

“Where Two or Three Are Gathered”: Worship for Smaller Assemblies

Ordinary Time until Sunday of Christ the King
Sunday, October 20th, 2019 to Sunday, November 24th, 2019

A resource for congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada,
produced by the Program Committee for Worship

General Notes

Lectionary:

As many of us know, the lectionary for Ordinary Time has options for two main ways of hearing Scripture (Old Testament). First, there are readings, sometimes called “complimentary,” which match the Gospel and are often summarized by it. Second, there are readings described as “semicontinuous.” These readings are designed to present us with themes in Scripture —ways in which the saving work of God has been known and spoken of in human history.

Consider how God is known and spoken of in your community and what lectionary choice best nurtures its faith. Is there a need to learn more about how Scripture speaks of Christ? In this case, the complimentary readings may be best. Is it time for your community to see more variety in the way God is present to creation, or is there a part of the Christian life that needs to be emphasized? In this case, the semi continuous reading is a helpful choice.

Bear in mind that in smaller gatherings, the first reading and the Gospel are sometimes all that is read, in addition to the Psalm.

Worship Environments:

Green, of course, is the colour of the season for Ordinary Time. This reminds us of the renewal of the earth, the new creation that Christ brings with his resurrection, and the sending of the Holy Spirit. Ordinary Time, however, is quite a long season. Variations in the kinds of green decorations that adorn our spaces can help mark the passage of time and the differences from Sunday to Sunday.

Consider a variety of green fabrics, or fabrics with various patterns of leaves and foliage to decorate and mark the places of your worship space for the readings, baptism, and Lord’s Supper. If there are people with gifts for cutting and sewing in your gatherings, making simple cloth paraments is a wonderful way to draw people together midweek, or Sunday afternoon. The variety of plants, flowers, and produce also give us options for changing the space —as well as highlighting themes in the readings and hymns. Again, a group activity to draw the worshipping community together could be a walk to gather foliage to decorate the space, or even a trip to a garden store in more urban areas.

Hymns and Music:

Bearing in mind that we may not all sing as well as we like, nor enjoy the gifts of musicians in our gatherings, it is perfectly fine to choose hymns that work best for our context. The suggested hymns in this resource come from the ELW, and are chosen for accessibility and ease of singing. With a little practice and planning, many can be played on a guitar, violin, flute, etc. In times of need, prerecorded music can be used to provide background support and guidance for our singing. In smaller gatherings, 2 -3 hymns are often enough.

Finally, since hymns are sung prayers and exist alongside the Psalms, in gatherings where singing is not possible, Psalms can be spoken in their place.

The Assembly:

Though Sunday is the primary day on which the people of God gather to hear the Word, forgive sins, celebrate the Lord's Supper, and give thanks, the needs of our communities may not make this possible. Following each primer for a Sunday-based eucharist is a primer for a midweek, evening Service of the Word. Elements from this rite can be used in settings for Holy Communion if your community gathers on Sunday evenings. Likewise, if you are unable to celebrate the Eucharist in your gathering, simply use the setting for Service of the Word—replacing all the “evening” themed parts with ones appropriate to “morning,” and Morning Prayer in the ELW.

There are a variety of imaginative ways to provide a setting for worship that draws us together in the presence of God. Consider carpooling to a specific location or home when distance is a challenge. Sometimes worship followed by a potluck meal (this includes breakfast and supper) encourages people to come to worship and stay longer—building the important connections we have to each other in faith and discipleship. Above all, remember that God creates time for us. What are some new ways in which the “ordinary time,” of our lives can be “given order” by God to make a space for worship?

Sunday, October 20th, 2019

Lectionary:

Genesis 32:22-31 **or** Jeremiah 31:27-34

Psalm 121 **or** Psalm 119:97-104

2 Timothy 3:14—4:5

Luke 18:1-8

Themes:

On this Sunday, the parable of the widow and the unjust judge encourages us to pray persistently in the hope that God will hear us and respond quickly. This is an especially poignant theme for our smaller gatherings, in times and places where we may be struggling to “not lose heart.” “Be comforted,” the Psalmist tells us, “[your] help will come from the Lord who made heaven and earth (Ps. 121:2).” These words of promise and life from Christ are “sweeter than honey (Ps. 119:103).” Our call is to remain steadfast in faith and trust God’s work.

Worship Environment:

Deep greens remind us of the strength of God’s steadfast love and faithfulness. The scent of beeswax candles are a way to evoke the words of Psalm 119. Today especially, the members of your community should be encouraged to contribute to the Prayers of Intercession and Thanksgiving.

Hymns and Music:

A few suggestions for this Sunday's theme are:

ELW 717: "Let Justice Flow like Streams"

ELW 715: "Christ, Be Our Light"

ELW 596: "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

ELW 742: "What a Friend We Have in Jesus"

Order of Service for Holy Communion:

Gathering

Thanksgiving for Baptism —ELW p.97

Hymn, or Psalm

Greeting

Canticle of Praise (any ELW setting)

Prayer of the Day: —ELW p.50 ("C")

Word

First Reading

Psalm (optional)

Second Reading (optional)

Gospel

Sermon/Reflection

Hymn of the Day or Psalm

Creed (optional) —ELW p.105

Prayers of Intercession and Thanksgiving (ELW p.105 has guidelines in red print)

Sharing of the Peace

Meal (an offering may be collected before the Great Thanksgiving)

Dialogue

Preface: "It is indeed right our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:"

Holy, Holy, Holy

Words of Institution —ELW p.108, Form II

Lord's Prayer

Communion

Sending

Blessing

Hymn, or Simeon's Canticle (may be spoken) —ELW p.113

Dismissal

Midweek, October 21st to 26th

Lectionary:

Psalm 84:8-12

Daniel 5:13-31

Matthew 21:28-32

Themes:

We hear the words of Jesus speak to us about discipleship and obedience in faith. There is a struggle in each of us as God makes the new creation real in the lives of every forgiven sinner.

Worship Environment:

For especially small gatherings, consider sitting around a table set with the colour of the season and candles. At the center of the table could be an open Bible, emphasizing

our dependence on God's Word. In gatherings for the Eucharist, the gifts could be set out in this way from the start.

Hymns and Music:

A few suggestions for the theme are:

ELW 581: "You are Mine"

ELW 472: "Eat this Bread"

ELW 484: "You Satisfy the Hungry Heart"

See also the "Evening" section: ELW hymns 560 - 573

Order of Evening Service of the Word:

Gathering

Dialogue: "Evening Prayer," ELW p.309

Hymn of Light (may be spoken, ELW Hymn 229 or 561)

Prayer of the Day: —ELW p.50 ("C")

Word

First Reading

Psalm (optional)

Second Reading (optional)

Gospel

Sermon/Reflection

Hymn or Psalm

Prayers of Intercession and Thanksgiving (ELW p.218 has guidelines in red print)

Sharing of the Peace

Thanksgiving (an offering may be collected before the Canticle)

Canticle of Thanksgiving (may be spoken) —ELW p.219

Thanksgiving for the Word (form I or II) —ELW p.220

Lord's Prayer

Sending

Blessing

Leader: "Let us bless the Lord."

All: "Thanks be to God."

Dismissal —ELW p.222

Sunday, October 27th, 2019

Lectionary:

Jeremiah 14:7-10, 19-22 **or** Joel 2:23-32

Psalm 84:1-7 **or** Psalm 65

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

Luke 18:9-14

Themes:

On this Sunday, the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector continues Christ's preaching to us that God hears prayer. True prayer comes when we are pushed into remembering our only hope is in God, and not in anything of creation. Smaller gatherings are especially mindful of this, as they know how quickly things in the world can change. Strength, hope, and unbroken promise all come from God's overflowing mercy.

Worship Environment:

By now, the seasons are definitely changing wherever we live. Green is becoming sparser, and the brightness of spring has given way to earthen tones. Consider bringing some of this change into your space in terms of colour shifts, different foliage (leaves, grains, pine cones, etc.), and sparseness.

Hymns and Music:

A few suggestions for this Sunday's theme are:

ELW 600: "Out of the Depths I Cry to You"

ELW 608: "Softly and Tenderly"

ELW 612: "Healer of Our Every Ill"

Order of Service for Holy Communion:

Gathering

Confession and Forgiveness —ELW p.94

Hymn, or Psalm

Greeting

Canticle of Praise (any ELW setting)

Prayer of the Day: —ELW p.51 ("C")

Word

First Reading

Psalm (optional)

Second Reading (optional)

Gospel

Sermon/Reflection

Hymn of the Day or Psalm

Creed (optional) —ELW p.105

Prayers of Intercession and Thanksgiving (ELW p.105 has guidelines in red print)

Sharing of the Peace

Meal (an offering may be collected before the Great Thanksgiving)

Dialogue

Preface: "It is indeed right our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:"

Holy, Holy, Holy

Words of Institution —ELW p.108, Form II

Lord's Prayer

Communion

Sending

Blessing

Hymn, or Simeon's Canticle (may be spoken) —ELW p.113

Dismissal

Midweek, October 28th to November 2nd

Lectionary:

Psalm 50

Amos 5:12-24

Luke 19:11-27

Themes:

Jesus reminds us that God expects the gifts we have been given to be used for the sake of the gospel —take risks, and give as much away as you can. The surprise comes from realizing that what we have isn't ours to keep to ourselves.

Worship Environment:

Consider decorating a box in the colour of the season, and placing it in a central location. Fill it with food items and essentials that can be given to someone in need at the conclusion of the service.

Hymns and Music:

A few suggestions for the theme are:

ELW 686: "We Give Thee but Thine Own"

ELW 685: "Take My Life, That I May Be"

See also the "Evening" section: ELW hymns 560 - 573

Order of Evening Service of the Word:

Gathering

Dialogue: "Evening Prayer," ELW p.309

Hymn of Light (may be spoken, ELW Hymn 229 or 561)

Prayer of the Day: —ELW p.51 ("C")

Word

First Reading

Psalm (optional)

Second Reading (optional)

Gospel

Sermon/Reflection

Hymn or Psalm

Prayers of Intercession and Thanksgiving (ELW p.218 has guidelines red print)
Sharing of the Peace

Thanksgiving (an offering may be collected before the Canticle)

Canticle of Thanksgiving (may be spoken) —ELW p.219

Thanksgiving for the Word (form I or II) —ELW p.220

Lord's Prayer

Sending

Blessing

Leader: "Let us bless the Lord."

All: "Thanks be to God."

Dismissal —ELW p.222

Sunday, November 3rd, 2019

Lectionary:

Isaiah 1:10-18 **or** Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4

Psalm 32:1-7 **or** Psalm 119: 137-144

2 Thessalonians 1:1-4, 11-12

Luke 19:1-10

Themes:

Today we hear the story of Zacchaeus, who goes out looking for Jesus —not really knowing who he is. Surprisingly, Jesus finds him, and in this way, Zacchaeus finds himself sharing a meal with Christ. His whole life is changed. We also know what it is like to be found by Christ. Even our smaller gatherings hold the presence of the One who makes everything new and alive.

Worship Environment:

Branches and leaves can be used as a form of decoration at the feet of the altar, the pulpit, or the font to evoke the tree that Zacchaeus climbs in order to see Jesus. Leaves can also be cut from contrasting green fabrics or paper and placed around the worship space.

Hymns and Music:

A few suggestions for this Sunday's theme are:

ELW 720: "We Are Called"

ELW 809: "Send Me Lord"

Order of Service for Holy Communion:

Gathering

Thanksgiving for Baptism —ELW p.97

Hymn, or Psalm

Greeting

Canticle of Praise (any ELW setting)

Prayer of the Day: —ELW p.52 (“C”)

Word

First Reading

Psalm (optional)

Second Reading (optional)

Gospel

Sermon/Reflection

Hymn of the Day or Psalm

Creed (optional) —ELW p.105

Prayers of Intercession and Thanksgiving (ELW p.105 has guidelines in red print)

Sharing of the Peace

Meal (an offering may be collected before the Great Thanksgiving)

Dialogue

Preface: “It is indeed right our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:”

Holy, Holy, Holy

Words of Institution —ELW p.108, Form II

Lord’s Prayer

Communion

Sending

Blessing

Hymn, or Simeon’s Canticle (may be spoken) —ELW p.113

Dismissal

Midweek, November 4th to November 9th

Lectionary:

Psalm 123

Job 25:1—26:14

John 5:19-29

Themes:

In this passage from the gospel according to John, Jesus tells us what he gives us, together with God. What Christ offers the world belongs to God, and Christ is able to do this because of God's gracious mercy.

Worship Environment:

The resurrection is the central image in this gospel. Choose light-coloured greens that reflect brightness and joy. Christian art that tells the story of the resurrection is also appropriate in the worship space, as a tool for reflecting on Scripture.

Hymns and Music:

A few suggestions for the theme are:

ELW 708: "Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love"

ELW 581: "You Are Mine"

ELW 666: "What Wondrous Love is This"

See also the “Evening” section: ELW hymns 560 - 573

Order of Evening Service of the Word:

Gathering

Dialogue: “Evening Prayer,” ELW p.309

Hymn of Light (may be spoken, ELW Hymn 229 or 561)

Prayer of the Day: —ELW p.52 (“C”)

Word

First Reading

Psalm (optional)

Second Reading (optional)

Gospel

Sermon/Reflection

Hymn or Psalm

Prayers of Intercession and Thanksgiving (ELW p.218 has guidelines in red print)

Sharing of the Peace

Thanksgiving (an offering may be collected before the Canticle)

Canticle of Thanksgiving (may be spoken) —ELW p.219

Thanksgiving for the Word (form I or II) —ELW p.220

Lord’s Prayer

Sending

Blessing

Leader: “Let us bless the Lord.”

All: “Thanks be to God.”

Dismissal —ELW p.222

Sunday, November 10th, 2019

Lectionary:

Job 19:23-27a **or** Haggai 1:15b—2:9

Psalm 17:1-9 **or** Psalm 145:1-5, 17-21

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17

Luke 20:27-38

Themes:

In the gospel, we hear Jesus offer us a hint of what life in the resurrection focuses on. We hear that some of the ways in which we relate to each other now may shift and change. The greatest comfort in the news about the resurrection is that all will have life.

Worship Environment:

Drawing on the themes, the worship space should embody the change of natural seasons and the changes Jesus speaks about. Minimize decoration. Choose light-coloured green paraments, and take away all foliage in the space so that it appears quite different to your community.

Hymns and Music:

A few suggestions for this Sunday's theme are:

ELW 815: "I Want to Walk As a Child of the Light"

ELW 715: "Christ, Be Our Light"

ELW 732: "Borning Cry"

Order of Service for Holy Communion:

Gathering

Thanksgiving for Baptism —ELW p.97

Hymn, or Psalm

Greeting

Canticle of Praise (any ELW setting)

Prayer of the Day: —ELW p.52 ("C")

Word

First Reading

Psalm (optional)

Second Reading (optional)

Gospel

Sermon/Reflection

Hymn of the Day or Psalm

Creed (optional) —ELW p.105

Prayers of Intercession and Thanksgiving (ELW p.105 has guidelines in red print)

Sharing of the Peace

Meal (an offering may be collected before the Great Thanksgiving)

Dialogue

Preface: "It is indeed right our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:"

Holy, Holy, Holy

Words of Institution —ELW p.108, Form II

Lord's Prayer

Communion

Sending

Blessing

Hymn, or Simeon's Canticle (may be spoken) —ELW p.113

Dismissal

Midweek, November 11th to November 16th

Lectionary:

Psalm 141

Ezekiel 43:1-12

Matthew 23:37—24:14

Themes:

As expected, towards the end of the liturgical year, we begin to think about the end of time, and listen to Jesus' reply with ears of faith and open hearts. This news about the end is meant to encourage our steadfastness and reliance upon God, rather than be terrified by the unknown.

Worship Environment:

Darker green colours reflect the sense of mystery and quietness held in the unknown. A single, bright source of central light next to a basin of water, or floating within it, is an ancient symbol of Christ bringing comfort in times of uncertainty with the promise of salvation.

Hymns and Music:

A few suggestions for the theme are:

ELW 439: "Soon and Very Soon"

ELW 456: "Baptized in Water"

See also the "Evening" section: ELW hymns 560 - 573

Order of Evening Service of the Word:

Gathering

Dialogue: "Evening Prayer," ELW p.309

Hymn of Light (may be spoken, ELW Hymn 229 or 561)

Prayer of the Day: —ELW p.52 ("C")

Word

First Reading

Psalm (optional)

Second Reading (optional)

Gospel

Sermon/Reflection

Hymn or Psalm

Prayers of Intercession and Thanksgiving (ELW p.218 has guidelines in red print)

Sharing of the Peace

Thanksgiving (an offering may be collected before the Canticle)

Canticle of Thanksgiving (may be spoken) —ELW p.219

Thanksgiving for the Word (form I or II) —ELW p.220
Lord's Prayer

Sending

Blessing

Leader: "Let us bless the Lord."

All: "Thanks be to God."

Dismissal —ELW p.222

Sunday, November 17th, 2019

Lectionary:

Malachi 4:1-2a **or** Isaiah 65:17-25

Psalm 98 **or** Isaiah 12:2-6

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Luke 21:5-19

Themes:

Continuing the theme of End Times, Jesus tells the disciples about the day the Temple will be torn down—but Christ will be raised up. This speaks to us in our small gatherings, as we do not worship in a larger Church. Nevertheless, Christ still calls us to newness of life and fashions a new creation in our midst.

Worship Environment:

Consider keeping the worship space as bare as possible, with just the slightest hint of seasonal colour. This emphasizes the present form of the world passing away, as we hear from Jesus, but it also suggests infinite possibilities in a new beginning.

Hymns and Music:

A few suggestions for this Sunday's theme are:

ELW 438: "My Lord, What a Morning"

ELW 822: "Oh, Sing to the Lord"

Order of Service for Holy Communion:

Gathering

Thanksgiving for Baptism —ELW p.97

Hymn, or Psalm

Greeting

Canticle of Praise (any ELW setting)

Prayer of the Day: —ELW p.53 ("C")

Word

First Reading

Psalm (optional)

Second Reading (optional)

Gospel

Sermon/Reflection

Hymn of the Day or Psalm

Creed (optional) —ELW p.105

Prayers of Intercession and Thanksgiving (ELW 105 has guidelines in red print)

Sharing of the Peace

Meal (an offering may be collected before the Great Thanksgiving)

Dialogue

Preface: “It is indeed right our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:”

Holy, Holy, Holy

Words of Institution —ELW p.108, Form II

Lord’s Prayer

Communion

Sending

Blessing

Hymn, or Simeon’s Canticle (may be spoken) —ELW p.113

Dismissal

Midweek, November 18th to November 23rd

Lectionary:

Psalm 24

Isaiah 60:8-16

Luke 1:1-4

Themes:

The opening of the gospel according to Luke sets the tone for the Sunday of Christ the King. It is the beginning before the end, but in Christ the two are not opposed. This statement of purpose written by “Luke,” gives us the reason for Ordinary Time: further formation in faith, by learning more about Jesus Christ—who is the way, the truth, and the life.

Worship Environment:

For especially small gatherings, consider sitting around a table with nothing other than candles. At the center of the table could be an open bible. In gatherings for the Eucharist, the gifts could be set out in this way from the start.

Hymns and Music:

A few suggestions for the theme are:

ELW 629: “Abide With Me”

ELW 769: “If You But Trust in God to Guide You”

See also the “Evening” section: ELW hymns 560 - 573

Order of Evening Service of the Word:

Gathering

Dialogue: “Evening Prayer,” ELW 309

Hymn of Light (may be spoken, ELW Hymn 229 or 561)

Prayer of the Day: —ELW p.53 (“C”)

Word

First Reading

Psalm (optional)

Second Reading (optional)

Gospel

Sermon/Reflection

Hymn or Psalm

Prayers of Intercession and Thanksgiving (ELW p.218 has guidelines in red print)

Sharing of the Peace

Thanksgiving (an offering may be collected before the Canticle)

Canticle of Thanksgiving (may be spoken) —ELW p.219

Thanksgiving for the Word (form I or II) —ELW p.220

Lord's Prayer

Sending

Blessing

Leader: "Let us bless the Lord."

All: "Thanks be to God."

Dismissal —ELW 222

Sunday, November 24th, 2019 —Sunday of Christ the King

Lectionary:

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Psalm 46 or Luke 1:68-79

Colossians 1:11-20

Luke 23:33-43

Themes:

On this, the last Sunday in the liturgical year, we are given a summary of who Luke understands Jesus to be. The main focus of Luke's gospel is repeated for us in the main themes of the readings. Above all, we close the ordering of time with all things rejoicing at the victory of Christ on his cross.

Worship Environment:

As we gradually removed all decorations for the worship space to signify the end of time, and the year, now we are invited to participate in one last "explosion" of bright light and fullness. In whatever way possible, consider filling the space with paraments, fabrics in varieties of white and cream colours, as well as patterns with exotic foliage and fruits. The cross is a particularly appropriate symbol for the day, as are crowns and candles for light. If all agree, consider burning a small bit of incense with a natural smell (sandalwood, frankincense, copal, cedar, etc.,) at the back of the space. This can be "worship with all five senses."

Hymns and Music:

A few suggestions for this Sunday's theme are:

ELW 414: "Holy God, We Praise Your Name"

ELW 430: "Rejoice, for Christ is King"

ELW 616: "Jesus, Remember Me" (sung 4-5 times)

Order of Service for Holy Communion:

Gathering

Thanksgiving for Baptism —ELW p.97

Hymn, or Psalm

Greeting

Kyrie (any ELW setting)

Canticle of Praise (any ELW setting)

Prayer of the Day: —ELW p.53 ("C")

Word

First Reading

Psalm (optional)

Second Reading (optional)

Gospel

Sermon/Reflection

Hymn of the Day or Psalm

Nicene Creed —ELW p.104

Prayers of Intercession and Thanksgiving (ELW p.105 has guidelines in red print)

Sharing of the Peace

Meal (an offering may be collected before the Great Thanksgiving)

Dialogue

Preface: "It is indeed right our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ. You reveal your glory as the glory of the father, the son, and the Holy Spirit: equal in majesty, undivided in splendor, one Lord, one God, ever to be adored in your eternal glory. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:"

Holy, Holy, Holy

Words of Institution —ELW p.108, Form I

Lord's Prayer

Communion

Sending

Blessing

Hymn, or Simeon's Canticle (may be spoken) —ELW p.113

Dismissal