

Worship Resources for Building Congregational Vitality Sunday

“God’s gifts of Word and Sacrament establish and equip the Church as the body of Christ in the world. The mission of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church flows from Baptism, is nourished at Lord’s Supper, and serves to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to all. In the same way, the Church’s ministry emerges from the font, arises from the table, and takes its shape from the Word of the Lord. Therefore the worship of the triune God is the center of our common life and our primary way of witness to the faith, hope, and love we have in Jesus Christ.” — Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Directory for Worship, *Book of Order*, W-1.0107

Three options (A, B, and C) are provided for many of the elements of the service.

OPENING SENTENCES

A Once we were in darkness, *Eph. 5*
but now in the Lord we are light.

Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord,
all that is good and right and true.

For everything exposed by the light becomes visible,
and everything that becomes visible is light.

B Blessed are you, O Lord; *Ps. 119*
teach me your statutes.

With my lips I declare your ordinances.
I delight in the way of your decrees.

I will meditate on your precepts,
and fix my eyes on your ways.
**I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.**

C If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: *2 Cor. 5*
**everything old has passed away;
see everything has become new!**

All this is from God,
**who sought reconciliation with us through Christ
and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.**

We are ambassadors for Christ,
since God is making this appeal through us;
**we entreat you on behalf of Christ,
be reconciled to God.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

A God of glory, you sent Jesus Christ *John 9*
to be the light of the world.

As Jesus restored the sight of a man born blind,
help us to see the new things you are doing
in your church and in your world.

Teach us to trust in you
and reveal your saving work to others,
that all may believe and have abundant life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

B Holy One, we wish to see Jesus. *John 12*

Help us to serve and follow him,
no matter where he leads us.
Strengthen us to give our lives for others,
all for the sake of the gospel.

Let us bear witness to your saving love,
that all people might be drawn to you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

C Faithful and loving God, *Luke 15*

you send us out with blessing
and welcome us back with mercy.
Strengthen us with your Holy Spirit
that we may build up your church
as a place of grace and peace for all;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

CONFESSION AND PARDON

The seven parts of this litany of confession are based on the seven marks of congregational vitality used in the PC(USA) Vital Congregations Initiative.

The confession and pardon may be led from the baptismal font.

For our sake, God sent Jesus into a sinful world
that we might know the righteousness of God.

Trusting in God's grace, let us confess our sin.

O my people, O my church, says the Lord.
What more could I have done for you?

Holy One, have mercy on us.

We have ignored and impeded
God's call to follow the way of Jesus.

Holy One, have mercy on us.

Lifelong Discipleship Formation

We have silenced and suppressed
the good news of God's holy realm.

Holy One, have mercy on us.

Intentional Authentic Evangelism

We have forgotten and forsaken
the gift of God's Word made flesh.

Holy One, have mercy on us.

Outward Incarnational Focus

We have ridiculed and rejected
Jesus' example of humble service.

Holy One, have mercy on us.

Empowering Servant Leadership

We have hidden and hoarded
the transforming presence of Christ.

Holy One, have mercy on us.

Spirit-Inspired Worship

We have denied and disregarded
God's great love for all the world.

Holy One, have mercy on us.

Caring Relationships

We have abused and abandoned
our common ministry in Jesus' name.

Holy One, have mercy on us.

Ecclesial Health

Forgive us, God of grace.

Let us be reconciled with you

with one another, and with our neighbors,

so that your church may be a light to the world

and a vital sign of your redeeming love;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lifting water from the font.

In Christ there is a new creation:
everything old has passed away;
everything has become new!

I declare to you, in the name of Jesus Christ,
we are forgiven. **Thanks be to God.**

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

The prayer for illumination is led from the lectern or pulpit.

A O Lord our God,
through the wisdom of your Word
and the power of your Spirit,
open our eyes, hearts, and minds
that we may see as you see

1 Sam. 16

and live as you have called us to live;
through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

B God of all wisdom and truth,
teach us to treasure your word.
Let your word take root in our hearts,
grow and flourish in our lives,
and, by the power of your Holy Spirit,
bear good fruit in this world;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Ps. 119; John 12

C Almighty God,
through your beloved Son
you overcame death
and opened to us the light of eternity.
Enlighten our minds and kindle our hearts
with the presence of your Spirit,
that we may hear your words
of comfort and challenge
in the reading of the Scriptures;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Luke 15

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We believe

The Confession of Belhar (excerpt), Book of Confessions, 10.7

- that God has revealed God's self as the one who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among people;
- that God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged
- that God calls the church to follow God in this; for God brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry;
- that God frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind;
- that God supports the downtrodden, protects the stranger, helps orphans and widows and blocks the path of the ungodly;
- that for God pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the widows in their suffering;
- that God wishes to teach the church to do what is good and to seek the right;
- that the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things,

that the church must witness against
and strive against any form of injustice,
so that justice may roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream;

- that the church as the possession of God
must stand where the Lord stands,
namely against injustice and with the wronged;
that in following Christ the church must witness
against all the powerful and privileged
who selfishly seek their own interests
and thus control and harm others.

INVITATION TO DISCIPLESHIP

The invitation to discipleship may be led from the baptismal font.

To everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters; come and eat!
Come, without money and without price.
Come. And let everyone who hears also say, "Come."
And let everyone who is thirsty come.
Let anyone who wishes
take the water of life as a gift.

Isa. 55, Rev. 22

All that God has is for each and every one of us
and for all that God causes us to meet.
So let us come together
for the work that God is calling us to do.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

The prayers of intercession may be led from the midst of the congregation.

The prayers may begin with these or other opening words.

A O Lord, our shepherd,
you provide for all our wants.
Hear our prayer.

Ps. 23

B Have mercy on us, O God,
according to your steadfast love.
Hear our prayer.

Ps. 51

C O Lord, with all the faithful
we offer our prayers to you,
trusting that you will deliver us.

Ps. 32

The prayers continue with these and other intercessions.

We pray for your church . . .
Build us up as the body of Christ
in our worship and service.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the world . . .
Bring peace to warring nations
and justice to oppressed peoples.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our neighbors . . .
Strengthen our witness and work
in the communities where we live.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for loved ones . . .
Help us to care for one another
in times of sickness and suffering.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for creation . . .
Show us how to live in right relationship
with the earth and all your creatures.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

There may be silent prayer.

Prayers conclude with these or other closing words:

- A** Let your goodness and mercy
follow us all the days of our lives,
and let us dwell in your house forever;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**
- B** Create in us a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within us.
Restore to us the joy of your salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**
- C** Be our help and our hiding place, O God.
Preserve us in times of trouble
and surround us with your steadfast love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer may follow.

INVITATION TO OFFERING

The invitation to offering may be led from the Communion table.

A In every age,
the Lord anoints servants and leaders
to do the work of the gospel
and build up the people of God.
Let us present our lives and gifts to the Lord
as an offering of thanksgiving and praise.
See what wonders God will do through you.

1 Sam. 16

B If a grain of wheat never falls to the earth,
it remains a single grain;
but if it falls to the earth and dies,
it will bear much fruit.
Let us share freely
from all that we have received,
trusting the abundant gifts of the Spirit
and the life-giving power of God
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

John 12

C Should there be famine
or lack of shelter or lack of any good thing
around our community or around the world;
let us, according to our ability,
give, so that all may have.
Bring and share your gifts,
so that the church may continue to stand by people
in any form of suffering and need,
and witness against and strive against
any form of injustice,
so that justice may roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Acts 11; The Confession of Belhar; Amos 5

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The prayer of thanksgiving may be led from the Communion table.

A Holy One, we give you thanks
that in Jesus Christ you have come
to set us free from sin and death,
to open our eyes to your grace,
and to lead us into everlasting life.

Use our gifts and our lives
to help others share a glimpse

John 9

of the promise of your coming realm—
a glorious new creation
of righteousness, justice, and peace.
This we pray through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

B We give you thanks and praise, O God,
for the saving life and love of Jesus Christ
and the vitality of your Spirit in our midst.
Build us up to be your faithful people,
that this community of faith may be
a refuge for those who are in need,
a source of justice and healing in our world,
and a living witness to your great love;
through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

Heb. 5

C Almighty and ever-present God,
we give you thanks for the church
and for the ministry we share as your people.
We continue to devote ourselves
to Jesus' teaching and the fellowship
and to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Acts 2

Furthermore, we thank you
for how you've called each of us to your work
from homes and hamlets around the city and around the world.
We thank you for your constant reminders
of how our beginning and our ongoing existence
is to give you glory.
The glory we give is not just in worship,
but in walking circumspectly in the world,
representing your hands of care and provision.
Thank you for continuing to bring us together safely
and even allowing us means
to enjoy the breaking of bread in our homes, praising you.
Thank you for continuing to sustain us
and adding to our numbers day by day.

Likewise, we thank you for spurring us
to consider our resources and share them accordingly
with the community around us.
Help us to recognize the needs beyond our walls,
and help those beyond our walls to recognize our call.
By our communion with others,
may you may truly be glorified. **Amen.**

BLESSING AND CHARGE

The blessing and charge may be led from the doors of the church.

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord be kind and gracious to you,
the Lord look upon you with favor
and give you peace. **Amen.**

Num. 6; Eph. 5

A Live as children of light.
Rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you. **Amen. or Thanks be to God.**

B Let us follow Christ faithfully,
serving others in his name
and bearing witness to the glory of God. **Amen. or Thanks be to God.**

John 12

C Thou who hast by Thy might,
led us into the light,
keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places,
our God, where we met Thee;
lest our hearts drunk with the wine
of the world, we forget Thee;
shadowed beneath Thy hand,
may we forever stand—
aware of our call
to do justice,
to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with Thee. **Amen. or Thanks be to God.**

True to Our Native Land, James Weldon Johnson; Micah 6

HYMNS, PSALMS, AND SPIRITUAL SONGS

All suggestions are from Glory to God (GTG): The Presbyterian Hymnal (WJKP, 2013); cross-references to the 1990 Presbyterian Hymnal (PH), if applicable, are provided.

Go to the World!	GTG 295
Go in Grace and Make Disciples	GTG 296
In Christ Called to Baptize	GTG 297
Lord, You Give the Great Commission	GTG 298, PH 429
Let Us Build a House (All Are Welcome)	GTG 301
When Hands Reach Out and Fingers Trace	GTG 302
Come Sing, O Church, in Joy!	GTG 305, PH 430
Blest Be the Tie That Binds	GTG 306, PH 438
Come, Great God of All the Ages	GTG 309, PH 132
Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather	GTG 311, PH 465
Men of Faith, Rise Up and Sing (Shout to the North)	GTG 319
The Church of Christ in Every Age	GTG 320, PH 421
The Church's One Foundation	GTG 321, PH 442
For All the Saints	GTG 326, PH 526
Lift Every Voice and Sing	GTG 339, PH 563
Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation	GTG 394, PH 416/417
Here in This Place (Gather Us In)	GTG 401
What Is This Place	GTG 404
Listen, God Is Calling	GTG 456
Wash, O God, Your Sons and Daughters	GTG 490
Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ	GTG 526, PH 514
Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether	GTG 529, PH 504
You Are Holy	GTG 596
Will You Come and Follow Me (The Summons)	GTG 726
Will You Let Me Be Your Servant (The Servant Song)	GTG 727
We All Are One in Mission	GTG 733, PH 435
From the Nets of Our Labor (We Will Rise Up and Follow)	GTG 751
Together We Serve	GTG 767