



LECTIONARY LITURGY

CREATIVE. SOUL-RENEWING. STEEPED IN SCRIPTURE.

SUMMER 2014 SEASON
SUNDAY, JUNE 22, 2014

YEAR A

GENESIS 21:8-21
PSALM 86:1-10, 16-17
ROMANS 6:1B-11
MATTHEW 10:24-39

SCRIPTURE ECHO

LECTIONARY LITURGY

CONTENTS

A MOMENT OF QUIET..... 3

SCRIPTURE TEXTS & WORSHIP THEMES..... 4

TRADITIONAL WORSHIP 5

Prayer of Preparation (Genesis 21, Psalm 86).....5

Call to Worship (Psalm 86, Romans 6, Matthew 10).....5

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer (Genesis 21)6

Prayer of Invocation (General).....6

Confession-to-Pardon (Romans 6).....7

Blessing of the Offering (Genesis 21, Matthew 10).....8

Charge and Benediction (Genesis 21, Matthew 10).....8

WORD TO THE CHILDREN 9

The Hairs on Your Head (Matthew 10).....9

You Can Talk to God about Being Jealous (Genesis 21)10

Should We Do the Wrong Thing? No Way! (Romans 6)10

PRAYER IN THE MIDST 11

SCRIPTURE PRESENTATION 12

Breathe New Life into Scripture Readings12

Upside Down and Inside Out (Adapted from Matthew 10:24-39).....14

INTERACTIVE WORSHIP 15

In the Wilderness (Genesis 21).....15

CONTEMPLATIVE WORSHIP 16

Guided Meditation (Genesis 21)16

ONE MORE IDEA..... 17

What Am I Going to Do? (Psalm 86)17

SCRIPTURE QUOTES 18

A BREATH PRAYER..... 18

MAKING CONNECTIONS 19

NOTES 20

A MOMENT OF QUIET

A Blessing for Worship Planners (Genesis 21)

Are you in the midst of some sort of wilderness? Is the path ahead unclear? Perhaps in some way you feel as if you are about to perish. Are you, in some way, crying out for help?

May you sense that God hears your cries and asks you to pour out your heart, knowing you are heard by the God who has not forsaken you, even if others have.

May you hear those oft-repeated words, "Do not be afraid." But this time, may you hear them on a deeper level, allowing them to find their way from your thoughts to your feelings to your core sense of identity. You are a person who need not fear. Not this wilderness. For you are not alone. You are accompanied. Heard. Understood.

And may you sense God opening your eyes, to show you exactly what you need, perhaps what was right in front of you, all along.

Your Prayer (Genesis 21)

Before you immerse yourself in planning for others to encounter God's presence in worship, spend some moments thinking about your own needs and articulating your own prayer.

Gracious God, hear my prayer.

Sometimes I feel as if I am in the wilderness ...

I cry out to you for help. Help me, O Lord, to ...

I don't want to fear, O God, but I am afraid. I am afraid of ...

Show me what I need, O Lord. Show me how to ...

(Rest quietly in prayer. Let go of the struggle. Sense God's presence with you.)

Amen.

Welcome to Lectionary Liturgy!

Each week, *Lectionary Liturgy* provides a variety of options to help you plan a worship service (traditional, blended, contemporary or alternative) that is creative, soul-renewing and steeped in scripture.

Many suggestions and ideas are given. Choose the elements that are right for your worship style and setting.

No matter what text or theme you choose as a focus, you can add richness and depth by using words and images from another text for your liturgy.

Adapt and change. Add and augment. Bring your own creativity and imagination to the art of creating a worship service that is meaningful and relevant to your congregation.

SCRIPTURE TEXTS & WORSHIP THEMES

Genesis 21:8-21

Sarah tells Abraham to cast out Hagar, then God tells Abraham to do as Sarah has asked. Abraham, though distressed, casts out Hagar and their son into the wilderness. Hagar and her son are about to die of thirst when God opens Hagar's eyes and she sees water. *"What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy."* (v. 17)

Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17

"Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me for I am poor and needy." (v. 1)
The psalmist repeatedly implores God to listen and answer, stating that God is good and without equal.

Romans 6:1b-11

As those baptized into Christ and united with him in death, we should consider ourselves dead to sin (even though grace abounds) and alive to God. Death no longer has any power over Christ, who has been raised from the dead. *"The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God."* (v. 10)

Matthew 10:24-39

Jesus brings openness (light to the darkness, secrets made known). God cares for each one of us, counting even the hairs of our head. Jesus: will deny before God anyone who denies Jesus on earth; brings a sword, not peace; sets a person against their family members, and asks that we love him more than our families; bids us to take up the cross and follow him.

God Opening Our Eyes and Providing	Genesis 21
Jealousy	Genesis 21
God's Care for Each of Us	Genesis 21, Psalm 86, Matthew 10
Do Not Be Afraid	Genesis 21, Matthew 10
God Answering Prayer	Psalm 86
Alive to God, Dead to Sin	Romans 6
United with Christ in Baptism and Death	Romans 6
Taking Up the Cross	Matthew 10
The Cost of Following Jesus	Matthew 10

(Verses are from the NRSV)

TRADITIONAL WORSHIP

Prayer of Preparation (Genesis 21, Psalm 86)

Print at the top of your bulletin or project on the screen as worshippers enter.

(GENESIS 21:21)

Open my eyes, O Lord, that I may see your abundance. Amen.

(PSALM 86:7)

In the midst of trouble, O Lord, I call on you, for I trust that you will answer me. Amen.

Call to Worship (Psalm 86, Romans 6, Matthew 10)

(PSALM 86, SELECTED VERSES, ADAPTED)

Leader: Be gracious to me, O God, for to you I cry.

People: I call on you in the midst of trouble. I know you will answer me.

Leader: Gladden my soul, O Lord. I lift up my soul to you.

People: Turn to me. Be gracious to me. Give me your strength.

Leader: There is no one like you, for you alone are God.

Let us join our hearts and voices, to worship the Lord!

(PSALM 86, SELECTED VERSES, ADAPTED) (Same as above, but using the plural “we.”)

Leader: Be gracious to us, O God, for to you we cry.

People: We call on you in the midst of trouble. We know you will answer us.

Leader: Gladden our souls, O Lord. We lift up our souls to you.

People: Turn to us. Be gracious to us. Give us your strength.

Leader: There is no one like you, for you alone are God.

Let us join our hearts and voices, to worship the Lord!

(LOOKING IN THE MIRROR, ROMANS)

When we look in the mirror, we do not look alone.

We look knowing that God looks with us and is rooting for us.

We look with honesty, but also with the knowledge that God understands.

We look with hope, for hope is the center of faith, and our identity as Christians.

Let us worship God together.

TRADITIONAL WORSHIP

Call to Worship (Matthew 10)

Jesus said, "Aren't two sparrows sold for a mere penny? And yet not even a sparrow will fall to the ground without God taking notice. Do not be afraid. You mean more to God than a sparrow. Why, even the hairs of your head are all counted." (Matthew 10:29-31, Adapted)

Brothers and sisters in Christ, let us worship God. The God who counts the hairs on our head. The God who takes notice of our lives. The God who cares for us more than we could even begin to imagine. Come ... set aside whatever might get in the way. Come ... worship, the Lord, your God.

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer (Genesis 21)

Are your eyes open to God's goodness, to God's grace?
Are you expectant and hopeful that God will meet you and attend to your needs?
Are you ready for what might happen?

Let us worship God together. Let us pray:

Open our eyes, O Lord, to see the wonder and beauty all around us, when we pay attention and allow distractions to fall away.

Open our eyes, O Lord, that we may find your abundant gifts right in front of us, meeting our needs and filling the God-shaped empty spaces inside of us.

Open our eyes, O Lord, in this time of worship, that we might be changed by our encounter with you.

In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

IDEA: Follow with the song, "Open Our Eyes" (Maranatha! Singers)

Prayer of Invocation (General)

Come, Holy Spirit, into this place as we worship together and sing God's praise.
Come, Holy Spirit, enliven us, energize us, and focus our attention.
Come, Holy Spirit, prepare our hearts to meet the living God.
Amen.

TRADITIONAL WORSHIP

Confession-to-Pardon (Romans 6)

Call to Confession

Paul asks this question, in his letter to the Romans: *“Shall we continue in sin in order that grace may abound?”* (v. 1b, NRSV) Should we take advantage of God’s grace and forgiveness, and continue to make wrong choices?

He answers his own question with the Greek phrase *me genoito!* Which means, “No way!” Absolutely not! And yet, we are human. We do fall short. And we do rely on the grace of God to forgive and to understand. Together, let us confess our sin before God.

Prayer of Confession (Unison)

O God, you created us. You know us and understand us. You realize that, at times, we come up short. We desire to be generous, but withhold from others and from you. We desire to be Christ-like in our actions, but we can forget and follow the values and examples that this world offers us. We desire to be kind and loving, but can allow fatigue and stress to deter us from these good intentions. Forgive us, O Lord, and allow your grace to wash over us. Help us to forgive others and to forgive ourselves, and to begin anew, each day.

And hear us now, in the silence of these moments, as we confess to you what is ours alone to confess.

(Time of Silent Confession)

Assurance of Pardon

Leader: In Romans 6:10, we read: *“The death that Christ died, he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God.”* We, as those who follow Christ, should consider ourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Jesus Christ. Hear and proclaim the good news of the gospel.

People: **In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God.**

IDEAS:

- If you are interested in using the “Looking in the Mirror” theme this summer, but not having it as the focus of your sermon series, consider choosing this theme to be the focus for your Confession-to-Pardon sequence. See page 13 for ideas about the worship environment.
- This week, Psalm 86:7 can serve as a Call to Confession or an Assurance of Pardon:
For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you. (NRSV)

TRADITIONAL WORSHIP

Blessing of the Offering (Genesis 21, Matthew 10)

(GENESIS 21)

We offer to you these gifts, O God – our tithes and offerings that we have set aside for ministry in the name of Jesus Christ, here in this church, in our community and throughout the world. Open our eyes to the needs of others and how we might be attentive to them, through the sharing of our treasures, but also our time and talents. Amen.

(MATTHEW 10)

You call us, O God, to live for you and to follow Jesus even when it is uncomfortable or challenging. As we share this offering with you, we ask that you would bless us in ways that allow us to be even more generous with our time and with the gifts you have given us. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Charge and Benediction (Genesis 21, Matthew 10)

(GENESIS 21)

Open your eyes – to the abundance that God offers, that may be right in front of you.
Open your eyes – to the possibilities that faith-filled choices might bring to you.
Open your eyes – to the ways in which you might follow God more closely – at home, at work, here at church, and in this community.

And as you do, remember that you are not alone, and that you need not fear. God, our Creator, Jesus our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit, our Encourager, are with you, this day and every day. Amen.

(MATTHEW 10)

Jesus invites us to take up the cross and follow him. He doesn't promise that it will always be comfortable. He doesn't promise that the choices we will be invited to make will always be easy. But he does promise that we will not be alone. And he does promise that we will be cared for and valued.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the comfort of the Holy Spirit be with you. Amen.



WORD TO THE CHILDREN

The Hairs on Your Head (Matthew 10)

Ahead of time: Bring in a doll (with plenty of hair.) You could probably find one in your church nursery. (Or, ask a family with a young girl to bring in a doll. She will think the invitation is very special.)

SAY: Good morning, boy and girls!

This might be a somewhat strange question. Have you ever counted the hairs on top of your head? (Wait for a moment as they look at you incredulously!) No, of course you haven't. It's too hard to count the hairs on your own head. I have this doll here with me today, and I thought we could work together to count the hairs on her head.

(Start counting.) One, two, three ... You know what? This is going to take a really long time. She has a lot of hair. Each of you has a lot of hair. In fact, I looked it up on the internet, and I found out how many hairs a human head usually has. Does anyone want to take a guess? (Allow time for guessing. If kids are reluctant, you could ask questions such as, "Do you think there are more than 10? More than 100? More than 1000? Etc.")

Most kids and a lot of adults have about 100,000 hairs on their head. Can you imagine counting each one of those hairs?

In the Bible, Jesus is teaching his disciples how much God cares about them – each of them. And he tells them that God has even counted the hairs on their head.

Now what I think Jesus means, is not that God spends a lot of time counting and recounting the hairs on our heads. I think that Jesus means that God knows us so well. God understands us so completely. God is interested in every little detail of our lives. There is nothing about us that God doesn't know. Which makes sense, because God created us. How amazing – that God cares for us so much!

Let's pray together, like an echo. I'll say a line, and you repeat it.

*Thank you God,
For creating us,
And for knowing
Everything about us.
Thank you, God,
For caring.
Amen.*

Call to the Children

SAY: Jesus made sure there was an important place for children, and so do we. I invite all the children to join me at this time.

WORD TO THE CHILDREN MESSAGE STARTERS

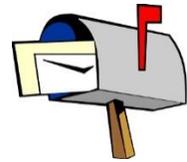
You Can Talk to God about Being Jealous (Genesis 21)

Children can get jealous, very jealous. Just ask any parent who has more than one child about sibling rivalry and the jealousy that can be a part of daily family life. Talk with the kids about being jealous and how they can pray about that jealousy.

SAY: We can talk to God about anything. If we're mad, if we're sad, we can talk to God. And we can talk to God if we are feeling jealous. When we're jealous, we wish we had something that somebody else has. It's not a feeling that we want to have. It can feel pretty yucky to be jealous. But it does happen. Everyone gets jealous, once in a while. It's part of being human. And God understands that. We can talk to God about being jealous. We can explain what we're feeling and ask for God's help.

IMPORTANT NOTE: (This week's story from Genesis about Sarah's jealousy of Hagar is not very kid-friendly. Keep your references to the Bible generic this week, perhaps by saying: The Bible has many stories about people who are jealous.)

IDEA: If you have a true, kid-friendly story about your childhood that involves jealousy, consider sharing that story. Or, save your message about jealousy until July 13th, with the story of Jacob and Esau, or August 10th, with the story of Joseph and his brothers – both of these texts are decidedly more child-appropriate.



LETTERS FROM GOD SERIES: Bring in a mailbox! Yes, a real mailbox. Borrow an old one; or buy one at your local hardware store (or at Wal-Mart for about \$18). You can use it for the rest of your ministry. Whenever your Children's Message is based on an epistle and you want a simple way to present it with a visual cue, bring out the mailbox. Type or write the main point of your lesson in large letters on a sheet of paper, fold it and place it in an envelope in the mailbox.

Should We Do the Wrong Thing? No Way! (Romans 6)

Print SHOULD WE DO THE WRONG THING? NO WAY! in large letters on a sheet of paper, and place it in an envelope marked *TO: The Church in Rome FROM: Paul.*

Place the letter in a "mailbox" or simply show the children. Have a child open the letter and ask for a volunteer to read it aloud. Talk with the children about how Paul asked this question – should we do the wrong thing because we know that God is going to forgive us? He answers this question with a phrase that means, "No way!" God wants us to always try to do the right thing. Sometime we make mistakes. Sometimes we need to ask to be forgiven. But we should always, always try to do the right thing!

PRAYER IN THE MIDST

This prayer is traditionally known as a Pastoral Prayer. Change any language to make it correspond to your style. This week, use the repeated phrase “Open our eyes,” as a subtle reference to Genesis 21:19.

Open our eyes, O Lord, to the beauty of creation, all around us. Blue skies. A gentle rain. Each new sunrise. A tiny flower. A child’s smile. The wisdom etched in an older person’s face.

(Make these references your own; change to fit your weather and your congregational life.)

Remind us to be aware of the goodness that exists everywhere we look, if we are looking with you and for you.

Open our eyes, O Lord, to the blessings that exist for each one of us, in different ways. Blessings of family or other relationships that are like a family to us. Blessings of home and the solace that we can find at home. Blessings of work that pushes us and allows us to contribute and to make a difference. We thank you God for the blessings that we are aware of, and those that are sometimes outside of our attention.

And we thank you this day for ... *(Name specific joys of your congregation)*

Open our eyes, O Lord, to those among us in need – in need of you and in need of our help and our prayer. We pray for those who are struggling this day. With illness or recovery ... with mourning the loss of someone dear ... with life situations that are a burden to bear ... with secrets that are too hard to hold ... with the thought of a future which is too much to even imagine. Be especially with ... *(Name specific concerns of your congregation)*

Hold each one that we have named, and each one we name in the privacy and silence of our hearts ... Hold them close and remind them that you are there, in ways that can matter. And guide us to speak words of comfort, and offer our assistance in ways that lighten the burden.

Open our eyes, O Lord, beyond ourselves, to our community, to our nation and to our world so that we might look with you at *your* world and respond in prayer and faithful action. We pray this day for ... *(Name specific concerns of your community, nation and world.)*

Open our eyes, O Lord. Widen our gaze. Expand our awareness, so that we might see the presence of Christ in our midst. So that we might *be* the presence of Christ in our midst. For it is in his name that we pray together, using the prayer that he taught us, saying ... Our Father ...

SCRIPTURE PRESENTATION

Breathe New Life into Scripture Readings

Make one of your scripture readings come alive—choose the idea that is appropriate to your worship style and your community. Other suggestions will help to give the scripture presentation more clarity and make it more accessible to listeners.

GENESIS 21:8-21

- You can use a light-hearted approach to gently introduce this story which quickly becomes anything but lighthearted. *SAY: Husbands, you might have learned over time that the best solution to most problems is to listen to your wives. To take their advice. Here's a story from the Bible in which a man, Abraham, does just that. It's a complicated story, though, with complicated relationships, and with life or death consequences.*
- Prior to reading this scripture, lead the congregation in this prayer of illumination: *Open our eyes to see. Open our ears to hear not just the words but the meaning and the message that lies underneath. Open our minds and hearts that we may understand and know your will more clearly. Amen.*
- During the reading of this text, intersperse a contemporary response.

After verse 10	So, Sarah is jealous. Who wouldn't be jealous? But this request is harsh.
After verse 12	Did God just tell Abraham to listen to his wife and do what she told him to do? Usually, this is great advice – do what your wife tells you to do. But in this case, it seems harsh. Too harsh.
After verse 16	I understand that Hagar has given up. I understand why she couldn't listen to the heartbreaking cries of a thirsty child. But did she really leave him alone, in the wilderness? How could a mother do something that harsh?
After verse 21	So, the story ends well, but still it prompts questions along the way. Harsh, hard-to-understand behavior from these two women and from God. What does this Bible story mean? For them and for us?

PSALM 86:1-10, 16-17

- This psalm could be a prelude to a time of silent prayer and meditation.
- Read this psalm slowly and with feeling, as if alone, pouring out your heart to God.
- If using the NRSV, prompt some reflection on the word “incline.” *SAY: The first three words of this psalm are “Incline your ear.” What is the psalmist asking God to do? What are we asking God to do? In many other translations, the psalm simply begins, “Hear me.” But pause for just a moment with this phrase, “incline your ear.” The psalmist is asking God to be inclined to listen. To move toward, so that the listening can be unimpeded by distraction. As I read the words of this psalm, I invite you to think about how it is that you are open to God moving toward you, coming closer to you, so that when you pour out your heart, you will feel heard and understood.*

SCRIPTURE PRESENTATION

ROMAN 6:1B-11

- **Worship Environment:** If you are using the theme of “Looking in the Mirror,” you might want to set a tone for the service that is more somber and self-reflective. Create a worship environment that is minimalist and bare. If you have a worship table, consider covering it with a dark cloth. Prop a large mirror on the table. Or if you can, place a large, free-standing mirror at a spot which reflects the congregation. If possible, set flower arrangements off to the side.
- In your introduction to the text, or right in the midst of verse 2, explain that Paul uses the Greek phrase *μη γενοιτο* (*me genoito*, pronounced *may geh-NOI-to*) to answer his question posed in verse 1 – “*Shall we continue to sin, just because we know God will grant us grace?*” This phrase is one that Paul often uses, and the translation “By no means!” is a good way to communicate the emphasis. “No way!” is another translation.
- Consider using *The Message* to read this text, which uses the metaphor of moving to a new country to explain what it means to live with grace.

If we’ve left the country where sin is sovereign, how can we still live in our old house there? Or didn’t you realize we packed up and left there for good? That is what happened in baptism. When we went under the water, we left the old country of sin behind; when we came up out of the water, we entered into the new country of grace—a new life in a new land! (from vv. 1-3, *The Message*)

MATTHEW 10:24-39

This is a relatively long passage (16 verses) that contains a collection of Jesus’ teachings. Consider a way to present the text that helps to maintain momentum.

- **Use two voices:** Whenever a new topic is introduced, switch voices. Here is a possible way of dividing the passage.

Verses 24-25:	Voice 1
Verses 26-27:	Voice 2
Verse 28:	Voice 1
Verses 29-31:	Voice 2
Verses 32-33:	Voice 1
Verses 34-37:	Voice 2
Verses 38-39:	Voice 1
- Consider interspersing your message with the scripture text. This is a helpful structure to use, every once in a while, to steep your message in scripture and also create a dialogue with the text.
- See the next page for a contemporary rendering of this passage that uses the repeated theme: Jesus turn things upside down and inside out.
- This passage would lend itself very well to creative movement or sacred dance.

SCRIPTURE PRESENTATION

Upside Down and Inside Out (Adapted from Matthew 10:24-39)

Use this contemporary rendering of the text to perk up the listening ear.

Jesus turns thing upside down and inside out. Jesus said:

A student is not above the teacher, but is like the teacher. A servant is not above the master, but is like the master. So if the house is led by someone who makes choices that are not-of-God, and if indeed that one is called “Not-of-God,” how much more will those of the household also be called “Not-of-God.”

Do not be afraid. What is covered will be uncovered. What is secret will be made known. What is told in the dark will now be told in the light. What is whispered will be shouted aloud.

Do not be afraid of those who can kill the body, but those who can destroy the soul.

Are not two small birds sold for a mere penny? Yet God knows when one of them falls to the ground. And you – why even the hairs on your head are counted. You are worth more to God than one small bird. Do be afraid.

Jesus turns things upside down and inside out. Jesus said:

All who acknowledge me, I will acknowledge before God. But those who deny me, I will deny. I haven't come for peace in the way that you understand. I have brought a sword to divide. Divide family members against one another. Former enemies may become your new family. You must love me more than others. More even than father or mother. More even than son or daughter.

Jesus turns things upside down and inside out. Jesus said:

Take up your cross. Follow me. Be worthy of the call I extend to you. For if you only want to cling to your life, you may lose it. But if you let go of everything you hold dear, for my sake, you will find life.

OPTION: Use two voices, one to introduce each section, with “Jesus turns things ...” and one to read the words of Jesus.

INTERACTIVE WORSHIP

In the Wilderness (Genesis 21)

Respond to the story of Hagar in the wilderness by inviting worshippers to consider these questions. Provide paper for journaling or divide into partners for discussion. Or, provide these questions for anyone who wants to spend some prayerful and reflective time at home engaging this scripture passage and the theme of wilderness.

- What wilderness are you experiencing at this time in your life?
- What feelings do you experience in the wilderness?
- Does it feel as if resources are scarce? What is it that you don't have enough of?
- How is it that you might be distancing yourself from loss and pain, within this wilderness? What are your emotional survival strategies?
- Who may be present in your life, in the midst of the wilderness, as an "angel"? Who is drawing your attention to God?
- Have you had a chance to talk with God about your struggle?
- What do you fear, within the wilderness?
- What might God be inviting you to do?
- How might God open your eyes to the abundance at hand that you might be missing?
- Often, we cannot see the blessings available to us, until the time of wilderness is far past. From this current vantage point, can you see a blessing?

CONTEMPLATIVE WORSHIP

Guided Meditation (Genesis 21)

Provide an opportunity for worshippers to quietly reflect and imagine what it means for them to be in a time of wilderness, and how they can turn to God in the midst.

Take time to prepare for the guided imagery and prayer. During each ellipsis (...) pause for silence. The key to an effective guided experience is leaving enough silence.

Preparing: I invite you to close your eyes ... To relax your breathing ... To allow distractions to fall away ... Give yourself permission to be fully present in this time ... Take a few deep breaths ... Open your awareness to God-with-you, through your imagination ...

Guided Imagery: I invite you to imagine a wilderness. This wilderness can be whatever your imagination creates. Perhaps there are many trees, tangled together and the light is dim ... Perhaps there is a wide expanse of space ... and the sunlight is harsh ...

Whatever setting you create, experience this wilderness through your senses. What do you see? ... What do you hear? ... What do you taste or smell? ... What can you touch? ...

Now place yourself in this wilderness. You are alone ... Look at yourself as if you are an observer. What do you look like? ... What does your facial expression communicate? ...

Guided Prayer: I now invite you to become aware of what you are feeling, in the midst of this wilderness. Allow feelings to come to mind without judging them. Just notice.

Are you afraid? ... Are you lonely? ... Are you hopeful? ... No feeling is wrong; just become aware ...

In the midst of these feelings, whatever they are, I invite you to turn to prayer, to talk to God in the privacy your own mind and heart. Be honest. Hold nothing back. Tell God how you feel. Ask God for the help you need

Closing Prayer: Holy One, we offer to you our thoughts, our feelings, our prayer, our hope. In the midst of any wilderness we are experiencing, remind us to turn to you. Amen.

ONE MORE IDEA

What Am I Going to Do? (Psalm 86)

Provide an opportunity for worshippers to engage Psalm 86 in a way that makes the psalmist's words relevant to their struggles. Invite three people to present three contemporary situations, with each of these three brief monologues, then respond with the reading of the psalm.

IDEA: Have each person enter and stand at a distance from one another in the front of your worship space. Before and after each one speaks their part, they freeze.

SAY: The psalms were written thousands of years ago, and yet their words can be the same words we cry out to God in our time. The human struggle and the faith response are timeless.

Situation 1: A woman holds children's toys, baby care products (diapers, etc.) a laundry basket, cleaning supplies, a tablet of paper, etc.

I'll never get it all done. I am so tired. I can't do it anymore. I can't keep up with the house. The kids are driving me crazy. It's so hard to sleep. I have to plan the agenda for this meeting. How is it all going to happen? It doesn't seem like any of the other moms feel this way. They have it all under control. But I don't. I can't talk to anybody about this.

What am I going to do? ... (Look upward.) God?

Situation 2: A man holds a pink slip.

I can't believe it. I've worked here for 17 years. I didn't see this coming. I don't deserve this. I've done a good job. Come to work every day. I did my part. I even worked on weekends. What are they thinking? They're not thinking about me – just the bottom line. What's next? How are the bills going to get paid? Who's going to hire me? I can't tell anyone about this. Not yet.

What am I going to do? ... (Look upward.) God?

Situation 3: A young adult holds a large pile of books and notebooks and papers.

Finals are next week. There's no way I'm going to pass. I still have so much to catch up on. I haven't even started to study. And there's that paper I need to write. That project I'm so far behind on. I can't tell my parents I've gotten into such a mess. I can't tell my friends – they all seem to have it all together.

What am I going to do? ... (Look upward.) God?

SCRIPTURE QUOTES

Here are a few faith-nurturing or thought-provoking quotes from the lectionary texts for this week that you might want to integrate into your life and ministry in various ways.

And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is.

Genesis 21:17

Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

Psalm 86:4

In the day of my trouble I call on you, for you will answer me.

Psalm 86:7

But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

Romans 6:8

Even the hairs of your head are all counted.

Matthew 10:30

(Verses are from the NRSV.)

A BREATH PRAYER

Take Psalm 86:7 and break it down into a breath prayer sequence. Silently pray each phrase to the normal rhythm of your breathing. Repeat the four-line sequence over and over.

While breathing in:	<i>In the day of my trouble ...</i>
While breathing out:	<i>I call on you ...</i>
While breathing in:	<i>For you will ...</i>
While breathing out:	<i>Answer me ...</i>

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Steep your ministry in scripture. Allow lectionary texts to be an ongoing source and structure.

Pastoral Care:

- **Those Who Have Lost a Child (Genesis 21)**

Be attentive to those who will hear the story of Hagar abandoning her child and fearing his death, and be reminded of their own loss or near-loss. Make an appointment to meet with them, and provide care in the midst of their ongoing journey of grief.

Broaden your scope of concern to medical personnel who are witness to the death and serious illness of children. Check in with them to see how they are managing that burden, and what emotional or spiritual support they might need.

- **Those Who Struggle with Depression (Psalm 86:3)**

Reach out to those who struggle with depression for whom Psalm 86:3 (*“To you I cry all day long”*) can be a reality. Remind them that they are not alone. Make sure they have access to resources that can help them with their illness.

In the Wilderness (Genesis 21):

- **Staff or Leadership Team Devotions**

Ask the leaders within your congregation to reflect on any experience of wilderness that your congregation might be facing. Use the questions on page 15 to guide your discussion, changing them to focus on your church. Give each person some time alone to reflect, then gather in partners or small groups so all can have a say. Finally, gather in a large group to share, brainstorm and pray together.

A Glance in the Mirror (Wilderness in Ministry)

- Take good care of yourself so that you can take good care of others. Plan to take some time to think about how you might be experiencing a time of wilderness at this time in your ministry. Set aside an hour or a half day, or even a full day to immerse yourself in prayerful reflection and meditation. Ask God for the help you need, in the midst of the wilderness, and ask trusted colleagues or helping professionals to assist you as well.

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR PLANNING AND YOUR LEADING!

MAY YOU OPEN YOUR EYES TO GOD'S GOODNESS AND GRACE, THIS WEEK.

NOTES:

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Some elements of this edition of *Lectionary Liturgy* were published in previous editions.

ALTERNATE LECTIONARY TEXTS FOR THIS WEEK

Jeremiah 20:7-13 *O LORD, you have enticed me, and I was enticed; you have overpowered me, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock ...* (NRSV)

Psalms 69:13 *But as for me, my prayer is to you, O LORD. At an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love, answer me.* (NRSV)

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Questions? Further needs? Have a reaction to share? Let us know. We are grateful for feedback to improve this resource.