



Christian Formation Week

Liturgy Suggestions

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 and highlight and start ministries. We encourage you to recognize the importance of Christian Formation and your leaders in worship.

The following worship and music suggestions are based in part on the Revised Common Lectionary readings for September 12, 2021 (Year B, Proper 19). Feel free to use pieces over various Sundays and in different years.

BCW = Book of Common Worship (WJKP, 2018). See also 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).

Call to Worship

Ps. 19:1, Prov. 1:20, Isa. 50:4

The heavens are telling the glory of God,
and wisdom cries out in the streets!

The Lord has given us teachers
to sustain the weary with a word.

Morning by morning, God awakens us
to listen for the word of the Lord.

Let us worship God.

Gathering Prayer

This prayer may be used at the opening of worship, at the conclusion of the prayers of intercession, or after the collection of tithes and offerings.

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.**

Prayer of Confession

The confession and pardon may be led from the baptismal font. A call to confession precedes the prayer and a declaration of forgiveness follows.

**O Lord, your teaching is perfect,
reviving the soul—
yet we fail to receive
the gift of grace you offer.
Your testimony is sure,
enlightening the mind—
yet we fail to bear witness
to your way of truth and life.**

Ps. 19:7, 14

**Forgive us, God of grace.
Let the words of our mouths
and the meditations of our hearts
be acceptable in your sight;
through Jesus Christ,
our rock and our redeemer.**

Prayer for Illumination

The prayer for illumination is spoken from the lectern or pulpit before the reading of Scripture. It is particularly appropriate to involve children and youth as readers.

Teach us, O God,
by your Word and Spirit.
Let our lives bear witness
to the new life you offer;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **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
to your saving work in the world;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

The intercessions should include reference to all those engaged in the ministry of Christian formation, perhaps mentioning teachers and mentors by name.

The following prayers may be incorporated or adapted as intercessions for the day.

Merciful God,
as a potter fashions a vessel from humble clay,
you form us into a new creation.
Shape us, day by day,
through the cross of Christ your Son,
until we pray as continually as we breathe
and all our acts are prayer;
through Jesus Christ
and in the mystery of the Holy Spirit, we pray. **Amen.**

BCW, 94

O God, you are our life and breath,
our light and fire,
our teacher and healer.

BCW, 451

We praise you for your handiwork
in shaping creation.
We commit ourselves to serve you
for the sake of the gospel.
We devote ourselves to prayer
with and for your people.
We offer ourselves with vulnerability,
and look to you alone for strength.
Be our rest. Be our rock.
Be our Lord. **Amen.**

Almighty God,
you have given your law to guide us in a life of love,
and you have appointed teachers to interpret your will.
Create in those who instruct your people
a mind to study your word,
and good understanding,
so that we may all learn your truth
and do it gladly;
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Master. **Amen.**

BCW, 523

For children throughout the world:
for good schools and compassionate teachers,
for healthy homes,
for clothing, food, and shelter enough
that they can thrive and grow;
for friends and neighbors, aunts and uncles,
grandparents and parents
who watch well over little ones,
that their joy in this world be complete.
Hear us, O God; **your mercy is great.**

BCW, 587

Offering

The offering in this service might involve something like the donation of school supplies for children in the community. A back to school blessing may be included here or at the blessing and charge.

After the collection of gifts, this prayer may be spoken from the pulpit, font, or table.

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.**

Blessing and Charge

2 Cor. 13:13, Mark 8:34

The blessing and charge may be spoken from the door of the church. The charge may be spoken by a Christian educator, a volunteer teacher/mentor, or a youth/child of the church.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with you all. **Alleluia!**

Let us take up the cross and follow Christ. **Amen.**

Hymn Suggestions

The following congregational songs are related to the ministry of Christian formation.

GTG = *Glory to God* (WJKP, 2013); PH = *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (WJKP, 1990)

Be Thou My Vision	GTG 450; PH 339
Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation	GTG 394; PH 416, 417
Earth and All Stars!	GTG 26; PH 458
God, My Help and Hiding Place	GTG 813
Gracious Spirit, Heed Our Pleading	GTG 287
Help Us Accept Each Other	GTG 754; PH 358
How Blest, Those Whose Transgressions	GTG 446
Lead On, O King Eternal!	GTG 269; PH 447, 448
Lord, Speak to Me That I May Speak	GTG 722; PH 426
People of the Lord	GTG 632
Take Thou Our Minds, Dear Lord	GTG 707; PH 392
These Treasured Children	GTG 487
We Give Thee but Thine Own	GTG 708; PH 428

All Christian Formation Week Resources available at <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/theology-formation-and-evangelism/office-of-christian-formation/christian-formation-week/>

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Office of Theology and Worship: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/theology-and-worship/>

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