



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

DAY OF SERVICE WORSHIP RESOURCES

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

In our baptismal calling, we are bold to pray for those in need and all of creation.

Servant of your people, help your church discover more and more joy in our work, prayer and service to the world. Lead our faith community boldly into generous acts of caring for others [*including ... specific service projects may be named*]. God of mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Creator of earth and stars, awaken our wonder at the multitude of distant stars. Make us your hands to tend and steward the earth. God of mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Proclaimer of truth and peace, use our voices to speak for justice. Guide leaders of nations and communities to seek peace and reconciliation in the face of threats and violence. God of mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Seeker of the lost, use our hands to serve those who are lonely, forgotten, hurting, angry, broken, grieving or ill, [*especially...*]. God of mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Protector of all, surround first responders [*especially ... names of first responders in your community may be listed*] with the comfort of your everlasting promise of love and mercy. Keep them safe from harm and grant courage in danger, calm in emergencies and wisdom in unexpected situations. God of mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Life of the living and the dead, you have renewed your covenant promises in every age, calling your saints of all times and places to serve your creation. Give us strength through their witness. God of mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Offering our hands for service, we commend these and all our prayers to God, through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Or consider using this prayer on its own or as part of your locally prepared intercessions. For emergency workers, found in Evangelical Lutheran Worship, page 85:

God of earth and air, water and fire, height and depth, we pray for those who work in danger, who rush in to bring hope and help and comfort when others flee to safety, whose mission is to seek and save, serve and protect, and whose presence embodies the protection of the Good Shepherd. Give them caution and concern for one another, so that in safety they may do what must be done, under your watchful eye. Support them in their courage and dedication that they may continue to save lives, ease pain, and mend the torn fabric of lives and social order; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Remembering those who have died

These supplemental materials were prepared for the 10th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the source of all mercy and the God of all consolation, who comforts us in all our sorrows so we can comfort others in their sorrows with the consolation we ourselves have received from God.

On this somber day we trust in the expectation of the resurrection to eternal life, as we remember this day those who died on the 11th of September 2001 and who now rest from their labors, especially those family members and friends who are dear to us.

Let us pray.

O God, we remember with thanksgiving those who have loved and served you on earth, who now rest from their labors, especially (*here individual names of the community may be read or a general statement such as "those who died on Sept. 11" may be used.*) Keep us in union with all your saints and bring us with them to the joyous feast of heaven; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

AFFIRMATION OF CHRISTIAN VOCATION FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

(You might also use the “Affirmation of Christian Vocation” found in Evangelical Lutheran Worship, page 84.)

Within the sending rite of the service or at a “God’s work. Our hands.” event, first responders may gather (at the font where possible) to affirm their vocation. The presiding minister addresses those affirming their vocation:

On this day of service we remember especially those who live out their baptismal vocation in service to the community as first responders, firefighters, police and EMTs.

[Sisters and brothers]/[name/s], God has called you through baptism to a ministry of care for others in moments of danger and crisis. Trusting that God has equipped you with gifts for that service and empowered you for this ministry, will you seek to serve God in word and deed, through your work and your rest, giving thanks to God for this call?

Response: I will, and I ask God to help me.

The presiding minister continues:

Protecting God, through your promise to us in baptism, care for these your servants, keeping them from all harm and danger, giving them courage and wisdom for stressful situations, and helping them serve your people in need. Surround them with the support of others and encourage us all to live out our baptismal calling in service to your earth and its peoples. **Amen.**

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

(from Evangelical Lutheran Worship)

358	Great God, Your Love Has Called Us
546	To Be Your Presence
583/685	Take My Life, That I May Be / Toma, oh Dios, mi voluntad
587/588	There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy
612	Healer of Our Every Ill
700	Bring Peace to Earth Again
704	When Pain of the World Surrounds Us
706	The People Walk/ Un pueblo que camina
708	Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love
710	Let Streams of Living Justice
887	This is My Song

LITANY

Our hands have created war and terror and have drawn lines between friends and enemies. Now we search for lasting peace and radical reconciliation.

Renew our hands for your work, O God, today and every day.

Our hands have created hunger and poverty, homelessness and unemployment. Now we long to be fed, sheltered and given new opportunities.

Renew our hands for your work, O God, today and every day.

Our hands have polluted your creation and misused our resources. Now we seek clean air, soil, water and abundant life for all living things.

Renew our hands for your work, O God, today and every day.

Our hands have broken homes, communities and nations with fear, abuse and violence. We plead for safety and wholeness.

Renew our hands for your work, O God, today and every day.

Our hands have brought discrimination and oppression based on race and class. Now we look for unity in diversity and the freedom to live in holy community with one another.

Renew our hands for your work, O God, today and every day.

Your hands created the world, and your life redeems it. Even now we see your reign of peace among us.

For our hands and your work, O God, we praise you today and every day.

Connecting to the texts of the day

This year's "God's work. Our hands." Sunday combines the 15th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks, a time to honor emergency responders, a day of service of all kinds to our communities and the texts of Lectionary 24C. The following connections might be helpful as you share these resources with your congregation, reflect on the day and perhaps prepare to preach in your context:

Most of us are searching for something – lost keys, a good job, a new home, good ideas, success, dreams The Gospel reading for today includes two of Jesus' stories about searching for what is lost – a lost coin and a lost sheep. Like the shepherd and the widow, rescue workers famously on 9/11 and less famously on every other day sought out with urgent determination those who were lost, hurting or in need – often at great peril to themselves.

But perhaps we, too, are searching for answers with equal desperation – answers about why bad things happen in our world, how we might find forgiveness in the wake of tragedy, what new life looks like after the death of a loved one, or when we might find peace between nations. We are searching for answers about God and how to live out our faith. Perhaps in preparation for today we have searched in our communities and around the world for places in need where we might use our hands for God's work. We likely found more need than a day of service can meet.

In the first reading from Exodus, Moses is faced with God's anger at the people's disobedience. He undertakes his own desperate search to find some way to intervene on their behalf. What he finds is not despair but God's faithfulness in response to wandering and rebellion, and the promise that was made to Abraham and his descendants forever to bless them and make them a blessing to others. The people's hands are stained, but Moses points back to the work God promised to do for them and through them.

In the second reading, Paul searches his own story for some wisdom to share with Timothy. He had once been lost in what he thought was religious zeal but was really persecution of others. His hands had been used to threaten and imprison others, but God transformed them for a new purpose. In searching his story for some reason for that transformation he finds only God's abundant mercy in the call to serve God as a messenger of the good news.

In our frantic search for answers, in the dangerous search that first responders sometimes face, and in our search for a way to help in a world of need, we often discover that we are, like the Israelites and Paul, the ones who have been lost. Whether aware of our distress like the missing sheep, or blissfully unaware like the missing coin, we are the ones sought out by God, who does not stop looking until we are found.

We are undoubtedly called to the difficult work of searching out the lost, and in doing so we discover much about God. But it is in our having been forever found through the promises of baptism that we discover the grace of God, without which we could not do the seeking work to which we have been called. Like Moses and Paul, we can go back to our own histories and point to the moments when God has unquestioningly promised us blessing and hope and salvation, despite our failings. We offer our imperfect hands and our whole selves in service to God and neighbor, seeking justice, peace and hope. But it is God's work to seek us out and claim us as children of God. When our searching fails to turn up what we seek or when we find deeper pain and need than we can handle, we have a God who through baptism has already found us and all that has been lost.