



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

DAY OF SERVICE WORSHIP RESOURCES

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

Your waters are a gift to us: oceans and seas, lakes and rivers, streams and ponds,
[name local bodies of water] nourishing our land, watering the plants, giving life to us.
Our lives flow from your well of grace.

Your waters are a gift to us: nourishing the Israelites in the desert, offering healing at the pools
of Bethesda and Siloam, proclaiming Jesus beloved in the waters of the Jordan.
Our lives flow from your well of grace.

Your waters are a gift to us: drowning us in baptism, washing away our death, calling us to the
work of reconciliation.
Our lives flow from your well of grace.

Your waters are a gift to us: soothing our thirst for justice and peace at home, in our community,
and around the globe; carrying us forward to our thirsting neighbors in need.
Our lives flow from your well of grace.

Continue to fill us with your love that our lives may proclaim Christ through word and deed,
care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace.¹
Amen.

¹ "Proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace"
taken from Holy Baptism in Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 228.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Set free by God's grace we are bold to pray for the needs of the church, the world, and all those in need.

God of unity and diversity, heal the divisions in your church. Empower us to come together to serve our neighbor and share your good news. In your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

God of new creation, restore the world you made where it has been polluted, misused, and destroyed. Use our voices and our labor in mending the land, air, and water. In your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

God of peace, reconcile nations at odds with one another. Make us your hands of peace, extending to our neighbors near and far. In your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

God of abundance, feed those who hunger, house those without shelter, provide welcome for the stranger, heal the sick, bind up the wounded. *[We pray especially for...]* In your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

God of humble service, strengthen the outreach and social justice work of our congregation, synod, and churchwide ministries *[especially...²]*. Bless our hands as we use them to care for others in your name. In your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

God of life, we give thanks for the faithful of all the ages whose witness inspires us with your message of good news for all the world. In your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We commend all for whom we pray into your strong and loving care, O God, through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. **Amen.**

² Here you may name people, places, or organizations your congregation will serve today and/or some of the ministries you regularly support.

ADDITIONAL PRAYERS

Worship leaders and service project leaders may find helpful the Additional Prayers section of Evangelical Lutheran Worship, especially the prayers for: Peace (p. 76), The Neighborhood (p. 78), and Social Ministry (p. 79-80).

OFFERING PRAYER

If your day of service includes a special offering of money or materials for those in need:

Generous Giver, you provide each of us with gifts to offer back to you and in service to others. Bless this offering [of/for...] As we feast at your table of life, open our hands to serve and turn our hearts to all in need, trusting in your ever-present abundance for us and for all the world, through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

If your day of service includes an offering of food for those who are hungry:

Abundant giver, in response to our hunger you provide our daily bread. Bless these gifts of bread and wine, of nourishing food and financial resources, which we have now gathered. May they nourish our lives with an awareness of your grace, give life and strength to those who are hungry, and fill us all with a hunger for justice, through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

Affirmation of Christian Vocation (ELW p. 84) may precede the blessing and dismissal.

The Creator who forms you anew,
The Christ who sets you free
The Spirit who draws you one to another,
One God,
Bless you in your service to others,
Bless you in your rest and renewal,
Bless you today, tomorrow, and forever.
Amen.

In Christ there is a new creation!
See, everything has become new!
Go forth to love and serve in Christ's name.
Thanks be to God.

HYMN SUGGESTIONS FROM EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN WORSHIP

204-206	Thankful Hearts and Voices Raise
247	Come Now, O Prince of Peace/Ososo, Ososo
452	Awake, O Sleeper, Rise from Death
603	God, When Human Bonds Are Broken
646	The Peace of the Lord/La paz del Señor
653	Where True Charity and Love Abide
725	When the Poor Ones/Cuando el pobre
729	The Church of Christ, in Every Age
739	Touch the Earth Lightly
798	Will You Come and Follow Me / The Summons
801	Change My Heart, O God
866	We Are Marching in the Light / Siyahamba
869	We Have Seen the Lord / Nimemwona Bwana

FOR THE PREACHER

Drawing connections between “God’s Work. Our Hands. Sunday: Freed and Renewed in Christ” and the Revised Common Lectionary Texts for Sunday, September 10, 2017.

The words of the people of Israel in today’s first reading include, “How then can we live?” Under the weight of the brokenness we experience in our lives and in the world around us, we might ask a similar question. We recognize ways that we have messed up in our own lives and we bear the burden of systemic and corporate failures, too. When we face so much need in the world and recognize our own complicity in it, we might also ask that question: “How can we possibly keep moving forward? How then can we live?”

The second reading reminds us following the law really is about living out of love for our neighbor. It’s hard enough to follow the “shall not” commandments, but at the heart of the law is the call to embody love to God, self, and other. It’s a very high calling that we often fail to live up to, despite our best efforts. With such a challenge, how then can we live?

In the gospel reading from Matthew 18, Jesus suggests one path forward for dealing with sin and conflict on an interpersonal level. It’s a sound model for conflict resolution, but it’s not easily to follow every time we encounter broken relationships. Often our attempts to resolve our own messes only create more mess. And the church, which is given as a place to hold and mediate conflict, is itself filled with conflict and divisions – a reality we must confront as we observe the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. When even our process for resolving conflict is broken, how then can we live?

FOR THE PREACHER (CONT'D)

It's this challenge that confronts us as we go out to be God's hands in the world. Ours is a world in which violence is in our homes, our streets, and in far away war zones. Ours is a world with refugees and migrants who need hospitality and support in our local communities. Ours is a world in which people are hungry and without shelter. Ours is a world where the earth is littered with garbage and the air we breathe is polluted. The question of reconciliation is not just about making up with our neighbor when we fight, but about engaging the deep divisions between what is and what might be. Reconciliation is about working toward justice and love for all people. We face so much that needs mending and also the reality that even sometimes our best-intended service comes with impure motives or unintended consequences. How then can we live?

If we rely on our acts of service today or any other day, then we can't. We can't save the world or ourselves, but we can live – and serve! – because Christ lives. We can confront our own role in the brokenness of the world because of Christ's forgiveness poured out. We can face the problems that exist around us because in Christ's death and resurrection the victory of life, of love, of hope is assured. We can live because God has claimed us in baptism, uniting us to Christ's death and resurrection. We have faced the worst and seen God's bringing us to life again. We have the presence of Christ in our gathered community – wherever two or three are gathered – working new life out of our mess.

It's in that confidence that we are set free to do the kind of reconciling work that today's readings call us to, whether that is reconciling with an angry neighbor, cleaning up a park as reconciliation with the earth, or collecting or distributing food to reconcile with those who are hungry. We are set free to enjoy being God's hands for God's work. In the promise of God's grace, our participation in service becomes an opportunity to notice the ways in which God is folding us into a new creation. We are set free to live as God's hands in the world, because we have been washed into God's work of new life.