

“Still in It for Life” Order of Service

The following are elements that can be incorporated into a congregation’s worship for Life Celebration Sunday. While together they can comprise *almost* the entirety of a service, the expectation is that they will be added and/or substituted into the “regular” service as suits the congregation’s practice and needs for that week. The Confession and Absolution, for instance, is an expansion of what is found in Divine Service II (found in Christian Worship: Supplement), but can be inserted into the “frame” of another service.

Hymn Suggestions

“O God, My Faithful God” — Christian Worship 459

“Rise, My Soul, to Watch and Pray” — Christian Worship 472

“Son of God, Eternal Savior” — Christian Worship 492

“O God of Mercy, God of Might” — Christian Worship 499

“Forth in the Peace of Christ We Go” — Christian Worship 518

“God of Grace and God of Glory” — Christian Worship 523

Invocation & Call to Worship¹

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son † and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

M: Praise the Lord. Give thanks to the Lord,

C: for he is good, for his mercy endures forever.

M: Who can tell about the mighty deeds of the Lord?

C: Who can cause all his praise to be heard?

M: Blessed are those who defend justice,

C: who do what is right all the time.

M: Remember me, O Lord,

C: when you show favor to your people.

M: Visit me with your salvation,

C: so that I may experience the good that belongs to your chosen ones,

M: so that I may rejoice in the joy of your nation,

C: so that I may join in praise with the people that belongs to you.

M: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from eternity to eternity,

C: and all the people say, “Amen!” Praise the Lord.

Confession

¹ From Psalm 106:1-5,48 (EHV)

M: Dear friends, on this Life Celebration Sunday let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

C: Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.

For sins of inaction and indifference,

For failing to defend the innocent and fearing the reactions of the godless,

**For being more concerned with my own comfort and ease than with what is pleasing
to you or good for my neighbor,**

For all the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,

You should cast me away from your presence forever.

O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant:

I forgive you your errors and apathy, your failures and fears, your selfishness and lovelessness, your inaction, and your evil acts. I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son † and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

(Christian Worship Hymn 346, "In You Is Gladness," could be used after the Absolution as a song of praise.)

Prayer of the Day

M: Let us pray.

Almighty God, you rule the world with justice and give vindication to the innocent, but you also call your servants to work while it is still day. Help us today and always to celebrate the gift of life wherever and in whomever it is found, and to join ourselves readily to your great work of sustaining, defending, and championing the gift of life for all people. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

First Lesson: Jeremiah 29:4-9 (or 1-9)

The Prophet Jeremiah wrote this letter, at the Lord's direction, to the people of Jerusalem and Judea who had been taken into exile by the Babylonians. They were to neither wallow in self-pity at their plight nor harbor false hopes of a quick return to their prior lives, but be God's people in their new land.

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 37²

M: Do not fret because of evildoers.

C: Do not be envious of those who do wrong.

M: Trust in the Lord, and do good.

² Psalm 37:1,3-6,8-13,28,30,31,39,40, EHV, adapted.

C: Dwell in the land and feed on faithfulness.
M: Take pleasure in the Lord,
C: and he will grant your heart's desires.
M: Commit your way to the Lord.
C: Trust in him, and he will act.
M: He will make your righteousness shine like light,
C: your justice like noon.
M: Let go of anger and abandon rage.
C: Do not fret—it leads only to evil.
M: For evildoers will be cut off,
C: but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the earth.
M: After a little while the wicked will be no more.
C: When you search for them at their place, they are not there.
M: But the meek will inherit the earth.
C: They will enjoy plenty of peace.
M: The wicked person plots against the righteous.
C: But the Lord laughs at the wicked.
M: The Lord loves justice.
C: He will not forsake his favored ones.
M: The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom.
C: His tongue speaks what is just.
M: The law of his God is in his heart.
C: His steps do not slip.
M: The salvation of the righteous comes from the Lord.
C: He is their stronghold in times of stress.
M: The Lord helps them and delivers them. He delivers them from the wicked.
C: He saves them, because they have taken refuge in him.
→ Congregation Sings: *Christian Worship Hymn 465, verse 2*

Second Lesson: Revelation 3:14–22

In this last of the Lord's seven letters to seven churches, the Laodicean Christians are condemned for having apathetic and inactive faith. We are encouraged to overcome our inclinations to care less and do little, and instead listen to Christ's call to repentance and action.

Verse of the Day (Psalm 34:18 EHV):

M: Alleluia. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted. He saves those whose spirits have been crushed. Alleluia.

Gospel: Matthew 24:3-14

As Jesus answers his disciples' question about the end of the age, he tells us not to be deceived in thinking things are over until they are actually over. He encourages us to not be discouraged by persecution or the "success" of sin and false teaching, but to stand firm in the faith to the end.

(There is no special confession of faith included with these materials; the worship planner can use the Apostles' or Nicene Creed as deemed appropriate.)

Prayer of the Church

M: Almighty God, you have called us to bring you not only our own needs and desires, but to make requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving for everyone.

We therefore pray for our nation's president, our state's governor, and all our elected county and local leaders. Give them a strong and renewed respect for all human life, wherever and however it is found. Guide them to policies and decisions that protect the vulnerable, assist the needy, and defend the innocent.

C: Hear us, Lord.

M: We pray also for all those who serve our citizens in Congress, legislature, and councils. Lead them to make and pass laws that protect life and to unmake and repeal any laws that put human life at risk. Give them wisdom and love for others that move them to rise above party politics and popular opinion, so that they choose to do what is best for all our people, not just some.

C: O Lord, hear our prayer.

M: Grant wisdom also to those who serve as judges and justices in our courts. Lead them to decisions that are not guided by the opinions or mood of the day. Instead, move them to respect and uphold the rights of all people to live their lives without fear of falling victim to anyone else's views that find them inconvenient or of small value.

C: Hear our prayer, for Jesus' sake.

M: Lead all your people in this nation, Lord, no matter what church they might belong to, to recognize what a precious gift life is and therefore to stand with you in defense of life. Give them the courage and confidence to speak and to act precisely in those areas where life is most under attack, whether in the womb, the wheelchair, or the hospital bed.

C: Have mercy and help us, Lord.

M: As you have given to us what was most precious to you, your Son, so that we might have eternal life, inspire us to give of ourselves in service to our fellow man. Whether it is with time, conversation, money, or labor, move us to engage with our world and invest ourselves in the land we live in, so that it prospers as we prosper. Especially let us be

effective and productive as salt and light in our society, pointing sinners to their Savior and working to preserve respect for life and all that is morally good.

C: Have mercy and help us, Lord.

M: We confess that we have too often been lukewarm with our faith. We have failed to appreciate your gifts of life and health, of forgiveness and salvation, of mercy and love. We have chosen easy paths instead of carrying our crosses and following Jesus. We have remained silent when we should have spoken, and we have failed to listen to your Word when it speaks regarding matters of fertility and conception, abortion and birth control, disabilities and dementia, extreme measures and the end of life.

C: Forgive us, Lord, for Jesus' sake.

M: We pray, therefore, Lord God, that in your mercy you would not only remove our guilt but grant us the power and courage to do now what we have failed to do in the past. Help us to remember that your purposes in this world matter more than anyone's opinions, and that the conflict your people have with those who oppose you and threaten life is one that will not be over until you decide it is over. Inspire us to see the contest and its stakes for what they really are, and to stay in it for life.

C: Hear us, good Lord. Amen.