RCA Worship Resource Toolkit:  
Worship liturgies  
for churches with a blended style of worship

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Introduction

Making primary use of the Gospel of Luke, the ecumenical lectionary gospel for Year C (which begins in Advent 2015), we will encounter stories of transformation, discipleship, leadership, and mission. Besides the Scripture texts, there are supporting Scripture passages from the Psalms and the Old Testament, and foundational Scripture passages of grateful living that support the denominational emphasis for each week. I have sketched a sermon or message theme for each Sunday, using some of the best published Christian resources. I owe a great deal of the resources for this four-week worship toolkit to N.T. Wright and his book, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*, as well as Alister McGrath’s short work in the Heart of Christian Faith series, *The Spirit of Grace*.

Preachers and worship planners are encouraged to consult these resources further when preparing their services. Song selections are from the *Lift Up Your Hearts* hymnal unless otherwise noted.
Week One: Transformation

Theme notes: Transformation both individually and corporately may begin with an instantaneous event such as an encounter weekend, a worship service, or a life-altering event, but that is only the beginning of transformation. Transformation is living with Jesus on an ongoing basis, so that the rhythms and patterns of Jesus—that at first seem awkward and strange—become almost second nature. It is living with Jesus so that when we find ourselves faced with spontaneous decisions, we reflect the image of Christ that has been deeply formed in us. The service parts are divided based on the hymn, “Speak, O Lord.”

Liturgy (* = please stand if you are able)

Prayer at the top of the bulletin:
   You awaken us to delight in your praise;
   for you have made us for yourself,
   and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you. (St. Augustine)

O LORD, WE COME TO YOU or THE APPROACH TO GOD

Prelude

Our purpose for gathering:
   Our help is in the name of the Lord
   who made heaven and earth. Amen.

Call to worship (based on Romans 12:1-2):
   Be transformed by the renewing of your minds
   Be transformed by the renewal
   Be transformed
   Be!

God’s greeting:
   Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Hymn or song of praise:
   #755 Speak, O Lord
   or #529 Gather Us In
   or #351 Love Divine, All Loves Excelling (more traditional)
A psalm of trust (Psalm 23):

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake.
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.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

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.

*Song response:

#527 Come Away from Rush and Hurry

(*And/or prayer of response: Lift Up Your Hearts #528)

Jesus, our Lord.
Jesus, our Savior.
Help us to set aside all that cannot bring us peace.
Help us to turn away from self-concern.
Help us to turn toward you in trust.
Amen.

*Sharing the peace of Christ:

The peace of Christ be with you.
And also with you.

Words of welcome: (not necessarily printed in the worship bulletin)

Welcome in the name of Jesus Christ.
May each one of us find great joy and spiritual nourishment as we begin a four-week journey of transformation.
May we experience not only a renewal of the mind,
but also of the heart and the soul, so that we may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

SHAPE AND FASHION US IN YOUR LIKENESS or CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE

Invitation to confession:
When we gather to praise God, we remember that we are people who have preferred our wills to the Lord’s. Accepting God’s power to become new and transformed persons in Christ, let us confess our sin before God and one another. *(adapted from The Worship Sourcebook, p. 85)*

Prayer of confession (in unison):
*God of birth, God of joy, God of transformation,*
*we come to you as people hungry for good news.*
*We have been so dead to miracles that we do not think that it is possible for us to change.*
*We have preoccupied ourselves with pleasures and have overlooked the joy you offer us.*
*We have been so concerned with making a living that we have missed the life you set among us.*
*Forgive us, gracious God.*
*Open our eyes and our hearts to receive your gift; open our lips and hands to share it with all humanity in the name of our savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.* *(adapted from The Worship Sourcebook, p. 97)*

Words of assurance: 2 Corinthians 5:17

Grateful living: Matthew 11:28-30 (The Message)

Dismissal of children for Children and Worship *(if applicable)*
  #896 Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying

SPEAK, O LORD or THE WORD OF GOD or SPEAK, O LORD, IN WORD AND SACRAMENT

Prayer for illumination


*Hymn of illumination:
  #859  Be Thou My Vision
  or #175  When I Survey the Wondrous Cross
  or #176  The Wonderful Cross
  or #153  Great God, Your Love Has Called Us Here

Sermon or message: “What Am I Here For?”

Prayer for blessing on the Word

*If the church celebrates the Lord’s Supper this Sunday:
  Song: #811  Great Prayer of Thanksgiving
  Communion Thanksgiving: #357  In the Lord I’ll be Ever Thankful

WE WALK AS YOU WALK WITH US  or  THE RESPONSE TO GOD

*Affirmation of faith:
  What is the chief end of man?
  Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.
  (Westminster Shorter Catechism)

OR

What is your only comfort in life and in death?
That I am not my own, but belong—
body and soul,
in life and in death—
to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.
He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,
and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.
He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head
without the will of my Father in heaven;
in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.
Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him. (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A #1)

OR

A testimony of personal transformation from a lay person, who shares specific ways Jesus Christ has brought transformation in his or her life.

Offering

*Doxology  or  #874  We Are an Offering

Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession, and the Lord’s Prayer  
(Possible outline of prayer in Lift Up Your Hearts #875)

*Hymn of dedication:
   #862  Take Us as We Are, O God
   or #863  Take My Life and Let It Be
   or #926  God of Grace and God of Glory
   or #946  Go, My Children, with My Blessing

*Benediction: Romans 12:1-2

*Postlude

Notes for the message – week one

In Luke 18:18-30, a rich ruler asks Jesus, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” People today—both inside the church and from a secular background—might ask this question with slightly different language. They might ask Jesus, “How can I be happy?”

The rich young ruler assumes, since Jesus is a teacher of Israel, that eternal life obviously has something to do with keeping certain rules and regulations or the
commandments of God, which the rich ruler says he has kept from his youth. Of course, many people assume that religion, first and foremost, is about keeping certain rules and regulations—that it has to do fundamentally with behavior.

But something was gnawing at this ancient professional person. Notice that Jesus does not deny that he has kept the commandments. There is a lack of fulfillment in his life or, we might say, a lack of transformation. As we dig deeper, we find that the rich young ruler is really asking the questions, “What am I here for?” and “What will make me happy?” And Jesus’ answer for this rich young person is that he lacks one thing. Jesus commands him to sell all that he owns and follow Jesus. The man’s wealth and riches are blocking him from the center of life that can bring him true transformation.

Notice that the rules that the young man has kept are basic prescriptions toward another human being. But what is missing is something more—a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Jesus suggests that he needs to turn his life inside out; he needs a radical and total transformation. Paul called this a transformation of the mind. Jesus is challenging the young man to a transformation of his entire being.

The rich man went away sad and did not follow Jesus into a life of total transformation, but if he had, belief in God would not have been the end. What happens after we believe? That too is part of the transformation of the gospel. In the old language, not only do we need justification, a right relationship with God, but we also need sanctification—an ongoing transformation in our walk with Jesus.

In N.T. Wright’s book, *After We Believe*, he references the heroic actions of Captain Sullenberger, who landed his failing commercial airliner on the Hudson River in January 2009. Many called it the “miracle on the Hudson,” and in many ways it was indeed a miracle. But the landing on the Hudson was also the result of piloting skills that came through years of practice and the development of a particular character as a pilot. You might call it the power of right habits or the result of training and experience. Similarly, in our daily walk with Jesus and in practicing spiritual disciplines over a lifetime, we develop the ability to make good decisions as though they are second nature. While we never completely “arrive” in our walk with Jesus, transformation is this lifelong walk with Jesus in which actions and decisions are formed deep within us.

Transformation as individual disciples and corporately in the body of Christ will mean that we keep rules, laws, and commandments out of the character that has been formed deep within us by the God we know in Jesus Christ.

*(See N.T. Wright, After You Believe, pp. 1-26 for more illustrative material.)*
Week Two: Discipleship

Theme notes: In a second story from the Gospel of Luke, we encounter the short tax collector Zacchaeus, who climbed up in a tree to see Jesus. He was so pleasantly surprised that Jesus came to his home that it led to specific acts of gratitude as part of following Jesus. Giving is one act of discipleship that flows out of gratitude to God. But there are others. We might even call acts of gratitude the virtuous circle (a term N.T. Wright uses in After You Believe, p. 260); these acts deepen our discipleship. Not only are we transformed by grace, but we also are formed as disciples of Jesus through specific acts of gratitude. The headings for the service parts use lyrics from the hymn, “Gather Us In.”

Liturgy (∗ = please stand if you are able)

Prayer at the top of the bulletin:
Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen. (St. Francis of Assisi)

GATHER US IN or THE APPROACH TO GOD

Prelude

Our purpose for gathering:
From the north and the south, from the east and the west,
from the strong and the weak, the old and the young,
the Lord’s name be praised.
Call to worship (Psalm 116:12-14, 17-19):

What shall I return to the Lord
for all his bounty to me?
I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the Lord,
I will pay my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all his people.
I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice
and call on the name of the Lord.
I will pay my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all his people,
in the courts of the house of the Lord,
in your midst, O Jerusalem.

Praise the Lord!

OR

Song #152 I Love the Lord; He Heard My Cry: refrain with responsive reading of Psalm 116

God’s greeting (2 Peter 1:2):

May grace and peace be yours in abundance
in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

*Hymn of praise:

#529 Gather Us In
or #511 Amid the Thronging Worshipers
or #526 Come, Now Is the Time to Worship

*Prayer of adoration:

Triune God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
you have adopted us as your children,
you lavish your grace upon us at Word and table.
May all that we do here equip us for discipleship,
build us up as the body of Christ,
strengthen our unity in faith,
deepen our knowledge of Jesus, our Lord,
and help us to grow in maturity as your children,
reflecting the full stature of Christ. Amen.
(adapted from Lift Up Your Hearts, #529 optional prayer)
*Sharing the peace of Christ:
As God has greeted us, let us greet one another.

OR

We welcome you to our service of worship this morning.
And we extend a special welcome to those visiting this congregation.
As we take up our cross and follow the path of discipleship, we rejoice that you can share with us in our journey with Jesus.

GIVE US A HEART, SO MEEK AND SO LOWLY  or  CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE

Invitation to confession: Romans 5:8; Hebrews 4:16

Prayer of confession:
Gracious God,
Our sins are too heavy to carry,
too real to hide, and too deep to undo.
Forgive what our lips tremble to name,
what our hearts can no longer bear,
and what has become for us
a consuming fire of judgment.
Set us free from a past
that we cannot change;
open us to a future
in which we can be changed;
and grant us grace
to grow more and more
in your likeness and image;
through Jesus Christ,
the light of the world.
(Lift up Your Hearts #636)

Words of assurance: I Timothy 1:15; I Peter 2:24

Grateful living: Galatians 5:19-26 (The Message)

*Song of response:
#956  To God be the Glory
or #961  Glory Be to the Father (Gloria Patri)
or #83  Gloria, Gloria
NOURISH US WELL  or  THE WORD OF GOD

Prayer for illumination

Old Testament lesson: Isaiah 1:10-18


*Hymn of illumination:
    #693 Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)
    or #753 Listen, God Is Calling
    or #743 O God, You Are My God
    or #730 I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

Sermon or message: “When Jesus Comes to Our Home”

Prayer for blessing on the Word

*If the Lord’s Supper is celebrated this Sunday:
  Song: #830 Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ

TEACH US TO FASHION LIVES THAT ARE HOLY  or  THE RESPONSE TO GOD

*Affirmation of faith:
    Since we have been delivered
    from our misery
    by grace through Christ
    without any merit of our own,
    why then should we do good works?
    Because Christ, having redeemed us by his blood,
    is also restoring us by his Spirit into his image,
    so that with our whole lives
    we may show that we are thankful to God
    for his benefits,
    so that he may be praised through us,
    so that we may be assured of our faith by its fruits,
    and so that by our godly living
    our neighbors may be won over to Christ.
    (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A #86)
OR

A personal testimony of discipleship

Offering

*Doxology

Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession, and the Lord’s Prayer

*Hymn of dedication:
  #938 My Friends, May You Grow in Grace
  or #854 I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me
  or #869 Here I Am, Lord
  or #352 O Jesus, I Have Promised

*Sending and benediction:
  #937 Live a Life Worthy of the Calling

  The grace and peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us all.

*Postlude

Notes for the message – week two

Luke’s account of Zacchaeus, the little man who climbed a tree to see Jesus, indicates that Zacchaeus is not well liked. He is a rich tax collector who makes his money by collaborating with the Roman authorities. Yet he is drawn to Jesus of Nazareth. We are not told why. Is he longing to be freed from the wealth that entraps him? Maybe his heart’s desires have found an answer in the person of Jesus? We simply don’t know. What we do know is that in Jesus Christ he experiences transformational grace.

But he doesn’t stop there. Transformation leads to Zacchaeus becoming transformational. “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much” (Luke 19:8). Here is a theme that reaches deep into the Reformed tradition—that salvation is grace and discipleship flows out of gratitude. Having found acceptance with Jesus, Zacchaeus responds by expressing his new status through changed attitudes and actions (Alister McGrath, The Spirit of Grace, p. 51).
Discipleship that flows from transformational grace is marked by certain disciplines of the Christian faith that in turn draw us closer to Jesus. N.T. Wright calls this the virtuous circle *After You Believe*. For Zacchaeus it is specific acts of stewardship and giving. But discipleship is not just about financial giving. The sermon can develop acts of discipleship around such themes as prayer and regular Scripture reading, corporate worship, or participation in the sacraments such as baptism and the Lord’s Prayer. Wright also stresses the importance of stories in the Scriptures and some examples from congregational life that model the way of discipleship in Jesus Christ. All of these help us to grow in the knowledge and grace of Jesus Christ, a theme that is highlighted in the suggested last song for this worship service.
Week Three: Leadership

Theme notes: The story of Simeon and Anna in the temple when Jesus is dedicated is a story of God dwelling with his people. It may have come about in part because Anna and Simeon provided mature leadership to the people of God and to Jesus’ family. We see a similar parallel in the Old Testament story of Eli and Samuel. Yes, Eli’s family line of priests will not continue, but at least the experienced Eli can help Samuel recognize the voice of God. Leadership is preparing the next generation, but it is also the experienced generation receiving the gifts of a new generation. Or as the song puts it, “One generation shall call to the next,” without defining whether it is the young to the old or the old to the young. We need both. The headings for the service parts use lyrics from this song, “We Will Extol You, God and King.”

Liturgy (* = please stand if you are able)

Prayer for the top of the bulletin:
We will not hide things we have heard and known, stories our ancestors have told.
We will tell the next generation.
We will recount the praiseworthy deeds and power of the Lord, so that children yet unborn will know them and tell them to their children, so that they will set their hope in God and obey God’s commands.
(adapted from Psalm 78:3-7)

OR

…and a little child shall lead them.
(Isaiah 11:6)

WE WILL EXTOL YOU, GOD AND KING or THE APPROACH TO GOD

Prelude

Our purpose for gathering:
Our help is in the name of the Lord who made the heavens and the earth. Amen.

Call to worship (Psalm 145:1):
I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.
God’s greeting (Jude 1-2):
To those who are called, who are beloved in God the Father and kept safe for Jesus Christ: May mercy, peace, and love be yours in abundance.

*Hymn of praise:
#562  We Will Extol You, God and King
or #599  Come, Christians, Join to Sing
or #405  O God, Our Help in Ages Past

*Psalm of adoration: Psalm 145:2-7
Every day I will bless you,
and praise your name forever and ever.
**Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;**
**his greatness is unsearchable.**
One generation shall laud your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.
**On the glorious splendor of your majesty,**
**and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.**
The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed,
and I will declare your greatness.
**They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness,**
**and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.**

*Song of response:
#314  Tell Your Children
or *Sing! A New Creation* #1  Sing a New Song

*Sharing the peace of Christ

Words of welcome:
Whether we are old or young,
whether first-time or long-time worshipers,
whether we are insecure or full of confidence,
new disciples or life-long Christians,
all generations are gathered here this morning
to celebrate the mighty acts of God and encourage each other.
Welcome in the name of Jesus Christ.

THE LORD IS SLOW TO ANGER  or  CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE

Invitation to confession: 1 John 1:8-9
Prayer of confession:

Eternal God, we confess that we have not been a faithful church. We have not done your will; we have not passed on the faith from one generation to the next. We, the older generation, have been fearful of change and held tightly to the past. And we, the younger generation, have become frustrated, wanting to be all by ourselves. Renew and cleanse us, O God, so that young and old can share the riches of faith and learn from one another. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Words of assurance: 2 Timothy 1:7

Grateful living: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (The Message)

Song response:

#930 This Little Light of Mine
or #360 You Are My King (Amazing Love)
or #405 O God, Our Help in Ages Past (v. 1)

Dismissal of children for Children and Worship: (if applicable)

# 709 Jesus Loves Me

MAKE KNOWN YOUR MIGHTY DEEDS TO ALL GENERATIONS or THE WORD OF GOD

Prayer for illumination

Old Testament lesson: 1 Samuel 3:1-10


*Hymn for illumination:

#404 God of Our Life
or #142 We Are People on a Journey
or #97 Song of Simeon
or #662 In an Age of Twisted Values
Sermon or message: “One Generation Shall Call to the Next”

Prayer for blessing on the Word

If the Lord’s Supper is celebrated:
   Song #810 Great Prayer of Thanksgiving
   and #809 Remembering with Love and Hope

ONE GENERATION SHALL CALL TO THE NEXT or THE RESPONSE TO GOD

*Affirmation of faith:
   What do you understand by
   “the communion of saints”?
   First, that believers one and all,
   as members of this community,
   share in Christ
   and in all his treasures and gifts.
   Second, that each member
   should consider it a duty
   to use these gifts readily and joyfully
   for the service and enrichment
   of the other members.
   (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A #55)

*Song of praise:
   #768 Halle, Halle, Halle
   or #769 Keep What You Have Believed

   OR

   A commissioning service #855

   OR

   The sacrament of baptism

   OR

   Sharing by a member of the congregation about a mentoring relationship—such as Kids Hope, Stephen Ministry, etc.
Offering

*Doxology

Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession and the Lord’s Prayer

*Hymn of dedication
  #853  God of the Prophets
  or #852  Faith Begins by Letting Go
  or #854  I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me
  or #856  How Clear is our Vocation, Lord

*Benediction: Romans 15:13
  May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
  So that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Postlude

Notes for the message – week three

I became a conscious Christian at the age of 15. When, as a teen, I read the story of Eli and Samuel, or the story of Anna, Simeon, and Jesus in the temple, I always identified with Samuel or Jesus. How could I not? They were new and fresh just as I was new in the faith. But sometime in my fifties—which is the median age of people in the RCA—I found myself identifying with old Eli, and with Anna and Simeon. We need the fresh insights of a new generation who can tell that old, old story in new, life-transforming ways. Many of our new church plants, the Christians of the global south, and immigrant congregations represent this fresh movement of the Spirit. At the same time, Eli knew how to access God when God was nearby, and so Eli could instruct Samuel. And Anna and Simeon were spiritually alert enough to realize that in Jesus was a new work of God. New leaders with enthusiasm and energy can learn something from those rooted in the faith, and the spiritually wise and experienced can benefit and rejoice that God is raising up a new generation in the faith.
Week Four: Missional Engagement

Theme notes: Two familiar passages in the tenth chapter of Luke can guide the people of God to partner with the Holy Spirit in bringing the kingdom of God to earth here and now. The parable of the Good Samaritan and the story of Martha and Mary need to be revisited. The Good Samaritan story points to missional engagement (in other words, being transforming), while the story of Martha and Mary reminds us that mission cannot take place without continual inner transformation at the feet of Jesus. The headings for the service parts are drawn from Psalm 100.

Liturgy (* = please stand if you are able)

Prayer at the top of the bulletin (from the Complete Book of Christian Prayer, p. 433):
   O Lord, convert the world—and begin with me.
   (Chinese prayer)

   OR

   God our Father, you sent your Son to us; grant that filled with your Spirit we may be renewed in faith, and inspired in hope and love, to spread the gospel of your kingdom to all humankind; through Christ our Lord, amen.
   (Anglican Province of Central America)

COME INTO HIS PRESENCE WITH SINGING or THE APPROACH TO GOD

Prelude

Our purpose for gathering:
   We have come to praise our gracious God.
   **Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Amen.**

Call to worship:
   God has blessed us by choosing the people of Israel
   for a new beginning and renewing the covenant through Jesus Christ.
   **Let us be a blessing to the entire world**
   **so that all things are reconciled in Jesus Christ. Amen.**

*Hymn of praise:
   #1 All People That on Earth Do Dwell *(may use different languages)*
   or #264 Lift High the Cross
   or #282 O God of Every Nation
Psalm of all lands summoned to praise God (Psalm 100):

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.

Know that the Lord is God.
It is he that made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him, bless his name.

For the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

*Song response:
   #4  God of Wonders

*Sharing the peace of Christ

Words of welcome:
Welcome to worship today as we continue the journey of transformation.
We are here because of God’s hospitality and grace to us.
We share that grace and hospitality to each other and to the ends of the earth.

WE ARE HIS PEOPLE, THE SHEEP OF HIS PASTURE  or  CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE

Invitation to confession: Matthew 5:13-16

Prayer of confession (in unison)
God, you placed us in the world to be its salt.
We are afraid of committing ourselves,
afraid of being stained by the world.
We do not want to hear what “they” might say,
and our salt dissolves as if in water.

Forgive us, Jesus.
God, you placed us in the world to be its light.
We are afraid of the shadows, afraid of poverty.
We do not want to know other's struggles,
and our light slowly fades away.
Forgive us, Jesus.
God, you placed us in the world to live in community.
Thus you taught us to love, to share in life,
to struggle for bread and justice,
to share the truth of Jesus to the world.
So be it, Jesus. Amen.
(Adapted from the Worship Source Book, p. 107)

Words of assurance: John 3:16-17

Grateful living: 1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10 (The Message)

*Song of praise:
    #77 Gloria/Glory
    Or #961 Glory Be to the Father (Gloria Patri)

Dismissal of children for Children and Worship (if applicable)
    #309 The Servant Song (vv. 1-3)
    or #930 This Little Light of Mine

KNOW THE LORD IS GOD or THE WORD OF GOD

Prayer for illumination

Old Testament lesson: Amos 7:7-15


*Hymn for illumination:
    #303 Healer of Our Every Ill (see sermon notes)
    or #294 When Asked, Who Is My Neighbor
    or #299 Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love

Sermon or message: “The Good Samaritan Revisited”

Prayer for blessing on the Word

If the Lord’s Supper is celebrated:
    Song #843 Be Present at Our Table
*Affirmation of faith (from Colossians 1:15-20):

Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn of all creation;
in him all things in heaven and on earth were created,
things visible and invisible,
all things have been created through him and for him.
He himself is before all things,
and in him all things hold together.
He is the head of the body, the church;
he is the beginning,
the firstborn from the dead,
so that he might come to have first place in everything.
For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,
and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things,
whether on earth or in heaven,
by making peace through the blood of his cross.

*Song of affirmation:

#15 The First Place

OR

Statement of Faith: Our Song of Hope (excerpts)

We sing to our Lord a new song;
We sing in our world a sure Hope:

Our God loves this world,
God called it into being,
God renews it through Jesus Christ,
God governs it by the Spirit.
God is the world's true Hope.

The Holy Spirit sends the church
to call sinners to repentance,
to proclaim the good news
that Jesus is personal Savior and Lord.
The Spirit sends it out in ministry
to preach good news to the poor,
righteousness to the nations,
and peace among all people.
Come, Lord Jesus:  
We are open to your Spirit.  
We await your full presence.  
Our world finds rest in you alone.

OR

#259 The Unity of the Body (Belhar Confession)

OR

Testimony by a member of the congregation participating in one of the congregation’s mission projects that is bringing transformation.

Offering

*Doxology or #874 We are an Offering

Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession, and the Lord’s Prayer  
#265 A Prayer for the Mission of the Church  
or #875 A Prayer: Almighty God, Father of All Mercies

*Hymn of dedication:  
#296 We Are Called  
or # 294 When Asked, Who Is My Neighbor  
or #297 Open Our Eyes  
or # 742 Will You Come and Follow Me

*Benediction:  
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. Amen.

OR

By the mercies of God, present your bodies as a living sacrifice,  
holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.  
**Do not be conformed to this world,**  
**but be transformed by the renewing of your minds,**  
so that you may discern what is the will of God—**  
what is good and acceptable and perfect. Amen.**
*(Adapted from Romans 12:1-2)*
Notes for the message – week four

The great early theologian and pastor of the church, St. Augustine, viewed humanity as wounded and prone to get things wrong. That is why he likened the church to a hospital, a community of people who are ill but under the care of the Great Physician (thus the song before the sermon, “Healer of Our Every Ill”). We are still on the road to recovery. In Christian community we regain confidence, as we continue in the process of discipleship and transformation.

Augustine developed this image through his reflections on the parable of the good Samaritan. Augustine saw the parable as one about the role of God’s people in bringing healing and transformation to our wounded human nature. We are wounded, abandoned, and unable to help ourselves. We need someone to help and heal us. The good Samaritan is a symbol for Jesus Christ, who comes to our assistance with graciousness and mercy.

But the parable does not end with the Good Samaritan coming to the aid of the wounded man. He entrusts the innkeeper with resources of money and personal concern until his return. Redemption, salvation, justice, compassion, and evangelism are entrusted to the community of God’s people until the return of Jesus Christ. We are an extension of the very body of Jesus Christ.

And yet in doing the work of the innkeeper and bandaging the wounds of humanity in mission, we can also fail to properly maintain our worship and inner resources of faith. There is a reason that the story of Martha and Mary is included in the same chapter as the parable of the good Samaritan. Transformed and being transforming is an ongoing spiritual cycle (see Alister McGrath, The Spirit of Grace, p. 65).