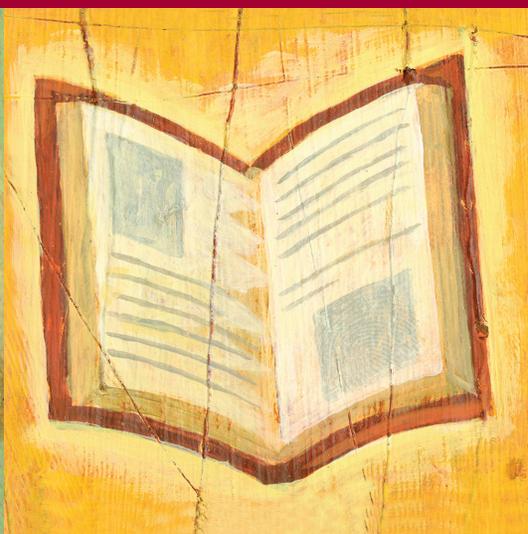
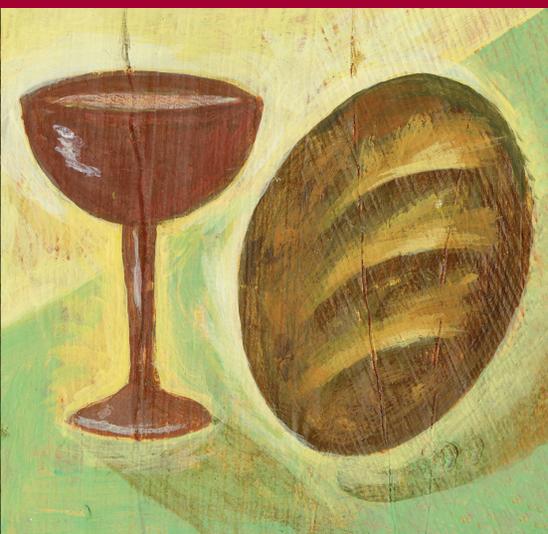
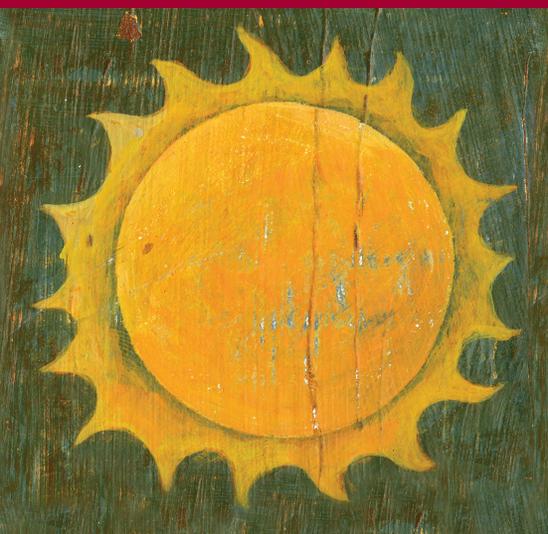


SUNDAYS AND SEASONS
YEAR C 2016





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WELCOME

Two decades and counting

This edition of *Sundays and Seasons* marks its twenty-first year of publication. Over those twenty-plus years, the mission of *Sundays and Seasons* has remained constant, even as its form and content have adapted to meet the changing needs of worship planners. *Sundays and Seasons* was introduced at a time when the ecumenical Revised Common Lectionary (1992) was being newly adopted by congregations and denominations and *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978) was nearing its twentieth anniversary. More than twenty years later the church's worship continues to be enriched by this lectionary, and North American Lutherans have a new principal worship resource, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (2006).

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.

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."

Welcome to the 2016 edition

Maybe you have been relying on *Sundays and Seasons* since its inception. Perhaps you are encountering it for the first time. While the basic form and content of *Sundays and Seasons* continues from previous years, this year's edition includes some things worth pointing out to both newcomers and longtime users.

This year, we are trying something new within the **seasonal introductions**. While *Sundays and Seasons* has

always provided suggestions around **preparing the visual environment** for each season, this year the suggestions are accompanied by actual visuals (photographs, patterns, step-by-step instructions, and more) presented in PDF files that can be accessed online. You can access and download these files for free through the Augsburg Fortress web store: <http://store.augsburgfortress.org/media/temp/SundaysSeasons/PDFs.zip>. If you are a sundaysandseasons.com subscriber, these same files will be accessible through the seasonal rites section of the Library. These visual suggestions and ideas were created and curated by Linda Witte Henke. Linda is an award-winning mixed-media artist who creates commissioned liturgical art and exhibits her work within and beyond the United States (www.lindahenke.com). She lives in Indianapolis, where she also chairs the worship committee of the Indiana-Kentucky Synod.

The decision to omit a **seasonal greeting** beginning in 2014 came from widespread observation that many presiding ministers are so tied to the words on the page when speaking the words of an unfamiliar, regularly changing greeting that they do not actually look at the assembly when speaking these words. The intention here is to encourage presiders to use a greeting known by heart so they can be freed from the page and truly greet the assembly. The standard "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all" serves beautifully any Sunday of the year. And, there is great power in hearing the same words again and again, something especially the children in our assemblies remind us when we change the words to worship texts they know by heart.

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 images

You may recognize **Tanja Butler's** (weekly images) black and white icons from sundaysandseasons.com. We have already colorized Tanja's icons for years A and B; year C will be added in time for Advent 2015. **Claudia McGehee** (annual and seasonal images) contemplates and illustrates from her home studio in Iowa City, Iowa. Learn about her and see more of her work at claudiaillustration.blogspot.com. In creating the cover art for *Sundays and Seasons*, **Nicholas Wilton** believed that symbols of things were needed as, like poetry, we are trying to express something about the spiritual.

Annual and seasonal materials

Jennifer Baker-Trinity (Lent, Three Days, and Easter lectionary and music introductions) is a church musician who leads the people's song at Beaver Lutheran in Beaver Springs, Pennsylvania. **Lynn Bulock** (lighting the Christmas tree; blessing the nativity scene) is a diaconal minister in southern California. She is a member of New Hope Lutheran, a Stephen Leader, wife, mother, and grandmother. **Dennis Bushkofsky** (midweek Lenten plan: Continuing in the Covenant of Baptism) likes having a church office and home within one Wi-Fi signal where he also produces AF's annual *Bread for the Day*. **Erik Christensen** (Summer, Autumn, and November lectionary and music introductions) is the pastor of St. Luke's Lutheran of Logan Square in Chicago. He is learning to play guitar and waiting for the next season of Downton Abbey. Award-winning mixed-media artist, published author, and former parish pastor **Linda Witte Henke** (seasonal visual environment suggestions) creates commissioned liturgical art and exhibits her work within and beyond the U.S. **Melissa Moll** (Epiphany Day service; midweek Lenten series: Open My Life, Lord) is an organist, a librarian, and a member of First Lutheran in Lincoln, Nebraska. **Craig M. Mueller** (Advent in November?) is pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran in Chicago and is interested in the intersection of liturgy, preaching, virtuality, and outreach to the millennial generation. **Mark Mummert** (Advent, Christmas, and Time after Epiphany lectionary and music introductions) is director of worship at Christ the King Lutheran in Houston. He served as seminary musician at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, 1990–2008. **Ray Pickett** (introduction to Luke) is professor of New Testament at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. **Gail Ramshaw** (Treasuring the Revised Common Lectionary) studies and crafts liturgical

language from her home in Washington, D.C. **John Roberts** (Maundy Thursday and Testing of Abraham scripts) is associate pastor of Unity Evangelical Lutheran in Chicago. **Clint A. Schneklloth** (evening prayer Advent series; graduate blessing) is lead pastor at Good Shepherd Lutheran, Fayetteville, Arkansas. He is the author of *Mediating Faith: Faith Formation in a Trans-media Era*.

Prayers of intercession

Rev. Dr. **Lawrence James Clark II** is senior pastor of St. Mark Lutheran in Chicago. **Brett Davis** is associate pastor of Muhlenberg Lutheran in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Pastor **Julie A. Kanarr** serves Christ Lutheran in Belfair, Washington. In addition to writing, she enjoys bicycling, camping, and sea kayaking. Diaconal minister **Jennifer Manis** serves at Lutheran Campus Ministry in Raleigh, North Carolina. She encounters God's grace daily through laughter, coffee, and walks in the wood. **Rachel Manke** is a parish pastor in the Boston area. In her free time she enjoys writing limericks and playing her ukuleles. **Kyle Schiefelbein** earned his PhD in liturgical studies from Graduate Theological Union and is a member of St. Mark's Lutheran in San Francisco. **Kevin Shock** enjoys many ministry opportunities with seniors, Penn State students, and others, but especially feels blessed as pastor for the people at St. Mark Lutheran in Pleasant Gap, Pennsylvania. **Lynn Bulock**, **Gail Ramshaw**, and **Clint A. Schneklloth** also contributed prayers of intercession to this volume.

Images in the readings, connections with the liturgy

Gail Ramshaw studies and crafts liturgical language from her home in Washington, D.C. She is the author of *Treasures Old and New*, *Christian Worship*, and *What Is Christianity?*

Ideas for the day

Pastor **Karen Bates-Olson** serves Lutheran Church of the Master in Pasco, Washington. She and her husband, Kevin, have two beautiful daughters, Amy and Katie. Pastor **Tim Brown** serves Luther Memorial Church in Chicago, and is a writer, dreamer, and occasional beer brewer. **Michael Coffey** serves as pastor of First English Lutheran in Austin, Texas. He enjoys writing, blogging, cooking, liturgical and ritual experimentation, Old Testament studies, and exploring spiritual formation. **Yehiel Curry** was ordained through the Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) program after serving two years as mission developer of Shekinah Chapel in Riverdale, Illinois. He later earned his MDiv from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. **Melody Eastman** is senior pastor of St. Paul Lutheran in Wheaton, Illinois. She and her husband Marty

crave live music and camping. **Anne Edison-Albright** is wife to Sean, mom to Walter and Sally, friend to Hank the dog, and pastor to Redeemer Lutheran in Stevens Point, Wisconsin. **Bryon Hansen** is pastor of Phinney Ridge Lutheran in Seattle, a parish passionate about formation in and around the gift of baptism. His greatest delight is to preside, preach, and assist the catechumenate process. **James Honig** is pastor of Faith Evangelical Lutheran in Glen Ellyn, Illinois. He is a writer, blogger, and avid enjoyer of God's good creation. **Liv Larson Andrews** is an ELCA pastor serving in the West Central neighborhood of Spokane, Washington. Sunday worship is enlivened for her by her young son, Arlo, and spouse, Casey. **Nathan LeRud** is an Episcopal priest serving as canon for spiritual formation at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Portland, Oregon. **Rebecca Liberty** has served in congregations and campus ministries in the western United States and now lives in Bangor, Maine. **Bekki Lohrmann**, a 2014 LSTC graduate, is awaiting first call. She has served as interim pastor at Holden Village in Chelan, Washington, and Faith Lutheran in Joliet, Illinois. **Anastasia McAteer** is a liturgist, preacher, teacher, community organizer, and mommy. **Patrick Shebeck** is pastor of St. Paul–Reformation Lutheran in St. Paul. He has been a church musician in Roman Catholic, Episcopal, and Lutheran parishes in the Twin Cities. **Harvard Stephens**, an ELCA pastor, finds renewal through many forms of contemplative spirituality, including tai chi. He also enjoys playing the soprano saxophone. **David Vásquez-Levy** is president of Pacific School of Religion. A committed pastor, nationally recognized immigration leader, and sought after speaker, David loves intersections: church, academy, and world. **Paul E. Walters** is pastor of Lutheran Church of the Master in Troy, Michigan. He is a husband, father to three boys, and a knight of Sufferlandria.

Let the children come

Sharolyn Browning is a Godly Play storyteller and trainer. She holds a certificate in the spiritual guidance of children and a Master of Divinity degree. **Suzanne Guinn** is a pastor and chaplain in Fort Worth, Texas, and has two cats. She enjoys playing the keyboard, singing, and writing poetry. **Ruth E. Hetland** is a pastor, writer, wife, mom, skeptic, taphophile, and a Norwegian reality show participant (*Alt for Norge*, season 5).

Music suggestions

Arletta Anderson (keyboard/instrumental) is an associate in ministry in the ELCA and cantor at Queen Anne Lutheran in Seattle. **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. **Michael J. Glasgow** (handbell) is an award-winning composer and internationally recognized conductor working in handbell, organ, orchestral, and choral settings (www.michaeljglasgow.com). **Gwen Gotsch** (children's choir) directs the youth choir and coordinates communications at Grace Lutheran in River Forest, Illinois. She has written devotions for *Christ in Our Home* and articles for *Gather*. **Julie Grindle** (hymns) is a lifelong church musician and serves as director of music ministries at St. Mark's Lutheran in Baldwinsville, New York. She is president-elect of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians. **Omaldo Perez** (praise/contemporary songs, Holy Trinity through Christ the King) has served four Lutheran congregations in the last fifteen years in New Jersey, Arizona, Washington, and now Ohio, where he happily serves as the music director and organist at Zoar Lutheran in Perrysburg. The task of suggesting songs in the praise/contemporary category (Advent through Day of Pentecost) was shared by **Clint A. Schnekloth**. New Hampshire native **Timothy Shaw** (choral) is a composer, conductor, pianist, organist, and music educator (www.shawmusic.org).

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. 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 29, 2015

First Sunday of Advent

Advent is about the “coming days.” God’s people have always lived in great expectation, but that expectation finds specific, repeated enunciation in the texts appointed for these four weeks. The ancients anticipated a “righteous Branch to spring up for David.” The Thessalonians awaited “the coming of our Lord Jesus with all the saints.” Our Lord’s contemporaries hoped for the time “to stand before the Son of Man.” With them we eagerly await the coming days: another Christmas celebration, a second coming, and the advent of our Lord in word and supper.

Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection alert us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and redeem us for your life of justice, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia. Stand up and ¹ raise your heads—* your redemption is ¹ drawing near. *Alleluia.* (Luke 21:28)

Readings and Psalm

Jeremiah 33:14-16

In the Old Testament, “righteousness” often has to do with being faithful in relationship. God acts righteously both in punishing Israel for its sin and in having mercy. In today’s reading, Jerusalem’s future name—“The Lord is our righteousness”—proclaims that the Lord is even now working salvation for Israel.

Psalm 25:1-10

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. (Ps. 25:1)

I Thessalonians 3:9-13

Upon Timothy’s report from the congregation at Thessalonica, Paul is exuberant with gratitude for them. In this passage from his letter, Paul voices overflowing thanks, joy, and blessings for the people of this growing church.

Luke 21:25-36

God will fulfill God’s purposes and, already, hidden signs of that fulfillment abound. On that great day there will be dismay, perplexity, confusion, and terror, but God’s people shall be given strength to stand boldly and receive God’s promised redemption.

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.

Emmanuel has come, is here, and is coming soon. Let us join in prayer for the church, the earth, and those who are in need, that all receive what God promises to give.

A brief silence.

Come to the church, saving God. Grant to your people your redemption. Stand with all Christians who are persecuted for the faith. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Come to the earth, creating God. Protect the lands from environmental disasters. Nurture the animals and plants that you have made. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Come to the nations of the world, sovereign God. Inspire all leaders to work for justice. Bring peace to Jerusalem. We pray for peace in (*here places or situations in need of peace may be named*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Come to all in need, mighty God. Protect those who suffer injustice. Comfort those who live in fear. Heal the sick. Accompany the dying. We pray especially for . . . Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Reveal yourself to this congregation and to our community, gracious God. Deepen our love for one another. In this season, give us compassion for all who suffer, and keep us from selfish excess. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Loving God, you bring to yourself all the faithful who have died (*especially*). Strengthen us in holiness until with all the saints we come to see you face to face. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Receive our prayers, merciful God, and make us ready to receive you when you come through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Images in the Readings

The four gospels repeatedly refer to the Jewish apocalyptic figure called the **Son of Man**, a mysterious humanlike judge who, as part of the cosmic upheaval at the end of time, will appear in the sky to represent God to the people and the people to God. The figure probably developed from speculation about the vision in Daniel 7. Despite popular misunderstanding that contrasts Son of God with Son of Man, “Son of Man” does not mean that Jesus was the human son of Mary. Today’s readings describe the end of the world with the arrival of the Son of Man in both frightening and comforting language. Luke’s description of the apocalypse emphasizes people’s terror: the day will be like a trap. Yet the summer promises new life.

There are many biblical references to the **fig tree**. An image in ancient myth and literature for male fertility, the fig tree provided both food and shade for Israelites, and even clothing in the story of the fall. In Luke 21 the fig tree is a positive image for the arrival of God. What is now in bud will see its fruition.

It was common in the ancient Near East to depict a monarchy as a tree of life. The idea was that the virility of the king ensured the health and wealth of the nation. Also the Old Testament includes descriptions of David as the tree, and the future messiah as a **branch**. For Christians, Christ is that branch, and through him we all share the life of God’s true tree.

Ideas for the Day

- ◆ As the people of God prepare for the coming of Jesus during Advent, many will focus on reclaiming the traditions of Christmases past. As families grow, tradition can pile upon tradition, ultimately creating expectations that become burdensome and wearying, making a call to lift one’s head and be on guard even more difficult. A prayer of confession could be used to invite individuals to consider how they might prepare for Christ rather than preparing for Christmas.
- ◆ For congregations with the technical resources, consider setting up a live Twitter stream to project tweets from members about things they might give up to make more space for prayerful preparation. Alternately, invite members to post on a congregational Facebook page throughout the coming week, giving one another encouragement to make choices about activities during Advent.

◆ Jesus’ words that “the powers of the heavens will be shaken” may evoke feelings of confusion or skepticism in an age when the study of the heavens reveals myriad wonders of quasars and black holes—and not so much of spiritual warfare. Biblical language about powers becomes less comprehensible in a scientific age, which leads to the danger of dismissing these words. Biblical scholar Walter Wink addresses the difficulty, and importance, of understanding “the powers” in biblical references and in our world in his book *The Powers That Be* (New York: Doubleday, 1998). He offers helpful insight into the “power struggle” that marks Christ’s coming, today and every day.

◆ One has only to search the phrase “apocalyptic movies” online to see the impact the idea of the last days has on our collective consciousness. End-of-the-world movies range from the ridiculous (for example, *Night of the Comet*, 1984; *The World’s End* and *This Is the End*, both released in 2013) to the poignant and/or disturbing (*The Road*, 2009, and *Melancholia*, 2011). Many of these movies contain profanity, violence, and sexual content—and as such certainly aren’t marketed to a Christian audience. But their prevalence raises interesting questions about whether we dread “the end,” think that it’s inevitable, hope for it, or consider it merely a matter of fantasy.

Connections with the Liturgy

In the Lord’s Prayer we ask God to “save us from the time of trial.” It is precisely the dangers and terrors of the eschatological end to which this petition refers. If your assembly is still praying the historic translation of the prayer about “temptation,” this Sunday is a good time to begin use of the 1975 translation, which more accurately conveys the meaning of the prayer ascribed to Jesus. Most Christians will indeed experience “a time of trial.”

Let the Children Come

The church tells time with colors as well as with calendars. Colors mark the progression of days and seasons, an immediate signal that something different is happening. Like people of any age, children respond to color with interesting interpretations. And one color may contain many meanings. Invite children and their parents to meet the presiding minister after worship for a brief chat about the color for Advent. What does or could this deep blue signify? How does the color make you feel? Where do you see it in the worship space? Could we “wear the season” too?

**Assembly Song
Gathering**

Fling wide the door ELW 259, LBW 32

Blessed be the God of Israel ELW 552

O come, O come, Emmanuel ELW 257, LBW 34, LS 10, LLC 281

Psalmody and Acclamations

- Jennings, Carolyn. "Psalm 25:1-10" from PWC.
 Parker, Val. "Psalm 25: To You, O Lord, I Lift My Soul." SATB, assembly, kybd, gtr. OCP 21060.
 Shute, Linda Cable. "Psalm 25:1-10," Refrain 1, from PSCY.
 (GA) Pishner, Stephen. "Advent Gospel Acclamation" from *Psalm and Gospel Acclamation for Advent*. SATB, cant, assembly, kybd. GIA G-5259.

Hymn of the Day

- Lo! He comes with clouds descending ELW 435, LBW 27 HELMSLEY
 Wake, awake, for night is flying ELW 436, LBW 31 WACHET AUF
 He came down ELW 253 HE CAME DOWN

Offering

- Light one candle to watch for Messiah ELW 240, st. 1, WOV 630, st. 1
 Blessed be the God of Israel ELW 250, sts. 1-2, WOV 725, sts. 1-2

Communion

- My Lord, what a morning ELW 438, TFF 40, WOV 627
 Wait for the Lord ELW 262
 Bread of life, our host and meal ELW 464

Sending

- Rejoice, rejoice, believers ELW 244, LBW 25
 Hark! A thrilling voice is sounding! ELW 246, LBW 37

Additional Assembly Songs

- Blessed be the Lord God of Israel W&P 20
 Caminamos hacia el sol LLC 275
 ¡Despertad! Que a todos llama LLC 276
 ☉ Cuban tune. "El es nuestra paz" from *Laudate Omnes Gentes/Praying Together*. U. Gütersloher Verlagshaus. Out of print; available on Amazon.com.
 ☉ Shaha, Bart. "Come, Lord Jesus Christ" from *Sound the Bamboo*. U. GIA G-6830.
 ☉ Bruxvoort Colligan, Richard. "To You (Psalm 25)" from *Shout for Joy*. AFP 9780806698632. psalmimmersion.bandcamp.com.
 ☉ Grundy, Christopher. "Stepping In" from *Stepping In*. christophergrundy.com.
 ☉ Hansen, Holly. "Song of Praise" from *Resonance Mass*. nemeracy.org/resonance.
 ☉ Kurtz, Rachel. "Save Us All" from *For Crying Out Loud*. rachelkurtz.org.
 ☉ Rundman, Jonathan. "Texas Kyrie" from *A Heartland Liturgy*. jonathanrundman.bandcamp.com.
 ☉ Wilson, Tay. "All Things New" from *Stay the Course*. Available on Amazon.com.

Music for the Day

Choral

- p • Bach, Johann Sebastian. "Zion Hears the Watchmen Singing" from *Bach for All Seasons*. U, kybd. AFP 9780800658540.
 p Benson, Robert. "My Lord, What a Morning." SATB, pno. AFP 9780800623876.
 p Ferguson, John. "Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers." SAB, org. AFP 9781451401684.
 p Haugen, Kyle. "Lost in the Night." SAB, pno, opt solo. AFP 9781451483215.

Children's Choir

- Handel, G. F./arr. Michael Burkhardt. "Daughter of Zion." U/SSA, org, opt 2 C inst/2 B-flat inst/2 hrn. MSM 50-8875.
 p • Kadidlo, Phil. "He Came Down" from *Children Sing Around the World*. 2 pt, pno, perc. AFP 9781451491951.
 Lowenberg, Kenneth. "Creator of the Stars of Night." 2 pt, opt C inst, kybd. GIA G-6873.

Keyboard / Instrumental

- p • Organ, Anne Krentz. "Helmsley" from *Piano Reflections on Advent Tunes*. Pno. AFP 9781451462647.
 p • Osterland, Karl. "Helmsley" from *Augsburg Organ Library: Advent*. Org. AFP 9780800658953.
 • Sowash, Bradley. "He Came Down" from *Piano Plus: Hymns for Piano and Treble Instrument, Advent/Christmas*. Pno, inst. AFP 9780800638542.
 • Walther, Johann. "Wachet auf." Org. Various editions.

Handbell

- p Hopson, Hal H. "Advent Carol." 3 or 5 oct, L2. CG CGB154.
 • Mallory, Ron. "Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying." 3-5 oct hb, opt 3 oct hc, L2+. LOR 20/1661L.
 • Nelson, Susan T. "Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending." 3-6 oct hb, opt 3-4 oct hc, L3+. HOP 2253.

Monday, 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.

Thursday, 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.

Friday, December 4

John of Damascus, theologian and hymnwriter, died around 749

Born to a wealthy family in Damascus and well educated, John left a career in finance and government to become a monk in an abbey near Jerusalem. He wrote many hymns as well as theological works. Foremost among the latter is a work called *The Fount of Wisdom*, which touches on philosophy, heresy, and the orthodox faith. This summary of patristic theology remained influential for centuries.



December 6, 2015

Second Sunday of Advent

Forerunners and messengers advance the advent of our God. While John the Baptizer's voice in the wilderness may be the principal focus of the day, Malachi's prophecy could as easily herald the coming Lord Jesus as forerunner of the Lord of hosts. Finally all the baptized are called to participate in the sharing of the gospel. In so doing we prepare the way for the coming of the Lord and assist all flesh in capturing a vision of the "salvation of God."

Prayer of the Day

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming give to all the people of the world knowledge of your salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

also looks beyond that to the end times when God's kingdom will be established.

Luke 1:68-79

In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us. (Luke 1:78)

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia. Prepare the way¹ of the Lord.* All flesh shall see the salva-¹ tion of God. *Alleluia.* (Luke 3:4, 6)

Philippians 1:3-11

The apostle Paul was the pastor of many new churches. He writes in this letter about his joy to be in partnership with the Christians of Philippi. Listen to how tender-hearted Paul, sometimes a stern preacher, is with his friends as he encourages them to grow in love and knowledge.

Readings and Psalm

Malachi 3:1-4

The Lord announces a covenant with Israel. A messenger like Malachi (his name means "my messenger") shall prepare the way for the coming of the Lord by purifying and refining God's people, as silver and gold are refined.

Luke 3:1-6

John the Baptist is a herald of the saving Lord, whose way is prepared by "repentance for the forgiveness of sins." As we hear the careful record of human leaders, we sense the spectrum of political and religious authority that will be challenged by this coming Lord.

or Baruch 5:1-9

A poem of hope from the school of the prophet Jeremiah speaks of the return of scattered Israel from Babylon, but



PREPARING FOR EASTER

Fullness and hope

Are you full? Have you had enough? After the devotion of Lent and the intensity of the Three Days, it might seem like we've had enough on our plates. And yet there is more. There is Easter.

City of God, Easter forever,
golden Jerusalem, Jesus the Lamb,
river of life, saints and archangels,
sing with creation to God the I AM!
Jesus is risen and we shall arise.
Give God the glory! Alleluia! (ELW 377)

Herbert Brokering's hymn with its buffet of images invites us into the season of Easter, a season of abundance.

In year C of the Revised Common Lectionary, the church reads from Revelation. It is a perplexing book, yet one we need to sink our teeth into. As biblical scholar Barbara Rossing reminds us, "Revelation's gift to us is a story of a God who loves us and comes to live with us" (*The Rapture Exposed* [Boulder, CO: Westview, 2004], xi). Revelation, like Easter, is not ultimately about absence, about Jesus' or our going away, but about presence and fullness.

One might be struck by the fullness of images and descriptors in the Easter readings from Revelation: myriads, thousands, blessing, honor, glory, multitudes, nations, and more and more. The tree in the city that we hear about in Revelation 21 bears not one but twelve kinds of fruit for the healing of the nations.

Fullness abounds in Easter, but even then we feel emptiness. We sing with the psalmist on Easter 4, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not be in want," but we still want for many things. So did the disciples. They hunkered down in a locked room, in the dark, afraid. Yet Jesus comes to them. Throughout the season of Easter, we will hear of Jesus coming among the disciples and promising peace. How will your Easter worship convey the fullness of God? How will it take seriously the wants, known and unknown, of a people hungering for more?

Historically, the church prepares for baptism during Lent, welcoming seekers to baptism at the Easter Vigil. Coming to the waters leads to the table. The

postresurrection stories with Jesus' followers often include a meal. It is in these meals that his followers recognize him. Easter would be an appropriate time for digging deeper into the rich meanings of holy communion (see "Names for Holy Communion and What They Mean" in the seasonal rites section, page 172). If your congregation does not practice weekly communion, consider communion every week during the season of Easter as a first taste.

Ascension: the fullness of all things

The image of Jesus ascending into heaven adorns many churches, but this Easter festival may get passed over in the congregation, especially if the focus becomes mired in scientific versus biblical debates. If the universe is more complicated than a heaven above, a hell beneath, and the earth in between, what do we make of Jesus' ascension? We read in Ephesians: "I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him. . . . He has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:17, 22-23).

The ascension paradox claims that fullness in Christ comes through Christ's going away. We are now Christ's body, witnesses of God's abundance. Instead of avoiding this day or seeking to explain its mystery away, how might preaching shift from explanation to wonder and witness: wondering at the fullness of God and witnessing to God's presence even when we fear God's absence?

Take care with musical choices for this festival. Many hymns and songs, both ancient and of the praise-and-worship genre, enforce a three-tiered universe. Can we retain these images if they are embraced as metaphor? How might they be balanced with hymns that challenge prescientific understandings (see, for example, "Christ is alive," ELW 389)?

The gift of Easter spills over. In the words of Laurence Hull Stookey, "We divide this wonderful action of God into parts that we may better approach the fullness of a mystery we can never fathom" (*Calendar: Christ's Time for the Church* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1996], 66). Celebrating the

ascension gives us another way to ponder what Christ's resurrection means for us.

Pentecost: filled with the Spirit

The finale of the Easter season echoes with the theme of abundance: "How manifold are your works. . . . The earth is full of your creatures. . . . All of them look to you to give them their food in due season" (Ps. 104:24, 27, *ELW*). Pentecost is indeed a culmination of Easter fullness. The myriad languages and nations described in Revelation return anew in this Sunday's readings from Acts or Genesis. It is the pouring out of the Spirit that leads to both perplexity and amazement. The signs of hope we see in Revelation infuse our Pentecost celebration; the Spirit is at work, renewing the face of the earth.

The gospel reading for Pentecost recalls Maundy Thursday: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Yet with this commandment comes the Advocate, the Holy Spirit who guides us. We celebrate baptisms and affirmation of baptism on this day, trusting in the Spirit who abides in us as the Three-in-One abides in unity.

Themes of unity and diversity mark the Day of Pentecost. How does our worship life on this day and at all times reflect both unity and diversity? The Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture (Lutheran World Federation, 1996) suggests that worship is both contextual and transcultural. The Spirit is at work in your time and place with your particular people. How do your choices for worship reflect this diversity? Your church's Pentecost celebration will not look like one across town or across the globe. Yet at the same time, we are one in the Spirit of the Lord, joint heirs with Christ, as we hear in Romans. What elements of our worship connect us to Christians across time and space?

Music

Alleluia! This word cries out to be sung. If your assembly keeps the tradition of burying the alleluia in Lent, celebrate its return with lavish alleluias during the Easter season. The word rolls easily off the tongue, making it a perfect word to sing with young children. Engage the assembly in vocal expressions of resurrection joy by making unabashed use of the Easter call and response (Alleluia! Christ is risen. / Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!) in the greeting, the peace, the invitation to communion, and the dismissal.

An assembly sings in full voice the songs they know deep in their bones. As you plan music for this season, think about the unity of the season and what musical elements hold up well to repetition for eight Sundays. How do you balance singing the familiar with the new? The fullness of Christ can be experienced as we sing a variety of hymns and songs, led by diverse instrumentation. Our knowledge and understanding of cultures different from us are limited.

As you teach and learn songs from other cultures, consult the *Hymnal Companion* (Augsburg Fortress, 2010) and *Musicians Guide* (Augsburg Fortress, 2007) to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* for background information and leading tips.

Congregations might sing in different languages on Pentecost as a way to embody the fullness of the Spirit. If this is new for you, have a soloist or choir sing in the new language and the assembly in the more familiar language. You might teach a simple refrain to the assembly that they can learn by ear.

"This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia!" How does your assembly sing during communion? Robustly? A little? Not at all? The voices in Revelation call us to sing at the feast, but singing during communion has its challenges. Part of this is practical; people are moving and walking. For this reason, new hymns with many stanzas are not ideal. Instead, choose songs with refrains (such as "I am the Bread of life," *ELW* 485) or repeated ostinatos ("Be not afraid," *ELW* 388).

Another challenge of singing during communion is theological. If your congregation regards communion as solely introspective and penitential, singing seems out of place. Without dismissing the need for silence and reflection, communion during the season of Easter carries a different flavor than communing on Maundy Thursday. We are feasting with the risen Christ! Could your assembly learn a hymn for this season that celebrates the banquet of the Lord? Could you sing it at either the beginning or conclusion of distribution? Possibilities in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* include:

- 375 Alleluia! Christ is arisen
- 491 Come, let us eat
- 498 United at the table
- 500 Now we remain
- 525 You are holy
- 531 The trumpets sound, the angels sing
- 869 We have seen the Lord

See also *The Sunday Assembly* (Augsburg Fortress, 2008, pp. 220–224) for a helpful list of communion hymns and songs.

Environment

See page 143 in this volume for visual art suggestions that can be introduced at the Easter Vigil and carried through the entire Easter season.

Let your worship environment appeal not just to the eyes and ears, but also to the nose. The lilies, tulips, and hyacinths that typically adorn worship spaces on Easter Day and perhaps a Sunday or two after may need to be replaced

with fresh blooming plants. Plan and budget for this in advance so that the Easter garden does not completely disappear before the season is half over. And what about freshly baked bread? In the account of Christ's interaction with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-49, Easter Evening), we find a powerful description of "how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread." Recruit a team to bake fresh, fully leavened bread for communion on all the Sundays of Easter, a reminder that "Jesus is risen and we shall arise" (ELW 377).

Pentecost

In Moses' encounter with God in the burning bush (Exod. 3), Moses asks God's name. Although God's reply has traditionally been translated as "I AM WHO I AM," it may also be translated "I will be present where I will be present." The latter option is clearly descriptive of God's presence at Pentecost. The rush of a violent wind, the appearance of dancing tongues of fire, the swirling sounds of multiple languages miraculously understood—each bears powerful testimony that God's Holy Spirit is unpredictable, uncontrollable, and uncontrollable; each reminds us of the endless possibilities for the Holy Spirit's movement within and among God's people. How might worship on this day invite the assembly into fuller experience of and appreciation for "I will be present where I will be present" in our midst?

Some ideas:

- If climate and circumstances permit, consider scheduling Pentecost worship outdoors.
- During the weeks leading up to Pentecost, engage broad congregational participation in creating folded paper doves (see www.origami-instructions.com/origami-dove.html). Construct a mobile of doves to be hung over or near the baptismal font as a reminder of the Spirit's gifts poured out in baptism (see www.pinterest.com/pin/271412315015138815 for an example).
- During the weeks leading up to Pentecost, collect old metal keys that worshipers are willing to discard, then use them to create a simple wind chime. Invite reflection on what forces, situations, or attitudes hold us captive and hinder the Spirit's movement within and among us.
- A month or so in advance, solicit donations to fund the purchase of potted red geraniums; use them to decorate the worship space on Pentecost, then plant them on the church grounds or give them away to homebound members and neighborhood residents.
- Before worship on Pentecost or on another Sunday before Pentecost, plan an intergenerational gathering where worshipers of all ages can create Pentecost windsocks, pinwheels, and streamers together

(see [06_Pentecost.WindToys.pdf](#))*. Incorporate these floating, blowing, dancing objects into processions today: at the gathering, the reading of the gospel, the offering, the sending.

- Create vividly colored, flame-shaped flags and display them outdoors and/or indoors on lightweight fiberglass fishing poles (see [06_Pentecost.Flags.pdf](#))*.
- Create a red paper banner with a fiery sun surrounding the cross (see [06_Pentecost.Banner.pdf](#))*.
- Use many yards of skinny, translucent ribbons in shades of vivid red and gold to create 30-foot-long streamers. Use a swivel hook to affix the streamers to lightweight (flexible) fiberglass fishing poles. Recruit and prepare worship leaders to move through the worship space with the streamers at the gathering, during the hymn of the day, and/or at the sending. Have them practice casting the ribbon streamers across the space to dance over the heads of the assembly.
- Conclude your Pentecost celebration with a community meal to which participants contribute foods whose aromas and flavors speak the languages of many cultures.

Seasonal Checklist

- It is particularly appropriate during the Easter season to use thanksgiving for baptism as an alternative to confession and forgiveness.
- Use the canticle of praise ("This is the feast"). Unify the season by singing one setting of the liturgy throughout.
- Use the Nicene Creed.
- Consider especially Thanksgiving at the Table IV in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.
- Publicize Ascension and Pentecost services, helping the congregation understand the importance of these festivals.
- If you will use a diversity of languages for the Day of Pentecost, make preparations in advance with musicians and readers.
- If your congregation celebrates affirmation of baptism (confirmation) during this season, review the rite in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

* Download at <http://store.augsburgfortress.org/media/temp/SundaysSeasons/PDFs.zip>