

This week at the African American Lectionary

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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In [my article on alternatives to the Revised Common Lectionary](#), I praised the African American Lectionary's extensive resources, but I didn't really describe them in any detail. There is a wealth of good stuff on [the AAL website](#).

The AAL is based on weekly themes, many of which do not correspond to the liturgical calendar the RCL follows. This Sunday is Caregivers Day, one of several new AAL observances this year. Here's what the site offers [for this week on its main lectionary commentary page](#), by Susan K. Smith:

- A two-paragraph description of the caregiving theme and why it matters ("Caregivers...are doing 'kingdom work.'")
- Two brief readings, 1 Thessalonians 5:11 ("Encourage one another") and Philippians 2:4 ("Look...to the interests of others")
- A short commentary connecting the day's theme in the present-day context to Paul's words (The "role of being caregiver is a part of imitating the Christ.")
- A slightly longer commentary on the passages' historical context ("Paul makes the point clear: the relational aspect of being a Christ-follower made it absolutely necessary to care for others.")
- A few sentences on the turn toward celebration, a crucial part of the black church tradition ("When one who is being cared for flashes a smile of appreciation toward us, it is the very smile of God.")
- Lists of relevant sights, sounds and emotions
- Links to additional resources for preaching

That's just the beginning. Then there's [a set of cultural resources](#), put together by Kymberley Clemons-Jones:

- A concise history of caregiving, with a particular focus on elder care
- Three relevant hymns, with full lyrics and a brief sketch of the song's background
- Two poems about caregivers
- A section on cultural response, including specific advice for both caregivers and those who seek to support them
- Audio-visual suggestions, including links to several online videos
- Two brief illustrations about people in Clemons-Jones's own congregation
- 11 concrete suggestions for creating a "memorable learning moment" on caregiving
- A reading list on caregiving

Finally, there are [worship and music resources](#), courtesy of Michelle Riley Jones:

- Several concrete suggestions for planning the worship space, music, prayers ("Begin naming the one offering care as well as the one for whom care is being given") and bulletins
- An original call to worship, litany and benediction, along with two introit suggestions
- A dozen congregational song suggestions, with publishing information, links and sample lyrics
- An even longer list of music suggestions for gospel choir, liturgical dance, choral anthems, instrumental music and more
- Extensive notes for a four-station "Spirit Spa For Caregivers"

That's all just for this Sunday. As I said in the article, the AAL is much broader in scope than a lectionary in the traditional sense (i.e., a table of readings). And they're doing great, collaborative work bringing together a wide variety of pieces to serve church leaders and respond to the needs of the church.