

## Higher Authority Life Celebration Event

### Worship Planning

The following are elements that can be incorporated into a congregation's worship for this *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 that found in the *Common Service (Christian Worship)* and *Divine Service I (Christian Worship: Supplement)*, but can be inserted into the "frame" of another service.

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#### Hymn Suggestions

*"Hail to the Lord's Anointed"* — *Christian Worship* 93

*"Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise"* — *Christians Worship* 240

*"Let All Things Now Living"* — *Christian Worship* 260

*"Christ, by Heavenly Hosts Adored"* — *Christian Worship* 617

*"Before the Lord We Bow"* — *Christian Worship* 618

*"There Is a Higher Throne"* — *Christian Worship: Supplement* 727

*"Speak, O Lord"* — *Christian Worship: Supplement* 735

*"O Lord of Nations"* — *Christian Worship: Supplement* 785

#### Invocation & Call to Worship<sup>1</sup>

**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:** He is the one who sits above the circle of the earth.

**C:** **To him its inhabitants are like grasshoppers.**

**M:** He stretches out the heavens like a curtain,

**C:** **and he spreads them out like a tent to live in.**

**M:** To whom can you compare me as if we were equals?

**C:** **says the Holy One.**

**M:** Lift up your eyes to the heavens,

**C:** **and see who created these things,**

**M:** See who brings out their army in great number

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<sup>1</sup> From Psalm 106:1; Isaiah 40:22,25,26,28-31 (EHV)

**C: and calls them all by name.**

**M:** Because of his great strength and mighty power,

**C: not one of them is missing.**

**M:** The LORD is the eternal God.

**C: He is the Creator of the ends of the earth.**

**M:** He will not grow tired, and he will not become weary.

**C: No one can find a limit to his understanding.**

**M:** He is the one who gives strength to the weak,

**C: and he increases the strength of those who lack power.**

**M:** Young men grow tired and become weary.

**C: Even strong men stumble and fall.**

**M:** But those who wait for the LORD will receive new strength.

**C: They will lift up their wings and soar like eagles.**

**M:** They will run and not become weary.

**C: They will walk and not become tired.**

*M: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,*

*C: As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.*

### **Confession**

**M:** Beloved in the Lord, on this Life Celebration Sunday let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins to God our Father, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

**C: Holy and merciful Father, I confess that I am by nature sinful and that I have disobeyed you in my thoughts, words, and actions.**

**I have given the worship and honor that belong only to you to gods of comfort and convenience, acceptance and ambition, desire and self-determination.**

**I have failed to fear, love, and trust in you above all things.**

**I have listened to and followed the voices of those who would lead me where my sinful nature wants to go, when I should have listened to and followed only the voice of you, my Rock and my Salvation.**

**I have turned upside down the order you established in this world by putting my will above yours and that of your representatives in the home, church, and state.**

**I have not loved my neighbor as myself.**

**I have not concerned myself as I ought with the needs of the innocent, the plight of the poor, the rights of the forgotten, the dignity of the desperate or disabled, the humanity of the unborn, or the defense of the inconvenient or elderly.**

**For all these failures and more, I deserve your punishment both now and in eternity. But I am truly sorry for my sins, and trusting in my Savior Jesus Christ, I pray:**

**Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.**

## **Kyrie/Lord, Have Mercy (OPTIONAL)**

**Option 1:** *Spoken:*

**C:** **Lord, have mercy on us. Christ, have mercy on us. Lord, have mercy on us. Amen.**

**Option 2:** *Sung: “Lord, Have Mercy” from Common Service, p. 15, Christian Worship*

**Option 3:** *Sung: “Lord, Have Mercy” from Divine Service I, p. 15, Christian Worship: Supplement*

## **Absolution**

**M:** God, our heavenly Father, has been merciful to us and has given his only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins of disobedience and rebellion, of idolatry and independence, of injustice and arrogance, of lovelessness and license. Therefore, as a servant of Christ and by his authority, 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 238, “Oh, Bless the Lord, My Soul”; Hymn 250, “From All that Dwell below the Skies”; Hymn 262, “All Glory Be to God Alone”; or another appropriate hymn could be used after the Absolution as a song of praise.)*

## **Prayer of the Day**

**M:** Let us pray.

Almighty God, you created the world by the power of your Word, and by that same Word you govern the universe and our lives. Grant us willing spirits to listen to and obey all that you tell us. Help us especially to care for and protect those who are weak, vulnerable, and defenseless against the selfish acts of those who follow Satan and their own sinful natures. Let your authority in all things be respected by all people and nations; we ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who is Head over all and lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C:** **Amen.**

**First Lesson:** Isaiah 46:5-13

*Here the LORD speaks through the Prophet Isaiah, reminding his people that we don't truly have the option of setting any other authority beside or above him, neither to rule our behavior nor to gain us salvation. He is our and the world's Creator and the almighty, unique, and only God and Savior.*

## **Psalm of the Day:**

**Option 1:** *(Sung) Psalm 31, Christian Worship, p. 77 (Affirms God's power and authority over life and death)*

**Option 2:** *(Sung) Psalm 72, Christian Worship, p. 93 (Affirms God's/Christ's authority over all nations and rulers)*

**Option 3:**     *(Sung) Psalm 72, Christian Worship: Supplement*, p. 51 (*Affirms God's/Christ's authority over all nations and rulers*)

**Option 4:**     *(Spoken) Psalm 75: Holy Bible*

**Psalm of the Day:**    **Psalm 75<sup>2</sup>**

*This psalm is a dialogue between his people and the Lord, in which his absolute authority over life, death, and every power of earth, exercised for his faithful, is proclaimed.*

**M:** We give thanks to you, O God, we give thanks.

**C:** **Your wonderful deeds reveal that your name is near.**

**M:** Yes, I choose the appointed time.

**C:** **I am the one who judges rightly.**

**M:** The earth and all its inhabitants are shaking.

**C:** **I am the one who holds its pillars firm.**

**M:** I say to the boasters, “Do not boast,”

**C:** **and to the wicked, “Do not raise a horn.<sup>b</sup>**

**M:** Do not raise your horns to the heights.

**C:** **Do not speak insolently with an outstretched neck.”**

**M:** Indeed, power to promote someone does not come from the east or from the west or from the wilderness.

**C:** **No, it is God who makes the decision.**

**M:** He brings down one.

**C:** **He raises up another.**

**M:** Indeed, a cup is in the hand of the LORD.

**C:** **The wine foams. It is fully mixed.**

**M:** He pours this out.

**C:** **Yes, they drain its dregs. All the wicked of the earth drink.**

**M:** As for me, I will proclaim this forever.

**C:** **I will make music for the God of Jacob.**

**M:** I will cut off all the horns of the wicked.

**C:** **The horns of the righteous will be lifted up.**

*M: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,*

*C: As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.*

**Second Lesson:**     Colossians 2:8-12,20,22 – 3:3

*God's people have always had to contend with other “authorities” competing for their hearts and minds. Here the Apostle Paul warns against choosing to follow human rules, philosophy,*

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<sup>2</sup> *Holy Bible: Evangelical Heritage Version.* (2019). (Ps 75:1–10). Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House.

<sup>b</sup> The word used here is not the word for a musical horn (*shofar*) but the horn which is the weapon of an animal (*qeren*).

*spirituality, and deception instead of Christ, the Head over all things and the One who gave us life from death.*

**Verse of the Day:**

If *spoken*: Alleluia. Christ is the head over every ruler and authority. Alleluia.  
(Colossians 2:10, EHV) (“Alleluia” is typically omitted during the season of Lent.)

If *sung*, using ***Christian Worship*** materials: John 14:23 (11 SAP) or Philippians 2:10,11  
(19 SAP)

**Gospel:** Matthew 7:24-29

*As Jesus finishes up his Sermon on the Mount, he tells a simple parable pointing out the difference between those who listen to him and his Word as their highest authority and those who do not. When he spoke, the people recognized that there was something about his teaching that called them to follow it.*

*(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 and Father, there is no one who can be set beside you as your equal. You are God and there is no other. You fulfill your plans without fail and bring to pass all that you will. All our times are in your hands — our beginnings and ends, and everything in between. Help us to recognize your absolute authority not only over us but also over all our society and world.

**C: Father, hear our prayer.**

**M:** O Christ, you are the head over every ruler and authority, yet there are so many who presume to claim authority higher than yours, seeking to take us captive through corrupted thinking and empty deceit. Help us to resist them and to reject every form of self-chosen religion in our lives. Grant that our feet would follow where you lead, that our hearts would feel for others as yours does, and that our minds would be set on things above, that we might be useful to our neighbors, especially the weak and vulnerable, here below.

**C: Jesus, hear our prayer.**

**M:** O Holy Spirit, we were buried with Christ in baptism and raised with him through the faith you worked in us by the Means of Grace. The Scriptures you caused to be written for our salvation and to equip us as God’s servants and representatives give us the foundation for our faith and our lives in this world. Give us always a hunger for the Word, confidence in its truth, and readiness to confess its teachings in our communities.

**C: Holy Spirit, hear our prayer.**

**M:** Lord, our society is full of sins against you, and too often we are complicit in them through our silence or inaction. Forgive us for these faults, and especially today we ask you to forgive us for failing to remain engaged in defending the defenseless, protecting the innocent, correcting the confused, and fighting against those who evilly treat life as an afterthought or inconvenience.

**C: O Lord, have mercy on us.**

**M:** Strengthen our marriages and families, that they may become and remain havens for and beacons of life to our neighbors. Bless our hearts and tongues that we might freely and gladly speak up for life and persuade others. Move the people in our nation increasingly away from selfish and misguided ideas about life and death and toward a new respect for this most precious gift. Give us leaders, judges, and public servants who fulfill the duties you have given them, to reward what is truly good and punish what is truly wrong. Let every authority on earth and in heaven follow your call to value and protect every human life, in whatever situation and wherever it is found.

**C: Lord, hear our prayers, for Jesus' sake. Amen.**

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