

Pentecost 2 SAMPLE WEEKS  
3 September & 22 October 2023



# Liturgy, Learning, & (purpose- ful) Life

Worship Resources

## MediaCom EDUCATION

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# Liturgy, Learning, & (purposeful) Life

**3 September – 19 November 2023**

MediaCom Education first produced the L3, then titled *Lay Leaders Liturgy* in time for Advent Year B (29 November 2020), in response to worship leaders asking for support with planning weekly worship following the Revised Common Lectionary.

Today, we connect with our faith communities for our common worship in varied ways. We still, as it seems we always have, gather in the same place at the same time, bringing our voices and embodied selves together in the moment. We gather at the same time from different places, online streaming keeping us together when in the past, illness, mobility, or travel might have separated us. Scattered after the moment, transcripts, recordings, and worship at home materials keep us connected, meeting us in the ever-changing rhythms of our lives. L3 is adapting with you.

L3 gathers writers and practitioners across the diversity of the body of Christ who seek to work collaboratively, drawing on the breadth of their experiences across both lay and ordained backgrounds. L3 writers are passionately engaged in providing for the faith formation of individuals and the gathered communities they belong to and share their creative gifts and worship ideas to encourage faith and leadership.

Bec Lindsay and Amanda Nicholas are the writers for Pentecost 2 2023.

This resource offers flexibility so local members can feel encouraged and supported in their leadership to create gatherings that enliven and deepen the worshipping practices within their community. We hope and pray the L3 resource supports ministry, nurturing faith in all those hearing the Word of God through this resource.

We hope that those drawing on this material will find their own faith encouraged and deepened as they develop their skills in liturgy.

Welcome to L3: Liturgy, Learning and (purposeful) Life—we are delighted to join you in worship in the creative and innovative ways that bring life to your community.

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## **Welcome to the Season after Pentecost – Pentecost 2**

The season after Pentecost is the longest season of the church year. This resource covers the second half of Pentecost, as we move towards the end of the liturgical year at Reign of Christ Sunday. This season is part of 'ordinary' time, liturgically represented by the colour green. In naming this time 'ordinary,' we are reminded that God is at work in the world in the mundane and everyday, as much as in the special moments and seasons. Ordinary time allows us to reflect on the extraordinary experience of God's accompaniment with people and all things.

We have chosen to focus on forming and living faithfully in community through the twelve weeks of this resource. The first seven weeks focus on the readings from the book of Exodus. The following five weeks focus on the readings from the letter to the Thessalonians. We reflect on the formation of Israel as a community, the experience of the early church to understand faith-filled living, and our own communities of discipleship as we seek to follow in Christ's Way.

The Exodus readings begin with God's invitation to the Israelites to form a people, a community, when they are enslaved in Egypt. They then follow the experiences of God and the people journeying and learning how to live well together. This story of the exodus is central to the identity of the Israelites.

The letter to the Thessalonians offers us an example from the early church of a community forming and gathering together to live as Jesus people. These readings offer us encouragement as we, too, live Christ's Way.

We note that some of these passages are challenging. The violence of the Exodus stories is confronting. This violence is seen in the oppressive experience of slavery and in the means used to escape that situation, including the death of the firstborn and the Egyptian soldiers drowned in the sea. There are also undertones of violence and empire within the passages from Thessalonians. We offer resources to reflect and engage with these passages, acknowledging that they may be difficult for us. We also see violence and empire around us today, and so we work in this context as we learn to be people who confront injustice and who live with God's love.

## Embodied Practice

L3 offers opportunities to participate in embodied practices that assist with a deeper exploration of the day's theme. These practices are best conducted within mixed generational groups, as they seek to open up and share the stories and life experiences across the generations of your members. Each week, options for intergenerational connections have been included for your community's exploration. Decide which one best suits your needs or adapt for your context.

Encourage each person in your gathering to be bold enough to attend to the people and conversations and participate regardless of what they feel about the activity at hand, remembering the activity serves as the facilitator for deepening the intergenerational connections within your community.

Gather a container of standard supplies, such as:

- HB pencils
- Eraser
- Sharpener
- Glue dots
- Coloured pencils
- Coloured markers
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- PVA glue (For collage)
- A4 paper
- A3 paper
- Googly eyes – assorted sizes
- Craft paint (acrylic or poster) – assorted colours
- Small paint brushes
- Simple water colour paint sets
- Paper plates
- Pom Poms
- Pipe cleaners (chenille sticks)
- Rubber bands
- Tissue paper
- Collage papers/ scrapbook patterned papers
- Variety of old magazines for cut outs
- Paper cups
- Feathers
- Craft sticks
- Toothpicks
- Tape (regular and patterned)
- Paperclips
- String and rope
- Clothespins
- Coffee filters
- Cupcake liners
- Small tools
- Measuring tapes or rulers
- Small plastic animals
- Battery operated tea lights

This is by no means a complete list, but merely a guide for things that will be used frequently in these activities.

**3 September 2023**

14th Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 17

# Calling: Invited into Community

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If you gather in person, you might speak the **bolded** lines together. Alternatively, if worshippers are not physically present, consider having two voices. Instructions are *italicised*.

## Theme Focus

*God said to Moses, 'I Am Who I Am. So say to the Israelites, "I Am has sent me to you."'*

*~ Exodus 3:14*

God reveals God's name to Moses. In sharing this name, God invites Moses and the Israelites into community with God. We are invited to reflect on God's name and ours.

## Scriptures

### **Exodus 3:1–15**

Moses encounters God in a burning bush and learns God's name.

### **Psalms 105:1–6, 23–26, 45b**

A psalmist remembers the stories of what God has done in past times and gives thanks.

### **Romans 12:9–21**

Advice for living with love.

### **Matthew 16:21–28**

On the way to Jerusalem, where he will be crucified, Jesus teaches his disciples about living in community together, and invites them to follow in his footsteps.

## Setting

Part of preparing for worship is curating the space you gather in and thinking about the creative elements that can be included, such as images, colours, shapes, scents, and textures. These elements will further open the way into the scripture readings and the theme for the day.

Suggested creative elements to include this week:

- Image of Moses before the burning bush
- Tray of sand with leather sandals
- Woven mat (think pacific islander)
- 3D model of a burning bush
- Large tree limb or shrub in a pot with hanging strips of red, yellow and orange
- Crepe paper representing the flames of the bush.
- Hiking/walking stick and robe

Gather items for embodied practice options (see Embodied Practice on page 3).

**Option 1:** Standard supplies kit

**Option 2:** newsprint, standard supplies kit

**Option 3:** Standard supplies kit (optional: simple A4 picture frames or premade Cardboard frames for public gallery)

## GATHERING

### Acknowledgement of Country

God said to Moses, 'Take off your sandals because you are standing on holy ground.'

If you are willing, you are invited to take off your shoes and feel the ground beneath your feet.  
With shoes or barefoot,  
on grass, sand, rock, concrete, carpet or tiles,  
our feet are placed on sovereign First Nations land.

We acknowledge the (*insert the name of the people*) peoples on whose land we stand today. We recognise their custodianship and care of this land. We seek to live in ways that honour this land and its peoples as holy and precious in God's sight.

### Introduction to Theme

God interrupts Moses, meeting him at the burning bush. In this, God draws Moses into community with God and with the people he will lead out of Egypt. How do we form our communities? How do we recognise and name God at the heart of our community?

### Call to Worship

God is present in our midst.  
God works wonders in our lives.  
God invites us into communities of care.  
So we call out with the writer of Psalm 105,

Sing to God;  
**sing praises to God;**  
**dwell on all God's wondrous works!**  
Give praise to God's holy name!  
**Let the hearts of all those seeking God rejoice!**  
(Ps 105:23)

Let us join our hearts in praise!

### Opening Prayer

God,  
as we gather in this place,  
show us that this is holy ground.  
May we hear your voice again  
and respond in worship and praise.  
Amen.

## Music Suggestions

Holy ground, this is holy ground	Christopher Beatty
Take, take off your shoes	<i>Together in Song 651</i>
Here I am, Lord	<i>Together in Song 658</i>

## Prayer of Confession

God who journeyed with Abraham and Sarah,  
God who met Moses in the burning bush,  
God who brings people out of captivity:  
We confess that your name is:  
    I am who I am,  
    I will be who I will be.  
Your being and becoming is entwined with ours.

We meet you in Christ Jesus  
who shows us your heart  
and says, 'Follow me.'  
Our being and becoming is entwined with yours.

Help us to name you and  
to follow your ways  
that we might confess your wonders  
and shout out your deeds among the peoples.  
Amen.

## Words of Grace

Wherever we are  
whenever we are  
whoever we are  
God's promise is to be among us.  
For this, we give thanks to God.



## ENGAGING THE WORD

### Scripture

#### Exodus 3:1–15

Moses was caring for the flock for his father-in-law Jethro, Midian's priest. He led his flock out to the edge of the desert, and he came to God's mountain called Horeb. <sup>2</sup> God's messenger appeared to him in a flame of fire in the middle of a bush. Moses saw that the bush was in flames, but it didn't burn up. <sup>3</sup> Then Moses said to himself, Let me check out this amazing sight and find out why the bush isn't burning up. <sup>4</sup> When God saw that he was coming to look, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!"

Moses said, "I'm here."

<sup>5</sup> Then God said, "Don't come any closer! Take off your sandals, because you are standing on holy ground." <sup>6</sup> He continued, "I am the God of your ancestors, Abraham and Sarah's God, Isaac and Rebekah's God, and Jacob's God." Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.

<sup>7</sup> Then God said, "I've clearly seen my people oppressed in Egypt. I've heard their cry of injustice because of their slave masters. I know about their pain. <sup>8</sup> I've come down to rescue them from the Egyptians in order to take them out of that land and bring them to a good and broad land, a land that's full of milk and honey, a place where the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites all live. <sup>9</sup> Now the Israelites' cries of injustice have reached me. I've seen just how much the Egyptians have oppressed them. <sup>10</sup> So get going. I'm sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

<sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, "Who am I to go to Pharaoh and to bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

<sup>12</sup> God said, "I'll be with you. And this will show you that I'm the one who sent you. After you bring the people out of Egypt, you will come back here and worship God on this mountain."

<sup>13</sup> But Moses said to God, "If I now come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' they are going to ask me, 'What's this God's name?' What am I supposed to say to them?"

<sup>14</sup> God said to Moses, "I Am Who I Am. So say to the Israelites, 'I Am has sent me to you.'" <sup>15</sup> God continued, "Say to the Israelites, 'I Am, the God of your ancestors, Abraham and Sarah's God, Isaac and Rebekah's God, and Jacob's God, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever; this is how all generations will remember me."

### Intergenerational Conversation

What is your name? (*opportunity for sharing*)

What does your name tell us about who are you? (*opportunity for sharing*)

Are there other names people call you?

How did you get these names and what do they tell us about who you are? (*opportunity for sharing*)

In the Bible, God is known by many names, including God, Lord, God-who-sees-me, Most High, Provider, Shepherd, Parent, Creator, God-with-us. In the story told in Exodus 3:1–15, God gives

Moses another name by which to call God: Yahweh. In Jewish traditions, this name is understood to be so special and precious that people don't speak it out loud. Instead, they use the term Adonai (Ad-don-nigh), which means Lord.

The name Yahweh is hard to translate into English. It could mean I-am-who-I-am, or I-will-be-who-I-will-be, or I-will-become-who-I-will-become.

What do you think this name tells us about God? *(opportunity for sharing)*

What name do you like using for God? Why? *(opportunity for sharing)*

## Embodied Practice

The embodied practice is an opportunity to engage more fully with the reading through a range of sensory experiences and stimuli. Embodied practice acknowledges the diversity with which we experience the world and take in new information. Embodied practice is for all to enter into the text in a new way with an openness to what new understanding might be received regardless of age. What is offered below are suggestions to inspire. You might choose from the following or use an embodied practice of your own to explore this week's reading.

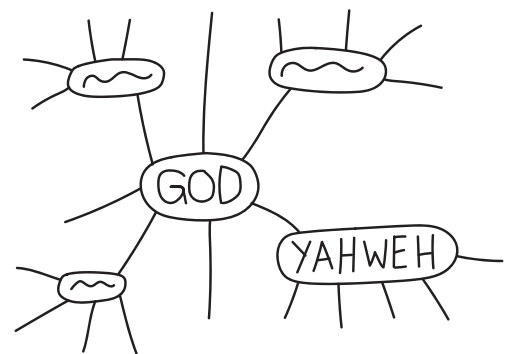
### Option 1: What's in a name?

Using resources from the standard supplies kit, create and decorate some posters of the name you like to use for God. You may like to use one of the Hebrew names for God or an attribute or characteristics for God. Put these up around the space or at home as a reminder for you of who God is to you and your community.

### Option 2: Mapping God's name

Using resources from the standard supplies kit, create a large map of names of God and stories from the Bible or your community which connect to that name.

1. Write 'God' in the centre of the page.
2. Then, drawing connecting lines out from this word, write all of the different names you know for God.
3. Now, from each different name for God, draw a line and write about any Bible stories or community stories you can think of that connect to this name.

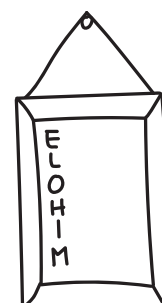


### Option 3: Naming God poems

Using resources from the standard supplies kit, choose one of the names of God to explore in the style of an acrostic poem.

1. Write the chosen name vertically down or horizontally on the page.
2. Use the letters of your chosen name as the first letter of each word and write about all of the things you know of or that are associated with that name for God.

*Optional:* Create each named poem on an A4 page, then frame and create a public gallery in your space of the names of God. You could add to this at any stage again.



Everlasting  
Loving  
Omnipresent  
Holy  
Indescribable  
Majestic

## Music Suggestions

Bring many names	<i>Together in Song 182</i>
Jesus, what a beautiful name	Tanya Riches
Our God	Delia Crabbe

## Word for the Day

God invites Moses into a relationship by revealing God's name to him. In giving Moses the task of speaking to Pharaoh, God begins drawing the Israelites into a renewed community with God. This process will take shape through the experiences of enslavement, the exodus from Egypt, wanderings in the wilderness, and the teachings for living well together (which we traditionally call the Law). The name God gives, Yahweh— I-am-who-I-am, suggests that God cannot be pinned down. It also suggests God's openness to genuine and vulnerable relationship with Moses and the people God has heard cry out from enslavement.

## Ideas for Reflection

- When we meet someone, we usually begin by learning their name. How do you understand this meeting between God and Moses?
- What do you think of the idea that God might grow and change in relationship with Moses and the Israelites?
- How do we make space for the people in our community to learn each other's names and stories?

## RESPONDING

### Music Suggestions

Community of Christ	<i>Together in Song 473</i>
Our God you called Moses	Carolyn Winfrey Gillette
The mind of God	John Bell, <i>I Will Not Sing Alone</i>

## Prayers for Others

God of many names,  
help us to form community and live well  
with the people and the earth around us.

May we live with love  
in our hearts,

in our hands,  
and on our lips.

May we offer welcome,  
to friends and to strangers,  
at our tables  
and in our politics.

May we show empathy  
in weeping and rejoicing,  
in hearing voices that cry out,  
and in seeking justice.

In all things,  
may we live with love.  
Amen

### Offering

May the gifts we bring be used to offer hospitality and to work against injustice.  
Amen.

## SENDING OUT

### Music Suggestions

God gives us a future	<i>Together in Song 687</i>
May the feet of God walk with you	<i>Together in Song 779</i>
Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice	<i>Complete Mission Praise 577</i>

### Blessing

As we leave this place,  
May you know the goodness of all creation,  
may you remember that you also are a good and wonderful creation,  
and may you see God's image in every person you meet.  
Amen.

**22 October 2023**

21st Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 24

# Serving the Living and True God

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If you gather in person, you might speak the **bolded** lines together. Alternatively, if worshippers are not physically present, consider having two voices. Instructions are *italicised*.

## Theme Focus

Over the next five weeks, we will explore Paul's letter to the Christian community in Thessalonica. Paul's letter is one of encouragement to the community of Christ there. This is a community whose living bears witness to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. This is a community serving the living and true God. Paul's letter also offers guidance as to how we might serve the Living True God in our own community.

## Scriptures

### **Exodus 33:12–23**

Moses pleads with God and asks God to provide evidence of their approval as God's holy people. God honours Moses' request and reveals their own being to Moses.

### **Psalms 99**

A song declaring the might of God and speaking of the relationship between Moses, Aaron and God.

### **1 Thessalonians 1:1–10**

Paul writes to the people in Thessalonica, encouraging them in their faithfulness and giving thanks for their continued obedience to the way of Christ.

### **Matthew 22:15–22**

Some religious leaders try to trap Jesus in his words. Jesus tells them to give to whom what is appropriate.

## Setting

Part of preparing for worship is curating the space you gather in and thinking about the creative elements that can be included, such as images, colours, shapes, scents, and textures. These elements will further open the way into the scripture readings and the theme for the day.

Suggested elements to include in your space this week:

- Letter writing supplies – old-style stationery, envelopes, stamps
- Cutouts of feet and hands
- Other items that reflect the idea of serving one another

Gather items for the embodied practices, as listed on page 60–62.

## GATHERING

### Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the *(insert the name of the people)* peoples on whose land we live, work, learn and play. We recognise their custodianship and care of this land. We seek to live in ways that honour this land and its peoples as holy and precious in God's sight.

### Introduction to Theme

*The news about your faithfulness to God has spread so that we don't even need to mention it. People tell us about what sort of welcome we had from you and how you turned to God from idols. As a result, you are serving the living and true God ~ (1 Thessalonians 1:8b–9)*

Hearing the stories from other early church communities is invaluable in encouraging us as we strive to live in faith-filled communities according to God's desire for us.

### Call to Worship

Grace and peace to all of you!

In ancient times we received letters

**with words telling of God's ways and instructing our path.**

In ancient times we received letters

**with words of encouragement for our daily living.**

In ancient times we received letters

**with words of thanksgiving for our faithfulness.**

As imitators of Christ in their lives and community, people in ancient times were an example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

Today we receive these letters,

**with words telling of God's ways and instructing our path.**

Today we receive these letters,

**with words of encouragement for our daily living.**

Today we receive these letters,

**with words of thanksgiving for our faithfulness.**

So that we may become imitators of Christ and an example to all believers in *(name own community here)*.

## Opening Prayer

God of the ancients,  
God of the early church,  
God of the everyday,  
your love for us astounds us.  
May we be imitators of your love  
in the world around us.  
Amen.

## Music Suggestions

Sing to God with joy	<i>All Together OK 325</i>
Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty!	<i>Together in Song 132</i>
Joyful, joyful, we adore you...	<i>Together in Song 152</i>

## Prayer of Confession

We give thanks that God calls us  
to be part of God's community of love.  
We live in awe of God's grace and mercy.  
We are also mindful that we do not always live as we would like.  
Friends, let us pause to reflect on who we are  
and on who God calls us to be.

*Time for silence.*

## Words of Grace

Sisters, brothers, siblings,  
grace and peace to all of you,  
you are loved by God!  
You are called by God!  
You are made new by God!  
Is there any news better than this?  
Let us shout out our praise together:  
**Alleluia! Amen!**

## ENGAGING THE WORD

### Scripture

#### 1 Thessalonians 1:1–10

From Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy.

To the Thessalonians' church that is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace to all of you.

<sup>2</sup> We always thank God for all of you when we mention you constantly in our prayers. <sup>3</sup> This is because we remember your work that comes from faith, your effort that comes from love, and your perseverance that comes from hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father. <sup>4</sup> Brothers and sisters, you are loved by God, and we know that he has chosen you. <sup>5</sup> We know this because our good news didn't come to you just in speech but also with power and the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know as well as we do what kind of people we were when we were with you, which was for your sake. <sup>6</sup> You became imitators of us and of the Lord when you accepted the message that came from the Holy Spirit with joy in spite of great suffering. <sup>7</sup> As a result you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. <sup>8</sup> The message about the Lord rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia but in every place. The news about your faithfulness to God has spread so that we don't even need to mention it. <sup>9</sup> People tell us about what sort of welcome we had from you and how you turned to God from idols. As a result, you are serving the living and true God, <sup>10</sup> and you are waiting for his Son from heaven. His Son is Jesus, who is the one he raised from the dead and who is the one who will rescue us from the coming wrath.

### Intergenerational Conversation

Who among us has received a letter in the mailbox recently? Not a bill or piece of advertising mail or email. A good old-fashioned letter. (*Encourage response*)

Was it typed or handwritten?

What did it feel like to get a physical piece of mail?

In today's reading we hear a portion of the first letter the apostle Paul writes to the community in Thessalonica. It had only been a couple of decades since Jesus was crucified, came to life in a new way, and ascended to heaven. People were sent out into all the lands to share the good news of Jesus Christ with the communities they encountered on the way. It was not always possible to be where you needed to be, when you needed to be there to speak to a community. Communication took a long time to get from one place to another. Today's technological marvels such as video conferencing, email, text messages, instant messages and other services enable us to speak to those who are far away with ease and speed, but how wonderful is it to receive a handwritten letter from someone? Maybe this week you can send a special handwritten letter with words of encouragement to someone you know, just like Paul sent to the community in Thessalonica?

### Embodied Practice

**Option 1: Service hands wreath** – See instructions on page 60.

**Option 2: Faithful footsteps** – See instructions on page 61.

**Option 3: Letters of encouragement** – See instructions on page 62.



## Music Suggestions

Jesus calls us, o'er the tumult	<i>Together in Song 589</i>
Sing of the Lord's goodness	<i>All Together for Good 524</i>

## Word for the Day

In 1 Thessalonians 1:1–10, the apostle Paul commends the believers in Thessalonica for their exemplary faith and dedication to serving the living and true God. He expresses gratitude for their faithfulness and the gospel's transformative power in their lives. Paul emphasises how the Thessalonian Christians became shining examples of genuine faith, hope, and love in action. Their faith was not merely a passive belief, but a dynamic force that led them to serve God and others actively. Paul highlights their work produced by faith, their labour prompted by love, and their endurance inspired by hope in Jesus Christ. This passage is a powerful reminder of the profound impact of living out one's faith through acts of service and how such a life can be a powerful testimony to the world.

The Thessalonians' dedication to serving the living and true God echoes the timeless call for believers today. It challenges us to examine the authenticity of our faith and how it translates into practical acts of love and service. The passage encourages a holistic approach to faith, where our beliefs are integrated into our daily lives, leading us to engage with the needs of those around us actively. Serving the living and true God goes beyond rituals and ceremonies; it involves a heart that overflows with love and compassion for others. As we reflect on this passage, it prompts us to consider how we can imitate the Thessalonian believers in our lives by becoming beacons of hope, love, and service in a world hungry for the gospel's transformative power.

## Ideas for Reflection

- Am I actively working hard to make a positive difference in the lives of others, or am I just saying I believe in God without any actions to back it up?
- What are some specific ways I can put my faith into action and serve the living and true God in my daily life?
- Do I have hope and trust in Jesus, even during difficult times, and does this hope inspire me to keep going and not give up?
- How can we demonstrate love and kindness to one another within our congregation, fostering a spirit of unity and support?
- How can we be a shining example of a faithful and loving community, attracting others to know more about the hope and love found in our relationship with God?

## RESPONDING

### Music Suggestions

Take my life and let it be	<i>Together In Song 599</i>
I the Lord of sea and sky	<i>Together in Song 658</i>

### Prayers for Others

Let us offer our prayers for our community gathered here and for the whole world that God loves.  
Today, we will use a response in our prayers:

God, in your grace,  
**transform our lives  
and renew the world.**

Gracious God,  
We are thankful to be part of a community  
that seeks to follow in Christ's way.  
We give thanks for all those who teach us, encourage us, and love us into faith.  
Help us to follow in their example as they follow after Christ.

God, in your grace,  
**transform our lives  
and renew the world.**

We pray for those who are lonely and do not have a place to belong.  
We want all people to know love and kindness,  
that all people everywhere would have what they need to live and to flourish.

God, in your grace,  
**transform our lives  
and renew the world.**

We pray against violence and oppression,  
We pray against the disparity between rich and poor, powerful and powerless.  
Help us to confront injustice  
and to build communities where all are valued.

God, in your grace,  
**transform our lives  
and renew the world.**

We pray for your precious and beloved world.  
Help us to care for the earth and its creatures.  
Help us to put aside any greed or complacency that damages the earth.

God, in your grace,  
**transform our lives  
and renew the world.**

We thank you again for the gift of Christ  
who became like us, sharing our lives.  
We thank you for the example of the early believers  
whose struggles and joys we can share through the sacred stories of scripture.  
We pray that our lives will be infused with love and justice.  
May we live remembering that we are loved.

God, in your grace,  
**transform our lives  
and renew the world.**  
Amen.

## Offering

May these offerings reflect our commitment to following Jesus' example of love and service. Just as the Thessalonian believers demonstrated their faith through their actions, may our gifts also bring hope, joy, and support to those in need.

We pray that these contributions will be used to further your reign and bless the lives of those in need. May they experience your love and provision through the service and support of this community.

## SENDING OUT

### Music Suggestions

May the mind of Christ my saviour	<i>Together In Song 609</i>
The servant song	<i>Together In Song 650</i>

### Blessing/Benediction

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts with faith, hope, and love as you seek to serve the living and true God. May your hands be instruments of kindness, your words be filled with encouragement, and your hearts be open to the needs of others.  
May you walk faithfully in the footsteps of Jesus, following his example of selfless service and compassion. May the Holy Spirit guide you in every act of love, and may your service be a testament to the transformative power of faith in action. As you go forth from this place, may you carry the message of God's love and grace, sharing it with all you meet. May your dedication to serving God inspire others to do the same, bringing light and hope to a world in need.  
In the name of the God who is Creator, Jesus who redeems us, and the Holy Spirit who guides us, amen.

The following instructions are for the 'Embodied Practice' on page 56.

## **Embodied Practice**

The embodied practice is an opportunity to engage more fully with the reading through a range of sensory experiences and stimuli. Embodied practice acknowledges the diversity with which we experience the world and take in new information. Embodied practice is for all to enter into the text in a new way with an openness to what new understanding might be received regardless of age. What is offered below are suggestions to inspire.

You might choose from the following options or use an embodied practice of your own to explore this week's reading.

### **Option 1: Serving hands wreath**

This activity represents the various acts of service each participant commits to. This wreath will be a visual reminder of our dedication to serving others and living a life devoted to God.

#### **Materials**

- Coloured construction paper or craft foam
- Scissors
- Markers or pens
- Glue sticks or craft glue
- Ribbon or string
- Hole punch (optional)

#### **Instructions**

1. Prepare the hand cutouts: Instruct participants to trace their hands onto the paper or foam and cut out the shapes using scissors. Depending on the number of hands, they may need to create multiple hand cutouts.
2. Acts of service: Encourage participants to think of different acts of service they can do for others, such as helping a friend, volunteering, or showing kindness to family members. Write an act of service on each hand.
3. Assemble the wreath: Arrange the hand cutouts in a circular shape to create the wreath. Overlapping the hands slightly will make the wreath look fuller. Use glue sticks or craft glue to attach the hands, forming the wreath shape.
4. Add ribbon or string: Punch a hole at the top of one hand cutout or near the wrist area. Thread a ribbon or string through the hole to create a loop for hanging the wreath.
5. Display and reflect: Display the wreath in a visible place. Gather around it and take a moment for reflection. Encourage each person to share one act of service they wrote on their hand cutout and why it's important to them. Remind everyone that the wreath represents a commitment to serving others and living a life devoted to God.

This activity allows participants to reflect on their acts of service and fosters a sense of community as everyone contributes to the collective display of serving hands.

## **Option 2: Faithful footsteps**

This activity encourages participants to think about the steps they can take in their journey of serving God. Each participant will create a pathway of 'faithful footsteps' representing their commitment to follow Jesus and serve others.

### **Materials**

- Coloured construction paper or cardstock
- Long length of newsprint or mural paper
- Markers or pens
- Scissors
- Glue sticks or craft glue

### **Instructions**

1. Prepare the foot cutouts: Instruct participants to trace their feet onto the paper and cut out the foot shapes. Depending on the number of footsteps they want to include, they may need to create multiple cutouts.
2. Write various steps of faith: Encourage participants to think about specific steps they can take to serve God and others. Write one step of faith on each foot.
3. Assemble the footsteps: arrange the foot cutouts in a pathway formation, starting from the left or right side, two side-by-side and extending across the length of the newsprint. Use glue sticks or craft glue to attach the foot cutouts, creating the pathway of 'faithful footsteps.'
4. Decorate the pathway (Optional): Participants might further decorate the pathway with drawings or symbols that represent their journey of faith and service.
5. Reflect and share: Gather around the pathway. Invite each person to share one step of faith they wrote on their foot cutout and why it is essential to their commitment to serve God and others. Encourage open and meaningful discussions about how each step can impact their lives and the lives of those around them.
6. Display and remind: Display the Faithful Footsteps pathway in a visible place, such as on a wall or bulletin board. Remind participants that this visual representation serves as a reminder of their dedication to walk in faith, following Jesus, and serving others in their daily lives.

This activity fosters personal reflection and a sense of community as participants share their steps of faith. It encourages focusing on practical actions that align with their commitment to serve the living and true God.

### **Option 3: Letters of encouragement**

This activity aims to promote a culture of support and care within the congregation. Participants will write heartfelt letters to one another, offering words of encouragement and appreciation for their commitment to serving the living and true God.

#### **Materials**

- Stationery or plain paper
- Pens or markers
- Envelopes
- Optional: stickers, coloured pencils, or other decorative materials

#### **Instructions**

1. Introduction and purpose: Gather the participants and introduce the activity. Explain that the purpose is to uplift and support one another in their journey of faith and service to God.
2. Explanation of the theme: Remind the participants about the theme of serving the living and true God, based on 1 Thessalonians 1:1–10. Emphasise how their actions of service and dedication to God have impacted the congregation positively.
3. Letter writing: Encourage participants to write letters of encouragement and appreciation to others in the congregation. They can address the letters to specific individuals or write more general messages of support for everyone. They might share specific examples of how the recipient's actions have made a difference and inspired others.
4. Optional decoration: Offer stickers, coloured pencils, or other decorative materials for those who wish to add a personal touch to their letters.
5. Encourage positivity and kindness: Emphasise the importance of being kind, uplifting, and sincere in their words. Encourage participants to avoid negative or critical comments and instead focus on the positive impact of each person's service.
6. Sharing (Optional): If the group feels comfortable, participants can read their letters aloud to the entire congregation. Alternatively, they can exchange the letters privately during the activity or distribute them later.
7. Closing and distribution: Conclude the activity with a moment of prayer, thanking God for the congregation's commitment to serving God and encouraging one another. Collect the letters and distribute them to the recipients.

This activity creates an atmosphere of love and support within the congregation, fostering a sense of community and appreciation for one another's dedication to serving the living and true God. The heartfelt letters will serve as cherished reminders of the impact of their faith and service.