



Community of Christ

COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS

YOUTH

28 November 2021 — 20 November 2022

COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS

Lifelong Disciple Formation in Community of Christ is the shaping of persons in the likeness of Christ at all stages of life. It begins with our response to the grace of God in loving community and continues as we help others learn, grow, and serve in the mission of Jesus Christ. Ultimately, discipleship is expressed as one lives the mission initiatives of the church through service, generosity, witness, and invitation.

We invite you to use these lessons for your class, group, or congregation.

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 & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament* (with focus on the gospel according to Luke) and *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament* (semicontinuous readings).

Lessons are available for three age groups. Recognizing each age group represents multiple stages of development, the instructor is encouraged to adapt lessons to best meet the needs of the class or group. When possible, optional activities are provided to help adapt lessons for diverse settings.

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.

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.

A Word Concerning Copyrights

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LESSON 1
28 November 2021

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT (HOPE)

Focus Scripture Passage: Jeremiah 33:14–16

Lesson Focus: How does Pursuit of Peace bring hope to the world?

Objectives

The learners will...

- identify places in their life where they notice a lack of peace.
- participate in spiritual practice to deepen their connection to God.
- deepen their understanding of God's covenant relationship to everyone in the world.

Supplies

- Poster chart paper or marker board, and markers
- Copies of the scripture mandala, one per learner (end of lesson)
- Coloring pencils, markers, or crayons
- Copies of the spiritual practice "See the Light of God," one per learner (see end of lesson)
- Advent wreath or Advent candles (we will be lighting one each week)
- Bulletin board or someplace the learners feel free to hang their mandalas if they choose
- Bible

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Jeremiah 33:14–16 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 21–22, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Invite a learner to light the first candle of Advent, and then to read the following (you can write it on the poster or marker board or just print it):

Advent invites us to name the places in our lives and society that are at odds with the divine vision of justice and righteousness.

Ask: Are there any words or phrases in the Advent statement that you aren't sure of? What are they?

As they answer, write the responses on the blank poster to keep up the entire season of Advent. If you are meeting virtually, consider using a Google doc that they can all share on.

Say: We will come back to this later and see if any of our learning today might help us better understand these words or phrases.

It is completely OK if the learners want to discuss the words or phrases, but the facilitator should let them figure out the meaning. The goal is for the learners to develop understanding at their level.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Say: Unlike years before, we are going to celebrate and learn about Advent through Old Testament scriptures. There won't be any written mention of the baby Jesus story. In fact, the people for whom these scriptures were written were not alive at all when Jesus was born. But Jesus grew up with these scriptures, and he understood why they were written and for whom they were written. These scriptures and what they teach about God's love for the world were part of Jesus' understanding of God, which he then used to teach people in his day and us in our day! Pretty cool.

Ask: Can anyone name any of the covenants God made with the people in the Old Testament?

If no one can, here are the three we hope they recall:

1. **God made a covenant with Noah** that the world would never be flooded again if the people turned away from God. God sent the rainbow as a visual reminder of that covenant.
2. **God made a covenant with King David** (*he was king, but before that he killed Goliath with a slingshot and was anointed by Samuel*). God promised that David and all of David's ancestors would forever be rulers of Israel.
3. **God made a covenant with Moses**. But this time it was different. It was the people who promised God they would follow the Ten Commandments, which were designed to help them live together in community with God at their center.

Say: As we explore the scripture text today, the people have quit living with God at the center of their lives. They don't live the commandments; they worship lots of other gods; and they go through the motions but don't believe in or behave what they claim to. Remember, there was no scientific thought going on here, no logical cause and effect. If something good happened, it was luck or due to whatever god thought you deserved the goodness, and likewise, if something bad happened, you must have made the god(s) upset and deserved what you got! Basically, they had broken covenant with God. Let's see what the prophet Jeremiah had to say about God and how to be in relationship with God."

Read Jeremiah 33:14–16.

If you think your learners will benefit from "doodling" to better focus, feel free to print out the mandala at the end of this lesson. It includes the scripture text and lets the learners color while listening. When they are finished, they can add it to the bulletin board or take it with them.

Ask:

- To what promise in the scripture passage is Jeremiah referring?

- Why does Jeremiah say Israel and Judah? (*When David was king, he ruled over the entire group, but they split into two after David died. There is hope that they will reunite.*)
- What did you notice or wonder when Jeremiah mentioned Branch with a capital B? Why do you think it is written with a capital B?

Say: Today is the first Sunday of Advent, the Sunday of Hope. How does this scripture convey hope to folks who are out of sorts with God or who think they are so awful that God has abandoned them?

3 RESPOND

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

Say: This scripture taught the people and now reminds us that God does not abandon us and God remains faithful to us with covenant relationships. What do you think the word *covenant* means? How is it different from the word promise?" Briefly discuss with the learners.

Say: Confidence in God's faithfulness to us enables us to believe in a new reality.

Say: Let's look at the Enduring Principle of Pursuit of Peace (Shalom). Here is one aspect of the Enduring Principle: "Led by the Holy Spirit, we work with God and others to restore peace (shalom) to creation" (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 30). Isn't that what Jeremiah was doing for the community that was suffering by not living with God?

Ask:

- How do you see a lack of peace in your home? or in your school? or in your neighborhood? or in your city? or in your congregation? (Let them discuss and come up with one or two ideas that they agree need help.)
- What could be the cause of the lack of peace in those situations?
- How would it look differently if there was a restored peace in those situations?
- What would have to happen for peace to be restored in those situations?

4 SEND

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

Spiritual Practice: See the Light of God

Say: Each week during Advent, we are going to share in a spiritual practice. These are not meant to just be an activity, but a way to focus on your connection with God. Some of the practices we do might help you feel connection to God, and some may not. Each of us has a unique relationship with God, so it is OK if the practice isn't exactly what you need. Hopefully, by Christmas, you will find one practice you can repeat at home whenever you are ready to build on your relationship with God, who loves you very much.

Say: You can close your eyes or put your head down. I will guide the practice and give you time to think between the directions that follow.

- Think back through your day yesterday. What made you happy, or where did you see the light of God? (pause to let them ponder)
- What made you sad, or where did you feel distant from God (maybe something you wish you could do differently)? (pause to let them ponder)
- What might God be inviting you to do tomorrow? (pause to let them ponder)
- Now offer a prayer thanking God for this time of reflection and ask for guidance as you start the new day.

Say: You may open your eyes now. This practice was called "See the Light of God." I have a handout you can take to hang up in your room to use each night before bed. Or you may want to take a picture of it on your phone, so you can look at it any time you feel like inviting God into your day.

Spiritual practices for children, can be found at www.CofChrist.org by typing "Spiritual Practices for Children" in the sitewide search.

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

Invite one learner to read the following (from the beginning of class):

Advent invites us to name the places in our lives and society that are at odds with the divine vision of justice and righteousness.

Ask (refer to the poster from the start of class): Do we have a better understanding of the words and phrases? (If yes, have the learners explain and add that to the poster. If no, leave it for next week.)

Read aloud to the class or invite a learner to share:

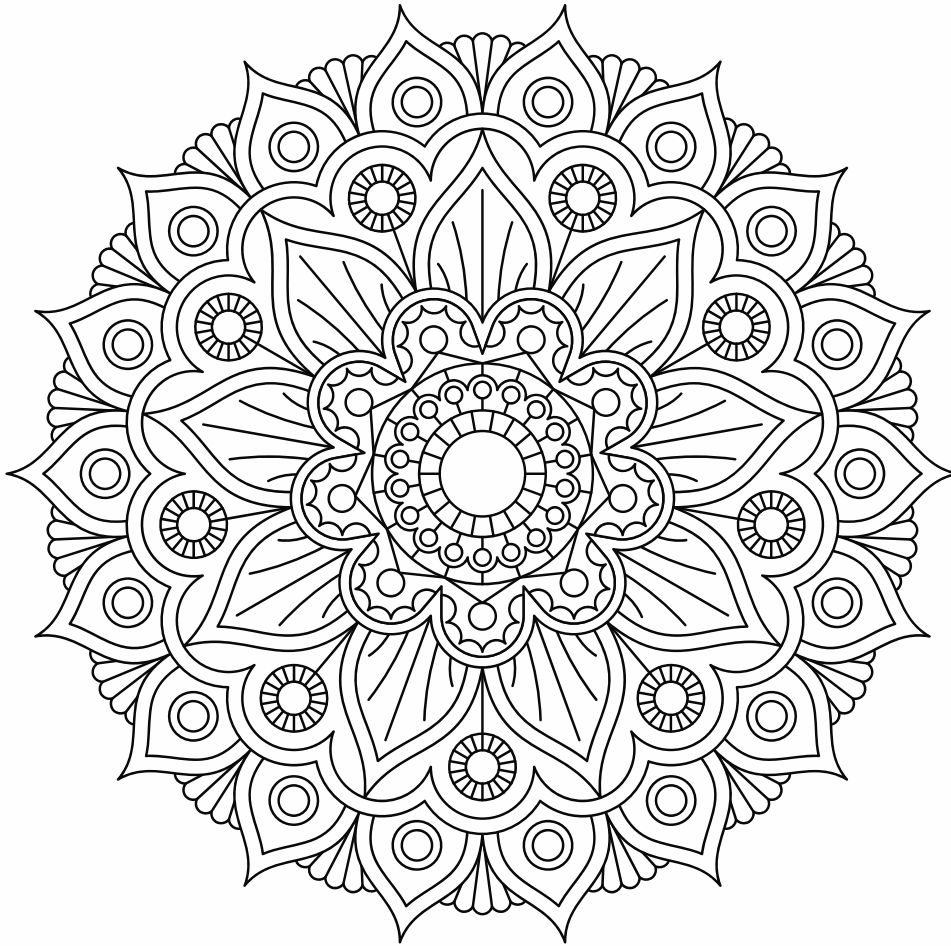
Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. Any small, calm thing that one soul can do to help another soul, to assist some portion of this poor suffering world, will help immensely. It is not given to us to know which acts or by whom, will cause the critical mass to tip toward an enduring good. What is needed for dramatic change is an accumulation of acts — adding, adding to, adding more, continuing. We know that it does not take "everyone on Earth" to bring justice and peace, but only a small, determined group who will not give up during the first, second, or hundredth [setback].

— "Letter to a Young Activist during Troubled Times," by Clarissa Pinkola Estés, Ph.D.,
www.mavenproductions.com/letter-to-a-young-activist

Hand out the spiritual practice cards and invite the learners to post their mandalas if they want to.

Jeremiah 33:14–16

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."



See the Light of God

- Think back through your day. What made you happy, or where did you see the light of God?
- What made you sad, or where did you feel distant from God (maybe something you wish you could do differently)?
- Consider what God might be inviting you to do tomorrow.
- Now offer a prayer thanking God for this time of reflection and ask for guidance as you start a new day.

LESSON 2
5 December 2021

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT (LOVE)

Focus Scripture Passage: Malachi 3:1–4

Lesson Focus: God is with me always.

Objectives

The learners will...

- participate in spiritual practice to deepen their connection to God.
- gain a deeper understanding of the Mission Initiative Invite People to Christ.
- understand a deeper meaning of the words "eat this bread."
- ask God for forgiveness.

Supplies

- Poster chart paper or marker board, and markers
- Copies of the scripture mandala, one per learner (see end of lesson)
- Coloring pencils, markers, or crayons
- Copies of the spiritual practice "Meditation Prayer," one per learner (see end of lesson)
- Advent wreath or Advent candles (we will be lighting one each week)
- Bulletin board or someplace the learners feel free to hang their mandalas if they choose
- Video: *Toward the Peaceful One—Part 3* found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_3xljnkKMw
- Bible

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Malachi 3:1–4 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 22–23, available through Herald House.

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

Invite a learner to light the first and second candles of Advent, and then to read the following (you can write it on the poster or marker board or just print it):

Advent, the season of preparation that reorients us to God in worship.

Ask: Are there any words or phrases in the Advent statement that you aren't sure of? What are they?

As they answer, write the responses on the blank poster to keep up the entire season of Advent. If you are meeting virtually, consider a Google doc that they can all share.

Say: We will come back to this later and see if any of our learning today might help us better understand these words or phrases.

It is completely OK if the learners want to discuss the words or phrases, but the facilitator should let them figure out the meaning. The goal is for the learners to develop understanding at their level.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Say: This is just a reminder that unlike years before, we are going to celebrate and learn about Advent through Old Testament scriptures. There won't be any written mention of the baby Jesus story. Jesus grew up with these scriptures, and he understood why they were written and for whom they were written. These scriptures and what they teach about God's love for the world were part of Jesus' understanding of God, which he then used to teach people in his day and us in our day.

Ask: Can anyone recall some of the covenants God made with the people in the Old Testament?

Share what you need with the learners. This is the same from last week:

1. **God made a covenant with Noah** that the world would never be flooded again if the people turned away from God. God sent the rainbow as a visual reminder of that covenant.
2. **God made a covenant with King David** (*he was king, but before that he killed Goliath with a slingshot and was anointed by Samuel*). God promised that David and all of David's ancestors would forever be rulers of Israel.
3. **God made a covenant with Moses.** But this time it was different. It was the people who promised God they would follow the Ten Commandments, which were designed to help them live together in community with God at their center.

Say: As we explore the scripture passage today, the people have been living with the understanding of the Davidic covenant, but they are not listening to prophets as messengers of God. Now, the prophets must argue their case and get the people to believe them. People now question the prophets! Malachi uses words and phrases from Isaiah, so you may recognize some of his words. And if you listen to Handel's *Messiah*, a choir piece sung at Christmas, you will hear those words there, too.

Read Malachi 3:1–4.

If you think your learners will benefit from "doodling" to better focus, print out the mandala at the end of this lesson. It includes the scripture text and lets the learners color while listening. When they are finished, they can add it to the bulletin board or take it with them.

Ask:

- To what covenant is the scripture referring?
- What is meant by endure? (*Have you had to tell someone, like a parent or good friend, about something you did that might end your friendship or make you feel like you will be in trouble for*

a long time? How did you feel? How did you endure that disappointment? In other words, self-reflection can make us feel uncomfortable, but can you persevere through that self-reflection.)

- What is meant by stand? (*This is getting the courage to tell the truth about what you did knowing you would have to endure the disappointment. You stand instead of running away to hide.*)
- What is a refiner and what is fuller's soap? (*A refiner was someone who made metals hot into liquid to get the dirty elements out. Making silver and gold clean or "purified" was easier than any other metal. Fuller's soap was used to clean wool or cloth to make it ready for use.*)
- What is the writer trying to get the people to understand? (*God can help the people change, reconcile relationships, and live with God in covenant relationship.*)

Say: Today is the second Sunday of Advent, the Sunday of Love. Is this scripture about God's love for people? Why or why not?

3 RESPOND

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

Say: Today is more than just the second Sunday of Advent. It is also the day we celebrate the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper (Communion). This is a time when we ask God for forgiveness for our actions that have caused us to move away from God. In the sharing of the bread and wine (juice), we are symbolically cleansed and ready to start over with God.

How would you help someone who does not know or believe they are worthy of being loved by God? (Let the kids discuss it and lead them toward Mission Initiatives for a more concrete way of expressing their ideas.)

Say: Let's look at the Mission Initiative of Invite People to Christ. Here is what Community of Christ says about this Initiative (from *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 23):

Invite People to Christ—Christ's mission of evangelism

We are poised to share the peace of Jesus Christ with those who are waiting to hear the redeeming words of the gospel.

Ask: Isn't that like what Malachi was doing for the community that was suffering by not feeling their worthiness to be in relationship with God?

Say: Let's learn a little more about what it means to "take this bread" during Communion.

Play [Toward the Peaceful One-Part 3](#) at the times posted below.

Start here: 1:20–2:35

- Did you ever think of what bread might mean in this way? (A short yes or no is adequate.)

Go to 3:07–5:03 (*The word "Eucharist" another word for Communion or Lord's Supper.*)

- Have you ever thought of bread as being two things—nourishing the body and nourishing the soul? (A short yes or no is adequate.)

Go to 5:20–7:08

- How does breaking bread create community?

- To whom can you share Jesus' wisdom, his "Bread of Life"?

4 SEND

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

Spiritual Practice: Meditation Prayer

Say: Each week we are going to share in a spiritual practice. These are not meant to just be an activity, but a way to focus on our connection with God. Some of the practices we do might help you feel connection to God, and some may not. Each of us has a unique relationship with God, so it is OK if the practice isn't exactly what you need. Hopefully, by Christmas you will find a practice you can repeat at home whenever you are ready to build on your relationship with God, who loves you very much.

Say: Our practice today is a meditation prayer. To participate in this meditation, we will first take a few deep breaths with our eyes closed. Then slowly and silently we will repeat this prayer eight times:

Forgive me when I fail to help others know their worth.

I want to share your bread of life.

I love you God.

After enough time has passed, close the prayer by saying, Amen.

End this segment by saying: "You are loved."

5 BLESS

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

Invite one learner to read the following (from the beginning of class):

Advent, the season of preparation that reorients us to God in worship.

Ask (refer to the poster from the start of class): Do we have a better understanding of the words or phrases? (If yes, have the learners explain and add that to the poster. If no, leave it for next week.)

Read aloud to the class or invite a learner to share:

Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. Any small, calm thing that one soul can do to help another soul, to assist some portion of this poor suffering world, will help immensely. It is not given to us to know which acts or by whom, will cause the critical mass to tip toward an enduring good. What is needed for dramatic change is an accumulation of acts — adding, adding to, adding more, continuing. We know that it does not take "everyone on Earth" to bring justice and peace, but only a small, determined group who will not give up during the first, second, or hundredth [setback].

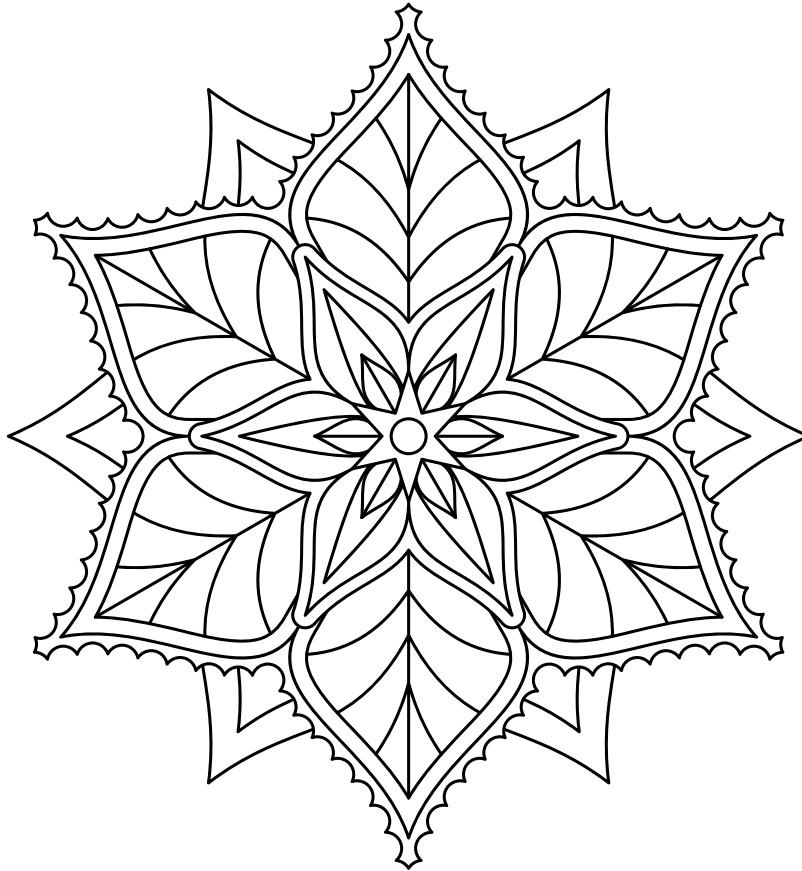
— "Letter to a Young Activist during Troubled Times," by Clarissa Pinkola Estés, Ph.D.,
www.mavenproductions.com/letter-to-a-young-activist

Hand out the spiritual practice cards and invite the learners to post their mandalas if they want to.

Malachi 3:1-4

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight – indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.



Meditation Prayer

Forgive me when I withhold the bread.

I want to share your bread of life.

I love you God.

Amen.

LESSON 3
12 December 2021

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (JOY)

Focus Scripture Passage: Zephaniah 3:14–20

Lesson Focus: What is my image of God?

Objectives

The learners will...

- participate in spiritual practice to deepen their connection to God.
- gain a deeper understanding of the Enduring Principle Worth of All Persons.
- develop a deeper meaning of the words "made in the image of God."
- contribute to creating community in the image of God.

Supplies

- Poster chart paper or marker board, and markers
- Copies of the scripture mandala, one per learner (see end of lesson)
- Coloring pencils, markers, or crayons
- Copies of the spiritual practice "Gratitude Prayer," one per learner (see end of lesson)
- Advent wreath or Advent candles (we will be lighting one each week)
- Bulletin board or someplace the learners feel free to hang their mandalas if they choose
- Video: *Toward the Peaceful One-Part 5* found at <https://youtu.be/-nomcVUUJR>
- Bible

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Zephaniah 3:14–20 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 24–25, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Invite a learner to light the first, second, and third candle of Advent, and then to read the following (you can write it on the poster or marker board or just print it):

Advent, is the expectant waiting for what is to come, be it known or unknown.

Ask: Are there any words or phrases in the Advent statement that you aren't sure of? What are they?

As they answer, write the responses on the blank poster to keep up the entire season of Advent. If you are meeting virtually, consider a Google doc that they can all share.

If needed say: We will come back to this later and see if any of our learning today might help us better understand these words or phrases.

It is completely OK if the learners want to discuss the words or phrases, but the facilitator should let them figure out the meaning. The goal is for the learners to develop understanding at their level.

Ask: What would it be like if God were here right now in a form (or way) you could recognize?

- What would you notice?
- What would you wonder?
- How would you feel?
- How would you respond?
- Would this be a known or unknown situation?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Say: This is just a reminder that unlike years before, we are going to celebrate and learn about Advent through Old Testament scriptures. There won't be any written mention of the baby Jesus story. Jesus grew up with these scriptures, and he understood why they were written and for whom they were written. These scriptures and what they teach about God's love for the world were part of Jesus' understanding of God, which he then used to teach people in his day and us in our day.

Ask: Can anyone recall some of the covenants God made with the people of the Old Testament?

Share what you need with the learners. This is the same from the last two weeks:

1. **God made a covenant with Noah** that the world would never be flooded again if the people turned away from God. God sent the rainbow as a visual reminder of that covenant.
2. **God made a covenant with King David** (*he was king, but before that he killed Goliath with a slingshot and was anointed by Samuel*). God promised that David and all of David's ancestors would forever be rulers of Israel.
3. **God made a covenant with Moses.** But this time it was different. It was the people who promised God they would follow the Ten Commandments, which were designed to help them live together in community with God at their center.

Say: As we explore the scripture passage today, the people are a bit more aware of their responsibility, their partnership, with God when living in right relationship. They are extremely ashamed of their behavior and recognize they have broken the covenant with God. This is different from the previous two weeks in that they are owning their sin, their "apartness from God."

Read Zephaniah 3:14–20.

If you think your learners will benefit from "doodling" to better focus, print the mandala at the end of this lesson. It includes the scripture and lets the learners color while listening to the scripture. When they are done, they can add it to the bulletin board or take it with them.

Ask the following to deepen understanding:

- Look at verse 17 and tell us what God is doing with the people. (*Singing and celebrating in their midst!*) Earlier in class we asked what it would be like if God is in our midst. Did you imagine singing and celebrating with God? Are the people included in that singing and celebrating?
- Notice something else in verse 17; God is a warrior! At the time of this scripture a warrior would rape, enslave, and kill those who lost the battle. What does the scripture say God will do as a warrior (verses 19–20)? Is that the behavior of a warrior? Is that what the people are expecting from God, their warrior?
- How do you think the people felt when they heard verses 19–20? (If the learners focus on the disappointment because they wanted revenge, lead them to understand that the people are wondering how God will deal with them—the ones who have broken covenant with God. How would verses 19–20 show God's love and compassion for them instead?)

Say: Today is the third Sunday of Advent, the Sunday of Joy. How does this scripture bring joy to those for whom it was written?

3 RESPOND

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

Say: Now, really try to imagine if God just showed up at school or at home. Not what does God look like, but rather you notice God is right there with you at school or at home, really with you. If God were asked to describe your regular actions during a day and how you show God's love, what would God notice about you? (Let them ponder for a bit.)

Say: Do your actions match the love you have for Jesus and for God? Explain what you think.

Note: This is not a time for beating themselves up but rather to personify God as we transition to the Enduring Principle, Worth of All Persons.

Reread verse 19.

Say: Keep that in mind as we explore the Enduring Principle Worth of All Persons.

Play *Toward the Peaceful One-Part 5* at the time posted.

Play this segment: 3:48–6:34.

Ask:

- Did you ever think of "bear the image of God" in the way it was described? (yes or no is adequate)
- How does this idea that me, you, everyone is the image God change your thoughts on the scripture passage when it says, "God is in your midst"?
- Matt said, "The image of God is incomplete without each other." Earlier when I asked you to imagine God right there with you at school or at home, did you picture the people you are always with? How would it change your response to the question, "What would God notice about you?" In other words, what do the people you are with notice about you?
- Does this idea of "every person is the image of God" change your understanding of Worth of All Persons? Explain.

If learners are unfamiliar with this Enduring Principle, share with them the following:

Worth of All Persons

- God views all people as having inestimable and equal worth.
- God wants all people to experience wholeness of body, mind, spirit, and relationships.
- We seek to uphold and restore the worth of all people individually and in community, challenging unjust systems that diminish human worth.
- We join with Jesus Christ in bringing good news to the poor, sick, captive, and oppressed.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 29

4

SEND

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

Spiritual Practice: Gratitude Prayer

Say: Our spiritual practice this week is the practice of Gratitude Prayer. Remember a spiritual practice is a way to focus on your connection with God. Some of the practices we do might help you feel connection to God, and some may not. Each of us has a unique relationship with God, so it is OK if the practice isn't exactly what you need. Hopefully, by Christmas you will find one practice you can repeat at home whenever you are ready to build on your relationship with God, who loves you very much.

To participate in the Gratitude Prayer, think of three qualities, gifts, or talents you have that you can use to live in community with God (with everyone) that expresses the Enduring Principle, Worth of All Persons. Make a list of those gifts or talents.

Note: You may need to help them with ideas about specific qualities like welcoming, helper, peacemaker, affirmer, etc. Or they can be more specific like, always notices when someone is missing from the group; is kind; makes sure all are included; notices when something isn't fair; shares easily; gives a voice for one who is afraid; offers help or support without anyone asking.

Say: We all say the first part together, and then fill in the blanks with our own gifts and talents.

Together: Thank you, God, for making me in your image. I will share your love for all when I...

- *name the first gift or talent*
- *name the second gift or talent*
- *name the third gift or talent*

Together: Amen.

5

BLESS

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

Invite one learner to read the following (from the beginning of class):

Advent, is the expectant waiting for what is to come, be it known or unknown.

Read aloud to the class or invite a learner to share:

Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. Any small, calm thing that one soul can do to help another soul, to assist some portion of this poor suffering world, will help immensely. It is not given to us to know which acts or by whom, will cause the critical mass to tip toward an enduring good. What is needed for dramatic change is an accumulation of acts — adding, adding to, adding more, continuing. We know that it does not take "everyone on Earth" to bring justice and peace, but only a small, determined group who will not give up during the first, second, or hundredth [setback].

— "Letter to a Young Activist during Troubled Times," by Clarissa Pinkola Estés, Ph.D.,
www.mavenproductions.com/letter-to-a-young-activist

Hand out the spiritual practice cards and invite the learners to post their mandalas if they want to.

Zephaniah 3:14–20

¹⁴ Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;
shout, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!

¹⁵ The LORD has taken away the judgments against you,
he has turned away your enemies.
The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.

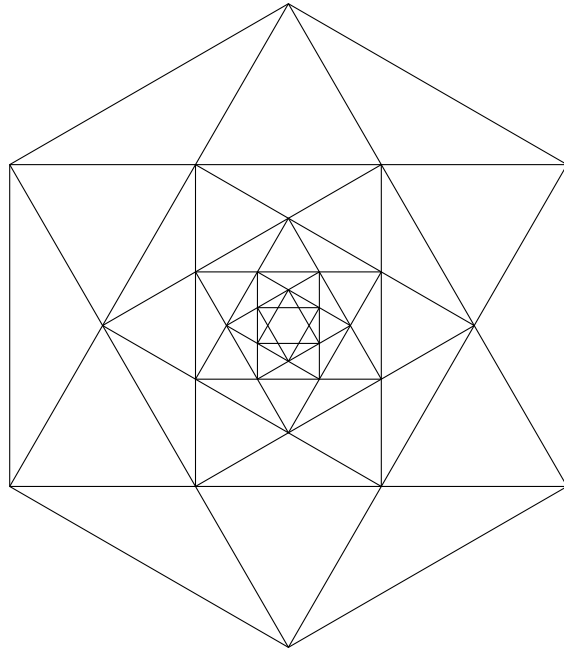
¹⁶ On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
Do not fear, O Zion;
do not let your hands grow weak.

¹⁷ The LORD, your God, is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you in his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing

¹⁸ as on a day of festival.
I will remove disaster from you,
so that you will not bear reproach for it.

¹⁹ I will deal with all your oppressors
at that time.
And I will save the lame
and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise
and renown in all the earth.

²⁰ At that time I will bring you home,
at the time when I gather you;
for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes, says the LORD.



Gratitude Prayer

Thank you, God, for making me in your image. I will share your love for all when I...

- _____
- _____
- _____

Amen.

LESSON 4
19 December 2021

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (PEACE)

Focus Scripture Passage: Micah 5:2–5a

Lesson Focus: What is my role in Pursuit of Peace?

Objectives

The learners will...

- participate in spiritual practice to deepen their connection to God.
- recognize God in unexpected ways.
- explore the Enduring Principle Pursuit of Peace (Shalom).
- connect the scripture passage to Jesus' ministry and to their own call as peacemaker.

Supplies

- Poster chart paper or marker board to write on
- Markers for writing on the paper or marker board
- Copies of the scripture mandala, one per learner (see end of lesson)
- Coloring pencils, markers, or crayons
- Copies of the Spiritual Practice "Breath Prayer," one per learner (see end of lesson)
- Advent wreath or Advent candles (we will be lighting one each week)
- Bulletin board or someplace the learners feel free to hang their mandalas if they choose
- Video: *Toward the Peaceful One—Part 2*, found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_3ejvlz9Lo&list=PLtVIRVpMxjwfZm0_tmfS5TfWfdM_TIsVs
- Bible

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Micah 5:2-5a in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 25–27, available through Herald House.

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

Invite a learner to light all four candles of Advent, and then to read the following (you can write it on the poster or marker board or just print it):

Advent, the season of preparation, anticipates a hopeful expectation of that which is unexpected.

Ask: Are there any words or phrases in the Advent statement that you aren't sure of? What are they?

As they answer, write the responses on the blank poster to keep up the entire season of Advent. If you are meeting virtually, consider a Google doc that they can all share on.

Say: We will come back to this later and see if any of our learning today might help us better understand these words or phrases.

Ask: What does the phrase "think outside the box" mean?

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

Say: This is just a reminder that unlike years before, we are going to celebrate and learn about Advent through Old Testament scriptures. These scriptures and what they teach about God's love for the world were part of Jesus' understanding of God, which he then used to teach people in his day and us in our day.

Ask: Can anyone recall some of the covenants God made with the people of Israel in the Old Testament?

Share what you need with the learners. This is the same from the last two weeks:

1. **God made a covenant with Noah** that the world would never be flooded again if the people turned away from God. God sent the rainbow as a visual reminder of that covenant.
2. **God made a covenant with King David** (*he was king, but before that he killed Goliath with a slingshot and was anointed by Samuel*). God promised that David and all of David's ancestors would forever be rulers of Israel.
3. **God made a covenant with Moses**. But this time it was different. It was the people who promised God they would follow the Ten Commandments, which were designed to help them live together in community with God at their center.

Say: As we explore the scripture passage today, the people once again realize they need right relationship with God. They really want the Davidic covenant to come true. They are despairing because they are always being the people who lose, who become slaves, who are taken from their homeland. The place of the temple is in Jerusalem, and that is where they want the power to come from. But right at the start of this passage, Jerusalem is under siege and the current ruler of Israel is powerless.

Read Micah 5:2–5a.

If you think your learners will benefit from "doodling" to better focus, print the mandala at the end of this lesson. It includes the scripture and lets the learners color while listening to the scripture. When they are finished, they can add it to the bulletin board or take it with them.

Ask:

- In verse 4, which shepherd do you think the people are thinking of? (*David, their last great king*)
- How is Bethlehem portrayed in this passage? (*little worth, powerless, verse 2*)
- What one single word describes this new ruler God will provide? (*peace, verse 5*)

- How do you think the people reacted when they heard that God was sending someone from Bethlehem who is shepherd-like? Was this message expected or unexpected? Remember, they are once again cut off and losing the battle.

Say: Today is the fourth Sunday of Advent, the Sunday of Peace. Even though the message is that God is still in covenant with the people, and will continue to be in covenant with them, Micah knows they need one who will govern and teach them to live in peace. God will provide them with an unexpected leader.

3 RESPOND

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

Begin the discussion by asking:

- Have you ever heard the phrase or song, "His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me"?
- Without really worrying that God is implied by the word "He" (*we know from last week's lesson that God is everyone*), what do you think that phrase means?

Say: In today's scripture passage, God promises one will come from Bethlehem to rule in peace. The people who heard this did not know Jesus, but we do.

In the summer of 2020, a phrase that became prevalent was "Black Lives Matter." Let's listen again to Matt as he tries to help us understand our role in bringing about peace here and now.

Play the video *Toward the Peaceful One-Part 2* at the times posted.

Start here: 5:32–10:15

Ask:

- What actions of Jesus can be seen in today's focus scripture? Remember, Jesus was raised knowing this scripture. (*Micah 5:4, feeding the flock, sheep were dependent on the shepherd. Jesus ministered to those who needed a shepherd*)
- Were Jesus' actions inside or outside of the box for his time? Explain.

Go to 11:32–12:46

Ask: How did you react when Matt said, "This world we have created is one of our own making"? Explain.

Explore the points of the Enduring Principle Pursuit of Peace (Shalom) below.

Pursuit of Peace (Shalom)

- God wants shalom (justice, reconciliation, well-being, wholeness, and peace) for all of creation.
- Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God's shalom (peace), reveals the meaning of God's peace in all aspects of life.
- The vision of Zion is to promote God's reign on Earth, as proclaimed by Jesus Christ, through the leavening influence of just and peaceful communities.
- We courageously and generously share the peace of Jesus Christ with others.
- Led by the Holy Spirit, we work with God and others to restore peace (shalom) to creation.

- We celebrate God's peace wherever it appears or is being pursued by people of good will.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 30

Discuss:

- Let's daydream for a while and think "outside" the box. What would your community (family, neighborhood, school) look like if everyone there lived the Enduring Principle, Pursuit of Peace (Shalom)?
- What would you notice is the same? What would be different?
- How did these changes come to be?
- Did you participate in any of them? How?

4

SEND

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

Say: This is the last Sunday of Advent. You may get other times this year to experience spiritual practice. Hopefully, you have found a practice or two that you can use to deepen or maintain your connection to God, who loves you very much.

Spiritual Practice: Breath Prayer

Say: Today we will explore the spiritual practice of the Breath Prayer. To prepare, we need a list of four words that prevent a person from living in peace.

Let the learners generate a list and then narrow down to four. Some ideas include tiredness, hunger, anger, worry, stress, etc.

Say: We will breathe in and out and add our prayer to the breath. As we inhale, we pray (silently) "Breathe in Peace." As we exhale, we pray (silently) "Breathe out _____." You will fill in with one of the words. We do this phrase four times, using one word from our list each time. But on the fifth breath, we "Breathe in Peace. Breathe out Peace"

You may choose to lead them in the prayer by saying the words or they may wish to do this prayer practice silently. Use the card at the end of the lesson to assist.

5

BLESS

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

Invite one learner to read the following (from the beginning of class):

Advent, the season of preparation, anticipates a hopeful expectation of that which is unexpected.

Say: We have learned that each of us together are the image of God, and that we have been called to create unexpected community. May we remember our part in creating the unexpected vision God has for our world.

Read aloud to the class or invite a learner to share:

Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. Any small, calm thing that one soul can do to help another soul, to assist some portion of this poor suffering world, will help immensely. It is not given to us to know which acts or by whom, will cause the critical mass to tip toward an enduring good. What is needed for dramatic change is an accumulation of acts — adding, adding to, adding more, continuing. We know that it does not take "everyone on Earth" to bring justice and peace, but only a small, determined group who will not give up during the first, second, or hundredth [setback].

— "Letter to a Young Activist during Troubled Times," by Clarissa Pinkola Estés, Ph.D.,
www.mavenproductions.com/letter-to-a-young-activist

Hand out the spiritual practice cards and invite the learners to post their mandalas if they want to.

Micah 5:2–5a

² But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,

who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me

one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.

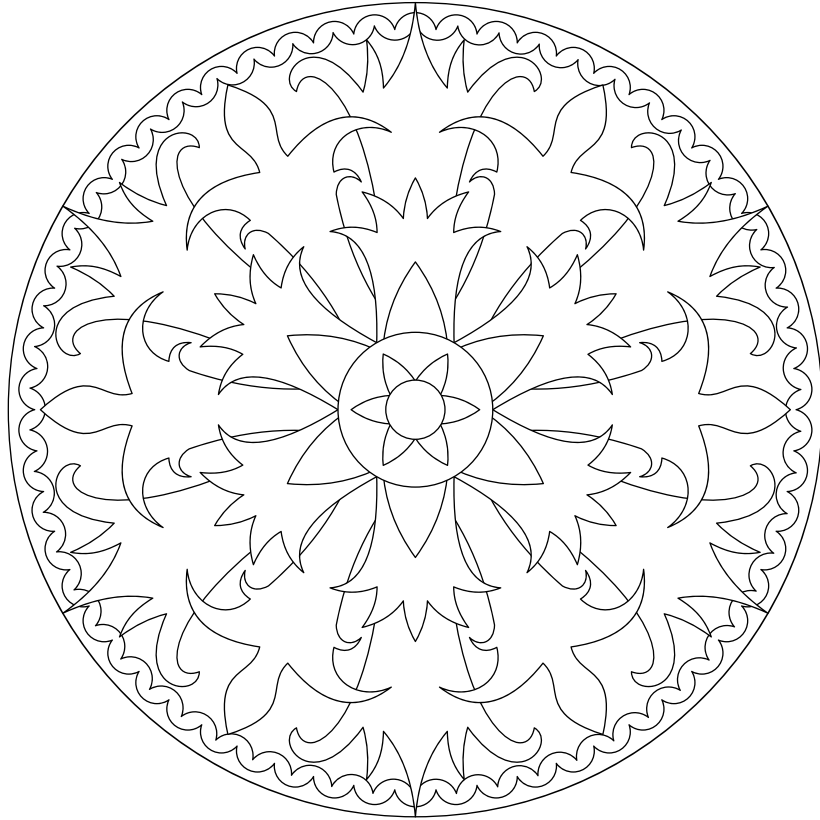
³ Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return

to the people of Israel.

⁴ And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.

And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth;

⁵ and he shall be the one of peace.



Breath Prayer

Breathe in Peace... and breathe out _____.

Breathe in Peace... and breathe out _____.

Breathe in Peace... and breathe out _____.

Breathe in Peace... and breathe out _____.

Breathe in Peace... and breathe out Peace.

LESSON 5
26 December 2021

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 2:41–52

Lesson Focus: Develop Disciples to Serve—Jesus models the importance of growing in a life of God.

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore the focus scripture passage.
- identify relationships which influence their lives as disciples.
- discuss ways to grow as disciples.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- Journals or paper and pens or pencils
- Large poster paper or rolled paper and markers (optional)
- Ball or another object to pass around the group

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 2:41–52 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 29, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Talk About It

The goal of this game is to talk continuously about a single topic for one minute. One person talks without pausing or using filler words such as um or uh. Other members of the group act as judges to make sure the person talking follows the rules. Provide several topics from which to choose such as school, sports, or family. Take turns allowing all to participate.

To make the game more challenging, an additional rule can be applied. If the “talker” is caught hesitating or using a filler word, another person must begin talking about the same topic. The winner of the round is the person speaking when the minute is up.

- How hard was it to talk about a single topic for one minute?
- What topic could you talk about for three days?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today's passage from Luke is the account of Jesus as a twelve-year-old boy in the temple during his family's trip to Jerusalem for Passover. Jesus is beginning to understand his mission and relationship to God.

Read Luke 2:41–52.

After three days of searching, Mary and Joseph find Jesus in the temple where he's been talking to, listening, and learning from the teachers.

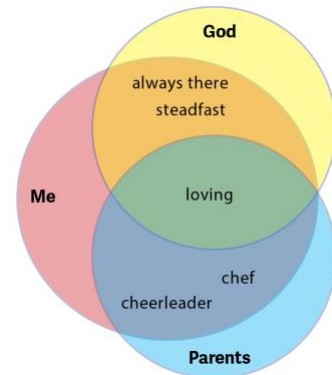
- Have you ever been so interested in something that you lost track of where you were supposed to be? Share your feelings about this experience with another or with the group.
- How do Mary and Joseph respond when they find Jesus?
- How does Jesus respond to Mary and Joseph?
- What does this passage teach us about Jesus? About learning and growing as disciples?

3 RESPOND

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

Venn diagrams are used to illustrate differences and similarities between two things. Using a Venn diagram (which can be drawn on a board or large piece of paper), discuss differences and similarities between our relationship to God and our relationship with our parents. Have the group write characteristics of each relationship in the larger part of each circle and characteristics that are shared where the circles overlap.

- How is our relationship to God different from our relationship with our parents?
- How are they similar?



Growing as Disciples

Develop Disciples to Serve is one of the five Mission Initiatives of Community of Christ. From an early age, Jesus modeled the importance of learning and growing in a life of God. When Mary and Joseph find Jesus, he responded, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" This is the first account of Jesus speaking for himself, and he is recognizing the direction his life will take. Jesus' life would be one devoted to God. In this passage Jesus is 12 years old, which may be younger than some of the youth in the group, and yet Jesus is aware of his significant relationship to God.

- List five people who have influenced your life as a disciple. Choose one person from your list and share with another, or with the group, how this relationship has influenced your life as a disciple.

- List (or draw) five activities or services you do to develop as a disciple. Choose what you do most often and what you would like to improve. Share these with another or with the group.
- What is your greatest challenge to growing as a disciple?
- How does Develop Disciples to Serve shape Christ's mission and the mission of the church?

4 SEND

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

Jesus spent three days at the temple talking and learning about God. Spend a few moments reflecting on the following challenge. Write or draw your responses in a journal or on a separate piece of paper.

Note to teacher: You may choose to hang large poster paper on the wall and invite youth to make a mural with their responses to the personal challenge.

Personal Challenge

- This week I will develop as a disciple by...
- This week I will encourage another to grow as a disciple by...

5 BLESS

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

Close with a "popcorn prayer." A popcorn prayer allows the whole group to share. Begin the prayer with a prompt, such as "I will be like Jesus by..." Give an object (a ball or another object that can be passed) to one group member who completes the phrase. That person passes the object to another person who responds; continue until everyone has participated.

LESSON 6
2 January 2022

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Focus Scripture Passage: Jeremiah 31:7–14

Lesson Focus: Hope is in God’s redemptive love.

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore what hope means to the class.
- uncover the hopeful message of the first hearers of today’s focus passage.
- write words of hope to someone who needs it most.
- be reminded that despite our faults, God still loves us and calls us to love others.
- remember the Enduring Principle, Worth of All Persons.

Supplies

- Paper
- Sticky notes (or small precut pieces of paper)
- Colored pencils (or crayons, markers, pens)
- Bible

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Jeremiah 31:7–14 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 31–32, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Pass out paper and colored pencils. Ask the class to remember a time when they attended a celebration.

- What did you celebrate?
- Why were you celebrating?
- Who attended the celebration?
- What emotions did you feel?

Ask the class to create an image of the celebration they remembered. The image could be a drawing of the event, abstract art with colors from the party, or symbols representing activities that occurred at the celebration.

Note: If needed, provided examples of celebrations they may have attended: a wedding, baby blessing, celebration of life, birthday party, grand opening, holiday tradition.

After the class has had time to create their art, offer an opportunity for classmates to share their celebration experiences and art.

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

Ask: How do you define hope? Allow time for the class to share their perspectives on hope.

Explain: Today's scripture passage comes from the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, written during the time of the Babylonian exile. To Jeremiah, God's people experienced exile because they failed to obey God's commandments. Specifically, they failed to care for the poor, and treated the most vulnerable of their community unjustly. Jeremiah frequently spoke of Jerusalem's ruin; however, God's love is more powerful than anything else. God heard the cry of God's people. Our passage today focuses on words of comfort and hope amid loss. There is a time of celebration, and that time is coming soon.

Read Jeremiah 31:7–14.

Remind the class these words were delivered to people who had experienced exile, anguish, and loss. Ask the class what the overall feel is of the scripture passage.

Pass out the sticky notes. Explain to the class that you will read Jeremiah 31:7–14 again. This time have them write down three words or phrases that represent hope.

Read Jeremiah 31:7–14.

Allow time for each student to share their words and why they chose them.

Ask: Imagine you were the ones in exile. How might hearing the words you chose lift you out of a hopeless situation?

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

Our scripture text from Jeremiah are words of comfort from part of something scholars call the Book of Consolation. To console is to comfort or support. The Israelites are given hope during a hopeless situation. Specifically, our passage depicts a party in which the world has never known including the best food, with singing and dancing! Prosperity and hope abound! Despite the Israelites' misfortune of their own doing, God is promising liberation from their suffering.

Pass out paper and a pen to each person.

There are people we know who are struggling. The pressures of our modern society can be crippling. We don't often hear words of encouragement or affirmation, as much as we need it. The words Jeremiah

shares with the Israelites were words that were desperately needed. Who do you know who needs God's loving words of hope? Do you know an overworked teacher, a lonely friend, a supportive coach, or an estranged parent? Identify someone specific in your life. Have students write a letter of hope and encouragement to that person. Have them include at least one of the words or phrases they chose during the scripture reflection.

Note to teacher: You are encouraged to also write a letter that may serve as an example.

4 SEND

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

If there is one important lesson to be understood it is this: Hope is rooted in God's redemptive love.

In Community of Christ, we believe God continues to guide and speak to us today (Continuing Revelation), helping us to be our best selves for the kingdom of God on Earth, here and now. Though we are all made in the image of God, we are not perfect. Just like how the Israelites mistreated those who were the most vulnerable, sometimes we mistreat others as well. As disciples we are called to overcome our shortfalls and work toward being good stewards of humankind and creation. Even when we struggle to do what's right, God's redemptive love for us brings us hope to be our best selves. In everything we do may we remember we are all children of God and treat others as the same. In this we must uphold the Enduring Principle, Worth of All Persons.

Worth of All Persons

- God views all people as having inestimable and equal worth.
- God wants all people to experience wholeness of body, mind, spirit, and relationships.
- We seek to uphold and restore the worth of all people individually and in community, challenging unjust systems that diminish human worth.
- We join with Jesus Christ in bringing good news to the poor, sick, captive, and oppressed.

Ask: How will you show hope to someone who needs it?

Challenge each student to give the letter of encouragement to the person for whom it was written.

5 BLESS

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

Ask each student to choose from one of the three words or phrases they reflected on during the "Engage" activity. Invite them to get comfortable. Guide them through a simple breath prayer. Every time they take a deep breath with you have them silently repeat that word or phrase. Repeat several times. At the end, remind them that God's encouraging words can help us feel calm, at peace, and deliver hope when it is needed most.

LESSON 7
9 January 2022

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY / BAPTISM OF THE LORD

Focus Scripture Passage: Isaiah 43:1–7

Lesson Focus: God is with us individually and communally, even when things are tough.

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore God's promise of redemption during the Israelites' exile.
- understand that we do not experience loneliness alone.
- be reminded God is always present.
- remind someone special that God is present in their lives.

Supplies

- Paper, one for each student
- Small strips of paper, five strips per student
- Sticky notes, two per student
- Pens or pencils
- Whiteboard, chalkboard, or chart paper and markers
- A way to play reflective music (phone, computer, audio system, live instrument)
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Isaiah 43:1–7 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 34–46, available through Herald House.

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

Begin playing reflective music. Invite the class to reflect on a time they felt lonely.

- When was it?
- How did it affect you?
- How did you overcome the situation?
- Who helped you through the healing process?

After five minutes of reflection offer an opportunity for students to share.

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

Today's scripture passage is about a group of people who have experienced great loss. They were exiled from their homeland; most were deported to Babylon.

Discuss:

- What does it mean to be "exiled"?
- What are modern examples of displacement or exile on a personal or global scale?
- What feelings and emotions do you think are experienced with these unfortunate events?

Our focus scripture passage today is directed toward an ancient group of people who experienced the feelings you mentioned. God heard their cries and felt their struggles. God gave a message of hope to these displaced people.

Read Isaiah 43:1–7.

Now ask for a volunteer to be the class "scribe" who will record for the class on the board or paper and easel. Give the students time to read the scripture passage to themselves. Instruct them to make notes of phrases that bring hope, share in God's promise of being present, words of comfort, and other uplifting expressions. During this time, play some reflective music.

After some time of reflection, as a class list the inspiring phrases. Have the class scribe record the words and phrases for the class to see. Ask students to imagine being in the situation of the exiled Israelites, then ask:

- You heard these words as you struggled with self-identity. How do these words help you discover yourself?
- You heard these words as someone who has been misplaced. How do these words help you feel found?
- You heard these words as someone who has been feeling unworthy. How do these words affirm you are a child of God?

Even during times of struggle God hears, God listens, God is present. God does not abandon us, but instead liberates us. God's salvation is both personal and communal...as are our struggles.

3 RESPOND

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

Give each student five strips of paper and a pen or pencil. Ask them to write five places or situations where they felt "exiled," displaced, or separated. Some examples: being a new student in a new school, a parent marries into a new blended family, they don't understand a school subject like others do, they experienced bullying. They can include the situation they shared in the beginning of class.

When finished, collect the papers making note of how many are turned in. Give a full piece of paper to each student; have them number their papers to match the number of small strips of paper received.

Explain that you will read each strip of paper. As you read, if the students resonate with what is read, they place an "X" next to that corresponding number on their paper. Once you've finished reading the strips of paper, collect the students' papers. Then hand the papers back randomly.

On the board or chart paper number from one to however many small slips of papers were completed. Go down the numbers and, together with the class, tally how many students resonated with each item you read. For example, if three students placed "X" on number 1, then write the number three next to that number on the chart or board. Continue through each of the numbers.

When finished, the class can see that all of us experience moments when we feel lonely, separated, or displaced. However, we are not alone in this. As a community of disciples, we are called to stand together. Our scripture passage was written to a community who were exiled from their home, together, not individually. God has promised redemption, salvation, liberation—a promise of never being alone.

4 SEND

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

To the group of exiled Israelites, the words in today's scripture passage were hopeful. Even today we can find refuge in these words when we feel lost, broken, or lonely.

Pass out two sticky notes to each student. Have them pick one phrase that brings them hope and write it on each of the sticky notes. There are two challenges before them:

1. Find a place in their house to place one of the sticky notes where they can see it every day as a reminder that God loves them and is ever-present in their lives.
2. Give the second sticky note to a friend, parent, teacher, coach, or mentor to help them remember that God is always with them.

5 BLESS

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

To close the class, sing or read "I Have Called You by Your Name" CCS 636.

LESSON 8
16 January 2022

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Focus Scripture Passage: John 2:1–11

Lesson Focus: Peace of Jesus Christ—Declare who Jesus Christ is.

Objectives

The learners will...

- discover ways of “changing water into wine.”
- explore their beliefs about Jesus.
- respond to the question, “Who is Jesus to me?”

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- Red cabbage water (see Gather section)
- At least one acid and one base (2T / 30 ml of each)
- Two cups
- One-gallon or One-liter container
- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- Computer or phone with Internet access

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 2:1–11 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 35–36, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

The story today is about Jesus turning water into wine. To introduce this passage, conduct this science experiment with the group. Take proper precautions with the supplies.

Water into Wine (or color-changing cabbage juice)

Red cabbage contains the pigment anthocyanin, which can be used as a pH indicator, meaning it turns different colors depending on the pH of a substance added to it. Before class, chop a head of red cabbage and place it in a pot of water. Bring the water to a boil, and boil until the water is dark purple.

Bring the purple water, an acid (like vinegar), and a base (like ammonia) to class. With the class, pour some of the cabbage water into two cups. Then add the acid to one cup and the base to the other. The acidic solution will turn pink; the base solution will turn blue or green. If time and supplies allow, try different acids (orange juice or soda) or bases (baking soda) and allow class members to mix liquids to see the pink, blue, and green variations.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

In the first twelve chapters of John, seven signs are narrated to testify that Jesus is the Word made flesh. Today's scripture passage, the wedding at Cana, includes the first of these signs, the miracle of turning jugs of water into wine.

Read John 2:1–11 together as a group.

The scripture passage says that Jesus turned approximately 120 to 180 gallons/450 to 680 liters of water into wine. Show students a one-gallon or one-liter container. Imagine Jesus turning more than 100 gallons or 400 liters of water into wine! The reactions of the acid and base in the cabbage juice are easy to explain; we know the science behind that. What if we didn't have science to explain something like this? When Jesus performed this miracle, it was not a science experiment, and people found faith in Jesus.

- How would you respond to something you could not explain?
- This miracle was a sign pointing to who Jesus is. What is something you have experienced that helped you understand who Jesus is?

3 RESPOND

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

Have you ever been to a wedding? What do you remember about weddings you have attended? Did you have to provide your own food or drink? Probably not. In Jesus' time, it was incredibly shameful to run out of wine during a wedding celebration. Jesus provided wine for the celebration—not just any wine, but the best wine! This story, which tells about something mysterious happening (*water becoming wine*), is not about that act. This story is not about proving a miracle. When we focus on the water-into-wine, we risk missing the point that this passage is about Jesus' identity. What matters is Jesus and who he is in our lives.

- Share about a time when you were so focused on something that you missed what really mattered.
- Who is Jesus to you? What roles has Jesus filled in your life? (Use these answers for the word cloud.)

Word Cloud

Jesus plays many roles in our lives: friend, teacher, leader, peace builder, and others. On paper, have class members write a list all the words they use to describe Jesus. Insert these words into a word cloud generator like www.wordle.com or www.tagxedo.com. Repeated words are OK; the more often a word is used, the more prominently it will appear in the word cloud. After you've inserted all the words, create a word cloud that reflects who Jesus is to the group. If it is not possible to create a word cloud, have the youth compare their lists to see which words they did and did not have in common, or create your own word cloud on a poster.

Note to teacher: Keep these words to be used in Lesson 14.

4

SEND

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

This was the first time Jesus was revealed as the Son of God, the Messiah for whom everyone had waited. We are called to share Jesus' message of justice and peace by the way we live each day with others and with all of creation.

Call to Action

This week, I will share Jesus' message of justice and peace by...

5

BLESS

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

Close the class with a prayer focusing on knowing and accepting the peace of Jesus Christ in our lives.

LESSON 9
23 January 2022

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 4:14–21

Lesson Focus: Christ's Mission, Our Mission—We declare and dedicate our lives as disciples.

Objectives

The learners will...

- read about Jesus' public ministry.
- declare their discipleship.
- practice the mission prayer.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- Computer or other device to view an inaugural address (see Gather section)
- Printed copies of the mission prayer (one for each youth)

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 4:14–21 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 37–38, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

If you are able, watch or read part of a presidential or prime minister inaugural address, a queen's or king's coronation speech, or the first speech of another leader coming into power. If you cannot watch a clip of a speech or read part of a transcript, ask the group if they are familiar with such speeches. If they are, they may be able to answer the questions without watching the clip.

- How is an inauguration speech different from other addresses a leader might give?
- What does a leader say or promise during an inauguration speech?

Often when leaders come into power, whether they are religious leaders, government leaders, or organization leaders, they give a public declaration of who they are and what they intend to do as a leader. Today's scripture passage is Jesus' declaration of his public ministry.

Read Luke 4:14–21.

- What did Jesus declare he would do? (*release the captives, give sight to the blind, and free the oppressed*)
- What might Jesus say he would do if he declared this today?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Life as a disciple takes you on a journey that is unlike any other adventure or experience you could have. As a disciple, you are a follower of Jesus Christ, but you can be a leader in your community, congregation, and with your friends. Take a few minutes to write your disciple's declaration. Like Jesus', this declaration is your opportunity to express who you intend to be as a disciple and what you want to do. In your speech, you should answer the question, "Who am I as a disciple of Jesus Christ?"

When the group has finished writing their speeches, give them the opportunity to share their speeches with the class or with the congregation. Discuss what the youth included in their speeches.

- What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?
- How are you going to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- How can you share the mission of Christ with others?

3 RESPOND

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

When you set out to accomplish something, the first step is to say you will do it. Your disciple's declaration was your first step. The next step is to begin doing that which you said you would do. One way to help bring our focus to Jesus' mission is through daily practices such as prayer. Prayer is a great way to feel closer to God.

Mission Prayer

Missional practices help cultivate new understandings and ways of engaging in Christ's mission. Missional practices are intentional and repetitive patterns of individual and community actions. One example of a missional practice is the mission prayer. We pray to be led by the Spirit with courage to go where the Spirit leads. Provide each class member a copy of the mission prayer. As a group, read it a few times.

Mission Prayer

God, where will your Spirit lead today?
Help me be fully awake and ready to respond.
Grant me courage to risk something new
and become a blessing of your love and peace.
Amen.

Body Prayer

The body prayer is a spiritual practice. Spiritual practices come in various forms: breathing, singing, keeping a journal, and many others. The body prayer is a prayer that takes on physical form through our body's movements. There are three steps. The first is "greeting God," and you do this by putting your hands together in front of your face as if you are praying. The second is "praising God." Raise your arms up above your head and out to the side to create a V shape. The third is "confessing to God." Bring your hands down and lay them over your heart. The fourth is "sharing God's love." Raise your arms outstretched to the side with palms facing upward. Practice the body prayer using the words of the mission prayer.

Mission Prayer

God, where will your Spirit lead today? (*greeting God*)

Help me be fully awake and ready to respond. (*praising God*)

Grant me courage to risk something new (*confessing to God*)

and become a blessing of your love and peace. (*sharing God's love with others*)

Amen.

4

SEND

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

When leaders make promises to those they lead, they are expected to follow through with them. The declaration you wrote today is your commitment to live as a disciple and share God's shalom. What can you do to keep the promise you made in your disciple's declaration?

5

BLESS

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

Close with the mission prayer.

LESSON 10
30 January 2022

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 4:21–30

Lesson Focus: Christ's Mission, Our Mission—How can we add our pieces to the puzzle?

Objectives

The learners will...

- read about Jesus' message and how some people struggled to understand it.
- explore what it means to be included and excluded.
- reflect on valuing the worth of others.
- find their places in Christ's mission.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- Copies of puzzle (end of lesson; cut apart before class)
- Scissors
- Plates or trays
- Sand

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 4:21–30 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 39, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Drawing in the Sand

Have you ever walked on the sand and left a footprint only to watch a wave wash it away? Sand is ever changing, one shape one minute and a different shape the next. Just like sand, the prayers on our hearts change, too. Pour sand onto a plate or tray, deep enough that words can be drawn in the sand. Provide each student with a plate and sand or share if supplies are limited. Give group members enough time to write words or draw pictures of the prayers on their hearts.

Life can be wonderful, full of happy moments and acceptance. Sometimes, though, we experience rejection from others. Read today's scripture passage about a time when the people of Nazareth, Jesus' hometown, rejected him and his message to the point of wanting to throw him off a cliff.

Read Luke 4:21–30.

The people of Nazareth were upset because they thought Jesus would recognize them as special, better than others, because they were from the same town as Jesus. The people of Nazareth were hoping for a message of exclusiveness, and instead Jesus offered a message of inclusiveness. Jesus is not the only person who has experienced rejection from others considered close. Maybe you have had moments when friends or family members have turned their backs on you; hopefully, they did not want to throw you off a cliff!

- Think of a time when friends turned their backs on you. What happened? How did that make you feel?
- Think of a time when you were included in a new group or activity. What happened? How did it make you feel?

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

Jesus' mission is radical! In the Scriptures, we often read about people struggling to accept or understand his mission. Today's scripture passage is about a group of people who struggled so much they tried to throw Jesus off a cliff! Jesus brought his mission and message 2,000 years ago, but people still struggle to understand and accept his mission. Jesus challenges what we do and how we live. He challenges us to do and be better!

President Veazey showed how we can be better disciples:

"That's not my style."

In President Veazey's April 2015 address to the church, he tells the story of a late-night chat with a medical technician while he was in the hospital. Due to failing equipment, the technician expressed her frustration. At the end of her colorful speech, she asked President Veazey what his job was. When he told her he was a minister, she quickly tensed, and asked, "Did I cuss? ...All of the ministers I know always try to make me feel guilty."

President Veazey told the technician, "That's not my style." In doing so, he was letting the technician know that he was no better than she and was not going to judge her or try to make her feel guilty.

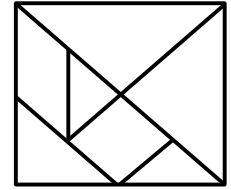
- Describe a time when you have gone against what was expected to show someone, "That's not my style".
- President Veazey tells us to give up self-righteous behavior because all persons are of worth. Share an experience when you valued the worth of others or when another valued you. How do you think that person felt? How did you feel?

3 RESPOND

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

Puzzle

Give each class member a piece of the puzzle found at the end of the lesson and have the group work to put the puzzle together. If you have a large group, make more copies of the puzzle and split the group. If you have fewer students, give each class member several pieces. Use the puzzle to transition to the following questions.



Just as each of you had a piece to the puzzle, each of you is included in Christ's mission. We are all part of Christ's mission, and we are called to add our pieces to the puzzle to help fulfill Christ's mission. Community of Christ is dedicated to making Christ's mission our mission, a mission that includes all people.

- How do you see your role as a disciple in Community of Christ?
- How do you add your "puzzle piece" to Christ's mission?
- How do you help others add their "puzzle pieces" to Christ's mission?

4 SEND

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

Jesus shares a message of inclusion, a message that is now ours to share. Complete the call to action with how you will include someone this week who is on the outside.

Call to action: This week I will try to include others when I ...

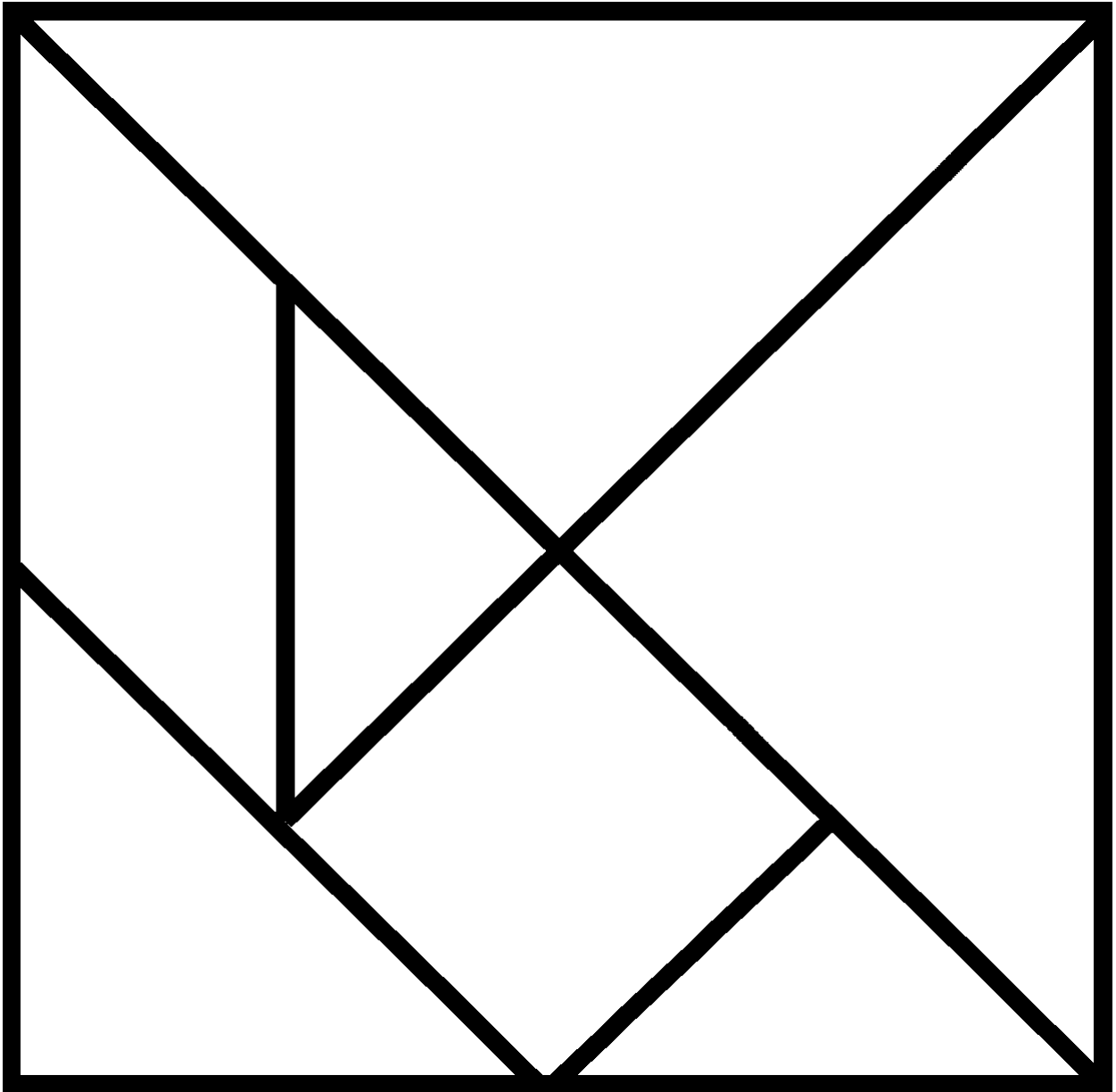
5 BLESS

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

Change of Heart

The prayers on our hearts are ever changing. It is possible the prayers on the class members' hearts have changed during this lesson. Close by allowing time for the group members to write or draw their new prayers in the sand.

Puzzle Pattern



LESSON 11
6 February 2022

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Focus Scripture Passage: Isaiah 6:1–13

Lesson Focus: God calls us to go out into the world!

Objectives

The learners will...

- journey with the prophet Isaiah’s call to a challenging mission.
- explore the Basic Beliefs of Judgment and Discipleship, and the Mission Initiative Develop Disciples to Serve.
- reflect on how their gifts, talents, skills, and passions can better God's kingdom.
- be challenged to share their gifts with others.

Supplies

- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- Coloring utensils
- Rulers
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Isaiah 6:1–13 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 41–42, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Today’s scripture passage focuses on the commissioning, or the call, of the Judean prophet Isaiah. Such an unexpected call rocked his world and altered his dreams and desires for himself. A common human question is “Where do I see myself in __ years?” It is not hard to believe that Isaiah may have asked this question himself.

Ask: Where do you see yourself in 5 years? In 10 years?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today's scripture text focuses on Isaiah's calling as a prophet for the people of Judea. Such a calling was unexpected. We will journey with several parts of today's passage through reflecting on our own lives.

Read Isaiah 6:1–2.

Today's passage begins with Isaiah's opening experience with the Divine court, with God. The "seraphs" represent heavenly beings who served as attendants of God's throne. Isaiah is filled with wonder and amazement.

- When have you experienced the presence of God? Where were you? How did you feel? How did that experience change you?

Read Isaiah 6:3–5.

It is pronounced to Isaiah that he is in the presence of God. Isaiah feels unworthy. He realizes he is part of a flawed group of people who've been mistreating the most vulnerable. He feels he does not deserve to be in God's presence.

- When has there been a time in your life when you have not felt worth enough? Did you overcome such feelings? Who helped you overcoming those feelings?

Read Isaiah 6:6–8.

After Isaiah admits his faults and fears, one of God's messengers performs a cleansing ritual liberating Isaiah from his past. He is liberated and ready to serve God's people.

- When has someone forgiven you for harm or hurt you caused? How did the healing process look?

After Isaiah's moment of salvation, God asks: "Whom shall I send?" Isaiah responds: "Here am I; send me!"

- When have you felt called to step in as a leader? (*group project, club president, preach the sermon at church, made initiative to mend a broken relationship*)
- How do you think you changed the lives of others through your leadership?

Read Isaiah 6:9–13.

This commissioning from God to Isaiah can be difficult to hear. In verses 9 and 10 God instructs Isaiah to go out and ensure the people do not hear, do not see, do not understand. God is to bring judgment to God's people. Isaiah is called to ensure it occurs. In Community of Christ, Judgment is one of our Basic Beliefs. We view judgment as:

Judgment

The living God whom we serve is a God of justice and mercy. God cares about how we treat our neighbors and enemies and how we make use of creation's gifts. It matters supremely to God how we welcome the poor, the stranger, the sick, the imprisoned, and the rejected. We affirm in scripture's light that Jesus Christ is advocate and judge of the living and the dead.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 38

After God's commission, Isaiah pushes back asking "How long?" God responds with more grim words: until everything is destroyed. Historically this passage is referencing the Babylonian exile. God's chosen people will be conquered and sent out of their homes. Isaiah, again, is called to make sure this happens.

- When have you felt lost or alone? How did you cope with that situation? Who or what helped you through that time in your life?

Even at the end there is hope. Judgment is not the last word: "The holy seed is its stump." Even during pain, destruction, and loss, a seed of hope remains. While the exile will last generations, liberation eventually comes. When the requests of forgiveness ring out, redemption will blossom from the ashes of loss.

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

Isaiah was called to serve God's people. Commissions were also given to the first followers of Christ. There is account of the Great Commission in each Gospel, plus one included in the beginning of the Book of Acts. In these commissions, Jesus called on his disciples to continue his work: spreading the hope of the gospel, sharing the peace of Jesus Christ that is rooted in love, and serving God's kingdom. Being a Christ-follower places the responsibility on us of being disciples.

In Community of Christ, discipleship is understood as the following:

Discipleship

Being a Christian is more than holding a list of right ideas; it is about radical obedience to Jesus in every part of life. God's boundless love sets us free for lives of responsible stewardship in which we generously offer our lives in service to God's reign. Discipleship is both an inward and outward journey. Jesus calls us to follow him and to invite others to experience the transforming power of his grace.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 37

Develop Disciples to Serve is one of the five Mission Initiatives in Community of Christ. This initiative drives us to help disciples of all ages uncover how they can live the mission of Jesus Christ in everything they do.

Develop Disciples to Serve—Equip individuals for Christ's mission

We are poised to equip men, women, and children to be true and living expressions of the life, ministry, and continuing presence of Christ in the world.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 23

Give a full sheet of paper to each student. Using a ruler have them draw a horizontal line, and vertical line intersecting at the middle of the paper creating four boxes. Have them brainstorm and reflect on four gifts, talents, skills, or passions they possess. Have them write each chosen gift at the top of a box, one for each box. Have students pick one of these to do in each box:

1. Draw how you can use that gift, talent, skill, or passion, to better the world.
2. Write a story of how you can use that gift, talent, skill, or passion.

3. Write the name of someone who helped you develop that gift, talent, skill, or passion. How did they help you? What did you have to overcome?

After giving ample time reflecting on each chosen topic, invite the class to share their work with the class.

4 SEND

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

Have each student pick one of their four skills, gifts, talents, or passions. Ask and allow time for students to reflect and share.

- How can you live and embrace that part of you this week?
- How do you think you can change the lives around you for the better by using that skill, gift, talent, or passion?

If we do not share the gifts God has given us, we are not reaching our maximum potential as disciples. God calls us to go out and serve.

5 BLESS

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

In closing, sing "I, the Lord of Sea and Sky" *CCS 640*.

LESSON 12
13 February 2022

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Focus Scripture Passage: Jeremiah 17:5–10

Lesson Focus: We are called to put our trust in God and work toward loving others.

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore the sometimes difficult-to-discuss Community of Christ Basic Beliefs of Sin and Judgment.
- explore the Enduring Principle Responsible Choices.
- discern through challenging scenarios and reflect on how God would want us to respond.
- be challenged to put their trust in God.

Supplies

- Paper
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Pens or pencils
- “The Tree or the Shrub” handout for each student**
- Bible

Notes to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Jeremiah 17:5–10 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 42–44, available through Herald House.

**Before class, print enough “The Tree or the Shrub” handouts for each student. If you do not have access to a printer, you may use black paper to invite the students to do the activity instead.

1 GATHER

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

Hand out a piece of paper and coloring utensils to each student. Have them draw a tree with the following requirements:

- Use at least four colors.
- Fill most of the paper.
- Show the tree's roots.

Give the class ample time to complete their trees and share their design.

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

Read Jeremiah 17:5–10.

Share: Today's scripture comes from the prophet Jeremiah. A passage written almost as a psalm; it was a warning to God's people to have trust in God. Judeans were worshiping other deities, putting their faith in gods of other lands. God, the one who liberated them from Egypt and provided a land fruitful of all they needed, felt hurt and abandoned. Many of the people were so engrossed in the worship of other gods, that their hearts had turned from God's. One outcome of this human hardening of hearts resulted in oppression of the most vulnerable. This sin was not an individual sin, it was a collective community sin that became a systemic problem. Jeremiah's words of warning provided an opportunity for repentance.

Our passage today deals with both sin and judgment. Judgment is upon God's people because of their sin.

Community of Christ's Basic Beliefs of these two topics resonate with today's passage.

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.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 34

Ask:

- Think of a time when a choice you made separated you from others, from your truest self, and from God? How did you overcome this experience?
- Today's scripture passage deals with individual sin and with collective sin where people lost heart in God and the mission to care for others. What is an example of collective sin in our world today that goes against the peaceful and loving Reign of God?

Judgment

The living God whom we serve is a God of justice and mercy. God cares about how we treat our neighbors and enemies and how we make use of creation's gifts. It matters supremely to God how we welcome the poor, the stranger, the sick, the imprisoned, and the rejected. We affirm in scripture's light that Jesus Christ is advocate and judge of the living and the dead.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 38

Ask:

- What gifts do you possess to help treat neighbors and communities as part of God's kingdom?
- If not already mentioned in the section before, what groups of people have been mistreated? How can we work to ensure they are receiving God's equity and peace?

3 RESPOND

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

Jeremiah was a strong pastoral voice who was striving to help his people make the right choices. They were worshipping false gods, and they were failing to care for the most vulnerable. Jeremiah states what they must do:

For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors forever and ever.

—Jeremiah 7:5–7

If God's people were to be like the tree pointing its roots to the stream and not fearing when the heat takes its toll and continuing to bear fruit, then they must choose to follow God who loves them...the God who demands that the lowest among them are cared for. Responsible Choices is one of Community of Christ's Enduring Principles. It helps us see how our choices make a difference in the world, not just for us, but also for others and creation. We face decisions every day. Choices we make have both positive and negative consequences.

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*, 4th Edition, p. 30

Pass out the “The Tree or the Shrub” handout with a writing utensil. Have students read each situation and write how they would respond. Be specific.

Once the students have had time to work on each scenario, have them get into small groups and share their responses. When finished, gather again as a whole group. Using your copy of the handout, discuss outcomes of the scenarios with the following question in mind: How do you feel God would want us to respond to these scenarios?

Share: Often, we respond to things through gut-reactions. Sometimes our stubbornness gets in the way of acting Christlike: with love, compassion, empathy, and justice. Some answers you chose may have been closer aligned to how God wants us to respond. May we remember the closing point of the Enduring Principle Responsible Choices: “We are called to make responsible choices within the circumstances of our lives that contribute to the purposes of God.”

4

SEND

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

Have students get into small groups of two or three. Ask them to discuss the following questions:

- What is the difference between rooting my faith in God versus rooting my faith in worldly things? What could the outcome be if I were to root my trust in God?
- What is one thing I can give to God in trust?
- What "fruit" (*talent or given gift*) I can share with the world?

5

BLESS

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

To close, read: Jeremiah 17:7–8.

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord,
whose trust is the Lord.
They shall be like a tree planted by water,
sending out its roots by the stream.
It shall not fear when heat comes,
and its leaves shall stay green;
in the year of drought it is not anxious,
and it does not cease to bear fruit.

The Tree or the Shrub

1. You see someone bullying a quiet, lonely classmate.
2. Your parent or guardian returns home from an exhausting day at work. Their temper is short, and they begin scolding you for something you did not do.
3. A good friend comes over and after they leave you realize they stole money from you.
4. You pray to God for the healing of a friend. Your friend does not recover.
5. You are working on a craft that has taken you several hours. Your sibling spills coffee on it.

LESSON 13
20 February 2022

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Focus Scripture Passage: Genesis 45:3–11, 15

Lesson Focus: Forgiveness and reconciliation are important parts of God's Shalom.

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore what forgiveness means.
- reflect on what forgiveness may have been like for Joseph or his brothers.
- write a letter of reconciliation.
- explore the Enduring Principle Grace and Generosity and be challenged to show grace to others.

Supplies

- Precut half-sheets of paper
- Markers
- Pens or pencils
- Lined paper
- Bible

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Genesis 45:3–11, 15 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 45–46, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Hand out a precut half-sheet of paper and marker to each student. Have them write in large, colorful print "Forgiveness" in the middle of their paper. Give everyone time to reflect on what forgiveness means to them. Invite them to write or draw their reflections on their paper surrounding the word "Forgiveness."

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

We are about to journey with Joseph of the Old Testament and his 11 brothers. Joseph was well loved by his father; some say he was the favored son of Jacob's 12 sons. Joseph had dreams picturing him as a great leader. His brothers became jealous of Joseph telling them of his dreams. Their jealousy led them to sell Joseph into slavery. This move brought him to Egypt where he eventually grew to be appreciated by the pharaoh and appointed a ruler in Egypt. His gifts of leadership and interpreting dreams helped Egypt through a long, challenging famine. His brothers came to Egypt seeking food for their families. It is here where Joseph and his brothers' journey intersects again. This is where our passage for today picks up.

Explain: Find a comfortable place in the room where, as the scripture is read, students will be able to carefully listen to the passage. Invite them to simply listen as it is read.

Read Genesis 45:3–11, 15.

Explain you are going to read the text again. This time challenge students to pick either Joseph or one of the brothers. As you read, invite them to imagine being that person in this story. What thoughts, feelings, or actions would that person experience?

Read the passage again allowing silent reflection for a few moments afterwards. Separate the class into two groups: those who chose Joseph (Group 1) or a brother (Group 2).

Discuss as follows:

Group 1: Joseph Group

- Why did you choose to be Joseph in this story? Why not one of the brothers?
- What emotions do you think you would have felt throughout this story if you were Joseph?
- Why do you think Joseph decided to choose the path of reconciliation instead of vengeance? Would that be an easy decision for you?
- Joseph promised to care for his family despite his brothers selling him into slavery. Have you ever shown grace to someone who wrongfully hurt you?

Group 2: Brothers Group

- Why did you choose to be a brother in this story? Why not Joseph?
- What emotions throughout this story do you think you would have felt as a brother?
- How would you take the immediate forgiveness that Joseph gave?
- The brothers were promised a safe space despite betraying their brother. Has grace ever been offered to you that you felt wasn't deserved?

3 RESPOND

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

Reconciliation is part of God's shalom. Healing of broken relationships is a characteristic of sharing the peace of Jesus Christ.

By the mystery of the incarnation, Jesus, born of Mary, came into the world to live and dwell among us to reveal God's nature and will. He prophetically condemned injustice in the temple and proclaimed the good news of the coming reign of God on earth, preaching liberation to the oppressed and repentance to oppressors. He taught his followers to love God, to love their neighbors, and to love their enemies. By eating with sinners, serving the poor, healing the unclean, blessing children, and welcoming women and men as equals among his disciples, Jesus declared that all persons are of worth in the sight of God.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, pp. 58–59

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we strive and be Christ-like in all we do. Unfortunately, we each hurt others in our lives and others hurt us. Forgiveness is not easy, yet as disciples of Jesus we are called to follow in his footsteps. We are called to forgive and work toward reconciliation.

Pass out two pieces of lined paper and a writing utensil to each student. On one sheet of paper have them reflect on the following questions:

- With whom do you need to reconcile?
- What happened? What could have been done differently?
- How do you seek to overcome the issues within the relationship?
- What do you appreciate about this other person?

Explain the class will now participate in a spiritual practice. Spiritual practices allow us time to be still, to listen and reflect as we open ourselves to connect with God, ourselves, and, sometimes, the surrounding community. Using the reflections from the first paper invite the students to write a letter of reconciliation using their responses to the questions above. They may add more content as needed. Challenge them to deliver the letter to whom it was written.

4 SEND

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

Joseph showed his brothers Grace and Generosity as he forgave them. Today, you were challenged to show grace to someone as you seek reconciliation. In Community of Christ, the Enduring Principle Grace and Generosity is described as follows:

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*, 4th Edition, p. 28

Explain: As you go throughout your week, think about how you can take this Enduring Principle to heart. Who needs to be shown grace? How can you share your gifts with your community?

5

BLESS

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

Even though Joseph was hurt by his brothers, he knew God's life-giving purposes and blessings were much larger than his hurt. There was more for him to be and do! As we go back to our "life as usual" let us remember we must work toward God's shalom here and now: Reconciliation is a key part of God's shalom.

Read or ask a volunteer to read the closing prayer:

May God nudge us toward reconciliation in a world full of division and brokenness.

May we be blessed by the community around us.

May we be challenged to live with an empathetic heart as Joseph did so long ago.

May God's loving embrace lift us up from pain and difficulty.

May we feel God's mysterious presence in everything we do.

LESSON 14
27 February 2022

LAST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY / TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 9:28–43a

Lesson Focus: Peace of Jesus Christ—Who is Christ to me?

Objectives

The learners will...

- read about Jesus' transfiguration.
- play a game to learn to really listen.
- answer the question, "Who is Jesus to me?"

Supplies

- Name tags
- Pens or pencils and markers
- Paper coffee filters, spray bottle, clothespins
- List of words created during Lesson 8 (see Respond section)
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 9:28–43a in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 47–48, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Today's scripture passage telling of Jesus' transfiguration marks the end of the season of Epiphany. The story, which tells of the divine nature of Jesus Christ, asks Christians an important question, "Who is Jesus to me?" Read the Luke 9:28–43a to learn about what happens to Jesus when he and a few of his disciples go to a mountain to pray.

Humans are fallible by nature. They make mistakes. Peter's human frailty is revealed on the mountaintop with Jesus. Peter wanted to stay there—in the place of his incredible experience. Jesus leaves the mountaintop because he has a mission to fulfill.

- Christ's mission is more important than anything else, but we easily forget what that means. What is something that you have put before Christ's mission?
- How have you been like Peter and wanted to bask in a mountaintop experience instead of sharing Christ's mission with others?

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

Because Peter was too concerned with the blessings of the manifestation of Jesus' divinity to really listen to Jesus, God reminds Peter and his companions, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"

Listen Closely

Instruct class members to close their eyes. Choose one person (without letting other class members know) to say the verse, "This is my son, my Chosen; listen to him!" The speaker's goal is to distort or disguise their voice making it difficult for the group to guess who is speaking. The rest of the group must listen closely and try to decide who spoke. An alternative is to play sound clips of different famous or recognizable people and have them guess whose voice it is.

It is important to listen closely and not get distracted by funny-sounding voices to distinguish who is talking. It is easy to understand how Peter was distracted, wanting to stay in the place where he witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus. God rebukes Peter telling him to "listen!"

- Like Peter, have you ever been so distracted by something that you missed something else?
- How do you remind yourself to pay attention to the important moments and experiences of life?

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

Jesus was transformed. The Jesus the disciples knew was transfigured into Jesus Christ, the divine. What does it mean to be transformed? We can say it, but how do we live it? In today's scripture passage, we see Jesus' very real, very tangible transformation. This transformation occurred while Jesus was praying. We can be transformed when we take on the mission of Jesus Christ and make it our own.

Who Is Jesus to Me?

In Lesson 8, class members wrote words describing who Jesus is to them. Remind the class of the words they used to describe Jesus. Who is Jesus to them? When Jesus came into the world, he showed us what it meant to share his peace. Jesus set the perfect example by being a teacher and friend, but Jesus' mission did not stop there. Jesus showed us how we should live so we can be an example for others.

- How can we be a [*fill in with a word used to describe Jesus*] to another?
- How have others exemplified that quality in your life?

Have class members choose one of the words that they will strive to model for other persons this week. Have them write their words on name tags so others know they are a friend, teacher, peace builder, or whatever they choose.

4 SEND

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

Be Transformed

Caterpillars go through a transformation called metamorphosis when they become butterflies. Metamorphosis requires much energy from the caterpillars, but in the end, they become beautiful butterflies. Provide each class member with a paper coffee filter, markers, and a clothespin. Have the youth draw shapes on their coffee filters making sure to leave some blank space. When they are done, use a spray bottle to spray each coffee filter with water. The color on the filter will bleed to fill in the white areas. Let the filters dry; then accordion-fold them from top to bottom in the middle and clip them with the clothespins. The clothespin is the body of the butterfly and the coffee filter, the wings.

- What does it mean to be transformed by Christ's mission?
- Share a time that you have seen someone transformed by Christ's mission?
- How has your understanding of Jesus transformed and deepened as you have encountered him in your life?

5 BLESS

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

Close with a prayer or sing "Lord, Prepare Me" CCS280.

LESSON 15
6 March 2022

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 4:1–13

Lesson Focus: Spiritual Formation—Sojourning in the Wilderness

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore the importance of "wilderness" for spiritual renewal.
- create a Lenten calendar.
- discuss personal temptations.
- open themselves to the Holy Spirit.

Supplies

- Joyful Yes Lenten calendars
- Pens or pencils
- Colored pencils
- Square paper for folding
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 4:1–13 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 51–52, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

The forty days of Lent before Easter Sunday represent the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness after his baptism. Lent is a season of preparation. Just like Jesus prepared in the wilderness for his earthly ministry, we must prepare ourselves to understand more deeply the events of Passion Week and Easter.

In the Wilderness

In the Scriptures, wilderness is symbolic of a place of spiritual renewal. We all have our own ways to develop spiritually and renew our spirits. Jesus was intentional about taking time for prayer and spiritual renewal as an important part of his ministry. We each have our own wildernesses that help us open ourselves to the Holy Spirit. We find Jesus in the wilderness in today's scripture.

Read Luke 4:1–13 about Jesus' time in the wilderness and the temptations he faced.

- Have class members name their “wildernesses.”
- Share about a time recently that you were in your “wilderness” for spiritual renewal. Do you take time regularly for spiritual growth and renewal?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

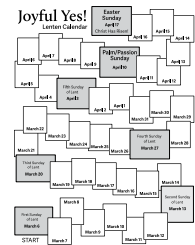
Joyful Yes Lenten Calendar

Lent is the season of the Christian calendar that spans the 40 days (not counting Sundays) between Ash Wednesday and Easter. Lent can be a powerful time of spiritual renewal—a time to pause, explore, and be intentional in our communion with the Divine. In some traditions, people fast or give up something for the 40 days of Lent as a symbol of their recommitment to God. Although members of the class may be giving something up for Lent (you may take time to discuss this), Lent is not just about saying no to something, but rather saying yes—a joyful yes! Jesus wants us to experience joy in discipleship by responding with a joyful yes every day!

Hand out copies of the Joyful Yes Lenten calendar and colored pencils or pens. During Advent we have Advent calendars to count down the days until Christmas; today we will create a Lenten calendar counting down the days until Easter. We ask ourselves the question, “How can we joyfully celebrate Lent?” Use the Lenten calendar to come up with ideas, writing them in the spaces provided. Help the group brainstorm for their first week.

Examples: talk to a person instead of texting or using social media, increase personal tithing, give notes of kindness or words of encouragement to friends and family, engage in a community event. When they are finished, allow them time to share ways they can respond joyfully.

Note to teacher: Keep the Lenten calendars to be used throughout Lent or remind the class to bring them each Sunday.



3 RESPOND

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

Temptations

During his time in the wilderness, Jesus faced three temptations. He answered the temptations with wisdom gained from prayer and meditation. Having a strong spiritual connection helped Jesus overcome the temptations. Jesus’ reliance on and growth from his prayer and meditation show us the importance of spiritual formation. Spiritual formation is important for our life and ministry as disciples.






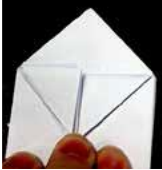
Think of a time you were tempted by something. Maybe you were tempted to spend time with friends instead of study for a test, or you were tempted with a few extra minutes of sleep, and you missed the bus. If you are comfortable, share with the group something about a temptation you have faced.





Jesus used wisdom gained from prayer and meditation to overcome temptation. If we apply this to all areas of our lives, how might wisdom gained from prayer and meditation help us in other ways? (*make*

responsible choices, reconcile disagreements with friends, choose to spend more time in our personal "wilderness")

Filled with the Holy Spirit

We, too, can be filled with the Holy Spirit like Jesus. Follow the steps below to create a paper balloon, or if time and materials do not allow, a regular balloon can be used. Without air, a paper balloon is just a folded piece of paper and cannot fulfill its potential. But when it is full of air, it is a balloon! We can better serve our purpose as disciples when we are filled with the Spirit in the same way a balloon is filled with air.

<p>Step 1</p> <p>Start with a square piece of paper. Fold and unfold from corner to corner creating an X-shaped crease in the paper.</p>	
<p>Step 2</p> <p>Fold the paper from the top edge to the bottom edge.</p>	
<p>Step 3</p> <p>Invert fold the top right corner into the folded section so the top right corner is in the middle of the bottom edge. Repeat on the other side.</p>	
<p>Step 4</p> <p>The paper should look like a triangle. Fold the bottom tips up to the top point creating a diamond. Repeat on the other side.</p>	
<p>Step 5</p> <p>Fold the two side points of the diamond inward so they meet in the middle. Repeat on the other side.</p>	
<p>Step 6</p> <p>At the top of the paper, there are four free flaps. Individually, fold the flaps down so their top points align with the folded-in side points.</p>	

<p>Step 7</p> <p>Fold the four folded flaps outward so their flat edges line up with the edge of the paper. Unfold these folds.</p>	
<p>Step 8</p> <p>Using the crease, tuck the four flaps into the spaces of the folded-in side flaps.</p>	
<p>Step 9</p> <p>Turn the paper around so the bottom is now the top. There should be an opening.</p>	
<p>Step 10</p> <p>Fold the entire opposite sides together so the folded portions are hidden.</p>	
<p>Step 11</p> <p>Blow into the hole to inflate the balloon.</p>	

4 SEND

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

Lent is a time of making space in our lives to experience God more completely and joyfully respond in serving God. The class created a list of ways they can respond joyfully throughout the first week of Lent. Have them choose one of the ideas from their calendars and use it to complete the call to action.

Call to Action

This week I will do more than just say yes; I will respond with a joyful yes by...

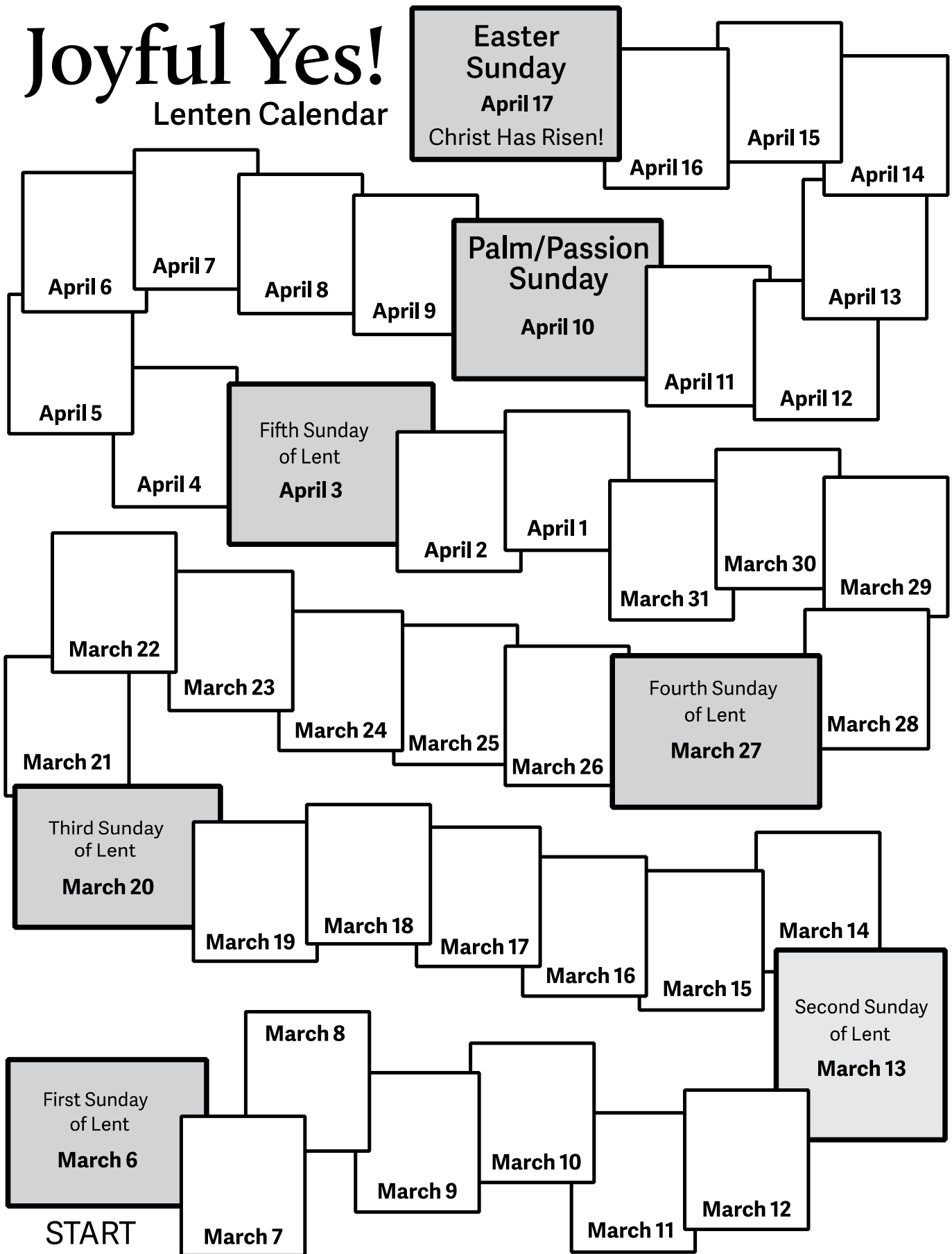
5 BLESS

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

Sing "Go with Us, Lord" CCS 612 or close with a prayer asking that each class member be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Joyful Yes!

Lenten Calendar



LESSON 16
13 March 2022

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Focus Scripture Passage: Genesis 15:1–12, 17–18

Lesson Focus: God is faithful and invites our faithful response.

Objectives

The learners will...

- define the difference between a contract and a covenant.
- explore covenant in Community of Christ sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and marriage.
- understand that we can trust God to keep God's promises.
- read about God's two-fold covenant with Abram.
- continue their journey through Lent.
- explore promises they can keep.

Supplies

- Dictionary
- Paper or note cards
- Pens or pencils
- Joyful Yes Lenten calendars from Lesson 15
- Bible
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition from HeraldHouse.org.
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Genesis 15:1–12, 17–18 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 54–55, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Invite a volunteer to look up and read the definition of the word "covenant" in a dictionary or online search. Invite another volunteer to look up and read the definition of the word "contract."

Discuss the difference between the concepts of covenant and contract.

Read some promises aloud. Ask if they could make and follow through with the promise, they should put both thumbs up. If they could not make and follow through with the promise, they should put their

thumbs down. Acknowledge honesty for admitting they could not promise tasks they know they would not do. If they can explain their thinking, validate everyone's opinions.

Ask these, or other questions appropriate to your group.

Could you promise...

- to have a birthday this year?
- to pay attention in all your classes in school and Sunday school?
- to share your favorite game with someone?
- always to brush and floss your teeth at least twice a day?
- to be a good sport during your next competitive event? (sports, music, speech, art)
- to do all your homework before watching TV?
- to learn to speak ____ (insert a non-native language) by next year?

Explain the word covenant means a deep bond based on a commitment or promise. Some examples of covenants are the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and marriage. These are promises made between people and God. When God makes a covenant, we can always trust God will follow through.

Going Deeper: Explore the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and marriage in *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, pp. 44–46, 49–50.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

In ancient times, like in today's Bible story, fathers declared their oldest sons their heirs. An heir is the person who would inherit, or get, everything the family owned. How many of you are the oldest sons in your family? That means you would have been your family's heir. At the beginning of today's story, a man named Abram is talking about his heir.

At the time of today's scripture story, Abram and Sarai had no children. This meant Abram did not have an heir, so he decided to make his slave his heir. Abram was about 85 years old. Can you imagine a person that age becoming the parent of a newborn baby?

Read Genesis 15:1–12, 17–18. As you read, listen for the covenant God makes with Abram.

Note to teacher: Explain that in the Bible, covenants were often sealed, or committed to, with a sacrifice of some of the people's greatest possessions. In this case, it was an animal sacrifice. Today, someone might say something like "I pinky promise" or "I cross my heart" to seal a promise. Or they might draw up a contract that two parties sign attesting to their agreement. The idea is that God used the sacrifice to explain God was serious about giving Abram a son of his own.

After reading the passage, ask someone to explain the covenant God made to Abram. (*It was a twofold covenant that Abram would be given a son to be his heir and he would have more descendants than there are stars in the sky.*)

God kept God's promises. Hundreds of years later, writers of books in the New Testament used Abram (in Genesis 17:5 God renamed him "Abraham") as an excellent example of someone who trusted God even when things did not happen right away, or the way he expected. If we take Abraham's story seriously

today and believe God will keep God's promises to us, then it is like we become spiritual children of Abraham's faith in God.

According to Genesis, Abram was 86 when his first son, Ishmael, was born and 100 when his second son, Isaac, was born. He also had other children after Sarai's (whom God renamed Sarah) death with his wife Keturah. Although there are many physical descendants of Abraham, according to Paul in the book of Galatians, anyone who lives by faith is a spiritual descendent of Abraham.

3 RESPOND

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

Joyful Yes Lenten Calendar

If you collected the Lenten calendars, pass them out to the students, or ask them to get them out. Have spare copies for class members who don't have one or forgot to bring theirs. With the group, review the Lent discussion and what they wrote on their calendars from the previous lesson. The class started their Joyful Yes Lenten calendars by brainstorming ways they can respond joyfully as disciples during the Lenten season. Discuss with the group their first week of Lent. How did they respond joyfully? Then give the group time to think of new ways to respond joyfully and write those on week two of the calendars. When the group is finished, allow time to share how they plan to respond joyfully.

4 SEND

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

In the part of Abram's saga explored today, God was shown to be steadfast in reaching out to humankind. It also told of the response of one human, even during times of doubt.

Remind the class that we can trust God to keep promises. It is also important we keep our promises. Have everyone think of a promise to make to God. Invite them to write or share their promises aloud.

Distribute note cards and pens to each class member. As a class, create a short slogan that captures those ideas. Invite class members to write the slogan on the note card to take with them as a reminder of God's steadfastness.

5 BLESS

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

Sing or read together "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" CCS 11.

LESSON 17
20 March 2022

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

Focus Scripture Passage: Isaiah 55:1–9

Lesson Focus: Come, Listen, See, Seek

Objectives

The learners will...

- discuss today's scripture text.
- continue their Lenten journey.
- engage in self-reflection by assessing their level of consumerism, how they use their time, and their relationship with God.
- explore the Enduring Principle Responsible Choices.

Supplies

- Bible or printed copies of Isaiah 55:1-9 (provided)
- Pens or pencils
- Joyful Yes Lenten calendars
- White board flip chart, or chalkboard and markers or chalk
- Candle and bell or chime

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Isaiah 55:1–9 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 55–57, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Ask class members to suggest a single word that could be used to get someone's attention. Write their answers on the white board, flip chart, or chalkboard. Suggest that the author of this part of the book of Isaiah, often referred to as Second Isaiah, wanted to capture the Babylonian exiles' attention so they would listen and respond to the words of counsel to follow.

Invite listeners to discover 1) how that was done, 2) what counsel was shared with the exiles.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Give each student a copy of the scripture text (end of the lesson). Read Isaiah 55:1–9 aloud.

Discuss:

- What effect do you think the first word had on the intended listeners?
- What action words were used? In what way were they significant?
- What do you think the general themes were for this text? Explain your choice(s). **Note to teacher:** Richard A. Puckett, a biblical scholar, has written that “the central message to be proclaimed is the extraordinary nature and dependability of God’s promises” (*Feasting on the Word, Year C, Volume 2*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 79).
- What message was the author trying to convey to the Babylonian exiles?

3 RESPOND

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

Lent is a time that inspires self-reflection. We are encouraged to be intentional about assessing our level of consumerism, the use of our time, and our relationship with God. These challenges can be found in the Isaiah text.

Invite class members to reread it silently and note which parts called the Israelites to reevaluate their spending, challenged them to pay attention to time spent laboring and listening, and invited them to seek the Lord.

How we react to circumstances is a choice we make. We can apply the Enduring Principle Responsible Choices, to the Joyful Yes Lenten calendars. Every moment is a choice. We choose what we are going to do, with whom we will do it, and how. Take a few moments to fill in the third week of the Lenten calendar with ways to respond joyfully by making responsible choices this week. Allow the group to share how they responded joyfully during the past week.

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*, 4th Edition, p. 30

4

SEND

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

List the following words on the white board, chalkboard, or flip chart leaving space to write between each one.

Come

Listen

See

Seek

Ask class members to think of a word or short phrase that completes a sentence for each one that conveys a sense of the Isaiah text. For example: Come and repent. Listen and believe. See and share. Seek and follow. Write down their ideas.

5

BLESS

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

Light a candle and ring a chime or bell and invite class members to a moment of silent meditation.

Ask them to focus on what was just written. Invite them to offer a silent prayer thanking God for God's word that is still relevant and asking for forgiveness for the times they failed to come, listen, see, and seek.

Ring the bell or chime a second time to close. Use the following prayer to end the class session.

May you have mercy on us, God, for the times we have felt that our thoughts take precedence over your thoughts. We believe in your abundant pardon. Help us turn toward you once again. Amen.

Isaiah 55:1–9

Ho, everyone who thirsts,

come to the waters;

and you that have no money,

come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk

without money and without price.

² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,

and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,

and delight yourselves in rich food.

³ Incline your ear, and come to me;

listen, so that you may live.

I will make with you an everlasting covenant,

my steadfast, sure love for David.

⁴ See, I made him a witness to the peoples,

a leader and commander for the peoples.

⁵ See, you shall call nations that you do not know,

and nations that do not know you shall run to you,

because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,

for he has glorified you.

⁶ Seek the Lord while he may be found,

call upon him while he is near;

⁷ let the wicked forsake their way,

and the unrighteous their thoughts;

let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them,

and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts,

nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.

⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth,

so are my ways higher than your ways

and my thoughts than your thoughts.

LESSON 18
27 March 2022

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 15:1–3, 11b–32

Lesson Focus: Worth of All Persons

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore the story of the Prodigal Son.
- consider God’s grace and generosity.
- discover the Worth of All Persons.

Supplies

- Joyful Yes Lenten calendars
- Pens or pencils
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 15:1–3, 11b–32 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 57, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

The parable of the Prodigal Son is the third in a series of stories about something being lost and then found. In Luke 15:4–7 we read about a lost sheep and in verses 8–10 a lost coin. These stories share similar features of irresponsible actions that end well. The shepherd left his flock to find one sheep and rejoiced when the sheep was found. The woman who lost her coin searched everywhere for it, and when she found it she rejoiced. In today’s scripture passage, the story of the Prodigal Son, a son is lost to his family, but returns and is met with rejoicing from his father.

Read Luke 15:11b–32 or have students alternate reading verses.

Draw the Circle Wide

Have the class sing the refrain of “Draw the Circle Wide” CCS273 which talks about accepting others into our circle, even if they, like the son from the story, have done something wrong.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Act It Out

In today's scripture passage, there are three main characters. One is a father who was filled with compassion and rejoiced at the return of his son. Another is the returning son who had nothing because of his irresponsible choices; he chose to return home despite all he had done. The third is the son who remained at home and is now angry that the returning brother should receive so much when he, who stayed, received nothing. Have the class act out the story; let them choose the characters they would like to portray. Allow a few minutes for groups of three to work out how they want to portray the story. If there is a group of only two, the teacher can fill in. If there is a group of only one, the teacher can fill in being either the father or the returning son with the youth being the other. Let the groups perform their renditions of the story and then discuss these questions.

- Which Enduring Principle does today's scripture passage uphold? (*There are hints of several such as Grace and Generosity and Blessings of Community, but Worth of All Persons will be the focus of this lesson.*)
- How was Worth of All Persons upheld in today's story? (Review aspects of this principle below.)
- How can we be like the father and uphold the worth of others?

Worth of All Persons

- God views all people as having inestimable and equal worth.
- God wants all people to experience wholeness of body, mind, spirit, and relationships.
- We seek to uphold and restore the worth of all people individually and in community, challenging unjust systems that diminish human worth.
- We join with Jesus Christ in bringing good news to the poor, sick, captive, and oppressed.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 29

3 RESPOND

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

Do you feel as if you've made the right choices your entire life but never get anything because of it? Maybe you understand the brother who stayed home. Have you made irresponsible choices and feel like you have nowhere left to go? Maybe you connect with the returning son. Have you lost something that you would give anything to find? Maybe you feel like the father. At different times in our lives, we might connect with a different person in the parable. Discuss class members' connections with characters from the story. Here are questions and discussion ideas for each.

Father

The father is sad that he has lost his son, someone who was so dear to him. When his son returned home, he offered forgiveness and grace and welcomed him warmly. Discuss ways we can forgive and be compassionate to all people regardless of their circumstances or what they've done.

- Have you lost something you wish you could find? (*an object, friend, idea, or something else important*)
- How does it feel to lose something of great value?
- Share about a time when you forgave or showed compassion to someone.

Returning Son

The returning son chose to leave his home and family. He squandered his money in a faraway land. He made terrible choices and was lost. He had nowhere left to go, so he returned home. Discuss how everyone goes through times of being lost. We are unsure where to go or what to do. This may be because of decisions we've made or life circumstances, but we can always receive God's grace.

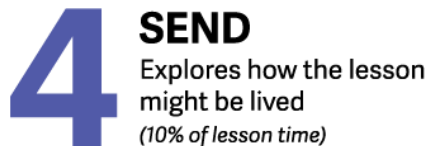
- Are there times when you feel lost or disconnected from what's going on at school, with friends, with family, or in other circumstances?
- Think of a time when you unexpectedly received grace or forgiveness from someone and share with the group.
- Is there a person in your life who you can extend grace and forgiveness to like the father did to his lost son? What can you do for this person?

Brother

The brother made all the right choices. He stayed home and helped his family tend the farm. Despite his good efforts, he feels as though he has received nothing and is angry that his brother should so easily be forgiven. Discuss that even though life is not always fair, we should still strive to be the best we can be, and welcome and rejoice with those who are found. It is also important to remember that making responsible choices helps us live in right relationships with God and others, and that brings us joy and well-being.

- Has a sibling or someone you know ever done something wrong and not been punished? How did that make you feel?
- Do you ever feel that others who make poor decisions get more attention than you even though you make all the right choices?
- How is it fair that people who decide poorly are still offered grace?

We could be the lost son who is returning home with nothing. We could be the father who offers immediate forgiveness and rejoices when the son returns. Or we could be the older brother who is angry that the father so easily welcomes the lost son home after all he has done. Today's passage shows us that God's grace is for all people, regardless of the decisions we make and possibly regret later. God's grace and generosity do not require us to be perfect.



Joyful Yes Lenten Calendar

Ask class members to get their Lenten calendars or pass them out if you collected them at the end of last week's lesson.

Today is the fourth Sunday in Lent. It will soon be Palm Sunday. Today would be a good day to remind the class what Lent is and why we have made a Lenten calendar. Lent is a time of spiritual renewal—a time to pause, explore, and be intentional in our communion with God. To do that, the class is counting the days until Easter with a calendar they fill in with ways they can respond joyfully. Jesus wants us to experience joy in our lives as disciples by responding with a joyful yes every day!

Allow class members time to share how they responded joyfully during the past week. Then, fill in ways to respond with a joyful yes during the next week. Remind them about Worth of All Persons. How can they respond joyfully while upholding the Worth of All Persons?

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

Close the lesson by singing “Draw the Circle Wide” *CCS273*.

LESSON 19
3 April 2022

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Focus Scripture Passage: John 12:1–8

Lesson Focus: Disciple's Generous Response

Objectives

The learners will...

- discuss generosity, both giving and receiving.
- imitate different levels of generosity.
- explore their true capacity.

Supplies

- Small plastic bags (such as sandwich bags)
- Dried beans
- Printed instructions for Give and Receive
- Joyful Yes Lenten calendars
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for John 12:1–8 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 58–59, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

In today's passage Jesus is spending time with friends, enjoying company, rest, and food. Read John 12:1–8 in which Jesus receives the generosity of another.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

What Would You Do?

Today's scripture passage demonstrates several ways to give and receive generosity. Mary, who had just received a great gift from Jesus, chooses to return the favor with a gift of great value. She chooses to use

a bottle of perfume, which costs the equivalent of a year's salary, to wash Jesus' feet. Judas, who saw this as wasteful, suggested selling the perfume and using the money to help feed the poor. Jesus is quick to defend Mary, showing what it means to accept true generosity.

The class will debate the two positions: Mary's and Judas'. Form the class into two groups. Assign one group to Mary and the other to Judas. Allow them a few minutes to discuss as a group how they will defend their decision about the perfume. As the group debates, help them with ideas to further the discussion. Once the discussion starts to dwindle or enough time has passed, have the groups switch sides and defend the other person's actions.

Mary

- Mary was responding to Jesus' generosity. Generosity received leads to generosity shared.
- The poor will always be with us; our time with Jesus is limited.

Judas

- It was wasteful.
- The money could have been used to help the poor.

Remember, the writer of John recorded these events many years after they occurred. The writer would have known about Judas betraying Jesus. This could explain the extra information within the parentheses in the passage. Reread today's passage without the parts within the parentheses.

- How does removing the writer's judgment change your mind or position about Judas? Do you find yourself agreeing more with Judas?
- Sometimes we allow others' judgments to decide how we feel and what we do. Think of a time when you allowed someone else's thoughts or feelings affect the way you acted. (*An example might be if one of your friends said they liked something, and you started to like it because they did.*)

We are individuals with thoughts and beliefs. It is up to us to make choices and decide what is best for our own circumstances. When we are too easily swayed by someone else's thoughts and ideas, we lose our ability to think and act independently. Jesus chose Judas as one of his disciples. Judas was a person of worth and Jesus saw that. We know that Judas betrayed Jesus, but he was also hand-selected by Jesus to be one of his most trusted followers.

3 RESPOND

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

Give and Receive

Form the class into three groups of equal numbers. Each group will receive a different set of instructions; do not tell the class what the instructions say. When instructions have been passed out, give each class member a bag of beans. (Each bag should have the same number of beans.) Have them play through a round of asking, giving, and receiving beans. When some class members are out of beans and others have many, move on to the discussion.

Instructions

Group A—When someone asks you for beans, you will immediately give them beans. You may ask others for beans.

Group B—When someone asks you for beans, you may decide whether to give any to them or not. You may ask others for beans.

Group C—When someone asks you for beans, you must not give any to them. You may ask others for beans.

Discuss:

- What did your instructions say? What did that mean for you during the game?
- What, if any, are some reasons your instructions might not be good if you applied them to your real life?
- Is too much giving a possibility? Too little giving? (Discuss true capacity in the following section.)

True Capacity

We are taught to be generous like Mary, a generosity that is extravagant and over-the-top, but when does generosity become reckless or too much? The Enduring Principle of Grace and Generosity says, “We generously share our witness, resources, ministries, and sacraments according to our true capacity.”

- What is our true capacity? (*True capacity is the fullest amount we can give of our witness, resources, and ministries, but that amount has a limit which can be reckless if we exceed it.*)

We are charged with helping others by being generous, but it is important that we take care of ourselves, too. Ask the group if they know about the giving model 10/10/80. Ten percent of income is shared, such as through tithing, 10 percent is saved for school or retirement, and the other 80 percent is used responsibly for living expenses such as food, clothing, and housing. These numbers are adjustable, but this is a good place to start to learn your true capacity. Thoughtful planning empowers people to give to their true capacity. Have the group discuss how they handle their money.

- Do you follow the 10/10/80 model? If not, how do you handle your money?
- How can you match your giving with your true capacity?

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

Joyful Yes Lenten Calendar

Ask class members to get their Lenten calendars or pass them out if you collected them at the end of last week’s lesson.

Allow class members time to share how they responded joyfully during the past week. Take time to fill in ways we can respond with a joyful yes during the next week. This week we focus on our generosity.

- How can we respond joyfully this week while giving to our true capacity?

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope

(5% of lesson time)

Close with "Take My Life and Let It Be" *CCS 608* or pray that we may give to our true capacity in all areas of our lives.

LESSON 20
10 April 2022

PALM SUNDAY

Focus Scripture Passage: Psalm 118:1–2, 19–29

Lesson Focus: God's Steadfast Love Endures Forever

Objectives

The learners will...

- dramatize the scripture passage.
- discuss the significance of a building's cornerstone and the meaning of its use in the text.
- explore connections between Psalm 118 and specific New Testament texts.
- reflect on the concept of the Lord's love being steadfast and enduring forever.
- consider the Enduring Principle of Grace and Generosity.

Supplies

- Bibles or printed copies today's scripture passage
- Palm branches

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Psalm 118:21–2, 19–29 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 60–61, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Sing the song, "This Is the Day That the Lord Has Made."

This is the day. (This is the day.)

That the Lord has made. (That the Lord has made.)

We will rejoice. (We will rejoice.)

And be glad in it. (And be glad in it.)

This is the day that the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

This is the day. (This is the day.)

That the Lord has made.

Tell students today's scripture passage includes the words to this song. Read Psalm 118:24 and 29 only. Discuss what it means to "rejoice" in something. Ask them what they think this passage has to do with today being Palm Sunday. (*It is a good day to be happy because people were excited Jesus was coming;*

we need to thank God because God sacrificed God's own son as a way of proving God's never-ending love for everyone.) Encourage the class to rejoice every day and not just on this special Palm Sunday.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Distribute Bibles and if needed printed copies of the scripture text for each class member. Invite everyone to read it silently.

Invite volunteers to dramatize the scripture passage giving class members directions and cues as you go through the text. Class members will use their Bibles or printed copies of the scripture for the readings. Before you begin, distribute the palm branches or other type of branch to a few class members.

1. Invite all class members to read aloud verses 1 and 2.
2. Invite two volunteers to stand on one side of the class space creating an obstruction. (They will simulate a gate.)
3. Ask for one volunteer to approach the "gate" and read verse 19.
4. Instruct both people who are the gate to read verse 20 in unison and then to step aside.
5. Ask the person who approached the gate to read verse 21 and then proceed through the "gate" to the front of the room.
6. Invite class members who are seated to read verses 22–27 in unison, stopping after the phrase "...and he has given us light."
7. Invite a different volunteer to read the last part of verse 27 beginning with the words "Bind the festal procession..."
8. Invite all seated class members who are able, to stand and walk through the "gate" and stop at the front of the room (symbolizing being in the temple). Once they are at the front of the room tell those with branches to lay them down before the imaginary altar and then invite everyone to read verses 28–29. Request that everyone be seated.

Discuss:

- In what way were the elements of this psalm like the kinds of worship activities many Christian faith traditions enact on Palm Sunday?
- In what way does this psalm turn our attention toward God? Why might that be an important part of spiritual formation?

3 RESPOND

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

One important concept reflected in the psalm is that God can use anything for God's purposes, even things, people, or situations that we might reject. Verse 22 "The stone that the builders rejected has

become the chief cornerstone" is quoted in New Testament scripture. Ask for three volunteers to each read aloud one of the following texts: Matthew 21:42–43, Acts 4:1–3, 7–12, and 1 Peter 2:7.

Matthew 21:42–43

Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures:

'The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord's doing,
and it is amazing in our eyes?'

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom.

Acts 4:1–3, 7–12

While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came to them, much annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming that in Jesus there is the resurrection of the dead. So they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.

When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. This Jesus is

'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders;
it has become the cornerstone.'

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."

1 Peter 2:7

To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe,

"The stone that the builders rejected
has become the very head of the corner"

Discuss:

- What is the importance of a cornerstone in constructing a building? (*keeps the sides square with each other; provides a foundation for walls*)
- Compare the contexts where the quote from Psalm 118 was used in Matthew, Acts and 1 Peter. Who or what was the cornerstone?

Psalm 118 verses 1 and 29 affirm that the Lord's steadfast love will endure forever. The concept of something lasting forever is hard to comprehend because in our experience there is nothing that lasts forever, not even stars in the universe. Isaiah 54:10 states

For the mountains may depart

and the hills be removed,
but my steadfast love shall not depart from you,
and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,
says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

Discuss:

- What feelings do you have when thinking about 1) the Lord's steadfast love and 2) that it will last forever?
- The psalmist expressed gratitude for that fact with the words in verses 1 and 29. Invite class members as a group to create a sentence that expresses thanksgiving for God's enduring love. Write it to use during the closing prayer.

4 SEND

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

God's enduring love is demonstrated through the unconditional grace that God extends to every human being. Community of Christ's Enduring Principle of Grace and Generosity affirms that "God's grace, especially as revealed in Jesus Christ, is generous and unconditional" (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 28).

Explore how believing that truth could impact the way you live your life, relate to other people, and follow Jesus Christ, the peaceful one.

5 BLESS

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

Invite the class to offer a "popcorn" style prayer of gratitude and thanksgiving, explaining that you will begin and end the prayer, and that they may add a word or brief phrase as they feel led. You might pray something like these words:

O Holy One, we cannot fully express our gratitude for your steadfast love, but we want to say thanks for...

Continue until there is a period of silence, then conclude the prayer with the sentence the class created earlier in the session.

LESSON 21
17 April 2022

EASTER SUNDAY

Focus Scripture Passage: John 20:1–18

Lesson Focus: How do we continue to write the sacred story?

Objectives

The learners will...

- read the Resurrection story.
- learn that Jesus was raised from the dead (resurrection).
- explore how they continue to write the sacred story.

Supplies

- Poster paper
- Markers
- Blooming plant, plant pots, seeds, and soil
- Optional: decorating supplies
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 20:1–18 and Luke 24:1–12 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 67–68, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Resurrection Story

Ask the group what they know about the Resurrection story. What happens? Who goes to the tomb? Who sees Jesus first? Write the answers on a whiteboard or poster paper. When the group has written everything they know, read John 20:1–18 telling of Jesus’ resurrection. After Jesus was raised from the dead, people came to faith in Christ along different paths. The beloved disciple went in the tomb and knew immediately; Simon Peter did not understand and returned home. We travel our own paths in life and have unique stories of how we came to faith.

- How has your faith strengthened you to share your story with others?
- We often come to faith through relationships and community. Tell the class of a time when your faith was strengthened by a relationship or your community.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

The Living Christ

Give each class member a small plant pot big enough for soil and a flower seed. Also have a pot with a blooming plant. (If possible, use seeds of the same variety as the blooming plant.) Using an empty pot and the pot with the plant, discuss Christ's resurrection. We put seeds in the soil, they are buried in the pot and then they fulfill their potential as blooming plants as they burst from the soil and grow. On the third day, Jesus was raised from his tomb and lives eternally. We follow the Living Christ and celebrate that Christ is risen!

Give the group time to decorate the outside of their pots with Easter decorations such as an empty tomb, Jesus talking to Mary, or the angels. Then place soil in the pots and plant the seeds. The group can take their plants home to remind them of the joy and hope we celebrate on Easter. The blooming of the plant can be a reminder of Jesus' sacrifice, death on the cross, and resurrection. He is the Living Christ.

3 RESPOND

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

Sacred Story

What is the sacred story? In Community of Christ, we define "sacred story" as the unfolding story of God's reconciling work in the world. We learn about God's relationship to people and all creation through the sacred story. For disciples of Jesus Christ, our part of the sacred story would not be complete without him and the story of his resurrection. The story of Community of Christ is part of a much larger sacred story that is rooted in Christian history, and we create our own stories as we live as disciples. We hold an important place in God's unfolding story.

Invite the group to write a sentence or two describing their own stories. This could be an experience from camp, a church activity, or their baptism.

- How do you share the sacred story with others? (*telling others, by our actions, the way you live*)
- Think about ways we continue to write the sacred story.

4 SEND

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

If we continue to share the mission and message of Christ—God's reconciling work in the world—we continue to write the sacred story. The story is as alive today as it was when Jesus was on the Earth. Using a piece of poster paper, have the group write how they continue to write the story. Hang the poster on the wall.

5

BLESS

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

Close by singing "In the Bulb There Is a Flower" CCS 561 or offering a prayer.

LESSON 22
24 April 2022

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

Focus Scripture Passage: John 20:19–31

Lesson Focus: Peace of Jesus Christ – A Journey of Faith and Doubt

Objectives

The learners will...

- discuss belief and doubt in our faith journeys.
- seek answers to questions.
- practice the breath prayer.

Supplies

- Poster paper
- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- Small pieces of paper
- Bible

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 20:19–31 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 71–72, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

On a piece of poster paper or a whiteboard, have the group list some things they believe but don't see. Discuss what it means to believe something. Examples are God, wind, karma, and scripture stories. When the group has listed what they believe, read John 20:19–31 about the disciple Thomas who had a hard time believing that Christ was risen.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

In the focus scripture passage, Jesus declares that those who have not seen and yet believe are blessed. Have you or someone you know experienced the blessing of believing without seeing? Today's scripture is

a message of faith and belief that can come despite misgiving and doubt. Thomas experienced doubt but found his faith and believed.

BELIEVE Acrostic Poem

An acrostic poem spells out a word using the first letter of each line or verse of the poem. Give each member of the group a piece of paper and ask each one to create an acrostic poem using the word BELIEVE. Before class you might want to create a list of B, E, L, I, and V words as examples or have a dictionary available for the group to use. Have class members share their poems when they've finished.

Blessing

Explore

Life

Ideas

Expectation

Validate

Emmanuel

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

Faith is a journey of doubt and trust which transforms belief into kingdom-building action. Doubt and questioning are not shameful or bad moments in our spiritual lives. They are vital parts of our faith journey. They help us explore and deepen our relationship to God. Doubt and questions open us to answers that we may not have understood before. Thomas' doubt has helped people from all places and in all times discover what it means to be a people of God. If someone so close to Jesus could have doubts, then so might we.

- How can we seek peace despite not having all our questions answered? What is the peace you can offer?
- How do we discover what it means to be a people of God in our time and place?

Doubt and Faith

Ask the group, "What are questions you have about Christianity, scripture, commitment, how we fit in, the hardships of life, finding God, or what the church is doing to make a difference in the world?" Have them write their questions on slips of paper and put them in a container. When all questions have been put in the container, draw one at a time and discuss as a group. Let the group know that even as the teacher or pastor, you do not have all the answers, but have faith in that which is not obvious. Having faith causes us to grow. Faith bridges the gap between what we know and what we want to believe but cannot prove. Faith carries us through doubt.

Note to the teacher: For this part of the lesson, it may be helpful to invite leaders from your congregation such as your pastor to take part in the discussion. Also use discretion with questions. You know your group best.

4 SEND

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

Breath Prayer

Have the class engage in a breath prayer. "He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" A breath prayer is a simple form of prayer that helps us center and receive the Holy Spirit. While focusing on your breathing, silently repeat, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

5 BLESS

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

Close the group with a prayer that uplifts the doubts and misgivings the class discussed.

LESSON 23
1 May 2022

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Focus Scripture Passage: Psalm 30

Lesson Focus: Thank God for the past; look to God in the present; trust God for the future.

Objectives

The learners will...

- identify movements in Psalm 30 that address the past, the present, and the future.
- recall a time when they petitioned God for help, healing, or direction.
- explore the Enduring Principle Blessings of Community.
- consider whole-life stewardship.
- identify God's blessings in their life and ways they can praise God.

Supplies

- Paper and pens or pencils
- White board, chalkboard, or flip chart
- Markers or chalk
- Bible or printed copies of Psalm 30 for each student
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Psalm 30 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 71–72, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Distribute copies of *Community of Christ Sings* and invite class members to sing "O Lord, Hear My Prayer" CCS 192. If you are not comfortable leading the song arrange for another to do so. Repeat it at least twice.

Invite class members to think silently of a time when they petitioned God for help, healing, or direction and their prayer was answered, maybe in an unexpected way. Ask them to reflect on how they responded.

Invite them to keep that in mind when exploring Psalm 30.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Hand out Bibles and if needed printed copies of Psalm 30 so that each class member has the scripture text. Lead the class in reading the text aloud following the directions below:

1. Invite a volunteer to read verses 1–3.
2. Ask everyone to read verses 4–5 in unison.
3. Invite another volunteer to read verses 6–7.
4. Recruit a third volunteer to read verses 8–10.
5. Ask everyone to read verses 11–12.

Discuss:

- In what way were your own responses to prayers similar or different from the psalmist's?
- What types of prayers were part of the psalm?

On a white board, chalkboard, or flip chart, write the words Past, Present, Future in three columns.

- Invite class members to name verses of the Psalm that reference the past, the present, or the future, and write them down.
- Ask them to describe some of the emotions that are evident in the psalmist's words and add them to the chart under the matching word (past, present, future).
- How would class members describe the psalmist's view of God? Punitive? Compassionate? Other? Add those terms under the matching words on the chart.
- Review items on the chart and analyze the psalmist's attitude, emotions, and view of God in the past. Ask class members to share what they have discovered.

3 RESPOND

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

Community of Christ's Enduring Principle Blessings of Community affirms that "We value our connections and share a strong sense of trust in and belonging with one another – even if we never have met" (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 31).

Discuss:

- Review items on the chart listed under the word Present. Ask class members what they have discovered that applies to their present time.
- How might the Blessings of Community be helpful in our struggles and in our joys in the present?
- What might be a meaningful element of a worship service that invites people to share present concerns, prayer requests, and joys? Write down the suggestions.

The future is unknown but as the Psalm states in verse 5 "his favor is for a lifetime."

- How does internalizing the truth that God's favor is extended to you for your lifetime affect the way you face the future? This is an important opportunity to explore the truth of God's favor when negative things happen. For example: How do you explain God's favor for those who suffer needlessly?
- Tell what gives you hope. In what way might that hope be shown and extended to others?

4 SEND

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

In Community of Christ, we believe in “whole-life stewardship.” That means we want to make good choices with everything in our lives like our time, talents, and money. “When our lives are touched deeply by God, we want to be more Christ-like in our living” (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 43).

- In what ways can we praise God through Christ-like living or moving toward Jesus, the peaceful One?

Have students spend a few minutes identifying God's blessings. They can reflect silently or make a list. Invite them to share one or two blessings for which they can praise God.

5 BLESS

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

End class time with a prayer of gratitude for God's blessings and opportunities to help others.

LESSON 24
8 May 2022

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Focus Scripture Passage: John 10:22–30

Lesson Focus: All Are Called—Follow Me

Objectives

The learners will...

- play a game focused on the importance of listening and following.
- explore their relationship to Jesus.
- challenge themselves to make change happen.

Supplies

- Voice recordings of several people in the congregation
- Poster paper or dry erase board
- Marker
- Bible

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 10:22–30 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 75–76, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

To introduce today’s lesson, have the class play Simon Says. To win this game, the followers must pay attention to what the leader is saying and doing.

Instructions for Simon Says:

Choose one class member to be “Simon” who will tell the rest of the group what to do. If Simon says, “Simon says...” followed by an instruction, the group must follow the instruction. If Simon says, “Simon says hop on one foot,” the group must hop on one foot. But, if Simon says, “Hop on one foot” without first saying, “Simon says...” the group should not hop on one foot, and anyone who does is removed from that round. The game continues until only one person is left, and that person becomes the new Simon.

Read John 10: 22–30 where Jesus explains what it means to follow him.

Just like playing Simon Says, we need to listen to what we are being called to do. Christ calls us into mission to “feed his sheep.”

- How do you understand the meaning of “feed my sheep?”

- In what ways are you hearing the call to feed Christ's sheep?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Using a phone or other recording device before class, record members of the class or congregation saying, "My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me." Play these clips one at a time to see if class members can identify the voice. If they know who it is, they can call out the name of the person. If recording is not possible, this game can be played by having members of the congregation stand out of view and speak so the class can hear them. Ask the group how they were able to identify people in the recordings. What did they rely on to identify the voices? Use a whiteboard or poster paper to make a list of their answers.

In Jesus' day, shepherds cared for their flocks night and day. Sometimes their sheep would be mixed with the sheep of other shepherds. The sheep knew the voice of their shepherd when he called and came to him, separating themselves from the other sheep. Jesus is our shepherd; he calls to us, and we are to follow.

- How are we like sheep? (*Sheep can be stubborn, easily frightened, and in need of constant care so they don't get lost or injured.*)
- How is Jesus like our shepherd? (*He calls us, guides us on the right path, and helps us when we are in need.*)

3 RESPOND

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

In today's passage, the Jews gathered around Jesus and demanded answers of him — "Tell us plainly." Humans are impatient. We want life to be easy and tools for good living to be handed to us. We ask God for what we want and sit around waiting for God to simply give. Waiting for God to make something happen is not what we are called to do. We are called to make something happen, and God will bless what we do.

Have the class think of all that they've ever asked for in a prayer. Examples are doing well on a test, getting better when sick, or asking for a particular present for Christmas. Write these on a dry erase board or poster paper. Discuss with the class asking God for things versus living in a way that makes change happen. Go back through the list and identify ways they could take the initiative in making change happen in their lives.

Examples:

- Preparing by studying would help you do well on a test.
- Resting and following your doctor's directions could help you feel better faster.
- Discuss the appropriateness of praying for "things."

4

SEND

Explores how the lesson
might be lived

(10% of lesson time)

Jesus not only wants us to follow him, but to be proactive. We are called to live in ways that affect positive change rather than wait for change to happen to us. Have each member of the group take a turn saying this week's personal challenge.

Personal Challenge: I will listen to the call and live to make positive change happen.

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope

(5% of lesson time)

Close with a circle prayer allowing each person an opportunity to say something they will strive to make happen this week. Have one person start the prayer and then squeeze the hand of the next person when they are done. The last person closes the prayer.

LESSON 25
15 May 2022

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER



Focus Scripture Passage: John 13:31–35

Lesson Focus: Worth of All Persons—Love One Another

Objectives

The learners will...

- love and be loved in return.
- learn about right relationships.
- disprove judgments and stereotypes.

Supplies

- Pens or pencils
- Poster paper
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 13:31–35 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 77, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Today’s passage tells of Jesus’ last moments with his disciples. They shared a meal, Jesus washed their feet, and gave them one final commandment. Read John 13: 31–35 to learn this new commandment.

Love is an incredible gift. To love and be loved are two of humans’ greatest experiences. Take a moment to think of all the people you love and who love you. Think about that love. Share with the group how that love makes you feel. Jesus tells us that all persons are worthy of being loved. We are meant to love so others may know what it feels like to be loved.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Right Relationships

Right relationships occur when there is harmony between two parties and compassion is present. We strive for all our relationships to be right relationships. We have been taught, "The restoring of persons to healthy or righteous relationships with God, others, themselves, and the earth is at the heart of the purpose of your journey as a people of faith" (Doctrine and Covenants 163:2b). These relationships embody Christ's love. Have the group think of right relationships in their lives and then share with the group what those relationships are like.

Form the group into smaller groups and give each a scenario below. Give them a few moments to read over the scenario, and then have them act it out for the group. An alternative is to read the scenarios as a group. After each group acts out its scenario, use the questions below to guide discussion.

Scenarios:

1. Two friends are making fun of someone in their class they don't like. That person hears them and is hurt by what they said.
2. A parent continually shows support and love for their child. The child feels loved and shows love and appreciation in return.
3. A man on the street drops his bag and all the contents spill out. Another person helps him clean up his belongings.
4. Two siblings want to play a game. One offers to take turns but the other refuses to share and keeps the game for himself.

Questions:

- Is this an example of a right relationship? Why or why not?
- If it's not a right relationship, what needs to change?
- Why is it important that all our relationships are full of compassion? When is this most challenging?

3 RESPOND

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

Jesus embodied God's love throughout his ministry, and his instruction to love one another is his final commandment to his disciples. By making this his final commandment, Jesus placed huge importance on loving one another. God's love is the supreme love, and though we try to embody it, sometimes we fall short. We struggle with prejudices and judgments based on stereotypes, and

All _____ are _____.

Examples: All girls are bad at sports.
All boys are smelly.
All teachers are boring.
All politicians are greedy.

these keep us from being able to love others fully. Name several ways we group people and make broad statements about them. Write them on a whiteboard or poster paper.

You may laugh about the exercise, but stress how ridiculous it is to limit our view of people to a narrow range of "facts," and how these views can keep us from loving fully. Have the group think of exceptions to each of their examples proving our judgments can be wrong. Then discuss the questions below.

- Share about a time when a judgment you've held has stopped you from having a right relationship with someone.
- How will Christ's love help us move away from judgment toward right relationships with God and others?

4 SEND

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

Take-away Question (Take-away questions can be discussed with the group but are meant to be considered throughout the week.)

Community of Christ upholds the Worth of All Persons. If we are moving toward Jesus, the peaceful One, how can we build relationships with those who feel distanced from God and others?

5 BLESS

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

Read the words to "Help Us Accept Each Other" *CCS 333* or "For Everyone Born" *CCS 285* as the closing prayer.

LESSON 26
22 May 2022

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Focus Scripture Passage: John 14:23–29

Lesson Focus: Peace of Jesus Christ—Holy Spirit, Dwell with Us

Objectives

The learners will...

- understand God’s peace.
- learn ways to experience peace amid life’s storms.
- explore ways they can share God’s peace with others.

Supplies

- Pens or pencils
- Paper
- Pieces of paper in various shapes, sizes, and colors
- "Eye of the storm" images from Internet search
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 14:23–29 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 78–79, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Community of Christ’s mission is to proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love, and peace. This mission was Jesus’ mission first. The season of Easter is moving God’s work from Jesus to the church. In today’s passage, Jesus calls us to continue his work.

Read John 14: 23–29.

This passage promises us the presence of the Holy Spirit which helps comfort and guide us in Jesus’ absence.

- Share a time when you have experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Eye of the Storm

Pursuit of Peace calls us into a way of living, but the promise of God’s peace does not mean we live without pain, conflict, loss, or distress. Rather, it assures us that Christ’s peace comforts us even when our lives are distressed. A visual representation of this would be the eye of a tropical storm. The area in the middle of these storms is calm with clear skies even though the storm rages around the eye. On the Internet, search “eye of the storm” for images.

Give each member of the group a piece of paper. Tell them to draw a circle in the middle of the paper. The circle represents the “eye” of their lives and everything outside the circle is what threatens their peace. Inside the circle, have them write words or draw pictures of things that bring peace to their lives such as the Holy Spirit, family, nature, and so on. Outside the circle, have them write their struggles—things that make peace in their lives difficult, such as homework, fights with loved ones, poverty, or illness. When the group is done, allow them to share what they’ve written or drawn.

3 RESPOND

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

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. Follow Christ in the way that leads to God’s peace and discover the blessings of all to the dimensions of salvation.

—Doctrine and Covenants 163: 2a

Pursuit of Peace

Start a discussion with the group about peace. Use their eye of the storm papers to lead the discussion.

- What does peace mean?
- How can we bring peace to others?
- When in your life have you known peace? At what times haven’t you known peace?
- How do you find peace in your storm?

Provide the group with pieces of paper of all different sizes, shapes, and colors. Have each youth take a handful and write the word “peace” on each piece of paper. This “peace” will be shared with others. (See Peace Challenge below.) If time allows, have the group think of situations when they can share peace with others and then act them out.

4

SEND

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

Peace Challenge

Challenge the youth to share their peace with others! As they meet people during the week, encourage them to share “peace” with them. Although a piece of paper with the word “peace” written on it doesn’t capture the full essence of peace, it can be a reminder of what Jesus called us to do.

5

BLESS

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

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit. Sing “Spirit of the Living God” CCS 567 to remind the group that during times when the storm rages around us, the Holy Spirit is present and can help us find comfort and peace.

LESSON 27
29 May 2022

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER / ASCENSION OF THE LORD

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 24:44–53

Lesson Focus: What Discipleship Means through the Lens of the Sacred Story

Objectives

The learners will...

- learn to be witnesses.
- explore the importance of the past and their roles in the future.
- proclaim Jesus Christ.

Supplies

- Wrapped items
- Poster paper or dry erase board
- Markers
- Doctrine and Covenants
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 24:44–53 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 80–81, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

The disciples were gathered in Jerusalem after the events of Holy Week and Easter. Jesus had already appeared to the disciples several times, like when he cooked them breakfast on the shores of the Sea of Galilee (John 21:9-14). Read Luke 24: 44–53 to see what happens during this encounter with the disciples.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Be a Witness

Before class time, wrap a few items with wrapping paper or newspaper. Give each member of the group one of the wrapped items. If there are more class members than items, make small groups of two or three. Allow members a few minutes to feel their packages, and then ask them to share their witness of the items. What would they say to help others understand the wonder of the items?

Now, have them open their packages to see what is revealed. Have them try again to give witness to the wonder of their items now they can see them.

- What made it easier the second time to tell about your item?
- What were some differences between your first witness and your second witness?

When the item was revealed to you, it was easier to witness the wonder of the item. Jesus “opened” the minds of the disciples so they would understand the scriptures and be able to witness better. Jesus fulfilled the scriptures by opening the disciples’ minds to them.

3 RESPOND

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

Past. Present. Future.

In verse 44 Jesus refers the disciples to the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms. Jesus stresses this link with the past. It is important to recognize that tradition and history have much to contribute. Ask the group to think of traditions they have learned or stories they have been told by their grandparents or older members of their congregation.

- Share about the traditions or stories you have learned from a member of an older generation. (Write these on poster paper or a dry erase board.)
- Are these traditions and stories important to your family or congregation? In what ways?
- Are you likely to continue these traditions and stories? If so, how could you do that? If not, why?
- What new traditions and stories do you hope to pass on? Explain why these are important now and in the future.

Children and youth learn about the past from others, and together multiple generations make up the present. In the future, children and youth will have the responsibility to pass on the traditions and stories. This is just like our role as disciples. We read the stories and learn the traditions of Jesus and his disciples, but we are the disciples now who have been tasked with sharing Christ’s mission. Today’s passage passes God’s gift in Jesus to us as disciples. The gifts that God has given us are great to receive, but they are not ours to keep—they are ours to share. They are divine gifts to be used for God’s purposes.

4

SEND

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

Proclaim Jesus Christ

The church's mission statement is "We proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love, and peace."

On a piece of paper, have each person write or draw their responses to the following statements.

- This week I will promote joy in my community by...
- This week I will promote hope in my community by...
- This week I will promote love in my community by ...
- This week I will promote peace in my community by ...

5

BLESS

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

Read Doctrine and Covenants 161:3c: "Be courageous and visionary, believing in the power of just a few vibrant witnesses to transform the world." Dream big, and brainstorm how the witness of this small group can lead to transformation in your community.

LESSON 28
5 June 2022

DAY OF PENTECOST

Focus Scripture Passage: Acts 2:1–21

Lesson Focus: Holy Spirit, Pentecost—God’s Spirit Poured Out

Objectives

The learners will...

- discuss Pentecost.
- explore the Holy Spirit’s empowering of the disciples.
- visualize where the Spirit leads.

Supplies

- Dry erase board or poster paper
- Markers
- Paper
- Drinking straws
- Poster paint
- Water
- Pens or pencils
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Acts 2:1–21 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 82–83, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Pentecost

Ask the class to write on a dry erase board or poster paper everything they know about Pentecost. Pentecost, which meant “fiftieth,” is celebrated 50 days after Passover. Pentecost was one of the most important festivals for the Jews and commemorated Moses receiving the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. People from all over would come to Jerusalem for the festival and offer two barley loaves in gratitude for the harvest. Today’s passage takes place in a busy marketplace full of activity and many different languages. Read Acts 2: 1–21 to find out what happens.

- How did people react to this event?
- What was the effect of having everyone hear the same message in their own language?
- How did the apostles feel while all this was happening?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

The disciples had looked to Jesus as God's Son, but also as a man like them. They had seen Jesus heal the sick and debate with religious leaders. They depended on Jesus' constant companionship and physical presence. Even after the miracles of the Resurrection and Ascension, the disciples were anxious when they no longer could see Jesus and talk to him personally. But the experience at Pentecost changed the disciples. They became not just men who had known Jesus for a brief time, but men who had Christ with them all the time.

- Why was the Holy Spirit's appearance necessary in the life of the early church?
- What did Jesus teach about the Holy Spirit that will help you in your life?

The events at Pentecost empowered the church to do Christ's mission. The Spirit that descended on Jesus now descended on the disciples giving power to the church. Just as Jesus began his ministry filled with the Holy Spirit, the disciples were beginning their ministry filled with the Spirit.

3 RESPOND

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

Led by the Spirit

This activity will help the class to imagine how the Holy Spirit can lead them. Each class member will need a piece of blank paper, a drinking straw, and some paint thinned with water. Using the straw, drop a few drops of paint on the blank paper. The drops should be placed near the bottom center of the page, but not touching each other. Then, using the straw, class members can blow the paint drops so they spread around the paper. Drops may mix to create a beautiful scattering and blending of color.

Imagine yourselves as the drops of paint and the Holy Spirit the wind that moved you around the page. Just as the Holy Spirit was present in the marketplace and empowered the disciples to move out in mission, you too are called to engage in Christ's mission. As drops, we are full of potential to share Christ's mission. With the help from the straw and your breath, the drop could spread and connect with other drops creating a new, beautiful picture.

4

SEND

Explores how the lesson
might be lived

(10% of lesson time)

Invite the group to remember the Spirit has empowered them to engage in Christ's mission. Sing "Come, Holy Spirit, Come" CCS 154. The Spirit is still leading us today.

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope

(5% of lesson time)

Since today's passage came from Acts, have the group close with an ACTS prayer. Provide paper and pencils so each class member can write their own. An ACTS prayer contains one sentence each on Adoration (*praise*), Confession (*acknowledgment of wrongdoing*), Thanksgiving (*gratitude*), and Supplication (*asking*). Ask class members to share one or more of their sentences in a circle prayer.

LESSON 29
12 June 2022

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST / TRINITY SUNDAY

Focus Scripture Passage: John 16:12–15

Lesson Focus: Guided by the Spirit

Objectives

The learners will...

- better understand the Trinity.
- discuss their understandings of God.
- explore the continued presence of the Holy Spirit.

Supplies

- Knife and cutting board
- Bible, one for each student if available
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 16:12–15 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 86, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Three in One

As the group gathers, challenge them to come up with words that have more than two meanings. To make it more challenging, form the group into two teams and see which team can come up with more words in a set amount of time. Some examples are provided.

Kid

- A baby goat
- A child
- To tease someone

Seal

- A fur-coated mammal

- To close something tightly
- A stamp that makes something official

Match

- Wooden fire starter
- To go together
- A game or competition (such as a tennis match)

Today the group will discuss the Trinity and Community of Christ's belief in one living God who is a community of three persons.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Remind the class of the events that took place during Pentecost. Because they have already read and discussed the Holy Spirit coming to the disciples and followers, this passage will be like a flashback. Jesus said this to the disciples before he ascended into heaven. Use John 16:12–15 to introduce the Trinity.

This passage is a promise of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit and a comfort both to the disciples and to us today. Jesus tells us that he will continue to communicate; the Holy Spirit will come and speak what is heard from Jesus. Jesus reminds us that everything that belongs to the Father belongs to Jesus, and the Spirit will declare that which belongs to Jesus. This passage expresses the closeness of the Trinity. Discuss the following questions to help the class understand the Trinity and what it means for our understanding of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

- Who are the “three persons” of the Trinity?
- What is your understanding of the Trinity?
- What questions do you have about the Trinity? (This question should be used to help guide the lesson and following discussion.)

3 RESPOND

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

Trinity

The Trinity wasn't something that people understood during the time of Jesus; it has developed as people tried to understand the interrelation between God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. The word Trinity is never mentioned in the Bible; however, God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are used interchangeably. But how can these three be one and one be all three?

Read the Community of Christ basic belief statement on God:

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*, 4th Edition, pp. 33–34

A common metaphor of the Triune God is *thought-word-breath*. Think of a word or idea—a thought. Now hold your hands in front of your mouth and speak the word aloud. The thought is like God, where the idea begins. The spoken word is Jesus Christ, who was described as the Word (John 1). The breath you feel on your hands is like the Holy Spirit, the breath that carries the spoken word out, the action that puts the idea into practice.

God speaks, God’s Word acts, and God’s Spirit moves over creation.

- In what ways does describing God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit as a community in loving relationship expand your understanding?

Give each youth a Bible and have them identify ways God is depicted.

- Whom does the passage identify? (*God, Jesus, Holy Spirit*)
- What metaphor is used when describing them?
- Which qualities are present in the depiction?

Examples: John 14:25–26, Isaiah 66:13, Genesis 1:1, Matthew 3:16, and John 10:11.

4 SEND

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

Take-away Question

Challenge the class to think about this during the week:

The continued presence of the Holy Spirit was promised to us. Throughout the week, pay attention to the moments when you feel the Holy Spirit’s presence. Take note of moments you were surprised to be aware of the Spirit.

5 BLESS

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

Close with “We Are One in the Spirit” CCS359. Pay special attention to the fourth verse which emphasizes the Trinity.

LESSON 30
19 June 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 7)

Focus Scripture Passage: 1 Kings 19:1–15a

Lesson Focus: Elijah hides from God

Objectives

The learners will...

- discover that God knows our hearts and will do something that speaks to us if we are ready to listen.
- understand God loves us and has different ways of communicating; not everyone should feel or experience God the same way.
- explore how our actions should show obedience to God; we do not need to fear when God has called us to a mission.
- know despite our weakness, God blesses and strengthens us to fulfill God's call.

Supplies

- Long strip of paper to create a wall mural**
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils and tape or glue
- Bible

Note to teachers: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for 1 Kings 19:1–15a in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 88–89, available through Herald House.

**Coordinate with today's worship planner or presider to have the youth participate in the worship service by sharing the mural and their interpretation of Elijah's encounter with God. See details in the Send section.

1 GATHER

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

Greet students and start by asking each one how they think God can speak to us. They can use biblical examples or examples of themselves or acquaintances who have felt that God has spoken to them.

Ask: Do you remember any people in the Bible who disobeyed God and then had to go do what God had asked? (*Jonah, Prodigal son, Saul who became Paul, among many others*)

Read 1 Kings 19:1–15a.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today's scripture passage has two distinct parts:

First, verses 3–4 introduce us the prophet Elijah, a man of God full of fear who fled to save his life, not remembering the miracles God had worked through him. Elijah's faith had diminished; he continued to flee until he reached the desert and rested beneath a tree. He was depressed, disenchanted, and sad. God gave special treatment to the prophet while he was in the wilderness; God sent an angel to feed him and strengthened him (verses 5–9a).

- How did the angel of the Lord help Elijah and strengthen him?
- Why did God want Elijah to be strong?

The second part of this text is described in verses 10–15. We see the result of listening to God's voice—being humble and obedient—so we are willing to do what God asks of us.

Here God introduced Godself to Elijah, who wanted to justify all his works for God. Elijah was able to recognize there was no difference between his own heart and those of the people. Both he and the people had been fearful and disobedient.

God sent Elijah on a mission. He arrived and hid in a cave and refused to come out. God showed Elijah through the natural elements that God was not found in the big, showy, or easily perceived natural events of wind, earthquake, and fire. None of them were God, and none could get Elijah to leave the cave. Maybe here it helped Elijah to see that his own big drama (where he had just shown the people and his rival Jezebel that God is stronger than the prophets of Baal), to see that it hadn't changed the actions and feeling of the people toward God. They went back to their disbelief and fears.

After the noise and spectacle, God showed up in sheer silence (some call it a quiet whisper). Elijah felt the difference and came out of the cave. He may have realized that sometimes it is better to accept a small, quiet miracle rather than looking for a big show to convince people of God's presence. Through this encounter with God, Elijah was transformed. God then told him to return to Damascus and anoint a king.

Usually, God does not use big showy displays to let us know of God's presence or convince us by force. It is most often in a soft, gentle invitation that we become aware of God's presence. God attracts us with love and by caring for our needs or giving us insight and understanding, rather than through a fearful display of power and greatness.

Elijah understood, obeyed, and felt ready to do what God asked. He returned ready to again assume his role as prophet and fulfill his mission (verse 15). The new king he would anoint would replace the evil and idol worshipping rulers who sought his life.

God has also chosen us to spread the good news of love and mercy. God calls us to be a light in the darkness. God also strengthens us for the work. God speaks to us in a whisper or a still, small voice or through quiet nudging so that we can return to the work God has for our lives as we follow Christ's mission.

Discuss:

- How can you hear and obey God's instructions?
- How can you prepare to hear God's voice?

- How can you know that it is God who speaks to you?
- What can you do to keep from being distracted from God's voice?
- In what ways does God strengthen you?

3 RESPOND

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

Wall Mural Activity

Create a wall mural or large poster to help remind students of the main parts of Elijah's story. List the important moments in the story and divide the long sheet of paper with the number of drawings you plan to have. Sequence the events and choose who will draw each portion of the story. Alternatively, you can distribute paper to each student and then assemble the drawings of the story on a long sheet of paper or poster.

4 SEND

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

Worship Challenge

Coordinate with today's worship planner or presider for the class members to share the story of Elijah's encounter with God during the worship service. Prepare the students to tell the story using their wall mural or poster. Have them explain their understandings to the congregation as part of the scripture focus. Make sure those who are going to speak are willing and happy to do so. If someone is very shy, they may be able to read a part of the scripture or just hold the mural from behind or do another task that helps the group in the presentation (sounds of wind, earthquake, fire, physically represent the tree and cave, etc.).

Review what everyone will say in the presentation.

5 BLESS

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

End class with a prayer for the group in their presentation. Thank each one for sharing how God speaks to each of us in the best way for each one.

LESSON 31
26 June 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 8)

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 9:51–62

Lesson Focus: Follow Jesus and proclaim God’s kingdom.

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore the demands of being a disciple.
- experience the need for a lack of hesitation required of Jesus’ disciples.
- discuss how the mission matters most.

Supplies

- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 9:51–62 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 93, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Today’s scripture passage can be split in two sections. **The first section (Luke 9:51–56)** focuses on the healing and peace that is God’s kingdom. The disciples James and John want to be angry at the Samaritans, and Jesus rebukes them, showing them the right path toward God’s kingdom. **The second section (Luke 9:57–62)** describes what it means to live a life as a disciple. Jesus tells his followers there cannot be hesitation as a disciple, and there is nothing more important than proclaiming God’s kingdom. Read Luke 9:51–62 to learn what Jesus teaches us and asks of us as disciples.

- When has someone made you so angry that you wanted to yell or retaliate?
- How are we called to respond to these circumstances?

Jesus tells of a kingdom where peace reigns and love is common—a kingdom where all are equal and injustice is something of the past. Jesus tells us that this kingdom—God’s kingdom—is attainable but we must be willing to proclaim and live it. This means we can’t hurt others even when they make us angry, and we can’t sit idly by and allow injustice. He goes further to let us know that if we want the kingdom of

God, we must be willing to put everything else aside and follow Jesus. Today's lesson will explore the true demands of being a disciple.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Keep the Beat

Keep the Beat is a fast-paced game that requires group members to act without hesitation. Each round of Keep the Beat has a new topic. The goal of the game is to come up with a word that goes with the topic and has not already been said during the round. Besides thinking of a new word, the group must keep the beat and say their words on the second count of the beat.

Have the group sit in a circle and practice the 1–2 beat. It can go as fast or slow as the group needs. It may be best to start the group slowly and speed up as they learn the game.

Group members will pat their laps on beat one and clap their hands on beat two. When it is their turn, they will say their words on beat two with the clap. This beat should be repeated 1–2–1–2 until a round ends.

Before the game, have several topics ready to go. Topics need to be general (Bible, clothes, animals, music) so the group has many choices for words. When the group is ready to start, you or one of the group members will select the topic and start the beat.

The game will rotate clockwise so that after the first person has said their word, the next person on the left will say the next word and so on.

A sample round, using animals as the topic, might go like this: (pat) "bird" (clap while saying "bird"), (pat) "dog" (clap while saying "dog"), (pat) "horse" (clap while saying "horse"), and continue around the circle with each person saying a different animal. The game continues around the circle until someone repeats an animal or hesitates and misses a beat. When the rhythm is broken, start a new round with a different topic. The goal of the game is to see how long the group can go without an error.

What makes Keep the Beat difficult is that when playing, you can't hesitate or you will miss the beat. This is like what Jesus is asking of us. Jesus tells us that this is how our devotion to God should be—without a second thought because nothing is more important than proclaiming God's kingdom.

"The mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead" (Doctrine and Covenants 164:9f).

3 RESPOND

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

Life as a Disciple Is Demanding

Give each group member a piece of paper and pen or pencil. Tell them they are going on a long journey and they get to go home and pack. Have them list everything they would pack for their trip. Would they want a special item, food, or clothes? Let each group member share a few of their essential items. Once the group has shared, tell them they can recycle their pieces of paper. They don't get to take any of that.

Like those in today's scripture passage, if Jesus came and said we needed to go with him right now, we wouldn't have time to go home and grab anything. All we could do is go with Jesus.

Discuss:

- If Jesus really did ask you to go with him and to leave everything behind, how would you react?
- Share about a time when you experienced how demanding discipleship is.
- In what ways is life as a disciple joyful? In what ways is it challenging?
- How can you support one another in responding to Jesus' call without hesitation?

4 SEND

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

Read or sing together "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus" *CCS 499*. When we decide to follow Jesus, we cannot turn back. If we seek a world that knows God's love and grace, then we must follow in Jesus' footsteps to proclaim God's kingdom.

5 BLESS

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

Each of us must decide to follow Jesus and proclaim God's kingdom. Close with a prayer that the group members will remember in their daily lives what it means to be a disciple.

LESSON 32
3 July 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 9)

Focus Scripture Passage: 2 Kings 5:1–14

Lesson Focus: A young girl bravely sharing about God and God's prophet leads to healing.

Objectives

The learners will...

- understand our actions have consequences, either positive or negative, for us and for others.
- see how far-reaching our small but brave testimony can be.
- see how God's power can heal and restore us.
- discover how young people can tell others of God's power and goodness.

Supplies

- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- Variety of art supplies: markers, crayons, colored pencils, paint, construction paper, scissors, glue
- Bible

Notes to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for 2 Kings 5:1–14 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 91–93, available through Herald House.

Optional: Coordinate with the worship planner or presider for the students to share a drama, poem, song, or image of the scripture story during the worship service. See details in the Engage section.

1 GATHER

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

Begin class with a prayer.

Ask if anyone knows the Old Testament Bible story of Naaman and Elisha. If so, what do they remember about the story? Give students opportunity to share their knowledge with the group.

Today's Bible story is about Naaman, a mighty warrior who had a terrible skin disease and how he was healed by God through the prophet Elisha. Also in the story is a young servant girl who told Naaman about Elisha.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Exploring the Scripture Passage

Read 2 Kings 5:1–14 together. Briefly discuss the main characters. Also discuss why people would tear their clothes like the king of Israel did.

- How did Naaman learn about Elisha and that he might be able to cure Naaman's illness?
- How did the servant girl know about Elisha? Do you think she was courageous to speak up and tell Naaman about Elisha? Why or why not?
- What does the story say about Naaman's bathing in the Jordan River? Why was he reluctant to do what Elisha instructed? Why do you think he got frustrated?

The healing miracle in today's scripture story reminds us that God can use simple and even strange ways to bless and heal us. A well-known healing story is of Jesus restoring sight to a blind man by mixing saliva and mud and putting it over the blind man's eyes (John 9:1–12). In today's story, Naaman needed to learn to be humble and obey so he could be healed.

Why was the role of the young servant girl important in the story? Sometimes we know something that will help another person, but we are afraid to share it. Sometimes we feel we don't have power or that people will accept what we say, so we don't speak up.

- Can you think of an example where you might feel a need to say or do something, but you are afraid to act?
- Why are some people afraid of sharing with their friends about God?
- What do you need courage to do to help someone else?
- Can you remember a time when God helped you, your family, or friends? What happened?

3 RESPOND

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

Creative Challenge

Make two groups with each person deciding which activity they prefer.

Group 1 can create a drama imitating the characters and events from this story. (Optional: coordinate to share the drama in the worship service to help teach the scripture story.)

Group 2 can create a poem, song, or draw illustrations about this story. These creations could also be shared in the worship service.

Have each group share their creations with the class.

4 SEND

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

Offer time for quiet reflection on the following question: How can I share God's love and healing powers with someone else?

5 BLESS

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

Close the class by thanking God for someone who shared with us about God's love.

LESSON 33
10 July 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 10)

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 10:25–37

Lesson Focus: Love Your Neighbor

Objectives

The learners will...

- reimagine the Good Samaritan with a modern setting.
- learn to love their neighbors.
- discuss how to use the story of the Good Samaritan in their lives.

Supplies

- Paper
- Pens, pencils, or markers
- Large writing surface
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 10:25–37 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 95–96, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Today’s scripture passage is one of the most familiar stories to Christians, the Good Samaritan. Read Luke 10:25–37 together.

Modern Samaritan

The story shows cultural and religious boundaries between the Jewish people and the Samaritans; but try to imagine this story in a modern setting. What culture or community would represent the victim, the robbers, the priest, and the Samaritan? Have the group act the story in a modern retelling. Give the group enough time to prepare.

Note to teacher: Ask the presider or worship planner if there is time in the service for the youth class to perform their modern parable.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Just as there are different cultures and customs today, in Jesus' time there were different cultures and customs. The Jewish people did not like to associate with the Samaritans. The Samaritans shared a similar history, but kept different religious practices, which is why no one would expect a Samaritan person to help a Jewish person or the other way around. Today's story shows that when a Jewish person was in need, it was only the Samaritan who stopped to help him.

The Samaritan showed true compassion by stopping and helping the man in need. The Samaritan knew what it meant to love your neighbor even when cultural traditions or other conditions made it difficult.

Love Your Neighbor

Give each group member a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Tell them to list conditions that might make them less likely to help a person in need. Examples might include seeing the other person as angry, atheist, mean, homeless, lonely, stressed, elderly, troubled, or ill.

- What about these conditions make you respond the way you do?
- How can you find ways to relate with compassion?

Note to teacher: The group will complete a sentence using the word list they've created. It is best if the words are adjectives (a word which describes a noun, such as the examples listed).

When the group has finished making their lists, write the following on a large writing surface. Then have the group each fill in a few of their words in the blank space so the phrase reads something like "Your homeless neighbor."

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

Your _____ neighbor.

Your _____ neighbor.

Your _____ neighbor.

Your _____ neighbor.

Your _____ neighbor.

It can be difficult to look beyond differences, but Jesus calls us to love all people. Jesus calls us to love every single neighbor regardless of whether they are ill, smelly, or mean. Sometimes we must ask ourselves, "Who is my neighbor?" to respond to the needs of others.

3 RESPOND

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

Who Is My Neighbor?

The story of the Good Samaritan has a lesson that goes beyond being nice and helpful. The Good Samaritan challenged cultural and religious boundaries without second thought. The Samaritan showed how the power of God can transform people.

- What divides people in your community or congregation?
- Have you ever witnessed the love and mercy such as that of the Good Samaritan?
- In what ways is your congregation responding to its neighbors who are isolated and in need? Or, how can your congregation respond?

4 SEND

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

Personal Challenge

In the final verse of today's passage, Jesus says, "Go and do likewise." Make this a personal challenge for the group.

Ask:

- How can I be like the Good Samaritan?
- Who is my neighbor?

5 BLESS

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

Close with a prayer of blessing to set the group's "hearts ablaze" or sing "Companion of the Poor" CCS 296.

LESSON 34
17 July 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 11)

Focus Scripture Passage: Amos 8:1–12

Lesson Focus: We are called to be advocates of justice.

Objectives

The learners will...

- understand ancient Israel was not treating their poor with dignity.
- explore injustice in our world and how we can work against it.
- create letters of affirmation for those who need our love.
- reflect on how they can make a difference in our world.

Supplies

- Paper and pens
- Whiteboard or paper pad and easel with markers
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Markers
- Card decoration items (Optional)
- Copies of Doctrine and Covenants 161:3–4b (end of lesson)
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Amos 8:1–12 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 95–96, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Have each student write a story where they witness someone not being treated with equity.

Invite the students to crumple up their written stories. Yell “Snowball fight!” and allow the student to throw their stories at each other as if they were having a fun snowball fight. After 30 seconds or so, call timeout and have the students pick up a “snowball.”

Allow each student to read the story they picked up and respond how they would work to bring justice to that situation.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Have a volunteer read Amos 8:1–12. Explain the book of Amos was written during a time of economic growth and prosperity for Israel. The book was written somewhere between 760–750 BCE. The nation's wealthy and well-off were thriving, while the poor were not well cared for...they were even belittled. God calls out the injustice and sends out a call for righteousness. Amos explains how God feels when the wealthy and the powerful exploit the poor and the defenseless. God loved God's people enough to confront their injustices within their society.

Work as a class to brainstorm definitions and examples of injustice. They may include the stories that were written at the beginning of class.

Injustice is described as a violation of the rights of others; it's unjust or unfair action or treatment. In Community of Christ, we're called to seek justice, caring for the poor, and walk with Jesus, the peaceful One. As disciples we are called to work toward God' justice.

Read Doctrine and Covenants 161:3–4b (end of lesson).

Form the class into two or three groups depending on the number of participants in your class and assign at least two verses to each group. Have each group read their section of the scripture passage. Give them time for personal reflection and answer the following questions:

- What words or phrases speak to you most? Why?
- Have you noticed in your communities the need for others to live these words? How so?
- How can you personally live what the scripture is challenging us to do?

3 RESPOND

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

Spread out the construction paper, scissors, markers, and any other card-making accessories where everyone from the class can access the materials. Share an example of someone you know who has felt like an outcast or an individual on the fringes in their community.

Ask: What are everyday examples of people you see living on the edges of your communities? Have them identify people they know in their neighborhood, school, church, sports team, or in other communities they share.

With the provided card-making supplies, have students write a message of affirmation for each day of the week to a different person they know on the fringes of their community. You may want to come to class with a few examples to help inspire the class with their own written notes.

Allow time for students to reflect and invite the class to share a message of affirmation.

4

SEND

Explores how the lesson
might be lived

(10% of lesson time)

After reflecting on where students see injustices in their community, shift the conversation toward action.

- How have you seen others respond to the injustices of the world?
- How do you want to respond to the injustices around you?
- What can you do to help create justice for those on the fringes?

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope

(5% of lesson time)

Close by singing a prayer of blessing using "For Everyone Born" CCS 285.

Doctrine and Covenants 161:3–4b

3a. Open your hearts and feel the yearnings of your brothers and sisters who are lonely, despised, fearful, neglected, unloved. Reach out in understanding, clasp their hands, and invite all to share in the blessings of community created in the name of the One who suffered on behalf of all.

b. Do not be fearful of one another. Respect each life journey, even in its brokenness and uncertainty, for each person has walked alone at times. Be ready to listen and slow to criticize, lest judgments be unrighteous and unredemptive.

c. Be patient with one another, for creating sacred community is arduous and even painful. But it is to loving community such as this that each is called. Be courageous and visionary, believing in the power of just a few vibrant witnesses to transform the world. Be assured that love will overcome the voices of fear, division, and deceit.

d. Understand that the road to transformation travels both inward and outward. The road to transformation is the path of the disciple.

4a. Do not neglect the smallest among you, for even the least of these are treasures in God's sight. Receive the giftedness and energy of children and youth, listening to understand their questions and their wisdom. Respond to their need to be loved and nurtured as they grow.

b. Be mindful of the changing of life's seasons, of the passage from the springtime of childhood and youth to the winter years of life. Embrace the blessing of your many differences. Be tender and caring. Be reminded once again that the gifts of all are necessary in order that divine purposes may be accomplished.

LESSON 35
24 July 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 12)

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 11:1–13

Lesson Focus: Being centered in God’s love through prayer is essential.

Objectives

The learners will...

- discuss how they pray.
- read Jesus’ tips for prayer and compare two versions of the Lord’s Prayer.
- write a prayer using what they learned from the passage.

Supplies

- Large writing surface and marker
- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 11:1–13 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 99, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Start a discussion with the group about prayer.

- In what ways do you pray?
- How would you describe your prayer life?

Read Luke 11:1–13.

We should not feel obliged, nervous, or scared to pray. Praying should come as naturally as a conversation with a best friend. God wants us to pray. God wants us to be in relationship to God and others, and centering ourselves in God’s love through prayer is essential for that relationship. It’s okay to feel unsure of how to pray or what to say. We see in today’s passage that even the disciples asked Jesus for help. Jesus told his disciples, and us, that prayer is important, and he even helps us with how to pray.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Lord's Prayer

Today's passage includes a version of the Lord's Prayer, Luke 11:2–4. Another version of this prayer can be found in Matthew 6:9–15. Read both versions as a group and discuss them. Write the group's answers on a large writing surface.

- What are key differences and likenesses?
- In what ways are these important?
- Can you identify the basic theme of both prayers? (*recognizing God's holiness, the wish for God's reign on Earth, our dependency on God, our vulnerability to God's grace*)

3 RESPOND

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

Praying helps us be in the mind of Christ and let the mind of Christ be in us. Prayer is a gift to everyone; through it we are in the presence of God's grace, being a part of God's grace. God blesses us in our lives, and through prayer we can express what is on our hearts. However, prayer is not used to give God our "wish list" of things we want. Prayer is a time to be mindful of self, others, and relationship to the world around us and to the Divine.

- In what ways do we interpret prayer being answered?
- How do we connect through prayer?
- How does prayer help us grow spiritually?
- What is a problem with using prayer to give God our "wish list"?

What Else Does Prayer Do?

In prayer we pray for God's reign on Earth, and we pray that in our lives as disciples we would be more aware of the needs of the hungry, suffering, and abused among us. Our prayers are a call to increase what we do in our ministry. We are called to mission, and through prayer we seek God's love and grace with us as we answer the call.

Give each group member a piece of paper and pen or pencil. Have them write a prayer using what they've learned today, or write the Lord's Prayer in their own words. Invite them to share their prayer with others, or part of a worship service. We talk to God through prayer and through prayer we commit to being disciples through our actions.

4

SEND

Explores how the lesson
might be lived

(10% of lesson time)

Spiritual Practice

Spiritual practices help us explore different styles of prayer and meditation to center ourselves in God's love. They can help us be more aware of and meet the needs of those facing injustice in our world. Use a spiritual practice the group is familiar with or find one from www.CofChrist.org by typing Spiritual Practices in the sitewide search. Engage together in a time of attentiveness and intentionality.

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope

(5% of lesson time)

In closing, sing "Seek Ye First" CCS 599, paying special attention to the second verse which echoes part of today's passage.

LESSON 36
31 July 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 13)

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 12:13–21

Lesson Focus: Making responsible choices with what we have places value on our relationships with others instead of on what we have.

Objectives

The learners will...

- compare wants and needs.
- see the injustices that others experience.
- discuss what they can give.

Supplies

- *Where Children Sleep* by James Mollison (ISBN 9781905712168)
- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Notes to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 12:13–21 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 100, available through Herald House.

This lesson is the first half of a two-part lesson.

1 GATHER

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

Today’s scripture passage tells the parable of the rich man and addresses the question, “How do we make choices about our material wealth?” Jesus uses the rich man as an example of what not to do. Read Luke 12:13–21 together to see what the rich man did.

Jesus condemns the rich man’s decisions, but it is not material wealth itself that is condemned. In this passage, the focus is on the choices that we make with our material wealth. We can look at examples from Jesus’ life and ministry to better understand how to make responsible choices with what we have.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Needs and Wants

Give each group member a piece of paper and pen or pencil. Have them make a chart like the example given with one side labeled "Wants" and one side labeled "Needs." Fill in each column with things in their lives they consider wants and needs.

Wants	Needs
New phone	Food
Candy	Clothes
Name-brand clothing	Love

Compare the lists of needs and wants. On a large writing surface, have the group name differences between the two sides.

- What are the differences between our needs and our wants?
- What happens when we let our wants dictate our choices?

Where Children Sleep

Look at *Where Children Sleep*, a book of photographs depicting children from around the world in their homes. Take time to look at the pictures and compare how other people live, being mindful of the wants and needs presented in each bedroom. If the book is not available, some pictures are available online at the photographer's website. <http://jamesmollison.com/books/where-children-sleep/>

We strive for justice in our world, justice where all have what they need. When our needs are met, we forget there are others in the world who are in need.

- Compare the photos of where children sleep. How does justice look in those spaces?
- Do all people in the world have what they need?
- How do your needs compare with the needs of some of the children in the photos?

Note to teacher: This activity is not to condemn those who have material wealth and compare standards of living (rich versus poor), but to look at the needs of others and the injustices that people in our world face. A good question to ask is, "What are basic needs, and are they being met?"

3 RESPOND

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

Luke is not trying to make people feel guilty for having material wealth. Luke tells us that having things is not bad, but the choice to aspire to wealth and hold onto it distracts us from what God wants for our lives. When what we want and value are material items, we have no room to value people and relationships. We have a responsibility to relationships with others, relationships that are not impeded by

want for material items. Jesus wants us to value our relationships with one another, ourselves, and to God above everything.

What Can I Give?

Give each group member another piece of paper. On this piece of paper have them write what they can give to help meet others' needs. This might be a material item, or it might be a characteristic to help a relationship grow. (Examples: *friendship, tithing, a listening ear, love, time, clothing, and so on.*) When the group is finished, have them share their lists.

Note to teacher: Keep the group's lists to be used in next week's lesson.

4 SEND

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

Each person has so much to offer the world. We may not be rich like the man in the story, but we can be rich in spirit or love or friendship. Jesus challenges us to make good choices. Have each youth consider the personal challenge as a goal for the week.

Personal challenge:

How will I focus on my relationships with others instead of my material wants?

5 BLESS

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

Close with "Seek Ye First" *CCS 599* or a prayer.

LESSON 37
7 August 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 14)

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 12:32–40

Lesson Focus: Making responsible choices with what we have places value on our relationships with others instead of on what we have.

Objectives

The learners will...

- discuss imitating God's generosity and tithing as a spiritual practice.
- discuss how our true capacity helps support local and worldwide ministries through Mission Tithes.
- create giving envelopes to give to others.
- challenge themselves to give what they can.

Supplies

- Tithing Brochure Presentation (PowerPoint) available at www.HeraldHouse.org/products/tithing-brochure-presentation-powerpoint
- Mission Tithes offering envelopes
- Blank mailing envelopes for each student
- Paper and pens or pencils
- Markers
- Bible

Notes to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 12:32–40 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 101–102, available through Herald House.

This lesson is the second half of a two-part lesson.

1 GATHER

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

Today's scripture passage builds on the previous lesson's scripture passage. It reminds us that when we invest in God's love, we have all we need. Take turns reading Luke 12:32–40.

Ask: If something you valued were stolen or lost, how would you feel?

It's easy to become attached to material items and be upset when something we value is lost. But Jesus reminds us that it is not important that we have things, but that we make wise choices with what we have.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Two lessons ago we discussed the need for prayer in our lives. In the previous lesson we discussed the value we give material items versus the value we give relationships. Today we're looking at how those come together. How do we prayerfully consider what to do with what we have? Opportunities for generosity and service sometimes come quietly and unexpectedly, like a thief in the night.

Read Doctrine and Covenants 165:2 and the definition of tithing approved by the 2016 World Conference through a common consent process.

Doctrine and Covenants 165:2

- 2 a. Free the full capacity of Christ's mission through generosity that imitates God's generosity.
- b. Listen to the testimonies of those responding generously. Follow your soul's yearning to come home to God's grace and generosity. Let gratitude show you the way.
- c. Remember, a basic discipleship principle is growing Christ's mission through local and world mission tithes according to true capacity. Giving to other worthwhile organizations, while an important part of A Disciple's Generous Response, should not diminish or replace mission tithes.
- d. Tithing is a spiritual practice that demonstrates willingness to offer every dimension of one's life to God. When defined by faith, love, and hopeful planning, including resolving unwise debt, capacity to respond becomes much greater than initially assumed.
- e. Stewardship as response to the ministry of Christ is more than individual giving. It includes the generosity of congregations and jurisdictions that give to worldwide ministries of the church to strengthen community in Christ in all nations.
- f. Sharing for the common good is the spirit of Zion.

Mission Tithes

As these words find expression in the church, the following affirmations guide us:

- Stewardship is whole-life response to God's grace and the ministry of Jesus Christ.
- One way stewardship is expressed is through the spiritual practice of tithing.
- Although tithing literally means a tenth, giving generously to one's true capacity is the spirit of tithing.
- Tithing of time, talent, treasure, and testimony supports local and worldwide church ministries in pursuit of Jesus Christ's mission.
- All disciples are called to live as faithful stewards who tithe.

These affirmations are part of World Conference Resolution 1314 Mission and Tithing, which was adopted by the World Conference June 11, 2016, using a common consent process.

Ask:

- What do you imagine when you think of imitating God's generosity (See Doctrine and Covenants 165:2a)?

- Who knows what Mission Tithes are?
- How can giving Mission Tithes be a spiritual practice (See Doctrine and Covenants 165:2d)?

3 RESPOND

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

Pass around Mission Tithes envelopes so the group can see what they look like. Ask the group if they or their families have ever used Mission Tithes envelopes or eTithing.

- Giving is a sacrifice that can be joyous. What can you give joyfully to help others?
- What makes giving difficult? Easy?
- Is it easier for you to share time, talents, treasures, or testimony?
- In what ways can you increase what you share or, in other words, free your full capacity to share in support of Christ's mission?

Giving Envelopes

What we do with what we have matters; it's an important part of our lives as disciples. Even if you don't have money to give, it's still important to be aware of what we do with what we have. Give group members blank, empty mailing envelopes. These envelopes will be like their Mission Tithes envelopes but for whatever else they have to offer. Give group members their lists of what they can give that they created in the previous lesson. Have the group decorate their envelopes as if they were going to tithe from that list. An example might be an envelope for all the love they can give.

4 SEND

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

Being aware of what we can share is only one part of giving; the next step is to give it. This week the personal challenge is for the group to give their giving envelope to someone with what they said they could give. So if they wrote they could give love, and they created a love envelope, they not only give the envelope to someone, but they find a way to give love, too.

5 BLESS

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

Close with a prayer that gives thanks for what we have and asks for help in valuing our relationships with others.

"When what we value aligns with the concerns and mission of Christ, it can never wear out, be stolen, or destroyed" (*Sermon and Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p.101).

LESSON 38
14 August 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 15)

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 12:49–56

Lesson Focus: Christ's Mission Is Our Mission

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore Jesus' challenge in today's scripture passage.
- discuss opposition they may face when standing up for what they believe.
- create posters for each Mission Initiative.

Supplies

- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, available from HeraldHouse.org
- Video: *Change Your Life, Change the World* available from www.CofChrist.org and youtube.com/CofChrist
- Computer or another device for playing video
- Poster paper
- Markers
- Copies of the Mission Prayer (end of lesson)
- Bible

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 12:49–56 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 103–104, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Ask: Could you stand up for something you believed in even if it meant opposition from the people you love most, like your family and friends?

That is Jesus' challenge to us in today's scripture passage. Read Luke 12: 49–56 which encourages us to make Christ's mission our highest standard.

Although possible, it's unlikely that you will face opposition from the ones you love if you stand up for what you believe. But that doesn't change Jesus' question about the decisions we make and what we choose to stand up for.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Jesus' life and ministry challenge us to look closely at what we do and the decisions we make. Today's passage puts that challenge to us again. Are we willing to stand up for what we believe even if that means people we love may distance themselves from us? Christ wants wholeness in our lives and oneness for the world, but the pursuit of peace and justice in the world often leads to division.

- Share a time you (or someone else) held a belief that caused distance between you and others.
- Did this create any difficulties?
- Did it make you question your beliefs?
- How did you persevere?

Life as a disciple can be challenging. In some places in the world, being a disciple of Jesus Christ can be dangerous. Not everyone will agree with you and you may face opposition, but Jesus wants us to push on. If we truly want peace for all and an end to injustices, we must be willing to face this opposition.

Anthem

Watch *Change Your Life, Change Your World*, Community of Christ's anthem for Christ's mission.

3 RESPOND

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

Jesus' mission was bold. He challenged traditions and people's decisions and shared God's love with everyone. That's a lot for just one guy, and that's why Jesus has called us to carry on his mission as disciples. Community of Christ has five Mission Initiatives that respond to that call.

- Invite People to Christ
- Abolish Poverty, End Suffering
- Pursue Peace on Earth
- Develop Disciples to Serve
- Experience Congregations in Mission

"Our call is to reclaim that same vision and passion for the whole mission of Jesus Christ today through five life-changing, church-changing, and world-changing Mission Initiatives" (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 22).

Ask the class what they know about the Mission Initiatives. Refer to *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition for more information.

Mission Initiative Posters

Form five small groups, pairs, or individuals, assigning each a Mission Initiative. Provide poster paper and markers. Groups should create posters depicting their assigned initiatives focusing on the bold mission of

Christ. How can we be bold like Jesus through each Mission Initiative? How did Jesus live the Mission Initiative? How can we live the Mission Initiative?

4 SEND

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

Share each poster with the larger group. If possible, have them share with the congregation also.

5 BLESS

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

Close with the Mission Prayer.

Mission Prayer

God, where will your Spirit lead today?

Help me be fully awake and ready to respond.

Grant me courage to risk something new

And become a blessing of your love and peace.

Amen.

LESSON 39
21 August 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 16)

Focus Scripture Passage: Jeremiah 1:4–10

Lesson Focus: We are worthy of God's call.

Objectives

The learners will...

- uncover a fear that may be holding them back.
- reflect on their worthiness of being called as a disciple.
- engage with the Enduring Principles in relation to the scripture text.
- be affirmed that they are never alone surrounded by God and a supportive community.

Supplies

- Paper and pens
- "Enduring Principles of Community of Christ" handout (end of lesson)
- "Then and Now: From Prophets to Principles" handout (end of lesson)
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Jeremiah 1:4–10 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 104–105, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Give a sheet of paper to each participant. Have them write one of their fears in the center of their paper. The fear should focus on something that gets in the way of doing a task, reaching a goal, healing a relationship, or completing an assignment. After time for reflection and writing, collect the papers. Situate the class in a circle to make it easy to pass around each fear. Randomly hand a paper to each one. Have the class write an affirming response to the fear on the paper. When everyone is finished, pass the paper a different direction so they can respond to the next fear. When someone gets their own paper, invite them to write an outcome of overcoming that fear. For example:

Fear: I am worried about talking to my friend whose feelings I hurt.

Responses: It is never easy, but God will help you find the words you need. Reconciliation is important; you got this!

In today's scripture passage, God calls Jeremiah to be a messenger and prophet for God. Jeremiah is hesitant and fearful; he resists the call. However, God affirms Jeremiah, despite his concerns that he is not worthy. Sometimes hearing the right words helps us overcome things in our life that hold us back from doing or being all that we can do and be. Affirmations are a powerful thing that can inspire us to be the best we can be.

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

Today's scripture passage comes from the Old Testament about Jeremiah, one of the most influential prophets. Specifically, the passage explains the calling of Jeremiah as a prophet for God. It is known as Jeremiah's commissioning, a call to go and serve God.

Read Jeremiah 1:4–5.

Our passage begins with God sharing a beautiful affirmation to Jeremiah saying I know you. God is establishing an intimate, loving, relationship with him.

- When has there been a moment in your life when you've felt truly known?
- Who helped you feel that way?
- Did it feel liberating to be yourself and to be proud?

Read Jeremiah 1:6–8.

Jeremiah immediately responds with a rebuttal saying he isn't adequate because he is too young and inexperienced. God pushes back exclaiming God will be there to give guidance and assurance. God's presence will detract the fear and insecurities that are hindering Jeremiah from saying yes to the call.

- When have you felt inadequate or unworthy? How did you overcome those feelings? Who helped you?
- When have you felt God's assuring presence in your life? How did that moment affect you?

Read Jeremiah 1:9–10.

These last few verses of our passage emphasize that Jeremiah is chosen and blessed by God to become a vessel for God. In the ancient world prophets were the messengers of God. They delivered the words of God and challenged God's people: socially, politically, culturally, and religiously. In this moment God promised God would be working through Jeremiah. But the message wasn't easy and full of joy. God's people were not caring for their poor, those who were being oppressed and degraded. It is also important to remember that books in the Old Testament were the stories and experiences of an ancient people as they tried to understand who God is and what God wants them to do and be. During their terrible deeds, God's judgment was upon them, leading to their eventual ruin. But even during the plucking and pulling, and the destruction and overthrowing, the hope of redemption was possible. Renewal was on the horizon.

- When have you been chosen to be a leader or in charge of something?
 - Who pushed or encouraged you to lead?
 - What was the outcome of the experience?
 - What did you learn?

- What is an example of uncovering hope amid sorrow?

3 RESPOND

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

In Community of Christ, we have nine Enduring Principles that express the essence of who we are as a community. We strive to live the principles individually and collectively wherever we go. Ask if the class can name all nine principles.

Grace and Generosity	Worth of All Persons	Pursuit of Peace (Shalom)
Sacredness of Creation	All Are Called	Unity in Diversity
Continuing Revelation	Responsible Choices	Blessings of Community

Give each student the “Enduring Principles of Community of Christ” and “Then and Now: From Prophets to Principles” handouts provided at the end of the lesson. Invite volunteers to read the Enduring Principles. Have students choose four Enduring Principles and write them on their handout. Have them answer the questions. Give time for them to share their reflections from the handout.

If time allows, encourage the students to do this again as a class.

4 SEND

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

Make sure each student has their original opening activity paper with their identified fear and the class members' affirmations. Invite them to place the handout in a spot where they will see it during the week. Some examples include on a mirror, a bulletin board in their room, or in their locker. May it be a reminder that we are not defeated by our fears. Instead, we are assured that God and others are advocating for us. We are a community who uplifts one another.

5 BLESS

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

Close your experience by singing “I, the Lord of Sea and Sky” CCS 640.

Enduring Principles of Community of Christ

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.

Sacredness of Creation

- In the beginning, God created and called it all good.
- Spirit and material, seen and unseen, are related.
- Creation's power to create or destroy reminds us of our vulnerability in this life.
- God is still creating to fulfill divine purpose.
- We join with God as stewards of care and hope for all creation.

Continuing Revelation

- Scripture is an inspired and indispensable witness of human response to God's revelation of divine nature.
- God graciously reveals divine will today as in the past.
- The Holy Spirit inspires and provides witness to divine truth.
- In humility, individually and in community, we prayerfully listen to understand God's will for our lives, the church, and creation more completely.

Worth of All Persons

- God views all people as having inestimable and equal worth.
- God wants all people to experience wholeness of body, mind, spirit, and relationships.
- We seek to uphold and restore the worth of all people individually and in community, challenging unjust systems that diminish human worth.
- We join with Jesus Christ in bringing good news to the poor, sick, captive, and oppressed.

All Are Called

- God graciously gives people gifts and opportunities to do good and to share in God's purposes.
- Jesus Christ invites people to follow him by becoming disciples who share his life and ministry.
- Some disciples are called and ordained to particular priesthood responsibilities and ministries for the sake of the community, the congregation, and the world.
- We respond faithfully, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to our best understanding of God's call.

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.

Pursuit of Peace (Shalom)

- God wants shalom (justice, reconciliation, well-being, wholeness, and peace) for all of creation.
- Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God's shalom (peace), reveals the meaning of God's peace in all aspects of life.
- The vision of Zion is to promote God's reign on earth, as proclaimed by Jesus Christ, through the leavening influence of just and peaceful communities.
- We courageously and generously share the peace of Jesus Christ with others.
- Led by the Holy Spirit, we work with God and others to restore peace (shalom) to creation.
- We celebrate God's peace wherever it appears or is being pursued by people of good will.

Unity in Diversity

- Community of Christ is a diverse, international family of disciples, seekers, and congregations.
- Local and worldwide ministries are interdependent and important to the church's mission.
- The church embraces diversity and unity through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- We seek agreement or common consent in important matters. If we cannot achieve agreement, we commit to ongoing dialogue and lovingly uphold our common faith in Jesus Christ and the mission of the church.
- We confess that our lack of agreement on certain matters is hurtful to some of God's beloved children and creation.

Blessings of Community

- The gospel of Jesus Christ is expressed best in community life where people become vulnerable to God's grace and each other.
- True community includes compassion for and solidarity with the poor, marginalized, and oppressed.
- True community upholds the worth of persons while providing a healthy alternative to self-centeredness, isolation, and conformity.
- Sacred community provides nurture and growth opportunities for all people, especially those who cannot fully care for themselves.
- We value our connections and share a strong sense of trust in and belonging with one another—even if we never have met.
- Some disciples are called and ordained to particular priesthood responsibilities and ministries for the sake of the community, the congregation, and the world.
- We are called to create communities of Christ's peace in our families and congregations and across villages, tribes, nations, and throughout creation.

Then and Now: From Prophets to Principles

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying,
"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born, I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how
to speak, for I am only a boy." But the Lord said to
me,

"Do not say, 'I am only a boy';
for you shall go to all to whom I send you,
and you shall speak whatever I command you.

Do not be afraid of them,

for I am with you to deliver you,
says the Lord."

Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my
mouth; and the Lord said to me,

"Now I have put my words in your mouth.

See, today I appoint you over nations and over
kingdoms,

to pluck up and to pull down,
to destroy and to overthrow,
to build and to plant."

—Jeremiah 1:4–10

Enduring Principle 1: _____

How is this principle reflected in the scripture passage?

How can you live this principle?

Enduring Principle 2: _____

How is this principle reflected in the scripture passage?

How can you live this principle?

Enduring Principle 3: _____

How is this principle reflected in the scripture passage?

How can you live this principle?

Enduring Principle 4: _____

How is this principle reflected in the scripture passage?

How can you live this principle?

LESSON 40
28 August 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 17)

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 14:1, 7–14

Lesson Focus: All are invited to a place at the table.

Objectives

The learners will...

- connect today's passage to choices they make.
- discuss the tables to which they are called to invite others.
- explore the gift of letting others give.

Supplies

- Small item or snack for each group member
- Way to attach items to bottom of chairs
- Copies of the *Daily Bread* story by Stephen Hatch (end of the lesson)
- Paper and Pens or pencils
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 14:1, 7–14 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 106–107, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

For the first object lesson, make sure there are enough chairs in the room for each group member. On half of the chairs, place something the group members can keep, such as a snack or small object. Also attach (with tape or other non-permanent means) an item to the underside of the chair. It is important that half of the chairs have something the group would want and the rest of the chairs have nothing. When the group starts to arrive, welcome them into the room and allow them to choose their chairs. When everyone has arrived, read Luke 14:1, 7–14 and then discuss the questions that follow.

Ask the group if they noticed anything different when they entered the room. They may have noticed that half of the group sat in a seat that had something on it.

- What was the item on the chair?
- Why did you choose your chair?

- What connection can be drawn between the parable and choosing a chair for class?

After the discussion, invite those who received an item to give their chairs to those who did not. Then tell them there is something to share (attached to the bottom of the chairs) so everyone has something. Jesus wants us to share what we have equally at the table. When we extend invitations to those in need and put others before us, we are living Jesus' teaching.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

In today's passage, as Jesus is sharing a meal with the Pharisees, he makes two points. He tells the host to invite those who are in need, not just those who can return the invitation. He tells the guests to show humility. Jesus sees guests seating themselves at places of honor when they arrive, trying to put themselves above everyone else instead of recognizing each person's place at the table. Jesus encourages us to be quietly amazing. What does it mean to be quietly amazing? It means to live humbly, to do what we can for others without seeking honor. It means providing everyone an equal place at the table and knowing that your place at the table is not always at the head.

- When have you been blessed by someone who was quietly amazing?
- How can we be quietly amazing?
- How can we let others shine?

What Is a Table?

In the parable, Jesus shares in a meal at a table, but when Jesus talks about inviting persons to a table, do you think he's talking only about a physical dinner table? To what other "tables" can we invite people?

3 RESPOND

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

Make copies of the *Daily Bread* story by missionary Stephen V. Hatch (end of the lesson). Form the group into pairs, have them read the passage together, and discuss the questions that follow.

One of the greatest gifts we can give is to allow another to give to us. When we receive the gifts of others, we allow them to develop their gifts as disciples.

4 SEND

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

Read this passage from Doctrine and Covenants 161:3a.

Open your hearts and feel the yearnings of your brothers and sisters who are lonely, despised, fearful, neglected, unloved. Reach out in understanding, clasp their hands, and invite all to share in the blessings of community created in the name of the One who suffered on behalf of all.

Ask: Who in your life is represented by this passage?

It might be a friend, a neighbor, a local shop owner, or a stranger who needs your invitation. These invitations are not metaphorical; they are real. Those whose hearts are yearning are real, with real needs, and we must open our hearts to them.

Provide each group member with a piece of paper and a writing instrument. Have them answer today's personal challenge and hang their papers on the wall of the classroom or display somewhere else in the church building.

Challenge Statement: This week I will invite others to the table by...

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

Close with the hymn "For Everyone Born" CCS 285 which focuses on everyone's place at the table.

Daily Bread story by Stephen V. Hatch

I am a foodie. I love to cook, but I also love to try new foods and have new dining experiences. I am fully convinced that one of the main reasons for this is my early experience of sharing meals with church members.

Some of my earliest memories are sharing with my family (my father was serving as a church appointee in Mexico) and going to homes of local members for meals. These homes were usually simple, and their food supply was meager. But the meal was always delicious and served with love and joyfulness. It was obvious to me that our hosts shared at a cost.

At first it made me uncomfortable, knowing that I was eating food at one meal that would likely serve them for a couple of days. But the hosts offered a sense of rich welcome and generosity. We felt their joy in having us in their home. I understood early what it was like to have a welcome place at their table.

In working for the church in the international field, I found myself welcomed to table after table with joy and generosity. Each country and culture are different, and every experience is unique. Sometimes it was a common meal such as potatoes and beans. Sometimes it was a little more interesting like guinea pig or udder. Sometimes it was a local dish like *feijoada* or *baleadas*, and sometimes it was like what I would prepare myself at home, like spaghetti or eggs. But my place at the table was always offered as one of welcome and love.

I love cooking for my family and inviting others for a meal. I love to share my food with others. I only hope that when I prepare meals for my guests, I also am expressing the same welcome and hospitality I have felt countless times. I hope they know they always have a place at my table.

- Talk about a fun experience you've had sharing a meal.
- Think about a time when someone served you with love and joyfulness.
- Have you ever experienced uncomfortable generosity like Stephen?
- Whom have you invited to have a place at your table?

LESSON 41
4 September 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 18)

Focus Scripture Passage: Jeremiah 18:1–11

Lesson Focus: What kind of decisions do I make that are Responsible Choices?

Objectives

The learners will...

- discuss the Basic Beliefs of Sin and Judgment in relation to the scripture passage.
- reflect on the Enduring Principles of Responsible Choices and the Continuing Revelation.
- explore ways God reveals Godself.

Supplies

- Paper and Pens or pencils
- Five colorful poster boards
- Markers
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, available from HeraldHouse.org
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Jeremiah 18:1–11 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 108–109, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

As the students arrive, pass out pencils and paper and have them start making their own list of various construction materials. See how many items they can think of on their own. When they have completed their lists, have each person share the items on their lists. Cross off the matching or duplicate items that someone else names. The one with the most unique answers (items that no one else names) is the winner.

Ask: Did anyone think of clay? This construction material is what today's scripture passage is about.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Jeremiah Fun Facts

1. The Prophet Jeremiah has a book named for him in the Old Testament. Jeremiah is considered a major prophet.
2. Jeremiah's prophetic preaching is based on the themes of the covenant relationship between God and the people of Israel and Judah.
3. Jeremiah was in Jerusalem while Ezekiel was already in Babylon.
4. King Zedekiah was invaded by Babylonian soldiers; the city of Jerusalem and the Israelite's temple were destroyed in 586 BCE (Before the Common Era).
5. The Common Era begins with the birth of Christ.
6. Remaining Judean leaders fled to Egypt and took Jeremiah with them.

—The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha, Third Edition, pp. 1073–1074

We seem to be bombarded daily with various kinds of makeovers. Social media, reality television, talk shows, and games feature something old, broken, or outdated that needs a new outward or updated appearance. For example: a home renovation; new hairstyle, wardrobe, or make-up; freshly organized closet or storage space; recipes for healthy eating; new fitness routines; car or truck restoration; etc.

Read together Jeremiah 18:1–11.

This scripture passage of the potter and the clay does not turn out like you think it might. In this story, the vessel is destroyed and then remade.

Discuss:

- In this chapter of Jeremiah, what is the potter making over?
- What is God making over?
- What does the clay pot represent?
- Why do you think Jeremiah shares this story of the potter and the clay?
- What is sin?

As we consider what might need to be remade in our lives, a discussion of the Basic Beliefs of Sin and Judgment may be needed. Sin is described as anything that separates us from God or each other. Sin can also call us to makeover a relationship or an aspect of our lives. Reconciliation is the only way to bridge the divide that our choices have created. Explore the Basic Belief of Sin (below).

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.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 34

Questions for Quiet Reflection:

1. Have my choices allowed me to focus only on myself?
2. Are my relationships suffering because I think only about my needs?
3. What adjustments do I need to make to shift my focus to God and others?

The Basic Belief of Sin states that separation and alienation can be solved by the reconciliation that divine grace allows. Reconciliation requires both repentance and forgiveness. Both aspects require something to change or be made new. Both actions are critical.

- *Repentance* occurs when you can admit that you have messed up and you want to change something or make a different choice.
- *Forgiveness* occurs when the one who has been wronged is able to let go of the offense and agrees to move past hurt feelings.

Experiencing forgiveness is crucial to our efforts to become more committed disciples. Holding grudges, or other behaviors that keep us separated takes up a lot of our emotional and physical space as the separation drags on. The burden of these behaviors becomes heavier as time passes and we leave things unresolved.

The Basic Belief of Judgment tells us we are accountable for our actions and inactions. What we do *and* what we fail to do have consequences. Our choices matter. Tearing down old ways and building up new ways of connecting with God and others are choices we can make that God will judge.

Judgment

The living God whom we serve is a God of justice and mercy. God cares about how we treat our neighbors and enemies and how we make use of creation's gifts. It matters supremely to God how we welcome the poor, the stranger, the sick, the imprisoned, and the rejected. We affirm in scripture's light that Jesus Christ is advocate and judge of the living and the dead.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 38

3 RESPOND

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

The church's nine Enduring Principles are the underlying truths and affirmations that shape the personality of the church. They guide how we live and describe how we experience and share the gospel with others. An Enduring Principle that connects with today's lesson is the principle of Responsible Choices.

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*, 4th Edition, p. 30

Using five colorful poster boards and markers, divide the class into five groups (or work together as needed). Use "Responsible Choices" as the title for the posters. Create an illustration for each of the five statements for this Enduring Principle (below). Be specific in your examples and hang the finished posters in the classroom or share in a public area of the congregation.

4 SEND

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

Jeremiah 18:1-2 states: "The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 'Come, go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words.'" Jeremiah followed these instructions and went to visit the potter's house and came away with new insights to share with God's people. God also invites us to experience God in new ways. We are often on our way somewhere. God continues to reveal new things.

- What do you think God is revealing to us? to you?

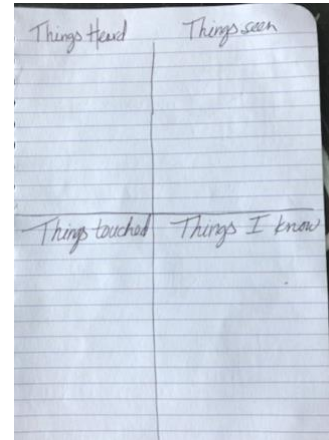
In 1 John 1:1 we read about John's testimony of Jesus Christ:

"We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life."

On a sheet of paper, have students draw two lines dividing the paper into four squares: one line centered horizontally, and the other line centered vertically. Label the four areas: Things Heard, Things Seen, Things touched, Things I know.

Fill in these squares to briefly describe your experience.

- How does God reveal Godself to me?
- What has come to my attention this past week or month?



Have them share a few of things on their list with the whole group.

As you continually look for God this coming week, identify a regular spot or space that you pass or spend time in each day. Mark this spot as your reminder that God is with you and wants you to be reconciled to yourself and others. God is close by; God is with us. Every time you go by your marked spot, let that place remind you of your connection to God.

5 BLESS

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

Read verse 1 of "O Christ, My Lord, Create in Me" CCS 507 as a closing prayer.

LESSON 42

11 September 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 19)

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 15:1–10

Lesson Focus: Who are the “lost sheep” who need to be found?

Objectives

The learners will...

- read parables about lost items and write their own versions.
- explore their roles in finding those who have been lost.
- look beyond themselves to welcome those whom society condemns.

Supplies

- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 15:1–10 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 109-110, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Reverse Hide and Seek / Seek and Find (Optional)

If time allows, this game is a great way to start a discussion. It is best played in a large area.

In this game, only one person hides. Pick one group member to hide first and give an agreed-on amount of time to hide. When that time is up, the other group members spread out and look for the hidden person. The first group member to find the one hiding announces it and the group cheers at finding their lost group member. A new round starts with the person who found the hidden person being the one to hide.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Welcome group members to class and sing “Draw the Circle Wide” *CCS* 273, which has a theme of inclusion and worth of persons like today’s scripture passage.

Read Luke 15:1–10.

In a previous lesson, we read a story about a lost son, the Prodigal Son. The Prodigal Son is the third parable in this set of three from Luke about something that's been lost but then found. The Prodigal Son taught us that God's grace is for all people. Jesus' lesson about grace for all began with the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin which he told to the Pharisees and the scribes. Pharisees and scribes were religious leaders that lived as would be expected of followers and interpreters of the law, but there was still something for them to learn. They became upset with Jesus when he decided to dine with sinners because that went against custom, but as we discussed in the previous lesson, Jesus was radical and countercultural. To help the Pharisees and scribes understand why he ate with sinners, he told them the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin.

The parables break ideas into two parts that speak to the same theme, Worth of All Persons. First, it's important that we search for that which has been lost. The sheep and the coin represent those who have become separated from the community. Jesus tells us that it is worth taking the time to find them. The second part is the celebration that follows finding them. We rejoice when others are brought into the circle; God's vision of shalom is realized when all are included.

- Whose job is it to find those who have been lost?
- Why does Jesus say it's important to seek those who have been lost?
- Like the social understanding the Pharisees and scribes adhered to, what are some of the barriers that keep us from dining with those who are on the margins of society?
- In which ways can we celebrate finding a "lost sheep"?

3 RESPOND

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

Jesus taught using stories called parables. A parable isn't a factual story but can be used as a teaching method. Jesus used the common examples of a lost sheep and a lost coin to point to a deeper understanding.

Modern Parable

What might a modern parable of something being lost and found include today? Rewrite the parable in modern language reflecting something that would happen to you. Examples: Parable of the lost friend or parable of the angry brother.

Have the group share their parables of lost things with the group.

4 SEND

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

We repeatedly discuss the Enduring Principle, Worth of All Persons because it's important to understand how integral that Enduring Principle is to our lives as disciples. When we say we want the kingdom of God,

we are striving for a community that is inclusive and loving of all people. We cannot make the kingdom of God real without each person being valued.

Read the passage below from Doctrine and Covenants 162:7d.

The call to respond is urgent. Look to the needs of your own congregations, but look also beyond your walls to the far-flung places where the church must go. Each disciple needs a spiritual home.

Take-away Question

Group members may answer the questions in class or take the questions with them to think about personally throughout the week.

- How can I look beyond my needs and the needs of my congregation to find those who have been lost?
- Who in my life is looking for a spiritual home, and how can I help them find it?

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

Close the lesson by singing again "Draw the Circle Wide" *CCS 273* or close with a prayer.

LESSON 43
18 September 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 20)

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 16:1–13

Lesson Focus: Disciples are called to serve God faithfully.

Objectives

The learners will...

- discuss a difficult scripture passage and work through its meaning.
- create a scale of things that matter in their lives.
- relate today's passage to their lives to learn how to serve God more faithfully.

Supplies

- Index cards
- Pens or pencils
- Large writing surface
- Bible

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 16:1–13 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 111, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Ask: In what ways can we faithfully serve God?

Remember, the book of Luke takes special notice of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem and what it means to be a disciple. Luke emphasizes Jesus as The Way and expresses that life as a disciple is a journey. Read Luke 16:1–13 in which Jesus tells a story to the disciples as an example of how not to faithfully serve God.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today's scripture passage can be difficult to understand. What does Jesus mean by telling us a story of the rich man who praised his dishonest manager? Start a discussion with the group about today's

passage. Let them work through what they think it means. First go through the events of the story (what’s happening), and then discuss its implications (what it means). If needed, use the discussion starters below.

- What is the point of the story of the rich man and his manager?
- Who is represented by the rich man? By the dishonest manager?
- To whom is Jesus talking? How does that change the scope of the story?
- Why is Jesus telling a story of a man praised for his wrongdoing?

In examples such as today’s passage, when it’s difficult to understand what’s going on, it’s good to see how it fits in the broader story. What passages come before or after the text? Read verses 14 and 15 for more information and then discuss new insights.

The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they ridiculed him. So he said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of others; but God knows your hearts; for what is prized by human beings is an abomination in the sight of God.

- How do these extra verses help your understanding of the passage?
- How do they challenge your understanding of the passage?

It seems as if Jesus was joking about how the rich man responded to his manager. The response wasn’t meant to be serious; Jesus is making the point that the manager went about making friends the wrong way. He managed the rich man’s money poorly and then cheated him out of his wealth to make friends with others. The point of today’s scripture passage is to do that which serves God better by putting God first. The rich man represents God who loves all, even when people do what is right for the wrong reasons. The manager was an example of what not to do and the rich man was an example of how we can respond even to those who decide poorly.

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

“What Matters” Scale

Write the following words on index cards (words can be added or removed to fit your group): love, relationships, money, school, God, family, friends, clothes, school, cars, church, and nature.

Each group member will do this object lesson individually. If supplies allow, create a set of cards for each group member. Shuffle the index cards, put them in a single stack, and turn them upside down. Group members will take one card at a time and decide where it goes on their “What Matters” scale by placing cards in a single row with what matters more on the righthand side. An example is below.



Group members will have some differences in their scales, but we hope God is at the “matters more” end of their scales. We recognize the importance of putting God first in our lives, unlike the manager from today’s story who did what was right but for the wrong reasons. The manager networked for his own

good, manipulating the rich man's debtors and effectively ruining his relationship with the rich man. The manager put wealth and power before his relationship with others and God.

The passage says that we cannot serve two masters. Think of a time you've had to decide between something that you wanted, or was popular, and serving God.

- When have you experienced someone like the manager?
- When have you been like the dishonest manager?
- How can we be like the rich man (*forgiving and understanding*) to the managers in our lives?

4 SEND

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

It's OK for clothes and money to matter to you, but Jesus teaches us that serving God faithfully is what should matter more in our lives. We make the choice how we see God and the role God plays in our lives. Write the words "God matters more" on a large writing surface and, around the words, have youth write ways they will make God matter more in their lives this week.

5 BLESS

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

Close with a prayer asking that we remember how to serve God faithfully.

LESSON 44
25 September 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 21)

Focus Scripture Passage: Jeremiah 32:1–3a, 6–15

Lesson Focus: What is the value of having hope?

Objectives

The learners will...

- reflect on the Enduring Principle of Responsible Choices.
- discover a story of hope.
- discuss the Basic Belief The Reign of God.
- learn Community of Christ's mission statement.

Supplies

- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, available from HeraldHouse.org
- Print out focus scripture script for three readers (included)
- Discussion Cards (end of lesson) print and cut out six cards
- Something to toss between group members (ball, beanbag, ball of yarn)
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Jeremiah 32:1–3a, 6–15 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 113–114, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Greet students and using the prompts below, have them share three things that happened to them this past week.

- I showed caring for others in this way.
- I was a good friend when this happened.
- The most responsible choice I made was this.

Sing "Praise the Lord Together Singing" *CCS* 642. Sing in unison and then try singing it as a round.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today's scripture passage is from the Old Testament book of Jeremiah. We read about these events:

- Verses 1-3a: King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem. Jeremiah is confined in the palace of Zedekiah, the king of Judah. Jeremiah still has close contact with God.
- Verses 6-15: We read about Jeremiah's prophecy and then see how it unfolded. Read the story in these parts.
 - The prophecy (verses 6-7)
 - Fulfilling the prophecy (verse 8)
 - The transaction (verses 9-10)
 - Preserving the deed (verses 11-14)
 - The message of hope (verse 15)

Using the script below, read this story of hope. You need three readers: Jeremiah, The Lord, and Hanamel.

Jeremiah 32: 6-15

Jeremiah: ⁶ The word of the Lord came to me:

The Lord: ⁷ Hanamel son of your uncle Shallum is going to come to you and say, "Buy my field that is at Anathoth, for the right of redemption by purchase is yours."

Jeremiah: ⁸ Then my cousin Hanamel came to me in the court of the guard, in accordance with the word of the Lord, and said to me,

Hanamel: "Buy my field that is at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for the right of possession and redemption is yours; buy it for yourself."

Jeremiah: Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord. ⁹ And I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel, and weighed out the money to him, seventeen shekels of silver. ¹⁰ I signed the deed, sealed it, got witnesses, and weighed the money on scales. ¹¹ Then I took the sealed deed of purchase, containing the terms and conditions, and the open copy; ¹² and I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch son of Neriah son of Mahseiah, in the presence of my cousin Hanamel, in the presence of the witnesses who signed the deed of purchase, and in the presence of all the Judeans who were sitting in the court of the guard. ¹³ In their presence I charged Baruch, saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel:

The Lord: ¹⁴ Take these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware jar, in order that they may last for a long time. ¹⁵ For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.

The Lord's words in verse 15 give hope to the people: "Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land." Despite their current troubles—the siege of Jerusalem and the captivity of Jeremiah—the Lord's direction to buy land is a sign of investment in the future. This every-day act of buying property together with the promise from the Lord provided a powerful hope to a devastated

people. Jeremiah follows the Lord's instructions; he buys land and stores the deeds so they will be preserved.

Ask: What are your observations of this story that Jeremiah shares?

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

For Community of Christ, the idea of building Zion, or building God's Kingdom on earth, has been a goal for many generations. Our hope in God's peaceful reign gives focus to our mission.

The Reign of God

The Reign of God is the coming triumph of love, justice, mercy, and peace that one day will embrace all of creation. Jesus' life and ministry were the living expression of this promise. He taught his disciples to pray for the kingdom's full coming and sent them out into the world to be living emblems of that new creation. "Zion" expresses our commitment to herald God's peaceable kingdom on Earth by forming Christ-centered communities in families, congregations, neighborhoods, cities, and throughout the world.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, pp. 37–38

Read the scripture passages below that call us to this mission, then discuss the questions following.

Doctrine and Covenants 163:3a (2007)

You are called to create pathways in the world for peace in Christ to be relationally and culturally incarnate. The hope of Zion is realized when the vision of Christ is embodied in communities of generosity, justice, and peacefulness.

Doctrine and Covenants 164:3 (2010)

3 a. All church members are urged to examine the depth of your baptismal commitment. Having been baptized and confirmed, become fully immersed in the servant life of Christ.

b. Live the meaning of your baptism daily as you grow in the skills and qualities of discipleship. Actively and generously support the ministries of the church, which was divinely established to restore Christ's covenant of peace, even the Zion of your hopes.

c. The Eternal Christ invites those who have yet to experience the blessings of baptism to "Follow me in the way of righteousness and peace." Be baptized of water and the Spirit and discover your spiritual home as a fully functioning member of the body.

Print out the page of Discussion Cards at the end of the lesson and cut into six separate cards. Give one card to each class member or small group if there are more than six class members. After time for discussion or reflection, have each person (or group) report on their answers.

4

SEND

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

Community of Christ's mission statement (see below) is a single sentence that tells how we are to share the peace of Jesus Christ in all its personal, interpersonal, community, and worldwide dimensions.

We proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love, and peace.

We Proclaim Jesus Christ! through local and worldwide evangelism, including ministries of invitation, witness, inclusive fellowship, worship, caring, and lifelong disciple formation.

We Promote Communities! We promote local and worldwide communities that signal (*represent, reveal*) the peaceful reign of God on Earth. Some call this the cause (*hope*) of Zion. When we effectively proclaim Jesus Christ by sharing our witness, ministries, and sacraments and promote Christ-centered communities of justice and peacefulness, we are sharing the peace of Jesus Christ.

Mission Statement Ball Toss

Gather the group in a circle. Using something soft (*a ball, beanbag, or yarn*), have students toss the item to one another in the circle. As the ball is passed, students will share one word of the church's mission statement in order until the mission statement has been recited. Repeat this several times until the students can say the mission statement together.

5

BLESS

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

Close today's lesson with a popcorn-style prayer. As each statement is read, students can say aloud or whisper their response.

Loving God,

We know that having hope in you gives us...

You are our hope because...

We are hoping for these things...

Amen.

"Collectively and individually, you are loved with an everlasting love that delights in each faithful step taken. God yearns to draw you close so that wounds may be healed, emptiness filled, and hope strengthened." —Doctrine and Covenants 163:10a

As God is revealed to us, it is our prayer that we will be strengthened by renewed hope!

Discussion Cards

<p style="text-align: center;">Question 1</p> <p>What do you hope for? What makes it easy or hard to maintain hope today?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Question 2</p> <p>In a world of inequality and injustice, do you still have hope for Zion? Why or why not?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Question 3</p> <p>In what ways do you see communities of generosity, justice, and peace in our world? How do you describe Zion (The Reign of God)?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Question 4</p> <p>In what ministries of the church have you participated?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Question 5</p> <p>What are the blessings of baptism? Have you ever thought about being baptized? What questions do you have about this sacrament?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Question 6</p> <p>Describe your spiritual home.</p>

LESSON 45
2 October 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 22)

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 17:5–10

Lesson Focus: With faith, anything is possible.

Objectives

The learners will...

- discuss how faith makes the impossible possible.
- explore the text through a modern lens.
- recognize the blessings of community.

Supplies

- Pieces of paper, pencils
- Erasers for each student
- Large writing surface
- Markers
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 17:5–10 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 113–114, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Open class with the song “Si tuvieras fe” CCS 249 which translates “If You Only Had Faith.” A recording of the song is available on the *Community of Christ Sings Audio Recordings*. If the youth are interested, encourage them to create motions for the words. This song is upbeat and fun to dance to.

As Jesus journeys to Jerusalem, he continues to teach his disciples lessons which apply to our lives as disciples. Today’s passage provides Jesus’ explanation of faith and the powerful role faith can play in our lives. Read Luke 17:5–10.

On small pieces of paper, write the word “impossible” and give one to each group member. Have them write something they think is impossible on the blank side of the paper. Ask the group, “How can something impossible be made possible?” After there has been some discussion, tell them that with faith the impossible is possible. Give each group member an eraser to represent faith. (If the erasers are big

enough, write the word “faith” on them.) With faith, they can make impossible possible by erasing the “im.”

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

In today’s scripture passage, the disciples are feeling inadequate in their faith. They are concerned that they are not good enough for lives as disciples. Jesus does not get angry with them for feeling inadequate; instead, he tells them to believe in themselves because they already have faith. Even with faith as small as a mustard seed the impossible is possible. Jesus was challenging them and telling them they were already faithful enough—they just had to know how to use it. If you act in faith, your faith will grow.

Ask: Have you ever said, “That’s impossible,” only to be proven otherwise?

Making the Impossible Possible

Have the group make a list of what may seem impossible. (They can include what they wrote on the back of their pieces of paper from the Gather section.) Write their list on a large writing surface. As a group, discuss possible ways to make their list of impossibilities possible. It’s okay if the answers are silly or seem implausible.

Examples:

- It’s impossible to breathe underwater. *(It’s possible to breathe underwater with an underwater breathing apparatus.)*
- It’s impossible to abolish poverty in the world. *(It’s possible to abolish poverty if you start small. Help one person; then help another.)*
- It’s impossible to become President. *(It’s possible to be a leader in your school or community.)*
- It’s impossible to love everyone. *(It’s possible to love everyone when you share God’s love.)*

Sometimes to do that which seems impossible requires us to think unconventionally. It takes some ingenuity to make possible what we think is impossible. It’s like Jesus telling his disciples their faith was enough. When challenges face us, we are already equipped to overcome them; we just need to use what we have. God gives us faith to do what was thought impossible.

- Share about a time when you felt inadequate as a disciple.
- What parts of mission seem impossible but could be possible by putting our faith into action?

3 RESPOND

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

Modernize the Text

It’s important to note that although today’s passage mentions slavery, it is in no way promoting or accepting slavery. However, it does remind us of our relationship to God. It makes us ask ourselves, “To whom or what do we belong?”

A great practice to help youth with tough texts like today's passage is to modernize the story. Have the group brainstorm the question, "If Jesus was speaking today, what would this story look like?"

Blessings of Community

Jesus doesn't want us to quantify our faith; he says that even if our faith is very small, such as a mustard seed, we are capable of much. What Jesus does want is for us to be open to the power and guidance of the Spirit, letting it form us as disciples. When we ask ourselves, "To whom or what do we belong?" the answer is that we belong to God and to one another. We have a relationship to God, and we also have relationships with other seekers and disciples with whom we experience blessings of community.

- If we belong to God, what does that mean for our lives?
- How have you experienced the blessings of community?
- How have you witnessed the impossible become possible through a community working together?

4 SEND

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

Have the group reflect on their answers to the question, "What aspects of mission seem impossible but could be possible with faith?" After a few minutes, redirect their attention to their pieces of paper from the Gather section. Remind them that with faith, all things are possible. Have the group consider one act that they can do in the coming week to help them move toward making the impossible possible.

5 BLESS

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

Sing the song, "Si tuvieras fe (If You Only Had Faith)" *CCS 249*. A recording of the song is available on the *Community of Christ Sings Audio Recordings*.

LESSON 46
9 October 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 23)

Focus Scripture Passage: Jeremiah 29:1, 4–7

Lesson Focus: What can I do to Pursue Peace?

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore of the Enduring Principle Pursuit of Peace (Shalom).
- learn about the Community of Christ International Peace Award and its 2016 recipient.
- discuss the realities of moving or relocating.
- listen to testimonies of creating hope, peace, and refuge.

Supplies

- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Jeremiah 29:1, 4–7 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 116–118, available through Herald House.

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

Begin a discussion of the Enduring Principle Pursuit of Peace (Shalom).

Pursuit of Peace (Shalom)

- God wants shalom (justice, reconciliation, well-being, wholeness, and peace) for all of creation.
- Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God’s shalom (peace), reveals the meaning of God’s peace in all aspects of life.
- The vision of Zion is to promote God’s reign on Earth, as proclaimed by Jesus Christ, through the leavening influence of just and peaceful communities.
- We courageously and generously share the peace of Jesus Christ with others.
- Led by the Holy Spirit, we work with God and others to restore peace (shalom) to creation.
- We celebrate God’s peace wherever it appears or is being pursued by people of good will.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 30

Community of Christ International Peace Award

Did you know that Community of Christ has a peace award? The award honors the work of individuals engaged in peace, justice, or environmental organizations. The first award was given in 1993. A full list of award recipients can be found at www.CofChrist.org.



At the 2016 World Conference, the International Peace Award was given to Leymah Gbowee (pronounced bow-ee), a Liberian peace activist. Ms. Gbowee is the founder and president of the Gbowee Peace Foundation Africa. Among her many accomplishments, she is the 2011 Nobel Peace laureate for her leadership of the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace. This nonviolent movement joined Christian and Muslim women, empowering them to speak against the war and join in prayer and public protest. Their actions played a pivotal role in ending the civil war in Liberia in 2003

Photo: [Community of Christ](http://CommunityofChrist.org)

- What character traits do you believe Ms. Gbowee possesses to lead the way to peace?
- What character traits do you see in yourself to lead the way to peace?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Jeremiah 29:1, 4–7, Jeremiah's Letter to the Exiles in Babylon.

Quiz for Understanding

- This letter was sent from where to where? (*from Jerusalem, to Babylon*)
- Who are the receivers of the letter? (*the Israelites*)
- Who are the foreigners? (*the Israelites*)
- Why were the Israelites in Babylon? (*They were taken captive by an invading army and moved to Babylon.*)
- What encouragement does Jeremiah's letter bring to the Israelites in captivity? (*They should build houses, plant gardens, get married, grow their families, and work for the welfare of the city where they are held captive.*)

In all, the Israelites were in Babylon for 70 years. Many who were born there did not return to Jerusalem. When Jeremiah wrote to the exiles, they didn't know how long it would be until they could return to Jerusalem. Jeremiah told them to settle in and start their lives again in this place.

Discuss:

- Have you ever experienced a household move or relocated to different school?
 - If so, what were some of the obstacles you experienced?
 - What was some of the excitement of moving?
 - If you were moving today, what would you be sure take? What might you need to leave behind?

- Share a positive or negative relocation experience that you or someone you know has had.

Moving is a complicated and disruptive process, even when it's a choice we make. Sometimes the choice to relocate is urgent and for health, safety, or for political or economic reasons. These are the primary causes of human migration. Give examples of recent news headlines concerning migrants.

In verse 7, the Lord is encouraging the captives to take an interest in what is going on around them and to participate in life where they are. They are told to "seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."

3 RESPOND

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

Receiving Refugees—a testimony by Jeannine Ward

In 2004, our congregation hosted a minister from Monrovia, Liberia. We learned of the needs and struggles of his congregation. We learned about the Liberian civil war that lasted from 1989–2003. We learned people were eating tree bark to survive. To better inform the congregation, we started having "Monrovia Minutes" in our worship services. We discussed how to best support people in Liberia and what their needs might be. We talked for nearly three years. It was now time to do something.

In February 2007, we had a fundraiser. Our goal: sponsor a school to teach women and orphans how to support themselves. We partnered with World Church and received a grant. The school was named the Monrovia Women's Institute in Monrovia, Liberia. Jan, a member of our congregation, had a student from Liberia in her classroom; she invited his father to speak at our event. When Jan and her husband Ron dropped off the family from Liberia at the end of the evening, they met another family in the parking lot. They invited that family to church the next day. The Menyon family accepted the invitation, and the congregation was sure surprised. That very day, there was a Liberian family in our congregation. They had arrived in our town just five days before.

The next week was filled with getting three of the four teenagers into school. The oldest son decided to find work instead of school. A father and his four children were now depending on us to help them navigate what must be done when arriving in a new place. Our first stop was shopping for basic hygiene supplies, warm clothes, and school supplies. We budgeted that each teen would need about \$100 USD worth of supplies. We did not keep track; we just filled the shopping cart. When we paid, we were just pennies over our expense goal. I was amazed that each of the teens could get everything they needed, just as we had planned. We had multiple, daily phone calls where we answered the family's many questions. The congregation provided a ride to church every Sunday.

At the 2007 World Conference, Section 163 was added to the Doctrine and Covenants. Hearing these words from 163:4a touched my heart and gave me strength.

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.

Wow! I was nearly worn out from my regular and new responsibilities of working, caring for our own family, and supporting this new family. These words strengthened and assured me.

We formed a support team with other members of the congregation. There were now 12 of us who assisted the family as needed.

Their first summer with us, two teens attended summer family camp (reunion). In May 2008, their mother was able to join her family. In June 2010, the father was baptized and confirmed. In March 2011, the mother and daughter were confirmed; it was the first Sunday the church accepted baptisms of other denominations. When I used *Sharing in Community of Christ* to explain about the church, the photo of the African woman being baptized in the river made an impression. The mother shouted, "That's me!" She explained she had been baptized in a river before they got to the refugee camp in Ghana. The tragedy of the Liberian civil war was what they were escaping.

Doctrine and Covenants 163:2b states:

Generously share the invitation, ministries, and sacraments through which people can encounter the Living Christ who heals and reconciles through redemptive relationships in sacred community. The restoring of persons to healthy or righteous relationships with God, others, themselves, and the earth is at the heart of the purpose of your journey as a people of faith.

It has been a joy sharing in the lives of this family. The sacraments of baptism, The Lord's Supper (Communion), marriage, and blessing of children have been celebrated together.

Now all family members are U.S. citizens. All three teenagers completed high school; it was a joy to be there as they crossed the graduation stage.

Discuss:

- What is your reaction to this testimony?
- Have you become friends with new students when they arrived at your school? Your neighborhood? Your sports team? If so, tell us about it.
- Name the different ways the congregation supported the Menyon family.
- With whom might you share an invitation, ministries, and sacraments?

4 SEND

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

How did each of the examples in today's lesson show hope and peace?

- Liberian peace activist and International Peace Award recipient, Leymah Gbowee
- Jeremiah's letter to the exiled Israelites in captivity
- The Menyon family from Liberia

5 BLESS

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

Sing together "God's Melody of Peace" CCS319.

LESSON 47
16 October 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 24)

Focus Scripture Passage: Jeremiah 31:27–34

Lesson Focus: What are the things that I can do to build God's kingdom?

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore the focus scripture passage as it relates to a new covenant for God's people.
- explore aspects of the document "We Share a Vision for Creation."
- consider what the Christian cross and the church seal mean to them.
- name things that are obstacles to God's vision for creation.
- consider their role in working for justice and mercy.

Supplies

- Worksheet: The Lord says, "I Will ..." for each class member (end of lesson)
- Pens or pencils and markers
- Bible (NRSV recommended) for each member if possible
- 20–24 brown paper grocery-size bags to make 10–12 blocks. Or if using lunch bags or sack-sized bags, make 30 blocks.
- Sunflower seeds with shells on
- Cardboard or card stock and glue
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, available from HeraldHouse.org
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Jeremiah 31:27-34 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 118–120, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Greet students and begin a discussion by asking:

- What are the things in this world that you find to be the most beautiful or that give you joy?
- What are the things in this world that you love but that are broken, corrupt, or in need of healing?

Read or sing together "Bring Forth the Kingdom" CCS 387. Pay attention to verse three that describes being a "seed of the Word" and how seeds of mercy and justice grow in God's kingdom.

Divide the class into three groups. We will close each section of our lesson with this reading.

Group 1: Bring forth the kingdom of mercy.

Group 2: Bring forth the kingdom of peace.

Group 3: Bring forth the kingdom of justice.

All: Bring forth the city of God!

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

God's Vision for Creation

Read "We Share a Vision for Creation" in *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, pp. 9–10.

God's vision for creation (Shalom) consists of reconciliation, salvation, wholeness, justice, and peace with humankind and all of creation. Community of Christ recognizes the Christian cross and the church seal as two symbols of our commitment to this vision.

- What do these two symbols mean to you?
- How would you share the meaning of the cross and the church seal with someone who hadn't seen them before?

Give each student a copy of worksheet: The Lord says, "I Will ..." (end of the lesson), a Bible, and something to write with. If there are not enough Bibles, read the passage aloud with different readers for each verse. Have students read Jeremiah 31:27–34 and complete the worksheet.

When students are finished, ask: Which "I will" statement means the most to you? Allow each one to share their thoughts.

Deepen Understanding

Verses 27–30 point to an in-between space. There is no longer judgment and destruction to fear for God promises to repopulate Israel and Judah with people and animals (v. 27) and to build and plant once again (v. 28). They might not see it; but Jeremiah is assuring them better times are coming; they are in-between destruction and new life.

In verses 29 and 30, Jeremiah explains an additional change that's coming. The curse-like proverb of "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge," is void in this new life. This long-held belief is nullified, and a new way of thinking is being born. The people are between old ways and new possibilities.

Verses 31–34 was written thousands of years ago to the Israelite people. They were in exile, which means they were far from home and feeling hopeless. God tells them, through the prophet Jeremiah, that God will make a new covenant with them. A covenant is a promise between God and the people. God had already made a covenant with the people of Israel many years before. The old covenant was written on tablets and scrolls, which could be lost. This new covenant, God says, will be written on the hearts of the

people. God's covenant is that God will be their God and they will be God's people. God will forgive their sins, and they will all know God.

This covenant is given to the actual people of that time and place; a real-time covenant, not one for a future people or a heavenly place, but for the first hearers of the text. There was a paradigm shift described here, moving away from power dynamics, rewards and punishments toward forgiveness and unconditional love. An undoing of the standards and expectations to live up to an embracing of a relationship to live into.

- In what ways does this scripture passage relate to how you see the "We Share a Vision for Creation" statement?
- What is something you see that prevents God's full vision for creation from becoming a reality?
- What is an area in which you need to deepen your understanding? This could be a social issue, a current topic of conversation with which you are unfamiliar, a theological stance or a historical event you want to understand more deeply. Make a commitment today to learn more about this over the next week.

Close this section by responding:

Group 1: Bring forth the kingdom of mercy.

Group 2: Bring forth the kingdom of peace.

Group 3: Bring forth the kingdom of justice.

All: Bring forth the city of God!

3 RESPOND

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

Using two paper sacks, create a "block" by opening the bags and putting them inside each other with the bottom of the bags facing out. Have students work together to construct a dozen or more blocks to build a dividing wall in your class area.

Next, work together to label the blocks by naming things that are obstacles to God's vision for creation.

Build the wall and place the students evenly on both sides of the wall. Assign one side to be lions and the other side to be lambs. Discuss what the wall represents to each of these cultures. What will it take so the lions and lambs can live together?

Recall aspects of the vision for creation. Remove the blocks one at a time to break down the dividing wall. As you remove blocks, make an "I will" statement as a response to having God's covenant written on your heart. Close this section by responding:

Group 1: Bring forth the kingdom of mercy.

Group 2: Bring forth the kingdom of peace.

Group 3: Bring forth the kingdom of justice.

All: Bring forth the city of God!

4

SEND

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

What seeds will you grow?

Verse 3 of "Bring Forth the Kingdom" CCS 387 says:

You are a seed of the Word, O people: bring for the kingdom of God!

Seeds of mercy and seeds of justice, grow in the kingdom of God!

—Marty Haugen, GIA Publications, Inc., 1986

Discuss:

- Plants produce seeds that can be planted for the next growing season. What kinds of seeds are you producing?
- What are seeds of the Word? Seeds of justice? Seeds of mercy?
- Seeds flourish in good soil. What in your life needs to be added or taken away so you are growing in good soil?

Give students a few sunflower seeds, some cardboard or card stock, glue, and markers. As they glue the seeds to the cardboard, have them name the seeds they are committing to grow. Display these in your learning space as a reminder.

Close this section by responding:

Group 1: Bring forth the kingdom of mercy.

Group 2: Bring forth the kingdom of peace.

Group 3: Bring forth the kingdom of justice.

All: Bring forth the city of God!

5

BLESS

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

Read Doctrine and Covenants 153:9.

Let my word be preached to the bruised and brokenhearted as well as those enmeshed in sin, longing to repent and follow me. Let the truths of my gospel be proclaimed as widely and as far as the dedication of the Saints, especially through the exercise of their temporal stewardship, will allow.

My Spirit is reaching out to numerous souls even now and there are many who will respond if you, my people, will bear affirmative testimony of my love and my desires for all to come unto me.

Be steadfast and trust in the instructions which have been given for your guidance. I will be with you and strengthen you for the tasks that lie ahead if you will continue to be faithful and commit yourselves without reservation to the building of my kingdom.

End class by responding:

Group 1: Bring forth the kingdom of mercy.

Group 2: Bring forth the kingdom of peace.

Group 3: Bring forth the kingdom of justice.

All: Bring forth the city of God!

The LORD says, "I Will ..."

Jeremiah 31:27-34

Read Jeremiah 31:27-34 and fill in the blanks to record what the Lord says.

Verse 27:

I will _____

Verse 28:

I will _____

Verse 31:

I will _____

Verse 33:

I will _____

Verse 34:

I will _____

LESSON 48
23 October 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 25)

Focus Scripture Passage: Joel 2:23–32

Lesson Focus: God blesses the people through acts of reversal and renewal.

Objectives

The learners will...

- understand the concepts of reversal and renewal as it relates to God's actions.
- explore the Enduring Principle Continuing Revelation.
- practice what it means to be faithful.

Supplies

- Paper and pens or pencils
- Blindfold
- Chair
- Bible

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Joel 2:23–32 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 120–121, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Begin by discussing the changes in the seasons you see going on around you.

- How do you know the seasons are changing?
- Was there ever a time when there was unseasonable weather: the rains came too early or too late, there was an early or late frost, snow in the summer? What were the results of this?
- What do the changing seasons have to teach us about reversal and renewal?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today's scripture passage comes from the prophet Joel. During the time Joel was alive, there was a plague of locusts that destroyed all their crops. Joel tells everyone that this “army” of locusts was a punishment

from God to the Jews for their sins and lack of faith. Joel convinces the Jews to pray and ask God for forgiveness. God heard their prayers and sent an early rainfall so that new crops could grow. Joel and the Jews rejoiced.

Joel reports on the reversal of the devastating effects of the locust infestation and the rains that did not come. His response is a rejoicing in the renewal of life and the reversal of fortunes after the people return to God.

Assign the scripture passage to three different groups as follows:

1. Joel 2:23–24
2. Joel 2:25–27
3. Joel 2:28–32

Have each group answer these questions. Provide paper and pens for notetaking if needed.

- What is being reversed?
- What is being renewed?

Discuss:

- What did the Jews have to do for God to stop their crops from getting eaten by the locusts? (*pray and believe in God and ask for forgiveness*)
- Because the Jews prayed and asked for forgiveness, what did God promise they would have? (*rain, plenty of grain to make food, and plenty of fruit to make wine and oil*)
- What does it mean when Joel writes, "You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I, the Lord, am your God"? (*God answered their prayers, so that was proof that God is with them and will always be there for them*)

The prophet Joel had a special relationship with God. God spoke to Joel, and Joel listened by convincing the Jews to pray for forgiveness. Because of his close relationship with God, Joel also predicted that one day everyone will feel God's Spirit and that those who remain faithful will be blessed by God. Joel and God had a special connection. But Joel isn't the only person who experienced that kind of special relationship with God. There are many people throughout the Bible and throughout history who have heard God speak to them. In fact, God continues to speak to people even today. In Community of Christ that is called Continuing Revelation, one of our Enduring Principles. We seek guidance and listen to God's response.

Continuing Revelation

- Scripture is an inspired and indispensable witness of human response to God's revelation of divine nature.
- God graciously reveals divine will today as in the past.
- The Holy Spirit inspires and provides witness to divine truth.
- In humility, individually and in community, we prayerfully listen to understand God's will for our lives, the church, and creation more completely.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 29

Ask: What can you do to take the time and hear God speaking to you?

3 RESPOND

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

Explain that the second part of today's scripture passage changes from rejoicing about God ending the plague of locusts to predicting a time in the future when everyone will get to experience God's Holy Spirit. They will no longer have to rely on prophets such as Joel to teach them about God; they will get to experience God for themselves.

According to Joel...

- Who will get to experience God's Spirit? (*everyone—young men, old men, servants, women*)
- What will happen when they experience God's Spirit? (*have dreams and visions; show wonders in heaven; blood, fires, and smoke on earth; sun to darkness*)
- This image might be a little scary—blood, fires, smoke, no sun—but Joel says if they remain faithful to God, they will be saved and blessed. What does it mean to remain faithful to God?

Ask for a volunteer to help you demonstrate what it's like to be faithful. Instruct the other class members that they should be quiet for this demonstration to work. Blindfold the volunteer and spin them in a few circles. The volunteer must then walk to the other side of the room using your verbal directions as guidance. As the helper nears the other side of the room, very quietly bring out a chair and place it directly behind them. Tell the volunteer to sit down as soon as you give the command. Explain that they are not allowed to feel if there is anything to sit on, they must just rely on faith. Tell the helper to sit. Once they are safely in the chair, they can remove the blindfold. Explain that just like your helper, we can't always see what's going to happen in our future. We need to listen and have faith that God will provide for us, even when things seem scary.

—<https://betterbibleteachers.com/2014/11/how-to-explain-faith-to-sunday-school-kids/>

4 SEND

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

Discuss:

- What does today's scripture passage on reversal and renewal say to us today? What does the text say about God's grace?
- How does this concept of reversal and renewal influence our lives today? Share some examples of God's grace in your life.

5

BLESS

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

Joel listened to God by helping the Jews pray for forgiveness and celebrating with them when God answered their prayers. He also shared with them his prediction of the future. We, too, must respond when we hear God's voice.

End class by reading or reciting the mission prayer.

God, where will your Spirit lead today?

Help me be fully aware and ready to respond.

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

Amen.

LESSON 49
30 October 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 26)

Focus Scripture Passage: Habakkuk 1:1–4; 2:1–4

Lesson Focus: Even when life is unfair, remain faithful and write the vision.

Objectives

The learners will...

- consider what makes things fair or unfair?
- define theodicy and lament and understand how they work in our lives.
- identify and understand Habakkuk's feelings and frustrations.
- practice and discuss waiting and remaining faithful.
- identify ways they can spread justice.

Supplies

- Cookies or candy or another desired snack (two for each person; one to eat and one to share)
- Paper and pens or pencils
- Stopwatch
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Habakkuk 1:1–4; 2:1–4 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 122–123, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Pass out two cookies or pieces of candy to each student. Tell them they are not allowed to eat it right now. They must wait until you let them eat it. If at any time throughout the lesson they ask, "How long?" respond with something vague like "You will see" or "When I decide."

Read or sing together verses 1 and 2 of "How Long, O Lord" CCS 201. Discuss how students feel about these verses.

Discuss ideas for fairness. What makes something fair or unfair? Offer a few ideas for them to consider what is fair or unfair.

- Your parent buys your sibling something new, but not you.

- You were blamed and got punished for something you didn't do.
- You and your friend get an equal amount of time to see who can make the most baskets. Whoever wins gets a candy bar.
- You get to wear brand new shoes to school, but a classmate must wear hand-me-down shoes because their family can't afford new shoes.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today we will be hearing from another prophet from the Bible named Habakkuk. Just like the prophet Joel from last week, Habakkuk had a special relationship with God. However, instead of going around and telling everyone what God spoke to him like Joel did, Habakkuk wrote his conversations with God on scrolls for people to read. Our scripture passage today comes from these writings. Habakkuk begins his message very upset with God because things around him seem unfair.

Theodicy is a common theme among the prophets. Basically, a theodicy addresses the question of why a good God permits the existence of evil in the world. It means vindication of God. The form the theodicy takes in scripture is a lament or complaint against God, then God's response. Many Psalms take on this formula. The hymn "How Long, O Lord" (CCS 201) is a theodicy, in that respect.

Read Habakkuk 1:1–4. (The Message is a good choice for these passages.)

- What is Habakkuk saying here?
- Is this a prophecy or a lament?
- What are some of the situations the prophet is addressing?

In the book of Habakkuk, chapter 1, we have the complaint. In chapter 2, Habakkuk begins to form a response out of his faith in God.

Read Habakkuk 2:1–4. (The Message is a good choice for these passages.)

- What is Habakkuk's response?
- What is God's response?
- What role does faith have to play in this passage?

The Lord's reply seems simple, but it can be difficult to do. First, God wants Habakkuk to write God's response clearly, so all may understand. Relating visions can be very difficult, but it must be done. God's message is to have patience and wait.

Discuss:

- When you are in a bad place, having done all that you can to change conditions, how easy is it to wait for a reversal of fortunes? How is your patience?
- Have you ever felt like bad things were happening and nobody was doing anything to fix it?
- Do you think it would be fair for God to punish people when they do something wrong?

- Habakkuk asks God how long he must wait, but God never gives him a time. Instead, he is just told to have faith in God and wait. Is it fair to make Habakkuk wait without knowing how long he must wait?
- Is it hard to wait without knowing when you'll get something? Have you ever given up because the wait is too long?

3 RESPOND

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

Tell the class that you're going to start a timer. They should sit quietly and wait while the timer is going. Explain that when they think it's been one minute, they should say, "Stop." Start the timer and wait for them to say "stop." Most likely, someone will say "stop" well before the one-minute mark. Take note how many seconds passed before they each said stop but continue timing. Stop the timer at one minute. People are often surprised at how long a minute seems. Discuss the following questions:

- Was your estimate of one minute close to the actual timed minute?
- Why did one minute feel so long?
- Do you have other experiences when time seems to move slowly? What kinds of things are you doing when time goes by slowly?

Time seems to go by slower when we're waiting for something that we want. Habakkuk wanted God to punish the Jews for their sins; he thought it was only fair. God told him to wait. Habakkuk asked how long, but God didn't give a specific time. Habakkuk just had to wait. Ask the following question:

- How long would you wait for something you want?

Explain that the amount of time you wait probably depends on how much you really want something and how much you trust the person giving it to you or that you will get it. It takes both desire and faith to wait long periods of time. God reminded Habakkuk that even when circumstances seem unfair or unclear, righteous people continue to have faith in God and never give up. Lead a discussion with the following:

- Describe a time when you had to wait for something you wanted.
- Are you waiting for anything now? What?
- Have you ever prayed for something that hasn't happened? Has God answered all your prayers or are you still waiting?

4 SEND

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

Community of Christ believes that we serve a God of justice and mercy, that God cares about how we treat our neighbors and enemies and how we make use of creation's gifts. It matters a lot to God how we welcome the poor, the stranger, the sick, the imprisoned, and the rejected.

As a class, brainstorm different ways we could promote justice by helping the poor, the stranger, the sick, the imprisoned, or the rejected. Pass out paper and writing utensils. Explain that since Habakkuk wrote his

conversations with God on scrolls, we, too, are going to write. Have students write the following sentence: "I will promote justice in my community by..." Give them time to write their ideas. Have them share a few ideas with the class if there's time.

Tell the class it's almost time to eat their snack, but first we need to discuss a few questions:

- Were there times during class you thought I was going to let you eat, but I didn't?
- Have you grown impatient waiting to eat the snack?
- Do you feel it is unfair to have to wait?

Explain that the people in other classes at church aren't getting a snack. Is that fair? Point out that they each have two snacks. God wants us to help bring justice to this world; God cares about how we treat others. Ask: What could you do with the extra snack? (*share with someone else in church*) Encourage the students to share their snack with someone else. Now they can eat their snacks.

5 BLESS

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

For a closing prayer, sing or read together verse 3 of "How Long, O Lord" CCS 201.

LESSON 50
6 November 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 27)

Focus Scripture Passage: Haggai 1:15b—2:9

Lesson Focus: Because God is with us, we have hope for the future.

Objectives

The learners will...

- learn the story of rebuilding the temple after returning to Judea.
- explore the importance of temple-building to past generations.
- discover our place in current Temple ministries.
- identify hopes for the future.

Supplies

- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, available from HeraldHouse.org
- Jenga® game
- Bible

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Haggai 1:15b—2:9 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 125–127, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Position a table in the middle of the room. Have student sit as far away from the table as possible. They should all be equidistant from the table. Pass out the Jenga® blocks so that everyone gets an equal amount, except one person, who gets none. The kids with the blocks are the “builders.” Explain that the goal is to build the tallest Jenga tower (3 x 3 stacks) on the table as fast as possible. The “builders” must run and carry only one block at a time to the table to stack. The person without any blocks is the “destroyer.” The destroyer’s job is to run to the tower and pull any one block out of the tower to make it fall. The destroyer brings that block back to their spot and goes back for another block (one block at a time). The “destroyer” is collecting blocks; the “builders” are getting rid of their blocks by stacking them to make a tower. The “builders” cannot reuse those blocks that have fallen off the tower; they can only use blocks from their stash to continue building. The game is over when all builders are out of blocks in their stash. Count how many levels high the “builders” were able to build the tower. Then discuss:

- Builders, how did you feel when the destroyer caused your tower to fall?
- Even if you had more blocks, would you ever be able to build a tall tower? Why not?

- Would you have been able to build a taller tower if everyone focused on building and there wasn't a destroyer?

Next, have the class share a couple of testimonies about their visit to one of the Community of Christ temples (in Kirtland, Ohio, USA or in Independence, Missouri, USA). What did they see there? What did they do there? What was most surprising to you?

If no one has had a chance yet to visit these temples, begin a discussion about the temples and the ministries and events that take place in them. A helpful resource is "We Share Temples as Life-giving Symbol" in *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, pp. 51–57.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

The prophet Haggai lived in Judea at a time when the Jews were finally able to return to their land. The Persians had conquered Babylon and given the Jews permission to return to their homeland. But when they returned to Judea, it had been destroyed.

They had been back in Jerusalem around 16 years. It is also about 68 years following the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. They had tried to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, but several catastrophes and lack of funds had deterred this effort. Plus, surrounding nations didn't want the Jews to become powerful. So even though walls were being built during the day, they were destroyed at night. Just like in our game, when not everyone was focused on building, the tower didn't get built.

Haggai is calling on them to rebuild the temple with courage and faith, and God will bless them.

Read together Haggai 1:15b—2:9.

Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the high priests were told to take courage because God is always with them—even during difficult times—a promise God made a long time ago.

- What does it mean to "take courage"?

Another problem experienced by the community seems to be discouragement. They remembered the temple in Jerusalem to be gigantic, covered in gold and precious stones. Their efforts were producing something much smaller and poorer than their vision. In verses 2:3–4, Haggai challenges this notion by questioning the "memories" of the people.

- What is Haggai saying here?
- How would this encourage the people to build?
- Haggai asks them if they remember what the temple used to look like before it was destroyed compared to what it looks like now. Have you ever had something of yours destroyed? How did it make you feel? Did you fix it or was it destroyed forever?

Haggai believed that rebuilding the temple would help the Jews focus on God. This was a necessary step toward the time when the messiah will reign and bring peace throughout the world. Haggai then reports a vision for the future restoration of Judea.

In verses 2: 6–9, Haggai said God will put fear in all the nations so that they will bring their treasures to the temple.

- Have you ever had something taken from you? Was it ever returned?

- The new temple will be greater than what?
- How do you think this prediction of what the temple will be like made the people feel?

Haggai predicted that God would bless the people so they will no longer be hungry or poor. It is a vision of hope that things will get better.

- What do you hope for in the future?
- What can you do to help make your hopes come true?
- What do you think God hopes for?
- What can you do to help make God's hopes come true?

3 RESPOND

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

Read Doctrine and Covenants 156:5.

The temple shall be dedicated to the pursuit of peace. It shall be for reconciliation and for healing of the spirit.

It shall also be for a strengthening of faith and preparation for witness.

By its ministries an attitude of wholeness of body, mind, and spirit as a desirable end toward which to strive will be fostered.

It shall be the means for providing leadership education for priesthood and member.

And it shall be a place in which the essential meaning of the Restoration as healing and redeeming agent is given new life and understanding, inspired by the life and witness of the Redeemer of the world.

Ask: What is the purpose for the Temple in Independence, Missouri, USA as stated in this scripture passage?

This Section of the Doctrine and Covenants was given in April 1984. Around this same time in history, the Cold War was still on; there was a terrible recession; Ethiopia was suffering the worst drought in history resulting in over a million dead; the United States deployed their first cruise missiles in Europe; a Union Carbide pesticide plant leaked lethal gas in Bhopal, India; the AIDS virus was identified; the first cell phones and desktop computers were released to the public; and the Internet was created.

- In this atmosphere, how would the direction to build a Temple for peace be received by the World Conference?
- How do you think the international delegates would have received this call?

During a World Conference after the Temple dedication, international delegates shared their joy and the joy of their brothers and sisters in their homelands in the building of the Temple. They saw it as a force for joy, hope, love, and peace in their lives and in the world, even though many would never see it in person. For some, it is a place of pilgrimage like Mecca is for Muslims.

- How do you understand the Temple's influence on you and your congregation?

4

SEND

Explores how the lesson
might be lived

(10% of lesson time)

Discuss the ways your class or congregation can participate in the ministries of the Temple where you live. One example is to participate in the Daily Prayer for Peace. This can be done as both a personal or communal spiritual practice. Search "Daily Prayer for Peace" on www.CofChrist.org.

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope

(5% of lesson time)

Haggai brought hope by reminding the people that God is always with them and by predicting a future of prosperity and a temple of splendor. God is also always with us—even if unseen—and we are called to help make God's vision come true.

Prayer of Hope

Together we are going to say a prayer of hope. We will go around the class so that everyone can speak one hope they have for the future. Begin the prayer by thanking God for always being with us, then state that we all have hopes for our future. State your hope, then motion for the person next to you to state their hope. Continue until everyone has a chance to participate. Finish the prayer by asking God to help us see opportunities where we can bring about God's vision in our world.

LESSON 51
13 November 2022

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 28)

Focus Scripture Passage: Isaiah 65:17–25

Lesson Focus: God's New Creation—Shalom

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore Isaiah's vision in the scripture text.
- create their own image of God's shalom.
- compare how the Community of Christ church seal reflects the scripture text.
- make connections with Community of Christ's Mission Initiatives, Basic Beliefs, and Enduring Principles.
- identify ways we can make God's shalom a reality.

Supplies

- Balloons (at least one per student)
- Timer
- White board, chalkboard, or easel pad and markers or chalk
- Paper
- Colored pencils, crayons, or markers
- Church seal, included in lesson
- Bible

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Isaiah 65:17–25 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: Old Testament*, pp. 127–128, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Prior to class, blow up enough balloons so that each student has their own. Explain that their job is to keep their balloon in the air for as long as possible. Designate one student (or two, depending on the size of the group) to be the "wolf." The "wolf's" job is to try to knock the balloons away so the balloons land on the floor. Explain that nobody but you and the wolf can touch your balloon. Sit down when your balloon hits the floor. The game ends when all the balloons have hit the floor. Time how long it takes for

everyone's balloons to hit the floor. Announce how much time it took and write the time on a white board or poster paper. After completing the game, discuss the following:

- Did the wolf knock your balloon down or did you drop it on your own?
- How difficult was it to keep your balloon in the air? What was the most challenging part?
- The wolf made it difficult for you to be successful at this game. Do you ever feel like there are people or things that keep you from being successful?

—Adapted from <https://storiesontheway.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/new-heavens-and-a-new-earth.pdf>

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Isaiah 65:17–25.

Isaiah uses a lot of imagery to describe the new world—a world full of peace. Those images include:

- No one will cry.
- Everyone will live long lives; children will not die.
- Everyone will live in their own houses and eat whatever food they grow.
- The wolf and the lamb will eat together.
- The lion will eat straw like an ox.
- No one will hurt or destroy anything.

Those are all great images of a peaceful world, but they are Isaiah's images. What kinds of images would you use to describe a peaceful world? Allow time for them to brainstorm ideas; write their thoughts on a whiteboard or poster paper. Pass out paper for every student and make available the coloring utensils. Tell them to use words or to draw their image of a peaceful world. While they're working, ask the following questions:

- How does it make you feel to talk about and describe a peaceful world?
- Do you think a peaceful world is possible? Why or why not?
- Do you think that one day we can make your image of peace come true?
- What would we need to do to make this a peaceful world?

3 RESPOND

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

Isaiah's vision is reflected in Community of Christ's Basic Beliefs concerning The Reign of God. This belief states: "The Reign of God is the coming triumph of love, justice, mercy, and peace that one day will embrace all of creation." It continues with a reminder that Jesus commanded his disciples to pray for that day.

Isaiah's vision is also reflected in the Community of Christ church seal (Show an image of the church seal.)

- How does the church's seal reflect this Basic Belief?

4 SEND

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

In Community of Christ, we believe God's vision for creation is shalom (*justice, wholeness, reconciliation, and peace*). Another way to describe shalom is restoring people to right relationships with God, others, creation, and themselves (*Of Water and Spirit*, p. 31).

The Mission Initiative Pursue Peace on Earth and the Enduring Principle, Pursuit of Peace (Shalom) both address our desire to seek justice and create peacemakers around the world. (Review below) The Temple in Independence, Missouri, USA, was built and dedicated to pursuit of peace, reconciliation, and healing of the spirit—in other words it was dedicated to shalom.

Pursue Peace on Earth—*Christ's mission of justice and peace*

We are poised to restore Christ's covenant of peace, even the Zion of our hopes. The hope of Zion will become reality when we live Christ's peace and generously share his peace with others.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p.23

Pursuit of Peace (Shalom)

- God wants shalom (justice, reconciliation, well-being, wholeness, and peace) for all of creation.
- Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God's shalom (peace), reveals the meaning of God's peace in all aspects of life.
- The vision of Zion is to promote God's reign on Earth, as proclaimed by Jesus Christ, through the leavening influence of just and peaceful communities.
- We courageously and generously share the peace of Jesus Christ with others.
- Led by the Holy Spirit, we work with God and others to restore peace (shalom) to creation.
- We celebrate God's peace wherever it appears or is being pursued by people of good will.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 30

Think back to the balloon game we played at the beginning of class. It was not a very peaceful game; it was stressful because you alone had to keep your balloon in the air and away from the wolf. How could we make this game more like God's image of shalom? (*First everyone should have the same goal of keeping the balloons in the air; the wolf no longer bats the balloons down but instead helps keep them up. Secondly, everyone should work together. Instead of only being responsible for your balloon, help others. If you see any balloon falling to the ground, hit it back up.*)

Now let's see if we can keep the balloons in the air longer. Begin timing them; point out when they surpass their original time. Allow them to keep going as time allows; you may have to stop them if time is running out. Recap by pointing out that when we all work together toward the same goal, we can accomplish much more. The same is true when striving towards God's shalom.

5

BLESS

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

Ask the students to commit to doing one thing this week that will help make God's vision of a peaceful world a reality. Have them share what they will do. At the end state, "Together we can make God's vision of a peaceful world come true."



LESSON 52
20 November 2022

REIGN OF CHRIST

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 29)

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 23:33–43

Lesson Focus: Christ reminds us of the importance of love and our commitment to peace and justice.

Objectives

The learners will...

- experience the scripture passage through *Lectio Divina*.
- learn about the lectionary and liturgical year.
- create a cross reminding them of their commitment to God's vision of peace and justice.

Supplies

- Bowl or similar container
- Slips of paper
- Black construction paper
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- Tissue paper of different colors
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 23:33–43 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 122–123, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina ("sacred reading" in Latin), "is a holistic, experiential way of reading scripture that uses mind, emotion, imagination, the senses, and prayer." Invite the group to get in a comfortable sitting position. You can also invite students to lie down on the floor for this practice. First, read today's scripture passage through simply to get an idea of the setting and events. Pause for a moment of silence; then read the

passage again. Tell the group to listen for a word or phrase that draws their focus. After a moment of silence, read the passage a third time, considering the question, "Is there an invitation here for me?" After another moment of silence, discuss the questions with the group.

More information on Lectio Divina can be found at www.CofChrist.org. Search "Lectio Divina for Groups."

Read Luke 23:33–43.

- Which word or phrase stands out?
- Where do you find yourself in this passage?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Ask the group if they know what a lectionary is. "A *lectionary* is a schedule of scripture lessons to be read in worship on specific occasions or for a given length of time" ("Lectionary Usage: The Living Word of Scripture," *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 11). Community of Christ uses the *Revised Common Lectionary* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992) which is based on the Christian calendar and runs on a three-year cycle. "During...that cycle, we remember the events and ministry of the life of Jesus while we hold up our own lives for analysis" (p. 11).

The church year, known as the liturgical year, starts with Advent, followed by Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, and Ordinary Time. Today is known as Christ the King Sunday, the last day of the liturgical year, the last day of Ordinary Time. Next week is the beginning of Advent.

More information about the lectionary can be found at www.CofChrist.org.

What Do We Do?

In a bowl or container, have slips of paper with the questions below written on them. Have group members take turns drawing a question from the bowl and reading it to the group. Discuss the question as a group.

- When is the end of the calendar year? What do we do at the end of the calendar year?
- When is the end of the school year? What happens at the end of a school year?
- When is the end of a league year? What happens at the end of a league year? (*A league year is the time professional sports team play and will vary depending on the sport.*)

When all questions have been discussed, ask the group, "What do we do at the end of the liturgical year?" How are their lives shaped by the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

3 RESPOND

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

Because we are nearing Advent, the time of the year when we prepare for Christ's birth, it seems weird that we are talking about Christ's death. But today's passage fits into the journey because we can look back over Jesus' life and see his whole story. In his final moments, Jesus showed us the power of love and forgiveness through his conversation with the criminals crucified with him. "In this last moment of Jesus' life shared so poignantly..., we are reassured that the good news of the gospel is fully realized in the present" (*Sermon and Class Helps*, pp. 122–123).

Note to teacher: There is an opportunity for more exploration about the cross. It was a device of torture and death, but Jesus responded to violence with forgiveness. How does this inform an understanding of what it means to move toward Jesus, the peaceful One?

Create a Cross

The Christian cross symbolizes and emphasizes our commitment to God's vision of justice and peace for the entire creation. Provide craft supplies for group members to create "stained glass" crosses.

Using black construction paper cut out a cross approximately 8 in/20 cm tall. Cut out the center of the cross leaving a ½ in/1 cm outline (see example). Using a glue stick, attach small pieces of different-colored tissue paper to the cross. When finished the cross should be filled in and look like a stained-glass window.



4 SEND

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

In the liturgical year, Advent through Pentecost is the time when we look at the life of Jesus, and Ordinary Time is a time to explore our lives as disciples. As you read today's scripture passage a final time, invite the group to reconsider the question, "Is there an invitation here for me?" Then, invite the group to consider the crosses they made—what does the cross mean to me?

5 BLESS

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

Ask a group member to close with a prayer focusing on our pursuit of peace and justice.