

Laity Sunday 2026: Together By Grace: *Be Grounded in Love (Ephesians 3:17)*

Laity Sunday celebrates the people of God, chosen, grateful, and rooted in a love that shines for the world to see. As God's people grow in grace, they gather with others who also come to reflect the saving love of Jesus Christ. So, on Laity Sunday (October 18, 2026), we continue to lift up God's call to follow the way of Jesus and lead others to him, especially as we consider what it means to be **chosen and grounded in God's love**—love that calls us to bless the world with our light and witness.



Laity Sunday 2026– Overview/Planning Worship

Laity Sunday is a special Sunday defined by General Conference “to celebrate the ministry of all lay Christians” (2020/2024 *Book of Discipline*, ¶ 264.2). Usually observed on the third Sunday in October, Laity Sunday expresses the core Christian conviction that *all* are called to participate in God's mission to bring life to light through the good news of Jesus. **Read more about the history of Laity Sunday at <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-laity-sunday>.**

This year, the Laity Sunday emphasis is on being chosen, love-grounded people of God who are

- imitators of God's grace,
- favored to favor,
- blessed to bless,
- called to be examples and bring light to life (vice versa)
as grateful witnesses to God's grace for *all*.

Laity Sunday 2026 and Quadrennial Themes

The Laity Sunday theme for 2026 comes from **Ephesians 3:17** through the lens of **1 Thessalonians 1:10** (see the other lectionary texts: [Exodus 33:12-23](#), [Psalm 99](#), and [Matthew 22:15-22](#)).

Last year, the Laity Sunday passage came from Ephesians 3:16, with resources connected to the quadrennial theme, “[Together By Grace: Be Strong in the Spirit](#).” We focused on singing the LORD's song as we come to know the ‘script’ by heart and accompany others. Bearing witness to the story of grace in every life is what the Spirit-strong, ‘ligament’ people of God do.

This year, we see the goal of grace is all people blessed. In the passages from Ephesians 3:17 and 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10, we consider that God's choosing is the root and ground of Love's promise to bless all people, especially as the chosen extend God's favor well beyond any particular 'chosen' group. As you think about what it means to be imitators and examples rooted in a love that chose you (before you chose it), we hope you will also think about how the chosen one who dwells in our hearts by grace is ever-drawing the circle of salvation wider. In this sense, "choseness" means favored, to be sure, but not favoritism. God's choosing grace is both a promise and privilege (not entitlement) to participate in Love's ever-expanding, world-blessing work.¹ By such favor, we come to *favor* (resemble) God's widening grace to *all* families, nations, and people. And by our witness and example, others will come to know what it means to become grateful, gracious people who embody God's grace *for* life, *for all*.

Laity Sunday Themes. 2025-2028 – Together By Grace!

2025: TOGETHER BY GRACE!—Be Strong in the Spirit (Eph. 3:16)

2026: TOGETHER BY GRACE—Be Grounded in Love (Eph. 3:17)

2027: TOGETHER BY GRACE!—Behold Love's breadth/depth (Eph. 3:18)

2028: TOGETHER BY GRACE —Be Filled with God's fullness (Eph. 3:19)

Laity Sunday 2026 – Preaching Notes

Texts: Ephesians 3:17 (NRSVUE); Psalms 99 (NRSV); Exodus 33:12-23 (NRSV); 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 (NRSV); Matthew 22:15-22 (NRSV); Other Readings: Isaiah 45:1-7 (NRSV), Psalms 96:1-9, 10-13 (NRSV)

LAITY SUNDAY READINGS

Read the passages for Laity Sunday listed above, especially the Ephesians and Thessalonians passages. Listen for what resonates with your heart and invite God's Spirit to confirm a word or insight for your life. Then determine how that will inform the worship experience and message. Try reading each passage more than once, listening for a word, phrase, or image that sticks with you. You might not need to read any more of the notes below to have clarity about your witness for the Laity Sunday service.

In addition to today's Laity Sunday theme passage from Ephesians 3:17, our readings include Hebrew Bible passages from Exodus and the Psalms and New Testament passages from Matthew 22. The focus is on **our deep roots/grounding in Christ's love that dwells in us as a people chosen by God to bless the world** (see the Preaching Notes [HERE](#) on 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10). As a community grafted to the tree of God's chosen people in the Hebrew Bible (see Romans 11:16-18), we are likewise chosen for much more than special favor: we live gratefully as those who are also

¹ See the covenant promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 (blessed to be a blessing to "all the families of the earth"). See also Isaiah 42:6-7, where the prophet emphasizes the chosen people as a covenant gift and "light to the nations." For a reader-friendly look at varying views of "choseness" in the Old Testament and letters of Paul, see chapter 7 of William P. Brown's book, *Sacred Tension: Embracing Dissonance and Dialogue in the Old Testament* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2025), 135-165. This is also the participant book for a new Lay Servant Ministries course.

responsible and called to bless a world of others. As in previous years, we continue to stress the witness of the whole people of God whose grateful lives become a blessing and light for all people – those Jesus loves and those God chooses to participate in saving grace. In a nutshell:

The ground and root of our life in Jesus is God's choice to love us. We were chosen for love. Because we are precious in God's sight, we will love a world of others. God's faithful, choosing love (*chesed*) creates, grounds, and sustains a redeemed people. But this "chosenness" is a different kind of partiality or favor with a deeper purpose: God's "mighty...ever expanding benevolence" and salvation to all.²

We are chosen to favor God by blessing all. We have been selected and appointed to resemble ("favor") God and reflect Love's "light to the nations" (Isaiah 49:6). This is our witness and example of love for all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:3, 18:18, 28:14). As you lead worship this week, think about ways to emphasize what it means to be grounded in a love that illuminates the people in your zip code and beyond.

THIS YEAR'S READINGS:

In Exodus 33, Moses wants to see God's glory. He seeks assurance of God's presence, which is the distinguishing mark of this favored, chosen, and rescued people about to leave Mt. Sinai. Yahweh promises presence, rest, grace, and mercy – and a passing glimpse of the 'backside' of God's goodness and glory.

The reading from Psalms 99 is a worship song for all peoples, lifting up Yahweh as the 'king' whose responsive presence and love for justice are revealed in the memory and instructions for faithful life together given at Mt. Sinai.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10, Paul greets and gives thanks to God for the "chosen" people at Thessalonica whose imitating "labor of love" has become a shining example to others in the region (Macedonia and Achaia and "every place [their] faith in God has become known" – now your town, too).

In the gospel reading from Matthew 22:15-22, religious professionals confront Jesus about whether it is 'lawful' (whose law, God's or Rome's?) to pay taxes to the colonial power and 'divine' emperor, Caesar. His answer amazes them: give Caesar the things that bear his image ('coinage') and God the things that belong to God (and by implication, bear God's image). There will be giving to both the gods of the age (Caesars) and God to whom all things belong. (Maybe putting our name on something does not make it any less God's.)

Finally, our passage from Ephesians 3:17 (NRSVA³ that reflects our Laity Sunday theme this year: "[I pray] that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are **being rooted and grounded in love.**"

We recall that Ephesians is a book about growing up in the mystery of God's will and purpose: to gather all people into the wholeness of those "made alive together...by grace" (Eph. 2:5). This passage from chapter three is a prayer, not a command, that God's presence in Jesus Christ finds a home in the hearts of a chosen and blessed people. We are to grow up in grace (Eph. 4:15) with deep roots in love that free and bless all. The root of our love

² *Sacred Tension*, page 160.

³ New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicized (NRSVA) Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

is the favor of God (grace), whom we ‘favor’ by extending blessings to all people. This is what it really means to be chosen: being Love’s blessing for others. This is our example, our witness, our light, and “the word of the Lord [that] has sounded forth” (1 Thessalonians 1:8) in our own communities and beyond.

SELECT QUOTES

“I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as **you are being rooted and grounded in love**.
-Ephesians 3:16-17 (NRSVA, *emphasis added*).

“For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that **he has chosen you**... For you became **imitators** of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy from the Holy Spirit,⁷ so that **you became an example** to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For **the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you** not only in Macedonia and Achaia but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it.” -1 Thessalonians 1:4, 6-8 (NRSVUE, *emphasis added*, The New Revised Standard Version Bible: Updated Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995, 2022 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.)

“[T]here’s a purpose behind God’s loving choice of Israel: to become a priestly and holy people, both internally and externally. Israel is the priest for ‘all the peoples,’ serving as an intermediary for God’s blessings to the world.”
-William P. Brown, *Sacred Tension* (Upper Room Books, 2025, page 145)

“I’m **all for love**, and that’s the truth now baby, **love for all**.”
-Stephen Duffy/The Lilac Time, “All for Love & Love for All”
-& *Love for All*, 1990, Fontana Records (*emphasis added*)

“The **witness of the laity** ... is the primary evangelistic ministry through which **all** people will come to know Christ and the United Methodist Church will fulfill its mission.”
-*The 2020/2024 United Methodist Book of Discipline*, ¶ 127 (*emphasis added*).

The General Rule of Discipleship is this: “**to witness to Jesus Christ** in the world, and to follow his teachings through acts of compassion, justice, worship, and devotion, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit“

Planning Worship

(If gratitude is part of your Laity Sunday emphasis, see <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/always-give-thanks/week-1-twenty-first-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a>.)

If the focus text is 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10, see below.

During a time of year when many churches are focused on giving, we turn for the next three weeks toward *thanksgiving*. Too early? Are you wondering if this series is better suited for November instead of October? Maybe so. But the lectionary invites us to start our thanksgiving early. Before the turkey and pumpkin pie and even before the trick-or-treaters come to our doors, we have the opening salutation of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians: "We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly..." (verse 2).

You know that warm feeling you have inside when a friend of a friend meets you and says, "I have heard so many good things about you!"? I have to imagine that's how the Thessalonians felt when they received this letter. Before Paul begins discussing their "chosen-ness," he claims them. He *remembers* them with thanksgiving. He prays for them and feels connected to them, even though they're apart. What relationships in your congregation feel like this? What neighborhood partnerships produce this feeling of gratitude? What connections are you giving thanks for here and now? How can you express this thanksgiving in worship?

If you choose to emphasize the theme of thanksgiving, consider whether you want to use a hymn of thanksgiving or gratitude as a thread woven throughout the three weeks of this series. Some traditional options include "Now Thank We All Our God" (*United Methodist Hymnal* 102), "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come" (*United Methodist Hymnal* 694), and "For the Beauty of the Earth" (*United Methodist Hymnal* 92). These well-known hymns offer opportunities to hear the familiar in new ways—whether by changing the tune or using a verse as a prayer response—while also leaning into a heart song in your community. You might also consider a newer song that is less familiar to your congregation, such as "Praise God for This Holy Ground" (*Worship & Song* 3009) or "All My Days" (*Worship & Song* 3011). Vary how you use the hymn from week to week, and by the end of three weeks, it may become a new favorite!

If you do happen to be in a season focused on stewardship, remember: thanksgiving and generosity go hand in hand. In one of his final articles as Director of Stewardship and Generosity, Rev. Ken Sloane notes the power of saying thank you. Thanksgiving and joy are at the root of true generosity. We don't tell people to be thankful as a transaction to receive their gifts. We start with thankfulness, because we have all been richly blessed by our Creator and our community, a community that chooses to follow God because we have been chosen and sustained by God. In times when stewardship campaigns can feel like an exercise in noticing all that we do not have, let thanksgiving turn you and your congregation toward the abundance of what God has already provided and trust that God will guide, provide, and equip you to live, work, and rest as the body of Christ planted just where you are for a time such as this.

Dr. Lisa Hancock, Director of Worship Arts Ministries, served as an organist and music minister in United Methodist congregations in the legacy Northwest Texas and North Texas Annual Conferences. After receiving her Master of Sacred Music and Master of Theological Studies from Perkins School of Theology, she earned her PhD in Religious Studies from Southern Methodist University, where she researched and wrote on the doctrine of Christ, disability, and atonement. Lisa is also the co-lead of the Growing in Grace: Accessible Worship for All God's Children initiative.

Preaching Notes focused on 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

<https://www.umediscipleship.org/worship-planning/always-give-thanks/week-1-twenty-first-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a/week-1-twenty-first-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-always-give-thanks-preaching-notes>

Focus Text: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

“What does it mean to be chosen?” Paul calls the Christians in Thessalonica **“beloved by God”** and says that **God has chosen** them. It must have made them feel good. We know what it is to be chosen (or maybe we know the pain of not being chosen). We know about exclusion and inclusion. We understand what it means to be part of something bigger than ourselves, or we long to.

That’s what Paul is talking about: that participation. He claims to know that the Thessalonians are chosen because the Word came to them. That’s an interesting claim. He knows their “chosenness,” their inclusion, because the word, the word he brought, came to them, and they received it. So, is listening to the word being chosen? Or is it that only those who are chosen can hear it—or hear into it? Is it only the chosen who can hear something bigger, something deeper? That is how your “chosenness” is identified, says Paul.

Actually, he says something more. **It wasn’t just hearing the word; it was receiving the power.** Ah, there we have it. The special ones are the ones chosen, the ones we read about in our history, the ones we’re not a hundred percent sure we believe. But wouldn’t it be great? Those miracles, those unexplained actions that a special few can do, or pretend to do, or convince people that they can do. That is what this is about, isn’t it? Wonder workers, celebrities, heroes, and heroines of the faith: those are the chosen.

Admit it: that has long been a suspicion we’ve had. We’ve felt that it wasn’t about us, the ordinary ones, but about the special ones. And good for them. Really. We need heroes and heroines. We need models to look up to, to emulate, or to imitate. Paul throws that in: “And you became imitators of me” (1 Thess. 1:6 NRSV). You, not you individually, but you all, all y’all. You became a community that lived faith, that grew in faith, that sought ways to act out faith. You—all y’all—did that. **That’s how he knows you were chosen, because you are living it,** because others are encouraged by you, **by the example you are setting,** and by **the hope you are living.**

Chosenness is about ripples. Like any gift of the Spirit, it isn’t given primarily for you, for the one receiving it. You are chosen to be an influence, to be an example. Many wonder **what it means to be a disciple** of Jesus Christ in today’s crazy world. They figure it out by looking to you, to your community, to **the witness that you give in word and deed, in mission and in service.**

You can ask **how the surrounding countries learned about** the faithfulness, **the chosenness of the disciples in Thessalonica.** We don’t know. Paul says he didn’t need to talk about it. Maybe he meant he didn’t need to keep talking about it. Maybe he told, but then the word spread. We don’t know. And in the end, it doesn’t really matter. **The message here is that you are an example, the light on the hill that Jesus talked about.** That’s you. That’s all y’all. Parents learn early on that they are being watched by the little ones they are raising, even when they aren’t “on” or intentionally parenting. They are being watched. There are folks in your town who wonder what it means to follow Christ. They wonder what it means to belong to a church. Sure, they could go to church themselves to find out, but they don’t need to. They just see you. Are you an example of the joys of discipleship? Are you one who loves God and neighbor with equal passion and commitment? What do your neighbors see when they look at you? At your church? Do they wonder if they might be welcomed if they wander in one day? Or is your church like a social club that they don’t have the credentials to join?

Paul says you are chosen because you responded. Being chosen is not an award or a medal that you can wear with pride. It is a call to follow Christ, to put on the yoke, to live outwardly and openly in a way that increasingly stands out in the culture around us these days. That call begins with gratitude.

Paul addresses his hearers by saying he always gives thanks to God for them. For us. For those who have been chosen, for those who have responded. We join him in this thankfulness and give thanks for the call on our lives and for the disciples who stand with us for support and encouragement. **We give thanks for the opportunity for the ripples to go out from the little things we do to lift up those around us.** We give thanks for the gift of life itself and the blessing of living in a world of wonders. We have been **chosen** for all of this and more. Thanks be to God.”

Rev. Dr. Derek Weber, former Director of Preaching Ministries, served churches in Indiana, Arkansas, and the British Methodist Church. His PhD in preaching and media is from the University of Edinburgh. He has taught preaching in seminary and conference settings for more than twenty years.

Laity Sunday 2026 – Order of Worship

Liturgical Resources – If 1 Thessalonians and Belonging/Chosenness is your Laity Sunday Focus

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/always-give-thanks/week-1-twenty-first-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a/week-1-twenty-first-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-always-give-thanks-liturgical-resources>

Focus text: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10; and Ephesians

Call to Worship

We are chosen children of God, bound together by the Holy Spirit.

Grounded in love, we belong to God, and through God, we belong to one another.

The Spirit empowers us to live as imitators of Christ in love of God, neighbor, self, and all creation.

Grounded in love, we belong to God, and through God, we learn to love one another.

The Spirit inspires us to receive God’s Word with joy in a world that rejects the good news.

Grounded in love, we belong to God, and through God, we live in joy with one another.

Come, let us worship in the assurance of God’s love that chooses us, empowers us, and inspires us to live as the family of Christ.

We come to worship God in the assurance that we belong to God, and through God, we belong to one another. Amen.

Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, July 2026.

Opening Prayer

Loving, living God,
be among us now.
Show us your ways.
Guide our steps.
Live in us,
that we may be people of steadfast hope
and powerful giving.
Help us hear your words,
challenging us to give you
all the things that are yours.
Help us remember
that all we are and all we have
are gifts from you,
gifts to be shared in service and love.
Holy One among us,
help us be a holy people
who receive your word with joy
and live your message with love. Amen.

Written by **Mary Scifres** on the Ministry Matters website, <http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/blog/entry/1779/worship-elements-october-16-2011>. Reposted on the re:Worship blog at <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2011/10/call-to-worship-prayer-proper-24a.html>.

Prayer of Confession

God of Grace,
we know that you have chosen us,
but we often forget that you have also chosen others.
You call us to be imitators of Christ,
yet many times we are imitators of the world.
You challenge us to turn from our idols,
but we are tempted to turn back to them again and again.

Rescue us, Lord, from ourselves.
Show us your way.
Guide our every action,
that we may live as you call us to live.

Prayers of silent confession

Words of Assurance

Beloved children of God,
receive this good news:
God loves us, chooses us,
Forgives us, and renews us
to live in love and service of God and neighbor.

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.
In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.
Glory to God! Amen.

Adapted from **Amy Loving**, The Worship Closet. Reposted on the re:Worship blog at <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2017/10/confession-1-thessalonians-1-1-10.html>.

Benediction

May God bless you with the assurance that you are chosen children of God,
empowered and equipped by the Spirit to live as the Family of God in a world in
desperate need of the good news. Amen.

Written by **Dr. Lisa Hancock**, Discipleship Ministries, July 2026.

Questions to Nourish Your Laity Sunday Preparation

Think about a time when you felt a sense of “chosenness” or belonging (in school, on a team, at a church or faith community). Then pick one or two questions below to help you think about this year’s Laity Sunday theme (together by grace/be grounded in love). Read and respond to one or two questions (or begin with your own). Your context has stories of being both chosen and excluded. Ask people in your church if they feel chosen/specially selected to receive and share grace.

- Was there a “favorite” in your family growing up (you, a sibling – firstborn or the baby of the family)? How did that impact other siblings or family members (envy, bitterness, resentment)?
- Think of a time when you were picked first (or last). How did it feel to be the last person standing yet to be chosen (if that was your experience)?
- Have you ever been the one doing the choosing? How did the experiences you thought about above shape the way you handled that?
- When has “being chosen” come with more responsibilities than privileges?
- How have you been the recipient of unearned favor (grace) in your life?

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Laity Sunday 2026 – An Alternative Order of Worship

ABBREVIATIONS

TFWS = *The Faith We Sing* (2000)

UMH = *United Methodist Hymnal*

See Suggested Congregational Songs and Hymns in the table below*:

**Also see the “Suggested Hymns” tab on the Discipleship Ministries lectionary page for this day (October 18, 2026):*

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/always-give-thanks/week-1-twenty-first-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a/week-1-twenty-first-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-always-give-thanks-hymn-suggestions>

ENTRANCE

CALL TO WORSHIP

Jesus said we are his witnesses.

We know God’s Spirit is at work in our lives.

We listen for his voice in the cries of our neighbors.

We know God’s plan is to gather all in love.

As God’s own people, we are Spirit-strong ligaments of grace when we follow God’s wisdom and instructions for a “whole” way of life.

We thank God that our lives can “cover” the LORD’s song when we know the “script” by heart.

WORD AND RESPONSE

Message Theme: **Together By Grace: *Be Grounded in Love***

Texts: Ephesians 3:17 (NRSVA); Psalms 99 (NRSV); Exodus 33:12-23 (NRSV); 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 (NRSV); Matthew 22:15-22 (NRSV); Other

Readings: Isaiah 45:1-7 (NRSV), Psalms 96:1-9, 10-13 (NRSV)

Prayers of the People (Skip if using “A New Great Thanksgiving for Laity Sunday”)

Three or four lay speakers/preachers may become the leaders of the intercessions, or other laity may be chosen to lead the prayers.

Pastor: Holy God, we know our call story as a chosen people is a vocation to love others you also choose.

Lay leader: Spirit of Jesus, empower us to be a whole body, knit together by grace.

People: God, we long to live as your light in the world.

Lay leader: Jesus, help us become a gift to a world of others who need your grace.

People: We know that you dwell in us and that we are rooted and grounded in your gracious, choosing love.

Lay leader: Bless a world of others through our witness, so they will discover their chosenness and calling, too.

People: God, help us live grounded in love.

Lay leader: Jesus, remind us that your love and mercy are wider than we imagine.

People: God, we know you are with us and the mystery of your good news is a gathering plan of love and life.

Pastor: Savior God, we are your people, and you are our God. We belong to you and to your love for the life of the world.

All: Amen.

THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION

WHEN NOT CELEBRATING HOLY COMMUNION:

Invitation to Thanksgiving

Leader:

We will go, Lord, into the world,
telling and retelling the story with other believers,
taking the gospel and making disciples
among all the people we meet.
We will go, knowing *you* will be with us.
You, O God, to whom we would
in these moments,
pour out our lives in service
and in thanksgiving. But we know the barriers that stand in our way.
We cannot pour ourselves out to you fully as individuals
with unconfessed sin in our lives.
We cannot pour ourselves out to you fully as your body
when we are in conflict with others.
So, hear our confession;
forgive and deliver us,
and give us courage to offer your peace
to one another.

Confession of Sin

Leader:

We have sinned against you and one another, Lord.
We have not lived worshipfully.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our confession.**
Silence

We have not loved you wholly.
We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We have not lived worshipfully.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our confession.**

Silence

We have not denied ourselves and taken up our own cross daily.
We have not lived worshipfully.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our confession.**

Silence

We have not loved kindness, pursued justice, or walked humbly with you.
We have not lived worshipfully.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our confession.**

Silence

We have not shared the good news with our lips or in our lives.
We have not lived worshipfully.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our confession.**

Silence

Pastor/Leader: The saying is sure: If we confess our sins, God is merciful and just and forgives us our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness.
In the name of Christ, you/we are forgiven.

People/Leader to Pastor and One Another: In the name of Christ, you/we are forgiven.

All: Glory to God! Amen!

Pastor/Leader: As forgiven and reconciled people, share Christ's peace with one another.

The peace of Christ be always with you.

And also with you.

The people share the peace of Christ with one another. After a suitable period of time, the pastor may continue:

Pastor/Leader: Forgiven and reconciled to God and one another,
let us offer our gifts and our thanks to God!

Thanksgiving Songs

During the Collection:

“Thank You, Lord” (UMH 84)

At the Presentation of Gifts:

“We Bring the Sacrifice of Praise” (TFWS 2031)

Pastor: Accept our gifts of thanksgiving and joy, O Lord,
as, by your Spirit, we remember and proclaim who you are!

Continue with the Sending Forth

OR WHEN CELEBRATING HOLY COMMUNION:

Invitation to the Table (UMH 12)

Confession of Sin (UMH 12)

Act of Pardon (UMH 12)

Sharing of Peace (UMH 12)

Offering (UMH 13)

Great Thanksgiving: “A New Great Thanksgiving for Laity Sunday”

SENDING FORTH

Blessing and Benediction

Lay Leader:

Be grounded in love, chosen, called, and blessed to be a blessing for a world God chooses to love.

Pastor:

And may Jesus dwell in your hearts each day as you live and love as chosen people.

Amen.

Laity Sunday 2026 — Hymn Suggestions

Hymns

BOW - *The United Methodist Book of Worship*

CLUW - *Come, Let Us Worship* (Korean)

MVPC - *Mil Voces Para Celebrar* (Spanish)

SOZ - *Songs of Zion*

TFWS - *The Faith We Sing*

UMH - *The United Methodist Hymnal*

URW - *Upper Room Worshipbook*

WSM - *Worship & Song, Music Edition*

WSW - *Worship & Song, Worship Resources Edition*

SoG - *Songs of Grace*

TAH – *The Africana Hymnal*

1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10	UMH	MVPC	CLUW	TFWS	SOZ	URW	WSM	WSW	SOG	TAH
Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine	369	65	287							4083
Blest Be the Dear Uniting Love	566		254							
Come, Thou Almighty King	61	11								
Filled with the Spirit's Power	537									
How Firm a Foundation	529	256								
Living for Jesus				2149						
My Life Flows On				2212		170				
O Spirit of the Living God	539									
Rejoice in God's Saints	708									
Spirit of Faith, Come Down	332		219							4081

1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10	UMH	MVPC	CLUW	TFWS	SOZ	URW	WSM	WSW	SOG	TAH
Thank You, Lord	84				228					4150
This Little Light of Mine	585		338		132					
We Are God's People				2220						
EXODUS 33:12-23	UMH	MVPC	CLUW	TFWS	SOZ	URW	WSM	WSW	SOG	TAH
Abide with Me; Fast Falls the Eventide	700									
Awesome God				2040						4004
Blessed Be the Name	63									
Breathe on Me, Breath of God	420					167				
Bring Many Names				2047						
Cry of My Heart				2165						
El Shaddai	123	45	77							
God of Many Names	105									
Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty	64	4	79							
How Firm a Foundation	529	256								
I Love You, Lord				2068						
Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise	103		74							

EXODUS 33:12-23	UMH	MVPC	CLUW	TFWS	SOZ	URW	WSM	WSW	SOG	TAH
It's Me, It's Me, O Lord	352		326		110					
Jaya Ho (Victory Hymn)	478									
Jesus, Savior, Lord (Saranam, Saranam)	523		105							
Lead On, O Cloud of Presence				2234						
Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing	671									
Now Praise the Hidden God of Love				2027						
Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me	361	247								
Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above	126		60			70				
Source and Sovereign, Rock and Cloud	113									

PSALM 99	UMH	MVPC	CLUW	TFWS	SOZ	URW	WSM	WSW	SOG	TAH
All Hail King Jesus				2069						
Awesome God				2040						4004
Crown Him with Many Crowns	327	157								
El Shaddai	123	45	77							
Glory to God				2033						
He Has Made Me Glad				2270						

PSALM 99	UMH	MVPC	CLUW	TFWS	SOZ	URW	WSM	WSW	SOG	TAH
He Is Exalted				2070						
Holy God, We Praise Thy Name	79		80							
Holy, Holy, Holy				2007						
Honor and Praise				2018						
How Great Thou Art	77	2	61							4015
Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise	103		74							
Lift High the Cross	159	164	174							
Lord, Be Glorified				2150						
O God Beyond All Praising				2009						
O Worship the King, All-Glorious Above	73									
Praise the Lord Who Reigns Above	96		124							
Praise to the Lord, the Almighty	139	29	68			63				
Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven	66					75				
Righteous and Just Is the Word of Our Lord (La Palabra Del Señor Es Recta	107									
Unsettled World				2183						
We Will Glorify the King of Kings				2087						
Wounded World that Cries for Healing				2177						

MATTHEW 22:15-22	UMH	MVPC	CLUW	TFWS	SOZ	URW	WSM	WSW	SOG	TAH
An Outcast Among Outcasts				2104						
Come, Let Us with Our Lord Arise				2084						
Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life	164									
He Is Exalted				2070						4082
His Name Is Wonderful	174	172	203							
How shall I come before the Lord								3124		
Lord of the Dance (I Danced in the Morning)	261	128	170							
Lord, Be Glorified				2150						
Make Me a Servant				2176						
More Precious than Silver				2065						
O Young and Fearless Prophet	444									
Rise Up, O Men of God	576									
Take My Life, and Let It Be Consecrated	399		312							
There's Something About That Name	171	74								
We Would See Jesus	256		168							
What Does the Lord Require	441									

Laity Sunday 2026 — Music Notes

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/always-give-thanks/week-1-twenty-first-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a/week-1-twenty-first-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-always-give-thanks-music-notes>

We give thanks for the opportunity for the ripples to go out from the little things we do to lift up those around us. We give thanks for the **gift** of life itself and the **blessing** of living in a world of wonders. We have been chosen for all of this and more. Thanks be to God.

Abbreviations

UMH=*United Methodist Hymnal*

TFWS=*The Faith We Sing*

Theme hymns:

Cry of My Heart

TFWS 2165

Give Thanks

TFWS 2036

Response:

Thank You, Lord

UMH 84

What does it mean to be chosen? Paul calls the Christians in Thessalonica “**beloved by God**” and says that God has **chosen** them. It must have made them feel good. We know what it is to be chosen (or maybe we know the pain of not being chosen). We know about exclusion and inclusion. We understand what it means to be part of something bigger than ourselves, or we long to.

“Maybe the chosenness of the “beloved” is revealed in our wide love for all who are precious to God.” (DCT)

My Life Flows On

TFWS 2212

Blessed Assurance

UMH 369

How Firm a Foundation

UMH 529

Contemporary and Modern Song Selections for the series:

“I Thank God”

CCLI Song # 7169680

I Thank God | Maverick City Music x UPPERROOM (Official)

“Goodness of God”

CCLI Song # 7117726

Goodness of God (LIVE) | Bethel Music - Jenn Johnson

“10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)”

CCLI Song # 6016351

10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord) | Matt Redman

“This Is Amazing Grace”

CCLI Song # 6333821

This Is Amazing Grace | Phil Wickham (Official)

“The Heart of Worship”

CCLI Song # 2296522 (*widely used CCLI listing*)

The Heart of Worship | Matt Redman (Live)

“The Blessing”

CCLI Song # 7147007

The Blessing (Live) | Elevation Worship ft. Kari Jobe & Cody Carnes

Offertory Prayer

Gracious God, you choose ordinary people and weave them into a community that shines with your love. We thank you for the gift of belonging—for the call to live our faith in ways that ripple outward into the lives of others. Receive these gifts as signs of our gratitude and our willingness to be witnesses to your grace. Use what we offer to encourage the weary, welcome the searching, and strengthen your church as a living example of hope. May our shared life together always point to Christ, whose love calls and sends us. Amen. (1 Thessalonians 1:1-10)

Laity Sunday 2026 — General Planning Notes

About the Acts of Thanksgiving

Acts of thanksgiving, although stated as an integral part of our Basic Pattern of Worship, are an uncommon or commonly truncated element when Communion is not celebrated. Today is an opportunity to model and explore what these acts can be if you are not celebrating Holy Communion.

About the Invitation to Thanksgiving

An act of invitation to thanksgiving is probably needed in most settings, much as the Prayer for Illumination, to help transition the energy from listening, commitment, and prayer in the previous movement (Word and Response) toward the energy of offering ourselves to God in thanksgiving for all God has done, is doing, and will do to save us and renew the universe.

The principles of transition are the same. Match the content, volume, speed, and energy of what came before, then move to what is needed next.

Now we move from prayer to thanksgiving, still in the spirit of awareness that Christ goes with us. Exhortation (the song), prayer (the prayers we have just prayed), and thanksgiving all use different kinds of energy. Give attention not only to the words used in the invitation to thanksgiving, but also to the kind of energy with which these words are spoken.

About the Pardon; Before the Acts of Thanksgiving

Anyone, lay or clergy, may lead an act of confession and pardon. If the leader of the act of pardon is the pastor, use “You are forgiven.” If the leader is a layperson, use “We are forgiven.”

About Serving Communion

One way to maintain the flow of the service when celebrating Communion is to ensure you have an efficient way to serve the elements. You don’t have to make people wait in long lines or sit for long periods. The typical time for people to receive both bread and cup without feeling rushed is ten to twelve seconds. This means you can easily serve five to six people per minute. Calculate the number and placement of serving stations to allow all in your congregation who wish to receive to do so within five minutes, if possible.

A Note about Presiding

While this is Laity Sunday in The United Methodist Church, the special day does not change the work laity and clergy do in the leadership and life of the church, established by both *Discipline* and doctrine (*This Holy Mystery*).

Authorized presiders are clergy, whether ordained elders, provisional members preparing for ordination as elders and assigned to a particular local church, deacons, other denominational clergy functioning as local pastors or provisional members, licensed local pastors.

A layperson may assist at the Lord's Table by preparing the Table, holding the liturgy book for the authorized presider, or leading intercessions if they are included within the Great Thanksgiving. The authorized presider leads the prayer. It should not be divided among two or more presiders.

Small-Group Discussion - 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 (what it means to be ‘chosen’)

Fellowship – Snacks or a Meal (10 minutes with snacks; longer, if there is a meal).

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, have participants answer, “Who has been **an example** of a Christian for you? What do you see in their faith or action that compels you?”

Group Dialogue (Approximately 30 minutes). You may not get through all the questions in the time you have together. Consider inviting group members to work through any remaining questions on their own throughout the week.

- Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 aloud, inviting participants to have the scripture in front of them, either in a Bible, on a phone app, or printed on paper. Ask group members the following questions:
 - What positive affirmation does Paul, the author of this letter (or “epistle”), give the church of the Thessalonians based on this passage?
 - Verse 4 refers to the people as “chosen.” Consider what it means in scripture when someone is “chosen.”
 - When have you been “chosen” for something? What about *not* being chosen? How does being chosen—or being excluded—shape one’s identity?
 - What do you think Paul means by the gospel not just being “word,” but also in “power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction”?
 - How do you understand the gospel having power and conviction?
 - Paul references them becoming imitators and being “an example to all the believers.” How does the idea of imitating Paul/Christian leaders sit with you? How does the idea of being an example to all believers sit with you? Which do you struggle with more? Why might that be?
- The Preaching Notes for October 18 say:

“There are folks in your town who wonder what it means to follow Christ. They wonder what it means to belong to a church. Sure, they could go to church themselves to find out, but they don’t need to. They just see you. Are you an example of the joys of discipleship? Are you one who loves God and neighbor with equal passion and commitment? What do your neighbors see when they look at you? At your church? Do they wonder if they might be welcomed if they wander in one day? Or is your church like a social club that they don’t have the credentials to join?”

- What resonates with you about these questions? What challenges you?
- Read back through the scripture passage. Is there a word or a phrase that stands out? Write it down for consideration in the week ahead.
- *Just One Thing*: What is one thing you want to do because of the discussion today?
- *Going Deeper on Your Own*: This week, consider studying one of the other lectionary texts in the following pattern:
 - **Prayerfully ask God** to open your eyes to the scripture. (Psalm 119:18)
 - **Read** the text of your choice [Exodus 33:12-23, Psalm 99, Isaiah 45:1-7, Psalm 96:1-9, (10-13), Matthew 22:15-22, Ephesians 3:17] out loud.
 - What do you **notice** about the text?
 - What **questions** arise?

- What do you think **God might be saying** to you in this text?

Prayer (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). End with the following prayer, a similar prayer, or the Lord's Prayer:

Loving God, the power of your resurrection raised Jesus from the dead, and it raises us, too. We can sometimes feel less than "qualified" to be an example for others. But you choose us anyway, before we do anything to be worthy of being chosen. May we be encouraged by the witness of the church of the Thessalonians, who served you, the Loving and True God. And may we also be found faithful. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

***Rev. Dr. Ashlee Alley Crawford**, Director of Adult Discipleship, an elder in the Great Plains Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, served in campus ministry for twelve years and in leadership with the Great Plains Conference for over a decade. She has a passion for connecting people with resources and encouraging them to nurture their faith and walk in step with Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. She has a D.Min. in spiritual direction from Asbury Theological Seminary. Ashlee also has a Certificate in Discipleship Coaching through Discipleship Ministries.*

Laity Sunday 2026— Scripture Readings

[Ephesians 3:17](#) [verses 14-16, 18-20 for context] [NRSVA](#)

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,^[a] ¹⁵ from whom every family^[b] in heaven and on earth takes its name. ¹⁶ **I pray** that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, ¹⁷ and **that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.** ¹⁸ I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

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1 Thessalonians 1:1-10, NRSVUE

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace to you and peace.

² We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly ³ remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵ because **our message of the gospel came to you** not in word only but also **in power** and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶ And **you became imitators of us** and of **the Lord**, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy from the Holy Spirit, ⁷ so that you became **an example to all** the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ⁸ For **the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you** not only in Macedonia and Achaia but **in every place your faith in God has become known**, so that we have no need to speak about it. ⁹ For they report about us what kind of welcome we had among you and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God ¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

Exodus 33:12-23, NRSVUE

¹² Moses said to the Lord, "See, you have said to me, 'Bring up this people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.' ¹³ Now if I have found favor in your sight, please show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favor in your sight. Consider, too, that this nation is your people." ¹⁴ He said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." ¹⁵ And he said to him, "If your presence will not go, do not bring us up from here. ¹⁶ For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth."

¹⁷ The Lord said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have asked, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name." ¹⁸ Moses[a] said, "Please show me your glory." ¹⁹ And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you the name, 'The Lord,'[b] and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. ²⁰ But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one shall see me and live." ²¹ And the Lord continued, "See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, ²² and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; ²³ then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen."

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Psalms 99, NRSVUE

The Lord is king; let the peoples tremble!

He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!

² The Lord is great in Zion;

he is exalted over all the peoples.

³ Let them praise your great and awesome name.

Holy is he!

⁴ Mighty King, lover of justice,

you have established equity;

you have executed justice

and righteousness in Jacob.

⁵ Extol the Lord our God;
worship at his footstool.
Holy is he!

⁶ Moses and Aaron were among his priests,
Samuel also was among those who called on his name.
They cried to the Lord, and he answered them.

⁷ He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud;
they kept his decrees
and the statutes that he gave them.

⁸ O Lord our God, you answered them;
you were a forgiving God to them
but an avenger of their wrongdoings.

⁹ Extol the Lord our God,
and worship at his holy mountain,
for the Lord our God is holy.

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MATTHEW 22:15-22, NRSVUE

¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. ¹⁶ So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one, for you do not regard people with partiality. ¹⁷ Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" ¹⁸ But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹ Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰ Then he said to them, "Whose head is this and whose title?" ²¹ They answered, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." ²² When they heard this, they were amazed, and they left him and went away.

ISAIAH 45:1-7, NRSVUE

Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus,
whose right hand I have grasped
to subdue nations before him
and to strip kings of their robes,
to open doors before him—
and the gates shall not be closed:

² I will go before you
and level the mountains;[a]
I will break in pieces the doors of bronze
and cut through the bars of iron;
³ I will give you the treasures of darkness
and riches hidden in secret places,
so that you may know that it is I, the Lord,
the God of Israel, who call you by your name.

⁴ For the sake of my servant Jacob
and Israel my chosen,
I call you by your name;
I give you a title, though you do not know me.

⁵ I am the Lord, and there is no other;
besides me there is no god.
I arm you, though you do not know me,

⁶ so that they may know, from the rising of the sun
and from the west, that there is no one besides me;
I am the Lord, and there is no other.

⁷ I form light and create darkness,

I make weal and create woe;
I the Lord do all these things.

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Other Readings

PSALM 96: 1-9 (10-13), NRSVUE

- O sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth.
- ² Sing to the Lord; bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.
- ³ Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples.
- ⁴ For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised;
he is to be revered above all gods.
- ⁵ For all the gods of the peoples are idols,
but the Lord made the heavens.
- ⁶ Honor and majesty are before him;
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.
- ⁷ Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
- ⁸ Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
bring an offering, and come into his courts.
- ⁹ Worship the Lord in holy splendor;
tremble before him, all the earth.
- ¹⁰ Say among the nations, "The Lord is king!
The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved.
He will judge the peoples with equity."
- ¹¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;

let the sea roar and all that fills it;
¹² let the field exult and everything in it.
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy
¹³ before the Lord, for he is coming,
for he is coming to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with righteousness
and the peoples with his truth.

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Additional Resource

“History of Laity Sunday,” <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-laity-sunday>

Laity Sunday 2026 — Graphics Links

Laity Sunday 2026 – Ephesians 3:17 Graphics (click on thumbnail for high-resolution images):

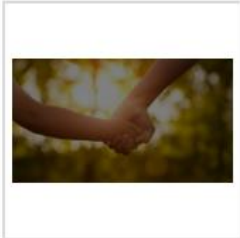
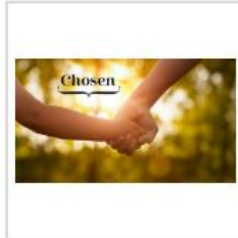
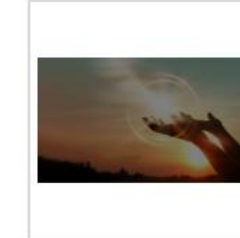
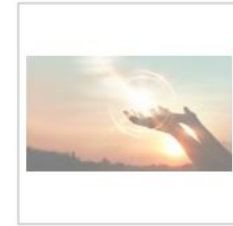
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Discipleship Ministries Laity Sunday 2026 Graphics Link:

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/l7ha6t26j7vvnkn1g5nad/AJhYQJokc_zzulDoRM6h5rw?rlkey=vvvaktk8pspnm1jiy31xvhjzd&st=j8ms9d37&e=2&dl=0

Laity Sunday 2026 — Other Image Links (*Chosen, Thankful*)

BULLETIN - CHOSEN JPG Download 	SOCIAL - CHOSEN JPG Download 	POWERPOINT (DARK) - CHOSEN JPG Download 
POWERPOINT (LIGHT) - CHOSEN JPG Download 	POWERPOINT (TITLE) - CHOSEN JPG Download 	
BULLETIN - ALWAYS GIVE THANKS JPG Download 	SOCIAL - ALWAYS GIVE THANKS (SERIES) JPG Download 	POWERPOINT (DARK) - ALWAYS GIVE THANKS JPG Download 
POWERPOINT (LIGHT) - ALWAYS GIVE THANKS JPG Download 	POWERPOINT (TITLE) - ALWAYS GIVE THANKS JPG Download 	