2026 Service Sunday Worship Resources

Scripture

Ephesians 4:11-13 (NIV)
So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Call to Worship

Come let us gather in the name of the Lord.
We are here full of awe to praise God.
Come let us gather to receive God's grace.
We are here, bathed in grace and forgiveness.
Come let us gather to embrace God's love.
We are here, filled with love and joy.
Come let us gather to hear God's word.
We are here to listen and to follow God's call to love and to serve.
We have come, Lord.
We are here, Lord.
ALL: O God –
You have called us to serve.
Show us how to serve each other.
Send us to also serve our neighbors.
Help us to encourage and equip each other to serve.
Open our eyes to see how we can serve in your name.

****

Jesus calls us to love one another.
Let us love as Jesus loved.
Jesus calls us to love our neighbors.
Let us love as Jesus loved.
Jesus calls us to serve one another.
Let us serve as Jesus served.
Jesus calls us to serve our neighbors.
Let us serve as Jesus served.
May we find ways to serve and to share God's love in our family, in our congregation, in our community, and wherever there is need.
Let it be so with the help of God.

****

One: Join hands, people of God, and rise to your feet! Christ has no body but yours and there are people in our communities that need our help.
All: Together we rise (congregation stands)—we will use our hands, our feet, our eyes, our ears and our voices to help others.
One: It's time to get to work in service! Let your lights shine!
All: Together we will join Jesus in the neighborhood and help light the way for others in service to our communities. Together we shine brighter!

—Nancy McCrickard, La Verne, Calif.

****

One: We come to worship our Lord Jesus Christ,
All: Who gave his life, blessing humanity with salvation.
One: We come, called to be God's people living in community,
All: Reaching out with Christ's love to our hurting world.
One: We come, to be equipped and to equip others,
All: To be Jesus' hands and feet of love to all we meet.
One: May we go from this place refreshed and renewed
All: Ready to serve in all the places God is calling us to be.

—Jan Orndorff, Woodstock, Va.

Responsive Reading

We are called to serve
Serve as Jesus served
To serve our friends and family
As He served His disciples
To serve our neighbors
As the Samaritan served a man in need
To serve with humility and love
To bring glory to God

So love friends and family
Love our neighbors as ourselves
As Jesus came to love and serve
We are called to follow in his footsteps
Go and do likewise

—BVS Volunteer Ella Hedges, Unit 337

Offertory Prayer

O God, your grace surrounds us and reminds us that we are blessed beyond measure. We are grateful for all that you have provided for us in every aspect of our lives. Today as we focus on the ways that we can serve others, help each one of us determine the ways that we can offer our gifts in that service. May the financial offerings that we now make be used to bring messages of your love and grace in tangible service to each other and to our neighbors near and far. In Jesus' name, Amen

Prayers

God of steadfast love and tender mercy, turn the hearts of your people away from sin. Deliver us from the evil of greed and the lust for power over others. Instead, lead us in the footsteps of Jesus, who walked among us, attentive to the needs of those he encountered. Make us, like Jesus, ready and willing to meet the needs of others – to heal the sick, to feed the hungry, to welcome the stranger. We pray in the name of the One who came not to be served, but to serve. Amen

—Rev. James Benedict, Union Bridge, Md.

****

(Specific to Brethren Disaster Ministries)
Oh Lord God,
We only need to turn on a television to find a troubled and needy world. We only need to turn to scripture to find your instructions to love God and neighbor as ourselves, thus to bring two worlds together. We are grateful for ministries like Brethren Disaster Ministries that are responding to an ever-present need with our human hearts—not just with hammer and nails but also with the love of God made real by those who serve and those who give the necessary material support. Together, let the givers and the recipients both be blessed. In Jesus' name. Amen

—Glenn Timmons, Englewood, Ohio

Children's Activity/Message

Illustration of making the face of Christ more visible in our communities
Cut a picture of the face of Jesus into puzzle-sized pieces; give a piece to each child (be sure to leave one piece out); talk about how together we make Jesus more visible in our communities--and that if even one piece is missing the picture isn't complete.

—Nancy McCrickard, La Verne, Calif.

****

Good morning! Today, we're going to talk about something very important—serving others and living with purpose!

Do you know what it means to have a purpose?

(Wait for responses like "a reason," "something we're supposed to do," etc.)

That's right! Having a purpose means that God made us for a special reason, and part of that reason is to love and help others. And guess what? When we help others, we are actually living with purpose—just like Jesus did.

Do you know how Jesus helped people?

(Pause for responses: "He healed people," "He fed people," "He taught people.")

Yes! Those are great examples of Jesus helping others. And you know what? We can do the same thing! God made each one of us to help and care for others.

In the Church of the Brethren, we believe that serving others is a very important way to live out our faith. Did you know that there are people in our church and in other churches around the world who have dedicated parts of their life to service?

(Give examples of people they may know in their church who serve or mention examples of ways you can serve within the Church of the Brethren – ex. when you are in middle school, youth go and serve for a week with FaithX, others serve with Brethren Disaster Ministries to help build houses after disasters, and some spend a whole year serving with Brethren Volunteer Service to help those in need.)

Can you think of a way you might help someone today? Maybe at school, at home, or with your friends?

(Wait for responses: "Helping with chores," "Sharing with a friend," "Being kind to someone who is sad.")

Those are great ideas! You don't have to wait until you're older to do good things in the world— you can start right now!

Here's another question: Why do you think it's important to serve others and help people?

(Pause for answers: "Because God wants us to," "It makes people feel happy," "It's kind.")

Exactly! When we help others, we show God's love. And guess what? Every time you do something kind for someone else, you're living out God's purpose for you!

So, I want you to think of one thing you can do this week to serve others. Maybe you can help your parents, share with a friend, or say something kind to someone who needs a little encouragement. Remember, when we help others, we're living with purpose—just like Jesus did!

Before you go back to your seats, let's pray together.

Dear God, Thank you for giving us a purpose to love and help others. Help us to be kind and serve those around us, just like Jesus did. Show us how we can make a difference in someone's life today. We love you, and we want to make a difference in the world by serving with love! In Jesus' name we pray, Amen!

—Chelsea Goss Skillen, director, Brethren Volunteer Service

Poems

I am your Beloved
The sun on my face
The wind in the trees
The breath in my chest
Your gifts given to me.
So, I give to others the gifts that I have
My friendship, attention, laughter, and love
I share my belongings to work hand in hand
My service in deed; small but yet grand
Your presence a light guiding our way
Beside one another
Actions intentional
Across many lands
Sharing your love
Finding our way
Back to you

—Carolyn Neher, associate director, Children's Disaster Services

****

I greet the morning with a grin
The sun has risen and the air is fresh
My home is clean and safe
The children wake and are well fed
I have many things for which I am grateful
The day is filled with work
Yet I sleep soundly at night
Such splendor is a bird given
When I live as I should

—Justine Eckert, BVS Unit 336,
Inspired by Matthew 6:25-34

Songs

Hymns:

"Lord, you have come to the lakeshore" *(Blue hymnal #229)*
"Lord, whose love in humble service" *(Blue hymnal #369)*
"This little light of mine" *(Blue hymnal #401)*
"Will you let me be your servant" *(Blue hymnal #307)*

All to Honour Jesus
This song is covered by CCLI License. Please see the pdf with guitar chords included with this document. To learn the words and music, go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwGnEwFxwH8&list=RDQwGnEwFxwH8&start_radio=1.

SongSelect (with CCLI License)
Worship songs on the theme of service:
https://songselect.ccli.com/search/results?list=theme_Service

Reflections

Our talents become spiritual gifts only when we recognize that their purpose is to benefit others. If we use our talents primarily to benefit or draw attention to ourselves, they remain just talents. But when we use our talents to build up others, they become something more—something holy. In service, they become sacred.

—Rev. James Benedict, Union Bridge, Md.

****

Have you ever received a gift that made you wonder "why?" Maybe it wasn't the right size, or color or was even a "what-am-I-ever-going-to-do-with-this?" gift. Have you ever wondered if the gift God gave to you is like that?

The Apostle Paul mentions many gifts God gives. The first is the gift of salvation, and then there's more! the gifts of prophecy, of preaching, of teaching[1], and the gifts of leadership, of encouragement, of mercy[2], and the gifts of extraordinary faith, of wisdom and knowledge, of helps[3], and the gifts of hospitality, of speech, of service[4], and more!

Can you share your "gift of gab" to visit someone? Can you swing a hammer or push a broom? Can you bake cookies to share? Can you gather supplies for a relief kit? Can you give time – a week, or month, or year – to BDM, FaithX, or BVS work?

God has gifted all of his people, including you! The Apostle Peter says, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."[5]

And Paul reminds us that our gifts are, "for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."[6] And, we have a long way to go before we reach that level.

So, open your gift and get ready to use it! You and your gift are needed!

[1]Ephesians 4:11
[2]Romans 12:5-8
[3]1 Corinthians 12:8, 9, 28
[4]1 Peter 4:9-11
[5]1 Peter 4:10
[6]Ephesians 4:11-13

—Diane Mason, Hillsboro, Kan.

****

"Living with Purpose" is about intentionality. It is less about the "what", and more about the "why".

What is driving your decisions day-by-day? I don't believe that everything has a reason, but the choices we make always do. If you don't have a reason to do something, you simply won't. When it comes to service, it is nice to think that it is "just because", but any kid will tell you that is not a reason.

When I was a kid, I often opened doors for people. It came rather naturally to me and most of the time I didn't think about it too much before I did it. It is hard to imagine that as 'having a reason', but it is. Part of it was that I was taught to be kind to others, so I thought it was something I was supposed to do. Part of it was because I enjoyed making

other peoples' days a little bit better. I remember being told on one occasion that that small act made that person's day—and I was beaming!

The purpose and intention of service is so important that Ephesians tells us what it is. Verse 4:13 says, "… until all of us come to the unity of the faith …" We are called to serve and to equip not "just because". Growing up Brethren, I learned that God is found in community and the love we have for each other. It is that community that service builds. When people struggle, one of the first things they do is turn to find help from others. Neighbors—local, national, and international—come together in times of disaster to rebuild and find peace. No one can serve alone. Even if you are the only one working on a project, you are still connected with the people it is for. And to learn to serve, to be equipped, you need someone to teach you. Every choice, every act of service, has purpose. It bolsters our community so that we may become the body of Christ that everyone is a part of.

—Aly Heckroth, BVS unit #336

****

The greatest opportunity in life is the opportunity to serve God and others. In such service, we begin to become the best version of ourselves, and we come to understand God more clearly than ever before. As we participate in the work God is doing to provide for the poor, lift the downtrodden, and pursue justice for the oppressed, the Holy Spirit surrounds and fills us. In service, we draw near to God, and God draws near to us.

—Rev. James Benedict, Union Bridge, Md.

Benediction

I…You…We…are called by God to serve. And we are called to equip each other to serve. Let us open our eyes and our hearts to see and act upon the endless ways that we can share—and help each other share—God's love and grace through service.

Service Sunday, recognized annually the first Sunday of February, is sponsored by the service ministries of the Church of the Brethren which include Brethren Volunteer Service, FaithX, and Brethren Disaster Ministries/Children's Disaster Services. Congregations and church leaders are encouraged to designate one Sunday each year as Service Sunday to lift up those who serve, or have served, in their local communities and throughout the world. The above resources may be used how you see fit during your Service Sunday celebrations. Please feel free to use resources from previous years also. They are found at https://www.brethren.org/bvs/service-sunday/.