

Matthew 25 Youth Service

This worship service is intended for use on Youth in the Church and World Sunday or any Sunday of the year when young people will be in worship leadership. Youth will quickly resonate with God's call to love the least, the last, and the lost, and this service is designed to amplify and clarify that call to action.

Following the traditional order of worship, below are 2 or 3 liturgical options for each section of the service. Please feel free to use, re-use, and even edit the words below to better fit your church context.

Intro

We are gathered in worship to glorify the God who is present and active among us – particularly through the gifts of Word and Sacrament. We are sent out in service to glorify the same God who is present and active in the world. (W-1.0101: Glory to God)

Call to Worship

Option A

Leader: Come as you are, broken and burdened,

People: and find healing in God's goodness.

Leader: Come as you are, gifted and beloved,

People: and find purpose in God's calling.

Leader: Come as you are, weary and wary,

People: and find comfort in God's embrace.

Leader: Trust in the Lord with all your heart,

People: and worship God with joy!

Option B

Leader: We are the body of Christ.

People: We are Christ's hands and feet and heart in the world today.

Leader: We are sent out to feed the hungry and offer water to the thirsty.

People: We are sent out to welcome the stranger and to clothe the naked.

Leader: We are sent out to care for the sick and visit the imprisoned.

People: We are sent out to visit the lonely and comfort the grieving.

Leader: We are sent out to dialogue with the doubting and offer refuge to the seeker.

People: We are sent out to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

Leader: We are the body of Christ.

People: Let us worship God today and every day.

Option C

Leader: We long for the day when Christ comes again.

People: When people will thirst and hunger no more.

Leader: What a glorious day that will be.

People: When all will feel welcome and at home.
Leader: In God's Kingdom all the sick will be healed
People: And those in prison will be set free.
Leader: Let us worship the God who cares for the unimportant.
People: Let us worship indeed.

Call to Confession

Option A

We think we know what the church is and what this place is all about. We think we know our purpose and sometimes we get so stuck on what we think the purpose of this place is – so stuck on the needs of ourselves, our family, and our immediate neighbors – we cannot see what we cannot see.

In this moment of confession, I invite you to let go of your preconceived notions about what the Church should be and what you are called to do and instead focus on what God is saying in this moment.

Option B

We continue to believe that we must earn our way into God's heart.
But God's grace is given to each of us,
for all of us, freely, unconditionally, always.
Let us open our lives to this mercy as we pray together:

Confession of Sins

Option A

Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart, mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves...

(Silence is kept for personal prayers of confession.)

In your mercy forgive what we have been, help us amend what we are, and direct what we shall be, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name.
Amen.

Option B

Dear God, we do not always turn to you when we are overwhelmed. Too often we do what we think is best and ignore the call you have placed within us. Yours is the voice we need to listen to. We confess that we hide our light instead of shining it.

(Silence is kept for personal prayers of confession.)

Forgive us, God of love, let your Spirit flow through us and turn these weary sparks into a flame.
Amen.

Option C

God of all things, we confess we are paralyzed by the problems of this world. We confess we are silent in the face of injustice. We confess we remain still when action is required. Too often we go our own way and ignore your commands as given in scripture. Your Word is what we need, not the sinful words of the world.

(Silence is kept for personal prayers of confession.)

Help us to focus our actions in a way that would please you. Give us the courage to not stand still.
Forgive us, God of love. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Option A

Leader: Friends, hear this good news, there is nothing you can do to make God love you any more and there is nothing you can do to make God love you any less. God loves you exactly as you are. With that knowledge may you know you are forgiven and be at peace.

People: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

Leader: Christ's peace passes all understanding. It is freely given. The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you!

People: And also with you!

Option B

We are imperfect people in a broken world, that is why we are need of God's grace and forgiveness. The Good News of the Gospel is that grace is already given. That forgiveness is already guaranteed.
In Jesus Christ we are forgiven. Amen!

Prayer for Illumination

Option A

Holy God, as we read your words,
we pray that they become for us
a fountain of wisdom and a wellspring of joy.
Open our ears, our minds, and our hearts,
so that we can hear your written word
and encounter your Living Word.
In the name of Christ we pray.
Amen.

Option B

Prepare our hearts, O Lord, to accept your word.
Silence in us any voice but your own.
so that in hearing your word,
we may also obey your will;
through Jesus Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.

Option C

(From Psalm 19:14) Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Scripture Reading

For a longer scripture reading, choose *Matthew 25:31-46* (412 words).

For a shorter scripture reading, choose *Matthew 25:34-40* (184 words).

For a second scripture reading, add *Luke 1:46-55* (148 words).

Sermon (Proclaiming the Word)

You could have the pastor of your church deliver a sermon like normal, but youth-led Sundays are also an opportunity to get creative with the proclamation of The Word. Below are a few ideas to inspire you as you plan your service.

Option A

Let youth and adult advisors share their own stories from past mission trips, youth conferences, and/or special events.

Option B

Using the 6 actions from Matthew 25:35-36 (feed, give drink, welcome, clothe, care for the sick, visit those in prison), have 6 people give examples of your church or community members doing these things.

Option C

Have a "Youth Panel" with young people seated in chairs next to the pulpit answering predetermined questions.

Option D

Invite three people from three different generations (i.e. youth, parent, grandparent age) to expound upon the three foci of the Matthew 25 Initiative:

- 1) Building congregational vitality
- 2) Dismantling structural racism
- 3) Eradicating systemic poverty

Affirmation of Faith

Option A

God sends the church into the world. God has not taken his people out of the world but has sent them into the world to worship him there and serve all humankind. We worship God in the world by standing before the Lord on behalf of all people. Our cries for help and our songs of praise are never for ourselves alone. Worship is no retreat from the world; it is part of our mission. We serve humankind by discerning what God is doing in the world and joining him in his work. We risk disagreement and error when we try to say what God is doing here and now. But we find guidance in God's deeds in the past and his promises for the future, as they are witnessed to in Scripture. We affirm that the Lord is at work, especially in events and movements that free people by the gospel and advance justice, compassion, and peace.

Amen.

Option B

From *The Confession of 1967* (9.37 & 9.38)

The church disperses to serve God wherever its members are, at work or play, in private or in the life of society. Their prayer and Bible study are part of the church's worship and theological reflection. Their witness is the church's evangelism. Their daily action in the world is the church in mission to the world. The quality of their relation with other persons is the measure of the church's fidelity.

Each member is the church in the world, endowed by the Spirit with some gift of ministry and is responsible for the integrity of his or her witness in each particular situation. Each member is entitled to the guidance and support of the Christian community and is subject to its advice and correction. In turn, each member, in her or his own competence, helps to guide the church.

Option C

From *A Brief Statement of Faith* (Lines 65-76)

In a broken and fearful world
the Spirit gives us courage
to pray without ceasing,
to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,
to unmask idolatries in church and culture,
to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,
and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.

In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,
we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks
and to live holy and joyful lives,
even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,
praying, Come, Lord Jesus!

Prayers of the People

During the time of prayer, offer a brief prayer for each of the items below with a moment of silence in between each item. Youth can also write their own prayers for each item and/or come up with their own items.

- Matthew 25 List:
 - The hungry
 - The thirsty
 - The stranger in need of welcome
 - The naked
 - The sick
 - Those in prison, in need of a visit
- Those within ½ mile of your church.
- Those within the city limits of your city.
- Those in the larger metropolitan area around you.
- Those in your state.
- Those in the whole United States of America.
- Those around the world.
- The people in your church:
 - The children looking up to the youth leading this service.
 - The youth who are heavily involved in the church.
 - The youth who are on the margins.
 - Parents.
 - Older members of the church who act like grandparents.
 - Those who are unable to attend worship in person anymore.

Prayer of Dedication

Option A

God, in the beginning you are with us,
even now you will never leave us alone.
Help us to breathe your Spirit into our every step
as we live as your people in this world.

Forgive us when we are hesitant to follow:
when we question Your call
or make excuses for our abilities;
when we complain about our lack of time
or hoard our resources.
Give us courage to step out in faith,
to follow where You lead without hesitation or fear,
trusting that Your presence goes with us,
and that You will provide all that we need.
Amen.

Option B

O God, through the offering of these gifts may we become a more open people...
open-minded in hearing your Word and wisdom,
open-hearted in healing a broken world,
open-handed in heeding your call for charity and enacted love.
With thanks for all good gifts, we present a portion of our substance and the whole of ourselves.
Amen

Option C

Creator God, we give our tithes and offerings to you. Bless and use these to accomplish your will through your church. We ask that every amount will be invested in the furthering of your kingdom. Grant us wisdom as we use these funds. Direct our ministry spending towards spreading the gospel and nurturing your children, towards spiritual growth and service. And bless the works of our hands.
Amen.

Benediction

Option A

Numbers 6:24-26

The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

Option B

2 Corinthians 13:13

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

Option C

Go forth into the world with compassion and justice in your heart.
Give strength to the weak. Give voice to the silent.
See one another truly,
Hear one another's story,
And love one another.

May the grace of God,
The love of Christ,
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
Be with you all, now and forever more.
AMEN.

Hymn Options

Possible hymns from *Glory to God*:

- 100 “My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout (Canticle of the Turning)” – Tune = “Star of County Down”
- 300 “We Are One in the Spirit” – Tune = “They’ll Know We Are Christians”
- 301 “Let Us Build a House (All Are Welcome)” – Tune = “Two Oaks”
- 363 “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!” – Tune = “Darwall’s 148th”
- 700 “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me”
- 757 “Today We All Are Called to Be Disciples” – Tune = “Kingsfold”
- 766 “The Church of Christ Cannot Be Bound” – Tune = “McKee”
- 767 “Together We Serve” – Tune = “San Anselmo”
- 852 “When the Lord Redeems the Very Least” – Tune = “I’ll Fly Away”

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