

WORSHIP SERVICE PLAN

April 20, 2025 • Build Disciples • Easter

John 15:1-17; 20:1-10

"Trust in Jesus' Presence Always"

Being a disciple means remembering always the source of our faith.

Preparation for Worship

Gather these items for worship. If you don't have a particular item, fret not:

- a piece of white cloth
- an end table or stand
- a plate
- a cup
- a glass or bowl of water
- a lighter/match
- a vine or tree branch (an image will do)
- a computer or internet-accessible device
- a thank you card to God for something this week

For each item you have, thank God for the provision. For each piece you do not have, thank God you don't need it. Place the table/stand in the area you plan to worship. If more than one person will be present, place the table in the middle of where you will be seated. Drape the cloth over it. Arrange the cup, plate, glass of water, and other items on the table. Keep the Bible in front of you.

Questions for the announcement loop

In preparing for Worship, consider the following:

- How often do you think about the resurrection of Jesus?
- How often do you think of Jesus as the source of your power? How does Jesus figure into your daily decision-making?
- Who knows what you believe about Easter?
- What could someone learn about being a disciple from observing your life?

(10am only) Call to Worship

"Christ Has Arisen!" by Daniel Mattix

**Christ has arisen as our King.
Conquering death and sin's vile sting!
With all creation join to sing;
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

Liturgy:

Christ the Lord is risen today!

Alleluia!

All creation, join to say:

Alleluia!

Raise your joys and triumphs high!

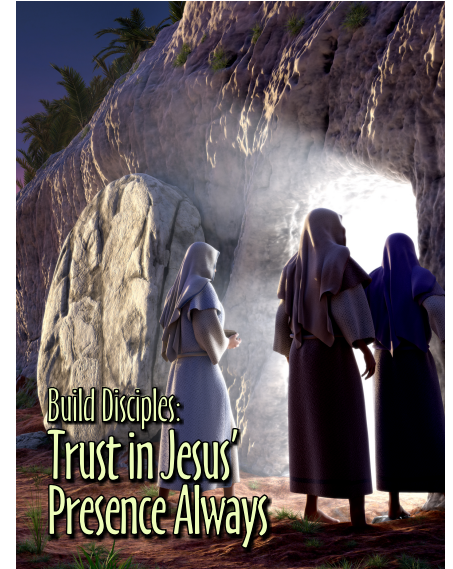
Alleluia!

Sing, O heavens, and earth and reply:

Alleluia!

Alleluia!

Amen!



**Christ has arisen from the grave,
He rose to triumph and to save!
New life to humankind he gave:
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

(10am only) Prelude:

"Christ Arose" arr. Melody Bober

Opening Sentence

John 15:8 (CEB)

"My Father is glorified when you produce much fruit and in this way prove that you are my disciples." —Jesus

Welcome to this service of Worship, We are glad you are with us! We have a few Community Notes for you to consider as we worship throughout the week...

Welcome Visitors!

We are glad you are here! Our nursery is in the Education Building and our restrooms are in the buildings other than the Sanctuary.

Go to the Source!

In the end, being a disciple is not something we invented. It's something God calls us into. Our success is not measured by our strength, but by how well we lean on Jesus. Our wisdom, ingenuity, talents, our power, should all be in service to that

of Christ. Easter is a huge reminder that our faith has but one Savior and it is not any of us. As you celebrate Easter and the risen Christ over the next seven weeks, find ways each week to bolster your reliance on God rather than yourself. Whether that's new ways to pray, discovering a new favorite hymn or other song, picking a new giving habit, putting an end to doomscrolling the news, changing what gets your attention on social media, memorizing a new Bible verse, volunteering at our local schools, taking on a personal mission project. You have lots of opportunities big and small to experience the gift of Easter in your life and the promise that a connection with Jesus can give to you and those around you.

Holy Humor Sunday

The Sunday after Easter, in some traditions, is Holy Humor Sunday, a chance to celebrate the joy faith in Christ offers. In preparation, you are encouraged to send in the jokes! We will incorporate what we can as a part of worship, but the rest will be part of the guide to worship prepared for next weekend. Please send in your jokes (memes, pictures, even video links) by Wednesday, April 23rd.

Time & Talent Survey

Where do your skills and passions meet the needs of the church? The Administrative Life committee will be conducting a survey the month of April. Please complete the survey located in the bulletin and return it to the ushers or church office. We need willing people to call upon. Our church offers many opportunities to share your unique passions and skills.



We Welcome Danny Yancey!

After a long search, Danny Yancey has answered God's call and found us! He will be our Worship Leader and Music Director for the evening service. Danny Yancey is a pianist, singer, songwriter and

GRAMMY-nominated music educator. He has taught music at the elementary, middle and high

school levels in North Carolina public and private schools for 20 years. He is a summa cum laude graduate of North Carolina Central University with a B.A. in Music Education and an M.M. degree in Music Education from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He currently teaches at St. David's Episcopal School where he is the Director of Music Curriculum and Choir and serves as Worship Director at Christ the King Church in Raleigh. He is married and lives in Durham with his wife Deidre and four kids: Christopher, Olivia, Cameron & Weston.

(10am only) Greet one another in Christ!

(10am only) "He Lives" CEL #368

**He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.
He lives! He lives! Salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives; He lives within my heart!**

Being a disciple means remembering always the source of our faith.

In this moment, let us remain standing, take a deep breath, silence our devices, and continue in worship together.

Let us sing our opening song together...

Opening Song

"Thine Is the Glory" (GTG #238)

Prayer of Confession/Preparation

Sometimes when we feel disconnected to God and God's story, we think God has moved away from us. That's just wrong. It's important to talk about our shortcomings so that we're ready to hear what God has to say. Let us begin with silent prayer...

(Please pray silently...)

Pray: Loving God, you created the earth and made us partners with you in managing it. But that wasn't enough for us. You got to the point of sending the Flood but you saved Noah's family. That wasn't enough for us. You sent the plagues, parted the Red Sea, gave us the 10

Commandments, and brought us to the Promised Land. That wasn't enough for us. You were content to be our King but we demanded a human king anyway. We squandered our blessings and still blamed you for the consequences. We received the news of your Messiah and got the message wrong. We saw his life unfold before us and took in his ministry. We waved the palms, shouted Hosannas, and celebrated the miracles. That wasn't enough for us. We took Jesus' life. With his resurrection your answer to us remains: love conquers all, grace is irresistible, and mercy is the law that matters most to you. May that finally be enough for us. May we come to reflect your generosity as enthusiastically as we receive it. Thank you for listening, God. Amen.

(10am only) Assurance of Pardon

God's love can change everything, even the power of our sins over us. And it is God's will that we have this power:

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

(10am only) Gloria Patri (Glory to God)

Glory be to the Father

And to the Son

And to the Holy Ghost

As it was in the beginning

It is now and ever shall be

World without end: Amen, amen.

Please be seated...

Reading of Scripture

Say: The Word of God doesn't just inform: it reveals. The Word of God doesn't just tell us the truth, it empowers us to live our true path. The Word of God, by God's own Spirit, teaches us to live. Let us be open to this gift of God and ask for help to understand. Let us pray...(everyone sings)

Pray/Sing: "At the Name of Jesus" GTG #264

At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow,

Every tongue confess him King of glory now;

'Tis the Father's pleasure

we should call him Lord,

Who from the beginning was the mighty Word.

Read: John 15:1-17 (CEB)

Jesus' last instructions.

¹ "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vineyard keeper. ² He removes any of my branches that don't produce fruit, and he trims any branch that produces fruit so that it will produce even more fruit. ³ You are already trimmed because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I will remain in you. A branch can't produce fruit by itself, but must remain in the vine. Likewise, you can't produce fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, then you will produce much fruit. Without me, you can't do anything. ⁶ If you don't remain in me, you will be like a branch that is thrown out and dries up. Those branches are gathered up, thrown into a fire, and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified when you produce much fruit and in this way prove that you are my disciples.

⁹ "As the Father loved me, I too have loved you. Remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have said these things to you so that my joy will be in you and your joy will be complete. ¹² This is my commandment: love each other just as I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than to give up one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I don't call you servants any longer, because servants don't know what their master is doing. Instead, I call you friends, because everything I heard from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You didn't choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you could go and produce fruit and so that your fruit could last. As a result, whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you. ¹⁷ I give you these commandments so that you can love each other."

Read: John 20:1-10 (CEB)

Jesus' resurrection.

¹ Early in the morning of the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. ² She ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and

we don't know where they've put him." ³ Peter and the other disciple left to go to the tomb. ⁴ They were running together, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and was the first to arrive at the tomb. ⁵ Bending down to take a look, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he didn't go in. ⁶ Following him, Simon Peter entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there. ⁷ He also saw the face cloth that had been on Jesus' head. It wasn't with the other clothes but was folded up in its own place. ⁸ Then the other disciple, the one who arrived at the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ They didn't yet understand the scripture that Jesus must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to the place where they were staying.

One: For the Word of God in Scripture, for the Word of God among us, for the Word of God within us...

All: Thanks be to God!

Children's Sermon

Adults, you'll need:

- sealed envelopes with various instructions inside: "hug someone", "do something nice", "learn a Bible verse", "share something", etc.

- to be sure to wait for answers!

"Executors"

- (showing the envelopes) Do you know what these are? Well, they are envelopes. We use them for all kinds of things. But mainly they hold paper important to us. What do you imagine is inside these envelopes?...
- Well inside these envelopes is a will. When someone dies, sometimes they have a will. It's a special piece of paper that says what the person wants to have happen after they are gone.
- Inside each of these envelopes is a will written for you. You're getting them because Jesus died for us. But when you get the will, it's important that you do what it says.
- So when you are around the people who care about you, ask them about the ways they follow God's will for their life. Then ask them for help with the will you received.
- Don't forget to pray!

Anthem: "Easter Song" by Joseph Martin;
Accompanist: Connie Lawrence

"Trust in Jesus' Presence Always"

It's a traditional greeting for the season of Easter. The idea is we practice here and then you practice it out there:

Christ is risen!

The Lord is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

Do we say it to let people know? Sure. Do we say it because we forget about it in daily life? Absolutely! It's one of those basic things that we learn early in our faith: Jesus died and then rose again. It's about as bedrock a belief as God is love, sin is bad, forgiveness is real.

But it can be easy to lose touch with our roots. It can be easy to forget how we got started. It's like a boat. Having the anchor on the boat looks cool, but it's function goes beyond looks. The anchor keeps us from drifting when things are calm and keeps us from getting lost when the storms come. And they *always* come.

But I'm mixing metaphors.

Jesus himself gives the disciples a big one. Last instructions before his crucifixion. He offers them a vision for life after he's gone and a way for them to think about their lives of faith in the face of his impending death. He gives them his last will and testament.

So what's in it? What do they *get*? What are these instructions?

Is it riches? Maybe deeds to property? Possibly that kitchen hutch or well-made reclining chair? I know, it's got to be the divine family china and other dishes. 30 pieces of silver maybe? Who gets what?

Over my time at Hawfields, I've seen lots of wills and estates being executed. I've also seen the fights that can ensue. I even witnessed a fist fight at a graveside service. It can really get family members twisted up focusing on what they feel they are owed. But I've also seen people get really focused on the wishes of the parted. There are several funds and pots of money here that function that way. We received money that can only be used for the cemetery. Some designated for our

historical properties. Still others for scholarships and student loans. Some money was even set aside for a Children's Church Library. And to this day we follow those instructions, those last wills of the people who gave that money.

It begs the question, doesn't it? What are we doing with the will and testament *Christ* left for us?

Well, to answer THAT, we have to know what's in the envelope. What do we hear when we sit for the reading of the will? What stands out to us?

Well, one question is exceptionally easy to answer. We all get everything. Everything in the will is meant for all of us. Whew! That's a relief. No fighting over who gets what.

So what does that leave?

God's will is summed up here in four directives: stay connected, be loving, remember you're chosen, produce fruit.

Stay Connected

Reading the resurrection narrative, you can be forgiven for longing for that experience. Who wouldn't want to have that moment where you go to the tomb and find it empty? For that matter, who wouldn't want to be there when he healed the blind, raised Lazarus or fed the five thousand? It feels like it would be so much easier to maintain faith, to maintain our connection to God if we could touch those experiences.

But Jesus simply says, "I am the vine, you are the branches." It's a simple prospect really. What happens when the branch falls away from the vine? What happens to the leaves in the Fall? What happens to our relationships when we disconnect from one another? What happens to our faith when we disconnect from God? But how do we stay connected? How do we maintain our attachment to the source? What does it take to grow in our faith and honor what Jesus came to do?

Be Loving

So, Jesus himself set it out when a Lawyer of all people asked him to rank all of God's laws. Think about it. If you had to rank the laws within the Bill

of Rights, what order would you use? The second amendment? The fourth? What about the 19th? Anybody for the first amendment? It's hard because each of the laws depend on each other. One doesn't really work without the other.

But God's laws, everything God commands us is summarized by how we love God and each other. Our perspectives. Our theology. Our politics. Our money. Our family names. Our talents and skills. Our reputations. Our institutions. Our tables. Our beds. Our schools. Our prisons. Our behavior. Our desires. Our accomplishments. Our dreams. Even our pains. It is all meaningless without love. Jesus even says, "No one has greater love than to give up one's life for one's friends." And if we want to show we belong to God, that we are connected to the vine, then love for us will be more than just a passing interest. It will become the greatest characteristic of our lives. Love is what makes us friends of God.

That's all fine to say. But how do we DO that? I can tell you I already have a hard time loving people. I have a hard time loving God when I feel like my prayers go unanswered. I have a hard time loving the person who hacked my account. I have a hard time with tyranny, despots, and narcissists. I have a hard time loving when I don't feel particularly loving or even deserving of love.

Turns out, Jesus had an answer for that also.

Remember You're Chosen

I laugh when I think about the number of things my parents say I hear coming out of my mouth. I laugh a lot less when I hear our children saying things like me. They are reminders though that we, none of us, arrived here on our own. We came from somewhere. We stand on someone's shoulders. We are made up of source material.

A cursory glance at my siblings' and my faces and there is NO question that we came from Linda Ealy. Listening to our shared penchant for snark in our comments and there's no mistaking the voice of James Ealy, Sr. This imprint, this impression, is something shared by all of us. It's not just true of our looks and mannerisms. It's also true of our ideas and choices. It's not that we aren't all our own

individual persons. But the influence of those who came before is a momentum not easily arrested. The same should be true of our faith when it comes to Jesus Christ.

Our faith didn't just show up. It came from hard fought struggles with us and God, culminating in the death and resurrection of Jesus. The letter to the Hebrews even says,

"So then, with endurance, let's also run the race that is laid out in front of us, since we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us. Let's throw off any extra baggage, get rid of the sin that trips us up, and fix our eyes on Jesus, faith's pioneer and perfecter. He endured the cross, ignoring the shame, for the sake of the joy that was laid out in front of him, and sat down at the right side of God's throne." (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Jesus: pioneer and perfecter. The one who started it for us and works it out for us. We didn't just look God over and say, "yeah, that works for me." God chose us. God chose us by name. That means figuring out how to love the way God wants is not just up to us. God will show the way. That means though staying connected enough to recognize God's voice. But that means loving enough to show we're listening in the first place. One feeds the other. One grows the other.

That's great and all, but so what? Where is this going? What does God want from us? What does it matter if I love the way God wants? What does it matter if I'm connected and chosen?

Produce Fruit

One of the things I love about the way God set things up is that we have no control over it. For all of my efforts, God will is like that grass coming up through the cracks in the driveway concrete. Jesus came and died, but, even at our worst, we couldn't stop the resurrection. Even if we don't get it right, we are still the seeds and fertile ground of God's desires. We can still be places where God's fruit grows: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." This is the legacy of the resurrection. This is the value of staying connected to the vine.

Producing fruit that everyone instinctively knows the world needs, now more than ever.

So, stay connected, be loving, remember you're chosen, produce fruit. Being a disciple means remembering always the source of our faith. Being a disciples means remembering and reminding all:

Christ is risen!

The Lord is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

Song of Reflection

"There Is Power In the Blood" (CEL #329)

Offering

God chooses to love us, abundantly. We should respond by choosing to be loving, abundantly. This is why we should give and share what we have and who we are. Let us reflect together on what has been given...

Offertory

"Redeemed by the Blood Medley (Praise Him! Praise Him!/Redeemed/My Tribute)" by Russell Mauldin; Accompanist: Connie Lawrence

Doxology

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow
Praise God, all creatures here below
Praise God, above you heavenly hosts
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

Blessing (online only)

**Let there be no doubt, Great God: you love us.
And we are grateful. Let there be no doubt,
Great God: we should be loving in turn. As we
receive the gifts you provide, may the gifts we
are meant to be emerge. In the great name of
Jesus Christ, we pray this together. Amen.**

Prayer of the People

- Say: The Lord be with you...and also with you. Let us pray...
- *"Alleluia, Alleluia! Give Thanks"* (GTG #240)
**Alleluia, alleluia! Give thanks to the risen Lord.
Alleluia, alleluia! Give praise to His name (2 X)**
- Loving God, we simply celebrate your resurrection. We celebrate that you were willing to die to give us the chance to be the people of your dreams. Thank you, Lord, for choosing us,

for keeping us close, for loving us so much. May the joy of this occasion, of this season, wash over us and renew us. May what you came to do take hold and may everyone who sees us see Easter at work in us.

- We've been talking a lot about what it means to be your disciples. Now, inspire us to do something about it. Help us move past theories and thoughts to putting your Spirit to work in us. May the fruit of your Spirit grow in us. May the resurrection always be before us, within us, and moving us.
- Thus, let us be Godly people. Let us make a habit of compassion and consolation. Let us make second nature your grace and mercy and sense of justice. Let us set aside safety and embrace risk-taking with you. May your healing balm reach through us to those around us, especially those on our prayer lists and those we will come to know. Help us love and give love. Help us value mercy as you do. Despite our collective answer of violence, of disdain, of division, of cynicism, to your love, may we truly be washed by you and embrace hope instead...(take time to name your own prayers)
- Thank you for believing in us, Thank you for transforming us. Thank you for teaching us, even how to pray when words fail us, saying,
- **Pray: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

Hymn of Sending

(In-person) *"All Hail the Power of Jesus Name"*
(GTG #263)

Sending & Benediction

Let us say together our benediction...

Being a disciple means remembering always the source of our faith.

(raise your hands and say) "Get up, take heart, Jesus is still calling you..."; Go, and the peace of

God which surpasses all understanding guide your hearts and minds this day and forever more. Amen!

Sing: *"Praise, Praise, Praise the Lord!"*

(GTG #390)

Praise, praise, praise the Lord! Praise God's holy name. Alleluia!

Praise, praise, praise the Lord! Praise God's holy name. Alleluia!

Praise God's holy name, alleluia! Praise God's holy name! Alleluia!

Praise God's holy name, alleluia! Praise God's holy name! Alleluia!

Praise, praise, praise the Lord! Praise God's holy name. Alleluia!

Praise, praise, praise the Lord! Praise God's holy name. Alleluia!

(10am only) Postlude

"Easter Song"

by Anne Herring