Lent 2018

Rehab

Series Overview

Rehab is a word that can refer to many different things. Just a quick glance through the Wikipedia article on rehabilitation, or “rehab,” points to issues ranging from health (cognitive rehab, wildlife rehab, drug rehab, occupational rehab, physical rehab, psychiatric rehab, vision rehab, vocational rehab) to politics (restoration of disgraced politicians) to home improvement (Rehab Addict!). In general, the word rehabilitate means to restore to a condition of good health, ability to work; to restore to good condition or operation; or to restore a person’s reputation.

Similarly, the annual observance of the Lenten discipline among Christians is a time to seek restoration for our lives. It is a time to reflect, take stock of our spiritual condition, and realign our lives. Our method for taking stock is the baptismal covenant as our reference point and making good use of the means of grace as our method. We enter the season through the Ash Wednesday call “in the name of the church, to observe a holy Lent: by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God’s Holy Word” (The United Methodist Book of Worship. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1992, 322 from The Book of Common Prayer, 1979, Public Domain). As we contemplate the method of Lent, even the spiritually mature among us become aware of how out of step we are with where we are called to be. We all have work to do.

There is much to mine from considering our Lenten journey this year within the frame of rehab, much to explore, much to learn. But the core of the learning in rehab, like the core of the learning in Lent, isn’t cognitive. It’s behavioral. In rehab, we learn how to live differently, to set a “new normal” for ourselves and our relationships after a period of time or perhaps a crisis has made it clear to us it is impossible to live as we had before. Likewise in Lent, we focus on helping those coming to faith in Christ for the first time, as well as those making their way back to Christ and the fellowship of the church after a period of absence or neglect, primarily in concrete, behavioral ways. Our goal for all who engage this period of time is that the way of Jesus becomes either the “new normal,” or, for those who have been consistent in the journey over time, is strengthened as our normal.

On each Sunday of this journey, the Scriptures provide the core guidance for the work of the week to come in our own lives and with others in midweek formation groups. We
begin on Ash Wednesday by recognizing the limits placed on us by our mortality and the depths of our sinfulness. On Lent 1, we acknowledge we are entering a wilderness, uncharted and perhaps unchartable territory for us. On Lent 2, we become aware of the degree to which we need intervention and help beyond ourselves, and we identify how we can access it and start doing so. On Lent 3, we encounter the specifics of the kind of program that can keep us moving forward and learning this new normal, if we stick with it. On Lent 4, we address the sense of progress (and lack of progress) that comes with beginning to make some recovery. And on Lent 5, we remember with gratitude and hope the promise of healing and wholeness that awaits us as we continue to persevere, even in the face of challenging circumstances.

It is with that sense of gratitude and hope of a journey well-begun that we enter Holy Week. All of what has come before has prepared us to walk through this final leg of the journey with Christ and his church, through his suffering, execution, death, burial… and finally, after all of that, his resurrection.


Week 1: February 18 Wilderness Mark 1:9-15

Week 2: February 25 Intervention Mark 8:31-38

Week 3: March 4 Program Exodus 20:1-17

Week 4: March 11 Recovery John 3:14-18

Week 5: March 18 Promise Jeremiah 31:31-34
Ash Wednesday
FULL SERVICE

Abbreviations
CCLI= Christian Copyright Licensing International SongSelect
W&S= Worship & Song
TFWS= The Faith We Sing
UMH= United Methodist Hymnal

ENTRANCE
The worship space should be fairly dark, illuminated only by candles (perhaps several banks of votive candles placed around the worship space) and the light on a projection screen, wall, or scrim. Use these or similar words, projected in a loop on a screen.

Prepare
Reconcile
Repent
Mercy
Mortality
Know Yourself
Prayer
Fasting
Deny Yourself
Read Scripture
Listen
Silence
Dust
Ashes
Kneel . . . Now

If you do not have projection capability, place the words on posters or banners and place them around the worship space.
Have an usher stationed, along with signs posted, encouraging people to enter in silence. If using posters or banners, the usher may invite people to walk through the stations before taking their seats.

Consider playing Gungor’s “Beautiful Things” (CCLI #5665521) in the background as the video of the words plays or as the people move from station to station. (If you use a recording, be sure you have the licensing to cover this use).

As people take their seats, they may kneel if they are able.

**Invitation to Lenten Discipline**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

the early Christians observed with great devotion

the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection,

and it became the custom of the Church that before the Easter celebration

there should be a forty–day season of spiritual preparation.

During this season, converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism.

It was also a time when persons who had committed serious sins

and had separated themselves from the community of faith

were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness,

and restored to participation in the life of the Church.

In this way the whole congregation was reminded

of the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ

and the need we all have to renew our faith.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church,

to observe a holy Lent:

by self–examination and repentance;

by prayer, fasting, and self–denial;

and by reading and meditating on God's Holy Word.

To make a right beginning of repentance,

and as a mark of our mortal nature,

let us now kneel (bow) before our Creator and Redeemer.

**SCRIPTURE AND RESPONSE**
Instrumentalists may continue playing the song softly while a reader reads.

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Do NOT project the words of this text. Let the focus be on the reader and on listening to the text. Let the screen keep the background (but not the words) of the opening loop. When the reader finishes, the instrumentalists finish the verse they are playing, then invite the assembly to sing.

“Dust and Ashes”
“O-So-So”

Still kneeling; words on the screen.

Again, instrumentalists continue playing while a reader reads.

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

The screen returns to the background as before. The reader finishes; the instrumentalists finish the verse; then cue the congregation to stand and sing.

**"Dust and Ashes"**
**"O-So-So"**

While the pastor or deacon or lay leader (if no deacon is present) or lay speaker (if no lay leader is present) brings the gospel to the center of the assembly and reads it . . .

*Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

All standing as able, instruments still playing the song. If a sermon is offered, the song fades out as the sermon begins, and resumes as the sermon ends.

[Brief Sermon]

“Dust and Ashes”
“O-So-So”

The assembly sings as the reader of the gospel returns to the front and the pastor lifts the container holding the ashes. At the words "lead us through the desert sands" in
"Dust and Ashes," or "reconcile your people" in verse 4 of "O-So-So" refrain (second time), the pastor blesses the ashes with the sign of the cross (no words are needed).

Receiving the Ashes
As the song concludes, the pastor gestures in silence for the people to come to receive the ashes. This should be done in a deliberate, unhurried way. Give each person ample time to kneel or bow to receive. Offer one station per 35-50 people, and plan for ten seconds per person. The action is offered in silence, with the words, "Remember, you are dust" and "Repent, believe the gospel," alternating on the projection screen, scrim, or wall.

As the ashes are received, a soloist with soft piano or guitar accompaniment sings.

Solo: “God, How Can We Forgive” TFWS 2169 or
Solo: “Falling on My Knees” W&S 3099

A soloist with ensemble/congregational response (for those in line or having already received) may sing.

Solo/Congregation "Forgive Us, Lord/Perdón Señor" TFWS 2134 or
"Depth of Mercy" W&S 3097

Instrumental music from this and other appropriate songs focused on repentance, confession, and forgiveness (but NOT the cross! Lent is not Holy Week!) may continue until all have received and returned to their places. Then all sing.

All: "Sunday's Palms Are Wednesday's Ashes," TFWS 2138 or
"Amazing Grace/My Chains are Gone," W&S 3104

Musicians begin segue into TFWS 2157 or W&S 3135.

Declaration of Pardon and Peace
Pastor: In Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

People: In Jesus Christ, we all have peace.
Ensemble sings "Come and Fill Our Hearts with Your Peace" (TFWS 2157) or "In God Alone" (W&S 3135) once through, and invites congregation to join as they share Christ’s peace with one another, words projected on screen. In the background of the projection, you may wish to project the word "Peace" in other languages -- “Peace,” “Shalom,” “Eirene,” “Salaam,” “Shantih,” “Ruh,” “Paix,” “Paz,” and whatever other languages may be spoken in the region where you are.

“Come and Fill Our Hearts with Your Peace” TFWS 2157 and/or
“In God Alone” W&S 3135

If this service continues with Holy Communion, follow the guidance beginning here. If not, skip to the end of this resource (Sending Forth without Communion) for suggestions for concluding the service shortly after the Peace.

INTERCESSION, THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION

Instrumentalists should segue smoothly from "Come and Fill Our Hearts" or "In God Alone" to "Lord, Let Your Kingdom Come" (TFWS 2201). Music may continue playing during the spoken intercessions and time for silent or spoken requests before the leader (deacon, lay leader, lay speaker, or song leader) sings "Lord, in your mercy" or the first half of Chorus 1a of “You Make Beautiful Things,” with the second half as congregational response. In keeping with the request of the Council of Bishops, be sure to add an intercession for the earth, as follows, "Together, let us pray for the earth, with thanksgiving for its bounty and for wisdom and strength to care for it and all life upon it."

The people may be standing and invited to join the leader in praying at the "orans" position -- hands raised slightly out to the sides, elbows bent, palms up.

Project on the screen only the words for the song and the theme of each intercession, as follows:
- Each other
- People who are suffering
- Local concerns
- World leaders, justice, peace
The earth
The whole church
The communion of saints

*Sung Intercessions: "Lord, Let Your Kingdom Come" (TFWS 2201) or Chorus 1a of “You Make Beautiful Things”

Instrumentalists segue to the opening of The Great Thanksgiving (TFWS 2257a or other setting).

The Great Thanksgiving (TFWS 2257 or other setting)
The presider (elder or local pastor) leads The Great Thanksgiving using the musical setting and The Great Thanksgiving for Early in Lent from The United Methodist Book of Worship (60-61). The presider may invite the congregation to continue praying in the orans position. The congregation uses the musical setting TFWS 2257. These words may appear on screen just before the congregation needs to sing them. Instrumental accompaniment (soft chords related to the setting) may continue through the presider’s prayer. You need not include the entire prayer onscreen, just the “people’s parts” and the verbal cues for when they begin. (“And so” introduces each of these in the Great Thanksgiving in our ritual).

Sharing the Bread and Cup
During the distribution, the congregation and a soloist, using the choir or accompaniment edition, may sing.

Songs during the Distribution
“Taste and See” TFWS 2267 and/or
“Come to the Table of Grace” W&S 3168

Once again, plan on at least one station per 35-50 people served, and do not rush. Other instrumental music relating to Holy Communion may be offered from The United Methodist Hymnal, The Faith We Sing or Worship & Song, or CCLI. As all are served and the table is re-set, instrumentalists begin segue to "The Spirit Sends Us Forth to Serve" (TFWS 2241) or "As We Go" (W&S 3183). This plays in the background during the dismissal with blessing.
SENDING FORTH
Dismissal with Blessing

Deacon or Lay Leader or Lay Speaker:
May God, who has forgiven and fed us,
now make us strong for these days ahead.
May Jesus lead us, and we be found faithful to follow.
May the Spirit drive us into the wilderness,
burning away the chaff of our lives,
and purifying our hearts for all to see
and be blessed.

Pastor:
And may the blessing of God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Mercy, Master, and Fire,
be with us and remain with us always!
People: Amen!

Song of Sending
“The Spirit Sends Us Forth to Serve” TFWS 2241 or
“As We Go” W&S 3183

Deacon, Lay Leader, or Lay Speaker:
Go in peace, to love and serve God and your neighbor.
People: Thanks be to God!

OR

SENDING FORTH (WITHOUT COMMUNION)
Instrumentalists segue to "Walk with Me" (TFWS 2242) or "As We Part for the Towns and Cities" (W&S 3180) during the dismissal and Lord’s Prayer that follows.

Dismissal with Blessing
Deacon or Lay Leader or Lay Speaker:
May God, who has forgiven us
now make us strong for these days ahead.
May Jesus lead us, and we be found faithful to follow.
May the Spirit drive us into the wilderness,
burning away the chaff of our lives,
and purifying our hearts for all to see
and be blessed.

_Pastor:_
And may the blessing of God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Mercy, Master, and Fire,
Be with us and remain with us always!

_People: Amen!_

**Song of Sending**
“Walk with Me” TFWS 2242 or
“As We Part for the Towns and Cities” W&S 3180

_Deacon, Lay Leader, or Lay Speaker:_
Go in peace, to love and serve God and your neighbor.
_People: Thanks be to God._

*Depart in silence.*

**MUSIC NOTES**

**Dust and Ashes (W&S 3098)**
An accompaniment for this hymn can be found in the Accompaniment Edition of _Worship & Song_, but my recommendation is similar to “O-So-So” above: the simpler, the better. On this day of reflection and repentance, creating stark textures can be very powerful. Either support with a drone (D and A), or simply sing as an a cappella canon as it is printed in the hymnal. If this is the chosen means of singing, know that having a choir (and rehearsing them ahead of time!) is vital to making this work. The other option
would be for a solo voice to serve as the leader, and a solo treble instrument such as flute, oboe, or violin, to accompany the congregational singing. A pulsing hand drum might also support rhythmic continuity. **Hymn Study**

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**O-So-So (TFWS 2232)**

There are many ways to approach the singing of this haunting, mysterious hymn. Although it can be accompanied on any number of instruments, I recommend keeping a simple drone (G and D) underneath the melody. This can be accomplished with an organ, choir, strings, or even a "singing bell" technique with handbells. Keep a slow tempo, and allow space between phrases for deep breathing. On the last beat of each line of the text, play finger cymbals one time for some variance in the texture. Using an instrument such as violin or flute on the unison melody can also enhance the ambience. **History of Hymns**

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**God, How Can We Forgive (TFWS 2169)**

This powerful hymn by **Ruth Duck** is beautifully set to the tune LEONI, which is often thought of in relation to the hymn, “The God of Abraham Praise.” It creates a mourning quality that is reflected in the probing questions of the hymn text. For a more traditional setting, accompany on organ or piano. Know, however, that when accompanied simply, this song also works well with a praise band and vocal team. Allow the long phrases of quarter notes to provide the basis to accompany with a driving rhythm. Doing so might provide some atmospheric variance in a service that is so often regarded as quiet and contemplative.

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**Falling on My Knees (W&S 3099)**

Simple, simple, simple. This is often regarded as a very personal, intimate song; and when receiving the ashes, it can be a powerful expression of repentance and prayer. It is singable either as a solo or a congregational song. The repetition of the text, “So I wait for you” creates a very anticipatory feeling leading into the higher notes of the refrain, and the phrase “I'm falling on my knees” is painted beautifully in the music by singing a descending musical line that itself embodies the action taking place here. Accompany with a piano or solo guitar, and supplement with other instruments if desired.

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**Forgive Us, Lord/Perdón, Señor (TFWS 2134)**

A wonderfully simple accompaniment is provided in the Accompaniment Edition of *The Faith We Sing* for this sung intercessory prayer. If you have a choir in your
church, instruct them to sing the congregational words, “Forgive us, Lord/Perdón, Señor,” in four-part harmony. It is possible to allow the congregational parts to serve as a cyclic song that would easily turn into a short statement akin to a breath prayer. A song leader or soloist should sing the intercessions. Treat this song as a true intercessory prayer, and create intercessions that are poignant to your church and community. Accompany with guitar, organ, or piano.

**Depth of Mercy (W&S 3097)**

Penny Rodriguez has created one of the most beautiful settings of a Charles Wesley hymn with this tune, GOTTES ZEIT. Though there are no actual words of conversation, the unspoken dialogue between God and the writer is profound and reflects both the restlessness of the believer and the relentlessness of the Creator. Accompany with an organ or a piano. [Hymn Study](#)

**Sunday’s Palms are Wednesday’s Ashes (TFWS 2138)**

This hymn offers a solid starting point for this Lenten series, as we spend each week focusing upon one of the baptismal vows in our ritual. The opening stanza of “Sunday’s Palms” contains the text, “We have marred baptismal pledges, in rebellion gone astray,” so this becomes a vital piece of confession to begin the season. BEACH SPRING offers a reflective tune for the text and one that helps move along the text, too. EBENEZER would be another choice, but understand that the hymn might take twice as long to sing. Accompany with organ or piano.

**Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone) [W&S 3104]**

Many congregations have embraced this song as a modern expression of one of the most beloved hymns in our congregational repertoire. The refrain hearkens to Charles Wesley’s own “And Can It Be that I Should Gain,” where Wesley writes, “my chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed thee.” This song is often accompanied by a band and vocal praise team, but it can also be accompanied by solo piano, guitar, or even organ. Note that the melody notes included in Worship & Song are an ornamental representation of the way Chris Tomlin sings the song, and your congregation may instead sing this as it is used to, which is perfectly acceptable! [Hymn Study](#)

**Come and Fill (TFWS 2157)/In God Alone (W&S 3135)**

These short, cyclic songs by Jacques Berthier are a part of the sung prayer repertoire from the Taizé Community in France. These simple chants offer a way for people to sing prayers in worship. They are also wonderful pedagogical tools for those seeking to strengthen part singing in choirs—both because of their simplicity and their repetition. The Taizé Community recommends using the resources of each context, so
accompaniment will vary from place to place. If you visit Taizé, however, you would usually hear an arpeggiated, finger-picked guitar with other obbligato instruments (flute, oboe, brass, strings, etc.) as are available. Sing the song several times to allow the words to transcend the page and become the prayers of your congregation.

**Lord, Let Your Kingdom Come (TFWS 2201)**

The instructions of this ritual song of intercessory prayer recommend singing in the following form: Refrain--Petition 1--Response, Refrain--Petition 2--Response, and so on. There are many ways this could be done, and you may have to experiment to see what feels appropriate in your context. Another suggestion would be for the choir or congregation to hum on an Eb Major chord or a unison Eb during the petitions and have the leader sing the first two measures of the response, at which point, the pulse and accompaniment picks back up each time. Whatever way you choose to sing, do so in a way that is doesn’t feel forced, even if it is appropriately structured.

**Taste and See (TFWS 2267)**

A standard in the catalog of GIA Publications, Inc., this hymn by James E. Moore offers a short, repetitive refrain for a congregation to sing while receiving the elements of Holy Communion. Singing these kinds of refrains in the midst of ritual action allows the congregation to move freely and not be encumbered by a book or bulletin. The stanzas are to be sung by a soloist, and the accompaniment is piano, guitar, and/or organ. Any combination of these instruments will work beautifully.

**Come to the Table of Grace (W&S 3168)**

This hymn offers the same possibility as “Taste and See” by having only a few repetitive words and phrases. “Grace” is replaced in different stanzas by the words “peace,” “love,” and “joy.” One of the best characteristics of this song is its ability to defy a set style or genre; it can be used in any setting, depending on the accompaniment and the tempo. Use some creative imagination to explore ways to enhance this simple song in your worship.

**The Spirit Sends Us Forth to Serve (TFWS 2241)**

LAND OF REST provides a beautiful and lilting setting for moving forward to “comfort those who mourn,” “be the hands of Christ,” and “go to serve in peace.” This folk melody has a beautiful accompaniment, but the inclusion of the melody line only in the Pew Edition of The Faith We Sing allows for some creativity in the accompaniment. Since it is largely, though not completely, pentatonic, this would also be a wonderful opportunity for some enhanced accompaniment from children on Orff instruments or other instruments with a simple, memorizable pattern. A good way to approach an
improvised accompaniment on a keyboard or strummed instrument would be to use different harmonic combinations of the notes F,G,A,C, and D. (The Bb does appear in the melody, but quite infrequently). Any combination of these notes should work against the melody. History of Hymns

As We Go (W&S 3183)

Jeremy Johnson has written a very short and memorable chorus with “As We Go.” I have personally used this song to close a number of events, and accompaniment can work with any keyboard or strummed instrument and light percussion, if desired. If it is unfamiliar to your congregation, use a choir or soloist to model the song in its entirety, then welcome the congregation to sing the second time through. This is a song that is easily adopted as a song of sending forth throughout a particular month or season, and that is by far the best way to introduce it to your congregation. Allow time to help with the teaching.

Walk with Me (TFWS 2242)

By singing the stories of those who inspire faithfulness (in this case, Moses, Peter, and Mary Magdalene), this hymn will inspire your congregation to live their week reflecting upon these examples of those who followed God. In the midst of such trying times as we are currently witnessing, sending your congregation forth with a message of unity and solidarity is one of the most important things you can do when entrusting your flock to the world. Accompany this hymn with a piano or organ. If you have a choir, encourage them to sing four-part harmony on the refrain (lines 1 and 2). On the last stanza, I recommend dividing the congregation in half and instructing them to turn, face the other half, and sing to one another, directing them to sing this as they would to inspire and encourage their neighbors. Holding hands on the last refrain might even be a way to share this witness of unity before leaving worship.

As We Part for the Towns and Cities (W&S 3180)

When considering this title by John Thornburg for inclusion in Worship & Song, we discovered that John had written the text to be paired with the tune AS THE DEER. It seemed like a logical choice and one that would be sung because of the widely recognized tune. However, we quickly learned that the copyright holder would not allow that tune to be set with any other hymn than “As the Deer.” Gary Alan Smith called me in haste, saying, “I need a tune ASAP.” This hymn tune, CONNECTION, was the result. It is important to note that John’s text is a prayer, and so it should be sung in the hope that God will answer these prayers, even as the congregation sings the song. Piano,
guitar, or organ can all serve as appropriate accompaniment. Should your choir be looking for an arrangement of this in a choral format, you can order a setting published by Choristers Guild [here](#).

**Beautiful Things (CCLI 5665521)**

This song is alluded to a few times in this service, and we encourage its use on Ash Wednesday because it is incredibly appropriate for this occasion. “You make beautiful things out of the dust” is a reminder of what God can do in the midst of our frailty and brokenness. Your congregation may already be familiar with this song through a vacation Bible school curriculum, but there is a suggestion to be made if you are only familiar with the recording by Gungor. You will notice in his recording that he eventually takes the chorus up one octave to a range unattainable by almost all congregations. My simple recommendation is to sing in the key of D, and continue singing the melody in its octave. To simulate the jump Gungor makes, a male voice could sing lead on the melody until the jump, at which point a female voice takes over. This will achieve the same octave leap, but typically people do not strain when they hear a female voice singing in a lower range. If this leap is not important in the worship dynamic you envision, feel free to sing in a lower range throughout. Accompaniment is best supported with a piano, guitar, or band.

**PREACHING NOTES**

I have to admit it. I despise those “tests of the emergency broadcast system” that pop up unexpectedly on television and the radio. The sound is awful. If frightens me a little bit. It is always an unwanted interruption. But I know it is necessary. It is necessary to be prepared to take action in the case of an emergency.

When the prophet Joel calls upon the the people of Zion to “blow the trumpet,” he is essentially setting off an emergency broadcast system. Unfortunately for Zion, this alarm is not a test. It is a signal that they are in a state of emergency. What’s the emergency? The day of the Lord is coming near. And the response of the people is prescribed. They are to begin preparations for this imminent visitation by assembling the people and calling them to return their hearts to the Lord. There is no time to waste. They must gather the people, sanctify a fast, and throw themselves on the mercy of the Lord before it is too late.
While Ash Wednesday may not signal an imminent return of the Lord (for no one knows the day or the hour of his return, not the angels in heaven or even the Son, but only the Father), it does serve as an annual test of our emergency response systems as disciples of Jesus Christ. The annual call to observe a holy Lent by self–examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self–denial; by reading and meditating on God's Holy Word, and by marking a right beginning of repentance by receiving a mark of our mortal nature is a reminder that we need to live as people who are prepared to stand before our Lord at any time, even as early as this very day, to receive the judgment that the Lord renders upon our lives.

It is a stark reminder that life is brief. Every moment is precious. We never know when our time on earth will come to an end. And so we must do all that we can with our lives, with each second and minute and hour and day that our Lord grants us, to live in the way that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has taught us to live.

As Christians, our call is to seek to please not the people around us, but the God who made us. Matthew tells us that the way to do this is to “not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

As we begin this holy season together, let us not ignore the warning that is blared by the emergency response system testing that is built into our tradition. Let us instead take it as a clarion call to action. Let us hear the invitation to observe a holy Lent as our marching orders, in which we get up and do what we need to do to be prepared for whatever may come, this day and every day. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, may we march courageously and faithfully through this season side by side, shoulder to shoulder, as disciples trusting completely in the promises of our God, made known to us in Jesus Christ.
Lent begins with dust and ashes. We start this time of intensive preparation for baptism or realigning our lives with the vows of the baptismal covenant acknowledging our human limitations. We remember we are dust and to dust we will return. Our efforts in this life will one day be reduced to ashes. And in the meantime, we have deeply ingrained habits marked by sin, stained by selfishness, and resistant to our own efforts to change them.

This is why Lent begins and proceeds with penitence. Penitence does not mean “feeling sorry” or “feeling guilty,” though these feelings may sometimes accompany the work of penitence. Penitence as we embody it in this service and throughout this season means acknowledging where we are, owning up to it, recognizing we cannot fix ourselves by ourselves, and seeking God’s mercy and power to renew us in the way of Jesus as we seek to learn to follow him either anew or more nearly.

This service of Ash Wednesday has many moving parts: music, graphics, readings, blessing and imposition of ashes, Communion. There are two things to keep in mind about services with many moving parts: One is the need for rehearsal to ensure that all parts work smoothly together and flow from beginning to end. Keep rehearsing until you need minimal or no verbal cues to move to the next step. The other is with as much ritual action as this service holds, less is more when it comes to additional words. Focus on nonverbal actions, and leave good space for silence. Let the words of Scripture, songs, and prayers be the primary verbalized parts. This is why we have placed the sermon in brackets in the order of worship. You may decide you do not need a sermon.

Finally, as people depart in silence, consider giving them a list of the formation groups and other weekly opportunities and where and when they meet during the coming weeks, with a note to pray for all people who are seeking Christ or a deeper knowledge of him through this season.
Wilderness
Week 1
February 18
FULL SERVICE

Abbreviations
CCLI= Christian Copyright Licensing International SongSelect
W&S= Worship & Song
TFWS=The Faith We Sing
UMH=United Methodist Hymnal

ENTRANCE
Enter in silence. No prelude. No video. No opening hymn or other music. Invite the congregation simply to listen, to enter the soundscape of a desert:
https://archive.org/details/aporee_28172_32458 or
https://archive.org/details/aporee_30865_35494

At an appropriate time, signal the congregation to rise for the reading of the gospel, facing the back of the congregation, where one of the readers and the pastor or deacon stand by the font, filled with sand.

WORD AND RESPONSE
Mark 1:9-13 Translation by Taylor Burton-Edwards

Reader 1: Narrator
And it happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. And immediately, as he was stepping up out of the water, he saw the sky split and the Spirit as a dove descending to him. And there was a voice from the sky:

Voice (unseen, and in an unexpected tone)
“You are my son, the beloved one. In you I delight.”

Reader 2: (older adult, rising from some other location)
And immediately the Spirit cast him out into the wilderness.

Reader 3: (youth, rising from some other location)
And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tested by Satan.

Reader 4: (child, rising from some other location)
And he was with the wild animals.
Readers 5: (preschoolers, all rising)
And the angels helped him.

(Silence)

*The pastor walks to the front of the worship space. The people turn facing front.*

Sermon

*Wilderness*

At the conclusion of the sermon, the readers move from the font to a position directly in front of the Lord’s Table.

Song (Choir/Ensemble or Congregation)

“Come Out the Wilderness,” UMH 416

Reader 1:

After John was handed over, Jesus went into Galilee publicly proclaiming the good news of God and saying:

Reader 2: (Jesus)

The time is fulfilled. God’s kingdom has drawn near. Repent and believe in the good news!

**Living the Call: Acknowledge the Wilderness**

*Invite all people to identify and write down one or more ways they currently find themselves in a spiritual wilderness. Invite them to make two copies of these items, and give one copy to one other person with whom they will check in during the coming week to share what they’re learning about being in this wilderness and offer mutual support. As they live the call this week, ask them to document times when they’ve learned something as well as situations when what they’ve learned is they need more help to determine next steps. Midweek formation groups will be another opportunity to check in, pray for one another, and encourage one another.*

*The choir or band may offer a solo piece or anthem during this time of response.

“Desert Song” CCLI # 5060793 or

“Jesus, Tempted in the Desert” TFWS 2105

At conclusion, all may sing:

“Come Out the Wilderness”

UMH 416, refrain 2X

When all have completed and exchanged their papers, a deacon or lay minister may lead the congregation in prayer and confession of sin.

**Prayers of the People**

We are in the wilderness.
As much as we have tried to map, domesticate, and routinize every inch of our planet and every moment of our lives, we know our maps do not tell us where we are with you, O God, and our schedules often serve to distract us from the reality that we ourselves and so many of our neighbors on this planet are in the wilderness, too.

And so we pray:

**Here, in this wilderness, prepare your way, O God.**

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

**Here, in this wilderness, prepare your way, O God.**

With leaders in religious, political, economic, and social life; with our families, friends, and neighbors; and with all who work to sustain and protect our lives as military, civilian workers, and first responders;

**Here, in this wilderness, prepare your way, O God.**

With all who need your healing power, and with all who offer healing through their skill and presence; with all who have harmed us, and all whom we have harmed by our action or inaction;

_Silence_

**Here, in this wilderness, prepare your way, O God.**

**Pastor:**
Receive the prayers of your people, most merciful God. In your compassion, forgive our sins, and free us for lives of joyful obedience through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

_Silence_

**Pastor:**
In the name of Jesus, you are forgiven.
People:
In the name of Jesus, you are forgiven.
All: Glory to God! Amen!

THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION

Pastor:
Forgiven and free, offer the peace of Christ to one another and your gifts to God.

*The peace is exchanged as the offering is collected.*

Offertory Music

The Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We are yours, O God.

Bless the Lord!
God’s holy name be praised!

Praised in heaven, praised in earth,
praised throughout your creation
is your name, Holy Triune God.

The deserts rejoice in your salvation,
and the wild animals in your deliverance.

The stars above shout out your glory,
and the earth trembles at your presence.

Satan tries us, but your angels support us,
so we, with all creation, cry “Holy!”

Holy, Holy, Holy,
Lord God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is Christ who comes in your name!
Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed are you, Jesus Christ,
Word made flesh,
showing us the way
where we can find no way.
Cast out into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit,
you made it your home.
Facing every test from Satan,
you trusted the wild animals as your companions,
and angels as your counsel,
and so were made ready to declare to all the world
the great good news of God’s kingdom drawing near.

Blessed are you, Jesus Christ.

Blessed are you for coming among us
and for offering yourself to us
in this holy meal
to fill our hungry and wandering souls,
and to empower us to break free from Satan’s hold
and walk humbly with our neighbor and with God.

With your first disciples, on the night of your betrayal into death,
you took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it, saying:
Take and eat this, my body given for you.

Then you took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it, saying:
Drink this, my blood of the new covenant for you.

Even so,
here and now,
come, Holy Spirit.
Come, Holy Spirit.

Come upon these gifts
and upon us.
Make them be for us
Christ’s body and blood,
that we who receive them may be for all
the body of Christ enlivened by his blood.

Come, Holy Spirit.
Make us one.

Come, Holy Spirit.
Unite us with you.

Come, Holy Spirit.
Revive us!

Make us whole and holy on this day, as we await that day when we shall feast with Christ in the new creation.

To Christ, to you, and to the All-Merciful Creator, One God, living and true, be all praise, and honor, and glory now and forever.

Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread and Distribution

Music during Communion
“Beautiful Things” CCLI # 5665521
“I Want Jesus to Walk with Me” UMH 521

Thanksgiving after Communion
Pastor and People:
Jesus, thank you!
You have fed us with yourself and bound us to you in love, that we may walk with you in the wilderness. In the power of the Holy Spirit, keep these bonds strong, through the days ahead so in this wilderness we, too, may make companions of the wild, and discover the angels at work in our midst. Amen.

SENDING FORTH

 Invite the congregation to face the back of the sanctuary, toward the exits.

Hymn/Song
“Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days” UMH 269
(Tune: House of the Rising Sun, W&S 3072) OR
“Forty Days and Forty Nights” Attachment

Deacon or Lay Leader (from the back of the worship space)
The Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness. The Spirit drives us there as well. Settle in. Make strange companions. Endure the trials. Trust the angels.
And learn the way.

Pastor:
Go in peace.

Postlude Variations on House of the Rising Sun (ad. lib.) or Variations on WAITING (attachment, ad.lib.)

MUSIC NOTES

Come Out the Wilderness (UMH 416)

You will quickly notice when singing this spiritual that the wilderness is a sought-after place of refining and connection with the living God. All the questions in this song relate to the effect of being in the wilderness (“How did you feel,” “Did you love everybody,” “Did your soul feel happy”), and we can assume that being in the wilderness is an intimate experience with God that causes us to be more loving. A number of approaches are possible, from a choral singing straight from the hymnal to a more bluesy, band-driven approach echoing a performance practice like this. A song leader is vital to singing this work, however, to move the congregation into the responses. If someone in your community is able to freely improvise in a call-and-response manner, make sure to use that person’s gifts by having him or her lead this song. It is also possible to maintain a stark contrast between the refrain and stanzas, and I suggest the refrain be quieter and gentler. However, a more wailing quality can also be appropriate. [History of Hymns]

Desert Song (CCLI # 5060793)

This poignant song from Hillsong in Australia effectively draws upon the imagery and metaphor of the desert and offers the words of praise in both times of desert and harvest. The rhythm of the verses is syncopated, but it is repetitive enough that it should be easily learned by the congregation. (The rhythm is very similar to the song “Days of Elijah,” if that is in your repertoire of congregational singing.) The possibility of teaching the congregation only the chorus is an option, but the verses are vivid with enough imagery that it would be best for the congregation to sing them as well. Accompaniment for this song can be as simple as a piano playing quarter-note chords underneath the melody or an acoustic guitar with a driving rhythm, or it can be as complex as a whole band. Whatever resources you have in your congregation can make this an accessible option for this First Sunday in Lent. The ideal key is B minor (relative to D Major).

Jesus, Tempted in the Desert (TFWS 2105)

EBENEZER is an ideal tune for use on this day, especially with this text by Herman Stuempfle, Jr. The hymn recalls the places in which Jesus was taken in the
midst of his temptation and recreates the conversation between Jesus and the devil. The last stanza is the opportunity for the congregation to live into the text, consider what temptation is in today’s context, and pray for strength to withstand the tempter. Because of the length of the phrases and the pulse needed, the tune allows for a good deal of time to be spent in reflection upon this text. Make note, however, that this hymn takes longer to sing than other 87.87 D tunes, so plan accordingly. It has a march-like quality that can also be interpreted as defiant, but be sure to interpret each stanza so the accompaniment can vary. This will allow the narrative quality of the hymn to shine through, and it will keep the congregation from focusing on how long it takes to sing the hymn. The best accompaniment is by organ or another keyboard instrument, but the starkness of the wilderness can also be created by singing at least one stanza with the only accompaniment being a hand drum (use the rhythm found in the melody of the first measure - half note/quarter-note triplet/half note/half note - as a repetitive rhythm) and solo wind instrument on the melody. Bring all the instruments together on the final stanza. History of Hymns

Beautiful Things (CCLI # 5665521)
Moving into Lent, this is a good time for people to hear the good news that God makes “beautiful things out of the dust… out of us.” The simplicity of the tune longs for a simple accompaniment as well. If you are familiar with Gungor’s original recording, you will note that it begins with a piano, guitar, and cello. This would be a beautiful accompaniment throughout if desired. Full band can be used, but don’t feel like you have to use all the instruments all the time. Find ways to show creativity with the instrumentation you have within your church. Also, make note that the best key for this song is D. However, the original melody leaps an octave in the second chorus, which is far too high for a congregation to sing. Though the timbre will be different, you can accomplish the same effect by having a bass-clef voice on the stanzas and opening choruses before the leap, and then supplement with a mezzo treble voice at the leap. When a congregation hears a male voice singing that high, the immediate thought is, “I can’t sing that,” and the voice oftentimes shuts down instead of continuing singing an octave lower. A female voice in the same frequency range assures the congregation that it is ok to not strain and leave the voice in a lower range when singing.

I Want Jesus to Walk with Me (UMH 521)
A Lenten favorite among many congregations, “I Want Jesus to Walk with Me” is a spiritual that has a wailing character that seems to embody the desolation found in the Scripture this week. This hymn would be sung very slowly in many African American settings, and we encourage its use in that style. It has, however, also been used slightly faster when sung with a band as a blues option. Just make sure the tempo is not too brisk; it still needs to have a lamenting quality (“When my heart is almost breaking”).
Accompany with an organ, piano, acoustic guitar, or band. You may also choose to adapt the time signature from 4/4 to 12/8 to offer a slow, swing version that has a bluesy pulse and character.

**Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days (UMH 269)**

We have left the mountain, and we are beginning the move toward the season of Lent. This song and the liturgy surrounding it serve as connection points to move us forward to a time when we will be formed as part of the Lenten journey. LAND OF REST is a brilliant American folk melody, and it would be best accompanied here by a simple accompaniment of piano or arpeggiated guitar alone. There is almost a longing tone to the tune, so be sure to use a gentle, rocking tempo. This is possible in a slower 6/4 or a quicker pace like a 6/8. [History of Hymns](#)

**Forty Days and Forty Nights**

This new hymn by Discipleship Ministries’ own Taylor Burton-Edwards, places Jesus’ wilderness story in the context of the greater Scriptural narrative with other notable biblical figures who were known for waiting on God—Noah, Moses, and Elijah. The melody and setting are easily learned and singable, and the accompaniment is characterized by a **Klezmer**-ish quality of longing. When playing, make sure there is more emphasis on the first beat of each measure, but don’t play so fast as to make it a quick waltz. When arriving at the last line, approach the music with more rubato leading into the D.C., and move the tempo forward again when repeating to the refrain. In the spirit of Klezmer, adding a violin and clarinet might be a great addition! [ADD LINK TO SCORE HERE](#)

**PREACHING**

**Notes**

As we were considering the season of Lent, we thought the idea of rehab was a helpful approach to the high holy season, which has historically led people on a path of readiness for baptism on Easter morning. This path included making an intentional choice to turn away from present practices, beliefs, relationships, and patterns of behavior, in order to enter into a time of intense spiritual preparation that led the exploring believers not only to entrance into Christian community through baptism, but to live as disciples in a state of hope, healing, and wholeness, which Jesus called eternal life.

In part, we were inspired by our colleague Taylor Burton Edward’s recent experience of cardiac rehabilitation after his heart attack.
BEGIN SIDEBAR:
Cardiac Rehab, take two.

I'll talk about take one in a future sidebar.

Here I'll just note that because I'd done Take One about a month earlier, I had some idea what to expect the experience to be. And that was, in general, a helpful thing.

The primary thing I knew is I could absolutely trust the staff both to keep me progressing and to watch out for me.

I knew this was something I had to do. My heart attack in April had left me weak, with little endurance, and slow, both physically and mentally. I had already become slower because of the progress of arthritis, another familiar inheritance. Having lost about thirty pounds since January had helped the arthritis some, but I had another thirty to go to get into the recommended BMI range for my height, and the heart attack set my mobility back further. It was like I hadn’t lost the first thirty. I didn’t expect more regular cardiac exercise to hasten my weight loss (and, as it turned out, it didn’t). But I did hope that it might improve mobility as diet managed weight loss (and it did).

So I began anew in late May. Take one hadn’t counted. It really was beginning again.

Stretching (10 minutes), six minutes of fast walking laps around the main gym, four minutes on an arm machine, six on a bike with no resistance, six on a bike/arms workout machine with minimal resistance, and blood pressure checks before and after. That’s where it would start from the new Day 1. I understood it would build from there. The good thing was I got through the new Day 1 without incident. And then Day 2, the next day, and Day 3 starting Tuesday the next week, a day that began (as I learned Tuesdays always would) with an education session and a brief walk instead of the usual ten-minute stretch.

I was getting through it, with helpful support from the nursing and training staff, and some sense of collegiality from the many others (all but one at least twenty years older than I) who were in the class.

After three weeks, as the time, resistance, and goals for the machinery were graduallyamped up, I changed the order of my workout. I found the bike/arms machine was the hardest thing I faced each time, the equipment that left me the most exhausted. So I decided to do it first, and then arrange the other pieces as a sort of extended cool down.
from that. I could psych myself up during warmup (or education and walk) for that, and … push it at the max to meet or exceed the stated average watts goal, then simply get through the rest of it. This was the one I felt I needed to master, because it was the one that seemed to have the greatest chance to master me.

Cardiac rehab three times a week became my new normal. And because of my travel and work schedule this summer, once I was released back to work, it would become my new normal for just over five months. Arrive. Record morning weight and wait for blood pressure check. Put on pouch and monitor. Stretch. Bike/arms machine. Bike. Arms machine. Walk laps. Cool down. Take blood pressure. Report results after each machine or exercise. Over time, more resistance, longer walks, added weights, higher watts, and added rowing machine. Day by day. Week by week. Month after month. Repeat.

I can’t say I liked it. I liked and trusted the staff, completely. It was good to be with others doing the rehab and getting to know some of them along the way. But I did not enjoy the workout itself. At all. It was more like I was trying to get through it, to best it. Still, I can and do say my cardiac rehab completion certificate may be the most important certificate I have received in my life.

End sidebar

Cardiac rehabilitation is but one form of rehab the people today may need to undergo. We thought about the present opioid and heroin crisis that is sweeping the nation. We thought about people in recovery from alcohol abuse, gambling, and sex addiction. We thought about people being released from prison and re-entering society. We thought about soldiers returning from difficult tours of duty. We thought about people grieving the loss of a loved one, or the loss of a job, or moving to a new community or into retirement.

As we studied the texts together, we noted that this year we begin the season of Lent smack dab in the middle of Black History Month. So as we begin our trek into the wilderness of Lent this week, we pray that as leaders in The United Methodist Church, we will be especially cognizant of the fact that racism continues to pervade our life together, especially those of us who live in the United States.

BEGIN SIDEBAR
On Recognizing Privilege
By Dawn Chesser
As a person of privilege, I have to be reminded that the current situation, in which it appears some people have become empowered in a new way to openly claim and profess their racist beliefs, is actually not something new. It hasn’t been revived. It hasn’t been suddenly released. It has always been here. What has changed is that people of privilege are starting to see more fully what our brothers and sisters of a darker hue have been experiencing every day, all their lives. What has changed is that we cannot bracket our responsibility to proclaim “Black Lives Matter” as a special observance every year during the month of February.

Likewise, we can no longer bracket women’s history as something to recognize during March, or consider the situation of Asian and Pacific Islanders only in May, or celebrate Hispanic heritage only during September and October, or remind ourselves of Native Americans only during November. We must be continuously diligent in recognizing, celebrating, and using the gifts of all the diverse people of The United Methodist Church, not just during special months, but year-round.

End sidebar

The only thing that seems clear is that the rehabilitative needs we face today call upon us, both as individuals and as a human family, to begin this season by following Jesus into the wilderness. Because these problems are each a kind of wilderness, are they not? And as they say in twelve-step programs, “The first step is admitting we have a problem.”

What is the wilderness? We want to suggest that the wilderness represents those times in our lives when we begin to face, head on, our own brokenness. We admit we have fallen and can’t get up on our own. We admit we have lost our way. We admit we are facing trials and temptations. We admit we have come face to face with evil. We admit that we can no longer manage on our own. We need help. We need a Savior.

For some, being in the wilderness is a temporary condition. For others, it is the status quo of their entire lives. But whether our wilderness is temporary or seems to be permanent, we experience it the same. Being in the wilderness is a time of testing.

When we first started talking about the wilderness, we found ourselves primarily pointing to places: the desert, uncultivated land, unsettled spaces. The wilderness is where the wild things are. The wilderness is where there is no ready supply of food or fresh water. The wilderness is desolate. It is a place of desperation.
But wilderness also speaks to periods of life or states of mind: lost, unsettled, wandering, discerning, tempted by Satan, tested by God. The wilderness is a time of trial. It is a probationary period.

Heading into the wilderness, whether it’s imposed upon us or we voluntarily go, is only the first step in the rehab journey toward reconciliation, healing, and wholeness. But it is a step we must take to start the process of recovery.

When Taylor talked about his experience with cardiac rehab, he said one of the hardest parts was the lifestyle change. When you are in rehab, there are things you can’t do anymore. Taylor couldn’t do normal daily activities. Alcoholics can’t go to bars. Drug addicts can’t be around users. Entering rehab necessarily involves a kind of radical departure from what you had before, creature comforts, usual habits, normal ways of being.

In the wilderness, there aren’t orchards. Water isn’t easily and readily available. Food is limited. In the wilderness, you might have to change your diet. You might have to self-impose limits until after you have returned from the forty days. And in rehab, if you are successful, the small changes you make will become part of a permanent lifestyle change.

The good news in this passage is the knowledge that whatever sort of wilderness challenge we might have to face, we don’t have to face it alone. Our Scripture story for today tells us that our Lord and Savior has gone ahead of us. He understands how difficult it is to take those steps, to resist the temptation to take an easier route through our troubles, or detour around them completely if we can. He understands our temptation to bury our feelings, to hide our truths, to seek the path of least resistance. He understands because he has been there himself. He has been there, and he persevered.

**Sidebar: The Wilderness of Alcoholism**

By Matthew B. Smith, Pastor, Destination Community Church

The significance of the wilderness should never be underestimated. Jesus entered the wilderness freshly baptized and left the wilderness, ready to call his disciples. Followers of Jesus also go through “wilderness experiences” and carry suffering that ultimately brings them into closer fellowship with Jesus.

My story is no different. My wilderness was a twelve-year journey through a battle with alcoholism. I kept face in public. I finished two degrees, became a college professor,
and would have been considered successful by most people’s definition. I wore a smile, worked hard, owned nice things, and took care of business. Inside, I was aware that I was deeply lost and running away from God. But for the most part, I was able to cover this with achievement and excuses.

Addiction is no respecter of persons. It comes in all forms and afflicts members across all strata of society. I never intended to become an alcoholic. And I certainly would not have admitted such if asked. I felt that I didn’t have a problem because I didn’t drink every day and didn’t suffer physical withdrawal. But I was completely dependent on a drink when I knew I needed one. I had managed to cover my pain and withhold my inner demons from others, and I did this tactfully for as long as I could.

After one difficult year of marriage and a growing distance from God, I made the decision to get help. This was after almost losing my family, home, and everything else around me. I cried out to God for help and chose to quit drinking and turn everything over to God. I knew that I could not quit on my own, so I sought help through a faith-based recovery program.

One would believe that my wilderness was coming to an end, but I felt that it was just beginning. Recovery is so tough. When an addict parts with the addiction, there is an overwhelming sense of boredom, confusion, and soul searching. We come to realize that we don’t know who we are and must discover this anew. This is scary, painful, and all-together difficult for a man in his thirties to do.

Through the darkness of my personal wilderness, Christ helped me overcome alcoholism, called me into pastoral ministry, and restored my marriage. As of February, I will have been sober five years. I am a full-time pastor at an exciting, vibrant church. My wife and I had another daughter two years ago, and I’m witnessing God in ways I never could have imagined. That was a time I could not imagine my life without alcohol. Now I can’t imagine my life with it.

I am but one more reason to believe in the power of the gospel as it pertains to recovery and overcoming obstacles. Grace found me in my wilderness and delivered me. Now I have a regular opportunity to speak to others in drug and alcohol recovery. The Father truly turns ashes into beauty.

**PLANNING NOTES**

**LENT 1 REHAB: WILDERNESS**

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**

**LENT 1 REHAB: WILDERNESS**
The primary color for Lent is purple.

**February**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Month</th>
<th>Black History Month</th>
<th>Lent Series Begins: Rehab</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 19</td>
<td>Presidents Day</td>
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**March**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Month</th>
<th>Women’s History Month</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 2</td>
<td>World Day of Prayer</td>
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<td>March 11</td>
<td>UMCOR Sunday</td>
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<td>March 25</td>
<td>Daylight Saving Time Change Song (Spring) (USA)</td>
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<td>March 29</td>
<td>Passion/Palm Sunday</td>
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<td>March 30</td>
<td>Maundy/Holy Thursday</td>
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<td>March 31</td>
<td>Good Friday</td>
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<td>March 25</td>
<td>Holy Saturday (until Sundown)</td>
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<td>March 25</td>
<td>Easter Eve/Easter Vigil (after Sundown)</td>
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**April**

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<th>April 1</th>
<th>Easter Day</th>
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<tr>
<td>April 15</td>
<td>Easter Series Begins</td>
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<td>April 22</td>
<td>Native American Ministries Sunday</td>
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<td>April 25</td>
<td>Festival of God’s Creation</td>
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<td>April 25</td>
<td>World Malaria Day</td>
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**May**

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

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

June 17  
Father’s Day (USA)
June 19  
Juneteenth (USA)

July
July 4  
Independence Day (USA)

August
All Month  
Back to School Resources

For Your Planning Team: LENT 1: REHAB: WILDERNESS Series Outline

Week 1: February 18  
Wilderness  
Mark 1:9-15

Week 2: February 25  
Intervention  
Mark 8:31-38

Week 3: March 4  
Program  
Exodus 20:1-17

Week 4: March 11  
Recovery  
John 3:14-18

Week 5: March 18  
Promise  
Jeremiah 31:31-34

Planning for This Service
Last week, we were on the mountain with Jesus, transfigured before us.

This week, we are driven into a wilderness with Jesus just after his baptism.

And we'll stay in this wilderness, figuratively speaking, through the season that lies ahead, this season we call Lent in English. Lent, in English, is more of a reference to the time of year this season falls in the Northern Hemisphere, a time when the days are “lengthening.” But in most other languages, the term for this season is derived from the
earlier Latin name for it, Quadragesima, or forty. The Latin name points not to the lengthening of daylight, but the length of the season we began last Wednesday with Ash Wednesday. It’s forty days of intensive focus on learning the way of Christ and helping others learn it for the first time, or perhaps anew.

Every year of the three-year cycle, Lent begins with Jesus in the wilderness for forty days. Last year, we focused explicitly on the baptismal vows and learning to live them. This year, we focus more broadly on the kind of bodily and relational learning we need to undertake to prepare for baptism or renewal of our relationship with God after a time apart from the life of the church. “Rehab” is the core metaphor we’re using to suggest what that process looks and feels like across these forty days. And today, we focus explicitly on the nature of the environment all of us who enter some form of rehab find ourselves in as we enter it.

It’s like a wilderness, like someplace where there are no cell towers, no wireless, and no GPS signals— it’s a data dead zone. Worse, it’s uncharted, and ultimately unchartable. If you tried to map it at one time, the map would likely not be helpful just a few months or even weeks later. That’s just part of what makes it feel—and even be—a bit dangerous. The wildlife there isn’t like the wildlife where you normally live. It’s in charge in this territory, and it lets you know that. Water sources are scarce. Mirages happen.

Almost nothing we have known as normal or taken for granted is normal or can be taken for granted out here.

We’re novices.

And the wilderness isn’t.

Out here, in this wilderness, we have to rely on God and others who may accompany us.

We’ll learn more about what it means to survive and thrive along the way.

But for now, for today, at series and season launch, the point is to become deeply aware of just how disoriented we really are as we begin this journey together.

Do not print the cues or even the text of the Scripture in the bulletin or place it on screen. Simply cue everyone to turn around and face the back. Before worship, gather your readers for rehearsal, and work through this whole opening movement so they are all ready to follow one another smoothly. Figure out where folks need to be placed to create the sense the Scripture is coming at people from all directions and in unpredictable ways. The opening moments of this service, with the reading dispersed among various people of various ages scattered across the congregation, and the congregation at least initially facing opposite where it may normally face at the beginning of worship, is an attempt to create a sense of the disorientation involved in this wilderness journey called Lent we are entering.
Then consider preaching the sermon, or at least beginning it, from an odd location as well. If you can move the pulpit to an unexpected place, consider doing so.

Each week of this series, we include an invitation to respond in a particular way. It’s really the beginning of a larger process of response we hope you will continue through midweek formation gatherings and groups each week, using our companion resource “The Wednesday Project,” developed by our colleagues Scott Hughes, Jacqui King, and Craig Miller (ADD LINK HERE).

And each week of the series, we’ll include a full service of Holy Communion connected to the theme of each service. We strongly encourage weekly Communion throughout Lent as part of making use of all the means of grace.

Additional Resources for this Service
2015 Planning Helps for these readings
Ecumenical Prayer Cycle: (Click link to find countries for this week when they are posted)
ENTRANCE

Choir or ensemble processes in slowly, leading the singing:
“Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah” (Long Meter) Africana Hymnal 4012 or
“Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah” (ZION) Africana Hymnal 4013

WORD AND RESPONSE

Reading Mark 8:31-38
(Translation, Taylor Burton-Edwards)
Reader 1: (front, moving toward the back)
Jesus started teaching his disciples that it was necessary for the Son of Humankind to
suffer many things, and to be tested and found wanting by the elders and the chief
priests and the scribes and to be killed, and after three days to be resurrected.

And he was talking this way to anyone who would listen.

So Peter, taking him aside, started rebuking Jesus.

All may turn to face the back of the worship space.

Reader 2: (back, moving toward the front with Reader 3)
But Jesus turned around. Seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter.

Reader 3: (Jesus, turning while speaking to face everyone in the congregation)
Get yourself back behind me, Satan. You are not concerning yourself with the ways of
God, but only the ways of people.

Reader 2: Jesus then addressed the entire crowd, along with his disciples.
Reader 3: (Jesus, looking upward and outward, pointing both within and beyond the congregation while speaking):

Look! If any of you desires to follow where I’m leading, you must deny yourself, and take up your crucifix, and follow me. For if you desire to save your own life, you will destroy it. But whoever among you should destroy your life for my sake and for the sake of the gospel, you will save it. For what profit would a person have to gain the whole universe and lose their life? For what would someone give in exchange for one’s life?

So if you consider it shameful to stand by me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Humankind will consider you shameful when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angel army.

Sermon “Intervention”

Call to Acknowledge Your Need for Intervention

People may be invited to write on cards at least one example of a place in their lives where they need God or others to intervene so they will follow where Jesus leads, not where they want to go. Invite them to make two copies, and give one copy to one other person with whom they will check in during the coming week to share how they have (or haven’t) seen God intervene or others intervene, and what has happened as a result. Midweek formation groups will be another opportunity to check in, pray for one another, and encourage one another.

Music during Call to Acknowledge

“Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart” UMH 500 or
“Fix Me, Jesus” Africana Hymnal 4123 or UMH 655

Prayers of the People

We are in the wilderness.
We have lost our way.
We cannot fix ourselves.
We need God’s intervention in our lives.
And so do many others.

And so we pray:
Come quickly to help us, O God.

Because people are still kept in poverty or slavery,
some are in fear from abusers, terrorists, and oppressors,
some face addiction,
and some are targeted for unjust treatment because of who they are;
Come quickly to help us, O God.

Because we need courage and integrity from leaders in religious, political, economic, and social life; because we love and sometimes struggle with our families, friends, and neighbors; and because the lives of those who sustain and protect our lives as military, civilian workers, and first responders are full of challenge and conflict;

Come quickly to help us, O God.

Because there are people who need your healing power, and some who offer healing through their skill and presence; because some have harmed us, and we have harmed others by our action or inaction;

Silence

Come quickly to help us, O God.

Pastor: Receive the prayers of your people, most merciful God. In your compassion, forgive our sins, and intervene to free us for joyful obedience through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Silence

Pastor: In the name of Jesus, you are forgiven.

People: In the name of Jesus, you are forgiven. All: Glory to God! Amen!

THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION

Pastor: Forgiven, freed, and helped where we need it most, let us offer the peace of Christ to one another and our gifts to God.

The people exchange the peace of Christ as the offering is collected and presented if Communion is celebrated. If Communion is not celebrated, the presentation of the collected gifts is part of the Act of Thanksgiving, below.
Music during the Offering and Peace

“Take Up Thy Cross” UMH 415 or
“I’ve Been Buked” SOZ 143
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZck6OXR_wE

Act of Thanksgiving (if Communion is not celebrated)

As the offering is presented, the congregation stands and is asked to offer thanks to God with one or both of the following:

Whom Shall I Fear (God of Angel Armies)” CCLI # 6440288
“Lift Every Voice and Sing” UMH 519

OR

The Great Thanksgiving BOW 60-61 or

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We are yours, O God.

Bless the Lord!
God’s holy name be praised!

Praised in heaven, praised in earth,
praised throughout your creation
is your name, Holy Triune God.

From generation to generation,
your people rejoice in your Name.

Though our wisdom is foolishness,
and our self-preservation leads to our destruction,
you continue to show us your way.

So with prophets, leaders, and faithful people,
we, with all creation, cry “Holy!”

Holy, Holy, Holy,
Lord God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is Christ who comes in your name!
Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed are you, Jesus Christ,
Word made flesh,
speaking truth hard to hear,
but making sure we hear it
and just how hard it is.
You denied yourself,
took up the cross,
followed where the Spirit led,
and called all your disciples to do the same.

Blessed are you, Jesus Christ.

Blessed are you for coming among us
and for offering yourself to us
in this holy meal
to fill our hungry and erring souls,
and to empower us to break free from Satan’s lies
and follow where you lead.

With your first disciples, on the night of your betrayal into death,
you took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it, saying:
Take and eat this, my body given for you.

Then you took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it, saying:
Drink this, my blood of the new covenant for you.

Even so,
here and now,
come, Holy Spirit.
Come, Holy Spirit.

Come upon these gifts
and upon us.
Make them be for us
Christ’s body and blood,
that we who receive them may be for all
the body of Christ enlivened by his blood.

Come, Holy Spirit.
Make us one.

Come, Holy Spirit.
Unite us with you.
Come, Holy Spirit.  
Revive us!

Intervene to make us what we are not now,  
as we await that day  
when we shall see Christ as he is  
at the feast of new creation.

To Christ, to you, and to the All-Merciful Creator,  
One God, living and true,  
be all praise, and honor, and glory  
now and forever.  
Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread and Distribution

Music during Communion

“Come, Ye Disconsolate”  
UMH 510 or  
“Chain Breaker”  
CCLI # 7060031 (key of G)

Thanksgiving after Communion

Pastor and People:

Jesus, thank you!  
You have fed us with yourself,  
Intervening with your own body and blood  
to free us from every illusion of success,  
and show us the true way,  
the way of your cross.  
By the power of the Holy Spirit,  
keep on intervening  
until we deny ourselves,  
take up the cross,  
and consistently follow you. Amen.

SENDING FORTH

Invite the congregation to face the back of the sanctuary, toward the exits.

Hymn/Song  
“Wherever He Leads, I'll Go”  
CCLI # 25194 or  
“Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone”  
UMH 424

Deacon or Lay Leader (from the back of the worship space)

Church, we often get it just plain wrong,  
turned inside out,
mistaking evil for good,  
our comfort for God’s will.  
We need some serious intervention  
and then some rehab.

And today, right here,  
God has started and continued that work in you.

Jesus is in you.  
The God of angel armies surrounds you.  
The Spirit is moving among us,  
and driving us out of here  
to continue in and through each of us  
what the Spirit has gotten started.

Pastor  
Go in the peace and with the intervening power of our Triune God.  
Amen.

Postlude  
Variations on Freedom Songs  

MUSIC NOTES

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah (Metered) [Africana Hymnal 4012]  
"Long-meter" hymn singing is a remarkable tradition within the African American church. The term “long meter” does not relate to the syllabic meter of the text, but the style in which the text is sung. Long-meter hymns are most often sung a cappella, although accompaniment can be added. This style of singing requires a confident leader to guide the congregation through the music, and it also requires experience from within the congregation. For examples on contextual performance practice, see the video “Reflect, Reclaim, Rejoice" from Discipleship Ministries.  

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah (ZION) [Africana Hymnal 4013]  
If you have never considered using the tune ZION to the singing of this hymn, it definitely adds a different dimension to the text, which itself is well suited to the season of Lent. The imperative within the title implies that the singer is comfortable making a request of God, especially when faced with the stress and anxiety of walking within the wilderness. The wilderness, however, is a subject of intense personal experience, and often it becomes a place of refuge where connection with God and a refining of the heart take place. Using this tune might help to present a different understanding of the wilderness in the same way that theologically reconsidering the nature of the wilderness can prove helpful. I suggest singing the 3/4 tune more in a 9/8 feel, where the dotted-
eighth/sixteenth patterns feel more like triplets. A tempo of quarter note = 60 would make this possible. **History of Hymns**

**Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart (UMH 500)**

This hymn by George Croly is a classic text from the nineteenth century in which a series of pleas are offered to the Spirit of God. In this worship service of the “Rehab” series, this hymn can be powerful in helping people understand their own needs for intervention. In singing it, the prayer is that God would continually work in us, that love might consume us and be our only desire. MORECAMBE is a beautiful tune that your congregation should know, especially in its musical passion in the last two lines as it moves to the climax at the beginning of the final line. However, if your church is not familiar with this tune, another option would be to use the tune FINLANDIA (“Be Still My Soul,” “This Is My Song.”), and sing the last two lines twice to complete the stanza for that tune. **History of Hymns**

**Fix Me, Jesus (Africana Hymnal 4123 or UMH 655)**

_The Africana Hymnal_ and _The United Methodist Hymnal_ contain two different settings of this well-known spiritual. Either is appropriate for singing in any context, and we encourage you to consider both and choose the one most accessible for your setting. The phrase “fix me” has a number of different interpretations, from repairing or making right (or healing/mending), to preparing. Any or all of these are correct in the context of this song, and discussing this with the congregation might offer them the ability to consider, while singing, what definition of “fix” most fits their immediate situation. The spiritual is best sung by a choir, either _a cappella_ or with piano or organ accompaniment. The singing should be slow and prayerful. **History of Hymns**

**Take Up Thy Cross (UMH 415)**

Every stanza of this hymn begins with the same phrase—”Take up thy cross”—a call to discipleship from Jesus (Matthew 16:24-25; Mark 8:34-35; Luke 9:23-24). A key part of the commitment to be a disciple is not being fooled into thinking that following Jesus will eliminate struggle and conflict. “Taking up our cross” is a daily exercise in sharing the suffering of Jesus and our neighbors. The first stanza is a paraphrase of the Scripture passages, while the other three offer commentary. Therefore, it may be appropriate to consider this when singing. If the tune is unfamiliar to the congregation, have a soloist (adult or child) introduce the melody by singing the first stanza, with the congregation singing the commentary within the final three stanzas. **History of Hymns**

**I’ve Been ’Buked (SOZ 143)**

Mahalia Jackson is well known for singing many songs, but this one in particular was a favorite when she sang it at the March on Washington in 1963. This song is found
in the United Methodist collection Songs of Zion with a unison melody. It should be sung in a very slow, rubato fashion, as illustrated by Mahalia Jackson in this video. You will quickly note that the melody is quite different from what is printed on the page, but it is encouraged to improvise upon the notes and rhythm of the melody. It will be up to you to decide whether this is an option for your entire congregation to sing, or more suitable as a solo in your context. Either option will work!

**Whom Shall I Fear (God of Angel Armies) [CCLI # 6440288]**

The inclusion of a song with warlike imagery might be a surprise to many, but we ask you to consider the theme of this series and the nature of power shifts when people are suddenly confronted with the nature of their addiction or weakness. Warlike imagery is problematic when sung from a place of power, but the incorporation of this imagery within a troubled place of brokenness (or a void of power) can yield a different result. This same imagery can be the words people cling to when confronting the demons that dwell within. Even though the melody seems to have been a lesser consideration than rhythm in this song, the repetition of both melody and rhythm help the congregation sing the words. The chorus might prove to be too high in your context, so the ideal key is Bb. Accompaniment can vary from a solo, pulsing piano on quarter-notes to a full band with vocal praise team.

**Lift Every Voice and Sing (UMH 519)**

No hymn tells the story of struggle as well as this classic hymn text from James Weldon Johnson. It does take a long time to sing, so be sure you have set aside plenty of time to sing it in its entirety at the close of the service. The tempo of J. Rosamond Johnson’s tune needs to be slow, with the dotted quarter = 46 or so. Accompany with organ, piano, or rhythm section, and be sure to prepare the choir in plenty of time so they can learn all the parts. Regarding breathing, the leader and choir should not breathe within the words at the end of the second, fourth, and eighth lines (“liberty,” “rolling,” and “victory is”). In its singing, also find a way to make sure the congregation knows the context of the hymn, which can be found in History of Hymns: "Lift Every Voice and Sing." Another poignant musical, theological, and poetic exploration of the hymn can be found here.

**Come, Ye Disconsolate (UMH 510)**

Singing this hymn during Communion offers an invitation to the Table for those who feel lost or broken. In the midst of this Rehab series, hearing the words “Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal [or cure]” speaks of God’s grace in the midst of the meal. Receiving the bread and cup, kneeling, and praying become a part of the healing that takes place at Christ's Table. The CONSOLATOR tune is best sung when supported by a four-part, SATB choir, particularly on the last line of the tune, where a
leap of a sixth is prominent in the first measure. If a song leader is used in your congregation, she or he should use a gentle, supportive, upward moving gesture just before that leap to embody the shape of the phrase and let the congregation know to prepare for a sudden, upward movement of the melodic line. Ideal accompaniment can vary with this hymn, and there are a number of accompaniment options ranging from a cappella choir or organ to piano or small instrumental ensemble. Keep the tempo moving at quarter note = 80-88.

Chain Breaker (CCLI# 7060031)

This modern worship song recalls some of the same sentiments from Charles Wesley’s “And Can It Be that I Should Gain” by characterizing Jesus as a liberator and one who has power over sin and death. The tune is joyful and syncopated and could best be accompanied by full band, although a solo acoustic guitar would also work well. The ideal key for congregational singing is G.

Wherever He Leads I’ll Go (CCLI# 25194)

A fine song of commitment resembling “Where He Leads Me” in the United Methodist Hymnal, the crux of the text is the commitment to follow Jesus wherever he leads. The tune is written in a familiar early twentieth-century gospel style, and the tune is very singable. The recommended tempo on CCLI of quarter note = 80 might be too slow to keep the tempo moving and support the breath of the congregation. Plus, it tends to feel that it lacks momentum at that tempo. I suggest thinking in 6/8 instead of 6/4, with the quarter note = 132. This will allow the congregation to sing and not lose support in the middle of phrases. The original key of F provides an ideal range for most singers.

Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone (UMH 424)

This text and tune combination has a very sentimental quality, which adds to the lyrical appeal of the melody. In his Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal, Carlton Young points out that the melody is almost the exact same as Thomas Dorsey’s “Precious Lord, Take My Hand,” set in a different meter. Singing this text with either tune setting would be appropriate. If using MAITLAND, however, I encourage ensuring a steady tempo of quarter note = 104-108 to support the breath of the congregation. Ideal accompaniment is organ or piano.

Another approach to this text would be incorporating Keith Hampton’s choral work, “Praise His Holy Name,” into the service. The piece features the first stanza and is a fun selection for adult and youth choirs alike. Click here for a video of this setting.
As we talked about last week, lots of times people do not go to rehab willingly. Although there are exceptions, most of the time intervention is required.

Perhaps, as in the case of my colleague, Taylor, intervention came in the form of a health crisis. Taylor had a heart attack. He was very fortunate that he sought medical attention. He was fortunate that the attack was not worse. He was fortunate that his wife knew his family history and intervened.

Intervention may come in the form of a relationship crisis or an act of tough love. A family decides they can no longer tolerate the drinking, or the gambling, or the hoarding. The person involved in the struggle is causing harm to the people he loves. Life has spun out of control so much that others are forced to confront the person about his or her problem.

Intervention may come as an unwanted surprise: your company downsizes, and you are forced to change jobs, or you become unemployed. A loved one is diagnosed with a major illness, and others have to adjust their lives in order to provide care. Retirement finally comes, but even a lifetime of working has not earned enough to provide full financial freedom. Your tour of duty comes to an end and you return home, not the same person as you were before because of what you experienced or witnessed.

In the case of the opioid crisis, part of the problem is that people don’t know what to do to intervene. Addiction to painkillers, be they prescription or street drugs, is physical. Most people struggling with this problem cannot simply choose to stop using. Stopping the drugs causes extreme physical illness. Other drugs are needed to get through the wilderness of opioid addiction. Maintenance medication may need to be part of the permanent solution. Because this particular crisis knows no social, cultural, or economic boundaries, many people who have a child or parent or grandparent who is addicted feel ashamed and isolated, and they may be reluctant to seek support from friends, neighbors, and brothers and sisters in Christ.

But then, nobody said it was going to be easy.

In this harsh exchange between Jesus and Peter, it’s almost as if Jesus is saying, “Dude, you need rehab!” This is an act of intervention, and it’s not pretty.
In the second semester of seminary, I was in a Greek exegesis class in which we translated and worked through the Gospel of Mark. One of my classmates chose to present one of his papers in the form of a rap—because it was a word study of the verb “epitimao” in Mark’s Gospel, a verb typically translated “rebuke,” but which we learned referred to a literal rap, a rabbi “rapping the knuckles” of a student who was either not paying attention or getting an answer totally wrong. “Rap, rap, rap… rap on the knuckles. Rap, rap, rap… epitimao!” My classmate got all of us rapping it with him, rapping our knuckles on our desks at each refrain.

We weren’t going to forget the meaning of that verb, any more than the disciples of a rabbi would forget the meaning-- and feeling-- of the rabbi’s rebuke.

Like a rap on the knuckles, a rebuke catches your attention. You can’t ignore it. And the pain of it tells you, immediately, that something is wrong, something needs your fullest attention. Now. Stop what you’re doing. Quit going the direction you’re going. Focus. Get realigned. Learn now what you thought you knew, but clearly didn’t. Start again.

In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus frequently rebukes demons, and occasionally rebukes some of his disciples, most notably Peter. But it’s the demons he rebukes first. And over and over again. He rebukes them and tells them to shut up. He rebukes them and casts them out. He has no patience for their completely distorted view of reality, or of him. So when Jesus turns and rebukes Peter (after Peter rebukes Jesus!), the effect within the gospel story may be startling at first. Is Peter a demon? No, but Peter’s thinking was demonic. The course he was taking opposite of the way of Jesus, whom he had just professed to be the Messiah of God. Totally wrongheaded. Rap! Rap! Rap! Stop right there. Learn this… this! Now, start again.

The Son of man must indeed suffer, be rejected, and be killed. And you, and we all, must deny ourselves, take up the crucifix (not flee it!), and follow where Jesus is leading-- straight into suffering, rejection, and execution. This is the way to life. And it is the way of life of those whom Jesus trains to be his disciples.

This may be the hardest element of Lenten rehab. Everything in us personally, much within our culture (think, white flight and suburbs!), and even some of the theology we pick up from our churches, teaches us to fulfill ourselves, stay out of harm’s way, and escape rather than walk into and among folks who are suffering. But Jesus says head straight into all of that. Because that’s where he’s going. Because that is where God’s kingdom is most manifest.

And he’s going there not to help us escape it ourselves. But rather to show us the way,
so we’ll keep going and show others the way.

“I been 'buked,” the old spiritual puts it. Yes, the world is good at “buking” those who follow the way of Jesus, or don’t fit into the way the world wants to force people to go. Expect to be “'buked” by the world.

But this Lent, and especially this week, hear Jesus ’buke you, then learn how not to be 'buked by him anymore.

End sidebar

What had Peter done that required intervention?

In the verses that immediately precede Jesus’ rebuke of him, Peter has proclaimed his belief that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the one sent from God to save God’s people. Jesus then goes on to teach his disciples, and everyone present in the crowd, what this means.

It means he will die, and then three days later, God will raise him from the dead.

In other words, Jesus teaches that not only he, but anyone who wants to follow him, must understand where the path leads. It leads to and through sacrificial living. It leads to suffering. It leads to the cross. And let us be clear that Jesus isn’t the only one who will be required to make a sacrifice. “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?” (Mark 8:35-37, NRSV).

Rehab is a journey into a very hard place. It is about taking up the cross. It is about denying yourself. It is about following a leader or a program or a Savior into the hard place of suffering, rejection, and even death. Rehab requires that we give up control for the time being and let someone else tell us what to do.

Intervention is a hard step for people to take. Jesus comes across here like a teacher humiliating a student. While Peter spoke privately to Jesus when he rebuked him, Jesus publically puts Peter behind him and speaks to the crowd, using him as his example. It’s humiliating.

Likewise, it may be publically humiliating to have to go to rehab. It may be hard to confess your sin and ask for help. It is humbling to admit that you can’t fix it on your
own, that the disease or the evil has gained control over you, and that you need intervention to get out from underneath the weight of your problem. But no matter what difficulties we face, after taking the first step—admitting we have a problem—we have to take the second step of entering into a time of pain and suffering. The only way to survive is to take a deep breath, trust in the people who love us and in the healing power of grace, and walk bravely into the depths of despair, whatever it may be.

If we try to preserve ourselves, by ignoring or denying that we have a problem, be it with our heart, or with drugs, or with alcohol, or with sex, or food, or PTSD, or whatever it is from which we need to recover, then we risk death. We risk not just physical death, but spiritual death as well.

Being a follower of Jesus means that we bravely head into the storms that life sends our way. It means we walk into the suffering that life brings, not just to us, but to others. And if we aren’t following Jesus into the path that leads to suffering, then we are heading in the wrong direction.

Because being a Christian is not a magic pill that we can take in order to avoid the suffering that is part of life. Following Jesus is very hard sometimes. We might want to respond like Peter and deny that the way of Jesus is the way of arrest, the way of suffering, the way of rejection, and the way of death. That’s the reality of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, and none of us will survive if we don’t first take on the reality that’s where we are going.

The good news is that we know when we are in Christ, pain and suffering, evil and death, no longer have dominion over us. We know that on the other side of the pain and the suffering of rehab is the promise of resurrection. Jesus promises that when we willingly give up our lives, do whatever it takes, even suffer and die, it is through this path that we will find eternal healing and life everlasting.

The good news is that no matter how difficult the journey gets, we do not walk into our suffering and our pain alone. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ goes with us. The Spirit goes with us through the hands of doctors and nurses, physical therapists, psychologists, sponsors, and family and friends. Christ goes with us. He goes ahead of us, just as he went ahead of Peter. He leads the way through the storms and through the difficult nights. He leads us like a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day. He leads us on paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. So, though we may walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we don’t have to fear evil, because God is with us. God’s rod and staff, they comfort us on the journey. Surely goodness and
mercy will follow us all the days of our lives, and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forevermore (Psalm 23, author's paraphrase).

PLANNING NOTES
LENT 2 REHAB: INTERVENTION

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
LENT 2 REHAB: INTERVENTION
The primary color for lent is purple.

February
All Month: Black History Month
February 19: Presidents Day

March
All Month: Women’s History Month
March 2: World Day of Prayer
March 11: UMCOR Sunday
March 25: Daylight Saving Time Change Song (Spring) (USA)
March 25: Passion/Palm Sunday
Holy Week Series Begins
March 29: Maundy/Holy Thursday
March 30: Good Friday
March 31: Holy Saturday (until Sundown)
Easter Eve/Easter Vigil (after Sundown)

April
April 1: Easter Day
Easter Series Begins
April 15 Native American Ministries Sunday
April 22 Festival of God’s Creation
April 25 World Malaria Day

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

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

June 17 Father’s Day (USA)
June 19 Juneteenth (USA)

July
July 4 Independence Day (USA)

August
All Month Back to School Resources

For Your Planning Team: LENT 2 REHAB: INTERVENTION

Series Outline

Week 1: February 18 Wilderness
       Mark 1:9-15

Week 2: February 25 Intervention
       Mark 8:31-38
Week 3: March 4  Program
Exodus 20:1-17

Week 4: March 11  Recovery
John 3:14-18

Week 5: March 18  Promise
Jeremiah 31:31-34

Planning for This Service
This week is about recognizing our need for intervention as we continue to prepare ourselves to live the way of Jesus.

It’s one thing to recognize you’re in the wilderness. It’s another to realize, once there, that what you think you know from your previous experience not only can’t help you now, but may actually do you or others harm.

It isn’t necessarily our fault that we’re so unaware of our unawareness. The way the brain processes how we respond to current circumstances is built on attempted pattern matching with previous circumstances and experiences. The way of Jesus, the way of God’s kingdom, is generally substantially out of sync with “things as usual.” And even in the church, a lot of us have been far more formed by “things as usual” than by the rhythms and realities of the kingdom of God. Even in the church, even among church leaders, lay and clergy alike, it’s quite common for us to bring the “things as usual” perspective to our actions and decisions, and so much so that were Jesus here to confront us with how far off we are from his ways, we’d have much the same reaction Peter did. We’d try to rebuke Jesus.

The good news is, Jesus is Lord, and he will have none of that.

He rebukes Peter, and us, right back.

The opening of worship today seeks to help dramatize not just the Scripture, but the larger situation we find ourselves in during this season of intense preparation to live the way of Jesus. We need to hear and see Jesus “up in our faces,” as it were, setting us straight on what it really takes to follow him. We need intervention if we’re going to escape the lies this culture tells and gets up in our faces about when it comes to what success looks like. Peter wasn’t wrong about what his culture and our culture has deeply taught us. But these cultures have lied and keep their lies alive and strong. Success in the way of Jesus looks like self-denial, not self-aggrandizement. It looks like walking straight into places of suffering, even when they endanger us. It is not avoiding or somehow “living above” them. And it involves actively following Jesus as we do so, not trusting in whatever we think our instincts have taught us to do, because the
instincts of many of the best of us are still terribly malformed or unformed in Jesus’ ways.

So our response to the word today, the Call to Acknowledge, as well as the Prayers of the People, the Great Thanksgiving developed for this service, and the words at the sending forth all build upon this understanding of how much we need Jesus to intervene, and toward strengthening and enacting our commitment to let him do it.

With a theme like this, it may be tempting to move into heavy-handed “holier than thou, hyper-righteousness” mode. Instead, gentleness, transparency, and humility are needed. Prepare yourselves to model these things in the ways you as worship leaders lead today. There’s no shame in admitting we need help. We do. And thanks be to God, God is ready to offer help to one and all, through prayer, through sacrament, and through our interactions with others in our daily lives.

**Additional Resources for this Service**

*2015 Planning Helps for these readings*

*Ecumenical Prayer Cycle:* (Click link to find countries for this week when they are posted)
ENTRANCE

Choir or ensemble processes in, followed by the pastor holding up the pyx of ashes used at Ash Wednesday, slowly, leading the singing:

“Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive” UMH 390, st. 1-3 or
“Perdón, Señor” TFWS 2134, st. 1-2

The pastor places the pyx on the Lord’s Table.

WORD AND RESPONSE

Responsive Reading  
Exodus 20:1-17  
(adapted from Book of Worship, abridged from The Book of Common Prayer)

Pastor or Deacon:
God spoke from the mountain and said:
"I am the Lord your God,  
who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery;  
you shall have no other gods before me."

Almighty God, write your law upon our hearts,  
and help us to keep it.

"You shall not make for yourself an idol.  
You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God.  
Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy."

Almighty God, write your law upon our hearts,  
and help us to keep it.
"You shall not make for yourself an idol.  
You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God.  
Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy."

**Almighty God, write your law upon our hearts,  
and help us to keep it.**

"Honor your father and your mother.  
You shall not murder.  
You shall not commit adultery.  
You shall not steal.  
You shall not bear false witness.  
You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor."

**Almighty God, write your law upon our hearts,  
and help us to keep it.**

_Silence_

“Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive”  
“Perdón, Señor”  
UMH 390, st. 4 or TFWS 2134, st. 3

Pastor: In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Sin no more.  
People: In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Sin no more.  
**All: Glory to God! Amen!**

Pastor: The peace of Christ rule in your hearts and reign in our midst.  
**All may exchange the peace. Music may resume.**

**Sung Prayer for Illumination**

“For Thy Word”  
“Come, Holy Ghost, Our Hearts Inspire”  
“Word of God, Speak”  
UMH 601 or UMH 603 or W&S 3184 or **CCLI# 3912788**

**Sermon**  
Program

**Call to Work the Program**

*People may be invited to write on cards at least one commandment they struggle or have struggled to keep over time, and one thing they will do start doing this week and keep doing to overcome the struggle and work this part of the program, too. Invite them to make two copies and give one copy to one other person with whom they will check in during the coming week to share how they have (or haven’t) made progress on the commandment they’re working on, and what has happened as a result. Midweek formation groups will be another opportunity to check in, pray for one another, and*
encourage one another.

Music during Call to Work the Program
“Trust and Obey”
“Trust and Obey”

UMH 467 or
CCLI# 5192764

Prayers of the People
Deacon or Lay Worship Leader
We are in the wilderness.
We have lost our way.
We need God’s intervention in our lives.
And God has shown us the way
and the program we must follow.

And so we pray:
Make us your instruments to make things right.

Because we know or know of people still kept in poverty or slavery,
some in fear from abusers, terrorists, and oppressors,
some facing addiction,
and some targeted for unjust treatment because of who they are;

Make us your instruments to make things right.

Because we need courage and integrity from leaders
in religious, political, economic, and social life;
because we love and sometimes struggle with
our families, friends, and neighbors;
and because the lives of those who sustain and protect our lives
as military, civilian workers, and first responders
are full of challenge and conflict;

Make us your instruments to make things right.

Because we know people who need your healing power,
and some who offer healing through their skill and presence;

Make us your instruments to make things right.

And because Jesus taught us to pray it, we obey and pray:

The Lord’s Prayer
THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION

Pastor:
Christ our Lord invites all who love him
(to his table/ to give freely as they have received).
Jesus says all who love him keep his commandments.
Let us offer our gifts and our lives to God.

Music during the Offering
“Love the Lord” W&S 3116 or
“O Jesus, I Have Promised” UMH 396

Act of Thanksgiving (if Communion is not celebrated)
As the offering is presented, the congregation stands and is asked to offer thanks to
God with one or both of the following:

“Now Thank We All Our God” UMH 102 or
“Thank You” CCLI# 5637487 AND/OR

The Great Thanksgiving BOW 60-61 or

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We are yours, O God.

Bless the Lord!
God’s holy name be praised!

Praised in heaven, praised in earth,
praised throughout your creation
is your name, Holy Triune God.

From generation to generation,
your people rejoice in your Name.

Your give your commandments to make us holy.
You enact and preserve your righteousness as we live them.

So with prophets, leaders, and faithful people,
we, with all creation, cry “Holy!”

Holy, Holy, Holy,
Lord God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is Christ who comes in your name!
Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed are you, Jesus Christ,
Word made flesh.
You are the fullness of the image of God,
showing what it means to fulfill God's law
through perfect love
of God and every neighbor,
especially those we refuse to treat as neighbor.

Blessed are you, Jesus Christ.

Blessed are you for coming among us
and for offering yourself to us
in this holy meal
to fill our hungry and erring souls,
and to empower us to break free from Satan's lies
and follow where you lead,
living your commands.

With your first disciples, on the night of your betrayal into death,
you took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it, saying:
Take and eat this, my body given for you.

Then you took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it, saying:
Drink this, my blood of the new covenant for you.

Even so,
here and now,
come, Holy Spirit.
Come, Holy Spirit.

Come upon these gifts
and upon us.
Make them be for us
Christ’s body and blood,
that we who receive them may be for all
the body of Christ enlivened by his blood.

Come, Holy Spirit.
Make us one.
Come, Holy Spirit.  
**Unite us with you.**

Come, Holy Spirit.  
**Revive us!**

Dwell in us and teach us to be faithful  
and to become holy,  
as we await that day  
when we shall see Christ as he is  
at the feast of new creation.

To Christ, to you, and to the All-Merciful Creator,  
One God, living and true,  
be all praise, and honor, and glory  
now and forever.  
**Amen.**

### The Breaking of the Bread and Distribution

#### Music during Communion

“What Does the Lord Require of You” TFWS 2174 or  
“Find Us Faithful” CCLI# 18259

#### Thanksgiving after Communion  
*Pastor and People:*

**Jesus, thank you!**  
You have fed us with your flesh  
that in our flesh we may perform your works,  
and even greater works than these  
to the glory of God and the honor of your name.  
By the power of the Holy Spirit,  
continue in us what has begun today  
that we may grow in faithful service and holiness  
all the days of our lives. **Amen.**

#### SENDING FORTH  
*Invite the congregation to face the back of the sanctuary, toward the exits.*

**Hymn/Song**  
“We Will Follow” (“Somlandela”) W&S 3160 and  
“Whatever You Do” W&S 3128 (in G) or  
“I Would Be True”  
https://hymnary.org/text/i_would_be_true_for_there_are_those
Deacon or Lay Leader (from the back of the worship space)

God has not only intervened to save us.
God has shown us how to take part in how God saves us.
We know the program.
We need to work it.

Jesus is in you.
The Spirit is moving among us,
and driving us out of here
to practice what God teaches,
to love God and our neighbor
by attending upon all the ordinances of God,
keeping Christ’s commands.

Pastor

Go in the peace and with renewed commitment to the ways of our Triune God.

Amen.

Postlude

Variations on Somlandela

MUSIC NOTES

Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive (UMH 390)

A few approaches of this haunting text and melody are possible, depending on which one might be most fitting for your setting. One option is to have an organ or bass-clef string instrument hold an open D/A drone while the melody is sung in unison (this can also be sung as a round, with each part beginning after two measures). Another choice would be to alter the time signature and rhythm to 3/2, but keep the melody the same (to understand the feel, make the A in the first phrase a dotted half note, and the subsequent F a quarter note in a 3/2 meter). The final option would be to simply sing it as written. The text and melody are both solid and idiomatic enough to ensure a somber and meditative atmosphere to begin worship. History of Hymns

Perdon, Señor (Forgive Us, Lord) [TFWS 2134]

A wonderfully simple accompaniment is provided in the Accompaniment Edition of The Faith We Sing for this sung intercessory prayer. If you have a choir in your church, instruct them to sing the congregational words, “Forgive us, Lord/Perdón, Señor,” in four-part harmony. It is possible to allow the congregational parts to serve as
a cyclic song that would easily turn into a short statement akin to a breath prayer. A song leader or soloist should sing the intercessions. Treat this song as a true intercessory prayer, and create intercessions that are poignant to your church and community. Accompany with guitar, organ, or piano.

**Thy Word Is a Lamp (UMH 601)**

Many people in both modern and traditional worship circles know the names Amy Grant and Michael W. Smith. This classic song of theirs appears in *The United Methodist Hymnal* within the section, “The Book of the Church: Holy Scripture.” The song can serve the church well as a prayer of illumination, as it is in this service today. It is tempting to play the notes as written in the hymnal, but if an alternate accompaniment is a possibility, pursue it by having a strummed guitar and/or piano, but without the melody. The voice is always the best way to lead, and a simple, pulsing accompaniment from a keyboard will help support the congregation. Also add light percussion if available. [History of Hymns](#)

**Come, Holy Ghost, Our Hearts Inspire (UMH 603)**

This sung prayer of illumination by Charles Wesley is a request for the Holy Ghost to come and be present in the reading of Scripture, its understanding, and the living of its eternal truths. If you have a choir who is interested in *a cappella* singing, this tune is a great place to start. It is a simple chorale, but the bass part can be tricky without a strong bass section. Accompaniment on organ or piano is also recommended, and a flute would also be a great addition on the melody, or an improvised line based upon the melody.

**Word of God, Speak (W&S 3184 or CCLI# 3912788)**

This modern prayer of illumination can be found on the CCLI website and in *Worship & Song*. The song itself is a request and a question that simply asks for God to be present through the reading and hearing of Scripture. Appropriate for both worship and private devotion, this song allows space for prayer. The ideal key for most worship settings is printed in *Worship & Song*—the key of A—but Bb would also work well.

**Trust and Obey (UMH 467)**

What does it mean “to be happy in Jesus?” This would be an interesting question to ask the congregation before singing this hymn. Regarding the Rehab theme of this Lenten worship series, many people struggling in the midst of brokenness seek to be “happy,” but being “happy in Jesus” might allude to a deeper, abiding sense of joy that is not a superficial feeling. Trusting and obeying Jesus is a lifelong endeavor of discipleship based upon a relationship and discipline of following. As explained here, singing this hymn might take a little explanation and discernment before singing it to
avoid a numbness of familiarity that focuses more on being happy than trusting and obeying. Accompaniment can vary from organ to piano or guitar. History of Hymns

Trust and Obey (CCLI# 5192764)
This song from Hillsong Music Publishing presents a statement that is different from the previous “Trust and Obey,” but it still includes the commitment to follow Jesus. The rhythm and melody combination in the verses is a bit tricky, but the chorus and bridge are easily singable in an appropriate range. The original key of G is too high, so lowering to the key of D will both assist the vocal range and still offer a great key accessible to most bands. Accompaniment can be full band to solo piano or guitar, but percussion would also be an excellent addition.

Love the Lord (W&S 3116)
Lincoln Brewster has created what has proven to be one of the best songs to teach Scripture to a congregation from young to old. The rhythm is difficult when played by instruments, but the voice smooths this out and makes it easier to sing when not doubled by a piano. In a typical vacation Bible school style, I usually add hand motions to “heart,” “soul,” “mind,” and “strength” to assist the learning and interaction while singing. I have often truncated the bridge by cutting the rhythms in half (This begins with the words, “I will love you”). Sing two measures and invite the congregation to echo each phrase. Accompaniment can vary from solo guitar or piano to full band.

O Jesus, I Have Promised (UMH 396)
What better way to commit to “a program” than by making a pledge or a promise. Serving Jesus is the basis for this commitment. As it is hopefully becoming evident in this worship series, rehabilitation takes an investment from us as God has also invested in us. Songs of commitment play an important role in this series as a part of this rehabilitation and transformation. The score in The United Methodist Hymnal is a very traditional setting, so explore how you might make it creative! It is such a personal text that it might be effective to print out the text on a bookmark or other keepsake to give to the congregation as they depart as a call to remember their commitment. History of Hymns

Now Thank We All Our God (UMH 102)
If this chorale is chosen as an act of thanksgiving following Communion, I recommend singing only stanza 3 as a way to transition into Communion. This particular stanza is a doxological expression of thankfulness. Recommended accompaniment would be organ or piano, although a unison melody with a band and fewer, less frequent chord changes is also possible. History of Hymns
Thank You (CCLI# 5637487)

This fairly simple modern worship song offers thanks for the works of God and is relatively easy to sing. The only hiccup is that the phrases in the verses are separated by complete measures of rest. Without confident and clear leadership, this can make musical entrances shaky and uneasy, which can easily thwart congregational singing (not many in your congregation want to sing a solo because of a rest). The original key of C works well with congregational singing, but the instruments need to crescendo into the chorus to help support singing in a higher range. Accompaniment can range from piano or solo guitar to full band.

What Does the Lord Require of You (TFWS 2174)

Singing this song during Communion helps embody the incarnational spirit of the ritual, with the body of Christ gathering to dine in the presence of the Holy Spirit. There are requirements when we come to the Table and follow Christ, but they are requirements that are not restrictive. They give life, and give it abundantly: “What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (NRSV). Doing these things creates space at Christ’s Table, so this song becomes quite poignant within this rite. Jim Strathdee has written the song to be a round (like “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”), and The Faith We Sing gives instructions with which choral parts to enter and in what order. If you do not have a choir, but you have three leaders who are confident, it is also possible to teach this to a congregation and sing completely through in canon (as you might in “Dona Nobis Pacem,” UMH 376), although it might also take a few weeks of learning to become comfortable with it. A simple accompaniment is provided in the Accompaniment Edition of The Faith We Sing.

If you are interested in a different choral setting of this text for your choir, be sure to consider this new composition from Tom Council.

Find Us Faithful (CCLI# 18259)

One of the most important means of support in the process of rehabilitation is encouragement from friends and family. In this song, we find this to be most true of the kinship we share within the family of God. Keep the accompaniment simple, but move toward a musical climax at the key change. The original keys of D and E are recommended for congregational singing. A piano, guitar, band, or small ensemble are all possibilities for accompaniment.

We Will Follow (Somlandela) [W&S 3160]
This short, cyclic song in the Zulu language has an almost marching quality that serves as the perfect setting as a sending forth in this service. This is among the easier of some songs from other cultures to teach to your congregation if you should choose to sing the Zulu text. Pronunciation is as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Sohm-lahn-deh-la} & \quad \text{Sohm-lahn-dehl} \quad \text{oo-Jeh-soo} \\
\text{Sohm-lahn-deh-la} & \quad \text{Yahn-keh} \quad \text{een-dah-woh} \\
\text{Sohm-lahn-deh-la} & \quad \text{Sohn-lahn-dehl} \quad \text{oo-Jeh-soo} \\
\text{Lah-poh} & \quad \text{eh-yah-koh-nah} \quad \text{sohm-lahn-deh-la}
\end{align*}
\]

If your choir is interested in singing songs that help work their way into singing more selections a cappella, this is a wonderful option to use. The parts are easy, accessible, and repetitive. Another way to sing this would be for the choir to sing the Zulu text, and then have the congregation sing in English when they are invited to sing. The preferred performance practice for this hymn would be to sing it a cappella, along with a variety of drums and percussion for rhythmic vitality and intensity. However, if that is not an option, it can also be accompanied by organ or piano. Encourage clapping on all beats, and have the song leader sing the cantor part at the end of each stanza to signal a repeat.

**Whatever You Do (W&S 3128)**

Singing this hymn by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette calls the congregation to care for those in their midst who are poor, hungry, thirsty, in prison, or struggling in other ways. For in serving them, we are serving Christ. Even if this text is unfamiliar to your congregation, the tune might not be. Many people know CRADLE SONG as the “alternate” tune to “Away in a Manger.” It might be especially powerful if taught and led by children. They may be more familiar with this tune than the adults! Accompany with organ, piano, or arpeggiated guitar. Use of a lyrical treble instrument (flute/violin/oboe), along with a sonorous bass clef instrument (cello) will also add to the sensitivity of the tune.

**I Would Be True**

Another hymn of commitment, this title is not found in United Methodist collections, but it is in the public domain, and you may find it at hymnary.org. Sing this hymn as an option similar to “Whatever You Do.” It gives the congregation the option to accept the task of serving others as they move from worship in the church into the world. Ideal accompaniment would be an organ or a piano.
PREACHING NOTES

In recovery support groups, the phrase “working the steps” or “working the program” is used to describe how a participant goes through the process under the direct supervision of a sponsor. Likewise, in cardiac or other physical rehabilitation programs, there is a prescribed set of exercises and activities that the person goes through, a program the individual “works,” also under the supervision of a trained specialist. So a fundamental component of rehab is that you need a program. A second critical component is you need others to support and encourage you as you work through it.

We want to suggest that the Ten Commandments is our ten-step program as followers of Jesus Christ. As such, we not only need to learn the steps, but we need to work them under the guidance and support of others. We work the steps of our program in the community of faith.

What is our program? Jesus summarizes the whole of it in two sentences: “One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, ‘Which commandment is the first of all?’ Jesus answered, ‘The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these’ (Mark 12:28-31, NRSV). But here in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, we get the full program:

1. Worship only the Lord God.
2. Don’t worship idols.
3. Don’t take the Lord’s name in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.
5. Honor your parents.
6. Do not commit murder.
7. Do not commit adultery.
8. Do not steal.
9. Do not lie.
10. Do not covet what other people have.

This is our ten-step program as followers of Jesus Christ. And even though Jesus provides a convenient, two-sentence summary, it is important for us to work the program throughout our lives. This is why our Ten Commandments are one of the first things we teach to our children. Following these commandments is about character.
They are about what we stand for as people of God and as community members. These are foundational principles for living in community with one another.

Can we do this? What gets in our way?

Lately, there has been a lot of talk about gun control. In the United States, we have watched so many mass shootings, two of them in Christian churches, and others in public spaces, non-Christian religious gatherings, and schools. Immediately following the mass shooting in Sutherland Springs, Texas, there were calls for church leaders and pastors to consider adopting security measures to ensure the safety of their church members. Some have even suggested training an armed security team, or that pastors arm themselves.

This is a difficult issue, and one in which people tend to be polarized in their viewpoints. But as we face these difficult questions as congregational leaders, it might behoove us to remember our ten-step program. Can we keep the Sabbath holy if we are carrying loaded firearms in worship? Are we willing to take a life in order to save the lives of others? How can we work our ten-step program together as a community of faith on this matter? And how can our ten-step program help us to make decisions about other important, and often polarizing, matters that we face, as individuals and as congregations? How can our denomination’s resources help us as we make decisions about security? As part of your discussion, consider this document from United Methodist Insurance: [http://www.uminsure.org/whentheunthinkablehappens](http://www.uminsure.org/whentheunthinkablehappens).

Likewise, the recent outcry by many women, some through the #MeToo movement, would suggest that we need to work the steps and have some serious conversation as members of Christian community around what it means to commit adultery, or lie, or covet. How can our ten-step program help us to be accountable to one another and to honor one another as men and women?

Most people who begin a program face times when it isn’t easy to keep going. They make mistakes. They want to quit. They break the rules.

God is surely aware that as followers of Jesus Christ, we too will face times when it isn’t easy to follow the program. We make mistakes. We break the rules. There are times when we want to give up altogether.

God surely knew these rules will be broken. But maybe following the commandments isn’t about never breaking them. Maybe it is more about how we will stick to this relationship model with God and with one another.
Taylor said when he was starting cardiac rehab that he didn’t believe he could do it. It felt impossible. He thought it might kill him. But at some point, he turned the corner and started believing he was going to live and that he could do it.

What makes people shift to starting to believe they can? Maybe it isn’t about believing. Maybe it is about simply making a decision. Making a commitment to follow the regimen and deciding to trust in someone else, and follow the goals set by someone else for our benefit.

At some point, we have to take that step of faith and just do it, whether we think we can or not, whether we are afraid or not, whether we think it might kill us or not.

The good news is that we don’t have to be perfect, and we don’t have to work the program alone. God promises to be with us in our journey. John Wesley asked his newly ordained ministers, “Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?” The answer the ministers were expected to give was a resounding “yes!”

Responding with a “yes” isn’t about our ability. It is about what God is able to do with us, and in us, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Yes! We do have faith in Christ. Yes! We are going on to perfection. Yes! We do expect to be made perfect in love in this life!

But we don’t do it alone. God perfects us in love as we live out our baptismal covenant and work the program together, enlivened and empowered by the Holy Spirit to do what we cannot do on our own.

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**PLANNING NOTES**

**LENT 3 REHAB: PROGRAM**

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

Leccionario en Español, *[Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes]*.
Calendar Notes

LENT 3 REHAB: PROGRAM
The primary color for Lent is purple.

All Month  Black History Month
February 19  Presidents Day

March
All Month:  Women’s History Month
March 2  World Day of Prayer
March 11  UMCOR Sunday
March 11  Daylight Saving Time Change Song (Spring) (USA)
March 25  Passion/Palm Sunday
March 25  Holy Week Series Begins
March 29  Maundy/Holy Thursday
March 30  Good Friday
March 31  Holy Saturday (until Sundown)
March 31  Easter Eve/Easter Vigil (after Sundown)

April
April 1  Easter Day
April 1  Easter Series Begins
April 15  Native American Ministries Sunday
April 22  Festival of God’s Creation
April 25  World Malaria Day

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

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

June 17  Father’s Day (USA)
June 19  Juneteenth (USA)

July 4  Independence Day (USA)

August  All Month  Back to School Resources

For Your Planning Team: LENT 3  REHAB: PROGRAM
Series Outline

Week 1: February 18  Wilderness
Mark 1:9-15

Week 2: February 25  Intervention
Mark 8:31-38

Week 3: March 4  Program
Exodus 20:1-17

Week 4: March 11  Recovery
John 3:14-18

Week 5: March 18  Promise
Jeremiah 31:31-34

Planning for This Service
We are now mid-series in a five-week series. This is where the energy for the series as a whole can most easily flag, and where every effort needs to be made to make sure that doesn’t happen.

One of the ways we propose to help that not happen is by taking our “usual” worship order and mixing it up a little bit today-- while in point of larger historical practice, actually following a Lenten practice with long historical precedent. We’ve begun the service with a recitation of the Ten Commandments in the form of a penitential order. This was standard practice in the Western Church and in the Church of England for centuries, and it was carried over by John Wesley into the Sunday Service he gave Methodists in America. The 1784 Christmas Conference adopted it as the founding ritual of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The language is modernized. The practice has much older roots.
What is different is the penitential order was normally a preface to the rest of worship. Today, it doubles as the reading of the Scripture for the day. So the song of illumination (we chose a song here rather than a prayer to help “re-sync” the congregation after the more chaotic exchange of peace) also has a slightly different role than usual. Normally, a song or prayer of illumination prepares us to hear the Scriptures read. Today, it functions more as a reflection on the Scripture, pardon, and peace already experienced, and a preparation to hear the Scripture applied in the sermon that immediately follows. This, too, has some precedent in other Methodist practice, that of our black churches in the U.S., where there is often a song or prayer not only before the Scripture, but also immediately before the sermon.

Today’s service within this series, perhaps more than the others in the series so far, depends a lot on the sermon. The idea that the Ten Commandments form the basis of our program of Christian living is not new in Christianity or in Methodism or Methodist ritual. Indeed, it’s bedrock. Methodists are different from some other Protestants in that we are not, as John Wesley often used the term, “antinomian” (against the idea that the law matters for Christian life). We affirm God gave the law for all who will be in covenant with God to fulfill. And we live within the mainstream of the Catholic and Anglican tradition of “making use of all the means of grace.” This Methodist distinctive has often gotten us accused by other Protestants of promoting “works righteousness.” The accusations then and now are false. What we promote is what Jesus himself taught, that those who love him keep his commandments, and he did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it and make it possible for us to do the same, being made perfect in love. We study Scripture and pray and attend upon the other ordinances of God, not as ends in themselves-- indeed, to do that would be to commit works righteousness-- but as means of grace, means God has offered to teach us, form us, and transform us, not simply as we study them and commune with God, but as we put what we learn in such study and communion into practice. As I put it in French in teaching this to our leaders in Kinshasa, Congo, “Les œuvres nous ouvrent.” The works open us to the living experience of divine grace.

The rest of the service proceeds as the pattern of the services we have laid out so far this season-- a call for response, prayers of the people framed by the theme of the day, and Communion or an alternative act of thanksgiving, followed by the sending forth. So the flow of the service overall moves from what may be for some the somewhat unfamiliar to what will have become, through the series, the more familiar, maintaining the coherence of the series as a whole.

**Additional Resources for this Service**
*
*2015 Planning Helps for these readings
*Ecumenical Prayer Cycle: (Click link to find countries for this week when they are posted)
LENT 4
REHAB: RECOVERY
MARCH 11, 2018
FULL SERVICE ORDER

Abbreviations
CCLI= Christian Copyright Licensing International SongSelect
W&S= Worship & Song
TFWS= The Faith We Sing
UMH= United Methodist Hymnal
SOZ= Songs of Zion

ENTRANCE
If you have a choir and are singing these hymns, the choir processes to surround the congregation while singing:
“All People That on Earth Do Dwell” UMH 75
“Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” UMH 89, st. 1-3
Choir processes to the choir loft/area during a musical interlude after st. 3, modulating one half step up. Then all sing:
“Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee,” st 4 UMH 89 or
“Come, Now Is the Time to Worship” W&S 3176
“Here I Am to Worship” W&S 3177

Prayer for Illumination
After “Joyful, Joyful”
Mighty is our chorus,
mightier still your love reigning over us.
May the words we now receive from the Scriptures extend your reign in our lives,
moving us with all creation to the fullness of the salvation you have for us now and in the age to come. Amen.

After “Here I Am to Worship”
Worship leader:
O God, we are here to worship,
here to declare the beauty and love we have seen and known in Jesus.
We stand in awe before your throne,
and wait with joy for you to speak to us today.
So speak, Lord.
Your servants are listening. Amen.

WORD AND RESPONSE
Narrator:
[Jesus said to Nicodemus…]

Jesus:
Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in wilderness, so also must the Son of Humankind be lifted up, so that everyone putting their trust in him would have eternal life."

Narrator:
For God so loved the world that God gave the only-begotten son, so that everyone putting their trust in him would not be destroyed, but have eternal life. For God did not send the son into the world to put the world on trial, but so the world would be saved through him. Whoever puts their trust in him is not judged. But whoever isn’t placing their trust [in him] has been put on trial already because they have not put their trust in the name of the only-begotten son of God.

Sermon

Call to Repent and Continue in Recovery
People may be invited to gaze at a depiction of Christ on the cross, whether on a scree, or printed in the bulletin. As they gaze, ask them to become aware of at least one habitual practice in their lives that puts Jesus there and at least one way they see God already at work in their lives to free them from the sway of the habitual practice. Invite them to make two copies and give one copy to one other person with whom they will check in during the coming week to share how they have (or haven’t) seen God freeing them, and what has happened as a result. Midweek formation groups will be another opportunity to check in, pray for one another, and encourage one another.

Music during Call to Repent and Continue in Recovery
“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” UMH 298 or 299 or “The Wonderful Cross” CCLI# 3148435

Prayers of the People

We are still in the wilderness.
We are learning the way,
and getting better at following.
So now we’re even more aware
of how much more we have to learn,
and how much farther we have to travel
to keep up, and keep keeping up,
with where Jesus leads.

And so we pray:
Forgive us where we go astray,
and keep us on the path of life.

Because we know or know of people still kept in poverty or slavery,
some in fear from abusers, terrorists, and oppressors,
some facing addiction,
and some targeted for unjust treatment because of who they are;
and we now see how our own actions or inaction
leave things as they are, or make them worse;

Forgive us where we go astray,
and keep us on the path of life.

With those among us and those around us who are leaders
in religious, political, economic, and social life;
with our families, friends, and neighbors;
and with all who sustain and protect our lives
as military, civilian workers, and first responders;

Forgive us where we go astray,
and keep us on the path of life.

With all who need your healing power,
and all who offer healing through their skill and presence;

Forgive us where we go astray,
and keep us on the path of life.

With all creatures with whom we share this planet,
those who sustain our lives, and those who threaten us,
those whose lives we sustain, and those whose lives we threaten;

Forgive us where we go astray,
and keep us on the path of life.

With Jesus and all of his disciples
from generation to generation:

The Lord’s Prayer

Pastor:
Receive the prayers of your people, most merciful God.
In your compassion, forgive our sins,
encourage us in the work you are already doing to free us,
and keep us faithful to our journey’s end;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Silence

Pastor:
In the name of Jesus, you are forgiven.

People:
In the name of Jesus, you are forgiven.
All: Glory to God! Amen!

THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION

Pastor:
Forgiven, yet aware of how far we all still need to grow, let us offer the peace of Christ to one another and our gifts to God.

The people exchange the peace of Christ as the offering is collected and presented if Communion is celebrated. If Communion is not celebrated, the presentation of the collected gifts is part of the Act of Thanksgiving, below.

Music during the Offering and Peace
“We Are Climbing Jacob’s Ladder” UMH 418 or
“Jesus, Thine All-Victorious Love” UMH 422

Act of Thanksgiving (if Communion is not celebrated)
As the offering is presented, the congregation stands and is asked to offer thanks to God with one or both of the following:

“O God, Our Help in Ages Past” UMH 117
“Restless” CCLI# 5762008 AND/OR

The Great Thanksgiving BOW 60-61 or

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We are yours, O God.

Bless the Lord!
God’s holy name be praised!

Praised in heaven, praised in earth, praised throughout your creation is your name, Holy Triune God.

From generation to generation, your healing love is known among all peoples.

You do not come to put us on trial,
but that the whole world may be saved.

So with prophets, leaders, and faithful people,
we, with all creation, cry “Holy!”

Holy, Holy, Holy,
Lord God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is Christ who comes in your name!
Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed are you, Jesus Christ,
Word made flesh.
Son of humankind, lifted on the cross,
in your wounds, we see our wounding,
In your cries, we hear our curses.
And in your torn flesh, we feel
the lashes we inflict on others,
and on you.

Have mercy on us, and heal us, Jesus Christ.

Merciful are you for coming among us
and for offering yourself to us
in this holy meal
to fill our hungry and erring souls,
and to empower us to break free from Satan’s lies
and follow where you lead,
loving God and neighbor
fully as ourselves.

With your first disciples, on the night of your betrayal into death,
you took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it, saying:
Take and eat this, my body given for you.

Then you took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it, saying:
Drink this, my blood of the new covenant for you.

Even so,
here and now,

Come, Holy Spirit.

Come upon these gifts
and upon us.
Make them be for us
Christ’s body and blood,
that we who receive them may be for all
the body of Christ enlivened by his blood.

Come, Holy Spirit.
Make us one.

Come, Holy Spirit.
Unite us with you.

Come, Holy Spirit.
Revive us!

Dwell in us, O Christ,
strengthen us in your ways
and continue to drive us to your cross
where we behold you
and see ourselves for what we are:
Sinners, loved and being saved by you
now and until that day
when we shall feast with you in new creation.

To you, All-Merciful Creator,
through Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit
we raise our cry of thanks:
All praise, and honor, and glory are yours,
blessed Triune God,
now and forever.
Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread and Distribution

Music during Communion

“Love Lifted Me”
“Son Was Lifted Up”

Thanksgiving after Communion
Pastor and People:

Jesus, thank you!
You have offered us yourself.
In bread we have broken
and wine we have poured
we see how we continue to break
and wound your world.
In receiving it as your body and blood
we are restored and strengthened
to be agents of hope and healing.
By the power of the Holy Spirit,
continue your work of recovery in and through us,
that in and through us all may see you
and live. Amen.

SENDING FORTH
Invite the congregation to face the back of the sanctuary, toward the exits.

Hymn/Song
“My Life Flows On”

Deacon or Lay Leader (from the back of the worship space)

We're still in the wilderness.
But we're in recovery.
We know we're still broken,
but we also know we’re getting better,
more loving, more just,
more like Jesus.

Jesus is in us.
The Spirit is moving among us
and driving us out of here
to keep living in the recovery
God is working among us.

Pastor
Go in the peace and restoring power of our Triune God.
Amen.

Postlude
Variations on “My Life Flows On”
All People That on Earth Do Dwell (UMH 75)
Widely known in many churches as “the doxology,” the OLD 100TH tune was originally written, arranged, or adapted by Louis Bourgeois to be paired with a setting of Psalm 134. Here we find it set to William Kethe’s 1561 setting of Psalm 100. Sing this hymn boldly, and do not allow the tune to drag, lest the tune lose its cheerfulness. Embody the joy of the hymn text, and instruct your choir to do the same! If you do not have a supportive choir, the congregation in many settings will be able to sing this tune confidently because of its wide liturgical use. Sing a cappella, or accompany with organ, piano, and/or brass. History of Hymns

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee (UMH 89)
Not all major classical works become hymn tunes, although many do! We have excerpts from Bach, Brahms, Haydn, Holst, and Sibelius (among others) in our United Methodist collections, and this favorite from Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 is one of the most prominent. Henry Van Dyke’s text is a celebratory offering for congregations as they offer praise to God. Accompany with organ or piano, or even with a string quartet or quintet to create an orchestral atmosphere reminiscent of Beethoven’s masterwork. History of Hymns

Come, Now Is the Time to Worship (W&S 3176)
Many songs from the 1990s are beginning to feel like standards in the modern worship repertoire, and this Vineyard song is a great representation of that era. Though the address shifts in the song (it begins about the congregation and changes to God), it is clear that takes place at the hinge point of the verse and chorus. Sing as a worship opener accompanied by band, solo guitar, or piano. As always, try to not play the melody with the piano. Instead, improvise a simple accompaniment based upon an easily repetitive pattern.

Here I Am to Worship (W&S 3177)
Set in the same key as “Come, Now Is the Time to Worship” and immediately adjacent to the same title in Worship & Song, this song is the perfect transition in an opening worship set. This well-known work from Tim Hughes focuses upon the worshiper and assuming a position of humility in worship. Continue the accompaniment in the set with the same instrumentation as the previous title: band, solo guitar, or piano.

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross (UMH 298 or 299)
Found at both 298 and 299 in The United Methodist Hymnal, you will have the choice of two tunes to use in worship. I would wager to say that HAMBURG (298) is the
more frequently used tune, but ROCKINGHAM (299) is a better setting for the text itself. HAMBURG, by Lowell Mason, is simple and both easily recognizable and singable. I do not discourage its use, but I also recommend the other tune as an option that lifts up Isaac Watts’ text in ways Mason’s tune does not. For instance, the opening phrase is pitched so that the leap to “the wondrous cross” almost directs our attention upward, to gaze upon Christ on the cross. Also, the triple meter places the opening syllabic emphasis in a better place. To better understand this comment, say the word “Forbid,” and then sing the word in the HAMBURG setting. You will find the rhythmic emphasis is on the wrong syllable! Accompany either setting with an organ or piano. One benefit of the HAMBURG setting is its ease in singing a cappella by many choirs.

History of Hymns

The Wonderful Cross (CCLI# 3148435)

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

We Are Climbing Jacob’s Ladder (UMH 418)

Like many spirituals, there is a wide variety of performance practice with this hymn. William Farley Smith has set it in 2/2 meter, but it is also possible to adjust it to fit into a 3/4 or 3/2 meter. If accompanying with piano or organ in 2/2, you are encouraged to improvise and even swing the rhythm a bit. If playing in Db (five flats) is not in the ability of your keyboardist, it is also possible to play as-is in the key of D, with the natural signs played as sharps, and the flats played as naturals. Songs with such rich and vivid imagery as this one also make great settings for church dance ministries to offer movement that lifts up the text.

Jesus, Thine All-Victorious Love (UMH 422)

Charles Wesley has skillfully encapsulated the nature of grace in this hymn as it explores the beginnings of faith and the ever-continuing work of sanctification. Paired with AZMON, it becomes a vibrant proclamation of our faith in God and the work God has done through Christ. Like many of Wesley’s hymns, the meter doesn’t always make
it easy to keep the syllabic emphasis consistent across the stanzas (notice “Jesus” is musically emphasized on the second syllable instead of the first, but “refining” works perfectly). However, do not rule out this hymn because of that tiny issue! Sing this with your congregation, and they will simultaneously sing a public witness of praise to God and build a deeper theological vocabulary. Accompany with organ or piano, or create an arrangement of AZMON for your band. G is the ideal key. History of Hymns

O God, Our Help in Ages Past (UMH 117)
Regardless of the style of your worship, many people may be familiar with this standard Isaac Watts hymn, which is found in an endless number of hymnals. The setting of the common-metered hymn provides enough brevity to sing all six stanzas in most contexts, along with some creativity in assigning stanzas to different groups, and even multiple modulations. A plethora of musical settings for various ensembles exist for this tune. Here is a recent setting for handbell ensembles. Lastly, this hymn is so beloved that even two History of Hymns articles were written to explore this hymn more deeply. You can find them here and here.

Restless (CCLI# 5762008)
Abiding in the love of God is a difficult discipline, and it takes time, space, and vulnerability. Audrey Assad and Matt Maher grasp this in this very intimate song, which deals with the restlessness we experience when we feel somehow disconnected from God’s love. We know that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, but that doesn’t mean we don’t feel differently. Maintaining spiritual disciplines, however, and “attending to the ordinances of God” can help us feel as connected to God as we already are. Even though a full band can sing this song, I suggest an intimate singing with solo guitar, and maybe even a low string instrument for contrast. The original key of B is a great option, although less experienced guitarists might need to utilize a capo when playing in this key.

Love Lifted Me (W&S 3101)
Two stanzas of this hymn have been included in Worship & Song, and the text draws the singer into the saving power of Jesus' love through the narratives of Jesus calming the storm and inviting Peter to walk upon the water. The tune embodies the triumph of Jesus as he harnessed the power of creation, so sing boldly and defiantly! The hymn in this format is best accompanied by piano because of the percussive nature of the instrument. Organ is also possible, but it might require a bit more work to maintain an upbeat tempo.
Son Was Lifted Up (CCLI# 7066055)
This modern worship song embodies the same source of strength from Jesus’
love as “Love Lifted Me,” but in a more contemporary context. The melody and rhythm
is simple and repetitive, but the range of the original key is too high for most
congregations. A or Bb would be recommended, along with the continued singing of the
verses in the lower octave. We also recommend not singing the second chorus because
of this song’s use in the liturgy as part of the Lenten season. Accompaniment can range
from piano to guitar and/or band.

My Life Flows On (TFWS 2212)
Also entitled, “How Can I Keep from Singing,” this classic Robert Lowry hymn
shows somewhat of a staunch defiance in the midst of tribulation. The tune and text are
often sung now by children’s and mixed SATB choirs as a brilliant example of an
idiomatic early American work. In The Faith We Sing, the meter changes frequently, but
in order to stabilize the pulse and make it more predictable for congregational singing, it
is also possible to keep the 3/2 meter throughout and simply elongate notes (usually the
third note of each phrase) to keep the triple meter. However, it is also possible to sing
as written, but the congregation will need access to the printed score in addition to the
words. Either sing a cappella or with organ or piano accompaniment. If you have access
to strings, a quartet would also play this beautifully and add a rich dimension to the
singing. History of Hymns

PREACHING NOTES
A homiletics professor I know teaches that when it comes to preaching, the place to
begin is always with the context. Context is a lot of things. Context includes the
community in which the preaching occurs. Context involves location and language and
style. It involves negotiation between preacher and congregation, preacher and
community, congregation and community. But context also refers to the text itself: To
whom was the story originally told? To what circumstances does the story refer? Who is
speaking? What is the setting?

Context is critical to all biblical interpretation, but it seems especially important in the
case of Scriptures that are often proclaimed or prayed primarily outside of their original
context.

Most Christians know by heart John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his
only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal
life." But many followers of Jesus might not know the context in which these beautiful words were spoken.

The assigned lectionary reading for today starts at verse fourteen, where Jesus makes reference to an incident from the Old Testament, involving Moses lifting up a "serpent in the wilderness." This leaves us to wonder what on earth does a snake have to do with God’s love for the world and God’s sending his son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life?

Perhaps some might think initially that this wilderness serpent is another appearance of the snake who tempted Adam and Eve, and draw the conclusion that this passage has something to do with temptation and original sin. But the serpent in this story is not a tempter. This snake is a savior.

Because the story of the snake that Moses lifted up in the wilderness is not in Genesis. Rather, it is found in the twenty-first chapter of Numbers, which tells of the people of Israel journeying for forty years in the wilderness between Egypt and Canaan after the exodus. In the context of our series, we might say that the Israelites were experiencing forty years of rehab.

The book of Numbers is a story of lost faith. After leaving Egypt, the Israelites got held up making their way to the promised land when they were forced to detour in the land of Edom. The delay meant forty years of misery and suffering in the desert. It had gone on so long that not only were they losing faith in their leader Moses, but they were losing faith in the Lord God. They began complaining loudly about the conditions of their wilderness experience:

“We were better off in Egypt. Why did you bring us out here into the wilderness to die? We've got no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food!”

But then, if we are really getting into context, I might suggest we back up even a little bit further into Numbers, where we would quickly discover that this was, in fact, not their first occasion for whining and complaining. It’s not their second or even their third.

It is at least the fourth occasion, and in each preceding time, God addressed their complaints in some way. But here they are at it again. And at this point, according to the Numbers 21 account, God is tiring of their complaints, because the book of Numbers reports that after this last incident God sent poisonous serpents among the people who were grousing. The snakes bit them, and many of the people died.
So the ones who didn’t die apparently went running back to Moses. They quickly confessed that they had sinned against him and against God. They threw themselves on the mercy of Moses and begged him to intervene with God on their behalf. So Moses went to God, and God told him to fashion a serpent out of bronze and place it on a pole. God told Moses that anyone who was bitten by a live serpent should look at the bronze serpent on the pole. And when the bitten person looked at the bronze serpent, he or she would recover and live.

Statistics suggest that most people who enter rehab don’t recover after the first trip. It usually takes multiple attempts, and multiple failures, before a person is able to leave behind the old way of life and fully embrace what it means to be in recovery. The word “recovery is revealing in itself. It suggests that healing from something difficult or traumatic is an ongoing process that requires maintenance, perhaps for the rest of one’s life. We are going on to perfection, to use Wesley’s terminology that we talked about last week. Recovery takes vigilance.

SIDEBAR: Flunking Rehab
by Taylor Burton-Edwards

I mentioned in an earlier sidebar that my real rehab experience was “take two.”

That’s because the first time I tried it, I failed. Dramatically.

To be sure, I was apprehensive about the whole project to begin with. I was more scared of rehab than I was of the heart attack and first cardiac catheterization and stent installation I went through, and far more scared of it than the second procedure I was to go through a few weeks later. I’d generally had an adverse response to hard exercise. Usually it was upper respiratory. In eighth grade, after running a mile as required for gym class, I was down for two weeks with upper respiratory distress, an ear infection, and vertigo that didn’t seem to want to quit. And I had a great uncle who died during cardiac rehab. Between my own body’s reaction and this family history (lots of heart disease and no male on my father’s father’s side living past fifty-eight in three generations; I was fifty-two), I wasn’t looking forward to starting—much less enduring—cardiac rehab.

But the staff of the rehab center were also the staff of the cardiac unit where I had received excellent care. I already knew and had come to trust them. So despite apprehensions, my actual attitude coming into it was more like “I may not like this, but I can trust them to get me through this.”
That trust was put to the test on the first day of rehab. I was feeling a little bit of chest pain, but was trying to ignore that and press through. But they didn't like what they saw on their monitors about what was happening with my heart rate under fairly minimal exertion, beginner level stuff for their workout machines. It was spiking too high. And it wasn't coming down. They stopped me. They called the cardiologist. He ordered bed rest until after the second stent would be installed. I had, in effect, flunked cardiac rehab, Day 1.

What I learned was I really could trust them, even though I didn't trust my body or my reading of my body’s attempts to signal me to slow down. I could trust them. They could get me to a program that would work for me in time. And they could and would prevent me from causing myself harm along the way. They proved that that day.

And they continued to prove it throughout the thirty-six sessions over the five months that followed. As time went on, I could begin to see real, measurable improvements not just in the stats (heart rate, blood pressure, and my improved ability to hit higher specific goals for each device), but also in some less measurable things, like flexibility and endurance. And these have been lasting after the thirty-six weeks ended a few months ago.

Flunking cardiac rehab the first time turned out to be an encouragement. Perhaps it might have read for me as condemnation— not even good enough to get through day 1. But the effect was quite the opposite. It may have been one of the most important steps toward being able to do it starting with Take Two, after the second stent.

And as I’ve noted, Take Two did take.

END SIDEBAR

So as we backed up in Numbers, I want to suggest that now, as we return to John’s Gospel, that we back up to the first verse of chapter three. If we look at the larger context there, we can see that Jesus’ mention of the serpent in the wilderness was part of a conversation with a Pharisee named Nicodemus. Nicodemus had come to Jesus seeking to understand his message and mission. Jesus would have known that as a Pharisee, Nicodemus would know well the reference to the story from Numbers and be able to understand it as a comparison to Jesus’ mission.

Thus, when Jesus says to Nicodemus, “And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have
eternal life,” Nicodemus would have understood very clearly that Jesus was saying he was to be a healer to the Jewish people in some way.

Nicodemus would not yet have known Jesus would be hung on a cross to die. He would not have been able to vision being “lifted up” in the way that you and I can. But he understood Jesus’ meaning: Just as looking at the bronze serpent on a pole enabled the ancient Israelites who were dying because of their sin to recover, so would looking at Jesus lifted up on the cross bring a hope for recovery to those who are dying in sin today.

So now we come to the final context that must be considered, and that’s your work to do. What is the particular context to which this good news is being proclaimed? Who is sitting there in your chairs or pews? What are their sins? What are they ashamed of? What are they hiding from the people in their lives? What do they wish they could change about themselves? From what do they need to recover? Are their sins making them sick? Are they causing them to not be able to live fully, or love fully, or be God’s witnesses on this earth?

The original sin of Adam and Eve was to desire to have the knowledge of good and evil for themselves, apart from God. They imagined they could do it on their own. They imagined they really didn’t need God to show them the way to the truth.

It is this original sin, of thinking that we can do everything without God, that leads to all the rest of our sins. So the first thing we need to do to begin to get out of the vicious cycle of our sinful behaviors is to admit that we can’t do it alone and to ask God and others to help us. And God has already provided the path to recovery!

Because just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved us that he gave his only son, so that when we believe in him, we will not perish, but will have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn us, but in order that we might be saved through him.

The good news is all we need to do is look to the cross. All we need to do to receive God’s healing grace is lift our eyes and gaze into the face of our Lord Jesus Christ. All we need to do is trust that he is the one who can transform us, change us, restore us, heal us, save us. And then let him keep doing it.
Call the people to repent! Invite them to go to the Lord in prayer and confess their sins. Tell them to ask the Lord to help turn away from their sins so that they too may have life. Life eternal.

**PLANNING NOTES**

**LENT 4  REHAB: RECOVERY**

**Reading Notes**

**Calendar Notes**

**LENT 4  REHAB: RECOVERY**

Color is purple.

**March**

*All Month:* Women's History Month  
March 2 World Day of Prayer  
March 11 UM COR Sunday  
March 11 Daylight Saving Time Change Song (Spring) (USA)  
March 25 Passion/Palm Sunday  
March 25 Holy Week Series Begins  
March 29 Maundy/Holy Thursday  
March 30 Good Friday  
March 31 Holy Saturday (until Sundown)  
March 31 Easter Eve/Easter Vigil (after Sundown)

**April**

April 1 Easter Day  
April 1 Easter Series Begins  
April 15 Native American Ministries Sunday  
April 22 Festival of God's Creation  
April 25 World Malaria Day

**May**

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

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

June 17
Father’s Day (USA)
June 19
Juneteenth (USA)

July
July 4
Independence Day (USA)

August
All Month
Back to School Resources

For Your Planning Team: LENT 4
REHAB: RECOVERY
Series Outline

Week 1: February 18
Wilderness
Mark 1:9-15

Week 2: February 25
Intervention
Mark 8:31-38

Week 3: March 4
Program
Exodus 20:1-17

Week 4: March 11
Recovery
John 3:14-18

Week 5: March 18
Promise
Jeremiah 31:31-34

Planning for This Service
We’re now “over the hump” and heading into the final stretch of this five-part series.
Holy Week begins in two weeks. Series wrap is next week.

We’re also at a time in Lent, the fourth Sunday, known as “Laetare Sunday.” This is a
day where, in the Western tradition, there has been a bit less of an emphasis on the
penitence and more on the joy that comes from the growing spiritual strength many may
have at this point because of the focus on a more disciplined form of life during these
weeks. In some Christian traditions, the paraments change from purple to rose (or pink) on this Sunday as a sign of this more joyful, less solemn emphasis.

The theme of today's service fits with the Laetare emphasis. Today we celebrate what it means to continue into the stage of Rehab where we start to see some real recovery taking place. We're not all the way there, any more than we're at Easter in just the fourth Sunday in Lent. And indeed, the degree to which we may start to experience recovery during rehab is often mirrored by a nearly equal sense of how far we still have to go, what is still not working as it really should, or, in this case, how we are still living out sinful, destructive patterns of behavior that still need to be addressed.

But we still have some reason to rejoice.

That's why the opening songs and the choice of prayers for illumination that follow (whether traditional or contemporary) may seem perhaps uncharacteristically upbeat for this Lenten Sunday. It's also why the response to the word today calls for both repentance and a bit of thanksgiving. And it's a balance we've sought to continue through the Great Thanksgiving, the prayer after Communion, and the sending forth. There is joy. We're making progress. AND there's still work to be done. All of it is true at once at this stage and on this Sunday in the Lenten journey.

Additional Resources for this Service
2015 Planning Helps for these readings
Ecumenical Prayer Cycle: (Click link to find countries for this week when they are posted).
Abbreviations
CCLI = Christian Copyright Licensing International  
SongSelect
W&S = Worship & Song
TFWS = The Faith We Sing
UMH = United Methodist Hymnal
SOZ = Songs of Zion

ENTRANCE
“Lord of All Hopefulness”  
“Hope of the World”  
“Lord of All Hopefulness”  
“Song of Hope” (“Heaven Come Down”)  
(alt words for bridge: Sing hosanna, sing, sing; O God save us, sing, sing)
“The Hope of All Hearts”

Prayer for Illumination
Hope of the world,
Hope of all hearts,
our hope remains in you
especially when hope seems hard.
Speak to us through your word.
Come to us at your table.
And sustain us in the hope of the covenant
you have written on our hearts. Amen.

WORD AND RESPONSE

Scripture  
Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NRSV, alt).

Unseen Reader:
The days are surely coming,
People: The days are surely coming.

Unseen Reader:
The days are surely coming,
People: The days are surely coming.

Unseen Reader:
When I will make a new covenant
with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.
People: A new covenant.

Unseen Reader:
The days are surely coming.
People: The days are surely coming.

Unseen Reader:
It will not be like the covenant that I made with your ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt--a covenant you broke, though I was your husband.
People: A new covenant.
Unseen Reader: A new covenant.
People: Not like the covenant we broke.

Unseen Reader:
Not like the covenant you broke.
But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days:
I will put my law within you...
People: Your law will be within us.
Unseen Reader:
I will write it on your hearts;
I will be your God.
People: You will be our God.
Unseen Reader:
You will be my people.
People: We will be your people.
Unseen Reader:
No longer will you teach one another, or say to each other,
   "Know the LORD,"
for you will all know me,
People: We will all know you.
Reader: You will all know me
   from the least among you to the greatest;
for I will forgive their iniquity,
   and remember their sin no more.
People: You will continually forgive us.
These days are surely coming?
Unseen Reader:
These days are surely coming.
People: These days are surely coming.

Sermon
Promise
Call to Hope for Transformation

People may be invited to become aware of their hope for a new heart, the degree to which they already sense that newness at work, and what leads them to feel a lack of hope for transformation in this life. Invite them to write these down, make two copies, and give one copy to one other person with whom they will check in during the coming week to share how they may have become more (or less!) hopeful, and why. Midweek formation groups will be another opportunity to check in, pray for one another, and encourage one another.

Music during Call to Hope for Transformation

“When Our Confidence Is Shaken”  
UMH 505  
“My Hope Is You”  
CCLI# 2373672

Prayers of the People

We are still in the wilderness.  
We are learning the way,  
and getting better at following.  
Yet this is still the wilderness.  
We are not yet fully renewed.

And so we pray:  
Joy of every longing heart,  
make our hearts beat with yours.

With people still kept in poverty or slavery,  
some in fear from abusers, terrorists, and oppressors,  
some facing addiction,  
and some targeted for unjust treatment because of who they are;  
and we now see how our own actions or inaction  
leave things as they are, or make them worse.

Joy of every longing heart,  
make our hearts beat with yours.

With those among us and those around us who are leaders  
in religious, political, economic, and social life;  
with our families, friends, and neighbors;  
and with all who sustain and protect our lives  
as military, civilian workers, and first responders;

Joy of every longing heart,  
make our hearts beat with yours.
With all who need your healing power,
and all who offer healing through their skill and presence;

Joy of every longing heart,
make our hearts beat with yours.

With all creatures with whom we share this planet,
those who sustain our lives, and those who threaten us,
those whose lives we sustain, and those whose lives we threaten:

Joy of every longing heart,
make our hearts beat with yours.

With Jesus and all of his disciples
from generation to generation:

The Lord’s Prayer

**Pastor:**
Receive the prayers of your people, most merciful God.
In your compassion, forgive our sins,
stir up our hope in your redemption,
and make our hearts beat more and more with yours;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Silence**

**Pastor:**
In the name of Jesus, you are forgiven.

**People:**
In the name of Jesus, you are forgiven.
**All:** Glory to God! Amen!

**THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION**

**Pastor:**
Forgiven and sustained in the hope of God’s salvation,
let us offer the peace of Christ to one another and our gifts to God.

*The people exchange the peace of Christ as the offering is collected and presented if Communion is celebrated. If Communion is not celebrated, the presentation of the collected gifts is part of the Act of Thanksgiving, below.*
Music during the Offering and Peace

“Through It All” UMH 507
“Be Thou My Vision” UMH 451 or
“Mighty to Save” W&S 3038

Act of Thanksgiving (if Communion is not celebrated)

As the offering is presented, the congregation stands::

“All things come from you, O God…” BOW 552 or
“All Things Come of Thee, O God” UMH 588

The Great Thanksgiving BOW 60-61 or

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Lift up your hearts.
We are yours, O God.

Bless the Lord!
God’s holy name be praised!
Praised in heaven, praised in earth,
praised throughout your creation
is your name, Holy Triune God.

From generation to generation,
you have been true to your promises.

You transform us from the inside out,
and claim us as your people.

So with prophets, leaders, and faithful people,
we, with all creation, cry “Holy!”

Holy, Holy, Holy,
Lord God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is Christ who comes in your name!
Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed are you, Jesus Christ,
Word made flesh.
You are the new covenant,
God with us,
and within us you are making
all things new.

**Blessed are you, Jesus Christ.**

Merciful are you for coming among us
and for offering yourself to us
in this holy meal
to fill our hungry and erring souls,
and to empower us to break free from Satan's lies
and follow where you lead,
loving God and neighbor
fully as ourselves.

With your first disciples, on the night of your betrayal into death,
you took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it, saying:
**Take and eat this, my body given for you.**

Then you took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it, saying:
**Drink this, my blood of the new covenant for you.**

Even so,
here and now,
come, Holy Spirit.
**Come, Holy Spirit.**

Come upon these gifts
and upon us.
Make them be for us
Christ's body and blood,
that we who receive them may be for all
the body of Christ enlivened by his blood.

**Come, Holy Spirit.**
**Make us one.**

**Come, Holy Spirit.**
**Unite us with you.**

**Come, Holy Spirit.**
**Revive us!**

Dwell in our hearts, O Christ,
and make us fully your people,
this day and every day
until that day
when we shall feast with you in new creation.

To you, All-Merciful Creator,
through Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit
we raise our cry of thanks:
**All praise, and honor, and glory are yours,**
blessed Triune God,
now and forever.
Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread and Distribution

**Music during Communion**

- “When God Restored Our Common Life” TFWS 2182 or
- “Listen to Our Hearts” CCLI# 903151

**Thanksgiving after Communion**

*Pastor and People:*

**Jesus, thank you!**
You have offered us yourself
in these gifts of bread and wine.
By the power of the Holy Spirit,
continue to write your ways into our hearts,
that we may know you as you are. Amen.

**SENDING FORTH**

*Invite the congregation to face the back of the sanctuary, toward the exits.*

**Hymn/Song**

“Come Out the Wilderness” UMH 416

*Deacon or Lay Leader (from the back of the worship space)*

We’re coming out of the wilderness.
We know God’s promise.
God will surely keep it.

Jesus is in us.
The Spirit is moving among us
and driving us out of here
to keep living in the hope
of full salvation,
all things new.
Pastor
Go in hope and the peace of our Triune God.
Amen.

Postlude

MUSIC NOTES

Lord of All Hopefulness (TFWS 2197)
If you have never prayed the daily office, singing this hymn at varying points during the day is a good start. Each stanza relates to a different time of day: waking, labors, homing, and sleeping. Singing the stanza that relates to your work at a particular time can help center your prayer on the activity of the moment. Within this service, allow each stanza to be a prayer for those encountering times of parting and possible division. Singing of bliss, strength, love, and peace can help us focus on the things we and others need as we encounter difficult times. If someone in your congregation plays a tin whistle, this is an opportunity to allow that person to add to the Irish character of the tune SLANE (which is commonly sung with “Be Thou My Vision”). Accompany the whistle with a guitar, piano, or organ. The printed key is Eb, but you might need to lower to D, depending on the key of the tin whistle. An alternate organ or piano harmonization can also be found here and an organ/piano duet can be found here. For a seamless transition to and from “Hope of the World,” consider singing this in 4/4 by changing the first two notes of each measure to dotted quarter notes. History of Hymns

Hope of the World (UMH 178)
A prominent figure in the history of American Methodism, Georgia Harkness helped create paths in the church for which we benefit today, including the paths toward the ordination of women. Harkness was also a gifted hymn writer, as we see with “Hope of the World.” Christ is described in this hymn as having “great compassion”—willing to walk along the road of loneliness and temptation while also being a victor over death. Every phrase in this hymn except the first enters after a rest on the primary beat, and this allows the first phrase to stand alone as the congregation boldly sings and proclaims Christ as the “Hope of the world.” Accompany with organ or piano, and make sure to maintain a tempo around quarter note = 104 to prevent dragging. Also, for song leaders, support the half notes at the end of each phrase through to the downbeat to prevent the congregation from cutting the note off too soon and entering on the rest that begins each next phrase. History of Hymns

History of Hymns
Song of Hope (Heaven Come Down) [CCLI# 5111477]

This song possesses a great deal of energy in its rhythm and melody, which adds to the excitement of its singing as we issue the imperative for God and heaven to “come down.” This is quite remarkable, because a new heaven and a new earth are not usually the subject of many modern worship songs. It could be argued that the heaven mentioned here is actually the reign of God (kingdom of God), but the melding of heaven and earth is a great image to put before the people in song. The original key is far too high for congregations to sing, so the key of G is recommended. Accompany with a full band, acoustic guitar, or even rhythm section.

The Hope of All Hearts (CCLI# 5604829)

The theme of this song is that God’s love never fails. In this recognition, there is hope and promise for all people. This song has a few challenges, and how you sort them out will depend on your context and the singing ability of your congregation. First of all, the key will need to be lowered to A or Bb. Even with this shift, the tessitura (average range) of the pre-chorus and chorus are in the higher part of the range, which can be taxing upon the voice without contour to bring the melody back into a lower range. This might make this song a good candidate for a band-led or solo piece when liturgically appropriate. Also, I would advocate for omitting the bridge, which just adds to the complication and is a little bit theologically incoherent. The verses and chorus are solid, however, and it would be a great choice to lift up the hope found in God.

When Our Confidence Is Shaken (UMH 505)

This hymn from Fred Pratt Green intends to offer comfort and strength to those who find themselves doubting their faith when faced with realities that challenge long-held beliefs. If the tune GRAFTON is unknown in your congregation, other recommended tunes are PICARDY or CWM RHONDDA. Be sure to consider the dynamic of worship at this point in the liturgy before selecting a tune because it can have a bearing on the worshiping atmosphere. Accompany with piano or organ. History of Hymns

My Hope Is You (CCLI# 2373672)

This upbeat song of hope was made known by the band Third Day in the 1990s. The song is simple and easily singable in the appropriate range for congregational singing. The key of A is recommended. Set in a simple AB form (verse/chorus), it would be possible to reprise the chorus after the prayer of confession (just before the Communion rite) in this week’s order of worship. Accompany with guitar or full band.

Through It All (UMH 507)
This short chorus from Andraé Crouch is the beginning of a set in which the songs can flow easily one from another. It is recommended to sing this chorus only once as listed in this set before transitioning to the next song. Keep it simple and accompany with a variety of instruments. Piano and organ work, but it might be possible to think outside the box on this one because all of these three songs represent quite a contrast of styles.

**Be Thou My Vision (UMH 451)**

This song has had increasing notoriety in churches and concert halls as more interest as spiked in Irish music in past decades. The text at the end of the previous song, “I've learned to depend upon God's word,” moves forward into this prayer for God to be present as the living Word. Accompany this hymn with organ, piano, light string ensemble, and even a tin whistle or flute if available. History of Hymns

**Mighty to Save (W&S 3038)**

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

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

**All Things Come of Thee (UMH 588)**

This brief, chant-like hymn and tune recognizes the fact that God is the source of creation, and therefore, all things belong to God. We offer back to God the good gifts that have been provided for us in an act of thanksgiving. When leading this chant, either an organist or song leader must be able to play and cue in a way that helps the congregation know when to change notes. However, don’t let the cues be rigid! They need to be inviting. Also, the tune must move forward enough to support the breath for only two phrases. Do not linger on long notes, but instead allow the leader or choir to move the text forward.
When God Restored Our Common Life (TFWS 2182)
Ruth Duck has created a paraphrase of Psalm 126 in the first two stanzas of this powerful hymn. Stanza three represents our prayer for the oppressed and those suffering from injustice. The RESIGNATION tune is a perfect pairing for the text because it contains echoes of both despair and joy. The words themselves are liberating, particularly the last phrase. Since the tune is rather slow and drawn out, it is recommended to sing at a tempo around quarter note = 96. If sung slower, the congregation will have a hard time properly maintaining the breath for the long phrases.

Listen to Our Hearts (CCLI# 903151)
Stephen Curtis Chapman made this song known among contemporary worship circles in the early 1990s, and the words are poignant as a statement of thanksgiving to God. The haunting melody and choice of minor harmonies prevalent throughout the song present the feeling that this offering of thanks has come at a price, or possibly at the end of a long, arduous journey. This makes it very fitting as a closing piece for the Rehab theme of this Lenten season. If choosing to sing this during Communion, it is recommended to consider using a lighter ensemble to accompany, even a solo guitar or piano. The original key of E found on the CCLI site would be appropriate for congregational singing.

Come Out the Wilderness (UMH 416)
You will quickly notice when singing this spiritual that the wilderness is a sought-after place of refining and connection with the living God. All the questions in this song relate to the effect of being in the wilderness (“How did you feel,” “Did you love everybody,” “Did your soul feel happy”), and we can assume that being in the wilderness is an intimate experience with God that causes us to be more loving. A number of approaches are possible, from a choral singing straight from the hymnal to a more bluesy, band-driven approach echoing a performance practice like this. A song leader is vital to singing this work, however, to move the congregation into the responses. If someone in your community is able to freely improvise in a call-and-response manner, make sure to use his/her gifts by leading this song. It is also possible to maintain a stark contrast between the refrain and stanzas, and I would encourage the refrain to be quieter and gentler. However, a more wailing quality can also be appropriate. History of Hymns

PREACHING NOTES
The prophet Jeremiah lived and preached in some very dark days for the Jewish people—around the years 627–587 B.C. That means Jeremiah lived and prophesied about 600 years before Jesus Christ walked this earth.

Jeremiah’s prophetic activity extended from the years immediately before Israel and Judah were conquered by their foes from the north, the Babylonians, and into the period of their exile and captivity. Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem in 597, and completed the conquest of Judah (the southern kingdom) over the next ten years, then took many of the conquered peoples into exile in Babylon. Jeremiah continued to prophesy through the period of the fall and into the time of exile.

Jeremiah didn’t really want to be the one picked to be a spokesperson for the Lord God. When God called him, he pleaded with God not to make him a prophet, saying that he was too young and too inexperienced. He begged God to choose someone else to deliver God’s message. But God picked Jeremiah anyway. (See Jeremiah 1.) I guess when God picks you to be a prophet, you kind of have to do it.

So Jeremiah’s first job as a prophet of God was to deliver a message to God’s chosen people that they’d better shape up their act and start living the way God had instructed them or they were going to be destroyed by a foe from the north.

Nobody wanted to hear this from Jeremiah. He was quickly branded as an outcast, an irritant to the people and especially to the king of Judah, because he kept advising the king to surrender to Babylon rather than be destroyed. He said the impending destruction was God’s judgment on the king and his people for their unfaithfulness.

Even in the midst of having to be the constant bearer of bad news, Jeremiah still had a heart of compassion for the people and a trust that God had plans for them beyond the dark days of destruction, capture, and exile. He believed God’s promise that there would eventually come a day of restoration, when their suffering would come to an end, and God would prosper them and give them a future with hope (see Jeremiah 29:11).

Jeremiah had so much confidence in God’s plans for a future with hope that even as Judah was falling to the armies of Nebuchadnezzar, he purchased a plot of land in Anathoth as a sign of his trust that one day the land would be restored to the chosen people and he would be able to return home.

For much of his book, Jeremiah’s prophecies that “the days are surely coming” referred to the imminent fall of Judah to Babylon. But by the time we get to this week’s reading in
the story, that fall has already occurred. So the words, “The days are surely coming,” take on a new meaning in this context. They have turned from threat to promise.

The chosen people have been conquered. They have been taken captive by their enemies and hauled off to live in a foreign land for seventy years. Through a letter from Jeremiah to the people in captivity, the Lord God has instructed the Israelites to build houses and live in them in this land of exile. He tells them to plant gardens and eat, marry and have children, and seek the welfare of their captors with whom they are now being forced to live. And the children of Israel are trying their best to do just what God has asked of them. But it is hard.

Rehab is hard. It is hard to live through a time of loss and grief. It is hard to prosper when your life has fallen completely apart. Sometimes it feels as if we are just going through the motions. It takes all our energy just to get through one day at a time, and sometimes even one hour at a time.

I imagine that the words of the Lord God to the chosen people during this period must have “gone in one ear and out the other.” That is, maybe they heard the words that Jeremiah spoke, but they did not find much comfort in them.

It makes me think about all the times in my ministry when I’ve tried to speak words of condolence to people who have suffered a terrible tragedy. Someone has died, and I say, “I’m so sorry for your loss.” I tell them I will pray for them. I visit and I try to listen. Maybe a few months later, I will offer up some word of hope by saying, “It will get better one day. Time heals all wounds.” But to someone who is in shock, or someone who is hurting deeply, or someone who is facing the end of his or her life, mere words just don’t help.

Every Sunday in the worship service I attend, our pastor shares the prayer concerns of the community. As I sit and listen to the problems people are facing, I know that what is being shared aloud in the Sunday morning worship service is only the tip of the iceberg. Our pastor even acknowledges this truth sometimes. He says that there is so much more that he is not saying, and he knows there are things that people are not sharing with him. He tells us he knows some of us are struggling in silence, and he reminds us that we are not alone in our struggle.

Does it help? Maybe a little. It helps to know that others care and are praying for us. It helps to know that people want to share in our burdens. But it doesn’t usually make the burdens go away.
I know how many times I’ve sat in some church somewhere in my own life where I could hardly hold back the tears. It is painful to be in the hard times, the periods when we are walking through the valley of the shadow of death, as the Psalmist puts it. The dark nights of the soul that come upon all of us at one time or another.

And of course it isn’t just our personal troubles. There are terrible things going on in the world around us beyond the immediate needs of the people in our congregations. So much pain. So much violence. So much anger. So much brokenness. Where do we find strength for today? Where do we find bright hope for tomorrow? This week, we find it in this promise from the Lord God sent through the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah some 2,600 years ago. And the amazing thing about this Scripture lesson is that the power of Jeremiah’s words speak to us just as clearly and profoundly today as they did to the children of Israel held in captivity in Babylon all those generations ago.

The Lord is saying to them, and to us, “No matter what you are going through, no matter how much it hurts or how difficult it is to imagine a future with hope, I promise you, it will get better one day. And you are not alone. I am with you to the end of the age.”

- One day, the Lord says, the house of Israel and the house of Judah will be restored.
- One day, you will be able to return to the land that the Lord gave to you.
- One day, your homes and businesses will be rebuilt.
- One day, you will have work again.
- One day, your divorce will be a thing of the past.
- One day, shame will no longer control your life.
- One day, your grief will become manageable, and you will smile and laugh again.
- One day, you will no longer be a slave to your addiction.
- One day, there will be a new covenant.
- One day, the sins of the past will all be forgotten and you will be given a fresh start. The slate will be wiped completely clean.
- One day, Christ will come in final victory and we will feast at his heavenly banquet.

One day. Some day. The days are surely coming, the Lord promises.

Do you think the people being held captive in Babylon found comfort in Jeremiah’s words? Probably not at that point. Sometimes we just aren’t in a place where we can hear any word of hope, not even from a prophet sent by the Lord God. But perhaps the one thing that we can do is put our faith in this new covenant, this promise of...
forgiveness, reconciliation, peace and even prosperity that is, because of Christ, offered
to all of us.

This covenant will not be made with words. It will be inscribed on our very hearts. It will
come as an assurance in which we know, we know for certain, that God is with us and
that God loves us whether we can feel it right now or not.

This is what we United Methodists call grace, and grace bypasses our heads, our
intellects, the limitations of communication through our words. The grace of God shown
in Jesus Christ speaks straight to our hearts.

If only during those times when we as pastors find ourselves searching for something to
say, something to do, something that will bring a momentary comfort to someone who is
in pain, we could find a way to communicate God’s amazing grace straight to
someone’s heart. If only we were able to bypass the limitations of human methods of
communication—our mouths, ears, and minds—and find a way touch the place that
most needs touching in a moment such as that.

We can’t do that, but through the Holy Spirit, God can. God can touch people
with grace inscribed straight on their hearts. Just as God touched the people of Israel
and Judah straight to the heart just when they needed it the most, so God can touch us
just when we need it most.

And that’s why this message from God is so powerful for us today. As we come to the
end of our Lenten journey through rehab, I hope you can help your people hear God’s
promise for themselves: for their struggles, personally. I hope we will remember it when
we find ourselves in despair.

For the days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new
covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the
covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring
them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their
husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house
of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will
write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No
longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for
they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for
I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more (Jeremiah 31:31-34,
NRSV).
When I turned twenty-five, I left a years-long romantic relationship that bordered on emotionally abusive. I quit my temp job, packed my belongings in my car, left our apartment and the state, and moved back in with my parents to heal. Looking back now, this process had some of the hallmarks of rehab and recovery: I had to admit that this relationship was a problem that I could not fix. I had to leave the entire situation behind and cut all ties with that relationship. I had to admit that it had caused me to lose friendships along the way. I had to repair my relationship with my parents. This person had shaped the first half of my twenties. I had to relearn who I was and how to be in a relationship in a healthy way. I spent the next year in what I considered to be “dating rehab.” I practiced clarity in speaking up for myself. I practiced compassion when I wanted to revert to passive-aggression. I learned that not all men were going to get angry at the drop of a hat. I learned to expect kindness. I went to church and prayed and reordered my priorities, putting my faith first and foremost. This process was not entirely emotional and relational work. At the same time, I paid off financial debt and found a rewarding job.

I guided myself through this recovery process. (Although I wish someone had gently directed me to a therapist’s office; it would have been immensely helpful.) All this recovery work, my “dating rehab,” was toward what I felt was God’s promise for me: a healthy relationship that would lead to marriage. Relationships take many forms, but marriage is what my heart longed for. I knew coming off my bad relationship that I was not the partner that I wanted to be in a marriage, and so I asked God to change my heart and life in preparation.

Almost exactly a year after I moved home, I attended a church fellowship dinner for young adults and met a man from North Carolina named Brian. I didn’t know it that night, but he had walked through the fire of divorce and experienced his own relational rehab and recovery. This was God’s promise that we had known in our hearts. Fifteen months later, we were married in that church. Our marriage, like any marriage, is not perfect, but it continues to reflect God’s love for us and promise to be with us always. Love radiates on the faces of our two precious kids. As my colleague says, God’s covenant will be inscribed on our very hearts. In our case, Brian and I feel it inscribed on our hearts and our marriage.
NRSV texts, artwork and *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers* for this service are available at the [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](https://www.divinity.vanderbilt.edu).  


### Calendar Notes

#### LENT 5 REHAB: PROMISE

The color today is purple.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>March</th>
<th>All Month</th>
<th>Women’s History Month</th>
<th>World Day of Prayer</th>
<th>UMCOR Sunday</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 2</td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>World Day of Prayer</td>
<td>World Day of Prayer</td>
<td>UMCOR Sunday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 11</td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>Daylight Saving Time Change Song (Spring) (USA)</td>
<td>Daylight Saving Time Change Song (Spring) (USA)</td>
<td>Daylight Saving Time Change Song (Spring) (USA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 25</td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>Passion/Palm Sunday</td>
<td>Passion/Palm Sunday</td>
<td>Passion/Palm Sunday</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 29</td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>Holy Week Series Begins</td>
<td>Holy Week Series Begins</td>
<td>Holy Week Series Begins</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 30</td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>Maundy/Holy Thursday</td>
<td>Maundy/Holy Thursday</td>
<td>Maundy/Holy Thursday</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 31</td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>Good Friday</td>
<td>Good Friday</td>
<td>Good Friday</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>Easter Eve/Easter Vigil (until Sundown)</td>
<td>Easter Eve/Easter Vigil (after Sundown)</td>
<td>Easter Eve/Easter Vigil (after Sundown)</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>April</th>
<th>All Month</th>
<th>Easter Day</th>
<th>Easter Day</th>
<th>Easter Day</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 1</td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>Easter Day</td>
<td>Easter Day</td>
<td>Easter Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 15</td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>Native American Ministries Sunday</td>
<td>Native American Ministries Sunday</td>
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<td>April 22</td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>Festival of God’s Creation</td>
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<td>Festival of God’s Creation</td>
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<td>April 25</td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>World Malaria Day</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 3</td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>Asian Pacific American Heritage Month</td>
<td>Asian Pacific American Heritage Month</td>
<td>Asian Pacific American Heritage Month</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 4</td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>National Day of Prayer</td>
<td>National Day of Prayer</td>
<td>National Day of Prayer</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 7-13</td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>May Friendship Day (UMW/CWU)</td>
<td>May Friendship Day (UMW/CWU)</td>
<td>May Friendship Day (UMW/CWU)</td>
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<td>May 10</td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>Ascension Day</td>
<td>Ascension Day</td>
<td>Ascension Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 13</td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>Ascension Sunday</td>
<td>Ascension Sunday</td>
<td>Ascension Sunday</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 19-20</td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>Change the World Weekend</td>
<td>Change the World Weekend</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 20</td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>Day of Pentecost</td>
<td>Day of Pentecost</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 24</td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>Heritage Sunday (forthcoming)</td>
<td>Heritage Sunday (forthcoming)</td>
<td>Heritage Sunday (forthcoming)</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 27</td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>Aldersgate Day</td>
<td>Aldersgate Day</td>
<td>Aldersgate Day</td>
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<td>May 28</td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>Trinity Sunday</td>
<td>Trinity Sunday</td>
<td>Trinity Sunday</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>Peace with Justice Sunday</td>
<td>Peace with Justice Sunday</td>
<td>Peace with Justice Sunday</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Month</td>
<td>Memorial Day (USA)</td>
<td>Memorial Day (USA)</td>
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June
Pray for annual conferences convening throughout the month, for all receiving new appointments or assignments, for those leaving existing appointments or assignments, and for congregations and other ministries receiving new leadership.

June 17  Father's Day (USA)
June 19  Juneteenth (USA)

July
July 4  Independence Day (USA)

August
All Month  Back to School Resources

For Your Planning Team: LENT 5  REHAB: PROMISE
Series Outline

Week 1: February 18  Wilderness
Mark 1:9-15

Week 2: February 25  Intervention
Mark 8:31-38

Week 3: March 4  Program
Exodus 20:1-17

Week 4: March 11  Recovery
John 3:14-18

Week 5: March 18  Promise
Jeremiah 31:31-34

Planning for This Service
Today is the conclusion of our Lenten series, a season focused on formation and transformation to help people become ready for baptism or renewed commitment to the way of Christ with the church.

Our “rehab classes” end this week. Starting next Sunday and throughout the ensuing Holy Week, we encounter through intense ritual something of what our rehab work has prepared us to face: the rejection, suffering, execution, death, and burial of Jesus.

As you plan for the conclusion of these weeks, as with every series, it will be good in some way to review where you’ve been on the journey and how you’ve gotten to where you are now-- hopefully a place of renewal already, with noticeable improvement in your capacity to pray and live as disciples of Jesus, and living hope for more. This review may be something as simple as listing the titles of each of the preceding weeks with a
brief description of how you’ve dealt with them (brief as in one or two lines, max) in a bulletin or as slides in your announcement loop (if you use screens). Singing “Come Out the Wilderness” as the song of sending may also help make it clear that while we’re not where we’re called to be ultimately, we’re no longer where we were.

Above all, this season is intended to move us from uncertainty and a confused way of living toward a living hope that orders our steps in Christ’s ways. The hope in us has become real, palpable, and we confess that today. And we do so precisely in the face of the circumstances in which we find ourselves that may cause us to lose hope.

That is the core dynamic of today’s service: Hope that can move us through and beyond despair. This is what we cling to in the final stages of rehab, where we think we can see the finish line, but we know there’s still more to go. And what seems left to go seems hard to get through. Rehab doesn’t usually get easier. Neither does Lent.

That’s why the songs we recommend, the prayers we pray, the response to the Word, the framing of the prayers of the people, and the language of the Great Thanksgiving are as they are this week. They’re all getting at that dynamic of hope in God’s continuing transformation of our lives in the face of serious challenges as we complete our process of rehab.

And we do complete that this week.

But we don’t get a certificate of completion.

Instead, we emerge from the wilderness we’ve been through.

We come out of the wilderness this week, renewed, leaning on the Lord, to head into the Holy City with Jesus next week. Here our hope and everything we think we know about hope will be tested and refined. Here we will stare injustice, oppression, manipulation, and cruelty in the face. Here we will spend two full days with death.

And only then, on the third day, will our cruelty-and-death-refined hope spring into life.

**Additional Resources for this Service**

2015 Planning Helps for these readings

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