

A Capella Sunday

First Sunday in Lent - 2016, 2019, 2022, 2025

Resource Guide

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Bulletin Insert

A Capella Sunday

This Sunday we are celebrating the first Sunday of Lent. To mark the beginning of this important season of penitence and preparation, we are joining with congregations around the country in singing congregational songs a capella (without instrumental accompaniment). By singing a capella, we are offering to God our selves in its most basic form. Soli Deo Gloria. To God alone be the glory.

*“A Capella Sunday” is a ministry of The Center for Congregational Song.
www.congregationalsong.org*

Hymn Text: Abide With Me

Hymn Tune: EVENTIDE

Lectionary Text Connection: Luke 4:1-13

Hymnary.org link: http://www.hymnary.org/text/abide_with_me_fast_falls_the_eventide

Suggested Use in a Liturgy:

Mass

Place in the Liturgy: Recessional Hymn (Evening Services), Communion Hymn

How to Introduce the Hymn: Cantor begins, invites others to sing at measure 5.

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: Lower parts ooh on 2, 3, 4, Some tenors double melody on 2 and 4.

How to conclude the Hymn: Choir or quartet sings the last four measures of the final stanza as the congregation reaches the final whole note.

Protestant Basic 4-Fold Service

Place in the Liturgy: Invitation Hymn, Call to Prayer or Prayer Response

How to Introduce the Hymn: Cantor begins, invites others to sing at measure 5.

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: Lower parts ooh on 2, 3, 4, Some tenors double melody on 2 and 4.

How to conclude the Hymn: Choir or quartet sings the last four measures of the final stanza as the congregation reaches the final whole note.

**This entry created by Hymn Society member CJ Redden-Liotta.

Hymn Text: For the Fruit of All Creation by Fred Pratt Green

Hymn Tune: AR HYD Y NOS

Lectionary Text Connection: Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Hymnary.org link: [http://www.hymnary.org/text/for the fruit of all creation](http://www.hymnary.org/text/for_the_fruit_of_all_creation)

Suggested Use in a Liturgy:

Mass

Place in the Liturgy: Communion Song; Cantor sings “for the fruits of this creation,” and the congregation sings “Thanks be to God.” Congregation continues to only sing “thanks be to God” or “God’s will is done,” etc...

How to Introduce the Hymn: If the tune is new to the congregation, sing through the melody on “ooo” at the beginning of communion. Make sure the choir has rehearsed the hymn ahead of time so that they can lead the congregational singing.

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: No variation needed since there are only 3 stanzas. Keep it simple.

How to conclude the Hymn: Have the choir “oo” through the full melody after everyone has finished going forward to receive the elements.

Protestant Basic 4-Fold Service

Place in the Liturgy: Sending Hymn or Concluding Hymn

How to Introduce the Hymn: Sing stanza 1 as a solo with the congregation humming along.

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: Invite the congregation to sing stanzas 2 and 3

How to conclude the Hymn: Just stop after stanza 3 with no fanfare or comments. Go straight to the charge/benediction.

**This entry created by Hymn Society member Brian Hehn.

Hymn Text: Forty Days, and Forty Nights

Hymn Tune: HEINLEIN

Lectionary Text Connection: Luke 4:1-13

Hymnary.org link: http://www.hymnary.org/text/forty_days_and_forty_nights_thou_wast

Suggested Use in a Liturgy:

Mass

Place in the Liturgy: The Concluding Rite- The first stanza reminds us of Christ's temptation. The remaining stanzas call for our response to this witness of God's love. We are called to remain steadfast and do our best to persevere through temptation. The final stanza calls us out reminding us that Lent is the beginning of this journey that ends in resurrection.

How to Introduce the Hymn: The congregation could be invited to hum the tonic while a prayer or the benediction is offered. Immediately following that a soloist could sing the first stanza to introduce the hymn.

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: Following the introduction, the second stanza could be sung by everyone. The third stanza could be sung in a round to highlight the text. The congregation could be divided by men/women, certain sides of the congregation or any other way that works! The final two stanzas could then be sung by the entire congregation.

How to conclude the Hymn: I would suggest ending this hymn strong. The text of the final stanza reminds us of what is yet to come. Through the trial, temptation and self-examination of Lent, we look forward to the joy of the resurrection at Easter.

Protestant Basic 4-Fold Service

Place in the Liturgy: Response- See Mass explanation for reasoning.

How to Introduce the Hymn: See Mass explanation for suggestion.

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: See Mass variations for suggestions.

How to conclude the Hymn: I would suggest ending this hymn strong. See Mass explanation for reasoning.

**This entry created by Hymn Society member Megan Mash.

Hymn Text: God That Madest Earth and Heaven by Reginald Heber

Hymn Tune: AR HYD Y NOS

Lectionary Text Connection: Psalm 91

Hymnary.org link: http://www.hymnary.org/text/god_who_madest_earth_and_heaven_darknes

Suggested Use in a Liturgy:

Mass

Place in the Liturgy: Entrance Hymn – Stanza 2 only

How to Introduce the Hymn: Solo stanza 2

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: Have choir do stanza 2 while the congregation “oo”s, then have the congregation sing stanza 2 on melody with the choir sings the harmony.

How to conclude the Hymn: As the choir hum’s through the hymn one more time, invite the congregation to look to the windows of the sanctuary, seeing the sunlight stream through as God wakes us up for a new day of praise and service.

Protestant Basic 4-Fold Service

Place in the Liturgy: Opening/Gathering Hymn

How to Introduce the Hymn: SAME AS MASS

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: SAME AS MASS

How to conclude the Hymn: SAME AS MASS

**This entry created by Hymn Society member Brian Hehn.

Hymn Text: How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds

Hymn Tune: ST. PETER (alternate tune: DOVE OF PEACE)

Lectionary Text Connection: Romans 10:8-13

Hymnary.org link: http://www.hymnary.org/text/how_sweet_the_name_of_jesus_sounds_in_a

Suggested Use in a Liturgy:

Mass

Place in the Liturgy: Processional Hymn, Offertory Hymn

How to Introduce the Hymn: Solo singer sings verse one, congregation joins.

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: Have tenors and sopranos switch lines for one verse. (ST PETER) or double each other's lines (DOVE OF PEACE)

How to conclude the Hymn: Repeat the final two lines (ST. PETER tune only)

Protestant Basic 4-Fold Service

Place in the Liturgy: Sermon or Invitation Hymn

How to Introduce the Hymn: Solo singer sings verse one, congregation joins.

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: Have tenors and sopranos switch lines for one verse. (ST PETER) or double each other's lines (DOVE OF PEACE)

How to conclude the Hymn: Repeat the final two lines (ST. PETER tune only)

**This entry created by Hymn Society member CJ Redden-Liotta.

Hymn Text: Jesus, Lover of My Soul by Charles Wesley

Hymn Tune: ABERYSTWYTH (Parry)

Lectionary Text Connection: Psalm 91

Hymnary.org link: http://www.hymnary.org/text/jesus_lover_of_my_soul_let_me_to_thy_bos

Suggested Use in a Liturgy:

Mass

Place in the Liturgy: Presentation and Preparation of the Gifts

How to Introduce the Hymn: Choir on stanza 1 - Unison

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: Stanza 2 – Unison Congregation; Stanza 3 – Harmony Congregation (choir should rehearse this to support the congregation); Stanza 4 – Unison Congregation with the basses of the choir on the bass line singing “dmm” to mimic a cello.

How to conclude the Hymn: If the preparation is still going on and you need to extend the hymn, have the choir sing stanza 4 in 4-part harmony.

Protestant Basic 4-Fold Service

Place in the Liturgy: 2nd Hymn (usually after the confession and assurance, or before the scripture and sermon.)

How to Introduce the Hymn: Same as Mass suggestion

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: Same as Mass suggestion

How to conclude the Hymn: Conduct the congregation’s last three notes to be slower and more intentional (slight ritardando).

**This entry created by Hymn Society member Brian Hehn.

Hymn Text: Jesus, Tempted in the Desert

Hymn Tune: EBENEZER

Lectionary Text Connection: Luke 4:1-13

Hymnary.org link: http://www.hymnary.org/text/jesus_tempted_in_the_desert

Suggested Use in a Liturgy:

Mass

Place in the Liturgy: Liturgy of the Word- This hymn text highlights and reinforces the Gospel reading very well.

How to Introduce the Hymn: If the choir and soloist were used for at least the first stanza to demonstrate the alternating pattern, this could serve as the introduction. If the entire congregation was invited to participate in this pattern from the beginning, the choir could either hum or “oo” the first phrase of the hymn as an introduction since it is repeated three times within the tune.

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: The first three stanzas are clearly divided into two sections. The first section is the specific temptation of Jesus and the second section is his response. For each stanza a certain group of the congregation, men/women/specific side/choir/soloists, could sing the first section followed by another, opposite group singing the second. The final stanza deviates from this pattern, mostly because there are only three temptations, and would be suited for the entire congregation to sing together in unison.

How to conclude the Hymn: This tune is very boisterous and the text of the final stanza calls for us to be strong. We know we must rely on Jesus to be able to resist temptation in all its forms and cannot do this with a weak spirit. Therefore this hymn calls for an energetic, powerful ending with either unison singing or parts if known by the congregation.

Protestant Basic 4-Fold Service

Place in the Liturgy: Word- This hymn text highlights and reinforces the Gospel reading very well.

How to Introduce the Hymn: See Mass Explanation

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: See Mass Explanation

How to conclude the Hymn: See Mass Explanation

**This entry created by Hymn Society member Megan Mash.

Hymn Text: Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee

Hymn Tune: ST. AGNES

Lectionary Text Connection: Romans 10:8-13

Hymnary.org link: http://www.hymnary.org/text/jesus_the_very_thought_of_thee

Suggested Use in a Liturgy:

Mass

Place in the Liturgy: Recessional Hymn

How to Introduce the Hymn: Choir sings the last 6 measures with the text from Stanza 4

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: Stanza 3 – Tenor and Bass on the melody with Alto and Soprano on the Alto line. Stanza 4 – Alto line 8^{va} as a descant.

How to conclude the Hymn: Same as introduction.

Protestant Basic 4-Fold Service

Place in the Liturgy: Call to Prayer, Invitation Hymn, Sermon Hymn, Congregational Hymn

How to Introduce the Hymn: Choir sings the last 6 measures with the text from Stanza 4

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: Stanza 3 – Tenor and Bass on the melody with Alto and Soprano on the Alto line. Stanza 4 – Alto line 8^{va} as a descant.

How to conclude the Hymn: Same as introduction.

**This entry created by Hymn Society member CJ Redden-Liotta.

Hymn Text: Just As I Am, Without One Plea

Hymn Tune: WOODWORTH

Lectionary Text Connection: Romans 10:8-13

Hymnary.org link: http://www.hymnary.org/text/just_as_i_am_without_one_plea

Suggested Use in a Liturgy:

Mass

Place in the Liturgy: Communion Hymn

How to Introduce the Hymn: One person begins, and invites others to join.

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: Stanza 3 – Tenors sing melody, Sopranos take tenor line (in their octave) on ooh.

How to conclude the Hymn: Fermata on final chord.

Protestant Basic 4-Fold Service

Place in the Liturgy: Call to Prayer, Invitation Hymn

How to Introduce the Hymn: One person begins, and invites others to join.

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: Stanza 3 – Tenors sing melody, Sopranos sing Tenor line (in their octave) on ooh.

How to conclude the Hymn: Fermata on final chord.

**This entry created by Hymn Society member CJ Redden-Liotta.

Hymn Text: Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days

Hymn Tune: ST. FLAVIAN (alternate tunes: MORNING SONG, LAND OF REST)

Lectionary Text Connection: Luke 4:1-13

Hymnary.org link: http://www.hymnary.org/text/lord_who_throughout_these_forty_days

Suggested Use in a Liturgy:

Mass

Place in the Liturgy: Processional Hymn

How to Introduce the Hymn: Cantor sings first stanza

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: Tenor cantors first stanza on the melody, Altos join for stanza 2, then all singers on their own parts for the remaining stanzas.

How to conclude the Hymn: Repeat the final line (“an Easter of unending joy...”)

Protestant Basic 4-Fold Service

Place in the Liturgy: Opening or Processional Hymn

How to Introduce the Hymn: Cantor sings first stanza

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: Tenor cantors first stanza on the melody, Altos join for stanza 2, then all singers on their own parts for the remaining stanzas.

How to conclude the Hymn: Repeat the final line (“an Easter of unending joy...”)

**This entry created by Hymn Society member CJ Redden-Liotta.

Hymn Text: O God, Our Help In Ages Past by Isaac Watts

Hymn Tune: ST. ANNE

Lectionary Text Connection: Psalm 91

Hymnary.org link: http://www.hymnary.org/text/our_god_our_help_in_ages_past

Suggested Use in a Liturgy:

Mass

Place in the Liturgy: Dismissal/Sending

How to Introduce the Hymn: Choir sings “our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home!” Then begin stanza 1 with the assembly

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas:

Stanza 1 – Unison

Stanza 2 – Choir Harmony

Stanza 3 – Men Unison

Stanza 4 – Women Unison

Stanza 5 – Choir in canon at the bar; Bass + Alto + Tenor + Soprano

Stanza 6 – All in harmony

How to conclude the Hymn: Choir repeats “be thou our guide while life shall last, and our eternal home, with part of the Soprano section on the tenor line 2 octaves up as a descant (or find a descant to use that you enjoy).

Protestant Basic 4-Fold Service

Place in the Liturgy: SAME AS MASS

How to Introduce the Hymn:

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas:

How to conclude the Hymn:

**This entry created by Hymn Society member Brian Hehn.

Hymn Text: O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High

Hymn Tune: DEO GRATIAS

Lectionary Text Connection: Luke 4:1-13

Hymnary.org link: http://www.hymnary.org/text/o_love_how_deep_how_broad_how_high

Suggested Use in a Liturgy:

Mass

Place in the Liturgy: Liturgy of the Eucharist- More specifically the Offertory Chant. This hymn text reminds us of all the Christ did for us and therefore calls us to give praise and glory to him. We are called to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice.

How to Introduce the Hymn: My experience has been that the familiarity of this hymn tune varies greatly among congregations. Therefore I would suggest a longer introduction to help the congregation become familiar with it. This tune also lends itself to being accompanied by a vocal drone. The congregation can hum or “oo” tonic and/or dominant. If the tune is less familiar to your congregation, I would suggest sticking only with the tonic. If the hymn is preceded by a scripture reading or prayer, the drone could be started before and sustained throughout the reading/prayer. A soloist could then sing the first stanza, followed by the choir singing the second to introduce the hymn.

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: Following the introduction, the third stanza could be sung by the entire congregation. The fourth and fifth stanzas could be divided among men/women or various sections of the congregation. The final stanza should be sung by everyone.

How to conclude the Hymn: A possible way to conclude this hymn beyond stopping after the final stanza would be to hum or “oo” over a reading or prayer preceding the hymn, to do it following the hymn.

Protestant Basic 4-Fold Service

Place in the Liturgy: Response- More specifically the Offertory. This hymn text reminds us of all the Christ did for us and therefore calls us to give praise and glory to him. We are called to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice.

How to Introduce the Hymn: See Mass Explanation

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: See Mass Explanation

How to conclude the Hymn: See Mass Explanation

**This entry created by Hymn Society member Megan Mash.

Hymn Text: Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior

Hymn Tune: PASS ME NOT

Lectionary Text Connection: Romans 10:8-13

Hymnary.org link: http://www.hymnary.org/text/pass_me_not_o_gentle_savior

Suggested Use in a Liturgy:

Mass

Place in the Liturgy: Offertory Hymn, Communion Hymn

How to Introduce the Hymn: Choir begins refrain – Sopranos begin first measure, add Tenor on measure 2, Alto for measures 3-4, then Basses enter for the remainder of the refrain.

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: Stanza 3 – Sopranos text, rest on ooh.

How to conclude the Hymn: Repeat the final two measures an additional 2 times.

Protestant Basic 4-Fold Service

Place in the Liturgy: Invitation Hymn

How to Introduce the Hymn: Choir begins refrain – Sopranos begin first measure, add Tenor on measure 2, Alto for measures 3-4, then Basses enter for the remainder of the refrain.

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: Stanza 3 – Sopranos text, rest on ooh.

How to conclude the Hymn: Repeat the final two measures an additional 2 times.

**This entry created by Hymn Society member CJ Redden-Liotta.

Hymn Text: Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God

Hymn Tune: LAFFERTY

Lectionary Text Connection: Luke 4:1-13

Hymnary.org link: http://www.hymnary.org/text/seek_ye_first_the_kingdom_of_god_and

Suggested Use in a Liturgy:

Mass

Place in the Liturgy: Because of its brief nature it could work well as the Entrance Song. It could also be placed in the Liturgy of the Eucharist to be sung during or after the receiving of the bread and wine. It could also serve as a call to prayer.

How to Introduce the Hymn: The way I would introduce this hymn would be dependent upon how well the congregation knows the tune. If it is unfamiliar to the congregation, it can be very easily taught by rote phrase by phrase. This could be done at the beginning of the service to prepare the congregation for its use later on. One could then have a soloist, possibly a child, sing the Alleluia descant to begin the hymn. The congregation would then be invited to join in singing the stanzas.

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: One way to provide variations on the stanzas for this short hymn is to layer the Alleluia descant on top of the stanzas. This can be done by the choir, a soloist, or a certain voice part from the congregation.

How to conclude the Hymn: After some layering of the descant, a way to conclude the hymn would be to invite everyone to sing the first stanza in unison together followed by humming the tune. Once the humming is established, a prayer can be layered on top to conclude the singing.

Protestant Basic 4-Fold Service

Place in the Liturgy: Depending on what precedes and follows it would influence its use. It could be used in the Gathering to call people to seek the Kingdom of God. It could be used in the Response section to provide a way to respond to God's call through the Word. It could be used as a call to prayer anywhere that happens in the service. This hymn offers a great deal of flexibility and creativity.

How to Introduce the Hymn: See Mass Explanation

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: See Mass Explanation

How to conclude the Hymn: See Mass Explanation

**This entry created by Hymn Society member Megan Mash.

Hymn Text: The Glory of These Forty Days

Hymn Tune: ERHALT UNS, HERR

Lectionary Text Connection: Luke 4:1-13

Hymnary.org link: http://www.hymnary.org/text/the_glory_of_these_forty_days

Suggested Use in a Liturgy:

Mass

Place in the Liturgy: Entrance song or Liturgy of the Word- This hymn could work as an entrance song because it links us to many aspects of salvation history. We are reminded of the many people who have fasted to grow closer to God. This provides a foundation to build a theme of the service around. It could also be used to highlight the Gospel text by showing that the tradition and spiritual discipline of fasting has deeper roots than Jesus.

How to Introduce the Hymn: The text of this hymn is reflective on fasting through the biblical witness. The choir (any kind, adults or children) could introduce the hymn simply by humming or “ooing” the tune to set this reflective tone. The congregation would then be invited to all join in singing the first stanza.

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: The middle two stanzas could be sung by contrasting groups to highlight the different biblical witnesses present. The opposite group could provide a drone of the tonic. The final stanza calls for our response therefore would be best sung by all.

How to conclude the Hymn: This final stanza invites us to prayer therefore a great way to end this hymn would be in prayer. The first phrase of the final stanza, “Then grant, O God, that we may, too, return in fast and prayer to you.” could serve as a sung prayer response. While the prayer is being offered the congregation and/or the choir could maintain the tonality by humming or “ooing” the tonic.

Protestant Basic 4-Fold Service

Place in the Liturgy: See Mass Explanation

How to Introduce the Hymn: See Mass Explanation

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: See Mass Explanation

How to conclude the Hymn: See Mass Explanation

**This entry created by Hymn Society member Megan Mash.

Hymn Text: When We Are Tested and Wrestle Alone

Hymn Tune: SLANE

Lectionary Text Connection: Luke 4:1-13

Hymnary.org link: http://www.hymnary.org/text/when_we_are_tested_and_wrestle_alone

Suggested Use in a Liturgy:

Mass

Place in the Liturgy: Liturgy of the Word- This hymn text provides an interpretation of the Gospel text that directly relates it to us. It highlights the fact that we are tested like Jesus was and when we rely on the God and the Word of God we can be carried through our trials. The text does more than simply remind us of story but places us directly in the midst of it.

How to Introduce the Hymn: If using the tune suggested above for this hymn, it should be familiar to most congregations. If this is the case, I would suggest simply telling the congregation verbally what the tune is by whatever means will help them recognize it. To start the hymn one could invite the congregation to hum pitches one and five, creating a drone, while a soloist sang the tune over the hum. This could either be done on a syllable such as "dah" or one could use the text from the first stanza.

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: As stated above, the first stanza could be done using a soloist while the congregation hums a drone. The text of the second stanza could be sung by the men while the women continue the drone. The roles could then be reversed for the third stanza. All voices could then join together singing the text for the fourth and final stanza.

Another way to vary the stanzas in this hymn would be to offer short prayers between each stanza. The congregation could hum the tonic upon finishing the stanza while the prayer is offered.

How to conclude the Hymn: The text of this hymn really lends itself to be followed by prayer. The hymn could be concluded with a prayer over humming the tonic or the tune.

Protestant Basic 4-Fold Service

All Sections: See Mass Explanation

**This entry created by Hymn Society member Megan Mash.

Hymn Text: You who dwell in the shelter of the Lord (On Eagle's Wings) by Michael Joncas

Hymn Tune: ON EAGLE'S WINGS

Lectionary Text Connection: Psalm 91

Hymnary.org link: http://www.hymnary.org/text/you_who_dwell_in_the_shelter_joncas

Suggested Use in a Liturgy:

Mass

Place in the Liturgy: Use the refrain as the musical response to the Prayer Of The Faithful.

How to Introduce the Hymn: Cantor sings it once through the first time, inviting the congregation to repeat. Subsequent repetitions can include just one time through with all singing.

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: None

How to conclude the Hymn: None

Protestant Basic 4-Fold Service

Place in the Liturgy: Assurance of Pardon

How to Introduce the Hymn: Just start singing the verses, and invite the congregation to sing the refrain with a simple invitational gesture.

Suggestions for Variations on Stanzas: Have the choir sing some verses instead of a soloist.

How to conclude the Hymn: Repeat the final chorus, using a gesture to show that you'd like the congregation to sing a bit louder.

**This entry created by Hymn Society member Brian Hehn.