

Sing Transformation

1 SAMUEL 2:1–10; LUKE 1:46–56

3



GOAL

Youth explore the ongoing transformation of Christ's church reflected in the musical witness of the Christian tradition.

- A Art
- AM Active/Movement
- AT Abstract Thinking
- C Conversation
- CT Concrete Thinking
- D Drama
- G Game
- M Music
- QC Quiet/Contemplative
- S Service
- T Technology
- X Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

God who forms and transforms, help me be open to your Spirit today. Amen.

THIS SESSION

God's promises of the past are remembered and reclaimed for the present through two ancient canticles—biblical songs found outside the Psalter—Mary's *Magnificat* and Hannah's Song. Each proclaims God's work of resistance against sin and death and God's solidarity with righteousness and life. A theological statement is found in these musical movements: Mary's bold and transforming vision of God's coming realm can be trusted because it is grounded in the Lord's great faithfulness to previous generations. Reliable *and* revolutionary, these women's songs give voice to communities that can truly sing: "See, everything has become new!" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Fresh voices are invited to join the church's revolutionary song and God's work of transformation.

THE BIBLE STORY

The *Magnificat* (Latin for "[my soul] magnifies") is the first of several songs found in the opening chapters of the Gospel of Luke. The angel Gabriel revealed to Mary that she will bear a child from the Holy Spirit. On a visit to her cousin Elizabeth, Mary sings. It sounds like a protest song, but it is also a hymn of praise, giving glory to God for the radical reordering of the world. The meek and lowly are lifted up; the powerful and proud cast down.

Mary revives an old standard, covering a classic from centuries before, the song of Hannah, sung when she learned she would give birth to the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 2:1–10). Hannah, too, poured out praise with an overflowing heart, rejoicing in God's promise of deliverance for the oppressed, plenty for the poor, food for the hungry, and justice for the arrogant, greedy, and wicked.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Youth are going through physical, emotional, and spiritual transformations. Seeing the process of change, development, and transformation present in the worship and mission of the church can provide a helpful reflection on how the Spirit of the Triune God may be acting in their personal and communal experiences of transformation.

SESSION PREPARATION

- "The Church Transformed" (p. 22): Print each image listed on Resource Page 1 on a separate sheet. For larger groups, make several sets.
Depending on the options you choose:
- "For Everyone Born" (p. 24): Copy the verse pattern from Resource Page 4 onto newsprint.
- "Hymnal Blackout Poetry" (p. 25): Select and make copies of a hymn from a hymnal.

GETTING STARTED

- ☐ Resource Page 1 (copies, optional)
- ☐ Printed images of churches

THE CHURCH TRANSFORMED

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Print the four images of churches referenced on Resource Page 1. For larger groups, print several sets. As participants enter, ask them to work together to place the images in chronological order based on when they think the churches were built.

Have participants show the order and time period they put the churches in and give reasons for their ordering. Reveal the correct order and give a brief description of each church from Resource Page 1.

Explain that many church buildings give visual illustration of the transformation of the Christian church. Like these structures, other aspects of the church—music, liturgy, our understanding of how God works in the world—also constantly change. In this session, you will explore how God is always doing a new thing, singing a new song, transforming the church.

- ☐ Copies of Resource Page 1 from session 1 (p. 11)
- ☐ Internet-connected device

OPENING RITUAL

M T

Distribute copies of Resource Page 1 from session 1 (p. 11) and sing the first three verses of “Sing a New Song” to the familiar tune of “Morning Has Broken,” either a cappella or with accompaniment using music from either bit.ly/FMBunessanTune (two verses) or the YouTube video “Giovanni Marradi—Morning Has Broken” (bit.ly/FMBunessanMusic, 3:39), stopping at 2:10 for three verses.

Alternatively, use the verse as a responsive reading, saying each line and having the youth repeat after you.

Invite youth to tell about songs of tribulation that they noticed as they listened to music during the past week.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

- ☐ Copies of your church’s hymnal
- ☐ Newsprint
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ Internet-connected device (optional)



As an option, play examples of the selected hymns. Use www.hymnary.org to find simple audio recordings of many hymns.

EXPLORING YOUR HYMNAL

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Have participants work in partners or small groups. Distribute copies of hymnals and ask them to pick one hymn from the pre-19th, 19th, and 20th/21st centuries. Display newsprint and make three columns with headings Pre-19th Century, 19th Century, and 20th/21st Centuries. Have a volunteer write the hymn titles and numbers on the newsprint under the column headings.

Select one hymn from each column and look at the lyrics. Discuss:

- ➔ What was going on in the world when these hymns were written? Can you see the history of this period reflected in the hymn?
- ➔ What do you notice about the language that gives you a clue about when this hymn was written?
- ➔ How do the three hymns your group selected illustrate a transformation in the life of the church over time? What ideas or themes stay the same?

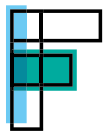
REFORMED AND REFORMING



Explain that, in the Reformed (Presbyterian) tradition, there is a motto: “Reformed and always being reformed.” This motto is another way of naming transformation, how we see God doing a new thing in our midst. Distribute sticky notes and pens. Have youth identify reforms, transformations, or changes they have seen in the world. Write each of these on separate sticky notes. Affix all notes to the newsprint for young people to review. Each person selects one reform that has significance for them. Ask:

- ➡ What reforms have you seen around you?
- ➡ What reform has significance for you? Why?
- ➡ How might God be doing a new thing in these reforms?

In this session, you will explore God’s work of transformation in the lives of people, in the church, and in the world.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

MARY’S SONG



Distribute markers, pens, or pencils and copies of Resource Page 2 to each participant. Form small groups or pairs. As they read Luke 1:46–56, have them highlight everything Mary says that God does in this passage. As a large group, discuss:

- ➡ What verses and phrases did you highlight?
- ➡ What does this song tell us about who Mary understands God to be?
- ➡ How does Mary see God transforming the world?
- ➡ If you were to sing this song today as your own testimony to who God is and how God is transforming the world, what verses might you add?

Have participants work either alone or in their small groups to add verses to Mary’s song. Share the new verses and the experiences they reflect.

HANNAH AND MARY



Luke 1:46–56 is like a *remix* of Hannah’s song in 1 Samuel 2:1–10. Distribute copies of Resource Page 3 and look at the two songs side by side. Ask:

- ➡ What similarities do you immediately notice between the two passages?
- ➡ What differences stand out?
- ➡ What do these observations indicate about the transformation of God’s people from Hannah’s era to Mary’s as the coming of the Christ child is made known?

- ☐ Sticky notes
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ Newsprint

- ☐ Copies of Resource Page 2
- ☐ Markers, pens, or pencils



Mary’s reference to God as exclusively *he* reflects her cultural and historical context. Today’s church uses additional words for God, such as *mother*, *rock*, and *redeemer*, reflecting the transformation of our understanding of God that has taken place throughout many generations of Christian witness.

- ☐ Copies of Resource Page 3
- ☐ Markers or colored pencils



It might be helpful to review 1 Samuel 1 to recall Hannah’s backstory. She was a faithful woman who could not bear children and promised God that if she was given a son, she would dedicate his life to God’s service.



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

- ☐ Resource Page 3 from session 1 (p. 13)
- ☐ Highlighters or markers
- ☐ Colored pencils



This activity can be done at the beginning or end of this section in each session.

PSALM 96



Remind participants that, in each session, they will read aloud Psalm 96 and look for the session's theme that appears in the psalm ("Sing Transformation"). Distribute highlighters or markers and copies of Resource Page 3 from session 1 (p. 13), making sure youth receive the paper they already marked. Have additional copies available for new participants.

Have volunteers take turns reading aloud each verse. As the psalm is read, encourage participants to highlight words or phrases that indicate change or transformation.

After the reading, have participants show what they highlighted and explain what made them think of transformation. Distribute colored pencils and ask them to elaborate on their thoughts, drawing words or pictures in the margins of the psalm. Gather the papers to be redistributed in the next session.

Choose one or both options.

- ☐ Smartphones

ANCIENT AND MODERN



Invite three volunteers with smartphones to locate the following YouTube videos on their phones and be prepared to play them. They can write the bit.ly address into the search field of their web browser. Remember, bit.ly addresses are case sensitive. They do not need to show the video, just play it for participants to hear. Alternatively, play these YouTube videos on your device with a speaker:

- "Gregorian Sampler" from the Monastic Choir of St. Peter's Abbey of Solesmes" (bit.ly/FMGregorian, 0:30)
- "Awake My Soul" sung by Mumford & Sons (bit.ly/FMAwakeMySoul, 4:15)
- "Awake My Soul and with the Sun" (bit.ly/FMAwakeSoul, 2:49)

Tell participants they will listen to three different samples of church music: an ancient Gregorian chant, a more recent song by Mumford & Sons, and a solo performance of a 1695 church hymn. As youth listen, encourage them to notice their feelings in response to the music. Discuss:

- In what ways are transformations of the church and the world reflected in these songs?
- How does music help the church honor where we have come from but also move forward into the future in new ways?

- ☐ Hymnals with "For Everyone Born"
- ☐ Internet-connected device
- ☐ Copies of Resource Page 4
- ☐ Prepared newsprint
- ☐ Paper and pens

"FOR EVERYONE BORN"



Distribute hymnals with the lyrics to "For Everyone Born" (*GtG*, #769). Play the YouTube recording "For Everyone Born—Brian Mann—Arr. Tom Trenney—Scrolling Score" (bit.ly/FMEveryone, 4:14). Stop after verse 1, which ends at 1:20. Read or sing it together. Ask:

- What do the lyrics say about who has a place at God's table?
- Where do you see visions of change or transformation for God's church?

Display prepared newsprint. Distribute paper and pens. In partners or small groups, have participants write a new verse on copies of Resource Page 4 that names people who can have a place at God's table. Follow the verse pattern from the newsprint. Invite participants to share their new verses. Sing the hymn with some of the new verses the youth created.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

DRUM CIRCLE

M AM

Participants will embody doing a "new thing" through rhythm and music. Have youth sit in a circle. Distribute a drum or rhythm instrument to each person.

- The leader begins playing a four-beat pattern. Participants echo the pattern. Repeat several different patterns so youth get comfortable playing their instruments.
- Go around the circle and have each individual create a four-beat pattern that others in the group echo.
- Finally, have one participant create a steady beat for the group to follow. Go around the circle and have participants add their own pattern to the first person's steady beat. By the end of the activity, everyone should be playing their instrument in time to the original beat.

Reflect on these questions:

- ➔ How did this activity make you feel?
- ➔ How was it different playing a pattern on your own versus playing with the group?
- ➔ How did you see/hear/feel transformation taking place in the drum circle?

HYMNAL BLACKOUT POETRY

A QC

Blackout poetry is the art of taking an existing document and using a marker to black out all but some of the text. The words that remain create a newly transformed message.

Distribute copies of a hymn and markers. Demonstrate a few lines of blacking out words to make poetry. Have youth create a blackout poem. Invite volunteers to share their poems with the group.

☐ Drums or rhythm instruments



If you do not have instruments, no worries. Create some. Hands can clap and slap thighs. Hard-sole shoes can tap. Pens can tap on mugs or tables, and so forth.

☐ Copies of a hymnal page
☐ Black markers



A helpful resource on blackout poetry can be found at bit.ly/FMBlackoutPoetry.



FOLLOWING JESUS

TRANSFORMED AND TRANSFORMING

C

Have participants return to Luke 1:46–56 and find one line in Mary's song for an inspiration verse. Write the verse on an index card and include an action step they will take that reflects this verse. Invite volunteers to share their verse and action step.

Read Luke 1:46–56 together as a closing prayer.

☐ Bibles
☐ Index cards
☐ Pens

Instructions

Each of the four bit.lys will take you to a page where at least one image may be selected and printed. You can also do an internet search to find others if you wish. Print one image of each of these on separate sheets. Youth will be working with them either as one group or multiple groups if you choose. Each group will need one copy of each image.

Image A: bit.ly/FMDuraEuropos

Image B: bit.ly/FMCanterbury

Image C: bit.ly/FMBurroughs

Image D: bit.ly/FMLakewood

Date and Brief History of Each Image

Image A: Dura-Europos House Church

The Dura-Europos church (also known as the Dura-Europos house church) is the earliest identified Christian house church. It is located in Dura-Europos in Syria. It is one of the earliest known Christian churches and was apparently a normal domestic house converted for worship sometime between 233 and 256 CE, when the town was abandoned after conquest by the Persians.

Image B: Canterbury Cathedral

Canterbury Cathedral in Canterbury, Kent, is one of the oldest and most famous Christian structures in England. Founded in 597, the cathedral was completely rebuilt between 1070 and 1077.

Image C: New Ogeechee Missionary Baptist Church

New Ogeechee Missionary Baptist Church (1893) is located in Burroughs, Georgia. Burroughs is a populated place established as a town in Chatham County, Georgia, by former slaves. It had a population of 118 in 1900. The town was chartered in 1898 and had its charter revoked in 1921. It is now a neighborhood of Savannah.

Image D: Lakewood Church

Lakewood Church (current structure, 2005) is an evangelical nondenominational Christian megachurch located in Houston, Texas. It is one of the largest congregations in the United States, averaging about 52,000 attendees per week. The 16,800-seat Lakewood Church building, home to four English-language services and two Spanish-language services per week, is located at the former Compaq Center. Joel Osteen is the senior pastor of Lakewood Church with his wife, Victoria, who serves as co-pastor.

Luke 1:46–55 (CEB)

⁴⁶Mary said, “With all my heart I glorify the Lord!

⁴⁷In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior.

⁴⁸He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant. Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored

⁴⁹because the mighty one has done great things for me. Holy is his name.

⁵⁰He shows mercy to everyone, from one generation to the next, who honors him as God.

⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations.

⁵²He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones and lifted up the lowly.

⁵³He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty-handed.

⁵⁴He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, remembering his mercy,

⁵⁵just as he promised to our ancestors, to Abraham and to Abraham’s descendants forever.”

Make Mary’s song your own.

Add verses about your witness of God’s transformative work in the world.

God has _____

God has _____

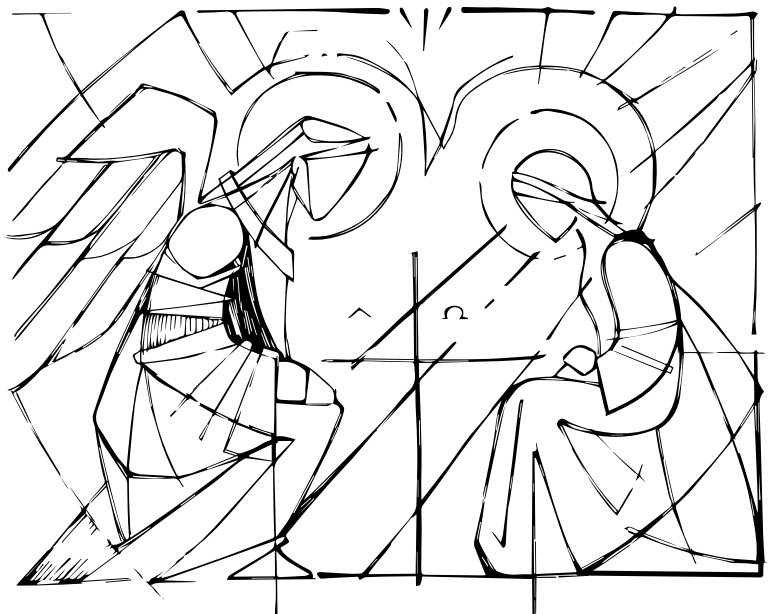
God has _____

Hannah's Song: 1 Samuel 2:1–10

¹Then Hannah prayed:
My heart rejoices in the LORD.
My strength rises up in the LORD!
My mouth mocks my enemies
because I rejoice in your deliverance.
²No one is holy like the LORD—
no, no one except you!
There is no rock like our God!
³Don't go on and on, talking so proudly,
spouting arrogance from your mouth,
because the LORD is the God who knows,
and he weighs every act.
⁴The bows of mighty warriors are shattered,
but those who were stumbling now dress
themselves in power!
⁵Those who were filled full now sell themselves for
bread,
but the ones who were starving are now fat from
food!
The woman who was barren has birthed seven
children,
but the mother with many sons has lost them all!
⁶The LORD!
He brings death, gives life,
takes down to the grave, and raises up!
⁷The LORD!
He makes poor, gives wealth,
brings low, but also lifts up high!
⁸God raises the poor from the dust,
lifts up the needy from the garbage pile.
God sits them with officials,
gives them the seat of honor!
The pillars of the earth belong to the LORD;
he set the world on top of them!
⁹God guards the feet of his faithful ones,
but the wicked die in darkness
because no one succeeds by strength alone.
¹⁰The LORD!
His enemies are terrified!
God thunders against them from heaven!
The LORD!
He judges the far corners of the earth!
May God give strength to his king
and raise high the strength of his anointed one.

Mary's Song: Luke 1:46–55 (CEB)

⁴⁶Mary said,
“With all my heart I glorify the Lord!
⁴⁷In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my
savior.
⁴⁸He has looked with favor on the low status of his
servant.
Look! From now on, everyone will consider me
highly favored
⁴⁹because the mighty one has done great things for
me.
Holy is his name.
⁵⁰He shows mercy to everyone,
from one generation to the next,
who honors him as God.
⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm.
He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and
proud inclinations.
⁵²He has pulled the powerful down from their
thrones
and lifted up the lowly.
⁵³He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty-handed.
⁵⁴He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,
remembering his mercy,
⁵⁵just as he promised to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to Abraham's descendants
forever.”



“For Everyone Born” Verse Pattern

Copy the verse pattern onto newsprint.

For _____ and _____

a place at the table

for _____ and _____

(refrain)

