

a cell-ebration for Holy Week



This worship service is designed to be led entirely using text messaging. The liturgy is simple and straightforward—you can use it every day of Holy Week to give kids a transcendent moment for reflection.

Maybe you, like me, have some teenagers who have a hard time showing up at all your events. Maybe they come from divorced homes, where Mom says, “Go to church,” and Dad says, “Sleep in.” Or maybe they’re addicted to busyness—they have jobs, boyfriends and girlfriends, midterms, and a grueling practice schedule for a sports team. If you’re lucky you see these kids once every two months.

If this describes some of your kids, this cell-ebration is a great way to stay connected to them—and it’s a perfect format for a late-night service. Once your kids get used to the format, you can lead this type of service over and over. But unlike past youth-led worship services in **group**, this one requires a certain amount of technical know-how. If you’re confused, ask your teenagers for help.

what you’ll need

- **Cell phones**—Every teenager needs one. They can gather friends around wherever they happen to be, or they can participate privately.
- **An order of worship**—Include this in your youth newsletter, the church newsletter, email it, or post it on your Web site.
- **Pictures**—If all of your worship participants have cell phones with picture-receiving ability, prepare four or five pictures that you can send during the service. Suggestions: a cross, a sunrise, a child, people praying, a tomb, a sky at night, a Bible. You can also adapt these to your group. Is there a specific location or sacred item that would have special meaning to them? If you’re going to lead a different cell-ebration each day of Holy

order of worship

a service of cell-ebration for Holy Week

- Youth Leader Texts:** The Lord be with you
- Teenagers Text:** And also with you
- Youth Leader Texts:** Let us lift our hearts to God
- Teenagers Text:** Amen
- Youth Leader Texts:** Four pictures (*The leader chooses four pictures and texts them to kids’ phones, one after the other. Then the leader follows up by texting “Amen.”*)
- Youth Leader Texts:** Let us offer the peace of God to all (*At this time all who are participating should text the word “Peace” to everyone on their list.*)
- Youth Leader Texts:** A psalm (*The leader texts the reference for the psalm for the day. Everyone reads the psalm. When they’re done reading, they text the word “Amen” back to the leader.*)
- Youth Leader Texts:** A passage from the gospels (*The leader texts the reference for the appropriate*

gospel passage for the day. Everyone reads the passage. When they’re done reading, they text the word “Amen” back to the leader.)

Youth Leader Texts: A short message (*The leader texts a one-sentence truth from the psalm or the gospel reading. Everyone reads the message. When they’re done reading, they text the word “Amen” back to the leader.*)

Youth Leader Texts: Prayers of the people

Teenagers Text: Specific prayers (*In one or two words, kids text concerns to everyone on the list. Examples: homework, test tomorrow, or friend depressed. As concerns come on your screen, pray for each one. Reply to each one with an “Amen.”*)

Youth Leader Texts: Kyrie eleison (*Greek for “Lord have mercy.”*)

Teenagers Text to All on Their List: Kyrie eleison

Youth Leader Texts: Go now to love and serve God

Teenagers Text: Amen. ■

ADVANCED PREPARATION

You’ll need to spend a few weeks promoting this service. Describe it as something new and cool that you’ve never done before. Set the time for worship at a different time each day so that the most kids can participate. Send out a text reminder in the hours leading up to each day’s service. Get a feel for how many kids will be participating. Create a new list of worship participants on your phone.



BY STEVE CASE

Steve is a longtime youth minister and a contributing editor for **group**. He recently authored *God Is Here: Connecting With Him in Everyday Life* (Relevant Books). He lives in Florida.



favorites

- BOOK—*Letters From the Earth* by Mark Twain
- COLD BEVERAGE—Cinnabon latte in a can
- PIZZA TOPPING—Hot Italian sausage