

Value the Gift 2022 Life Celebration Sunday

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.

If using the new *Service Builder* (with the new hymnal), you might also consider the hymns, psalms, and service elements listed as resources for the "Holiday" of "Sanctity of Life" and connected to the readings.

Hymn Suggestions

"Praise to the Lord, the Almighty" — *Christian Worship (93) 234 / CW21 624* (verses can be split up)

"Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise" – *Christian Worship (93) 240 / CW21 614* (esp. verse 3)

"Children of the Heavenly Father" – *Christian Worship (93) 449 / CW21 502*

"Son of God, Eternal Savior" – *Christian Worship (93) 492 / CW21 729*

"This Is My Will" – *Christian Worship (93) 497 / CW21 728*

"O God of Mercy, God of Might" – *Christian Worship (93) 499*

"Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace" – *Christian Worship (93) 521 / CW21 768*

[Other hymns from the "Christian Love" and "Social Concern" sections might also be appropriate.]

Also consider "Songs" from the [CLR Resource page here](#), especially "Life Is a Gift of God".

INVOCATION

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

C: **Amen.**

RESPONSIVE LITANY *Psalm 139, selected verses*

M: O Lord, you have searched me and you know me.

C: **You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.**

M: You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

C: **Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord.**

M: Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

- C: If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.**
- M: If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea
- C: Even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.**
- M: If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me.”
- C: Even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.**
- M: For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
- C: I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.**
- M: My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,
- C: Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.**
- M: How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!
- C: Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand.**
- M: Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.
- C: See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.**

CONFESSION OF SINS

- M: Dear friends, we have come into the presence of God, by whose very hand we are each fearfully and wonderfully made. We have come to listen to God, who spoke the heavens and the earth into existence. We have come to humbly acknowledge his rightful claim on our bodies, lives, and souls, as our Creator, Savior, and Sanctifier. Therefore, let us confess to him our sinful nature and sinful deeds.
- C: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; According to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean. Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; Let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins. And blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God. And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence. Or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation. And grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.**

(Psalm 51, selected verses)

- M: The Lord has forgiven your sins. “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed... but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect... Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God... You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God”

(1 Peter 1, selected verses).

* OR *

CALL TO WORSHIP (Psalm 8)

M: From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise.

C: because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.

M: When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,

C: The moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

M: What is mankind that you are mindful of them,

C: Human beings that you care for them?

M: You have made them a little lower than the angels

C: And crowned them with glory and honor.

M: You made them rulers over the works of your hands;

C: You put everything under their feet:

M: All flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild,

C: The birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

M: LORD, our Lord,

C: How majestic is your name in all the earth!

CONFESSION OF SINS

M: Brothers and Sisters, let us turn with trust to God our Father, who is merciful and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, and ask him to accept the repentance of his people who humbly confess their sins, and to grant us mercy.

C: Lord God, as we gather to celebrate the precious gift of life, we confess that we have not loved as you have loved us. We have not loved others as ourselves. We easily adopt the contempt and hateful stance of the world around us. Our disobedience contradicts the gospel and the faith we profess. We have not trusted you as we ought, for we know you created the universe, you parted the sea, you raised the dead. The life we have been given is yours – You created us. You redeemed us. You sustain us. We are not worthy of the gift of life. Forgive us for Jesus' sake. Wash away our sin and cleanse our hearts. Have mercy, Lord!

M: God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should have the gift of eternal life. His will is not endless years in this fallen world, but he sent the Savior that we might have life and have it to the full. Jesus has redeemed us from the empty way of life handed down to us from our ancestors, not with perishable things such as silver or gold but with his holy precious blood and innocent sufferings and death. In his name and on the basis of his promise, I forgive you all your sins. Life is yours! Value the gift!

C: Amen.

Prayer of the Day

M: Let us pray.

Gracious God, our heavenly Father, open the eyes of all people to see life as your gift and have compassion for small and great, young and old, healthy and sick. Move us to reflect your love and value the time of grace you have given all people; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

First Lesson: Jonah 4:1-11

After God turned him around and Jonah went and preached in Nineveh, the people there repented of their sins and God did not destroy them as he had threatened. This wasn't what Jonah wanted, because he didn't see the people there the way God did.

Second Lesson: 1 John 3:11-18

In explaining the Lord's command that we love each other, John also teaches us something about what life is worth to God's children.

Gospel: John 15:9-17

The night before he was crucified, Jesus made sure his disciples understood the depth of his love and our love, and what both mean for life.

If celebrating on/near March 25 to coincide with the Festival of the Annunciation, you may also use the appointed readings:

First Lesson: Isaiah 7:10-14

Second Lesson: Hebrews 10:5-10

Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

PSALM OF THE DAY: **Psalm 139b**, p. 117 (CW93) / **139** (CW21) / **139A, C, D, E, F, G**
(CW Psalter)

VERSE OF THE DAY: John 15:13

Alleluia. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.
Alleluia.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

The First Article of the Apostles' Creed & Martin Luther's Explanation

C: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

M: What does this mean?

C: I believe that God created me and all that exists, and that he gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears and all my members, my mind and all my abilities.
And I believe that God still preserves me by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, property and home, spouse and children, land, cattle and all I own, and all I need to keep my body and life. God also preserves me by defending me against all danger, guarding and protecting me from all evil.
All this God does only because he is my good and merciful Father in heaven, and not because I have earned or deserved it.
For all this I ought to thank and praise, to serve and obey him. This is most certainly true.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

M: Almighty and eternal God, when mankind threw the gift of eternal life with you away in the Garden of Eden, you restored it to them with the gift of your Son.

C: Give us the strength to share the promise of forgiveness with those who are hurting, with those who have no hope, with those who do not yet know you.

M: Almighty and eternal God, you are the creator and the preserver of life. It is you who knits the child together in their mother's womb. As we consider how wonderfully you made us, help us to grow in our appreciation for your wisdom and power. We ask you to open the eyes of those who embrace the practice of abortion. Lead them to cherish the life you create in the womb.

C: Help anyone who has had, encouraged, or performed an abortion to realize that they have complete forgiveness and pardon through faith in Jesus Christ.

M: Almighty and eternal God, you know everything about us. You know that at times we have too much loved and lived for ourselves, too little loved and lived for you, and too little loved our neighbor as ourselves.

C: Forgive us, Father, and give us an unwavering love and trust in you. Move us to love our neighbor by speaking up for those who cannot speak for themselves that we may protect the life of the born and the unborn.

M: Almighty and eternal God, you alone know the number of our days. Yet many today say that people have the right to terminate life according to their own wishes. Help us to realize that no matter what hardship we are facing, each day you give us on this earth is a precious gift.

C: Help us to understand that you use hardships in our lives to draw us closer to yourself.

M: Almighty and eternal God, in your mercy, hear the prayers of all who call on you in any trouble, that they too may know the joy of receiving your help in their need.
Hear us, Lord as we bring you our private petitions.

Silent prayer

M: We ask this all in the name of Jesus Christ, and to his glory.