

Where Two or Three are Gathered: Worship for Small Assemblies

Easter Sunday to the 7th Sunday of Easter 2025

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Planning Notes for Leaders

Introduction to the Season of Easter

The season of Easter is the most celebratory season of the liturgical year. The early church considered the 50 days of Easter to be one great day of celebration. Easter followed by Pentecost Sunday concludes the first half of the liturgical year, where the narrative of Jesus' life and ministry is the focus. Through the season we hear stories of the resurrection and then move with the disciples and first followers of Jesus to becoming the Church - the community of Jesus' followers called to proclaim the Good News throughout the world.

Each Sunday we gather to worship is like a mini-Easter, because we proclaim Christ's resurrection in our worship. Though Sunday is the first day of the week (note: Sunday is not the Sabbath day) the early church considered Sunday to be the 8th day, a day that extended the 7-day cycle of creation inaugurated in Genesis by doing a new thing, ushering in a new creation. The 8th day then became a way of expressing how the Resurrection brings us all into new life in Christ. Sunday, the 8th Day, the day of Resurrection, then is the day that Christians gather to worship.

Easter Sunday itself follows the end of Holy Week, where the assembly has journeyed from Palm Sunday/Sunday of the Passion, to the Triduum (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil) and returns again for worship on Easter morning. Some communities consider the Easter Vigil to be the primary Easter worship service, forgoing an additional Sunday morning service on Easter. Others add services like a Sunrise Service or an Easter Evening Service. Communities and assemblies will be informed by local tradition. Whatever those traditions may be, the focus is the culmination of our gospel proclamation - that Easter is the vindication of the incarnate and crucified Christ, whose death and resurrection transforms all creation. Easter worship should attempt, however imperfectly, to communicate this reality.

Season and Lectionary

The season of Easter plays with our concept of time. The first 3 Sundays of Easter begin with the celebration of the resurrection on Easter Sunday morning. Each Sunday the gospel lesson returns the assembly to the morning of the resurrection, thus we remain on that first Easter Day for the first fifteen days of the season.

The second half of the Season of Easter begins on the 4th Sunday of Easter known as Good Shepherd Sunday. While the day continues with the themes and seasonal elements of the first 3 weeks, the attention of the readings turns from recounting the stories of Easter Day to looking ahead to the creation of the new Easter community called the Church on Pentecost.

Seasonal visuals and music

The colour for Easter Sunday is Gold or White. The colour for the Sundays in the season of Easter is white. Visuals such as lilies, white cloth and fabric wrapped over crosses and other festive decor is appropriate for Easter Sunday and the duration of the season.

The hymns throughout the season of Easter should be taken from the Easter canon, though selections from other parts of the hymnbook should be added to expand the hymnody of the season.

Seasonal variations on the liturgy

In the opposite of Lent and Advent, it is appropriate to omit the Kyrie during Easter to emphasize the hymn of praise and the celebratory nature the season.

The Nicene Creed is used in Easter.

As a primary Easter theme is our resurrection in the waters of baptism, it is appropriate to use the Thanksgiving for Baptism through the season of Easter in place of the brief order for confession and forgiveness. In Baptism we receive the same promise of God's forgiveness that is announced in confession and forgiveness. In fact, the promise of God's forgiveness of sins is a Baptismal promise.

Easter Sunday, April 20, 2025

Lectionary

Acts 10:34-43

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

1 Corinthians 15:19-26

Luke 24:1-12 or John 20:1-18

(white)

Hymn Suggestions

Jesus Christ is Risen Today (ELW 365, LBW 151)

Thine is the Glory (ELW 376)

Christ is living / Cristo vive (ACS 934)

Awake, my heart with Gladness (ELW 378, ELW 129)

The Strife is O'er, the Battle Done (ELW 366, LBW 135)

Earth, earth awake! (ACS 937)

Prayer of the Day

O God, you gave your only Son to suffer death on the cross for our redemption, and by his glorious resurrection you delivered us from the power of death. Make us die every day to sin, that we may live with him forever in the joy of the resurrection, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Second Sunday in Easter April 27, 2025

Lectionary:

Acts 5:27-32

Psalm 118:14-29

Revelation 1:4-8

John 20:19-31

(white)

Hymn Suggestions:

Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain (ELW 363, LBW 132)

The day of resurrection (ACS 936)

That Easter Day with Joy Was Bright (ELW 384)

The Risen Christ (ELW 390)

Soon and Very Soon (ELW 439)

Rise, O Church, Like Christ Arisen (ELW 548)

Prayer of the Day

O God of life, you reach out to us amid our fears with the wounded hands of your risen Son. By your Spirit's breath revive our faith in your mercy, and strengthen us to be the body of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Third Sunday in Easter, May 4, 2025

Lectionary:

Acts 9:1-6 [7-20]

Psalm 30

Revelation 5:11-14

John 21:1-19

(white)

Hymn Suggestions

Christ is Risen! Alleluia! (ELW 382)

Christ is Alive! Let Christians Sing (ELW 389)

Day of delight and beauty unbounded (ACS 933)

I Know that My Redeemer Lives (ELW 619)

Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness (ELW 843)

Go to the world (ACS 991)

Prayer of the Day

Eternal and all-merciful God, with all the angels and all the saints we laud your majesty and might. By the resurrection of your Son, show yourself to us and inspire us to follow Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen

Fourth Sunday in Easter May 11th, 2025 (Good Shepherd Sunday)

Lectionary:

Acts 9:36-43;

Psalm 23;

Revelation 7:9-17;

John 10:22-30

(White)

Hymn Suggestions:

Good Christian friends, rejoice and sing! ELW 385

Blessing and honor ELW 854

God of promise, let these signs of grace ACS 959

You satisfy the hungry heart ELW 484, WOV 711

Have no fear, little flock ELW 764, LBW 476, LS 171

Nothing can trouble / Nada te turbe ACS 1033

The King of Love My Shepherd Is ELW 502

The Lord's My Shepherd ELW 778

Prayer of the Day

O God of peace, you brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep. By the blood of your eternal covenant, make us complete in everything good that we may do your will, and work among us all that is well-pleasing in your sight, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Fifth Sunday in Easter May 18th, 2025

Lectionary:

Acts 11:1-18;

Psalm 148;

Revelation 21:1-6;

John 13:31-35

(White)

Hymn Suggestions:

Now all the vault of heaven resounds ELW 367

Awake, O sleeper, rise from death ELW 452

Alleluia! Jesus is risen! ELW 377, WOV 674,

O God, who gives us life ACS 1086

Where charity and love prevail ELW 359, LBW 126

Christ is alive! Let Christians sing ELW 389

Prayer of the Day

O Lord God, you teach us that without love, our actions gain nothing. Pour into our hearts your most excellent gift of love, that, made alive by your Spirit, we may know goodness and peace, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Sixth Sunday in Easter May 25, 2025

Lectionary:

Acts 16:9-15;

Psalm 67;

Revelation 21:10, 22--22:5;

John 14:23-29;

John 5:1-9 (alternate)

(White)

Hymn Suggestions:

Come down, O Love divine ELW 804

Love divine, all loves excelling ELW 631

Lift up your heads ACS 1032

Alleluia! Jesus is risen! ELW 377, WOV 674,

When peace like a river ELW 785

Christ is alive! Let Christians sing ELW 389

My life flows on in endless song ELW 763, WOV 781

How shall I sing that majesty ACS 1095

Prayer of the Day

Bountiful God, you gather your people into your realm, and you promise us food from your tree of life. Nourish us with your word, that empowered by your Spirit we may

love one another and the world you have made, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

Seventh Sunday in Easter June 1st, 2025

Lectionary:

Acts 16:16-34;

Psalms 97;

Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21;

John 17:20-26

(White)

Hymn Suggestions:

Rise, O Sun of righteousness ELW 657

Alleluia! Sing to Jesus ELW 392, LBW 158

Alleluia! Jesus is risen! ELW 377, WOV 674,

Thine the amen ELW 826, WOV 801

One bread, one body ELW 496

Crown him with many crowns ELW 855

Son of God, eternal Savior ELW 655, LBW 364

Prayer of the Day

O God, form the minds of your faithful people into your one will. Make us love what you command and desire what you promise, that, amid all the changes of this world, our hearts may be fixed where true joy is found, your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Suggested Order for Holy Communion for Sundays in Easter

Order for Holy Communion

Gathering

Gathering with Thanksgiving for Baptism

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

In the waters of baptism,
we have passed over from death to life with Jesus Christ,
and we are a new creation.

For this saving mystery, and for this water, let us bless God,
who was, who is, and who is to come.

Water may be poured into the font as the presiding minister gives thanks.

We thank you, God, for your river of life,
flowing freely from your throne:
through the earth,
through the city,
through every living thing.

You rescued Noah and his family from the flood;
You opened wide the sea for the Israelites.
Now in these waters you flood us with mercy,
and our sin is drowned forever.
You open the gate of righteousness
and we pass safely through.

In Jesus Christ, you calm and trouble the waters.
You nourish us and enclose us in safety.
You call us forth and send us out.
In lush and barren places, you are with us.
You have become our salvation.

Now breathe upon this water
and awaken your church once more.
Claim us again as your beloved and holy people.
Quench our thirst; cleanse our hearts; wipe away every tear.

To you, our Beginning and our End,
our Shepherd and Lamb,
be honor, glory, praise, and thanksgiving,
now and forever.

Amen.

Greeting
Hymn of Praise
Prayer of the Day

Word
First Reading
Psalm

Second Reading

Gospel Acclamation

Use ELW 175 Gospel Acclamation, repeat 3 times

Gospel Readings

Sermon

Hymn of the Day

Nicene Creed

Prayers of Intercession

ELW p. 105 offers helpful guidelines for crafting prayers from the assembly

Peace

Offering

Meal

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE for Easter (from Sundays and Seasons)

Holy, living, and loving God,

we praise you for creating the heavens and the earth.

We bless you for bringing Noah and his family through the waters of the flood,
for freeing your people Israel from the bonds of slavery,
and for sending your Son to be our Redeemer.

We give you thanks for Jesus
who, living among us,
healed the sick,
fed the hungry,
and with a love stronger than death,
gave his life for others.

In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore,
his life-giving death and glorious resurrection,
we await your promised life for all this dying world.

Breathe your Spirit on us and on this bread and cup:
carry us in your arms from death to life,
that we may live as your chosen ones,
clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

Through him all glory and honor is yours,
Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,
in your holy Church,
both now and forever.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Communion

Prayer after Communion for Easter (from Sundays and Seasons)

Let's us pray,
We give you thanks, generous God,
for in this bread and cup
we have tasted the new heaven and earth
where hunger and thirst are no more.
Send us from this table as witnesses to the resurrection,
that through our lives, all may know life in Jesus' name.
Amen.

Sending

Blessing

The triune God,
who was, who is, and who is to come,
Sovereign, ✝ Savior, and Spirit,
light your way with resurrection dawn,
now and always.

Amen.

(From SundaysandSeasons.com)

Sending Hymn

Dismissal

Suggested Order for Service of the Word for the Sundays of Easter

Gathering

Gathering with Thanksgiving for Baptism

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

In the waters of baptism,
we have passed over from death to life with Jesus Christ,
and we are a new creation.
For this saving mystery, and for this water, let us bless God,
who was, who is, and who is to come.

Water may be poured into the font as the presiding minister gives thanks.

We thank you, God, for your river of life,
flowing freely from your throne:
through the earth,
through the city,
through every living thing.

You rescued Noah and his family from the flood;
You opened wide the sea for the Israelites.
Now in these waters you flood us with mercy,
and our sin is drowned forever.
You open the gate of righteousness
and we pass safely through.

In Jesus Christ, you calm and trouble the waters.
You nourish us and enclose us in safety.
You call us forth and send us out.
In lush and barren places, you are with us.
You have become our salvation.

Now breathe upon this water
and awaken your church once more.
Claim us again as your beloved and holy people.
Quench our thirst; cleanse our hearts; wipe away every tear.

To you, our Beginning and our End,
our Shepherd and Lamb,
be honor, glory, praise, and thanksgiving,
now and forever.

Amen.

Greeting
Kyrie
Prayer of the Day

Word

First Reading
Psalm
Second Reading
Gospel Acclamation
 Use ELW 175 Gospel Acclamation, repeat 3 times

Gospel Readings

Sermon

Hymn of the Day

Nicene Creed

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Peace

Offering

Thanksgiving for Word for Easter (written by The Rev. Erik Parker)

Let us pray.

Alleluia Christ is Risen. From the beginning of the world, there was a cross in your heart O God: You brought to life all that grows, flies, swims and crawls upon the earth. For your Risen Word, O Lord.

we give you thanks and praise.

Alleluia Christ is Risen. From Abraham's call to slavery in Egypt, from wilderness to promised land, from captivity in exile to return home, you journey with your chosen people O God: In the covenant and promises given to Israel, you call all nations to faith.

For your Risen Word, O Lord.

we give you thanks and praise.

Alleluia Christ is Risen. Through the One who suffered the cross and grave, you transformed death for all: forgiveness, grace and mercy ushered forth from an empty tomb and given for all.

For your Risen Word, O Lord

we give you thanks and praise.

On this great day of the resurrection, you grant us the Spirit of Life: Raise in us your gifts of faith, hope and love for all creation, brought forth for a dying world. With Mary Magdalene and Peter, and all the witnesses to the resurrection, with earth and sea and all their creatures, with angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, we pray to you O God, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honour, glory, praise and might, forever and ever.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Sending

Blessing

The triune God,
who was, who is, and who is to come,
Sovereign, ✝ Savior, and Spirit,
light your way with resurrection dawn,
now and always.

Amen.

(From SundaysandSeasons.com)

Sending Hymn

Dismissal