The words of St. Augustine echo the restlessness in today’s culture - a yearning in hearts weighed down by sorrow and emptiness; a yearning that waits for the Light. Today’s hymn festival explores an avenue for finding peace through an intentional remembrance of the earthly life of Jesus through the repetition represented in the church’s “sacred cycle,” or liturgical year.

You’re invited to fully participate in this service of singing. Hymns listed with a number can be found in the pew hymnal. Others are included in this worship guide. In responsive readings, please read the bold print.

Today, we sing!

No matter whether you sing poorly and fumble with the pages, or even sing the wrong words - the music expands and makes room for all the voices - even yours.

Welcome
Opening Prayer

*Hymn ~ #482 “Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty” (all stand in body or spirit)

*Psalm 5:7-8, 11 (remain standing and read the bold)

Because of your great love, O God,
I come into your Temple.
Because I fear and respect you,
I worship in your holy Temple.
Lord, since I have enemies,
show me the right thing to do; show me how you want me to live.
Let everyone who trusts you be happy;
let them sing glad songs to your Holy Name forever! (a response follows
Chorus Shout to the Lord
Text & tune: Darlene Zschech, 1993
remain standing and sing

Shout to the Lord all the earth let us sing
power and majesty, praise to the King.

Mountains bow down and the seas will roar at the sound of your name. I sing for joy at the work of your hands, forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand. Nothing compares to the promise I have in you.

The congregation may be seated

A reading from a letter to the Hebrews (5:12-6:1 NCV) ~ By now you should be teachers, but you need someone to teach you again the lessons of God's message. You still need the teaching that's like milk, as though you're not ready for solid food. Anyone who lives on milk is still a baby and knows nothing about right teaching, but solid food is for those who are grown-up, mature enough to know the differences between good and evil. So let us be ready, and go on to grown-up teaching.
Connection.
Where we come from in the midst of where we are.
Roots.
Tradition on its back tying us to the past, allowing us to know who we are.
Connection to the One whom we follow from manger to Mount of Olives.
To learn to think like He thinks.
To do what He would do.
To make Him the center of our lives.
To say out loud, "it's me."
It's me that needs this."

_Anthem_ 
"Standin' in the Need of Prayer"  
_Spiritual / arr. D. Cherwien_  
_Craig Robinson, conductor_

_It's me, it's me, oh Lord, standin' in the need of prayer, not my brother, not my sister, but it's me, O Lord, standin' in the need of prayer! Not the preacher, not the deacon, but it's me, O Lord, standin' in the need of prayer! Not my father, not my mother, but it's me, O Lord!_

_A reading from the prophet Isaiah (40:3-5, 7-9 NCV) ~ ‘Prepare in the desert a way for the Lord; a straight road in the dry lands for our God. Every valley should be raised up, and every mountain and hill should be made flat. The rough ground should be made level; the rugged ground made smooth. Then the glory of the Lord will be shown, and all people together will see it.’ People are like the grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass dies, and the flowers fall, but the word of our God will live forever. Jerusalem you have good news to tell. Go up on a high mountain and shout it out._

The story begins with Advent’s lessons:
Wait
Look
Ask

Wait in the present moment,
and know that only the present well-lived leads to fullness of life.

Look for God
in all the places previously ignored.

Ask where your life is spent
what star you really follow.

Year after year, scriptures of promise, hymns of longing
Advent after Advent after Advent
until we realize that this ‘coming’ depends on us.

What we choose (or not) either hastens or slows, sharpens or diminishes its coming. His coming.

_Hymn #9 ~ O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (remain seated)_
A reading from the Gospel of Luke (2:8-11 NCV)  
That night, some shepherds were in the fields watching their sheep. And suddenly an angel stood before them and the glory of the Lord was shining around them, and they became frightened. ‘Do not be afraid,’ the angel said. ‘I bring you good news that will be a great joy to all the people. Today your Savior was born in the town of David. He is Christ, the Lord.’

The star on the horizon of the soul, Christmas confirms what our heart already knows:  
God is with us.
Radiant dawn has swallowed the darkness  
and it is, indeed, the Season of Light  
igniting the spark that leads through the darkness of our lives  
every day of the year.
No longer do we see through a child’s eye  
a baby in a manger,  
but in the manger we see the meaning of an empty tomb.

Anthem

“Mary, Did You Know”  
Mark Lowry

Mary did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water?  
Mary, did you know that your baby boy will save our sons and daughters?  
Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?  
This child that you’ve delivered, will soon deliver you.

A reading from Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus (5:1-2, 9-10)  
You are God’s children whom he loves, so try to be like him. Live a life of love just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us as a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice to God. Live like children who belong to the light. Learn what pleases the Lord.

Ordinary time – an odd name for time  
in the sacred cycle.  
Ordinary?  
Routine?  
Inconsequential?  
Hardly.
The church’s “ordinary time” - following Epiphany, capstone to the Christmas cycle; after Pentecost, capstone to the Easter cycle offers time to reflect on the driving truth of faith:
Jesus was, Jesus is, Jesus will come again.
**Blessing the Ordinary  (read as indicated)**

(Leader) Let these words lay themselves like a blessing on your head,

(Women) as if, like hands, they could pass on to you what you most need for this day

(Leader) as if they could anoint you, not merely for the path ahead but for this ordinary moment

(Men) to gather up these words in the bowl of its palm.

(Leader) You may think a blessing lives within these words

(Women) But I tell you it lives in the opening and in the reaching;

(Men) it lives in the ache where the blessing begins;

(All) it lives in the hollow made by the place where the hands of this blessing meet. *(Jan Richardson)*

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**Anthem**

"Come, Spirit, Come"

**Mary Kay Beall**


Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me.

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**A reading from the Gospel of Matthew (4:17) - From that time on, Jesus began to preach, saying ‘Change your hearts and lives, because the kingdom of heaven is near.’**

Lent calls us to renew commitment grown dull.

Lent challenges us to decide if we believe that Jesus really is the Christ – and if we believe, will we live accordingly when we no longer hear the song of angels, and the star of Bethlehem has grown dim.

Lent allows us to see our own weak places, to touch the wounds in our own soul.

Lent calls us to live beyond our lowest aspirations. To know that darkness may overtake us, but will not overcome us as long as we refuse to become the very things we say we hate.
Hymn

Would I Have Answered When You Called?

Text: Herman Stuempfle, Jr., 1997  Tune: Traditional English melody

Remain seated and sing as indicated

All sing
1. Would I have answered when you called, “Come,
Women
2. Would I have followed where you led through
Men
3. Would I have matched my step with yours when
All sing
4. O Christ, I cannot search my heart through

Follow, follow me!”?

Would I at once have
ancient Galilee,
on roads unknown, by
crowds cried, “Cru-ci-fy!”
when on a rocky
all its tangled ways,
nor can I with a

left behind both work and familiar
ways untried, beyond security
hill I saw a cross against the
certain mind my steadfastness ap-

ly? Or would the old, familiar round have
ty? Or would I soon have hurried back where
sky? Or would I too have slipped away and
praise. I only pray that when you call, “Come,

held me by its claim and kept the spark with-
home and comfort drew, where truth you taught would
left you there alone, a dying king with
follow, follow me!” you’ll give me strength be-

in my heart from bursting into flame?
not disturb the ordered world I knew?
crown of thorns upon a terrible throne?
yond my own to follow faithfully.
Where You Sit
(all read the bold)

We leave our box seats
at the symphony or ball park,
and pray you won't catch our eye
as we pass you
sitting with the homeless;

we wait for a few minutes
at the doctor's office
to get a $15 shot
so we won't catch the flu,
while half a world away
you sit for a week
hoping medicine
which will cost you a year's wages
finds its way to your village;

we sit in our home theaters,
watching the latest “reality”
on our plasma screens,
while you sit in the darkness,
rocking your child asleep,
as she cries from the ache
of an empty stomach.

Lord Jesus;
When

(like James and John)
we want to be at your side in glory:
remind us where you really sit.
(Thom Sherman)

A reading from the Gospel of John (18:19-23, 28-30, 36 NCV) - The high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. ‘I have spoken openly to the world,’ Jesus replied. ‘I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said.’ When Jesus said this, one of the officials slapped him in the face. ‘Is this the way you answer the high priest?’ he demanded. ‘If I said something wrong,’ Jesus replied, ‘testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why strike me?’ [after being sent to Caiafas, the high priest, and then to Pilate, the Roman governor] Jesus said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest. My kingdom is from another place.’
Holy Week confirms that some things worth living for, even if we find ourselves having to die for them, as well, for this life, good as it may be, is only a spiritual way-station to another kind of life, the fulfillment of which does not live in this world.
Not for Jesus; not for us.

And at the end of all suffering, we see ourselves with the women at the tomb, with apostles in the Upper Room, with disciples on the way to Emmaus, and know there is life in death beyond all imagination.

We come to recognize that good can come in strange guises — in shepherds and young maidens, in fishermen and tax collectors, in presumptuous thieves, and cowardly ones, too.

Hymn

**When I Survey the Wondrous Cross**

*Text: Isaac Watts, 1707  Tune: Lowell Mason, 1824*

**Remain seated**

1. When I survey the wondrous cross On which the women
2. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, Save in the men
3. See, from His head, His hands, His feet, Sorrows and all
4. Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were a prince of glory died, My richest gain I
dead Christ my God; All the vain things that love flowed mingled down; Did e'er such love and present far too small; Love so amazing,
count but loss, And pour contempt on all my pride.
charm me most, I sacrifice them to His blood.
sorrow meet, Or thorns compose so rich a crown?
so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all.
A reading from the Gospel of Mark (16:4-6 NCV) - The women saw that the stone had been rolled away. They entered the tomb and saw a young man wearing a white robe, sitting on the right, and they were afraid. But the man said, 'Don't be afraid. You are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He has risen from the dead; he is not here.'

The Feast of the Resurrection!
This – not the birth of a baby – is the reason we celebrate Christmas.
We are followers of Light that shines beyond the grave.

Hymn Christ is Risen! Shout Hosanna!

Text: Brian Wren, 1986  Tune: Ludwig van Beethoven, 1924

HYMN TO JOY

All stand in body or spirit and sing

1. Christ is risen! Shout Hosanna! Celebrate this day of days!
2. Christ is risen! Raise your spirits From the caverns of despair.
3. Christ is risen! Earth and heaven Never shall be the same.

Christ is risen! Hush in wonder: All creation is amazed.
Walk with gladness in the morning. See what love can do and dare.
Break the bread of new creation Where the world is still in pain.

In the desert all surrounding. See, a spreading tree has grown.
Drink the wine of resurrection. Not a servant, but a friend.
Tell its grim, demonic chorus: “Christ is risen! Get you gone!”

Healing leaves of grace a-bounding Bring a taste of love unknown.
Jesus is our strong companion. Joy and peace shall never end.
God the First and Last is with us. Sing Hosanna, everyone!
There is a yearning in hearts weighed down by ancient grief and centuries of sorrow.
There is a yearning in hearts that in the darkness hide and in the shades of death abide,
a yearning for tomorrow. Emmanuel, Emmanuel, within our hearts, the yearning . . .

The tides of the liturgical year wash over us,
and like Mary, we “ponder these things in our hearts”
and see the footprints of those who lived it before us.
Steeped in the life of Jesus, we find the answer to the yearning –
And the kind of faith that drove John the Baptist
to the court of a king to announce the will of God,
and the women of Israel to a tomb in the midst of disaster.

The kind of love that takes in foreigners
Gives away water in a desert
Cures outcasts
Forgives thieves
Keeps disciples faithful to the commandment
“do this in remembrance of me.”
Steeped in the life of Jesus, we know.
We know.

Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine

Text: Fanny Crosby, 1873  Tune: Phoebe P. Knapp, 1873

All stand in body or spirit and sing

1. Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
2. Perfect submission, perfect delight,
3. Perfect submission, all is at rest;

O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
I in my Savior am happy and blest,
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
an- gels de-scend-ing bring from a-bove
watch-ing and wait-ing, look-ing a-bove,

born of his Spir-it, washed in his blood.
ech-oes of mer-cy, whis-pers of love.
filled with his good-ness, lost in his love.

This is my sto-ry, this is my song,
prais-ing my Sav-i- or all the day long;
this is my sto-ry, this is my song,
prais-ing my Sav-i- or all the day long.
A Parting Blessing ~

The service has ended.

Go in peace to serve God and your neighbor in all that you do,
so that those to whom love is a stranger, will find in you a generous friend.

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~ Worship Leaders ~

Brandon Nichols, VWC '13  Stephanie Drinkard, VWC '12  Lawrence Clemens, trumpet

The Great Bridge Presbyterian Praise Team & The Alleluia Ringers of Great Bridge Presbyterian

Dr. Craig Wansink is Professor of Religious Studies and chair of the department at Virginia Wesleyan College. His PhD is from Yale University and the MDiv from McCormick Theological Seminary, with further studies at universities in Japan, Jordan, Germany, and Israel. His undergraduate degree is from Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa, where he currently serves as President of the Board of Trustees. His research has been featured widely, most recently on Good Morning, America and CNN. Wansink also serves as Pastor of Second Presbyterian Church-Norfolk.

Jason Evans, organist, is Director of Music Ministries and Organist at Outer Banks Presbyterian Church and also coordinates joint music festivals for Easter, Christmas and Patriotic celebrations among all the churches on the Outer Banks. Previously, he served as pianist and music assistant at First Baptist-Norfolk where he accompanied the Sanctuary Choir and Orchestra and served as administrator of the church’s Conservatory of Fine Arts. He earned the bachelor’s degree in music (organ) and the Church Music Certificate from Virginia Wesleyan College.

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Virginia Wesleyan College extends its deepest thanks to the members and staff of Great Bridge Presbyterian for their gracious hospitality in hosting today’s hymn festival.

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