

SUNDAYS AND SEASONS

YEAR A 2017





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Introduction

Welcome to the 2017 edition

With this edition of *Sundays and Seasons* we begin another three-year lectionary cycle. Maybe you have been relying on *Sundays and Seasons* since its inception twenty-two years ago. Perhaps you are encountering it for the first time. You are welcome here! As it has from the beginning, the Sundays and Seasons family of resources continues to support week-by-week planning for Lutherans with content and ideas shaped by the Revised Common Lectionary, the church year, and the assembly gathered around word and sacrament. Or, to say it the way its first editor, Samuel Torvend, said it, “*Sundays and Seasons* points us to that merciful place of encounter where God comes to abide among us in the holy gospel and the sacraments of grace: the worshipping assembly.”

Sundays and Seasons has expanded beyond a single print volume into a family of resources that includes a robust online planning tool, sundaysandseasons.com (see a list of the whole family on page 2 of this volume). In 2014, we introduced *Sundays and Seasons: Preaching*, an annual print resource that encourages and provides help for lectionary preaching, taking into account all the readings for the day, in addition to the rest of the service and the day itself in the church year. For each day, someone writing from the perspective of a scholar addresses the question, “What would I want my pastor to know about these readings, this day, in approaching the sermon-writing task?” And a practicing preacher—a different one for each day—provides ideas for ways to craft a sermon that compellingly confronts the worshipping assembly with law and gospel in the vital Lutheran tradition.

Reformation 500

Not only does this year mark the beginning of another lectionary cycle, it also brings us to the observance of the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation. In this year’s edition you will find helps and suggestions throughout the publication that will prepare your worshipping community for this significant moment in the life of the church. The three articles that begin this volume consider various aspects of this observance: how the Gospel of Matthew informs preaching and planning; how we might organize our prayers for the church during this Reformation 500 year; and how the hymn of the day is a particular Reformation inheritance for Lutherans. Each seasonal

introduction also suggests ways in which congregations might prepare to observe this milestone anniversary. Look for the “Reformation 500” section in each. The seasonal materials for Autumn (pp. 249-255) consider Reformation observances in detail and provide many practical helps. This year’s prayers of intercession, particularly the petition for the church, have been crafted with Reformation themes in mind.

With the whole church

This resource would not exist without the creative talents of many people across the church. Those who create content for *Sundays and Seasons* are people just like you. They are pastors, musicians, associates in ministry, members of worship committees and altar guilds, seminary professors, visual artists, diaconal ministers, and deaconesses. They work full time, part time, or are volunteers in their churches. They serve large and small congregations and campus ministries in rural areas, small towns, cities, and suburbs in the United States, Canada, and abroad. They come from various cultural contexts, and with different approaches to worship in word and sacrament. Over the past two decades literally hundreds of people have contributed to *Sundays and Seasons*. Here’s this year’s group.

Visual art

Christina Saj (cover art) has had a longtime fascination with spiritual objects and universal symbols. Using their formal and structural elements as a departure point, she creates paintings in which the symbols can be recognized and reinvented so they may reflect the character of the time in which they were created. Christina lives and works in Cedar Grove, New Jersey. www.christinasaj.com. **Gertrud Mueller Nelson** (interior art) grew up in St. Paul, Minnesota. She is an illustrator, author, speaker, and designer. Montessori, the domestic church and Jung’s psychology are often subjects of her lectures and writing. She has written and/or illustrated thirteen books including the best seller *To Dance with God* (Paulist Press, 1986). Best of all, she is the Oma of three grandchildren. Gertrud lives in San Diego.

Annual and seasonal materials

Troy M. Troftgruben (introduction to Matthew) is assistant professor of New Testament at Wartburg Theological

Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, an ordained minister of the ELCA, and author of the newest Book of Faith study on Matthew (Augsburg Fortress, 2016). **Gail Ramshaw** (praying for the church universal in 2017; thanksgivings at the table for Reformation 500), a Lutheran laywoman, studies and crafts liturgical language from her home outside of Washington, D.C. She recently authored *More Days for Praise: Festivals and Commemorations in Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Augsburg Fortress, 2016). **Mark Mummert** (hymn of the day as Reformation inheritance) is minister of music and communications at Zion Lutheran, York, Pennsylvania. He was the 2015 distinguished visiting cantor at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. **Jon Niketh** (preparing for Advent) serves as pastor of First Lutheran in Lynn, Massachusetts on Boston's north shore, and chairs the New England Synod's worship team. **Emily Hartner** (midweek Advent series) is pastor of St. Mark's Lutheran in Charlotte, North Carolina. She is married to Ian and her social media posts primarily feature their two adorable French bulldogs. **Michael Coffey** (Blue Christmas) serves as pastor of First English Lutheran in Austin, Texas, and is author of *Mystery without Rhyme or Reason: Poetic Reflections on the Revised Common Lectionary*. **Anne Edison-Albright** (preparing for Christmas) is a pastor celebrating nine years of writing for *Sundays and Seasons*. Next year: cake! **Richard Bruxvoort Colligan** (Christmas calls to worship) is a freelance psalmist bringing adventurous songs to the wider church. He's part of the body at Emanuel Lutheran in Strawberry Point, Iowa. **Marissa Sotos** (preparing for the time after Epiphany) is a graduate of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago who loves all things beautiful and liturgical. She lives in Minneapolis. **D. Foy Christopherson** (preparing for Lent) is pastor for worship and the arts, hospitality, and pastoral care at Central Lutheran, Minneapolis. **Lynn Bulock** (midweek Lenten series) is a diaconal minister in Thousand Oaks, California. She is a wife, mother, grandmother, writer, and advocate for mental health issues. **Miriam Schmidt** (preparing for the Three Days) serves as pastor/priest of All Saints in Big Sky (Montana), a shared ministry of the Episcopal and Lutheran (ELCA) churches. **Kevin Anderson** (preparing for Easter) is director for worship and music at St. Philip Lutheran in Mount Dora, Florida. **Alex Raabe** (preparing for Summer) is a church planter at Table of Mercy in Austin, Texas who is passionate about vintage religious kitsch, postmodernity, Jesus, and cream soda. **Craig M. Mueller** (preparing for Autumn) is pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran in Chicago and is interested in the intersection of liturgy, preaching, virtuality, and outreach to the millennial generation. **Bradley E. Schmeling** (seasonal worship texts for Autumn) serves as senior pastor at Gloria Dei Lutheran in St. Paul. **Karen Bates-Olson** (preparing for November) serves as pastor to the wonderful people of Resurrection Lutheran in Tacoma, Washington. She and her family love the North "wet."

Prayers of intercession

Jennifer Baker-Trinity is an associate in ministry and church musician who leads the people's song at Beaver Lutheran in Beaver Springs, Pennsylvania. **Rev. Dr. Lawrence James Clark II** is senior pastor of St. Mark Evangelical Lutheran in Chicago. **Brett Davis** is associate pastor of Muhlenberg Lutheran in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Pastor **Julie Kanarr** serves Christ Lutheran in Belfair, Washington. In addition to writing, she enjoys bicycling, camping, and sea kayaking. **Jean Larson** lives in Missoula, Montana, with her husband and her horse. After 34 years in ministry, she trained with Auburn Seminary and coaches her colleagues (jeanlarsoncoaching.com). Diaconal minister **Jennifer Manis** serves at Lutheran Campus Ministry in Raleigh, North Carolina. She encounters God's peace in the swimming pool and eating with friends. **Rachel Manke** is a pastor in Richmond, Virginia. She teaches music and plays the ukulele. **Kyle Schiefelbein** earned his PhD in liturgical studies from Graduate Theological Union and is a member of St. Mark's Lutheran in San Francisco. **Lynn Bulock** (see seasonal materials) also contributed prayers of intercession to this volume.

Ideas for the day

Tim Brown is the senior pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran in Raleigh. He loves beer, writing, his wife and two boys, and brevity. **Yehiel Curry** is the seventh child born to Regina Curry. He has been husband to Lashonda for twenty years and is a proud empty-nesting father of three awesome daughters. **Melody Eastman** is a parish pastor in Illinois. In her spare time she inflicts her bodhrán (drum) playing on tolerant trad Irish music sessions. **Heidi Heimgartner** is a parish pastor in Blooming Prairie, Minnesota. She and her spouse parent two elementary-aged sons who give great sermon feedback. **Jim Honig** is pastor of Faith Evangelical Lutheran in Glen Ellyn, Illinois and loves pastoral ministry, reading, writing, and the outdoors. His new passion is serving as a prairie restoration volunteer at Nachusa National Grasslands. **Rebecca Liberty** has served in congregations and campus ministries in the western United States and is now pastor of Redeemer Lutheran in Bangor, Maine. **Bekki Lohrmann** is serving in her second year as pastor at Faith Lutheran in Joliet, Illinois. She studied at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and Valparaiso University. **Henry Martinez** is country coordinator for the ELCA's Young Adults in Global Mission program in Australia. He loves cooking and being a dad. **Rev. Lucille "Ce Cee" Mills** is program associate for African Descent Ministries for the ELCA. She lives in Greensboro, North Carolina. At press time, **Alissa Oleson** was serving her pastoral internship at St. Paul Lutheran in Arlington, Massachusetts. **Katya Ouchakof** serves as co-pastor of Lake Edge Lutheran in Madison, Wisconsin. She enjoys canoeing, knitting, Star Wars, the Bible, and her family. **Julia Seymour** serves as pastor of Lutheran Church of

Hope in Anchorage, Alaska. Along with family time, she enjoys reading, outdoor walks, and crocheting. **Harvard Stephens Jr.** is dean of the chapel at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. He is also a tai chi instructor and jazz musician. **William Storm** is a first call pastor at Memorial Drive Lutheran in Houston, Texas. He is excited to be a first time contributor to *Sundays and Seasons*. **Paul Walters** is pastor of Lutheran Church of the Master in Troy, Michigan. He is a husband, father of three boys, and a knight of Sufferlandria. **Michael Coffey** (see seasonal materials) also contributed ideas for the day to this volume.

Other weekly materials

Sharolyn Browning (let the children come) is a Godly Play storyteller and trainer. She is awaiting her first call as a pastor in the ELCA, after having worked with children and their families for more than twenty years. She holds a certificate in the spiritual guidance of children. **Gail Ramshaw** (images in the readings; connections with the liturgy), a Lutheran laywoman, is the author of *Treasures Old and New: Images in the Lectionary, Christian Worship: 100,000 Sundays of Symbols and Rituals*, and *What Is Christianity?* (Fortress Press, 2002, 2009, 2013).

Music suggestions

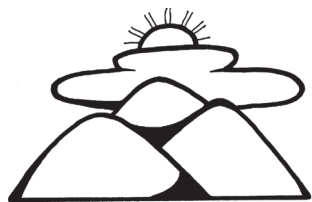
Andrea Baxter (children's choir) serves as the associate director for music at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran in Lansdale, Pennsylvania where she directs a graded children and youth music program. **Lorraine S. Brugh** (global) is professor of music and director of chapel music at Valparaiso University. She serves as executive director of the University's Institute of Liturgical Studies, which annually brings church leaders across the country together to study and reflect upon worship practices. **Cheryl Dieter** (psalmody) is minister of worship and music at Trinity Lutheran in Valparaiso, Indiana, and business manager for the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians. **Chad Fothergill** (keyboard/instrumental) is a university fellow and PhD student in musicology at Temple University,

Philadelphia, and has served as keyboardist, conductor, and composer for congregations in Minnesota, Iowa, and Pennsylvania. **Michael J. Glasgow** (handbell) is an award-winning composer and internationally recognized conductor working in handbell, organ, orchestral and choral settings. He is known for his high energy, positive spirit, and musical integrity (www.michaeljglasgow.com). **Zebulon M. Highben** (choral) is a conductor, composer, and Lutheran church musician who teaches at a Presbyterian liberal arts college—Muskingum University in New Concord, Ohio. **Mark Mummert** (hymns) is minister of music and communications at Zion Lutheran, York, Pennsylvania. He was the 2015 distinguished visiting cantor at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. **Omaldo Perez** (praise/contemporary) has served Lutheran congregations in New Jersey, Arizona, Washington, and now Ohio, where he is the music director and organist at Zoar Lutheran in Perrysburg.

You make it happen

Sundays and Seasons continues to be a collaborative endeavor each year. In our editorial conversations here at Augsburg Fortress we regularly evaluate the scope, format, and quality of the content provided in these pages. Your feedback, collected from you firsthand at events around this church, from postings in various forms of social media, from phone calls and emails to our sales and service representatives, and from surveys, helps us make decisions about how to adjust content so it is even more helpful, or, frankly, to leave it alone because it is doing its job. You, dear partners in ministry, make this resource happen. I welcome your ideas for future content, your suggestions for potential contributors (maybe you!), and your constructive feedback. Thank you for the trust you place in the changing roster of contributors who offer their time and talent to the whole church through *Sundays and Seasons*. Even more, thank you for the many and various ways in which you care for the Sunday assembly and its worship of the triune God.

Suzanne K. Burke, general editor



November 27, 2016

First Sunday of Advent

The new church year begins with a wake-up call: Christ is coming soon! In today's readings both Paul and Jesus challenge us to wake from sleep, for we know neither the day nor hour of the Lord's coming. Isaiah proclaims the day when God will gather all people on the holy mountain and there will be no more war or suffering. Though we vigilantly watch for the promised day of salvation, we wait for what we already have: Christ comes among us this day as the word and meal that strengthens our faith in the promises of God.

Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection save us from the threatening dangers of our sins, and enlighten our walk in the way of your salvation, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia. Show us your steadfast ¹ love, O LORD,* and grant us ¹ your salvation. *Alleluia.* (Ps. 85:7)

Readings and Psalm

Isaiah 2:1-5

The visionary message presented in this reading focuses on a future day when God establishes a universal reign of peace. Divine decisions will make war obsolete, and the worshipping community responds: "Let us walk in that light of that Lord now!"

Psalm 122

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD." (Ps. 122:1)

Romans 13:11-14

Paul compares the advent of Christ to the coming of dawn. We live our lives today in light of Christ's coming in the future.

Matthew 24:36-44

Jesus describes his second coming as a sudden, unexpected event that will bring salvation or judgment upon people caught up in the usual affairs of daily life. He urges people to be alert and expectant.

Preface Advent

Color Blue

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

As we anticipate the fullness of the presence of Christ, we join with the church throughout the world, praying for all who are in need.

A brief silence.

For the church and its leaders, and for all who work for the unity of the gospel; that the compassion of Christ break down all divisions, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For the well-being of creation, for mountains and hills, lakes and rivers, snow and sunshine, plants and animals, and for all who care for the earth; that God raise up stewards to protect this good creation, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For peace among nations, for those who lead all levels of government, for judges and magistrates, and for those who speak for the voiceless; that all are treated with equity and fairness, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For those who are anxious and worried, for the sick and bereaved, for the homeless and imprisoned, for those in any need (*especially*); that the compassion shown by Christ be embodied in caregivers and advocates, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For those who gather for word and sacrament, for those who travel, and for our holiday preparations; that in all our activities we give thanks to the Lord, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

In thanksgiving for those who have died and are at rest; that their witness to the gospel serve as examples of living the life of faith, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, those spoken aloud and those known only to you, and grant us peace through Jesus Christ, our coming Savior.

Amen.

Images in the Readings

The apocalyptic imagery of **the end of the world**, like the flood sweeping all things away, echoes from the Old Testament into the preaching of Jesus and continues in contemporary disaster movies and terrorist activity. For Christians, fear about the end always comes to rest in trust in the presence of God. When all is over, at our end is God.

Today's readings expand and challenge our society's welcome of God arriving as only baby Jesus, for God comes as **judge** and calls us into a life of justice for all, evoking in us both anticipation and fear. Often in classical art, Justice is a towering robed woman who judges right from wrong.

Often in the Bible, God meets with humankind on a **mountain**. Our language even calls "a mountaintop experience" one so overwhelming that it changes one's future. Sinai, Horeb, Jerusalem, the mount of Jesus' sermon, the Mount of Transfiguration, the Mount of Olives, Golgotha, Zion: all are superimposed on our church buildings, for the Christian mountain is wherever we receive the word and sacraments.

In English, the phrase "**swords into plowshares**" indicates the hope for world peace, a hope for which Christians pray to God.

Ideas for the Day

- The end-time imagery of Matthew and Isaiah has often appeared in protest movements. In the 1980s, the Plowshares movement, a pacifist group influenced by Catholicism, became famous when its members were convicted and served prison time for damaging military property in resistance to war. In the American civil rights movement, African Americans chanted, "What time is it?" (The answer: "Nation time!") The spiritual "Down by the Riverside," sometimes used in antiwar protests, uses Isaiah's words to imagine a time when people "study war no more." Recall the ways these scriptures have given hope, concreteness, and urgency to social change efforts, and apply them to your time and place. What are the current and concrete hopes for people struggling in your community? For people you know who are oppressed, "what time is it?"
- "Keep awake," Jesus says, a call echoed in Paul's letter to the Romans: "It is now the moment for you to wake from sleep" (Rom. 13:11). The concepts of spiritual awakening and being fully present attract many people, Christians and non-Christians alike. Many spiritual teachers and counselors have shared advice on living "awake" and in the moment. You might compare and contrast some of those popular teachers with Jesus and Paul. A few places to start include the work of scientist and mindfulness teacher Jon Kabat-Zinn, and two best-selling books, *The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment* by Eckhart Tolle (Novato, CA: New World Library, 1999) and *Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality without Religion* by Sam

Harris (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014). As we begin this Advent season, how do you describe the difference between being "awake" in one's life and being "awake" to Christ's coming?

- In Matthew's gospel, Jesus pictures the Son of Man surprising people in the midst of daily life: while people are in the field, grinding meal, or sleeping at home. Use one or more short skits to imagine contemporary scenes for his coming, such as workers gathered around an office conference table, young people playing video games, or shoppers at a mall preparing for Christmas. Where do we watch for Christ's coming today?

Connections with the Liturgy

The Apostles' Creed anticipates the coming of the judge: I believe in Jesus Christ, who "will come to judge the living and the dead."

Let the Children Come

Advent is our signal that some brand-new thing is about to begin! And yet it feels old and familiar, doesn't it? Some of the children in your community are too young to quite remember last year, or some might be murmuring, "Not this again!" The work of the Christian people is to invite children into our collective memory, but also to learn from children how to see, with new eyes, God's presence animated among us. We all are partners together in the body of Christ. Let us approach Advent, and this year, learning and teaching alongside children in our midst.

Assembly Song Gathering

Great Litany ELW 238, LBW pp. 168–173

Lo! He comes with clouds descending ELW 435, LBW 27

O Lord, how shall I meet you ELW 241, LBW 23

Psalmody and Acclamations

Hobby, Robert A. "Psalm 122" from PWA.

Long, Larry J. "Psalm 122" from PSCY.

Savoy, Thomas F. "I Rejoiced When They Said to Me." SATB, cant, assembly, org. GIA G-7524.

(GA) Syrian traditional. "Halle, Hallelujah" from *Pave the Way: Global Songs 3*. AFP 9780800676896. Use ELW psalm tone 5 in E minor with verse for Advent 1.

Hymn of the Day

Wake, awake, for night is flying ELW 436, LBW 31, LLC 276

WACHET AUF

Soon and very soon ELW 439, WOV 744, W&P 128, TFF 38

VERY SOON

Rejoice, rejoice, believers ELW 244, LBW 25 HAF TRONES LAMPA

FÄRDIG

Offering

Soon and very soon ELW 439, WOV 744, W&P 128, TFF 38
Come now, O Prince of peace ELW 247

Communion

My Lord, what a morning ELW 438, TFF 40, WOV 627
The people walk/*Un pueblo que camina* ELW 706, LLC 520
Wait for the Lord ELW 262

Sending

The King shall come ELW 260, LBW 33
Lord our God, with praise we come ELW 730

Additional Assembly Songs

- I want to be ready TFF 41
- O Savior, rend the heavens wide LBW 38
- We are awaiting the coming MSB2 S536
- ☉ Farrell, Bernadette. "Word of Justice" from *Agape: Songs of Hope and Reconciliation*. 2 pt. Lutheran World Federation. Out of print. Available on Amazon.com.
- ☼ Corum, Casey. "Kindness" from CCLI.
- ☼ Kirkland, Eddie. "Hosanna" from CCLI.
- ☼ Mac, Toby. "Break Open the Sky" from CCLI.
- ☼ Reeves, Sarah/Jeremy Rose/Sarah Hart. "Awaken" from CCLI.
- ☼ Smith, Martin/Chris Tomlin/Jesse Reeves. "Waiting Here for You" from CCLI.
- ☼ Walton, Greg. "Come to Us" from CCLI.

Music for the Day

Choral

- ♫ Bouman, Paul. "Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers." SATB, org. MSM 50-0004.
- Nelson, Ronald A. "A Vision of Peace." SAB, pno. GIA G-7007.
- P ♫ Nelson, Ronald A. "Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers." SAB, pno or org, opt assembly. AFP 9781451424027.
- Leavitt, John. "My Lord, What a Morning." SATB, pno. CPH 98-4157.

Children's Choir

- Lindh, Jody. "An Advent Carol." U, kybd. CG CGA648.
- P Patterson, Mark. "Advent Prayer" from *ChildrenSing: Seven Anthems for Elementary Age Singers*. U/2 pt, kybd. AFP 9780800677695.
- P Schram, Ruth Elaine. "I Was Glad." 2 pt mxd, kybd. AFP 9780800676650.

Keyboard / Instrumental

- ♫ Krebs, Johann Ludwig (1713–1780). "Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying" (Wachet auf) from *Eight Chorale Preludes for Organ with Trumpet (or Oboe)*. Tpt or ob, org. PRE 453001070.

- Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Felix (1809–1847). "Andante" from *Sonata No. 6 in D Minor, Op. 65.6*. Org. Various editions.
- P ♫ Raabe, Nancy. "Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers" with "Come Now, O Prince of Peace" (Haf trones lampa färdig; Ososö, ososö) from *Grace and Peace, vol. 7: Hymn Portraits for the Christmas Cycle*. Pno. AFP 9781451499124.
- P Rowland-Raybold, Roberta. "Creator of the Stars of Night" (Conditor alme siderum) from *Winter Solstice: Carols for Organ*. Org. AFP 9781451499100.

Handbell

- ♫ Ingram, Bill. "Soon and Very Soon." 3-5 oct, L3-. Ring Praise! RP7624.
- P ♫ Moklebust, Cathy. "Rejoice, Rejoice" from *Celebrate the Season*. 2-3 oct, L2+, CG CGB785. 3-5 oct, L2+, CG CGB786.
- ♫ Page, Anna Laura. "Wake, Awake (Wachet auf)." 3-6 oct hb, opt 3-5 oct hc, L4. CG CGB755.

Wednesday, November 30

Andrew, Apostle

Andrew was the first of the Twelve. He is known as a fisherman who left his net to follow Jesus. As a part of his calling, he brought other people, including Simon Peter, to meet Jesus. The Byzantine church honors Andrew as its patron and points out that because he was the first of Jesus' followers, he was, in the words of John Chrysostom, "the Peter before Peter." Together with Philip, Andrew leads a number of Greeks to speak with Jesus, and it is Andrew who shows Jesus a boy with five barley loaves and two fish. Andrew is said to have died on a cross saltire, an X-shaped cross.

Saturday, December 3

Francis Xavier, missionary to Asia, died 1552

Francis Xavier (SAYV-yehr) was born in the Basque region of northern Spain. Francis's native Basque language is unrelated to any other, and Francis admitted that learning languages was difficult for him. Despite this obstacle he became a missionary to India, Southeast Asia, Japan, and the Philippines. At each point he learned the local language and, like Martin Luther, wrote catechisms for the instruction of new converts. Another obstacle Francis overcame to accomplish his mission work was a propensity to seasickness. All his travels to the Far East were by boat. Together with Ignatius Loyola and five others, Francis formed the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). Francis spoke out against the Spanish and Portuguese colonists when he discovered their oppression of the indigenous people to whom he was sent as a missionary.



Preparing for Easter

Christ Is with Us

Following the traumatic events of the crucifixion and a terrifying resurrection, the disciples in their confusion and grief had to be wondering, *What's next?* The lectionary readings for the Easter season provide the road map ahead as the disciples discover a new postresurrection life and reality: Christ is with us. Behind closed doors, in our doubt, on our journey, in water, bread, and wine, the Good Shepherd calls us to follow, going before us to prepare the way, bringing peace, breathing the Spirit on us, so that we may tell this story to people of every land and nation. Jesus' promise to be with us always is the game changer.

Today, how do we acknowledge Christ's presence with us in our Sunday assemblies? What does it mean for us that this is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ? Do we worship as if we believe Christ is truly present with us? If not, what could we do differently? How can we make known Christ's presence with us in our worship through our words and actions, art and music? Here are some ways assemblies can visibly and physically reveal Christ's presence with God's people today.

Processional Cross

The processional cross has a long history of use in Western and Eastern Christianity and is often a significant work of art. While many congregations have a cross on a pole standing near the altar table, this cross might be used rarely as intended. When the cross is carried into the midst of the assembly, it becomes a powerful sign of Christ's presence with us. The celebration of the Easter season is particularly suited to using the cross in procession. During the gathering song, the cross may be carried into the church by the crucifer. It might be flanked by two candle torches and followed by the lector carrying a Bible or lectionary book, the assisting and presiding ministers, and processional banners. A tradition is for the assembly to face the cross as it enters and to bow as a sign of reverence, acknowledging Christ's presence, as it passes. If a gospel procession is included, the cross may lead the procession of a Bible or lectionary book and ministers to the center of the assembly for the reading of the gospel when we hear Jesus' voice alive and

present with us again. As the sending song is sung, the cross leads the assembly to the entrance doors for the dismissal as a sign we carry the presence of Christ with us into the world.

Thanksgiving for Baptism

The thanksgiving for baptism, with its images of new life in the risen Christ, is a fitting alternative to confession and forgiveness during the Easter season (see page 168 for a newly written example). The ministers gather at the baptismal font for the thanksgiving. Water may be poured into the font as the prayer is said. As a reminder of the gift of baptism, the assembly may be sprinkled with water as a song is sung. A small glass bowl of water and an evergreen branch work well for the sprinkling. This sprinkling of the assembly is a reminder that "by water and the Holy Spirit we are reborn children of God and made members of the church, the body of Christ" (*ELW*, p. 227). In addition to "This is the feast" or an Easter hymn, songs for Holy Baptism are especially appropriate when accompanied by sprinkling. If your baptismal font and paschal candle do not occupy a prominent place in your worship space, consider creating such an area with ample space to accommodate baptismal groups.

Sign of the Cross

The Easter season is the perfect time to teach children and adults to remember their baptism by introducing the sign of the cross to the assembly. In his *Small Catechism*, Martin Luther instructs us to make the sign of the holy cross and say, "God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit watch over me. Amen," as soon as we get out of bed in the morning and before going to bed in the evening (*ELW*, pp. 1166–1167). We are encouraged also to make the sign of the cross each time we begin and end worship. Notice in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* the red crosses in the texts for confession and forgiveness, thanksgiving for baptism, and the blessing. These crosses are not just cues for the presiding minister to make the sign of the cross but are there so that *all* may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism. Invite everyone to make the sign of the cross with the presiding minister at these times. The sign of the cross is made by touching your hand to your forehead, then to your

lower chest, then to each shoulder. Additionally, people may be encouraged to dip their fingers into the water of the baptismal font and trace the sign of the cross on their foreheads as they enter church or come to the table for communion. This is another reminder of our baptism: “Child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever” (ELW, p. 231). Engaging with the means of grace regularly is essential to our faith formation.

Bible or Lectionary Book

A significant Bible or lectionary book placed on the ambo or pulpit is a visible sign of the centrality of the word of God in Christian worship. Rather than reading from a sheet of paper that will be discarded later, we demonstrate how important scripture is to us by reading from a permanent book. When carried to the center of the assembly for the reading of the gospel, the Bible or lectionary book is a symbol of the life-giving word of God and the proclamation of the gospel—Jesus alive and active in the world today.

The Feast of Victory

The Use of the Means of Grace (1997) reminds us that holy communion is known by many names, each emphasizing a certain aspect of the sacrament (Principle 36). Easter calls us to see the meal as a great thanksgiving for creation’s redemption in Jesus Christ and to share with the risen Lord a foretaste of the feast to come. During the Easter season, make your celebration of the meal a feast of victory. Consider using a delicious loaf of fresh-baked leavened bread and a good wine you would enjoy drinking with a fine meal. Stand instead of kneel to receive the sacrament. Train your communion ministers to boldly proclaim to each person the good news: “The body of Christ, given for you.” “The blood of Christ, shed for you.” Sing lively music fitting for a celebration. Finally, and very importantly, consider how you can physically and visibly send the sacrament from the table with communion ministers for distribution to those who are sick, homebound, imprisoned, or absent from the assembly for any reason. Like Jesus bursting forth from the tomb, the walls of the church can no longer contain the Easter feast of victory.

Music

The seasonal liturgical music and song you choose play a vital role in creating a unified Easter cycle (Ash Wednesday through the Day of Pentecost). Sing a strong Easter hymn as the gathering song each week to remind people we continue to celebrate the resurrection every Sunday. The music from Lent should feel as if it is transformed in the Easter season. If you sang a Kyrie during Lent, sing the same Kyrie during the Easter season followed by a complementary setting of “This is the feast.” The Lenten gospel acclamation is replaced with the return of the alleluia. Consider using a setting of the gospel acclamation that complements the “Holy, holy, holy” of the great thanksgiving. This will help connect two climactic elements of the liturgy, the proclamation of the gospel and the thanksgiving at the table. If you choose to include a gospel procession (carrying a Bible or lectionary book to the center of the assembly to read the gospel), sing the alleluias with the appointed verse before the reading and repeat the alleluias alone as the procession returns. Retain the musical setting of the great thanksgiving used during Lent but now with sung acclamations and amen. The “Lamb of God” may be retained, or you may replace it with “The Disciples Knew the Lord Jesus” from *Music Sourcebook for Lent and the Three Days* (Augsburg Fortress, 2010), S496, S497.

As much as possible, continue to include instrumental parts and choral descants used on Easter Day throughout the season. A joyous celebration of the entire Easter season can reverberate through every Sunday of the church year, transforming our worship with the new life of the risen Christ who is present with us at every gathering of the assembly.

Reformation 500

One way your congregation can observe the 500th anniversary of the Reformation during the Easter season is to sing hymns with texts attributed to Martin Luther and those with important historic roots in Lutheran church history. The hymn of the day for Easter Day could be Luther’s classic “Christ Jesus lay in death’s strong bands” (ELW 370). It is rich in Luther’s theology and paired with a tune of its own significance derived from plainsong. Sing “Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord” (ELW 395), one of the finest hymns from the Lutheran heritage, on the Day of Pentecost. The gospel acclamation for the season could be “Christ is arisen” (ELW 372). If you include a gospel procession, an alleluia with the appointed verse could precede the reading and this hymn could be sung following the gospel. In the spirit of the Reformation composers, write your own gospel acclamation based on well-known tunes. As an example, use the refrain from “The strife is o’er, the battle done” (ELW 366) combined with psalm tone 1 or tone 4 (transposed to D) and the proper

verse (see *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Accompaniment Edition: Liturgies*, pp. 215, 220). Selected stanzas of “At the Lamb’s high feast we sing” (ELW 362) can be the assembly’s song at the setting of the table. For more information on these hymns, see *Hymnal Companion to Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Augsburg Fortress, 2010).

Seasonal Checklist

- Visually extend the festive celebration of Easter Day throughout the season by refreshing lilies or other flowers and retaining art and decorations through the Day of Pentecost. In addition to adorning the table and ambo, consider ornamenting the cross, paschal candle, and baptismal font as well.
- It is particularly appropriate during the Easter season to use thanksgiving for baptism as an alternative to confession and forgiveness.
- Sing the canticle of praise “This is the feast” either following the thanksgiving for baptism (with the option of sprinkling with water) or as the table is set for the meal.
- Use the Nicene Creed.
- Appropriate options for the thanksgiving at the table include prayers IV, VII, or X in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (pp. 111, 67, 69) and those for the season of Easter (E) and the Day of Pentecost (F) in *With One Voice Leaders Edition* (pp. 69, 70).
- Publicize Ascension and Pentecost services, helping the community understand the importance of these festivals. Since Ascension of Our Lord falls on a Thursday, it may provide an opportunity for local congregations and full communion partners to worship together in a joint Ascension Day service.
- Consider observing the Day of Pentecost as the next baptismal festival following the Vigil of Easter.
- Determine ways to emphasize the Day of Pentecost, such as using red flowers or balloons, inviting people to wear red, or using a diversity of languages in scripture readings, prayers, or music. If you will use a diversity of languages for the Day of Pentecost, make preparations in advance with musicians and readers.
- On Pentecost, seven votive candles in red glass holders may be lighted near the altar table to recall the gifts of the Spirit identified in the rites of Holy Baptism and Affirmation of Baptism (Isa. 11:2).
- If your congregation celebrates affirmation of baptism (confirmation) during this season, review the rite in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.