

## ENGAGING THE PAST—ACTIVITY

Worship planners, pastors, and leaders assemble one or more worship services or sermons in which events/processes/personalities from the past are explicitly named and treated appropriately within the liturgy (as opportunities for praise, thanksgiving, confession, lament, etc.).

### Time needed for activity

As many Sundays as is fitting. (We suggest four Sundays—for a “Memory Month.”)

### Group size

All current members and regular visitors

### Steps for Activity

1. Determine the team who will lead this portion of the congregation's journey into the past. Encourage the team to begin their work as soon as possible. The work of planning worship and implementing plans takes some time! It's important to allow enough time for the participation of guests who might come from a distance or who might require a significant amount of time to plan their involvement.
2. Communicate regularly to the congregation about the upcoming series in order to generate congregational excitement.
3. Consider these “anchoring” texts for possible inclusion in the worship services and/or sermons:
  - *Exodus 20:22-26*—God's command, given at Mount Sinai, to Israel to remember his words/voice (his involvement in their lives) and to use undressed stones in their memorial (a repudiation of their slavery experience and a celebration of God's shaping of them for future life/work).
  - *Psalms 33*—A congregational psalm of praise for God's faithfulness. See also Psalms 46, 48, 67, 87, 90, 95, 103, 105, 106, 107, 113, 115, 122, 125, 136, 147, 149.
  - *1 Kings 19:1-18*—God's promise to despairing Elijah that his power is at work behind the scenes.
  - *Ezekiel 37*—Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones; God's promise to his people to breathe new life into them—a new life that may or may not involve the restoration of a particular congregation.
  - *Joel 2:28-32*—God's promise to his people that his faithfulness to them never ends—a promise to hold on to even when a congregation is experiencing a possible end.
  - *Matthew 16:13-20*—Christ's promise to Peter, celebrating his profession of faith—a promise to hold on to even as a particular congregation's vitality fades.
  - *Matthew 28:16-20*—Christ's call to and promise to be with his church forever. See also John 14:25-31; Acts 18:9-11.
  - *Ephesians 3:14-21*—Paul's prayer that the Ephesian church would live in the awareness of God's love.
  - *Philippians 1:3-11*—Paul's prayer of thanksgiving for the Philippian Christians and his confidence in God's finishing work.
  - *Colossians 1:15-23*—Paul's proclamation of Christ's supremacy and the call to the Colossians to continue in their faith.
  - *Revelation 6:5-11*—God's promise to his hurting people that he continues to be at work, accomplishing his good purpose (interpretive key for Revelation).

4. Consider using the [Engaging the Past—Prayer Litany](#).
5. Proceed with planning, remembering that the Lord's Supper can be a key element of this activity (as well as the remembrance of baptism, creeds, and confessions that bind your congregation to Christians around the world and throughout history, and hymns/songs/ worship events that have had special meaning in times past).

### **Facilitator's Questions**

As you plan your services and sermons, consider some questions like these:

1. What values/virtues/passions do you see in your past that you can carry into the future?
2. Which people or groups from your past do you need to honor?
3. What mistakes, misuses of power, and conflicts should you acknowledge and/or confess together?
4. With whom do you need to reconcile?\*
5. What hardships do you need to lament?\*
6. What do you need to thank God for?
7. What are some key moments when you saw the Holy Spirit lead you into something you wouldn't have been able to do yourself?
8. How has your community been transformed in big or little ways because of God's work in and through you?

\*If this question leads to a sense that there is work to be done in the areas of reconciliation and/or healing, then the group should feel free to seek assistance from [Pastor Church Resources](#).