

JESUS' LAST LECTURE

Luke 24:44-53 // A Service Celebrating Graduation

Graduating from high school or college is an important rite of passage. Many congregations want to honor their own graduating seniors in the context of the worship gathering, blessing them and thanking God for divine care and guidance.

MAIN THEME: *In the passage from Luke's Gospel, Jesus gives his "last lecture," highlighting the really important stuff for his disciples. Invite worshipers, and especially graduating seniors, to listen anew to Christ's final teaching to the disciples.*

CHOOSING MUSIC // FOR SINGING

- ✪ **God of Grace and God of Glory** [Key of G]
Text and Music: Harry Emerson Fosdick and John Hughes
Public Domain

- ✪ **Be Thou My Vision** [Key of D]
Text and Music: Eleanor Henrietta Hull and Mary Elizabeth Byrne
Public Domain

- ✪ **This I Believe (The Creed)** [Key of G]
Text and Music: Ben Fielding and Matt Crocker
© 2014 Hillsong Music Publishing (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)

- ✪ **How Great is Our God** [Key of C]
Text and Music: Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash, Jesse Reeves
© 2004 sixsteps Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)

- ✪ **Let It Be Said of Us** [Key of C]
Text and Music: Steve Fry
© 1999 Word Music, LLC (Admin. by Brentwood-Benson Music Publishing, Inc.)

- ✪ **In Christ Alone** [Key of E]
Text and Music: Keith Getty and Stuart Townend
© 2001 Thankyou Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)

- ✪ **Leaning On the Everlasting Arms** [Key of G]
Text and Music: Anthony Johnson Showalter and Elisha Albright Hoffman
Public Domain

- ✪ **Forever (We Sing Hallelujah)** [Key of A]
Text and Music: Brian Johnson, Christa Black Gifford, Gabriel Wilson, Jenn Johnson, Joel Taylor, and Kari Jobe
© 2013 KAJE Songs (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)

CREATING DRAMA // FOR HEARING

One tradition includes a formal procession into the worship space. Graduates could elect the hymn that has been most meaningful to their faith and process into worship. Purchase and use “**To Rise Above**” // The Work of the People [www.theworkofthepeople.com] as a response to today’s message, perhaps as a benediction.

Purchase and use “**Colossians 1**” // The Work of the People [www.theworkofthepeople.com] as a prayer of blessing for graduating students, based on Colossians 1:10-11. Prepare a video presentation in which graduating students give their own “last lecture.”

Ask them to consider these questions:

- Who has influenced you most in life?
- What has been your most memorable experience during your church years?
- Do you have a favorite Scripture passage that has regularly strengthened your faith?
- What advice would you give to students beginning their high school or college years?

FINDING ART // FOR SEEING

In some contexts, it may be appropriate to hang banners or pennants with the school colors, representing the schools of all graduating. As worshipers are gathering, project “Get-to-Know Me” slides featuring pictures of all graduates and highlighting their future plans.

Do you feature visual art in your worship space? Or do you decorate your worship space regularly? Invite graduating students to be a part of this process for this worship gathering. Design and print a nice, sturdy program booklet, perhaps following a high school “yearbook” format, with a full page devoted to each graduate. This booklet could also include encouraging words from parents, ministers, youth leaders, and other mentors, written to graduates. Take time in making this book so that graduates can keep it as a memento of this important occasion.

LIVING WORSHIP // FOR DOING

Students should regularly be included in the preparation and leadership of worship, but especially on this day.

- Enlist graduating students and their peers to provide various forms of worship leadership today.
- Provide an additional time of fellowship by offering a special luncheon after the worship gathering for graduating students, their families, friends, mentors, and ministers. At the luncheon, distribute appropriate gifts, such a study bible with the student’s name engraved; a challenging book that gives them guidance for the future; special jewelry with a cross or engraving; and a USB drive containing video files of the graduation worship service, and personal messages from ministers, mentors, and friends.
- Prior to the worship gathering, ask church members to “sponsor” a graduating student. The sponsor should agree to support the student through prayer, care, and support, especially during the early years of this next phase of life. Encourage acts of care like birthday packages, final exam “survival packs,” and thoughtful cards. At the fellowship luncheon announce formally the sponsor-student partnerships. This is a great way to further interaction among worshipers of different ages.

MAKING SPACE // FOR WORSHIPPING

Have graduating students set up “Get-to-Know Me” tables, filled with pictures, personal mementos, and information about their future plans in the narthex, or the gathering area just outside the worship space. As worshipers are gathering, invite them to linger in the narthex, getting to know the personal stories of those who are graduating.

WRITING POETRY// FOR PRAYING

Use this prayer, a prayer on behalf of graduating students, or allow its themes to inspire your own.

“God of life’s journey, thank you for making us, for saving us in Christ, for calling us to be your people. We thank you for the gifts of these graduates, their excitement, their wonder and curiosity. We pray for the wisdom to make healthy choices in the face of endless and confusing options. We pray for the courage to stand with you for justice and peace in this world and in this time. We pray for the wisdom to discern your call in our lives. As they step forward into the world that awaits, comfort their fears with the full knowledge of your divine presence. Strengthen their resolve to walk in the footsteps of Jesus as modern-day disciples in a world that needs your presence. Guide their feet as they move through life, protecting them from the pitfalls of darkness while they help to lead future generations into the warmth and promise of your light. For at the end of the day, we know that it is not about making our mark, but pressing on to Your mark, that prize for which Paul himself strained— the moment when the Master says, “Well done” and the ‘forever’ we will have of knowing You face-to-face. We ask this blessing upon each of them, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

SAMPLE WORSHIP SERVICE

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[Invite worshipers to browse the graduating students' "Get-to-Know-Me" tables prior to worship.]
[Have graduating students process in and sit at the front as the congregation sings a hymn specially chosen by seniors for its impact on their faith.]

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Many voices are speaking to us today
in the movie theaters,
on the concert stages,
on the television.

**All: Today, Lord, we choose to listen to
your voice, to respond to your
desires, to follow your highest path
for us.**

One: Many voices are speaking to us today
in our homes,
in our friendships,
and in our community.

**All: Today, Lord, we choose to listen to
your voice, to respond to your
desires, to follow your highest path
for us.**

One: Many voices are speaking to us today
through celebrities, commercials,
and through media.

**All: Today, Lord, we choose to listen to
your voice, to respond to your
desires, to follow your highest path
for us.**

One: As many voices ring in our ears,
we say that we choose to listen to your
voice, to do what pleases you, and to
stay true to the path you have lovingly
set before us. Strengthen each of us to
choose the high road, to live up to the
greatness you placed within us, and to
honor you in all our ways. Lord, we will
listen for your voice. Amen.

from Dan Wilt

SONG OF FAITH

In Christ Alone

WELCOME

Say hi to other worshipers and welcome one
another in the name of Christ.

INTRODUCTION OF GRADUATES

Invite graduates to come forward to receive a
special gift from the pastor. Play brief
"testimony" videos of students reflecting on
their "last lecture" by answering questions such
as: Who has influenced you most in life? What
has been your most memorable experience
during your church years? Do you have a
favorite Scripture passage that has regularly
strengthened or guided your faith? What
advice would you give to students beginning
their high school years?

BLESSING OF GRADUATES

Offer this prayer of blessing:

God of life's journey, thank you for
making us, for saving us in Christ, for
calling us to be your people. We thank you
for the gifts of these graduates, their
excitement, their wonder and curiosity.
We pray for the courage to stand with you
for justice and peace in this world and in
this time. We pray for the wisdom to
discern your call in our lives. As they step
forward into the world that awaits,
comfort their fears with the full
knowledge of your divine presence.
Strengthen their resolve to walk in the
footsteps of Jesus as modern-day disciples
in a world that needs your presence.
Guide their feet as they move through life,
protecting them from the pitfalls of
darkness while they help to lead future
generations into the warmth and promise
of your light. For at the end of the day, we
know that it is not about making our

mark, but pressing on to Your mark, that prize for which Paul himself strained — the moment when the Master says, “Well done” and the ‘forever’ we will have of knowing You face-to-face. We ask this blessing upon each of them, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

SONGS OF WORSHIP

Be Thou My Vision
This I Believe

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 24:44-53
Jesus’ Final Teaching and Ascension

SONG OF ADORATION

Forever (We Sing Hallelujah)

MESSAGE

Jesus’ Last Lecture

REFLECTION / TIME OF RESPONSE

Purchase and use “To Rise Above,” by The Work of the People inviting worshipers to reflect on our call to follow Christ and believe his teaching.

CLOSING SONG

Let It Be Said of Us

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Life and Ministry of Our Church

BENEDICTION

Leader: On our heads and our houses
the blessing of God.
In our coming and going,
the peace of God.
In our life and believing,
the love of God.
And our end and new beginning,
the arms of God to welcome us and
bring us home. Amen.

from *The Iona Abbey Worship Book*

LIVING OUR WORSHIP

Invite graduating students, their families, friends, ministers, and mentors to a celebration luncheon. Provide them with special gifts like a study Bible and a USB drive containing video files of encouraging words from members of the faith community, as well as the graduation celebration service. Introduce students to their “sponsors,” church members who promise to offer love, care, prayer, and support during the first few years of this next phase of life.