” in the rubrics of *The United Methodist Hymnal*.

**“How Great Is Our God,” W&S 3003**

Written in a ballad style, this Trinitarian song can be a great way to begin a worship service. It would most often be found in modern settings at the close of the opening worship set, leading forward into other acts of worship. It is possible to accompany this song with a band, a piano, or a lone acoustic guitar. Because of this, adaptability is also quite easy with this selection.

One of the most commonplace, yet interesting practices is to pair this song with the refrain of “How Great Thou Art.” It is easy to make this transition toward the end of the song, and it gives singers of a slightly more traditional hymnody the chance to sing a familiar tune. When doing this, however, it is important to keep the two songs in the same key. Some simple adaptation may be needed.

**“We Are the Church,” UMH 558**

This popular Avery/Marsh song has become a familiar song of unity that reminds us that the church is not a structure built by human hands. It is the people of God, gathering together and being led by the Holy Spirit. For the purposes of this service, we have recommended dividing the song up into stanzas 1-2 here, and stanza 5 later. As people are invited to be seated following the second verse, continue playing a fade-out on “I Am the Church” leading into the first reading.

Make note that when you sing this song, it is very easy to begin at a swift pace because of the opening exclamations in the refrain. However, don’t be tempted to go too fast because the stanzas are very “notey,” meaning the melody is very syllabic, and there are many syllables sung with a melody that jumps around a bit. If you take the refrain too quickly, what will happen is a stanza that becomes bogged down as the congregation tries to fit all those syllables in. It is ok to pull back a little bit on the stanzas, but having to slow down dramatically sets the stage for some awkward singing.

**“Love the Lord,” W&S 3116**

Be sure to create an environment for singing with all ages in worship. This song can help! I have often taught and sung this song by integrating some simple hand motions with the words, “heart,” “soul,” “mind,” and “strength.” I would suggest accompanying this song with a band or a small ensemble using guitar and other strummed instruments. It is very difficult on the piano, and even when playing it from *Worship & Song* accurately, it is clumsy at best. For best practice, it requires a simple, repetitive rhythm (like a strum pattern), which is easiest on a guitar. It even works *a cappella* if you are brave enough to sing it in that fashion. Or have an ensemble sing through the first verse and chorus and invite congregational participation on succeeding verses and choruses.

**“Take Up Thy Cross,” UMH 415**

We have suggested pairing this song with the tune GIFT OF LOVE (UMH 408) or O WALY WALY (W&S 3124) because of the lyrical nature it gives to Christ’s call to “take up their cross and follow me.” I have most often seen this tune in use with hymns that have rhyming couplets (AABB), and though it is not as fitting for the rhyming pattern found in this hymn (ABAB), it will still provide a good setting for the congregation to sing.

**“What Does the Lord Require of You,” TFWS 2174**

It is possible for your congregation to sing in canon! What it requires, however, is a leader of congregational song who understands the needs of creating a sung canon—cueing sections of the congregation when to enter, cutting sections off when the canon is over, and creating an overall inviting atmosphere within which the gathered people sing—and a willing choir to help sing the parts. If you are wondering what a “canon” is, think of the way larger groups will sing “Row, Row, Row Your Boat,” with different sections beginning at specified times. Singing the melody lines against one another creates harmony where there was none before. “What Does the Lord Require of You” is an example of an accessible congregational canon, but keep in mind that whenever singing a canon, it is best (especially if the congregation hasn’t sung in canon before) to rehearse this before the worship service begins. The choir is vital with this endeavor because they will support the singing and give confidence to those in worship.

If you are in a situation where singing in canon may not be an option, I would recommend one of the following options:

* Sing “How Shall I Come Before the Lord” from *Worship & Song*, 3124.
* Instead of congregational singing, have the choir sing the piece entitled “Offering,” a beautiful choral setting of Micah 6:8 by John Ness Beck (Published by Beckenhorst Press).

**“Go Ye, Go Ye into the World,” TFWS 2239**

Though this is listed as a congregational song, this might be a great opportunity for the children in your congregation to sing as well. Taken from a Choristers Guild children’s anthem, this melody was originally written for a young choir to sing, and it might be a great selection for the children of your church to present. Even if you don’t have enough children to sing in multiple parts, have someone who plays the flute, violin, or other treble instrument to play the descant on the final stanza with the children.

Of course, the congregation can sing this song, too! Know that we have planned this with flexibility in mind. Adapt it to your context and what works in your setting.  
  
**“Amen, Amen,” TFWS 2072**

This song is a favorite way to conclude worship in many African American and Caribbean congregations. Sing it with gusto, and maybe more than once, especially if you sense the congregation is ready to affirm all that has been said and done and can’t wait to get out to tell others about the love, justice, and good news of God in Jesus Christ.

***If using Acts of Thanksgiving instead of Holy Communion:*“Thank You, Lord,” UMH 84**

This African-American spiritual gives thanks to God in a simple, direct form, and invites repeated singing with a variety of arrangements, including *a capella*. It may be sung by the congregation, by a choir or ensemble, or both. Consider alternating the words provided with verses such as “Loved the world,” “Gave your Son,” “Cleansed my soul,” “Made me whole,” “Death’s undone,” or “All things new.”  
**“We Bring the Sacrifice of Praise,”** **TFWS 2031**

Coming to us through the charismatic movement in the mid-1980s, the words and rejoicing spirit of this song are a great accompaniment to bringing and dedicating the offering. To add to the spirit of joy, invite the congregation to stand and clap throughout this song and sing it through at least three times. Consider slightly increasing the tempo and modulating the tune up a half step each time, moving from E-flat to E to F.

After the last verse, either modulate to G or start playing the chords for “We Are the Church” (verse 5) in F as the congregation prepares to join in the final verse as part of being sent forth.

May the peace of God be with you as you sing in worship!

**Preaching Notes**

Instead of one person offering the sermon for this service, consider having four or possibly even five people contribute to the Proclamation of the Word. For each section of the sermon, a different person will share a story from his or her own experience. Each of these people could also read the Scripture lesson for that section and provide introductory comments on the Scripture lesson. Alternatively, a fifth person could be recruited to read the Scripture lesson and give a brief “preaching introduction” component for each section, with the other four people giving only their personal testimonies.

There are two keys to making this sermon-in-four-acts work. The first is careful selection and preparation of participants. Choose participants based not simply on who is willing to stand up and speak, but rather on who exhibits the dimensions of discipleship that will be highlighted by the Scripture lessons. This way, each contributor will serve as a living example as he or she tells the story of how he or she answered God’s call to discipleship. After each person speaks, the congregation will sing, allowing for a smooth transition to and from the pulpit and from one person to the next.  
  
The second is timing and rehearsal. Each participant will have no more than five minutes. It will be important for individuals to practice what they want to say, time themselves, and if needed, edit what they have prepared to stay within the five-minute time frame. This will help keep the sermon moving and ensure a smooth and balanced flow from beginning to end without bogging down anywhere along the way.

**Preacher #1: *Worship Is Love*—To put love of God and neighbor above all else**

**Scripture Focus: Matthew 22:37-39 (The Great Commandment)**

**Introduction:**

Sometimes when we hear a sermon on this text, the focus is not on the *Shema*—the centerpiece of Jewish morning and evening prayer that comes from Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (NRSV) and reads, “Hear O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your strength, and with all your might.” Instead, the focus is on Jesus’ addition of “And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39 NRSV). Often, preachers will focus on the second part and interpret the addition from Jesus to mean that loving our neighbors is the primary way that we love God: loving our neighbors IS the way we love God. I have often interpreted it this way myself!

But for this reading, I suggest that the first lay preacher focus on what it means to love the Lord our God with all our heart and strength and might. Who in your congregation demonstrates a passion for loving God? If you had to think of someone in your church who really loves the Lord, who would it be? If someone comes to mind for you, it is probably because you have seen how this person loves the Lord by the way he or she lives.

The sermon could begin by sharing that Jesus spoke these words in response to the Pharisees’ question, “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” Jesus’ answer comes from the *Shema,* which is the centerpiece of the prayer that all observant Jews are taught to pray at the beginning and the end of each day (see comments above).

It is these words from Deuteronomy that are written on tiny pieces of paper and rolled up and inserted in decorative scroll holders, called *mezuza*hs, and attached to the doorframes of the primary entrances of Jewish homes. The *mezuzah* reminds them of this commandment whenever they come and go from their house. Scrolls with these words are also inserted into *phylacteries*, little leather boxes that Jewish men attach to their foreheads with a head strap to wear during morning prayer. These words are of critical importance to the Jewish faith. They were critically important to Jesus.

How do we love the Lord our God with all our heart and strength and might? Here are some things that I was taught to do.

Personal Witness:

*At this point, the individual should offer a first-person witness as to how he or she loves God in everyday life. What are some of the things the person does to demonstrate his or her love for God? What was the person taught to do? What are the person’s practices of prayer, Bible study, devotion, tithing, fasting, and attending to the ordinances of God? If the person feels shy about drawing attention to himself or herself, please encourage the individual to share as a way of helping others to live out this commandment. The person should speak for a total of 3-5 minutes. At the conclusion, the congregation will sing:*

Sung Response:

“Love the Lord,” W&S 3116

**Preacher #2: *Worship Is Discipline*—To embody God’s love individually**

Scripture Focus: Matthew 16:24 (The Great Commitment)

Introduction:

Let us recall the situation that led up to Jesus speaking these words to his disciples. Jesus had been healing people and teaching great crowds as he made his way toward Jerusalem for the last time. According to Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus had just multiplied seven loaves of bread and a few fish to feed four thousand people. The Pharisees and the Sadducees heard the news of his latest miracle and began demanding that Jesus show them a sign from heaven, which he refused to do. When Jesus asked the disciples who people were saying he was, Peter declared that he was the Messiah, the son of the living God. After this, Jesus began telling the disciples what fate awaited him in Jerusalem. When they protested, Jesus spoke harsh words and then and said that if they wanted to be his followers, they would need to take up their own cross. He said that those who wanted to save their lives would lose their lives, but those who lose their lives for his sake would find their lives.

The way to discipleship is not free. It costs us to follow Jesus. We who call ourselves his followers must give up some of what the world teaches us to have in order to find a richer, more meaningful life in Christ.

Personal Witness:

*The second preacher should tell a personal story of a time when he or she had to give something up to follow Jesus. This doesn’t have to be a big, earth-shattering thing. It might be something small, or something that happens every day, but might not automatically be connected to a person’s faith. For example, at one point in my own life, I had to make a decision about whether or not to stay married to my first husband and the father of my two children. A primary reason I made this choice had to do with my Christian faith. My former husband was not a Christian, and he had even asked me if I would consider giving up my call to ordained ministry to become a public school teacher instead. I remember telling him that he put me in an impossible situation by asking me to do this. It meant, for me, that I had to choose him over my relationship with Christ, which was integral to my identity as a person. It meant that I had to choose him over the very essence of who I was. I couldn’t choose him over myself. I tried very hard for many more years to make the relationship work, but in the end, the distance between us was too great. I needed to follow Jesus first, even if it meant that I had to ask my husband for a divorce, and in doing so, cause our children a great deal of pain. As I look back over my life, I know that if I hadn’t made this choice, the way I would have been able to answer God’s call would have been very different. Certainly, I would have had less freedom to go wherever God called me to serve. It would have been much more difficult for me to to say “yes” to many of the twists and turns my journey has taken.*

Sometimes it costs us to be disciples of Jesus Christ. What cross have you had to bear to follow Jesus? What cost have you paid? What has happened to your life as a result of your willingness to take up your cross and follow Jesus?

*The second preacher should speak for 3-5 minutes. At the conclusion, the congregation will sing:*

Sung Response:

“Take Up Thy Cross” (Words: UMH 415) Sung to tune of GIFT OF LOVE, UMH 408

**Preacher #3: *Worship Calls Us to Justice*—To live God’s love through our actions**

Scripture Focus: Micah 6:8 (The Great Requirement)

What does justice embodied through the actions of a person look like? How about kindness and humility? I know there are people in every congregation who live out their call to discipleship through social action.

During the time of Micah, the people of Israel were doing a good job of worshiping God. In our context, they were the ones that we might call “active members.” They showed up for worship services most of the time. They received Holy Communion at least once a month. They attended Sunday school. They gave regularly to support the church. Maybe they were even in a small group or a member of United Methodist Women. They might even have volunteered in the nursery, or taught the children, or sung in the choir. They were not criminals (at least not the kind who got caught). They didn’t drink or gamble or cheat on their spouses. They took care of their families and paid their bills. They were, by all accounts, good church members.

But, the Lord says, it isn’t enough to be a good church member. If you show up for church every Sunday, but Monday through Friday you mistreat the people who work for you, then you are not doing what the Lord requires. If you refuse to speak out against injustice, or fail to advocate for those whose voices are oppressed, or if you actively engage in practices that cause harm to a group of people, then your life is not pleasing to God.

So it was to this kind of a situation to which Micah spoke a bold and prophetic word: The Lord God requires more than empty rituals. God desires God’s people not to just talk the talk, but to walk the walk, every day, in their own communities and as a witness to the wider world.

*The third preacher should share a story (3-5 minutes) of something he or she does to live out Micah’s call to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. It will be important to tell a single, clear and focused story that highlights how the action a person has taken relates to God’s call for justice, kindness, and humility.*

Sung Reponse:

“What Does the Lord Require of Us,” TFWS 2174

**Preacher #4: *Worship Calls Us to Evangelism*: To go and take God’s love into the world**

Scripture Focus: Matthew 28:19-20 (The Great Commission)

Introduction:

How is it that we mere mortals are able to go out into God’s world and make disciples by baptizing people into Christ’s holy church? What guides us as we go and take God’s love into the world?

The answer to this question is that we don’t do these things by our own power. It is only by the power of God working through the Holy Spirit that we are enabled to respond to Jesus’ commission on our lives. It is through the power of the Spirit that Jesus stays with us to help us, giving us the right words and teaching us the right way to bring his good news to the people we meet.

*The final preacher should tell a story (3-5 minutes) in which he or she gives a specific example of how he or she shared God’s love with another person. Sometimes when we share our faith with people, they do not respond affirmatively; and the story that is told here need not have a “happy ending.” The important thing to hear is that it isn’t our job as Christians to convert a heart. That is God’s job. Our job is to share our faith in such a way that we communicate the joy and passion we have for being disciples of Jesus Christ. The heart of this final section of the sermon should be sharing of the person’s excitement about being a Christian. We go and take God’s love into the world because God first loved us, and we want to others to know that feeling of assurance. We give our testimony because we can’t help but want to share it with others! We don’t worship God in order to feed our own needs. We live our lives as an ongoing act of worshiping God our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer!*

Sung Response:

“Go Ye Go Ye into the World,” TFWS 2239