

Laity Sunday 2024: Rise Up! And Retain the Spirit's Good and Beautiful Things

Laity Sunday celebrates the ministry of all Christians as they love God and neighbor. As God's people grow in grace to become "all-love" disciples in community, we gather with others and connect all to God's saving love in Jesus Christ. So, on Laity Sunday (October 20, 2024), we continue to lift up God's call to all who follow the way of Jesus and lead others to him – specifically as we consider what it means to cherish/protect what has been entrusted to us: our witness to grace at work in every life.



Laity Sunday 2024– Overview/Planning Worship

Laity Sunday is a day set aside to remember and lift up a constant reality: the priesthood and ministry of *all*. *Everyone* is invited to share in God's community of healing togetherness and world-repairing love.

Laity Sunday is a special Sunday defined by General Conference "to celebrate the ministry of all Christians" (2016 *Book of Discipline*, ¶ 264.2). Usually observed on the third Sunday in October (in 2024, **October 20**), Laity Sunday is one way we express the core Christian conviction that *all* are called to participate in God's mission to "abolish death" and bring life to light through the good news of Jesus. **Read more about the history of Laity Sunday (<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-laity-sunday>).**

This year, the emphasis is on keeping the good and beautiful things Gods Spirit entrusts to us: our storied experience of grace at work in every life.

Laity Sunday 2024– Quadrennial Themes on the way to Together By Grace

The **Laity Sunday themes** for the quadrennium coming to an end in 2024 come from II Timothy 1:1-14. Following the call to **Rise Up**, many laity in the current quadrennium have echoed the invitation of this passage: Rise Up and **revive God's gift of faith** (that first lived in those who loved us); Rise Up and **reveal the grace in Christ that brings life** with others; Rise Up and **remain committed to the 'sound' teaching** (healthy words) **we witness in every life that models grace**; and, Rise Up and **retain** the treasured nearing in Jesus that God's Spirit animates us to witness and share: every story of grace with us, at work **for** life.

In 2021, we noted that **when we remember** those whose care and love brought us to faith in Jesus, we discover that same faith and **fire for life are rekindled in us**. This was compared to remembering a forgotten tune as we learn to sing the LORD's song in what seems like a very 'strange land' (Psalm 137). The writer of 2 Timothy prayerfully reminds us that our forebears sang this song of saving love into our own lives where it still burns (if we remember to revive it!). In many ways, the lives of these dear saints have been verses in a sacred song extending and rhyming with the memories of scripture and the social life of Jesus in churches across time. So, we join this chorus and discover how to sing the LORD's love song for life.

In 2022, we focused on how the vocation to **all-love discipleship** first modeled by people who 'sang their lives to God'¹ takes root and finds new expression in our time **as we create 'together-life' with others**. As we turn to God's life-giving nearness, we find that very same love calling us to **bring others along with us** into God's healing life. In our here and now, living well together for others becomes the place where John Wesley's words ring true: "The Gospel of Christ knows of no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness."

callout/sidebar: "The Gospel of Christ knows of no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness." John Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739), Preface

The **2023 Laity Sunday focus** was on what it means to **hold** on to the pattern of **healthy words heard**—words heard in those whose lives have been remade and restored by grace (2 Timothy 1:13). For Paul, his own story of saving grace from a life of threatening, toxic words becomes one of many exemplary stories of what God can do in all of us.

In 2024, we connect the final theme of this passing quadrennial, **Rise Up! And retain the Spirit's good and beautiful things**, to the vision of living '**together by grace**' expressed in the Laity Address of the 2024 General Conference. Encouraging all laity to accompany people beyond church walls, conference lay leaders reminded us that we are witnesses to grace at work - witnesses who echo what photographer Jack Corn said was key to being a witness: **you have to be there, see there, and gather others to care there**. We place our lives in God's hands, believing that God can be trusted with life (until the very end; see 2 Timothy 1:12). It turns out this is what Paul is asking Timothy to keep/guard/retain, too: the beautiful lives grace touches and the witness to that ongoing restoration work all around us.

Laity Sunday Themes 2021-2024 - Rise Up!

2021: **RISE UP!** – and **Revive** God's gift (2 Tim 1:3-7)

2022: **RISE UP!** – and **Reveal** God's grace (2 Tim 1:8-12)

2023: **RISE UP!** – and **Remain** committed to Love's teachings (2 Tim 1:13)

2024: **RISE UP!** – and **Retain** the Spirit's good and beautiful things (2 Tim 1:14)

Laity Sunday 2024 – Preaching Notes

Texts: Job 38:1-7, (34-41); Isaiah 53:4-12; Psalm 104:1-9, 24, 35c; Mark 10:35-45; Hebrews 5:1-10; **2 Timothy 1:14**, (1-13)

LAITY SUNDAY READINGS <subhead>

Today's scripture passages from the Hebrew Bible include passages from the book of **Job** and **Psalms**. In Job, God speaks from the whirlwind with a series of questions whose implied answer from human beings late to creation's game is "I don't know who, how or why" — questions like, 'Who measured the earth's foundations when the morning stars sang'? The Psalmist responds with awe at the wonder of God's work in creation, "Praise the LORD," the one who wears light and walks on the wings of the wind. This may be the best answer to **the** whirlwind questions of the Job passage - not because they are satisfying intellectually or remove the sting of suffering and chaos, but because worshiping the one who is the who, how, and why is most likely the only fitting response of good and beautiful things made out of the dust.

The suffering servant spoken of by the prophet **Isaiah** in chapter **53** is the one who bears his people's pain and trouble, a savior figure who bears the soul-sickness of the afflicted and the corrupt, but also the one whose wounds bring healing. We recognize our own savior in this 'suffering servant.' God with us in Jesus is the one who is willing to bear the yoke of grace (the cost of love) and mend all who entrust their lives to him.

In the gospel reading from **Mark 10** we read of two ambitious brothers who audaciously aspire to join Jesus atop an imagined 'kingdom' leadership power pyramid. Jesus, the suffering servant of the New Testament, reminds them how much they don't know about God's saving presence and work ("You don't know what you are asking...Can you drink the cup?"). While "I don't know" might have been a better answer, they say, "We can" - and Jesus confirms that they will indeed come to know the work of grace in their own suffering witness to good news for life.

The New Testament passage from the **Hebrews 5** pictures Jesus as a type of high priest who learns obedience from suffering and is not self-promoting. Like a high priest, with prayers, cries, and tears, Jesus is the one whose own human weakness uniquely positions him to deal gently with the ignorant and misled, all of us who don't know exactly how or why grace works — and like a good high priest sacrifices whatever is needed to make things right.

Finally, our **scripture reading from 2 Timothy** takes center stage on this Laity Sunday: **2 Timothy 1:14**. In this passage the apostle encourages his young mentee Timothy to keep/guard with care the good/beautiful things entrusted to him. Paul has already confessed confidently (verse 12) that God is able to keep what he himself has entrusted to God and what God has entrusted to him: his life placed in protective care (until/against 'that day'). Paul is near the end of his life, so whether this means 'that day' when he sheds the mortal coil or when Christ makes all things new at the end of all things, it doesn't matter. God will keep safe the life Paul entrusts to God - including Timothy's life, and the lives of those at all the addresses and in all the churches Paul has nurtured. Timothy is to guard the good and bear witness to Jesus' love for life: every face and life entrusted to him by the Spirit that lives and thrives in us.²

TAKEAWAYS <subhead>

- Guard the good and beautiful lives God entrusts to us (and vice versa)
- The goodness of Jesus' saving work is bringing life to light (and vice versa)
- With humility we know there is a not-knowing at the heart of faith that trusts God will make beautiful things out of our dust
- The face of our neighbor is the address of God (the 'where' and the call, the location and vocation for our life together)
- The way we continue together by grace is to respond with prayer and care to God's call on our lives in every face and place (because every life is a call story)

QUOTES <subhead>

“Protect [guard] this good thing that has been **placed in your trust** through the Holy Spirit who lives in us.”

-2 Timothy 1:14 (CEB)

I know not why God's wondrous grace

to me he hath made known...

But I know whom I have believed,

and am persuaded that **he is able**

to keep that which I've committed

unto him against that day.

-D. W. Whittle, James McGranahan/El Nathan, “I Know Whom I Have Believed (I Know Not Why God's Wondrous Grace)” (1883), United Methodist Hymnal, 714

All around

Hope is springing up from this old ground

Out of chaos **life** is being found **in You...**

You make beautiful things out of the dust...out of us

Written by: LISA GUNGOR, MICHAEL GUNGOR

Lyrics © BMG Rights Management, Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC

“All I wanted to do was take pictures of life as it was. You just got to be there - **the being there is the thing** and taking the time to do it. My work is a witness and it's a witness of what you see, and then what you did about it.”

-Jack Corn

I don't know why
The trees grow so tall
And I don't know why
I don't know anything at all
But if there were no music
Then I would not get through
I don't know why
I know these things, but I do
-Shawn Colvin, "I Don't Know Why" (1992)

Songwriter: Shawn Colvin

I Don't Know Why lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Group, Warner Chappell Music, Inc

Guard the Good Thing, Bring Life to Light <subhead>

Witnesses to grace guard the good things and bring life to light. That's the nutshell insight for Laity Sunday 2024 based on Paul's word to a young leader in 2 Timothy 2:14. As witnesses living together by grace, we also bring life to light, following Christ Jesus who put death to death and illuminated the living (2 Timothy 1:10). We are called to be a community that keeps in our care the lives of those God nears in Jesus, lives entrusted to God and entrusted by God to us. And spoiler alert: The Spirit's good and beautiful things are lives changed by Jesus' love.

callout/sidebar: Witnesses to grace guard good things and bring life to light.

A few questions for this year's Laity Sunday to help you prepare for worship. Your stories of grace and those of your neighbors may be all you need to prepare good news for the people called Methodists on Sunday, October 20.

- Think of something about your experience of grace that you have never quite understood but have trusted by faith. Do you find it easy to say with the hymn writer, D. W. Whittle, "**I know not why** God's wondrous grace...But I know whom..." (see the hymn, *I Know Whom I Have Believed*, UMH 714)?
- In Second Timothy chapter one Paul reminds us that Jesus brings life to light, and we entrust our lives to God and one another. Who in your community brings life to light – showing both needs and the good things being done to bring life to people on the 'underside' of life?
- What has someone entrusted to you (something for safe keeping, a story secret they could trust you to keep in confidence, etc.)?
- Are there things (good and beautiful, made out of the 'dust' and wreckage) that we can only know with the Spirit's help in us? What things? What restoration project or reclaimed thing in your own life has become a testimony to the God who makes "**beautiful things out of the dust**" <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oyPBtExE4W0>> (Mark Gungor).

I Know Not...But I Know <subhead>

When I was a kid in the 1970s living in northwestern Arkansas my mother sent me off with the Baptists to church camp every summer (probably for her own sanity). We would travel by un-airconditioned bus to Camp Ouachita. The word "Ouachita" meant 'good hunting ground (for life)' in Choctaw (borrowed from Caddo people who lived in that area long before French colonizers 'discovered' it).

On that ‘good ground’ they did all the camp things we did at Methodist church camps: arts/crafts, fishing, games, hiking, canoeing, and of course, singing camp songs. One song that stuck in my middle school brain was an unlikely song leader choice (it seems to me) for children and youth. I can still hear it in my head:

I know whom I have believ-ed [yes, we pronounced the last syllable like the name of the TV talking horse] , <https://hymnary.org/hymn/UMH/714>
And am persuaded that he is able
To keep that which I’ve committed
Unto him against that day”¹

It was kind of a challenge singing this whole sentence in one breath. I later discovered that [this song](https://hymnary.org/hymn/UMH/714) <<https://hymnary.org/hymn/UMH/714>> found its way into many if not most Protestant hymnals in the 20th century. Now I had no idea then what that song was about, but it was fun to sing faster and faster accompanied by the loud (too loud to me now) hand clapping of out of breath campers. I suspect now that it was a theological favorite for my Baptist friends because it seemed to emphasize the power of grace to hold us till judgment day (or whatever end day we come to). The writer, D. W. Whittle, took the chorus directly from 2 Timothy 1:12 in the King James Version of the Bible.

Today I cherish this song for different reasons. I have a great appreciation for Whittle’s verses. <<https://hymnary.org/hymn/UMH/714>> In each one he confesses **he doesn’t know why, how, when** God does what God does. Me either. Like Job and the disciples in the reading from Mark, too. **Yet D.W. Whittle sings that he has entrusted himself, his very life, to the God** who draws near in a saving way in Jesus Christ. This “entrusting” or “setting before” for safe keeping is precisely what Paul has done with his own life (and what God has done by placing the lives of so many people in Paul’s faithful hands as a trusted leader).

Bring Life to Light <subhead>

In our reading from 2 Timothy 1:14 we find Paul encouraging his young protégé Timothy to keep/guard what has been entrusted to him with help from the Spirit at work in **the life of the community**. This kind of life together in Jesus is the same one that Paul encouraged Timothy to rekindle since this “living” started in Timothy’s grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5). And this echoes Paul’s ‘life’ story of saving grace where it is **his redeemed life** that he has entrusted to God for safe keeping – as well as **the lives of others** entrusted to Paul. Paul’s work is ‘life work,’ and he is a ‘herald’ of good news “for the sake of the promise of life” (2 Timothy 1:1, 11).

[See [last year’s Laity Sunday notes](#) for a deeper dive into Paul’s gospel witness to a Love that brings life out of the death-dealing damage done by harmful words]

For Paul (and Timothy) the work is witness to grace at work. And this is **grace that brings reclaimed** (like reclaimed wood) **life to light** (2 Timothy 1:10, NRSV). This is what Jesus does and what we do when we see God bringing good and beautiful things to life.

¹ [I Know Whom I Have Believed](https://hymnary.org/hymn/UMH/714) <<https://hymnary.org/hymn/UMH/714>> (I Know Not Why God’s Wondrous Love), by D.W. Whittle and James McGranahan (1883), United Methodist Hymnal, 714. The song – officially titled “I Know Not Why God’s Wondrous Grace” – was written by a Civil War veteran from Illinois, D. W. Whittle, who became a traveling lay evangelist following his traumatic time in the service after being wounded during the battle at Vicksburg, Mississippi. Following the death of his friend, musician Phillip Bliss (Wonderful Words of Life, tune for It is Well with My Soul) in the Ashtabula train disaster in Ohio, he met his future writing partner James McGranahan in person for the first time in Ohio trying to recover Bliss and his wife’s remains. McGranahan helped with the melody for “I Know Not Why...” Whittle’s daughter married D. L. Moody’s son and they partnered for many years in evangelistic work. For more than you might want to know about D. W. Whittle, see one researcher’s work here:

A Laity Address <subhead>

In April of 2024 members of the executive team for **Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders** (AACLL) challenged lay and clergy leaders to live their witness “together by grace,” embracing a message from the book of Ephesians 3:14-21 that will guide many lay efforts in the next quadrennium (2025-2028). This [Laity Address](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFVkJ2SEA) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFVkJ2SEA> asked, “how did we start by grace?” and told stories of the early Methodist movement where John and Charles Wesley both learned from and listened to lay women (Susanna Wesley, Mrs. Turner).³

[For a transcript of this Laity Address, click [HERE](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/kvi33jycqnxlp5r4zcynr/Laity-Address-MP-Draft-1_LRTNotes_LRTFinal_PDF.pdf?rlkey=00w8rbd2iin5s93zyp5qv068r&st=jeimrs90&dl=0)] , https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/kvi33jycqnxlp5r4zcynr/Laity-Address-MP-Draft-1_LRTNotes_LRTFinal_PDF.pdf?rlkey=00w8rbd2iin5s93zyp5qv068r&st=jeimrs90&dl=0. <<Link to uploaded pdf of the Laity Address>>

Echoing Paul’s description of Jesus who “brought life to light” (2 Timothy 1:10), this address also stressed that **we continue to live together by grace** into God’s good future **by being witnesses who accompany our neighbors and shed light on *their* lives**.

By lifting up the witness of retired award-winning photojournalist (and Methodist) Jack Corn, LaToya Redd Thompson (Mississippi), Micheal Pope (California-Nevada), Jennifer Swann (Louisiana), John Hall (North Carolina) and Mele Maka (California-Pacific) challenged those who have seen grace change their own lives to follow Corn’s call to “**be there, see there, and gather others to care there.**” You can watch [Jack Corn’s testimony to grace in his work](https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/disciples-in-the-marketplace-episode-5-my-work-is-my-witness) here: [My Work is My Witness](https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/disciples-in-the-marketplace-episode-5-my-work-is-my-witness). <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/disciples-in-the-marketplace-episode-5-my-work-is-my-witness> Feel free to use this short video clip if you like in your Laity Sunday service. View the entire Laity Address [HERE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFVkJ2SEA). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFVkJ2SEA>

As incoming AACLL president, Micheal Pope put it:

“Jack Corn reminds us that we “the people called Methodists” can begin to answer our “how” questions by becoming active witnesses: *Being there* to witness the stories of our siblings; *Seeing there* by embracing the spirit of Jesus when we observe and shed light on the stories; and [living] into our faith by *Gathering others* to bring care to every place that needs it...

We ‘the people called Methodists’ are being guided into a future where we see each other as a valuable creation. The Holy Spirit is moving us to live from the inside out! We do that by asking “how can I/we walk alongside my/our siblings”? How do I/we honor the multiple thoughts which enrich our spiritual journey together? We let go siblings of our guilt and judgement by being quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger (James 1:19). Together as laity and clergy we are asked to build the bridges! WE do this by remaining grounded in our faith by sharing the LOVE of Christ in every circle where we show up.”

Our lay leaders challenge us to ‘continue by grace’ as witnesses. For these lay leaders (and Jack Corn), the face of our neighbor is the address of God – both in the sense of God’s calling and the actual place where we meet God and share grace. The lives of people within and beyond the church become our prayer (as we address ourselves to God), our place, and our vocation to healing life together for others.

As another author describes it, we are ‘**story stewards**’ who attend to traumas, trials, and beautiful restorations in the lives of those who can trust us to care.⁴ In this sense we might consider our locales and the people who struggle there as **our ‘laity address’** (the peoples’ place and call for help and accompanying grace). If this is true, **what is your laity ‘address’?** Who lives there? What has happened to them? What can they teach you about grace at work in every life?

BEAUTIFUL THINGS OUT OF THE DUST <subhead>

In 2013 I was the project manager for [COVENANT Bible Study](https://www.cokesbury.com/search?q=covenant+bible+study&pagenumber=1), <<https://www.cokesbury.com/search?q=covenant+bible+study&pagenumber=1>>a video-based small group study produced by Abingdon Press/The United Methodist Publishing House in 2014. Each opening/closing sequence of the videos for this study featured a table being built out of reclaimed and discarded barn wood.

As we were wrapping up filming and the written portion of this study, we found ourselves stumped on one thing: **what song would accompany the video openings/closings of each episode?** My boss at the time – and now retired associate publisher for the Bibles, Leadership, and Theology at Abingdon – Dr. Paul Franklyn, and I both had collected a lot of possibilities, but nothing seemed to fit.

The study itself focused on covenant as primary biblical theme or metaphor for our relationship with God and others (like a pattern in the quilt of scripture). In the experience of our individual and social shattered wholeness we long for relationship. And without fail, God’s faithful love in Jesus always finds a way to meet us with signs of life. This is the story of scripture.

Paul Franklyn called me out of nowhere one weekend and said, ‘I’ve got it!’ I was skeptical. He said, “Do you know Mark Gungor’s song, *Beautiful Things*?” <<https://bit.ly/3ZBLEv5>> I did. And at the time it was one of the few new worship songs I had heard that I somehow knew would be a favorite in my worshiping life. [See the video opening with that ‘theme’ song here: [Covenant Bible Study opening](https://bit.ly/3ZBLEv5). <<https://bit.ly/3ZBLEv5>> See a live performance by Gungor [HERE](https://bit.ly/3ZBLEv5). <<https://bit.ly/3ZBLEv5>>]

The beautiful things God is making out of the dust are us and those in our zones of influence. That’s not just what the song says, it is also what Paul knows we must guard and treasure, the faces, places, and stories of lives repaired, repurposed, rebuilt through the Spirit at work in us all.

callout/sidebar: The Spirit’s good and beautiful things are lives changed by Jesus’ love.

The Spirit’s good and beautiful things are lives changed by Jesus’ love. Will the people called Methodists (the laity) be trustworthy caretakers of every life and at every address we ‘near’? That’s the calling that Paul encourages Timothy to embrace as only one of many witnesses who see grace at work for life and gather others to do the same. And the next version of our church will thrive if it takes care to keep this trust and love every life beyond our Sunday service walls.

David C. Teel is Director of Laity and Leadership at Discipleship Ministries and a writer, editor, and Christian educator in Nashville, Tennessee. He studied at Vanderbilt Divinity School and has served United Methodist churches since 1997.

This year’s Laity Sunday theme is Rise Up! And Retain the Spirit’s Good and Beautiful Things The focus is guarding with care the lives (including our own) we have entrusted to God (and that God has entrusted to us).

The **2025-2028 Laity Sunday themes** are: Together By Grace (Ephesians 3:14-21)
2025: TOGETHER BY GRACE! — Be Strong in the Spirit (Eph 3:16)
2026: TOGETHER BY GRACE! — Be Grounded in Love (Eph 3:17)
2027: TOGETHER BY GRACE! — Behold the breadth/depth of Love (Eph 3:18)
2028: TOGETHER BY GRACE! — Be Filled with the Fullness of God (Eph 3:19)

Laity Sunday 2024 – Order of Worship

ABBREVIATIONS

BOW = *United Methodist Book of Worship*
CCLI = Christian Copyright Licensing International, SongSelect [<https://us.ccli.com/>]
TFWS = *The Faith We Sing* (2000)
UMH = *United Methodist Hymnal*
URW= *Upper Room Worshipbook*
WSM = *Worship & Song*, Music Edition
W&S = *Worship & Song* (2011)
SOZ = *Songs of Zion*
SoG= *Songs of Grace*
TAH = *The Africana Hymnal*

Some Suggested Congregational Songs and Hymns*:

I Know Whom I Have Believed	UMH 714
O How He Loves You and Me	TFWS 2108
God of the Sparrow, God of the Whale	UMH 122
Come Christians Join to Sing	UMH 158
All Glory, Laud, and Honor	UMH 280
Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise	UMH 103
Here I Am, Lord (I, the Lord of Sea and Sky)	UMH 593
Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee	UMH 89
Thy Word is a Lamp Unto My Feet	UMH 601
Surely the Presence of the Lord	UMH 328
All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name	UMH 154
Lift High the Cross	UMH 159

One Bread, One Body (if sharing Communion)	UMH 620
Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me	UMH 361
O Sacred Head Now Wounded	UMH 286
Humble Thyself in the Sight of the Lord	TFWS 2131
You Are My Hiding Place	TFWS 2055

**Also see the “Suggested Hymns” tab among the Laity Sunday worship resources online.*

ENTRANCE

CALL TO WORSHIP

We are called to be witnesses who bring life to light.

We know the Spirit guards for safe keeping every life entrusted to God.

We listen for the altar call of grace at every address.

We know grace is a prayer for help answered.

In all that we do, we are growing together in God’s grace, ever at work for the life of the world.

We thank God that the same Savior who accompanies us leads us to bear witness to grace at work in others.

WORD AND RESPONSE

Message Theme: Rise Up! And Retain the Spirit’s Good and Beautiful Things

2 Timothy 1:14, (1-13); Isaiah 53:4-12

Prayers of the People (Skip if using “A New Great Thanksgiving for Laity Sunday”)

Three or four lay speakers/preachers may become the leaders of the intercessions, or other laity may be chosen to lead the prayers.

Pastor: Savior God – we don’t know every why, how or when.

Lay leader: Spirit, help us be story stewards of your grace at work in every life.

People: *God, we entrust our lives to you now, again.*

Lay leader: Jesus, help us be your witnesses – to ‘see there, be there, and gather others to care there.’

People: *We know “you make beautiful things out of the dust.”*

Lay leader: Lord of Life, help us bring life to light, at every address.

People: *God, help us keep close, take care, and draw near.*

Lay leader: Jesus, we know your promise is life.

People: *God, we know you have entrusted us with the life-stories of our neighbors, in and beyond our enclaves.*

Pastor: Savior God – we are yours. We know whom we have believed and are persuaded that your Spirit will help us guard good and beautiful lives entrusted to our care.

All: Amen.

THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION

WHEN NOT CELEBRATING HOLY COMMUNION:

Invitation to Thanksgiving

Leader:

We will go, Lord, into the world,
telling and retelling the story with other believers,
taking the gospel and making disciples
among all the peoples with whom we come in contact.
We will go, knowing *you* will be with us.
You, O God, to whom we would
in these moments,
pour out our lives in service
and in thanksgiving. But we know the barriers that stand in our way.
We cannot pour ourselves out to you fully as individuals
with unconfessed sin in our lives.
We cannot pour ourselves out to you fully as your body
when we are in conflict with others.
So, hear our confession,
forgive and deliver us,
and give us courage to offer your peace
to one another.

Confession of Sin

Leader:

We have sinned against you and one another, Lord.
We have not lived worshipfully.
Lord, in your mercy, *hear our confession.*
Silence

We have not loved you wholly.
We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We have not lived worshipfully.
Lord, in your mercy, *hear our confession.*
Silence

We have not denied ourselves and taken up our own cross daily.
We have not lived worshipfully.
Lord, in your mercy, *hear our confession.*

Silence

We have not loved kindness, pursued justice, or walked humbly with you.

We have not lived worshipfully.

Lord, in your mercy, ***hear our confession.***

Silence

We have not shared the good news with our lips or in our lives.

We have not lived worshipfully.

Lord, in your mercy, ***hear our confession.***

Silence

Pastor/Leader: The saying is sure: If we confess our sins, God is merciful and just and forgives us our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

In the name of Christ, you/we are forgiven.

People/Leader to Pastor and One Another: In the name of Christ, you/we are forgiven.

All: Glory to God! Amen!

Pastor/Leader: As forgiven and reconciled people, share Christ's peace with one another.

The peace of Christ be always with you.

And also with you.

The people share the peace of Christ with one another. After a suitable period of time, the pastor may continue:

Pastor/Leader: Forgiven and reconciled to God and one another,

let us offer our gifts and our thanks to God!

Thanksgiving Songs

During the Collection:

"Thank You, Lord" (UMH 84)

At the Presentation of Gifts:

"We Bring the Sacrifice of Praise" (TFWS 2031)

Pastor: Accept our gifts of thanksgiving and joy, O Lord,

as, by your Spirit, we remember and proclaim who you are!

Continue with Sending Forth

OR WHEN CELEBRATING HOLY COMMUNION:

Invitation to the Table (UMH 12)

Confession of Sin (UMH 12)

Act of Pardon (UMH 12)

Sharing of Peace (UMH 12)

Offering (UMH 13)

Great Thanksgiving: "A New Great Thanksgiving for Laity Sunday"

SENDING FORTH

Blessing and Benediction

Leader:

Go into the world, guarding with care the friends of God you see in every place you live, work, and play.

Pastor:

And may God the Spirit help you shed light on Love's work, with all, for life.

Amen.

Laity Sunday 2024 — Hymn Suggestions

Hymns

BOW - *The United Methodist Book of Worship*

CLUW - *Come, Let Us Worship* (Korean)

MVPC - *Mil Voces Para Celebrar* (Spanish)

SOZ - *Songs of Zion*

TFWS - *The Faith We Sing*

UMH - *The United Methodist Hymnal*

URW - *Upper Room Worshipbook*

WSM - *Worship & Song, Music Edition*

WSW - *Worship & Song, Worship Resources Edition*

SoG - *Songs of Grace*

TAH - *The Africana Hymnal*

JOB 38:107, (34-41)	UMH	MVPC	CLUW	TFWS	SOZ	URW	WSM	WSW	SOG	TAH
Behold a Broken World	426									
God of the Sparrow God of the Whale	122	37	59							
Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise	103		74							
I Sing the Almighty Power of God	152		65							
Great Is Thy Faithfulness	140									
Here I Am, Lord (I, the Lord of Sea and Sky)	593									

Joyful, Joyful	121									
ISAIAH 53:4-12	UMH	MVPC	CLUW	TFWS	SOZ	URW	WSM	WSW	SOG	TAH
O Sacred Head Now Wounded	286									
Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me	361	247								
All Glory, Laud, and Honor	280									
O How He Loves You and Me				2108						
Come Christians Join to Sing	158									
Lamb of God				2113						
When I Survey the Wondrous Cross	298									
PSALM 104:1-9, 24, 35C	UMH	MVPC	CLUW	TFWS	SOZ	URW	WSM	WSW	SOG	TAH
Bless the Lord				2013		377				
Great is the Lord				2022						
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling	384					100				
Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise	103		74							
O God Who Shaped Creation	443									
Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee	89	5	75			65				
Let Us with a Joyful Mind				2012						

HEBREWS 5:1-10	UMH	MVPC	CLUW	TFWS	SOZ	URW	WSM	WSW	SOG	TAH
All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name	154									
Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine!	369	65	287							
Crown Him with Many Crowns	327	157								
Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken	731		256							
Hallelujah! What a Savior	165									
Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise	103		74							
Humble Thyself in the Sight of the Lord				2131						
Lift High the Cross	159	164	174							
O How He Loves You and Me				2108						
Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me	361	247								
Sanctuary				2164						
Sweet Hour of Prayer	496	248	330							
Thank you, Lord	84				228					
What a Friend We Have in Jesus	526	257	333							

Love the Lord Your God				2168						
------------------------	--	--	--	------	--	--	--	--	--	--

MARK 10:35-45	UMH	MVPC	CLUW	TFWS	SOZ	URW	WSM	WSW	SOG	TAH
Amazing Grace! How Sweet the Sound	378	203	94		211					4091
As We Gather at Your Table				2268						
We Are the Church	558									
Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy	340									
Now Praise the Hidden God of Love				2027						
Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love	432									
Humble Thyself in the Sight of the Lord				2131						
Jesus Calls Us o'er the Tumult	398		96							
Lord God, Your Love Has Called Us Here	579									
Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling	348	193	284							
There is a Balm in Gilead	375									
Together We Serve				2175						
Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life	427	296								
You Are My Hiding Place				2055						

2 TIMOTHY 1:14	UMH	MVPC	CLUW	TFWS	SOZ	URW	WSM	WSW	SOG	TAH
Standing on the Promises of Christ My King	374	252								
I Know Whom I Have Believed (I Know Not Why God's Wondrous Grace)	714		290							
Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands	319									
Come Christians Join to Sing	158									
Sing the Wondrous Love of Jesus	701									
Cry of My Heart				2165						
Forward Through the Ages	555									
There's Within My Heart a Melody	380									
God Be With You Till We Meet Again	672									
Here Is Bread, Here Is Wine				2266						
Holy Spirit, Truth Divine	465									
Thy Word is a Lamp Unto My Feet	601									
Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise	103									
It Is Well with My Soul	377									
Jesus, United By Thy Grace	561									
Sing the Wondrous Love of Jesus	701									
Surely the Presence of the Lord is in this Place	328									

Laity Sunday 2024 — Planning Notes

About the Acts of Thanksgiving

Acts of thanksgiving, although stated as an integral part of our Basic Pattern of Worship, are an uncommon or commonly truncated element when Communion is not celebrated. Today is an opportunity to model and explore what these acts can be if you are not celebrating Holy Communion.

About the Invitation to Thanksgiving

An act of invitation to thanksgiving is probably needed in most settings, much as the Prayer for Illumination, to help transition the energy from listening, commitment, and prayer in the previous movement (Word and Response) toward the energy of offering ourselves to God in thanksgiving for all God has done and is doing and will do to save us and renew the universe.

The principles of transition are the same. Match the contents, volume, speed, and energy of what came before, then move them to what is needed for what comes next.

Now we move from prayer to thanksgiving, still in the spirit of going in the awareness that Christ goes with us. Exhortation (the song), prayer (the prayers we have just prayed), and thanksgiving are all different kinds of energy. Give attention not only to the words used in the invitation to thanksgiving, but also to the kind of energy with which these words are spoken.

About the Pardon; Before the Acts of Thanksgiving

Anyone, lay or clergy, may lead an act of confession and pardon. If the leader of the act of pardon is the pastor, use “you are forgiven.” If the leader is a layperson, use “we are forgiven.”

About Serving Communion

One of the ways to maintain the flow of the service when you celebrate Communion is to ensure you have an efficient way to serve the elements. You don’t have to make people wait in long lines or for long periods of time in their seats. The typical amount of time for people to be able to receive both bread and cup without a sense of rush is ten to twelve seconds. This means you can easily serve five to six people per minute. Calculate the number and placement of serving stations to allow all in your congregation who wish to receive to do so within five minutes, if possible.

A Note about Presiding

While this is Laity Sunday in The United Methodist Church, the special day does not change the work laity and clergy do in the leadership and life of the church, established by both *Discipline* and doctrine (*This Holy Mystery*).

Authorized presiders are clergy, whether ordained elders, provisional members preparing for ordination as elders and assigned to a particular local church, other denomination clergy functioning as local pastors or provisional members, licensed local pastors, or ordained deacons now authorized by the 2020/2024 General Conference to preside in their particular ministry settings.

A layperson or deacon may assist at the Lord's Table by preparing the table, holding the liturgy book for the authorized presider, or leading intercessions if they are included within the Great Thanksgiving. The prayer is led by the authorized presider. It should not be divided among two or more presiders.

Laity Sunday 2024— Scripture Readings

Job 38:1-7, (34-41) CEB

Then the Lord answered Job from the whirlwind:

² Who is this darkening counsel
with words lacking knowledge?

³ Prepare yourself like a man;
I will interrogate you, and you will respond to me.

⁴ Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations?
Tell me if you know.

⁵ Who set its measurements? Surely you know.
Who stretched a measuring tape on it?

⁶ On what were its footings sunk;
who laid its cornerstone,

⁷ while the morning stars sang in unison
and all the divine beings shouted?

...<I don't know...in Whittle and S. Colvin> >

Can you issue an order to the clouds
so their abundant waters cover you?

³⁵ Can you send lightning so that it goes
and then says to you, "I'm here"?

³⁶ Who put wisdom in remote places,
or who gave understanding to a rooster?^[d]

³⁷ Who is wise enough to count the clouds,
and who can tilt heaven's water containers

³⁸ so that dust becomes mud
and clods of dirt adhere?

³⁹ Can you hunt prey for the lion
or fill the cravings of lion cubs?

⁴⁰ They lie in their den,

lie in ambush in their lair.
⁴¹ Who provides food for the raven
when its young cry to God,
move about without food?

Common English Bible (CEB) Copyright © 2011 by Common English Bible

Isaiah 53:4-12, CEB

It was certainly our sickness that he carried,
and our sufferings that he bore,
but we thought him afflicted,
struck down by God and tormented.

⁵ He was pierced because of our rebellions
and crushed because of our crimes.
He bore the punishment that made us whole;
by his wounds we are healed.

⁶ Like sheep we had all wandered away,
each going its own way,
but the Lord let fall on him all our crimes.

⁷ He was oppressed and tormented,
but didn't open his mouth.
Like a lamb being brought to slaughter,
like a ewe silent before her shearers,
he didn't open his mouth.

⁸ Due to an unjust ruling he was taken away,
and his fate—who will think about it?
He was eliminated from the land of the living,
struck dead because of my people's rebellion.

⁹ His grave was among the wicked,
his tomb with evildoers,^[a]

though he had done no violence,
and had spoken nothing false.

¹⁰ But the Lord wanted to crush him
and to make him suffer.

If his life is offered as restitution,

he will see his offspring; he will enjoy long life.

The Lord's plans will come to fruition through him.

¹¹ After his deep anguish he will see light, and he will be satisfied.

Through his knowledge, the righteous one, my servant,

will make many righteous,

and will bear their guilt.

¹² Therefore, I will give him a share with the great,

and he will divide the spoil with the strong,

in return for exposing his life to death

and being numbered with rebels,

though he carried the sin of many

and pleaded on behalf of those who rebelled.

Common English Bible (CEB) Copyright © 2011 by [Common English Bible](#)

Psalms 104:1-9, 24, 35c, CEB

Let my whole being^[a] bless the Lord!

Lord my God, how fantastic you are!

You are clothed in glory and grandeur!

² You wear light like a robe;

you open the skies like a curtain.

³ You build your lofty house on the waters;

you make the clouds your chariot,

going around on the wings of the wind.

⁴ You make the winds your messengers;

you make fire and flame your ministers.
⁵ You established the earth on its foundations
so that it will never ever fall.
⁶ You covered it with the watery deep like a piece of clothing;
the waters were higher than the mountains!
⁷ But at your rebuke they ran away;
they fled in fear at the sound of your thunder.
⁸ They flowed over the mountains,
streaming down the valleys
to the place you established for them.
⁹ You set a boundary they cannot cross
so they'll never again cover the earth...

²⁴ Lord, you have done so many things!
You made them all so wisely!

^{35c} Praise the Lord!

Common English Bible (CEB) Copyright © 2011 by Common English Bible

Mark 10:35-45, CEB

James and John, Zebedee's sons, came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

³⁶ "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

³⁷ They said, "Allow one of us to sit on your right and the other on your left when you enter your glory."

³⁸ Jesus replied, "You don't know what you're asking! Can you drink the cup I drink or receive the baptism I receive?"

³⁹ "We can," they answered.

Jesus said, "You will drink the cup I drink and receive the baptism I receive, ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right or left hand isn't mine to give. It belongs to those for whom it has been prepared."

⁴¹ Now when the other ten disciples heard about this, they became angry with James and John. ⁴² Jesus called them over and said, "You know that the ones who are considered the rulers by the Gentiles show off their authority over them and their high-ranking officials order them around. ⁴³ But that's not the way it will be with you. Whoever wants to be great among you will be your servant. ⁴⁴ Whoever wants to be first among you will be the slave of all, ⁴⁵ for the Human One^[a] didn't come to be served but rather to serve and to give his life to liberate many people."

¹⁴ "Many people are invited, but few people are chosen."

Common English Bible (CEB) Copyright © 2011 by [Common English Bible](#)

Hebrews 5:1-10, CEB

Every high priest is taken from the people and put in charge of things that relate to God for their sake, in order to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² The high priest is able to deal gently with the ignorant and those who are misled since he himself is prone to weakness. ³ Because of his weakness, he must offer sacrifices for his own sins as well as for the people. ⁴ No one takes this honor for themselves but takes it only when they are called by God, just like Aaron.

⁵ In the same way Christ also didn't promote himself to become high priest. Instead, it was the one who said to him,
You are my Son.

Today I have become your Father,

⁶ as he also says in another place,

You are a priest forever,

according to the order of Melchizedek.^[a]

⁷ During his days on earth, Christ offered prayers and requests with loud cries and tears as his sacrifices to the one who was able to save him from death. He was heard because of his godly devotion. ⁸ Although he was a Son, he learned obedience from what he suffered. ⁹ After he had been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for everyone who obeys him. ¹⁰ He was appointed by God to be a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Common English Bible (CEB) Copyright © 2011 by [Common English Bible](#)

2 Timothy 1:14, CEB

Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

Common English Bible (CEB) Copyright © 2011 by Common English Bible

¹ Don Saliers, “Singing Our Lives” in *Practicing Our Faith*, Dorothy C. Bass, ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc. Publishers, 1997), 179-193.

² While there is some difference of opinion about whether Paul is describing the life he himself has entrusted to God or the life (and lives) God has entrusted to him, it probably doesn’t matter since the life we yield to God’s care is also the life God entrusts us to protect with care. The word for the treasure or entrusted things to be guarded/kept is something set before us together to cherish and enjoy, like a meal that gathers others to live well together by grace.

³ See article on the Laity Address for General Conference 2020/2024 here:

<https://um-insight.net/general-conference/general-conference-2024/a-journalist-and-a-cartoon-fish-can-point-the-way/>.

⁴ See Brené Brown’s cultural analysis of our feeling language and how changing that might bring healthier connection to our society: *Mapping Meaningful Connection and the Language of Human Experience*.