



Book of Faith Lenten Journey: Water Marks

These worship helps are provided to congregations shaping their Lenten Wednesday worship services around *Book of Faith Lenten Journey: Water Marks*. The book's weekly themes explore God's actions and our life of faith from the waters of chaos and creation to the waters of repentance and redemption. We will dwell on the water that satisfies all thirst, the waters of our Baptism, and the water which flows from the Garden of Eden to the new Jerusalem. Dwelling with the six readings for each week from *Water Marks*, as well as the readings for worship for each of the seven weeks, will help to shape worship during this Lenten journey. You can glean ideas and suggestions in these worship helps—and add your own, naturally—to build worship experiences that speak to your congregation's context and relate to members of the congregation who are working through *Water Marks* as a personal or small-group Lenten practice.

The following items are available in each set of worship helps.

Introduction to the Day

Introduction to the book's weekly theme and its connection to the worship experience and Scripture readings for the day.

Prayer of the Day

A Prayer of the Day connected to the day's theme.

Readings and Psalm

Scripture readings that connect to the worship theme and help set the direction for the worship service.

Water Marks Canticale

Original hymn that provides a new verse for each weekly theme. (See reproducible download.)

Prayer Prompts

Suggested thematic prayer petitions to guide the prayers of the community in worship.

Hymns for Worship

Hymn suggestions from multiple hymn sources to use in building the worship experience, including the original hymn *Across the Waters*. (See reproducible download.)

Ideas and Images

Suggestions for interactive sources of art, media, and content to use in creative ways to enhance or expand the worship experience.



Worship Helps for Ash Wednesday *Water Marks God's Creation*

■ Introduction to the Day

To be used as a sermon starter and springboard into the worship service.

Water is chaos. Water is life. Creation is marked by water in these two opposite ways. Water brings destruction and death. Water brings life. Water as both death and life set the parameters of our journey. Our Lenten journey, beginning with Ash Wednesday, is a forty-day pilgrimage passing through the waters of these opposing forces and is a vivid reminder of our passages from death to life, our daily passages to new life in Christ.

In this Lenten Journey entitled *Water Marks* we begin with waters of creation, which our creator gathers “as in a bottle” (Psalm 33:7). Yet in these waters lurk chaos and death. In his baptismal prayer in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW), p. 230, Luther describes our deliverance through the deathly waters—our deliverance “by the baptism of Jesus’ death and resurrection.” The opposing images of water are part of our baptismal language and are present in our daily experience. Water as death and life sets the parameters of our journey through *Water Marks*.

On Ash Wednesday we are reminded of this passage by the ashes on our foreheads, the mark of our mortality. At the same time we are set on our journey to that rebirth which Jesus promises to Nicodemus, birth of water and Spirit.

Preaching might focus on one of the following ideas:

- Does the ashen cross on our foreheads signify death or life, or both? How do the dangerous waters of creation, the flood, our drowning in baptism, and new life through water and the Spirit connect with everyday life? With the modern world?
- Luther’s flood prayer.
- How is our reflective pilgrimage through Lent different from the rest of our year?
- Waters that mark our death and God’s gift of life to us might become thematic for the whole of the Lenten season—a passage through water marks of the faith.
- Of course, a good water story focusing on peril and redemption would be very appropriate.

■ Prayer of the Day

Creating and redeeming Lord, you bring us safely each day through rain and flood. Be with us step by step in our pilgrimage through Lent and through our lives. We praise you for the splendor of your creation, for your loving kindness where there is fear, for healing where there is pain, and for the promise of new life through water and your Spirit. Amen.

Readings and Psalm

Use the introductions provided below each text reference.

JOB 38:4-11

Few of us experience the trials of Job, but all of us are up against the big questions of existence, life, and death. God talks to each of us out of the whirlwind and comforts us with the knowledge that God takes care of creation, even the chaos of the seas, like a mother cares for her child.

PSALM 33:1-9

Even on Ash Wednesday or during Lent, or perhaps especially then, we can rejoice with the psalmist and sing a new song because the LORD has created through the Word, and the earth is full of God's loving kindness. God bottles up the chaos of the seas. Even as we receive the ashes on our forehead, we can rejoice in new life.

REVELATION 7:13-17

The springs of the water of life flow from creation to redemption. This is the equivalent of Psalm 23 at the end of the Bible, in which the living water, our hope for redemption, comes from the Lamb, who will wipe away our tears.

JOHN 3:1-5

Nicodemus' question is like Job's: "How is this possible? How can I be born again?" Jesus' answer is much shorter than the voice of God from the whirlwind. We are reborn through water and the Spirit. Our life is in God's hands.

Water Marks Canticle (reproducible download)

The canticle may be sung in the service where you choose. Have congregation or soloist sing verse 1. All sing the refrain.

Prayer Prompts

Use these prompts to supplement the prayers of the community.

- Lord of all, you care for your creation, even the chaos of the seas, as a mother cares for her child. We praise you for the splendor and mystery of this world and ask that we may also care for it as worthy stewards.
- May we this Lenten season be washed in your river of life, be cleansed by the springs of your love, and be reborn daily through your water and Word.
- When we have questions and doubts hold us fast, dear Lord, in your loving kindness.
- When we are in pain or fear, lead us to the springs of living water and wipe away our tears.
- Guide us through our Lenten pilgrimage as you carried Noah and all your creatures great and small through the flood. Shine on us the promise of renewed life.

Hymns for Worship

These hymn suggestions complement the weekly theme and the readings.

- I'm Going on a Journey, ELW 446
- O Living Breath of God, ELW 407
- Crashing Waters at Creation, ELW 455

- Thy Holy Wings, ELW 613
- Shall We Gather at the River, ELW 423
- Across the Waters (Jacobson, 2009; see reproducible download)

Ideas and Images

The Web sites listed here are sources for clip art, photos, and videos for use in worship. The images could be projected for the congregation to view, printed in the bulletin, or incorporated in the sermon. Make sure you have the proper permission to reproduce or project any items you use.

WORD AND ACTION

Each weekly worship experience in Lent could begin with Luther's flood prayer (ELW, p. 230) and could include baptismal images. The petitions of thanksgiving in the "Thanksgiving for Baptism" from the ELW *Occasional Services* book, p. 83, could be used in blessing the waters of creation and redemption at the baptismal font.

IMAGES FOR WORSHIP

- Gather forty images of dramatic scenes depicting water and display them surrounding the sanctuary during Lent. These images could come from photographers, artists, or family art projects from your congregation and could be gathered and added to a display over the course of the whole Lenten season. They could also be public domain art images illustrating the themes or scripture passages (for example, see www.textweek.com/art/art.htm). Each of the images could be accompanied by the scriptural excerpt from each of the forty devotions in *Lenten Journey: Water Marks*. The gallery of images could be entitled *Forty Images for Our Lenten Pilgrimage*.
- Create and display a banner depicting the waters of Luther's flood prayer.

DRAMA FOR WORSHIP

A congregation with adequate dramatic and musical resources could stage *Noye's Fludde*, Benjamin Britten's mystery play, complete with small orchestra, choir, and actors. See examples on YouTube, such as <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wy0xVW5JiE&feature=related>. Alternatively, the play could be shown as a video before or after worship. The flood narrative is the biblical excerpt for Friday after Ash Wednesday in *Water Marks*.

SOUNDS OF WORSHIP

Consider playing a recording of a large work in 15-20 minute increments as prelude music before Lenten midweek worship services. This could be a musical or dramatic work such as Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, *Godspell* by Stephen Schwartz and John-Michael Tebelak, or whatever might work well for your congregation.



Worship Helps for the Second Wednesday in Lent ***Water Marks Israel's Story and Our Story***

Introduction to the Day

To be used as a sermon starter and springboard into the worship service.

At the center of Israel's story is God's act of saving the people from the tyranny of Pharaoh. God brings them out by the hands of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. The lives of the people of Israel, from birth to death, are marked by water. This marking invites us to see our own lives marked by the same pattern of redemption.

The story, as told in all four readings for the day, connects the dots between creation and redemption—redemption not only through water but by baptism “with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matthew 3:11). It connects the rock from which God made water to flow (Psalm 114:8) to the rock which is Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4).

The story calls for action from the hearer. In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul couches it as a cautionary tale about evil desires that threaten in spite of God's deliverance and the presence of the Spirit. In Matthew 3, John the Baptist cautions against reliance on identity as God's people and points to a Messiah who baptizes with fire and has a winnowing fork. This is a story both of deliverance and also of the need for repentance.

Preaching might focus on one of the following ideas:

- The waters of creation flow into the waters of redemption, as reflected in all the readings for the week.
- Luther's flood prayer as paraphrased in ELW, p. 230.
- How does the story of the Israelites' wandering in the wilderness and deliverance through the sea connect to our stories of affliction, enslavement, freedom, and redemption?
- From where (from whom) do we draw our identity?
- Paul calls the rock from which water flows in the wilderness “Christ.” How does this analogy work? How is Christ both rock and source of living water?

Prayer of the Day

Deliver us, redeeming Lord, from waters of chaos, from fear, from violence, from selfishness, from hate, from doubt, and from all the ways we wander in the wilderness. Fill us with the joy of your presence, for you are our Rock and our Salvation. Amen.

■ Readings and Psalm

Use the introductions provided below each text reference.

EXODUS 14:21-31

The story of deliverance through water points back to the parting of the chaotic waters by land in Genesis. And the statement, “Israel saw the great work . . . and believed,” points forward, by contrast, to Jesus’ words to Thomas, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe” (John 20:29).

PSALM 114

This tiny psalm of praise encapsulates the Exodus story and God’s relationship to creation. The creation is joyful, with hills skipping like lambs. God is in charge and draws a flowing stream from the hardest stone.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-6

Like Psalm 114, here also is a summary of Israel’s deliverance, but with an emphasis on the presence of the Spirit. The water flows from a spiritual rock, and the rock is Christ. Paul turns this into a cautionary tale, reminding his listeners of “evil desires” that are still with us in spite of partaking of spiritual food and drink.

MATTHEW 3:1-12

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness” (John the Baptist) is an echo of second Isaiah (Isaiah 40:3) and the Israelites in their Babylonian exile. It also brings to mind Psalm 114:2, in which “Judah became God’s sanctuary.” John contrasts his “waters of repentance” with Jesus’ baptism with Holy Spirit and fire.

■ Water Marks Canticle (reproducible download)

Have congregation or soloist sing verse 2. All sing the refrain.

■ Prayer Prompts

Use these prompts to supplement the prayers of the community.

- We praise you, Creator, for you are Lord of all creation from its beginning and to the end of time. The earth trembles in your presence.
- God of Abraham and Moses, you led your children through the waters of the Red Sea. Be with us in this age as we pass through our own perilous waters.
- Give us the strength and wisdom to repent when we let go of your guiding hand and stray from your presence.
- Praise to you, our Rock and our Salvation, for the waters of our healing flow from you.
- Guide us through our Lenten pilgrimage as you guided your people Israel across the Jordan River and to the promised land.

■ Hymns for Worship

These hymn suggestions complement the weekly theme and the readings.

- Bless Now, O God, the Journey, ELW 326
- Guide Me Ever, Great Redeemer, ELW 618
- Crashing Waters at Creation, ELW 455
- Spirit of Gentleness, ELW 396
- Praise, Praise! You Are My Rock, ELW 862

- On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand, ELW 437
- Wade in the Water, ELW 459
- Across the Waters (Jacobson, 2009; see reproducible download)

Ideas and Images

The Web sites listed here are sources for clip art, photos, and videos for use in worship. The images could be projected for the congregation to view, printed in the bulletin, or incorporated in the sermon. Make sure you have the proper permission to reproduce or project any items you use.

WORD AND ACTION

- Each weekly worship experience in Lent could begin with Luther's flood prayer (ELW, p. 230) and could include baptismal images. A focus on John the Baptist and the waters of repentance would echo Matthew 3.
- The prayer for children in the "Welcome to Baptism" section of *ELW Leader's Desk Edition*, p. 595, is a beautiful biblical account of call and redemption, beginning with the rescue of Moses.
- Offerings or part of offerings from midweek services might be dedicated for flood and natural disaster victims in North America and abroad.

IMAGES FOR WORSHIP

Continue to gather images (photography, original art, images from textweek.com, family art projects) for *Forty Images for Our Lenten Pilgrimage* reflecting the forty devotions from *Water Marks*. These images could be posted in the sanctuary or around the church one at a time through the forty days, perhaps by forty members of the congregation, as markers through a forty-day pilgrimage. The images for the week could be highlighted during the course of midweek Lenten worship. Resources for exploring the texts and considering images can be found at www.enterthebible.org.

SOUNDS OF WORSHIP

The midweek worship service during Lent can be a time for exploring beautiful and imaginative ways of singing, saying, and portraying the Psalms readings. For Psalm 114—a vivid and short synopsis of the exodus—the organ or other musical instruments could be used creatively to paint a "sound stage" for reading or chanting of the psalm by individuals, the choir, or the congregation. (You might consider suspending the Lenten moratorium on "Alleluia" for verse 1 of the psalm.)



Worship Helps for the Third Wednesday in Lent

Water Marks the Prophetic Word

■ Introduction to the Day

To be used as a sermon starter and springboard into the worship service.

Through the prophets God speaks words both of judgment and of promise, often sealed with water marks. When we hear these words directed to us, we live into our own baptismal promises.

In Jeremiah 2, (Day 13) we find a lengthy complaint of human fault and poisoned waters. In Isaiah 41, God promises to answer the poor one whose tongue is parched with the gift of an overwhelming amount of water in the driest of places. The prophets point to the perennial failings of God's people and to the Lord's persevering and overwhelming presence. In Matthew 10, Jesus tells of losing one's life to find it, welcoming God in the person of Jesus and in giving water to a child. And finally, as Peter points out (1 Peter 1:3), God shows overwhelming mercy by giving us new birth through Jesus' death and resurrection—a one verse description of baptism, even without mention of baptismal waters.

Preaching for this Third Wednesday in Lent might focus on one or more of the following ideas:

- Do we sense God as vividly today as does the psalmist in Psalm 29 describing the storming voice of God? How can we talk about God's presence in this topsy-turvy day and age with the same assurance as Isaiah 41 describes that presence to a people in exile?
- What does losing our life in order to find it have to do with welcoming our Lord?
- What do Jesus' words about welcoming a prophet or a righteous person or giving cold water to "one of these little ones in the name of a disciple" say to us twenty-first century disciples?
- 1 Peter 1:3 is a beautiful summary of our new life through baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus. How does baptismal imagery inspire and inform our daily living?

■ Prayer of the Day

Redeeming Lord, our world is thirsty, desperate to know your presence. Give strength to your people and give them, O Lord, the blessings of peace. Amen.

■ Readings and Psalm

Use the introductions provided below each text reference.

ISAIAH 41:17-18

This chapter is full of prophetic hope, and in its center are the poor and needy with parched tongue. Jesus may be alluding to this in Matthew 10:42: "whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones. . ."
God is ever present, ready to help the poor and exiled Israelites, even with impossibilities like open rivers on bare mountain heights.

PSALM 29

The voice of God sweeps through like a powerful thunderstorm in this hymn of praise, complete with thunder, lightning, and finally, flooding. The LORD sits above the flood, right on top of chaos, and gives strength, blessing, and peace to the listener.

1 PETER 1:3

Our Christian faith is nestled into one verse—a verse of praise and blessing for a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection.

MATTHEW 10:39-42

A lesson in divine hospitality, these verses urge extreme hospitality, even to the extent of losing one's own life. Water becomes a means of hospitality. Giving a cup of cold water to "one of these little ones" is as worthy as welcoming a prophet. In refreshing the little ones, we welcome Jesus and the One who sent him.

Water Marks Canticle (reproducible download)

Have congregation or soloist sing verse 3. All sing the refrain.

Prayer Prompts

Use these prompts to supplement the prayers of the community.

- Creating God, we thank you for your overwhelming presence in our world. Open our eyes so that we may always know that you are here.
- Gracious God, help us to serve you better in the serving of those in need. Give us the courage to lose ourselves and to find ourselves in you.
- Merciful God, forgive us when we fail to welcome you in the disciple, in the stranger, or in one of your children thirsting for drink. Help us to grow in hospitality that reflects your loving kindness.
- Comfort and nourish us throughout our Lenten pilgrimage as you comforted and nourished your people Israel through their time of exile.

Hymns for Worship

These hymn suggestions complement the weekly theme and the readings.

- When the Poor Ones, ELW 725
- Light Dawns on a Weary World, ELW 726
- Let Streams of Living Justice, ELW 710
- Let Justice Flow like Streams, ELW 717
- Let Justice Roll Down Like a River (for choir, Marty Haugen, GIA Publications)
- Springs of Water, Bless the Lord, ELW 214
- All Are Welcome, ELW 641
- Take My Life, That I May Be, ELW 583, 685
- Across the Waters (Jacobson, 2009; see reproducible download)

Ideas and Images

The Web sites listed here are sources for clip art, photos, and videos for use in worship. The images could be projected for the congregation to view, printed in the bulletin, or incorporated in the sermon. Make sure you have the proper permission to reproduce or project any items you use.

WORD AND ACTION

Each weekly worship experience in Lent could begin with Luther's flood prayer (ELW, p. 230) and could include baptismal images. "The voice of the Lord . . . upon the waters" (Psalm 29:3) is a vivid image to associate with the prayer for week 3 of *Water Marks*.

IMAGES FOR WORSHIP

- Images for Week 3 of *Forty Images for Our Lenten Pilgrimage* could be such images as cracked pottery (Jeremiah 2), blighted landscapes, or destroyed nuclear plants. They could depict hunger and thirst. But they could also depict caring for the hungry and thirsty (Isaiah 41) or the power and beauty of nature (Psalm 29). Might Amos' justice rolling down like waters be captured in any way? Attention could be given to the subject of welcoming (Matthew 10).
- The banner suggested for Week 1 depicting the waters of Luther's flood prayers could be a process in which the contents of the banner are added to according to the themes of each week. For example, week 2 could have the addition of a river, and week 3 a child drinking water.

SOUNDS OF WORSHIP

In the spirit of dramatic, creative, and powerful ways of doing psalms (see Week 2), Psalm 29 presents a wonderful opportunity for portraying a storm while reciting this tumultuous psalm of praise. Children of the congregation could be engaged to provide sounds of thunder (metal thunder sheets), lightning (camera flashes?), water (recorded waterfall?), and wind (microphones and vocal wind sounds).



Worship Helps for the Fourth Wednesday in Lent *Water Marks Our Life of Prayer*

■ Introduction to the Day

To be used as a sermon starter and springboard into the worship service.

Scripture not only tells a story and speaks words of judgment and grace. Scripture also gives us words for personal and corporate introspection, reflection, and prayer.

Week 4 of *Water Marks* travels through an inward conversation and journey, a life of prayer, turmoil, and transformation described by scripture. Week 3 ends with Isaiah 55, and its buoyant welcome to a thirsty people. The following six days examine that thirst from many angles. The four readings for worship this week explore birth, the human condition, and the journey of faith. Jonah laments to his God from the belly of the fish, and the fish delivers Jonah (so to speak) on dry land. The psalmist cries, “I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5). Paul broadens that cry: “We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now” (Romans 8:22). In John’s Gospel, Jesus cites scripture, saying that rivers of living water shall come out of a believer’s inmost being, a believer’s heart (see John 7:38).

In sin we are conceived, yet our faith and our hope have been conceived within us as well. This speaks of the deepest thirst, the deepest transformation, and of our personal and public life of faith and prayer.

Preaching for this Fourth Wednesday in Lent might focus on one or more of the following ideas:

- Wrestling with our doctrine of original sin and other notions of sin.
- What is a life of prayer?
- What is this creation of “a clean heart”? What are these “rivers of living water” flowing from the believer’s heart? How does this fit into our lives of faith?
- Does Paul’s talk about “creation . . . groaning in labor pains until now” say that this life is only a vale of tears? Or do rivers of living water flow here and now?
- What is the relationship between private prayer and public proclamation?

■ Prayer of the Day

Create in us a clean heart, O God. We know that without your presence we are lost in a lost world, in a desolate, dirty, dry place. Come to us, redeeming Lord, that rivers of living water may flow from deep within us. Amen.

■ Readings and Psalm

Use the introductions provided below each text reference.

JONAH 2:1-10

There is no stranger image in Scripture than that of Jonah composing a song of praise in the belly of a fish. This smelly shelter is Jonah's refuge from the depths of Sheol, place of the dead. But is it a haven from the chaos of the seas or the chaos of Jonah's faith in God? Does Jonah's cry "Deliverance belongs to the LORD" extend to his enemies, the Assyrians in Nineveh? How does this odd story show forth Christ?

PSALM 51:1-13

A penitential psalm attributed to David in his repentance to Nathan, Psalm 51 paints a picture of humanity's sinful condition and looks with hope and joy to the steadfast love, the *hesed*, of God.

ROMANS 8:18-27

Paul pictures all of creation, including humanity, groaning with labor pains, in spite of having "the first fruits of the Spirit." Faith points hopefully to what is not seen—redemption, "adoption." Paul looks helplessly at the human condition and with eager longing for "the glory about to be revealed."

JOHN 7:37-38

Jesus and his disciples are celebrating Sukkot, the festival of booths, during which people make pilgrimages to Jerusalem and build booths to remind themselves of their wandering in the wilderness. In this context, he evokes Isaiah 55:1—"Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters." Jesus tells the thirsty travelers to come to him.

■ Water Marks Canticle (reproducible download)

Have congregation or soloist sing verse 4. All sing the refrain.

■ Prayer Prompts

Use these prompts to supplement the prayers of the community.

- Lord of all creation, you know us inside and out. Fill us with your love. Renew us through your Spirit.
- May we this Lenten season be washed in your river of life, be cleansed by the springs of your love, and be reborn daily through your water and Word.
- May we daily repent, turn around, and serve you by bringing your Word of redemption to a needy world.
- We thank you, Lord, for the fruits of the Spirit, the hope of renewed life in you.

■ Hymns for Worship

These hymn suggestions complement the weekly theme and the readings.

- Out of the Depths I Cry to You, ELW 600
- Out of the Deep (Jacobson, see Music download)
- Create in Me a Clean Heart, ELW 185, 186, 187, 188
- As the Deer Runs to the River, ELW 331
- In Deepest Night, ELW 699

- Down to the River to Pray (<http://www.musicnotes.com/sheetmusic/mtd.asp?ppn=MN0055953&>)
- By Gracious Powers, ELW 626
- Come, Ye Disconsolate, ELW 607
- Across the Waters (Jacobson, 2009; see reproducible download)

Ideas and Images

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WORD AND ACTION

Each weekly worship experience in Lent could begin with Luther's flood prayer (ELW, p. 230) and could include baptismal images. The first prayer on p. 84 of the ELW *Occasional Services* could be used with a focus on the statement, "We praise you for the gift of water that sustains life, and above all we praise you for the gift of new life in Jesus Christ." This would be very appropriately done by the baptismal font.

IMAGES FOR WORSHIP

- Images for week 4 of *Forty Images for Our Lenten Pilgrimage* could depict scenes from Jonah. Ships in storms, big fish, lush rivers, or biblical "hyssop" would connect to the texts.
- Show images and a description of the hyssop of Psalm 51 and of the crucifixion (see John 19:29).

DRAMA FOR WORSHIP

A dramatic reading of prayer scenes from the Bible, such as the Jesus' prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane or Jonah 2:1-10 could be presented by one or two "actors" as part of the worship.

SOUNDS OF WORSHIP

A large work which could be played in increments as pre-service music for midweek Lenten services (see Week 1) is *Baptism*, a collection of songs and poetry set to music by Peter Schickele and performed by Joan Baez. It is a profound and beautiful work with elements of folk music and art song combined (see <http://www.schickele.com/shoppe/psrec/baptism2.htm>).



Worship Helps for the Fifth Wednesday in Lent ***Water Marks the Life of Christ***

Introduction to the Day

To be used as a sermon starter and springboard into the worship service.

We know Jesus in part through his story and his teaching. His water-marked life invites us to deeper faith in him.

For this week in our Lenten journey we turn our attention to the life of Jesus—his baptism, miraculously turning water into wine, calming the storm, preaching from a boat on the Sea of Galilee, weeping over Jerusalem, and washing the disciples' feet. We see a triumphant Messiah who calms the raging sea and walks on the threatening deep, who transforms waters for purification into luxurious amounts of wine, who preaches to Jew and Gentile alike from the sea separating nations, and who baptizes with the Spirit. And we see the suffering servant who sheds tears over Jerusalem and does the humblest act of service—washing feet.

Preaching for this Fifth Wednesday in Lent might focus on one or more of the following ideas:

- Jesus' kingship and his reign of service.
- Picture Jesus preaching from a boat on the Sea of Galilee (Day 28). Located between Galilee and Bashan in Jesus' time, the Sea of Galilee currently sits between Israel and the Golan Heights. Picture Jesus' weeping over Jerusalem (Day 29), lamenting "If you . . . had only recognized . . . the things that make for peace!" What do these images say to us in our divided world?
- Psalm 72 is a psalm of blessing for a just and merciful king, but the psalmist blesses God, "who *alone* does wondrous things." Paul exhorts Titus to instruct the unruly Cretans in righteous behavior, yet points to the Savior who renews us through water of rebirth and the Holy Spirit by his mercy and not because of human works of righteousness. How do we understand God's call to righteousness in light of free grace?
- How might Jesus' command "to wash one another's feet" (Day 30) be taken to heart in our lives?

Prayer of the Day

You are Lord of all, dear Jesus, and yet you stooped as a humble servant to wash the feet of your disciples. Give us the courage to bend down from our false pride and selfish fears to be servants in this world full of need. May we serve you with joy. Amen.

■ Readings and Psalm

Use the introductions provided below each text reference.

NUMBERS 24:2-7

The readings for this week are marked by irony. Here Balaam is commissioned by Balak to invoke a curse upon Israel, but Balaam's oracle is one of blessing. An angry Balak sends Balaam home without pay.

PSALM 72:1-19

This royal psalm is a prayer for righteousness and justice for the king of Israel, who merits divine righteousness and blessing because he is just and merciful. But the psalm ends with a doxology to the God of Israel “who *alone* does wondrous things.”

TITUS 3:4-7

Paul (or one of his followers), in the midst of exhorting Titus to coach the Cretans on Christian morality, points to the “water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” not because of moral behavior but because of God's loving kindness.

MARK 1:1-12

The beginning of Mark is the beginning of the “good news of Jesus Christ.” The passage begins in the pathless wilderness, where John, the voice in the wilderness, points to a path—the waters of repentance for the forgiveness of sins—and to the one who will follow him, transcending this path and baptizing with the Holy Spirit. Then, following Jesus' baptism by John, the Spirit drives Jesus back into the wilderness.

■ Water Marks Canticle (reproducible download)

Have congregation or soloist sing verse 5. All sing the refrain.

■ Prayer Prompts

Use these prompts to supplement the prayers of the community.

- Comforter of humankind, the waters of our world are troubled. We are tempest tossed. Instill in us a deep faith and trust, for we know that you are always with us to calm our stormy waters.
- Holy Spirit, as you descended on Jesus when he was baptized in the Jordan River, come also to us in the daily flow of our lives.
- Inspire us with the fruits of the Spirit that we may lead a Spirit-filled life, knowing that your love and grace are ample and free.
- Inspire us to serve humbly, unselfishly, and courageously, caring for our fellow creatures as you cared for your disciples in the washing of their feet.

■ Hymns for Worship

These hymn suggestions complement the weekly theme and the readings.

- When Jesus Came to Jordan, ELW 305
- Christ, When for Us You Were Baptized, ELW 304
- This Is the Spirit's Entry Now, ELW 448
- Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters, ELW 445

- Calm to the Waves, ELW 794
- My Life Flows On in Endless Song, ELW 763
- There's a Wideness in God's Mercy, ELW 587, 588

Ideas and Images

The Web sites listed here are sources for clip art, photos, and videos for use in worship. The images could be projected for the congregation to view, printed in the bulletin, or incorporated in the sermon. Make sure you have the proper permission to reproduce or project any items you use.

WORD AND ACTION

Luther's flood prayer on page 84 of ELW *Occasional Services* includes Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist.

IMAGES FOR WORSHIP

The growing gallery of art for *Forty Images for Our Lenten Pilgrimage* could include all kinds of visual art—photography, painting, sculpture, and certainly children's art. A family project creating a shadow box depicting one of the days in *Water Marks* would bring children and parents together in creating worship experiences. For Week 5 depictions of storms and boats or Jesus walking on water would be perfect.

DRAMA FOR WORSHIP

Numbers 24, with the prophet Balaam and the enemy king Balak, could be made into a small two-person play. Expand the story to include Numbers 22, and the play could highlight Balaam's talking donkey and an angel.

SOUNDS OF WORSHIP

- With the tune for the Doxology (*Old 100th*) played as a “backdrop,” the choir could speak Psalm 72 as a speech choir with various antiphonal effects (men/women, individual/choir, adult choir/youth choir, etc.); at its conclusion the congregation could sing the *Old 100th* Doxology (“Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow”) in place of verses 18-19.
- A choir could perform the anthem “The Last Words of King David” (based on 2 Samuel 23 but related to Psalm 72) by Randall Thompson.



Worship Helps for the Sixth Wednesday in Lent ***Water Marks the Followers of Christ***

Introduction to the Day

To be used as a sermon starter and springboard into the worship service.

Water marks the followers of Christ, showing us a myriad of ways in which we are invited to live out our baptismal calling as his disciples.

The story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well goes to the core of discipleship. Jesus meets the woman on her own turf—alien turf. Jesus understands her. He offers her living water—himself. He makes himself known as her Messiah, the Christ, the savior. And she responds, sharing with the townspeople all that she had heard, even though she was probably not one of the town's respected citizens. We can hold up this woman, whose morality is very much in question, as our ideal for discipleship. With her we can give thanks for our Lord's loving kindness and for the living water flowing from the well which is Jesus. And we can go out to share this water.

Preaching for this Sixth Wednesday in Lent might focus on one or more of the following ideas:

- Explore how the recognition of “my bone and my flesh” (Genesis 29:14) is expanded by the contrast of Jacob, sent out to marry a cousin, a family member, a wife from inside the fold, and Jesus' relationship to the Samaritan woman.
- Justification (making “just” in spite of crimes) in Roman law and “justification by grace” in Romans 3.
- “Sacrifice of Atonement” (or the “mercy seat” on the Ark of the Covenant and the accompanying priestly sacrifices for atonement) in the person of Christ Jesus, as explained in Romans 3.
- What it means to be a disciple. How we can understand Jesus' words to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people” (Day 31)?
- The cost of discipleship, as exemplified by the woman who washed Jesus' feet (Day 34) or as explored by Dietrich Bonhoeffer and others.

Prayer of the Day

We thank you, Lord, for you are good, and your mercy endures forever. You satisfy our thirst with living waters. Help us to share with neighbor and stranger this drink that quenches our deepest need. May we go out with courage and share the good news of your loving kindness. Amen.

Readings and Psalm

Use the introductions provided below each text reference.

GENESIS 29:1-14A

When a man meets a woman at a well in the Bible, marriage inevitably follows. This story at “Jacob’s Well” (as it is known to this day), closes one episode in which Isaac sends Jacob away to find his uncle Laban and to marry *one* of his daughters. Laban greets him as “my bone and my flesh,” and the story of Jacob’s family and the tribes of Israel begins.

PSALM 107:1-9

This song of thanksgiving opens with thanks for the LORD’s steadfast love and God’s wonderful works to humankind, for the Lord “satisfies the thirsty.” The stage is set for Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well.

ROMANS 3:21-26

Paul describes justification by grace both in Roman legal terms and in terms of the Jewish Day of Atonement and the mercy seat placed on the Ark of the Covenant by Moses. As the “sacrifice of atonement” Jesus becomes the fulfillment of the law.

JOHN 4:1-30, 39

The story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well puts the gospel into intimate, human terms. Jesus crosses forbidden lines, converses with a woman of the enemy at Jacob’s well (*not* “my bone and flesh”), does not marry her, but promises her living water that will “satisfy the thirsty” forever.

Water Marks Canticle (reproducible download)

Have congregation or soloist sing verse 6. All sing the refrain.

Prayer Prompts

Use these prompts to supplement the prayers of the community.

- Fount of every blessing, you meet us at our wells and offer us water that quenches all thirst. Like your servant, the Samaritan woman, help us to accept it freely and then tell the good news.
- Dearest Lord Jesus, you find us at the seashore with nets weighed down with care. Guide us so that we, like your disciples at Galilee, will follow you to catch people.
- Gentle Comforter, the noise of the world fills our ears. May we always, through the din, hear your voice saying, “Behold, the living water, thirsty one; stoop down and drink and live.”
- The cost of being a disciple is high, dear Lord. Following you is frightening. Give us good courage so that we may go out to follow you in joy and peace.

Hymns for Worship

These hymn suggestions complement the weekly theme and the readings.

- Send Me, Jesus, ELW 549
- Send Me, Lord, ELW 809
- Ocean of Love, *Global Songs 3: Pave the Way* (Augsburg Fortress), p. 8
- Come to Me, All Pilgrims Thirsty, ELW 777

- I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say, ELW 332
- You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore, ELW 817
- Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing, ELW 807
- Across the Waters (Jacobson, 2009; see reproducible download)

Ideas and Images

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WORD AND ACTION

The second prayer on page 84 of Holy Baptism from ELW *Occasional Services* could be expanded to include names of particular bodies of water (as suggested in the service) and to include reference to the account of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well.

IMAGES FOR WORSHIP

Week 6 of *Forty Images for Our Lenten Pilgrimage* could focus on discipleship—biblical stories such as the seaside discipleship story of Luke 5 or the woman washing and anointing Jesus’ feet, or modern depictions of service. Family-based art projects could focus on anything having to do with discipleship or service. Service or evangelical outreach projects of your church could be highlighted.

DRAMA FOR WORSHIP

John 4 could be presented as a dramatic reading by three or more people. The reading could be expanded to include all of John 4:1-42. Computer projections of public domain art could enhance such a reading (for example, see www.textweek.com).

SOUNDS OF WORSHIP

“I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say” (ELW 332)—a beautiful hymn rather unfamiliar to congregations these days—would be an effective choir anthem. Likewise, “Send Me, Jesus” (ELW 549) and “Send Me, Lord” (ELW 809)—both African call and response hymns—would be wonderful for youth choirs to lead, inviting the whole congregation to participate.



Worship Helps for the Seventh Wednesday in Lent ***Water Marks the Cross and Resurrection***

Introduction to the Day

To be used as a sermon starter and springboard into the worship service.

We know Christ most profoundly and intimately through the cross and resurrection. His death and resurrection are sealed with water marks recalling the waters of creation, of the story of Israel, of prophecy, of prayer, and of our baptism with Christ into his death and resurrection.

In Genesis 1, a wind from God sweeps over the face of the waters and creation begins. In Jeremiah 31, Rachel weeps for her children in exile because “they are no more.” In John’s Gospel, a stream of blood and water flow from Jesus’ side. In Romans 6, Paul tells us that through our baptism we die and are raised from the dead to walk in “newness of life.” In Revelation 22, the river flowing from Eden now flows from the throne of God. And at the very end of the Bible the Spirit says, (recalling the words of Isaiah) “let everyone who is thirsty come . . . take the water of life as a gift” (Revelation 22:17).

Preaching for this Seventh Wednesday in Lent might focus on one or more of the following ideas:

- How are the waters of baptism like other waters the waters such as:
 - ❑ waters of creation (Day 1)
 - ❑ the waters of the flood (Day 3)
 - ❑ the waters of the Red Sea (Day 10)
 - ❑ the water of Isaiah’s invitation in Isaiah 55:1 (Day 17)
 - ❑ the water that flows from Jesus’ side (Day 38)
 - ❑ the “water of life” in Revelation 22:17 (Day 40)
- What does it mean to die and to rise with Christ?
- Hyssop makes a final biblical appearance in John 19:29. Is this related to “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean” (Psalm 51:7)? Why is something as human as thirst important as Jesus is dying on the cross?
- The “Day of Preparation” and not breaking Jesus’ legs links the crucifixion of Jesus with the Passover lamb. How is Christ our Passover lamb?

Prayer of the Day

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world. May we each day rise with you and walk in newness of life. May we drink deeply of that water of life, your grace, which flows so freely from you. Lamb of God, have mercy on us. Grant us peace. Amen.

Readings and Psalm

Use the introductions provided below each text reference.

JEREMIAH 31:15-17

This passage from Jeremiah's "book of consolation" begins with weeping—Rachel weeping for her children, who are now in Babylonian exile. But the weeping turns to the consoling voice of the LORD offering reward for the Babylonian "work" and hope for a return to Israel.

PSALM 22:1-15

Jesus cries out from the cross in words of Psalm 22. This lament psalm of a people in exile becomes Jesus' lament in his separation from his Father. The sarcastic taunt "let [God] rescue the one in whom [God] delights" (22:8) foreshadows the words of a taunting soldier at the foot of the cross, and "I am poured out like water" (22:14) prefigures the piercing of Jesus' side.

ROMANS 6:1-5

Paul confronts a puzzling moral question: God justifies by grace. Should we abound in sinful ways in order for that grace to abound even more? Paul answers an emphatic "no" in baptismal words. As we die and are buried with Christ through baptism, so also we rise with Christ and are set free to live in a new way.

JOHN 19:28-34

Jesus' sixth word from the cross, "I am thirsty," is a cry of human agony, but the seventh word "It is finished" (or "completed") is a statement of accomplishment of divine purpose. Then, in contrast to the cry of thirst, a stream of healing water and blood "at once" flows from Jesus' spear-pierced side.

Water Marks Canticle (reproducible download)

Have the congregation or soloist sing verse 7. All sing the refrain.

Prayer Prompts

Use these prompts to supplement the prayers of the community.

- Lord, we weep for your children of this world, lost in a wilderness of hatred, violence, pain, sorrow, and need. With you alone is consolation. With you alone is hope for the future. Grant us peace in our time.
- Lamb of God, wash us daily in your precious blood. May we, cleansed by your grace, walk each moment in the newness of life.
- Oh Fount of every blessing, we are thirsty for your refreshing grace. Fill us, refresh us, inspire us, for we put our trust in you.
- Savior of the World, as you guided the Israelites across the waters and through the wilderness, be with us throughout the pilgrimage of our lives, for we know that you have conquered death and lead us always to life abundant.

Hymns for Worship

These hymn suggestions complement the weekly theme and the readings.

- By the Waters of Babylon (<http://www.8notes.com/scores/3355.asp>)
- They Crucified My Lord, ELW 350
- Baptized and Set Free, ELW 453

- Eternal Lord of Love, Behold Your Church, ELW 321
- As the Deer Runs to the River, ELW 331
- Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me, ELW 623
- Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery, ELW 334, verse for Lent 3
- Shall We Gather at the River, ELW 423
- Across the Waters (Jacobson, 2009; see reproducible download)

Ideas and Images

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WORD AND ACTION

For the Wednesday worship services in Lent, your congregation may have been using variants of Luther’s baptismal prayer, as suggested above. For Holy Week worship the baptismal font and a large cross, if they are in proximity, could be connected with a long blue cloth, connecting the waters of baptism to the water flowing from Jesus’ side and connecting each of our baptisms to our own death and resurrection in Jesus. Children and families, in fact, could use this theme in Holy Week projects for the “Images for Worship” (below).

IMAGES FOR WORSHIP

The forty days of Lent and the devotional time and worship that we have shared in *Water Marks* draws to a close. Your church sanctuary, fellowship hall, classrooms, or hallways may be filled with images—maybe forty, maybe more. When Lent is past, the church could offer some of the art created for the *Forty Images for Our Lenten Pilgrimage* for donations, with the proceeds used to fund service or outreach projects of your congregation. As an alternative, the images and associated texts could be brought to shut-ins of the congregation.

DRAMA FOR WORSHIP

Images from *Forty Images for Our Lenten Pilgrimage* that relate to each of the four scriptural readings for the day could be projected as a backdrop for reading. The entire collection of *Forty Images* could be projected at the front of the sanctuary as people gather to worship.

SOUNDS OF WORSHIP

To conclude the Lenten journey, the congregation could conclude the service with “Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song As I Journey” (ELW 808). A poet from the congregation could write a new second verse for the hymn in the spirit of *Water Marks*, beginning with a line such as “You lead me to waters of life as I journey . . .” Lights in the church could be dimmed during the fourth stanza. Organ and/or other instruments could continue playing the hymn softly as the congregations departs.