

Where Two or Three are Gathered: Worship for Small Assemblies

April 7 – May 12, 2024

Season of Easter / Year B
The 2nd Sunday of Easter through to the 7th Sunday of Easter
Prepared by Gail Berg, Synod of Alberta & the Territories

Planning Notes for Leaders

Season and Lectionary

“Alleluia! Christ is risen!”, and “He is risen indeed!”, is the joyous refrain of Easter Sunday, marking the day of resurrection of our Lord. Every Sunday is a return to the day of the week on which the resurrection of Christ happened, and so is a celebration. Easter Sunday is the most important day of the church year, so the Easter season becomes a sort of celebrative follow up on Christ’s resurrection and by connection, our resurrection as well. It is a joyous time and the season should be celebrated as such.

The Season of Easter is actually the 50 days that follow Good Friday and is the oldest of the church’s celebrations. The Season’s colour is white and is to be 50 days of celebrating the mystery and wonder of the resurrection of Christ. When we plan our worship services, it is good to remember the mood of the season. It marks a stark contrast to the penitent and somber mood of Lent and Holy Week. Think of things that can help make the 50 days a reflection of the joy of the disciples and other followers in the upper room when they are visited by the risen Lord, or the joy of Thomas when he finally comes face to face with his Saviour and exclaims “My Lord and my God!”. Then there’s the joy of knowing Jesus as the great Shepherd, or our true connecting vine that feeds us with his life so that we, as the branches, can live.

Each of the Sundays carries a slightly different theme, or aspect, of what the risen Christ means for us individually and as community. Finding ways in worship and in preaching that find the subtle differences is a key to a fuller understanding of what the resurrection means.

Here are Luke’s and John’s gospel themes in the lectionary:

2nd Easter – Jesus appears to the disciples and then to Thomas, (John 20:19-31)

3rd Easter – Jesus appears to his disciples and says, “You are witnesses...”, (Luke 24:36b-48)

4th Easter – Jesus is the “good shepherd” of the sheep”, (John 10:11-18)

5th Easter – Jesus is the “vine” and we “the branches”, (John 15:1-8)

6th Easter – Jesus emphasizes the place of “Love” in his work, and ours, (John 15:9-17)

Ascension Day – (*this celebration can be moved to 7th Easter as an option),

As Jesus ascends/returns to heaven, he says again that the disciples are witnesses to “these things” and are now also proclaimers of the message.

Luke’s version sets them up for the Jerusalem Pentecost event.

7th Easter – a part of Jesus’ longer prayer the night of his arrest, he prays earnestly for the protection of his disciples while they are in this world.

Easter is a joyous celebration that runs 50 days until Pentecost, which was a Jewish celebration of the giving of Torah to Moses on the holy mountain. In our Christian terms, the new Covenant, the new “Law” and a new way of the Holy Spirit’s work begins, but that’s for Pentecost and another season. **Celebrate the new life in Christ through the whole of the Easter Season.**

Suggested Orders for Holy Communion and Service of the Word:

Order for Holy Communion Service

The Holy Communion liturgy is for use when an Ordained Pastor or Authorized Lay Minister is present to preside

Greeting

Call to Worship (optional)

Thanksgiving at the Font (Optional – very appropriate for Easter season) p.59-60 ACS

Kyrie (optional)

Gathering Hymn

Prayer of the Day

Word - First Reading, Psalm, Second Reading, Gospel

Sermon/Reflection

Hymn of the Day

Apostles' Creed

Prayers of Intercession

Share the Peace

Offering

Eucharistic Prayer

ELW p. 65-70, choose between forms V-XI, OR ACS p. 56-58

Lord's Prayer (ELW p.221)

Distribution of Communion

Blessing or Sending

Sending Hymn

Dismissal/Blessing ELW p.222, or as printed

Order for Service of the Word

Greeting

Call to Worship (optional)

Thanksgiving at the Font (Optional) p.59-60 ACS

Gathering Hymn

Prayer of the Day

Word - First Reading, Psalm, Second Reading, Gospel

Sermon/Reflection

Hymn

Apostles' Creed

Prayers of Intercession

Share the Peace

Canticle of Thanksgiving – ELW #208 *Praise to You, O God of Mercy*

Thanksgiving for the Word (ELW p.220) OR

Thanksgiving for the Word (Psalm 25:1-2a, 4-5, 10)

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be put to shame.

Show me your ways, O LORD, and teach me your paths.

Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all the day long.

All your paths, O LORD, are steadfast love and faithfulness to those who keep your covenant and your testimonies.

Lord's Prayer (ELW p.221)

Blessing Leader: Let us bless the Lord. **All: Thanks be to God.**

Sending Hymn / Dismissal

- **There is also a Service of Word & Prayer in ACS, p.42-45**

Thanksgiving for Baptism

In the Lutheran tradition, we often start worship with either Confession and Forgiveness or Thanksgiving for Baptism. It is very common to begin services during the Easter Season with Thanksgiving for Baptism. I think that any time we can acknowledge our messiness and imperfections in church is good. It is such a relief to start worship knowing I'm in a room full of imperfect people who are also sinners and have also made mistakes. Publicly sharing that together is a great way to start our time with God. It is great to understand how messy we are, how the world hurts us, and that we need God in our lives. Enjoy this liturgy. - Pastor Thom Johnson

L: Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God, the fountain of living water, the rock who gave us birth, our light and our salvation.

All: Amen.

L: People of God, in the baptismal waters we travel with Christ from death to life. Our past, our sin, our failure, our doubt, and our shame are drowned and gone here.

All: You, O God, wash us clean.

L: Our fear, our confusion, our self-righteousness, our despair -- ALL are washed away by grace.

All: You, O God, wash us clean.

L: Our pride, our hypocrisy, and other people's opinions of us no longer have the power to define us.

All: You, O God, give us new life.

L: The Spirit lives and moves through us now, a great and joyful mystery, so we may bring love and mercy into the world as the body of Christ.

All: You, O God, give us new life.

L: Rejoice that God has claimed us in this baptismal grace, not by our own doing or believing but by God's mercy alone.

All: You, O God, give us new life.

L: And so, as we begin worship, we give thanks to God for the gracious gift of baptism that joins us together in Christ by the Spirit's power. Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism, we are clothed with God's mercy and forgiveness. We praise you for the gift of new life in Jesus Christ. To you be given honour and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

All: Amen.

- **Other Baptismal Affirmations can be found in ACS, pg.59/60 – Thanksgiving at the Font**

Resources in ELW and ACS

Prayer of the Day – can be found with the Lectionary readings in ELW, p.44-46

Prayers of the People - ELW p. 105 offers helpful guidelines for crafting prayers from the assembly. Different themed prayers can be found on p. 72-87 OR in ACS p.46-55

Alternate Eucharistic Settings – Bread of Life, Setting 5, With One Voice, Tree of Life by Marty Haugen, All Creation Sings – Setting 11 or 12

Baptismal Affirmations – Thanksgiving at the Font ACS, pg.59/60 OR ELW pg.70/71

Please note - Excerpts are taken from "Stages on the Way", Iona Community, Wild Goose Worship Group (Excellent book to purchase for your library. Also available is an Advent/Christmas one, "Cloth for the Cradle")

2nd Sunday of Easter, April 7, 2024

Lectionary readings:

Acts 4:32-35, Psalm 133, 1 John 1:1-2:2,

Gospel John 20:19-31 - Jesus appears to the disciples and then to Thomas

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Opening Dialogue

L: Jesus Christ, we greet you! Your hands still have holes in them, your feet are wet from the dew; and with the memory of our names undimmed by three days of death you meet us, risen from the grave. We fail to understand how; we puzzle at the reason why. But you have come: not to answer our questions, but to show us your face.

R: You are alive and the world can rejoice again. Hallelujah. Amen. *(from Iona community)*

OR (use a hymn as a Call to worship)

L: Now all the vault of heaven resounds, in praise of love that still abounds,

R: Christ has triumphed! He is living!

L: Sing, choirs of angels, loud and clear! Repeat their song of glory here.

R: Christ has triumphed! He is living! Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! (ELW 367)

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, with joy we celebrate the day of our Lord's resurrection. By the grace of Christ among us, enable us to show the power of the resurrection in all that we say and do, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (ELW p. 32)

Offering Prayer

Blessed are you, O God, ruler of heaven and earth. Day by day you shower us with blessings. As you have raised us to new life in Christ, give us glad and generous hearts, ready to praise you and to respond to those in need, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Spoken: **Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! Jesus Christ is risen and sends to all the earth's ends, good news to save every nation. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!**

Blessing

Today and tomorrow, **Today and tomorrow**

Lo, I am with you always...**when we try to do your will**

I am with you always...**when we go where we do not know.**

I am with you always... **when we meet One we do not recognize,**

I am with you always...**where faith ends and doubt begins,**

I am with you always...**and should we forget you....**

I am with you always. **Today and tomorrow. You are with us always to the end of the world. Amen.**

(from Iona Community)

Dismissal

Alleluia! Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia! You are the body of Christ raised up for the world.

Go in peace. Share the good news. **Thanks be to God.**

Hymn Suggestions:

Now the Green Blade Rises	ELW 379
Christ is Living	ACS 934
Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain	ELW 363
Hallelujah! We Sing Your Praises	ELW 535
I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light	ELW 815
By Your Hand You Feed Your People	ELW 469
We Come Now to Your Table	ACS 970

3rd Sunday of Easter – April 14, 2024

Lectionary:

Acts 3:12-19, Psalm 4, 1 John 3:1-7,

Gospel Luke 24:36b-48 Jesus appears to his disciples and says, "You are witnesses..."

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Opening Dialogue

L: Jesus Christ, we greet you! Your hands still have holes in them, your feet are wet from the dew; and with the memory of our names undimmed by three days of death you meet us, risen from the grave. We fail to understand how; we puzzle at the reason why. But you have come: not to answer our questions, but to show us your face.

R: You are alive and the world can rejoice again. Hallelujah. Amen. (from Iona community)

OR use a hymn as a Call to Worship

Eternal is the gift he brings, therefore our heart with rapture sings:

Christ has triumphed! He is living!

Now still he comes to give us life and by his presence stills all strife.

Christ has triumphed! He is living! Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! (ELW 367)

Prayer of the Day

Holy and righteous God, you are the author of life, and you adopt us to be your children. Fill us with your words of life, that we may live as witnesses to the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (ELW p. 33)

Offering Prayer

Gracious God, along with our time, talent and resources, we offer our visions and hopes for the possibilities of new life in all your people. Help us to endure, to be renewed, and to be agents of your grace whenever possible. We thank you for dreaming us into being and we offer ourselves to your love. Amen

Gospel Acclamation

Spoken: **Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! Jesus Christ is risen and sends to all the earth's ends, good news to save every nation. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!**

Blessing

Today and tomorrow, **Today and tomorrow**

Lo, I am with you always...**when we try to do your will**

I am with you always....**when we go where we do not know.**

I am with you always... **when we meet one we do not recognize,**

I am with you always...**where faith ends and doubt begins,**

I am with you always....**and should we forget you....**

I am with you always. **Today and tomorrow. You are with us always to the end of the world. Amen.**

Dismissal

Alleluia! Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia! You are the body of Christ raised up for the world.
Go in peace. Share the good news. **Thanks be to God**

Hymn Suggestions

Alleluia! Jesus is Risen!	ELW 377
Touch that Soothes and Heals.	ACS 939
The Strife is O'er, The Battle Done	ELW 366
Alleluia! Christ is Arisen.	ELW 375
Let Us Talents And Tongues Employ	ELW 674

4th Sunday of Easter - April 21, 2024

Lectionary:

Acts 4:5-12, Psalm 23, 1 John 3:16-24,

Gospel John 10:11-18. Jesus is the "good shepherd" of the sheep".

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Opening Dialogue

L: This is the Good News- the grave is empty, Christ is risen.

ALL: HALLELUJAH!

L: This is the Good News – the light shines in the darkness and the darkness can never put it out.

ALL: HALLELUJAH!

L: This is the Good News – once we were no people, now we are God's people.

ALL: HALLELUJAH!

L: Christ is our peace, the indestructible peace we now share with each other.

ALL: HALLELUJAH! *(From Iona Community)*

- *(Can also be used just before sharing the Peace)*

OR

Great God, your love has called us here, as we, by love for love were made. Your loving likeness still we bear, though marred, dishonoured, disobeyed.

We come, with all our heart and mind, your call to hear, your love to find.

Great God, in Christ you call our name and then receive us as your own, not through some merit, right, or claim, but by your gracious love alone.

We strain to glimpse your mercy seat and find you kneeling at our feet.

Great God, in Christ you set us free your life to live, your joy to share. Give us your Spirit's liberty to turn from guilt and dull despair.

And offer all that faith can do while love is making all things new. (ELW 358)

Prayer of the Day

O Lord Christ, Good Shepherd of the sheep, you seek the lost and guide us into your fold. Feed us, and we shall be satisfied; heal us, and we shall be whole. Make us one with you, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (ELW p. 33)

Gospel Acclamation – Halle, Halle, Hallelujah ELW 172

Offering Prayer

God, who loves all of earth, every created thing is beloved to you. We give thanks for your embrace and reach out to this wild world with the gifts we dedicate to your love. May these gifts transform so many stories. Amen.

Blessing

Light of God, **Lead us**

Power of God, **Hold us**

Joy of God, **Heal us**

Laughter of God, **Bless us**

Love of God, **Caress us**

The blessing of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Spirit of Life be with us all. **Amen**

Dismissal

Alleluia! Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia! You are the body of Christ raised up for the world.

Go in peace. Share the good news. **Thanks be to God**

Hymn Suggestions:

Hallelujah! Jesus Lives!	ELW 380
The Trumpets Sound, the Angels Sing	ELW 531
Have No Fear, Little Flock	ELW 764
The King of Love My Shepherd Is	ELW 502
You, Lord, are Both Lamb & Shepherd (familiar tune)	ACS 954
Commonwealth is God's Commandment	A C S 1036
The Lord's My Shepherd	ELW 778
May the God of Hope Go With Us	ACS 984

5th Sunday of Easter – April 28, 2024

Lectionary:

Acts 8:26-40, Psalm 22:25-31, 1 John 4:7-21,

Gospel John 15:1-8 Jesus is the “vine” and we “the branches”,

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Opening Dialogue

Almighty God, your word is cast like seed into the ground;

now let the dew of heaven descend and righteous fruits abound.

Let not the sly satanic foe this holy seed remove,

but give it root in every heart to bring forth fruits of love.

Let not the world's deceitful cares the rising plant destroy,

but let it yield a hundred fold the fruits of peace and joy.

So when the precious seed is sown, life-giving grace bestow,

that all whose souls the truth receive its saving power may know. (ELW 516)

Prayer of the Day

O God, you give us your Son as the vine apart from whom we cannot live. Nourish our life in his resurrection, that we may bear the fruit of love and know the fullness of your joy, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (ELW p. 34)

Offering Prayer

We offer these gifts in our desire to live by your story rather than someone else's story. Help us to use them, dear God, to bring hope in despair and compassion where there is distress. Bless these gifts and every gift we offer with your love. Amen.

Blessing

Light of God, **Lead us**

Power of God, **Hold us**

Joy of God, **Heal us**

Laughter of God, **Bless us**

Love of God, **Caress us**

The blessing of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Spirit of Life be with us all. **Amen**

Dismissal

Alleluia! Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia! You are the body of Christ raised up for the world. Go in peace. Share the good news. **Thanks be to God**

Hymn Suggestions:

There in God's Garden ELW 342

Now the Green Blade Rises ELW 379

Born, Reborn ACS 956

Now All the Vault of Heaven Resounds ELW 367

O Blessed Spring	ELW 447
Let All Things Now Living	ELW 881
We Are Baptized in Christ Jesus	ELW 451

6th Sunday of Easter – May 5, 2024

Lectionary:

Acts 10:44-48, Psalm 98, 1 John 5:1-6,

Gospel John 15: 9-17 Jesus emphasizes the place of “Love” in his work, and ours

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Opening Dialogue

Come! Live in the light! Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!

We are called to be light for the kingdom, to live in the freedom of the city of God.

Come! Open your heart! Show your mercy to all those in fear!

We are called to be hope for the hopeless so hatred and blindness will be no more.

Sing! Sing a new song! Sing of that great day when all will be one!

God will reign, and we'll walk with each other as sisters and brothers united in love. (ELW 720)

Prayer of the Day

O God, you have prepared for those who love you joys beyond understanding. Pour into our hearts such love for you that, loving you above all things, we may obtain your promises, which exceed all we can desire; through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen. (ELW p. 34)

Offering Prayer

Blessed are you, O God, ruler of heaven and earth. Day by day you shower us with blessings. As you have raised us to new life in Christ, give us glad and generous hearts, ready to praise you and to respond to those in need, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

Blessing

Light of God, **Lead us**

Power of God, **Hold us**

Joy of God, **Heal us**

Laughter of God, **Bless us**

Love of God, **Caress us**

The blessing of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Spirit of Life be with us all. **Amen**

Dismissal

Alleluia! Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia! You are the body of Christ raised up for the world.

Go in peace. Share the good news. **Thanks be to God**

Hymn Suggestions:

I Come With Joy	ELW 482
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling	ELW 631
God, We Gather As Your People	ACS 1038
Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us With Your Love	ELW 708
Jesus Loves Me!	ELW 595
Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee	ELW 836
O God Beyond All Praising	ELW 880

Ascension Day – (*this celebration can be moved to 7th Easter as an option),

As Jesus ascends/returns to heaven, he says again that the disciples are witnesses to “these things” and are now also proclaimers of the message. Luke’s version sets them up for the Jerusalem Pentecost event.

7th Sunday of Easter – May 12 , 2024

Lectionary:

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26 , Psalm 1, 1 John 5:9-13,

Gospel John 17:6-19 This is a part of Jesus’ longer prayer the night of his arrest, he prays earnestly for the protection of his disciples while they are in this world.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Opening Dialogue

Build Us up Lord *ELW 670*

Prayer of the Day

Gracious and glorious God, you have chosen us as your own, and by the powerful name of Christ you protect us from evil. By your Spirit transform us and your beloved world, that we may find our joy in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (ELW p. 35)

Offering Prayer

Blessed are you, O God, ruler of heaven and earth. Day by day you shower us with blessings. As you have raised us to new life in Christ, give us glad and generous hearts, ready to praise you and to respond to those in need, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

Blessing

Light of God, **Lead us**

Power of God, **Hold us**

Joy of God, **Heal us**

Laughter of God, **Bless us**

Love of God, **Caress us**

The blessing of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Spirit of Life be with us all. **Amen**

Dismissal

Alleluia! Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia! You are the body of Christ raised up for the world.

Go in peace. Share the good news. **Thanks be to God**

Hymn Suggestions:

Alleluia! Sing to Jesus	ELW 392
God is Here	ELW 526
May This Church Be Like a Tree	ACS 1042
I come With Joy	ELW 482
Crown Him with Many Crowns	ELW 855
Thine the Amen	ELW 826
May the God of Hope Go With Us	ACS 984
Here on Jesus Christ I Will Stand	ACS 1024