



# Easter Sunday Options and Ideas

**Theme** The theme of E21 is “*Certain Hope for Uncertain Times!*”

## Easter sermon series

The E21 theme can serve for the entire Easter season. Publicizing a sermon series is an excellent way to encourage visitors to return.

The following themes are modified from those provided by the sainted Prof. Daniel Deutschlander in *Planning Christian Worship* (Year B; available at <https://worship.welsrc.net/>). If preaching on a text other than the day’s Gospel, some adjustment might be useful. This series is mentioned in the E21 worship folder.

4-11, Easter 2	Resurrection hope gives us peace.
4-18, Easter 3	Resurrection hope is certain through the Word.
4-25, Easter 4	Resurrection hope comes from Christ, our Good Shepherd.
5-2, Easter 5	Resurrection hope has rich consequences for life every day.
5-9, Easter 6	Resurrection hope comes from Christ living in us.
5-13, Ascension	Christ’s Ascension triumph makes our resurrection hope certain.
5-16, Easter 7	The risen Christ prays for us in heaven to fortify our resurrection hope.

## Easter Sunday service outline

For most elements, musical options are below. Some of these are the same as recommend for E20.

- Hymn CW 157: Jesus Christ Is Risen Today.
- Song of Praise CW 265: This is the Feast replaces the Gloria, ideally for the entire Easter season\*
- Psalm of the Day Psalm 118 from *Christian Worship: Supplement*
- Verse of the Day Options are available for free download.
- Hymn of the Day CWS 720: Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands. Alternate” CW 152: I Know that My Redeemer Lives
- Sermon Hymn CW 142: Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain
- Hymn CW 162: He Is Arisen! Glorious Word.

\* If this has not been your custom in the past, give it a try. If the hymn is unfamiliar to the congregation, have a soloist or choir sing the verses with the congregation joining in on the refrain. If this has been

your custom in the past, creative musical settings will enhance appreciation. See below for versions with choir and optional instruments.

## COVID adjustments?

As this planning guide was prepared in late December, daily COVID news was both good and bad: good news about vaccines, bad news about trends. This worship plan assumes a degree of normalcy by Easter regarding the amount of singing and speaking in worship. Adjustments can be made according to guidelines and trends in your state/community: less singing (fewer hymns/stanzas, speak or omit the Song of Praise, soloist sings a psalm) and less speaking (a Prayer of the Church that is not a dialogue). Instructions on receiving an offering may be modified.

## Worship folders

A worship folder draft of 20 pages is available in [E21 Worship Resources](#). Local information and announcements may be added on pages 2, 17, and 20. The back cover announces the Easter season sermon series.

Since the text and music for “This Is the Feast is” copyrighted, this is not included in the worship folder. Those with the electronic version of *Christian Worship* can insert the music graphic and license via OneLicense.net. Or, if you have enough hymnals for a packed Easter service, sing from the hymnals. Or substitute another song if you need to print everything in the worship folder.

The worship folder selections included are not meant to suggest that these are optimal for every WELS congregation. They are simply a baseline starting point, using mostly items in the public domain or for which copyright permission is easily granted for free distribution. Many congregations will want to include an Easter anthem. Some will include a more festive and challenging setting of the psalm, etc.

The worship folder includes by permission some artwork from Ian Welch ([ianmwelch.com](http://ianmwelch.com)). Additional graphics from him are available for free download in [E21 Worship Resources](#).

## Sermon

E21 also provides thoughts for a sermon on 1 Corinthians 15:19-26, the appointed second reading. It was an easy choice to reinforce the E21 theme given its opening verse: “If only for this life we have **hope** in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.”

## Prayer of the Church

The prayer in the worship folder was written by Daron Lindemann for the Easter service at the 2011 WELS worship conference. Another option is to adapt a prayer from LetUsPray at <https://www.lcms.org/worship/three-year-series-prayers>. These prayers tend to be very well crafted. With occasional editing, they can serve well in WELS congregations. A way to incorporate one of these prayers without printing the entire prayer follows.

## PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

*Each petition of the prayer concludes:*

M: ... Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

*The last petition of the prayer concludes:*

M: ...one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

## Opening Dialogue

Regarding the Easter Proclamation: There are two common versions. Here is the version found in *Christian Worship: Occasional Services* and common in some other denominations:

M: ALLELUIA! CHRIST IS RISEN!

C: **HE IS RISEN INDEED! ALLELUIA!**

Another custom omits the Alleluias. If you have an established custom, edit the worship folder to match your custom. Include this Easter Proclamation at the beginning of each service during the season of Easter.

## Song of Praise

Some churches follow the custom of singing CW 265, This Is the Feast of Victory, every Sunday of the Easter season. (This custom is recommended in the forthcoming WELS hymnal.)

From an outreach perspective, recognizing that some visitors might be “de-churched,” it’s worth noting that this hymn/canticle has been published in 40 hymnals. That means it’s known outside of Lutheran circles.

If your congregation is not yet familiar with this hymn, you could email a link and ask people to listen a few times before Easter Sunday: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9h1P65VnKo>. Or: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8u-VlqFCOrI>

Those churches able to muster a brass ensemble, with optional choir and timpani, can use the well-known setting by Richard Hillert. This works with just one trumpet as well, and optional timpani. Most churches don’t have timpani, but perhaps a local high school will loan a set. The article “Timpani for the Asking” ([E21 Worship Resources](#)) describes how one church borrowed/rented timpani.

If your church has done the original Hillert setting and wants a fresh arrangement for similar instrumentation, try a 2014 setting by Jeff Blersch. Granted, only a few big churches can manage this one! But it sure is glorious! This is the Feast (Festival); <https://online.nph.net/catalog/product/view/id/26165/>.

N.B.: The Hillert and Blersch settings skip the refrain after verse three. Make sure this is clear in the worship folder.

Another musical version of the text is by Peter Hallock. This version will appear in the digital resources for the forthcoming WELS hymnal. If you want to program it now already for E21, order through NPH.

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Yet another option for the Song of Praise is CWS 788, “Thanks Be to God!” —with these lines in the refrain recurring four times: “He gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.” This canticle, too, could be sung for every Sunday of the Easter season. Due to lack of familiarity, a choir or soloist should sing the verses at least for the first two or three Sundays.

## Psalm of the Day

**Psalm 118** from CWS is included in the worship folder. The accompaniment is available for free download for those who do not have CWS. You may substitute a more festive setting. Find additional options by searching “Psalm 118” at NPH. One by John Behnke includes handbells, for those capable. An old standby from NPH is: <https://online.nph.net/psalm-118-i-will-not-die-but-live-pdf.html>.

## Hymn of the Day

**A concertato new in 2020 is again recommended for E21:** CWS 720, Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands. The Commission on Worship and NPH commissioned Benjamin Culli to write a new concertato for E21 on this great Luther hymn set to the new tune by Kermit Moldenhauer. Culli’s arrangement is for SAB choir, congregation, and optional trumpet. But it works also just with congregation and keyboard (organ or piano). If the tune is unfamiliar, the choir could sing stanza 1 as well as 4 and 6.

At seven stanzas this is a long hymn.\* But note that after the sermon only four hymn stanzas are included in the rest of the service. Thus the climax of the service is Luther’s powerful hymn and the sermon.

\*But if you desire shorter version for the Hymn of the Day, Culli provides flexible ways to shorten the hymn.

**The original concertato:** While Culli’s new concertato is accessible for smaller churches, Moldenhauer’s original concertato remains a great choice for churches with a brass quartet. But note that the brass is optional, and the SATB choral stanza can be done with fewer parts as noted in the score. Note that this setting includes only four stanzas. <https://online.nph.net/christ-jesus-lay-in-deaths-strong-bands-full-score-vocal-inst-congr.html>

**Alternate:** If CWS 720 seems too unfamiliar in your setting (even with a choir or soloist singing three stanzas), CW 152 is appended to the end of the worship folder and may be substituted. Due to the length of this hymn and to add festive interest, a choir or soloist may sing select stanzas to some of the many alternate accompaniments available. Since this alternate hymn fits on one page, it may be placed on page 11.

## Choral music

**Verse of the Day:** NPH has given permission for the Seasonal Response for Easter/Ascension from Morning Praise and Evening Prayer to be available as a free download along with the standard NPH musical setting of the Verse of the Day. Another option for the Verse by Carl Schalk, covering every Sunday in Easter, is: <https://www.cph.org/p-31793-alleluias-and-verses-for-the-easter-season.aspx>.

**Anthem: If Christ Had Not Been Raised From Death:** New for 2021. The text wonderfully echoes the E21 theme and anticipates the sermon. Featuring the text of *Christian Worship: Supplement* hymn 721 to new music, this anthem for SATB, organ, and trumpet provides a festive Easter text in a manageable setting for most choirs. The four-part writing is minimal, the vocal and instrumental ranges accessible, and the organ accompaniment not at all difficult. (Or the choir may sing in unison during the four-part sections, using either the accompaniment or the SATB harmony to accompany the unison singing.)

<https://online.nph.net/catalog/product/view/id/27128>

**Alternate anthem 1: If Christ Had Not Been Raised From Death:** If you have *Christian Worship Supplement* and want an even easier option: a unison choir or soloist sings CWS 721, perhaps with choir on stanzas 1 and 3, soloist on 2.

**Alternate anthem 2:** New for 2021: *Vocal Solos for the Church Year*. This collection offers a way to enhance worship using only one vocalist and one accompanist. It includes ten mostly hymn-based solos. One selection, **Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia**, is a creative setting of CWS 719. The entire hymn may be sung by the soloist. Or if your church has the digital edition of CWS, this hymn may replace a hymn in the E21 worship folder, and the congregation may join in on stanzas 3-5. NPH #: 2700089.

<https://online.nph.net/catalog/product/view/id/27135>

**Alternate anthem 3: See, What a Morning:** New for 2021. This popular Getty/Townend Easter hymn is arranged by Linda Moeller. This hymn was on the same debut album with “In Christ Alone” and will appear in *Christian Worship 2021*. Commissioned originally in conjunction with E20 but then not released last year due to COVID. For two-part, piano, C instrument, optional guitar and optional bass. NPH#: 2809069E. <https://online.nph.net/see-what-a-morning.html>

Suitable for a small adult choir or soloist/duet as well as a children’s choir. The text nicely complements the E21 “certain hope” theme; from stanza 3: “One with the Father, Ancient of Days, through the Spirit who clothes faith with **certainty**....”

MP3 accompaniment (2809069M) is a separately purchased product. <https://online.nph.net/choral-see-what-a-morning-mp3.html>.

## Service music

The following resources for a prelude, offertory, or postlude are based on the hymn tune NORTHBRIDGE (the Hymn of the Day) and on FESTIVAL CANTICLE (This Is the Feast). Many other possibilities on other hymns are not listed.

### FESTIVAL CANTICLE

This is the Feast (organ): <https://online.nph.net/this-is-the-feast.html>. You can hear a recording from the WELS church in Antioch, IL here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eIVhY50c14I>.

Piano Impressions for Easter: <https://online.nph.net/catalog/product/view/id/26163/>

Handbells – an arrangement by Rett Richards for 2-3 octaves (**order through NPH: 800-662-6022 or orders@nph.wels.net.**): <https://www.giamusic.com/store/resource/this-is-the-feast-of-victory-pdf-dhb0453>

## **NORTHRIDGE**

NPH has published five keyboard settings of this tune—four for organ, one for piano. Search NPH on NORTHRIDGE to find these: <https://online.nph.net/catalogsearch/result?q=northridge>. The newest is a set with six variations: <https://online.nph.net/christ-alone-variations-for-organ-on-hymns-about-redemption.html>. Note that this collection also includes variations on In Christ Alone (CWS 752), a hymn that may be substituted for one of the public domain choices in the E21 worship folder. The opening stanza well complements the E21 theme: “In Christ alone my **hope** is found.”

## **Additional musical options**

See this section of the worship planning guide for E20 for additional options: <https://welscongregationalservices.net/download/e20-worship-resources/>.