



## Christian Formation Celebration Sunday

### Worship and Liturgy Suggestions Year C

The Presbyterian Church (USA) planning calendar recognizes a week of Christian Formation in churches and faith communities. This week begins the Sunday after Labor Day, but churches may choose different weeks or split up some of the celebration over several Sundays depending on their church and school calendars. When considering all the ways in which formation happens in our faith communities, we can use this time to kick-off a new program year for Christian education, commission faith formation leaders or start ministries. We encourage you to recognize the importance of Christian Formation and your leaders in worship.

The following worship suggestions are based in part on the Revised Common Lectionary readings for *Year C, Proper 18*. For 2025, Christian Formation Celebration week begins September 7. All resources for Christian Formation week can be found at [www.pcusa.org/christianformationweek](http://www.pcusa.org/christianformationweek).

The Scripture passages in the lectionary for this day are: *Jeremiah 18:1-11, Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18, Deuteronomy 30:15-20, Psalm 1, Luke 14:25-33*.

#### **Gathering Prayer**

Gracious God, shape us by your Word and fill us with your Spirit, that we learn your way of truth and life, and teach others to follow the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

#### **Passing the Peace**

Leader: Peace be with you.

**All: And also with you.**

Leader: Friends, beloved in Christ, just as God called and equipped Jesus, so our creator calls and equips you to share with the world and one another the peace that passes all understanding. Let us share the peace of Christ with one another.

#### **Prayer for Illumination**

*Based on Jeremiah 18*

Lord, Potter at the wheel,  
Fashion us now, O God, by your hand.  
Mold us and shape us into the people you hope us to be.  
For you know how to work with clay,  
Always fashioning people in your image,  
Always making all things new.  
As we hear your Word proclaimed today,  
May it spark the creativity that you gave us  
That we may see how you are working the clay of all creation  
To be more beautiful, to remind us of the art of love  
Again and again,  
Amen.

## **Children's Sermon**

*Bring a Bible with you for this children's sermon and mark Psalm 1:1*

What is this? (hold up Bible)

This is the Bible, and it looks like it is just one book, but it actually many books and many types of books in one. And does anyone know what the middle book of the Bible is? (Psalms)

The Psalms are in the middle of the Bible and they are poems that tell us about God in a special way. So the first verse of our poem or Psalm today is Psalm 1:1, which says, "Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers." NRSV (or "The truly happy person doesn't follow wicked advice, doesn't stand on the road of sinners, and doesn't sit with the disrespectful." CEB)

So, there are 3 things that help make us happy: 1. Don't listen to mean people. 2. Don't hang out with mean people. 3. And don't say mean things, especially to people who are trying their best.

Tell me, if you were building a whole city with Legos and someone stomped all over it and told you that you were not smart or creative, what would you do? I think you could certainly tell a teacher, and you could maybe start building that city again.

Because when people are doing things creatively, like Noah building the ark or the people of God building the ark of the covenant or when someone built a manger to feed animals that would hold the baby Jesus, God is inspiring them to create.

Because that's who God is - a creator!

So, let's build something together because it's really hard to be mean when you're excited about what you're learning.

Let's pray: Dear God...

*Additional Idea: You could also do a Children's Sermon on the potter and clay from Jeremiah 18.*

## **Offertory Sentences**

When God gives to us, it is with love and abundant joy. Therefore, let us give back to God, in ways big and small, with joy. Will the ushers please come forward...

*(This is a great opportunity to include all ages. Pair and child and adult ushers, or two teens, or a baby in a sling with a curmudgeonly old grandpa.)*

## **Prayer of Dedication**

Holy and generous God, we give up these things to you. Help us, each day, to offer our whole lives, our whole selves to you in service of your mission in this world. Amen.

## **Prayers of the People**

We give you thanks, O God, for the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, who hovered over the deep, wondering what it could become, wondering if a small blue and green orb could house creatures that would praise you with their very breath.

Artist of our Lives, may we come back again and again to the peace and joy you bring. May this community remind us of your inspiring love and hope, even as institutions crumble and the things we once saw as helpful became other.

We thank you for all sources of inspiration: for poetry and novels, for art pieces and sculpture, for dance and movement. And for the songs we sing and the dreams we dream.

We give you thanks for pencils and notebooks,  
For daydreams and doodles,  
For to-do lists left beautifully undone in the name of experiments  
For the uncertainty of tomorrow that gives us hope to create beauty.

God of all wisdom and truth, we offer you our lives, our gifts, all our talent, all our treasure. We entrust to your care those who teach and learn, and all who devote themselves to the work of formation—teachers and students, staff and administrators, parents and children. Make us faithful disciples and shape us for your service; through the Lord Jesus Christ, our teacher and our friend. **Amen.**

## **Litany of Commitment**

*Eph. 4:7–16*

*This litany of commitment may be used in a variety of places in worship—after the sermon, as a response to the proclamation of the Word; around the offering, as a sign of dedication to the educational ministry of the church; or before the blessing and charge, as a commissioning to service in Christian formation.*

*The unison (bold print) response, "... we build up the body of Christ," is the only part of the litany that needs to be printed or projected in worship aids; it may also be taught immediately before the litany (and not printed or projected). The simplicity and repetition of this response will allow non-readers to participate fully.*

*The response might be accompanied by an appropriate gesture such as the raising of hands, palms up and open (an ancient gesture of prayer).*

*The leader parts may be divided among several voices, suggesting the variety of persons engaged in Christian formation. Worship planners should feel free to add or edit phrases, adapting the litany as needed to reflect the ministry of Christian formation in the particular congregation.*

Each of us was given grace  
according to the measure of Christ's gift.  
The gifts God gave were that some would be apostles,  
some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,  
to equip the saints for the work of ministry,  
for building up the body of Christ.

As members, deacons, elders, and pastors,  
**we build up the body of Christ.**

As teachers and learners, mentors, and peers,  
**we build up the body of Christ.**

As leaders and helpers, staff and volunteers,  
**we build up the body of Christ.**

As children, youth, and adults,  
**we build up the body of Christ.**

With stories and songs, with words and actions,  
**we build up the body of Christ.**

In worship and service, discipleship and fellowship,  
**we build up the body of Christ.**

At church, at home, at work, and at play,  
**we build up the body of Christ.**

In the sanctuary or streets, creation or classroom,  
**we build up the body of Christ.**

In times of celebration and seasons of struggle,  
**we build up the body of Christ.**

Through the day, the week, the year, and throughout our lives,  
**we build up the body of Christ.**

All for the sake of the world God loves,

## **we build up the body of Christ.**

*After a moment of silence, a leader prays:*

God of all generations,  
teach us to speak your truth in love  
and help us to grow as Christ's body,  
all knit together by your Holy Spirit.  
Build us up in faith, hope, and love,  
so that we may be faithful witnesses in the world;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **Sending/Benediction**

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is calling you, friends. We are all called to be disciples, forsaking that which we love more than God, in order to love those whom God loves. Do not be dismayed nor afraid. Rather, hold onto hope that God's love transcends the boundaries of kinship and reviles evil, that we may all live in peace with one another.

So, as you go out into this world, go knowing that the love of God, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ do go with you always. Amen.

## **Sermon Helps**

*Luke 14:25-33*

This gospel text, and others like it, often cause consternation for the uninitiated. It can be really tough to hear Jesus saying "you're out" simply because you love your family. I wonder if the blunt, almost harsh nature of it is intended to make us sit up and listen, rather than to idly let it go in one ear and out the other. Jesus is saying something really important here, and uses language intended to provoke.

But what's he really saying? Is he honestly telling us it is a requirement of discipleship that we \*hate\* our parents? Really? That seems...very un-Jesus-like. Instead, and especially on this faith formation Sunday, let us consider that perhaps we don't know all the things. Jesus is asking us to recognize our own shortcomings, to admit that we will never be perfect disciples. And then he's asking us to just try. When he tells us we must revile our families, he's just saying we need to own up to the ways we get selfish when it comes to our families. For instance, how many of us would do anything for the people we are closest to? Would you forsake all others? We live in a society that does not reward community or tribalism or villages. It rewards individuality. So, when I say, "I would do anything for my kids," does that mean "and if it hurts other kids, oh well"? That's the big question Jesus wants us to grapple with, I believe. Can we honestly do what is in the best interest of all of God's people, or do we serve our own people first?

## **Outreach/Mission Ideas**

One of the vows we make at baptism is the renunciation of evil. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us during our life of faith to work to dismantle systems that perpetuate evil. Below are some ways to be disciples of Christ in this world, which follow with the theme of faith formation and working for justice.

- Special offering for various charities (lunch debt for local school children, The Trevor Project, Presbyterian Giving Catalog, Heifer International, RIP Medical Debt)
- School supplies and backpack drive
- Snack drive or weekend lunch boxes
- "Blessing Box" with school supplies, women's hygiene products, small coats/hats/gloves/socks
- Letter writing campaign for more school funding to public schools.

*(This would be a great liturgical piece as well. Perhaps use the sermon time to craft a letter together with the whole congregation giving input.)*

- Learning about [Educate a Child, Transform the Word](#) program of PCUSA.

## **Additional Ideas**

- Think about ways to “set the table” and include visual reminders of supporting formation and education for all ages. Also consider what symbol or gift you can share with students and educators of all ages like [backpack tags or stickers](#).
- For Back to School and Backpack Blessing ideas see [this](#) Quicksheet.
- See also from the [Book of Common Worship](#) (WJKP, 2018) the service for Recognition of a Certified Christian Educator (BCW 492–493), the Litany of Gifts (BCW 503), and the resources for Commissioning to Ministry within a Congregation (BCW 516–521).
- If Bible presentations to elementary children are part of your celebration, [here](#) are ideas for presentation and suggested Bibles.
- For additional ways to celebrate Christian Formation week see [Faith Practices At Home](#) to start the new school year, [Blessings around the New School Year](#), [Kick Off Sunday and Intergenerational Ideas](#), and [Social Media Posts](#) for download. There are also Spanish language versions of several Quicksheets. See all the Quicksheets including liturgy helps from previous years [here](#) and look for new ones to be added.

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