

#Laity Sunday 2022: Rise Up! And Reveal God's Grace

Laity Sunday celebrates the ministry of all Christians to love God and neighbor. As we (the people) grow in grace to become “all love” disciples in community, we gather with others and connect all to God’s love in Jesus Christ. So, on Laity Sunday (this year, October 16, 2022), we continue to lift up the vocation of all (all means all) to follow the way of Jesus and lead others to him – particularly as we rediscover practices of togetherness that reveal “God’s presence for the life of the world” (Dorothy Bass, Craig Dykstra, “A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices,” *Lifelong Faith*, Volume 2.2 Summer 2008, 5).

[callout/sidebar: “I want you to be *all love*. This is the perfection I believe and teach.”-John Wesley, “Letter to Dorothy Furlly,” September 15, 1762]



#Laity Sunday 2022– Overview/Planning Worship

Laity Sunday is a day set aside to remember and lift up a 24/7 reality: the priesthood and ministry of *all*. Every person is invited to participate in the community of healing love, justice, and world transformation.

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 2022, October 16), Laity Sunday is one way we express the deep conviction that *all* are called to

participate in God’s mission in communities that share abundant life in Jesus Christ. **Read more about the history of Laity Sunday.** [link to the History of Laity Sunday page: <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-laity-sunday>]

This year, the emphasis is on discipleship as covenant ‘together-life’ – the very life of Jesus in and among us, gathered and responsive to the always *with us* nearness of God. God is near and here to help every life, every place in need of grace.

#Laity Sunday 2022– Quadrennial Themes

Here at the beginning of the end of the pandemic, 2022 finds us returning to familiar forms of in-person worship and community life. Yet the insights we gained from our pandemic experience have left us aware of so much more that God is doing outside the walls of our churches.

Last year, we noted that when we remember the faith of our spiritual mothers and grandmothers (and forefathers), we find our own hearts reignited “to serve and witness in deeds and words that heal and free” (*Book of Discipline* ¶ 128). Grace has crossed our paths with people who loved us into leadership. In many ways, the lives of these dear saints have been verses in a sacred song extending and rhyming with the memories of scripture. We join this chorus and discover how to sing the LORD’s love song for life in a strange land.

Our vocation to all-love discipleship first modeled by the saints who loved us and 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: “[there is] no holiness but social holiness.”

The **Laity Sunday themes** for this quadrennium come from II Timothy 1:1-14. Under the call to **Rise Up**, laity (the people) in the current quadrennium will continue to echo 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 destroys death and brings life; Rise Up and **remain** committed to sound teaching with faith and love; and, Rise Up and **retain** this reliable gift of good and beautiful things placed in our trust by the Holy Spirit.

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 teaching (2 Tim 1:13)

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

#Laity Sunday 2022– Preaching Notes

Texts: [Jeremiah 31:27-34](#); [Genesis 32:22-31](#); [Psalm 139: 1-10](#) (or [Psalm 121:1-8](#)); [Matthew 15:21-31](#) (or [Luke 18:1-8](#)); [2 Timothy 1:8-12](#)

LAITY SUNDAY READINGS <subhead>

Today’s scripture passages from the Hebrew Bible testify to the saving nearness of God with covenant people in the places they live and struggle. There is Jacob’s wrestling match with the angel at Peniel in Genesis 32 (bringing a new name fit not only for an individual but for a whole people).

We also have a song in Psalm 139 about God’s closeness no matter where we are. The alternative Psalter reading (Psalm 121) declares that God is our help and protector, as near as the “shade at your right hand” (Psalm 121:5).

The prophet Jeremiah brings a message of hope and promise for a post-exilic time of abundance and restoration in the land, where the faithful’s mended life together is formatted by God’s instructions for living well, inscribed on the hearts of *all* people. In all these Old Testament passages, we see that God is with God’s people, renewing life together in the land and in community.

The New Testament scripture readings affirm that God’s nearness in Jesus reveals grace – grace that is here, now, and on display in the lives of those drawn into a sphere of healing love. In the Gospel of Matthew, in particular, we see that God’s call and covenant promise to be with us in Jesus carries with it a vocation to bring others along *with* us into his healing presence. And in the alternative gospel passage from Luke, Jesus contrasts the unjust judge with God who hears those who cry for help and moves quickly to bring them justice, even as Jesus questions his hearers as to whether the Human One (CEB) or Son of Man (NRSV) will find faithful earthly responses to this cry.

TAKEAWAYS <subhead>

- God’s **saving nearness *with us*** in Jesus Christ is a core conviction for faithful disciples.
- The “**us**” **always includes** those we think of as “**them**.”
- **Collective attention** to the lives of others **gathers us to places and people** where grace is already at work, **bringing new life** to all.
- **Jesus has a social life**, revealed in the people (*laos*, laity) who gather together for others.
- ‘**Meta**’-**faith** in Christ is more than hype: it is the way we recognize, acknowledge, and respond to the calling closeness of God “for the life of the world,” by being *with*, near, and among *all* those whom Jesus loves.

QUOTES <subhead>

“**Great crowds** came to him, **bringing *with them*** the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many others.”
-Matthew 15:30 (NRSV, emphasis added)

“The **gospel of Christ** knows of no religion, but social; **no holiness but social holiness.**”

- John Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, Preface page viii.

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/blog/no-holiness-but-social-holiness>

“**Help us to help each other**, Lord,
each other’s cross to bear;
let all their friendly aid afford,
and feel each other’s care.
Help us to build each other up,
our meager gifts improve,
increase our faith, confirm our hope,
and perfect us in love.”
-Charles Wesley, 1742

“By ‘Christian practices’ we mean **things Christian people do together** over time to address fundamental human needs **in response to** and in the light of **God’s active presence for the life of the world.**” [emphasis added]

-Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra, “A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices”²

HELP ME HELP <subhead>

I was honored to join several annual conference laity sessions this year celebrating the vocation of all people to be living witnesses to grace. At every conference I visited, I would begin with a simple prayer (accompanied by hand motions, echoing my time in Sunday school and VBS settings):

“Jesus, help me here.
Jesus, help me hear.
Jesus, help me heal.
Jesus, help me help.
Because **Here-to-Help** is one meaning of Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.”

At each of these gatherings, I also shared a few things the late Rev. Junius Dotson taught me about **discipleship** (leadership, evangelism, attention training), the **nearness of God** (closer than we know, ever *with* [Greek, *meta*] us), and the power of collective attention to **the contexts of grace** (the everywhere scenes of struggle, trauma, and joy where God’s love is already at work).

DISCIPLESHIP IS GROWTH IN AWARENESNESS OF GRACE <subhead>

Junius taught us that **love has a learning curve**. That has implications for how we help one another grow roots deep in Christ’s love. And because it has a learning curve, love makes a growth plan that meets people wherever they are on the journey. So **plan to grow**. At Discipleship Ministries, we call this process a spiritual growth plan or “intentional discipleship system” (IDS).

Beyond our best laid plans, though, Rev. Dotson believed that love constantly modifies the growth plan by seeing/engaging people beyond congregational settings.

Recall our Laity Sunday theme is “Rise Up! And Reveal God’s Grace.” For John Wesley (and Junius), we experience holiness/wholeness and reveal grace when we grow roots deep *together* as “all love” disciples who lead ourselves and others to a deeper experience of God’s love. Where? Here, now, in the places where we’re planted. So even when it feels like G-O-D-I-S-N-O-W-H-E-R-E, we find that **G-O-D-I-S-N-O-W-H-E-R-E**.³

For Junius, that means we are called to see what grace has been up to in other lives, at personal scenes of loss and pain, as well as moments of beauty, joy, and bliss. He really believed that the prevenient grace of God at work in every life provides the missing piece to the puzzle of social holiness (how we are to live well together as all-love disciples of Jesus Christ).

<callout/sidebar: We experience holiness/wholeness and reveal grace when we grow roots deep *together*.>

Another way of saying that is that Discipleship begins (and ends) with relationships – especially with people beyond church walls.

Now Rev. Dotson also knew from experience the spiritual power of self-care. Developing a spiritual growth plan and lifestyle of authentic and organic relationships with others (who, it turns out, are also the all-called) is both a blessing and exhausting. As laity, we are continually called to nurture our own souls during seasons of chaos, anxiety, and distress.

By relearning the rhythms of grace through spiritual practices that nurture a deep awareness of God’s nearness, we can reset our souls, rediscovering the principle of sabbath rest so crucial to spiritual wholeness.⁴ So, make a plan to rest.

DISCIPLESHIP IS LEADERSHIP, EVANGELISM, ATTENTION TRAINING <subhead>

What does this have to do with Laity Sunday? For all followers of Christ, this means that **discipleship is leadership**. Laity must first lead themselves by committing to spiritual practices that create daily life with God: we first follow Jesus to lead a life that draws others to the God revealed in him.

This kind of ‘life-leading’ has an end well beyond personal enrichment. **Discipleship is also evangelism**, because all who follow Jesus lead others to him.

At the onset of the pandemic in 2020, I helped my older daughter move home to Nashville from New York City. She’s thirty now, but when I was in divinity school and she was a toddler, we played a game in my white Corolla on the way home from grad school (and preschool). In call-response fashion, I would say, “With God…” And without missing a beat, she would reply from her car seat, “Everything.” Then I would say, “Without God…” And she would reply, “Nothing.”

In my favorite version of this game, I’d say, “What’s the secret of life, Anastasia?” And she would say, “paying attention, Daddy.”

Through his words and witness, Junius Dotson continues to remind us that **discipleship is attention training**. This is much more than an individual skill. Through healthy *life together*, we hone our ability to discern God’s grace as a call we have all received, a grace in us that is always near and here to help. <callout/sidebar: Discipleship Is Leadership, Evangelism, and Attention Training.>

Beyond our in-group awareness of God’s nearness in our own redeemed lives, attentive spiritual growth *together* hones our ability to recognize and respond to God’s grace already at work in the lives of others. If the secret of life is paying attention, then the secret of life together is paying collective attention, not only to our own flocks and faith families but also to the places and people near us who also need God’s grace.

Junius believed (and I do, too) that when we engage our communities and listen to the laity – which just means ‘the all-called’ people around us – we discover the rich meaning of social holiness. Listening love and gracious conversations with people where they live create shared life and holy ground around the backstories, brokenness, and wounds, where God’s prevenient grace continues to cross every path.

Here, even the lives of strangers – especially those beyond our close-knit, familiar fellowships – begin to ‘fill full’ our understanding of the shape of God’s love already working at every address and in every life.

GATHERED TO THE CONTEXTS OF GRACE IN PERSON<subhead>

Award-winning author and journalist Philip Gourevitch tells a story of hearing a series of screams and cries in the mountains of genocide-ravaged Rwanda back in the early 1990s. A local man explained that

the [crying] was a conventional distress signal and that it carried an obligation. ‘You hear it, you do it, too. And you come running,’ he said. ‘No choice. You must. If you ignored this crying, you would have questions to answer. . . . The people are living separately together,’ he said. ‘So there is responsibility. I cry, you cry. You cry, I cry. We all come running, and the one that stays quiet, the one who stays home must explain. . . . This is simple. This is normal. This is community.’⁵

For Gourevitch, this cry of distress and the echoing community that runs to help defines traumatized people finding responsible life beyond the scene of a crime. <callout/sidebar: “I cry, you cry. You cry, I cry. We all come running...This is simple. This is normal. This is community.”>

Do we hear? Do we pay attention? Do we come running? To be honest, it often seems we are not paying attention. Caught up in our own church dramas and conflicts, how can we attend to what’s truly nearest when our attention span for local context collapses under the weight of so many distractions? It seems to be increasingly difficult to see the nearness of God or attend to the contexts of grace closest to us.⁶

While most of us have come (gratefully) to depend upon Zoom meetings, livestreaming, and smartphones to break through the isolation and loneliness of quarantined loved ones and others we had unwittingly forgotten, it seems there is a new kind of hype around the power of virtual encounters to create a better life: what some are calling the ‘metaverse.’⁷

In light of the hyped-up promise of a “metaverse” (a 3-D world of virtual social connectedness and transaction) and Junius Dotson’s convictions about the presence of Jesus (how we ‘near’ him through spiritual practices, how he ‘nears us in the persons beyond church walls), here are a few final

thoughts on a gospel understanding of what it means to be “meta” (*meta*, Greek μετά) disciples in the marketplace, in the concrete contexts beyond our current culture of notification and virtual presence.⁸

MATTHEW’S GOSPEL, GOD WITH US, AND A META-FAITH

One way we might rethink the limits of online-only connection and embrace anew the nearness of God in Jesus and our neighbors is by doing what Junius did: listen to Matthew’s story for clues to what ‘meta’ means for kingdom (or better, kin-dom) people. And contrary to the distortion of the hype-masters who add daily to our sense of “context collapse,” here’s what we hear in some of the ‘metaverses’⁹ in the Gospel of Matthew.

Ask his friends across the connection, and they will tell you that one of Rev. Dotson’s favorite passages of scripture comes from Matthew 11:25-30— in a nutshell, Jesus’ invitation to *all*: come close to me, take my yoke, learn from me, find your rest (together with weary others, the lost and broken).

We know the immediate context of the ‘come to me and find your rest’ passage in Matthew, chapter 11. It’s in a short speech by Jesus after he has sent the disciples out in chapter 10 to heal the lame, cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and cast out demons. It also follows more closely the news from John the Baptist’s followers that John is questioning the meaning of the most important baptism he performed (spoiler alert: it was Jesus).

After telling John’s disciples to pass along what they’ve heard and seen (the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, deaf persons hear, the dead are raised, the poor get good news, and blessings shower on the unoffended), Jesus turns to the crowds drawing near him and talks about what they saw when they went to see John. He is ‘more than a prophet’ and Elijah-to-come if they can handle that.

Jesus then looks for a metaphor for talking about his generation. He says they are like children in the marketplace calling to one another, upset that others won’t sing their songs, dance their dances, or feel their feelings (hit ‘like,’ ‘sad,’ or ‘subscribe’). Into this cacophony of cultural noise made by ‘organ-grinders’ demanding others anxiously follow their conga line, Jesus invites closeness and comes back to the *meta*-message of the gospel itself: Emmanuel, **God-with-us**, is near and here to help. <callout/sidebar: The ‘meta’ message of the gospel itself [is] God-with-us, near and here to help.>

As a religion major back in the 1980s, I learned from my Greek teacher that ‘meta’ just meant “with” or “after.” Of course, that’s right. But it carries richer senses of **being among**, **accompanying closely**, and **taking ‘along with’** (such as, ‘bring someone along with you’). Let’s just say that ‘meta’ (μετά) is used both ways in the Gospel of Matthew. From early uses in chapter one referencing Jesus’ ancestral kin after the separations of the Exile – and subsequent nearness in the second temple period – to one of the biggest ideas introduced at the outset of the story in Matthew 1:23 (delivered by a heavenly messenger): Jesus is God-*with-us*.

This is the last word in Matthew 28, too: “look, remember I am *with* [meta] you all the days.”¹⁰ Like John Wesley’s words before he breathed his last, “Best of all...God is with us.”

For a faithful and responsive people, one of the most interesting ‘meta-verses’ comes in our Laity Sunday gospel reading: **Matthew 15:30**, where “great crowds” (NRSV) bring *with* (meta) them those on the outside of respectable nearness, presence, and official temple encounters with the holy. Or as Matthew writes: “the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many others. They put them at his feet, and he cured them” (Matt 15:30, NRSV).

In addition to our gospel reading, other ‘good news of nearness’ meta-verses in Matthew say, ‘Repent (‘meta-noia’) the kingdom is near.’ This is John the Baptist’s first line in Matthew’s story (Matthew 3:2), and these are Jesus’ first words to the people, too (Matthew 4:17).

Here, the word we often translate *repent* (“change your hearts and lives” in the Common English Bible), is *meta-noia*. It means **a turning to the nearness** – turning our waking, thinking attention from distraction to the people and places where God is near. Such a change of heart and mind also turns to those wronged and broken by life and brings them along (meta) to be healed by Jesus. **<callout/sidebar: ‘Repent’ (*metanoia*) means turning our waking, thinking attention from distraction to the people and places where God is near.>**

TURN TO THE NEARNESS, FIND OUR WHEREWITHAL <subhead>

Will we use the so-called “metaverse” that Silicon Valley is so excited about to create virtual connections with a new generation of people? Of course, we will. But this will be no replacement for in-person connection and closeness.

Laity – *all* the people – know that authentic discipleship finds its vitality in real, “near-and-now-here” places, where in-person (as well as online) cries for help are met with face-to-face embraces and journeys together to the healer (see Matthew 9:2). And it turns out, that for Matthew, these are the very ones we dare not try to keep from Jesus – the ‘other children,’ who (unlike the children sitting in the marketplace), instead cry out from a sacred place: “Hosanna” (save/help us” [Matthew 21:15].

Like the “great crowds” in Matthew 15, laity are already answering God’s beckoning call to discipleship with meta-lives, “near and here-to-help” lives, lives that turn to face those who are more than an afterthought to Jesus: the ones the gospel describes as the lame, maimed, broken, and lost (in other words, the all-called). We should not be surprised. Laity listen when Jesus tells us where we will ‘near’ him: in forgiving beyond violations/conflicts (Matthew 18), and especially in those we avoid or forget: the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, incarcerated, and excluded others (Matthew 25). Here, Christ is near. **<callout/sidebar: This gospel calls *meta*-followers of Jesus to turn to the nearness and find the ‘wherewithal’ to love wide...through our togetherness for others.>**

This same gospel calls *meta*-followers of Jesus to turn to the nearness and find the ‘wherewithal’ (or better, the Where. the With. the All) to love wide in the specific places grace is revealed through our togetherness for others.

Know that this year and beyond, laity will be the hands of Christ, gathering others to the feet of Jesus, where all of us find – within and beyond our virtual connections – rest, healing, hope and kin-dom nearness to the one who is nearer now than when we first believed (Romans 13:11).

We know this: we are called to keep close – to Jesus and one another – as we respond to God’s grace bringing new life to the world.

We also know that God’s love has a learning curve. That’s what Junius Dotson believed. And if we are open to our own zones of grace, those who are outside the walls of our church buildings will help us grow, teaching us that giving collective attention to their lives and the places they live is key to our own wholeness and holiness. <callout/sidebar: Giving collective attention [is] key to our own wholeness and holiness>

Why? Because they provide our own beloved communities with deep insight into the terrains and patterns of grace that might just reveal the God who is already *with* us, repairing the world’s shattered wholeness. In this saving work, we discover the social life of Jesus with *all* others.

So, maybe my laity session ‘me’ prayer should be rewritten in the image of Charles Wesley’s verse above:

“Jesus, help *us* here,
Jesus, help *us* hear,
Jesus, help *us* heal,
Jesus, **help *us* help.**” AMEN.

*This year’s **Laity Sunday theme** is Rise Up! And Reveal God’s Grace. The focus is on recognizing and responding together —beyond church walls— to God’s gathering nearness and grace for the life of the world.*

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#Laity Sunday 2022 – Order of Worship

ABBREVIATIONS

BOW = *United Methodist Book of Worship*

CCLI = Christian Copyright Licensing International, SongSelect [include link: <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*:

Emmanuel, Emmanuel	UMH 204
All Creatures of Our God and King	UMH 62
Abide with Me	UMH 700
Help Us Accept Each Other	UMH 560
Nearer, My God, To Thee	UMH 528
Heal Us, Emmanuel, Hear Our Prayer	UMH 266
Here I Am, Lord (I, The Lord of Sea and Sky)	UMH 593
Please Enter My Heart, Hosanna	TFWS 2154
Breathe on Me, Breath of God	UMH 420
Change My Heart, O God	TFWS 2152
Sois la Semilla (You Are the Seed)	UMH 583
All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name	UMH 154
One Bread, One Body (if sharing Communion)	UMH 620
My Jesus I Love Thee	UMH 172
O God, Our Help in Ages Past	UMH 117
Great Is Thy Faithfulness	UMH 140
Praise to the Lord, the Almighty	UMH 139
For the Beauty of the Earth	UMH 92

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

ENTRANCE

CALL TO WORSHIP

We are all invited to God's nearness in Jesus Christ.

We know Jesus is God's grace for the life of the world.

We look for grace revealed in our togetherness and in the lives those beyond our church walls.

We know our together life in Christ is never gated or exclusive.

In every place, we discover what it means to be faithful – with you – to make all things new.

And we hear your invitation to help heal and repair the world's shattered wholeness.

WORD AND RESPONSE

Message Theme: Rise Up! And Reveal God's Grace Matthew 15:21-31, Timothy 1:8-12

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: We ask for your help, O God, to recognize and respond to your nearness in our own struggles and in the cries of others.

With the psalmist, we know that we can never escape your presence; you are right beside us.

Lay leader: Jesus, help us here [gesture to indicate this place]

People: *God, we trust you are close.*

Lay leader: Jesus, help us *hear* [gesture to indicate listening]

People: *God, we know you are calling us.*

Lay leader: Jesus, help us heal.

People: *God, mend our brokenness; bring our neighbors wholeness.*

Lay leader: Jesus, help us help.

People: *God, send us to those who need grace today.*

Pastor: O God, we are your people, near and here to help.

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 sacrifices of thanksgiving and joy, O Lord, as, by your Spirit, we remember and proclaim who we 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, sharing yourself
and proclaiming God's lovingkindness,
justice, and peace,
in words and deeds
that bring life and hope.

Pastor:

The Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Living Spirit,
is with you today and every day, forever and always.

Amen.

#Laity Sunday 2022 — 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

JEREMIAH 31:27-34	UMH	MVPC	CLUW	TFWS	SOZ	URW	WSM	WSW	SOG	TAH
Breathe on Me, Breath of God	420									
Change My Heart, O God				2152						
Come and Fill Our Hearts				2157						
Great Is Thy Faithfulness	140									
Here I Am, Lord (I, the Lord of Sea and Sky)	593									
Sois la Semilla (You Are the Seed)	583									
GENESIS 32:22-31	UMH	MVPC	CLUW	TFWS	SOZ	URW	WSM	WSW	SOG	TAH
Be Thou My Vision	451	240				180				
Come, O Thou Traveler Unknown	386					148				

Faith is Patience in the Night				2211						
God Be with You till We Meet Again (God Be with You)	672		347		37					
God of Many Names	105									
Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God	405	201	136							

PSALM 121	UMH	MVPC	CLUW	TFWS	SOZ	URW	WSM	WSW	SOG	TAH
Christ Beside Me				2166						
Eternal Father, Strong to Save				2191						
From the Rising of the Sun				2024						
God Will Take Care of You (Nunca desmayes)	130	260								
Holy Spirit, Come to Us				2118		395				
Jesus, Lover of My Soul	479									
My Life Is in You, Lord				2032						
O God, Our Help in Ages Past	117					200				
Our Help Comes from the Lord (Psalm 121)						315				
Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above	126		60			70				
Today, O God (Psalm 121)						320				
You Have Been Our Help (Psalm 121)						317				

PSALM 139:1-10	UMH	MVPC	CLUW	TFWS	SOZ	URW	WSM	WSW	SOG	TAH
Abide with Me; Fast Falls the Eventide	700									
Christ Beside Me				2166						
Creating God, Your Fingers Trace	109									
Cry of My Heart				2165						
Dear Lord, Lead Me Day by Day	411		100							
Guide My Feet				2208						
I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry				2051						
Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise	103		74							
Into My Heart				2160						
Jesus, Lover of My Soul	479									
Lead Me, Lord	473					226				
Mothering God, You Gave Me Birth				2050						
Oh, I Know the Lord's Laid His Hands on Me				2139						
Praise to the Lord, the Almighty	139	29	68			63				
Precious Lord, Take My Hand	474		309			179				
Savior, Again to Thy Dear Name	663	349								
Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above	126		60			70				

MATTHEW 15:21-31	UMH	MVPC	CLUW	TFWS	SOZ	URW	WSM	WSW	SOG	TAH
Freely, Freely (God Forgave My Sin)	389		258							
Healer of Our Every Ill				2213		161				
Faith Is Patience in the Night				2211						
I'm So Glad Jesus Lifted Me				2151						
Kyrie				2275						
Let Us Plead for Faith Alone	385									
Lord, Have Mercy (SINGAPURA)				2277						
Lord, I Want to Be a Christian	402	215			76					
My Faith Looks Up to Thee	452				215					
My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less	368	261								
O Christ, the Healer, We Have Come	265									
People Need the Lord				2244						
Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me	361	247								
Wounded World that Cries for Healing				2177						

2 TIMOTHY 1:8-12	UMH	MVPC	CLUW	TFWS	SOZ	URW	WSM	WSW	SOG	TAH
Am I a Soldier of the Cross	511									
By Gracious Powers So Wonderfully Sheltered	517									
Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands	319									
Cry of My Heart				2165						
Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether	632									
Faith Is Patience in the Night				2211						
Forward Through the Ages	555									
He Who Began a Good Work in You				2163						
Here Is Bread, Here Is Wine				2266						
Holy Spirit, Truth Divine	465									
I Know Whom I Have Believed (I Know Not Why God's Wondrous Grace)	714		290							
In the Singing				2255						
Jesus, Priceless Treasure	532									
Jesus, You Once Called Disciples									14	
May the Spirit of God Be in You								40		
My Faith Looks Up to Thee	452				215					

2 TIMOTHY 1:8-12	UMH	MVPC	CLUW	TFWS	SOZ	URW	WSM	WSW	SOG	TAH
O God, we are so grateful								151		
O Thou Who Camest from Above	501		269							
Oh, I Know the Lord's Laid His Hands on Me				2139						
Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus	514									
Standing on the Promises of Christ My King	374	252								
When Our Confidence Is Shaken	505									
You Formed Us in Your Image, Lord									60	

#Laity Sunday 2022— 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, in extraordinary circumstances, ordained deacons given authorization by the bishop to preside in their particular ministry setting.

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 divvied up among two or more presiders.

#Laity Sunday 2022— Scripture Readings

Genesis 32:22-31

Jacob got up during the night, took his two wives, his two women servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed the Jabbok River's shallow water. ²³He took them and everything that belonged to him, and he helped them cross the river. ²⁴But Jacob stayed apart by himself, and a man wrestled with him until dawn broke. ²⁵When the man saw that he couldn't defeat Jacob, he grabbed Jacob's thigh and tore a muscle in Jacob's thigh as he wrestled with him. ²⁶The man said, "Let me go because the dawn is breaking."

But Jacob said, "I won't let you go until you bless me."

²⁷He said to Jacob, "What's your name?" and he said, "Jacob." ²⁸Then he said, "Your name won't be Jacob any longer, but Israel, because you struggled with God and with men and won."

²⁹Jacob also asked and said, "Tell me your name."

But he said, "Why do you ask for my name?" and he blessed Jacob there. ³⁰Jacob named the place Peniel, "because I've seen God face-to-face, and my life has been saved." ³¹The sun rose as Jacob passed Peniel, limping because of his thigh.

Genesis 32:22-31 CEB

Jeremiah 31:27-34

The time is coming, declares the LORD, when I will plant seeds in Israel and Judah, and both people and animals will spring up. ²⁸Just as I watched over them to dig up and pull down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring harm, so I will watch over them to build and plant, declares the LORD. ²⁹In those days, people will no longer say:

Sour grapes eaten by parents

leave a bitter taste in the mouths of their children.

³⁰Because everyone will die for their own sins:

whoever eats sour grapes

will have a bitter taste in their own mouths.

³¹The time is coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. ³²It won't be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant with me even though I was their husband, declares the LORD. ³³No, this is the covenant that I will make with the people of Israel after that time, declares the LORD. I will put my Instructions within them and engrave them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴They will no longer need to teach each other to say, "Know the LORD!" because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD; for I will forgive their wrongdoing and never again remember their sins.

Jeremiah 31:27-34 Common English Bible (CEB)

Psalm 139:1-10

LORD, you have examined me.

You know me.

²You know when I sit down and when I stand up.

Even from far away, you comprehend my plans.

³You study my traveling and resting.

You are thoroughly familiar with all my ways.

⁴There isn't a word on my tongue, LORD,

that you don't already know completely.

⁵You surround me—front and back.

You put your hand on me.

⁶That kind of knowledge is too much for me;

it's so high above me that I can't reach it.

⁷Where could I go to get away from your spirit?

Where could I go to escape your presence?

⁸If I went up to heaven, you would be there.

If I went down to the grave,^[a] you would be there too!

⁹If I could fly on the wings of dawn,

stopping to rest only on the far side of the ocean—

¹⁰ even there your hand would guide me;

even there your strong hand would hold me tight!

Psalm 139:1-10 CEB

Psalm 121:1-8 (alternative reading)

A pilgrimage song.

I raise my eyes toward the mountains.

Where will my help come from?

²My help comes from the LORD,
the maker of heaven and earth.

³God won't let your foot slip.
Your protector won't fall asleep on the job.

⁴No! Israel's protector
never sleeps or rests!

⁵The LORD is your protector;
the LORD is your shade right beside you.

⁶The sun won't strike you during the day;
neither will the moon at night.

⁷The LORD will protect you from all evil;
God will protect your very life.

⁸The LORD will protect you on your journeys—
whether going or coming—
from now until forever from now.

Psalm 121:1-8 CEB

Matthew 15:21-31

²¹From there, Jesus went to the regions of Tyre and Sidon. ²²A Canaanite woman from those territories came out and shouted, "Show me mercy, Son of David. My daughter is suffering terribly from demon possession." ²³But he didn't respond to her at all.

His disciples came and urged him, "Send her away; she keeps shouting out after us."

²⁴Jesus replied, "I've been sent only to the lost sheep, the people of Israel."

²⁵But she knelt before him and said, "Lord, help me."

²⁶He replied, "It is not good to take the children's bread and toss it to dogs."

²⁷She said, "Yes, Lord. But even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall off their masters' table."

²⁸Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith. It will be just as you wish." And right then her daughter was healed.

²⁹Jesus moved on from there along the shore of the Galilee Sea. He went up a mountain and sat down. ³⁰Large crowds came to him, including [or bringing *with* them] those who were paralyzed, blind, injured, and unable to speak, and many others. They laid them at his feet, and he healed them. ³¹So the crowd was amazed when they saw those who had been unable to speak talking, and the paralyzed cured, and the injured walking, and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

Matthew 15:21-31 CEB

Luke 18:1-8 (alternative reading)

Jesus was telling them a parable about their need to pray continuously and not to be discouraged. ²He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected people. ³In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him, asking, 'Give me justice in this case against my adversary.' ⁴For a while he refused but finally said to himself, I don't fear God or respect people, ⁵but I will give this widow justice because she keeps bothering me. Otherwise, there will be no end to her coming here and embarrassing me." ⁶The Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷Won't God provide justice to his chosen people who cry out to him day and night? Will he be slow to help them? ⁸I tell you, he will give them justice quickly. But when the Human One comes, will he find faithfulness on earth?" Luke 18:1-8 CEB

2 Timothy 1:8-12

⁸So don't be ashamed of the testimony about the Lord or of me, his prisoner. Instead, share the suffering for the good news, depending on God's power. ⁹God is the one who saved and called us with a holy calling. This wasn't based on what we have done, but it was based on his own purpose and grace that he gave us in Christ Jesus before time began. ¹⁰Now his grace is revealed through the appearance of our savior, Christ Jesus. He destroyed death and brought life and immortality into clear focus through the good news. ¹¹I was appointed a messenger, apostle, and teacher of this good news. ¹²This is also why I'm suffering the way I do, but I'm not ashamed. I know the one in whom I've placed my trust. I'm convinced that God is powerful enough to protect what he has placed in my trust until that day.

2 Timothy 1:8-12 CEB

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

² Craig Dykstra and Dorothy C. Bass, "A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices," *Lifelong Faith*, (Volume 2.2, Summer 2008), 5, https://www.lifelongfaith.com/uploads/5/1/6/4/5164069/lifelong_faith_journal_2.2.pdf.

³ See Jacob's first dream at Bethel where he exclaims, "The LORD is definitely in this place, but I didn't know it!" (Genesis 28:10-19, CEB). See also Peter Rollins, *The Fidelity of Betrayal: Towards a Church Beyond Belief* (Brewster, Massachusetts: Paraclete Press, 2008).

⁴ Junius B. Dotson, *Soul Reset: Breakdown, Breakthrough, and the Journey to Wholeness* (Nashville, Tennessee: Upper Room Books, 2019).

⁵ Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with our Families . . . Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Picador USA, 1998), 34.

⁶ Jenny Odell, *How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy* (Brooklyn, New York: Melville House Publishing, 2019), xii: "[T]he villain here is not necessarily the Internet, or even the idea of social media; it is the invasive logic of *commercial* social media and its financial incentive to keep us in a profitable state of anxiety, envy and distraction. . . . [How can we connect] when our platforms for 'connection' and expression detract from the attention to place and time that we need, simultaneously eroding the contexts that would allow new strategies to sharpen and flourish?"

⁷ On the hype, see Gian H. Volpicelli, "Big Tech Needs to Stop Trying to Make Their Metaverse Happen," *Wired* (January 31, 2022), <https://www.wired.com/story/metaverse-big-tech-land-grab-hype>. This is no dismissal of our current tools for online connection, which are similar to other virtual technologies like the Apostle Paul's use of 'distance learning' and encouragement through the "tech" of letter writing, or our parents' and grandparents' morale-boosting "V-Mail" used during World War II. These provide lifelines of virtual connection to those separated by great distances or too vulnerable for in-person closeness. See Deanna A. Thompson's book, *The Virtual Body of Christ in a Suffering World* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015). While this technology has been a godsend, some are beginning to question the irrational exuberance that "flickering images on glass screens" (C. Lasch) are substitutes for in-person gathering and closeness, or that they will create a truly 'meta' world.

⁸ Clearly our digital tools are more than sources of distraction. They can connect us and amplify this call by crowd-sourcing the way we come running in Jesus' name. But drawing close to help will always be an in-person experience for those called to embody the life of an incarnate healer in the real world.

⁹ By 'meta-verse' here, we just mean those verses in the Gospel of Matthew that use the word *meta* (with, near, bring along with, after, closely following) to describe the big idea in this gospel: God *with* us as a saving nearness that mends and remakes the world in the shape of love, mercy, and justice. This is just a play on the word 'metaverse.' After Aristotle, the word *meta* has come to also mean a deeper beyond or something that grounds (and exceeds) all things.

¹⁰ Even to the end, every day (ἐγὼ μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας).