

Planning for Rites and Rituals

A Resource for Episcopal Worship, Year C, 2018–2019



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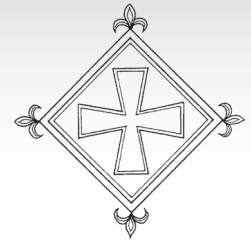
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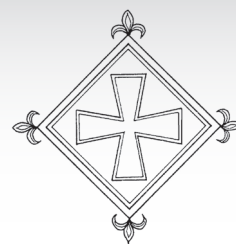
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WELCOME



Welcome to Year C, 2018-2019 of *Planning for Rites and Rituals*. All of us at Church Publishing are pleased to bring you this resource for liturgical planning. The editorial team (Milton Brasher-Cunningham, Sharon Ely Pearson, and Nancy Bryan) tasked with creating this volume worked with some amazing folks to bring you a wide range of thought-provoking, creative options for Sundays and holy days throughout the liturgical year. Looking for ways to engage a range of ages? It's here. Looking for help "seeing" the images in each week's scripture? We've got that. Want hymns keyed to the lectionary or brief introductions to the scriptures? It's all here, in a single resource.

You will find this resource offers planning suggestions grouped by liturgical season and date. Each section of the book opens with an overview of the liturgical calendar, as well as *Seasonal Rites*, which offers a number of expansive ideas for worship in and outside the primary Sunday service. Specific suggestions for every Sunday and holy day follow, offering a variety of material for the liturgy as well as ideas for formation and community engagement within and beyond your church doors.

Dozens of individuals were part of the creation of this all-in-one volume. Priests, educators, musicians, members of Altar Guilds, and many others are featured within these pages. Our intention is to provide a similar mix of established writers and new voices—those working in small parishes and those in larger ones, those in rural locales and those in cities, clergy and lay—in each successive volume of this resource over the years to come.

Here is a description of the areas to deepen themes of each Sunday and holy day, along with those who have contributed their creative ideas this year:

- ♦ *The Gospel of Luke in Year C* was written by **Kimberly S. Jackson**, a priest and activist in the Diocese of Atlanta. The *Preparing for....* seasonal overviews were written by **James Farwell**, professor of theology and liturgy at Virginia

Theological Seminary. Last year's overviews were the result of the wisdom of liturgical scholar **Laura Elizabeth Moore**, whose name was inadvertently left out of that list of credits. We list her here with gratitude and apology.

- ♦ *Engaging All Ages* offers ideas for enriching all ages in their engagement with worship (children, youth, and adults). They include thoughts for the congregation to take home and discuss, things to notice or highlight during worship (colors, senses, symbols, gestures), and ideas for action. Contributors for these portions are: **Jerusalem Jackson Greer**, Family Minister at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Conway, Arkansas; **Kathy Hood Culmer**, a biblical storyteller from Kingwood, Texas; and **Elizabeth Hammond**, retired Christian educator of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Greenville, North Carolina.
- ♦ *Prayers of the People* are the offerings of **Jeremiah Williamson**, priest at Grace and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado.
- ♦ *Ideas for the Day* approach the day and its text in preaching and worship, including contemporary issues, movies, technology and social media, literature, historical events, and figures related to the Sunday lections and season. Contributing these ideas are: **Jane Gober**, Assistant for Youth and Family at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Walla Walla, Washington; **Will Mebane**, interim dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in Buffalo; **Paul Fromberg**, rector of St. Gregory of Nyssa, San Francisco; **Ernesto Medina**, rector of St. Martha's Episcopal Church in Papillion, Nebraska; **Mike Angell**, rector of the Episcopal Church of the Holy Communion in St. Louis; **Megan Castellán**, rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Ithaca, New York; **Jay Fluellen**, composer, organist, and choir director of the African American Episcopal Church of St. Thomas in Philadelphia; **Lelanda**

Lee, a writer, poet, and church and community leader in Longmont, Colorado; and **Sharon Ely Pearson**, Christian educator from Norwalk, Connecticut.

- ◆ *Making Connections* offers insights into connecting our Episcopal tradition to each Sunday. This may take the form of referencing other areas of the Book of Common Prayer, our Baptismal Covenant, or faith in daily life. Contributors here are: **Marcus Halley**, rector of St. Paul's Church on the Lake of the Isles, Minneapolis; **Demi Prentiss**, lay leader and ministry developer from Fort Worth; and **Vicki Garvey**, biblical scholar and educator in Chicago.
- ◆ *Images in the Readings* tap into the metaphors, names, history, and theology that are found in the day's lections. **Gail Ramshaw**, well-known Lutheran scholar and author, is the source of those connections. *Hymns for the Day* are drawn from **Carl Daw, Jr.** and **Thomas Pavlechko's** *Liturgical Music for the Revised Common Lectionary, Year C* (Church Publishing Incorporated, 2009). These

compliment the theme and readings of the day and come from *Hymnal 1982*, *Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, and *Wonder, Love, and Praise*. *Weekday Commemorations* are drawn from *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* and *A Great Cloud of Witnesses* by **Martha Baker**, writer, editor, and educator in St. Louis, Missouri.

Your feedback and perspective, of course, are also critical to these efforts. Let us hear from you—what would you appreciate seeing? What was most helpful? Who are the writers you would recommend to us for future editions?

We are also delighted to offer a new digital resource, RitePlanning, which has been designed to work with the resources in this volume. A trial subscription will be available through the Church Publishing website beginning in early fall 2018.

Thank you for the trust you put in Church Publishing Incorporated to provide liturgical planning tools for your parish use. We value our partnership on the journey and are grateful for the many ways in which you care for the church's worship.



Advent



Preparing for Advent

In the opening section of this book, we considered the importance of planning any single season of the liturgical year in relationship to all the others. That is true not only with respect to the whole year but also with respect to two smaller cycles within the year: the incarnational cycle (Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany); and the Paschal cycle (Lent, Holy Week, Easter, through Pentecost).

Advent, Christmas and Epiphany, while foreshadowing the death of Christ, all play on the larger theme of the Incarnation *as such* and its significance for the redemption of the world, both now and finally. It is common to think of these three seasons as moving along a narrative, and they surely do, since Year C's gospel of Luke (interspersed with selections from John and Matthew from Christmas through Epiphany) foregrounds both Jesus' life and ministry and our own discipleship as a journey along the Way. But one might also think of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany along the lines of a three-movement symphony where primary motifs appear and reappear, in relation to the Incarnation, in various forms throughout the three seasons.

So, while the next pages of this book will deal with Advent, the wise planner will take a look at the sections on Christmas and Epiphany and then plan each season with a view to the whole cycle. The same principle should apply to the planning of the Paschal cycle.

Theological Themes That Might Shape Liturgy, Catechesis, and Education

Advent's theme is, consistent with its historical genesis as a penitential observance, focused on God's call as redeemer and judge of all time. Advent sets our celebration of the Incarnation into this framework of anticipation of this redemption and gracious judgment.

The tone of this penitence, slightly different than the Lenten lections, is filtered through confidence and eagerness that God is coming, and the call to make ready as a cause of joy. Themes in preaching and liturgical catechesis, then, might well focus on repentance and making ready; anticipation of a great gift; longing for the reign of God; the deepening of our sensitivities to what is broken in a world that needs God's coming; and the attunement of our expectation that God's promise will be fulfilled, as the readings shift toward the approach of the Feast of the Incarnation/Christmas.

What would it mean to focus in catechesis and preaching, in adult and children's education, on the Christian life as the cultivation of desire for God? How might the choice of hymns, the "tone" and choices of liturgy, the preaching, lead us not to the satisfaction of our desires, but to the stoking of the fire of our longing for that which is not yet fulfilled? "God is with us," indeed; and yet we long for God to be with us. "God is with us," but the emphasis on this truth awaits the seasons of Christmas and Epiphany. *Maranatha*, the cry of ancient Christians (I Corinthians 16:22; the Didache sect. 10): both "The Lord has come," but also "Come, Lord!" It is the latter meaning that preoccupies this season.

Liturgical Possibilities

Rites

Given Advent's origin, it would be appropriate to open the liturgies over the course of the season with the penitential order (BCP 351 for Rite II), which puts into sharp relief the distance between the world we seek (and create) and the world as God is bringing it in. This would provide Advent the differential relationship with Christmas that exists between Lent and Easter, and would give a recognizable, parallel

shape to those two cycles of the calendar. It is always commendable, if the space allows it, for the Penitential order to be led from the Font, after which the procession can move toward seating on the Kyrie or Trisagion.

Whether using the Penitential order for the season or not, the penitential Acclamation (for Lent) from the Prayer book would be appropriate. An alternative would be the Advent acclamation from *Enriching Our Worship* (EOW, vol. 1) as the prayer book provides no Advent specific acclamation. (Remember that EOW is used with the permission of the bishop.) Using the EOW Acclamation within the penitential order—that Acclamation focuses on God’s coming to set us free—would nicely combine the Advent themes. One might even consider opening the first Sunday of Advent with the Great Litany, and the alternative form in EOW provides language at once more contemporary and flexible than the Litany in the prayer book. Either way, lifting up the penitential themes of Advent might offer rich resources to mine in a season in which we find ourselves contending regularly with the powers of market forces and the gratification of desires for accumulation that have little to do with the open handed self-offering that Jesus embodies and to which he calls us.

There are a number of ways to simplify the liturgies of Advent, such simplicity also being appropriate to penitence, recollection, and a return to one’s baptismal vows. One could use more silence; one could make sure that music is simplified, and contemplative in nature—a good counterpoint to the rush and noise of the commercial season, and perhaps a way to redeem for the latter a sense of what all the busy-ness is about.

Prayers of the People, if they are written by members of the congregation or by the deacon or priest, might be oriented around the theme of hope for God’s coming as the framing symbol for the healing of the sick, the fulfillment of longing, the prayers for those who are in leadership of the nations. Repeating scriptural or seasonally thematic tropes and allusions within the people’s responses in the intercessions might remain set for the whole season (e.g. “let us pray to the Lord/Come, Lord Jesus” or “Lord Jesus, hear our prayer/come to us and set us free), while the stanzas of the intercessions would change from week to week, freshly attendant to the needs of the world.

Of course, as for all seasons, the choice of eucharistic prayer should have some stability over time and capture the focus of scripture. Certainly, with Advent being only four weeks, the best practice would seem to be a single eucharistic prayer for that whole season that foregrounds incarnational imagery—Prayer B or EOW Prayer 2, perhaps. Prayer D would also be appropriate, although that robust prayer, in its full West Syrian shape and with its sources both ancient and ecumenical, is perhaps best reserved for Principal and Major feasts.

Finally, while the arc of the Paschal cycle, Lent through Pentecost, is arguably the most defensible pattern for the preparation of adults for Holy Baptism (the catechumenate), it is a practical reality, depending on when adult seekers have come into the process of formation, that Easter baptisms may not always offer the right timing. In such cases, the “Admission of Catechumens” in the fall could lead to the “Enrollment of Candidates for Baptism” (see the *Book of Occasional Services* 2003, p. 117 and following) on the first Sunday of Advent, leading to the baptism on the First Sunday after Epiphany (traditionally, the “Baptism of Our Lord” as reflected in the lectionary’s appointed readings), and mystagogical formation continuing through the season of Epiphany. In that case, one would want to include prayers for the candidates, preferably with the laying on of hands, throughout the seasons of Advent and Christmas.

Space

Beginning a new liturgical year at a time where the eschatological in-breaking is envisioned might be a time to alter the space a bit in buildings where that is possible. A little disorientation, in proper measure, can be healthy for liturgical life now and again, so long as the stability of the liturgical centers (Ambo, Font, Table) is honored. For those spaces that have flexible seating, and depending on its configuration and the size of the congregation, chairs might be moved into choir seating or some other contrasting arrangement for plainchant.

Other Rituals and Resources

Many ritual options exist for use with the congregation during this season. The Advent wreath is perhaps the most commonly known, and drawing in members of the congregation, particularly children, is typical and a good way of incorporating those not usually in the liturgy leadership team (acolytes, crucifers, etc.).

In that practice, the candle of the day for the Advent wreath is commonly lit before the liturgy begins, but it could also be a rich addition to the entrance rite, specifically, during the Kyrie or Trisagion. That would also make it consistent with other patterns of lamplighting (for example, in the Order of Worship for the Evening.)

Of course, some clergy and congregations make much of the colors of the candles, as well as the “pause” that occurs at the third Sunday of Advent, where instead of a violet candle (or blue), a rose candle is sometimes lit. (The occasion is what is known informally as “Gaudete Sunday” named for the opening Introit of the day in the Latin mass). These sorts of customs, while sometimes charming, can interfere with the clean lines of the seasons as intended by the 1979 prayer book; and, when too much is made of allegory—“we light the rose candle on the Third Sunday of Advent because . . .,” or “we light this altar candle first because it stands for . . .”—it can actually distance people from liturgical practice, which is not done because it “stands for” something but because it is itself an end: participation in the Paschal Mystery. Its meaning is in its doing. Perhaps best to choose blue or violet candles and keep them uniform throughout, letting the focus instead be the arc of the lectionary carrying us toward the Christmas feast. Blue is a perfectly acceptable color for Advent candles and vestments, as long as one does not make claims that blue was the color of Advent in the English Sarum rite. This cannot, historically, be defended.

Many other possibilities exist for ritual or para-ritual practices in Advent. The Jesse tree; the “Advent Word” activity initiated originally by the Society of St. John the Evangelist; and the “O Antiphons.” Information about the first two is easily obtainable from a quick web search. As to the “O Antiphons”:

Each “O Antiphon” is an address that names God with an accompanying prayer reflecting the themes of Advent and more. Of course, these are the antiphons

that constitute the verses of Hymn 56 and one begins to use them, if daily, on December 17th. Clergy and musicians can develop various ways to return to that hymn each Sunday of Advent that will highlight the antiphons. These might be used as a center of reflection in catechesis for children and adults. Or a daily Eucharist might supplement the Sunday Advent observances from Dec. 17 onward, building the preaching and perhaps even a brief reflection outside the liturgy itself on the theological content of each antiphon.

A word is due on “Advent Lessons and Carols” (*Book of Occasional Services* 2003, p. 31). This is a lovely service rooted in English tradition, as well as in the older, general form of scriptural vigils. Many Episcopal Churches use Advent Lessons and Carols during this season, and quite a number make it the liturgy of the Word at a Sunday Eucharist, often near the end of the season. It is commendable to encourage people to practice this liturgy as another form in which to cultivate the desire for God’s coming, but its use at the Eucharist produces a liturgy that is somewhat unbalanced, with its elements pulled out of shape. Better to deploy this ritual at a separate occasion, perhaps a Sunday night, allowing it to stand on its own integrity as a service of Word and Prayer.

Finally: some churches have moved into the practice of a “Blue Christmas”—a liturgy that makes space for the complex emotions and memories that the liturgical season or cultural practices of Christmas can sometimes bring about. (Since it is usually scheduled in Advent, it is included here.) This can be planned as an “Ordo Eucharist” using the materials from the Book of Common Prayer, p. 400 and following; or one of the prayer book propers, perhaps drawn from those for healing, might be used. The point is to open up a space where people can acknowledge, in a cultural season in which everyone is supposed to be excited, the grief that come from maturation as well as loss, including the loss of those we love; from trauma and catastrophe that may have become associated with the season; from the gradual or sudden diminution of family connections. A Blue Christmas liturgy would do well to use hymnody resounding with God’s comfort, companionship, and power to heal; make use of silence and candlelight; and make other appropriate adaptations to elements discussed above, while giving voice to the hope that comes to us as God’s promise, even in the midst of sadness.

Some Practical Considerations

In addition to choosing the eucharistic prayer, developing the prayers of the people, and selecting appropriate music,

- ◆ Choose the color (blue or violet)
- ◆ Assume a gradual increase in attendance over the season and plan accordingly for the sacraments
- ◆ Determine the customary for lighting of the Advent wreath or other rituals

Through the Eyes of a Child

During Advent, we, along with our families and all who are the church, wait for the birth of the baby Jesus, who is a gift God gave to us and to all people because God loves us so much and has made us one big family. It is a time we prepare for when Jesus will come again to earth, and God will be in all and make all things new. During this season, we ask what we can give to others to celebrate the fact that in Jesus, God loves us so much his promise to be with us always is complete. In Advent, we tell stories of hope and promise and wonder how the light breaks through the darkness. The Advent wreath helps us to count the days and weeks toward Christmas, a circle of evergreen shows us that God's love never ends, and we light candles (one for each Sunday of Advent) to help us remember that Jesus brings the light into the world.

Through the Eyes of Youth

In Advent we advertise that we have faith in the birth of Jesus as well as faith that Christ will come again. We in the church prepare for the birth of Christ by giving the gift of ourselves as we wait in joy. It is a time of action: Hold onto the promise that Christ will come again by hosting an "alternative gift fair" such as an angel tree in which members of your community can provide gifts to those in your community who are in need. Pray, ask, and respond: Who are the people in our world who need the message of God's love? What are our hopes for how people today can receive the message of God's love? How do we help others know God's love?

Through the Eyes of Daily Life

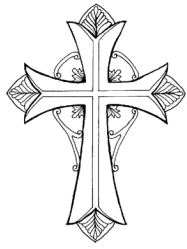
Advent is a time of preparation, of patience, of remembering what grounds and sustains us. The function of Advent is to remind us who God is and who we are meant to be, as well. Advent is about the riches of emptiness. God coming as an infant without retinue or riches is the metaphor of a humility that requires us to remember how really small we are in the universe. In our secular culture, a tone of wanting more, spending more, and accumulating riches on earth surround us. As Christians, we long for our society to live up to God's vision, for the kingdom to come in its fullness outside of materialism. The cry of Advent, "Wake up! Be alert! Watch for his coming" is difficult amidst the busyness of the season. We can practice some simple, but not easy, disciplines. We can fast from the media to become more alert to the still small voice of God. We can focus on the giving of ourselves to God. Plan to spend time apart from the busyness of the season each day so you can be alert to God in the silent, the small, and the simple.

Through the Eyes of the Global Community

Advent is a time of concern for God's judgment, particularly in reference to the coming kingdom. The power of this theme of judgment brings about a realization of the sinfulness of the present age. As Christians, we believe it is Jesus who bears this judgment through his life, death, and resurrection, revealing the reign of God to the church in every generation. Our Eucharistic Prayer reminds us that Christ will come again. This is the hope for Advent, and this is the hope we find in the Lord's Prayer in "thy will be done" and "thy Kingdom come." These familiar words call us into a reality of the real presence of Christ in our lives as we look at our own response to today's world. The Collects of Advent remind us how we are living in the reality of Christ's presence that allows us to approach ethical, social justice, and global issues.



Epiphany



Seasonal Rites for Epiphany

Epiphany Blessing¹

The following blessing may be used by a bishop or priest whenever a blessing is appropriate. It is a three-fold form with an Amen at the end of each sentence, leading into a Trinitarian blessing. This may be used from the feast of the Epiphany through the following Sunday.

May Almighty God, who led the Wise Men by the shining of a star to find the Christ, the Light from Light, lead you also, in your pilgrimage, to find the Lord. *Amen.*

May God, who sent the Holy Spirit to rest upon the Only-begotten at his baptism in the Jordan River, pour out that Spirit on you who have come to the waters of new birth. *Amen.*

May God, by the power that turned water into wine at the wedding feat at Cana, transform your lives and make glad your hearts. *Amen.* And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you for ever. *Amen.*

Blessing for a Home

Twelfth Night (January 5), the Feast of the Epiphany (January 6), or another day during the week following, is an occasion for family and friends to gather for a blessing of their home for the coming year.

*Following an eastern European tradition, a visual blessing may be inscribed with white chalk above the main door; for example 20 + CMB + 18. The numbers change with each year, with this year being 2018. The three letters stand for either the ancient Latin blessing *Christe mansio-nem benedicat*, which means "Christ, bless this house," or the legendary names of the magi (Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar).*

Celebrant Peace be to this house, and to all who dwell in it.

Visit, O blessed Lord, this home with the gladness of your presence, Bless *all* who live here with the gifts of your love; and grant that *they* may manifest your love [to each other and] to all whose lives *they* touch. May *they* grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of you; guide, comfort, and strengthen *them*; and preserve *them* in peace, O Jesus Christ, now and for ever. *Amen.*²

Candlemas³

Saturday, February 2

Candlemas (Candle Mass) takes its name from the candles carried at the celebration of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. It celebrates a ritual of Jewish law related to first-born sons that Joseph and Mary carried out (Luke 2:21-40). Luke's gospel tells how Simeon and Anna, devout Jews, honored the infant Jesus as the promised Messiah.

When circumstances permit, the congregation gathers at a place apart from the church so that all may go into the church in procession; however, it can begin just inside the door of the church. All are provided with unlighted candles. These are lit during the opening canticle, which is sung or said.

The Entrance

Celebrant: Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thanks be to God.

A Light to enlighten the nations,
and the glory of your people Israel.

*A Light to enlighten the nations,
and the glory of your people Israel.*

Lord, you now have set your servant free
to go in peace as you have promised.

*A Light to enlighten the nations,
and the glory of your people Israel.*

¹ *The Book of Occasional Services 2003* (New York: Church Publishing, 2004), 24.

² *Ibid*, 49.

³ *Ibid*, 53-55.

For these eyes of mine have seen the Savior,
whom you have prepared for all the world to see.

*A Light to enlighten the nations,
and the glory of your people Israel.*

God our Father, source of all light, today you revealed to the aged Simeon your light which enlightens the nations. Fill our hearts with the light of faith, that we who bear these candles may walk in the path of goodness, and come to the Light that shines for ever, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The Procession

Deacon: Let us go forth in peace.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

All carry lighted candles while an appropriate hymn or canticle is sung, stopping for the following Collect to be read.

O God, you have made this day holy by the presentation of your Son in the Temple, and by the purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Mercifully grant that we, who delight in her humble readiness to be the birth-giver of the Only-begotten, may rejoice for ever in our adoption as his sisters and brothers; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The procession approaches the altar as the following antiphon and Psalm 48:1-2, 10-13 is read.

We have waited in silence on your loving-kindness,
O Lord, in the midst of your temple. Your praise, like your Name, O God, reaches to the world's end; your right hand is full of justice.

Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised;
in the city of our God is his holy hill.
Beautiful and lofty, the joy of all the earth, is the hill of Zion, the very center of the world and the city of the great King.
Let Mount Zion be glad and the cities of Judah rejoice, because of your judgments.
Make the circuit of Zion; walk round about her; count the number of her towers.
Consider well her bulwarks; examine her stronghold; that you may tell those who come after.
This God is our God for ever and ever; he shall be our guide for evermore.

Other Notable Days the Season After the Epiphany

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

January 21

A federal holiday, this day will fall on Monday, January 21, 2019. Some schools celebrate the day by teaching their pupils or students about the work and ministry of Martin Luther King and the struggle against racial segregation and racism. It has also become a day on which Americans give some of their time as volunteers in action in their communities. For congregations, Sunday, January 20, can be a day of focused prayer, preaching, and education on the legacy Dr. King entrusted to us. Resources can be found at <http://www.thekingcenter.org/king-holiday> and <https://www.serve.gov/site-page/mlkday>

Lord our God, see how oppression and violence are our sad inheritance, one generation to the next. We look for you where the lowly are raised up, where the mighty are brought down. We find you there in your servants and we give you thanks this day for your preacher and witness, Martin Luther King Jr. Fill us with your spirit: where our human community is divided by racism, torn by repression, saddened by fear and ignorance, may we give ourselves to your work of healing. Grant this through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*⁴

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

January 18-25

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is an international Christian ecumenical observance for eight days, held between the feasts of Peter and Paul. Resources for study, prayer, music, and worship are offered in advance at <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/week-of-prayer> (accessed March 28, 2018).

We have come together in the presence of Almighty God to pray for the recovery of the unity of Christ's Church, and for the renewal of our common life in Jesus Christ in whom we are all made one.

Silence

Let us give heed to the words of Holy Scripture, which set forth God's will and purpose for the unity of his church.

“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”

⁴ Christopher L. Webber, editor. *An American Prayer Book* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2008), 124.

Lord, write your word in our hearts.

That we may know and do your will.

“There is one body, and one Spirit, as there is also one hope held out in God’s call to you; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Lord, write your word in our hearts:

That we may know and do your will.

“For Christ is like a single body with its many limbs and organs which, many as they are, together make up one body. For indeed we were all brought into one body by baptism, in the one Spirit, whether we are Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and that one Holy Spirit was poured out for all of us to drink.”

Lord, write your word in our hearts:

That we may know and do your will.

“But it is not for these alone that I pray, but for those also who through their words put their faith in me; may they all be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, so also may they be in us, that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

Lord, write your word in our hearts:

*That we may know and do your will. Amen.*⁵

Theological Education Sunday

February 3

Theological Education Sunday (TES) is officially recognized on the first Sunday in February. It is a day parishioners set aside to pray and give for all laity and clergy whose ministry is Christian education, wherever that ministry happens—in the home, preschool programs, parishes, colleges, universities, and seminaries. Established in 1999 by the Episcopal Church, this Sunday on the church calendar is an occasion for all parishioners to focus on education as a key aspect of mission. Guest preachers and seminarians sponsored by the congregation are often invited to preach.

O God of truth, ever beckoning us to loftier understanding and deeper wisdom, we seek your will and implore your grace for all who share the life of divinity schools and seminaries in our day, knowing that, unless you build among us, we who teach and learn will labor but in vain.

Silence

For the men and women who teach, that they may together bring fire and vision to a common task, knowing one field yet eager to relate it to all others; just in their academic demands, yet seeing each student as a child of God; fitted to teach not only by great learning but by great faith in humankind and in you, their God:

*In them and in us, O God,
kindle your saving truth.*

Silence

For deans and presidents, trustees and development officers, and all others who point the way for theological education in our day, that their chief concern be not budgets and buildings and prestige, but men and women freed to know your whole will and roused to serve you in your Church:

*In them and in us, O God,
kindle your saving truth.*

Silence

For janitors and maids, for cooks and keepers of the grounds, for those who prepare our food and wash our dishes, and for the host of other workers and suppliers whose faithfulness ministers to our common life:

*In them and in us, O God,
kindle your saving truth.*

Silence

For parents and givers of scholarships, who support theological students, that they may not desire for them more income, or social acceptance, or glory of family or of donor, but look rather for new breadth of intelligence, the spirit made whole, and devoted Christian service in life:

*In them and in us, O God,
kindle your saving truth.*

Silence

For the students themselves, that their confusion may be brief, their perspective constantly enlarged, and their minds and spirits alert to all that chapel and classroom, library and fieldwork assignment can mean in their lives.

*In them and in us, O God,
kindle your saving truth.*

Silence

⁵ “The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity,” in *The Wideness of God’s Mercy: Litanies to Enlarge Our Prayer*, edited by Jeffrey W. Rowthorn (New York: Church Publishing, 2007), 128-129.

For every member of this community of learning and service, that with them we may be aware of your Holy Spirit leading us all into truth, and may grasp here your special intention for all our learning and striving:

*In them and in us, O God,
kindle your saving truth.*

Silence

We know, O heavenly Father, that a seminary education is but the willing and planning of many men and women, each sought by your great love. Grant that we who would earnestly serve you may witness in the world to the reality of your gospel, as it is shown forth in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Amen.*⁶

Super Bowl Sunday: Souper Bowl of Caring

February 3

The Souper Bowl of Caring is a national movement of young people working to fight hunger and poverty in their own communities around the time of the Super Bowl football game. In the weeks leading up to or on Super Bowl Sunday, young people take up a collection (many use a soup pot), asking for one dollar or one item of food for people in need. They give 100% of their donation directly to the local hunger-relief charity of their choice. Learn more at <https://souperbowl.org/welcome> (accessed 5/12/2018)

We have seen your hand of mercy in the service of those who spread food, shelter, hope, and faith to suffering humankind. Plant more seeds in the bellies of the full, to burst forth in joy, to explode like the ripened grain with life-giving bread. Give us, we beseech you, in the bosoms of our souls, a passion for the powerless and a commitment to place all poverty in the past. *Amen.*⁷

The Feast of Lights: An Epiphany Pageant⁸

This service is one of darkness and light, showing how the message of Jesus spread throughout the world and throughout the ages to the present day. It can take the form of a simple liturgy of lighting candles in the sanctuary or can be one in which participants dress in costume to represent each of the persons in history who helped spread the Light of Christ. Traditionally, it is held on the Feast of the Epiphany, or on an evening at the beginning of this season.

Candles can be placed throughout the church, or on the altar. Characters can be seated in the congregation, come forth to stand in front and recite their lines, go light their candle, then return to their seat. Have a candle lighter (taper) at a central location so each participant can easily pick it up on their way to light "their" candle. Once the first candle is lit, subsequent candles can be lit from the flame of the previously lit candle.

There are many characters (41+/-), several without speaking roles. Ideally, a different person represents each character; however, individuals can represent more than one person, especially if you are not dressing up as the person. This is an excellent pageant to be totally handed over to youth in its production and presentation as an offering to the congregation.

Costumes

Costumes that are used for Christmas pageants can be used—simple robes and headpieces for most of the characters that lived in the first century. Academic robes or period costumes can be used for later period characters.

Props

One candle (in a candlestick, holder, stand, etc.) per character located on the altar, chancel area, or around the sanctuary.

Candle lighter/taper

Candles (with paper followers to catch drips) for every member of the congregation or audience

⁶ John Oliver Nelson, "For Theological Seminaries," in *The Wideness of God's Mercy: Litanies to Enlarge Our Prayer*, edited by Jeffrey W. Rowthorn (New York: Church Publishing, 2007), 165-166.

⁷ Marcia King, "For An End to Poverty" in *Lifting Women's Voices: Prayers to Change the World*, Margaret Rose, Jenny Te Paa, Jeanne Person, and Abigail Nelson, editors (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2009), 6

⁸ Sharon Ely Pearson, "Feast of Lights: An Epiphany Pageant" part of Church Publishing Incorporated's *Skiturgies: Pageants, Plays, Rites & Rituals* collection. www.skiturgies.com

Script

[NARRATOR]: Welcome to bear witness to the Light. In the fullness of time, God entered this world in the birth of Jesus, the Word of God, the Light of the world. Jesus grew to adulthood in Nazareth of Galilee. He came to the river Jordan to be baptized by John, and when he came up out of the water, the heavens opened and the Spirit of God descended upon Him, and God said, “You are my beloved Son.”

[JESUS]: Let the paschal candle be lit for Jesus Christ, the light of the world.

[NARRATOR]: Jesus chose twelve ordinary men to receive his light. He spoke to them saying: “While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become children of light” Then he sent them as apostles to establish the Church, to spread his light to all people, in every race and in every nation on earth. Let a candle be lit for each of the twelve apostles . . .

[PETER]: Simon, called Peter. Jesus called me “the rock” in which he would build the Church.

[ANDREW]: Andrew, his brother. A fisherman.

[JAMES]: James, the son of Zebedee. Also a fisherman.

[JOHN]: John, his brother. A fisherman.

[PHILIP]: Philip.

[BARTHOLOMEW]: Bartholomew.

[MATTHEW]: Matthew, the tax collector.

[JAMES]: James, the son of Alphaeus.

[SIMON]: Simon, the Zealot.

[THOMAS]: Thomas. Following the Resurrection, many felt I had doubts of Jesus’ rising to new life.

[JUDE]: Jude

[JUDAS ISCARIOT]: Judas Iscariot. I was to betray Jesus with a kiss. Let my candle be extinguished for the light I was unable to carry to the end. (*Light candle, then extinguish by blowing out.*)

[MARY MAGDALENE]: I was the first witness to the Resurrection of Jesus, and one who first bore that news to the twelve. I had accompanied Jesus for much of His ministry, and my special and favored relationship with the Lord is shown in the fact that it was to me that Jesus first spoke after He had risen. From ancient tradition in the Church, I am accorded a status equal to an apostle.

[MATTHIAS]: I am another who is ranked with the original twelve. I was elected by the remaining eleven to take the place of Judas in their number.

[NARRATOR]: Let two candles be lit for Matthias and Mary Magdalene, who together show that the apostolic succession is proven not only by lineage but also by faithful presence and witness.

[NARRATOR]: Many women have served as disciples, witnesses, and apostles.

[MARY OF BETHANY]: (*Move forward with Martha of Bethany*) Mary of Bethany. I served Jesus many times at my home in Bethany. A week before his crucifixion, I took a jar of expensive perfume, poured it on his feet, wiping it with my hair. I loved to sit at Jesus’ feet and listen to him.

[MARTHA OF BETHANY]: (*Move forward with Mary of Bethany*) Martha of Bethany. I was often focused on the details when Jesus came to visit us. But I knew Jesus was the source of eternal life, and believed God would give Jesus whatever he asked. I was right; my brother Lazarus was brought back to life.

[SAMARITAN WOMAN]: The Samaritan woman. I met Jesus at Jacob’s well and was among the first to confess Jesus as the Messiah.

[JOANNA and SUSANNA]: (*Say together.*) We traveled with Jesus through Galilee and financed his journeys.

[MARY]: I was the mother of our Lord, and was present at the cross and among those gathered at Pentecost.

[PHOEBE and PRISCILLA]: (*Say together.*) We were deacons in the early church.

[JUNIA]: I was an apostle and contemporary of Paul.

[LOIS, EUNICE, and TABITHA]: (*Say together.*) We were disciples during the early years of the church.

[NARRATOR]: Let candles be lit for each of these faithful women of scripture and the early church, who both led and served their communities of faith.

[NARRATOR]: These apostles went out into the world to spread the light of the gospel of Christ. There were many who opposed their witness and the Word.

[PAUL]: I was one of those who tried to put out the Light. I was known as Saul of Tarsus, a fanatical persecutor of all followers of Jesus until one day I was overcome by a vision of the Light of Christ. Taking the name of Paul, I carried that light throughout the Mediterranean world, establishing the Church far beyond the cities and people of the Jewish culture. From the seeds I planted and those who accompanied me, the Light of Christ has spread from a small group in Jerusalem to two billion people in every nation on earth today. Today I am called, “the apostle to the Gentiles.”

[NARRATOR]: The story of Jesus spread throughout the world.

[AUGUSTINE]: In the year 596, I, Augustine, was sent from Rome by Pope Gregory the Great to be a missionary to England. I became the first Archbishop of Canterbury and reorganized the remnants of the old Celtic churches throughout Britain and Ireland, which had existed since the second century and had been built up by revered predecessors in the faith, such as Patrick of Ireland, Alban in England, David in Wales, and Ninian in Scotland.

[NARRATOR]: Let five candles be lit for these patriarchs of British Christianity.

(Patrick, Alban, David, and Ninian come forward to light candles)

[STEPHEN LANGON]: Reading and studying the Holy Scriptures was greatly facilitated by the system of dividing the Bible’s texts into chapters and verses. I, Stephen Langon, introduced this relatively modern idea. I was an Englishman at the University of Paris and later, in 1207, became Archbishop of Canterbury.

[THOMAS CRANMER]: I, Thomas Cranmer, became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1533. I had been much influenced theologically by the Lutheran reformers in Germany, such as Martin Luther. When the English church rejected the authority of the papacy in 1534, I led the creation and adoption of a new liturgy for the church, producing the first two versions of the Book of Common Prayer, which has been the lifeblood of Anglican worship throughout the world ever since. I am known as the father of Anglican liturgy.

[QUEEN ELIZABETH I]: It was I, a laywoman, whose genius, leadership, and personal faith truly established Anglicanism as a strong and distinct tradition. As Queen of England, I preserved and brought together into one church the ancient catholic order and the principles of the Reformation. My vision presented the possibilities of unity with diversity.

[SAMUEL SEABURY]: After the American colonies won independence, I was sent from Connecticut to Scotland in 1784 to be consecrated as the first American Anglican bishop. I, Samuel Seabury, thus secured the historic episcopate for the Episcopal Church.

[WILLIAM WHITE]: Three years later, the Archbishop of Canterbury presided at the consecration of two others to be bishops for the Episcopal Church. I, William White, was one of these men from Pennsylvania, and became the first Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. I was the chief architect and wise overseer for the church for almost fifty years. Every Episcopal bishop, past and present, can trace their ordinations back to my episcopacy.

[YOUR FIRST BISHOP]: _____ was the first Episcopal bishop of _____, consecrated for this office in _____.

(Note any historical information).

[YOUR FIRST CLERGY PERSON/LAY LEADER]:

(Note the founding of your congregation and any leadership involved, including historical information about your church.)

[NARRATOR]: We, the people of _____ *(name your congregation)*, are now the recipients of the faith and faithfulness, which has been entrusted to us in _____ *(your town or city)* as congregations in full communion with each other. With joy and gratitude, we ponder that the faith of Christ, announced by a miraculous star two thousand years ago, has been passed down through the centuries to our places of worship—by Magi, apostles, saints, bishops, local clergy and laypeople: men and women, extraordinary and ordinary. The light is passed from the Bethlehem

manger to this place and to our homes. Our prayer is that we sustain and grow the Light that is Jesus Christ, and pass it on—to those now beside us, and around us, and to those who come after us. As an outward sign of this, everyone will please light each other's unlit candles.

May Almighty God, who led the Wise Men by the shining of a star to find the Christ, the Light from Light, lead you also, in your pilgrimage, to find the Lord. *Amen.*

Preparing for Lent

The last Sunday of the season of the Epiphany features the story of the Transfiguration in the gospel reading. This is also the last Sunday the word, "Alleluia" will be used in liturgy, and preparations begin for the coming week's Ash Wednesday liturgy as well as the solemn season that follows.

Here are two traditions for making the transition from Epiphany to Lent.

Burying the Alleluia

As we keep the ancient practice of fasting from singing or speaking "alleluia" through the forty days of Lent, you may consider the practice of "burying" the alleluia at the end of the liturgy on the last Sunday before Ash Wednesday. This might mean simply singing an appropriate song at the end of the service or including the actual lowering of a visual alleluia banner (perhaps created by children) while singing. You could bury it in your churchyard or hide it away in a dark place (but remember where you put it!). Bring the alleluia back as part of the first alleluias at the Great Vigil of Easter or your Easter Festive Eucharist.

Leader: O God, make speed to save us, hallelujah, hallelujah.

O Lord, make haste to help us, alleluia, alleluia.

Leader: "Alleluia" is Greek for "Praise the Lord."

Our God is a loving God, worthy of praise.

Leader: The faithful people of God praise him for the great deeds he has done.

*God created us out of dust, restored the land,
took Israel out of exile, spoke through the prophets,
and gives hope and forgiveness through
his Son, Jesus Christ.*

Leader: The Book of Psalms contains "Hallels" (Psalms 113-118) or special chants. These hymns of praise were sung on each step going up to the Temple during festive celebrations and pilgrimages.

*Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him,
all peoples! For great is his steadfast love
toward us; and the faithfulness of the Lord
endures for ever. Praise the Lord.
(Psalm 117)*

Leader: Hallelujah! Praise God in his holy temple.
(Psalm 150:1)

*Let everything that has breath
praise the Lord, Hallelujah. (Psalm 150:6)*

Leader: We have much for which to be thankful. But there is not always joy in our lives. There is sadness and loneliness in the world. Sometimes we need time to think. Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness praying to God. Lent is our forty days of quiet time to prepare for the mystery of Easter. This is a time when we do not say "alleluia" in church. "Alleluia" is reserved for the great festive celebration of Easter.

*How shall we sing the Lord's song in a
foreign land? (Psalm 137:4)*

(Silently bury the "Alleluia")

Leader: Almighty God, you bid your faithful people to rejoice in praise, but also to repent and reflect in silence. Give us grace and courage to devote our hearts to you and to love others as you would, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, on God, forever and ever. *Amen.*⁹

⁹ Linda Nichols, "Farewell to Alleluia" as part of Church Publishing Incorporated's *Skiturgies* collection. www.skiturgies.com

Shrove Tuesday

The day before Ash Wednesday was the day all households were to use up all milk, eggs, and fat to prepare for the strict fasting of Lent. These ingredients were made into pancakes, a meal which came to symbolize preparation for the discipline of Lent, from the English tradition. "Shrove" comes from the verb "to shrive" (to confess and receive absolution) prior to the start of the Lenten season. Other names for this day include Carnival (farewell to meat) and Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday of the French tradition). Thus, many congregations have Shrove Tuesday pancake suppers.

O Lord, we as we prepare our hearts for our Lenten journey, bless these pancakes we are about to share. As they remind us of the rich ingredients from our kitchens that fill our bellies with satisfaction, may we also remember your time in the wilderness when you did not even have bread or water. Be present with us as we get ready to begin the holy season of Lent, strengthening us to be ready to serve you in the days and weeks to come. *Amen.*

Making Pretzels

The pretzel has been used during Lent for more than 1,500 years. It is thought that originally pretzels were made by monks to resemble arms crossed in prayer. These breads were called "little arms." This can have deep spiritual meaning for us during Lent. Since basically only flour and water are used, pretzels can remind us of fasting.

Heavenly Father, we ask you to bless these little breads. Each time we eat them may we be reminded of the special season we are in and that through prayer we will become better people to each other. Let us not forget those who are in need of our prayers daily. Keep your loving arms around us, O Father, to protect us always. *Amen.*



Holy Week



Monday in Holy Week

April 15, 2019

We pray that we may find the way of the Cross to be the way of life and peace.

Color Red / Oxblood

Preface Of Holy Week

Collect

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

Readings and Psalm

Isaiah 42:1–9

In our reading from the Hebrew scriptures, we hear of **the mission of the Lord’s servant, the one whom God has chosen to bring forth justice and salvation.** This is the first of the “servant songs” that form a portion of the Book of Isaiah written at the time when the exile in Babylon was ending and the city of Jerusalem had begun to be restored. The servant is sometimes thought to be an historical individual, or is understood as an idealization of Israel. Christians see in the servant a prefiguration of the ministry of Jesus, who will become a light to the nations of the world.

Psalm 36:5–11

The psalmist celebrates the expansive love of God expressed in faithfulness and justice. God is a river of delight in whose light we see light.

Hebrews 9:11–15

Christ has inaugurated a new covenant, accomplishing all that was anticipated by the rites and rituals of **the first covenant**, that is, redemption from sin and transgression and the purification of conscience for the right worship of the living God.

John 12:1–11

Six days before the Passover, Jesus gathers with his friends in Bethany at the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. **Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, anoints Jesus’ feet with costly perfume, wiping his feet with her hair.** This extravagant devotion is criticized by Judas Iscariot, but Jesus defends the action in ways that seem to prefigure his fast approaching death.

Ideas for the Day

- ♦ The Bible is our living legacy as Christians, telling the stories of those who have gone before us. These stories resonate with the people we are today. We live in constant cycle of historical context. We cannot separate ourselves from the stories that came before. Today’s society has many counter-historical threads in it, focusing on a belief that what we are experiencing in this moment is unique to our time. The reality is, much of the human experience has remained the same over the course of human civilization. There have always been people who seek to tear things down, in addition to people who seek to build things up. Christians work towards building and the Bible is record of those who worked towards constructing a future.

- ♦ There is a phrase in today's gospel that says, "There they gave a dinner for him." It makes me wonder what I would do if I had the opportunity to host a dinner party for Jesus. I wonder what I would serve for dinner. What friends would I invite? What music would be playing? What topics of conversation would occur? Would we find ourselves laughing or crying or both?

And what would this dinner party be like if we didn't know about the Crucifixion or the Resurrection? What if it was just a bunch of good friends together just to tell stories?

- ♦ What's the most unpopular day of the week? It's undoubtedly Monday! People dread going back to work or resuming whatever is their regular routine. The celebrating and fun activities of the weekend are in the rearview mirror as the new week begins. No one knows on Monday what the week offers, and we immediately focus our attention on what's planned for the next weekend. We aren't very excited about the weekdays ahead. We can miss what Monday has to offer in our rush to get to the next weekend. God's faithfulness and steadfast love are not to be taken for granted. Even on a Monday.

Making Connections

Jesus did a risky thing at the beginning of the week in which he died: raised a friend back to life within walking distance of Jerusalem. Not recommended behavior at the outset of Passover week so near the capitol and nervous-nellie administrators. Baptism in the days of the infant church was that risky too; you risked your life just hanging around the People of the Way, much less professing to be among their number. Baptism today has become more routine, tame, safe, the occasion for a party. But should it be only that?

Engaging All Ages

It was six days before Jesus would be crucified, and he stopped in Bethany at the home of his dear friend Lazarus, whom he had recently raised from the dead. It is Jesus' last supper before the Last Supper. The ointment that Mary uses to anoint Jesus was imported from India and was the most expensive ointment available in Israel in Jesus' day. The smell filled the whole house. It was the fragrance, the sweet aroma of her gratitude and offering, and of her profound love for Jesus. Smells can often remind us of a person, place, or event. God uses us to "spread the knowledge of Christ everywhere, like a sweet perfume. Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God (2 Cor. 2:14-15)." What is the fragrance of your love? Of your gratitude? Of your life? How will you share it?

Hymns for the Day

The Hymnal 1982

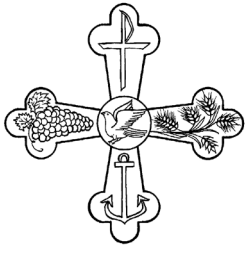
We sing the praise of him who died 471
 Ancient of Days, who sittest throned in glory 363
 Jesus shall reign where'er the sun 544
 Thy strong word did cleave the darkness 381
 Weary of all trumpeting 572
 Come, thou fount of every blessing 686
 Cross of Jesus, cross of sorrow 160
 Draw nigh and take the Body of the Lord 327,328
 Glory be to Jesus 479
 Holy Father, great Creator 368
 Let thy Blood in mercy poured 313
 God himself is with us 475
 Jesus, all my gladness 701
 Jesus, the very thought of thee 642
 Just as I am, without one plea 693
 There's a wideness in God's mercy 469,470

Lift Every Voice and Sing II

Come, thou fount of every blessing 111
 Just as I am, without one plea 137



Pentecost



The Third Sunday after Pentecost: Proper 8

June 30, 2019

Leaving everything to follow Christ.

Color Green

Preface Of the Lord's Day

Collect

Almighty God, you have built your Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone: Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their teaching, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Readings and Psalm

2 Kings 2:1–2, 6–14

From the Hebrew Bible, we hear **the story of the taking up of the prophet Elijah into heaven and the passing on of his power to Elisha.** The narrative illustrates the great favor Elijah found in the eyes of the Lord as he is carried away in a chariot of fire. Elisha is in despair, but God does not leave the people without prophetic vision. As Elijah had done before him, and like a new Joshua, Elisha proves that God is with him by causing the Jordan River to part.

Psalm 77:1–2, 11–20

The psalm asks that God endow the king with compassionate justice and righteousness and that his reign may extend over all nations and throughout all generations. To him shall kings from distant lands bring gifts.

or

1 Kings 19:15–16, 19–21

Our first reading is **the story of the calling of Elisha by Elijah to be his successor as the Lord's prophet.** Elijah is commissioned to anoint the kings of Syria and Israel and, more importantly, to anoint Elisha to a prophetic ministry. He throws his hairy prophet's cloak on Elisha, who immediately recognizes what Elijah has done. Elijah leaves the decision whether or not to follow him to Elisha, who then bids his parents farewell and makes a feast of his plowing oxen.

Psalm 16

Contentment, refuge, and joy are found in the presence of the Lord.

Galatians 5:1, 13–25

In this lesson, **Paul describes the character of Christian freedom.** It enables one to fulfill the spirit of the entire law by loving one's neighbor as oneself. But always there is the danger of lapsing back into the old ways, described here as the ways of the flesh. This means enslavement to physical and spiritual sins which result from an unwillingness to be servants to one another in love. Those who belong to Christ live by the Spirit of love, joy, and self-control.

Luke 9:51–62

In our gospel, we hear how **Jesus, on his way to Jerusalem, encounters opposition and misunderstanding and then speaks with several would-be disciples.** The Samaritans reject Jesus because they were opposed to worship in Jerusalem. James and John wish to punish them, but this is not Jesus' way. Potential followers are bid to count the cost, and Jesus points out that true discipleship means leaving other things behind. This can cause the painful rupture of past ties and relationships.

Prayers of the People

If we live by the Spirit, brothers and sisters, let us also be guided by the Spirit. And, guided by the Spirit, let us lift our prayers to the Lord, saying, “We cry aloud to you; *O God, hear us.*”

We give you thanks, O God, that for freedom Christ has set us free. Though at times it challenges our patience, we also give you thanks for the freedom, through love, to become servants of one another.

Silence

We cry aloud to you;

O God, hear us.

Gracious God, give us the will and the strength to prepare the way for your Kingdom to come. May love heal our factions and peace overcome strife.

Silence

We cry aloud to you;

O God, hear us.

Your paths are in the great waters, mighty Redeemer. We thank you that by the waters of baptism you have made us members of your household.

Invite the congregation to add their thanksgivings, followed by silence

We cry aloud to you;

O God, hear us.

Lord Jesus, you rebuked your disciples James and John when they desired the destruction of others. Instill in us gentleness and self-control that we might learn to love even those with whom we strongly disagree.

Silence

We cry aloud to you;

O God, hear us.

You are the God who works wonders. We offer to you our sincere prayers for our hurting loved ones. Work wonders in their hearts and lives, we pray.

Invite the congregation to add their petitions, followed by silence

We cry aloud to you;

O God, hear us.

By your strength, O God, you redeem your people. Lead us by your Spirit and make us fit for your heavenly Kingdom.

Silence

We cry aloud to you;

O God, hear us.

Images in the Readings

All three readings assume that the hearer knows that oxen are **yoked** together to **plow** fields. Elisha is called away from plowing his fields, and he burns up the yokes; Paul refers to our being yoked to a law that cannot save; and Jesus likens the life of proclaiming the kingdom to plowing a field. Our task is to bring vibrancy to these images, which are so distant from most of our worshipers.

In Genesis, God does send **fire** down from heaven to destroy wicked cities. Luke calls believers to refrain from such retribution and instead to move on to another village. The fire that Luke describes is the illumination on the forehead of each believer’s head at Pentecost.

Many Christian artists depicted the tree of life filled with the **fruits of the Spirit**: on the branches each little fruit was labeled “love,” “joy,” “peace,” etc. In 1845, Nathaniel Currier also drew *The Tree of Death*, on which were fruits corresponding to Paul’s list of vices.

Ideas for the Day

- ◆ Have you noticed how the more you acquire, the more you seem to have to lose? You spend time sorting, storing, and safekeeping your belongings. The song “Me and Bobby McGee” declares that “Freedom’s just another word for nothing left to lose.” Recent studies have found that Millennials do not want their parents’ treasures like china and furniture. They do not want to become slaves to such material possessions. Rejecting an acquisitive mindset allows the freedom to focus on fostering relationships and caring for neighbors near and far. How much is too much in your life? How much is enough?
- ◆ In poker, the term of art for putting your whole bet on a single hand is called being “all in.” There is a similar term of art in discipleship: “following Jesus,” which means that we are all in. Today’s gospel reading gives the most radical teaching of

Jesus in relation to being all in: “Leave the dead to bury their own dead.” Jesus tells his followers that there is no time to worry with piety; you must follow now. The twentieth-century biblical scholar Norman Perrin notes that “In Judaism, the responsibility for burying the dead was one that took precedence over all other duties enjoined in the Law. ‘He whose dead lies unburied before him is exempt from reciting the *Shema*, from saying the *Tefillah*, and from wearing *phylacteries*’ (some texts add: ‘and from all the duties enjoined in the Law’).” Jesus teaches that piety cannot get in the way of following him—not if we’re all in.

- ◆ It’s week two of the Jesus comedy tour, or “Sons of Thunder Earn their Nickname.” The temptation to violence displayed by James and John is strong in our culture, especially now. It is seen as a sign of strength, a sign of power. But we know, as followers of Jesus, that true strength does not come through violence, and that violence is ultimately a false god, despite all it promises. Stephen Spielberg’s *Munich* speaks of the emptiness of violent retribution, as does *Dead Man Walking* (though with somewhat more political content). Revenge, while satisfying in the moment, is ultimately hollow, as philosophers like James Alison and Rene Girard point out. The way of Christ is love, despite all trials.

Making Connections

In the thanksgiving after communion, many congregations pray, “. . . and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you *with gladness and singleness of heart*” (BCP, p. 365). Each of today’s readings points us toward living a congruent life, guided by singleness of purpose, keeping the main thing the main thing. God’s steadfast love, Christ’s companionship along the way, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit offer the promise that in following the Way with such focus, we will proclaim the reign of God.

Engaging All Ages

“So you want to be a disciple?” may well be the question of the day. And with the question, we are called to consider all the things that we may want more and are tempted to use as excuses. Today’s gospel lends itself well to dramatization with those playing would-be friends offering the familiar excuses of today or to being read by different ages/voices.

Consider inviting youth to present their interpretation. Send worshippers home with an invitation (challenge?) to pause during a busy day to consider if being a disciple could take precedence over daily busy tasks. Let the words of dismissal resonate with Jesus’ words, “Follow me.”

Hymns for the Day

The Hymnal 1982

Christ is made the sure foundation 518
 The Church’s one foundation 525
 God of the prophets, bless the prophets’ heirs 359
 Like the murmur of the dove’s song 513
 Lord, whose love through humble service 610
 My God, accept my heart this day 697
 When Christ was lifted from the earth 603,604
 Day by day 654
 He who would valiant be 564,565
 In your mercy, Lord, you called me 706
 Jesus calls us; o’er the tumult 549,550
 Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us 559
 My song is love unknown 458
 O Jesus, I have promised 655

Lift Every Voice and Sing II

Swing low, sweet chariot [SC] 18
 I can hear my Savior calling 144
 I have decided to follow Jesus 136

Wonder, Love, and Praise

If you believe and I believe 806
 Will you come and follow me 757

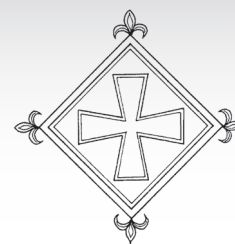
Weekday Commemorations

Thursday, July 4

Independence Day

Ten years after July 4, 1776, General Convention called for observance of Independence Day throughout “this Church, on the fourth of July, for ever.” Proper psalms, lessons, and prayers were appointed for the national recognition of this day; however, they were rescinded in 1789 by General Convention with the intervention of Bishop William White. Although he supported the American Revolution, White revolted against observing the day, given that the majority of the Church’s clericals remained loyal to the British government. Not until 1928 was provision made again for the liturgical notice of the day.

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