

A Year with Matthew

for a Matthew 25 church



Revised Common Lectionary, Year A

Part 1: Advent through Pentecost

Dec. 1, 2019 – May 31, 2020



Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Presbyterian Mission



Artwork: "Sermon on the Mount," JESUS MAFA, 1973. JESUS MAFA is a response to the New Testament readings from the lectionary by a Christian community in Cameroon, Africa. Each of the readings were selected and adapted to dramatic interpretation by the community members. Photographs of their interpretations were made, and these were then transcribed to paintings.

Source: *Art in the Christian Tradition*, Vanderbilt Divinity Library (library.vanderbilt.edu/divinity), Nashville, Tennessee. Original source: Librairie de l'Emmanuel (librairie-emmanuel.fr), Paray-le-Monial, France. The image is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Noncommercial ShareAlike 3.0 License.



A Year with Matthew

for a Matthew 25 church

Part 1: Dec. 1, 2019 – May 31, 2020 (Advent through Pentecost)

Drawing on the Gospel readings from the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) Year A, this resource helps preachers, educators and worship planners attend to themes of congregational vitality, systemic poverty and structural racism throughout the Christian year (or liturgical calendar). It takes advantage of the convergence of the focus on Matthew in RCL Year A (2019–2020) and the 2019 launch of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s Matthew 25 invitation, with its three-part emphasis on systemic poverty, structural racism and congregational vitality.

The primary components of this resource are:

- a brief introduction to the Gospel of Matthew and how it functions in the lectionary;
- theological, pastoral and liturgical guidance for the seasons of the Christian year, with a focus on the Matthew 25 themes of poverty, racism and vitality;
- sermon prompts and music suggestions that highlight Christ’s call to righteousness, justice and reconciliation in the Gospel of Matthew.

Additional features of this resource include:

- Seven Ways to Read the Gospel of Matthew [reading plans]
- Emmanuel: God with Us [public reading of the Gospel]
- The Sermon on the Mount [Scripture reading and hymn festival]
- The Ten Miracles [Scripture reading and hymn festival]
- Reading Matthew in Daily Prayer [daily lectionary]
- Index to the Gospel of Matthew [appendix]

The objective is to form faithful and active disciples and communities of people who are engaged with, energized by and committed to these strategic priorities for the PC(USA).

Notes

- The Scripture readings below are the appointed texts in the Revised Common Lectionary; brief summaries come from Call to Worship (pcusa.org/calltoworship).
- alt: Italicized passages offer alternative (non-RCL) Gospel readings from Matthew.
- [Verses in brackets are added to expand the readings from Matthew’s Gospel.]
- Congregations wishing to read the whole Gospel of Matthew during Year A should use the italicized passages and the verses in brackets; they should also find occasions to read The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1–7:29) and Ten Miracles (Matthew 8:1–9:34).

How to use “A Year with Matthew for a Matthew 25 church”

This resource was designed to offer a variety of ways to engage the Gospel of Matthew and the PC(USA)’s Matthew 25 vision over the course of a year. It is not assumed that congregations or individuals will make use of all the options provided in the document. You are encouraged to select the approaches that seem most appropriate and helpful, and to adapt as needed to suit your context. For instance, congregations might choose to host a reading of the Sermon on the Mount, but not the whole Gospel of Matthew. Preachers might decide to use some of the sermon series provided, but not others. Individuals might elect to use the 26-week reading plan for half the year and other options for the remainder.

The Gospel of Matthew

Thought to have been committed to writing in Antioch or southern Galilee after the year 70 CE, the Gospel of Matthew was intended for a primarily Jewish audience. The central figure of Jesus is depicted as the “new Moses,” who has come to lead his people to redemption. The structure of the Gospel mirrors the five books of the Torah (see outline below), with each section consisting of stories from Jesus’ ministry followed by accounts of Jesus’ teaching. Distinctive features of the Gospel of Matthew include the account of the visit of the Magi (Matt. 2), the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7), and the Great Commission (Matt. 28).

An Outline of the Gospel of Matthew

Prologue: Genealogy and Infancy Narrative — Matthew 1:1–2:23

Book One: Opening Proclamation of the Kingdom — Matthew 3:1–7:29

Narrative: Matthew 3:1–4:25 beginning of ministry

Discourse: Matthew 5:1–7:29 Sermon on the Mount

Book Two: Ministry in Galilee — Matthew 8:1–11:1

Narrative: Matthew 8:1–9:34 10 miracles

Discourse: Matthew 9:35–11:1 instructions to the Twelve for mission

Book Three: Controversy and Parables — Matthew 11:2–13:53

Narrative: Matthew 11:2–12:50 incredulity and hostility

Discourse: Matthew 13:1–53 a collection of parables

Book Four: Formation of the Disciples — Matthew 13:54–19:2

Narrative: Matthew 13:54–17:27 stories before the journey to Jerusalem

Discourse: Matthew 18:1–19:2 instructions for the assemblies

Book Five: Up to Jerusalem — Matthew 19:3–26:1

Narrative: Matthew 19:3–23:39 stories on the journey and at Jerusalem

Discourse: Matthew 24:1–25:46 instructions concerning the last things

The Passion — Matthew 26:1–27:66

The Resurrection — Matthew 28:1–20

The Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) presents the Gospel of Matthew not strictly in its biblical sequence, but in a way that helps us keep time with Christ’s church around the world through the Christian year. The distinctive shape of the liturgical calendar — with the first half including numerous festivals and seasons and the second half consisting of “ordinary time” — lends itself to a two-part approach to this year with Matthew:

- (1) In the first half of the year, from Advent through Pentecost, this resource addresses the basics of Christian faith and discipleship in a more general way, yet always with an eye toward the themes of Matthew 25.
- (2) In the second half of the year, from Trinity Sunday (Great Commission) to the final three Sundays of Year A (all from Matthew 25), ending with Christ the King (final judgment), this resource focuses more specifically on Matthew 25 priorities — systemic poverty, structural racism and congregational vitality — as these themes are reflected throughout Matthew’s Gospel. (Fittingly, in the second half of the year the RCL draws exclusively from Matthew, not relying on the other Gospels.)

¹Gordon W. Lathrop, *The Four Gospels on Sunday: The New Testament and the Reform of Christian Worship* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 98.

The Season of Advent

“Advent” means coming or arrival. This word has a double significance, as in Advent we celebrate Christ’s coming into the world and look with longing for his coming again. The season of Advent begins with an emphasis on final things (eschatology). We watch and pray with expectant hope for the establishment of God’s justice and the return of the Prince of Peace. As the weeks of Advent progress, the focus shifts to thanks and praise for the birth of the one who has already come — Jesus Christ our Savior.

The duration of Advent was, in some times and places, as long as six or seven weeks. The RCL still anticipates the themes of Advent in the final three weeks of the Christian year, including Christ the King/Reign of Christ. This feature of the lectionary allows preaches and worship planners to get a head start on Advent before it is eclipsed by preparations for Christmas. (Excerpted from the Book of Common Worship (WJK, 2018), p. 163)

Advent Series: The Realm of God

There is a kind of refrain in the Gospel of Matthew, ringing like a bell throughout this first book of the New Testament. It is the phrase “kingdom of heaven” (basileia ton ouranon), appearing 32 times in the book of Matthew, with the final reference found in the first verse of Matthew 25.

The season of Advent provides the church an opportunity to get to know this coming realm of God — the kingdom of heaven that Jesus came to proclaim, and for which we wait in Advent. What is this kingdom? How will we know it when it comes? How does it differ from earthly powers and principalities?

Specifically, what does this realm of God mean for people who are poor, for societies struggling with racism and for churches longing for renewal? How might we experience or participate in God’s realm — here and now — through our work to eradicate systemic poverty, dismantle structural racism and build congregational vitality?

The preaching and music suggestions in this four-week series offer ideas for engaging these themes and exploring the significance of the realm of God in Christian faith and in the vision of a Matthew 25 church.

Sunday, Dec. 1

First Sunday of Advent

Matthew 24:36–44	The Lord is coming; keep awake; no one knows the day or hour.	
Sermon prompt:	There is good news and bad news. The bad news: Christ is coming at an unexpected time to judge the world. How will Christ judge us when it comes to poverty, vitality and racism? The good news: Christ the judge is also Christ our Savior. How are we longing for salvation?	
Featured hymns:	Come Now, O Prince of Peace	GTG 103
	Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence	GTG 347
	Keep Your Lamps Trimmed and Burning	GTG 350

Sunday, Dec. 8

Second Sunday of Advent

Matthew 3:1–12	John calls for repentance: prepare the way of the Lord.	
Sermon prompt:	It is our turn to turn. John calls us to repent (turn around) and prepare the way of the Lord. In what ways do we need to repent in relation to poverty, racism and vitality? How might we prepare the way for the coming of God’s new realm of justice, peace and righteousness?	
Featured hymns:	Wild and Lone the Prophet’s Voice	GTG 163
	Freedom Is Coming	GTG 359
	For the Troubles and the Sufferings	GTG 764

Matthew 11:[1] 2–11 [12–15]	Jesus praises John, the messenger who has prepared the way.	
Sermon prompt:	Has the time finally come? Jesus describes signs that the kingdom of God has indeed come near: healing, new life and good news for the poor. Have you seen signs of God’s realm with respect to racism, vitality and poverty? Are we ready? What are we waiting for?	
Featured hymns:	While We Are Waiting, Come	GTG 92
	Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn	GTG 107
	Heaven Shall Not Wait	GTG 773

Matthew 1:18–25	Mary is with child; an angel visits Joseph; Jesus is “God with us.”	
Sermon prompt:	Jesus is “Emmanuel,” God with us. What difference does Jesus make in building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism and eradicating systemic poverty? By responding to these concerns, how might the church proclaim to the world that God is with us in Jesus?	
Featured hymns:	Love Has Come	GTG 110
	O Little Town of Bethlehem	GTG 120
	He Came Down	GTG 137

All hymns, psalms and spiritual songs are from *Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2013). For more ideas, see the *Book of Common Worship* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2018) and *Call to Worship: Liturgy, Music, Preaching, and the Arts* (pcusa.org/calltoworship).

The *Book of Common Worship* includes Opening Sentences, Prayers of the Day, Lighting the Advent Candles, Litany for Advent (O Antiphons), Thanksgiving for Baptism, Confession and Pardon (3), Prayer for Illumination, Response to Readings (3), Ascription of Praise, Prayers of Intercession (4), Invitation to the Offering (3), Invitation to the Lord’s Table, Great Thanksgiving (2), Prayer after Communion (3), Prayer of Thanksgiving, Blessing and Charge (3), and Chalking the Doors; see pp. 187–210.

Call to Worship 53.1 (Year A, 2019–2020) includes Confession and Pardon, Thanksgiving for Baptism, Prayer for Illumination, Response to Readings, Ascription of Praise, Affirmation of Faith, Invitation to Offering, Prayer after Communion, Blessing and Charge, Candle Litanies, Seasonal Hymns, Anthems for Children’s Choirs, Anthems for Youth Choirs, Piano Music, Instrumental Music, Opening Sentences, Prayer of Confession, Hymns for the Day, Psalm Settings, Anthems for Adult Choirs, Handbell Music, and Organ Music; see pp. 8–21.

Season of Christmas



“Christmas” (from Christ-mass) is the church’s celebration of the incarnation and nativity of Jesus Christ. At the Nativity of the Lord and throughout the season of Christmas we give thanks that, in the fullness of time, God’s Word became flesh to live among us, full of grace and truth. We proclaim this good news of great joy for all people: that God has sent us a Savior, the Messiah, the Lord. We bear witness to the light of Christ that has come into the world, the light that darkness cannot overcome.

As with Easter, Christmas refers not only to a single day, but to a whole season of celebration in the Christian year. The season of Christmas spans the twelve days between the Nativity of the Lord (December 25) and the Epiphany of the Lord (January 6). Traditionally, the first service of Christmas takes place on the eve of the Nativity of the Lord. Depending on the year, one or two Sundays fall within the season of Christmas; on these Sundays we continue to rejoice in the wondrous gift of Emmanuel — God with us in Jesus Christ. (Excerpted from the Book of Common Worship (WJK, 2018), p. 187)

Note: Several of the RCL readings in Christmas are from the Gospels of Luke and John. For congregations wishing to focus on the Gospel of Matthew, alternate readings are provided, with the exception of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas Day).

Christmas Focus: God with Us — three weeks (12 days)

Matthew’s Gospel begins with the announcement that the child born to Mary will be “Emmanuel,” God with us (Matt. 1:23). And it ends with Jesus’ promise that “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). Between these bookends, Matthew shares the faith-shaping, world-changing story of Jesus’ birth, life, death and resurrection.

The season of Christmas is a time to dwell in the wonder and mystery of Christ’s incarnation — the gift of God’s Word made flesh among us, full of grace and truth. Concerns about systemic poverty, structural racism and congregational vitality may seem distant from the minds of many worshipers, and discordant with the festive nature of the season. However, for many children of God these are inescapable realities and ever-present struggles.

The preaching and music suggestions in this resource pick up where we left off on the fourth week of Advent: celebrating the gift of God with us in Jesus, “Emmanuel.” In comparison with the ideas provided for Advent, this span of weeks deals less directly with matters of poverty, racism and vitality; however, it seeks to establish theological foundations that are essential to a year with Matthew and critical to the church’s mission of righteousness, justice and peace.

Tuesday, Dec. 24

Christmas Eve

Luke 2:1–14 (15–20) <i>alt: Matthew 1:1–17</i>	Jesus is born in Bethlehem; angels tell shepherds the good news. <i>The genealogy of Jesus from Abraham through David to Joseph</i>	
Sermon prompt:	Matthew’s Gospel begins with Jesus’ family tree, the account of 42 generations from Abraham to David to Babylon to the Messiah. The God of our ancestors — indeed, of all history — has come to dwell with us. This is truly “good news of great joy for all” (Luke 2:10).	
Featured hymns:	O Come, O Come, Emmanuel Hark! The Herald Angels Sing Once in Royal David’s City	GTG 88 GTG 127 GTG 140

Since congregations are less likely to hold a separate service on Christmas Day (Nativity of the Lord), the suggestions for Christmas Eve are repeated in the next section. Note: This resource approaches the season of Christmas as an opportunity for “focus” rather than a “series,” and features important readings from sources other than the Gospel of Matthew. There are two reasons for this approach. First, worship planners are advised to resist making this time in the Christian year too programmatic, focusing instead on the key mystery of faith we proclaim — Christ’s incarnation and nativity. Second, leaders will recognize that Christmas is a time when congregations see a higher number of visitors, extended family members and occasional worshipers who are less likely to appreciate a longer series of services or sermons.

Wednesday, Dec. 25**Nativity of the Lord**

Luke 2:(1–7) 8–20	To you is born this day a Savior, the Messiah, the Lord.	
John 1:1–14	The Word of God became flesh and lived among us.	
Sermon prompt:	<i>See Dec. 24, Christmas Eve</i>	
Featured hymns:	O Come, O Come, Emmanuel	GTG 88
	Hark! The Herald Angels Sing	GTG 127
	Once in Royal David's City	GTG 140

Sunday, Dec. 29**First Sunday of Christmas**

Matthew 2:13–23	Joseph and Mary flee to Egypt to escape persecution from Herod.	
Sermon prompt:	Matthew's Gospel is distinctive in its treatment of Mary, Joseph and Jesus as political refugees, situating their story in the context of an act of genocide. This is in stark contrast to the message of Epiphany (Matt. 2:1–12): that Jesus is good news for the people of all nations.	
Featured hymns:	In Bethlehem a Newborn Boy	GTG 153
	Jesus Entered Egypt	GTG 154
	Where Armies Scourge the Countryside	GTG 344

Since congregations are unlikely to hold a separate service for Epiphany, which occurs on a Monday in 2020, this resource transfers the RCL reading from Matthew 2 to the previous Sunday and connects it with the theme of the reading from the Gospel of John.

Sunday, Jan. 5, 2020**Second Sunday of Christmas**

John 1:(1–9) 10–18	Those who trust in Christ have the power to become children of God.	
<i>alt: Matthew 2:1–12</i>	<i>Following a star, wise men visit Jesus and bring him gifts.</i>	
Sermon prompt:	John's Gospel tells us that anyone who has faith in Jesus Christ will be claimed as a beloved child of God. Matthew's Gospel shows us this truth — sharing the story of wise travelers from far beyond the land of Judah, who nevertheless come to adore the newborn king.	
Featured hymns:	On This Day, Earth Shall Ring	GTG 141
	'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime	GTG 142
	What Star Is This	GTG 152

Monday, Jan. 6**Epiphany of the Lord**

Matthew 2:1–12	Following a star, wise men visit Jesus and bring him gifts.	
Sermon prompt:	<i>See Jan. 5, Second Sunday of Christmas</i>	
Featured hymns:	On This Day, Earth Shall Ring	GTG 141
	'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime	GTG 142
	What Star Is This	GTG 152

All hymns, psalms and spiritual songs are from *Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2013). For more ideas, see the *Book of Common Worship* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2018) and *Call to Worship: Liturgy, Music, Preaching, and the Arts* (pcusa.org/calltoworship).

The *Book of Common Worship* includes Opening Sentences, Prayers of the Day, Lighting the Advent Candles, Litany for Advent (O Antiphons), Thanksgiving for Baptism, Confession and Pardon (3), Prayer for Illumination, Response to Readings (3), Ascription of Praise, Prayers of Intercession (4), Invitation to the Offering (3), Invitation to the Lord's Table, Great Thanksgiving (2), Prayer after Communion (3), Prayer of Thanksgiving, and Blessing and Charge (3), as well as Las Posadas and Lessons and Carols; see pp. 163–186.

Call to Worship 53.1 (Year A, 2019–2020) includes Confession and Pardon, Thanksgiving for Baptism, Prayer for Illumination, Response to Readings, Ascription of Praise, Affirmation of Faith, Invitation to Offering, Prayer after Communion, Blessing and Charge, Seasonal Hymns, Anthems for Children's Choirs, Anthems for Youth Choirs, Piano Music, Instrumental Music, Opening Sentences, Prayer of Confession, Hymns for the Day, Psalm Settings, Anthems for Adult Choirs, Handbell Music, and Organ Music; see pp. 22–35.

Time after Epiphany

The Sundays after Epiphany are sometimes called Ordinary Time — not because they are routine or mundane, but because their primary rhythm has to do with following the Sundays “in order.” Indeed, each Sunday is a celebration of Christ’s resurrection from the dead on the first day of the week, and it is this holy mystery that animates, renews, and transforms our life of faith. These Sundays are bracketed by festivals that concern the identity of Jesus Christ: Baptism of the Lord and Transfiguration of the Lord; according to the Gospels, at each of these events a voice from heaven claims Jesus as God’s beloved Son. The RCL readings for the time after Epiphany highlight the themes of Christian vocation, discipleship, and community. (Excerpted from the Book of Common Worship (WJK, 2018), p. 211.)

Winter Series: Discipleship — seven weeks

Matthew’s Gospel begins with the announcement that the child born to Mary will be “Emmanuel,” God with us (Matt. 1:23). And it ends with Jesus’ promise that “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). Between these bookends, Matthew shares the faith-shaping, world-changing story of Jesus’ birth, life, death and resurrection.

The season of Christmas is a time to dwell in the wonder and mystery of Christ’s incarnation — the gift of God’s Word made flesh among us, full of grace and truth. Concerns about systemic poverty, structural racism and congregational vitality may seem distant from the minds of many worshipers, and discordant with the festive nature of the season. However, for many children of God these are inescapable realities and ever-present struggles.

The preaching and music suggestions in this resource pick up where we left off on the fourth week of Advent: celebrating the gift of God with us in Jesus, “Emmanuel.” In comparison with the ideas provided for Advent, this span of weeks deals less directly with matters of poverty, racism and vitality; however, it seeks to establish theological foundations that are essential to a year with Matthew and critical to the church’s mission of righteousness, justice and peace.

Sunday, Jan. 12

Baptism of the Lord

Matthew 3:13–17	Jesus is baptized; the Spirit descends; a voice says: This is my Son.	
Sermon prompt:	Where does discipleship begin? In each of the Gospels, Jesus’ ministry begins at his baptism, where he is claimed as God’s beloved child and anointed with the gifts of the Spirit. The same is true for us. Baptism is the beginning of a lifelong journey of discipleship in Jesus’ name.	
Featured hymns:	Sing of God Made Manifest	GTG 156
	Down Galilee’s Slow Roadways	GTG 164
	Wonder of Wonders, Here Revealed	GTG 489

Sunday, Jan. 19

Epiphany 2

John 1:29–42 <i>alt: Matthew 14:1–12</i>	Joseph and Mary flee to Egypt to escape persecution from Herod. <i>John the Baptist is beheaded by Herod.</i>	
Sermon prompt:	What is the cost of discipleship? John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus’ coming; he was later beheaded for challenging Herod (Matt. 14). Andrew and Simon (Peter) were the first disciples called by Jesus (John 1); according to early church tradition, they were both crucified.	
Featured hymns:	Take Up Your Cross, the Savior Said	GTG 718
	Rejoice in God’s Saints	GTG 732
	Precious Lord, Take My Hand	GTG 834

Sunday, Jan. 26

Epiphany 3

Matthew 4:12–23 [24–25]	Jesus calls four disciples: Follow me, and you will fish for people.	
Sermon prompt:	How do you fish for people? Sometimes discipleship is like “casting a net into the sea” (Matt. 4:18) — reaching out in new forms of ministry. At other times it may mean “mending our nets” (Matt. 4:21) — tending to the relationships and communities that sustain our service.	
Featured hymns:	You Walk along Our Shoreline	GTG 170
	Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore	GTG 721
	From the Nets of Our Labor	GTG 751

Sunday, Feb. 2**Epiphany 4**

Matthew 5:1–12	Jesus begins his Sermon on the Mount with the Beatitudes.	
Sermon prompt:	What does it mean to be blessed? The Beatitudes suggest that, like Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 12:1–3), we are blessed in order to be a blessing to others. This is a fitting vocation for Christian disciples — baptized into the life of Jesus, in whom God is “well pleased.”	
Featured hymns:	Blest Are They	GTG 172
	For the Healing of the Nations	GTG 346
	Make Me a Channel of Your Peace	GTG 753

Sunday, Feb. 9**Epiphany 5**

Matthew 5:13–20	Jesus says: You are salt and light; I have come to fulfill the law.	
Sermon prompt:	How do you recognize a disciple? Jesus says we are called to be like salt, seasoning the world with goodness, and like light, shining for all to see. This is how we fulfill the law and follow God’s way. This is how others can “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps. 34:8).	
Featured hymns:	Take Us as We Are, O God	GTG 312
	Here in This Place	GTG 401
	Taste and See	GTG 520

Sunday, Feb. 16**Epiphany 6**

Matthew 5:21–37	Jesus interprets the laws on murder, adultery and making vows.	
Sermon prompt:	What is the purpose of God’s law? The law can be a mirror: revealing our sin in contrast to God’s holiness. The law can be a fence: restraining us from evil and keeping order in society. For Christian disciples, the law is also a sign: guiding us in a life of faithfulness.	
Featured hymns:	I Long for Your Commandments	GTG 64
	Where Charity and Love Prevail	GTG 316
	Before I Take the Body of My Lord	GTG 428

Sunday, Feb. 23**Transfiguration of the Lord**

Matthew 17:1–9 [10–23]	On a high mountain with Moses and Elijah, Jesus is transfigured.	
Sermon prompt:	How can we see God’s glory? The disciples glimpsed it in the face of Jesus Christ on the mountain of transfiguration. The early church leader Irenaeus said we can see it in “a human being fully alive.” To live into our calling as Jesus’ disciples is to shine with God’s glory.	
Featured hymns:	Swiftly Pass the Clouds of Glory	GTG 190
	Lord, the Light of Your Love Is Shining	GTG 192
	Jesus, Take Us to the Mountain	GTG 193

All hymns, psalms and spiritual songs are from *Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2013). For more ideas, see the *Book of Common Worship* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2018) and *Call to Worship: Liturgy, Music, Preaching, and the Arts* (pcusa.org/calltoworship).

The *Book of Common Worship* includes Opening Sentences, Prayers of the Day, Lighting the Advent Candles, Lullaby for Baptism of the Lord, Litany for Transfiguration of the Lord, Thanksgiving for Baptism (2), Confession and Pardon (2), Prayer for Illumination (2), Response to Readings (2), Prayers of Intercession (2), Great Thanksgiving (3), Prayer after Communion (2), Prayer of Thanksgiving (2); see pp. 211–232.

Call to Worship 53.1 (Year A, 2019–2020) includes Confession and Pardon, Thanksgiving for Baptism, Prayer for Illumination, Response to Readings, Ascription of Praise, Affirmation of Faith, Invitation to Offering, Prayer after Communion, Blessing and Charge, Seasonal Hymns, Anthems for Children’s Choirs, Anthems for Youth Choirs, Piano Music, Opening Sentences, Prayer of Confession, Hymns for the Day, Psalm Settings, Anthems for Adult Choirs, Handbell Music, and Organ Music; see pp. 36–53.

Season of Lent



“Lent” comes from an old English word for springtime, perhaps connected with the lengthening of days in this time of the year in the Northern Hemisphere. The season of Lent is a time for growth in faith—through prayer, spiritual discipline, and self-examination in preparation for the commemoration of the dying and rising of the Lord Jesus Christ. In ancient Christian practice, Lent was a time of preparation for the celebration of Baptism at Easter. In many churches, it remains a time to equip and nurture candidates for Baptism or confirmation, and for the whole community of faith to reflect deeply on the theme of baptismal discipleship. Reconciliation is a key theme in the season of Lent — reconciliation with God and with one another through the grace of Jesus Christ.

Lent is a period of forty days — like the flood of Genesis, Moses’ sojourn at Sinai, Elijah’s journey to Mount Horeb, Jonah’s call of repentance to Nineveh, and Jesus’ time of testing in the wilderness. The Sundays in Lent are not counted among the forty days, as every Lord’s Day is a celebration of Christ’s resurrection. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday and concludes at sunset on Holy Saturday, at the start of the Great Vigil of Easter. (Excerpted from the Book of Common Worship (WJK, 2018), p. 233.)

Note that the RCL features a series of readings from John in Lent Year A; these are texts that have been important in Christian catechesis. For congregations wishing to focus on the Gospel of Matthew, alternate readings are provided.

Lenten Series: Called to Die — six weeks (40 days plus Sundays)

As Jesus’ journey leads to Jerusalem, he tells his disciples three times about his coming death and resurrection (Matt. 16:21–23; 17:22–23; 20:17–19). Not surprisingly, they are greatly disturbed by this news. They have left everything to follow this teacher. They know that their own fate is bound up with that of their Savior and Lord.

If we are to be faithful disciples of the crucified and risen Lord, we too must face this consequence of our faith. Following Jesus means taking up the cross. As Jesus taught, “those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it” (Matt. 16:25). This is the nature of our Lenten journey, the deep and costly calling of the gospel.

The 40 days of Lent are an opportunity to ponder this paradox and wrestle with these questions. What do we need to give up in order to take up the life of discipleship? What do we need to confess and lament in order to move toward reconciliation with God and one another?

The preaching and music suggestions in this six-week series invite us, as communities of faith and individual believers, to consider how we too are “called to die” . . . to sin and evil, power and privilege, status and security, false idols and fear. Dying to these things will help us live into the Matthew 25 vision.

Wednesday, Feb. 26

Ash Wednesday

Matthew 6:1–6,
[7–17] 16–21 [22–23]

Don’t flaunt your fasting and prayer; store up treasure in heaven.

Sermon prompt:

Where is your heart? In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warns us: “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:21). Lent is an invitation to examine our own hearts and return to the heart of our faith — dying to sin and evil and rising to life in Christ.

Featured hymns:

Son of God, Whose Heart Is Peace	GTG 425
Search Me, O God	GTG 426
Jesus Knows the Inmost Heart	GTG 427

Sunday, March 1**First Sunday in Lent**

Matthew 4:1–11	Jesus spends 40 days in the wilderness and is tested by the devil.	
Sermon prompt:	Jesus faces three tests in the wilderness. In this year with Matthew 25, we might ask: How are we tempted to deny God’s providence (systemic poverty), to rely on power and privilege (structural racism), or to worship things other than God (congregational vitality)?	
Featured hymns:	Lord, Who throughout These Forty Days	GTG 166
	Seek Ye First	GTG 175
	When We Are Tested	GTG 783

Sunday, March 8**Second Sunday in Lent**

John 3:1–17 <i>alt: Matthew 12:38–50</i>	Those who seek God’s kingdom must be born of water and Spirit. <i>The sign of Jonah. Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?</i>	
Sermon prompt:	[racism] Jesus challenges us to rethink our ideas about birthright and family allegiances. Whether in his conversation with Nicodemus (John 3) or the crowds (Matt. 12), Jesus describes new relationships in God. What does this suggest about dismantling structural racism?	
Featured hymns:	Wash, O God, Your Sons and Daughters	GTG 490
	Now There Is No Male or Female	GTG 493
	O God, We Bear the Imprint	GTG 759

Sunday, March 15**Third Sunday in Lent**

John 4:5–42 <i>alt: Matthew 19:[1–15] 16–30</i>	Those who seek God’s kingdom must be born of water and Spirit. <i>The rich young man; for God all things are possible.</i>	
Sermon prompt:	[poverty] Ironically, the rich young ruler asks Jesus, “What do still I lack?” (Matt. 19:20). The problem, of course, is that he has too much. In the realm of God, the first will be last and the last will be first. We must learn to depend on the overflowing grace of God (cf. John 4:14).	
Featured hymns:	Take My Life	GTG 697
	I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me	GTG 700
	When the Poor Ones	GTG 762

Sunday, March 22**Fourth Sunday in Lent**

John 9:1–41 <i>alt: Matthew 20:17–34</i>	Jesus heals a man born blind; the Pharisees question him about sin. <i>The sons of Zebedee; healing two blind men.</i>	
Sermon prompt:	[vitality] Who can really claim to see what God is doing? In each of these Gospel stories, those who are dismissed as blind seem to have more insight. What assumptions do we make about people outside the church? How have we failed to see what God is doing with them?	
Featured hymns:	Be Thou My Vision	GTG 450
	Open My Eyes, That I May See	GTG 451
	Open the Eyes of My Heart, Lord	GTG 452

Sunday, March 29**Fifth Sunday in Lent**

John 11:1–45 <i>alt: Matthew 26:1–13</i>	Jesus, the resurrection and the life, raises Lazarus from the dead. <i>A woman anoints Jesus; a dispute about the poor.</i>	
Sermon prompt:	The anointing at Bethany (Matt. 26) and the raising of Lazarus (John 11) strongly foreshadow the great mystery of faith we are preparing to commemorate at Holy Week. How does the church’s work around poverty, racism and congregational vitality lead us to Christ’s cross?	
Featured hymns:	A Prophet-Woman Broke a Jar	GTG 201
	God Weeps with Us Who Weep and Mourn	GTG 787
	Why Has God Forsaken Me	GTG 809

Sunday, April 5
Palm/Passion Sunday (Sixth Sunday in Lent)

Matthew 21:1–11	Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey; the people shout: Hosanna!	
Matthew 26:14–27:66	After the Passover meal, Jesus is betrayed, tried and crucified.	
Sermon prompt:	On Palm/Passion Sunday the Scriptures speak for themselves (and at some length). The irony of the Lenten season culminates in Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The call to die leads to Gethsemane and Golgotha. A brief homily, if any, will suffice to connect the dots.	
Featured hymns:	All Glory, Laud, and Honor	GTG 196
	Hosanna, Loud Hosanna	GTG 197
	Filled with Excitement	GTG 199
	O Sacred Head, Now Wounded	GTG 221
	When I Survey the Wondrous Cross	GTG 223, 224
	Were You There	GTG 228

All hymns, psalms and spiritual songs are from *Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2003). For more ideas, see the *Book of Common Worship* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2018) and *Call to Worship: Liturgy, Music, Preaching, and the Arts* (pcusa.org/calltoworship).

The *Book of Common Worship* includes Opening Sentences, Prayers of the Day, Litany for Lent (2), Thanksgiving for Baptism, Confession and Pardon (3), Prayer for Illumination, Response to Readings (3), Ascription of Praise (3), Prayers of Intercession (4), Invitation to the Offering (3), Invitation to the Lord's Table, Great Thanksgiving (3), Prayer after Communion (3), Prayer of Thanksgiving, and Blessing and Charge (3), as well as full orders of worship for Ash Wednesday and Palm/Passion Sunday; see pp. 233–271.

Call to Worship 53.1 (Year A, 2019–2020) includes Confession and Pardon, Thanksgiving for Baptism, Prayer for Illumination, Response to Readings, Ascription of Praise, Affirmation of Faith, Invitation to Offering, Prayer after Communion, Blessing and Charge, Seasonal Hymns, Anthems for Children's Choirs, Anthems for Youth Choirs, Piano Music, Instrumental Music, Opening Sentences, Prayer of Confession, Hymns for the Day, Psalms Settings, Anthems for Adult Choirs, Handbell Music, and Organ Music; see pp. 54–76.

The Three Days

The liturgy for the Three Days proclaims one dramatic story in three acts. The events of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Great Vigil of Easter are best understood as one service, unfolding over the course of three days. Through this profound and transforming experience at the heart of the Christian year, we are immersed in the holy mystery of Christ's death and resurrection and the great story of God's saving love. (Excerpted from the Book of Common Worship (WJK, 2018), p. 233.)

Note that the RCL highlights readings from John's Gospel.

Triduum Focus: The Heart of the Gospel — three days

The Three Days — Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil — are an annual opportunity for the church to reflect on the heart of the gospel and experience the mystery of our faith: the dying and rising of the Lord Jesus Christ.

These preaching and music suggestions examine Matthew 25 priorities in light of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. They seek to situate the missional emphases of eradicating systemic poverty, dismantling structural racism and building congregational vitality within the great story of salvation history and the holy mystery of God's self-giving love in Jesus Christ.

Thursday, April 9

Maundy Thursday

John 13:1–17, 31b–35	Jesus washes the disciples' feet and gives a new commandment.	
Sermon prompt:	"Maundy" Thursday takes its name from the Latin word for commandment (mandatum), referring to Jesus' call to love one another as he has loved us. How are the church's ministries around poverty, racism and vitality a response to Christ's call to love and service?	
Featured hymns:	An Upper Room Did Our Lord Prepare	GTG 202
	Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love	GTG 203
	Sharing Paschal Bread and Wine	GTG 207

Friday, April 10

Good Friday

John 18:1—19:42	Jesus is arrested, put on trial, crucified and buried.	
Sermon prompt:	Good Friday is called "good" because it proclaims God's great love for the world, revealed in Jesus Christ. From the cross, Jesus reaches out to embrace the world with this great love. How might the church's work on vitality, racism and poverty be a sign of such love?	
Featured hymns:	They Crucified My Lord	GTG 219
	Rejected and Despised	GTG 222
	There in God's Garden	GTG 226

Note: This resource approaches Holy Week as an opportunity for "focus" rather than a "series," and features important readings from sources other than the Gospel of Matthew. There are two reasons for this approach. First, worship planners are advised to resist making this time in the Christian year too programmatic, focusing instead on the key mystery of faith we proclaim — Christ's death and resurrection. Second, leaders will recognize that Holy Week is a time when congregations see a higher number of visitors, extended family members and occasional worshippers who are less likely to appreciate a longer series of services or sermons.

Saturday, April 11

Great Vigil of Easter

John 20:1–18	At the empty tomb, the risen Lord appears to Mary Magdalene.	
Sermon prompt:	The Great Vigil of Easter stands at the threshold of Lent and Easter, death and life. We remember God’s saving love through history. We anticipate the dawn of a new creation. Where do you see God at work around racism, poverty and vitality in the great story of salvation?	
Featured hymns:	Joyful Is the Dark	GTG 230
	Christ Has Risen While Earth Slumbers	GTG 231
	Lift High the Cross	GTG 826

All hymns, psalms and spiritual songs are from *Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2013). For more ideas, see the *Book of Common Worship* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2018) and *Call to Worship: Liturgy, Music, Preaching, and the Arts* (pcusa.org/calltoworship).

The *Book of Common Worship* includes full orders of worship for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Great Vigil of Easter, as well as additional texts for the Solemn Reproaches of the Cross and Easter Proclamation, and resources for Seven Last Words and Tenebrae; see pp. 272–315.

Call to Worship 53.1 (Year A, 2019–2020) includes Confession and Pardon, Thanksgiving for Baptism, Prayer for Illumination, Response to Readings, Ascription of Praise, Affirmation of Faith, Invitation to Offering, Prayer after Communion, Blessing and Charge, Seasonal Hymns, Anthems for Children’s Choirs, Anthems for Youth Choirs, Piano Music, Instrumental Music, Opening Sentences, Prayer of Confession, Hymns for the Day, Psalms Settings, Anthems for Adult Choirs, Handbell Music, and Organ Music; see pp. 54–93.

Season of Easter

“Easter” comes from an old English word related to dawn and shining. At Easter we stand in the light of the resurrection to see a new creation, transformed by the grace and glory of God. We celebrate the presence and power of the risen Christ in his church, proclaiming his good news through Word and Sacrament. We rejoice in the gift of the Holy Spirit, who is the “Lord and giver of life.” In the fullest sense, Easter is a new way of life, in which we are “dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11); for this reason, it is an especially appropriate time to celebrate the sacrament of Baptism.

As with Christmas, Easter refers not only to a single day, but to a whole season of celebration in the Christian year. The season of Easter spans the fifty days between the Resurrection of the Lord and the Day of Pentecost, and encompasses the Ascension of the Lord. Traditionally, the first service of Easter takes place on the eve of the Resurrection of the Lord with the Great Vigil of Easter. The seven weeks of the Easter season make up a “week of weeks” (seven times seven): A symbol in time of the fullness and abundance of God’s grace. In ancient practice, fasting and kneeling were forbidden during the weeks of Easter. In this most joyful season, we celebrate the great mystery of our faith—that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. (Excerpted from the Book of Common Worship (WJK, 2018), p. 233.)

Note that the RCL features a series of readings from John in Lent Year A; these are texts that have been important in Christian catechesis. For congregations wishing to focus on the Gospel of Matthew, alternate readings are provided.

Easter Series: Called to Live — eight weeks (50 days)

“... into eternal life” (Matt. 25:46). These are the final words of Matthew 25 — concluding the fifth “book” of Matthew’s Gospel, patterned after the five books of Moses. Just as Deuteronomy ends with Moses’ benediction to the people of Israel, the story of Jesus’ life and ministry ends with Jesus’ blessing for those who recognize him among the “least of these.”

During the 50 days of Easter, the church practices resurrection. We live into God’s promise of new creation and beloved community. We celebrate Christ’s invitation to abundant and everlasting life. We look for the risen Lord in the faces of everyone we meet — particularly among people who are hungry and thirsty, strangers or naked, sick or in prison.

The preaching and music suggestions in this eight-week series are all organized around questions. In the six weeks between the Resurrection of the Lord and the Day of Pentecost, there are pairs of questions related to congregational vitality, systemic poverty and structural racism — provided to inspire deeper reflection and action around Matthew 25 themes in the context of the Easter season.

Sunday, April 12

Resurrection of the Lord

Matthew 28:1–10	Women find Jesus’ tomb empty; he has been raised from the dead.	
Sermon prompt:	What does it mean to believe in resurrection? For Christians, this is our joyful affirmation that Jesus is risen from the dead. But it is also our call to a new way of life, a new orientation for the people of God. We believe that God is still working to bring new life to the world.	
Featured hymns:	Jesus Christ Is Risen Today Christ Is Alive! Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia	GTG 232 GTG 246 GTG 251

Sunday, April 19

Second Sunday of Easter

John 20:19–31 alt: Matthew 15:29–39	Jesus spends 40 days in the wilderness and is tested by the devil. <i>Jesus heals crowds and feeds a multitude.</i>	
Sermon prompt:	[vitality] What are the marks of a vital congregation? (Part One.) John 20 reveals that vitality involves the work of the Holy Spirit, forgiveness and trust in Christ. Matthew 15 suggests that vitality means a ministry of healing and sharing God’s abundant grace.	
Featured hymns:	Alleluia! Christ Is Arisen These Things Did Thomas Count as Real The Risen Christ	GTG 253 GTG 256 GTG 257



Sunday, April 26

Third Sunday in Easter

Luke 24:13–35 <i>alt: Matthew 16:1–12</i>	On the road to Emmaus, two disciples meet the risen Lord. <i>Disputes with the scribes and Pharisees.</i>	
Sermon prompt:	[vitality] What are the marks of a vital congregation? (Part Two.) Luke 24 teaches us that vitality involves recognizing the presence and action of Christ among strangers. Matthew 16 invites us to consider the “sign of Jonah” — a call to repentance, death and resurrection.	
Featured hymns:	Day of Arising	GTG 252
	Hallelujah! We Sing Your Praises	GTG 538
	You Are Holy, You Are Whole	GTG 596

Sunday, May 3

Fourth Sunday in Easter

John 10:1–10 <i>alt: Matthew 18:1–14</i>	Jesus says: I am the gate for the sheep; enter by me and be saved. <i>Welcoming little ones; the shepherd and the sheep</i>	
Sermon prompt:	[poverty] What does abundant life look like? (Part One.) John 10 says that it means trusting the shepherd’s voice, rather than thieves and bandits who kill and destroy. Matthew 18 connects heavenly life with welcoming all, eliminating stumbling blocks and seeking out the lost.	
Featured hymns:	Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us7	GTG 187
	Shepherd Me, O God	GTG 473
	My Shepherd Will Supply My Need	GTG 803

Sunday, May 10

Fifth Sunday in Easter

John 14:1–14 <i>alt: Matthew 12:1–21</i>	Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; he prepares a place for us. <i>Disputes about the sabbath: picking grain and healing a man’s hand.</i>	
Sermon prompt:	[poverty] What does abundant life look like? (Part Two.) John 14 promises that there are many dwelling places in the house of God, where Jesus makes room. Matthew 12 shows how Jesus came to provide for human flourishing — feeding, healing and serving others.	
Featured hymns:	Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather	GTG 311
	This Is My Father’s World	GTG 370
	Lord, Prepare Me	GTG 701

Sunday, May 17

Sixth Sunday in Easter

John 14:15–21 <i>alt: Matthew 21:12–22</i>	Jesus says: the Father will send the Spirit, who will abide in you. <i>Jesus cleanses the temple and curses a fig tree.</i>	
Sermon prompt:	[racism] Where do we see love in action? (Part One.) John 14 underscores Jesus’ new commandment to love one another in the name and image of the triune God. Matthew 21 demonstrates that love in action means rooting out corruption and bearing good fruit.	
Featured hymns:	We Are One in the Spirit	GTG 300
	Lord, I Want to Be a Christian	GTG 729
	Somos el Cuerpo de Cristo	GTG 768

Thursday, May 21

Ascension of the Lord

Luke 24:44–53 <i>alt: Matthew 24:1–35</i>	Jesus interprets the Scriptures; then he is carried up into heaven. <i>Signs of Christ’s coming and the end of the age</i>	
Sermon prompt:	Where is Jesus now? The story of Christ’s ascension is sometimes misunderstood as his absence; the point is that Christ is sovereign, interceding for us. Especially in Easter, we celebrate the power and presence of the risen Christ with the church at work in the world.	
Featured hymns:	Jesus Shall Reign Where’er the Sun	GTG 265
	He Is King of Kings	GTG 273
	You, Lord, Are Both Lamb and Shepherd	GTG 274

Sunday, May 24**Seventh Sunday of Easter**

John 17:1–11 <i>alt: Matthew 22:23–33</i>	Jesus seeks the glory of God and prays for his disciples. <i>A question about marriage and resurrection.</i>	
Sermon prompt:	[racism] Where do we see love in action? (Part Two.) John 17 describes how Jesus has given the mission of God’s reconciling love to the church. Matthew 22 indicates that, “in the resurrection,” former relationships will be transformed by the power of the living God.	
Featured hymns:	Glory to God The Church’s One Foundation In My Life	GTG 585 GTG 321 GTG 468

Sunday, May 31**Day of Pentecost (Eighth Sunday of Easter)**

John 20:19–23 <i>or John 7:37–39</i> <i>alt: Matthew 12:22–37</i>	The risen Lord appears to the disciples and gives them the Spirit. Jesus promises the Spirit: living water from the believer’s heart. <i>TJesus casts out a demon; he does this by the power of the Spirit.</i>	
Sermon prompt:	Got Spirit? The church’s witness and work toward eradicating systemic poverty, dismantling structural racism and building congregational vitality utterly depends on the work of the Holy Spirit. But here is the good news of the gospel: It is the Spirit who has us.	
Featured hymns:	Come, O Holy Spirit, Come Gracious Spirit, Heed Our Pleading As the Wind Song	GTG 283 GTG 287 GTG 292

All hymns, psalms and spiritual songs are from *Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2013). For more ideas, see the *Book of Common Worship* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2018) and *Call to Worship: Liturgy, Music, Preaching, and the Arts* (pcusa.org/calltoworship).

The *Book of Common Worship* includes Opening Sentences, Prayers of the Day, Prayer of Adoration (2), Litany for Easter (2), Litany for Ascension of the Lord, Litany for Pentecost (2) Thanksgiving for Baptism (2), Confession and Pardon (5), Prayer for Illumination (3), Response to Readings (5), Ascription of Praise (3), Prayers of Intercession (5), Invitation to the Offering (3), Invitation to the Lord’s Table, Great Thanksgiving (4), Prayer after Communion (5), Prayer of Thanksgiving (3), and Blessing and Charge (3); see pp. 316–351.

Call to Worship 53.1 (Year A, 2019–2020) includes Confession and Pardon, Thanksgiving for Baptism, Prayer for Illumination, Response to Readings, Ascription of Praise, Affirmation of Faith, Invitation to Offering, Prayer after Communion, Blessing and Charge, Seasonal Hymns, Anthems for Children’s Choirs, Anthems for Youth Choirs, Piano Music, Instrumental Music, Opening Sentences, Prayer of Confession, Hymns for the Day, Psalm Settings, Anthems for Adult Choirs, Handbell Music, and Organ Music; see pp. 86–113.

Please note: This document includes the first half of the Christian year, Advent through Pentecost. The second half, Trinity Sunday through Reign of Christ, will be provided as soon as it is available. Watch pcusa.org/matthew25 for updated content.



Seven Ways to Read the Gospel of Matthew

The Gospels — Matthew, Mark, Luke and John — were written by early Christians because they wanted future generations to know Jesus and trust in him as Savior and Lord. The Matthew 25 movement of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) offers us an occasion to encounter Jesus again through the story of Matthew’s Gospel: to reaffirm our faith in his saving grace, remember his way of righteousness, justice and peace, and recommit ourselves to his mission in the world.

Here are seven ways to read the Gospel of Matthew in the coming year.

Options 1–2 offer suggestions for encountering the Gospel of Matthew as a whole, from start to finish.

- 1. Personal reading, in a single sitting.** Read the Gospel of Matthew as you would a short novel. This is an excellent opportunity for growth in faith and discipleship: immersing yourself in the whole narrative arc of Jesus’ birth, life, death and resurrection. It would be a good activity for a silent retreat. Pray for God’s insight before reading and allow some time afterwards for reflection. The reading itself will take approximately 1½ to two hours.
- 2. Public reading, at a congregational event.** This resource provides a way to experience the Gospel of Matthew with other members of your congregation (see Emmanuel: God with Us). This approach puts the story of Jesus in a communal context, building relationships around the themes of Scripture. It would be a good activity for a church retreat or weekend event. Pray for illumination before reading and allow some time afterwards for discussion. Reading Matthew aloud will take approximately 2½ to three hours.

Options 3–6 may be used in coordination with the resources for daily prayer found in the Book of Common Worship — Daily Prayer edition (WJK, 2018) or the PC(USA) Daily Prayer app (pcusa.org/dailyprayer):

- 3. In a week, at daily prayer.** Read the Gospel of Matthew in one week at morning and evening prayer, using the following pattern. This plan takes advantage of the way Matthew is organized into five “books,” mirroring the Torah, and places the resurrection on the first day of the week:

Sunday a.m.	Matt. 28:1–20	Sunday p.m.	Matt. 1:1–2:23
Monday a.m.	Matt. 3:1–4:25	Monday p.m.	Matt. 5:1–7:29
Tuesday a.m.	Matt. 8:1–9:34	Tuesday p.m.	Matt. 9:35–11:1
Wednesday a.m.	Matt. 11:2–12:50	Wednesday p.m.	Matt. 13:1–53
Thursday a.m.	Matt. 13:54–17:27	Thursday p.m.	Matt. 18:1–19:2
Friday a.m.	Matt. 19:3–23:39	Friday p.m.	Matt. 24:1–25:46
Saturday a.m.	Matt. 26:1–75	Saturday p.m.	Matt. 27:1–66

- 4. In a month, at daily prayer.** Since the book of Matthew happens to consist of 28 chapters, another way to explore the Gospel is to read one chapter per day throughout the month (read Matthew 1 on the first day of the month, Matthew 2 on the second day, and so on). On the 29th–31st (where applicable), you may read other passages of Scripture. You may choose to do this for one month only or repeat the reading of Matthew several times in a year.
- 5. Twice in a year, at daily prayer.** This resource provides a daily plan for covering the whole Gospel of Matthew twice in one year (see Reading Matthew in Daily Prayer). It divides the book of Matthew into short, logical units, paying attention to the narrative divisions and larger structure of Matthew’s Gospel; however, it is not coordinated with the seasons and festivals of the Christian year. Since this lectionary only provides readings six days a week (Monday through Saturday), users are encouraged to take time on Sundays to reflect on one or more of the regular Lord’s Day readings.
- 6. In a year, in daily meditation.** There are 1,071 verses in the Gospel of Matthew. That number divided by 3 is 357. This means if you read three verses a day, beginning Jan. 1, you will finish reading Matthew just before Christmas. This approach doesn’t pay attention to the structure of the book of Matthew, of course, or take into account the rhythms of the Christian year. But it provides a way to savor and contemplate the Gospel story in very small units that you can carry in your heart through the day. One variation on this approach would be to write out the three verses each day in a notebook. By the end of the year, you will have copied the whole Gospel in your own hand. You might then use the notebook for daily reading in future years or give it to a friend or family member.

Option 7 may be used in coordination with resources for the Christian year in the Book of Common Worship (WJK, 2018) or Call to Worship: Liturgy, Music, Preaching, and the Arts (pcusa.org/calltoworship):

7. In a year, at public worship. The suggestions for preaching and worship in this document also offer a way for users to read the whole Gospel of Matthew in one year, following the Revised Common Lectionary (as modified and amplified in this resource). Those wishing to take this approach should be sure to use the alternate readings (italicized) for each Sunday and festival, as well as the additional verses provided in brackets. Further, in order to complete the reading of Matthew's Gospel, congregations should find occasions to read the Sermon on the Mount and Ten Miracles (for one way to do this, see the hymn festivals provided below).

Emmanuel: God with Us

A public reading of the Gospel of Matthew

Year A of the Revised Common Lectionary (which begins Dec. 1, 2019) features readings from the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew offers a dramatic and compelling portrait of Jesus the Messiah — the one we have come to know as Emmanuel, “God with us” (Matt. 1:23). It takes 2½ to three hours to read the entirety of Matthew's Gospel out loud. Why not host a public reading of Matthew in your congregation?

The potential opportunities and benefits are many:

- hearing the Gospel out loud allows us to rediscover the good news of Jesus as the biblical writer intended — as the story of our salvation, unfolding in an intentional and dramatic way, received in community;
- hearing the entire story in context gives us a chance to experience the “big picture” of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, not as isolated scenes and individual stories, but as a unified account of God's saving work;
- hearing the whole Gospel story in community presents an opportunity for discernment and dialogue about its implications, and creates a situation in which we become accountable to one another for how we will respond;
- hearing the Gospel as a congregation provides an occasion for us to evaluate the faithfulness of our mission and ministry in light of the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ;
- hearing all of the Gospel in one sitting helps to fill in the gaps between the lectionary readings, and compensates for places where the lectionary readings are out of sequence with the chronology of Matthew's Gospel;
- hearing a year's worth of Gospel readings together can be a way for preachers, church musicians and other worship planners to think systematically and strategically about the year ahead;
- most importantly, hearing the Gospel can be — by the power of the Holy Spirit — a life-changing, faith-shaping, disciple-making encounter with the living Word of God.

When you have determined a time and place for the reading of Matthew's Gospel, spread the good news! You can use or adapt the paragraph below to create an announcement for your church newsletter or website. You might find ways to publicize this event to the larger community as well, as an opportunity for outreach and evangelism. Or you might consider hosting a reading in partnership with another congregation in your community (Presbyterian or otherwise) as a collaborative project and witness to Christian unity.

Have you heard the good news? Join us for public reading of the Gospel of Matthew [insert date, time, and location]. Matthew offers a dramatic and compelling portrait of Jesus the Messiah — the one we have come to know as Emmanuel, “God with us” (Matt. 1:23). It takes less than three hours to read the whole Gospel of Mathew out loud. By the gift of the Holy Spirit, this can be a life-changing, faith-shaping, disciple-making encounter with the living Word of God.

Emmanuel: God with Us

A public reading of the Gospel of Matthew

Opening Sentences

Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,
which means, “God is with us.”

Matt. 1:23

Hymn

Blessed Jesus, at Your Word

GTG 395

Prayer for Illumination

Eternal, living God,
by the power of your Holy Spirit
prepare the way in our hearts
for the coming of your Word;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

After a time of silent preparation, the reading begins.

The Gospel of Matthew

The Prologue

Matthew 1:1–2:23

A brief song or refrain, such as “Come, Come Emmanuel” (GTG 91), “While We Are Waiting, Come” (GTG 92), “Prepare the Way of the Lord” (GTG 95), “Glory to God” (583–585), or “Alleluia” (GTG 586–591), may be sung after each of the five “books” of Matthew.

	Narrative	Discourse
Book One	Matthew 3:1–4:25	5:1–7:29
Book Two	Matthew 8:1–9:34	9:35–11:1
Book Three	Matthew 11:2–12:50	13:1–53
Book Four	Matthew 13:54–17:27	18:1–19:2
Book Five	Matthew 19:3–23:39	24:1–25:46
The Passion	Matthew 26:1–27:66	

After a time of silent reflection, the reading continues.

The Resurrection Matthew 28:1–20

Closing Prayer

Lord God, we give you thanks for the good news we have received
in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Savior.
By the power of your Holy Spirit, keep us faithful in our calling
to take up our cross and follow him for the sake of the gospel. Amen.

Hymn

Go to the World!

GTG 295

Dismissal

Jesus said: Remember, I am with you always,
to the end of the age. Amen. Thanks be to God.

Matt. 28:20

Guidelines for Reading

This suggestion for dividing up the readings is based on the literary structure of Matthew's Gospel. Each unit has a certain shape and integrity in the way the biblical story is presented.

You'll need an appropriate number of good readers: between five and 12, doubling up parts as necessary. Use a group of readers that is representative of your congregation — younger, older; diversity of gender; people of different cultures, backgrounds and professions. Encourage deacons and elders in the congregation to read; don't rely too much on pastors. If possible, find an opportunity for readers to rehearse their parts out loud, in the presence of others who can offer constructive feedback.

Begin with a prayer for illumination, and end with a concluding collect that ties together the themes of the Gospel. Examples are provided. You may have the first and last readers lead these prayers or ask someone else to lead them.

Read the Gospel from the church's Bible (the big book on the lectern or pulpit). It may be tempting to print out individual "scripts," with enlarged type or markings for readers; however, this can convey the impression that the Word of God is temporary and disposable. Reading from the church's book shows that this Word is a treasure we share. Using the same translation of Scripture throughout will also help to reveal recurring images and themes.

Don't rush through the readings. Read slowly, clearly and above all with the conviction that this is good news — a life-changing, faith-shaping, disciple-making message from God. Allow brief times of silence between readers (letting one reader be seated before the next stands to read), and provide longer silences for reflection as indicated.

A few hymn suggestions are provided. Singing together during the reading is important for a number of reasons: Congregational song offers a way to respond to God with praise and gratitude for the grace of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Gospel; carefully selected hymns help to reinforce the themes and images of Scripture, deepening our understanding; music provides time and space for personal prayer and reflection on the Gospel story; and singing engages the whole body — heart, mind, soul and strength — in the event of the Word proclaimed.

At the conclusion of the reading, there are a number of possibilities. You might schedule this event in such a way that the reading of Matthew's Gospel takes place on a Saturday morning, followed by a meal, and then a time for discussion and discernment — ideally in small groups first, then reporting back to the whole. This would be a good format for a congregational retreat. If the reading takes place in the afternoon or evening, you might provide light refreshments and then continue with a shorter time for discussion. In any case, it's important to find an opportunity for conversation about the Gospel as soon as possible after the reading. It is better not to break up the event for discussion during the reading, because this may interrupt the flow of the story and disrupt the experience of the Gospel as a whole.

It may be tempting for people to read along in their own Bibles. However, it is preferable that participants not be distracted by the written word during the reading, but that they attend to the Word proclaimed through the voice of the one who is speaking this good news. This is how we came to know the Word of God in Jesus Christ: as the Word made flesh.

The Sermon on the Mount

Scripture reading and hymn festival

The following reading plan allows congregations to experience Jesus' Sermon on the Mount from the Gospel of Matthew (5:1–7:29) in a single presentation. The 10 biblical passages might be divided among five readers. A related hymn selection is provided for each passage. A brief time of silence for reflection may follow each reading or hymn. It is recommended that time for discussion be provided after this event, perhaps over a meal. Questions for reflection or discussion are found on the final page of this document and may be reproduced as a handout.

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, we do not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from your mouth.
Make us hungry for this heavenly food,
that it may nourish us today in the ways of eternal life;
through Jesus Christ, the bread of heaven. **Amen.**

First Reading

- ⁵ When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:
- ³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- ⁴ “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
- ⁵ “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
- ⁶ “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
- ⁷ “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
- ⁸ “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
- ⁹ “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
- ¹⁰ “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- ¹¹ “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Hymn Blest Are They

GTG 172

Second Reading

- ¹³ “You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.
- ¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵ No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.
- ¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Hymn Here in This Place (Gather Us In)

GTG 401

Third Reading

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ ²² But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire. ²³ So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.

³¹ “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³² But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

³³ “Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.’ ³⁴ But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷ Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’; anything more than this comes from the evil one.

Hymn Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive

GTG 444

Fourth Reading

³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ ³⁹ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; ⁴⁰ and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; ⁴¹ and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. ⁴² Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Hymn Make Me a Channel of Your Peace (Prayer of St. Francis)

GTG 753

Fifth Reading

³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ ³⁹ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; ⁴⁰ and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; ⁴¹ and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. ⁴² Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Hymn As a Chalice Cast of Gold

GTG 429

Sixth Reading

⁷ “When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹ “Pray then in this way:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And do not bring us to the time of trial,
but rescue us from the evil one.

¹⁴ “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Hymn Our Father, Which Art in Heaven

GTG 464

Seventh Reading

¹⁶ “And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

¹⁹ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²² “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; ²³ but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

²⁴ “No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Hymn Lord of All Good

GTG 711

Eighth Reading

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸ And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you — you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ ³² For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

³⁴ “So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

Hymn Why Should I Feel Discouraged? (His Eye Is on the Sparrow)

GTG 661

Ninth Reading

⁷ Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. ² For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. ³ Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your neighbor, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while the log is in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye.

⁶ “Do not give what is holy to dogs; and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you.

⁷ “Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹ Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? ¹⁰ Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? ¹¹ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

¹² “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.

Hymn Seek Ye First

GTG 175

Tenth Reading

¹³ “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. ¹⁴ For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will know them by their fruits.

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?’ ²³ Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.’

²⁴ “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. ²⁵ The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. ²⁶ And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell — and great was its fall!”

Hymn My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less

GTG 353

Conclusion

²⁸ “Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, ²⁹ for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Closing Prayer

Holy God, you confound the world’s wisdom
by giving your kingdom to the lowly and poor in heart.
Give us such a hunger and thirst for justice
and perseverance in striving for peace,
that by our words and deeds
the world may see the promise of your kingdom
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Scripture readings are from the *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Hymn suggestions are from *Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal* (WJK, 2013). Opening and closing prayers are from the *Book of Common Worship* (WJK, 2018), 68, 221.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

After reading Matthew 5:1–7:29 ...

1. What are your general impressions on hearing the whole Sermon on the Mount? What surprised, challenged or puzzled you? How do you think Jesus’ original audience responded? How do these words address the church and world today? How does the Sermon on the Mount relate to the overall message of the gospel, or to the life of Christian discipleship?

As a part of the Matthew 25 invitation, the Presbyterian Mission Agency is engaging in focused work around systemic poverty, structural racism and congregational vitality. The following questions relate to these mission priorities.

2. Jesus said: “You are the salt of the earth” (5:13) and “You are the light of the world” (5:14). How is your congregation “salt” and “light” in your neighborhood, city or community? What else might you do to “let your light shine before others” (5:16)? What else can we learn about promoting congregational vitality from the Sermon on the Mount?
3. Jesus said: “Be reconciled to your brother or sister” (5:24) and “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (5:44). How does Jesus’ call to be reconciled and love one another challenge us to address the problems of racism and white privilege? What else can we learn about dismantling structural racism from the Sermon on the Mount?
4. Jesus said: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth” (6:19) and “You cannot serve God and wealth” (6:24). How does this teaching inform the church’s work for economic justice and ministry with people who are poor? What else can we learn about addressing systemic poverty from the Sermon on the Mount?

Visit pcusa.org/matthew25 for more information about the Presbyterian Mission Agency’s work on systemic poverty, structural racism and congregational vitality.

The Ten Miracles

Scripture reading and hymn festival

The following reading plan allows congregations to experience the accounts of Jesus' 10 miracles from the Gospel of Matthew (8:1–9:34) in a single presentation. The 10 biblical passages might be divided among five readers. Related hymn selections are provided for each passage; planners should choose just one hymn for each spot. A brief time of silence for reflection may follow each reading or hymn. It is recommended that time for discussion be provided after this event, perhaps over a meal. Questions for reflection or discussion are found on the final page of this document and may be reproduced as a handout.

Opening Prayer

Guide us, O God,
by your Word and Spirit,
that in your light we may see light,
in your truth find freedom,
and in your will discover your peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Jesus Cleanses a Leper

⁸ When Jesus had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed him; ² and there was a leper who came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean." ³ He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I do choose. Be made clean!" Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. ⁴ Then Jesus said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

Hymns	Ten Lepers Facing Constant Scorn	GTG 179
	Just as I Am, Without One Plea	GTG 442
	Will You Come and Follow Me	GTG 726

Second Reading: Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant

⁵ When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, appealing to him ⁶ and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible distress." ⁷ And he said to him, "I will come and cure him." ⁸ The centurion answered, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed." ⁹ For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does it." ¹⁰ When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to those who followed him, "Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. ¹¹ I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, ¹² while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." ¹³ And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you according to your faith." And the servant was healed in that hour.

Hymns	In Christ There Is No East or West	GTG 317, 318
	O Christ, the Healer	GTG 793
	O Savior, in This Quiet Place	GTG 794

Third Reading: Jesus Heals Many at Peter's House

¹⁴ When Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever; ¹⁵ he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she got up and began to serve him. ¹⁶ That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and cured all who were sick. ¹⁷ This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases."

¹⁸ Now when Jesus saw great crowds around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. ¹⁹ A scribe then approached and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." ²⁰ And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." ²¹ Another of his disciples said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." ²² But Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

Hymns	Healer of Our Every Ill	GTG 795
	We Come to You for Healing, Lord	GTG 796
	We Cannot Measure How You Heal	GTG 797

Fourth Reading: Jesus Stills the Storm

²³ And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. ²⁴ A windstorm arose on the sea, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. ²⁵ And they went and woke him up, saying, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!” ²⁶ And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, you of little faith?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm. ²⁷ They were amazed, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?”

Hymns	Eternal Father, Strong to Save	GTG 8
	Calm to the Waves	GTG 184
	Lonely the Boat	GTG 185

Fifth Reading: Jesus Heals the Gadarene Demoniacs

²⁸ When he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demoniacs coming out of the tombs met him. They were so fierce that no one could pass that way. ²⁹ Suddenly they shouted, “What have you to do with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?” ³⁰ Now a large herd of swine was feeding at some distance from them. ³¹ The demons begged him, “If you cast us out, send us into the herd of swine.” ³² And he said to them, “Go!” So they came out and entered the swine; and suddenly, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the water. ³³ The swineherds ran off, and on going into the town, they told the whole story about what had happened to the demoniacs. ³⁴ Then the whole town came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their neighborhood.

⁹ And after getting into a boat he crossed the sea and came to his own town

Hymns	I Will Come to You	GTG 177
	I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light	GTG 377
	Jesus Calls Us	GTG 720

Sixth Reading: Jesus Heals a Paralytic

² And just then some people were carrying a paralyzed man lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.” ³ Then some of the scribes said to themselves, “This man is blaspheming.” ⁴ But Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts? ⁵ For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and walk?’ ⁶ But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” — he then said to the paralytic — “Stand up, take your bed and go to your home.” ⁷ And he stood up and went to his home. ⁸ When the crowds saw it, they were filled with awe, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to human beings.

⁹ As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he got up and followed him.

Hymns	I Will Come to You	GTG 177
	I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light	GTG 377
	Jesus Calls Us	GTG 720

Seventh Reading: The Question about Fasting

This reading is not an account of a miracle; it speaks to the identity of Jesus as Messiah.

¹⁰ And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples.

¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹² But when he heard this, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.”

¹⁴ Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?” ¹⁵ And Jesus said to them, “The wedding guests cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. ¹⁶ No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak, for the patch pulls away from the cloak, and a worse tear is made. ¹⁷ Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.”

Hymns	Rejoice! Rejoice, Believers	GTG 362
	Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy	GTG 415
	Bread of the World in Mercy Broken	GTG 499

Eighth Reading: A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed

This reading includes the accounts of two miracles of Jesus.

¹⁸ While he was saying these things to them, suddenly a leader of the synagogue came in and knelt before him, saying, “My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.” ¹⁹ And Jesus got up and followed him, with his disciples. ²⁰ Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, ²¹ for she said to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well.” ²² Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.” And instantly the woman was made well. ²³ When Jesus came to the leader’s house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, ²⁴ he said, “Go away; for the girl is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him. ²⁵ But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. ²⁶ And the report of this spread throughout that district.

Hymns	Woman in the Night	GTG 161
	The Woman Hiding in the Crowd	GTG 178
	God Weeps with Us Who Weep and Mourn	GTG 787

Ninth Reading: Jesus Heals Two Blind Men

²⁷ As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, crying loudly, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!” ²⁸ When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to him, “Yes, Lord.” ²⁹ Then he touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith let it be done to you.” ³⁰ And their eyes were opened. Then Jesus sternly ordered them, “See that no one knows of this.” ³¹ But they went away and spread the news about him throughout that district.

Hymns	Be Thou My Vision	GTG 450
	Open My Eyes, That I May See	GTG 451
	Open the Eyes of My Heart, Lord	GTG 452

Tenth Reading: Jesus Heals One Who Was Mute

³² After they had gone away, a demoniac who was mute was brought to him. ³³ And when the demon had been cast out, the one who had been mute spoke; and the crowds were amazed and said, “Never has anything like this been seen in Israel.” ³⁴ But the Pharisees said, “By the ruler of the demons he casts out the demons.”

Hymns	O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing	GTG 610
	Open Your Mouth and Praise the Lord!	GTG 640
	Lord, Speak to Me That I May Speak	GTG 722

Closing Prayer

Lord God of the nations,
 you have revealed your will to all people
 and promised us your saving help.
 May we hear and do what you command,
 that the power of evil may be overcome
 by the gift of your healing grace;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns with you
 in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 now and forever. **Amen.**

Scripture readings are from the *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Hymn suggestions are from *Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal* (WJK, 2013). Opening and closing prayers are from the *Book of Common Worship* (WJK, 2018), 68, 221.

Reading Matthew in Daily Prayer

This 26-week plan for reading the Gospel of Matthew in daily prayer allows users to read the entire Gospel twice in the course of one year. Use the readings designated below on Monday through Saturday; on Sundays, use one or more of the lectionary readings for Lord's Day worship in your congregation.

						Week 1 Mon 1:1–17 Tue 1:18–25 Wed 2:1–12 Thu 2:13–15 Fri 2:16–18 Sat 2:19–23	Week 2 Mon 3:1–12 Tue 3:13–17 Wed 4:1–11 Thu 4:12–17 Fri 4:18–22 Sat 4:23–25
Week 3 Mon 5:1–12 Tue 5:13–16 Wed 5:17–20 Thu 5:21–26 Fri 5:27–30 Sat 5:31–32	Week 4 Mon 5:33–37 Tue 5:38–42 Wed 5:43–48 Thu 6:1–4 Fri 6:5–6 Sat 6:7–15	Week 5 Mon 6:16–18 Tue 6:19–21 Wed 6:22–24 Thu 6:25–34 Fri 7:1–6 Sat 7:7–12	Week 6 Mon 7:13–14 Tue 7:15–20 Wed 7:21–23 Thu 7:24–27 Fri 7:28–29 Sat 8:1–4	Week 7 Mon 8:5–13 Tue 8:14–17 Wed 8:18–22 Thu 8:23–27 Fri 8:28–34 Sat 9:1–8	Week 8 Mon 9:9–13 Tue 9:14–17 Wed 9:18–26 Thu 9:27–31 Fri 9:32–34 Sat 9:35–38		
Week 9 Mon 10:1–4 Tue 10:5–15 Wed 10:16–25 Thu 10:26–31 Fri 10:32–33 Sat 10:34–39	Week 10 Mon 10:40–42 Tue 11:1 Wed 11:2–6 Thu 11:7–10 Fri 11:11–15 Sat 11:16–19	Week 11 Mon 11:20–24 Tue 11:25–30 Wed 12:1–8 Thu 12:9–14 Fri 12:15–30 Sat 12:31–32	Week 12 Mon 12:33–37 Tue 12:38–42 Wed 12:43–45 Thu 12:46–50 Fri 13:1–9 Sat 13:10–17	Week 13 Mon 13:18–23 Tue 13:24–30 Wed 13:31–35 Thu 13:36–43 Fri 13:44–46 Sat 13:47–50	Week 14 Mon 13:51–53 Tue 13:54–58 Wed 14:1–12 Thu 14:13–21 Fri 14:22–33 Sat 14:34–36		
Week 15 Mon 15:1–20 Tue 15:21–28 Wed 15:29–31 Thu 15:32–39 Fri 16:1–4 Sat 16:5–12	Week 16 Mon 16:13–20 Tue 16:21–23 Wed 16:24–28 Thu 17:1–13 Fri 17:14–21 Sat 17:22–23	Week 17 Mon 17:24–27 Tue 18:1–5 Wed 18:6–9 Thu 18:10–14 Fri 18:15–20 Sat 18:21–19:2	Week 18 Mon 19:3–12 Tue 19:13–15 Wed 19:16–22 Thu 19:23–30 Fri 20:1–16 Sat 20:17–19	Week 19 Mon 20:20–28 Tue 20:29–34 Wed 21:1–11 Thu 21:12–17 Fri 21:18–22 Sat 21:23–27	Week 20 Mon 21:28–32 Tue 21:33–46 Wed 22:1–14 Thu 22:15–22 Fri 22:23–33 Sat 22:34–40		
Week 21 Mon 22:41–46 Tue 23:1–12 Wed 23:13–36 thu 23:37–39 Fri 24:1–2 Sat 24:3–14	Week 22 Mon 24:15–28 Tue 24:29–31 Wed 24:32–35 thu 24:36–44 Fri 24:45–51 Sat 25:1–13	Week 23 Mon 25:14–30 Tue 25:31–46 Wed 26:1–5 thu 26:6–13 Fri 26:14–16 Sat 26:17–25	Week 24 Mon 26:26–30 Tue 26:31–35 Wed 26:36–46 thu 26:47–56 Fri 26:57–68 Sat 26:69–75	Week 25 Mon 27:1–2 Tue 27:3–10 Wed 27:4–14 thu 27:15–26 Fri 27:27–31 Sat 27:32–44	Week 26 Mon 27:45–56 Tue 27:57–61 Wed 27:62–66 thu 28:1–10 Fri 28:11–15 Sat 28:16–20		

Index to the Gospel of Matthew

The following chart indicates where the Gospel of Matthew is used in the Revised Common Lectionary, and how the alternate readings (in italics and brackets) provided in this resource fill in the gaps, allowing worshipers to experience the entire book of Matthew over the course of the Christian year. Those wishing to read the whole Gospel should also find an occasion to read the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1–7:29) and the Ten Miracles (Matt. 8:1–9:34); see the hymn festivals provided in this document for one option.

Matthew 1:1–17	alt for Christmas Eve		12/24/19
Matthew 1:18–25	RCL Advent 4		12/22/19
Matthew 2:1–12	alt for Christmas 2 or RCL Epiphany of the Lord		1/5/20 or 1/6/20
Matthew 2:13–23	RCL Christmas 1		12/29/19
Matthew 3:1–12	RCL Advent 2		12/8/19
Matthew 3:13–17	RCL Baptism of the Lord		1/12/20
Matthew 4:1–11	RCL Lent 1		3/1/20
Matthew 4:12–23	RCL Epiphany 3		1/26/20
Matthew 4:24–25	[added to RCL Epiphany 3]		1/26/20
Matthew 5:1–12	RCL Epiphany 4 / RCL All Saints' Day	(Sermon on the Mount)	2/2/20 / 11/1/20
Matthew 5:13–20	RCL Epiphany 5	(Sermon on the Mount)	2/9/20
Matthew 5:21–37	RCL Epiphany 6	(Sermon on the Mount)	2/16/20
Matthew 5:38–48	(RCL Epiphany 7*)	(Sermon on the Mount)	
Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21	RCL Ash Wednesday	(Sermon on the Mount)	2/26/20
Matthew 6:7–17	[added to RCL Ash Wednesday]	(Sermon on the Mount)	2/26/20
Matthew 6:22–23	[added to RCL Ash Wednesday]	(Sermon on the Mount)	2/26/20
Matthew 6:24–34	(RCL Epiphany 8*)	(Sermon on the Mount)	
Matthew 6:25–33	RCL Thanksgiving (Year B)	(Sermon on the Mount)	11/26/20
Matthew 7:1–20		(Sermon on the Mount)	
Matthew 7:21–29	(RCL Epiphany 9*)	(Sermon on the Mount)	
Matthew 8:1–13		(Ten Miracles)	
Matthew 8:14–27		(Ten Miracles)	
Matthew 8:28–9:8		(Ten Miracles)	
Matthew 9:9–13, 18–26	(RCL Proper 5*)	(Ten Miracles)	
Matthew 9:14–17, 27–34	(add to RCL Proper 5*)	(Ten Miracles)	
Matthew 9:35–10:8 (9–23)	RCL Proper 6		6/14/20
Matthew 10:24–39	RCL Proper 7		6/21/20
Matthew 10:40–42	RCL Proper 8		6/28/20
Matthew 11:1, 12–15	[added to RCL Advent 3]		12/15/19
Matthew 11:2–11	RCL Advent 3		12/15/19
Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30	RCL Proper 9		7/5/20
Matthew 11:20–24	[added to RCL Proper 9]		7/5/20
Matthew 12:1–21	alt for Easter 5		5/10/20
Matthew 12:22–37	alt for Day of Pentecost		5/31/20
Matthew 12:38–50	alt for Lent 2		3/8/20
Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23	RCL Proper 10		7/12/20
Matthew 13:10–17	[added to RCL Proper 10]		7/12/20
Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43	RCL Proper 11		7/19/20

Matthew 13:31–33, 44–52	RCL Proper 12	7/26/20
Matthew 13:34–35	[added to RCL Proper 11]	7/19/20
Matthew 14:1–12	alt for Epiphany 2	1/19/20
Matthew 14:13–21	RCL Proper 13	8/2/20
Matthew 14:22–33	RCL Proper 14	8/9/20
Matthew 14:34–36	[added to RCL Proper 14]	8/9/20
Matthew 15:1–9	[added to RCL Proper 15]	8/16/20
Matthew 15: (10–20), 21–28	RCL Proper 15	8/16/20
Matthew 15:29–39	alt for Easter 2	4/19/20
Matthew 16:1–12	alt for Easter 3	4/26/20
Matthew 16:13–20	RCL Proper 16	8/23/20
Matthew 16:21–28	RCL Proper 17	8/30/20
Matthew 17:1–9	RCL Transfiguration of the Lord	2/23/20
Matthew 17:10–23	[added to RCL Transfiguration of the Lord]	2/23/20
Matthew 17:24–27	[added to RCL Proper 24]	10/18/20
Matthew 18:1–14	alt for Easter 4	5/3/20
Matthew 18:15–20	RCL Proper 18	9/6/20
Matthew 18:21–35	RCL Proper 19	9/13/20
Matthew 19:1–15	[add to alt for Lent 3]	3/15/20
Matthew 19:16–30	alt for Lent 3	3/15/20
Matthew 20:1–16	RCL Proper 20	9/20/20
Matthew 20:17–34	alt for Lent 4	3/22/20
Matthew 21:1–11	RCL Palm/Passion Sunday	4/5/20
Matthew 21:12–22	alt for Easter 6	5/17/20
Matthew 21:23–32	RCL Proper 21	9/27/20
Matthew 21:33–46	RCL Proper 22	10/4/20
Matthew 22:1–14	RCL Proper 23	10/11/20
Matthew 22:15–22	RCL Proper 24	10/18/20
Matthew 22:23–33	alt for Easter 7	5/24/20
Matthew 22:34–46	RCL Proper 25	10/25/20
Matthew 23:1–12	RCL Proper 26+ / alt for All Saints' Day	11/1/20
Matthew 23:13–37	[add to alt for All Saints' Day]	11/1/20
Matthew 24:1–35	alt for Ascension of the Lord	5/21/20
Matthew 24:36–44	RCL Advent 1	12/1/19
Matthew 25:1–13	RCL Proper 27	11/8/20
Matthew 25:14–30	RCL Proper 28	11/15/20
Matthew 25:31–46	RCL Reign of Christ	11/22/20
Matthew 26:1–13	alt for Lent 5	3/29/20
Matthew 26:14–27:66	RCL Palm/Passion Sunday	4/5/20
Matthew 27:11–54	RCL Palm/Passion Sunday	4/5/20
Matthew 27:57–66	RCL Holy Saturday	4/11/20
Matthew 28:1–10	RCL Resurrection of the Lord	4/12/20
Matthew 28:11–15	best omitted due to anti-Semitic implications	
Matthew 28:16–20	RCL Trinity Sunday	6/7/20

* *Provers 5, 7, 8 and 9 are not used in 2019–20 because of the date of Easter.*

+ *Proper 26 is sometimes not used when All Saints' Day (Nov. 1) is on a Sunday, as in 2020.*



Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Presbyterian Mission

100 Witherspoon St. | Louisville, KY 40202