



Community of Christ

COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS

YOUTH

1 DECEMBER 2019 — 22 NOVEMBER 2020

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 A: New Testament* (with focus on the gospel according to Matthew) and *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament* (semi-continuous 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.

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LESSON 1
1 December 2019

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT (HOPE)

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 24:36–44

Lesson Focus: We are hopeful in our preparation for Christ's birth.

Objectives

The learners will...

- begin to prepare for Jesus' birth.
- explore God's shalom.
- create messages about Christ's mission.

Supplies

- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Assortment of large-size clothing
- Paper
- Markers
- Colored pencils

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Matthew 24:36–44 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 18–19, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Who's Ready?

Before class, gather large shirts, pants, shoes, hats, and other articles of clothing the group could fit over their clothing. Equally divide the clothing in two piles and ask for two volunteers to race against one another to "get ready" for class. The two group members will then, as quickly as possible, put on all the clothing in his or her pile, racing to finish first. Allow all group members an opportunity to play.

As a class, read today's passage about being ready.

³⁶But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, ³⁹and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴²Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³But understand this: if the owner of the

house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.

—Matthew 24:36–44

Today is the first week of Advent and the theme is Hope. As we move into the season of Advent, we meet the hope that wells up inside us as we anticipate the birth of Christ. The word Advent comes from the Latin word *advenire* (to come) and during Advent, we celebrate the coming of Jesus into our lives and our world.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

In today's passage, Jesus is helping us prepare by telling us to be alert for the coming of the Son of Man. With television shows and books such as *Left Behind* (a popular book series that fictionalizes the aftereffects of the disappearance of much of the human race), popular culture has labeled those "left behind" as the ones who did something wrong and were rejected from entering the kingdom. However, Community of Christ, with many Christians, understands God's shalom in a loving, grace-filled manner. Community of Christ affirms God's love for all creation and God's desire to restore creation to wholeness. Disciples are called to be an active part of restoration and wholeness. Such an understanding changes our perspective from living in fear of destruction and rejection to being prepared to create a hope-filled future.

- In what ways can we be a part of a hope-filled future?
- What does it look like to live in fear as opposed to living in hope?
- What do you want the future to look like? How can you make that happen?

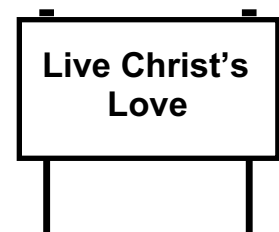
3 RESPOND

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

Billboard for God

God sent Jesus to show us the way, to teach us what it means to love and live as disciples. Imagine driving down the road and seeing a billboard with a message that represents our understanding of what mission is about. What might that billboard say? Provide supplies such as paper, markers, and colored pencils for group members to create billboards with their messages. When they have finished, have them share their billboards with the group and display them around the room or church building.

- How can we be billboards for God?



4 SEND

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

When the passage says we need to be watchful and ready, it's not because something bad is going to happen to us if we haven't been paying attention. Rather, it reminds us to be prepared, to be part of

God's purposes at work in the world. We are called to be aware of our surroundings and open to what is going on so we can be intentional in our lives as disciples.

- In what ways can you be more aware of people and circumstances around you?
- What opportunities for Christ's mission do we miss when we are not prepared to act as compassionate disciples?

5 BLESS

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

Close with the first verse of the Advent hymn "View the Present through the Promise" CCS 401 as a statement of blessing or with a prayer centered on the hope that comes with the birth of Jesus Christ.

Going Deeper: God's Shalom

The Going Deeper section in each lesson has questions or object lessons that can be used to explore further and go deeper into the passage and lesson topics. Use this section with older youth or youth who have discussed the topic previously.

Read the section below on the Enduring Principle of Pursuit of Peace (Shalom) from *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 30.

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.

Our understanding of shalom is not God destroying Earth because God is angry or vengeful. Our hope lies in building Zion (communities of justice and peace) here on Earth as we live God's shalom. Using the information about shalom, discuss the pursuit of peace in group members' lives.

- What stands in our way of living God's shalom?
- How must we change what we believe or what we do to create Zion on Earth?
- Consider and then share what shalom is like in your life. What changes in your life would help you live God's shalom more fully?

LESSON 2
8 December 2019

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT (PEACE)

Focus Scripture Passage: Isaiah 11:1–10

Lesson Focus: We will explore the concepts of the Peaceable Kingdom and what it could look like.

Objectives

The learners will...

- understand God's desire for a just, fair, and compassionate world through Jesus.
- reflect on what the Peaceable Kingdom can look like by crafting their very own.

Supplies

- Copies of Community of Christ seal handout (end of lesson)
- Copies of Peaceable Kingdom Building handout (end of lesson)
- Roads handout (end of lesson—you may need several if you live in a larger town)
- Picture or example of the current church seal (you may also include examples of past church seals)
- Writing utensils (pens or pencils)
- Markers, colored pencils, or crayons
- Bible
- Lined paper
- Optional: craft supplies (construction paper, glue, cotton balls, chenille stems, etc.)

Notes to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Isaiah 11:1–10 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, pp. 20–21, available through Herald House.

As you prepare, identify an area in your congregation where you can display a 2-D paper village your class will be creating. Ask the presider of the worship for some time for you and your class to share about the peaceable village your students created.

1 GATHER

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

Pass out the Community of Christ Seal handouts and markers, colored pencils, or crayons. Explain that today we will be exploring the scripture that inspired the church seal. Provide students examples of the current church seals and past seals, if available. The students will have the opportunity to get creative and design their own Community of Christ church seal. Have them include the lion, lamb, child, and the

word “peace.” Encourage them to be creative and make it their own. Urge them to share what they created with the whole class when they are finished designing.

Old Church Seals



Current Church Seal



2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Isaiah 11:1–5.

Our scripture passage today comes from the Old Testament major prophet book Isaiah. The verses just read describe a promise from God of a Davidic king of the future. Do you remember the story of King David? He's the one who bravely took down Goliath and ruled over ancient Israel. He is known as one of the greatest kings of that time. While not perfect, he plays an important role in God's story of the Old Testament. The phrase "stump of Jesse" refers to a king who will rise up from the family tree of David.

The passage tells the readers the Spirit of the Lord will rest on this king with three pairs of gifts: (1) wisdom and understanding, (2) counsel and might, (3) knowledge and fear of the Lord. In this context, wisdom and understanding mean dealing with reality in a fair and just way in both political and judicial situations. With wisdom and understanding a ruler is kind, fair, seeks justice instead of oppression, and sees the whole picture. Counsel and might refer to both diplomatic and militaristic experience. Knowledge and fear of the Lord refer to acknowledging God in the world and being in "awe." While fear is usually equated with being afraid of something, in this context it is a feeling of amazement and respect for God.

Ask:

- When you think of a king, what characteristics do you think of? Think of kings or rulers from TV or movies. What are they like?
- Who is someone in your life who gives you wisdom or understanding when you need it most? What wisdom did they give? How did you respond?
- Who is someone in your life who gives you counsel (advice) when you need it most?
- Who is someone in your life who is a spiritual mentor who has great knowledge and "awe" of God?

Read Isaiah 11:3–5 again.

These verses describe the justice when the coming king returns. The poor and meek will be protected and liberated, while the oppressors will be given proper justice. This new king will represent justice, righteousness, and liberation for all those who need it. In our Christian context we know that Jesus wouldn't actually kill his enemies. Many times in the scriptures Jesus liberated the oppressor, too, as in the story of Zacchaeus, the tax collector, or Saul (who becomes Paul) who persecuted the earliest Christ-followers.

Ask: What would justice toward the poor and meek look like?

Read Isaiah 11:6–10.

With a new king comes a new way to rule. A wise, knowledgeable, just, fair, and compassionate king can bring peace. Verses 6–10 lay out what the kingdom will be like when this new king rules: Peace. Prey will be safe from predators. Oppressors and oppressed can thrive together in harmony. Children, our most vulnerable members, can play safely without threats or danger. Put more simply, this new kingdom is a place where God's creation can live safely without fear, without oppression.

This passage as a whole focuses on a future where God establishes a just and peaceful Earth where all creation will live in harmony. In a world where human greed, violence, injustice, oppression, and struggle are real, a new king will help shape and guide God's vision of harmony. Jesus is that new king. As disciples, we have the opportunity to be part of that vision.

3 RESPOND

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

For this activity the class will be creating their own Peaceable Kingdom village. To begin ask the following:

- What characteristics are important when being in community?
- If you could craft your own peaceful town what would that look like? What buildings would be in it?

Have enough copies of the Peaceable Kingdom Building handout for each member of the class. If you have a class of less than five, it is recommended that you print out extra handouts if students want to add to their village. Invite the class to answer the three questions on the handout. They may either write or draw their answers in each box. Have each student share about their building and its importance to our peaceful community. Keep in mind that everyone's values are different so there may be a variety of buildings. That is okay. After the students create and share their buildings, go to a place in your congregation (blank bulletin board, wall, easel, etc.) to display your village. The Roads handout is included as optional décor. You are also encouraged to share your village with the congregation as part of the worship that day.

Optional: If you have the supplies, you may encourage your students to use crafting items (construction paper, cotton balls, chenille stems, glue, etc.) to design the village on a surface you and the class choose.

4 SEND

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

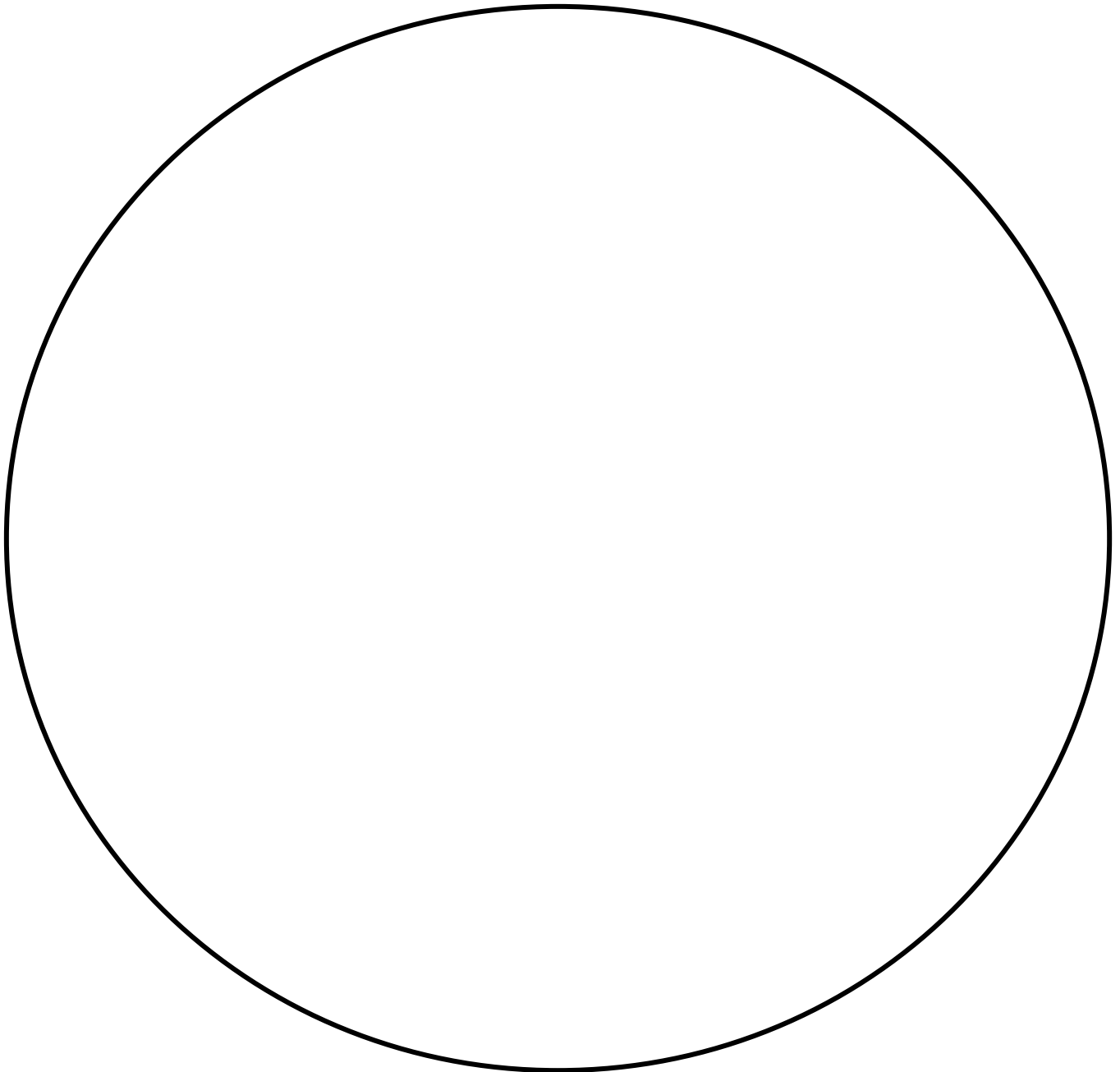
Pass out the writing utensils and lined paper. Read aloud Isaiah 11:6–9 again. Have the students come up with three to five pairs of opposites that can live together in community if this vision of peace became a reality. Some examples to get the students thinking include: the bully will play with the bullied; the liberal can celebrate with the conservative; the Christian can worship with the atheist; etc. This activity can lead to some challenging but deep discussion, so invite your students to share what they wrote, why they wrote it, and how those opposites joining together can make God's kingdom a better place.

5 BLESS

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

Have students sing the classic campfire song "I've Got Peace like a River" as their closing time together.

Community of Christ Church Seal



Peaceable Kingdom Building

Building Name

Whom does this building serve?

What function does this building have?

What does your building look like?

Roads (for your peaceable kingdom)



LESSON 3
15 December 2019

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (JOY)

Focus Scripture Passage: Isaiah 35:1–10

Lesson Focus: God seeks to bring joy to those who are lost.

Objectives

The learners will...

- journey with the ancient Judeans receiving good news.
- use positive words and phrases to bring joy to their community.
- understand God's peaceable kingdom brings new life and transformation.

Supplies

- Bible
- Joyful Message Ornament handout for each student (end of lesson)
- Colored construction paper (optional: Christmas colors)
- Markers
- Scissors
- Glue or glue stick
- One-hole punch
- Yarn or string

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Isaiah 35:1–10 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, pp. 22–23, available through Herald House.

Instructor tip: Before this lesson, complete the Joyful Message Ornament activity to create an example for the class. If you don't have construction paper available for you or your class, please print out the Joyful Message Christmas Ornament handout.

1 GATHER

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

The word “redeemed” is a common word used in both Christian and secular cultures. In certain parts of the Bible being redeemed meant literally to be released from physical captivity, while other examples were more spiritual or metaphorical.

Ask:

- When you think of the concept of being redeemed what does that look like?
- What religious or spiritual examples of redemption are there?
 - Jesus welcoming Zacchaeus, the tax collector, who changes his life

- The conversion of Saul, the persecutor of the first Christ-followers, into Paul
- The many healings and miracles of Jesus
- The thief on the cross with Jesus who asked Jesus to “remember me”
- What examples of redemption are there in history or in pop culture?
 - *Star Wars* character Darth Vader saving his son from the evil Emperor
 - Tim Robbins’ character, Andy Dufrense, from *Shawshank Redemption*
 - Jean Valjean from *Les Misérables*
 - Nelson Mandela
 - John Newton, author of the hymn “Amazing Grace”

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today’s scripture passage is from Isaiah. Scholars believe that multiple authors helped compile this book in the Bible. The original Isaiah is credited with writing the first part of the book of Isaiah (traditionally up to chapter 39), while other writings and scrolls made up the other portions. The passage we are discussing today was most likely written towards the end of the Babylonian exile in 539 BCE (Before Common Era). These verses were written to a people who were lost, broken, taken from their homes—exiled. They were awaiting God’s call for them to return home, being liberated and redeemed.

Ask:

- When has there been a time in your life when you felt exiled or left out of a group?
- How did that make you feel?
- Did you long to be welcomed back?

While the students consider these questions, invite them to step in the shoes of an ancient Judean who experienced a lifetime of exile.

Read Isaiah 35:1–2. Pause for a brief moment to allow personal reflection.

Read Isaiah 35:3–4. Pause for a brief moment to allow personal reflection.

Read Isaiah 35:5–7. Pause for a brief moment to allow personal reflection.

Read Isaiah 35:8–10. After pausing for reflection reread all the verses together.

Ask:

- Did reading this passage from the perspective of an exiled Judean give you any insight?
- How would you feel as an exile hearing these words? How would you feel called to respond?
- What phrases, words, or images jump out at you as you reflected?
- Would these words have brought you comfort or joy as an exile? How so?

This passage is a message to the exiled Judeans that God is coming to liberate and bring joy. Their world as they knew it was going to be transformed. The desert will blossom, the blind will have their eyes opened, the deaf will hear, the lame shall jump as a deer, and the burning sands will become a pool of water. These poetic words symbolize the radical transformation coming. Such a change would bring joy, celebration, and gladness.

This passage was written for Judeans recovering from an exile 500 years before Jesus; however, even as Christians we can find deep relevance. Jesus Christ came to liberate humankind from our own blindness and deafness. He also performed miraculous deeds caring for the physical needs of others. God's reign even today incorporates both spiritual and physical well-being. Jesus challenges us to be transformed as we become his hands and feet, serving God's creation as disciples building the peaceable kingdom. With this good news how can we not be joyful!

3 RESPOND

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

Our Advent theme today is "Joy!" It is fitting with today's scripture, which mentions joy four times. The passage brought joy to its first hearers who felt broken, lost, and alone. While many celebrate the Christmas season with glee, others may be suffering or feel lonely. Just as this passage gave hope and joy to its first readers, the class has an opportunity to spread joy.

Joyful Message Ornaments activity:

Supplies needed:

- Sheets of colored construction paper (or printed Joyful Message Ornament handout)
- Scissors
- Glue or glue stick
- Markers
- Yarn or string
- One-hole punch

Directions:

- Pass out construction paper Joyful Message Ornament handout.
- Have students cut out strips of paper matching the size of the example handout.
- Write positive words, encouraging phrases, or Christmas greetings on each side of each piece of paper.
- Glue the pieces of paper together as seen in the example below.
- Punch a hole in the top of the ornament.
- Thread the string or yarn through the hole and tie a knot creating a hook. (Optional: You can also unbend a paper clip to make the hook.)
- You're finished with your Joyful Message Ornament!



If you have time, encourage your class to make more ornaments.

4 SEND

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

Ask each student to share whom they are going to give their ornament to, if they are comfortable sharing. If they don't want to be specific, that is okay. Ask: What significance does that person play in your life?

5 BLESS

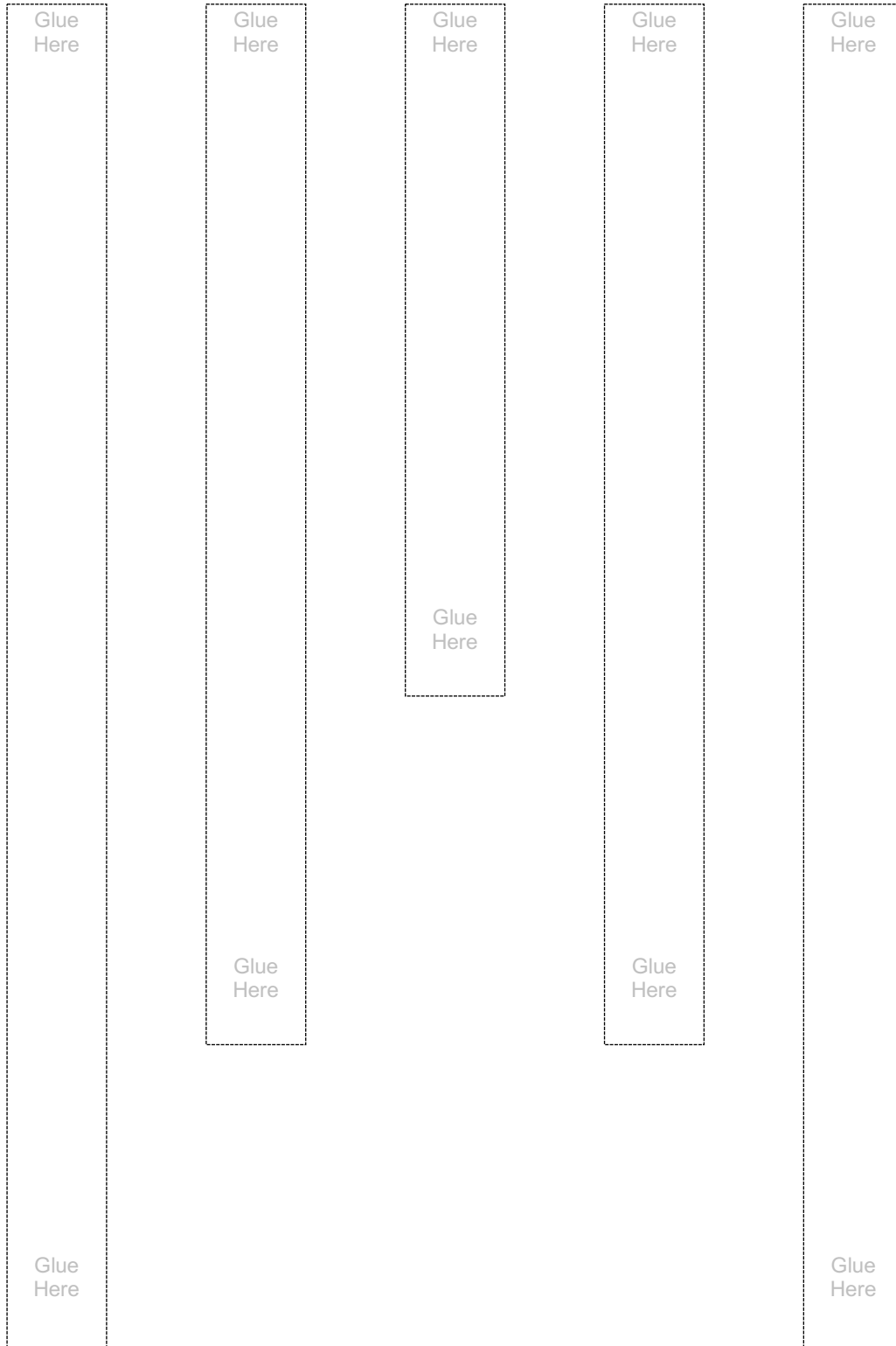
Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Close by singing the campfire song "I've Got the Joy."

Verses include:

- I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy, down in my heart.
- I've got the peace that passes understanding, down in my heart.
- I've got the love of Jesus Christ my Savior, down in my heart—or—I've got the love of my savior, my blessed redeemer, down in my heart.
- I've got the hope of God, our liberator, down in my heart.

Joyful Message Christmas Ornament (Example for class)



LESSON 4
22 December 2019

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Focus Scripture Passage: Isaiah 7:10–16

Lesson Focus: God is with us, and God promises to always be with us even in the smallest of life's moments.

Objectives

The learners will...

- understand the context of a scripture passage over 2,500 years old and how it can ring true to Christians today.
- be assured that God is forever present in God's world.

Supplies

- Writing utensils for each student
- Easel with large paper pad
- Sticky notepad (10–15 individual sticky notes per student)
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Isaiah 7:10–16 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, pp. 24–25, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

We celebrate the Christmas season because of the birth of Jesus. God's child put on Earth to be among us. That is something worth celebrating! The Old Testament shares many accounts of babies being born. The ancient people who originally heard today's scripture passage recognized prophecies about the birth of babies. The first hearers of the Old Testament knew the importance of birth and its symbolism for God's hope and love.

Ask:

- Is there a baby in your life that means a lot to you? What is the baby's relationship to you?
- If there is not a baby currently in your life, what about when you were younger—a sibling, family friend, or family member who had a baby?
- How did that baby change the lives of those around him or her for the better?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today's passage comes from the Book of Isaiah from the Old Testament. The books of the Old Testament were written before the birth of Jesus, and it is important to understand who the original audience was and why it was written (this is called the context). We will view this scripture passage from both the Old Testament perspective and the perspective of the Christian worldview.

Read Isaiah 7:10–17.

During the time of the prophet Isaiah the Israelites lived in a divided kingdom: The northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judea. The Assyrian Empire was a threat to all who lived in the area, so many of the surrounding countries formed an alliance against the Assyrians. The king we just read about, King Ahaz of Judah, did not join the alliance. The allied nations attacked Judah for not joining the alliance thinking Judah may be aligning with Assyria. These events resulted in Ahaz seeking counsel with his prophet Isaiah. However, King Ahaz did not want to ask God for guidance, unusual for a king in ancient Judea. Despite Ahaz's resistance, Isaiah declares a sign from God. He looks to a young woman who will bear a child who will be named Immanuel. Before Immanuel will begin to eat solid foods (such as curds and honey), the two kings who threaten Judea will be defeated. Later Isaiah's prophecy came to pass as Assyria took over the smaller nations.

Ask:

- King Ahaz was full of fear but didn't ask God for guidance. When was there a time in your life when you resisted help and it made the situation worse?
- King Ahaz may have not sought God's guidance because he felt like God abandoned him and his people. When have you felt alone or left out?
- Isaiah gave King Ahaz and the other Judeans hope when they believed all hope was lost. Who is someone in your life who gave you hope? How did they comfort you? What was the outcome of their help?

Jesus' birth account recorded in Matthew 1:22 quotes Isaiah 7:14. The author of Matthew and early Christians interpreted this ancient text to mean something new. Jesus, the Son of God, would become the promised child who would walk among God's creation. Jesus would become an answer to the prophecy.

Ask a volunteer to reread Isaiah 7:10–17. Have another volunteer read Matthew 1:20–25.

The original audience of Isaiah's prophecy was given hope knowing God had not given up on God's people. With the birth of this child there is a promise of safety and a presence of love. Using something as beautiful and sacred as the birth of a child brings a message of God's presence forever and always. When the Judeans received this prophecy, threats of violence, conquests, and war overshadowed their minds. The new life in the form of a baby became a symbol of God's eternal and everlasting loving presence. For the first Christians, Isaiah's prophecy foretold the birth of Jesus, God among us. Both perspectives are important when reading scripture, and both tell a similar story: God promises to have a presence in the world God created.

3 RESPOND

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

Often people limit God's presence to certain places or events in their life. Such an error causes us to miss the beautiful, small moments. God is everywhere and anywhere. God is at the birth of a child; with a grieving family who just lost a loved one; at the park while you skateboard or play; as someone opens the

door for a stranger. God is intricately involved in God's creation. Isaiah foretold to the king of Judea over 2,500 years ago that God was with them and such a prophecy rings true for us today.

Display a large easel and paper pad so the entire class can see. Write "God is present in..." at the top of the paper. Hand out 10 to 15 sticky notes to each participant in the class. Have the students write where they see God present in their lives. Remind them that God is present even in the smallest of places. When they are finished writing, have them share what they wrote in small groups. Then have each of them share one or two for the entire class. Once the class is done sharing, invite them to place what they wrote on the large paper pad. Keep the pad of paper displayed in the classroom or somewhere else in the congregation. Encourage your class to share with the congregation what they wrote, and invite others to add to the list.

4

SEND

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

Ask each student to take a moment to reflect on how busy they are. Do they get wrapped up in schoolwork, their jobs, band, orchestra, a sport, theater, etc.? Give the students some time to reflect on the question: How can I be more aware of God's presence in the world? Have each student share his or her answer in the following statement:

"I, [Name], will be more aware of God's presence by_____."

5

BLESS

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

Sing or have a volunteer read "God's Love Made Visible" CCS 411.

LESSON 5
29 December 2019

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 2:13–23

Lesson Focus: The faithful listen and respond to God's call.

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore the scripture passage.
- be reminded of a king born for everyone.
- engage in stories about the faithful

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- Doctrine and Covenants
- Card stock (three sheets per person)
- String or yarn, hole punch or tape
- Crayons or colored pencils
- Nativity scene

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 2:13–23 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 26–27 available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Read Matthew 2:13–18. Review the events that led to this time. Describe Joseph's dream. Give each group member a sheet of card stock to sketch Joseph's dream. What were the conditions at home? Where were Joseph, Mary, and Jesus to go? What prophecy was fulfilled by this action? Who was the prophet giving the prophecy?

¹³Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” ¹⁴Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, ¹⁵and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.”

¹⁶When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. ¹⁷Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: ¹⁸“A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing

and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.”

Read Matthew 2:19–21. Ask group members to describe what happened next. Give each group member another sheet of card stock and sketch scene two. Who appeared? What was their destination?

¹⁹When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, ²⁰“Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child’s life are dead.” ²¹Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel.

Read Matthew 2:22–23. Provide a third sheet of card stock to sketch scene three. Who was king and what was his relationship to Herod? How was Joseph warned? Where were they told to go? What prophecy was fulfilled this time? What acts of faith can be identified in the story?

²²But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. ²³There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, “He will be called a Nazorean.”

In ancient times, triptychs were writing tablets composed of three panels of writing, pictures, designs, or carvings hinged or tied together. They were used mainly as altarpieces. Make triptychs by connecting each of the three sheets sketched by class members. Use tape or punch holes and join the three sheets with string. Stand the triptychs up, adjusting outside panels forward slightly until they stand by themselves. Display the triptychs throughout your place of worship.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Faithful Journey

Today’s scripture passage includes the tragic story of King Herod killing all male infants in Bethlehem. This fate for Jesus was avoided by the faithful response of Joseph. After Joseph’s dream, his response was to listen and move Jesus and Mary to safety. Because Joseph had faith and listened to God’s call, Jesus was safe.

- Joseph was on a faithful journey. What has been an unexpected experience on your faithful journey? Explain.
- In what ways is it difficult to be faithful? In what ways is it easy?
- How do you listen for God’s direction in your life?

3 RESPOND

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

Listen to God’s Voice

Arrange the group in pairs. Take turns having each pair try to converse while the rest of the group talks loudly around them. The pairs should find it difficult to hear each other over the loud talking and distracting voices of those around them.

It can be difficult to listen for God when there are many things going on that distract us. Just like trying to converse while other people are talking over you, if we are too distracted by what’s going on in our lives, then we will miss what God is trying to say to us. There are many “voices” in our lives that compete for

our attention, but it is God who wishes to be with us, dwell with us, and lead us. All are called to share gifts, invite others to Christ, and to do good in the world.

- What does it mean to listen for God's voice?
- Have there been times in your life when you listened for God's voice and responded? What was the result?

4 SEND

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

Challenge Question

The beginning of a new year is a chance to listen for God's voice calling to you. In the pairs formed above, have group members share their answers to the challenge question.

- At the beginning of the new year, what actions will you take to be a faithful participant in the sacred story?

Going Deeper: The Wise Men

Out of Place

Place a nativity scene (one that includes the wise men) on a table or somewhere the group can see it. Now that the group has read today's scripture passage, ask them what is out of place with the scene. The wise men, Magi, or three kings as they are sometimes called, only appear in the Gospel of Matthew. While they are often depicted in nativity scenes when Jesus was born, they did not arrive until later. The wise men were from the East, foreigners to Jesus, and yet they recognized Jesus as the king. It fits that these visitors to Jesus, a king for all, were outsiders.

- How would you describe the wise men in today's passage?
- Who are the "wise men" today?
- Whom do the "wise men" represent in your community?

5 BLESS

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

In closing read Doctrine and Covenants 162:2a or invite a group member to offer a prayer of blessing.

2a. Listen carefully to your own journey as a people, for it is a sacred journey and it has taught you many things you must know for the journey yet to come.

LESSON 6
5 January 2019

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Focus Scripture Passage: John 1:1–18

Lesson Focus: Through Jesus, we can more deeply understand who God is.

Objectives

The learners will...

- talk about who the class thinks Jesus is.
- reflect on how God is present in our lives today.
- take a look back at our own “origin” story and how our journey shapes and molds us.

Supplies

- *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*, 4th Edition (also available online)
- Pens or pencils
- Paper 11 in x 17 in (legal size) for each student
- Poster paper or whiteboard
- Markers
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Notes to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 1:1–18 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 28, available through Herald House.

Work with your worship planning team to give your class an opportunity to share one another’s stories during a worship service.

1 GATHER

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

Ask four volunteers to read aloud “Creator God, Still Creating” CCS 60, one stanza per volunteer. After reading each stanza, discuss the questions that follow.

Read stanza 1. Discuss: How do you see God at work in today’s world?

Read stanza 2. Discuss: What is redemption? How do you see God’s redemptive work in our world?

Read stanza 3. Discuss: Through what vessel (a person, a thing, music, an activity, the Spirit) does God help sustain you when you need love?

Read stanza 4. Discuss: How is God present in your life?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

This is the second Sunday after Christmas. While today's scripture passage isn't a traditional story explaining the birth of Jesus, it is still an important prologue and beginning to the life of Jesus.

Read John 1:1–5.

Verse 3 says, "All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people." Who is someone in your life that is a light, someone who is a Christ-like figure in your life?

Read John 1:6–13.

Discuss the following and invite the class to write responses on a whiteboard or poster paper.

- These passages talk about believing and understanding who Christ is. How do you see Jesus?
- What are things you feel Jesus was passionate about?
- What were some of the things Jesus did?

Read "We Proclaim Jesus Christ" in *Sharing in Community of Christ*, pp. 58–60. Take turns as a class reading from the preamble through point 9.

Read John 1:14–18.

Discuss:

- If God is the Word, and the Word became flesh (human) that means part of God became human (Jesus, God's son). This is a radical shift of thinking about God. God is no longer some distant old dude watching from afar. Through Christ, God experiences what we experience: living, eating, laughing, crying, hurting, and happiness.
- When have you felt comfort or support from God? Through someone? Something? (This echoes question 3 of the Gathering activity.)

3 RESPOND

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

We have just had the opportunity to experience the season of Christmas as we celebrated the birth of Christ! The stories of Jesus' birth are commonly taken from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The passage for today is another way of looking at the origin story of Jesus. Some Bible scholars believe this passage may have been a hymn dedicated to the origin (beginning) of Jesus. This passage serves as a literal prologue, a beginning, to the Gospel of John. Today we are going to take the time to reflect on our own origin stories, our past.

Hand out the 11 x 17 paper to each student, along with pens, markers, crayons, or colored pencils. Have each student take time to reflect on their past. Have them write, draw, or create a timeline of their journey. Include the following items:

- Where you are from
- Names of parents, grandparents, guardians, or someone who cared for you who mean a lot to you today
- Important figures and people in your life

- Important passions or hobbies that evolved over time
- A positive memory that sticks with you
- Your first experience you remember in church
- A struggle or challenge you faced
- Any important spiritual or meaningful event

When everyone is finished, invite classmates to share their journeys. If someone doesn't feel comfortable sharing their entire work, they can share one aspect.

4 SEND

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

Our words matter. The Word matters. Our story matters. As children of God and as disciples, we are called to share Christ's good news of hope, peace, love, redemption, and community. Have each classmate find a partner. Have each class member share a story about a meaningful memory related to camp, youth group, their congregation, or something similar. The partner should write down key points in order to remember the teller's story.

As noted during the beginning of the lesson: Work with your worship planning team to give your students the opportunity to share the stories of their peers. They may keep the stories anonymous depending on your group's level of comfort.

5 BLESS

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

Close by rereading point 9 of the "We Proclaim Jesus Christ" in *Sharing in Community of Christ*.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY/BAPTISM OF THE LORD

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 3:13–17

Lesson Focus: Baptism and confirmation are essential to forming disciples in the body of Christ.

Objectives

The learners will...

- identify key details of Jesus' baptismal story. (coming to river, talking to John, water, heavens opening, dove descending, God speaking)
- describe how baptism marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry and our discipleship.
- share feelings about the dialogue between John and Jesus regarding the necessity of Jesus' baptism.
- understand the importance of baptism as a starting point for those choosing to follow Jesus today.

Supplies

- Bibles (NRSV recommended)
- Bowl filled with water
- Finger paint or dirt
- Paper
- Towel
- Markers, pens, or pencils

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Matthew 3:13–17 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 31–32, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Begin with an activity that is symbolic of baptism. On a table, place a bowl of water, dirt or finger paint, and a towel. Have the students apply dirt or paint to their hands and then wash them in the bowl of water.

- How did it feel to be covered in the dirt?
- How do you feel while washing your hands?

Ask class members to share memories of their baptismal services or services they have attended.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction

(35% of lesson time)

Read Matthew 3:13–17. Ask the students to imagine the details of the scene; feel the sand on the shore as though they are watching Jesus' baptism.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

- What questions would you ask as Jesus arrived?
- What would you think as you listened to Jesus and John discuss who should be baptizing whom?
- What questions would you ask after Jesus came up out of the water?

Today's scripture story is a decisive point in Jesus' life that marks the beginning of his ministry. In the act of his baptism, Jesus modeled for his followers how to begin the journey of discipleship. A person seeking to be baptized "into Christ" becomes a "new creature" and recognizes God's personal love and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Those baptized make lifelong covenants or promises to follow Jesus. We are immersed in water to symbolize death to sin and are raised out of the water to begin a new life. Paul, an early convert to Christianity, wrote how baptism symbolizes a dramatic change of life as one chooses to follow Jesus: "...when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God..." (Colossians 2:12).

Explore the importance of baptism in Community of Christ using the following excerpt from "OFFICIAL POLICY: Baptism, Confirmation, and Church Membership"

(<https://www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Official-Policy-on-Baptism-Confirmation-and-Church-Membership.pdf>).

Baptism and confirmation are fundamentally important in Community of Christ. They are essential steps in lifelong disciple formation and growth. We believe:

Baptism is how we initially express our commitment to lifelong discipleship. As we yield our lives to Christ in baptism we enter Christian community (the body of Christ) and have the promise of salvation.

Baptism has several significant meanings in Community of Christ. Through baptism, God's generous grace and eternal purposes, revealed in Jesus Christ, are made evident in human lives. In response, we

- choose in faith to accept God's invitation to enter a covenant relationship.
- evidence our commitment to follow Jesus Christ in a life of active Christian discipleship.
- display an attitude of repentance and receive the promise of forgiveness.
- receive the promise of salvation and new life through symbolically engaging in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Using the excerpt and your own ideas, create a list of statements about baptism in the order of importance for you.

3 RESPOND

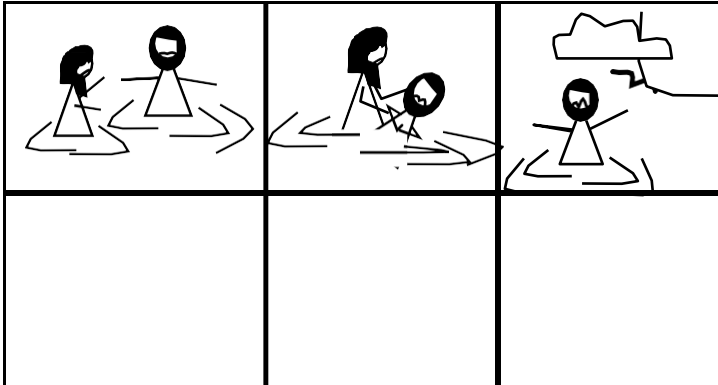
Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Telling and Retelling the Story

Knowing the stories of Jesus guides a disciple's journey and helps disciples invite others to be a part of the Christian community. Choose actors to play Jesus and John. Have a narrator read Matthew 3:13–17 as the actors interpret the feelings and actions of the characters. Choose two more actors to play a modern-day disciple and his friend. The actors will role play a discussion of Jesus' baptism and its importance for disciples today.

Telling the Story in Pictures

Give each student a blank piece of paper. Instruct them to fold the paper in half lengthwise. With the paper lying "landscape" style, create boxes for comic strip frames. On the top half, have the students draw the story of Jesus' baptism from Matthew 3:13–17 as a comic strip. On the bottom half, draw another comic strip depicting a modern-day disciple and her friend discussing the importance of baptism.



4 SEND

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

Ask the class to review today's lesson. What is one idea you will take with you from this lesson? How has your reflection on Jesus' baptism helped prepare you for more effective discipleship? How will you respond when asked about the importance of baptism?

5 BLESS

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

Close with the following prayer. You may choose to have individuals or small groups read each line.

God of grace and glory,
you call us with your voice of flame
to be your people, faithful and courageous.

As your beloved Son embraced his mission in the waters of baptism,
inspire us with the fire of your Spirit to join in his transforming work.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

—The Revised Common Lectionary,
© 2002 Consultation on Common Texts, Augsburg Fortress

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Focus Scripture Passage: Isaiah 49:1–7

Lesson Focus: The Servant's Mission

Objectives

The learners will...

- identify connections between the Second Servant Song and Civil Rights leaders in the United States.
- examine the role of servant.
- construct a timeline of the Civil Rights movement in the United States (or your home country).
- evaluate the actions of a servant as described in Section 165.
-

Supplies

- Flip chart and markers
- Civil Rights timeline resources
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Isaiah 49:1–7 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, pp. 36–37, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Invite the class to sing, read, or watch a video of “The Servant Song” or “We are Pilgrims on a Journey” CCS 550.

- How would you describe this servant?
- Compare and contrast this servant with other images of servants.
- In “The Servant Song,” do you agree with the servant’s actions?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction

(35% of lesson time)

This week we are exploring the “Second Servant Song” in Isaiah. This is a dialogue between God and God’s servant, the nation of Israel. There are many layers of meaning in this text, but to better understand we need to go back in history to the Patriarch Jacob.

Jacob and Esau were twins. Genesis 25:26 tells us that as they were born, Jacob grasped Esau’s heel. He was therefore named “Jacob,” meaning “one who grasps by the heel or supplants.” Jacob was an important leader from birth, who, in Genesis 32, after wrestling with an angel, God changed his name to Israel, meaning “one who strives with God.” Jacob/Israel is considered the father of ancient Israel.

God calls the nation Israel to speak truth for God. The servant strives with God. When human efforts have failed, the servant continues to affirm the relationship of trust and grace, “Surely my cause is with the Lord and my reward with my God.”

Ask the class to read the text from *The Message*, and identify images and meanings as they read.

Isaiah 49:1–7 The Message (MSG)

Listen, far-flung islands,

pay attention, faraway people:

God put me to work from the day I was born.

The moment I entered the world he named me.

He gave me speech that would cut and penetrate.

He kept his hand on me to protect me.

He made me his straight arrow

and hid me in his quiver.

He said to me, “You’re my dear servant,

Israel, through whom I’ll shine.”

But I said, “I’ve worked for nothing.

I’ve nothing to show for a life of hard work.

Nevertheless, I’ll let God have the last word.

I’ll let him pronounce his verdict.”

“And now,” God says,

this God who took me in hand

from the moment of birth to be his servant,

To bring Jacob back home to him,

to set a reunion for Israel—

What an honor for me in God’s eyes!

That God should be my strength!

He says, “But that’s not a big enough job for my servant—

just to recover the tribes of Jacob,

merely to round up the strays of Israel.

I'm setting you up as a light for the nations
so that my salvation becomes global!"
God, Redeemer of Israel, The Holy of Israel,
says to the despised one, kicked around by the nations,
slave labor to the ruling class:
"Kings will see, get to their feet—the princes, too—
and then fall on their faces in homage
Because of God, who has faithfully kept his word,
The Holy of Israel, who has chosen you."

God trusts the Servant and expands the servant's mission to be a light to the nations that all will know the Redeemer of Israel. Today, Christians see this servant as a model for the coming of Christ. God calls us to the work of restoration, to free the captives, expand the mission, and be a light to the world for the glory of God.

3 RESPOND

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

The task of releasing the captives, recovering sight for the blind, and setting the oppressed free takes many forms as we work to fulfill Christ's mission (Isaiah 4:18–19). The Servant Song in today's text speaks of "working for nothing...to show." The servant nevertheless persists in serving God, who in turn also trusts the servant, expanding the mission to the world.

On Racial Justice Day, we remember the work of many people who dedicated their lives and efforts for Christ's mission. Like the servant, the work was not always easy. It did not always feel rewarding. In fact they were often "kicked around by the nations" as well.

In 1959, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote:

My call to the ministry was neither dramatic nor spectacular. It came neither by some miraculous vision nor by some blinding light experience on the road of life. Moreover, it did not come as a sudden realization. Rather, it was a response to an inner urge that gradually came upon me. This urge expressed itself in a desire to serve God and humanity, and the feeling that my talent and my commitment could best be expressed through the ministry... During my senior year in college I finally decided to accept the challenge to enter the ministry. I came to see that God had placed a responsibility upon my shoulders and the more I tried to escape it the more frustrated I would become.

—http://okra.stanford.edu/transcription/document_images/Vol06Scans/7Aug1959MyCalltotheMinistry.pdf

Dr. King did not set out to create a name for himself as a great civil rights leader. Instead, like the servant in today's text, the Lord said, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." When Rosa Parks sat down in the "whites-only" section of a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, USA, Dr. King was thrust into the leadership of the Civil Rights movement.

As a class create a timeline of the Civil Rights movement in the United States from both the students' knowledge and resources such as:

<https://civilrightstrail.com/timeline/>

<https://www.civilrightsmuseum.org>

What connections can you make between the text of the Second Servant Song and the life experience of Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights leaders?

Note: If you live outside the United States, you may adapt this exercise to reflect the evolution of civil rights in your country.

4

SEND

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

Doctrine and Covenants 165 contains many insights that can guide us in our journey to be God's servants and write our own servant song. Let's look closely at a portion of this text and identify what each one of us can do right now to pursue our role as God's servants.

Section 165:3

- a. More fully embody your oneness and equality in Jesus Christ. Oneness and equality in Christ are realized through the waters of baptism, confirmed by the Holy Spirit, and sustained through the sacrament of Communion. Embrace the full meaning of these sacraments and be spiritually joined in Christ as never before.
- b. However, it is not right to profess oneness and equality in Christ through sacramental covenants and then to deny them by word or action. Such behavior wounds Christ's body and denies what is resolved eternally in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- c. You do not fully understand many interrelated processes of human creation. Through its wonderful complexity, creation produces diversity and order.
- d. Be not consumed with concern about variety in human types and characteristics as you see them. Be passionately concerned about forming inclusive communities of love, oneness, and equality that reveal divine nature.
- e. Oneness and equality in Christ do not mean uniformity. They mean Unity in Diversity and relating in Christ-like love to the circumstances of others as if they were one's own. They also mean full opportunity for people to experience human worth and related rights, including expressing God-given giftedness in the church and society.

Ask:

- What relationships can you identify between Section 165:3 and the images of a servant discussed today?
- How would you improve oneness in your congregation, community, and world?
- What actions of God's servant might draw disagreement from your peers? How would you justify your actions?

5

BLESS

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

Invite a member of the class to close with a prayer.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Focus Scripture Passage: Isaiah 9:1–4

Lesson Focus: Even in the face of despair, God lights the way forward.

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore images of darkness and light.
- understand the context of today's scripture passage in relation to darkness and light for its original readers/hearers.
- consider the power of an image for peace.
- share together in joyful activity.

Supplies

- Small water bottles
- Black washable felt-tip markers
- Non-toxic oil such as mineral (baby) oil
- Duct tape
- Small plastic cups
- Tablecloth or newspaper
- A bag or basket with slips of paper (see Send section)
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Isaiah 9:1–4 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, pp. 38–39, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Open class with a prayer.

Share with the class today's theme: Light shines on those in darkness. Observe their initial responses to the theme, recording them on a piece of paper.

Have the students assemble a bottle of light and darkness to experiment with. You will need the following supplies for each student:

- Small water bottles
- Black washable felt-tip markers
- Non-toxic oil such as mineral (baby) oil
- Duct tape
- Small plastic cups
- Tablecloth or newspaper

Directions:

1. Cover the table with a tablecloth or newspapers to prevent making a mess.
2. Give each student a small water bottle, a small plastic cup, and a black washable felt-tip marker (worn ones work great). Ask the students to pour the water from the bottle into the plastic cup.
3. Place the marker tip in the water, coloring it as dark as possible.
4. Once the water is colored, pour half of it back into the small water bottle.
5. Fill the remainder of the bottle with the oil. Replace the lid and use duct tape to seal it.

Have the class shake their bottles, mixing the dark with the light.

- How do the water and oil react with each other?
- What similarities are there between your experiment and the “light of day” and the “dark of night”?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today’s scripture text from the prophet Isaiah is widely accepted by scholars to have been written in the eighth century BCE, sometime after 732 BCE, though a precise date is difficult to establish. Assyria had conquered Israel and Judah prior to this passage, causing anguish and despair. It is most likely this prophetic hymn was written to celebrate the birth of a new crown prince, a descendant of David, a sign of deliverance from this situation. The opening sentence, “But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish,” grabs the reader’s or listener’s attention, that those who are faithful in this time of despair will see light not darkness for the way ahead.

It is helpful to note that the author uses two different phrases for the land of Galilee: first, “the land of Zebulun and Naphtali”—two tribes of Israel that occupied Galilee; and second, “the way of the sea”—a reference to the caravan route from Damascus to Galilee that Assyria used to conquer the region. Also, the author refers to the day of Midian in Judges 6 and 7, when Gideon fought the Midianites. The story clearly gives God the credit for the victory.

As you read together, make note of the people, the area, and the promise.

Isaiah 9:1–4

But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.

You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

The prophet tells the people it doesn't matter who rules this land. It doesn't matter how humans name it. God will turn the Galilee from a defeated land to one that reflects the glory of God. The powerful image of a people living in darkness, yet blessed by God's light, is used throughout the New Testament, particularly in building the understanding of Jesus as the light shining on those who dwell in darkness.

Verses 3 and 4 begin to sketch a scene of celebration with the harvest, the end war, and breaking of the rod of oppression. It is God who multiplies the nation, gives joy, relieves burdens, and breaks oppression. These are the assurances, the promises, that God is faithful and will bring light, peace, freedom, and joy, in God's own time.

3 RESPOND

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

Ask:

- In what ways do you see darkness and light in our world?
- Do images such as these have any power for us today? Where have you seen them used?
 - Light
 - Dark
 - Harvest
 - Increased joy
 - Broken yokes
 - Shattered bars
 - Destroyed rods

Good news is communicated by both what is said and how it is said. How can these images fuel the imagination, encourage commitments, and thereby change current reality? Can peace become a reality if there is no image to draw people toward it? What images of peace come to mind?

4

SEND

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

Share God's Light

From the bag or basket have the students draw a slip of paper and lead the group in performing the actions listed on the paper. As they engage in these fun and energetic activities, remind them that God's light shines in joyful ways.

Supplies needed: A bag with slips of paper indicating something to do

Suggestions:

- sing or hum a camp song while running around the room
- give each person a high five
- pretend to be a monkey
- do "the Wave"
- jump up and down 10 times, then yawn
- spin in a circle seven times

—adapted from www.threethirtyministries.org

5

BLESS

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

Read or sing "Come and Bring Light" CCS 287.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Focus Scripture Passage: Micah 6:1–8

Lesson Focus: God requires us to treat others with kindness, mercy and to be advocates for justice.

Objectives

The learners will...

- journey with the ancient Judean prophet Micah and his audience by exploring today's scripture passage.
- discern the question "What does the Lord require of me (us)?"
- experience a finger labyrinth.
- share words of affirmation with others.

Supplies

- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Construction paper
- Markers or colored pencils
- Space for three worship stations (see the Respond section)
- "Do Justice" strips, one for each classmate (end of lesson)
- Finger Labyrinth handout, one for each classmate (end of lesson)

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Micah 6:1–8 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, pp. 40–41, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Ask four volunteers to each read one stanza of "What Does the Lord Require" CCS 300 pausing after each stanza for a time of silent reflection.

Ask: What is this hymn challenging its hearers to do?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction

(35% of lesson time)

Today's Old Testament scripture text comes from the Book of Micah and is attributed to the eighth-century Judean minor prophet. Prophets of the Old Testament were often tasked with challenging jobs such of delivering warnings or calling out those in power to stop their injustice. Micah was tasked with both of those tasks. Today's passage begins as a call for Israel to defend itself from its past mistakes and prepare for inevitable challenging times ahead. The verses end with a challenge of how Micah's audience can bring hope and reconciliation to itself through kindness, mercy, and justice.

Read Micah 6:1–2.

The introduction to our passage sounds similar to a legal court case. Israel has broken its promise with God. God's people have become faithless. Those in power have been greedy, unkind, and failed at guiding the masses. God has called upon the mountains and hills to be the jury; God has called on creation who has witnessed the past deeds of the people.

Ask:

- When have you made a mistake?
- How did that mistake affect others? You?

Read Micah 6:3–5.

These verses describe the acts God provided for the Israelites. God liberated them from Egypt's slavery giving them Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. God kept them safe from Shittim to Gilgal (most likely a reference of crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land). God also turned a curse, directed to Israel by Balaam from King Balak, into a blessing. God has been lovingly faithful to God's people, but now they are faithless and unjust. Micah wanted the hearers to understand the amazing faithfulness of God to God's people. Blessing after blessing was given; however, now their lack of faith has equated to struggle and hardship ahead. The people of Israel have taken advantage of God and the goodness once delivered to them.

Ask:

- Who or what in your life have you taken for granted?
- Why do you think you've taken that person or thing for granted?
- What is its importance to you?

But there is hope. Read Micah 6:6–8.

These verses focus on what God asks in response to God's past goodness, and how the people of Israel can move forward from their past. Several ancient examples are listed such as bowing to God, giving burnt offerings, animal offerings, oils, or even other humans (a reference to Isaac, Abraham's firstborn). Micah offers an alternative to these responses: "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God"?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from
hearing to doing

(35% of lesson time)

In reflection of today's scripture passage and in preparation for today's activity, ask:

In relation to today's scripture passage what does God ask of you (us)?

- Do Justice
- Love Kindness (be kind to others)
- Walk humbly with God

What does the Lord Require Worship Stations

Note to teacher: To prepare for this activity make sure you have space in your classroom or somewhere else in the building for three worship stations.

Station 1: “Do Justice” Statements

At this station have “Do Justice” strips for every classmate. In the context of the scripture passage, doing justice is treating others with kindness, respect, and fairness. Have them list three ways they can “do justice” in their local communities. Some examples include stand up to a bully, sit with someone new at lunch, work at a local shelter or food pantry, befriend someone new.

Station 2: Kindness Cards

Have the construction paper and writing utensils on a table. Invite youth to think of a person they feel needs words of kindness, encouragement, or hope. Ask them to respond to the following questions or write other affirming statements:

- Why is this person important to me?
- What are this person’s gifts, talents, and positive characteristics?
- What has this person taught me?

Station 3: Walking with God—the Finger Labyrinth

Post or read before breakouts:

What is a labyrinth? A labyrinth is an ancient symbol patterned from the sacred geometry of the natural world (spiral and circle). Though it is used in Christianity to depict pilgrimage and journey into God, its symbolism and meaning transcend religious and non-religious boundaries. The path in is the path out. The labyrinth is not a maze and is not intended to trick or confuse you. There is no “right” way to walk the labyrinth, though typically you start at the entrance, follow the path to the center, and then follow the same path out. The beauty of this symbol is how it can mean different things to different people. Diverse paths find expression on this unifying way. Allow the experience to be a metaphor for your life and discover what this ancient path means for you today.

Provide a finger labyrinth for each classmate. Have participants travel through the finger labyrinth, reflecting on their journey with God, using a finger.

Note to teacher: For more information on labyrinths you may visit:

<https://www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Labyrinth-Resource.pdf>

4

SEND

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

Have each student share about their kindness card and to whom they plan to give them.

Ask:

- Why did you write a kindness card to the person you chose?
- What significance does that person play in your life? You in their life?
- How has that person brought kindness to you?

5

BLESS

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

Read or sing “What Does the Lord Require of You” CCS 580.

Do Justice Statements

My "Do Justice" Statement:

I will do justice in my local community by:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My "Do Justice" Statement:

I will do justice in my local community by:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My "Do Justice" Statement:

I will do justice in my local community by:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My "Do Justice" Statement:

I will do justice in my local community by:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My "Do Justice" Statement:

I will do justice in my local community by:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Finger Labyrinth



RELEASE: The journey in—what distractions or resistances are you called to shed as you journey deeper into God?

RECEIVE: The center—feel free to linger here. Rest into God’s presence. What is God’s invitation for you?

RETURN: The journey out—what is God’s call in your life? Whom are you being called to become?

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Focus Scripture Passage: Isaiah 58:1–12

Lesson Focus: When we work for justice, we walk closely with God and one another.

Objectives

The learners will...

- engage with today's scripture passage through the spiritual practice Dwelling in the Word.
- identify situations where selfishness harms others and brainstorm ways we can be kinder in our everyday lives.
- reflect on how to be reconcilers and advocates of justice.

Supplies

- Bible
- Random assortment of props
- Pens or pencils
- Candle
- Lighter
- Dwelling in the Word handout, one for each student (end of lesson)

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Isaiah 58:1–12 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, pp. 42–43, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Last week students had the opportunity to create three “Do Justice” statements. Have the students share one of their three statements of how they were advocates of justice within the past week. If you have a student who did not attend last week, encourage them to share a time they stood up for something they believe in: being an advocate of justice in their world.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction

(35% of lesson time)

Today's scripture passage comes from the Old Testament book Isaiah. It is important to understand that this book was written for a group of people who were trying to understand who God is and how to be the best they could be. Our job in the 21st century is to take these ancient writings and find value and meaning in them for our lives today. In the passage we are about to explore, God was calling out the Israelites for their hypocrisy. They believed their fasting made them righteous and worthy. However, they were not being just, fair, or caring for the poor and oppressed. Therefore, this passage became a call and challenge to look at fasting as a way to live equality, fairness, love, compassion, and justice.

Dwelling in the Word: A Spiritual Practice

Explain that we are participating in a spiritual practice known as Dwelling in the Word. Spiritual practices give us the opportunity to connect with God, ourselves, and sometimes our communities. Invite students to get comfortable. They may sit in their seats or lie down comfortably; just ensure they can focus intentionally in this exercise.

Read the scripture aloud and allow time for quiet reflection.

Pass out writing utensils and the handout to reveal just the scripture. Read the scripture aloud a second time. This time invite students to underline or highlight words or phrase that speak to them. Allow time for quiet reflection.

Invite students to flip to the questions on the Dwelling in the Word handout. Read the scripture aloud a third time. Allow time for quiet reflection.

Give the class an opportunity to reflect and share their experience. If one feels drawn to share a written question aloud to the class, allow space for sharing.

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from
hearing to doing

(35% of lesson time)

Note to teacher: In preparation for class, find random fun props for students to use in this activity.

Oftentimes our own needs and selfishness get in the way of our ability to be kind, caring, fair, or just. God calls us to refrain from the negative aspects that keep us from being our best selves—those things that keep us from being kind, respectful, just, or caring for one another. It is important to look within our own lives and see where we can be just and kind to others, instead of our own selfish characteristics taking over.

Create groups of three or four students. Have each group brainstorm three different scenarios in which selfishness gets in the way of letting our lights shine (or of being kind). You may give examples such as cutting the lunch line, bullying, or stealing an item from a friend. Next, have students create a skit acting out the injustice. Have them plan on two skits: (1) the injustice towards someone, and (2) an alternative solution using kindness or fairness. For example, if a group is acting out a scene about bullying, the first skit can simply be about the bully intimidating their victim while the bystanders just watch. The second skit could involve an individual stepping in to stand up to the bully with kindness. Pass out a prop item to each group and challenge them to use the prop in their skit. After each group brainstorms, plans, and prepares their skits, have them each share their skits with the class.

Optional: If you have extra time or want to allow the class to be creative, have them act out several scenarios.

4

SEND

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

The final verse of today's passage reads, "Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in."

At that time the repairers of the breach would help rebuild the physical Jerusalem who was struggling to stay together amid exile, persecution, and damaged structures. Today we can look at "restorers of the breach" as those who are peacemakers and reconcilers.

Ask:

- As advocates of justice, how can you become a restorer of the breach? How can you bring reconciliation and peace where it is needed?

Note to teacher: You may share a personal story of how you or someone you know has been a "restorer of the breach" and brought about reconciliation or peace in a challenging situation. You may ask students to respond with their own stories of being or seeing "restorers of the breach."

5

BLESS

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

Set a candle where it is visible to all in class. Ask for a volunteer to light it. Close with a prayer challenging the class to think of how their own light can spread kindness and love and how they can be advocates of justice.

Isaiah 58:1–12

False and True Worship

¹Shout out, do not hold back!

Lift up your voice like a trumpet!

Announce to my people their rebellion,
to the house of Jacob their sins.

²Yet day after day they seek me
and delight to know my ways,

as if they were a nation that practiced
righteousness

and did not forsake the ordinance of their
God;

they ask of me righteous judgments,
they delight to draw near to God.

³“Why do we fast, but you do not see?

Why humble ourselves, but you do not
notice?”

Look, you serve your own interest on your fast
day,

and oppress all your workers.

⁴Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to strike with a wicked fist.

Such fasting as you do today
will not make your voice heard on high.

⁵Is such the fast that I choose,
a day to humble oneself?

Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?

Will you call this a fast,
a day acceptable to the Lord?

⁶Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,

to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

⁸Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you,
the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

⁹Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I
am.

If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,

¹⁰if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.

¹¹The Lord will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.

¹²Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many
generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.

Dwelling in the Word

As you engage with the scripture passage listen to what the Spirit is trying to say to your soul.

What words, images, or phrases are speaking to me in this text?

What is God's invitation to me in this scripture?

What is God's invitation to our community in this scripture?

What is the relevance of this scripture in today's world?

What does this passage tell us about God?

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Focus Scripture Passage: Deuteronomy 30:15–20

Lesson Focus: Loving God and others will bring forth beautiful blessings.

Objectives

The learners will...

- engage with the Enduring Principle Responsible Choices.
- reflect on our “idols” that keep us from being the best we can be.
- explore the focus scripture Deuteronomy 30:15–20.

Supplies

- Pens or pencils
- Sticky notes
- Whiteboard or flip chart paper

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Deuteronomy 30:15–20 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, pp. 44–45, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

We as humans have the ability to make our own choices. As disciples we are asked to follow God's commandments. We make choices every day about whether or not we do kind things or things that can hurt others. One of our Enduring Principles is Responsible Choices. This principle states how making choices is part of who we are as a movement. Read the Enduring Principle Responsible Choices below:

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

Ask:

- What has been a recent easy choice for you to make?
- What choice have you made that deeply affected others around you?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today's passage comes from the Book of Deuteronomy from the Old Testament. It is a speech given by Moses towards the end of his life about how the Israelites need to move forward. They need to love God and follow God's commandments. They are about to enter the Promised Land, which is also inhabited by others who are much different from them. The temptation to follow the other inhabitants' gods and cultural practices will be great, but as long as they follow God's words given to them, they will thrive in their new land.

Read Deuteronomy 30:15–16.

¹⁵See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. ¹⁶If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess.

Ask:

- When have you been blessed as a result of good deeds or actions?

Read vv. 17–19a.

¹⁷But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, ¹⁸I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses.

Ask:

- When has something gotten in the way of you reaching your maximum potential?

Read vv. 19b–20.

Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, ²⁰ loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Ask:

- What activity makes you feel happiest? Most alive? Is it a communal act, or something you enjoy doing by yourself?
- How does this activity reenergize or reinvigorate you?

3 RESPOND

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

The first two commandments God gave in Exodus were:

1. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them...

God wanted the ancient followers to understand that God's way was the way we are called to follow. In a world filled with many gods and other strange customs, God wanted God's people to love others, work for justice, and to be selfless in a selfish, individualist world.

Hand out writing utensils and three sticky notes per student. Have the students think of "idols" or things that sometimes replace God. These idols may take up our time with friends and family or may distract us from what really matters in life. These idols keep us preoccupied or exhaustingly busy. Some examples could include toys, phones, video games, sports practices, work, money, etc.

Many of the "idols" in our lives are part of who we are and are hard to cut out entirely. However, we can strive to take more breaks, limit ourselves, or focus on being present in the moment through meditation or prayer.

Gather all the sticky notes and place them on the whiteboard or easel.

Read each sticky note asking: In relation to this idol, how can we take more time to be with God, meditate, or take a break?

4 SEND

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

Give each student three sticky notes with other peers' "idols" written on them. Ask them to take them home, placing them in a special place where they will be seen. Challenge the students to offer a prayer for each person who wrote the idol—a prayer focused on helping that individual take some time for peace, calm, and discernment so they can be the best person they can be.

5 BLESS

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

Close today by reading or singing together the following campfire song:

Love the Lord your God
With all your heart and all your soul
And all your mind and
Love all humankind
As you would love yourself, and...

Love -----,
The Lord your God
With all your heart,
And all your soul and mind and love all people.

We've got Christian lives to live,
We've got Jesus' love to give,
We've got nothing to hide,
Because in God we all abide...

LAST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 17:1–9

Lesson Focus: The story of the Transfiguration reveals the importance of Jesus as the Messiah and challenges us to see Jesus in new ways.

Objectives

The learners will...

- compare personal experiences similar to the Transfiguration story.
- state their feelings on witnessing the Transfigured Jesus, Elijah, and Moses.
- explore affirmations from “Scripture in Community of Christ.”

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition
- Copies of “Scripture in Community of Christ” (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, pp. 63–67)
- Markers
- Paper and pens or pencils
- Chart paper

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 17:1–9 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 43, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Significant spiritual, or life-changing, events are sometimes called mountaintop experiences. Ask students to describe their own mountaintop experience.

- Where were you?
- How did it feel?
- Why is it memorable?

Note to teacher: It is possible that students may not have had such experiences. If students have not had what they would consider a mountaintop experience, ask them to imagine what one might be like and describe or draw what they imagine.

Offer a prayer of gratitude for life-changing encounters with the divine. Pray also for openness to such encounters in the future.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Matthew 17:1–9. Read the passage a second time and invite students to act out the actions of Peter, James, John, Jesus, Moses, and Elijah.

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, “Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

Moses and Elijah had encounters with God on mountaintops. These stories are recorded in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). In this passage they represent the Law and the Prophets. This is an important connection the Gospel writer wanted to highlight. Matthew uses features from the Moses story to tell us about Jesus. Moses had an experience with God on top of Mount Sinai, including a cloud that accompanied Moses on his journey. The prophet Elijah also encountered God on a mountain. Having these representatives of the Law and Prophets brings importance to Jesus for the writer of Matthew and his early Jewish readers.

The transfiguration event confirms that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. He is more than Moses (the Law) and more than Elijah (the Prophets); he is the Messiah. But this is a Messiah who will face suffering and death. Like at Jesus’ baptism, God’s voice again confirms that Jesus is God’s Son, the beloved. A voice in this passage also tells the disciples to listen to Jesus. The disciples fall to the ground in fear. Jesus comes over to them, touches them, and tells them to get up and not be afraid. So far in this Gospel others have always come to Jesus. An important distinction in this story is Jesus goes to them to touch them and encourage them to get up and go on.

The passage ends with the four descending the mountain and Jesus telling them not to tell others about what happened until he has been raised from the dead. In other words, Matthew’s listeners are made to understand that what happened on the mountain was something that could only be fully understood after Jesus had died and been resurrected.

- Imagine you are one of the disciples witnessing the Transfiguration. What words describe how you think or feel as you watch the scene?
- What is your response when Jesus approaches, touches your arm, and says, “Get up and do not be afraid”?

3 RESPOND

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

Some Christians view scripture as literal, that all stories contained in the Bible are factual. Others understand scripture as a collection of writings containing many literary styles including history, metaphor, poetry, genealogy, letters, law, parables, prophecy, and wisdom literature.

Community of Christ affirms scripture as a library of works containing writings from diverse times, places, cultures, and authors. In the statement “Scripture in Community of Christ” (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, p. 63) we read, “Scripture provides divine guidance and inspired insight for life when responsibly interpreted and faithfully applied. Scripture helps us believe in Jesus Christ. Its witness guides us to eternal life and enables us to grow spiritually, to transform our lives, and to participate actively in the life and ministry of the church.”

Distribute copies of “Scripture in Community of Christ” (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, pp. 63–67). Review together the nine affirmations of scripture in Community of Christ.

- Which affirmation provides a new understanding for you about scripture? Explain.
- Assign an affirmation to each student to rewrite in their own words. How would they explain this affirmation to a friend? **Note:** This may be challenging for many students. You may choose to have older youth work on this in pairs or small groups. With younger youth, you may choose one of the affirmations to work on together.

4 SEND

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

The story of the Transfiguration of Jesus is not a scientifically testable event, especially two millennia later. Affirmation Five reads, “Scripture is vital and essential to the church, but not because it is inerrant (in the sense that every detail is historically or scientifically correct). Scripture makes no such claim for itself. Rather, generations of Christians have found scripture simply to be trustworthy in keeping them anchored in revelation, in promoting faith in Christ, and in nurturing the life of discipleship. For these purposes, scripture is unfailingly reliable.”

Evaluate the text of the Transfiguration through the lens of Affirmation Five.

- What truth exists whether or not the account is literal?
- What are we challenged to understand from this story?

5 BLESS

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

Close with a group prayer. Invite students to complete each prayer statement aloud or silently.

Creator God, thank you for mountaintop experiences such as...

Thank you for lessons in scripture that teach us... Thank you for a new understanding of...

Bless us as we...

Amen.

LESSON 14
1 March 2020

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 4:1–11

Lesson Focus: We prepare daily to become disciples of Jesus Christ.

Objectives

The learners will...

- define aspects of human growth.
- examine what it means to prepare.
- evaluate choices.
- explore the role of trust and faith as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Pictures of people at different stages of growth (Note: If possible, ask group members to bring pictures of themselves at different ages for this activity.)
- Chart paper
- Paper
- Pens, pencils, or markers

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 4:1–11 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 45–46, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

We Grow

Display pictures of people at different stages of growth, child to adult.

- What do you observe about each person? What is different? What is the same?
- Can you observe anything about their intellectual and spiritual growth?
- In what other ways does a person grow?
- How do you measure how a person grows physically? Intellectually? Spiritually?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

The Christian Season of Lent

Today is the first Sunday in Lent. For the next five Sundays we will explore our spiritual growth as we discover what it means to grow closer to God and how to live as disciples of Jesus. It is a time of spiritual self-examination and recommitment. The forty-day period signifies the forty days of temptation of Jesus as described in Matthew 4:1–11. This is the time between his baptism and the beginning of his ministry. The number forty is significant throughout the Bible as a time of transformation.

The word Lent comes from the Middle English word *lente* or springtime, a season of reawakening, and was first used in the 13th century. These forty days before Easter (not counting the Sundays) are recognized by many Christian churches as a time of spiritual renewal.

Ready, Set, Go!

Before the team hits the basketball court, the soloist performs the recital, the actor goes on stage, and the student takes an exam, they prepare for the challenge ahead of them. They prepare to do their best by training with a coach, a mentor, a teacher, or someone who can show them the way and give them guidance with their skills and techniques.

- Tell about a time when you prepared for an event with someone who coached or mentored you.
- Describe what happened at your last practice just before the competition, recital, or other event.
- How did you know you were ready to perform or compete?
- How important was the involvement of your coach, mentor, or advocate?

Today's scripture is a conversation describing Jesus' last experience before he began his ministry. It tells how he was tested, and what his responses revealed about his nature and mission. Read the passage taking turns.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

—Matthew 4:1–11

- How had Jesus prepared to withstand the temptations placed before him?
- How are the roles in this passage like a mentor testing the readiness of an individual for a task?
- How does this scripture connect to your spiritual growth?

3

RESPOND

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

Choices

In the scripture passage, Jesus had choices to make. He made those choices based on his relationship and commitment to God. With whom do you communicate when you have choices to make? Write the titles such as teacher, coach, parent, or God on slips of paper, fold in half, and place in a container. Use several slips of paper, if needed. After all papers have been placed in container, unfold, categorize, and display them for all to see.

- Who are the most common individuals consulted?
- Why do persons go to them?
- How does this relationship impact choices?

Responsible Choices

Read the section below from the Enduring Principle Responsible Choices from *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 30.

- God gave 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.

Discuss the following questions.

- What keeps us from responding to God's call?
- What changes do we need to make in our lives to follow the ways of Jesus better?
- How can we respond more faithfully to Jesus Christ's invitation, "Follow me"?

4

SEND

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

Whom Do You Serve?

Jesus began his ministry to "worship the Lord [his] God, and serve only him" (v. 10). As Christians, we declare our promise to be Jesus' disciples, to learn and follow what he taught and practiced.

- How do you prepare to be a faithful disciple of Jesus?
- How can the five Mission Initiatives of Community of Christ (Invite People to Christ; Abolish Poverty, End Suffering; Pursue Peace on Earth; Develop Disciples to Serve; and Experience Congregations in Mission) provide opportunities to grow as a disciple?

Make a chart titled “Invite People to Christ.” As a class, list people you can invite to your church activities in the next few weeks.

- Consider what you need to do as an individual and a class to be invitational.
- Ask yourself, “Do I represent Jesus in a way that others would want to come with me?”
- How do you live daily to represent Jesus?

Consider these questions prayerfully this week and invite someone to come with you to a church activity.

5 BLESS

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

Close by singing or by each group member taking a different verse or phrase to read from “Jesus, Tempted in the Desert” CCS 449, or sing “Breathe on Me, Breath of God” CCS 190 verses 1–3 as a closing prayer.

LESSON 15
8 March 2020

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Focus Scripture Passage: John 3:1–17

Lesson Focus: Being open to new ideas helps disciples grow in the likeness of Christ.

Objectives

The learners will...

- Explore how searching is part of the journey to understanding.
- Discover how our fears hold us back.
- recognize God's love outshines our fear.
- identify various ways of becoming a disciple.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Index cards
- Small mirrors
- Chart paper

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 3:1–17 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 47, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Ask: Have you ever wanted to know the answer to a question or how something works, but were afraid to ask? Describe the situation and how you felt. Did someone help you find the answer? Explain.

After sharing, ask a volunteer to read John 3:1–17.

¹Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ²He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.” ³Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” ⁴Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” ⁵Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ ⁸The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” ⁹Nicodemus

said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?”

¹¹“Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹²If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

—John 3:1–17

Nicodemus was a prominent leader in Jewish community, a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish ruling religious council). His education taught him that the only way to enter heaven was to be obedient to Jewish laws—there were “only” 613! He wanted to protect his reputation with his peers, yet he recognized in Jesus the presence of God. He was intrigued with Jesus’ teaching of “being reborn” as the way to enter heaven. At night, under the cover of darkness, he made a secret visit to find answers to the questions that were bothering him.

- What respect did Nicodemus show Jesus? (Rabbi was a term used to address a respected teacher.)
- What was Nicodemus’ question?
- What was Nicodemus’ understanding of the phrase “born again”?
- How did Jesus respond?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Guided by Questions

Jesus used questions to guide Nicodemus in the discovery of the answers he was seeking.

- What do you think Jesus wanted Nicodemus to understand when he asked, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?” (v. 10)
- And this question, “If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?” (v. 12)
- Was this a challenge to Nicodemus’ reputation, or encouraging him to think in new directions?

Jesus provided the answers for Nicodemus and for us. Jesus explained why he came to live among the people of Earth. Reread John 3:16–17. In the original Greek, *agape* was the word used for the highest form of love described in this scripture. Jesus was God’s presence in human life—God’s plan for salvation.

3 RESPOND

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

Being Nicodemus, Being Jesus

Nicodemus sought Jesus during the night. Whom was he avoiding? Even Nicodemus dealt with peer pressure. At all ages, whoever the peers are, there is pressure to conform to the group, to be like everyone else. Even Jesus had to deal with peer pressure from the people around him and the religious leaders. Jesus continued to share his knowledge of God with people whose hearts were open to hear his message. He drew people who followed him as disciples and then shared their understandings of what Jesus taught with others.

- How did Jesus respond to the pressure of religious leaders?
- With whom did Jesus share?

Discipleship

Read the section below on the Basic Belief “Discipleship” from *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 37.

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 in 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.

- How does a disciple respond?
- The Mission Initiative Develop Disciples to Serve says we should equip ourselves for Christ’s mission. What does that mean, and what does it challenge you to do?
- How can you share your beliefs with those who have open hearts and minds, waiting to hear of God’s love for them?

Darkness to Light

Nicodemus traveled at night to see Jesus. He was looking for answers that would enlighten him. Many biblical scholars identify the theme of darkness and light found in this scripture passage. Other scriptures describe Jesus Christ as the Light; a life-giving energy; a light of truth that defies darkness; and the true, living light for the world. We can choose to respond to the Light and reflect its brightness.

Consider the reflection of a face in the mirror. Without light, there is no reflection. With dim light, the image in the mirror is not clear. With the full light of the room or the sun, the image in the mirror reveals all there is to see on the surface and hints about the potential behind the image. Give each group member a small mirror. Darken the room; then slowly increase the light.

- What can be seen in the dark?
- How does the image in the mirror change when more light becomes available?
- What potential might be found in the image in the mirror with even greater light?
- How is Jesus like the light?
- How is the Light of Jesus reflected in the mirror?

Sing “Siyahamb’ Ekukhanyen’ Kwenkhos’ (We Are Marching in the Light of God)” CCS 95.

Going Deeper

Nicodemus may have found some of the answers he was looking for that night, but we don't know exactly. His name appears later in the book of John. Read John 7:50–51 and 19:39–40 NRSV to find more about this seeker who may have become a disciple.

4 SEND

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

Nicodemus sought out Jesus for answers to his questions. On an index card ask each group member to list several peers or others they know who may be asking questions like Nicodemus did. Beside each name identify an opportunity or event to meet that person and share God's message that Jesus shared. Challenge group members to meet with one of those persons in the coming week.

5 BLESS

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

Read John 3:16 NRSV as a group from Bibles or written on chart paper. Challenge the group to commit the verse to memory. Provide a sheet of paper for each group member. Title the paper "John 3:16" and have group members write words or draw pictures to express their thoughts about the verse. Share what they recorded on their papers. Together recite John 3:16 again.

LESSON 16
15 March 2020

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

Focus Scripture Passage: Exodus 17:1–7

Lesson Focus: Invite People to Christ

Objectives

The learners will...

- relate the word “refugee” to “Israelites.”
- connect their story and feelings toward God with those of the Israelites.
- use their understanding to Invite People to Christ.

Supplies

- Bibles
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Chalkboard or marker board with chalk or markers OR chart paper with pens
- 3 in x 5 in notecards or letter-sized paper cut into fourths
- Pencils or pens

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Exodus 17:1–7 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, pp. 60–61, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Write the word “refugee” in large letters in the center of the board. Then have students generate questions they would want to ask a refugee. Allow them to write or post their questions all around the word. Suggestions are:

- How did you get in this situation?
- Do you have all of your family with you?
- What do you do for money?
- Where do you make your home?
- Where do you want to go?
- What would you want me to know about you?

Allow the students to exhaust their curiosity but **do not answer the questions**. Some will start to speculate, which is natural. See if you can form that speculation into a question to add to the board.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction

(35% of lesson time)

Hand out the Bibles and read aloud Exodus 17:1–7. See if the students can summarize what is going on.

For example, the Israelites are following Moses, and they see there is no water. They get mad and accuse Moses of trying to kill them. Moses then “cries out to the Lord” (what feelings is Moses experiencing?). God tells Moses to take some elders (witnesses) and his staff. When he strikes a rock, water appears.

Ask:

- What can you infer, if anything, about Moses’ feelings by the name he calls the place?

If your class needs a reminder of who Moses or the Israelites are, give a brief synopsis:

Moses organizes the Israelites and confronts the Pharaoh, demanding the release of the Hebrew people who were slaves. Guided by a pillar of cloud during the day and by fire during the night, Moses and the Israelites head west toward the sea. Pharaoh chases them. The Israelites complain that Moses has taken them to die in the wilderness. Moses, at God’s bidding, parts the sea for the people to cross. Pharaoh follows and Moses closes the waters back again, drowning the Egyptian army. Witnessing the miracle, the people decide to trust Moses, and they sing a song extolling God as a great but loving warrior. Their optimism is brief, and the people soon begin to worry about the shortage of food and water. God responds by sending the people food from heaven, providing a daily supply of quail and a sweet bread-like substance called manna. The people are required only to obey God’s commandments to enjoy this food.

Now direct the attention of your class back to the Refugee board created at the start of the lesson. Before reading the scripture again, inform the students, “The Israelites were refugees. When we read through the scripture a second time, connect your questions and feelings to the people in the story known as Israelites.”

Read through the scripture a second time.

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from
hearing to doing

(35% of lesson time)

Have the students read the last line of the scripture aloud one more time: “Is the Lord among us or not?”

Ask:

- Why did Moses decide to call the water oasis by that name?
- How do you think the elders felt when they witnessed Moses bring water out of a rock? Explain.
- How do you think the Israelites felt when they arrived at Massah? Explain.
- Did your feelings toward the Israelites change when you thought of them as refugees? How so?

Distribute *Community of Christ Sings* to the students. Read all three stanzas of “When We Are Called to Sing” CCS 229 silently or aloud to each other.

Ask:

- In which verse can you hear Moses? The Israelites?
- Which verse speaks to your own experience or someone’s story that you know? If you want, please elaborate or share the connection of your story to the hymn.

- After that experience, were you able to say, “Yes, the Lord is with me”? If so, how?

4

SEND

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

Hand out the 3 x 5 cards or paper along with the pencils or pens.

Write this question on the board: How or where will we find the “water” in this “rocky soil” of our troubled life?

Say: Everyone can relate to being thirsty, to grumbling, to complaining to God. So, how would you answer this question using three sentences or less?

Allow students write their answers on the cards provided. If time allows, let students share their answers.

5

BLESS

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

Say:

- What you wrote on your card is one way to Invite People to Christ. If you find yourself with a friend who is thirsty and doesn’t know what to do, this is a way to start sharing together.

As a class, read stanza three of “Bless Now, O God, the Journey” CCS 559 as a closing benediction.

LESSON 17
22 March 2020

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Focus Scripture Passage: 1 Samuel 16:1–13

Lesson Focus: Mission Prayer

Objectives

The learners will...

- connect Samuel, David, and themselves with the “Who I Am” lyrics of the video *Risking Something New*.
- understand that God saw potential instead of power in his choice of David.
- personalize their own mission prayer.

Supplies

- Lyrics to “Who I Am” (end of this lesson)
- Highlighters
- Pens or pencils
- Bibles
- Optional: Ability to stream or show a downloaded video

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for 1 Samuel 16:1–13 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, pp. 62–63, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

As students enter class, informally ask them about people they are aware of who are in power.

- Do they have things in common? What are they?
- What do they do differently?
- Are they old or young? Men or women? Married, unmarried, or divorced? Do they have children? Are they educated?

Once you are ready to start class, say: We are going to watch a music video. As it plays, highlight the lines that speak to you.

Hand out the lyrics to “Who I Am” and highlighters as students watch *Risking Something New*.

- To download go to <http://www.missionalleaders.org/videos-az> and scroll down to *Risking Something New*.
- To stream go to <https://bit.ly/2O9DEL1>.

If you cannot show videos in class, just use the lyrics sheet.

Have students put their highlighted lyrics to the side for later.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today we are reading a scripture from 1 Samuel. The characters are God, Samuel, Saul, Jesse, and Jesse's sons.

Ask:

- Have you heard of the house of Jesse? Or maybe the “stem of Jesse”? (*hopefully they will recall that is the house of the lineage of Jesus*)
- Do you recall who Samuel is? (*the son of Hannah who had begged God for a child. She promised that if God would grant her this, she would give her child to God. She gave her son Samuel to the temple where he was raised by Eli. When Eli was very old, Samuel was sleeping and he heard someone calling his name, “Samuel.” Thinking it was Eli, Samuel went to Eli and said, “Here I am.” After the third time, Eli realized God was calling Samuel. The next time Samuel responded, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”*)
- Do you know who Saul is? (*Samuel conveyed to God that the Israelites wanted a king, and even though God and Samuel knew this would not necessarily work, God sent Samuel to Saul, and Samuel anointed Saul the king.*)

Read 1 Samuel 16:1–13.

Help the students understand the scripture.

- God was not happy with Saul as king and wanted Samuel to anoint a new king
- In verse 2 Samuel was trying to get out of doing what God instructed.
- Why Bethlehem? The land was out of Saul's kingdom, out of Saul's jurisdiction.
- What Samuel was doing was dangerous—he couldn't anoint a new king while the current king, Saul, was still sitting on the throne.
- Samuel looked at Jesse's sons and identified one he thought would do. But God kept rejecting the men until the very last son.
- Notice the description of the boy in vv. 12–13, but we don't learn of his name (David) until he has been anointed.

3 RESPOND

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

Look at the lyrics to the song we considered earlier.

Ask:

- How do you see Samuel in these lyrics?
- How is the choice of David reflected in the lyrics?
- Does David sound like the person(s) of power you described at the beginning of class? Why or why not?

Ask:

- What lyrics did you highlight at the start of class? Allow students to share.
- What sacrament did David's anointing remind you of? (*ordination and laying on of hands for the sick*)
- How do the lyrics you highlighted relate to ordination? To laying on of hands for the sick?
- What other sacraments do you think are related to the lyrics of the song?

4 SEND

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

In the space below the lyrics, write your own mission prayer. Use the lyrics to help you, but feel free to use your own words. Pay attention to your daily routine. What is keeping you from having courage? How do you sense the Holy Spirit with you?

If time allows, share with the class and encourage students to repeat their prayer throughout this week.

5 BLESS

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

As a closing prayer, together read the chorus of "Who I Am."

“WHO I AM”

Make some space for dreaming,
God’s future unfolding,
In unexpected places,
In old and new faces,
See with new eyes what could be.

CHORUS

Where will you lead me today?
And in everything that comes my way
May I be courageous and bold
Willing to risk, move out of the old
Live into who I am.

Lean into the adventure,
Risk new mission together,
Giving not into fear,
Holding trust ever near,
Creating what will be with God.

CHORUS

Settle into unsettledness,
Holy disruption and mindfulness.
Falling down and then,
Getting up again,
Learning what to bring, what to leave.

CHORUS

BRIDGE

Timeless truths we know in our heart
Bring clarity and give wisdom a part
What do we find but new insights arise
Life changes direction, therein the truth lies.

CHORUS

—Lyrics by Dave Heinze and Ron Harmon 2014 Community of Christ
Permission granted to print for congregational use

LESSON 18
29 March 2020

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Focus Scripture Passage: Ezekiel 37:1–14

Lesson Focus: Develop Disciples to Serve

Objectives

The learners will...

- choose the attributes they believe make someone or something alive.
- tell the story of “Dry Bones” in their own words to glean deeper understanding.
- relate the scripture to times in their lives.
- convey a strategy they use to come “back to life.”
- commit to using strategies to help others to come “back to life.”

Supplies

- Puppet or doll
- Marker board or chart paper with markers
- Bibles
- Small ball or beanbag to pass among the students
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*, copies for students to share

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Ezekiel 37:1–14 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, pp. 64–65, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Ask for a volunteer to sit in a chair in the front of the group. Place a puppet or doll in another chair beside them. Ask the students what the difference is between the two. Challenge the group to describe qualities and characteristics of each “person” that could be explained to someone who is just learning the concepts of “alive” and “not alive.”

On the marker board or chart paper, create two lists to describe the difference between alive and not alive. Ideas might include warm, has a heartbeat, breathing, moving, eating, and so on.

Ask:

- How might these characteristics also describe what it means to be spiritually alive or spiritually not alive? What might you add to the list or take away from it?

—“The Walking Dead: Week 1, Dry Bones,” ©2011 by Callie Dean,
<https://creativetheology.wordpress.com/2011/11/08/the-walking-dead-youth-bible-study/>

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Before reading the scripture, tell the youth to be on the lookout for any of the signs of life or lack of life that were on the list they created.

Take turns reading aloud the scripture text Ezekiel 37:1–14.

To make sure the students get the gist, have them retell the story using a format called “Then suddenly...”

In this group-retelling of the story, only one person can speak at a time. They will be holding a ball or other object and will say what happens first in the story, creating a cliffhanger by saying, “Then suddenly...” at the end of their sentence. Whomever they pass the ball to will pick up where they left off.

- You may want to demonstrate with a well-known story. For example,
- Student 1: Once upon a time there were three bears that lived in a house together. Then suddenly...PASS THE BALL
- Student 2: ...they decided to go for a walk. Then suddenly...PASS THE BALL
- Student 3: ...a girl named Goldilocks came inside...PASS THE BALL

—“The Walking Dead: Week 1, Dry Bones,” ©2011 by Callie Dean,
<https://creativetheology.wordpress.com/2011/11/08/the-walking-dead-youth-bible-study/>

Ask:

- Did Ezekiel really go to a place filled with bones? How do you know?
- Why do you think Ezekiel didn’t question what God wanted him to do?
- What was in Ezekiel’s prophecy that made the bones “live again”?
- Based on the scripture passage, who was dried up that Ezekiel needed to go help to live again?

3 RESPOND

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

The Israelites were “dried up,” which conveys a sense of physical or spiritual weakness or hopelessness. They, in fact, had been exiled from their homeland and were withering in their new land.

Ask or say:

- Can you recall a time in your life when you felt empty of spirit or physically spent? If possible, share about that experience.
- How did God, Jesus, or your church family help you “come back to life”?
- Do you have a ritual or physical place that helps you renew and “get your breath back”? If possible, share about it.
- Now think about the people you interact with every day in your life. Do you think any of those you encounter have felt as you have or do? Do you think any of them are “out of breath”?
- In Doctrine and Covenants Section 163:1, we are counseled on our faith journey—“Do not be afraid to go where it (your faith) beckons you to go.”

- How could you use your experience of going from emptiness to fullness to support your friends you encounter each day? Share your ideas—as many as you can, whether or not you will actually do them. Record the ideas on the board.

4 SEND

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

Examine the list the students generated.

Say: Commit to two ideas you can utilize this week when you hear others around you expressing their stress and emptiness, both physically and mentally.

Ask every student complete this phrase:

I will embrace the calling of Community of Christ by *(name the two ideas the student is committing to)* and become a blessing to creation.

Optional: use your phone to video the class as they individually complete the phrase. Then email or use social media to send them the video midweek to encourage them on their discipleship. Be sure parents are aware of the recording and include them when you share it midweek.

5 BLESS

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

Together read or sing “Holy Spirit, Come, Confirm Us” CCS 505, stanzas one and four.

LESSON 19
5 April 2020

PALM SUNDAY

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 21:1–11

Lesson Focus: We celebrate Jesus' entrance into our lives.

Objectives

The learners will...

- create an atmosphere of celebration.
- discuss the significance of Palm Sunday in the sacred story.
- identify the Jewish celebration of Passover as a setting of this story.
- explore how the story might happen today.
- understand that humility and peace have enduring strength.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Items to decorate the room for a celebration
- Chart paper or white board
- Markers
- Various props to create a movie scene for this scripture

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 21:1–11 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 53–54, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Celebrate!

Imagine an Olympic gold medal winner, a famous movie star, or a respected political figure was coming to your location today. How would you celebrate? Would you have a parade, a reception, or a party? Take a few minutes to decorate the room, or share ideas of how you would celebrate.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Who Is This Jesus?

Today we read about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem marking the beginning of what Christians call Holy Week. Jesus comes from his ministry of preaching and healing. Most recently, he raised Lazarus, a close friend, from the dead. He taught Lazarus' sisters, Martha and Mary, about his mission. Jesus healed the man born blind and visited with the Samaritan woman at the well. In all of these events, Jesus revealed who he was to those around him, and they shared that knowledge with others. Now we see him returning to Jerusalem, a place where he was threatened with death both now and at the time of his birth. (See Matthew 2.)

News of Jesus' coming spread rapidly among the crowds along the road. They knew his reputation and the stories of his ministry, and saw Jesus as the Promised One who was coming to save them. It was a celebration honoring an important person. They wanted to see him and shout their "Hosannas" meaning "Save us. Rescue us."

Read Matthew 21:1–11.

¹When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethpage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." ⁴This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, ⁵"Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey." ⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" ¹⁰When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" ¹¹The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

The city was crowded, overflowing. History suggests there may have been three to five million people present. The setting included a mixture of political and religious thought, feelings of anger, and feelings of uncertainty. Passover was the celebration of the Israelites' liberation from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. Every Jewish person was expected to visit Jerusalem during this holy week. (Passover is still celebrated in synagogues and homes around the world as the Jewish liberation from Egypt is remembered and retold.) But many inside the city did not know about Jesus.

Jerusalem was part of an international trade route. The markets were filled with Romans (the occupying governing power) and many merchants and buyers from other countries. So Jerusalem was filled to overflowing with local people, religious pilgrims, Roman soldiers, and merchants. They did not know Jesus, and they asked, "Who is this?"

- Describe how you think the disciples thought and felt.
- How did Jesus enter Jerusalem? Why a donkey? Compare a donkey to a warhorse. What are their practical uses? What is the symbolism implied?
- If you owned the donkey and colt, how would you respond if you were asked to give them up?

- What did Jesus' manner of entering Jerusalem say about who he was?
- What would be today's version of spreading clothing and branches on the ground?
- What was Jesus' purpose in returning to Jerusalem?

3 RESPOND

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

What Was Jesus Doing?

What kind of king was Jesus of Nazareth? On a large paper or erasable surface, make a list of words that describe Jesus as king. Make another list of words that describe the kingdom of God on earth.

How do the lists compare with world leaders and powerful countries of the world today?

Jesus rules through suffering love and humility. This king is God's grace and power arriving in town on the back of a donkey.

- Who would you be in the crowd? Explain.
- Would you be shouting "Hosanna" or asking "Who is this?"

Write and act out a movie scene telling this story as though it were happening in your community today.

We Share the Peace of Jesus

The crowd heard about the miracles Jesus performed. Many wanted to see a miracle before they would believe, but Jesus did not stop to perform miracles. He rode quietly, peacefully, and humbly through the crowd on the young colt. Others were tired of their political bondage under the Romans. Yet Jesus did not enter as the conquering hero on a great stallion. Jesus rode an animal of peace, not war, into Jerusalem. What kind of king was Jesus?

Explore these scriptures before reading the scripture below: Isaiah 54:10 NRSV; John 14:27 NRSV; Ephesians 2:14, 17 NRSV.

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 of the dimensions of salvation.

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.

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:2

Read "We Share the Peace of Jesus Christ" from *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, pp. 13–15.

- How would you describe the peace of Jesus Christ?
- What are some ways you can share the peace of Jesus Christ with others?

4

SEND

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

We Follow Jesus

Invite students to respond to the following through silent reflection, writing or drawing, or sharing in small groups or pairs. Allow time for students to respond after you read each question.

- How has your journey through Lent prepared you for this Holy Week?
- How has Jesus entered your life?
- What is God's invitation to you during Holy Week?

Offer an opportunity for sharing.

5

BLESS

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

We sing for joy and celebrate Jesus in our lives just as the crowd shouted and sang "Hosanna!" Read or sing "My Life Flows On in Endless Song" CCS 263 or "Celebrate Jesus" CCS 474.

LESSON 20
12 April 2020

EASTER DAY

RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

Focus Scripture Passage: John 20:1–18

Lesson Focus: Celebrate, Christ has risen!

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore what group members know about Easter.
- consider the meaning of resurrection, new life, God's love for us, and Christ's peace.
- think about the actions of Mary Magdalene and how her response applies to disciples today.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Large sheet of paper
- Markers
- Paper
- Pencils, pens
- Roll of brown paper for making tree
- Scissors
- Tape or pins
- Journal

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 20:1–18 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 60–61, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

It Is about Jesus!

Make a chart from a large piece of paper in the shape of an egg, or draw a large egg shape that fills the paper. Give each group member a marker and ask them to fill the egg with everything they know about Easter. Give them several minutes to write their thoughts. When time ends, have them share and discuss what they wrote. Mention that the egg is a universal symbol for new life or new beginnings.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

The Meaning of Easter

On Palm Sunday, Jesus humbly rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey to cheering crowds shouting and singing

“Hosanna!” That is quite a contrast to the week that followed. Divide these scriptures among group members to read and summarize for the group.

- John 13:21–30 NRSV
- John 18:1–11 NRSV
- John 18:28–40 NRSV
- John 19:17–22 NRSV
- John 19:23–27 NRSV
- John 19:28–30 NRSV
- John 19:38–42 NRSV

Read John 20:1–18.

¹Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” ³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” ¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

- What is the setting when John’s story begins?
- Where has the theme of dark and light appeared in an earlier lesson?

- Who is the first character seen in this story?
- What is the action in verses 1–10?
- Who are other characters in the story?
- How did the characters respond to one another and to what occurred?
- What is the action in verses 11–18?
- What new response does each character have?

The Easter story of the resurrection of Jesus appears in all four Gospels. Jesus was crucified and was resurrected. The details vary in each Gospel, just as each one witnesses events in different ways. What is important is how we respond to what we see and hear.

Resurrection and Eternal Life

Remember the story of Lazarus from a previous lesson. Jesus raised Lazarus from death after four days, and the story clearly indicated his body was beginning to decompose. Lazarus' body was restored or resuscitated to his original body. He would live to old age to die again, but Jesus' body was transformed. There are stories of other people raised from the dead in the New Testament. Lazarus (John 11:41–44 NRSV), Jarius' daughter (Luke 8:52–55 NRSV), and the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:14–15 NRSV) were raised from the dead by Jesus. Later, Peter raised Tabitha (Acts 9:40–41 NRSV), and Paul brings Eutychus back from the dead (Acts 20:9–11 NRSV).

Read the selections below from *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition.

On the third day, God raised Jesus from the dead, vindicating his life and ministry, and triumphing over all injustice, even death itself. He ascended into heaven, having entrusted his followers with authority to minister in his name to the ends of the earth. He sent the Holy Spirit to be with them in their witness of the good news of the Resurrection.

Christ is our peace, breaking down the dividing walls of hostility between us. He promises us the redemption and healing of our relationships with God, one another, and all of creation (p. 59).

Christ is risen! Thus we believe that God is God of life, not of death. By faith we share in eternal life even now. In Christ, God's love finally will overcome all that demeans and degrades the creation, even death itself. Easter also gives us hope that the tragic suffering and death of victims, throughout history, is not the last word. We believe the Holy Spirit will transform all creation to share in the glory of God (p. 38).

- What does the resurrection of Jesus mean to you?
- How would you tell the story of God's love and Christ's peace? With whom can you share your story?

3 RESPOND

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

Lights, Camera, Action!

Write a play about this event set in your lifetime. Think about setting, scenery, actor selection, actor interpretation, stage directions, costuming, and props. Consider what is meaningful to a modern-day audience and what you want them to know at the end.

4

SEND

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

I Have Seen the Lord

Lives were changed around the world when followers of Jesus Christ shared their story. It was a new way of believing. A new religion was born. Jesus' death was not the end his crucifiers thought it would be. For those who believed in Jesus, it was a new beginning. Mary Magdalene believed when she heard Jesus call her name. She recognized his voice and knew what he said would happen was true. Mary Magdalene had seen the Lord. She believed and went to tell the others (John 20:18).

Many people become believers because others "call their name," create relationships, mentor, and nurture them in their new life in Christ. Lives are changed around the world by followers of Jesus Christ sharing their story of Jesus' love for them today!

- How did you first learn the story of Jesus' love?

Doctrine and Covenants 165:1c, 4c reads,

Lovingly invite others to experience the good news of new life in community with Christ. Opportunities abound in your daily lives if you choose to see them...And, always remember, the way of suffering love that leads to the cross also leads to resurrection and everlasting life in Christ's eternal community of oneness and peace. Trust in this promise.

- Describe how you were invited to "experience the good news of new life in community with Christ."
- How have you invited another to "experience the good news of new life in community with Christ"?

Optional Activity: Using a roll of brown paper, cut out a tree and tape it to the wall. With the group, identify and write the names of spiritual mentors from Christian history, Community of Christ history, and congregational and family history. On branches or leaves add more people who are sharing the sacred story including group members. Leave room for additional names. Display the tree where all the congregation can see and invite them to continue to add names. Create a meditation center nearby with a place to sit. Provide an open journal for people to write and reflect on their part in the sacred story and how Jesus Christ's resurrection prompted a new beginning in their lives. Ask group members to be the first to write or draw in the journal.

5

BLESS

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

Your Name in the Sacred Story

Read or sing "I Have Called You by Your Name" CCS 636. Offer a prayer of gratitude for the love of Jesus Christ in our lives and the new life he brings.

LESSON 21
19 April 2020

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

Focus Scripture Passage: John 20:19–31

Lesson Focus: Jesus invites disciples to receive and share his peace.

Objectives

The learners will...

- read together the story of the disciples' first encounter with Jesus following his resurrection.
- understand that through the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ is present with us.
- respond to the challenge presented in Jesus' greeting, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

Supplies

- Bibles (NRSV recommended)
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Ping-pong balls or any available light-weight object or paper

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for John 20:19–31 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 64–65, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

The Power of Breath

Ping-pong Ball Relay: Form the class into two teams. Give each team one ping-pong ball. You may substitute any light-weight object, leaf, or piece of paper. Placing the ball on the floor, players take turns blowing the ball from one end of the classroom to the other and back again. (To make the game a little more difficult for older students, an obstacle course may be set up.)

Ask the youth what other activities depend on breath. (singing, blowing up balloons, playing some musical instruments, etc.)

Breath is one description the scriptures use for the Holy Spirit. How might the Holy Spirit be like breath or wind?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Last week was Easter Sunday. We learned about the resurrection of Jesus and Mary's encounter with him in the garden. The disciples did not believe her. Today we will read together how, while they were hiding behind a locked door, Jesus met them.

- Why might the disciples have been afraid?
- What might have caused them to hide? Have a student read John 20:19–23.

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

This fear-filled gathering of disciples represents the faith community in general, not just the apostolic leadership. The peace Jesus offered was given to the whole community, freeing them from their fears, reminding them they need not be anxious when facing the Jewish authorities because he was with them. Jesus breathing on the disciples reminds us of other scripture stories such as Genesis 1:7 NRSV, when God breathes the breath of life into the first human, and Ezekiel 37:9 when the breath of life came upon the dry bones.

Have another student read John 20:24–31.

²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

²⁶A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." ²⁸Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

This story centers on Jesus and his generous offer to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Jesus did not scold Thomas for his need to touch the wounds. Jesus offered Thomas just what he needed in order to believe. Jesus' love and care for his followers did not end with his death. This is a story of hope and promise both then and now.

- What would be your response to this scene if it were you sitting in the locked room?
- Would you have wanted to touch the wounds as well?

3 RESPOND

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

In *Sharing in Community of Christ*, the Holy Spirit is described this way: “We believe in the Holy Spirit, Giver of Life, holy Wisdom, true God. The Spirit moves through and sustains creation; endows the church for mission; frees the world from sin, injustice, and death; and transforms disciples. Wherever we find love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control, there the Holy Spirit is working” (p. 34).

- Which words are familiar to your understanding of the Holy Spirit?
- Which words or phrases are new to you?
- How are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control evidence of the Holy Spirit?

4 SEND

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

Twice Jesus says to the disciples, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” These are words of commission, authorizing or directing the disciples and us to continue Christ’s mission. Jesus showed us what it means to share Christ’s peace and to have right relationships in sacred community with others. He shared with a person outside his culture and helping her change her life within her community, intervened on behalf of a person accused of adultery while her accusers were also sinners, and sat down to eat with those who were not respected so they might develop into disciples as well (*Of Water and Spirit*, p. 35).

- To what communities do you belong?
- How might you offer Christ’s peace within those communities?
- Are there specific persons you can think of (without naming them) who need you to bring Christ’s peace through conversation, crossing cultures, intervening on their behalf, or bringing respect to them? How might you take action for these persons?

5 BLESS

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

Sing verse one of “Breathe on Me, Breath of God” CCS 190.

Close with a circle prayer: “Jesus, breathe your Holy Spirit on us. We can share your peace by... Amen.” (Go around the circle encouraging each person to say their idea how to share peace.)

LESSON 22
26 April 2020

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 24:13–35

Lesson Focus: Like Jesus' followers after he died, we can feel sad or afraid and struggle to understand the meaning of the Easter experience. Jesus walks with us, though we are sometimes unaware, helping us with our feelings and questions through the Holy Spirit and the Blessings of Community.

Objectives

The learners will...

- hear the story of two of Jesus' followers who meet Jesus on the road to Emmaus after he has risen.
- discuss how the risen Lord meets us in the ordinary places and experience of our lives.
- learn how the Holy Spirit and the Blessings of Community can help us recognize, remember, and respond to God's presence.

Supplies

- Bible
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition
- A variety of breads, bagels, or rolls (include gluten-free options)
- Ball of yarn

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 24:13–35 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 66, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Breaking Bread

As students arrive, have a tray or basket of different breads for them to share. Allow a few minutes for them to talk among themselves while they eat.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Many scripture stories involve table fellowship—eating, drinking, and talking together. Breaking bread is the foundation of the sacrament of Communion, remembering Christ's sacrifice for us. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote extensively about the fellowship of Christians and the depth of relationships in following Jesus

together. Table fellowship is intentional time together, centered on the shared physical need for food and the shared gratitude for God who supplies our need.

Bonhoeffer writes,

“The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists of listening to them. Just as love of God begins with listening to his word, so the beginning of love for our [brothers and sisters] is learning to listen to them.”

—*Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*,
Harper & Row, 1954, p. 97

Today’s story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus is filled with layers of meaning, hope, and application to our lives today. Luke 24:13–35 is believed by scholars to be an early tradition of the first-century Christian community. The story form of travelers being accompanied by heroes, angels, or gods in disguise would have been familiar throughout the Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures. The story is divided into four parts. Have different students read each part.

Part One: The Meeting

Luke 24:13–16

- What important details did you hear?

Part Two: The Conversation En Route

Luke 24:17–27

- What details did Cleopas share with “the stranger” regarding the happenings in Jerusalem?
- How did “the stranger” respond?

Part Three: The Meal at Emmaus

Luke 24:28–32

These five verses contain the dramatic moment Jesus’ identity is revealed. Aristotle wrote that “recognition is, as the name indicates, a change from ignorance to knowledge.”

- Imagine yourself sitting at the table. Your guest, “the stranger,” becomes the host blessing and breaking the bread, and you become aware this is Jesus. How would you respond?
- What did the disciples mean when they said, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us...?”

Part Four: The Return to Jerusalem

Luke 24:33–35

- Why do you suppose verse 34 notes that “the Lord has risen indeed and he has appeared to Simon” before Cleopas and his companion tell their story of what happened on the road?

3 RESPOND

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

We do not know why these two disciples were traveling to Emmaus. Were they going home, going there on business, or just getting away from the trouble in Jerusalem? This story illustrates that the risen Lord meets us on our “Emmaus road,” in the ordinary places and experiences of our lives, and in the places to which we retreat when life is too much for us. These disciples did not plan a sacred moment, but found one in sharing a meal with a stranger.

- When have you shared with someone you didn't know well? Was it a good experience? What did you learn, feel, or do?
- Religious experiences happen in every context of life, not just at camps or in churches. The presence of God is described in a variety of ways from a still, small voice to roaring thunder. How can we become more aware of God walking beside us on the road?

In Community of Christ we affirm the Enduring Principle 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.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th edition, p. 31

Discuss:

- How do you understand the community as a blessing?
- Why would the gospel of Jesus Christ be expressed best in community life?
- How does the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus express these blessings of community?

4 SEND

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

Strength of Community

Group members form a standing circle. The first player starts by holding a ball of yarn. The player then shares a community to which they belong (e.g. family name, school name, team name, troop number, etc.) and tosses the ball of yarn to another player—while still holding on to the end of the yarn. This player shares a community to which they belong and tosses the ball of yarn to yet another player, keeping hold of the yarn before passing the ball. The ball of yarn should be passed across the circle in a random pattern having each player share several times. Do not pass it to the person next to you. Create a thick web of yarn. It should be strong enough at the end of creating the web of community that a person can lie down on the yarn and the group can pick him or her up, symbolizing the strength of community.

5 BLESS

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

Close with a prayer: "Jesus, open our eyes to see you walking with us on the road to our Emmaus."

LESSON 23
3 May 2020

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Focus Scripture Passage: Psalm 23

Lesson Focus: How do I become a better disciple?

Objectives

The learners will...

- identify comfort from Psalm 23.
- interact with the text by questioning the parts that don't make sense to them.
- consider their personal path of discipleship to identify their strengths and weaknesses.
- learn more about the sacrament of evangelist blessing and how it can be part of their discipleship.

Supplies

- Guest speaker who can share about the sacrament of evangelist blessing—especially how and why they received one and the effect it has made on their life as a disciple. See the guidelines in the RESPOND section.
- Poster of Psalm 23 (end of lesson)
- Pens or pencils
- Paper
- List of evangelists in the congregation or mission center the students can contact for more information about the evangelist blessing
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)* for students to share

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Psalm 23 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, p. 78, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge,
prepares, and motivates for lesson

(15% of total lesson time)

Post Psalm 23 on the board (you can print the last page of the lesson). As students arrive, have them read it to themselves and make note of which part of the scripture they find the most comforting and why. Don't discuss until everyone has arrived.

While waiting for others, invite the students to come up with one or two questions about the scripture—they could write these directly on the scripture poster. For example, why is a rod a comfort? Why would I want a table set for me if I was in the middle of my enemies? Why is oil used for anointing? Does the anointing make me a king?

Do not try to answer these questions; just allow the youth to interact and question the text.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Once everyone has arrived, have everyone read the scripture aloud together.

Allow youth to take turns sharing the parts they find comforting and why.

Ask:

- What characteristics do you see in the scripture passage that show God is the Good Shepherd?
- Do you know anyone who has the characteristics of being a Good Shepherd? Explain.
- Can you identify a time in your life when you felt that God has been your shepherd? If possible, share.

Point out to the students that the scripture doesn't stop with, "You lead me beside still waters." The scripture describes the journey we take throughout life and how God is always on the journey with us, teaching us to become good shepherds, too.

3 RESPOND

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

Read these next two questions to your students. Allow them to think about the questions and, on paper, jot down whatever they are moved to write. They are not expected to share what they write.

- In which of the characteristics of a good shepherd listed above do you excel? With which do you struggle?
- Do you feel you are a good shepherd to others in your life? Why or why not?

Read to the students:

In Community of Christ we have sacraments that, when we participate in them, cultivate and strengthen our relationship with the Divine. We are also counseled in Doctrine and Covenants 158:11c,

"All of the sacraments are based in God's self-revelation to the world and God's desire to be in relationship with creation. God is the gracious initiator—God chooses to be in relationship with us and through the sacraments offers tangible ways for us to experience the Divine presence that leads to spiritual awakening."

Ask: What do you know about the sacrament of evangelist blessing? Allow students to respond.

Evangelist Blessing—Guidance in the Ways of Discipleship

These are special prayers of blessing...They are given by an elder called an evangelist. He or she will take time to get to know the person requesting the blessing and with that individual make special prayerful preparation before giving the blessing. The blessing provides counsel and guidance on how individuals, in their unique circumstances, can be disciples, living the ways of the peaceable kingdom. The blessing may be recorded for further reflection and remembrance.

—Andrew Bolton and Jane Gardner, *The Sacraments: Symbol, Meaning, and Discipleship*, Independence, Missouri: Herald House, 2005, p. 63

Introduce your guest speaker to the class. The speaker should briefly respond to the following questions:

- How old were you when you asked for the blessing?

- Why did you ask for the blessing?
- How did that blessing affect your decision making or did it?
- Do you still refer back to the blessing? Why or why not?

Allow students opportunities to ask your guest questions.

4 SEND

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

Tell the students to go back to the questions you asked earlier.

- In which of the characteristics of a good shepherd listed above do you excel? With which do you struggle?
- Do you feel you are a good shepherd to others in your life? Why or why not?

Invite the students who want to grow in their characteristics of becoming a good shepherd to others to think about asking for an evangelist blessing. Provide a list of persons the youth may approach in their congregation or mission center to learn more about the sacrament of evangelist blessing.

5 BLESS

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

Sing or read together “Prayer of Peace” CCS 164, stanza four, but replace “Christ” with “God” to connect God on the path with us as the Good Shepherd.

Psalm 23 NRSV

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.

LESSON 24
10 May 2020

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Focus Scripture Passage: Psalm 31:1–5, 15–16

Lesson Focus: How understanding the word refuge leads us to the Mission Initiative Abolish Poverty, End Suffering

Objectives

The learners will...

- define refuge.
- give examples of refuges.
- identify the emotions involved when seeking refuge.
- consider ways to Abolish Poverty, End Suffering in their own communities.

Supplies

- Bible
- Vocabulary graphic organizer at the end of lesson, one per person
- Pens or pencils

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Psalm 31:1–5, 15–16 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, p. 79, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Provide a graphic organizer found at the end of the lesson to each student. Have them write REFUGE in the center. Then allow time to discuss and use their technology, if possible, to fill out the chart. The definition should be in their own words. Facts can also be characteristics of the word.

Once completed, ask: What emotions would someone seeking refuge be experiencing? Keep their answers in mind as you engage with the scripture passage for today.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Take turns reading verses of Psalm 31:1–5, 15–16.

Have students refer to their REFUGE chart as you ask them questions:

- What images from the psalm would you add to your chart?

- What stories are in the news today about refugees? Allow students to use an online search if possible.
- How is the word refuge used in and around where you currently live? For example, are there shelters for homeless, battered women, runaways, etc., in your area? Allow students to search online, if possible.
- If you were seeking refuge, what part of this psalm would mean the most to you? Explain.
- What part of the psalm did you hear during the Easter story? (*"Into your hand I commit my spirit." This was a familiar scripture to Jesus and he was reciting it from this psalm.*)
- As a response to someone who may be reciting this scripture, which of the Mission Initiatives do you think best describes how we should respond?
 - Invite People to Christ
 - Abolish Poverty, End Suffering
 - Pursue Peace on Earth
 - Develop Disciples to Serve
 - Experience Congregations in Mission

3 RESPOND

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

The Mission Initiative Abolish Poverty, End Suffering is described by Community of Christ as follows:

We are poised to be Christ's hands and feet, reaching out through compassionate ministries that serve the poor and hungry and stop conditions that diminish the worth of persons.

We fulfill God's ultimate vision as we...

- Help Those Who Hurt
- Feed the Hungry
- Support Compassionate Ministries
- Respond in Times of Crisis

—<https://www.CofChrist.org/mission-initiatives>

Say: Often, we think only of refuge as a place for people affected by war or natural disasters. Yet there are those in our own community who are hurting, who hunger, and who are living in crisis.

Discuss the following questions with the students. Do not be concerned if you do not have answers. Use this time to consider how to begin to address the Mission Initiative of Abolish Poverty, End Suffering.

- What situations or relationships in your **family** are not in harmony with God's vision to restore the worth of persons?
- What situations or relationships in your **congregation** are not in harmony with God's vision to restore the worth of persons?
- What situations or relationships in your **neighborhood** are not in harmony with God's vision to restore the worth of persons?
- What situations or relationships in your **town or city** are not in harmony with God's vision to restore the worth of persons?

- In what ways are you willing to challenge a situation or relationship to restore the worth of persons?

—*Fully Awake and Ready to Respond*, Herald Publishing House, p. 13

4 SEND

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

Read Psalm 31:1–5, 15–16 aloud again.

Ask:

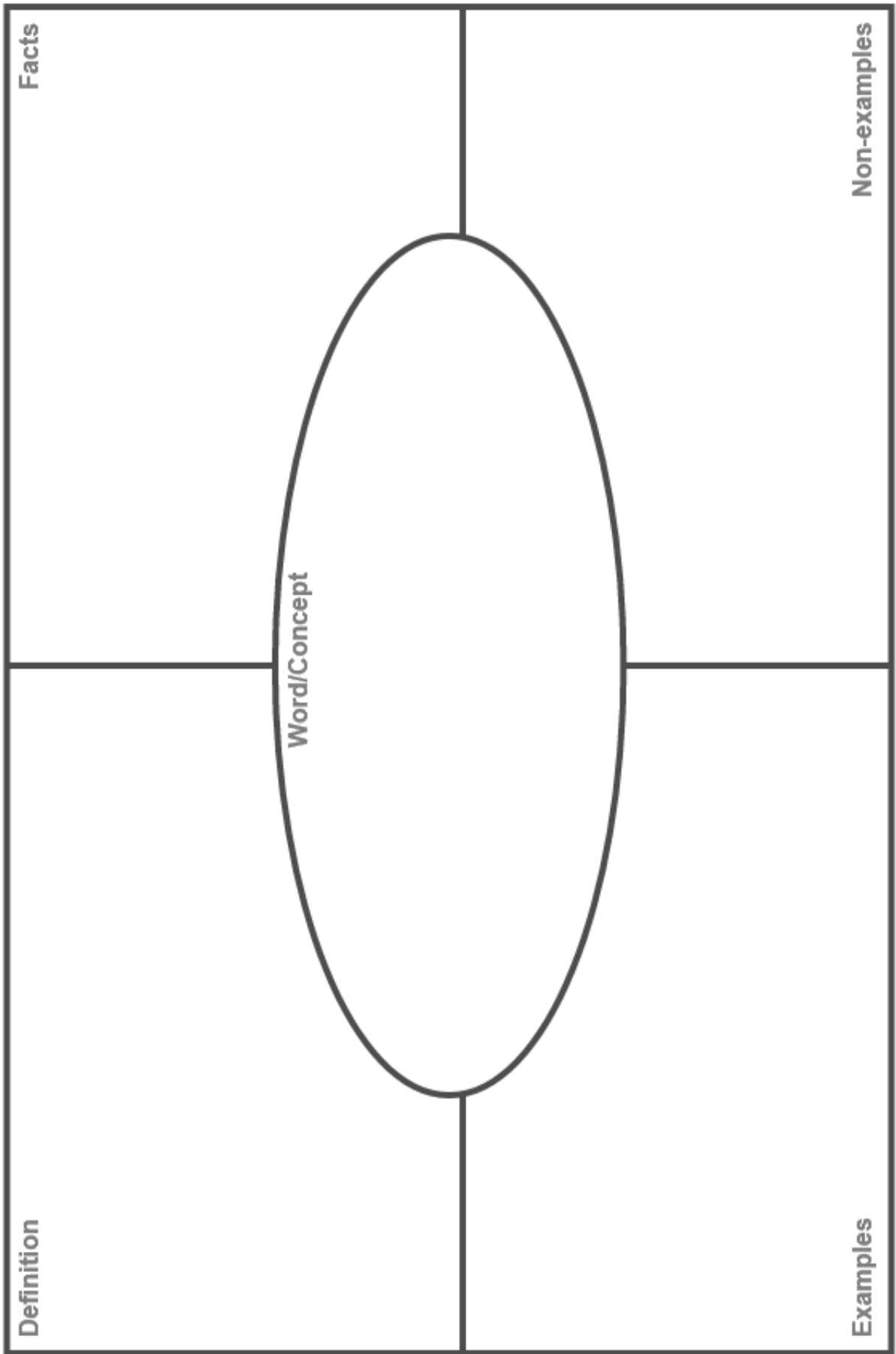
- After considering the ways you will risk publicly challenging a situation or relationship, has the meaning of the scripture passage changed for you in any way? Explain.
- Can you identify now with the need for refuge when contemplating how to express the Enduring Principle Worth of All Persons?

5 BLESS

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

Share the counsel in 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.



LESSON 25
17 May 2020

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Focus Scripture Passage: John 14:15–21

Lesson Focus: Jesus will not leave us alone! He loves us and sends the Holy Spirit as an Advocate.

Objectives

The learners will...

- hear Jesus' words of promise to be with us.
- learn that Jesus asks us to keep commandments to love God, others, ourselves.
- explore how we can keep Jesus' commandments by being an advocate for others.

Supplies

- Bibles
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Chart paper and markers

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for John 14:15–21 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 71, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Introduce the class to the song "Ubi Caritas et Amor," in CCS 152. The Latin text means, "Where there is charity and love, God is to be found." Have the class sing the song together repeating the verse several times. Ask the class to share what this text means to them and examples they have seen.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today's focus scripture passage describes two dimensions of the disciples' relationship with Jesus. First, loving Jesus and keeping his commandments are inseparable. To love Jesus is to live his commandments; to keep Jesus' commandments is to love him. Second, this love between Jesus and his followers is known through the Holy Spirit.

Have the students read aloud John 14:15–21 one verse at a time. After each verse ask the students to put the verse in their own words, and share what the verse means to them.

Record student responses on a flip chart or large writing surface.

Teacher Reference Notes on John 14:15–21 (based on *New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, Volume IX, Abingdon Press, 1995, p. 746)

14:15 This verse points to the whole of what Jesus says and reveals about God. Faithfulness is a mark of belonging to him.

14:16–17 Advocate comes from the Greek noun *parakletos* which can mean “the one who exhorts,” “the one who comforts,” “the one who helps,” or “the one who makes appeal on one’s behalf.” The following words are used in various translations of the Bible: Advocate, Counselor, Comforter, and Paraclete. These words describe the function of the Holy Spirit. “The Spirit of truth” keeps the truth of Jesus present in relationship with the faith community.

14:18–20 Orphan was a common metaphor to describe disciples left without their master. Its use in this verse connects with the imagery of family that runs throughout Jesus’ teaching. His promised return, “I am coming,” indicates he will not abandon his own.

14:21 The third promise of presence highlights the connected nature of community life, the love of Jesus and keeping his commandments, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

3 RESPOND

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

Rudolf Bultmann, an important twentieth-century New Testament scholar and theologian, wrote, “The question therefore which activates the section (John 14:15–21) is this: what is this love, which is directed toward Jesus? ... Can the disciples still love him after he is gone? Can the next generation love him, without having had a personal relationship with him?” (*The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, Westminster John Knox Press, 1971, p. 613).

Ask the students to answer the following questions. Accept all responses and affirm there are no right or wrong answers.

- How do you love Jesus?
- Can disciples love Jesus without having a personal relationship with him? Explain.

John 14:15–21 affirms disciples can still love Jesus, but not by clinging to a memory of him or by keeping personal experiences of him to themselves. Rather, they can continue to love Jesus by doing his work and keeping his commandments. Living in this way continues the community’s relationship with Jesus beyond those who knew him personally to the generations that follow.

Read the following passage adapted from *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 27.

God’s revelation in Jesus Christ and continuing presence through the Holy Spirit, as proclaimed by scripture, is the foundation of our faith, identity, mission, message, and beliefs. In faithful response to our heritage and continuing experience with God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, we endeavor to uphold the following Enduring Principles (values, concepts, themes) as essential components of church identity and mission: Grace and Generosity, Sacredness of Creation, Continuing Revelation, Worth of All Persons, All Are Called, Responsible Choices, Pursuit of Peace, Unity in Diversity, and the Blessings of Community.

Form small groups or pairs and assign each group or pair one or more of the Enduring Principles listed above. Provide each group or pair with a large piece of paper and markers. Discuss how living the Enduring Principle demonstrates how disciples love Jesus and follow his commandments. Write or draw responses on the paper provided and share with the larger group.

4

SEND

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

Ask students to answer the following questions by writing or drawing their responses, sharing in groups of two or three, or sharing with the larger group.

- How has someone demonstrated one of the Enduring Principles to you in the past week?
- What Enduring Principles have you lived or experienced in the past week?
- Select at least one Enduring Principle and describe how you will demonstrate it in your home or at school in the coming week(s).

5

BLESS

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

Close class with a circle prayer having each student complete the sentence, "God help me show my commitment and love for Jesus this week by..."

LESSON 26
24 May 2020

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER ACCENTION OF THE LORD

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 24:44–53

Lesson Focus: Jesus blessed his disciples before he left them. Disciples bless others with words and actions.

Objectives

The learners will...

- hear the scripture passage about Jesus blessing his disciples and ascending to heaven.
- think about what Christ's commission means.
- learn that blessing means to "speak well of."

Supplies

- Bibles
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Chart paper and markers

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 24:44–53 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 72–73, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

In the ancient Celtic tradition, a prayer called Saint Patrick's breastplate (a piece of armor) includes the words below (adapted). Use this prayer to remember that as you follow Jesus, you are strengthened to share Christ's mission and message. Have students stand and create movements representing the action of the text as the prayer is read.

Christ be with me
Christ before me
Christ behind me
Christ beneath me
Christ above me
Christ on my right
Christ on my left
Christ where I lie
Christ where I sit
Christ where I arise

Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me
Christ in every eye that sees me
Christ in every ear that hears me.
Salvation belongs to the Lord.
Amen.

—*Of Water and Spirit*, Herald House, p. 53

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

The prayer of St. Patrick's breastplate expresses how we are loved by God and surrounded by Christ through the Holy Spirit. In Luke 24:44–53, we read the story of Jesus' last appearance. In these final verses of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus reminds them of all they have seen and heard while he was with them. He tells them "You are witnesses." Then Jesus blesses the disciples, and they respond with great joy and blessing.

Have a member of the class read aloud Luke 24:44–53.

Imagine you are standing with the disciples as Jesus speaks. Reread verses 44–48.

What is your response to Jesus' statement, "You are witnesses of these things?"

- How would you describe the word "witness" to a friend?
- Using Google or a dictionary, look up definitions of the word "witness." Which definition best fits with the passage from Luke? Explain.
- How are we witnesses today?

This passage includes a commissioning (to authorize, send on a mission) of the disciples. Luke 24:47 states "that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

Form small groups of two or three and assign each group one of the following passages. Discuss how this passage compares with the passage from Luke. What is the same, and what is different? Share responses with the larger group.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

—Matthew 28:19–20

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

—John 20:21

And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation."

—Mark 16:15

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

—Acts 1:8

3 RESPOND

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

The Easter season affirms our belief that the Lord is risen! Disciples of all generations must ask, “What shall we do?” Just like the first-century church, we must consider what it is the Lord has sent us to do. Community of Christ has been counseled that “the mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead” (Doctrine and Covenants 164:9f).

In Luke 4:18–19, Jesus proclaimed his mission when he read from the writings of Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.

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

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:

- **Invite People to Christ**—Christ’s mission of evangelism
- **Abolish Poverty, End Suffering**—Christ’s mission of compassion
- **Pursue Peace on Earth**—Christ’s mission of justice and peace
- **Develop Disciples to Serve**—Equip individuals for Christ’s mission
- **Experience Congregations in Mission**—Equip congregations for Christ’s mission

How do these five Mission Initiatives encourage our response to Christ’s commission?

As a disciple, what Mission Initiative do you prioritize in your response to Jesus’ commissioning of you? Explain.

Form small groups of two or three. Ask each group to write, draw, or act out how the five Mission Initiatives are connected, and how they work best when lived together. Share with the larger group.

4 SEND

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

Luke 24:50 describes Jesus “lifting up his hands, [and blessing] them.” To “bless” people means to “speak good things” about them.

- What is significant about Jesus lifting his hands to bless the disciples?
- How has someone blessed you with their hands or by speaking good things about you?
- In what ways can you use your hands or words to bless another in your home? Your school? Your community?

5

BLESS

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

Close with this prayer attributed to St. Teresa of Avila (1515–1582). Consider your response to Christ's commission as the prayer is read.

Christ Has No Body

Christ has no body but yours,

No hands, no feet on earth but yours,

Yours are the eyes with which he looks Compassion on this world,

Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,

Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.

Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,

Yours are the eyes, you are his body.

Christ has no body now but yours, No hands, no feet on earth but yours,

Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

LESSON 27
31 May 2020

DAY OF PENTECOST

Focus Scripture Passage: Acts 2:1–21

Lesson Focus: Jesus sent the Holy Spirit for all people in all places.

Objectives

The learners will...

- hear the story of Pentecost.
- talk about ways we understand the Holy Spirit.
- learn that Community of Christ is a worldwide church.

Supplies

- Bibles
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition
- Video: *Let the Spirit Breathe*, available through the link below or at missionalleaders.org (optional)
- Internet access to research languages (optional)
- Copy of Languages of the Church handout for each youth (end of lesson)

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Acts 2:1–21 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 74–75, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

As youth arrive, hand them the Languages of the Church handout. Have them research where the individual languages are primarily spoken around the world. Have the students try to pronounce the name of the church in the different languages. Ask:

- What language(s) do you speak?
- When someone talks in a different language, can you understand what he or she is saying?
- Do you have friends whose first language is different from your own?
- Translating from one language to another is more about conveying similar meanings in both languages than it is translating one word for the same word in the other language. Can you infer how this may impact common understanding?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Last week we heard Jesus' instructions for the disciples to "stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" from Luke's Gospel. This week we will read about the disciples receiving the "power from on high" on the day of Pentecost. Listen carefully to the images used to describe the Holy Spirit and the people's responses to it.

Have several students share in reading Acts 2:1–21, stopping between each verse to note the action of the characters and hear students' responses to the story.

- Have you ever been in a situation where the people around you were speaking different languages? How did you feel in that situation?

Invite students to find a comfortable position, even lying down, to hear the passage read again. Imagine they are part of the crowd. As they listen to the passage, imagine what they see, hear, smell, and feel as the events take place. Share with the larger group.

As the crowd begins to wonder what is happening, they assume the disciples are drunk on new wine. Peter raises his voice to defend what they are witnessing as an act of God, an outpouring of the Spirit.

- Imagine you are Peter. How would you respond to the crowd? How would you explain what was happening?

3 RESPOND

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

The scripture passage today describes the Holy Spirit as a violent wind and divided tongues of fire.

- How do these images of wind and fire describe the Holy Spirit?
- What other images can you think of to describe the Holy Spirit? (*Dove, Breath, Comforter, Advocate*)
- Why are there so many images for the Holy Spirit?

Have a student read the following description of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the continuing presence of God in the world. The Spirit works in our minds and hearts through intelligence, comfort, guidance, love, and power to sustain, inspire, and remake us. God is with us and for us as revealed in Jesus Christ. God is also at work in us through the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works within our community of faith to conform us to the image of Jesus, God's Son."

—*Walking with Jesus*, Revised Edition, Herald House, 2011, p. 83

- What word or phrase best describes your understanding of the Holy Spirit? Explain.
- How does this description compare and contrast with the passage from Acts?

4

SEND

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

The video *Let the Spirit Breathe* provides another image of the Holy Spirit. As you watch the video, consider your own response to the Spirit moving in your life.

Watch the video and respond to the following questions. (videos.files.wordpress.com/bkCfa3Cw/lcm_let-the-spirit-breathe_dvd.mp4)

- Describe how the dancer represents the Holy Spirit.
- How does this video express or challenge your understanding of the Holy Spirit?
- What do you think of the actors' responses to the Spirit's action?

If it is not possible to show the video, form small groups or pairs and have each one act out a description of the Holy Spirit. You may choose to use words or phrases from a reading in this lesson, or use your own understanding of the Holy Spirit. Act for the rest of the class and have them guess what is being described.

5

BLESS

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

Close with the Mission Prayer:

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

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

TRINITY SUNDAY

Focus Scripture Passage: Genesis 1:1—2:4a

Lesson Focus: All of creation is sacred, and we are called to be good stewards within it.

Objectives

The learners will...

- reflect on the first creation story through art.
- explore how each Enduring Principle challenges us to be good stewards of God's creation.
- create a service project for their congregation.

Supplies

- Copies of the three artwork pieces at the end of this lesson (*The Void, The Split, The Beauty*)
- Copy of Enduring Principles (end of lesson)
- *Sharing in Community of Christ* (3rd or 4th Edition)
- Pens or markers
- Paper
- Large paper pad
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Genesis 1:1—2:4a in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, pp. 84–85, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Have four volunteers ready to read one of the four stanzas of "Creation Flows Unceasingly" CCS 107.

- After stanza 1, ask: Where in God's creation do you find sacred? What makes it such a special place in your heart?
- After stanza 2, ask: What is a favorite outdoor activity of yours? Why is it a favorite?
- After stanza 3, ask: What is a strong, positive characteristic that describes you?
- After stanza 4, ask: Where do you see God's work in the world?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Note to teacher: Have the three paintings (*The Void*, *The Split*, *The Beauty*) provided at the end of this lesson ready to display when the lesson calls for it.

Our next activity is a spiritual practice known as *Visio Divina*, or divine seeing. This practice is similar to *Lectio Divina*. Whereas in *Lectio Divina* the participant reflects on a scripture passage, in *Visio Divina* the participant reflects on an art piece such as a drawing, photograph, or painting. Spiritual practices give us an opportunity to stop to listen, engage, and reflect with ourselves, God, and sometimes our community.

Display *The Void* painting. Invite each student to get comfortable.

Invite them to look at the image and keep their eyes on the first part of the image they see. Challenge them to look at just that piece of the artwork. Ask them to deeply breathe as they contemplate that part of the image.

Now invite them to broaden their sights to the entire image. Gaze at every part. Have them consider every color, every shape, and every element.

Ask the following questions:

- What emotions do you feel as you gaze at the image?
- What colors, shades, or details speak to you the most? Why do you think that is?
- How does this image reflect your own life?

Now remove *The Void* and reveal *The Split*.

Invite them to look at the image and keep their eyes on the first part of the image they see. Challenge them to look at just that piece of the artwork. Ask them to deeply breathe as they contemplate that part of the image.

Now invite them to broaden their sights to the entire image. Gaze at every part. Have them consider every color, every shape, and every element.

Ask the following questions:

- What emotions do you feel as you gaze at the image?
- What colors, shades, or details speak to you the most? Why do you think that is?
- How does this image reflect your own life?

Now remove *The Split* and reveal *The Beauty*.

Invite them to look at the image and keep their eyes on the first part of the image they see. Challenge them to look at just that piece of the artwork. Ask them to deeply breathe as they contemplate that part of the image.

Now invite them to broaden their sights to the entire image. Gaze at every part. Have them consider every color, every shape, and every element.

Ask the following questions:

- What emotions do you feel as you gaze at the image?
- What colors, shades, or details speak to you the most? Why do you think that is?
- How does this image reflect your own life?

Now display all three images as you read Genesis 1:1—2:4a.

3 RESPOND

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

Today we're exploring Sacredness of Creation, which is one of our Enduring Principles. We will have the opportunity to explore each Enduring Principle as it relates to God's creation and our responsibility to be good stewards of the Earth.

Read the basic belief Creation from *Sharing in Community of Christ* (3rd Edition, p. 15; 4th Edition, p. 34). Then ask:

- How is this understanding of creation different from your current views? Similar?
- How does today's scripture passage reflect our Basic Belief of creation?
- What are we called to do as stewards? How can we achieve this?

Now read the introduction to the Enduring Principles "The Foundation: God, Christ, Holy Spirit" (*Sharing in Community of Christ* [3rd Edition p. 12; 4th Edition p. 27]). Separate the class into three groups. Pass out markers, paper, and one Enduring Principle cutout provided at the end of this lesson to each group. Have each group read their Enduring Principle and write responses to the following questions:

- Which of the points reflect aspects or gives a challenge about God's creation the most?
- How does creation intertwine itself with this Enduring Principle?
- How can we live this Enduring Principle to better God's creation?

Repeat the exercise with the remaining Enduring Principles. Come back together to answer the following question:

- How does each Enduring Principle challenge us to respect and be good stewards of God's creation?

Note to teacher: As the teacher you know your classroom. If it is more appropriate to do this activity as a larger group, that is fine as well.

4 SEND

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

As disciples of God's creation we are called to be good stewards for the world around us. Take your class outside and tour the entire property. Ask:

- Does our congregation have a welcoming environment?
- Is there trash or litter around?
- What improvements could we make to ensure a more welcoming environment and be good caretakers of our congregation?

After exploring, brainstorm with your class a project to help the outdoor environment of your congregation. Some examples include:

- Mulch a garden, plant trees or flowers, rake twigs and leaves, repaint the building, pull weeds, create a community garden or labyrinth, create a worship center, and more.

Feel free to invite a pastor or others into your conversation and make sure to talk with congregational leaders so they are aware of your projects. You are encouraged to make this a community project!

5

BLESS

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

Close with singing “All Creatures of Our God and King” CCS 98.

The Void



The Split



The Beauty



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.

LESSON 29
14 June 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 6)

Focus Scripture Passage: Genesis 18:1–15, 21:1–7

Lesson Focus: Generosity is an intricate part of being a disciple. We are called to give, even to the stranger.

Objectives

The learners will...

- journey in the story of Abraham and Sarah.
- understand the importance of generosity as a disciple.
- serve their fellow peers.
- create giving bags to hand out to their communities.

Supplies

- Copies of Genesis 18:1–15; 21:1–7 and the Dwelling in the Word handout (front and back) for each student (end of lesson)
- Paper
- Colored markers
- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Pens
- Bowl of water
- Clean washcloth
- Grapes
- Small plates
- Water
- Small paper cups
- Gallon plastic bags (enough for each student)
- Various supplies for Giving Bags (not limited to items below; these are just ideas):
 - Bottled water
 - Small tissue packets
 - Socks
 - Candy or protein bar
 - Hand warmers
 - Gloves or a hat
 - Toothbrush and toothpaste
 - Deodorant

Notes to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Genesis 18:1–15, 21:1–7 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, pp. 89–90, available through Herald House.

Before class set up a small worship center with the bowl of water, cloth, grapes, and cups of water. Feel free to be creative and use other décor or accessories. Make sure the bowl of water and cloth are easily accessible to the students.

Toward the end of the lesson the class will have the opportunity to create and share “giving bags.” The supplies needed may be costly or require time acquiring. You may ask the congregation for donations or work with the class beforehand to gather the supplies. You are encouraged to find ways to get the entire congregation involved. Phone trees, church announcements, and Facebook are good avenues for asking members in your congregation to give!

1 GATHER

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

Hand out paper and markers for every student. Have each of them draw a picture of a moment that represents a time in their life when they were surprised. If they were surprised by a gift, they can draw the item. If they were surprised when their military parent came home early from deployment, they could draw the memory. If they were surprised at a party, they may draw their experience. It is okay if the students do not see themselves as artists. The activity is all in good fun.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Teachers note: Please print out copies of the scripture and the Dwelling in the Word provided at the end of the lesson.

Invite students to find a comfortable place in the room. They may sit or lie down; make sure they know they can be comfortable. Explain that the class will be engaging with the spiritual practice known as Dwelling in the Word. This practice gives the students an opportunity to explore a scripture in a different way. Have them close their eyes and simply listen.

Read Genesis 18:1–15; 21:1–7. When you are done, allow time for silent reflection. Then read the following:

As I read aloud the text a second time, I would invite you to pick a character in the story: Abraham, Sarah, God, or God’s two companions, Isaac. Try to imagine yourself in that person’s place. What are the person’s thoughts? Feelings? See the story from their point of view.

After you’ve paused for more silent reflection, pass out the scripture and Dwelling in the Word handout so every student has his or her own. Make sure each student also has a writing utensil. As you read a third time, invite the students to highlight, underline, or make notes on *just* the scripture handout. When you’ve completed the third read-through, have the students reflect on the Dwelling in the Word questions. Give the class an opportunity to share their reflections from the experience.

Note to teacher: If the class is struggling, have them share in small groups first.

3 RESPOND

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

Before class begins, prepare a bowl of water and place in an area of the room as a worship center. Make sure to have a clean washcloth placed next to the bowl. For the second part of this activity make sure there are enough small cups of water and grapes. These items may make up the worship center.

Today's scripture passage tells us of three men who arrived at Abraham and Sarah's tent. Abraham immediately showed them hospitality by bowing to them. He offered his service of giving the travelers what they needed. We as the readers come to know that these three visitors are actually God and two of God's companions. Abraham does not initially know this. That does not matter, however, for Abraham and Sarah both extend hospitality to these strangers by honoring them, preparing food and feeding them, and cleaning them to make them feel welcome. They were genuinely concerned with the strangers and their welfare.

Explain to the class that today we will be serving our fellow classmates. Everyone in the class will have an opportunity to have their hands cleaned by a peer or leader, similar to Abraham cleaning the strangers. Such an act symbolizes the person's worth as a member of God's kingdom. Begin by going to the bowl of water and inviting a student to come up and have their hands washed. As soon as you are finished, take a seat and have them wash the hands of the next person who comes to the worship center to have their hands washed. Continue this activity until every student has had his or her hands washed. Encourage staff to also participate in the activity.

Not only did Abraham and Sarah clean their three guests, but they also prepared a meal and fed them. The class will participate in an agape meal. This practice gives an opportunity for participants to both give and receive words of comfort and affirmation, and to receive nutrients (both physically and spiritually through words of hope or encouragement). Ask a student to go to the worship station to get a grape and a cup of water. Find someone in the class to give the food to. Before they give their gift have the students give words of affirmation, support, or hope to the individual. Make sure every student receives a chance to share in the meal before concluding the meal.

4 SEND

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

We now have the opportunity to give to our larger communities. As a class we will be creating Giving Bags full of supplies. Here are some suggestions:

- Bottled water
- Small tissue packets
- Socks
- Candy or protein bar
- Hand warmers
- Gloves or a hat
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Deodorant

Take a gallon-size bag and fill it with the items you've collected. Every student needs at least one bag to take with him or her. Challenge the students to give the bag to a stranger in need. Today's scripture passage not only focuses on human hospitality, but also showing God hospitality. In Matthew 25:45 we read, "...just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." Verses before it talk about not giving food, water, clothing, and more to "the least of these." God is in and with our neighbors, strangers, and ones who are different from us. When we serve and provide ministry to others, we provide ministry to God.

5 BLESS

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

Read or sing "Sometimes We Wait, Expecting God" CCS 304.

Genesis 18:1–15—A Son Promised to Abraham and Sarah

¹The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. ² He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. ³ He said, “My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. ⁴ Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. ⁵ Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.” So they said, “Do as you have said.” ⁶ And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, “Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.” ⁷ Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. ⁸ Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

⁹ They said to him, “Where is your wife Sarah?” And he said, “There, in the tent.” ¹⁰ Then one said, “I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. ¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. ¹² So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?” ¹³ The Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ ¹⁴ Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.” ¹⁵ But Sarah denied, saying, “I did not laugh”; for she was afraid. He said, “Oh yes, you did laugh.

Genesis 21:1–7—The Birth of Isaac

¹The Lord dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as he had promised. ² Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. ³ Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him. ⁴ And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. ⁵ Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. ⁶ Now Sarah said, “God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.” ⁷ And she said, “Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”

Dwelling in the Word with Genesis 18:1–15; 21:1–7

As you engage with the scripture passage listen to what the Spirit is saying.

What words, images, or phrases are speaking to me in this text?

Which character in this story do I most resonate with? Abraham? Sarah?
God or the other two with God? Isaac?

What is God's invitation to me in this scripture?

What is God's invitation to our community in this scripture?

What is the relevance of this scripture in today's world?

What does this passage tell us about God?

LESSON 30
21 June 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 7)

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 10:24–39

Lesson Focus: Following Jesus and sharing God’s love with others is not always easy, but God’s love gives us strength and courage.

Objectives

The learners will...

- consider what it was like for those hearing Jesus’ words for the first time.
- discuss the responses of the disciples.
- explore how they will respond as disciples of Jesus.

Supplies

- Transparent jar, cup, bowl, or other container
- Pebbles or other small items to fill container
- Paper (timeline) and writing utensils

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 10:24–39 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 86–87, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Welcome youth to the space and begin the lesson with the game “Would You Rather?” Ask students the following questions and have them move to a designated space according to their response. Discuss why they make the choices they do.

Would You Rather? (Make your list of choices appropriate for the youth in the group.)

1. Go on a fun weekend trip with friends or spend one hour with a celebrity?
2. Read a book or play an instrument? (Remember, your voice is an instrument!)
3. Go to the mountains or go to the beach?
4. Play a team sport or play a video game in an online community?
5. Sing a solo or sing with a group?
6. Help someone in need or have lots of money?
7. Promote healthy living through exercise or healthy eating?
8. Listen to your favorite music or watch your favorite sports team?
9. Create your own artwork or admire a famous piece of artwork?
10. Give a gift or receive a gift?

One of Community of Christ's Enduring Principles is Responsible Choices. Invite youth to read the following descriptions of Responsible Choices. If possible, project or post these descriptions to be viewed throughout the lesson.

- 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.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

The scripture passage this week can be troubling if understood literally. Jesus uses examples of common relationships to teach about difficult choices as a disciple. These are challenging words for us since they imply the things we believe are important and the social standards we submit to are turned upside down. The uplifting news is that God's love is inclusive of all. We don't have to hide things, we don't have to fear, and we don't have to keep secrets. God knows all and nothing is hidden from God. Nothing.

Have youth take turns reading Matthew 10:24–39.

²⁴“A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; ²⁵it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household! ²⁶“So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. ²⁷What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. ²⁸Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰And even the hairs of your head are all counted. ³¹So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

³²“Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; ³³but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven. ³⁴“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; ³⁶and one's foes will be members of one's own household. ³⁷Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

Form two groups and assign each group vv. 24–31 or vv. 32–39. Have them discuss what the passage means and rewrite in their own words. Combine the two groups and have them read the full passage in their own words. Discuss the following questions with the larger group.

- What was most challenging to understand in the passage? Why?
- What does it mean to deny yourself in order to serve God and follow Jesus?
- What difficult choices are you faced with as a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- What helps you make Responsible Choices?

Before class begins, fill a clear container with rocks, pebbles, or other small objects. Make a note of how many objects are in the container. Share the following object lesson:

If you have ever gone into a store or market, you may have seen large jars, packages, cans, cups, bags, or other containers filled with items. Have you ever stopped to wonder how many items could be in a certain container?

Show students the container you have prepared and ask: Can you guess how many items are in this container? (Allow some time for them to guess.)

Wouldn't it be impressive if someone had the ability to look at this container and tell you exactly how many items are in the container? That would be pretty amazing, but let me tell you something more amazing than that! Today's scripture passage reveals that God knows exactly how many hairs are on your head. If you look around the room, you notice some have a lot of hair, and some don't have very much at all. (Fun fact: The average human head has about 100,000 hairs.) Luckily, it doesn't matter how much or how little hair you have! God knows everything about you, including things that are in your mind and heart (even things you may be hiding). God knows these things because God created every part of you...every little detail!

The scripture passage also reveals that God knows exactly how many birds are in the air, and if one of them falls to the ground, God knows it! If God cares when a little sparrow falls to the ground, can you imagine how much God cares for you? We can never fully understand the amount of love that God has for us. God cares for all persons so much that God sent Jesus to teach us about God's amazing love, no matter what our life circumstances and choices are!

- What would it look like for people to be equal, for us to not be fearful, for things to be out in the open, and for us to put God first?
- What is your most important relationship? Whom do you love the most?
- How do we pick Jesus over our siblings, our friends, or our mom and dad? How do we look into their faces and say, "I love Jesus more"? (We love each other best when we love God most.)

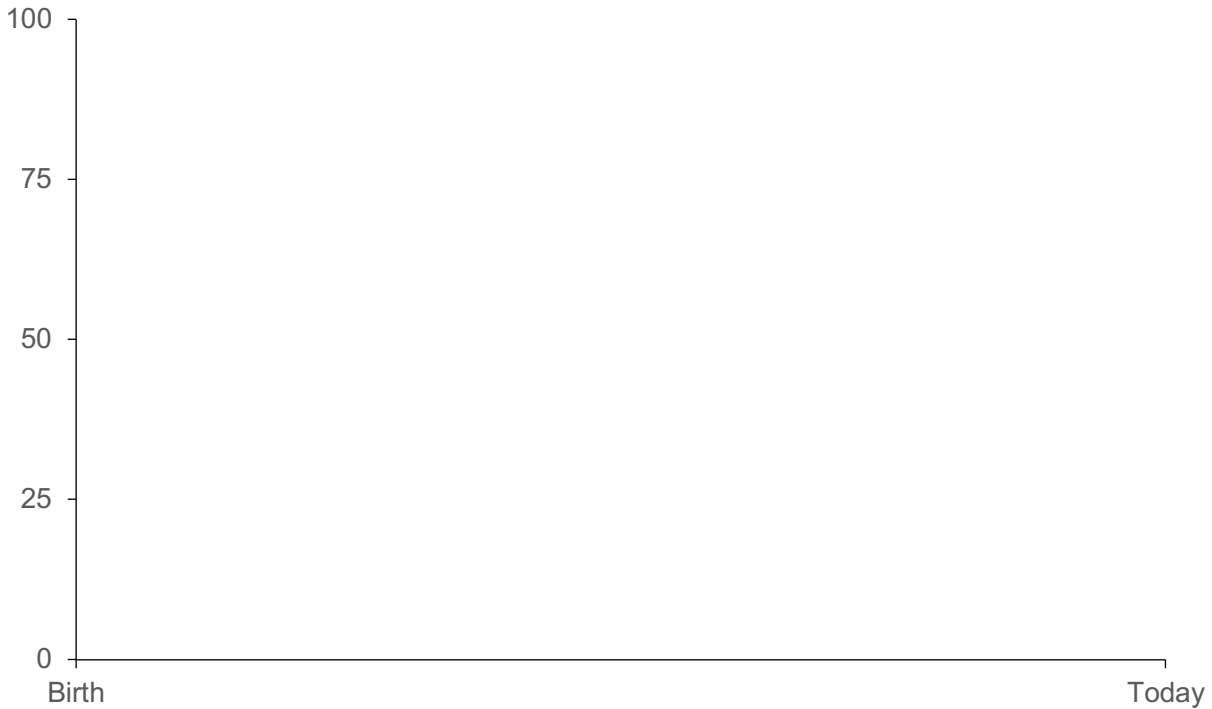
3 RESPOND

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

This week is all about how much God knows you. God knows you better than you know yourself, and God is always present even when you don't recognize it.

Now we will create a timeline of your faith journey with God. On a sheet of paper, draw X and Y axes. Label the Y (vertical) axis with the numbers 0 (bottom), 25, 50, 75, and 100 (top). This will be the percentage that you recognized God's presence in your life. On the X (horizontal) axis, at the far left, write the date of your birth. The farthest right point will be today. Chart your journey with God and consider the following questions. Write or draw examples of your responses around your timeline.

- Who are some people you have met, and what events have happened on your journey? How have they influenced your life? What was God doing in the midst of the events? What choices were you faced with during this time?
- When and how have you experienced the good news of the kingdom? What was happening in your life during those times? What changed in your life as you experienced God's love and presence?



4

SEND

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

Personal Challenge

Invite the youth to share their timelines and respond to the personal challenge statement.

I recognize God's love and presence most when...

I will make Responsible Choices, such as _____, that will allow me to recognize God's presence and love more fully.

5

BLESS

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

Close your time together with the following prayer.

Eternal God, we are thankful you know everything about us, including the hairs on our head. Thank you for sending Jesus to reveal your love. Guide us in making Responsible Choices as disciples of Jesus. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

LESSON 31
28 June 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 8)

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 10:40–42

Lesson Focus: Disciples represent Jesus and share the peace of Christ in all relationships.

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore descriptions of invitation, witness, and hospitality.
- describe ways to make a stranger feel welcome.
- consider whom they will invite to know the peace of Jesus Christ.

Supplies

- Large writing surface and markers or chalk
- Dictionary or access to internet (optional)
- Bible (NRSV preferred)
- Welcome sign or welcome mat (optional)
- Paper
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 10:40–42 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 88, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

On a large writing surface, make three columns titled Invitation, Witness, and Hospitality. Invite students to list words in each column to describe the title.

- What similarities do you find in all three columns?
- What differences are important?

If possible, use a dictionary or internet to look up definitions of each title. Which definitions are most related to living as disciples of Jesus Christ?

Sing or read “Jesu, Tawa Pano (Jesus, We Are Here)” CCS 71. This song expresses how we represent Jesus in the world. We are here to invite and welcome others to know the peace of Jesus.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction

(35% of lesson time)

Whoever invites you, invites Christ. Whoever invites Christ, invites God. This is an essential understanding of living as a disciple of Jesus Christ. When these words were written, there were no telephones or computers or even mail. Welcoming someone who came bearing a message implied welcoming the person who sent the message. God sent Jesus to help us understand the nature of God.

Read Matthew 10:40–42. Then have each youth read the passage and replace “you” with their name. Have them read the passage again and replace “you” with the name of someone with whom they disagree or someone who is a stranger to them. Discuss how it changes the meaning when they personalize it.

⁴⁰“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. ⁴¹Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; ⁴²and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”

Have you ever noticed a welcome mat or sign that says Welcome? Where might you ordinarily see something like this? A welcome mat serves two purposes. It is a friendly reminder for guests to wipe their shoes before they enter your house so they won’t track soil into your home. It also tells guests they are welcome in your home.

How are people welcomed in your home? Are people invited into your home that look or believe differently than you? What about in our congregation? Do we make everybody feel welcome in our congregation?

Community of Christ upholds the Worth of All Persons as an Enduring Principle. As a faith movement, we work hard to be an inclusive body of disciples that continue to draw the circle wide (and draw it wider still!) and welcome everyone to a place at the table.

- What does welcoming the stranger look like?
- How do we welcome Christ into our lives?
- Who invited you to know the peace of Jesus? How did they do this?
- How is Community of Christ welcoming? How can we be more welcoming?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from
hearing to doing

(35% of lesson time)

Invite the group to discuss how the congregation welcomes people on Sundays, as well as other days of the week. You can do this in smaller groups or in a large group. Do we welcome people as if they were Christ?

Challenge the group to consider ways to be more welcoming. What happens when a stranger walks in? Are there greeters to welcome them and introduce them to others? Can a stranger who speaks another language find the restroom? Can a blind person find his or her way to a seat for worship? Brainstorm ways that you can improve how welcoming your congregation is. Can you make signs? Volunteer to be a greeter? Identify ways to improve your congregation’s hospitality and talk with the pastor about them?

Provide paper and crayons, markers, or colored pencils for each student. Have them create a welcome sign that reflects what the group has discussed.

4 SEND

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

Invite youth to share practices of invitation, welcome, and hospitality they have experienced. (For example, offering water to someone who is thirsty, providing food to the hungry, putting up welcome signs, assigning individuals to entryways when people arrive at church, inviting somebody to play a game, and so on.) Then invite students to complete the personal challenge statement. They may choose to write or draw responses on the back of their welcome signs, share in groups of two or three, or share in the larger group.

Personal challenge:

This week I will invite _____ to know the peace of Jesus Christ by...

5 BLESS

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

Offer this prayer to close your time together.

Eternal God, we plead for your patience and awareness. May we remember that when we welcome others to our homes and to our church, it is the same as welcoming you. May we always have the strength to welcome all persons in your name. Amen.

LESSON 32
5 July 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 9)

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30

Lesson Focus: All are invited to receive, embody, and share the peace of Jesus Christ.

Objectives

The learners will...

- discover tools to help lift and carry heavy objects.
- understand how Christ helps us carry burdens.
- discuss burdens they are carrying and how they can receive and share the peace of Christ.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- Variety of items which are not heavy and a couple that are heavy
- Picture of an automobile jack (optional)
- Picture of a yoke (included below)
- Paper and pens, pencils, crayons, or markers

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 89, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Gather a variety of items (heavy and light) for students to lift. Heavy items should be a challenge to lift without presenting a risk of injury to students.

How strong do you think you are? Would you say that you not strong at all, somewhat strong, or very strong? How many of you think you could pick up this heavy item (select one)? How about another heavy item like this one (select one)? If you are able to lift these items, then you must be pretty strong. How many of you think you could lift a vehicle? Do you think that it possible? Many tools help lift things that we could not lift by ourselves. For example, to lift a car, you can use an automobile jack. (Show a picture, if possible.) If you put this jack under a car and pump the handle, you can easily lift a car that weighs over 3,000 pounds! Yes, with the help of a jack, you can lift a car!

- What other tools or techniques help us lift heavy objects?

Show a picture of a yoke and ask students if they know what it is and for what it is used. Tell the students it is a yoke, and have them listen for how it is used in the scripture passage.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction

(35% of lesson time)

Invite youth to take turns reading these verses from Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30.

¹⁶“But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

¹⁷“We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.”

¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; ¹⁹the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

²⁵At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; ²⁶yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

People were comparing Jesus with John the Baptizer.

- What did people say about John and Jesus? (They criticized John for not eating and drinking, but they criticized Jesus for eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners.)
- Why was Jesus frustrated with this? (The people did not get who Jesus was or that his ministry was inclusive of all.)
- In verses 25–26 Jesus indicates that even children understand Jesus’ ministry better than adults at times. What examples have you seen of children and youth engaging in Christ’s mission?

Jesus expresses his frustration with the way people responded to his ministry, but then he offers gratitude for those who have come to know God through him. The final verses reveal Jesus’ ministry is full of compassion and mercy.

- How is yoke used in the final verses to demonstrate Jesus’ compassion? (It is described as a bond, keeping or tying people together.)
- How has someone demonstrated this kind of compassion for you?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from
hearing to doing

(35% of lesson time)

Some of you may be carrying heavy burdens. Bullying, peer pressure, troubles at home or at school, and so much more might weigh you down. Some people are burdened by physical challenges. Maybe someone in your family is sick and you are worried about them. You may be having a hard time making passing grades in school. Whatever the burdens are in your life, some may be too heavy to handle by yourself. Well, guess what? You don’t have to! That is the wonderful message in today’s passage!

Jesus said, “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” You don’t need to struggle with burdens that are too heavy for you. Scripture is full of promises to help us in times of trouble. These words of encouragement are just what we need to face the hard times that may come our way.

Invite one or more youth to read Doctrine and Covenants 163:2a.

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 of the dimensions of salvation.

- How does this passage compare with Matthew 11:28–30?
- How does Jesus embody God's shalom? (*His ministry was inclusive of all; he promoted justice for the marginalized; he promoted peace; he cared about those others did not care about.*)
- What leads to God's peace and all dimensions of salvation (personal, social, environmental)? (*following Jesus, living like Jesus, promoting justice and peace for all, sharing the peace of Jesus, caring for the Earth and all creation*)
- What examples do you see of people living and sharing the peace of Jesus?

4

SEND

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

Does Jesus promise that, if we ask, God will take our troubles away? No, but God will help us. The challenge for us is to recognize God's presence and Christ's peace. In fact, some of our struggles may help us grow and become stronger. They may also help us learn to trust in Jesus. But when the load is too heavy, he will help us carry it—and no burden is too heavy for Jesus.

Provide each student with a piece of paper (conserve paper by distributing half sheets) and items with which to write, draw, or color. Have youth make a T-chart on the paper. On the left side, have them list burdens (5–10) they carry. On the right side, list possible "yokes" (people, spiritual practices, Responsible Choices) that can make those burdens easier to carry.

Invite youth to share one burden and yoke with the larger group.

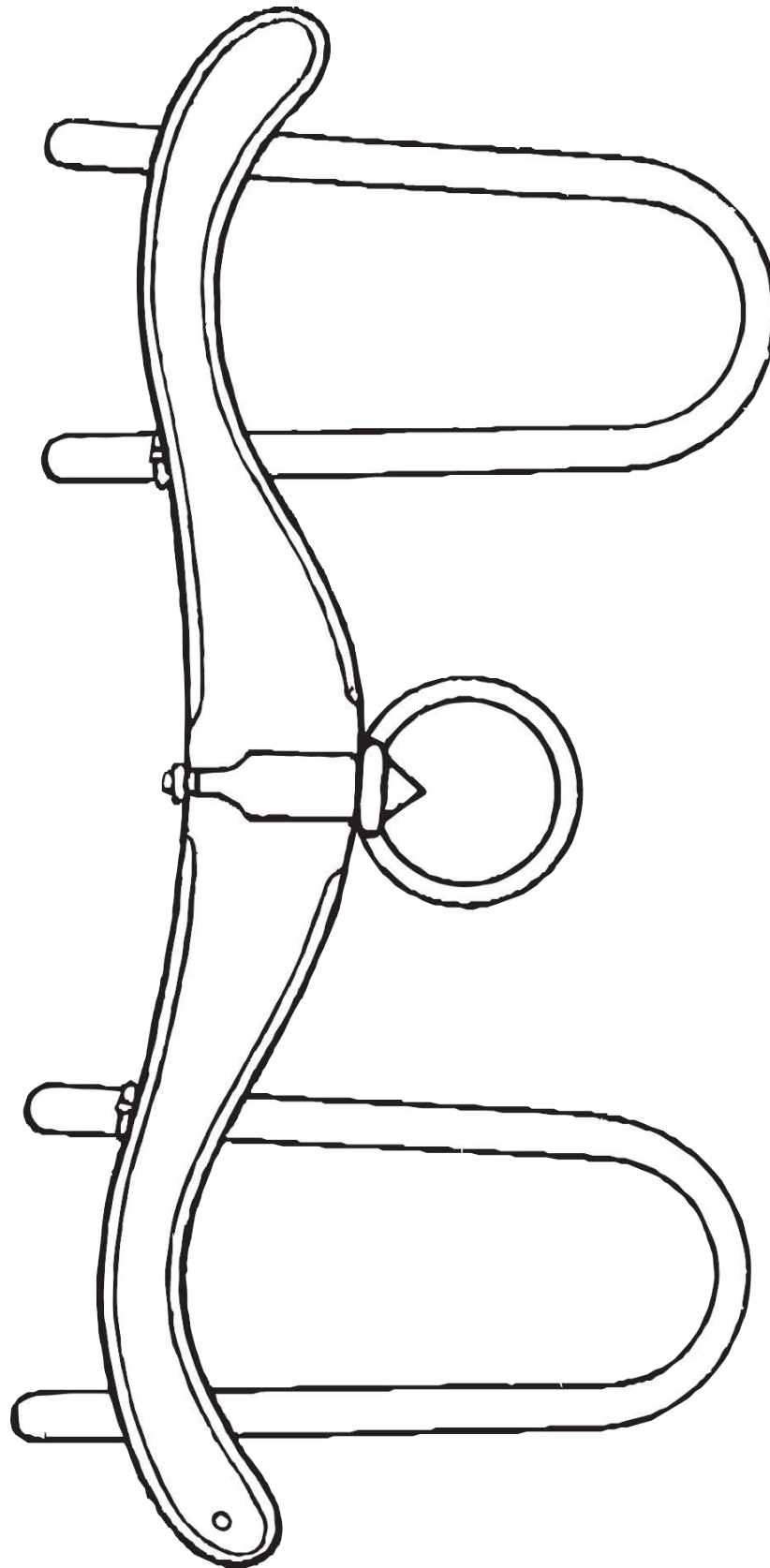
5

BLESS

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

Share this prayer to close your time together.

Eternal God, we are thankful that when we struggle under the load of life's burdens, you are there to help us carry the load. Jesus showed us how to love one another and think of others, not just ourselves. Help us let go of the selfishness that weighs us down. Help us lift our spirits by putting the needs of others ahead of our own. Amen.



LESSON 33
12 July 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 10)

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23

Lesson Focus: Jesus uses parables to teach disciples. The Parable of the Sower teaches disciples about caring for themselves, others, and the Earth.

Objectives

The learners will...

- compare rocky ground, thorny ground, and good soil and their effect on planted seeds.
- discuss the Parable of the Sower.
- explore how Jesus teaches disciples to care for themselves, others, and the Earth.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- Seeds
- Four recycled containers
- Rocks or pebbles, dry hard dirt, thorns or weeds, potting soil
- Paper and pens, pencils, crayons, markers, or colored pencils

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 90–91, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Prepare four containers, each with one of the following: rocks or pebbles, dry hard dirt, thorns or weeds, and potting soil.

Have you ever planted anything? If so, what did you plant, and how did you nurture the seeds and plants? The kind of soil you have is essential to the success of a garden. If the ground is too hard or filled with rocks and weeds, you won't have healthy plants.

Give individuals (or pairs) one of the four prepared containers and some seeds. Have them create a short story or scenario about what the contents of the container represent, what the seeds represent, and what happens to the seeds. They may choose to tell, read, illustrate, or act their story and share with the larger group. Be creative!

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Have youth take turns reading Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23.

¹That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ²Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³And he told them many things in parables, saying: “Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. ⁵Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. ⁶But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹Let anyone with ears listen!”

¹⁸“Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. ²⁰As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. ²²As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. ²³But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

This story is typically called the Parable of the Sower. A parable is a story (which may or may not be true) that teaches a lesson or points to a greater truth. This parable is more about the soil than the sower or the seed. A portion of the seeds that were planted fell along the way where the ground was hard. The seeds lay on top of the ground, and the birds came and ate them. A portion of the seeds fell on the rough ground. The seeds grew rapidly; however, when the sun came, the plants died because they didn't have strong roots. Some of the seeds fell among weeds, and plants grew for a little time; however, the weeds took control and killed them. Luckily, a portion of the seeds fell on rich, fertile soil, and the plants became strong and sound and produced a decent harvest.

- Whom does the sower represent in this story? (God, Jesus, teachers or ministers, disciples, anyone who shares the good news of Jesus)
- What do the seeds represent? (God's vision for creation, the gospel or good news that Jesus teaches, people, or creation)
- What elements kept the seeds from growing? (hard ground, birds, little soil, weeds, thorns)
- What do these elements represent? (unhealthy conditions, poor choices, forces of nature)
- What can we do to help seeds or disciples grow in good soil? (take care of the Earth, make healthy and Responsible Choices, learn and grow as disciples, share the good news of Jesus with others, encourage others)

In Jesus' story, the word of God (good news of Jesus) is the seed, and we are the dirt. Sometimes we hear someone preaching, teaching, or sharing a testimony about Jesus; but, we may be distracted. Maybe we are thinking about what we will do that evening or what we did yesterday. We hear the message, but we are not really listening to what is being said. This act resembles tossing seed on the ground and not in the ground. It won't ever develop into anything in our life.

Sometimes we hear the message and get excited about it, but we fail to act. Slowly we begin to lose that excitement. That resembles the seeds that fall on the rough ground. The plants spring up quickly but die because the roots are shallow.

Once in a while we hear the message and accept what it says, but we do not change the way we respond. That resembles planting the seed in the middle of weeds. What happens next? The weeds will soon take control of us!

When we hear the message, listen and attempt to comprehend what it says, and put it into practice, then we resemble great soil—soil where the seed flourishes and develops and delivers a strong and healthy harvest. That is the type of soil that Jesus needs us to be.

3 RESPOND

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

Have one or more of the students read Doctrine and Covenants 165:1e.

Let nothing separate you from this mission. It reveals divine intent for personal, societal, and environmental salvation; a fullness of gospel witness for creation's restoration.

Discuss the following questions:

- How would you describe personal salvation to another person? (wholeness and well-being in this life and the next)
- How would you describe societal salvation to another person? (justice and wholeness in relationships and among groups of people)
- How would you describe environmental salvation to another person? (care for the Earth and environment so that all life can flourish)

Provide half sheets of paper for each student. Consider your life as a disciple. How does it compare to what the contents of the four containers represent? Take a few moments to draw a plant growing in healthy soil. How can you nurture good soil as a disciple and care for yourself, others, and the Earth?

4 SEND

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

Ask the youth for suggestions about how they can make their roots grow deeper in Christ's love (safely fasting, prayer, scripture study, singing, meditation, worship, service, and relationships). Write their suggestions on the pictures of their plants.

God's vision for all creation to flourish is made real through generous disciples.

On the back of their plant drawing, have students write and respond to the following:

As a disciple of Jesus Christ, I am rooted in God, the Source of life and love.
This week I will nurture good soil and care for myself by...
I will nurture good soil and care for others by...
I will nurture good soil and care for the Earth by...

5

BLESS

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

Close your time together with this prayer.

Loving God, we want to be like the good soil. Help us plant seeds of your love by caring for ourselves, others, and the Earth. In your name we pray. Amen.

LESSON 34
19 July 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 11)

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43

Lesson Focus: Jesus teaches disciples to make Responsible Choices and love without judgment.

Objectives

The learners will...

- understand what Jesus means when he speaks of wheat in a parable.
- understand what Jesus means when he speaks of weeds in a parable.
- discuss Enduring Principles and make connections to the focus scripture passage.

Supplies

- Copies of Enduring Principles (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, pp. 12–14, available from Herald House or at <https://www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Sharing-in-Community-of-Christ-4thEd-WEB.pdf>)
- Small recycled containers, potting soil, and wheat seeds (optional)
- Paper, colored pencils, and tape or glue

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 92, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Invite youth to share what they remember about the story from last week and what they learned. Ask them to describe what a parable is and how Jesus used parables.

Spend a few moments reflecting on the personal challenge for the past week. Invite youth to share how they nurtured good soil in the past week by caring for themselves, others, and the Earth.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today’s story is another parable that is similar to the story last week. Have youth take turns reading Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43.

²⁴He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; ²⁵but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. ²⁶So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. ²⁷And the slaves of the

householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' ²⁸He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' ²⁹But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. ³⁰Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

³⁶Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." ³⁷He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; ³⁸the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, ³⁹and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, ⁴²and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

Discuss the following questions:

- How is this parable similar to the parable from last week? What is different?
- How would you describe shalom to another person? (God's vision for creation, wholeness, justice, and peace)
- What does the wheat represent in this parable? (people who make Responsible Choices and care for themselves, others, and the Earth)
- What do the weeds represent in this parable? (people who do not make Responsible Choices and do not care for themselves, others, or the Earth)

One of the greatest threats to a strong, healthy garden is weeds. Weeds will steal the nutrients from the soil that are supposed to help plants develop, and they will suppress strong plants. How do people take care of weeds? One option is to use a tool to dig out the weeds. However, if you do that, you run the risk of unintentionally injuring the strong plants.

Another approach to disposing of the weeds is to use weed killer. It will kill the weeds for sure. However, weed killer doesn't know a dandelion from a tomato plant. It kills each plant that it touches. Once in a while, it is best to allow the weeds to grow unbothered until the time has come to collect the harvest. At that point, you can separate the weeds from the healthy plants.

There are times when people in our families, schools, congregations, or communities are like weeds. They do not make choices that contribute to good in the world; or they do not care for themselves, others, and the Earth. Sometimes we are the weeds.

Jesus teaches disciples to focus on the wheat, not the weeds—to focus on fulfilling Christ's mission. When people are like weeds, we are to remember what Jesus teaches us: God's love and grace are for all persons. We are to live and love as Jesus modeled, and leave the rest to God.

3 RESPOND

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

Provide each youth with a small, recycled container. Let the youth fill them $\frac{3}{4}$ full with soil. Give each youth wheat or grass seed to plant in their soil and water it in.

As youth are planting their seeds, explain that in the early phases of growth, weeds and wheat may look similar. We must wait until each begins to develop before figuring out which is which. The wheat in the

story symbolizes those who follow and live like Christ. The weeds symbolize those things that get in the way of God's purposes in our lives. Christ will always help us remove weeds from our lives.

Provide copies of the Enduring Principles. Assign each student one of the Enduring Principles. Have them read the descriptions and consider how living the Enduring Principle contributes to God's purposes in our lives and in the world. Share with the larger group an example of how living the Enduring Principle contributes to God's shalom.

4 SEND

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

Parables like this show us what God's kingdom is like, since we frequently do not have the language and the understanding to grasp God's kingdom in an easier way.

This parable shows us that God is untiring with the world. God waits until the time is right before separating the wheat (the disciples) from the weeds (those things that hold us back and get in our way). God is giving us an incredible opportunity to develop into wheat rather than weeds. This parable shows us that God's kingdom on earth is blended with diverse individuals—those who model Jesus' ministry and mission and those that hinder that process.

The parable clearly explains that we shouldn't rush to judge whether somebody is a weed or wheat. We need to invite people to Christ and encourage them to grow as disciples.

Provide strips of paper for each student to write and complete the following action challenge. Have them decorate their strips, then tape or glue the strip to their containers.

This week I will live the Enduring Principle by...

5 BLESS

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

Close your time together with this prayer.

Eternal God, help us love without judgment and live according to your purposes. Amen.

LESSON 35
26 July 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 12)

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 13:31–33, 44–52

Lesson Focus: God magnifies even the smallest gifts.

Objectives

The learners will...

- discuss the descriptions of the kingdom of heaven in the focus scripture passage.
- compare the parables with Community of Christ's understanding of shalom.
- share examples of Blessings of Community.

Supplies

- *Community of Christ Sings* (CCS)
- (Optional) Video "Peace through All People" www.CofChrist.org/resources?tags=English-Home-Resource#/930/peace-through-all-people
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition (available through Herald House or online at <https://www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Sharing-in-Community-of-Christ-4thEd-WEB.pdf>)
- (Optional) Supplies for demonstration
 - 1/2 cup 6% hydrogen peroxide (sold in beauty supply stores or online as 20 Volume clear developer)
 - 2 tsp. yeast (1 packet)
 - 3 tbsp. warm water dish detergent
 - food coloring (optional)
 - empty 16 oz. plastic bottle
 - funnel
 - safety goggles
 - tray or container to catch the foam

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Matthew 13:31–33, 44–52 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 93, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Greet the youth by name and welcome them to the space. Sing "Peace Salaam Shalom" CCS 310 or show the video "Peace through All People." www.CofChrist.org/resources?tags=English-Home-Resource#/930/peace-through-all-people

Ask:

- What Enduring Principles or Mission Initiatives are represented in this song or video? (Refer to *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, pp. 27–32, 20–24 as needed.)

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

In today's focus scripture passage, Jesus uses parables to describe what the kingdom of heaven is like. Assign each youth one or more of the following paragraphs from Matthew 13:31–33, 44–52. Have them read their paragraph(s) and explain how the parable describes the kingdom of heaven. Discuss ideas with the larger group.

Matthew 13:31–33, 44–52

³¹He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; ³²it smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

³³He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

⁴⁴"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

⁴⁷"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; ⁴⁸when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹"Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes." ⁵²And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Read and discuss this selection from "We Share a Vision for Creation" found in *Sharing in Community of Christ*, pp. 9–11.

The vision we share is God's vision of reconciliation, salvation, wholeness, justice, and peace expressed in the scriptural definition of shalom. Shalom means a fullness or completeness of peace with humankind and with all of creation.

- How would you describe shalom to a friend?
- How would you complete the phrase "Shalom is like...?"

God's vision of peace for creation clearly was revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who proclaimed the coming kingdom or peaceful reign of God on Earth. The gospel or "good news" was then entrusted to the church—the community of disciples called to be the body of Christ. The purpose of the church is to form disciples who faithfully share the gospel of peace in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

- How does Jesus represent shalom?
- What do you think is the purpose of the church?

3 RESPOND

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

A seed cannot grow on its own; it needs water, sunlight, and soil to help it grow. Yeast cannot act alone; it requires other ingredients to activate it. Shalom cannot be created or experienced by one person working alone, but by the community working together. This is expressed in Community of Christ's Enduring Principle Blessings of Community.

The following experiment illustrates what happens when small things work together to create something bigger.

If supplies are not available for the science experiment, ask youth to describe, act out, or draw what Blessings of Community means to them.

1. Pour 1/2 cup of the peroxide into the empty water bottle. (Hydrogen peroxide can irritate skin and eyes, so make sure you protect your eyes and skin.)
2. Add a few drops of food coloring to the bottle (optional).
3. Add 1 tbsp. of liquid dish soap and swish it just a bit to mix it.
4. In a separate cup, combine yeast and warm water. Mix for about 30 seconds until most lumps are gone.
5. Use a funnel to pour the yeast mixture into the bottle and watch the foaming begin.

The foam is just water, soap, and oxygen, so it's safe to touch, but it will be warm because of the chemical reaction!



Source: www.cometogetherkids.com/2012/02/elephant-toothpaste-foaming-science.html



Source: www.cometogetherkids.com/2012/02/elephant-toothpaste-foaming-science.html

Ask:

- How does this experiment demonstrate Blessings of Community?
- What acts of kindness and generosity have you seen magnified when a community works together?

4 SEND

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

Invite youth to complete the following action challenge. Share responses with the larger group.

This week I will use my gift of _____ to create shalom by...

5 BLESS

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

Close by singing "Peace Salaam Shalom" CCS 310. Invite youth to offer a closing prayer.

LESSON 36
2 August 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 13)

Focus Scripture Passage: Genesis 32:22–31

Lesson Focus: Encounters with God change us.

Objectives

The learners will...

- identify the learner's place in the Sacred Story.
- explore what a relationship with God is.
- discuss what it means to be a disciple.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- Doctrine and Covenants 165
- Sources for the meaning of names (books for naming babies, Internet, community members)
- Markers
- Three large sheets of paper
- Paper and pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Genesis 32:22–31 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, pp. 99–100, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

(Before class find the meaning of names of the learners in your class. Bring a source to look up the meaning of other names.)

Ask learners if they know the meaning of their name. Look up and discuss the meaning. Ask if the meaning says who they are or does the name have any impact. For example, a person who has the same name as their father or mother may feel like they must exhibit similar characteristics. It may be too difficult to uphold the standard set by the parent, or for some reason they would be embarrassed to share the same name. Naming in many cultures is important because of the meaning the name holds.

Today's scripture passage is about Jacob whose name means “cheater” or “one who undermines.” By the end of the passage his name is changed to Israel, which means “may God prevail.” If you could, would you change your name?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction

(35% of lesson time)

Jacob was an interesting person. He already had a reputation for being a tricky, maybe dishonest, character. He stole his twin brother's birthright and blessing. (A birthright is a particular right of possession or privilege one has from birth, especially an eldest child. Jacob was the second born. Tradition said the birthright and blessing went to the first born.) Jacob caused enough trouble that he fled his country to live with his mother's brother. His deceiving ways got him into trouble with his uncle, too. He kept the best for himself and gave his uncle the weaker animals. After a time, Jacob had to flee back to his homeland with family and flocks. The fear of revenge from his brother whom he had cheated was great. Sending his family and flocks across the stream was a defensive move to save part of his wealth. He sent out scouts earlier who returned saying his brother was coming with 400 men. Jacob had to prepare for attack.

Read the scripture passage to see what happened next. Then discuss the following questions.

²²The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ²³He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. ²⁴Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. ²⁵When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. ²⁶Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." ²⁷So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." ²⁸Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." ²⁹Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. ³⁰So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." ³¹The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip.

—Genesis 32:22–31

- What happened to Jacob? What changed?
- Do you have a scar from a cut or wound? When you look at it, do you think about how you got it?
- What does it mean to "not prevail" against someone?
- What did Jacob learn from his experience?
- Who was Jacob's opponent?
- How and when have you struggled with God?
- How did this experience shape your life?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from
hearing to doing

(35% of lesson time)

Ready, Action!

Make an action movie or skit of this scripture passage. Begin at the point in the story where Jacob sends his family and flocks across the Jabbok and he remains alone. Discuss the role of Jacob. How did he feel? Who initiated the struggle? How long did the struggle last? Who won? What happened to Jacob after he encountered God? How did Jacob respond to God? Decide how to act out these answers in the skit. Perform the skit. (For a sequel, read more from Genesis 32.)

Going Deeper

Time Alone with God

Jacob spent some time alone with God. Ask learners to think about their relationship with God. Do they find time to fit God into their daily schedules? In what ways could they adjust their time to include God more? Could they read a scripture passage, schedule a regular time to pray, visit with a friend about spiritual topics, learn a spiritual practice, or attend a worship service? Give out paper and pens. Ask learners to make a sample daily schedule and follow it for the week.

4

SEND

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

The Sacred Story

Jacob, now named Israel, was the father of a great nation. God blessed him with a new name, many descendants, and a promised land. As Israel, he continued the relationship with God that began with grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac. Later, his son Joseph would continue this covenant relationship with God. A covenant is a promise, an agreement between two parties to continue in relationship keeping promises and bringing blessings to each other. All these ancients became a blessing to their people as they followed one God. Doctrine and Covenants 161:5 tells us: "Do not fail to listen attentively to the telling of the sacred story for the story of scripture and faith empowers and illuminates."

Think about a covenant made at baptism, a promise to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and living in relationship with God who blesses us. When we talk with God we often ask for blessings. When we are blessed, how can our discipleship share that blessing with others? On a large sheet of paper make a list of blessings the class thinks they have. On a second sheet, write ideas on how their blessings can be used to bless others. Select one or two ideas to do in the future. On a third sheet, list ways we become part of the sacred story.

5

BLESS

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

Sing "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" CCS 325. Offer a pray of blessing on the class that they may develop their own relationship with God and become disciples.

LESSON 37
9 August 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 14)

Focus Scripture Passage: Genesis 37:1–4, 12–28

Lesson Focus: We can trust God.

Objectives

The learners will...

- examine how God works in human history.
- recognize that God is reliable and trustworthy.
- understand that God is present and working even in bad times.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- CD or YouTube recording of “Joseph’s Coat” from *Joseph’s Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* by Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Weber www.YouTube.com
- Mission Initiatives found at <https://www.CofChrist.org/mission-initiatives>
- Doctrine and Covenants 164 and 165
 - <https://www.CofChrist.org/doctrine-and-covenants-section-164>
 - <https://www.CofChrist.org/doctrine-and-covenants-section-165>
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Box with lid, full of colorful, rich textured fabric scraps
- CD or video player for YouTube recording
- Paper and pens
- Chart paper and markers

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Genesis 37:1–4, 12–28 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, pp. 101–102, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge,
prepares, and motivates for lesson

(15% of total lesson time)

A Special Gift

Set the box filled with colorful fabric scraps in the center of the group. Open the box and discuss what project might have provided the leftover scraps.

Today’s lesson is about Joseph, Jacob’s son in last week’s story. It is a story about Jacob’s family. Joseph was Jacob’s favorite son out of the 12 sons he had. He was such a favorite that Jacob gave him a special gift, a robe. Some Bible translations call it a robe of many colors; others, like the NRSV

translation, call it a robe with long sleeves. Whatever the robe is called, it must have been very special, suggesting Joseph was more important than any of his brothers. A robe with long sleeves suggests that it was not a garment used for working. Long sleeves would hinder the work of a shepherd tending flocks. This robe suggested someone of royalty, a perfect gift for a very, special son and a gift of envy and jealousy for the 11 brothers.

(If you have the CD or YouTube clip of “Joseph’s Coat” from *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, play it now.)

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read today’s scripture passage.

¹Jacob settled in the land where his father had lived as an alien, the land of Canaan.

²This is the story of the family of Jacob.

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father’s wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. ³Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves.⁴But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.

¹²Now his brothers went to pasture their father’s flock near Shechem.¹³And Israel said to Joseph, “Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them.” He answered, “Here I am.” ¹⁴So he said to him, “Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock; and bring word back to me.” So he sent him from the valley of Hebron.

He came to Shechem, ¹⁵and a man found him wandering in the fields; the man asked him, “What are you seeking?” ¹⁶“I am seeking my brothers,” he said; “tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock.” ¹⁷The man said, “They have gone away, for I heard them say, ‘Let us go to Dothan.’” So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. ¹⁸They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him. ¹⁹They said to one another, “Here comes this dreamer. ²⁰Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams.” ²¹But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, “Let us not take his life.” ²²Reuben said to them, “Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him”—that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father. ²³So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore; ²⁴and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

²⁵Then they sat down to eat; and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels carrying gum, balm, and resin, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. ²⁶Then Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? ²⁷Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.” And his brothers agreed. ²⁸When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

—Genesis 37: 1–4, 12–28

This is the same Jacob or Israel of last week's lesson. It is a part of the sacred story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with Joseph continuing the covenant with God. Although God is not specifically mentioned in this passage, one can see God's working in human life all along even when humans work against God's divine purpose. Doctrine and Covenants 164:2b says, "God's grace, revealed in Jesus Christ, freely moves throughout creation, often beyond human perception, to achieve divine purposes in people's lives." Look for God working as students answer these questions. (Learners will want to continue looking for God working in human life through next week's lesson, too.)

- What was the reason given that Jacob loved Joseph more?
- Why did the brothers not like Joseph?
- Jacob sent Joseph on an errand. What was it, and what was the result?
- What did the brothers call Joseph when they saw him coming?
- What brothers slowed down the mob-like reaction of the brothers?
- What did each of them do?
- Do you see God working here? How or how not?
- Could you eat a meal after throwing your brother, sister, or a friend into a pit?
- How did money or profit change the action?
- Joseph is sold into slavery by his own brothers. Where is he going?
- What items was the caravan from Gilead carrying? How are these items used?
- What do you predict happens next? Write the learner's ideas down to see if they are correct as the story progresses. (Keep these notes for next week.)

Going Deeper

This Dreamer

When Joseph's brothers saw him coming, they referred to him as "this dreamer." The lectionary scripture passage today omits verses 5–11. Read these verses from the Bible to find out what the brothers were referring to.

- How did this situation between Joseph, the other brothers, and Jacob's favoritism impact the situation?
- What did Jacob tell Joseph to do about the dreams?

Dreams in ancient times were considered powerful predictors of the future. The word "dream" today frequently is associated with hopes for the future or goals to work toward. What are your dreams for your future?

3 RESPOND

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

Sibling Rivalry

- What problems do you see in Jacob's family?
- Describe the characteristics of Reuben, Judah, and Joseph.
- Are you more like Reuben, Judah, or Joseph?

- If you were a family counselor, what advice would you give them?
- What if Joseph had disobeyed his father and not gone to check on his brothers?
- How would you feel if you were treated like this?
- Did you discover a change you might make in your own family?

4 SEND

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

End Suffering

Community of Christ Mission Initiative Abolish Poverty, End Suffering says:

We are poised to be Christ’s hands and feet, reaching out through compassionate ministries that

serve the poor and hungry and stop conditions that diminish the worth of persons.

We fulfill God’s ultimate vision as we...

Help Those Who Hurt

Feed the Hungry

Support Compassionate Ministries

Respond in Times of Crisis

—<https://www.CofChrist.org/mission-initiatives>

At this point in Jacob’s family story, poverty does not seem to be a problem, but there is suffering. The brothers are suffering from lack of attention from their father; Joseph suffers from too much, which causes intense jealousy. Where in your community do you see people suffering? Make a chart and complete it to see where you might serve as Christ’s hands and feet. Choose one project to do as a class or a congregation.

Undertake compassionate and just actions
to abolish poverty and end needless suffering.

Pursue peace on and for the Earth.

—Doctrine and Covenants 165:1d

LOCATION			
AGE GROUP			
SIZE OF GROUP			
POSSIBLE WAYS TO END SUFFERING			
COMMUNITY RESOURCES			
SERVICE PROJECT IDEAS			

5

BLESS

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

Balm in Gilead

The caravan from Gilead to Egypt was carrying gum, balm, and resin, items sometimes used in healing. Think about those suffering in the world in need of God's healing presence. Surely, Joseph was suffering as he looked up, out of the pit. What was he thinking at that time? How was he feeling as he left in bondage to be sold as property in Egypt? Was he suffering then?

Sing "There Is a Balm in Gilead," CCS 234. Think about those suffering in the world. Say a prayer for them each day this week.

LESSON 38
16 August 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 15)

Focus Scripture Passage: Genesis 45:1–15

Lesson Focus: Our ability to forgive and reconcile with others frees us to work for God.

Objectives

The learners will...

- identify God's continuing work in humanity.
- recognize our ability to forgive others and ourselves frees us to be better disciples.
- learn how a disciple can respond to God's grace and generosity.

Supplies

- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition
<https://www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Sharing-in-Community-of-Christ-4thEd-WEB.pdf>
- www.YouTube.com or CD for *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, "Brothers Come to Egypt/Grovel"
- Bread, tortilla, naan, pita, or gluten-free bread
- Paper, pens
- Poster board, chart paper, markers
- Computer or tablet
- CD player

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Genesis 45:1–15 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, p. 103, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Bread for the Hungry

Bring a piece of bread (tortilla, naan, pita, gluten-free bread if needed) for each learner to class. Ask learners to think about all the hungry people in the world. Have them tear the bread into pieces. As learners slowly chew each piece, ask them to pay attention to its taste, smell, and feel. Offer a prayer for the bread and the person who made it. Ask God to help each learner to find ways to help those who are hungry.

Sing stanzas one and three of “Let Us Break Bread Together” CCS 521. Continue by saying, “Today our story is about a people facing famine, what they did, and who helped them. It is also about a person we met in the last lesson, his family, and God working through humanity to accomplish divine purpose.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

A Lesson in Forgiveness

We last saw Joseph walking as a slave with a group of merchants headed to Egypt. Many events happened during the 22 years since we last saw him. Copy these points on a poster to bring learners current on what has happened in Joseph’s life.

- Potiphar, captain of Pharaoh’s guard, bought Joseph when he arrived in Egypt and eventually made him manager over all of his household and wealth.
- Joseph was falsely accused of a crime while working for Potiphar and put into prison.
- The head jailer liked Joseph and put him in charge of the other prisoners.
- Joseph developed a reputation as a dream interpreter among the prisoners.
- Pharaoh heard about Joseph’s gift of interpreting dreams and released him from jail to interpret dreams for him.
- Pharaoh believed Joseph’s interpretations and put Joseph in charge of the entire land of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh.

Read today’s scripture passage.

¹Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, “Send everyone away from me.” So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ²And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. ³Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.

⁴Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come closer to me.” And they came closer. He said, “I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither ploughing nor harvest. ⁷God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. ¹⁰You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children’s children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹I will provide for you there—since there are five more years of famine to come—so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.’ ¹²And now your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my own mouth that speaks to you. ¹³You must tell my father how greatly I am honored in Egypt, and all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here.” ¹⁴Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept, while Benjamin wept upon his neck. ¹⁵And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

—Genesis 45:1–15

If possible, listen to or watch “Brothers Come to Egypt/Grovel” from *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (CD or YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NZYkDEQww>). For lyrics, go to <https://www.stlyrics.com/lyrics/josephandtheamazingtechnicolordreamcoat/thebrotherscometoegyptgrovelgrovel.htm>.

Why Forgive?

Some say Joseph was a model for forgiveness and reconciliation. Ask learners to define “forgiveness” and “reconciliation.” Suggest the following ideas: forgiveness does not involve resentment or revenge; it is not about forgetting because something wrong was done; people need to be held responsible; some kind of change in the person or relationship is expected.

If you could invite Joseph to visit your class, what questions would you ask him about why he forgave and reconciled with his brothers?

What do we still need to learn about forgiveness and reconciliation?

Going Deeper

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, ministry, and sacraments according to our true capacity.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 28

Look at each point listed for the Enduring Principle Grace and Generosity. Where do you see grace and generosity in the scripture passage about Joseph? Where do you see grace and generosity in your community today? Considering that one’s true capacity changes according to age and circumstances over time, what can you do at this point in your life?

3 RESPOND

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

God Is at Work

Several times in today’s scripture passage Joseph pointed out how God was working through him in human events. Look for words and phrases that show God was at work. Write those words and phrases on a chart and discuss how God was working. How do you see God working through humans today?

4 SEND

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

A Disciple's Generous Response

Joseph's position as the second in power to Pharaoh and his management skills placed him in a position to help surrounding nations, including his family, when famine came. Respond to each principle of A Disciple's Generous Response with what you already do or how you can prepare to respond generously. (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, pp. 40–42, or <https://www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Sharing-in-Community-of-Christ-4thEd-WEB.pdf>). Provide paper and pens for writing responses. When finished ask if anyone would like to share.

1. God's grace and love is extended to all persons and are expressed through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. I can reflect God's generosity by _____.
2. A disciple is faithful in response to Christ's ministry by serving others. I can serve others by _____.
3. A disciple's financial response, while unique to individual circumstances, expresses love of God, neighbor, creation, and oneself. I can demonstrate that love by _____.
4. A disciple shares generously through tithing so others may experience God's generosity. I can make tithing generously a spiritual practice by _____.
5. A disciple saves wisely to create a better tomorrow for self, family, the church's message, and the world. I can prepare for the future by _____.
6. A disciple spends responsibly as a commitment to live in health and harmony with God and the world. I can find balance between needs and wants by _____.

5 BLESS

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

Minute Prayer

For one minute, have learners pray for someone who has injured them in some way. Sing together "Spirit of the Living God" CCS 567. Seek to forgive; seek to serve as a disciple.

LESSON 39
23 August 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 16)

Focus Scripture Passage: Exodus 1:8—2:10

Lesson Focus: The oppression of the Hebrews and the birth of Moses set the stage for the exodus toward the Promised Land.

Objectives

The learners will...

- discover a continuing understanding of God's faithfulness in the Sacred Story.
- identify God's work through human events.
- recognize how the practice of civil disobedience can produce change in injustice.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- World map or map of Egypt
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, <https://www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Sharing-in-Community-of-Christ-4thEd-WEB.pdf>
- Basket
- Doll
- White cloth to wrap doll
- Grasses or reeds to cover doll
- Paper strips, pens, pencils
- Chart paper and markers
- Copies of Moses Word Search (end of lesson)

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Exodus 1:8—2:10 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, p. 104, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge,
prepares, and motivates for lesson

(15% of total lesson time)

A Basket and a Baby

Before class place a basket on the table where learners can see. In the basket place strips of plain paper and pens or pencils. Cover with rushes or use fresh greens for rushes. Place a doll wrapped in an old, white cloth on top of the rushes.

Ask:

- What is the potential in the basket?
- If the doll were real, what might the child grow up to become?
- What would you be willing to do to make sure this child fulfills its potential?

Share some ideas.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

From Freedom to Slavery and a Baby

Today's lesson is about a free people pressed into slavery by a threatened pharaoh. It is also about a baby named Moses. We will meet his mother, his sister, and an Egyptian princess. Read the scripture passage; then answer the questions.

⁸Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. ⁹He said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. ¹⁰Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land." ¹¹Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor. They built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh. ¹²But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. ¹³The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, ¹⁴and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labor. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them. ¹⁵The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, ¹⁶"When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live." ¹⁷But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. ¹⁸So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?" ¹⁹The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them." ²⁰So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. ²¹And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. ²²Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live."

—Exodus 1:8–22

- In what country does the story take place? (Have a map available to help locate where Egypt and the Nile River is today.)
- This Pharaoh was afraid of something. What was it?
- Describe Pharaoh's plan.
- What did Egyptians think about Hebrews? What verse tells us how they felt? Was this a new concept? (Look back at previous lessons for help.)
- Who were the Hebrew midwives?
- What decree did Pharaoh make to the midwives?

Now read Exodus 2:1–10 then answer the questions.

¹Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. ²The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him for three months. ³When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. ⁴His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him. ⁵The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. ⁶When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. "This must be one of the Hebrews' children," she said. ⁷Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" ⁸Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. ⁹Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it. ¹⁰When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses because, she said, "I drew him out of the water."

—Exodus 2:1–10

- What did Moses' mother do with her baby? Why?
- Who found him?
- Who took care of the baby?
- What did the mother do when the baby grew older?
- What does the name "Moses" mean?
- Why was Moses put in the basket in the Nile River at that time?
- Why do you think this story was included in the Bible?
- What was God's promise to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph? (See earlier lessons.)
- How does this promise apply to Moses?

Remove the doll and reeds from the basket. Have each learner select a slip of paper and pen or pencil from the basket. Ask them to predict what Moses' life will be like as the grandson of the Pharaoh. Share.

Distribute the Moses Word Search and allow students time to complete.

3 RESPOND

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

Going Deeper:

Heroic Women

Look back at Exodus 1:8–2:10 and list the main characters in the story on chart paper. (Pharaoh or king, Hebrew midwives or Shiphrah and Puah, daughter of Pharaoh, Levite man and woman or mother, sister, boy child or Moses) Beside each character describe the role each played. You will notice the majority of the characters are women, powerful women that defied the ruling made by Pharaoh to kill all Hebrew male children. They saved the babies! Refer to the scripture passage to discover how God worked through them to achieve this in a time when women really had no power and little control over their lives.

Civil disobedience is a strategy in which people refuse to obey the unjust rulings of a government or power in a nonviolent manner. Examples of people practicing civil disobedience are Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Norwegians who sheltered Jewish refugees during World War II, and Nelson Mandela. Can you think of other examples? Would you have the courage to participate in civil disobedience against unjust practices and laws? Discuss.

Serving God

Many learners will already know the story of Moses and how people served God by protecting him as a young child. Thinking about service for God, make a chart of the five Mission Initiatives leaving space under each for writing. Ask learners to list activities they can do to serve God for each initiative. Following are some sample ideas.

- **Invite People to Christ**—have youth parties at church, invite people to a community dinner, invite to class, have church families and other families join in activities
- **Abolish Poverty, End Suffering**—collect clothing and food for people in need, have a fundraiser for another organization, help stock a food pantry, serve a meal at a shelter
- **Pursue Peace on Earth**—visit older people in the community, visit someone who is ill, care for a young child without expecting pay, do something for love, give a hug, read scripture passages about peace
- **Develop Disciples to Serve**—read scripture passages about how Jesus served others, share ideas with friends, design a project for the class that practices some of the ideas on this chart, teach younger children
- **Experience Congregations in Mission**—create an activity for the congregation that explores how everyone can serve God

4

SEND

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

Who Am I?

Many things will happen in Moses' life as he grows up. The next lesson will continue with Moses' life as he leaves Egypt as an adult and has an encounter with God. Today, however, we remember that Moses was an adopted Egyptian, adopted by the pharaoh's daughter. He grew up in a royal household, but then learned he was Hebrew. Learning that information probably caused him much thought and many questions about who he really was. What kind of questions would you be asking? How might this information change your decisions? Your life? How would you live differently? Share and discuss together.

5

BLESS

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

Things happen in our lives we do not plan. Events change, places change, people change, and friends change. How do we handle change? The Bible tells us that God is with us through the changes in our stories. God was with the Hebrews who were pressed into slavery with the change of a new pharaoh. In Moses' story, a new law in the land threatened his family, yet God made it possible for them to be family in a new way. We saw God in the life of Jacob and Joseph, too. God is faithful to God's people. God is with us. Offer a prayer for God's presence in the lives of the learners as they meet life changes each day.

Moses Word Search

E V R E S I S T E R V Q J O A
V L M V U Q Y T G S I Z C T B
V C J S T B I V K O H V Q L Q
W H K T H L A R J S D E E R E
E L O V E B E I D X M W J R B
V Y B A B K U C W U W E U A S
M I R Q R R S O S M V J T K A
A S X U E A Q A V K T N D Z W
I E S H W Z H F B C V U U R E
R S T L S I D P D L G H X K S
I O I A U P R B P O W Q W B S
M M D E X F X L X F K X V O Y
L S S O A D B U O B C J T S L
P Q W E E T E P J F Y Z G O D
X I C L L K H Y X N S O S L Y

BABY
BASKET
GOD
HEBREW
ISRAELITE
LOVE
MIRIAM
MOSES
MOTHER
PHARAOH
REEDS
RIVER
SERVE
SISTER

LESSON 40
30 August 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 17)

Focus Scripture Passage: Exodus 3:1–15

Lesson Focus: God empowers us to serve God despite our weaknesses and fears.

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore the scripture passage about Moses' call to serve God and the Israelites.
- discover words to define God.
- analyze the Enduring Principle All Are Called and how it includes each learner.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Sharing in the Community of Christ*, 4th Edition
- Doctrine and Covenants 163, 164, and 165
- Two pieces of chart paper and markers or one piece of chart paper and sticky-notes and pens
- Brown paper cutouts of feet or sandals
- Plain paper and pens

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Exodus 3:1–15 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, p. 105, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Leader Wanted

God made a promise to Abraham that if the Israelites (Abraham's family and descendants) would serve God, God would bless them with prosperity and many blessings. The Israelites had lived in Egypt since the days of Joseph. They thrived and multiplied. Joseph died and a new pharaoh came to power. The pharaoh was threatened by the growth and size of the Israelite population. Pharaoh made slaves of them forcing them to construct new cities for the Egyptians. The Israelites were suffering under those conditions, but they were faithful to God, and God was faithful to them. God heard their suffering. In today's lesson, God finds a reluctant leader, one of their own, to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. What if God contacted you to complete a project like this? Discuss.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

A Shepherd, a Bush, and a Call to Serve

In a previous lesson, we learned of a baby boy named Moses. The Book of Exodus is the story of Moses' life. There was trouble in Egypt when he was born. His own mother, who became his nurse in Pharaoh's home, trained him in God-things. His Egyptian mother, Pharaoh's daughter, trained him in Egyptian wisdom and learning.

Moses lived 40 years in Egypt before he went to the land of Midian to become a shepherd for a man named Jethro. There he married and had a family. Moses was much older, but he was happy, comfortable with his life, and did not want new adventures. Have you ever made excuses to avoid doing something? Read Exodus 3:1–15 to learn about the turning point in Moses' life. Then discuss the questions.

¹Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ²There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. ³Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." ⁴When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." ⁶He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

⁷Then the LORD said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, ⁸and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." ¹¹But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" ¹²He said, "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain."

¹³But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" ¹⁴God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" ¹⁵God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you: This is my name for ever, and this my title for all generations.'"

—Exodus 3:1–15

- What is the setting? Note that Moses will return to this place.
- What is unusual that catches Moses' attention?
- Whom did Moses find there?
- Who is the first to speak in the passage?
- What does this speaker want to be called?

- What did God ask Moses to do?
- Why did Moses need to take off his sandals?
- What is holy ground? Have you ever heard that term before? Where?
- How did Moses respond to God and the call to serve?
- Why is Moses' life story important to us?

3 RESPOND

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

I Am Who I Am

Distribute markers to each learner. On a large sheet of chart paper have each learner write words to define God. (The teacher may want to give each learner a sticky-note to write his or her definitions and then have the learners share as they put it on the wall.)

Return to today's scripture passage and reread Exodus 3:6, 13, 14, 15 one at a time and discuss each verse. Add to the definition list if needed. Continue reading from Doctrine and Covenants scriptures below, discussing and adding to the chart words that help define God.

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

—Doctrine and Covenants 165:1b

Free the full capacity of Christ's mission through generosity that imitates God's generosity.

—Doctrine and Covenants 165:2a

As revealed in Christ, God, the Creator of all, ultimately is concerned about behaviors and relationships that uphold the worth and giftedness of all people and that protect the most vulnerable.

—Doctrine and Covenants 164:6a

Beloved children of the restoration, your continuing faith adventure with God has been divinely led, eventful, challenging, and sometimes surprising to you. By the grace of God, you are poised to fulfill God's ultimate vision for the church.

—Doctrine and Covenants 164:9a

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 of the dimensions of salvation.

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:2a

Going Deeper

The Potential in the Basket

Remember baby Moses was found in a basket nestled in the reeds near the bank of the Nile River. Little did the mother, the sister, or the daughter of Pharaoh know of the potential within that tiny life. When a baby is born, there is potential for many things. People, events, learning, and decisions

mold that potential for many years. Moses was called by God for an immense task, to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. This land was promised by God to Abraham on the condition that the people would serve God who promised to be with them.

- What might God be calling you to do?
- Are you preparing?
- How can you serve God?

(Make footprint or sandal cutouts of brown paper for learners to write what they will do and who they will ask for help.) Put the footprints or sandals in their Bibles.

4 SEND

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

Reluctant Servant—All Are Called

Moses was a reluctant servant. He stuttered and did not think the Israelites would follow his leadership. Pharaoh would laugh in his face. But God called him and promised to be with him. Moses was empowered to serve despite his reluctance because of God's steadfast, faithful presence. Moses returned to Egypt to lead the Israelites to freedom.

God calls all of us. Read the Enduring Principle All Are Called.

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.

—www.CofChrist.org/enduring-principles

Think about how God is calling you. Maybe it is to serve at a food pantry, maybe it is to visit the elderly, maybe it is to be a good friend or a good listener. Write a sentence beginning with each letter in the word "Moses." Each sentence should be a challenge to yourself about how you will respond to God's call.

My first challenge is to pray for God's strength each day.

O.....

S.....

E.....

S.....

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope

(5% of lesson time)

Sending Forth

The challenges and opportunities are momentous. Will you remain hesitant in the shadows of your fears, insecurities, and competing loyalties? Or will you move forward in the light of your divinely installed call and vision?

—Doctrine and Covenants 164:9e

LESSON 41
6 September 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 18)

Focus Scripture Passage: Exodus 12:1–14

Lesson Focus: Remembering the Passover and sharing our liberation with others.

Objectives

The learners will...

- understand the symbolism of Passover.
- connect the first Passover with the freedom they experience through Christ.
- prepare to share the liberating truth of God through Jesus Christ with others.

Supplies

- Sharing in Community of Christ scavenger hunt, one for each student (end of lesson)
- Copies of *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition (also available in PDF online <https://www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Sharing-in-Community-of-Christ-4thEd-WEB.pdf>)
- Witnessing cards, one for each student (end of lesson)
- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- Paper bag with a question mark written on the outside
- Mystery items: unleavened bread (either the actual object or a picture of it), red streamers or ribbon, wool (or a picture of a lamb), broken or frayed rope, picture to represent “remembering” or “remember” written on a piece of paper
- Optional: prize for the winner of the scavenger hunt
- Pens or pencils

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Exodus 12:1–14 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, pp. 106–107, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Prior to class, place the unleavened bread, the red streamers or ribbon, the wool, the rope, and the representation of remember inside the paper bag. Put the bag somewhere the students will notice. As students enter the room, greet them with the traditional Passover greeting “*Chag pesach samich.*” This means “happy Passover festival” but don’t tell them that yet. Invite them to sit around a table and talk with one another until everyone has arrived.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction

(35% of lesson time)

Once everyone is seated around the table, empty the contents of the mystery bag onto the table so everyone can see what is inside. Have them work together as a group to try to figure out how all of the items are related to one another. If they are able to identify that all of these items relate to Passover, ask them to share with one another what they know about this tradition. Once the group has had time to deliberate and discuss, read Exodus 12:1–14. As you mention each item from the mystery bag within the story, pause and discuss the item and what it symbolizes.

¹The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: ²This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. ³Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. ⁴If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. ⁵Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. ⁶You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. ⁷They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ⁸They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ⁹Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. ¹⁰You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn.

¹¹This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the Lord. ¹²For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. ¹³The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. ¹⁴This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

The unleavened bread: God told the Israelites to make unleavened bread so they would be prepared when it was time to leave. Normally bread is leavened with yeast, and it has to rise before it is baked. God wanted the Israelites to make unleavened bread rather than having to wait for their bread to rise. We, too, must be prepared when God calls.

The wool: God told the Israelites that they were to slaughter a lamb. It was supposed to be blemish free and consumed quickly before the morning. Any part of the lamb that was not eaten was to be offered up as a burnt offering to God. In the New Testament, Jesus is referred to as the Lamb of God.

The red streamers or ribbon: God told the Israelites to use the blood of the lamb to mark their doors. When God sent the plague through Egypt to kill the firstborn sons in each home, God passed over the homes marked with blood and their sons were spared. This is why we call this event Passover.

The broken or frayed rope: In sending this final plague, God freed the Israelites from slavery. We, too, experience liberation through Christ.

Representation of “remember”: God directed the people to celebrate the festival of Passover throughout the generations. We remember the first Passover as part of our sacred story that guides and shapes who we are as Community of Christ.

3 RESPOND

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

In the Old Testament, Passover marks the liberation of the Israelites who were slaves in Egypt. In the New Testament, the Gospels present Jesus himself as the Passover meal when he institutes the first Communion and gives of his own body and blood to free us. The liberation that comes from Jesus is for all of creation, not just a select population. Just as God told the Israelites to continue to observe the festival of Passover, Jesus tells his followers to observe Communion in remembrance of him.

- In what ways do you experience freedom in Christ?
- What do you think it means for Jesus to have come to liberate all of creation? How is that different than the liberation the first Passover provided?
- How do you think we should respond to the sacrifice made by Jesus?

One way we should respond to the sacrifice Jesus made for us is to share his liberating message with all of creation. This can be challenging and scary. Sometimes we hesitate to share our experience with others because we aren't sure what we should say. Explain to the class that preparing to share is one way we can be ready when the Spirit urges us to witness. Community of Christ has a resource called *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*, 4th Edition that summarizes the liberating message of Jesus Christ as we understand it and live it in our faith community. Being familiar with this resource can help us be prepared to share. Invite students to complete a scavenger hunt through this resource using the Sharing in Community of Christ Scavenger Hunt sheet. Students can work independently, in partners, or in groups.

- What did you find most interesting in this resource?
- What is something you learned that you want to share with someone you encounter in your daily life?

4 SEND

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

There are many wonderful things to share about Community of Christ, but students should also be encouraged to share their own stories. Remind them that they shouldn't doubt their own testimonies by sharing with them Doctrine and Covenants 162:8a:

You are a good and faithful people, but sometimes you fail to see the power that is resident in your own story and fellowship. Look carefully, listen attentively, and sense the Spirit among you.

Invite students to consider quietly how God is calling them to share their testimony and fellowship with others. Invite them to fill out a witnessing card with the names of people with whom they plan to share.

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope

(5% of lesson time)

Give students the opportunity to begin praying over their list of names as instructed on the witnessing card. After they have been given time to do so, offer a closing prayer giving thanks and remembering the freedom we receive through Christ.

On what pages can you find pictures of Community of Christ sacraments being performed? _____
How many sacraments are there? _____

Complete the following statement from the description of Mission, Peace, and Justice in the We Are One, We Are Many:
We go to the _____, to the hospitals, to the hungry, to the _____ the world, to risk; we talk about things _____ about. We go to people difficult to go to. We go to build _____, to _____ community.

Find the section on Community of Christ Enduring Principles. Pick one Enduring Principle and describe it in your own words below.

how do you write COMMUNITY OF CHRIST IN SWAHILI?

ACCORDING TO THE WE SHARE SECTION, CREATION IS AN EXPRESSION OF WHAT?

ON WHAT PAGE CAN YOU FIND INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMMUNITY OF CHRIST TEMPLES? _____
HOW MANY TEMPLES DOES COMMUNITY OF CHRIST HAVE?

What do we share in
Community of Christ?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Write the Community of Christ Mission
Statement below:

What are our five Mission Initiatives?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What are the Mission
Initiatives based on?

How many sources of scripture does Community
of Christ have? _____
What are they? _____

Think of someone who is not in class that you feel called to share this information
with. What will you share with them?

My Witnessing Card

After prayer, I feel God has given me the persons named below as my witnessing stewardship:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

I will pray for each one daily.
I will pray to be alert for opportunities to witness to each one.
I will invite them to worship.
I will expect the Holy Spirit to help me.

My Witnessing Card

After prayer, I feel God has given me the persons named below as my witnessing stewardship:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

I will pray for each one daily.
I will pray to be alert for opportunities to witness to each one.
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My Witnessing Card

After prayer, I feel God has given me the persons named below as my witnessing stewardship:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

I will pray for each one daily.
I will pray to be alert for opportunities to witness to each one.
I will invite them to worship.
I will expect the Holy Spirit to help me.

LESSON 42

13 September 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 19)

Focus Scripture Passage: Exodus 14:19–31

Lesson Focus: Trusting in God to journey with us as we follow to where God leads

Objectives

The learners will...

- recognize God's faithfulness to the Israelites.
- be encouraged to leave their comfort zones as they journey with God.
- connect this part of sacred story to the invitation to participate in Christ's mission.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- Video from YouTube of baby ducks jumping from their nests (multiple options available)
- Mission Prayer cards
- Computer
- Projector
- Quotes about risk (provided below), either typed or written
- Tape
- Journals or writing paper
- Pens or pencils
- RSVP cards, one for each student (template at end of lesson)

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Exodus 14:19–31 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, p. 108, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge,
prepares, and motivates for lesson

(15% of total lesson time)

To begin class, show a video of baby ducks jumping from the safety of their nests in the trees to the ground below. There are many videos available on YouTube and can be found by searching “baby ducks jumping from nests.” Select the one that works best for your class. The ducklings must leave the comfort and security of their nests and risk a jump into the unknown. Each one survives and begins their adventure.

- What are the nests in your life? What comfort zones are you currently stuck in?
- What risk is God calling you to take?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

After the Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt, they began their journey to the Promised Land. Just as the baby ducks had to leave the certainty of the nest, the Israelites had to leave the certainty of their lives in Egypt in order to discover the freedom they were promised. Share Exodus 14:19–31 with the group. Let them know that you will read it twice. The first time, they should listen for how God was with the Israelites. The second time they should think of a connection to their own lives and a time when God was with them.

¹⁹The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them.

²⁰It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

²¹Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided.

²²The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. ²³The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. ²⁴At the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. ²⁵He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the Lord is fighting for them against Egypt."

²⁶Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." ²⁷So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. ²⁸The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. ²⁹But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

³⁰Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

Ask:

- How was God with the Israelites as they journeyed?
- The Israelites were protected from the Egyptian army; when have you felt God protecting you? How does this give you courage to journey with God even when the future is not certain?

3 RESPOND

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

Type or write the quotes below and hang them around the room. Invite learners to read each of the quotes thoughtfully and choose one that resonates most with them. When they have picked the quote most meaningful to them, invite them to sit in front of that quote with a journal and writing utensil. As they

sit, give them the journal prompts on which to reflect and write. Pause between each prompt. Once they are finished writing, invite the group back together and offer the opportunity for them to share what they have written. If no one wants to share, that is fine.

Quotes:

1. In any given moment we have two options: to step forward into growth or to step back into safety (Abraham Maslow).
2. Thinking “here goes nothing” could be the start of everything (Drew Wagner).
3. If you are not willing to risk the unusual, you will have to settle for the ordinary (Jim Rohn).

Prompts

- Why did you choose this quote?
- Think of a specific area of your life in which God is calling you to take a risk and trust in God. How does the quote you chose relate to that area?
- In what ways do you believe God is already present in this area of your life?
- How will you intentionally look for God in this area as you leave your comfort zone and take a risk?

4

SEND

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

Provide each learner with a Mission Prayer card. Let them read through the card once by themselves and then read through the card together.

- In what ways were the Israelites led by the Spirit?
- How did they respond?
- What new thing did they risk?

Just as God was with the Israelites, God is with us, too. Give each youth an RSVP response card. Explain what RSVPs are typically used for. Discuss the questions asked on their RSVP cards and brainstorm with the group how they might answer, but also encourage them to answer in a way that reflects their thinking. Invite them to fill out their response to God by answering the questions. Once they have finished, allow them some time to draw or write a reminder of the situation they journaled about on the blank side of the card. Allow them to take their RSVPs with them as a reminder that they are committed to responding to God even in the face of uncertainty.

5

BLESS

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

Close the class by saying the Mission Prayer together, putting special emphasis on the line that says, “Grant me courage to risk something new”!

MISSION PRAYER

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

MISSION PRAYER

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

MISSION PRAYER

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

MISSION PRAYER

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

MISSION PRAYER

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

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Help me be fully awake and ready to respond.
Grant me the courage to risk something new
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Amen*

rsvp

Where is God's Spirit leading you today?

What is in your way of being fully awake and ready to respond?

What specific risk are you going to take this week?

rsvp

Where is God's Spirit leading you today?

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rsvp

Where is God's Spirit leading you today?

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ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 20)

Focus Scripture Passage: Exodus 16:2–15

Lesson Focus: Trusting God to provide and being grateful

Objectives

The learners will...

- recognize how God provided for the Israelites.
- reflect on how God provides for them.
- practice giving thanks for the blessings in their lives.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- Bag of marshmallows and Teddy Grahams (or some other food to represent manna and quail)
- Props for different roles in the scripture (optional)
- Multicolored pick-up sticks (or multicolored toothpicks or M&Ms)
- Copies of Gratefulness Challenge (one per learner)

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Exodus 16:2–15 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, pp. 109–110, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Begin class by playing Would You Rather. Students will stand in the center of the room until you read a “Would you rather...” question. Once the question has been read, learners will either go to the left or the right side of the room depending on whether they chose option 1 or option 2 as their answer. The statements begin silly but as play continues participants will be asked to choose between wants and needs.

- What was difficult about choosing between the two options?
- What is the difference between a want and a need?

Would You Rather Questions:

- Would you rather never eat a cupcake again or only eat cupcakes for the rest of your life?
- Would you rather be able to drink water only and have it always be clean or be able to drink whatever you want but always have a bug in your drink?
- Would you rather have unlimited access to all the music you want or any movie you want?
- Would you rather lose all of your money and valuables or all of the pictures you have ever taken?

- Would you rather have the newest iPhone as soon as it is released for free but always be hungry or would you rather always have enough to eat but only have flip phones?
- Would you rather get to meet any celebrity you wanted but have to live without shelter or have a safe home but be ignored by anyone famous?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Share with learners that as the Israelites journeyed in the wilderness, they weren't always comfortable and didn't have everything they wanted. However, God continuously provided for their needs. Assign class members a role in today's scripture story. If you brought props, such as a staff for Moses, pass those out before you begin reading. Additionally, whoever is playing God will need the bag of marshmallows and Teddy Grahams.

Roles:

- Moses
- Aaron
- God
- Congregation of Israelites- remaining participants

Explain to the group that they will be performing a spontaneous drama. This means that as you read they will have to act out what you are saying. For example, the beginning of the scripture passage explains that the whole congregation of Israelites complained. When you read this sentence, pause to allow time for those playing the Israelites to complain. When God provides quail or manna in the story, pause and have the person playing God throw marshmallows and Teddy Grahams around and have the Israelites collect and eat the food. It is ok for this to be a little silly as they perform.

²The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." ⁴Then the Lord said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not.

⁵On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days." ⁶So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, ⁷and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your complaining against the Lord. For what are we, that you complain against us?"

⁸And Moses said, "When the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the Lord has heard the complaining that you utter against him—what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the Lord."

⁹Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, 'Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining.'" ¹⁰And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. ¹¹The Lord spoke to Moses and said, ¹²"I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.'"

¹³In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. ¹⁴When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. ¹⁵When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat."

Ask:

- Why were the Israelites complaining?
- Why did God instruct the people to gather only enough food for one day? Why did God test them in this way?
- Can you think of a way that God has provided for you in your life?
- How can you intentionally practice gratitude when you feel like complaining?

3 RESPOND

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

This activity will give the group an opportunity to practice gratitude.

The goal of the game is to end with the most pick-up sticks. There will be six rounds with more sticks in play during the final round just as more food was available to the Israelites on the sixth day. Don't use up all of the sticks before the final round. In between each round, the students will share something for which they are grateful for every stick they collected, based on its color. They can't repeat something they have said before and can't repeat something a classmate has said. Encourage students to be specific so that they don't run out of responses too quickly. For example, if the first person to respond says they are grateful for their mom, then no other student can say that. However, if the first person to respond says they are grateful for their mom Carole, another student has an opportunity to share that they are grateful for their mom Jane. If a participant cannot think of something to say that is not a repeated response, they must return all of the sticks they collected that round to the middle of the room for others to collect in the next round.

At the beginning of each round, participants must have two hands on a wall in the classroom. Once you throw the sticks to the center of the room and yell manna, the students may run to the middle and grab as many sticks as they can before returning to the wall. When all of the sticks are collected for a round have each student share what they are grateful for before starting another round of play.

Stick Colors:

Color 1: Name a PERSON you are grateful for.

Color 2: Name a PLACE you are grateful for.

Color 3: Name a FOOD you are grateful for.

Color 4: Name a THING you are grateful for.

Color 5: Name ANYTHING OF YOUR CHOICE you are grateful for.

Ask:

- Why do you think you had to return sticks when you couldn't think of something to be grateful for?
- What makes it difficult to be grateful sometimes in life?
- How can we remember to be grateful to God for what God provides even in those difficult moments?
- How does having an attitude of gratitude change our outlook on life?

4 SEND

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

Invite students to participate in a gratefulness challenge throughout the week and be prepared to share their results in class next week. If you want, offer a prize next week to the individual who completed the most elements of the challenge. Give each learner a Gratefulness Challenge! page. Regardless of whether or not they participate, encourage the youth to look for ways to be intentionally grateful each day.

5 BLESS

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

Offer a prayer of thanksgiving. Before you pray, mention that you will include some silence in your prayer. Encourage learners to speak what they are grateful for into this silence.

Gratefulness Challenge!

Throughout the week, pay attention to how God is blessing your life. Bring a picture or object to answer each of these prompts.

Find something you are grateful for...

- In nature
- At your house
- That makes a beautiful sound
- That smells amazing
- That has been difficult for you
- That tastes good
- That you would want to share with others
- That you recently discovered or learned
- That has words on it
- That makes you feel strong
- That makes you laugh
- That makes you cry
- That represents your country or culture
- That is random

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- That makes you cry
- That represents your country or culture
- That is random

LESSON 44
27 September 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 21)

Focus Scripture Passage: Exodus 17:1–7

Lesson Focus: God’s faithfulness to the Israelites even when they doubted

Objectives

The learners will...

- recognize how God provided for the Israelites despite their doubt.
- reflect on how God provides for and sustains them in their own lives.
- develop a plan to practice intentional gratitude.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- Printed picture of Moses striking the rock (Find one that includes more than just Moses.)
- Rocks (enough for each participant to have one or two)
- Paint pens
- Fan or blow dryer (to dry the rocks quickly)

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Exodus 17:1–7 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, pp. 111–112, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Refer to last week’s Send activity. Give learners the opportunity to share the results of their efforts on the assignment. If you have a large class, consider letting them pair up to share rather than having everyone share with the whole class. Thank them for their intentional awareness of their blessings.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Show learners the picture of Moses striking the rock and water shooting out. Ask them to share what stands out to them in the picture and what they believe is happening in the picture. Tell the youth that you will now read the scripture that tells the story of what is happening in the picture and you want them to pick a place in the picture to be while you read. Invite them to be creative; they can be a person or an object within the picture.

¹From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the

people to drink. ²The people quarreled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?" ³But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" ⁴So Moses cried out to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." ⁵The Lord said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

This passage tells of God providing the Israelites with water in the desert. The Israelites were arguing with and complaining to Moses demanding that he give them water. God instructed Moses to strike a rock with his staff and provided the Israelites with the water they demanded.

- Why do you think the Israelites were still concerned that their needs wouldn't be provided for, even after God saved them from the Egyptians and provided them quail and manna?
- Has there been a time in your life when you were angry with God for not giving you something you needed? What was that like?
- Has God ever provided for you in an unexpected way? How did you respond?

3 RESPOND

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

Explain to the youth that the Israelites were constantly focused on what they didn't have and failed to remember all the ways in which God had provided for them throughout their journey. Their concern about not having water was not unfounded. However, if they had remembered all they had received and been grateful for it, they would have realized that they didn't need to worry at all.

Give each student a rock and provide them with a variety of paint pens. Ask them to decorate their rocks with words or pictures describing something for which they are grateful.

4 SEND

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

Remind the youth that the life of a disciple is not always easy, but God will always be with us as we journey. Doctrine and Covenants 155:8 reminds us,

The call is for workers in the cause of Zion; therefore, neither tarry, nor doubt that I am. I know your perplexities and I am aware of your uncertainties, but if you will call upon my name my Spirit will go before you into whatsoever place you are sent and I will continue to bless you as you have need.

Although discipleship is not easy, when we are intentionally aware of the ways in which God is present in our lives and grateful for them, we find it easier to continue journeying in faith. Invite the youth to find a partner and share their rock(s). After they have shared, ask them to tell their partner where they plan to keep their rock(s). Encourage them to keep it somewhere they will be reminded of God's grace and all they have to be grateful for.

5

BLESS

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

Sing the campfire song “My Lord, He Done Done” and invite youth to contribute suggestions to the song of what God has done for them.

My Lord (my Lord)

He done done.

My Lord (my Lord)

He done done.

My Lord (my Lord)

He done done.

He done did what he said he would do.

He said he'd give us (suggestion)

He done done.

He said he'd give us (suggestion)

He done done.

He said he'd give us (suggestion)

He done done.

He done did what he said he would do.

Repeat

LESSON 45
4 October 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 22)

Focus Scripture Passage: Exodus 20:1–4, 7–9, 12–20

Lesson Focus: Making responsible choices

Objectives

The learners will...

- know the Ten Commandments and be able to apply them to modern-day situations.
- understand Jesus' new commandment.
- explore the Enduring Principle Responsible Choices and consider how they can incorporate it into their lives.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- Modern Day Match Up (enough copies for multiple teams)
- Copies of the Enduring Principle Responsible Choices, available online or in *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, p. 30.
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Scategories recording sheets (one per person)
- Construction paper
- Magazines or printed pictures and words
- Glue
- Scissors
- Pens or pencils
- Paper scraps

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Exodus 20:1–4, 7–9, 12–20 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, pp. 113–114, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Ask youth if they have ever played Scategories. In this game players are given a topic and they have one minute to think of as many things as they can that relate to that topic, one for each letter of the alphabet. For example, if the topic was FOOD, I could write apples, bananas, creamed corn, donuts, and so on for each letter. After the minute is up, players get a point for each item they wrote that no one else had. For example, if two other people had written apple, I would not get any points for it. If no one else had included donut, I would get one point. I would receive two points for creamed corn because it had two

words that started with C. Give each youth a recording sheet. Tell them that their topic is **RULES PARENTS AND TEACHERS HAVE FOR YOU**. After giving them a minute to write, score the round to see who wins.

- What kinds of rules do parents and teachers have for you?
- Why do they have these rules? Is it to be mean and strict?

Parents and teachers set rules for you because they **LOVE** you and want you to have the best life possible. The same was true with the Israelites. God loved them and wanted them to have the best lives possible so God gave Moses the Ten Commandments.

2 **ENGAGE**

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Exodus 20:1–4, 7–9, and 12–20. These verses introduce the Ten Commandments. As you read, define tricky words for the youth but refrain from giving examples.

¹Then God spoke all these words: ²I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ³you shall have no other gods before me. ⁴You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

⁷You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. ⁸Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work.

¹²Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. ¹³You shall not murder. ¹⁴You shall not commit adultery. ¹⁵You shall not steal. ¹⁶You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. ¹⁷You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. ¹⁸When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid and trembled and stood at a distance, ¹⁹and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die."
²⁰Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin."

God's relationship with the Israelites was very different than the relationship we have with God today. Even so, these commandments can still have application in our lives. Split the youth into teams to compete against one another. Give each team the Modern Day Match Up sheet. Challenge them to think of an example of modern-day situations that relate to each commandment. The first team to come up with an example for each commandment wins.

After the competition, explain to the class that part of the reason God's relationship with the Israelites was different than our relationship with God is because Jesus came to establish a new covenant relationship with us. Jesus introduced a new commandment in Matthew 22:34–40:

³⁴When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, ³⁵and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" ³⁷He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." ³⁸This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Ask:

- How are Jesus' new commandments different than the Ten Commandments?

- What are some situations in your personal life where you should apply Jesus' new commandments?
- What are some situations in your community where you should apply Jesus' new commandments?
- What are some situations in the country where we should apply Jesus' new commandments?
- What are some situations in the world where we should apply Jesus' new commandments?

It appears that Jesus believed in living by the spirit of the law rather than the letter of the law. It is with this understanding that we as Community of Christ uphold the Enduring Principle Responsible Choices.

3 RESPOND

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

Share with youth the description of Responsible Choices. It is important to read through each point and discuss what it means. Oftentimes, people make what they believe to be responsible choices but don't use tradition, scripture, or God's guidance as they make those decisions. Making responsible choices isn't about using logic to justify decisions that aren't of God. Rather, it is about being open to God's guidance in our lives and being good stewards of our agency. Additionally, as the description of this Enduring Principle highlights, making responsible choices isn't about judging others for the choices they have made. Rather, it is about inviting others into a fuller life through Christ regardless of past decisions.

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.

Explain to the youth that part of making responsible choices is setting intention. By preparing diligently and with the Spirit's influence, students will be better equipped to make responsible choices in the face of difficult decisions. To begin setting their intention, the youth will use construction paper and magazines to make a collage vision board. This vision board shouldn't simply represent their hopes for their lives; rather it should represent God's hopes for their lives and all of creation. Once they are finished making their vision board, invite them to turn it over and write three responsible choices God is calling them to make in order to make this vision a reality.

4 SEND

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

Remind the class that discipleship is not always easy or popular. Some of the choices we make will be very difficult. Have each youth write his or her name on a scrap of paper and place it folded into a basket. Once everyone's name is in the basket, pass it around and have students pull out a slip of paper. If they draw their name have them return the slip to the basket and grab another. Once everyone has a name explain that the individual on their slip is who they will pray for. They will pray that this person is able to make responsible choices influenced by God throughout their daily life. Determine a set amount of time

that these prayer partnerships should last. Remind the class that as they face difficult decisions in their lives, their prayer partner is praying for them and asking for God to guide them.

5 BLESS

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

Close your time together by singing “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus” CCS 499.

Scategories

Rules Parents and Teachers Have for You

- A: _____
- B: _____
- C: _____
- D: _____
- E: _____
- F: _____
- G: _____
- H: _____
- I: _____
- J: _____
- K: _____
- L: _____
- M: _____
- N: _____
- O: _____
- P: _____
- Q: _____
- R: _____
- S: _____
- T: _____
- U: _____
- V: _____
- W: _____
- X: _____
- Y: _____
- Z: _____

Scategories

Rules Parents and Teachers Have for You

- A: _____
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- M: _____
- N: _____
- O: _____
- P: _____
- Q: _____
- R: _____
- S: _____
- T: _____
- U: _____
- V: _____
- W: _____
- X: _____
- Y: _____
- Z: _____

Commandments	Modern-day Situations
Don't worship other Gods	
Don't worship idols	
Don't use the Lord's name in vain	
Keep the Sabbath day holy	
Honor your father and mother	

Commandments	Modern-day Situations
Don't murder	
Don't commit adultery	
Don't steal	
Don't lie	
Don't covet	

LESSON 46
11 October 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 23)

Focus Scripture Passage: Exodus 32:1–14

Lesson Focus: Staying focused on God's vision for creation even in difficult times

Objectives

The learners will...

- understand how the Israelites worshiped the golden calf because they wanted certainty.
- learn about how to discern God's vision for creation.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- *Yearning for God: Discernment and Spiritual Practices* (online at <https://www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Yearning-for-God.pdf>)
- Chart paper
- Markers
- Homemade game spinner (see directions below)
- Supplies needed (if any) for selected spiritual practice
- Four sheets of paper with numbers 1–4 written (one number per page)
- Music and a way to play it
- Adhesive tape

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Exodus 32:1–14 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: Old Testament*, pp. 115–116, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

As the youth gather, present them with the scenario of a zombie apocalypse. Explain to them that the leaders of our country and of the world are nowhere to be found and they don't know what they should do next. They decide they must leave their home and journey somewhere safer. Ask them collectively to create a list of things they will need for the journey.

- Why did you choose these things to bring along?
- Is there anything not tangible you'd need for the journey?
- Would you need God's protection and guidance?
- Have you had a situation in your life where you didn't know what to do and had to wait for God to respond?

The Israelites weren't facing zombies, but they were facing uncertainty as they traveled to the Promised Land. At one point, Moses went up on a mountain to talk to God. When they were faced with uncertainty and didn't know when their leader would return, they panicked and disobeyed God.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read the youth Exodus 32:1–14.

¹When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." ²Aaron said to them, "Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." ³So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears, and brought them to Aaron. ⁴He took the gold from them, formed it in a mold, and cast an image of a calf; and they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" ⁵When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a festival to the Lord." ⁶They rose early the next day, and offered burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel. ⁷The Lord said to Moses, "Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; ⁸they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'" ⁹The Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. ¹⁰Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation." ¹¹But Moses implored the Lord his God, and said, "O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹²Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. ¹³Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, 'I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'" ¹⁴And the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

Ask:

- What caused the Israelites to be concerned?
- Why was God angry with them?
- What could they have done instead of abandoning God's vision for them?
- Do you think the Israelites would have been less concerned if they had been able to talk to God themselves? Why?
- Has there been a time in your life when you felt uncertainty and acted in a way contrary to God's vision?

Explain that when the Israelites became uncertain, they abandoned God's plan for them and reverted to previous understandings of the divine and how the divine interacts with the world. God was angry because they lacked the faith to continue when things got difficult. Create a T chart with the youth. On one side of the T chart ask them to share ways they currently cope with uncertainty. For example, when

they are feeling overwhelmed, do they binge watch Netflix? Once you have a sufficient number of examples on the first side go back through your list and come up with alternative responses to uncertainty that focus on God. For example, if they watch TV when they are worried about a big test, an alternative response could be to pray that God helps them find motivation and prepares their brain to receive the knowledge before starting to study. The choice to remain focused on God is not always easy or enjoyable. However, just as God was faithful to the Israelites God is faithful to us. We must remain faithful to God's vision for our lives and for all of creation.

3 RESPOND

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

Tell the youth they are going to play a game of uncertainty. Tape the papers with the numbers 1-4 written on them in different corners of the room. For each round of play the students will try to guess on which number the spinner will land. The goal is to not be in the corner that has the same number as the spinner. Students will move to a corner of the room they think will be safe. Play music while they make their choices and stop the music to signify that their decision needs to be made and that no further movement is allowed. Spin the homemade spinner and call out the number on which it lands. Anyone standing in that corner is out. Continue with more rounds until everyone is out of the game.

- How did you decide where to move?
- Was there a way to be certain of your choice?

Explain that it is difficult to be certain of exactly where God is calling us to go. However, unlike the game, there are things we can do to better understand God's vision and be prepared to respond correctly even when we aren't certain.

- What are some ways we can be more in tune with God?
- Are there certain places you feel closer to God? How can you recreate those conditions in your daily life?

4 SEND

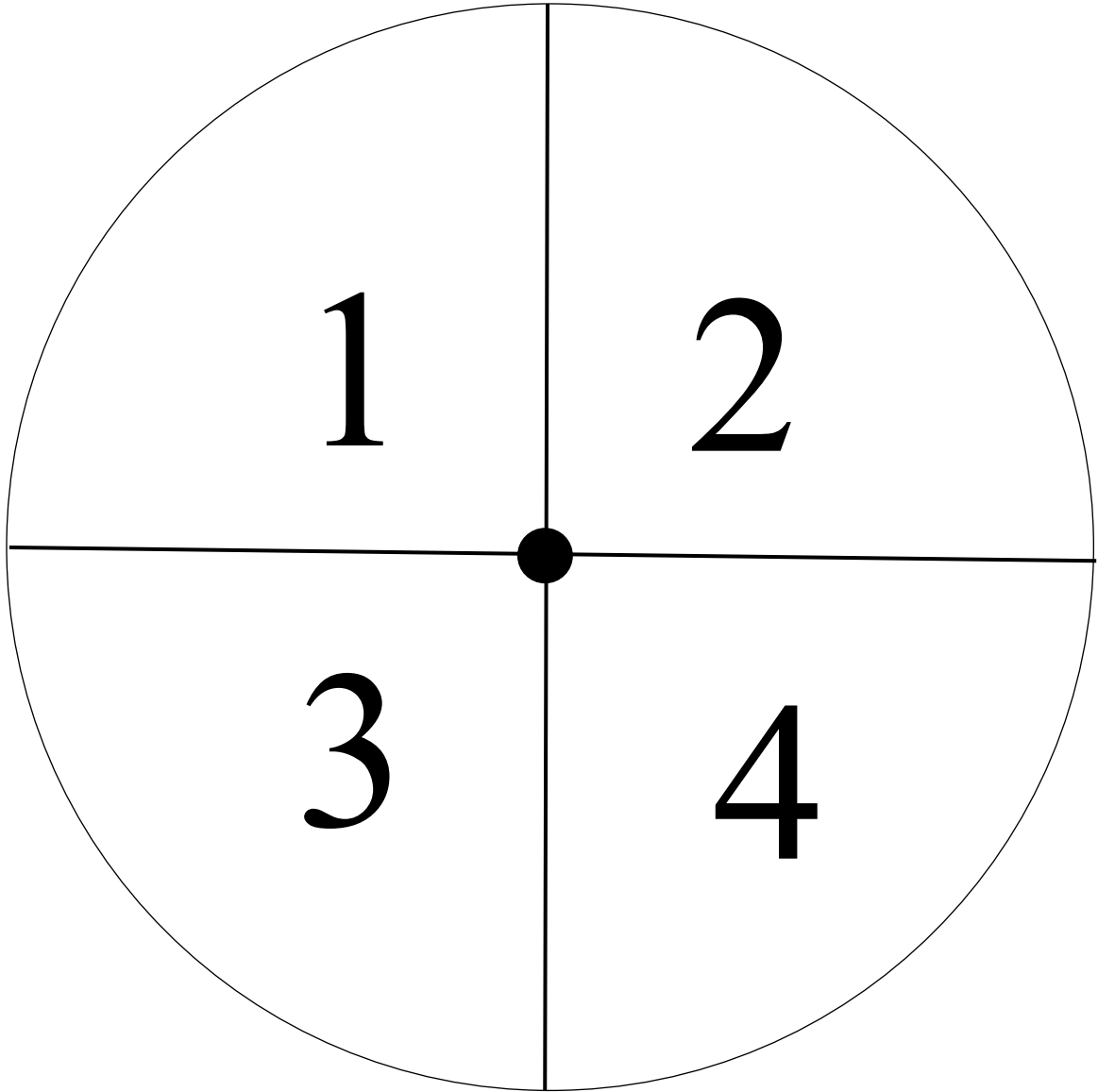
Explores how the lesson might be lived
(10% of lesson time)

Explain to the class that one way we can better know God's vision is to participate in spiritual practices. Just like sports and choir practices help us be better at playing or singing, when we practice spiritually we get better at being with God. There are many spiritual practices. Every one will not work for every person. It is important to find a spiritual practice that works for you so you can deepen your relationship with God. Introduce the class to a spiritual practice from *Yearning for God: Discernment and Spiritual Practices*. If supplies are needed for the chosen practice, make sure to provide them. Invite students to continue trying this practice throughout the week and report back how it went for them. Encourage them to turn to spiritual practices in the face of uncertainty in their lives and in the world.

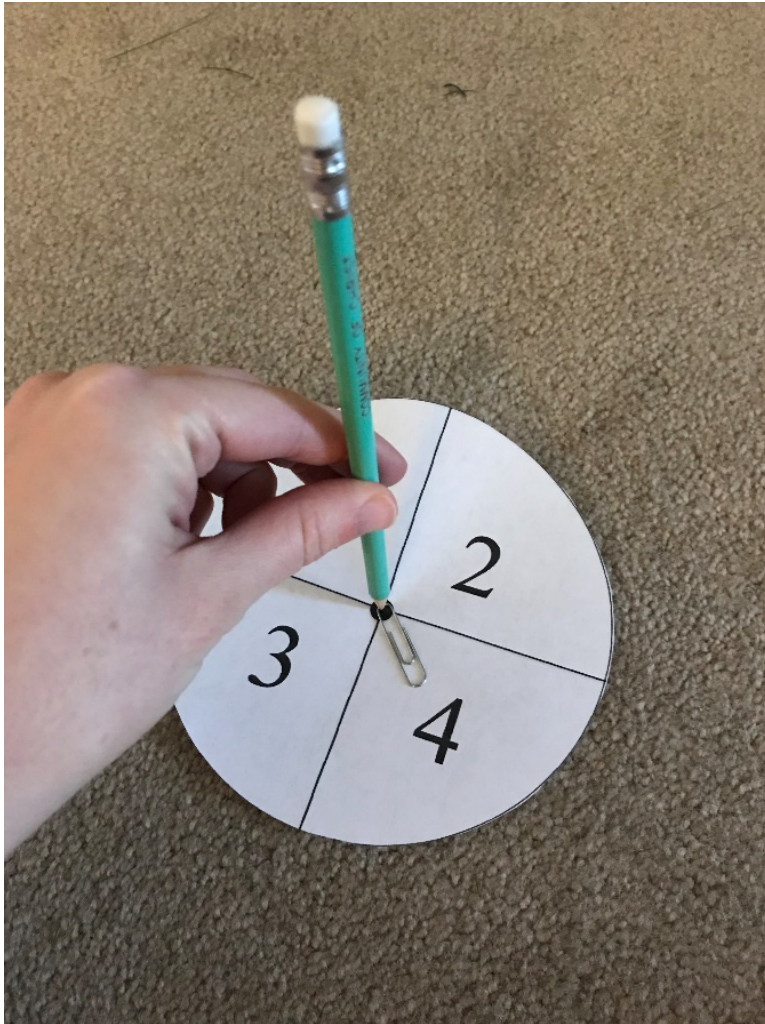
5 BLESS

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

Close by singing "Seek Ye First" CCS 599.



To make this spinner, cut out the circle. Place a paper clip on the dot at the center of the circle and place a pencil inside the paper clip on the same dot. Now, when you flick the paper clip, it will spin around the pencil and land on a number.



LESSON 47
18 October 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 24)

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 22:15–22

Lesson Focus: We belong to God.

Objectives

The learners will...

- recognize God as creator of all things.
- know we belong to God.
- recognize God's generosity in our lives.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- A variety of coins or pictures of coins
- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- Video camera or phone
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 22:15–22 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 110, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Show Me the Money

Display a variety of coins or pictures of coins. Ask the group to identify what is on each one. If coins have the image of a person, identify that person and why they appear on the coin.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Argue like Jesus

The scripture passage for today's lesson takes us into Jerusalem where Jesus is approached by a group of Herodians (Jewish people who were supporters of King Herod; a Jew put in a place of power by Rome

to rule the Jewish population) and Pharisees (religious leaders of the Jewish people who enforced religious law found in the Torah. The Torah is the first five books contained in the Bible used by Christians today.) They quiz Jesus about the appropriate action to take considering the paying of taxes.

Read the scripture passage. (This same event is told in Mark 12:13–17 and Luke 20:20–26. You might want to read these passages, also, to compare how they are alike or different.)

¹⁵Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. ¹⁶So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. ¹⁷Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?” ¹⁸But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹Show me the coin used for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰Then he said to them, “Whose head is this, and whose title?” ²¹They answered, “The emperor’s.” Then he said to them, “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” ²²When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

—Matthew 22:15–22

It is interesting to know the Herodians and Pharisees were enemies, but found a common interest in trapping Jesus. If Jesus would please the Herodians, he would tell them to pay the tax. This tax was required by the Romans to pay the soldiers who enforced Roman rule over the Jews. Essentially, Jews had to pay for their own captivity. If Jesus agreed with the Pharisees, he would tell them not to pay because it would be breaking the Jewish laws of the Torah about having no engraved images. The image on this particular coin, the denarius, was of Caesar, the Roman emperor who considered himself divine. This coin was required for the payment of this particular tax.

Another law broken was that Jewish people only honored one God, the God of Abraham. To possess and use this coin with the image of Caesar would put one in bad standing with religious authorities. So what did Jesus do? He took the question and turned it back on them. What did he say?

- What did the Herodians want from this encounter with Jesus? Did they get it?
- What did the Pharisees want? Did they get it?
- What did Jesus want them to understand when he said, “[Give] to God the things that are God’s”? Do we understand this concept today?
- What are the “things” that belong to God?
- What does the scripture help us understand about priorities? On a piece of paper number from 1 to 10. List the top 10 priorities in your life today. Share with one another.

3 RESPOND

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

There are so many activities and priorities that compete for our time. Social media dominates many waking hours. Think about Facebook, Twitter, internet, television, advertisements, billboards, buses, trucks, and building advertisements which bombard us daily. What messages are prioritized in many of these ads? What do these messages uphold as valuable and important?

Think about the music to which we listen. What messages and values are proclaimed? How do music and media influence your priorities? Are they God’s priorities? What are God’s priorities? Discuss.

Create a short drama or video based on the question, “Your priorities: Where is God in your life?” You may choose a format such as a talk show, an interview, a documentary, or a public service announcement.

4 SEND

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

What Belongs to God? We Belong to God.

Think about the list of top 10 priorities created earlier. In several short sentences, write a personal priority plan for placing God first. Take it home and put it where it can be seen daily.

Going Deeper: Generosity

Faithful disciples respond to an increasing awareness of the abundant generosity of God by sharing according to the desires of their hearts; not by commandment or constraint. Break free of the shackles of conventional culture that mainly promote self-serving interests. Give generously according to your true capacity. Eternal joy and peace await those who grow in the grace of generosity that flows from compassionate hearts without thought of return. Could it be otherwise in the domain of God, who eternally gives all for the sake of creation?

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:9

“We Share Whole-life Stewardship” is a statement of six guiding principles (Sharing in the Community of Christ, 4th Edition, pp. 39–43). Consider the first two principles.

- Principle 1. God gifts each person with boundless grace and unending love. God's gifts for each of us are expressed through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.
- Principle 2. When we faithfully respond to the ministry of Jesus Christ we become accountable to one another, God, and ourselves. Our response to God's gifts of love and grace is to serve others and let generosity become part of our nature.

Design a series of questions based on the scripture passages found in the lesson whose answers create a deeper understanding of a disciple's generous response to God.

5 BLESS

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

Give All to God

Read Psalm 96:1–8.

¹O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. ²Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. ³Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples. ⁴For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods. ⁵For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens. ⁶Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. ⁷Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. ⁸Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts.

—Psalm 96:1–8

Sing together “Can We Calculate Our Giving” CCS 617 or “God Forgave My Sin in Jesus' Name” CCS 627.

LESSON 48
25 October 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 25)

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 22:34–46

Lesson Focus: God's love knows no boundaries.

Objectives

The learners will...

- identify the characteristics of a Christian.
- analyze what it means to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.
- speculate how mission is a response to God's love.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- Paper or sticky notes
- Markers
- Chart paper
- Doctrine and Covenants

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 22:34–46 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 111–112, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

What Do You Love?

Provide each learner with several sticky notes and markers. Ask them to think of the things they love and write one on each note. When all are finished, have them stick the notes on the wall. Ask the learners to look over all of the notes carefully, then classify them in the following groups: Love God, Love Your Neighbor, Love Yourself. (You may want to make labels on larger sheets of paper to place on the wall for greater impact.)

Ask: What does the class love most? Is it balanced?

2

ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction

(35% of lesson time)

Love God, Love Your Neighbor, Love Yourself

In Matthew 22, Jesus tells us that the first and greatest commandment is to love God with all of your heart, soul, and mind. He also says to love your neighbor as much as you love yourself. How important is it to love others even when it is not easy? Jesus puts loving others second only to loving God. It was not easy for Jesus to endure all that he did and still love the people around him.

Ask someone to read Matthew 22:34–46 in which Jesus was again being tested by the religious authorities, and he turned it into a positive, teaching moment for those present.

³⁴When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, ³⁵and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” ³⁷He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ ³⁸This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

⁴¹Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: ⁴²“What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.” ⁴³He said to them, “How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, ⁴⁴‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet”’? ⁴⁵If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?” ⁴⁶No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

—Matthew 22:34–46 NRSV

Jesus never asks us to do anything that he did not demonstrate himself while he was living on earth. He knows our potential. Matthew 5:44 says to love your enemies and bless those that curse you, do good to those that hate you and pray for those that spitefully use you. This is not an easy task that we are assigned; however, it is possible with Christ. “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

Take a few minutes and have students role-play the scripture story found in Matthew. Transfer the concept learned to an experience in the twenty-first century. Demonstrate both a situation where love was forgotten and participants expressed anger toward one another and a situation where love and patience were shown even when it was not deserved.

Commanded to Love

Jesus was well acquainted with the Hebrew scriptures of his day (the first five books of our Old Testament or Hebrew Bible). Confronted by others who were trying to discredit him, he drew on this knowledge not only to divert their attack, but to provide wisdom that would benefit all those who sought to follow him. There are many commandments within the scriptures, and it is difficult to memorize them all. Jesus shared with us two commandments on which all others are based. Read Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18.

- Why would Jesus have chosen these scriptures out of all the others in the Jewish law to answer the Pharisees?
- What if Jesus had selected any of the other 613 Jewish laws? What effect would this have had?
- Would the Pharisees have questioned Jesus why he chose one above another?
- By responding as he did, what was Jesus saying about love and living our lives?

3 RESPOND

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

How Do We Show Our Love for God?

Make three columns on chart paper with the headings: Heart, Soul, and Mind, one word for each column. Read verses 37–44 again. Mission, going to the world with the message of love Jesus Christ taught, is a response to God’s love for us, and mission is how we show love for our neighbors. Discuss ways “to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind,” and fill in the chart with suggestions.

Going Deeper

Love Knows No Boundaries

Emigration and immigration are words heard often in today’s world. Emigrate is to leave one’s country to settle in another country. Immigrate is to move into another country to live permanently. What have you heard about these topics recently? Discuss.

The Shema is a Jewish prayer found in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. It is the most important prayer in Judaism and is recited morning and evening in Jewish households and services. Jesus would have said this prayer at home. Read the prayer. Jesus says to love your neighbors as yourself. How does this concept fit with all you hear about emigration, immigration, and Christianity?

Read these selections from the Doctrine and Covenants and answer the questions above again with the perspective from the Doctrine and Covenants passages.

Doctrine and Covenants 161: 2a; 3a–d; 6b

Doctrine and Covenants 162: 2c; 3b 4a–b; 6a–c; 7a; 8c

Doctrine and Covenants 163: 3b–c; 4a

Doctrine and Covenants 164:6a, c; 9

Doctrine and Covenants 165:1, 3e

- What have you heard about immigration from Christians and other faiths in your community?
- How does the concept found in the Shema fit with what you hear?
- What discoveries were made by reading the passages from the Doctrine and Covenants?
- How does this information redefine “mission” for you?

4

SEND

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

Creating Your Own Hallmark

A hallmark, by one definition, is a mark of quality or excellence. What hallmark or standard does Jesus set in the scripture passage today?

A popular way to show you care or you are thinking of someone is with a greeting card or e-card. If you want to share your best knowledge and love of God with someone in any situation, how would you express it? Design a greeting card or e-card to send to someone this week or create greeting cards to deliver to the congregation during today's worship that convey the essence of the message found in Matthew 22:34–46.

5

BLESS

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

Love Is the Reason

Our kindness to others is a reflection of the love of God in our lives. By Jesus' example, we can truly know what it is like to love all. Close class by reciting together the Mission Prayer.

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

LESSON 49

1 November 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 26)

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 23:1–12

Lesson Focus: Humble servants practice what they preach.

Objectives

The learners will...

- recognize Jesus Christ as the ultimate humble servant.
- distinguish between following rules and giving your heart over to God.
- identify ways to be humble servants for God.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Doctrine and Covenants
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition
- Magazines and newspapers
- Scissors, glue, markers, tape
- Two sheets of chart paper
- Paper
- Pens/pencils

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 23:1–12 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 114–115, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Who Is a Servant?

Ask the group to give examples of people who serve them. Set a time limit of three minutes to encourage quick thinking. If the group is large enough, divide into teams to compete. Record examples on a chart. (Examples might include firefighters, police, teachers, doctors, ministers, mail carriers, nurses, government officials.) Then by each example put a name of a local person who fills that capacity in the community. Discuss what type of service each position provides and who benefits from the service. Ask the group if anyone has a story to share about benefiting from a service on the list.

2

ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction

(35% of lesson time)

Rabbi, Teacher, Servant

After the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 CE, the rabbis preserved the Jewish religion and culture. Today rabbis are similar to ministers, leading religious services and guiding Jewish worshipers in synagogues. Calling Jesus a rabbi showed the respect Jesus' disciples held for him as an educated man, one who could interpret the law and the significance of the laws for everyday life. He held the attention of large crowds as well as a small group of followers. The disciples didn't want to be mere listeners; they wanted to study with Jesus to discover the meaning of life and how to know God. Jesus asked questions and listened carefully to the disciples' answers. He encouraged them to speak freely, which helped him form lessons to get this message across to the disciples. Jesus was unlike any rabbi or priest they had met. Jesus' mission was to point to himself, not as a mere man living in the world, but as an example of how to live a life guided by God's word.

In the following scripture passage, Jesus discusses what a rabbi or teacher should and should not be. He pointed out the importance of noticing all the characteristics of the rabbis that disciples should follow and try to imitate. He warned them to be observant, to watch what the scribes and Pharisees said and did. He praised the scribes and Pharisees for teaching great principles of Moses' law such as respect for other people. But strict adherence to laws does not bring a person to God. Religion should not be a burden to bear. It should be a joyous experience to come into God's presence in worship. Read Matthew 23:1–12.

¹Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ²"The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; ³therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. ⁴They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. ⁵They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. ⁶They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, ⁷and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi. ⁸But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. ⁹And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. ¹⁰Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. ¹¹The greatest among you will be your servant. ¹²All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

—Matthew 23:1–12

- To whom was Jesus speaking?
- About whom was Jesus speaking?
- What are Pharisees, scribes, and rabbis? (*In Jesus' day, a rabbi was a man well educated in Jewish laws and traditions. A priest at that time was a descendent of Aaron with special authority to perform sacred rites within the temple. A rabbi was not a priest [having no temple authority], but a priest could be a rabbi if he had sufficient training in Jewish law. Scribes were rabbis who studied law and could become judges or occupy governmental positions. Pharisees, also very well-educated rabbis, emphasized strict interpretation and observance of the Mosaic law in both its oral and written form.*)
- What is the connection to Moses' seat? (*Moses' seat is a metaphor for the religious authority held by leaders of the synagogues.*)
- Whom might Jesus challenge today? Give examples.
- What was Jesus saying in vv. 3–9?
- What are some examples of this type of behavior?

- Why is it important to some people?
- What are phylacteries and fringes? (*Phylacteries are small boxes containing passages from the Torah. They are attached by leather straps to the arm and forehead of Jewish men during morning prayers. Borders of their garments or “fringes long” refer to tassels attached to the corners of prayer shawls as a way to remember God. See Deuteronomy 22:12.*)
- Who will be your servant and what does that mean?
- What is the paradox (*a phrase that appears contradictory but isn’t*) in v. 12? What is its meaning?
- What is humility? Have two or three group members act out scenes of humility, and have the others guess what activity is taking place.
- How did Jesus practice what he preached? Give examples.

3 RESPOND

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

Being a Servant

There are many stories in the scriptures of people who chose to become servants for others. Divide the scriptures below among the group. Search the scriptures to find who and how these individuals became servants of God.

Exodus 3:1–4	Isaiah 6:1–8	1 Corinthians 9:19–23
Acts 9:36–42	2 Kings 4:8–11	Luke 1:5–17, 26–32
1 Samuel 3:1–10	Esther 4:15–16	

- What characteristics do these servants share?
- Did they practice what they preached?
- What does God expect of a servant?
- What makes a person choose to become a servant for God, for your community, and for your family?
- Can you be a servant as Jesus was?

4 SEND

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

Make Me A Servant

Jesus calls (Doctrine and Covenants 161:6b) and challenges all of us to live in the world as humble servants (Matthew 23:11–12). Paul modeled (23:8–9) the role of servant by living among those he served (Romans 1:12). The call is part of Community of Christ heritage and future (Doctrine and Covenants 4 and 161). Make a choice, prepare to be a servant (Doctrine and Covenants 5:21e), and witness of God’s love for all people. Know the joy that comes from serving God (Doctrine and Covenants 156:11b and 165:6). Clip words from magazines and newspapers to glue on chart paper making a word collage titled “Be a Servant.”

Going Deeper

Practicing Servants: Let's Do It

What people do you know who have fun in their faith, who worship with a thankful and joyous spirit? Who is humble? Whose example do you want to follow? What actions of theirs are like the actions of Jesus?

Doctrine and Covenants 165:1 offers Mission Initiatives to guide the way to become a practicing servant. *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, pp. 20–25, provides more information. As a group set servant goals for the next month for each of the Mission Initiatives. Follow up to plan, carry out, and evaluate your goals.

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope

(5% of lesson time)

Imitate the Original

We see Jesus as our example. People in their journey toward Christ can lead us only so far. Remember to make Jesus Christ, the original example of a servant practicing what he preached, your guide. Sing together “Make Me a Servant” CCS 597.

LESSON 50
8 November 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 27)

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 25:1–13

Lesson Focus: We prepare to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

Objectives

The learners will...

- respond to the call to prepare for Christ's coming.
- understand the importance of being ready.
- discover qualities of a disciple.
- design a message that communicates what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

Supplies

- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Bible (NRSV recommended and other versions to compare)
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition
- Chart paper (2 pieces), tape
- Markers
- Paper and pens
- Supplies for "Mission Possible"

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Matthew 25:1–13 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 116–117, available through Herald House.

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

Oops! I'm Not Ready!

Ask group members to share stories about when they've been late for an event or unprepared for an assignment or test.

When we get ready for a party, a game, or a test, we usually do certain things to prepare ourselves for what is about to happen. What do we do to prepare?

2

ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction

(35% of lesson time)

Ready or Not, Here I Come!

Read Matthew 25:1–13 from several Bible versions.

¹“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ²Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; ⁴but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. ⁵As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. ⁶But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ ⁷Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹But the wise replied, ‘No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ ¹⁰And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. ¹¹Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ ¹²But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you.’ ¹³Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

—Matthew 25:1–13

This passage is a parable, one of the stories told by Jesus to illustrate and teach a spiritual lesson. Consider these questions:

- What was the situation in this scripture?
- What was the job of the bridesmaids?
- Why did some bridesmaids go with the bridegroom and the bride to the banquet and others did not?
- What if the five bridesmaids who had enough oil shared their oil? What were the possibilities?
- Does this mean we shouldn’t share?
- What new understanding do you think each group of bridesmaids gained?
- To whom do you think Jesus was telling this story? (*Jesus’ audience was Jewish. The disciples would be very familiar with the images and traditions in this story.*)
- What was Jesus describing? Look to Matthew 24 to see why this parable was told.
- This parable is very symbolic. Whom does the bridegroom represent? (*Jesus*)
- Whom do the bridesmaids represent? (*the church*)
- What does the bridegroom’s coming represent? (*the Second Coming of Christ*)
- What does the oil symbolize? (*deeds of love and mercy*) (See Matthew 25:31–46. Jewish tradition used oil as a symbol of good deeds.)
- What do you think was Jesus’ lesson?

3 RESPOND

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

Time to Prepare

In the scripture story of the ten bridesmaids and the oil lamps, all of the bridesmaids anticipated the bridegroom's arrival and all brought their lamps. However, some anticipated the need to be more prepared. They were wise and brought extra oil with them. If they ran out of oil in the lamp, they at least had some to spare. Others were distracted by the excitement and did not consider what would happen if the bridegroom was late in arriving. But because they had to go buy more oil, they missed the wedding feast. They could not understand why they were not allowed to enter because, after all, they had done what was expected of them. Their lack of preparation caused them to fall short of their goal. The lesson here is—good intentions don't always get good results.

If we learn anything from the bridesmaids, it should be that even though we have a purpose or goal, we must take responsibility for our actions and be ready for anything that may come our way. We need to be wise with the use of our talents, time, and money. We need to prepare, learn, and study as much as possible so we can deal with any situation that may arise—even those we cannot foresee.

Brainstorm ideas and activities that we, as God's people, need to do to be wise and be ready. Write the ideas down on a chart. Have each group member select one item from the chart and create a plan they think would prepare a person for Christ's mission. Share plans.

4 SEND

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

Mission Possible

Select one or two of the plans created above and choose a method to communicate the need to prepare for Christ's mission from the list below.

- Facebook, YouTube, Twitter or another form of social media
- Television, radio, or newspaper advertisement
- Poster, pamphlet, or flyer
- Poem, short story, or lyric
- Motivational speaker, minister, or coach

Have paper, pens, markers, scriptures, art supplies, and additional items available for group members to use to create their message. Ask those who would like to share with the group to present their message. If group members would like to share their presentations with the congregation, check with the worship coordinator about using their products in future worship services.

Going Deeper

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

Matthew tells how one who is committed to serve must be prepared and live expectantly for each opportunity to serve. It is not a passive commitment, but an active one. Preparation consists of whatever it takes: study, prayer, fasting, and service. In the parable of the ten bridesmaids, the groom did not arrive at the expected time. Only those who prepared with extra oil were there to greet him.

- How would you persuade someone to become a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- Evaluate the significance of the parable of the ten bridesmaids and commitment of discipleship for today.

5

BLESS

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

Be Wise, Be Ready

Read Doctrine and Covenants 162:7.

7a. There are many lives waiting to hear the redeeming words of the gospel, or to be lifted from hopelessness by the hands of loving servants. But they will be lost to you without the generous response of disciples who share from their own bounty that others may know the joys of the kingdom.

b. Many are fearful and believe their security is to be found in the accumulation of possessions. The answers you seek are not inherent in the things of this world but in a faith that places its trust in the promises given to all who would follow Jesus Christ.

c. You have been given the principles of generosity, rightly interpreted for a new time. These principles call every disciple to tithe faithfully in accordance with means and capacity. Those values, deeply rooted in the Restoration faith, affirm that stewardship and discipleship cannot be divided and are dependent upon each other.

d. 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. You are called to build that home and care for it, but also to share equally in the outreaching ministries of the church. In that way the gospel may be sent to other souls also yearning for a spiritual resting place.

Challenge group members to be wise, be ready, prepare their hearts and minds, and shape their lives as disciples of love and mercy. Sing “What Is the World Like” CCS 385 or “Jesu, Tawa Pano” CCS 71. Close with prayer.

LESSON 51
15 November 2020

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 28)

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 25:14–30

Lesson Focus: God invites us to use our gifts and talents for building God's vision of shalom.

Objectives

The learners will...

- identify their God-given gifts and talents.
- explore ways to responsibly develop and use gifts and talents as generous disciples.
- explain how gifts and talents can integrate with Mission Initiatives.

Supplies

- Bible
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Chart paper (9 pieces)
- Markers
- Paper and pens

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 25:14–30 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 118–119, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Decisions

Ask group members what they would do with an infinite amount of money. Make a list of the things they imagined and discuss how they would make their ideas real.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Talents

In the parable of the talents found in Matthew 25:14–30, the man distributed talents to his servants. A talent in this scripture was a monetary unit valued at more than a worker's wages over a period of fifteen years. Read the parable.

¹⁴“For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; ¹⁵to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each

according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. ¹⁷In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. ¹⁸But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' ²¹His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' ²²And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.' ²³His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' ²⁴Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; ²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' ²⁶But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? ²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. ²⁹For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. ³⁰As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

—Matthew 25:14–30

God asks us to be good caretakers over what we are given. That means we are expected to handle things with responsibility. Whether God has blessed our lives with money or a particular talent, it is important to use these things wisely. God calls us to use them for the needs of others. It says in 1 Corinthians 4:2 that it is required that we be found faithful. Too many times the gifts God entrusts to us are used for our own wants and priorities instead of God's. Like the three servants in Matthew 24 that were given responsibility to use their talents, when we use our gifts wisely, when we take a risk with God, God will provide abundance. Those that squander their gifts find that they soon have little left. They use their gifts for their own agendas and soon find that God will place those responsibilities with someone who will use them well.

Prepare to act out this passage. If possible, perform it for a younger audience. Another option is to become movie directors. Decide which of today's actors would fill each role. Tell what qualities made each actor the best for the role.

3 RESPOND

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

Multiply

What are some of the responsibilities that God places in our care? What are some of the ways that we can use what God has given us to help others? Ask each group member to make a list of the talents and skills they have. Ask group members to suggest gifts and talents they see in other group members like humor, charity, joy, or organization. Ask each to make a list on paper of the ways their talents can be used to help others.

Write Principles 3, 4, 5 and 6 of A Disciple's Generous Response on four different large sheets of paper. Ask group members how each of the gifts in the group, from the lists they compiled, could work within these principles adding their thoughts to each appropriate page. The principles are:

Principle 3—Managing the money we have, no matter the amount, expresses our desire to love and help God, neighbors, ourselves, and the world. When we focus our giving on God's purposes, our hearts become more aligned with God's heart.

Principle 4—Tithing is a spiritual practice. It is a gift of thanksgiving to God in response to God's generous gifts to us. When we share our tithes, the church can spread joy, hope, love, and peace around the world so others can experience God's generosity, too.

Principle 5—Saving is a way to prepare for the future. It gives us the chance to extend our love and create a better tomorrow for our families, friends, the church's mission, and the world.

Principle 6—Responsible spending is a commitment to live a healthy, happy life together with God and others. The teachings of Jesus challenge us to make lifestyle choices that are often counter-cultural.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 4th Edition, pp. 40–42
(Additional information for discussion is available on this page.)

- How can my talents and skills be multiplied for God?
- How do we use these gifts to help change the world?
- How can we use them to convey God's mission of shalom?

Going Deeper

Christ's Mission Is Our Mission

The mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead.

—Doctrine and Covenants 164:9f

For each Mission Initiative identify group members' gifts and talents that can be engaged in the mission of Jesus Christ. How can each member take a risk like Jesus did? Make a chart for each initiative and let group members record how they can use their gifts and talents for each one.

Invite People to Christ—Christ's mission of evangelism

Abolish Poverty, End Suffering—Christ's mission of compassion

Pursue Peace on Earth—Christ's mission of justice and peace

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

Experience Congregations in Mission—Equip congregations for Christ's mission

4

SEND

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

Servants

The servants praised by their master took their challenge seriously. They took a risk, wisely invested what they were given, and produced more that they could share. For their good work, they were rewarded with greater responsibility and joy in knowing they were serving their employer well. Reflect and share about the following questions.

- What risk are you willing to take as a generous disciple of Jesus Christ?
- In what ways are you using talents wisely?

- How can you develop gifts and talents?
- What can you do this week to use your gifts and talents for someone?
- Where can you risk yourself for Christ's mission?

5

BLESS

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

In the book, *The Prophet*, Kahlil Gibran wrote,

You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself
That you truly give....There are those who give with joy, and that joy is their reward...

It is well to give when asked, but it is better to give unasked, through understanding;

And to the open-handed the search for one who shall receive is joy greater than giving.

—Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet* (New York: Knopf), 1972, pp. 20–22

Thought for the week: Consider this week how to develop your gifts and talents in ways to serve Christ's mission. That is what matters most. Close with prayer.

LESSON 52
22 November 2020

REIGN OF CHRIST

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 29)

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 25:31–46

Lesson Focus: Our choices matter in the mission of Jesus Christ.

Objectives

The learners will...

- describe responsible choices.
- examine who are “the least.”
- demonstrate acts of mercy.
- analyze what it means to live as a disciple.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Pictures of faces (See “At First Glance.”)
- Chart paper
- Markers

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 25:31–46 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 120–121, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

At First Glance

Prepare pictures of a number of familiar faces, not extremely well known by today’s students, from magazines, copied from library books, or printed off the internet. Select a mix of ethnic groups, races, and cultures. Make enough black-and-white copies of the pictures so several will be left over and no one will be forced to take the last picture. On the back attach the reason the people are known and why they are valued by God. Spread the pictures out on the floor of the room. When group members arrive, ask them to select a picture of a person with whom they would be willing to eat a meal. Instruct them not to turn over the picture, and when they’ve made their selection, sit down.

Whom they have chosen is not so important as the thoughts and judgments they make in their selection process. Start the discussion by asking the whole group why the leftover pictures were not chosen. Then ask each person why they chose the picture they did. Include these questions in the discussion:

- What do you look for in another person when you first meet them?
- What impresses you most?
- Do you go through an elimination process? (ugly or fabulous; black, white, or brown; rich or homeless; dating material or freaky) Describe your process.
- Why do you make first impressions of others?
- Do your thoughts indicate how these people will be treated?

After the discussion, ask group members to turn their pictures over to reveal that person's information. Was anyone surprised? Were any first impressions inaccurate? What message comes from this activity?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Sheep and Goats

If possible, divide the class into two groups. Designate the group on the right as the sheep, and the group on the left as the goats. Read the scripture passage to the class. Ask for reactions from each group. How did the sheep feel about the outcome of the story? What did the goats think? What questions does this story raise?

This parable, the parable of the ten bridesmaids, and the parable of the talents were told by Jesus to his disciples just days before his death. Jesus knew he was nearing the end of his public ministry and was leaving instructions for his closest circle of friends, the disciples, until he would return. The author of Matthew thought these stories were important enough to include them in his writing. Read Matthew 25:31–46 again, and search for answers to the questions following.

³¹“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ ⁴⁰And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ ⁴¹Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴²for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ ⁴⁵Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ ⁴⁶And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

—Matthew 25:31–46

- What are the characteristics of the sheep described in the scripture?
- What are the characteristics of the goats?

- What was the criteria Jesus used for judgment?
- What does the phrase “the least of these” mean?
- How did the disciples respond to this parable and to human needs?
- Can you find examples in the Bible where the disciples chose to act as sheep or goats? Begin with these:
 - Mark 6:7–13 (Jesus gave the disciples authority to go out two by two to heal and preach and they did.)
 - Luke 9:54 (“Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”)

Make a chart of the information you find.

3 RESPOND

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

When Did We Meet You?

Act out the following scenarios for the others to identify the situation and describe how ministry might be provided in the situation. Begin with these, and then have the group create some of their own.

You have several pieces of clothing that you don’t wear any more. They are in good condition, but they are too small for you. A family living close to you recently had a lot of smoke damage in their home due to a fire.

A teenager from another congregation is visiting your church this morning and he might feel out of place. You do not know him personally. Your friends are sitting on the other side of the church.

A person at your school was severely hurt in a motorcycle accident. She has a broken leg and has to stay home for a while. You wonder if she would like to know what is going on at school, but you don’t know her very well.

4 SEND

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

Choices: Sheep or Goats

How do we become part of all Jesus promised his disciples? Where do we fit on the sheep-and-goats chart? Jesus created for the disciples a visual image they could easily understand as he taught them about moral choices and judgment at his final return. What images might Jesus use today to help us understand the same message? Discuss ideas.

Our positive response to Jesus’ instruction to reach out to “the least of these” is expressed in our acts of compassion and mercy. What have we failed to do even when we already knew the expectation? When have we met Jesus in the form of the homeless, the hungry, the thirsty, the child, the stranger, the sick, or the prisoner? Jesus taught us to love our neighbor, to treat all we meet with respect. How will you reach out and touch others in the name of Jesus Christ this week?

5

BLESS

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

Be Jesus' Hands and Feet

Sing "Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love" CCS 367 or "Whatever You Do" CCS 355.

Read together:

The mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead.

—Doctrine and Covenants 164:9f