

INTRODUCTION

This handbook is designed to assist pastors to understand and implement their ministry as defined by the mission and polity of the Free Methodist Church. For day-to-day use it serves as a helpful companion to the *Book of Discipline*.

Those who are inquiring about the nature of pastoral ministry in the Free Methodist Church, those who are presently preparing for ministry in the church or those who are beginning their pastoral work are urged to read paragraphs A/500 through A/506 of the *Book of Discipline* entitled "The Ordained Ministry." These pages will define the nature of pastoral ministry and the qualifications for the same as understood by the Free Methodist Church.

The practical design of this *Handbook* gives immediate access to a variety of worship aids. Duplicates may easily be photocopied for participants.

The binding is designed for pulpit use and easy pocket storage.

We commend this book to you with the prayer that God will bless its use to the good of both you and your people.

The Board of Bishops

CHAPTER I
THE PASTOR AS LEADER OF WORSHIP
SCRIPTURE IN WORSHIP - THE LECTIONARY

A Guide for Selecting Scripture Lessons
During the Church Year

The Study Commission on Doctrine, at the request of the General Conference of 1979, prepared the following lectionary for the Free Methodist Church of North America. Adopted at the 1985 General Conference, it was first published in the 1986 edition of the Pastor's Handbook.

A lectionary is a collection of Old Testament and New Testament Scripture lessons arranged to guide worship across the church year. It guarantees broad exposure to all parts of the Scriptures by setting forth lessons keyed to the church year. The church year, meanwhile, unfolds basic Christian teaching in an orderly fashion by moving through the stages of our Lord's life. Together a lectionary and church year guide the congregation in edifying worship of God.

The historic church developed its own calendar over many centuries. The gospel story provided the pattern. In keeping with this tradition, this lectionary organizes the Scriptures to center around Jesus Christ.

The Christian year has five seasons, each with its own emphasis:

Advent and Christmastide — the birth of God's Son;

Epiphany — the ministry of God's Son;

Lent — the death of God's Son;

Easter — the resurrection of God's Son;

Pentecost — the Holy Spirit, the gift of God's Son.

A close study of the seasons shows that the church year can be divided into two major parts:

Advent through Easter focuses on God's work through His Son during His earthly life.

Pentecost centers on God's continuation of our Lord's work through the Spirit's ministry.

Beginning early in her history, the church created lectionaries to guide in worship. Both the church year and the lectionaries gradually grew more complex. After the Reformation, Protestant churches adopted, to varying degrees, the calendar and lectionaries. Liturgical churches kept them quite generally, making their own adaptations here and there. Nonliturgical churches abandoned them almost entirely.

The Free Methodist Church has been influenced both by liturgical and nonliturgical Protestantism. John Wesley, the father of

Methodism, was a member of the Church of England. All his life Wesley observed morning and evening prayers found in the *Book of Common Prayer*. But the free church movement from the other end of the Reformation has also influenced the Free Methodist Church. Many fear that any planned approach will imperil worship's true nature. This fear is unnecessary for those willing to seek a balance between order and spontaneity. Because these two approaches are in our history, Methodism at its best provides for order in worship that leaves opportunity for response to the Spirit's leadership.

The Free Methodist lectionary has adapted the Common Lectionary to correspond to the emphasis of the denominational calendar.

This lectionary draws on the time-tested wisdom of the church universal. It also has distinctive features. On the one hand, it includes the seasons of the historic church year and, for each Sunday, suggests lessons from the different parts of the Bible. This is in keeping with the church's ancient teaching that the Scriptures, within a rich diversity, have a profound unity. Based on a three-year cycle, the lectionary includes much of the New Testament and a great many Old Testament texts. At the same time, it pays special attention to passages that emphasize the God-given concerns distinctive of historic Methodism.

Pastors must decide exactly how to use the Scripture lessons. There may be Sundays when local needs require a departure from the lectionary altogether. They will discover, however, that the lectionary, rather than binding them, actually frees them to develop their own services by focusing their attention in a particular direction. They will, of course, have to go on from there and in preaching determine precisely how to apply the Scripture lessons to local needs. This will require much prayer and careful study.

Some pastors may choose not to use the lectionary. If they do so, they must remember that they are responsible as worship leaders to see that the Scriptures are covered in the worship services of their congregations. There are a few leaders who on their own can assure that across the year their congregations are widely and systematically exposed to the broad sweep of Scriptures. Most pastors, however, simply do not have the time or resources needed to develop such a plan. Those who do not will wisely consider what the lectionary has to offer.

God has given the church His book — the Holy Scriptures, unique in all world history. His Book is a trust. God has also given leaders to the church, ordained and appointed to teach and preach the message of His Book in its broadest sweep and to lead His people in public

worship. This lectionary offers those leaders assistance in the form of a simple guide which allows both Word and Spirit to have full sway in His church.

THE USE OF THE LECTIONARY

Pastors will need to examine the lectionary thoroughly. This first reading should include attention to the scope of each season, the unity of the themes within a season, and the movement of passages through consecutive Sundays. Pastors who have grasped the lectionary's plan will be in a good position to use it.

Here are some suggestions. Pastors should make sure their congregations regularly hear the unity of the Scriptures' message through its various witnesses. Reading at least two lessons in the morning worship service enlarges the impact that God's Word can make. This, in fact, draws on our heritage, for the 1910 hymnal of the Free Methodist Church suggested that an Old Testament and a New Testament lesson be read in each worship service.

Approaches most certainly will vary. Pastors may use the whole of the scripture lessons or abbreviate them. They may follow the lessons in the morning and veer from them in the evening in favor of personal selections. Beyond these options, portions from a psalm (which are not included in the three-year cycle) may be read in the call to worship or elsewhere.

Pastors may discover that preaching through a book of the Bible is valuable. Others may find helpful alternating between following a book series (for example, in Pentecost) and following the church year and lectionary.

Those who would like to join other Free Methodist churches in reading the same scripture lessons weekly can follow this rule. If the sum of the digits is divisible by three, use the lessons for year A. For example, since the sum of 2001 equals 3, a number divisible by 3, the church year 2001/02 would follow the lessons for A. Then 2003/04 would follow the lessons for B, and so on. This rule applies only for the third millennium.

Those less mathematically inclined, may use the following chart:

Year A: Advent 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016, 2019

Year B: Advent 1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020

Year C: Advent 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018

Below are two samples of the ways in which the lessons for Trinity
Sunday A (Pentecost I) can be used.

Call to Worship, Ps 90:1-2

Scripture Lessons, Gen 1:26-2:3; Mt 28:16-20

Sermon Lesson, 2 Cor 13:5-14

Call to Worship, Ps 90:1-4, 12

Scripture Lesson, Mt 28:16-20

Sermon Lesson, 2 Cor 13:5-14

ADVENT AND CHRISTMASTIDE

The name Advent implies that the Lord has “come to” us in the Christchild. Advent themes, therefore, deal with His birth, the coming in the flesh of God’s Son, its prediction in Old Testament prophecy, its preparation in Old Testament history, the people involved, and the marvel of His coming. The Advent season and readings also focus on our readiness to receive the King, our expectancy, and our patience.

Theme	Psalms	Year	First Lesson	Second Lesson	Gospel
I. Preparation	24;1:84 5	A	Isa 2:1-5	Rom 13:11-14	Mt 24:36-44
		B	Isa 63:16b-64:8	James 4:1-10	Mk 13:32-37
		C	Jer 33:14-16	1 Thess 5:1-6	Lk 21:25-36
II. The Prophet	50:1-15	A	Isa 11:1-10	Rom 15:4-9	Mt 3:1-10
		B	Isa 40:1-11	2 Pet 3:8-14	Mk 1:1-8
		C	Mal 3:1-4	Phil 1:3-11	Lk 3:1-6
III. The Prophet’s Message	2:46;3; 21:45	A	Isa 35:1-10	James 5:7-12	Mt 11:2-11
		B	Isa 61:1-3,8-11	1 Thess 5:12-24	Jn 1:6-8,19-28
		C	Zeph 3:14-20	Phil 4:4-9	Lk 3:7-18
IV. David’s Son	80:85; 89:1-4, 38-52;132	A	Isa 7:10-14	Rom 1:1-7	Mt 1:18-25
		B	2 Sam 7:8-16	Rom 16:25-27	Lk 1:26-38
		C	Mic 5:1-4	Heb 10:5-10	Lk 1:39-45 or 1:46-55
Christmas (Eve)	118;8;148	A	Isa 9:2-7	Titus 2:11-15	Lk 2:1-20
		B	Isa 62:11-12	Titus 3:4-7	Jn 1:1-18
		C	Isa 52:7-10	Heb 1:1-6	Lk 2:1-20
Christmas I	145;138; 111;150	A	Isa 63:7-9	Gal 4:4-7	Mt 2:13-19
		B	Isa 45:18-19, 22-25	Col 3:12-17	Lk 2:21-24
		C	Jer 31:10-14	Heb. 2:10-18	Lk 2:36-40
January I	81;90;147; 103	A	Num 6:22-27	Eph 5:8-20	Mt 13:47-52
		B	Ecc 3:1-15	2 Cor 5:16-6:2	Jn 21:20-25
		C	Deut 8:1-10	Heb 12:1-6,11-13	Lk 14:15-24
Christmas II	121;66;72	A	Prov 8:22-31	Eph 1:3-10	Jn 3:22-30
		B	Ex 34:1-7	Eph 1:11-14	Lk 2:25-35
		C	Job 28:20-28	1 Cor 1:18-25	Lk 2:41-52

EPIPHANY

Epiphany refers to the appearance of God in the ministry of His Son. The Epiphany season opens with the stories of the visit of the Magi, and Jesus' baptism, the event that inaugurated His ministry. It concludes with His transfiguration, an event in which God witnessed to His Son. The Epiphany season usually extends well into February, our Compassion Month. Jesus' ministry provides an excellent model for our compassion. Old Testament passages that describe God's care for the poor and the oppressed give us a pre-Christian model of mercy.

Theme	Psalms	Year	First Lesson	Second Lesson	Gospel
I. The Epiphany	19:93;35	A	Isa 42:1-7	Acts 10:34-38	Mt 3:13-17 or 2:1-12
		B	Isa 60:1-7	Acts 11:4-18	Mk 1:4-11
		C	Gen 1:1-5	Eph 3:1-6	Lk 3:15-17, 21-22
II. Ministry	23;100;11; 40	A	Isa 49:1-6	1 Cor 1:3-9	Jn 1:29-34
		B	1 Sam 3:1-10	1 Cor 6:12-20	Jn 1:35-42 or 1:43-51
		C	Isa 62:1-5	1 Cor 12:4-11	Jn 2:1-11
III. Proclamation	125;55;68; 105;7	A	Amos 3:1-8	1 Cor 1:10-17	Mt 4:12-23
		B	Jonah 3:1-5,10	1 Cor 7:17-23	Mk 1:14-20
		C	Neh 8:1-4a,5-6, 8-10	1 Cor 12:21-31	Lk 4:14-21
IV. Clear Teaching	1; 119:1-16; 32	A	Zeph 2:3;3:11-13	1 Cor 1:26-31	Mt 5:1-12
		B	Deut 18:15-20	1 Cor 8:1-13	Mk 1:21-28
		C	Jer 1:4-10	1 Cor 14:1-5, 12-19	Lk 4:22-30
V. Sharing	61;104; 111;147	A	Isa 58:6-10	1 Cor 2:1-5	Mt 5:13-20
		B	Job 7:1-7	1 Cor 9:16-23	Mk 1:29-39
		C	Isa 6:1-8	1 Cor 15:1-11	Lk 5:1-11
VI. Healing	38;6;41	A	Deut 30:15-20	1 Cor 3:1-9	Mt 5:27-37
		B	2 Kg 5:1-14	1 Cor 10:31-11:1	Mk 1:40-45
		C	Jer 17:5-10	1 Cor 15:12-20	Lk 6:17-26
VII. God's Love	102;101; 14	A	Lev 19:1-2,11-18	1 Cor 3:10-17	Mt 5:38-48
		B	Isa 43:18-25	2 Cor 1:18-22	Mk 2:1-12
		C	Ex 34:29-35	Eph 2:1-10	Lk 6:27-36
VIII. Liberating	125;55;68; 105;7	A	Isa 49:13-18	1 Cor 4:1-5	Mt 6:24-34
		B	Hos 2:14-20	2 Cor 3:1-6	Mk 2:18-22
		C	2 Sam 5:1-5	2 Cor 3:12-18	Lk 6:39-45
IX. The Trans- figuration	90;47;48	A	Ex 24:12-18	2 Pet 1:16-19	Mt 17:1-9
		B	Dan 7:9-10,13-14	Rev 1:4-8	Mk 9:2-9
		C	2 Kg 2:1-12	2 Cor 4:3-6	Lk 9:28-36

LENT

Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon word “to lengthen” and refers to the gradually lengthening days of that time of year, early spring. In this season, we remember the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, the climaxing acts of the gospel. Traditionally, Lent has been a time of abstinence for forty days (though fasting is not practiced on the six Sundays that fall during that period). Our Lord fasted for forty days before He began His public ministry, and His example shows that God can use us in a special way when we turn aside from the routine of life and wait before Him.

Although we believe that self-denial belongs to all seasons of the Christian year, this is an excellent time to call for full surrender and total obedience. Lent naturally focuses on the final days of Jesus’ earthly ministry and His sacrificial death. It concludes with Holy Week, and our churches often participate with other communions in community services. Many Old Testament scriptures fit naturally into the Lenten season, such as those explaining the plan of atonement, uttering prophetic calls to repentance, and setting forth the examples of great Hebrews who gave their lives totally to God’s service.

Theme	Psalms	Year	First Lesson	Second Lesson	Gospel
I. Repentance	106:51; 69:39	A	Joel 2:12-19	2 Cor 5:16-6:2	Mt 6:1-6, 16-18
		B	2 Chron 7:11-16	James 1:12-18	Mk 2:13-17
		C	Zech 7:1-10	1 Cor 9:24-27	Lk 5:27-32
II. Testing	4:62;139; 42-3	A	Gen 2:7-9:3:1-7	Rom 5:12-19	Mt 4:1-11
		B	Gen 22:1-14	1 Pet 3:18-22	Mk 1:12-15
		C	Deut 26:5-11	Rom 10:8-13	Lk 4:1-13
III. Trusting God’s Promise	67;140;14	A	Gen 12:1-8	Rom 4:1-8	Jn 4:4-26
		B	Gen 28:10-17	Rom 8:31-39	Mk 9:14-32
		C	Gen 15:5-12,17-18	Gal 5:1-6	Jn 5:1-15
IV. The Way of the Cross	26:142; 141:32	A	1 Sam 15:16-23	Rom 6:1-11	Mt 16:21-28
		B	1 Sam 16:4-13	1 Thess 4:1-12	Mk 8:27-9:1
		C	Dan 3:1-6,16-18	Gal 5:16-26	Lk 14:25-33
V. The Narrow Way	20:63;138	A	Gen 13:5-13	Rom 6:12-23	Mt 7:13-20
		B	Deut 11:16-32	Phil 3:7-14	Mk 4:1-12
		C	Hos 6:1-3	Gal 6:1-10	Jn 13:1-5 12-17
Palm Sunday	21:3; 7:88	A	Isa 50:4-7	Heb 3:1-6	Mt 21:1-11
		B	Zech 9:9-12	Phil 2:5-11	Mk 11:1-11
		C	Isa 59:15b-20	1 Tim 1:12-17	Lk 19:28-40
Maundy Thursday	25:26; 27:28	A	Ex 12:1-11	1 Cor 11:23-32	Mt 26:36-46
		B	Deut 16:1-8	1 Jn 2:1-6	Mk 14:12-26
		C	Ex 12:21-28	1 Cor 5:6-8	Lk 22:14-34
Good Friday	10:17;22; 31:34	A	Isa 52:13-53:12	Heb 4:14-5:10	Mt 27:31-50
		B	Lev 16:7-10, 29-30	Heb 10:11-18	Jn 19:16-37
		C	Lam 1:8-12	Rev 5:6-14	Lk 23:26-49

EASTER

Easter is the high point of the church year, when we celebrate Christ's triumph over sin, death, and hell. His resurrection also becomes the model for the Christian's transformation in the "new birth" and for the entire world's future transformation in the "new creation." The ascension of our Lord took place ten days before Pentecost. Thus, the season includes Christ's resurrection, exaltation to heaven, intercession for Christians, and the promise of the Holy Spirit. We can also turn back to Old Testament passages that describe the triumph of God such as the Exodus and psalms that proclaim "the Lord reigns." While Lent is a time for reflection, confession, and commitment, Easter is a season of joy, confidence, anticipation, and power.

Theme	Psalms	Year	First Lesson	Second Lesson	Gospel
I. Easter	58:29; 118:135; 18	A	Isa 43:1-3a	Col 3:1-11	Mt 28:1-10
		B	Isa 25:1,6-9	1 Pet 1:3-9	Jn 20:1-9
		C	Ex 15:16	1 Cor 15:20-28	Lk 24:1-12
II. Appearance	114;27:29; 50	A	Acts 2:42-47	1 Pet 1:3-9	Jn 20:24-31
		B	Acts 3:1-10	1 Jn 5:1-6	Mt 28:11-20
		C	Job 42:1-6	Rev 1:9-13,17-19	Jn 21:1-14
III. Power of Resurrection	110;97:99 47	A	Acts 2:22-32	1 Pet 1:17-21	Lk 24:13-35
		B	Acts 3:13-19	1 Jn 1:1-2:2	Lk 24:36-49
		C	Acts 5:27-32, 40-42	1 Cor 15:35-49	Jn 21:15-19
IV. The Good Shepherd	64;72:2; 21	A	Acts 2:36-41	1 Pet 2:19-25	Jn 10:1-10
		B	Acts 4:8-12	1 Jn 3:1-3,7-10	Jn 10:11-18
		C	Acts 13:42-52	Rev 7:9-17	Jn 10:22-30
V. Life in Christ	30:28; 145	A	Acts 6:1-7	1 Pet 2:4-10	Jn 14:1-12
		B	Acts 9:26-31	1 Jn 3:18-24	Jn 15:1-8
		C	Acts 14:21-28	Rev 21:1-5	Jn 11:17-27
VI. The Promise of the Spirit	116;23; 68:1-20; 49	A	Acts 8:4-8,14-17	1 Jn 2:18-25	Jn 14:15-21
		B	Acts 11:19-30	1 Jn 4:1-6	Jn 15:9-17
		C	Acts 15:1-2, 22-29	Rev 21:10-14, 22-23	Jn 14:23-29
VII. Ascension	96;45:48	A	Acts 1:1-11	Eph 1:16-23	Jn 17:1-11
		B	Acts 1:6-14	Heb 9:11-14	Jn 17:12-19
		C	Acts 1:15-26	Heb 19:19-25	Jn 17:20-26 or Lk 24:44-53

PENTECOST

The name for Pentecost comes from the Old Testament festival of the firstfruits. In the New Testament it refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit which God sent to the church on the day of Pentecost. In this long season, then, we think about the present ministry of His Spirit both within the church and in the world. Old Testament passages concerning God's dealings with Israel, His church in the pre-Christian era, belong in this season. The themes of the twenty-fourth through the twenty-seventh Sundays after Pentecost could appropriately be used during the Free Methodist Church's "Festival of Praise" in early November.

Theme	Psalms	Year	First Lesson	Second Lesson	Gospel
I. Pentecost	73;91;34;	A	Joel 2:28-32	Acts 2:1-11	Jn 15:26-16:4
	46	B	Ezek 37:1-3,11-14	Acts 2:1-11	Jn 7:37-39
		C	Gen 11:1-9	Acts 2:1-11	Jn20:19-23
II. Trinity	90;93;114;	A	Gen 1:1-2,26-2:3	2 Cor 13:5-14	Mt 28:16-20
	8	B	Deut 6:4-9	Rom 8:12-17	Jn 16:12-15
		C	Isa 6:1-8	Rom 5:1-5	Jn 3:1-17
III. Heeding God's Word	31;19;56	A	Deut 11:16-21	Rom 3:21-28	Mt 7:24-29
		B	Deut 5:6-21	2 Cor 4:7-12	Mk 2:23-28
		C	1 Kg 8:41-43	Gal 1:1-10	Lk 7:1-10
IV. Judgment for Sin	50;5:11	A	Hos 6:3-7	Rom 4:13-25	Mt 9:9-13
		B	Gen 3:8-15	2 Cor 4:13-5:1	Mk 3:29-29
		C	1 King 17:17-24	Gal 1:11-24	Lk 7:11-17
V. The Message & Messengers	3;14;78;	A	Ex 19:2-6	Rom 5:6-11	Mt 9:35-10:8
	97	B	Ezek 17:22-24	2 Cor 5:1-10	Mk 4:26-34
		C	2 Sam 12:1-10	Gal 2:11-21	Lk 7:36-50
VI. God's Sovereignty	12;13;71;2	A	Jer 20:7-13	Rom 5:12-15	Mt 10:26-33
		B	Job 38:1-11	2 Cor 5:11-21	Mk 4:35-41
		C	Zech 12:7-10	Gal 3:23-29	Lk 9:18-24
VII. War Within	51;106;109	A	Isa 2:17-22	Rom 7:14-25	Mt 10:37-42
		B	Gen 4:3-10	2 Cor 7:8-12	Mk 5:1-13
		C	Deut 15:7-11	Galo 5:1,13-18	Lk 9:51-62
VIII. Christian Freedom	36;4;131	A	Zech 9:9-10	Rom 8:1-11	Mt 11:25-30
		B	Ezek 2:1-5	2 Cor 12:7-10	Mk 6:1-6
		C	Isa 66:10-14	Gal 6:12-18	Lk 10:1-9
IX. Christian Values	39;76;117	A	Isa 55:10-13	Rom 8:18-25	Mt 13:1-9
		B	Amos 7:12-17	Eph 6:10-20	Mk 6:7-13
		C	Deut 30:9-14	Col 1:1-14	Lk 10:25-37
X. God's Freedom	10;74;75;	A	Isa 44:5-8	Rom 8:26-30	Mt 13:24-30
	96;137	B	Jer 23:1-6	Eph 2:11-18	Mk 6:30-34
		C	Gen 18:1-10a	Col 1:21-28	Lk 10:38-42

XI.	34;115;4	A	1 Kg 3:5-12	Rom 8:31-34	Mt 13:44-52
Prayer		B	2 Kg 4:1-7	Eph 4:1-8	Jn 6:1-15
		C	Gen 18:20-32	Col 4:2-6	Lk 11:1-13
XII.	54;89:1-18;	A	Isa 55:1-3	Rom 8:35-39	Mt 14:13-21
God's	126	B	Ex 16:2-4,12-15	Eph 4:17-24	Jn 6:25-35
Liberality		C	Ecll 2:17-26	Col 2:6-10	Lk 12:13-21
XIII.	9;70;113;	A	1 Kg 19:9b-18	Rom 9:1-5	Mt 14:22-32
God Reveals	129	B	1 Kg 19:1-9a	Eph 4:29-5:2	Jn 6:41-51
Himself		C	Gen 15:1-5	Heb 11:1-3,8-12	Lk 12:32-40
XIV.		A	Isa 56:1, 6-8	Rom 11:13-16; 28-32	Mt 15:21-28
Testing	58;33;79	B	Prov 9:1-6	Eph 5:15-20	Jn 6:51-59
		C	Jer 38:1-13	Heb 11:4-6; 32-40	Lk 12:49-53
XV.	77;99;144	A	Ex 6:2-8	Rom 11:33-36	Mt 16:13-20
God's People		B	Josh 24:1-2	Eph 5:21-33	Jn 6:60-69
		C	14-18 Isa 66:18-23	Heb 12:18-24; 28-29	Lk 13:22-30
XVI.		A	Jer 15:15-21	Rom 12:1-8	Mt 16:21-28
Pure Religion	101;5;59	B	Deut 4:1-8	James 1:19-27	Mk 7:1-8, 20-23
		C	Prov 22:1-9	Heb 13:1-9	Lk 14:1, 7-14
XVII.	93;141;95	A	Ezek 33:7-11	Rom 13:8-10	Mt 18:15-20
Rebuking and		B	Ezek 33:12-20	James 2:1-5	Mk 7:31-37
Forgiving		C	Prov 9:8-12	Philemon 8-17	Lk 15:1-10
XVIII.	60;40;123;	A	Gen 50:15-21	Rom 14:1-8	Mt 18:21-35
Acceptance	124;130	B	Isa 55:6-9	James 2:14-18	Mk 8:27-35
		C	Ex 32:7-14	1 Tim 1:12-17	Lk 15:11-32
XIX.	133;134;135	A	Isa 55:6-9	Phil 1:21-27	Mt 20:1-16
Servant		B	Jer 11:18-20	James 3:13-18	Mk 9:30-37
Leadership		C	Amos 8:4-7	1 Tim 2:1-8	Lk 16:1-13
XX.	53;82;83;94	A	Ezek 18:25-29	Phil 2:1-11	Mt 21:28-32
God's Justice		B	Num 11:24-30	James 5:1-6	Mk 9:38-50
		C	Amos 6:1-7	1 Tim 6:11-16	Lk 16:19-31
XXI.	127;128	A	Isa 5:1-7	Phil 3:12-4:1	Mt 19:1-12
The Family		B	Gen 2:18-24	Heb 2:9-11	Mk 10:2-12
		C	Heb 1:2-3;2:2-4	2 Tim 1:3-12	Lk 17:5-10
XXII.	62;49;52	A	Isa 25:1, 6-9	Phil 4:10-13, 19-20	Mt 22:1-14
God's Provisions		B	Prov 3:13-20	Heb 4:12-13	Mk 10:17-27
		C	2 Kg 4:8-17	2 Tim 2:8-13	Lk 17:11-19
XXIII.	42;3;108;44	A	Isa 45:1-7	1 Thess 1:1-5a	Mt 22:15-21
God's Servants		B	Isa 53:10-12	Heb 5:1-10	Mk 10:35-45
		C	Gen 32:22-32	2 Tim 3:14-4:2	Lk 18:1-8
XXIV.		A	Ex 22:21-27	1 Thess 1:4-10	Mt 22:34-40
The Great	15;98;1	B	Jer 31:7-9	Heb 5:11-6:3	Mk 10:46-52
Commandment		C	Deut 10:14-22	2 Tim 4:4-8, 16-18	Lk 18:9-14

XXV.	41;107;122	A	Mic 3:5-12	1 Thess 2:7-13	Mt 23:1-12
Responsibility of Leaders		B	1 Kg 17:7-16	Heb 7:23-28	Mk 12:28-34
		C	Ex 34:4-9	2 Thess 1:3-5, 11-12	Lk 19:1-10
XXVI.	87;16;84	A	Lam 3:22-26	Rom 15:1-13	Mt 5:13-20
Festival of Praise		B	Deut 26:16-19	1 Thess 4:13-18	Mk 5:21-24a, 35-43
		C	Isa 1:10-20	Col 2:13-23	Lk 7:40-50
XXVII.	37;86;146;120	A	Lam 3:22-26	Rom 15:14-22	Mt 5:43-48
Festival of Praise		B	Amos 5:1-4; 14-15	Eph 6:10-20	Lk 5:1-11
		C	Prov 11:5-11	1 Cor 13:1-13	Lk 6:12-19
XXVIII.		A	Mal 3:6-12	Rom 15:23-33	Mt 6:5-15
Festival of Praise	17;85;143;130	B	Lev 18:1-5; 19:18	3 Jn 1-8	Jn 4:27-38
		C	Prov 28:18-28	1 Cor 15:58-16:4	Lk 6:20-26
XXIX.		A	Ezek 34:11-17;	1 Cor 15:2--28	Mt 25:31-46
Last Sunday	23;45;47	B	23-24	Rev 1:4b-8	Jn 18:33-37
Christ the King		C	Dan 7:13-14	Col 1:11-20	Lk 23:35-42
			Jer 23:2-6		

SPECIAL SUNDAYS

Psalms	Year	First Lesson	Second Lesson	Gospel
113;23	A	1 Sam 1:1-3,9-11, 19-28	2 Jn 1-6	Mt 15:21-28
	B	Prov 31:10-31	2 Tim 1:3-7	Jn 2:1-11
	C	Ruth 1:1-9,14-18	Acts 16:11-18	Jn 19:25-27
37;30;130	A	Jer 31:31-34	Rom 5:1-11	Mt 5:1-20
	B	Ezek 36:24-32	Rom 8:9-17	Lk 9:23-27
	C	Isa 1:18-20	1 Thess 5:16-24	Jn 15:1-8
127;8	A	Ex 13:11-16	Heb 12:4-13	Mt 21:28-32
	B	Ecll 12:1-14	Eph 6:1-4	Mk 10:13-16
	C	1 Sam 3:1-10	1 Tim 4:12	Lk 2:41-51
44;114; 127;37	A	Gen 28:19-22	Heb 11:11-19	Mt 1:18-21,24-25; 2:13-15
	B	Josh 4:1-7,19-24	1 Jn 2:12-17	Mk 9:17-25
	C	1 Sam 2:27-36	Acts 10:24,30-33	Lk 15:11-31
33;67;9	A	1 Sam 8:6-8	Rom 13:1-7	Jn 19:8-16
	B	Dan 2:19-23,36-45	1 Tim 2:1-8	Mk 12:13-17
	C	Deut 28:1-6	1 Pet 2:11-17	Lk 1:68-79
29;92;150	A	1 Chron 16:23-26	Gal 1:1-9	Mt 8:5-13
	B	Isa 55:1-5	Rev 3:14-22	Jn 17:6-11
	C	Isa 49:8-13	Rev 7:13-17	Jn 17:20-26
32;133;5	A	Hab 2:1-4	Rom 3:21-28	Mt 11:25-30
	B	Ex 33:12-17	Rom 1:16-17	Jn 3:13-21
	C	Isa 30:15-21	Heb 11:1-6	Lk 18:9-14
112;23;65; 136	A	Deut 26:1-11	Gal 6:1-10	Mt 7:7-12
	B	Isa 40:25-31	Phil 4:4-7	Lk 17:11-19
	C	Deut 7:6-9	2 Cor 9:6-15	Jn 4:43-54

THE CALENDAR AND THE SEASONS

The dates, Christmas, Epiphany Day, and Easter, serve as the reference points for all other dates in the church year. Here, in brief, is the historical background on how these dates were established.

Easter was the beginning point. The Gospel accounts report that Jesus' death and resurrection occurred during the Passover festival in the first month of the spring. Because the Jewish calendar follows the lunar month rather than the solar year, the Passover season can vary by several weeks. Thus, like Passover, the date for Easter is also movable.

Christmas, on the other hand, always occurs on a fixed date. We have no way of knowing from the Gospel accounts when, in the Jewish year, Jesus was born. The selection of the date evolved in the church's battle with Mithraism, a pagan religion that flourished in the early centuries of this era. Many Christians were tempted to join the annual feast in honor of Mithra, which occurred at the time of the winter solstice. The church, to give an alternative, substituted the festival of the birth of Christ.

Early in the second century, Christians celebrated both the birth and the appearance of God's Son on January 6, Epiphany Day, which coincided with their observance of the winter solstice. By the fourth century, the date for the winter solstice was moved to December 25, and the church separated the observance of Jesus' birth from that of His appearance which continued to be celebrated on January 6. This was done to insure that Christians would reject "adoptionism," a heresy that taught that Jesus was born as any other man and was only adopted as God's Son at the time of His baptism.

The church year opens with the Advent season, beginning on the Sunday nearest to November 30. Epiphany always begins on January 6. Easter is "the first Sunday after the full moon on or after the first day of spring, March 21, or if the full moon is on Sunday, the next Sunday after." From here the following rules apply. Advent and Christmastide have five or six Sundays, four before Christmas Eve and one or two after. There are from four to nine Sundays after Epiphany Day.

Lent begins on the forty-sixth day before Easter and always has six Sundays. The Easter season always has seven Sundays. And for the remainder of the church year, there are from twenty-three to twenty-eight Sundays after Pentecost Sunday, the fiftieth day after Easter (counting inclusively).

Church Year	First Sunday in Advent	First Day of Lent	Easter	Pentecost
1997/98	Nov. 30	Feb. 25	April 12	May 31
1998/99	Nov. 29	Feb. 17	April 4	May 23
1999/00	Nov. 28	Mar. 8	April 23	June 11
2000/01	Dec. 3	Feb. 28	April 15	June 3
2001/02	Dec. 2	Feb. 13	March 31	May 19
2002/03	Dec. 1	Mar. 5	April 20	June 8
2003/04	Nov. 30	Feb. 25	April 11	May 30
2004/05	Nov. 28	Feb. 9	March 27	May 15
2005/06	Nov. 27	Mar. 1	April 16	June 4
2006/07	Dec. 3	Feb. 21	April 8	May 27
2007/08	Dec. 2	Feb. 6	March 23	May 11
2008/09	Nov. 30	Feb. 25	April 12	May 31
2009/10	Nov. 29	Feb. 17	April 4	May 23
2010/11	Nov. 28	Mar. 9	April 24	June 12

CALLS TO WORSHIP

The first words heard by worshipers who come from the distractions of everyday life should direct their attention toward God.

These timeless expressions from Scripture will inspire adoration and praise far more readily than spontaneous comments offered by the leader, well intended as they may be.

In some instances a brief statement to prepare the people may be helpful, such as: “Hear God’s invitation to worship.” Or “Welcome to the house of the Lord. Let us join in divine worship.”

Or “The words of [cite the author] call us to worship.”

Then should be read with feeling and clarity one of the following passages or one carefully selected to fit the order of worship. A wise pastor will make notations of each use to avoid undue repetition.

Instead of one reader, you may create responsive calls to worship from any of these. Usually two statements by both the reader and all the congregation make for a good balance. Start with the reader and end with the congregation. Here are a few examples of how to make a responsive call to worship:

ONE: Lord, You have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.
ALL: Before the mountains were born or brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God.
ONE: May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us;
ALL: Establish the work of our hands for us — yes, establish the work of our hands.

Psalms 90:1-2, 17

ONE: Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;
ALL: Let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.
ONE: Let us come before Him with thanksgiving;
ALL: And extol Him with music and song.

Psalms 95:1-2

ONE: Give thanks to the Lord, call on His name;
ALL: Make known among the nations what He has done.
ONE: Sing to Him, sing praise to Him,
ALL: Tell of His wonderful acts.
ONE: Glory in His holy name;
ALL: Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

Psalms 105:1-3

ONE: Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;
ALL: His greatness no one can fathom.
ONE: One generation will commend Your works to another;
ALL: They will tell of Your mighty acts.
ONE: They will speak of the glorious splendor of Your majesty,
ALL: And I will meditate on Your wonderful works.

Psalms 145:3-5

ONE: Praise the Lord.
ALL: Praise God in His sanctuary;
ONE: Praise Him in His mighty heavens.
ALL: Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!

Psalms 150:1, 6

SAMPLE CALLS TO WORSHIP

General

But I, by Your great mercy will come into Your house; in reverence will I bow down toward Your holy temple. Lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness because of my enemies, make straight Your way before me.

Psalms 5:7-8, NIV

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in His holy place? Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully.

Psalms 24:34, NRSV

Wait for the Lord; be strong, and take heart and wait for the Lord.

Psalms 27:14, NIV

I will extol the Lord at all times; His praise will always be on my lips. Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together. Those who look to Him are radiant.

Psalms 34:1, 3, 5a, NIV

Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together. For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light.

Psalms 34:3; 36:9, NIV

Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together. For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; He is to be revered above all gods.

Psalms 34:3; 1 Chronicles 16:25, NIV

Send forth Your light and Your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to Your holy mountain and to the place where You dwell. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight.

Psalms 43:3, 4, NIV

Praise awaits You, O God, in Zion; to You our vows will be fulfilled, O You who hear prayer, to all (people) will come.

Psalms 65:1-2, NIV

Blessed are those who You choose to bring near to live in Your courts! We are filled with the good things of Your house, of Your holy temple!

Psalms 65:4, NIV

Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for You judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.

Psalms 67:34, NRSV

My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh cry out for the living God.

Psalms 84:2, NIV

Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Satisfy us in the morning with Your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. May Your deeds be shown to Your servants, Your splendor to their children. May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us, yes, establish the work of our hands.

Psalms 90:12, 14, 16-17, NIV

It is good to praise the Lord and to make music to Your name, O Most High; to proclaim Your love in the morning and Your faithfulness at night.

Psalms 92:1-2, NIV

Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His land.

Psalms 95:6-7

Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! Sing to the Lord, praise His name; proclaim His salvation day after day. Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous deeds among all the peoples! For great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise.

Psalms 96:1-4, NIV

O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised. Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.

Psalms 96:1, 4, 6, NRSV

Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise! Give thanks to him, and praise His name. For the Lord is good and His love endures for ever, His faithfulness continues through all generations.

Psalms 100:4-5, NIV

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all His benefits.

Psalms 103:1-2, NRSV

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Psalms 103:8; 1 John 1:9, NIV

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and His compassion is over all that He has made.

Psalms 103:8; 145:9, NRSV

Give thanks to the Lord, call on His name; make known among the nations what He has done. Sing to Him, sing praise to Him, tell of His wonderful acts. Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice!

Psalms 105:1-3, NIV

O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His love endures forever. Let them give thanks to the Lord for His unfailing love and His wonderful deeds for men.

Psalms 107:1, 8, NIV

My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and make melody. Awake, my soul! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn. I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the peoples.

Psalms 108:1-3, NRSV

Praise the Lord. I will extol the Lord with all my heart in the council of the upright, in the assembly. Great are the works of the Lord ...Holy and awesome is His name ... To Him belongs eternal praise.

Psalms 111:1-2, 9-10, NIV

Praise the Lord! Praise, O servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord! Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time on and forevermore! From the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the Lord is to be praised!

Psalms 113:1-3, NRSV

From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised! May my prayer be set before You like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.

Psalms 113:3; 141:2, NIV

Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol Him, all peoples. For great is His love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures for ever. Praise the Lord!

Psalms 117, NIV

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalms 118:24

I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord!”

Psalms 122:1, NRSV

I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Psalms 121:1-2, NRSV

The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth. He fulfills the desire of all who fear Him, He also hears their cry, and saves them.

Psalms 145:18-19, NRSV

Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty firmament! Praise Him for His mighty deeds; praise Him according to His surpassing greatness!

Psalms 150:1-2, NRSV

“Come now, let us reason together,” says the Lord: “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.”

Isaiah 1:18, NIV

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.” O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

Isaiah 6:3; Psalms 95:6, NIV

But those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Isaiah 40:31, NRSV

Seek the Lord while He may be found, call on Him while He is near, let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that He may have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

Isaiah 55:6-7, NRSV

For this is what the high and lofty One says — He who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.” The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, will not despise. Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will lift up. Come near to God and He will come near to you.

Isaiah 57:15; Psalms 51:17; James 4:10, 8, NIV

Rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

Joel 2:13, NRSV

With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:6, 8, NRSV

The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him. "Surely the Lord is in this place. ... How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Habakkuk 2:20; Genesis 28:16-17, NIV

The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him. "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Habakkuk 2:20; Psalms 46:10-11, NIV

"Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30, NIV

"For where two or three come together in My name, there am I with them."

Matthew 18:20, NIV

"Let the little children come to Me, do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs." "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

Mark 10:14; Matthew 18:3, NRSV

"But the hour is coming — indeed is already here — when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth: that is the kind of worshiper the Father seeks. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth."

John 4:23-24, Jerusalem Bible

“When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’”

John 20:19, NRSV

For God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made His light shine in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:6, NIV

Celebrate God all day, every day. ... Don’t fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God’s wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It’s wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.

Philippians 4:4, 6-7, The Message

As you come to Him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to Him — you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:4-5, NIV

This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all ... if we walk in the light, as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 1:5-7, NRSV

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:8-9, NRSV

Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.

Revelation 3:20, NRSV

He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.” “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or be terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Revelation 21:5-6; Deuteronomy 31:6, NIV

SPECIAL

Missions

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the families of the nations will bow down before Him, for dominion belongs to the Lord, and He rules over the nations.

Psalms 22:27-28, NIV

The God who made the world. ... From one ancestor He made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, ... So that they would search for God and perhaps grope for Him and find Him — though indeed He is not far from each one of us.

Acts 17:24, 26-27, NRSV

Sing to the Lord, all the earth! Proclaim His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous works among all the peoples! For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise.

1 Chronicles 16:23-25, NIV

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matthew 28:19-20, NIV

Christmas

“I am bringing good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Messiah, the Lord.”

Luke 2:10-11, NRSV

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom He favors!”

Luke 2:13-14, NRSV

“Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.”

Luke 2:15, NRSV

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Isaiah 60:1, 3, NIV

Palm Sunday

Crowds went ahead and crowds followed, all of them calling out, “Hosanna to David’s son!” “Blessed is He who comes in God’s name!” “Hosanna in highest heaven!”

Matthew 21:9, The Message

Lift up your heads, O gates; lift them up, ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is He, this King of glory? The Lord Almighty — He is the King of glory!

Psalms 24:9-10, NIV

Easter

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory.”

1 Corinthians 15:20; Revelation 19:6-7, NIV

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. His love endures forever. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade — kept in heaven for you.

Psalms 136:1; 1 Peter 1:3-4, NIV

National

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people He chose for His heritage!

Proverbs 14:34; Psalms 33:12

Thanksgiving

O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever! Let them thank the Lord for His steadfast love, for His wonderful works to humankind. For He satisfies the thirsty, and the hungry He fills with good things.

Psalms 107:1, 8-9, NRSV

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.

Psalms 100:1-2, 4-5, NIV

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us make a loud noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before Him with thanksgiving and extol Him with music and song. For the Lord is the great God, and great King above all gods.

Psalms 95:1-3, NIV

May the peoples praise, O God; may all the peoples praise. Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God, will bless us. God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear Him.

Psalms 67:5-7, NIV

INVOCATIONS

The invocation, as the word indicates, is a prayer which implores God to visit His people with grace to enable them to worship Him. It is a concise petition offered at the beginning of worship in recognition of our inability to approach God unless He provides both the way and the means.

The invocation should be confined to two or three sentences referring specifically to the act of worship. Avoid the redundancy of making the invocation either a preview or extension of the pastoral prayer.

SAMPLE INVOCATIONS

General

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit that we may perfectly love Thee and worthily magnify Thy holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

— Gregorian Sacramentary, 7th Century

O Lord our God, who are always more ready to bestow Thy good gifts upon us than we are to seek them, and art willing to give more than we desire or deserve: help us to seek that we may truly find, so to ask that we may joyfully receive, so to knock that the door of Thy mercy may be opened unto us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

— Book of Common Order of St. Giles' Cathedral

O God, author of eternal light, lead us in our worshipping this day; that our lips may praise Thee, our lives may bless Thee, our meditations may glorify Thee, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

— Sarum Breviary, 11th Century

Almighty God, grant us the forgiveness of all our sins that we, being full of grace, virtue and good works, may become thy kingdom. May we with heart, soul, mind and strength, inwardly and outwardly, submit to Thy commands and do Thy will. Amen.

— Martin Luther

We humble ourselves, O Lord of heaven and earth, before Thy glorious majesty. We acknowledge Thy eternal power, wisdom, goodness and truth, and desire to render unto Thee thanks for all the benefits which Thou pourest upon us. But, above all, for Thine inestimable love in the redemption of us by our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

— John Wesley

Do something mighty in us today, Lord. We grow complacent and reticent. We are prone to become overly familiar with holy things, leaving behind awe and reverence and the majesty due thy Name. Hide great hopes in our souls, stir mighty visions in our minds, fan noble desires in our hearts; that more perfectly we may worship Thee, more committedly we may serve Thee, and more receptively we may be filled by Thee.

Do something mighty in us today, Lord. Do Thou it for Thy Name's sake. Amen.

— E. Lee Phillips

Dear God and Lord, Your existence stretches from the beginning to the end of eternity. You are the Source of all that is; or ever will be. And it is to You whom we come, in this hour of worship, for You alone are worthy of our adoration and praise.

Please, give us ears to hear Your truth and open minds to understand. Give us eyes to catch Your vision for our lives and willing hearts (and yes, willing feet) to follow, as You lead. We pray all this in the name of Jesus, Amen.

We come to worship You, Lord, You who are the great God and Creator who launched the worlds of the universe into existence and skillfully created every living thing. Yet You are the deeply personal, loving God who offers us salvation; a chance to begin a new life through Jesus Christ.

We praise and honor You and ask Your blessing on this hour. May it be infused with Your presence, and our lives renewed by Your Spirit. Amen.

O Father, our eternal Light, lead us in our worship this day. May our lips truly praise You, our lives faithfully bless You, and our meditations greatly glorify You. Through Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Great God — Our God; the creator of all that is; we give You praise: for who You are; for Jesus and his saving death; for love so freely given; for life, Your life that dwells within.

We give ourselves in worship. May our spirits encounter Your Spirit. May we be renewed and empowered for Your kingdom's work in this world. This we pray through Jesus name, Amen.

Eternal God, our Fortress, our strength, our help in trouble ... we bow before You. We confess that we come from an array of distracting circumstances, making it hard for us to truly worship.

Some of us come with fear, others with guilt. Many of us are filled up with ourselves and our things leaving little room left for You.

So, God, we ask You to replace our fear with trust, release our guilt with forgiveness, and help us to surrender anything that takes Your place in our hearts. Help us to freely worship You. May praise and honor rise from overflowing hearts and lips, because we have met You in a new way this hour. This we pray in the strong name of Jesus our Lord and King. Amen.

Advent

Eternal God, who has prepared from the beginning the minds and hearts of people for the coming of Your Son, and whose Spirit always works to illumine our darkened lives with the light of the gospel: Prepare now our minds and hearts, we pray, that Christ may dwell in us, and ever rule our thoughts and affections as the King of love, and the very Prince of Peace. Grant this, we pray, for His sake. Amen.

Almighty God, source of all things, we remember with joy and awe that the world is Your creation, and that life is Your gift. Lift up our thoughts from the smallness of our own works to the greatness, the majesty, and the wonder of Yours, and teach us so to behold Your glory that we may grow into Your likeness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Most merciful God, who so loved the world as to give Your only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life: Grant to us, we humbly pray, the precious gift of faith, that we may know that the Son of God is come, and may have hearts ready to receive Him. Grant us, through Him, the power to overcome the world and gain a home in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hosanna! Alleluia! Praise to God! Words of adoration come naturally and easy, Lord, when we begin to capture the wonder of Your love. We welcome You to this hour of worship. May this gathering with You be a time of strengthening for those who are weak; a time of renewing for those who are exhausted and dismayed; a time of confession for those who are arrogant and self-sufficient. For each one, may this be a time for encountering anew the Creator of the universe, the Savior of the world, the babe of Christmas ... In whose name we pray, the name of Jesus. Amen.

Palm Sunday

Gracious and Eternal God, as today we remember the entry of Your Son Jesus into the city of Jerusalem, may Your presence triumph in our hearts — as we worship You this hour — we want YOUR touch, where YOU see our need; and unlike the fickleness of the ancients who so easily praised, then so quickly turned their backs in the panic of the crucifixion, may our praise be ever faithful and our lives continually molded by the glory of Your resurrected Son. For it's in His name — Jesus our Savior, that we pray. Amen

Easter

Hallelujah! What a Savior, what a Friend! Saving, helping, keeping, loving — Father, In Jesus Your love is expressed so largely that we cannot get our minds around it. At the same time, He makes Your love so personal, we cannot help but respond. So we come to You in worship.

We have come to give You praise and glory, to learn from Your Word, and to grow from our shared experiences in relationship with You.

Energize each part of our worship this hour with Your Spirit. May it be a gift to You and a time of renewal and growth in us. For we pray in the name of Jesus, the greatest messenger of love. Amen.

Graduation

Heavenly Father, we celebrate this joyous occasion together in Your presence. Blend our minds and hearts into a fountain of thanksgiving to You for bringing us to this pinnacle of our lives.

We pray today for family and friends who have stood with these graduates during the struggles and joys of growth and are proud of their sons and daughters at this special hour. Thank You for their unwillingness to give up when giving up would have been easy. Thank You for their support which has cheered and encouraged young lives to finish the task at hand. May Your gracious presence, strengthen each family member and friend today.

We pray for our graduates who are the focus of our festivities. Let this day not be seen as the end of life's pursuits. Instead may it truly be a commencement, a beginning, a new day for each man and woman.

Teach them to dream Your holy dreams. Cause their hope to keep them striving toward completion. And may each success be hallowed by Your love, because they come to trust You for all things in this life.

Father, we welcome Your presence with us. We pray in the strong name of Jesus, Amen.

THE OFFERING

The offering is a supreme act of praise and thanksgiving. It should never be viewed as a perfunctory interlude for raising money. Offerings may be received in a variety of ways, but the event is always a high moment of participation as worshipers present a portion of their negotiable selves to God in recognition of His ownership of all things.

At this moment all the activities of a secular workweek come in contact with a Holy God who gives strength for honest labor.

Because of the sacredness and importance of the offering, it deserves to be introduced in the morning worship by a portion of Scripture, either before or after the ushers receive the offering.

Sample Offertory Sentences

On the first day of every week, each one is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper.

1 Corinthians 16:2

Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord.

Psalms 4:5

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.

Matthew 6:33

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Matthew 6:19-21

What shall I render to the Lord for all His bounty to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord, I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people.

Psalms 116:12-14

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see Your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is Yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; You are exalted as head over all.

1 Chronicles 29:11, NIV

Honor the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce.

Proverbs 3:9

Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High.

Psalms 50:14

Moreover it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.

1 Corinthians 4:2

“Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house; and thereby put Me to the test says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.”

Malachi 3:10

Honor and majesty are before Him; strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength! Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come into His courts!

Psalms 96:6-8

He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.

Luke 16:10

Take heed what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you.

Mark 4:24

For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life?

Matthew 16:26

Now as you excel in everything — in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in your love for us — see that you excel in this gracious work [of giving] also.

2 Corinthians 8:7

No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Luke 16:13

Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

Luke 12:15

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."

Mark 16:15-16

Sample Offertory Prayers

O Lord our God, send down upon us Your Holy Spirit, we pray, to cleanse our hearts, to hallow our gifts, and to perfect the offering of ourselves to You; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Accept, O Lord, these offerings Your people make to You, and grant that the work to which they are devoted may prosper under Your guidance, to the glory of Your name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O God, most merciful and gracious, of whose bounty we have all received: Accept this offering of Your people. Remember those who have brought it, and those for whom it is given, and so follow it with Your blessing that it may promote peace and salvation among all people, and so advance the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Almighty God, whose loving hand has given us all that we possess: Grant us grace that we may honor You with our substance, and remembering the account which we must one day give, be faithful stewards of Your bounty; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O God, who need not be enriched with any gifts that we bring, yet who loves the cheerful giver: Receive these our offerings which we present before You, and with them ourselves, our souls and our bodies, as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to You; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord Jesus, who for our sake became poor, that by Your poverty we might become rich: grant to Your people so to give of their substance as to acknowledge that they belong wholly to You; for Your own sake. Amen.

Heavenly Father, giver of all good things, who hast taught us that it is more blessed to give than to receive: We dedicate these our offerings to the service of Your Church, humbly praying that all our gifts and energies may be consecrated to the extension of Your kingdom on earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

All that we have is from You, heavenly Father, for You are the Creator and preserver of all peoples and all things; accept these gifts we now bring; and help us to make the whole of life an offering. We would seal this our worship in a renewed consecration of ourselves and our coming days to Your service; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

BENEDICTIONS AND CLOSING PRAYERS

Worship services are usually concluded by either a benediction or a closing prayer. Benedictions are statements of blessing usually given with eyes open and facing the congregation. They present a unique opportunity for the worship leader to send the worshipers into the world with a final good word from the Lord.

Sample Benedictions

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13:20-21

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. Amen.

Adapted from Philippians 4:7, by Lloyd H. Knox

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

2 Corinthians 13:14

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

1 Corinthians 1:3

The Lord bless you and keep you: the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you: the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen.

Numbers 6:24-26

Go in peace; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always. Amen.

— *Lloyd H. Knox*

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with you henceforth and forever. Amen.

— *Lloyd H. Knox*

May the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Amen.

Romans 15:13

Unto God's gracious mercy and protection we commit you. And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you forever. Amen.

— *Lloyd H. Knox*

Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion, and power, both now and ever.

Jude 24, KJV

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen.

2 Corinthians 13:14, KJV

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen.

1 Timothy 1:17, KJV

Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Ephesians 3:20, KJV

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word. Amen.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17