

***Gathering,* Lent/Easter 2021**

Ash Wednesday to the Last Sunday of Easter

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## **Ash Wednesday to the Last Sunday of Easter**

## **Lent and Holy Week**

**Dates:** Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, which falls 40 days prior to Easter. Sundays are not included in the count of these days, as each Sunday is a “little Easter,” meant to celebrate resurrection.

**Feast Days\* and Special Days**

\*Ash Wednesday – the beginning of the Lent– Easter cycle. It is marked by the ceremonial distribution of ashes as a symbol of entering into the penitential Season of Lent. The wearing of ashes, made from the burning of the previous year’s palms from Palm Sunday, is considered a sign of repentance, sorrow, and mourning, an appropriate way to begin Lent.

Women’s World Day of Prayer – first Friday in March.

International Women’s Day – March 8.

\*The Triduum – Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday.

**Meaning of Name**

The name Lent comes through Middle English *lente* and Old English *lencten* or *lengten*, referring to the season of spring and the lengthening of days. It is also related to the French word *lente*, which means “to move slowly.”

**Liturgical Colour: Purple**

Purple is a cool colour on the colour wheel, reflecting divinity, wisdom, dignity, mystery, and creativity. Dark purple is a penitential colour, evoking sadness and deep reflection. In the first century CE, purple dye was very hard to come by, so only the wealthy could afford purple garments.

## **Easter**

**Dates:** Easter is currently a moveable feast, celebrated in Western Christianity on the first Sunday after the first astronomical full moon on or after the vernal (spring) equinox (fixed as March 21 for ecclesial purposes). Thus Easter falls between March 22 and April 25 on the Gregorian calendar. Easter Day within Eastern Christianity is calculated in the same manner but following the Julian calendar, using the actual vernal equinox date at the meridian of Jerusalem, and with the added condition that Easter must fall after Passover. There are talks underway exploring the possibility of fixing the date of Easter to the second or third Sunday of April. This would allow all Christians to celebrate on the same day.

**Feast Days\* and Special Days**

April Fool’s Day – April 1.

Holy Humour Sunday – the Sunday after Easter Sunday.

Earth Day – April 22.

\*Ascension Day – 40th day after Easter.

Camping Sunday – last Sunday of April.

**Meaning of Name**

The name Easter comes from the Old English *Eostre*, rooted in the Proto–Germanic *austron*, meaning “dawn,” and the Proto–Indo–European *aus*, meaning “to shine.” The word *east* has the same roots. Bede, a seventh–/eighth–century English monk, made a connection between the name Easter and an early Germanic goddess of the dawn or spring, possibly named *Eostre*, whose feasts were celebrated in the month of April, though there is current debate about who this goddess might actually be. Within Greek and Latin traditions, the celebration is referred to as Pascha, a name rooted in the Aramaic word for Passover.

**Liturgical Colours: White and Gold**

White, which is all colours of light combined, has traditionally, in Western cultures, denoted goodness, innocence, and God’s faithfulness. Gold reflects glory, triumph, wealth, richness, and extravagance. Gold is also associated with illumination, love, compassion, courage, and wisdom. Together they are colours of celebration.

## February 17 – Ash Wednesday

Worship materials for Ash Wednesday were contributed by Don Uhryniw and Arlene Gray, Emmanuel U.C., Peterborough, Ont.

**Joel 2:1–2, 12–17**

Return to God with all your heart.

or **Isaiah 58:1–12**

The worship that God desires.

**Psalm 51:1–17** (VU pp. 776–777)

Put a new heart in me, O God.

2 Corinthians 5:20*b*—6:10

Be reconciled to God.

Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21

Practise your faith in secret.

### To Ponder

What contradictions in your life do you need to embrace or weave into a new way of being?

### Spark

Begin the service by burning the palms from last year, perhaps outdoors.

### With Children

When we light a candle, it is easy to see its flame and the wax that feeds the wick to produce light. But when a candle has burned itself out, where has the light gone and what happened to the wax? We saw the candle with its flame so we know that it did exist. How is the candle like the Creator?

### Sermon Starter

It is always startling to me that we begin our journey to the cross and the empty tomb with ashes, ashes that are shadow and not light. These contrasts—and contradictions—are reflected in the lections for this day. In Joel, we read “sound the alarm” and “blow the trumpet” (twice); in Isaiah, “shout out” and “lift up your voices like a trumpet”; and in Psalm 51, “O [God] open my lips.” But Matthew’s gospel says, “do not sound a trumpet.” The passage from 2 Corinthians is the best example of contrasts: honour vs. dishonour, ill repute vs. good repute, and so on. A very wise man said to me, “Embrace the contradiction.” Perhaps that is the map to guide us on our Lenten journey.

### Hymns

Joel 2:1–2, 12–17

VU 381 “Spirit of Life”

VU 382 “Breathe on me, breath of God”

Isaiah 58:1–12

VU 109 “Now quit your care”

MV 173 “Put peace into each other’s hands”

Psalm 51:1–17

VU 371 “Open my eyes, that I may see”

MV 76 “If I have been the source of pain”

2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10

VU 112 “O God, how we have wandered”

MV 10 “Come and seek the ways of Wisdom”

Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21

VU 701 “What does the Lord require of you”

MV 147 “God, help us to treasure”

MV 187 “We give our thanks”

General/Seasonal

VU 105 “Dust and ashes touch our face”

## February 21 – Lent 1

Worship materials for Lent 1 to Lent 5 were contributed by Fern Gibbard, Penticton, B.C.; Sandra Stickney, Naramata, B.C.; and Laura Turnbull of Penticton, B.C.

Genesis 9:8–17

The covenant between God and Noah.

Psalm 25:1–10 (VU p. 752)

Lead me in your truth, O God.

1 Peter 3:18–22

Baptism now saves you.

Mark 1:9–15

The baptism, temptation, and mission of Jesus.

### To Ponder

Through Lent, we invite you to engage with the various covenants—the promises, relationships, pledges, arrangements, and commitments—that we are called to live out. We are calling this engagement “Treaty Talks.” With each week’s lections, ask yourself the following questions:

* Who is included?
* What are the gains? What are the losses?
* Where is the power? Where is the freedom?

We recommend the work of Richard Wagamese, particularly *Embers: One Ojibway’s Meditations* (Douglas & McIntyre, 2016) and *One Drum: Stories and Ceremonies for a Planet* (Douglas & McIntyre, 2019). Wagamese is a person who dared to trust others with some of the essence of First Nations’ stories. *Embers* is helpful in learning again what the Judeo-Christian story is and what the cultural and colonial conventions are. He challenges us to remember that God’s interest is in all of who we are and what we do. Our religion is bone deep and not a product we choose or a garment we wear from time to time.

### Spark

The Covenant of Promise

God’s covenant with Noah was sealed with a rainbow. What meanings do rainbows hold for you? Can we have rainbows without water? February 24, 2021, is Pink Shirt Day. What might your congregation do to discourage bullying and promote inclusiveness? Many First Nations potlatch protocols include the exchange of gifts as signs of relationship and equality. Everyone gets to give and to receive. No one is only a benefactor or only a recipient. All are held under the rainbow’s arch.

### With Children

To show the importance of water, plant some seeds in an egg carton or small containers and continue to water them throughout Lent, so that by Lent 5, they will have grown large enough to be the focus of conversation.

For today: On Anti-Bullying Day in 2020, local schoolchildren in Naramata, B.C., painted rocks pink, then signed their names and wrote beautiful expressions of kindness and peace on them. Then they delivered them to neighbours. The one delivered to the Naramata church porch said “Peace.” Show the children some similar rocks that you have prepared. Ask them what it would feel like to receive such a message. This is a way to show each other that God is with us; we are not alone.

### Sermon Starter

Water is essential to life. The human body can last only three to four days without water. All plants and animals are mostly water. Is there enough? What are the treaties or agreements that govern water in your area? (For an example, research the Columbia River Treaty). Water issues are international and worldwide, as well as near to us in our homes and bodies. In examining how water is used and valued, we can start with the droplets released with our next breath or the needs of the whole globe. What are our agreements? With both scarcity and flooding, who gains and who loses in these treaties? What do the colours of the rainbow show us about our freedom and equality? You might explore the significance of the LGBTQ+ community’s use of the rainbow flag as the symbol of acceptance and welcome. We are all mostly water; washed and welcomed in baptism, our equality is radically renewed.

### Hymns

Genesis 9:8–17

VU 449 “Crashing waters at creation”

MV 27 “Creator God you gave us life”

MV 135 “Called by earth and sky”

MV 138 “My love colours outside the lines”

Psalm 25:1–10

VU 643 “Faith, while trees are still in blossom”

VU 651 “Guide me, O thou great Jehovah”

*1 Peter 3:18–22*

MV 144 “Like a healing stream”

MV 154 “Deep in our hearts”

Mark 1:9–15

VU 99 “Christ, when for us you were baptized”

VU 100 “When Jesus comes to be baptized”

VU 560 “O Master, let me walk with thee”

VU 644 “I was there to hear your borning cry”

MV 144 “Like a healing stream”

## February 28 – Lent 2

Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16

The covenant between Abram, Sarai, and God.

Psalm 22:23–31 (VU p. 746 Parts Three and Four)

You have not hidden your face, O God.

Romans 4:13–25

God’s promise rests on grace and faith.

Mark 8:31–38

Those who lose their life for the gospel will save it

### To Ponder

What does your name mean to you? Why?

### Spark

The Covenant of Trust

Our scripture today looks at the covenant that God made with two elderly people. How do we relate to people who are older than us? Do we value their faith and viewpoint even if they are not on social media? Ask the oldest person you know if they would be open to being interviewed. Don’t script or overplan it. You might even ask the children to help with interview questions.

Naming is so vital to our self-identity! All we need to do is consider those in circumstances where they are choosing to keep or change their names, and we come to understand the power of our names. What is the significance of Sarah and Abraham’s name change?

### With Children

Invite children to help interview an elder about their name, or ask the children about their own names. Ask: Do you know the story of where your name came from? Do people agree about how your name is used, pronounced, or shortened? Do people remember to use the name that you like for yourself? Are there names people agree not to call you? Or perhaps ask someone who has changed their name, for any reason, to share their story.

### Sermon Starter

How old is old? When is it time for a new beginning? The Raging Grannies demonstrate to us that seniors have a powerful voice. Might it be that seniors are the present and the future of the church? Perhaps we ought to expect the unexpected! Anything is possible. What resources does your community have for aged seniors? Where are the gaps? What have we learned through the pandemic? An observation: Indigenous musicians are gaining prominence on CBC Radio. Are Indigenous voices valued along with others? Who matters?

Or explore: What does it mean to lose our lives for the gospel’s sake?

### Hymns

Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16

VU 268 “Bring many names”

VU 580 “Faith of our fathers”

VU 634 “To Abraham and Sarah”

MV 148 “Hope of Abraham and Sarah”

MV 161 “I have called you by your name”

Psalm 22:23–31

VU p. 743 “God, why have you forsaken me”

MV 30 “It’s a song of praise to the Maker”

Romans 4:13–25

VU 104 “We have come at Christ’s own bidding”

VU 642 “Be thou my vision”

Mark 8:31–38

VU 561 “Take up your cross”

VU 567 “Will you come and follow me”

VU 614 “In suffering love”

MV 172 “God says”

March 7 – Lent 3

Exodus 20:1–17

The ten commandments.

Psalm 19 (VU pp. 740–741)

The heavens declare the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 1:18–25

God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom.

John 2:13–22

Jesus clears the temple.

### To Ponder

When have you been stirred up enough to interfere in a conversation or situation? How did it work?

### Spark

The Covenant of Love

Let’s rethink the Ten Commandments as the Ten Promises of God’s Radical Love. How about as “A Bill of Rights” from the God who is the Great Lover? Would this give us a better sense of balance between God and ourselves? Let’s build balance between what is practical and what is visionary. We all belong to God. We are needed, wanted, and loved!

### With Children

Sometimes we underestimate the depth of concern children have for doing what is right. They want to know what is right and wrong. This might be a good moment to help with that. Is there a local dilemma brewing? What are the tools we have to decide what to do? Honour, truth, dignity, respect, and some rules or “best ways” will help with that. Use VU 131 “If our God had simply saved us” and the concept of “enough”: verses 1–9 tell the story leading up to and including the Ten Commandments. (Note: *The Complete Guide to Godly Play, Volume 2*, Lesson 9: “The Ten Best Ways” [Church Publishing, 2017] does a lovely job of setting the commandments as a love story between God and God’s own.) Or explore when Jesus cleared the temple and the sense that sometimes you just need to clean up. Gather some stones the size of a child’s hand, along with basins, water, soap, and scrub brushes. Scrub those stones until they sparkle and seem to come alive. Choose hard stones that will respond well to scrubbing. This is a good lesson for adults, too—sometimes you need to start by cleaning up.

### Sermon Starter

The gospel story is a powerful example of radical interference. What radical interference is needed from us today? For example, how do the stories rising out of Black Lives Matter call to us? Or how do our treaty agreements, or the lack of them, move us to know our anger and work for justice? For the First Nations, a treaty was more a way of sharing well than a compromise. It was entered into, from the beginning, as a win for all. Colonialism brought inequalities that made no sense to the people of the First Nations. They knew that nations thrived or died together. The people of the Nass Valley in British Columbia teach that their valley was settled at the same time as the Hebrew people settled in the Holy Land. The First Nations’ priority of enough for all is one that was shared by the people of Israel. It shows up in the commandments of God for how they are to treat strangers. Or explore the clearing of the temple. Today, what do we charge a fee for and what is offered for free? What might the gospel story have to say to us? Can someone belong to a congregation if they have no money?

### Hymns

Exodus 20:1–17

VU 274 “Your hand, O God, has guided”

VU 642 “Be thou my vision”

VU 691 “Though ancient walls”

MV 62 “There is room for all”

Psalm 19

VU 248 “When long before time”

VU 330 “Jesus shall reign”

1 Corinthians 1:18–25

VU 260 “God who gives to life its goodness”

VU 325 “Christ is made the sure foundation”

VU 686 “God of grace and God of glory”

John 2:13–22

VU 117 “Jesus Christ is waiting”

VU 120 “O Jesus, I have promised”

VU 562 “Jesus calls us”

MV 173 “Put peace into each other’s hands”

## March 14 – Lent 4

Numbers 21:4–9

A bronze serpent heals the people.

Psalm 107:1–3, 17–22 (VU p. 831 Parts One and Two)

God’s steadfast love endures forever.

Ephesians 2:1–10

We are not saved by our own doing, but by grace.

John 3:14–21

For God so loved the world.

### To Ponder

When have you experienced healing in your life? How did it come to you?

### Spark

The Covenant of Healing

We are writing this in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our world has radically changed. No one is exempt from the limitations and resulting fear. Churches are being called to find new ways to live love. No longer can colonial attitudes prevail. We are being called to embrace God’s love lavished on all.

### With Children

Display a globe. Invite the young ones to hug themselves. Then invite them to reach toward the globe and pretend to hug the globe. Imagine that God loves every child and adult in every part of our wonderful world. God’s love is the biggest hug we can imagine, and it is for everyone, everywhere. Passing the Peace, if it is now safe to do so, would follow nicely after this introduction.

### Sermon Starter

Marcus Borg once declared that we are called to love what God loves, as God loves. What are our expressions of loving as God loves? Who gains? Who loses? God seeks our wholeness, over and over again. Evil is that which works to destroy that love. Sin is a relationship problem. Our prayers and our goals echo that of Julian of Norwich “that all may be well.” We share in the power and covenant of healing. Mental Health First Aid (www.mhfa.ca) offers an excellent two-day course that teaches first aid for the mental well-being of self and others, which reminds us of the extraordinary human power of listening without judgment. In Numbers, we have a story in which God gave the ancient ones power over serpents; God told Moses to put a bronze serpent on a pole so that all could see it for what it was and choose healing over fear. No magic required. What powers and gifts do we have within our faith story to support mental and spiritual well-being?

### Hymns

Numbers 21:4–9

VU 619 “Healer of our every ill”

VU 633 “Bless now, O God, the journey”

MV 65 “When we are tested”

MV 74 “When painful mem’ries”

MV 79 “Spirit, open my heart”

Psalm 107:1–3, 17–22

VU 472 “O Jesus, joy of loving hearts”

VU 637 “Jesus, Saviour, pilot me”

MV 89 “Love is the touch”

Ephesians 2:1–10

VU 266 “Amazing grace”

VU 371 “Open my eyes, that I may see”

VU 559 “Come, O Fount of every blessing”

VU 630 “O Christ, in thee my soul”

MV 81 “Love us into fullness”

John 3:14–21

VU 333 “Love divine, all loves excelling”

VU 365 “Jesus loves me”

VU 585 “Jesus bids us shine”

VU 679 “Let there be light”

MV 94 “Love knocks and waits”

MV 145 “Draw the circle wide”

**The Gospel of John** has been used through the centuries to stir up antisemitism, especially with its declaration about “the Jews” in relation to Jesus’ death. While hostile references may reflect the historical context of the gospel, they are contrary to the actual gospel message of loving neighbours and enemies. Remember, Jesus and all of the disciples were Jewish. In our current context, these hostile references are unnecessarily divisive. When reading from the Gospel of John, you might choose to say “Judeans” instead of “Jews,” an acceptable translation of the original Greek word. You might also use “the religious authorities.” For other suggested wording options for the Gospel of John readings, see *Celebrate God’s Presence*, p. 177.

## March 21 – Lent 5

Jeremiah 31:31–34

“I will write my law on their hearts.”

Psalm 51:1–12 (VU pp. 776–777)

Put a new heart in me, O God.

or Psalm 119:9–16 (VU pp. 838–839)

Finding joy in God’s commandments.

Hebrews 5:5–10

Christ did not glorify himself; rather he suffered.

John 12:20–33

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth.

### To Ponder

How do you live hope so that others are encouraged and inspired?

### Spark

The Covenant of Hope

A treaty is more than a contract. It is not a “good enough” measure or a compromise. It is not even really a negotiation. It is more like a way to honour the highest and the best in each of us and all of us. It is a triumph for all and a defeat for none. It is who we are when we live firm in a sense of abundance and have no need to diminish any other. Such is a covenant. Such values are gifts of God written in our hearts. They are not held by paper or even stone tablets.

### With Children

Look at the seeds that were planted on Lent 1. Then show some grains or seeds and demonstrate getting them ready to sprout. In the transformation to new life, the seed dies—it is completely changed. Our lives can change completely too. You may want to start some seeds ahead of time so children can observe the stages of transformation in a “time-lapse.” You might show some time-lapse video of a grain of wheat sprouting and growing, dying to become new life.

### Sermon Starter

What life force is the seed that brings hope to our world? This is the essential question before people of all ages who drink to blot out the pain of the world. Consider the many examples in the news of insufficient hope for the future. We must remember that God writes on our hearts a message of love that is transformative. Let’s live reckless love and radical hope! What can we do to show that there is hope and possibility in this world? Hearts and lives transformed by love is the power God gives us to shift the world. Every effort matters. Every human connection matters, whether to the earth itself, to plants, animals, or other human beings, or to the Divine.

In *Talking to Strangers* (Little, Brown, 2019), Malcolm Gladwell speaks of a theory about alcohol and substance use that suggests the human brain loses the ability to see beyond the present moment. This myopia foreshortens the view of the future. We need to find ways of painting a future that we and our children feel we can bear if we hope to stem this tide of despair. Our Christian story is exactly that. How will we tell it for our world’s current hopelessness? What of our old beliefs and ways of thinking must die for new life to emerge?

### Hymns

Jeremiah 31:31–34

VU 658 “O Love that wilt not let me go” (play with spirit!)

VU 686 “God of grace and God of glory”

MV 12 “Come touch our hearts”

MV 79 “Spirit, open my heart”

Psalm 51:1–12

MV 115 “Behold, behold, I make all things new”

MV 191 “What can I do?”

Hebrews 5:5–10

VU 149 “When I survey the wondrous cross”

VU 595 “We are pilgrims”

John 12:20–33

VU 186 “Now the green blade rises”

VU 598 “When pain of the world”

VU 697 “O for a world”

VU 703 “In the bulb there is a flower”

MV 1 “Let us build a house”

MV 125 “When a grain of wheat”

## March 28 – Palm/Passion Sunday

Worship materials for Palm/Passion Sunday to Easter Sunday were contributed by Don Uhryniw and Arlene Gray, Emmanuel U.C., Peterborough, Ont.

## Liturgy of the Palms

Mark 11:1–11 or John 12:12–16

Jesus’ joyful entry into Jerusalem.

Psalm 118:1–2, 19–29 (VU p. 837 Parts One, Three, and Four)

The stone that the builders rejected.

## Liturgy of the Passion

Isaiah 50:4–9*a*

The servant, “I gave my back to those who struck me.”

Psalm 31:9–16 (VU p. 758 Parts Two and Three)

My times are in your hands, O God.

Philippians 2:5–11

Let the same mind be in you as was in Christ Jesus.

Mark 14:1—15:47

Narrative of Jesus’ final hours.

### To Ponder

To which part of the Passion narrative do you gravitate? Why?

### Spark

A palm parade is always a fun thing to do. What would a contemporary palm parade look like? Or a parade in pandemic times?

### With Children

Especially for younger children, the story of the entry into Jerusalem is accessible. Share images and stories about what the children looked like, what they were wearing, and what were they shouting.

### Sermon Starter

For the Liturgy of the Palms

For most of us, John’s rendition of the entry into Jerusalem is the nearer to our childhood memories. How did something that was so happy go so quickly very wrong? In Mark’s gospel, Jesus checks out the temple after arriving in Jerusalem. Why? Knowing that Good Friday is coming, how can we quote the psalmist—“God’s love endures forever!”—with integrity?

For the Liturgy of the Passion

The Passion story is the last part of the story. Is it the beginning of the end or is it the end of the beginning? In these lections are some of the most poignant phrases: “My eye wastes away from grief, my soul and my body also” and “My times are in your hand” (Psalm 31); “But emptied himself taking the form of a slave” (Philippians 2); and “Are you the Messiah?” (Mark 14). We read these from this side of the empty tomb but can we imagine what Jesus’ followers were experiencing? It is uncomfortable to remember that Jesus was executed alongside two men found guilty of treason. Jesus death is not nostalgia, but very political. What does that mean for us as 21st-century followers of Jesus? (In Mark 14, when they come to arrest Jesus, there is a young man wearing a simple white garment who runs naked into the night. Some may wish to consult The *Secret Gospel: The Discovery and Interpretation of the Secret Gospel According to Mark* by Morton Smith [Dawn Horse, 2005]. It is informative and delightfully controversial!)

### Hymns

Mark 11:1–11 or John 12:12–16

VU 124 “He came riding on a donkey”

VU 128 “Sanna, sannanina”

MV 8 “And on this path”

MV 128 “When they heard”

Psalm 118:1–2, 19–29

VU 10 “Prepare the way of the Lord”

MV 42 “Praise God for this holy ground”

Isaiah 50:4–9a

VU 145 “O sacred head”

MV 78 “God weeps”

Psalm 31:9–16

VU 652 “Be still, my soul”

MV 83 “Let my spirit always sing”

Philippians 2:5–11

VU 335 “At the name of Jesus”

MV 47 “Born in human likeness”

Mark 14:1—15:47

VU 141 “They crucified my Lord”

VU 144 “Were you there”

## April 1 – Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12:1–4, (5–10), 11–14

Instructions for the first Passover.

Psalm 116:1–2, 12–19 (VU p. 836)

How can I repay you, O God?

1 Corinthians 11:23–26

An account of the Last Supper.

John 13:1–17, 31*b*–35

Jesus washes the disciples’ feet.

### To Ponder

What might have been your response if Jesus knelt to wash your feet?

### Spark

April Fool’s Day and Maundy Thursday make a strange combination, but this combination might also allow for some gentle playfulness on how God played a trick on death. If possible and if now safe to do so, move the worship service to a room where all can gather around a great big dining table.

### With Children

Whatever focus you may choose for the liturgy—the supper, washing of the feet, anointing with oil—it will offer excellent opportunities to involve younger folk in both leading and receiving. That could be their way of expressing their faith and love.

### Sermon Starter

The lections for this day remind us to hold in tension our Jewish roots and the new covenant. While rooted in Judaism, the new commandment that Jesus expresses to the disciples—that we love one another as Christ loves us—is at the very core of our identity as friends of Jesus. Our identity is not only what we believe but what we do. We are called to a performative expression of love. The ritual meals of the two traditions—the Passover and the Last Supper—remind us that our expression of faith is to share with others and to do love. When we gather around the table, we are reminded that we are all, equally, children of the Creator. No one has a reserved or special place.

### Hymns

Exodus 12:1–4, (5–10), 11–14

VU p. 806 “O God, our help in ages past”

Psalm 116:1–2, 12–19

VU 549 “For all your goodness, God”

VU 706 “Give thanks for life”

1 Corinthians 11:23–26

VU 461 “Bread of the world”

VU 477 “I come with joy”

VU 550 “Bread is broken”

MV 195 “Long ago and far away”

John 13:1–17, 31b–35

VU 130 “An upper room”

VU 147 “What wondrous love is this”

VU 348 “O love, how deep”

VU 595 “We are pilgrims”

## April 2 – Good Friday

Isaiah 52:13—53:12

The servant is despised, suffering, acquainted with infirmity.

Psalm 22 (VU pp. 743–746)

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Hebrews 10:16–25

Let us approach God with a true heart.

or Hebrews 4:14–16; 5:7–9

Jesus the High Priest.

John 18:1—19:42

The betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion of Jesus.

### To Ponder

How do you understand the reason for Jesus’ death?

### Spark

The worship space should be as dimly lit and shadowed as is safely possible. Silence would be preferable.

### With Children

The Passion narrative could be very troubling for young children. You might place the emphasis on how some things, like rules and laws, don’t always work out the way we want or expect. (Share a child-friendly example.) But what we know is that even when things are really bad, God is with us. God will never abandon us. God’s love is bigger than anything bad that can happen to us.

Sermon Starter

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” The author of the fourth gospel has woven together a very compelling story, and all the characters are there: Jesus, Judas, Nicodemus, Pilate, and so on. It is a story of drama, death, and injustice. And surprisingly, Pilate, who is asking all the questions, asks one with great depth: What is truth? While most mainline Christians mark and recognize the solemnity of this day, the recorded stories and their interpretations invite us to explore the question of whether Jesus died for our sins or because of our sins or both, or for another reason altogether. What is the truth? To help us struggle with this question, let us remember that in a few Christian traditions, Pilate is considered a saint (such as in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church). Note that Jesus’ words “It is finished” (John 19:30) were written in the perfect passive indicative tense in Greek, which indicates that an action has been completed but its effects continue on.

### Hymns

Isaiah 52:13—53:12

VU 614 “In suffering love”

MV 78 “God weeps”

Psalm 22

VU 611 “Out of the depths, O God”

VU p. 743 “God, why have you forsaken me”

Hebrews 10:16–25 or Hebrews 4:14–16; 5:7–9

VU 473 “Let all mortal flesh keep silence” *verses 1–3*

VU 591 “Jesus, united by your grace”

John 18:1—19:42

VU 143 “My song is love unknown”

VU 144 “Were you there”

VU 145 “O sacred head”

VU 146 “When Jesus wept”

VU 148 “Jesus, remember me”

## April 4 – Easter Sunday

Acts 10:34–43

Peter preaches, “God shows no partiality.”

or Isaiah 25:6–9

God provides a rich feast.

Psalm 118:1–2, 14–24 (VU p. 837 Parts One, Two, and Three)

God is my strength and my song.

1 Corinthians 15:1–11

An account of Jesus’ resurrection appearances.

John 20:1–18 or Mark 16:1–8

The resurrected Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene.

### To Ponder

What power does your faith bring to you?

### Spark

During the opening hymn, process in the flowers, banners, and other colourful, joyful items.

### With Children

Do a repeat parade, like the one for Palm Sunday. Have the children, and anyone from the congregation who wishes to join, process around the worship space singing VU 167 “Christ is risen from the dead.”

### Sermon Starter

In Acts, Paul speaks about being anointed by the Holy Spirit and with power. Too often we forget that our faith can allow us great power: the power to create, to roll away stones, to transform lives, to work for justice, to confront racism, etc. The journey of Lent through Holy Week to the Sunday of the resurrection gives us an experience to travel through uncertainty, pain, and shadow toward hope. Too often, we are unable to recognize Jesus, or we are unwilling to see him in the gardener, in a child, in shadow and in light. We must live our faith in such a way that we too can often say, “We have seen the Lord.” Share some of your experiences or invite several within the congregation to share their experiences when they could declare, “We have seen the Lord.”

### Hymns

Acts 10:34–43

VU 164 “The day of resurrection”

VU 166 “Joy comes with the dawn”

VU 606 “In Christ there is no east or west”

Isaiah 25:6–9

VU 651 “Guide me, O thou great Jehovah”

MV 120 “My soul cries out”

Psalm 118:1–2, 14–24

VU 409 “Morning has broken”

MV 122 “This is the day”

1 Corinthians 15:1–11

VU 155 “Jesus Christ is risen today”

VU 178 “Because you live, O Christ”

John 20:1–18

VU 180 “Christ is risen, yes, indeed”

MV 121 “Hey now! Singing hallelujah!”

Mark 16:1–8

VU 164 “The day of resurrection”

VU 179 “Hallelujah, hallelujah, give thanks”

MV 138 “My love colours outside the lines”

## April 11 – Second Sunday of Easter

Worship materials for the Second to the Fifth Sunday of Easter were contributed by Elaine Bidgood Sveet, First Lutheran Church, Rugby & Leeds, North Dakota.

Acts 4:32–35

The believers shared everything in common.

Psalm 133 (VU p. 856)

How pleasant it is when God’s people are together.

1 John 1:1—2:2

God is light; walk in the light.

John 20:19–31

Jesus appears to the disciples; but Thomas is not there.

### To Ponder

How do you experience Jesus’ love for you? How do you help others experience that love?

### Spark

The ASL (American Sign Language) sign for Jesus is touching the marks of the nails in the centre of each hand with your middle finger. Jesus is known by his scars. Teach this sign to the congregation. Use it at the beginning (Call to Worship) and closing (Benediction) of worship. Invite the congregation to echo your sign. You may wish to follow the tradition of celebrating this Sunday as Holy Humour Sunday. (See resources in Prayers for Worship, p. 50.)

### With Children

Exhale. Smile. Relax your shoulders. What makes you feel peaceful? Where do you feel at peace, calm, relieved? Jesus says the word peace many times in the Bible. In fact, in the King James version of the Bible, the word *peace* is recorded 429 times! (It’s 340 in the NRSV.) Peace is important for Christians. Peace was the way that Jesus lived and spoke. Explain the stress of the disciples after Jesus’ death, their fear, and Jesus’ forgiveness. Invite the kids to say “Peace be with you” to each other, like Jesus did.

### Sermon Starter

Because He Loves

Thomas loved Jesus. Three memorable moments with Thomas paint the picture of a committed disciple. John 11:16 and 14:5 and the John 20 gospel reading for today show a disciple who loved Jesus and, out of love, is eager to touch and see his Lord. Jesus loves Thomas, too. Jesus gives Thomas what he needs. He shows up again for him. Because Jesus loves his disciples, he will show up when the room is locked and when they are afraid. Because Jesus loves his disciples, he will ease their minds with a repeated word of peace. Because Jesus loves them and us, he will go to the cross, rise, and come to us, not only so our sins will be forgiven and a path to eternal life granted, but so we will have peace and confidence with it all. Truly Jesus loves us.

### Hymns

Acts 4:32–35

VU 395 “Come in, come in and sit down”

VU 595 “We are pilgrims”

MV 145 “Draw the circle wide”

MV 154 “Deep in our hearts”

Psalm 133

VU 402 “We are one”

VU 510 “We have this ministry”

VU 602 “Blest be the tie that binds”

MV 1 “Let us build a house”

1 John 1:1—2:2

VU 79 “Arise, your light is come”

VU 87 “I am the light of the world”

VU 585 “Jesus bids us shine”

VU 642 “Be thou my vision”

VU 679 “Let there be light”

John 20:19–31

VU 158 “Christ is alive”

VU 166 “Joy comes with the dawn”

VU 178 “Because you live, O Christ”

VU 365 “Jesus loves me”

“Because he lives” by Gloria and Bill Gaither

Holy Humour Sunday

VU 260 “God who gives to life”

VU 624 “Give to us laughter”

## April 18 – Third Sunday of Easter

Acts 3:12–19

Peter preaches in Solomon’s Portico.

Psalm 4 (VU p. 727)

Answer me, when I call, O God.

1 John 3:1–7

We are children of God.

Luke 24:36*b*–48

Jesus invites the disciples to touch his hands and feet.

### To Ponder

How are (or were) you framing the need to refrain from touch during the pandemic within the Christian faith?

### Spark

If it is now safe to do so, what examples of touch, smell, and vision can you create for your congregation to experience as they enter worship? Include a variety so that everyone can engage with the senses that work best for them. Set up a few small tables and invite people to touch, smell, or see an item. Use boxes with small holes cut out to conceal some items (in whole or in part) and ask people to use their senses to guess what they are (suggestions: a basketball, grapefruit, rosemary, rice, a fork). You could display instructions on the tables or ask volunteers to help.

### With Children

Have the children be the disciples and you be Jesus to act out the gospel story. Narrate it so children simply do what you say. Read the following paraphrase of the gospel slowly with ample pauses for children to act on: “The disciples were sitting and talking to each other. Jesus surprised them. He appeared saying, ‘Peace be with you.’ They were surprised and afraid; terrified, really, really afraid. Jesus asked, ‘Why are you afraid? Why do you doubt it is me? Look at my hands and feet. Touch me and see.’ The disciples got up and got close to Jesus. They looked and touched. They were super happy—a little confused still, but super happy. The end.”

### Sermon Starter

Seeing Is Believing

Open-casket visitation and prayer services are sometimes preferred by families, so people can see and touch their loved one, one last time. People come to pay their respects, to offer sympathy, to see with their own eyes the proof that this person they loved is truly alive no longer. Seeing is often believing, though some prefer to not see the body. Explorers often brought back proof of what they had seen and touched; photographs, maps, new foods, plants, something to show they had been where they said they had been. Selfies are extremely popular now. If you haven’t taken a photo and posted it on social media, some people might wonder if you’d really been somewhere. We expect to see it or hear about it in a “see-and-touch” world. Over the past year, in times when we could only see or hear, and not touch, what has helped us connect to each other and to our immortal, invisible God?

### Hymns

Acts 3:12–19

VU 477 “I come with joy”

VU 508 “Just as I am”

VU 649 “Walk with me”

Psalm 4

VU 400 “Lord, listen to your children praying”

VU 411 “O God we call”

VU 589 “Lord, speak to me”

*1 John 3:1–7*

VU 266 “Amazing grace”

VU 345 “Come, children, join to sing”

VU 477 “I come with joy”

Luke 24:36b–48

VU 264 “Immortal, invisible, God only wise”

VU 603 “In loving partnership we come”

VU 635 “All the way my Saviour leads me”

VU 661 “Come to my heart”

Sunday closest to Earth Day

VU 187 “The spring has come”

VU 229 “God of the sparrow”

VU 291 “All things bright and beautiful”

VU 296 “This is God’s wondrous world”

VU 307 “Touch the earth lightly”

## April 25 – Fourth Sunday of Easter

Acts 4:5–12

Peter testifies before the high priests.

Psalm 23 (VU pp. 747–749)

God is my shepherd.

1 John 3:16–24

Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

John 10:11–18

Jesus is the good shepherd.

### To Ponder

What have you sacrificed in love for another person? Who has sacrificed for you?

### Spark

Project or display pictures of sheep or shepherds as people gather. Children and adults might have fun creating 3-D cotton-ball sheep to adorn the entrance to the church. Include sheep of all colours, even rainbow sheep, to represent diversity in the church.

### With Children

Play a math game. Use plastic farm animals as props or cotton balls to represent sheep. Invite kids to make the *baa* sound when they are in agreement with something you say. Depending on the age of the children, adjust the difficulty of the equation. (Example: I have 3 groups of 10 sheep. Do I have 30 sheep? I have 5 groups of 6 sheep. Do I still have 30 sheep? I have one shepherd. I think one shepherd could care for 30 sheep, and for 99 sheep.) Discuss how valuable each sheep is to a shepherd and that we all have one shepherd. The whole world has one shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd. Finish with a prayer. Tell the kids that after they say amen with you, they can give a final *baa* too!

### Sermon Starter

One Flock, One Shepherd

Jesus seems to be highlighting his devotion to the people. He can be trusted. He is not like a hired hand, who might feel no commitment and flee when danger approaches. Jesus is committed. Jesus loves the sheep and will sacrifice for them. In this season of Easter, we are reminded of just how much Jesus is willing to sacrifice. Who has sacrificed for you in your life? Perhaps a parent sacrificed their time or adjusted their work to be present and care for you. Perhaps you know someone who has donated a kidney, bone marrow, or blood. (Would they tell their story?) Perhaps you know someone who has come racing to your aid in a moment of need, regardless of the cost to them. This generous *agape*, this sacrificial, selfless love, is modelled by our good shepherd. We have one shepherd, yet we multiply the generous love of our God as we do likewise.

### Hymns

Acts 4:5–12

VU 169 “Good Christians all”

VU 179 “Hallelujah, hallelujah”

VU 331/332 “The church’s one foundation”

Psalm 23

VU 240 “Praise, my soul, the God of heaven”

VU 273 “The King of love”

VU 326 “O for a thousand tongues to sing”

VU 478 “You satisfy the hungry heart”

VU p. 766 “As the deer pants for the water”

1 John 3:16–24

VU 574 “Come, let us sing of a wonderful love”

VU 593 “Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love”

VU 595 “The Servant Song”

John 10:11–18

VU 238 “How Great Thou Art”

VU 333 “Love divine, all loves excelling”

VU 343 “I love to tell the story”

VU 422/423 “God be with you till we meet again”

VU 635 “All the way my Saviour leads me”

## May 2 – Fifth Sunday of Easter

Acts 8:26–40

Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch.

Psalm 22:25–31 (VU p. 746 Parts Three and Four)

Praise God who has heard our call.

1 John 4:7–21

Everyone who loves is born of God.

John 15:1–8

Jesus is the true vine.

### To Ponder

What image helps you feel most connected to Jesus?

### Spark

Borrow potted plants from church members to create a lush sanctuary of greenery for this Sunday. The image of a green, growing, living garden at the front of the church will be memorable.

### With Children

Hold one of the plants on your lap or set it beside you. Ask: Have any of you helped plant a garden? What would you like to grow in your gardens? I like to grow \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Jesus once used an image of a garden to describe our connection with Jesus and God. Any guesses what plant he used as an example? Or maybe you already know. Jesus said that he was the vine (the grape vine) and we are the branches. It was his way of telling us that we are so totally connected to our Jesus. We grow and get strength from Jesus. How awesome is that! If you ever feel weak, scared, or alone, remember Jesus is connected to you, giving you strength and power.

### Sermon Starter

Extensions of Christ

Last Sunday, we had the image of Jesus the good shepherd and us as his wandering, stubborn, needy sheep. Today the image draws us closer. Jesus is the vine. We extend from the vine as branches. We are rooted in and draw strength and life from Jesus. We are intimately connected to him. If we were cut off from Jesus, we would perish like a branch chopped off from its vine. How might we extend to others this life-giving, loving connection with Christ? Name for your congregation where you see them extending out in Christ’s love, collectively and individually. Examples might be ministries of welcome, prayer, and outreach like backpack programs, food banks, prayer shawl and quilt ministries, prayer chains, mission trips, choirs, and youth groups. Encourage your congregation to keep growing with Christ and extending the branches of love.

### Hymns

Acts 8:26–40

VU 559 “Come, O Fount of every blessing”

VU 639 “One more step along the world”

Psalm 22:25–31

VU 165 “Come, you faithful”

VU 371 “Open my eyes”

VU 374 “Come and find the quiet centre”

VU 644 “I was there to hear your borning cry”

MV 88 “Over my head”

1 John 4:7–21

VU 282 “Long before the night”

VU 359 “He came singing love”

VU 701 “What does the Lord require of you”

John 15:1–8

VU 291 “All things bright and beautiful”

VU 703 “In the bulb there is a flower”

## Abide with Me

Metre: 10 10 10 10; suggested tune: EVENTIDE

Abide with me, O Christ, the one true vine.

Root me in love and train me to be kind.

Guide all my actions, thoughts so I can be

fruitful for you, O Christ, abide with me.

I can do nothing, Lord, apart from you.

Yours is the glory, strength and wisdom, too.

May I obey and faithful always be.

O Christ, who changes not, abide with me.

Stay with me, God, through all this life does bring.

Your nearness is a joy for all to sing.

Grant me a heart that serves you all my days.

Almighty God, I will abide always.

Elaine Bidgood Sveet, First Lutheran Church, Rugby & Leeds, North Dakota

## May 9 – Sixth Sunday of Easter

*Worship materials for the Sixth Sunday of Easter, Ascension Day, and the Seventh Sunday of Easter were contributed by Barbara Cairns, West River U.C., Cornwall, P.E.I.*

Acts 10:44–48

The gift of the Holy Spirit comes as Peter preaches.

Psalm 98 (VU p. 818)

Sing to God a new song.

1 John 5:1–6

To love God is to obey God’s commandments.

John 15:9–17

Love one another as I have loved you.

### To Ponder

When have your own biases and prejudices been shattered?

### Spark

Rise up! Today is the first day of the rest of your life. You can make one small step toward reconciliation and peace by reaching out and saying, “I’m sorry. I love you. Please forgive me. Can we play? Can we dance?” You could use Andra Day’s song “Rise Up” as inspiration or the Parachute Club’s song of the same name (both available on YouTube). Or, if it is safe to do so, host a multicultural fair or have a feast with different food, music, and games to celebrate that the kingdom of God is like a party for all creation. Another good option is to show the President’s Choice video #EatTogether 2017.

### With Children

Sing or play a video of “A place in the choir” by Bill Staines. Talk about being inclusive of all creation: people, animals, young and old; no matter what our differences, we are all part of God’s choir. What does that mean? Ask the children if they sing, play an instrument, dance, or play sports. Talk about the different ways they add to God’s world through these talents. When we love each other and respect the gifts and energy we each bring, we are a part of God’s choir, team, and family.

### Sermon Starter

The story in Acts shatters stereotypes. It is a story of being turned upside down and changing, and of erased boundaries. It points to the otherness of God’s Spirit. It shows us how, even in otherness, we find common ground. Suggest that people explore and open up about their own prejudices, cultural biases, and negative stereotypes. One way to encourage this is to provide a demonstration. Place an empty vase on a table. On small cards, write examples of prejudices and biases, perhaps your own, naming them aloud as you write. Place them in the vase, either taped to sticks or in the plastic forks used to hold cards in flower bouquets. Then take each one and write a word or action to replace or change those things. You have now created a bouquet of healing. Let us celebrate that God pours love out on all creation. God’s love happens outside of the limited boxes that we love to place God in. Let us, with joy, reach out beyond our own preconceived notions, ideologies, and cultural limitations. (You might use the quote from Rob Bell that begins, “If the gospel isn’t good news for everybody…”)

### Hymns

Acts 10:44–48

VU 606 “In Christ there is no east or west”

MV 102 “Jesus, your Spirit in us”

MV 145 “Draw the circle wide”

MV 162 “Christ, within us hidden”

Psalm 98

MV 142 “Oh a song must rise”

MV 213 “Take up his song”

1 John 5:1–6

VU 382 “Breathe on me, breath of God”

MV 81 “Love us into fullness”

John 15:9–17

VU 283 “God is the One whom we seek together”

VU 365 “Jesus loves me”

MV 138 “My love colours outside the lines”

MV 145 “Draw the circle wide”

MV 154 “Deep in our hearts”

MV 159 “In star and crescent”

MV 209 “Go, make a diff’rence”

## May 13 – Ascension Day (Thursday)

Acts 1:1–11

The ascension of Jesus.

Psalm 47 (VU p. 771)

Clap your hands, all you peoples.

Ephesians 1:15–23

Paul prays for the church at Ephesus.

Luke 24:44–53

Jesus explains scripture.

### To Ponder

When has your patience been stretched in learning a skill or waiting for an event?

### Spark

“A Sonnet for Ascension Day” by Malcolm Guite is a good addition to this service (Internet search author and title). Some transcendent music of the Taizé community might also be used.

### With Children

How do we teach our children about being patient, especially in our fast-paced, takeout, and hurry culture? Talk or show videos about caterpillars and butterflies, tadpoles and frogs, eggs and chickens. These transformations don’t happen overnight. These stages take time. This is the mystery of life that even when you sleep, you change and grow. It takes patience. We are asked, as Christians, to grow in our faith. This doesn’t happen overnight. It too takes time and we need to be patient. Waiting for things to happen can be hard. When have you had to wait? Were you patient or not? What can you do to practise being patient? Waiting is hard but it is a good thing to learn. We all need to learn patience. When we are patient, we also learn about being kind, gentle, and compassionate. Those are all part of being the people of God and following the Way of Jesus. (For another video on patience, Internet search *Sesame Street Zac Efron Elmo practise patience*.)

### Sermon Starter

We might find it hard to believe stories that are full of supernatural encounters, such as Jesus rising into heaven. How do we find a way into the story in our postmodern, post-Christian era, where we demand that things be proven in order for them to have meaning? How do we help our folks develop a love of mystery that is not about taking the story as supernatural or literal? Is it possible to expand our minds to embrace the concept of ascension and resurrection? Will cultivating a love of poetry and music help us listen to the scriptures in a new way? There are more questions than answers in this story. Maybe that is where we need to start, by accepting that we don’t know the answer and have no explanation. Maybe not knowing and being okay with not knowing will move us to experience the powerful presence and transforming work of the Holy Spirit. We are constantly invited to become active agents of God’s kingdom, not to just stay still, stare, and point. We are called to let go of our preconceived notions so that we can be transformed like Jesus and so that we, too, can transcend into our roles as apostles of the good news. What are you waiting for? Are you waiting for God to come and change the world or for Jesus to return? Perhaps the bigger question is this: Do we really want to change?

### Hymns

Acts 1:1–11

VU 158 “Christ is alive”

VU 189 “Hail the day that sees him rise”

VU 211 “Crown him with many crowns”

VU 507 “Today we all are called to be disciples”

MV 102 “Jesus, your Spirit in us”

Psalm 47

VU p. 820 “Make a joyful noise”

MV 59 “Alleluia, praise to God”

MV 183 “I’m gonna shout, shout”

Ephesians 1:15–23

MV 6 “Holy Spirit, come into our lives”

Luke 24:44–53

VU 194 “Filled with the Spirit’s power”

VU 231 “I sing the mighty power”

VU 397 “O praise the gracious power”

MV 13 “O let the power fall on me”

## May 16 – Seventh Sunday of Easter

Acts 1:15–17, 21–26

Matthias is elected as an apostle.

Psalm 1 (VU p. 724)

Blessed are those who delight in God’s law.

1 John 5:9–13

The testimony of God is greater than human testimony.

John 17:6–19

“May my joy be made complete in them.”

### To Ponder

What makes your joy whole and complete? What is joy and when do you feel it?

### Spark

You might use the song “Joy of the Lord.” The Rend Collective has a great version. Watch a YouTube video with Brené Brown on joy and gratitude in preparation for this service.

### With Children

Feelings are gifts from God. There are no good or bad emotions. Emotions just help us to know ourselves and they help us to understand others. When we ignore how we are feeling, when we don’t tell anyone how we are feeling, we can get mixed up and act in ways that hurt ourselves and others. Often this makes us and others feel bad. One emotion that Jesus wanted to share with us in a special way is joy. The joy Jesus talked about is more than a feeling. It was a prayer that Jesus offered on our behalf to God. Jesus prayed that we may find joy. How do we, in this community of faith, help each other find the joy Jesus offered to us? Isn’t it amazing that Jesus prayed for us? Now let’s pray to Jesus: Thank you, Jesus, for praying for us and watching over us. Thank you for feelings of love, joy, and even sadness. Help us to be loving and kind. Help us to follow in your way. We thank you, Jesus, for your prayers and friendship. Amen.

### Sermon Starter

The thing about Jesus and joy is that Jesus always wants us to have it in great abundance, like an overflowing fountain with fresh life-giving water in a barren desert. How do we trust the prayer that Jesus prays for us all? It is a prayer that offers us hope and strength, even in the challenging times, but not as a simple fix. Grace and joy are intertwined. If we can enter into the linked feelings of joy and grace, we can receive “grace upon grace upon grace” (Karoline Lewis, *The Abingdon Preaching Annual* [Abingdon Press, 2017], pp. 81–82). How do we feel this kind of joy and grace? It’s not the cheap joy and cheap grace that we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it, “Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.” Grace and joy are not the opposite of sorrow and pain. Often, they reside in the same breath. Gratitude is one way to cultivate joy. Invite people into a daily practice of gratitude. Brené Brown (see Spark) writes that when we actively practise gratitude, we invite joy into our life. Gratitude is an active way to bridge the gap between our pain and heartache and deep, abiding joy.

### Hymns

Acts 1:15–17, 21–26

VU 562 “Jesus calls us”

VU 569 “You call us out”

MV 157 “I am a child of God”

MV 161 “I have called you by your name”

Psalm 1

MV 98 “Like a river of tears”

1 John 5:9–13

VU 574 “Come, let us sing of a wonderful love”

VU 594 “O Christian, love”

MV 84 “In you there is a refuge”

John 17:6–19

VU 326 “O for a thousand tongues to sing”

VU 365 “Jesus loves me”

VU 570 “Jesus’ hands were kind hands”

VU 630 “O Christ, in thee my soul”

VU 635 “All the way my Saviour leads me”

VU 642 “Be thou my vision”

Seasonal

VU 555 “Our Parent, by whose name”

VU 556 “Would you bless our homes and families”

VU 557 “A prayer for homes and families”