



Community of Christ

LECTIONARY LESSONS

ADULT

JANUARY-EASTER 2015 (PILOT)

COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LECTIONARY LESSONS



Discipleship is grounded in spiritual formation and includes scripture study, worship, mission, peacemaking, and lifelong learning—for all ages.

Community of Christ is piloting this set of disciple formation lessons for children, youth, and adults January through Easter 2015. We invite you to use these lessons for your class, group, or congregation, and then provide us feedback.

Lectionary-based: The weekly lessons connect the *Revised Common Lectionary* for worship with Community of Christ identity, mission, message, and beliefs.

Quick, easy: The lessons are designed for approximately 45-minute class sessions with two to three pages of ideas, discussion starters, and activities. Additional preparation help may be found in sermon helps sections of *Worship Resources Year B: 2014–15*.

Your feedback is needed! Pilot lessons for 14 weeks have been created, and we'd like to know how they met the needs of your class or group. We'll ask for feedback as part of the pilot and evaluate for further development.

Lessons are available for these age groups:

Children (multiage, 6–11): Help children engage in the Bible and introduce mission and beliefs with stories, crafts, and activities.

Youth (ages 12–18): Engage teens in scripture study and provocative questions about identity, mission, and beliefs.

Adult (ages 19 and older): Deepen faith and understanding with reflective questions, theological understanding, and discussion ideas.

To participate in the pilot, please contact Diane Maupin at dmaupin@CofChrist.org or (816) 833-1000 ext. 1259.

Note: Unless otherwise noted, all Bible scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) Bible, copyright 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

GOD'S GENEROUS LOVE

January 4, 2015

Focus: Grace and Generosity—God desires all creation to experience wholeness.

Focus Scripture: Jeremiah 31:7–14

Objectives

The learners will...

- read and reflect on Jeremiah 31:7–14.
- explore the Enduring Principle Grace and Generosity.
- discover new understandings of God's grace and generosity drawn from readings and hymn texts.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV)—one for each participant
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Paper and pens or pencils

Note to facilitator: *In preparation for this lesson, read sermon helps for Jeremiah 31:7–14 in Worship Resources Year B, January 4, 2015.*



GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Select one person to read the scripture passage aloud, divide the class into two groups and read alternating verses as a chorus, or have different individuals read each verse. For the reflection, share in groups of two or three, as a large group, or invite participants to write or draw their responses.

Read: Jeremiah 31:7–14
Reflect: What words or phrases capture your imagination? Why?

Read again: Jeremiah 31:7–14
Reflect: Consider a time when you experienced a joyful return to God, to another person, or to a special location.

Read again: Jeremiah 31:7–14
Reflect: How have you experienced God's faithfulness?

Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for God's generous love and faithfulness.



ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read these selections and respond to the questions that follow:

God always wants to deliver us from our suffering and lack of wholeness.

—*Worship Resources, Year B*, 60

God has reached out in Christ to reconcile the world and to welcome us to God’s table despite what we are... Grace is not a lifeless substance, but God’s love in action.

—Anthony J. Chvala-Smith, *Understanding the Way*, rev. ed., 52

God, the Eternal Creator, weeps for the poor, displaced, mistreated, and diseased of the world because of their unnecessary suffering. Such conditions are not God’s will. Open your ears to hear the pleading of mothers and fathers in all nations who desperately seek a future of hope for their children. Do not turn away from them. For in their welfare resides your welfare.

—*Doctrine and Covenants* 163:4a

- What words or phrases from the readings reflect your current understanding of God’s grace and generosity?
- What new understandings of God’s grace and generosity have you gained?
- What do these readings reveal about God’s grace in relation to humanity? To all creation?
- What do they reveal about the significance of our response to God’s grace?



RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Grace and Generosity

- God’s grace, especially as revealed in Jesus Christ, is generous and unconditional.
- Having received God’s generous grace, we respond generously and graciously receive the generosity of others.
- We offer all we are and have to God’s purposes as revealed in Jesus Christ.

- We generously share our witness, resources, ministries, and sacraments according to our true capacity.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*, 3rd ed., 12

Divide the group into smaller groups of two or three and assign each group one of the following hymn texts from *Community of Christ Sings*. Each group may select a particular verse from the hymn or use all verses. Have each group discuss these questions and share responses with the larger group.

- To which of the descriptions of Grace and Generosity, from *Sharing in Community of Christ*, does the hymn text most closely relate?
- What does the hymn text reveal about God’s grace? About our response to God’s grace?

“Amazing Grace” CCS 19

“If by Your Grace I Choose to Be” CCS 587

“Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You” CCS 609

“By Gracious Powers” CCS 268



SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Spend a few moments silently reflecting on the following:

The grace of God delivers us into a new way of life, the Way of Jesus Christ. Welcomed to the Lord’s Table and called into God’s family, there is now much for the disciple to do. The invitation is to open every dark corner of our life to the transfiguring light of God. All that was declared at our baptism, we must now make real, visible, and habitual day by day until life shall end.

—*Understanding the Way*, rev. ed. 55–56

Share with your group how you will respond to these challenges:

- I will increase my capacity to receive God’s grace by...
- I will generously respond to God’s grace by...



BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

As a collective blessing, invite groups to read aloud one verse of their designated hymns.

*For deeper exploration, read and study chapters 8 and 9 of *Understanding the Way: Exploring Our Christian Faith* by Anthony J. Chvala-Smith, ISBN 9780830914692, order at www.HeraldHouse.org.

OF WATER AND SPIRIT

January 11, 2015

Focus: Baptism of water and spirit represents a covenant between an individual, God, and the church community.

Focus Scripture: Mark 1:4–11

Objectives

The learners will...

- reflect on Mark 1:4–11 and the significance of covenant.
- discuss the importance of covenant and community in the sacraments of baptism and confirmation.
- explore the significance of sacraments in the mission of Jesus Christ.
- consider what it means to live sacramentally.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV)—for each participant
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Copies of lesson for each participant
- Blank paper or journals for each participant
- Pens or pencils

Note to facilitator: *In preparation for this lesson, read sermon helps for Mark 1:4–11 in Worship Resources Year B, January 11, 2015.*

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Read aloud today's focus scripture, Mark 1:4–11.

Allow time for reflection on the following questions:

- What words, images, or phrases in this scripture passage reflect the covenantal relationship between God and creation?
- What does this scripture passage convey about Jesus' solidarity with humankind?

Read aloud a second time. Invite participants to write or draw their responses, share in small groups, or share with the larger group.

Offer a prayer of invitation for this time of learning and sharing.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read and discuss the following:

Sacraments are special ministries which convey the grace of Jesus Christ to his disciples and all those he yearns to touch with his compassion. God sanctifies common elements of creation to bless human life and to renew and form the church to seek the peaceable reign of God.

God calls us into covenant and community to form relationships that reflect God's loving nature. Covenant begins with God extending love and invitation to us. President Stephen M. Veazey explains covenant this way:

I once was told covenant is like the seat belt on a roller coaster. Life is full of surprising "twists and turns." Being mindful of the covenant of peace in Christ and sacramental covenants like baptism [and] confirmation...doesn't "hold us back." It helps us stay within the scope of faithfulness to God's will as we live in the freedom of the gospel of Christ.

The sacraments shape the ongoing formation of the church through spiritual connection with God, the congregation, and the worldwide church. In addition, mission-sensitive disciples remember the sacraments are ministries of reconciliation and wholeness for all people who are seeking a relationship with God in community. The sacraments are not only a blessing to participants but also bear witness to what God is doing in the world through the church. For instance:

Baptism is a witness of God's saving work in the world. Through baptism of water, people show they are willing to be part of Christ's mission.

Confirmation is a witness of God's continual binding together of the community of faith through the power of the Holy Spirit. The sacrament of confirmation recognizes the work of the Holy Spirit in the disciple's life.

- In what ways do baptism and confirmation invite personal transformation?
- In what ways do baptism and confirmation invite community transformation?
- How does the church, through these sacraments, express the mission and ministries of Jesus Christ?
- How is community essential to our understanding of covenant and sacraments?

RESPOND Takes the learners from hearing to doing (35% of lesson time)

Divide participants into small groups. Read the following paragraph:

Live Sacramentally: Discipleship is not about being perfect; it is first about being one of God's beloved children. Then as God's children, we accept the challenge of growing in the love of Christ. Following Jesus calls us to recognize our constant need for grace. It is about yielding our lives to God's purposes day by day. It is about loving God with our whole being and loving our neighbor as ourselves. The sacraments remind us of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

—*Walking with Jesus*, Herald Publishing House, 46

Invite each group to identify specific examples in response to the following questions:

- Beyond celebrating a sacrament in church, what would it look like to be a living sacrament?
- What does it mean to be a living sacrament in relationships with others?
- How could it be possible to live in sacramental relationship with all nature or creation?

Invite groups to share some of their ideas with the larger group.

SEND Explores how the lesson might be lived out (10% of lesson time)

As you consider your response to God's grace and generosity, Christ's mission, and the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, reflect on the following questions. Record your responses on paper or in a journal, or share in small groups.

- How have you sensed God's closeness through the sacraments of baptism and confirmation?
- What questions do you have about these sacraments?
- How have you experienced living sacramentally as you have journeyed with Christ?

BLESS Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope (5% of lesson time)

Read or sing "At the Heart of Sacred Calling" CCS 509. Focus on how the text expresses covenant, encouragement, challenge, and blessing.

INVITE PEOPLE TO CHRIST

January 18, 2015

Focus: Jesus Christ invites people to follow him by becoming disciples who share his life and ministry.

Focus Scripture: John 1:43–51

Objectives

The learners will...

- share experiences of being invited to Christ.
- read and discuss specific sections of John 1:43–51 NRSV.
- make connections between the scripture passage and current life experiences.
- connect the scripture passage to the Enduring Principles, Worth of All Persons and All Are Called, and the Mission Initiative Invite People to Christ.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV)—one for each participant
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Copies of lesson or blank paper
- Pens or pencils

Note to facilitator: *In preparation for this lesson, read sermon helps for John 1:43–51 in Worship Resources Year B, January 18, 2015.*



GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Invite participants to reflect on the following and respond by writing in a journal, sharing in groups of two or three, or sharing as a larger group.

- Think about a person who invited you to Christ, or who invited you into a deeper awareness of Christ.
- What were the circumstances surrounding this particular encounter?
- In what ways was your life transformed?
- Describe anything unusual or surprising about the invitation.

Offer a prayer of gratitude for all who share the light and love of Christ.



ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read aloud the focus scripture, John 1:43–51. Divide the group into three groups to discuss the following verses.

Group 1: verses 43–46

- Who was inviting and who was being invited in these verses?
- What is significant about Philip's response?
- What limited Nathanael's acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah?

Group 2: verses 47–49

- What is significant about the encounter between Nathanael and Jesus?
- What does Jesus recognize in Nathanael?
- How did Nathanael's encounter with Jesus change his mind?

Group 3: verses 50–51

- What connection do you see between what Jesus tells Nathanael in verse 51 and the story of Jacob (Genesis 28:10–19)?
- What is Jesus offering to Nathanael?

Invite one person from each group to share responses with the larger group.



RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

At first, Nathanael was not able to recognize the divinity of Jesus because of his preconceived ideas related to the nature of Jesus' humanity. Perhaps we limit our encounters with God because of preconceived ideas about God or other people.

Invite the three discussion groups to connect their scripture passage to current situations by discussing the following:

Group 1:

- When have you experienced or witnessed another's response to Christ in the way Philip responded?

- When have you witnessed or experienced hesitancy to respond to Christ because of prejudice or preconceived ideas?

Group 2:

- When have you encountered Christ in someone with whom you differ?
- How did that encounter change your mind about yourself or your relationship to God?

Group 3:

- In what ways have you experienced a deeper awareness of God through specific encounters with others?
- How has your response to follow Christ opened your eyes to God's presence in others?

Invite one person from each group to share insights from their small-group discussions with the larger group.



SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Note to teacher: You may make copies of these statements for each participant or project them for all to see.

As you reflect on your relationship with God, consider these challenging statements:

- Affirming the worth of all persons, I will increase my ability to recognize God's divine presence by...
- I will open myself to divine encounter through the giftedness of another by...
- I will invite _____ to encounter the Living Christ by...



BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read aloud or sing verse 4 of "Welcome, Jesus, You Are Welcome" CCS 277.

GOD OUR REFUGE

January 25, 2015

Focus: All things that exist owe their being to God: mystery beyond understanding and love beyond imagination.

Focus Scripture: Psalm 62:5–12

Objectives

The learners will...

- engage in the practice of dwelling in the word with Psalm 62:5–12.
- discuss understandings of God expressed in *Community of Christ Basic Beliefs and Understanding the Way* (Herald Publishing House, ISBN 9780830914692).
- discover new insights about God through hymn texts.
- be introduced to the practice of keeping a prayer journal.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV)
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Whiteboard, chalkboard, or large poster paper
- Paper and pens or pencils

Note to teacher: *In preparation for this lesson, read sermon helps for Psalm 62:5–12 in Worship Resources Year B, January 25, 2015.*



GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Invite participants to share a word or phrase that best describes their understandings of God. You may choose to have participants complete the following statements. Record responses where the group can see them throughout the lesson.

- God is like...
- To me, God is...

Dwelling in the Word

This practice affirms the understanding that God continues to speak to us today through scripture. Dwelling in the word is not about gaining information, but listening to God speak and call us to join in Christ's mission in our communities and the world. Keep in mind persons respond to scripture through many different lenses and personal experiences.

1. Find a comfortable position, breathe deeply, and center yourself in God's peace.
2. As Psalm 62:5–12 is read aloud, quietly reflect as you allow the words to wash over you and fill your mind.
3. As the scripture is read a second time, pay attention to words or phrases which capture your attention regarding the nature of God.
4. After the scripture is read a third time, respond to the following by writing or sharing in groups of two or three.
 - Which words or phrases affirm your understanding of God?
 - Which words or phrases challenge your understanding of God?
 - In what ways are you comforted by this scripture?
 - In what ways are you disrupted by this scripture?

we have understood, but accept our call to be pilgrims always on the Way.

—Anthony J. Chvala-Smith,
Understanding the Way, rev. ed., 30–32

- In what ways has your understanding of God changed over the years?
- What prompted a change in your understanding?
- Which statements in the readings resonate most with your understanding of God?
- How are the expressions of God in Psalm 62:5–12 and the readings different?
- In what ways are discipleship and ministry shaped by one's understanding of God?
- How does an understanding of God affect one's relationship with others and with creation?

ENGAGE Invites exploration and interaction (35% of lesson time)

Read and discuss the following:

We believe in one living God who meets us in the testimony of Israel, is revealed in Jesus Christ, and moves through all creation as the Holy Spirit. We affirm the Trinity—God who is a community of three persons. All things that exist owe their being to God: mystery beyond understanding and love beyond imagination. This God alone is worthy of our worship.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd ed., 14

The Living God is not some nameless, impersonal force, or abstract idea we use in place of a question mark...The Living God—as opposed to all the false gods human beings manufacture and follow—is revealed as the Source and Goal of all things, the Holy One who saves and helps, who judges and sets free, who atones and cleanses, who calls and empowers, who answers and renews...According to the testimony of scripture and the church, the glory of God is revealed in the “face of Jesus Christ” and becomes known in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. God, Christ, Spirit: God is not a lonely, static, solitary being, but a living, dynamic relationship that has written community into the very nature of the universe...God's own being is itself communal, or more simply, God is love... Faith in the Living God is a relationship in which we never settle for where we have been or what

RESPOND Takes the learners from hearing to doing (35% of lesson time)

Divide the group into four groups and assign each group one verse of “How Can We Name a Love” CCS 2. Invite them to discuss the following questions in relation to their assigned verses.

- What connections can be made between this verse and the scripture passage or readings above?
- How is discipleship shaped or challenged by this hymn text?
- What new insights about God are revealed by this text?

Ask one person from each group to share some of the thoughts expressed in the discussion.

SEND Explores how the lesson might be lived out (10% of lesson time)

Prayer Journals

Encourage the use of prayer journals over a period of time agreed on by the group (one week, one month, or other). List words or phrases that express an understanding or help connect with God. Incorporate new ways to address God in prayer, and note how they change your practice of prayer. (For ideas, see hymns 1–21 in *Community of Christ Sings*.) Participants may buy journals or simply use blank paper or a notebook. Participants may choose a prayer partner with whom they can share new ideas or encouragement.



BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read aloud or sing “How Can We Name a Love” CCS 2.

*For deeper exploration, read and study chapter 4 of *Understanding the Way: Exploring Our Christian Faith* by Anthony J. Chvala-Smith, ISBN 9780830914692, order at www.HeraldHouse.org.

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CALLED TO LOVE AND SERVE

February 1, 2015

Focus: Loving servant ministry blesses and builds community.

Focus Scripture: 1 Corinthians 8:1–13

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore and discuss the scripture passage, 1 Corinthians 8:1–13.
- make connections between the scripture passage and the Enduring Principle Responsible Choices.
- apply the scripture passage to current circumstances and discipleship.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV)—one for each participant
- Paper and pens or pencils

Note to teacher: *In preparation for this lesson, read sermon helps for 1 Corinthians 8:1–13 in Worship Resources, Year B, February 1, 2015.*



GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson

(15% of total lesson time)

Provide each person with a small slip of plain or self-adhesive paper. Invite all to find comfortable sitting positions, breathe deeply, and center their thoughts in God's presence of peace. Listen with open attention as 1 Corinthians 8:1–13 is read aloud. As the passage

is read a second time aloud or silently by individuals, invite persons to write down phrases that capture their imagination. Respond to the following in groups of two or three, as a large group, or post them for the group to see throughout the lesson.

- What phrase from this passage captures your imagination? Why?
- What questions come to mind as you consider this phrase?

Offer a prayer of invitation and openness for this time of learning and sharing.



ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read and discuss:

The church in Corinth, to whom Paul was responding in today's focus scripture passage, was made up of two groups: the educated, elite Christians and the working class, many of whom were new Christians. The educated elite understood there was only one God; therefore, food sacrificed to pagan gods had no meaning. Those who were new to Christianity had more recent experience with pagan rituals and believed the food sacrificed to idols was unclean and should not be eaten.

- What is the significance of laws to new Christians?
- In this passage, how does Paul redirect the focus from laws to relationships?
- What is the message then and now regarding knowledge and love?
- How does this passage shape an understanding of discipleship and ministry for us today?

The following statements help explain the meaning of the Enduring Principle Responsible Choices. The fourth statement emphasizes our response to this principle. As group size permits, divide into four discussion groups. Assign each group one of the following statements and have them discuss the questions which follow. After a period of sharing, invite groups to share their thoughts with the larger group.

Responsible Choices

- God gives humans the ability to make choices about whom or what they will serve. Some people experience conditions that diminish their ability to make choices.
- Human choices contribute to good or evil in our lives and in the world.
- Many aspects of creation need redemption because of irresponsible and sinful human choices.
- We are called to make responsible choices within the circumstances of our lives that contribute to the purposes of God.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd ed., 13

- What connections can be made between this statement about 1 Corinthians 8:1–13 and Responsible Choices?
- What challenges are inherent in applying this statement?
- How does this statement shape an understanding of discipleship and ministry?



RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

What is *food* for us today?

Using one of the phrases from the focus scripture passage, have individuals or small sharing groups of two or three adapt the phrase to relate to a current circumstance in your congregation or community. (For example: "Food will not bring us close to God" might be adapted to read "The color of carpet in the sanctuary will not bring us close to God.") After each adapted statement is read, invite the group to respond to the following question as it relates to each circumstance.

- In what ways can loving servant ministry build community?



SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Spend a few moments reflecting on the following question. It may be helpful for individuals to complete the commitment statement which follows the question.

- How am I called to build community through loving servant ministry?

I am called to _____ (responsible choice) as I _____ to promote oneness and equality in Christ.



BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Close this time of learning with the following prayer (adapted from "God Who Cares for All Creation" CCS 14) or invite someone to offer a prayer.

God who cares for all creation,
Make us bearers of your grace,
Grant us boldness in our caring,
Make us guardians of the helpless,
Help us share your wider vision in our witness and our deeds.
Amen.

COME AND BE HEALED

February 8, 2015

Focus: Faithful disciples respond to Jesus' healing by ministering and serving others.

Focus Scripture: Mark 1:29–39

Objectives

The learners will...

- gather with a practice of song, scripture, and prayer.
- explore the focus scripture passage, Mark 1:29–39.
- connect the focus scripture passage with Community of Christ Mission Initiatives and Enduring Principles.
- reflect on their personal commitment to healing and servant ministry.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV) —one for each participant
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Dry erase board and markers, or large paper and markers
- Fourteen small slips of paper with a Mission Initiative or Enduring Principle written on each
- Paper and pens or pencils

Note to teacher: *In preparation for this lesson, read sermon helps for Mark 1:29–39 in Worship Resources, Year B, February 8, 2015.*



GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

reading or singing a stanza of CCS 237 with phrases from Doctrine and Covenants 163:2a followed by moments of silent reflection and prayer.

Find a comfortable sitting position, breathe deeply, and center yourself in God's presence and peace.

Invite all to participate together in prayer and blessing through a blending of song and scripture. Alternate

Read aloud or sing stanza one of "God, Renew Us by Your Spirit" CCS 237.

Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God's shalom, invites all people to come and receive divine peace in the midst of the difficult questions and struggles of life. (Pause for silent reflection and prayer.)

Read aloud or sing stanza 2 of "God, Renew Us by Your Spirit."

Follow Christ in the way that leads to God's peace... (Pause for silent reflection and prayer.)

Read aloud or sing stanza 3 of "God, Renew Us by Your Spirit."

Discover the blessings of all the dimensions of salvation. (Pause for silent reflection and prayer.)

Read aloud or sing stanza 4 of "God, Renew Us by Your Spirit."

ENGAGE Invites exploration and interaction (35% of lesson time)

The practice of song, scripture, and prayer highlights the promise of wholeness through Christ, the importance of personal renewal and prayer, and the call to respond as servants of healing and wholeness for others and for all creation. Today's focus scripture follows the same rhythm of healing, renewal, servant ministry, and mission.

Read aloud Mark 1:29–39 NRSV.

On a dry erase board or large paper, draw a line down the middle creating two sections. On the left side, make a list of all examples of healing found in the scripture passage. On the right side, make a list of everything that happened as a result of each example of healing.

Reflect on the following questions as you consider your responses.

- Who are the people engaged in servant ministry? How?
- Who experiences healing and renewal? Explain.
- What do these examples reveal about Jesus' healing ministry?
- What is the significance of touch in this passage? What connections can be made between the importance of touch in sacraments and servant ministry?

- What does verse 35 reveal about Jesus' approach to ministry and mission?

RESPOND Takes the learners from hearing to doing (35% of lesson time)

Place the small slips of paper (with a Mission Initiative or Enduring Principle written on each one) in a basket or container. Have each person draw a slip of paper and consider how that Mission Initiative or Enduring Principle is expressed through the scripture passage from Mark. Share with the larger group. Repeat as often as time and the size of the group allow to consider all the Mission Initiatives and Enduring Principles.

SEND Explores how the lesson might be lived out (10% of lesson time)

Allow time for reflection on the following questions. You may choose to post or project the questions so all can see, or print them for persons to write their responses. Share in a way (personal reflection and response, small group, or large group) that works best with the size of the group and time available.

- When have you experienced healing through the servant ministry of another? How did this experience lead you into a deeper awareness of Christ or Christ's mission?
- What need or desire do you have for healing through a particular sacrament? Commit to share this with your pastor or other spiritual companion.
- What new insights are emerging as you consider your response in servant ministry?
- What specific steps will you take to connect more closely with others and with God?

BLESS Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope (5% of lesson time)

Read aloud or sing "Find Your Wholeness" CCS 643. Give particular attention to the ways in which this hymn expresses the connection between wholeness and mission.

LISTEN TO THE BELOVED

February 15, 2015

Focus: Mission begins with encounter.

Focus Scripture: Mark 9:2–9

Objectives

The learners will...

- discuss the scripture passage, Mark 9:2–9.
- make connections between Jesus' transfiguration experience and mission.
- explore ways the group or congregation is responding to divine encounter and mission.
- make specific commitments to choices and actions which nurture their spiritual ventures and engage in Christ's mission.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV) —one for each participant
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Paper and pens or pencils

Note to teacher: *In preparation for this lesson, read sermon helps for Mark 9:2–9 in Worship Resources, Year B, February 15, 2015.*



GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

- Describe an experience you would classify as a mountaintop experience. How were you changed by the experience?
- Describe someone who has been a mentor or inspiration for you, and share how that person has strengthened your faith.

Mountaintop Experiences and Spiritual Giants

Invite the group to respond to the following in groups of two or three:

Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the transformative encounters and influential spiritual companions that shape our journeys of faith.



ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today is Transfiguration Sunday and the last Sunday of the season after Epiphany. It closes out the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany and takes us to the mountaintop with Jesus before we turn toward Jerusalem and the cross in our journey of Lent.

Read Mark 9:2–9.

Today's scripture is Mark's account of Jesus' mountaintop experience of transfiguration which includes the appearance of spiritual giants, Moses and Elijah, who have gone before him. There is a significant connection between Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Each took action against the injustice of empires of their time (Jesus—Roman and Jerusalem priesthood, Moses—Egyptian empire, and Elijah—corrupt kings of the northern Kingdom of Israel).

- What does the connection between Jesus and the spiritual giants, Moses and Elijah, reveal about Christ's mission?
- What does Mark's account tell us about the importance of encounter and mission?
- What do you think is significant about Jesus telling Peter, James, and John to tell no one about what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead?
- Peter, James, and John were among those who followed Jesus on the way to the cross. How might their mountaintop experiences have prepared them for Jesus' subsequent ministry?



RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

The kingdom was present in Jesus' ministry, as described in the Gospels and his disciples' actions described in Acts. Those first believers continued Christ's mission by proclaiming the Living Christ, inviting all people into community, valuing the worth of each person, generously and compassionately meeting their needs, and pursuing justice and peace for everyone.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd ed., 9

When we boldly proclaim Christ's mission as our mission, we are drawn into life-changing and world-changing encounters with God, with our neighbor, and with all of creation. We are transformed through divine encounter, but we know we cannot dwell in those mountaintop experiences. We must head down the mountain into a world longing for ministries of invitation, compassion, and justice and peacemaking.

From words of counsel presented to the 2013 World Conference by Prophet-President Stephen M. Veazey, we read:

As a spiritual venture, boldly follow the initiatives into the heart of God's vision for the church and creation. Then, in response to growing insight about God's nature and will, continue to shape communities that live Christ's love and mission.

Divide the group into four small sharing groups. (Adapt as needed for the size of your group.) Assign each group one of the following statements and have the group create a response that reflects what is currently being done in the congregation and a response of what could be. As a group, discuss what is keeping the group or congregation from moving toward what could be.

- Our spiritual venture following the Mission Initiatives includes...
- We are responding to God's vision for the church and creation by...
- We are opening ourselves to new insights about God's nature and will by...
- We are shaping communities that live Christ's love and mission by...



SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Mission begins with encounter. Sometimes encounters are mountaintop experiences; other times they are daily, intentional practices of being in the presence of God. Spend a few moments reflecting on your response and commitment to the following challenges. Consider a specific choice or action in the coming week that will help you live your response.

My spiritual venture will include...

I will live Christ's love and mission by...



BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing "Transform Us" CCS 569. In closing, invite participants to share one phrase or thought from the hymn that resonates with them as a statement of blessing or commitment.

OR close with the Mission Prayer:

God,

Where will your Spirit lead today?

Help me be awake and ready to respond.

Grant me the courage to risk something new
to be a blessing of your love and peace.

Amen.

Evaluation of Lectionary Lessons Pilot

Weeks 1–7

Thank you for being part of the field testing for the lectionary lessons. We value your feedback and suggestions as we continue to create quality educational resources. You will receive an e-mail with a link to an online SurveyMonkey evaluation. (If you cannot access the online evaluation, please complete this form; the questions are the same. Instructions for submitting this form are found on the next page.)

Congregation size

- Under 50
- 50–100
- Over 100

Class size

- 1–5
- 6–10
- Over 10

Class length

- 20–30 minutes
- 30–45 minutes
- Over 45 minutes

Curriculum tested

- Children
- Youth
- Adult

Were these materials appropriate for the length of time of your classes? If not, please explain.

Were these materials appropriate for the age level of your class? If not, please explain.

Were these materials appropriate for the class size? If not, please explain.

How much preparation time did you need for each lesson?

What do you like most about the lessons?

What was your favorite lesson/activity?

Do you have any suggestions that might improve the lessons?

Would you use lectionary lessons on an ongoing basis? Why or why not?

What church school materials were you using prior to field testing the lectionary lessons?
Please include title, author(s), and publisher.

Would your congregation be willing to pay for these materials if they were offered for a modest price? ___ Yes ___ No

We appreciate your willingness to pilot these lessons and provide feedback. Your ideas and suggestions are important to us as we develop future curricular materials.

If you completed this evaluation (rather than SurveyMonkey), please return to Diane Maupin, 1001 W. Walnut St., Independence, MO 64050, or e-mail to dmaupin@CofChrist.org.

GOD IS NEAR

February 22, 2015

Focus: Beginning a Lenten journey: contemplating discipleship and mission

Focus Scripture: Mark 1:9–15

Objectives

The learners will...

- discuss sections of the focus scripture, Mark 1:9–15.
- explore the significance of Lent relating to discipleship, ministry, and mission.
- engage in personal and community spiritual practices.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV) —one for each participant
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Paper and pens or pencils

Note to teacher: *In preparation for this lesson, read sermon helps for Mark 1:9–15 in Worship Resources, Year B, February 22, 2015.*



GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Today is the first Sunday of Lent. The word *Lent* comes from the Germanic language family and simply means “spring.” By the fourteenth century AD, Lent was associated with the 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter. Sundays during Lent are times of refreshment and are not included in the count of days.

Invite the group to sit in a comfortable prayer posture, breathe deeply, and rest in the presence of God. Read the following prayer, written by Apostle Stassi Cramm, as an invitation to this time of learning and shared journey of Lent.

We journey as individuals and as a faith community.

We journey *from* the temptations in our wilderness of the worldly images of power, success, exclusion, and hierarchy of worth.

We journey *in* confession...
We are weak and easily lured by these worldly images.
We sometimes serve our own self-desire to achieve these images even when it hurts Your creation and children.

We journey *in* repentance...
Forgiveness...
And Your Grace.

We journey *toward*...
A call to sacrifice these images of cultural norms.
The challenge to stand against worldly culture and to embrace Your culture.
The invitation to be cocreators of Your vision of Shalom for the world...
Where power comes in the form of a baby.
Where success hangs on a cross and breaks free from the tomb.
Where walls of exclusion turn to dust and inclusion for all is the norm.
Where hierarchy of worth is equalized and each person experiences his or her own worth and the worth of all others.

We journey *with* thankful hearts for...
The call to sacrifice,
The challenge to take a stand,
And the invitation to be cocreators with You and each other of a new world of Shalom.

We journey *in* trust that You will give us what we need to make this journey...
Strength
Courage
Endurance
Wisdom
Compassion
Unconditional Love

We journey *to* rebirth as the embodiment of the Living Christ in Your world in whose name we pray. Amen.



Today's scripture passage from Mark takes us from Jesus' baptism and 40 days in the wilderness to the beginning of his Galilean ministry. The rhythm of this passage is fitting for the focus of Lent as we, in turn, reflect on the spiritual venture of our discipleship, ministry, and mission. Share together as a group, in smaller groups of two or three, or

individually (write in a journal or on paper provided) your responses to the discussion questions following each of these scriptures and reflections.

The Baptism of Jesus

Read Mark 1:9–11.

In the broader Christian tradition, Lent has been a time for baptismal preparation, and for those already baptized, a time to reflect on their baptismal covenants. Baptism means taking on Christ, becoming part of his body as he becomes part of us. In this respect Lent is very much about discipleship, which is about following Jesus. "Baptism is a decision that marks a significant point in the process of repentance from all that is selfish, violent, and unjust. It is a voluntary step taken because of the joy of committing one's life to Jesus and his vision of the kingdom of God on earth" (*The Sacraments: Symbol, Meaning, and Discipleship*, edited by Andrew Bolton and Jane Gardner, 56).

- In what ways have you experienced joy in committing your life to Jesus and his vision of the kingdom of God on Earth?
- What questions do you have about the sacrament of baptism?
- How has your discipleship drawn you away from selfishness into justice and peacemaking?

The Temptation of Jesus

Read Mark 1:12–13.

Immediately following his baptism, Jesus was called into a wilderness experience. In Mark's account, the details about the temptations are not included. The significance of Jesus being among the wild animals would have been understood by the Jews and early church as an end of violence and of peace among all creatures (as found in Isaiah 11). In this respect, the wilderness experience can be seen as both negative and positive. It is both a time of temptation and an experience in the peaceful reign of God. A wilderness experience for us can be a time of separation from God or from our neighbor. It can also be a time that draws us closer to God. By acknowledging our brokenness, God mercifully offers release and new life.

- Describe a wilderness experience in your life. In what ways did this experience bring you closer to God?
- What connections can be drawn between our journey of Lent and Jesus' wilderness experience?

The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry

Read Mark 1:14–15.

Jesus returned from his wilderness experience proclaiming, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of

God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” His time in the wilderness had prepared him for his mission of bringing forth the kingdom of God on and for the Earth.

- In what specific ways can these forty days of Lent renew and prepare you to share the good news of the Living Christ? How can Lent renew and prepare your congregation?

RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Lent is, above all, about being in the presence of God with greater awareness and intentionality than usual. What matters most is abandoning old and ineffective habits, leaving the ordinary, and discovering new and fresh experiences with God. This is why the image of the desert has been so important in the practice of Lent.

The practice of fasting is most often associated with Lent. Fasting is not about causing ourselves discomfort. It is meant to create space with less distraction, while opening ourselves to the presence of the divine. The intent is to break the control *things* have over us, to reorder our priorities, to focus on the ministry and mission of Jesus Christ, and prepare to receive anew the Easter gift.

Consider your congregation or community as you discuss the following questions. Depending on the size of your group and time available, you may choose to divide into two groups and have each group discuss one of the following questions. Share responses with the larger group.

- What can your group or congregation do to practice being in the presence of God with greater awareness and intentionality than usual?
- What kind of fast would help your group or congregation reorder priorities and focus more intentionally on discipleship and mission?

SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

During Lent, there will be an intentional focus on specific practices to help guide us deeper inward and ultimately outward. As you journey toward the cross, and as you seek deeper connection with God and with all creation, contemplate what is holding you back from experiencing new life in Christ.

To fast is to intentionally empty oneself in a way that makes space for a greater awareness of God’s presence. In the week ahead, choose something from everyday life you will noticeably miss. What will you do in place of what you have given up? Spend time during your fast to pay attention to what is going on within you. How does intentional emptying make space in your life for a greater awareness of God’s presence?

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing “Lead Me, Lord” CCS 450 as a closing prayer of commitment.

BE A COVENANT PEOPLE

March 1, 2015

Focus: Transformative experiences through covenant relationships

Focus Scripture: Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16/17:1–8, 21–22 IV

Objectives

The learners will...

- discuss the focus scripture passage.
- explore what it means to be a covenant people.
- examine the nature of covenant relationships revealed in Genesis and in recent counsel to Community of Christ.
- be introduced to the Lenten practice of *examen*.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV) —one for each participant
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Paper and pens or pencils

Note to teacher: *In preparation for this lesson, read sermon helps for Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16 in Worship Resources, Year B, March 1, 2015.*



GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Today is the second Sunday in Lent. As mentioned in the previous lesson, Lent is, above all, about being in the presence of God with greater awareness and intentionality than usual. This is a time to abandon old

and ineffective habits, leave the ordinary, and find fresh places and ways of being with God.

- What changes did you make to your normal routine in the past week as a practice of Lent?
- What new insight or awareness has emerged as you sought new ways of being with God?

Read or sing “Lead Me, Lord” CCS 450 and invite someone to offer a prayer of invitation for this time of learning and sharing.



ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

(35% of lesson time)

Today's focus scripture passage describes an intimate, personal relationship between God and Abram. This account from Genesis invites us to consider God's generosity and our own relationships with others, with God, and with all creation.

Read Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 and discuss the following. (Note to facilitator: you may choose to discuss each question with the whole group or divide into smaller groups and assign each group one of the following questions to discuss. Share responses with the larger group.)

- What does this passage reveal about covenant relationships between God and humankind?
- What does this passage reveal about the nature of God?
- What does this passage reveal about human nature?



RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing

(35% of lesson time)

Abraham and Sarah's covenant relationship with God was transformative in ways they could not begin to imagine. As we enter into covenant relationships with one another, with God, and as community in Christ, we are transformed in unexpected ways. We become part of a new creation.

Read Doctrine and Covenants 164:5, 9b-c and discuss the questions which follow.

5. It is imperative to understand that when you are truly baptized into Christ you become part of a new creation. By taking on the life and mind of Christ, you increasingly view yourselves and others from a changed perspective. Former ways of defining people by economic status, social class, sex, gender, or ethnicity no longer are primary. Through the gospel of Christ a new community of tolerance, reconciliation, unity in diversity, and love is being born as a visible sign of the coming reign of God.

9b. When your willingness to live in sacred community as Christ's new creation exceeds

your natural fear of spiritual and relational transformation, you will become who you are called to be. The rise of Zion the beautiful, the peaceful reign of Christ, awaits your whole-hearted response to the call to make and steadfastly hold to God's covenant of peace in Jesus Christ.

9c. This covenant entails sacramental living that respects and reveals God's presence and reconciling activity in creation. It requires whole-life stewardship dedicated to expanding the church's restoring ministries, especially those devoted to asserting the worth of persons, protecting the sacredness of creation, and relieving physical and spiritual suffering.

- What connections can be made between this passage from Doctrine and Covenants and the previous passage from Genesis?
- What does this passage reveal about covenant relationships?
- What does this passage reveal about discipleship as part of a new creation?
- What does it mean to be a covenant people?



SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out

(10% of lesson time)

Choose one phrase or sentence from the Doctrine and Covenants passage that captures your imagination or challenges you. Write the phrase or sentence on a small piece of paper to keep with you during the coming week. Read it daily and consider how you are being drawn into spiritual or relational transformation.



BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope

(5% of lesson time)

During this week of Lent, all are invited to engage in the practice of *examen*. The prayer of *examen* encourages us to review the day with God, remember our connection with the holy, and recommit ourselves to encounter the Divine once again. Praying the *examen* during Lent is an opportunity to review our lives, realigning with the mission of Christ.

For more details about spiritual practices during Lent, visit www.CofChrist.org.

REVIVE MY SOUL

March 8, 2015

Focus: God is revealed in all creation and in the world through those who embody the ethics of Christ's peace.

Focus Scripture: Psalm 19

Objectives

The learners will...

- review and share experiences of Lent.
- discuss portions of Psalm 19.
- explore the nature of God revealed in creation and in the law.
- make connections between Psalm 19 and other designated scripture passages.
- introduce the practice of holy attention.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV) —one for each participant, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Paper and pens or pencils

Note to teacher: *In preparation for this lesson, read sermon helps for Psalm 19 in Worship Resources, Year B, March 8, 2015.*



GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Today is the third Sunday in Lent. As mentioned in previous lessons, Lent is, above all, about being in the presence of God with greater awareness and intentionality than usual. This is a time to abandon old

and ineffective habits, leave the ordinary, and find fresh places and ways of being with God.

- What has been most meaningful in your practice of Lent?
- What new insight or awareness has emerged as you sought new ways of being with God?

Read or sing "Lead Me, Lord" CCS 450 and invite someone to offer a prayer of invitation for this time of learning and sharing.



ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Psalm 19 begins with a proclamation of God revealed in creation (vv. 1–6), continues with a proclamation of the goodness of the law (vv. 7–13), and ends with a prayer (v. 14).

Read verses 1–6 of Psalm 19 and discuss the following:

- How does the psalmist use imagery to describe God’s revelation in creation?
- What imagery would you use to describe God revealed in creation?
- What does verse 3 reveal about humanity’s response to God revealed throughout creation?

The law to which the psalmist refers is the Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Read verses 7–13 of Psalm 19 and discuss the following:

- What phrases or images describe a legalistic view of the law or letter of the law?
- What phrases or images describe a principled view of the law or spirit of the law?
- How do we allow the letter of the law to obscure our vision of God at work in our world?

The law provides a way for God’s revelation to be known through all who embody and live the ethics of Christ’s peace. Read verse 14 of Psalm 19 and discuss the following:

- In what ways is God revealed through the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts?
- How does this closing verse of prayer encourage us to recognize God revealed in others?



RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Divide the group into small groups of two to three. Assign each group one of the following scripture passages from the *Revised Common Lectionary* and *Worship Resources* for this Sunday.

Exodus 20:1–17

1 Corinthians 1:18–25

John 2:13–22

2 Nephi 3:35–40, 46–50

Doctrine and Covenants 154:7 or 162:1

Have each group read its assigned passage and share with the larger group thoughts about one or more of the following questions:

- What connections can be made between this passage and Psalm 19?
- What does the passage reveal about the law understood as the ethics of Christ’s peace?
- In what ways is this passage reviving? Disrupting?



SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Engaging in the practice of holy attention allows us to suspend our inner conversations and agendas, giving reverent and receptive focus to a specific person or part of God’s creation. Regarding another as an unrepeatable miracle whose life journey is unique and sacred brings awareness to and affirmation of God’s presence in all creation. During Lent, as we continue to empty ourselves (fasting) and evaluate our lives (examen), we begin to make space for awareness of where and how God is showing up in the world around us.

As you engage in this practice in the coming week, be mindful of the following:

- As you make space in your life through fasting and prayer, to what person, group of people, life circumstance, or part of creation are you being drawn to give holy attention?
- What new awareness do you experience as you engage in this practice as part of Lent?

For more about spiritual practices during Lent, visit www.CofChrist.org.



BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Close with the following prayer:

May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you,

O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

CONFESS OUR IMPATIENCE

March 15, 2015

Focus: Confessing our impatience renews and frees us.

Focus Scripture: Numbers 21:4–9

Objectives

The learners will...

- discuss Numbers 21:4–9.
- make connections with John 3:14–21.
- examine connections between scripture passages and current circumstances.
- explore opportunities for reconciling ministries within current circumstances.
- engage in the practice of centering prayer.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV) —one for each participant
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Paper and pens or pencils

Note to teacher: *In preparation for this lesson, read sermon helps for Numbers 21:4–9 in Worship Resources, Year B, March 15, 2015.*

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Today is the fourth Sunday in Lent. As mentioned in previous lessons, Lent is, above all, about being in the presence of God with greater awareness and intentionality than usual. This is a time to abandon old

and ineffective habits, leave the ordinary, and find fresh places and ways of being with God.

- In what ways did you practice holy attention in the past week?
- What new insight or awareness has emerged as you practiced holy attention?

Read or sing “Lead Me, Lord” CCS 450 and invite someone to offer a prayer of invitation for this time of learning and sharing.



ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today's focus scripture passage from Numbers is the final "murmuring" story of complaint, discontent, and rebellion of the Israelites as they journey with Moses through the wilderness. Read Numbers 21:4–9 and discuss the following:

- What is the basis for the complaints of the Israelites?
- What do the venomous snakes represent?
- Moses is instructed to make a serpent and set it on a pole. If persons were bitten by a serpent, they would look at the bronze serpent and live, but the snakes remain. What is significant about the venomous snakes remaining among the Israelites?
- What does this passage reveal about God and human nature?

Read John 3:14–21. In verse 14, Jesus makes reference to the scripture from Numbers.

- What connections are made between the passage in John and the passage in Numbers?
- What does the passage in John reveal about God in Christ and the human condition?



RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Read the following passages from Community of Christ Basic Beliefs in *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd ed., p. 15.

Humanity

Every human being is created in the image of God. In Jesus Christ, God took on the limits of human flesh and culture, and is known through them. We therefore affirm without exception the worth of every human being. We also affirm that God has blessed humankind with the gift of agency: the ability to choose whom or what we will serve within the circumstances of our lives.

Sin

God created us to be agents of love and goodness. Yet we misuse our agency individually and collectively. We take the gifts of creation and of self and turn them against God's purposes with tragic results. Sin is the universal condition of separation and alienation from God and one another. We are in need of divine grace that alone reconciles us with God and one another.

- What phrases or concepts from these statements are found in the scripture passages from Numbers and John?

- What new insights are revealed about God's nature and the human condition?

Consider a current event in your congregation, community, or in the worldwide church that connects with the story of Moses and the "murmuring" Israelites.

- How does this circumstance illustrate a separation from God and others?
- What ministries would bring healing and reconciliation?



SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Community of Christ affirms that reconciliation—with one another, with all creation, and with God—is a constant human need. Repentance, or turning toward God, is an important part of Lent. By acknowledging our brokenness, God mercifully offers release and new life. As you continue to engage in practices of fasting, examen, holy attention, and centering prayer, look for opportunities to engage in acts of justice and peacemaking that reconcile relationships with God, with others, and with creation.

Centering prayer is a simple way to pray that uses breathing and a prayer word or phrase to stay focused on God's presence. The intent of this prayer is to simply spend time with God, seeking no answers but merely connecting to the Divine. During Lent, centering prayer helps us dwell more deeply in the mystery of God. As you engage in this practice in the coming week, be mindful of the following:

- As I dwell in the mystery that is God, how do I honor the divine mystery in others?
- How do I honor the divine mystery within myself?
- What am I being invited to consider and live into as I dwell in God's presence?

For more about spiritual practices during Lent, visit www.CofChrist.org.



BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Offer a closing prayer, or spend a few moments in centering prayer. As you relax and enter into a time of prayer, use your breath to create a sense of peace and letting go into God. Be aware that God is present and that you are in this space with the intention of loving and being loved by God. Repeat the following phrase silently to yourself in rhythm with your breathing: *I dwell in you as the source of all life.*

WE ARE FORGIVEN

March 22, 2015

Focus: God initiates a new covenant with all.

Focus Scripture: Jeremiah 31:31–34

Objectives

The learners will...

- review the practices of Lent.
- discuss the focus scripture.
- explore deeper understanding of God’s relational nature and covenant.
- engage in the practice of *lectio divina* with Doctrine and Covenants 163:2.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV) —one for each participant
- Doctrine and Covenants
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Paper and pens or pencils

Note to teacher: *In preparation for this lesson, read sermon helps for Jeremiah 31:31–34 in Worship Resources, Year B, March 22, 2015.*



GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Today is the fifth Sunday in Lent. As mentioned in previous lessons, Lent is, above all, about being in the presence of God with greater awareness and intentionality than usual. This is a time to abandon old

and ineffective habits, leave the ordinary, and find fresh places and ways of being with God.

- What has been meaningful in your practice of Lent?
- What new insight or awareness has emerged as you sought new ways of being with God?

Read or sing “Lead Me, Lord” CCS 450 and invite someone to offer a prayer of invitation for this time of learning and sharing.



ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Jeremiah has the unfortunate distinction as the “gloom and doom” prophet. He witnessed much sorrow and destruction as his warnings went unheeded. Even though today’s scripture passage is the pinnacle of Jeremiah’s message and one of great hope, it begins in the reality that humans have broken their faith in God. Despite this reality, the very nature of the Triune God is relational, and God continues to initiate and uphold a covenant with all humanity that is unbreakable. God’s covenant is one of forgiveness, hope, and new life.

Read Jeremiah 31:31–34 and discuss the following:

- What is the old covenant mentioned in this passage?
- What is the significance of a covenant “written on their hearts” as opposed to one “written in stone”?
- What is the new understanding of God’s nature and covenant revealed in this passage?
- What understanding of God’s covenant is revealed in Christ Jesus?
- What is the difference between obeying and embodying a covenant?



RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

The practice of *lectio divina* (Latin for sacred reading) provides opportunity for encountering God through sacred text. Listening deeply to the words opens us to an awareness of God’s invitation through a particular scripture passage or hymn text.

Use Doctrine and Covenants 163:2 as the text to engage in the practice of *lectio divina*. Read the text four times allowing time for meditation and prayer between each reading. You may choose to write your thoughts and responses during the time of meditation between each reading.

1. *Lectio*—Listen to the text to get an overall sense of its setting and message.
2. *Meditatio*—Focus on meaning and understanding. What does the text tell you about God? How do you relate to the text?
3. *Oratio*—Focus on your emotional response. What do you feel: joy, sorrow, hope, fear, or guilt? Share

your feelings with God in prayer. Ask for help, listening deeply to these emotions and meanings.

4. *Contemplatio*—Continue in a time of receptive prayer. Breathe deeply and calmly, entering a profound, silent state of listening. Wait for whatever God may bring to you in the quiet. If no particular awareness comes, let your mind return to the text. Offer a word of thanks to God to close your time.

- What layers of meaning begin to unfold as you engage in this practice with the text?
- What do you sense about God’s call to you through this text?
- What do you sense about God’s call to the church through this text?

Invite those who wish to share their responses or thoughts about the text with the group.



SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

God’s covenant of forgiveness and new life is for all. Jeremiah 31:34 affirms, “...they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord...” which upholds Community of Christ’s Enduring Principle Worth of All Persons. Lent is a time to focus on repentance and forgiveness, as well as our lives as disciples and our role in Christ’s mission. This week, focus on the practice of *lectio divina*. You may choose texts such as Isaiah 58:6–9 or Doctrine and Covenants 163:2, or you may use hymn texts such as “How Long, O God, How Long” CCS 455 or “Leftover People in Leftover Places” CCS 275.

As you engage in this practice daily, consider the following:

- What does God want me to receive? What is God calling me to share?
- How am I being led to actions of social justice?

For more about spiritual practices during Lent, visit www.CofChrist.org.



BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Offer a closing prayer, or repeat together the following prayer phrase for the week: *Living Word, live through me.*

PASSION WEEK

March 29, 2015

Focus: The passion story draws us deeper into the story we are to live.

Focus Scripture: Mark 14:1—15:47/14:1—15:51 IV

Objectives

The learners will...

- reflect on personal experiences during Lent.
- explore the significance of the passion story and what it reveals about God's nature and purposes.
- connect the passion story to recent counsel to Community of Christ.
- discover new understandings of discipleship, salvation, and suffering love.
- introduce the practice of silence for the final week of Lent.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV) —one for each participant
- Doctrine and Covenants
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Paper and pens or pencils

Note to teacher: *In preparation for this lesson, read sermon helps for Mark 14:1—15:47 in Worship Resources, Year B, March 29, 2015.*

GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Today is the last Sunday in Lent and the beginning of Holy Week. This week, we walk in "real time" with Jesus to the cross. Take a few moments to reflect on your Lenten experience.

- What have you discovered about your discipleship?
- What practices have been most meaningful?
- What has been life-giving about the journey of Lent? What has been challenging?

Read or sing "Lead Me, Lord" CCS 450 and invite someone to offer a prayer of invitation for this time of learning and sharing.



ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

(35% of lesson time)

The passion story, as uncomfortable as it is, is not a segment of Jesus' life we can ignore. It is the story that draws us deeper into the story we are to live, a story of a people who love as God loves, a story that extends God's justice and grace into the lives of the broken and lost (*Worship Resources*, 127).

Mark's account of the passion story includes the following passages. Each passage contains multiple elements which reveal the socio-political context of the story, who Jesus is, and the nature of God and God's purposes. As time and class size allow, you may choose to divide into five small sharing groups to discuss what is revealed in each passage. Share what is discovered with the larger group.

The plot to kill Jesus (Passover), Anointing—14:1-2, 3-9

Judas' plan of betrayal, The Last Supper—14:10-11, 12-25

Agony and betrayal in Gethsemane—14:26-52

Jesus condemned by chief priests, Peter's denial, Condemned by Pilate—14:53-65, 66-72, 15:1-15

The Crucifixion, Jesus' burial—15:16-38, 39-47

Encourage all members of the group to read one passage each day through Good Friday as personal study and spiritual practice. Pay attention to what is discovered anew with each reading. What emotions are present? What is revealed about suffering love as you walk with Jesus to the cross?



RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing

(35% of lesson time)

And, always remember, the way of suffering love that leads to the cross also leads to resurrection and everlasting life in Christ's eternal community of oneness and peace.

—words of counsel delivered to 2013 World Conference

The passion story is one of suffering love that leads to the cross and to new life. It is a story that reveals the

intensely personal nature of God's love. Rehearsing the story draws us into God's purposes and God's vision of new life for all creation.

Read Doctrine and Covenants 163:4 and discuss the following:

- What does this passage reveal about the nature of God?
- What new insight is gained as you read this passage in the context of Holy Week?
- What does this passage reveal about discipleship, salvation, and suffering love?
- What is God's call to you through this passage? To your congregation?



SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out

(10% of lesson time)

Engage in the practice of silence during this last week of Lent. Practicing silence reminds us that relationship with the Divine is reciprocal. In silence, we take the time to really listen and be present with God. Often, our most profound spiritual experiences cannot be fully described. As we enter Holy Week, the full implication of discipleship brings with it a weighted hush. There are moments when words are inadequate and our most faithful response is to stand humbly before the mystery. As you engage in this practice in the coming week, be mindful of the following:

- How does it feel to be present with God in silence?
- In the silence, are you discovering something new about yourself or your relationship with God?
- As you prepare to experience new life in Christ, what leaves you speechless?

For more about spiritual practices during Lent, visit www.CofChrist.org.



BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope

(5% of lesson time)

Offer a closing prayer and repeat together the prayer phrase for the week: *Holy Mystery, I am speechless in your presence.*

RESURRECTION!

April 4, 2015

Focus: Living as Christ's new creation

Focus Scripture: Mark 16:1–8/16:1–7 IV

Objectives

The learners will...

- discuss Mark 16:1–8/16:1–7 IV.
- explore what it means to live as Christ's new creation.
- reflect on personal covenant commitment.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV) —one for each participant
- Doctrine and Covenants
- Paper and pens or pencils

Note to teacher: *In preparation for this lesson, read sermon helps for Mark 16:1–8 in Worship Resources, Year B, April 5, 2015.*

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Invite people to reflect on their experiences of Lent, particularly Holy Week. Respond to the following with the large group, in small groups of two to three, or through writing or drawing.

- In what ways have you experienced new life?
- What insight or awareness has been revealed regarding your discipleship and Christ's mission?

Offer a prayer of gratitude for the journey to new life in Christ.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

We gather on Easter Sunday to celebrate the joy and hope of the gospel which is the good news that Jesus lives! We view the well-known story through our 21st-century Christian lens, but today's account of the resurrection story found in Mark provides a different reality for those present at the time of Jesus' death.

Read Mark 16:1–8 and discuss the following as a large group or in small groups of two to three.

- What is most surprising to you in Mark's account of

the women's encounter at the tomb?

- Imagine what the women must have felt (fear, anger, disappointment, disbelief, doubt) and share your thoughts about why they responded as they did.
- What feelings or emotions do you experience reading this text?
- In the midst of chaos and grief, the women were carrying out the ordinary task of burial preparation. When have you experienced divine encounter in the midst of ordinary tasks?
- The women were confronted by a new reality in their encounter at the tomb. With what new reality are we confronted as we claim the message and mission of the Living Christ?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Jesus' empty tomb reveals the glory of God. The story of Jesus ends with the wonder of an empty tomb...Easter casts its light backward over the whole career of Jesus and reveals what was always true about him: that he was and is Christ, that he was and is for all time God's Son. It casts its light on the appalling spectacle of his death, showing the cross to be God's mercy in action, identifying with human misery completely. And it casts its light forward, revealing a glimpse of a glory yet to be: the new creation.

—Anthony J. Chvala-Smith, *Understanding the Way: Exploring Our Christian Faith*, rev. ed., 35

Recent words of counsel to Community of Christ reveal a deeper understanding of what it means to live as Christ's new creation.

Read Doctrine and Covenants 164:9b–d.

Divide into five groups (adjust according to the size of the group) and assign each group one of the following "action items" found in Doctrine and Covenants 164:9b–d.

Discuss ways you or your congregation embody this phrase, as well as ways you or your congregation are challenged by this phrase.

1. Willingness to live in sacred community as part of Christ's new creation
2. Spiritual and relational transformation
3. Whole-hearted response to the call to make and steadfastly hold to God's covenant of peace in Jesus Christ
4. Sacramental living that respects and reveals God's presence and reconciling activity in creation
5. Whole-life stewardship dedicated to expanding the church's restoring ministries, especially those devoted to asserting the worth of persons, protecting the sacredness of creation, and relieving physical and spiritual suffering

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Through the passages from Mark and Doctrine and Covenants, we are confronted with our personal response to encountering the Living Christ. We are also challenged by what it means to live as Christ's new creation. As you prepare to take part in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (Communion), consider how the Holy Spirit is leading you to renew your covenant as a disciple. As a personal commitment, reflect on your response to the following:

I will embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ by...

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Offer a prayer of blessing as you prepare for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (Communion).