Introduction

Involving multiple senses in worship can connect us to God on a deeper level. Use these worship resources to help your church community experience God through the senses. It can also help us express our worship in a creative way.

This resource book offers several creative ways that your church community can come before God in worship.

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The Liturgical Calendar

The liturgical calendar follows the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

**Advent**
Advent is a time of preparation for and anticipation of the birth of Jesus.
*When?* From the fourth Sunday before Christmas through Christmas Eve
*Liturgical color:* Purple

**Christmas**
Christmas celebrates Christ’s birth.
*When?* December 25
*Liturgical color:* White

**Epiphany**
Epiphany celebrates the revelation of the Son of God as a human being in Jesus. Western Christians usually commemorate the magi’s visit to Jesus.
*When?* January 6
*Liturgical color:* White

**Baptism of the Lord**
This is the day we celebrate John the Baptist’s baptism of Christ in the Jordan River.
*When?* The Sunday after Epiphany
*Liturgical color:* White

**Ash Wednesday**
This day marks the beginning of Lent. It is focused on prayer, fasting, and repentance.
*When?* 40 days (excluding Sundays) before Easter Sunday
*Liturgical color:* Purple

**Lent**
Lent is a time of penitence and preparing for the death of Christ.
*When?* The period of time between Ash Wednesday and Holy Week
*Liturgical color:* Purple

**Palm Sunday**
Palm Sunday commemorates the beginning of the last week of Jesus’ earthly life. It celebrates Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem.
*When?* The Sunday before Easter
*Liturgical color:* Red

**Holy Week**
Holy Week commemorates the last days of Jesus’ earthly life. It is a time of repentance and sometimes fasting as the church prepares to remember Jesus’ sacrifice.
*When?* The week between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday
*Liturgical color:* Through Wednesday the liturgical color is red; from Thursday through Saturday there is no color

**Maundy Thursday**
Maundy Thursday commemorates the Last Supper and Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.
*When?* Thursday of Holy Week
*Liturgical color:* Maundy Thursday has no liturgical color

**Good Friday**
Good Friday is the commemoration of Jesus’ crucifixion and death.
*When?* Friday of Holy Week
*Liturgical color:* Good Friday has no liturgical color

**Easter**
Easter is the celebration of Jesus’ resurrection and the empty tomb. The Easter season lasts until Pentecost Sunday.
*When?* Easter is held on the Sunday following the first full moon on or after the vernal equinox
*Liturgical color:* White

**Ascension Day**
Ascension Day is the celebration of Jesus’ ascension after his resurrection.
*When?* 40 days after Easter Sunday
*Liturgical color:* White

**Pentecost**
Pentecost commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles.
*When?* Seven weeks after Easter
*Liturgical color:* Red

**Trinity Sunday**
Trinity Sunday celebrates the doctrine of the Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
*When?* The first Sunday after Pentecost
*Liturgical color:* White

**All Saints Day**
All Saints Day commemorates all Christians, past and present. It is sometimes used to remember church members who have died in the past year.
*When?* November 1 or the Sunday closest to November 1
*Liturgical color:* White

**Christ the King Sunday**
Christ the King Sunday celebrates the complete authority of Christ as king and Lord of creation.
*When?* The last Sunday before Advent
*Liturgical color:* Christ the King Sunday has no liturgical color
Advent

Family Fun Night

This event is a chance for the entire community to come together to kick off the Advent season in a fun and memorable way. It is also a time for participants to think about how they can bless those around them. Set up a series of stations with different activities, some designed to help participants celebrate Advent together and some designed to share with people who do not take part in the event (neighbors, shut-ins, etc.). Feel free to modify the following ideas to better fit the needs of your community, and even come up with some ideas of your own. Plan this event as close to the beginning of Advent as possible.

Nativity photos

At this station, families or groups of friends can dress up to create a nativity picture. This is a lot of fun, and it creates a nice keepsake of the evening.

You'll need:
- Long pieces of fabric to wrap over participants’ clothes or simple costumes that can be put on over clothing
- Hay bales and a manger to set the scene
- A blue or black backdrop with stars painted on it
- Stuffed barnyard animals

Someone will need to serve as the photographer for the evening. After the event, be sure to get photos printed and distributed to those who had their picture taken! If your church is active on social media, you can share the pictures there as well.

Advent chain

Families can create a paper chain with Bible verses on each paper link to help them stay focused on Christ as they count down to Christmas Day.

You'll need:
- Strips of red and green paper (2 x 10 inches)
- Pens or markers
- A list of Bible verses, one for each day from the day of the event until Christmas Day (check the Revised Common Lectionary, which is available online at lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu for readings to fit the season)
- Staplers or tape

Write each day's Bible reference on a strip of paper, then staple or tape the first one into a loop. Feed the next day's paper through the first loop and fasten the ends together to create the chain. Repeat until all the strips are in the chain. Rip one loop off the chain each day of Advent. Read the Bible passage written on it as a family.

Operation Christmas Child

Samaritan’s Purse distributes Christmas gifts to children in need all over the world through its Operation Christmas Child program. Visit www.samaritanspurse.org for details.

If you collect shoe boxes and gift items ahead of time, you can have Advent Family Fun Night participants pack the boxes and get them ready to ship.

Christmas treats

Christmas treats are a fun way to share the love of Christ during Advent. Families can make treats at the event and then deliver them to a friend or neighbor. Here are a few ideas: chocolate-dipped pretzels, decorated Christmas cookies, and jars of Christmas tea mix.

Caroling

Singing Christmas carols is a wonderful way to end the evening. Consider driving everyone over to a local nursing home and caroling for the patients there.

Christmas tea mix recipe

You'll need one-pint Mason jars and a funnel to package the tea mix. You can dress up the jars by putting a piece of fabric under the ring of the lid.

Ingredients:
- 1-1/3 cups Tang (orange-flavored powdered drink mix)
- 1/3 cup instant tea
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. ground cloves

Instructions:
Mix together all the ingredients and pour them into a Mason jar. Be sure to include preparation directions on a label or tag: “Place one rounded teaspoon in a cup of hot water.”
Advent

**A Family Christmas Eve Service**

Gather around an Advent wreath for a simple, at-home service to help prepare for Christmas Day. You can take turns doing the readings and lighting the candles.

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**John 1:1-5 (The Message)**

“The Word was first, the Word present to God, God present to the Word. The Word was God, in readiness for God from day one. Everything was created through him; nothing—not one thing!—came into being without him. What came into existence was Life, and the Life was Light to live by. The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn't put it out.”

*Light the first candle.*

**Isaiah 9:2**

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.”

*Light the second candle.*

**Isaiah 9:6-7a (NIV)**

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.”

*Light the third candle.*

**Luke 1:32-33**

“He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

*Light the fourth candle.*

**Nativity Story**

Read a paraphrase of the nativity story written for children, or tell the story in your own words.

*Light the fifth candle.*

*Sing “Silent Night” together.*
Community Christmas Eve Worship Service

This service will primarily be led by children. They will reenact the nativity story while a narrator reads Luke 2 from *The Message*. Practice with the children beforehand so they know where they are supposed to be and when.

**Before the service**

Dim the lights, and as people begin arriving, have “Silent Night” playing quietly in the background. This will help set a reverent, reflective tone for the service. Have chairs in the meeting space set up in a semicircle with a sticky note and something to write with at each chair.

**Setting the scene**

**Sets:** You’ll need to create a stable. If you can’t find or build one, several bales of hay will suffice. You can buy bales of hay in the fall and store them in a barn for use in this service.

**Costumes:** You’ll also need simple costumes for the children. They don’t need to be fancy. Bathrobes or long pieces of fabric wrapped over their clothes will work. You can make a halo out of garland for the child playing the angel.

**Props:** Your shepherds will need walking sticks or staffs. If you can’t find walking sticks, just use long tree branches. The shepherds will also need some stuffed sheep. Have the children bring in other stuffed barn animals to help create the feel of a stable. For baby Jesus, wrap a baby doll in a blanket. Use a wooden cradle, a wooden box turned upside down, or a wicker basket for the manger.

**Beginning the service**

Have greeters at each entrance. As people enter, the greeters should hand them a battery-powered tea-light candle and say, “Greetings to you on this holy night.”

Once everyone has arrived and has been seated, the pastor opens with a welcome and a prayer:

Father God, we come before you tonight to remember the gift of your Son, Jesus, who is not only Emmanuel, “God with Us,” but Savior of all. We thank you for this time and space to worship you. We enter into your presence now with our hearts open to hear from your Holy Spirit as we marvel at the mystery of God becoming man. Help us respond in humble awe and in love for God. In Jesus’ name, amen.

**The reenactment**

As the pastor concludes the prayer, the children should move to their spots. The shepherds should be guarding their sheep a short distance from the stable, and the angels should stay off to one side until it is time for their entrance. During the reenactment, the children simply follow the narrator’s words as he or she reads Luke 2 from *The Message*. If you’d like, the children playing the shepherds and the angel may recite their “lines” rather than the narrator reading them.
Luke 2: The birth of Jesus (The Message)

About that time Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Empire. This was the first census when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone had to travel to his own ancestral hometown to be accounted for. So Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census. As a descendant of David, he had to go there. He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant.

Mary and Joseph enter with baby Jesus and move toward the stable.

While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hostel.

Mary places baby Jesus in the manger, and she and Joseph sit beside it.

There were shepherders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep.

The shepherds mime tending the sheep. The angel walks over to the shepherds. The shepherds act afraid.

Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

Other angels join the first angel. The angels may all chant their lines in unison.

At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises: "Glory to God in the heavenly heights, Peace to all men and women on earth who please him." As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherders talked it over.

Angels leave the stage. Shepherds mime discussion.

"Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us." They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger.

The shepherds run to the stable and kneel before the manger.

Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherders were impressed.

Shepherds go up to congregation members and share the good news. They can say something simple such as, "Have you heard?" or "The Savior is here!"

Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself.

Mary can wrap her arms around herself or place her hands over her heart.

The shepherders returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they'd been told!

The shepherds should dance and jump and, in general, look like they're overjoyed.
The narrator closes the story with a paraphrase of Matthew 1:21:

She will give birth to a son, and give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

**Closing the service**

Play “Silent Night” quietly in the background.

The pastor says:

Christ, the Savior, is born! Jesus, who is God incarnate, came to us in human form so that he might one day sacrifice his own life for our sins. What a gift! What can we give to Jesus in return? The only gift that we can give is the way we live our lives. If anyone has not accepted the gift of Jesus and would like to, please see me after the service.

If you already serve the Christ child as Lord, take a moment and think what you could give to him this coming year.

I encourage each of you to write what you would like to give to God on the sticky note you found on your chair at the beginning of the service. Whenever you are ready, come forward and stick it to the manger.

After the community has finished bringing their gifts forward, have them turn on their tea lights and sing “Silent Night.” This can be done a cappella or with very light instrumentation such as an acoustic guitar.

You can transition into the song several ways:

- An acoustic guitar player and designated singer could start the song once everyone has returned to their seats.
- A volunteer from the congregation could begin the singing from where he or she is sitting.
- The narrator could begin the singing.

The pastor ends the service with:

My friends, this is the mystery of God: Emmanuel, God with us. Go in peace knowing that the Spirit of the Christ child is within you.

As the worshipers leave, have greeters at the doors saying, “Go in peace on this most holy of nights.”
Advent

Christmas Worship Stations

This station-based worship experience will enable worshipers to reflect deeply on the circumstances of Jesus’ birth. This worship experience is based on the song “Breath of Heaven (Mary’s Song)” by Amy Grant and Chris Eaton. To have permission to reproduce the lyrics for each station, your congregation must have a CCLI license. The non-italicized portions of text under each station (except station 5, because the volunteers will be guiding that station) are instructions for the worshiper. You can have the text displayed at the proper station, or you can have a paper guide for each worshiper with instructions for all the stations.

"Keep the room fairly dim. You can use electric candles or night lights to provide some light. "Breath of Heaven" should be playing quietly, over and over, in the background."

A call to obedience

STATION 1

Have the first verse of “Breath of Heaven” displayed at this station. Emphasize the second half of the verse.

Instructions: Think back to a time when you were burdened by something difficult that God called you to do. What did you do? Did you obey? If you did not, take this time to ask for God’s forgiveness. If you did obey, reflect on what you went through at that time. Spend time in prayer thanking God for choosing you to walk that path and for giving you the strength to walk it.

Have a path marked for worshipers to walk to get to the second station, symbolizing the difficult, lonely path that Mary had to walk. Have a small card with the lyrics to the second verse of the song at station 1 for each worshiper to take, read, and ponder while they walk the path to the second station.

Be with me now

STATION 2

The second verse of the song should be displayed here. You can also provide prayer beads to aid in contemplative prayer. To make simple prayer beads, string some wooden beads on a length of twine or hemp and tie the ends together to form a circle.

Instructions: Repeat the prayer, “Be with me now,” for several minutes. Rub the prayer beads while you repeat the prayer. The kinetic motion will help you focus more deeply.

Breath of heaven

STATION 3

The chorus of the song should be displayed at this station. Have an area marked on the floor for people to kneel to pray. Point a small space heater at the spot worshipers will be kneeling. The warm air is evocative of the breath of God. There should also be a candle here to symbolize God’s light in the darkness. A battery-powered candle is best because it can’t be accidentally blown out or tipped over.

Instructions: Here you will do a body prayer. If you are able, kneel in the marked area, wrap your arms around yourself, and pray this prayer:

“Jesus, I am nothing without you. Even when my world is falling apart, you are there and in control. Please, just hold me now.”
Offering all I am

The third verse of the song should be displayed here. You’ll also need a table and chairs with paper, paint, and brushes.

**Instructions:** At this station you will worship through art. Use the supplies provided to express what this verse says to you. Are you offering all that you are to Jesus right now? Pour all of your emotions and worship into your painting. The painting can be abstract if you’d like. This is a time for you to ponder and pray about these words and to let them be expressed in your painting.

Pour over me your holiness

The chorus of the song should be displayed again at this station. You’ll need a volunteer (or several volunteers, depending upon how many people you expect will be worshiping) at this station who will pray over and anoint each worshiper. There should also be another space heater and battery-powered candle.

The volunteer(s) should first pray over each worshiper. Worshipers may ask for prayer in specific areas if they wish. If someone has not claimed Jesus Christ as Lord, the volunteer can lead him or her in a prayer of acceptance.

After prayer, the volunteer can anoint the worshiper, saying, “God is pouring over you his holiness, for you are a holy child of God through the great news of Jesus Christ.”

After the fifth station, worshipers may spend however long they would like at either or both of the remaining two stations.

Molding the clay

Have air-drying clay on a table.

**Instructions:** Use the clay to mold something as an act of worship and love toward God—something that you are feeling right now or something that God spoke to you during your time alone with him.

Writing our worship

Have a table and some chairs set up, and provide paper and writing utensils so that people can express their worship in writing.

**Instructions:** Journaling can be a very meaningful way to worship. Here you can journal prayers, thoughts, or anything else you feel led to write.
Lent is a time of meditation and repentance, a time to examine our inner and outer spiritual life. The spirit of Lent is penitential and devotional. It is all about preparation—during the season of Lent we reflect on the road that Jesus walked leading up to his crucifixion. Three actions traditionally associated with Lent are prayer, fasting, and charitable giving. Jesus knew that his path led to the cross, yet he remained in conversation with his Father and continued to help those in need. He continued to live a life that was pleasing to God the Father.

What does that mean for us? We should follow Jesus’ example and focus on prayer, Scripture, helping those in need, and social justice. During Lent, we should be preparing to die to ourselves as Christ died for us.

Psalms for All Seasons: A Complete Psalter for Worship
This worship resource book contains a reading list of Psalms for Ash Wednesday through Easter. You could use this list to make a booklet or bookmark of daily readings for your congregation or to create an email list to send out each day’s reading.

You can order Psalms for All Seasons from Faith Alive Christian Resources: www.faithaliveresources.org or 1-800-333-8300.
A Tenebrae Service for Holy Week

“Walking the Path that Jesus Walked”

This station-based worship experience will help worshipers try to imagine what Jesus was feeling before he died. Each station represents an event from his final hours. A typical tenebrae service takes place in a dark room lit by a number of candles. A series of Scripture readings chronicles Jesus’ final week, ending with his burial. At the end of each reading a candle is snuffed out, until the final candle, the Christ candle, is carried out, leaving the room in darkness. Have enough candles (they can be real or battery-powered) at each station for the number of participants. Instruct worshipers to snuff out (or turn off) one candle when they leave each station. There is a passage of Scripture for worshipers to read assigned to each station. You can either provide a few Bibles at each station and display the Scripture reference, or you can display the entire passage. The non-italicized passages are instructions for the worshipers. These instructions should be available at their respective stations. The tenebrae service is a silent, solemn event. Encourage worshipers to go through the stations in complete silence. During Lent, we should be preparing to die to ourselves as Christ died for us.

**Jesus prays at Gethsemane**


*Surround this station with trees and plants, either real or fake, to create the feeling of a garden. Encourage people to kneel while they pray, but have a chair available for those who are unable to kneel.*

**Instructions:** Read Luke 22:39-46 and reflect. Ask yourself:

- Have I ever been in a position where God was calling me to do something that I did not want to do?
- Would I be willing to lay down my life for another?

Spend some time in prayer around these questions. Kneel if you are able.

**Jesus is arrested**


*This station requires a table and chairs. You’ll also need to provide paper and something to write with.*

**Instructions:** Read Luke 22:47-53. Reflect on a moment when you have betrayed Jesus or when you were betrayed by someone you love. Write a prayer to God that expresses your feelings of sadness and regret, and your desire for forgiveness.

**Peter disowns Jesus**

Luke 22:54-62

*This station requires a table and chairs. You’ll also need paper and painting supplies.*

**Instructions:** Read Luke 22:54-62. Use the tools provided to express a time when you gave in to societal pressure and disowned Jesus. Use your senses and freely paint what you are feeling.
Jesus stands before Pilate and Herod

Have a large bowl filled with water at this station.


We are responsible for the blood that was spilled. We are responsible for crucifying Jesus. Take some time for meditative prayer.

Jesus is sentenced

Have a gavel (or something similar) sitting at this station, symbolizing the judgment that has been passed on Jesus.


Jesus is crucified
Luke 23:26-43

You’ll need a cross at this station. It can be made of pieces of lumber, or it can be a paper cutout attached to the wall. There should also be a pad of sticky notes and some pens. You’ll need a recording of the song “Who Am I?” by Casting Crowns and a way for worshipers to listen to the song with headphones as well.

Instructions: We have all sinned. It was our sin that held Jesus to the cross. Because of our sin, Jesus gave his life as a willing sacrifice so that we may have forgiveness and eternal life. Read Luke 23:26-43 and use the headphones to listen to the song “Who Am I?” Then write your name on a sticky note and stick it to the cross.

Jesus dies
Luke 23:44-46

Have a basket of large carpenter nails at this station.

Instructions: Read Luke 23:44-46. Take a nail as a physical reminder of the sacrifice that Jesus made on your behalf.

Jesus is buried
Luke 23:50-56

The candles at this station, unlike all the others, should be unlit. Have a lighter or two available (if the candles are real).

Instructions: Read Luke 23:50-56. Remember that this is not the end of the story! As believers, we know that Jesus is risen. Light a candle in the hope of the resurrection and leave in quiet meditation.
Create a bag of scented “anointing spices” filled with pieces of cloth sprinkled with anointing oil.

As worshipers arrive, encourage them to smell the bag and imagine that they are on their way to the tomb to anoint Jesus’ body.

Then lead them, a few at a time, to an empty tomb. You’ll need to get a little creative here to create a tomb. You could use cardboard boxes or papier-mâché. Your tomb does not have to be life-size, but it should be large enough for people to be able to look in and see only Jesus’ grave clothes (long strips of plain cloth) remaining.

Once the worshipers have seen with their own eyes that Jesus has risen from the dead, lead them to a corporate seating arrangement for the rest of the service.
Pentecost

Pentecost Service

Use fans, recordings of multiple languages, and red banners to evoke the feeling of the first Pentecost.

At the beginning of the worship service, once people are seated, start the fans so that the congregation experiences "a sound like the rush of violent wind" (Acts 2:2). Project Acts 2:2 on the screen.

If possible, have long, flowing red banners hanging from the ceiling to evoke flames of fire coming down to touch worshipers' heads. Project Acts 2:3 on the screen.

If you have enough people who speak different languages in your congregation, have a group read Scripture in multiple languages. Otherwise, play recordings of Scripture in multiple languages for several minutes. Project Acts 2:4.

Have seven readers present Acts 2:5-42 (NLT). You could have quiet instrumental music in the background while they read.

**Acts 2:5-8, 12-13**

At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers. They were completely amazed. “How can this be?” they exclaimed. “These people are all from Galilee, and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages!”

They stood there amazed and perplexed. “What can this mean?” they asked each other. But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, “They’re just drunk, that’s all!”

**Acts 2:14-16**

Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, “Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o’clock in the morning is much too early for that. No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel:

**Acts 2:17-21**

“In the last days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants—men and women alike—and they will prophesy. And I will cause wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below—blood and fire and clouds of smoke. The sun will become dark, and the moon will turn blood red before that great and glorious day of the Lord arrives. But everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’
Acts 2:22-24

“People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know. But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him. But God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its grip.

Acts 2:25-31

“King David said this about him: ‘I see that the Lord is always with me. I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me. No wonder my heart is glad, and my tongue shouts his praises! My body rests in hope. For you will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your Holy One to rot in the grave. You have shown me the way of life, and you will fill me with the joy of your presence.’

“Dear brothers, think about this! You can be sure that the patriarch David wasn’t referring to himself, for he died and was buried, and his tomb is still here among us. But he was a prophet, and he knew God had promised with an oath that one of David’s own descendants would sit on his throne. David was looking into the future and speaking of the Messiah’s resurrection. He was saying that God would not leave him among the dead or allow his body to rot in the grave.

Acts 2:32-36

“God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this. Now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God’s right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, gave him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today. For David himself never ascended into heaven, yet he said,

“‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit in the place of honor at my right hand until I humble your enemies, making them a footstool under your feet.”’

“So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!”

Acts 2:37-42

Peter’s words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”

Peter replied, “Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God.” Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation!”

Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all. All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer.”
Dialogue

After the readings, lead into a dialogue about what the worshipers experienced hearing these verses.

End with stanzas one, four, and seven of 15th-century English poet John Dryden's translation of the Latin prayer “Veni Creator Spiritus.”

Creator Spirit, by whose aid
The world’s foundations first were laid,
Come, visit ev’ry pious mind;
Come, pour thy joys on human kind;
From sin, and sorrow set us free;
And make thy temples worthy Thee.

Refine and purge our earthly parts;
But, oh, inflame and fire our hearts!
Our frailties help, our vice control;
Submit the senses to the soul;
And when rebellious they are grown,
Then, lay thy hand, and hold ’em down.

Immortal honour, endless fame,
Attend th’ Almighty Father’s name:
The Saviour Son be glorified,
Who for lost Man’s redemption died:
And equal adoration be,
Eternal Paraclete, to thee.
God the Potter

"Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand" (Isaiah 64:8).

For this time of worship, you will need air-drying clay and an index card with Isaiah 64:8 written on it for each child. Have the children sit at a table to make cleanup easier.

Begin this time by asking the children some of the following questions.

- What does it mean that God is our Father?
- What can you do with clay? Can you make things out of it?
- What is a potter and what does a potter do?
- What do you think it means that God is our potter?
- What do you think that God is shaping you to be? How is he doing that?

After the discussion, let the children use the clay to mold something that represents what they feel God is creating them to be.
Station-Based Worship

Prayer Walk with Communion

This worship experience is designed to be held outside. It is a meditative walk based on Psalm 23. Worshipers may experience the walk in groups or by themselves.

Participants will read Scripture passages at different stops along the path. They will be served communion in the middle of the walk. If possible, hold this prayer walk next to a river or lake so that station 2 can overlook the water.

Each worshiper should receive a handout with each station's Scripture passage and worship instructions on it. You will also need to indicate, either in the handout or by marking each location, where participants should stop for each station.

At the end of the prayer walk, you could give each worshiper a simple cross necklace as a reminder of the blessings of salvation. You can purchase inexpensive wood or stone necklaces in bulk from Oriental Trading Company.

Psalm 23:1-2a
"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures."

Instructions: Sit or lie down on the grass. Touch the blades of grass and smell their freshness. Revel in the fact that God made this beautiful earth. Spend some time thanking God for his creation. When you are ready, move on to the next station.

Psalm 23:2b-3a
"He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul."

Instructions: Listen to the sound of the water and let it calm you. Spend some time thanking God for comfort and salvation.

Psalm 23:3b
"He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake."

Instructions: Spend some time in prayer seeking forgiveness for any sin in your life. Pray that God would lead you down paths of righteousness.

Serve communion as worshipers are leaving station 3, after they have spent time in confession.

Psalm 23:4
"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me."

Have writing utensils and some clipboards or other flat writing surfaces available at this station.

Instructions: Think about a time when life seemed overwhelming. Did you feel the peace of God at that time? Maybe you are going through a difficult time right now and are in need of comfort from the Great Shepherd. Use the back of this worship guide as a journal to write a prayer asking for the comfort that only God can truly give.
Psalm 23:5b
"You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows."

Station 5 will require anointing oil and a prayer intercessor who is comfortable anointing each worshiper. (If you will have a large volume of worshipers going through the prayer walk, you may wish to have several intercessors stationed here.)

Instructions: Spend some time praying with the prayer intercessor, praising God for all that God has done and for all that God will do through and for us.

Psalm 23:6
"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long."

Instructions: This is a moment of praise! Read this verse out loud with a joyful voice.
A Worship Experience on the Joy of Forgiveness
Based on Psalm 32

This station-based worship experience will help worshipers reflect on God's forgiveness. Display the appropriate verse(s) and worship instructions at each station.

You'll need:

- A large bowl filled with water (station 2)
- Small stones (station 2)
- Copies of the Prayer of Saint Patrick for each worshiper, or one larger-print copy to display (station 3)
- Paper and pens (station 4)
- Communion elements (station 5)
- Air-drying clay (station 6)

**Psalm 32:1-4**

“Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

“While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah.”

**Instructions:** “Selah” is believed to be a musical term meaning “pause and think.” Pause now and reflect on your life. Do you have any unconfessed sins?

**Psalm 32:5**

“Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord;’ and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.”

**Instructions:** Seek forgiveness for the sin in your life. Then pick up a stone and imagine that the stone is your sin. Drop your stone into the bowl of water, releasing your sin to God for forgiveness.

**Psalm 32:6-7**

“Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. Selah.”

**Instructions:** Here you will pray what is called a body prayer. If you are able, kneel in the marked area, wrap your arms around yourself, and pray. As you pray this ancient prayer attributed to the fifth-century missionary and bishop Saint Patrick, wrap your arms around yourself to symbolize
Christ surrounding you.

**The Prayer of Saint Patrick**
As I arise today, 
may the strength of God pilot me, 
the power of God uphold me, the wisdom of God guide me. 
May the eye of God look before me, 
the ear of God hear me, 
the Word of God speak for me. 
May the hand of God protect me, 
the way of God lie before me, 
the shield of God defend me, 
the host of God save me. 
May Christ shield me today.

Christ with me, 
Christ before me, 
Christ behind me, 
Christ in me, 
Christ beneath me, 
Christ above me, 
Christ on my right, 
Christ on my left, 
Christ when I lie down, 
Christ when I sit, 
Christ when I stand, 
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me, 
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me, 
Christ in every eye that sees me, 
Christ in every ear that hears me. Amen.

**Psalm 32:8-9**

“I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding, whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you.”

**Instructions:** Pray and ask for God’s continued guidance in your life. If you’d like, use the paper provided to write out your prayer.

**Psalm 32:10**

“Many are the torments of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.”

*Have a pastor or elders serve communion at this station.*

**Psalm 32:11**

“Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.”

**Instructions:** Worship the Lord through the art of your hands with the clay provided.
Abiding in Jesus
Based on John 15:1-9

This station-based worship experience will give worshipers an opportunity to reflect on what it means to abide with God. Display the appropriate verse(s) and worship instructions at each station.

You’ll need:

- Artificial grapevines (or artificial vines and some artificial grapes, if grapevines aren’t available)
- Freestanding room dividers (wicker ones with large holes in the design work best because you can thread the artificial vines through them)
- Scissors
- Cut-up fruit

**John 15:1-4**

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me."

Decorate this station to resemble a vineyard. Create walls on three sides with freestanding room dividers. Drape them with artificial grapevines.

**Instructions:** Read John 15:1-4 and reflect.
- Are you abiding in the one who has given you life, or are you trying to handle life on your own?
- Does God’s life and love show in you?
- Are you allowing God to prune you so that you may produce more good fruit?

Spend some time in prayer, asking God if there is an area of your life that needs pruning. If God shows you an area of your life that needs to be cleansed, ask for forgiveness. Finally, take the scissors and cut off a piece of the vine to symbolize Christ’s pruning work in your life.

**John 15:5**

"I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing."

Provide cut-up fruit for participants to eat.

**Instructions:** Eat some of the fruit. Take your time; savor the flavor and texture. Are you bearing ripe fruit that is full of goodness and meaning? Are you ministering where God is already at work? Spend some time in prayer, asking God to help you bear ripe, good fruit.

**John 15:7-9**

"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love."

**Instructions:** Spend time in meditative prayer. Repeat over and over, aloud or to yourself, “May I abide in the love of Jesus.”
Station-Based Worship

Experiencing Scripture through the Senses

The Book of Matthew

Matthew 5:16
"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."

Sensory experience: Place a small, battery-operated tea light at each seat or hand them out as people enter for worship. At the end of the service, dim the overhead lights and have everyone turn on their tea lights to symbolize their individual commitment to let their light shine.

Matthew 6:19-21
"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Sensory experience: Have a shiny penny for each worshiper. Worshipers can feel the smoothness of the money, see the shine, and smell the copper. At the end of the service, have worshipers drop their penny in a bucket to symbolize that they are storing up not monetary treasures, but heavenly ones.

Matthew 6:28-30
"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. 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?"

Sensory experience: Have a flower for each worshiper. They can smell the flower, touch the silky petals, and admire its beauty. It serves as a reminder that God will always provide.

Matthew 7:3-5
"Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? 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? 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."

Sensory experience: Have one small, rough piece of scrap wood for each person. The piece of wood serves as a reminder that each of us is sinful, so we should not judge others.
Matthew 7:24-25

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. 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.”

Sensory experience: Have a palm-size stone for each person as a reminder to build his or her life on Jesus.

Matthew 12:1-2

“At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. When the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath.”

Sensory experience: Fill baskets with heads of grain and have each worshiper take one. They can feel and taste the grain just as the disciples did.

Matthew 13:45-46

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

Sensory experience: A fake pearl can serve as a reminder of the value of the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 21:8-9

“A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!’”

Sensory experience: Hand out palm branches to each worshiper.

Matthew 27:24-54, Jesus’ crucifixion

Sensory experience: Hand out a large carpenter nail to every worshiper. The nail will serve as a reminder of the sacrifice that Christ made for us.
When we see a well-known company’s logo, we automatically identify it with the company’s brand, even if there are no words to tell us what it stands for. The logo is a powerful symbol of the brand.

Symbols can also be very powerful in worship. They can remind us of God’s saving deeds through history, and they can inspire us to worship. You can incorporate symbols into banners for the worship space. You could even have the congregation make banners as an act of worship.

### Other Resources

#### Symbols in Worship

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#### Advent wreath
Symbolizes the hope that we have as we await Christ’s birth. Each candle in the wreath also has symbolism. The white candle in the center symbolizes Christ. Traditionally, one of the outer four candles is pink or rose and symbolizes joy. The meaning of the other three candles varies by tradition.

#### Alpha and Omega
Represents God, the beginning and the end.

#### Altar
In the Old Testament, the altar was a raised area used for sacrifices. Now it symbolizes the Lord’s Supper.

#### Ark of the Covenant
Symbolized God’s presence among the Israelites.

#### Basin
The basin is a symbol of purity. It was used in the tabernacle for ritual purification and was often used by Christians before partaking in communion.

#### Bells
Aaron’s priestly robes had bells attached to the hem. Traditionally, bells have been rung to summon people to church. The Orthodox Church uses bells to mark different points in the service.

#### Bread and cup
Symbolize the body and blood of Jesus Christ in communion.

#### Chi-Rho
This symbol is formed by superimposing the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ, X and P. The superimposed letters also evoke a cross.

#### Cross
Symbolizes the redemption of humanity through Christ’s sacrifice.

#### Crown of thorns
Symbolizes the suffering that Christ endured on our behalf.

#### Dove
Symbolizes the baptism of Jesus, when the Holy Spirit descended upon him like a dove.

#### Easter lily
Represents the resurrection of Jesus.

#### Gate
Represents the way to Jesus and everlasting life.

#### Ichthys (fish)
First used by early Christians to identify each other while they faced persecution. Now it is a common symbol of Christianity.

#### Incense
Symbolizes the prayers of the faithful flowing to heaven.
Lamp
Symbolizes the wisdom that comes from God. In the tabernacle, the lamp also symbolized God’s presence.

Lampstand
Symbolizes the people of Israel.

Lifted hands
A symbolic posture of prayer and worship.

Lion
The Lion of Judah is a title for Christ (Revelation 5:5).

Nails
Represent Jesus’ suffering on the cross.

Rock
A rock can symbolize many things. In the Old Testament, it was symbolic of God’s strength. When Moses struck a rock, water flowed out. The rock can also be a symbol of Christ, who refreshes the soul. In the parable of the wise man who built his house upon the rock, the rock symbolizes God as our firm foundation.

Shamrock
With its three petals, the shamrock is a symbol for the Trinity.

Shepherd’s staff
Symbolizes God as our good shepherd.

Star
A symbol of Christ as the light of the world; also symbolizes the Star of Bethlehem that heralded Jesus’ birth.

Star of David
The six-pointed star is the symbol for modern Judaism. In Christianity, it is also known as the creator’s star. Each point represents one of the days of creation.

Tabernacle
In ancient times, the tabernacles symbolized God’s desire to be near the people of Israel. Now it can symbolize God’s desire to be near us.

Three interwoven circles
Represents the Trinity. A circle has no beginning or end, so it signifies the eternal nature of God. The interweaving of the three circles symbolizes the equality among God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

Trumpet
In the Old Testament, the trumpet announced holy days and festivals.
A Prayer for the Enjoyment of Creation

We give you thanks, most gracious God,
for the beauty of earth and sky and sea;
for the richness of mountains, plains, and rivers;
for the songs of birds and the loveliness of flowers.
We praise you for these good gifts
and pray that we may safeguard them for our posterity.
Grant that we may continue to grow
in our grateful enjoyment of your abundant creation,
to the honor and glory of your name,
now and forever. Amen.

*Book of Common Prayer, 1662*

A Prayer of Gratitude

Unto which joys for to attain
God grant us all his grace,
And send us, after worldly pain,
In heaven to have a place,
Where we may still enjoy that light
Which never shall decay:
Lord, for thy mercy lend us might
To see that joyful day.

The rainbow bending in the sky,
Bedecked with sundry hues,
Is like the seat of God on high,
And seems to tell these news:
That as thereby he promised
To drown the world no more,
So by the blood which Christ hath shed,
He will our health restore.

Excerpt of Elgar’s 1929 adaption of “Good Morrowe” by George Gascoigne, 1557

A Prayer for Worship

God, you are with me and you can help me. You were with me when I was taken, and you are with me now. You strengthen me. The God I serve is everywhere—in heaven and earth and the sea, but he is above them all, for all live in him: all were created by him, and by him only do they remain.
I will worship only the true God; you will I carry in my heart; no one on earth shall be able to separate me from you.

Quirinius, fourth-century bishop of Siscia
**A Prayer for the Fulfillment of God’s Will**

O Lord, by your dealings with us, whether of joy or pain, of light or darkness, let us be brought to you. Let us value no treatment of your grace simply because it makes us happy or because it makes us sad, because it gives us or denies us what we want; but may all that you send us bring us to you; that knowing your perfectness, we may be sure in every disappointment you are still loving us, in every darkness you are still enlightening us, and in every enforced idleness you are giving us life, as in his death you gave life to your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Phillips Brooks, 19th-century American clergyman

**A Prayer for the Mind of God**

Grant me, O Lord, to know that which is worth knowing, to love that which is worth loving, to praise that which pleases you most, and to esteem highly that which is precious to you. Amen.

Thomas à Kempis, 15th-century German canon

**A Prayer of Confession**

Almighty and most merciful Father,
we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep.
we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts,
we have offended against thy holy laws,
we have left undone those things which we ought to have done,
and we have done those things which we ought not to have done. And there is no health in us.
But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us,
spare thou those, O God, who confess their faults,
restore thou those who are penitent,
according to thy promises declared unto mankind
in Christ Jesus our Lord;
and grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake,
that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life,
to the glory of thy holy Name. Amen.

*Book of Common Prayer, 1662*

**A Prayer for Cleansing**

O Lord our God, great, eternal, wonderful in glory, cleanse us from our sins, and from every thought displeasing to thy goodness. Cleanse our souls and bodies, our hearts and consciences, that with a pure heart and a clear mind, with perfect love and calm hope, we may venture confidently and fearlessly to pray unto thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Coptic Liturgy of Saint Basil

**A Prayer for the Love of God**

Lord, give us hearts never to forget your love; but to remain there whatever we do, whether we sleep or wake, live or die, or rise again to the life that is to come. For your love is eternal life and everlasting rest; for this is life eternal to know you and your infinite goodness. O let its flame never be quenched in our hearts; let it grow and brighten, till our whole souls are glowing and shining with its light and warmth.
Excerpt from an English translation of a prayer by Johann Arndt, 17th-century Lutheran theologian

**A Prayer for a Steadfast Heart**

Give us, O Lord, a steadfast heart, which no unworthy affection may drag downwards; give us an unconquered heart, which no tribulation can wear out; give us an upright heart, which no unworthy purpose may tempt aside. Bestow upon us also, O Lord our God, understanding to know you, diligence to seek you, wisdom to find you, and a faithfulness that may finally embrace you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Thomas Aquinas, 13th-century Dominican friar

**A Prayer for Hungering after God**

Grant us, we pray, the lost who hunger and thirst after righteousness—the longing for God. Grant to us that drawing power by which everything in us shall call for you. Become necessary to us. With the morning and evening light, at noon and at midnight, may we feel the need of your companionship . . . Though you do not speak as man speaks, yet you can call out to us; and the soul shall know your presence and shall understand by its own self what you mean. Grant to us this witness of the Spirit, this communion of the soul with you—and not only once or twice: May we abide in the light. Amen.

Henry Ward Beecher, 19th-century Congregationalist minister

**A Prayer of Worship**

Have mercy upon us, O God, and again have mercy upon us; who at all times and in every hour, in heaven and on earth, is worshiped and glorified. Christ, our good Lord, the long-suffering, exceedingly merciful, and extremely compassionate one; who loves the righteous and is merciful to the sinners, of whom I am chief; who does not wish the death of a sinner but rather wishes that he repent and live; who calls all to salvation through the promise of blessings to come. Lord, accept our prayers at this hour and at every hour. Establish our way, and guide us to carry out your commandments. Sanctify our soul. Cleanse our body. Straighten our thoughts. Purify our intentions. Heal our sickness. Forgive our sins. Deliver us from every destructive grief, distress, and heartache. Surround us with your holy angels, who guide and guard within their camp, so we may attain the unity of faith and the knowledge of your infinite and invisible glory. For you are the blessed God, now and forever and from all ages to all ages. Amen.

Ancient Coptic prayer