

Signal Communities...

Live Christ's Mission

Lessons for Children Ages 6–11

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Independence, Missouri, USA

Format and Structure

The purpose of this course is to introduce children ages 6–11 to the idea of signal communities; to deepen their understanding of signal communities; and to talk about our being called to create signal communities. This course will explore how signal communities reflect the peace of Jesus Christ, embrace continuing revelation, challenge us to make responsible choices, pursue peace, honor the sacredness of creation, and proclaim and fulfill Christ's mission. Some of these key points are Community of Christ's enduring principles. This lesson series completes the exploration of enduring principles begun with "Wholeness through Christ," Reunion 2011 lessons.

This course includes six lessons and an original children's chapter book, available for free download in PDF format. With original artwork created for this series, each chapter illustrates the daily theme focus. Artwork may be printed for display in the classroom. These materials are available at www.CofChrist.org/onlineresources/reunion.

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Signal Communities...

Reflect Christ's Peace

Session 1

Focus:

Share the Peace of Jesus

To introduce the concept of signal communities by hearing the first chapter of the story *Signal Community*. To discover that the inspiration for a signal community comes from a dream which others have shared that can be captured and lived out by everyone.

Focus Scripture

The disciples are sent into the world to spread the good news of Jesus Christ and build signal communities of justice and peace.

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:5a,
adapted for children

Objectives

The learner will...

- experience what a “signal” is.
- be able to give a definition of a “signal community.”
- read *Signal Community* chapter 1 and discuss the concept of building signal communities of justice and peace
- identify the elements of a signal community to create a wall mural with the class

Materials

- Create a “Welcome to Signal Community” sign with bell and light (see *Signal Community* book illustration for sample)
- Print copies of the storybook *Signal Community* from www.CofChrist.org/onlineresources/reunion. Print a complete copy per child, but give them only the chapter you’re reading each day. They may assemble these into a book.
- Print the six illustrations of *Signal Community* on large poster paper to display as each chapter is read in class
- Art supplies to develop a signal community as a mural or three-dimensional model: washable markers, crayons, colored pencils, tape, scissors, long sheets of newsprint, duct tape, recycled materials, small milk cartons, checkbook boxes and other items. Set up a tabletop, heavy cardboard, or wooden base to hold the 3-D city. Draw on roads and lakes. Chenille wires may be used to make trees; draw and cut out 3-D people. **Use recycled materials as much as possible.**
- A poster of Doctrine and Covenants 163:5a (adapted for children)

Resources

- *Signal Community* story downloadable at www.CofChrist.org/onlineresources/reunion
- Bible (New Revised Standard Version), such as the *NRSV Children's Bible* (Abingdon Press, 2006. ISBN 9780687332458)
- Doctrine and Covenants 163:5a and 164:9
- Romans 12 NRSV

Before class, turn off the lights and set up the “Welcome to Signal Community” sign. Ring the bell and turn on the light (or use a flashing light as in a lighthouse) as children enter the room. Gather them to discuss:

- What got your attention to come into the classroom? (the light, the bell) Identify these as “signals.”
- What does a signal do? (alerts us of something, shines a light on what’s there)
- Have you had a dream that made you want to do something or create something?
- Did you follow your dream? What was your dream? What did you create? Tell about it.

We’re going to read a story about a young girl’s dream. She followed her dream; she invited her friends to help her, and together they created something better than she imagined.

1 Gather

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson.

2 Engage

Invites exploration and interaction.

Display the illustration for chapter 1 of the story *Signal Community*. Plan space for a “gallery” of these illustrations, adding a new picture as you read subsequent chapters of the story.

Read the story to the children, or give each a copy of the chapter and read along with them, inviting them to read different paragraphs or the voices of different characters where there is dialogue.

Discuss:

- Who are the main characters in this story?
- Where do they live?
- What was Sara’s dream? Was it her dream or someone else’s dream?
- What happened on the first day in the park?
- Describe Signal Community. What did the kids do there after they built it?
- Would you like to build or live in a place like Signal Community?

The idea of a signal community, one that follows Christ’s way of living and is an example to others, is a key part of God’s shalom. A community like this is made up of people who scripture has



called “the pure in heart.” It is defined in scripture as a city on a hill, an ensign (sign) of peace. A signal community is where we can find inner peace, but also where we live with others in loving relationships that are just and fair, where we can forgive and reconcile (work out) our problems with others, where there’s no poverty, and we live in harmony with nature. Such a place can be real...a place that we can help create.

- Community of Christ has wanted to create signal communities many times in its history, at Kirtland, Ohio; Nauvoo, Illinois; Independence, Missouri; and other places. Signal communities can be built in places like cities, but can also exist in places like family camp, in your congregations, and anywhere people are trying to live as God hopes we will.

Display and read Doctrine and Covenants 163:5a from the poster prepared before class:

The disciples are sent into the world to spread the good news of Jesus Christ and build signal communities of justice and peace.

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:5a, adapted for children

3 Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing.

Build a Signal Community

Would you like to create a signal community just as Sara and her friends did? What would be in your signal community?

On a flip chart or newsprint, record the children's brainstorming. From this exercise, you will get clues that indicate what the children understand or can imagine about a signal community. These questions might help their brainstorming.

- What are the favorite places in your neighborhood, town, or city right now? Parks? Sports fields? Restaurants? Why are they your favorite places? Should we add something like that to our city?
- What other features should our city have? Bicycle lanes on city streets? Walking trails? Dog parks? Library? Add those to the city.
- What would people enjoy in a city like Signal Community? Let's add that to our mural.

Provide supplies for children to create a Signal Community mural along the wall or a three-dimensional model on a table. They may draw buildings, roads, bridges, and more (but not people yet).

OPTION

Create a 3-D Signal Community model instead by decorating small milk cartons and small boxes as buildings. Set up a tabletop, heavy cardboard or wooden base to hold the 3-D city. Draw the roads and lakes. Chenille wires or twigs may be used to make trees. Use recycled materials as much as possible.

Allow enough space and time for the children's creativity, and ensure that the mural or 3-D model can be added to in some form each class period. Plan to invite others from the youth and adult classes to see the mural on one of the last days of class.

4 Send

Explores how the lesson might be lived out.

If possible, go outside, lie on a blanket, and look at clouds while discussing the children's dreams and their best times in community. If weather does not permit, hang construction paper clouds from the ceiling of the classroom and invite children to lay under them and share their dreams.

5 Bless

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope.

Offer a prayer over the children, affirming their hopes and dreams.

Signal Communities...

Embrace Continuing Revelation

Session 2

Focus:

Share the Good News

To hear chapter 2 of *Signal Community* where children learn that people who live in Signal Community talk and listen to God and that God is asking them to invite other people to come live in Signal Community with them.

Focus Scripture

Paul wrote a letter to the Romans: Give the best that you can be to God. Don't do everything others do, but transform your mind, so that you can understand God's vision—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

—Romans 12:1–2, adapted for children

Objectives

The learner will...

- engage in a discernment practice using Psalm 46:10
- read *Signal Community* chapter 2 and discuss the concept of sharing the good news and the enduring principle Continuing Revelation
- add drawings to the Signal Community mural or 3-D city of those people whom the children would invite there
- play a game of sharing the good news and inviting others
- identify an upcoming church event to invite a friend to, then create an invitation for their friend
- sing and add new verses to the song “Move When the Spirit Says Move”

Materials

- “Welcome to Signal Community” sign with bell and light
- A poster of Psalm 46:10 “Be still and know that I am God.”
- Candles (matches or lighter)
- Copies of the second chapter of *Signal Community* for yourself and each child in class
- Color print of the chapter 2 illustration
- A poster of Romans 12:1–2 (above), adapted for children
- Art supplies for the Signal Community mural or 3-D model
- Flip chart or newspaper and markers

Resources

- *Signal Community* story downloadable at www.CofChrist.org/onlineresources/reunion
- Bible (New Revised Standard Version), such as the *NRSV Children's Bible* (Abingdon Press, 2006. ISBN 9780687332458)
- Doctrine and Covenants 163:5a and 164:9
- Romans 12 NRSV

1 Gather

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson.

Gather children at the “Welcome to Signal Community” sign. Light candles.

Engage children in a prayer and discernment activity about listening

to God using Psalm 46:10. Repeating a verse of scripture can focus one’s mind on God. Display the poster of Psalm 46:10 for children to follow. Tell them that after repeating this verse of scripture, there will be a moment of silence to feel the peace of Jesus Christ or to listen to God’s voice. Say each of the following phrases slowly and prayerfully.

Be still and know that I am God...

Be still and know that I am...

Be still and know...

Be still...

Be.

Be...

Be still...

Be still and know...

Be still and know that I am...

Be still and know that I am God. Amen.

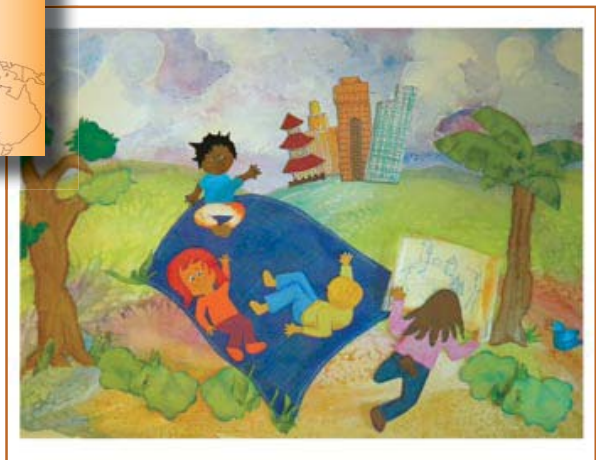
Now say the scripture in reverse order:

Take away the poster and say the verses one more time, then allow a time of quiet reflection.

2 Engage

Invites exploration and interaction.

Ask children to summarize what has happened in the story *Signal Community* from the previous class session. Display the drawing for chapter 2. Read the story to the children, or read along with them.



Discuss:

- Who are the new characters in today’s chapter of this story?
- What did Sara and the others hear and understand and what was missing in Signal Community?
- When they prayed together, they saw the clouds forming into what?
- What did they do when they saw the clouds?

Draw children’s attention to the poster with the passage from Paul’s letter to the Romans.

Give the best that you can be to God. Don’t do everything others do, but transform your mind, so that you can understand God’s vision—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

—Romans 12:1–2, adapted for children

In Community of Christ, we affirm the enduring principle Continuing Revelation. We call the president of our church “prophet” because he witnesses to us God’s eternal purpose and continuing activity. But we are also called a “prophetic people” because we believe God guides the community of disciples to fulfill the mission of Jesus Christ.

Discuss:

- Tell about a time when you felt God near. What were you doing? How did you feel?
- How does your personal spiritual practice (such as, praying, meditating, scripture reading) help you to feel comforted? Loved? At peace?
- How does your practice give you ideas to follow or insight to answer your questions?

3 Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing.

God loves us and wants us to share in the eternal purpose. In Community of Christ we call that *continuing revelation*. We can discover God's purposes for the church by being with God, in prayer, in quiet, in listening.

In today's story, the children felt that they should share the good news of Jesus Christ and invite others to Signal Community. They ran throughout the park and invited others.

1. What is the "good news"?
2. How do you share the "good news"?
3. How do you invite others? Who do you invite? What do you invite them to?

Signal Community Mural

Who would be invited to our signal community? Invite children to brainstorm and record their ideas on a flip chart.

Distribute art supplies and ask children to draw pictures of people they would invite to Signal Community to add to the mural. Have them cut out their drawings and tape or glue them to the mural. Try to create a three-dimensional effect when possible. If creating a 3-D mural, drawings of people can be on cardboard, with an added tab at the feet so they will stand up. Or people can be created from pipe cleaners, clay, or other materials.

Invite Others to Our Church Event

Look at a church calendar of upcoming events (congregation or mission center). To what event would you like to invite someone you know? Give each child an invitation or two and have them write the event, date, and time, and the invitee's name on the envelope. Ask them to make plans to hand deliver the invitation(s).

Share the Good News Game

Play a tag game to share the good news. Choose someone to be "It." "It" tries to gently tag another child and share the good news. (They may use any phrase they want to convey Jesus Christ's love for them). Once "it" has tagged someone, the tagged child then can also tag other children and share the good news with them. Very quickly, everyone will have been tagged. Tell children that now they can go out and share the good news with others. This game will go quickly; you may wish to play more than once.

Discuss:

- In a game of tag, children avoid being tagged. Is this like real life? Is it difficult to invite people and share the good news with them?
- Is it difficult to talk about Jesus Christ to others? Why or why not?
- We can also share the good news by being friendly, inviting, caring, and a true friend. Is it easier for you to do this than to tell others about Jesus Christ?

Signal Communities...

Make Responsible Choices

Session 3

Focus:

Make Good Choices

To hear chapter 3 of the story where people living in Signal Community prepare to be disciples of Jesus Christ in many ways including learning how to make responsible choices.

Focus Scripture

Here is how to live in community: care for others by showing that your love is real; hold onto what is good; love one another with affection; outdo one another in being honorable. Be energetic in spirit, serving the Lord. Be joyful and hopeful, be patient, keep praying. Help others in need; share hospitality with strangers.

—Romans 12:9–13, adapted for children

Objectives

The learner will...

- sing with others “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus”
- read *Signal Community* chapter 3 and discuss the concept of sharing the good news and the enduring principle Responsible Choices
- answer a survey about making choices; brainstorm ideas for making better choices with the class
- identify a “bad choice” and a solution for a better choice. Illustrate the choices by either (1) role playing that scenario in a small group OR (2) drawing a comic strip
- make a plan to take specific actions at home “when no one is watching” and record on an index card to take home

Materials

- “Welcome to Signal Community” sign with bell and light
- A poster of Romans 12:9–13 (use the adaptation for children)
- Copies of the third chapter of *Signal Community* for yourself and each child in class
- Print of illustration for chapter 3 of the story *Signal Community*
- Two copies of the Choices Survey (at the end of this lesson; you might want to enlarge the surveys on a copy machine), masking tape, markers
- Index cards (one per child) and pencils or pens
- Paper for comic strip stories, colored pencils for each child (optional)

Resources

- *Signal Community* story downloadable at www.CofChrist.org/onlineresources/reunion
- Bible (New Revised Standard Version), such as the *NRSV Children’s Bible* (Abingdon Press, 2006. ISBN 9780687332458)
- Doctrine and Covenants 163:5a and 164:9
- Romans 12 NRSV

Gather children at “Welcome to Signal Community” sign and “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus.”

1 Gather

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson.

To hear the melody and view sheet music for “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus” go to the following website: http://library.timelesstruths.org/music/I_Have_Decided_to_Follow_Jesus/

I Have Decided to Follow Jesus

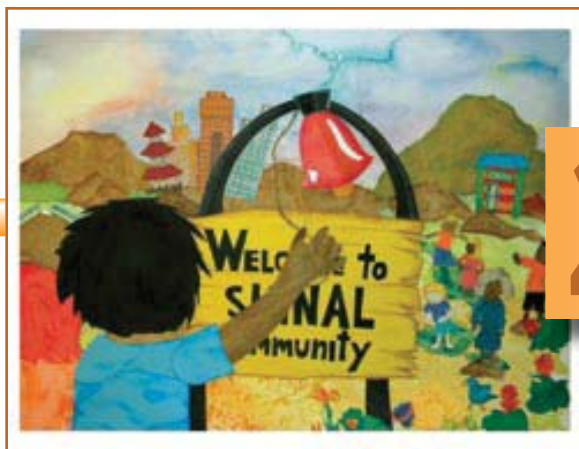
I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
No turning back, no turning back.

Though I may wonder, I still will follow;
Though I may wonder, I still will follow;
Though I may wonder, I still will follow;
No turning back, no turning back.

The world behind me, the cross before me;
The world behind me, the cross before me;
The world behind me, the cross before me;
No turning back, no turning back.

Though none go with me, still I will follow;
Though none go with me, still I will follow;
Though none go with me, still I will follow;
No turning back, no turning back.

Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
No turning back, no turning back.



2 Engage

Invites exploration and interaction.

Ask children to summarize what happened in chapter 2 of *Signal Community* in the previous class session. Display the drawing for chapter 3 of the children’s story. Read the story to the children, or read along with them.

Discuss:

- Do you remember what “sharing the good news” means?
- In today’s story, the children share the good news with people in Signal Community. Tell what good things they saw.
- Sara noticed that some people were not making good choices. Who were they and what were they doing?
- What did Sara, Julio, and Micah do?

Draw children’s attention to the poster of Romans 12:9–13, adapted for children.

Here is how to live in community: care for others by showing that your love is real; hold onto what is good; love one another with affection; outdo one another in being honorable. Be energetic in spirit, serving the Lord. Be joyful and hopeful, be patient, keep praying. Help others in need; share hospitality with strangers.

In Community of Christ, we affirm the enduring principle Responsible Choices. This means that God gives us the ability to make choices, and hopes that we will make good choices. When we do, we create more good things in the world, we have better friendships, and all of creation is healthier. Even when people have made bad choices that hurt others or the Earth, we can work with God to make things better.

3 Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing.

Choices Survey

Hang one or more copies of the Choices Survey (below) on the wall. You may add your own ideas to the list of choices. Invite children to come to the posted surveys and record their choices with a checkmark. When they are done, tabulate their answers. Ask: Do we tend to make good choices or not? Praise them for the good choices they are making. If they are making less-than-good choices, ask what they can do differently (recycle more, help with household chores, help a younger child).

When Someone Is Making a Bad Choice

Sara and Julio discovered people in Signal Community making bad choices—the kids who ate all the licorice and the family who threw trash in the river. Have you ever come upon someone making a poor choice? Tell about it. What was someone doing? What did you do?

Choose one of these options:

1. Have children in groups of two or three think of an incident when someone made a bad choice. Have them dramatize that action, and what they would do, for the entire class. You may give some ideas of bad choices to the children or they may come up with their own.
2. Children may draw a comic strip version of an incident in which someone made a bad choice, and how they might have responded in the same situation. These may be shared with everyone in class.

CHOICES SURVEY	ALWAYS	SOMETIMES	NEVER
Recycle paper and plastic			
Pick up trash on the street			
Brush my teeth after meals			
Play/exercise every day			
Turn off water to brush my teeth			
Share food and toys with friends			
Share food and toys with siblings			
Practice my (sports, music, dancing, etc.)			
Clean my room			
Do my homework			
Take care of my pet			
Give some money to church			
Save some of my money			
Offer to help others			

Signal Communities...

Pursue Peace

Session 4

Focus: Pursue Peace

To hear chapter 4 of the story where, just like in other communities, people in Signal Community are having trouble getting along with one another and caring for the Earth. To learn how the residents resolve these conflicts.

Focus Scripture

How are we to act? How are we to share peace with others? The scripture tells us: Bless those who hurt you; rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but live in peace with others. Overcome emptiness, sadness, and hurt with good.

—Romans 12:14–21, adapted for children

Objectives

The learner will...

- engage in a personal spiritual practice: Poses for Peace (yoga)
- read *Signal Community* chapter 4 and engage in the enduring principle Pursuit of Peace (Shalom)
- experience peacefulness by doing yoga and listening to music
- identify four stories about Jesus sharing peace with a stranger, a friend, a family member, or alone, and then identify how he or she can share peace in these same four ways
- identify places where he or she goes to feel at peace, then draw and add those places to the Signal Community mural
- carry the idea of a “peace day” or a peaceful family retreat to their family to engage in together

Materials

- A poster of Romans 12:14–21 (use the adaptation for children, above)
- Copies of the fourth chapter of *Signal Community* for yourself and each child in class
- Color print of illustration for chapter 4 of *Signal Community*
- Print a copy of the Family Pledge of Nonviolence for each child (at end of this lesson)
- Supplies to add art to Signal Community mural or 3-D model

Resources

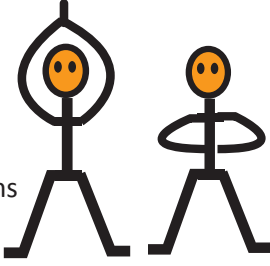
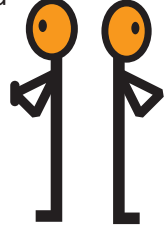
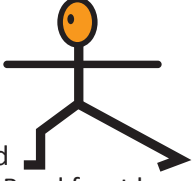

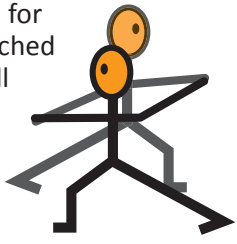
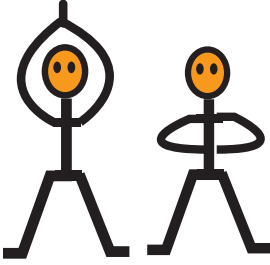
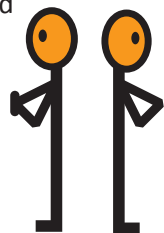

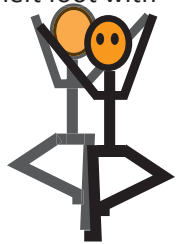
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- Doctrine and Covenants 163:5a and 164:9
- Romans 12 NRSV

1 Gather

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson.

Children's Yoga: Poses for Peace

Guide children through the yoga "Poses for Peace" by Lisa Ash. These poses are suggestions for embodying the message of Jesus' peace. They are appropriate for all levels of physical ability and can even be modified to do while seated, but standing is more fun! Give children a chance to play and explore the poses. Teach the individual sequence first to help reinforce safety and teach the children the words. Then, try with a partner!

WORDS	INDIVIDUAL VERSION	PARTNER VERSION
"Peace"	<p><i>Tadasana Namaste:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Stand with feet slightly apart, firmly rooted into the ground. Lift arms and meet palms together high above head. Bring your hands to heart, palms together. 	<p>Partners face back to back while following steps described in individual version.</p> 
I leave with you,	<p><i>Peaceful Warrior:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Step right foot out three feet to the right. Turn foot to face the right and turn back toe in (spin heel out). Bend front knee and bring arms to a "t" with right arm over right leg and left arm over left leg. <i>Warrior 2:</i> Sweep right arm up by ear and left arm down to back leg. Lift heart in peaceful warrior.  	<p>Partners continue back to back, facing opposite directions. Follow individual steps 1 and 2.</p> <p>3. With front arm straight ahead, use back arm to reach for partner's outstretched hand. Partners still face opposite direction.</p> 
my peace	<p><i>Tadasana Namaste:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Stand with feet slightly apart, firmly rooted into the ground. Lift arms and meet palms together high above head. Bring your hands to heart, palms together. 	<p>Partners face back to back while following poses described in individual version.</p> 
I give to you."	<p><i>Utthita Vrksasana (Tree Pose):</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Bring feet together, lift left foot with knee facing out and set foot gently on right leg above or below the knee. Lift arms and hold. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Bring feet together, lift left foot with knee facing out and set foot gently on right leg above or below the knee. Lift arms and spread wide. Inside hands meet partner's and hold. 
	<p><i>Tadasana namaste with bowed head:</i></p> <p>Stand with feet tall, firmly rooted into the ground. Bring your hands to heart, palms together. Bow in "Namaste" blessing.</p>	<p>Same as individual poses.</p>

2 Engage

Invites exploration and interaction.

Ask children to summarize what happened in Signal Community in the prior class session. Display the drawing for chapter 4 of *Signal Community*. Read chapter 4 of *Signal Community* to the children or read along with them.



Discuss:

- Today when the children walked through Signal Community, they saw more people not living in a loving way. What were some things they noticed?
- What did Sara say that Signal Community was about?
- What stories did the children read from the Bible?
- What did the residents decide to do differently?

Draw children's attention to the poster of Romans 12:14–21, adapted for children: How are we to act? How are we to share peace with others? The scriptures tell us: Bless those who hurt you; rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but live in peace with others. Overcome emptiness, sadness, and hurt with good.

3 Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing.

Christians believe that Jesus Christ came to show us how to love and care for others and how to feel peace. There are many stories of Jesus doing that. When we study scripture and learn more about Jesus Christ, we learn what we can do too. Community of Christ pursues the peace of Jesus Christ, and shares it with others in our communities. One of our enduring principles is Pursuit of Peace (Shalom). Shalom means justice, well-being, wholeness, and peace. God wants shalom for all creation, and Signal Community is to be a place that is just (fair) and peaceable. Jesus Christ shows us what shalom, God's peace, means.

In John 14:27, Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you."

Peaceful Places

Where is your peaceful place, a place where you can relax, be still, pray, or just be present with God? What do you do there? What brings you peace? Discuss as a group, perhaps adding the ideas to a flip chart.

Distribute art supplies. Have children create drawings of peaceful places to put in Signal Community: treehouses, swing sets, a wooded area by a lake or river, musical notes floating through the air.

Stop Bullying and Make a Nonviolence Pledge

When you are with your friends, stand up against bullying. Don't allow insults or meanness. Set a good example for others. Report bullying and make friends with children who are being bullied. Let them know that it's not their fault, and that it's not okay for them to be bullied.

- Do you know bullies in your school or neighborhood? Tell about it.
- What can you do?
- Do you believe in nonviolence as a way to solve problems?

Give each child a Family Pledge of Nonviolence (next page). Encourage them to take the pledge with them to invite their entire family to sign it.

Stranger, Friend, Family, Alone

Divide a sheet of paper into a grid of four squares and write in the squares: Jesus with a stranger, Jesus the friend, Jesus with his family, Jesus alone. Read each of the following scripture stories:

- Mark 1:35 (Jesus alone)
- Luke 14:12–14 (Jesus with a stranger)
- John 19:26–27 (Jesus with family)
- John 15:12 (Jesus the friend)

Write which one fits in each one of these squares. How did Jesus show what a peaceable person he was—with a stranger, a friend, a family member, or alone? Make a grid on a new page and write how *you* can share peace with a stranger, a friend, a family member, or alone.

4 Send

Explores how the lesson might be lived out.

Think about your peaceful place at home and how it helps you feel at peace. Think about other places where you can feel at peace. Ask your family to plan a family retreat to feel at peace. It could be a trip away for the weekend or a “peace day,” a dedicated Saturday in your home. Take time to be at peace, relax, and enjoy time together and with God. Play outside, explore God's bountiful gifts around you, play relaxing music and dance, or write a letter to God or someone else that you love. Take a deep breath, and thank God for the experience.

If time allows, children may wish to do the “Poses for Peace” yoga exercise again.

5 Bless

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope.

Pray a prayer of peace for the children such as: “Dear God, please bless these children with peace, the peace you left with them. May they find peace, may they share peace, and may they always pursue peace to create a signal community wherever they are. Amen.”

Family Pledge of Nonviolence

Making peace must start within ourselves and in our family. Each of us, members of the _____ family, commit ourselves as best we can to become nonviolent and peaceable people:

To Respect Self and Others

To respect myself and others, to affirm others, and to avoid uncaring criticism, hateful words, physical attacks, and self-destructive behavior.

To Communicate Better

To share feelings honestly, to look for safe ways to express anger, and to work at solving problems peacefully.

To Listen

To listen carefully to one another, especially those who have differing views from myself, and to consider others' feelings and needs rather than insist on having my own way.

To Forgive

To apologize and make amends when I have hurt another, to forgive others, and to keep from holding grudges.

To Respect Nature

To treat the environment and all living things, including our pets, with respect and care.

To Play Creatively

To select entertainment, activities and toys which support our values and to avoid entertainment that makes violence look exciting, funny, or acceptable.

To Be Courageous

To challenge violence in all its forms whenever we encounter it, whether at home, at church, at school, at work, or in the community, and to stand with others who are treated unfairly.

This is our pledge. These are our goals. We will check ourselves once a month on _____ (date) for the next twelve months so that we can help one another become a more peaceable person and a more peaceable family.

Signed:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Adapted from Families Against Violence Advocacy Network: c/o Institute for Peace and Justice, 4144 Lindell Blvd., #408, St. Louis, MO 63108 (314) 553-4445; e-mail: ppjn@aol.com

Signal Communities...

Honor the Sacredness of Creation

Session 5

Focus: Love God's Creation

To hear chapter 5 of the story where the people in Signal Community are called by God to go into the world to be the hands and feet of Jesus as they help the poor, the hurting, and the Earth.

Focus Scripture

The promise we make when living in sacred communities (signal communities) means respecting, caring for, and loving God's creation. It means using our whole selves to bring God's love to others. It especially means knowing everyone has worth, protecting our sacred creation, and helping those who are hurting.

—Doctrine and Covenants 164:9c,
adapted for children

Objectives

The learner will...

- sing "O How Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit" together with all the children in the class
- read *Signal Community* chapter 5 and engage in the enduring principle Sacredness of Creation
- write lists of what God has created
- engage in a "Scripture Hunt" to find and share stories of Jesus helping those who were in need and tell how he or she would help those people in Jesus' place
- add drawings of people who may need help to the Signal Community mural
- identify people in his or her own community who may be hurting, and make a plan to help

Materials

- "Welcome to Signal Community" sign with bell and light
- A poster of Doctrine and Covenants 164:9c (use adapted for children version, above)
- Copies of chapter 5 of *Signal Community* for yourself and each child in class
- Color print of the chapter 5 illustration
- Copies of the "Scripture Hunt" handout (at the end of this lesson)
- Newsprint, several sheets

Resources

- *Signal Community* story downloadable at www.CofChrist.org/onlineresources/reunion
- Bible (New Revised Standard Version), such as the *NRSV Children's Bible* (Abingdon Press, 2006. ISBN 9780687332458)
- Doctrine and Covenants 164:9c

1 Gather

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson.

Gather children at the “Welcome to Signal Community” sign and sing “O How Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit,” *Hymns of the Saints* 322.

Discuss:

- What is this hymn about? (those who are poor, hurting, humble, and more, are blessed)
- How does it make you feel to know that everyone is welcome in the kingdom of God?
- Do you know anyone who is sad or sick? Tell about that person.

Offer a prayer for all who are sad, sick, or hurting. Invite children to offer prayers for those they know as well.

2 Engage

Invites exploration and interaction.

Ask children to summarize what happened in chapter 4 of *Signal Community* in the prior class session. Display the drawing for chapter 5. Read the story to the children, or read along with them.

Discuss:

- What was the first thing Sara, Julio, and little Kimmie heard when they went to Signal Community this day? Tell what happened.
- When Sara rang the bell for everyone to gather in the park, what Bible stories did they read?
- What were the new things added to Signal Community?
- Do you think Signal Community is “finished” now? Does it have everything it should? Explain your answer.



Draw children’s attention to the poster of Doctrine and Covenants 164:9c, adapted for children—

The promise we make when living in sacred communities (signal communities) means respecting, caring for, and loving God’s creation. It means using our whole selves to bring God’s love to others. It especially means knowing everyone has worth, protecting our sacred creation, and helping those who are hurting.

3 Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing.

Creation Stations

Community of Christ believes that God has a beautiful vision of shalom (peace) for all creation. With love, God created all of creation, and is still creating today. Hang sheets of newsprint around the room and label them as “nature,” “animals,” “people,” “art,” and “ideas.” Give each child a colored marker or crayon and position them in front of different posters. When you ring a bell (from the “Welcome to Signal Community” sign), tell them they should write on that newsprint sheet something God created that fits the category. After a minute or two, ring the bell and have the small groups rotate through each of the five posters. For example, on the page labeled “nature” they might write tree, flower, sky, or lake. “Art” could include music, dancing, or drama, and “ideas” are the best ideas that someone has discovered. “Animals” could include wild and domesticated animals from many countries. On the “people” poster they could write about people of different cultures, countries, abilities, occupations, or relationships (married, sisters, parents).

When children have written their ideas, gather them to read the answers they wrote on the posters. What awesome creations God has made!

Signal Community Mural

Distribute art supplies and ask children to create pictures or models of people who need help to add to the mural or model. Have them illustrate the people as healed and joyful or being helped by another. They may also add models of pets (even their own pet), and other things that they use, like Ahmil’s wheelchair “Dreamer.” Also, real flowers could be “planted” on the mural or model.

Jesus Helped/You Can Help Scripture Hunt

Jesus cared for others who were hurting, sick, disabled, or who needed the help of others. Let’s explore some stories about Jesus helping and think about how we can help too!

Before class, hide the items listed below around the classroom and attach a tag with the scripture reference to them. Give kids (in teams of two or individually) the “Scripture Hunt” handout (at the end of this lesson). Teams look for the items, then look up the scripture passage related to it. On the handout, have them write their answers to: “How Jesus Helped” and “How You Could Help.”

Items are:

1. Sunglasses (Luke 18:35–43)
2. Pillow (Mark 2:1–12)
3. Hair bow or barrette (Luke 8:49–56)
4. Ten adhesive bandages (Luke 17:11–19)
5. Gravestone (John 11:38–44)
6. Cane (Luke 13:10–13)
7. Thermometer (Matthew 8:14–15)
8. Glove (Luke 6:6–11)

Ensure that each team finds at least one item and looks up the scripture passage. Give the class adequate time to complete their scripture hunt.

Invite each team to share the item they found, what scripture story it relates to, and their answers.

- Who did Jesus help?
- How did Jesus help?
- How could you help?
- Now think of someone you know who is “cast out”—not accepted because of an illness, or skin color, lack of education, disability, or other reason. Tell about that person. Do you feel that others “cast them out”?
- What would Jesus do with this person, if Jesus were here?
- What can you do in Jesus’ place?

4 Send

Explores how the lesson might be lived out.

Gather children and ask:

- Are there people in your own family, community, church, or club who may need special help? Who may be hurting? Who are they? Tell about them.
- Tell what you could do to help.

All children can brainstorm solutions together so that each child knows how to reach out to one person with a clear idea of how they can help, in Jesus' place.

5 Bless

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope.

Offer a prayer for the children's desires to help others in need. Ask each child to say the name or describe the person they have identified to help, and what they will do. Bless all with an "Amen!"

SCRIPTURE HUNT: Match up the item you found with the scriptures. Look up the scripture stories to find who Jesus helped and write it on the blank line.

1. **SUNGLASSES** (Luke 18:35–43)

How Jesus helped:

How you could help:

2. **PILLOW** (Mark 2:1–12)

How Jesus helped:

How you could help:

3. **HAIR BOW OR BARRETTE** (Luke 8:49–56)

How Jesus helped:

How you could help:

4. **10 ADHESIVE BANDAGES** (Luke 17:11–19)

How Jesus helped:

How you could help:

5. **GRAVESTONE** (John 11–44)

How Jesus helped:

How you could help:

6. **CANE** (Luke 23:10–13)

How Jesus helped:

How you could help:

7. **THERMOMETER** (Matthew 8:14–15)

How Jesus helped:

How you could help:

8. **GLOVE** (Luke 6:6–11)

How Jesus helped:

How you could help:

Signal Communities...

Speak and Live Christ's Mission

Session 6

Focus: Live Like Jesus (or Follow Jesus)

In the sixth and final chapter of the *Signal Community* book, the characters in the story and the reader are called to live in signal communities wherever they are: their school, their neighborhood, their community, their congregations, and God's Earth.

Focus Scripture

When you want to live in sacred community and are willing to be changed as you follow Jesus Christ, then you will become who you are called to be. The blessed communities of God are waiting for you when you respond with your whole heart and share the peace of Jesus Christ.

—Doctrine and Covenants 164:9b,
adapted for children

Objectives

The learner will...

- see how Jesus' love can be "Bubblin' Over" with a simple science experiment; sing the song "Bubblin' Over"
- read *Signal Community* chapter 6 and learn the concepts of building a signal community by following Jesus Christ
- identify four communities he or she is a member of and make an action plan that shows how to contribute to making those *signal* communities
- play a game of working together to untangle a community "knot"
- take a "checklist" home to record impressions of the class and make plans to create a signal community wherever he or she is

Materials

- "Welcome to Signal Community" sign with bell and light
- A poster of Doctrine and Covenants 164:9b (use the version above, adapted for children)
- Copies of chapter 6 of *Signal Community* for you and each child in class
- Color print of chapter 6 illustration
- Newsprint or flip chart, markers
- Copies of the "Community Action Plan" for each child, pencils or pens
- Copies of the "Signal Community Checklist" for each child
- Bubbling over demonstration: ¼ cup/100 ml baking soda, 1 cup/250 ml vinegar, clear vase or bowl, "receiving" container like tray, sink, or bucket
- A color print of "Sustainable Village" from Outreach International for each child (www.outreach-international.org/get-involved/learn/outreachkids/sustainable-village-map)

Resources


- *Signal Community* story downloadable from www.CofChrist.org/onlineresources/reunion
- Bible (New Revised Standard Version), such as the *NRSV Children's Bible* (Abingdon Press, 2006. ISBN 9780687332458)
- Doctrine and Covenants 164:9b

1 Gather

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson.


Bubblin' Over

1




Bub - blin' o - ver, bub - blin' *(Sing twice before adding Group 2. Continue repeating.)*

2



Ba ba ba bub - bl - in' *(Sing twice before adding Group 3. Continue repeating.)*

3



Je - sus' love is bub-bl-in' o - ver, Je - sus' love is in my soul.

Bubbling Over

Welcome children and invite them to gather around a sink or place where you can demonstrate this experiment. Put 1/4 cup/100 ml baking soda in a clear container. Add 1 cup/250 ml vinegar. The mixture of vinegar and baking soda will bubble over as the two ingredients create carbon dioxide (be sure to have a tray or basin to catch the “bubblin’ over” mixture). As the water overflows, invite children to think about how God’s love is overflowing. Sing “Bubblin’ Over.”

Divide the whole group into three smaller groups.

1. Have group one sing repeatedly the phrase, “Bubblin’ over, bubblin’ over...”
2. Have group two sing repeatedly the phrase, “Ba-ba-ba-bubblin’, Ba-ba-ba-bubblin’...”
3. Have group three sing repeatedly the phrase, “Jesus’ love is bubblin’ over. Jesus’ love is in my soul...”

Have group one sing their phrase twice before adding group two. Have groups one and two sing their phrases twice before adding group three. Continue repeating.

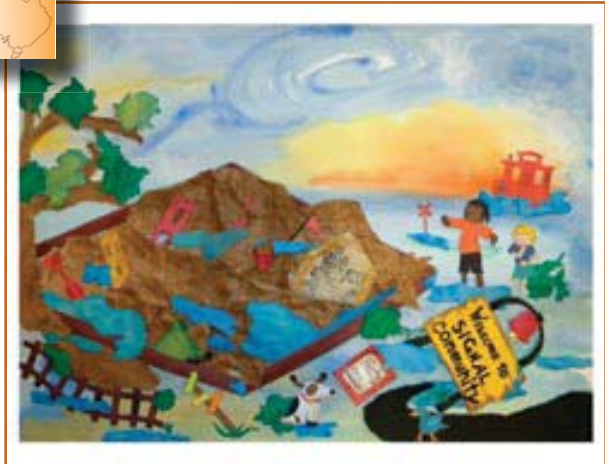
2 Engage

Invites exploration and interaction.

Ask children to summarize what happened in the story *Signal Community* in the prior class session. Display the illustration for chapter 6. Read the story to the children, or read along with them.

Discuss:

- What was the weather like when Sara and the other children woke up Sunday morning?
- Tell what happened to Signal Community.
- Was Signal Community “real”? (Yes, it lived in the imagination of the children and they worked together on real issues with other children. It wasn’t a life-size city but rather a creation in a sandbox.)
- Were the children in Signal Community “real”? (Yes!)
- Tell what happened when the children went to church that day.
- Where did Sara’s dream for Signal Community originally come from?
- What did Sara say about building other signal communities?



Draw children’s attention to the poster of Doctrine and Covenants 164:9b, adapted for children. Read: When you want to live in sacred community and are willing to be changed as you follow Jesus Christ, then you will become who you are called to be. The blessed communities of God, are waiting for you when you respond with your whole heart and share the peace of Jesus Christ.

This scripture promises us that we can live in communities like Signal Community when we follow Jesus Christ and give with our whole heart. When we are willing to change and grow in the ways Jesus Christ has shown, then together we will live in beautiful communities of peace.

- How do you feel about God’s message to us in this scripture passage?

3 Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing.

Signal Communities in Community of Christ

Community of Christ has worked to create signal communities throughout its history of almost 200 years. In Kirtland, Ohio; Nauvoo, Illinois; and Independence, Missouri; Community of Christ has built towns and established communities with schools, churches, printing companies, and more. It has encouraged inhabitants to live lives in line with God's vision of shalom, sharing the peace of Jesus Christ, and fulfilling Christ's mission.

Blessings of Community

Gather the children next to the Signal Community mural, or model, they've created this week. On a flip chart or newsprint, make a list as children call out what kinds of "communities" are within that neighborhood: congregations, families, schools, clubs, sports teams, and more.

- Is there anything missing that we want to have in our Signal Community? (Ask if someone would like to quickly draw it onto the mural.)
- What could we do to help our community be a "signal community"? Children may suggest welcome signs, peacemaking or bullying-prevention classes, free meals, etc.
- Do you live in a place like Signal Community?
- What is missing from your community that would make it a true signal community?
- Brainstorm with children: What's the next step to make these things happen in your community? (Talk to your congregational leaders, your principal, your parents, your Scout leader, family, or whomever. Get support and find ways to make it happen). A loving, blessed community like the children in the story built, is possible!

Knots: Working Together

In community we learn how to work together and help one another. Let's play a game to experiment with this idea! Invite the children into a circle, holding hands, with arms stretched out. Everyone drops their hands, reaches into the circle with their right hand, and grabs the right hand of someone else. Then they reach in with their left hand and grab the left hand of a different person. This creates a human "knot" for them to unravel. Without letting go of one another's hands, children are to untangle themselves to form the big circle again. Each one can give suggestions to move over, under, around or through to untangle the knot.

My Community Action Plan

Remind children they are part of many communities. Give each child the "Community Action Plan" (at the end of this lesson). Ask children to draw a picture of their face in the middle of the paper. There are four circles on the page: Family, Church, School, Club (or Friends). Tell children that they are members of *all* these communities. And *all* of their communities bring them blessings.

Ask them to write in the circles one blessing they bring to each community, or say what they do for that community. They may take these home as reminders of the signal communities to which they belong.

Sustainable Signal Communities

In our story today, the children realized they could build signal communities anytime, anywhere! Outreach International began when Community of Christ leaders saw the needs of people in other parts of the world. They helped people to help themselves build the kind of village they wanted. Show children the "Sustainable Village" map from Outreach International (www.outreach-international.org/get-involved/learn/outreachkids/sustainable-village-map). What is in this village that was also in our Signal Community? What do you notice that's similar to our village? Actions? Buildings? People? The work that Outreach International does follows the same vision as Community of Christ: God's vision of signal communities of peace and justice. Give each child a copy of the "Sustainable Village" map.

My Community Action Plan

Family

Church

Draw your face here.

School

**Club/
Friends**

Signal Community Checklist

Create a quiet place to pray and listen to God often.

Tell one dream you have.

What is your favorite story of Jesus caring for someone?

How will you share the "good news"? (Hint: it can be the way you act with that person.)

What is a good thing you will do when no one is watching?

What will you do when someone is doing the wrong thing? (bullying, trashing a place)

Where are my favorite places in my community?

Why are they my favorites?

What friends or family would be the ones to help you create a signal community right now?

What is the best thing you've learned about creating signal communities?

Doctrine and Covenants

Section 163

Every day since being ordained as prophet-president, I have carried the needs of the church on my heart. Sometimes the weight of concern has seemed almost unbearable. Perhaps this is as it should be, because the heaviness of responsibility has pressed me to seek the mind and will of God as never before. Striving to be open to the guidance of the Spirit, while attempting to lay aside my own preconceived notions, has been a challenging but necessary learning experience. And, as I have sought to perceive God's will for the church through prayer, study, and listening for the Creator's voice in the voices of the faith community, I have been blessed by the Spirit in various, sometimes surprising ways.

The words and images that follow have been birthed through much struggle, not because of any lack of inspiration, but because of the limitations of the human vessel entrusted with responsibility for articulating divine encounter. Attempting to communicate in words what is ultimately beyond words always leaves one with a sense of incompleteness. Added to this is the challenge of creating phrases that can be translated into the languages of the international church without loss of essential meanings. Fortunately, we have the promise that one of the primary functions of the Holy Spirit is to bear witness of divine truth beyond the confines of language and culture.

Therefore, it is in deep humility and with heartfelt gratitude to God that I offer the following counsel as a witness of God's eternal purpose and continuing activity in the life of the church. In so doing, I place these words in the church's hand, trusting that the Spirit will enable the faith community to hear the call of God today with increasing clarity.

1. "Community of Christ," your name, given as a divine blessing, is your identity and calling. If you will discern and embrace its full meaning, you will not only discover your future, you will become a blessing to the whole creation. Do not be afraid to go where it beckons you to go.

2 a. 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.

b. 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.

3 a. You are called to create pathways in the world for peace in Christ to be relationally and culturally incarnate. The hope of Zion is realized when the vision of Christ is embodied in communities of generosity, justice, and peacefulness.

b. Above all else, strive to be faithful to Christ's vision of the peaceable Kingdom of God on earth. Courageously challenge cultural, political, and religious trends that are contrary to the reconciling and restoring purposes of God. Pursue peace.

c. There are subtle, yet powerful, influences in the world, some even claiming to represent Christ, that seek to divide people and nations to accomplish their destructive aims. That which seeks to harden one human heart against another by constructing walls of fear and prejudice is not of God. Be especially alert to these influences, lest they divide you or divert you from the mission to which you are called.

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

b. The earth, lovingly created as an environment for life to flourish, shudders in distress because creation's natural and living systems are becoming exhausted from carrying the burden of human greed and conflict. Humankind must awaken from its illusion of independence and unrestrained consumption without lasting consequences.

c. Let the educational and community development endeavors of the church equip people of all ages to carry the ethics of Christ's peace into all arenas of life. Prepare new generations of disciples to bring fresh vision to bear on the perplexing problems of poverty, disease, war, and environmental deterioration. Their contributions will be multiplied if their hearts are focused on God's will for creation.

5 a. The Council of Twelve is urged to enthusiastically embrace its calling as apostles of the peace of Jesus Christ in all of its dimensions. The Twelve are sent into the world to lead the church's mission of restoration through relevant gospel proclamation and the establishment of signal communities of justice and peace that reflect the vision of Christ. As the apostles move out in faith and unity of purpose, freeing themselves from other duties, they will be blessed with an increased capacity for sharing Christ's message of hope and restoration for creation.

b. To accelerate the work of sharing the gospel, the Twelve and the Seventy should be closely associated in implementing wholistic evangelistic ministries. The seventy are to be the forerunners of Christ's peace, preparing the way for apostolic witness to be more readily received.

c. Procedures regarding the calling and assignments of the Presidents of Seventy and members of the Quorums of Seventy shall be developed to facilitate the maximum level of collaboration with the Council of Twelve. The Twelve, the Presidents of Seventy, and the Quorums of Seventy should spend sufficient time together to ensure a mutual understanding of evangelistic priorities and approaches.

6 a. Priesthood is a sacred covenant involving the highest form of stewardship of body, mind, spirit, and relationships. The priesthood shall be composed of people of humility and integrity who are willing to extend themselves in service for others and for the well-being of the faith community.

b. Truly authoritative priesthood ministry emerges from a growing capacity to bring blessing to others. Unfortunately, there are some who have chosen to view priesthood as a right of privilege or as a platform for promoting personal perspectives. Others hold priesthood as a casual aspect of their lives without regard to appropriate levels of preparation and response.

c. The expectation for priesthood to continually magnify their callings through spiritual growth, study, exemplary generosity, ethical choices, and fully accountable ministry is always present. How can the Spirit fill vessels that are unwilling to expand their capacity to receive and give according to a full measure of God's grace and truth?

d. Counsel given previously regarding the need to develop ways whereby priesthood can magnify their ministry or determine their commitment to active service remains applicable and should be more intentionally implemented. The First Presidency will provide guidelines for processes to be applied in culturally respectful ways in the various fields of the church. Fundamentally, however, the ultimate responsibility for priesthood faithfulness rests on the individual in response to the needs and expectations of the faith community.

7 a. Scripture is an indispensable witness to the Eternal Source of light and truth, which cannot be fully contained in any finite vessel or language. Scripture has been written and shaped by human authors through experiences of revelation and ongoing inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the midst of time and culture.

b. Scripture is not to be worshiped or idolized. Only God, the Eternal One of whom scripture testifies, is worthy of worship. God's nature, as revealed in Jesus Christ and affirmed by the Holy Spirit, provides the ultimate standard by which any portion of scripture should be interpreted and applied.

c. It is not pleasing to God when any passage of scripture is used to diminish or oppress races, genders, or classes of human beings. Much physical and emotional violence has been done to some of God's beloved children through the misuse of scripture. The church is called to confess and repent of such attitudes and practices.

d. Scripture, prophetic guidance, knowledge, and discernment in the faith community must walk hand in hand to reveal the true will of God. Follow this pathway, which is the way of the Living Christ, and you will discover more than sufficient light for the journey ahead.

8 a. The Temple is an instrument of ongoing revelation in the life of the church. Its symbolism and ministries

call people to reverence in the presence of the Divine Being. Transformative encounters with the Eternal Creator and Reconciler await those who follow its spiritual pathways of healing, reconciliation, peace, strengthening of faith, and knowledge.

b. There are additional sacred ministries that will spring forth from the Temple as rivers of living water to help people soothe and resolve the brokenness and pain in their lives. Let the Temple continue to come to life as a sacred center of worship, education, community building, and discipleship preparation for all ages.

c. As these ministries come to fuller expression, receptive congregations in the areas around the Temple and throughout the world will be revived and equipped for more effective ministry. Vital to this awakening is the understanding that the Temple calls the entire church to become a sanctuary of Christ's peace, where people from all nations, ethnicities, and life circumstances can be gathered into a spiritual home without dividing walls, as a fulfillment of the vision for which Jesus Christ sacrificed his life.

9. 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?

10 a. Collectively and individually, you are loved with an everlasting love that delights in each faithful step taken. God yearns to draw you close so that wounds may be healed, emptiness filled, and hope strengthened.

b. Do not turn away in pride, fear, or guilt from the One who seeks only the best for you and your loved ones. Come before your Eternal Creator with open minds and hearts and discover the blessings of the gospel anew. Be vulnerable to divine grace.

11 a. God is calling for a prophetic community to emerge, drawn from the nations of the world, that is characterized by uncommon devotion to the compassion and peace of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Through divine grace and wisdom, this faith community has been given abundant gifts, resources, and opportunities to equip it to become such a people. Chief among these is the power of community in Christ expressed locally in distinctive fashions while upholding a unity of vision, foundational beliefs, and mission throughout the world.

b. There are many issues that could easily consume the time and energy of the church. However, the challenge before a prophetic people is to discern and pursue what matters most for the journey ahead.

In addition to the words offered above, I want to express my heartfelt love for the church as it is and as it is becoming. Despite the challenges involved, it is my pleasure to be able to serve you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, who have been claimed by the adventurous vision and spirit of the Restoration movement. May we journey into the future trusting one another, confident that the One who called the church into being continues to guide it toward fulfillment of divine purpose.

Grace and Peace,
Stephen M. Veazey
President of the Church

Independence, Missouri
March 29, 2007

Doctrine and Covenants

Section 164

While sharing with the church in prayer, discussion, and discernment about important issues, I received an increasingly strong sense of divine direction about conditions of membership and other pressing questions. A significant aspect of my experience was God's Spirit drawing me to consider various scripture passages. After I thoroughly explored many passages, the Holy Spirit focused my attention on Galatians 3:27–29:

As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

While I studied this passage, the Spirit helped me see much broader dimensions of God's grace working through Christ to transform human relationships in a divided world. As a result, I have an even-greater testimony than before of the power of the gospel of Christ to birth a new creation among those who dare to live its message in sacred community.

As the significance of what was unfolding became more obvious, the Spirit led me to consider a series of Doctrine and Covenants sections. Each addressed spiritual and relational dynamics of being a prophetic people. (For example, see Sections 10:6, 147:7, 149:4, 161:5, 162:2, and 163:7.) These include distinguishing between more-universal spiritual principles and particular expressions of them within the confines of human history and understanding. Being a divinely led prophetic people involves—as a necessity—reevaluating at times some existing understandings and customs to allow added insight and interpretation under the Spirit's guidance.

With that background in mind, I present the following counsel to the church in response to the guidance of God's Spirit. I offer this counsel in humility, fully aware of my limitations and weaknesses, which I always carry as a burden. I also

present these words with full conviction of their truthfulness as an expression of the spirit of wisdom and revelation that flows from God's eternal being.

To the Councils, Quorums, and Orders, to the World Conference, and to the church:

1 All who actively engaged in prayer, discussion, and discernment about important issues in the church's life are commended for your faithful response. Your disciplined effort to open your lives more fully to God's Spirit in response to the call to be a prophetic people has become a blessing to the entire church. Your spiritual yearning for light and truth has created a favorable environment for the Spirit's movement to provide inspired counsel as authoritative guidance for the church.

2 a. Instruction given previously about baptism was proper to ensure the rise and cohesiveness of the church during its early development and in following years. However, as a growing number have come to understand, the redemptive action of God in Christ—while uniquely and authoritatively expressed through the church—is not confined solely to the church.

b. God's grace, revealed in Jesus Christ, freely moves throughout creation, often beyond human perception, to achieve divine purposes in people's lives. In harmony with God's will, the Holy Spirit leads some people already committed to Jesus Christ through Christian baptism to further focus their response through church membership.

c. Individuals previously baptized of water in an attitude of humility and repentance and as an expression of faith in Jesus Christ may become church members through the sacrament of confirmation of the Holy Spirit.

d. Confirmation should follow a time of intentional preparation that includes exploring the church's mission, beliefs, and understanding of discipleship expressed through covenant with God and others in sacred community.

e. During the confirmation prayer include an acknowledgment of the grace and authority of Jesus Christ through which baptism occurs. Also, bear witness to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, which weaves people's giftedness into beautiful patterns

of community to enrich their discipleship and to strengthen the fabric of the church.

3 a. All church members are urged to examine the depth of your baptismal commitment. Having been baptized and confirmed, become fully immersed in the servant life of Christ.

b. Live the meaning of your baptism daily as you grow in the skills and qualities of discipleship. Actively and generously support the ministries of the church, which was divinely established to restore Christ's covenant of peace, even the Zion of your hopes.

c. The Eternal Christ invites those who have yet to experience the blessings of baptism to "Follow me in the way of righteousness and peace." Be baptized of water and the Spirit and discover your spiritual home as a fully functioning member of the body.

Some have continued to express concerns about how the sacrament of the Lord's Supper should be conducted. In other places, the meaning and potential power of this sacrament have been lessened by a lack of understanding and preparation. Because of these circumstances, the following counsel is given as confirmed by the Spirit:

4 a. Serve the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to all committed followers of Christ as a visible witness of loving Christian fellowship and shared remembrance of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. Individuals may choose whether or not to receive the emblems according to their faith and understanding in harmony with guidelines provided by the First Presidency.

b. This pastoral provision does not lessen additional meanings associated with this sacrament in the church's life. When the church gathers for Communion, highlight the opportunity for members to reaffirm their baptismal covenant, to reconcile strained relationships, and to commit together to the church's mission of promoting communities of generosity, justice, and peacefulness.

c. Explore all the ways the Lord's Supper can spiritually form the church community into a true and living expression of the life, sacrifice, resurrection, and continuing presence of Christ. Inherent in this sacrament is the divine call for the church to be a

sacramental offering for the blessing, healing, and peace of creation.

Serious questions about moral behavior and relationships continue to arise in many nations. These issues are complex and difficult to understand outside their particular settings because of strikingly different cultural histories, customs, and understandings of scripture. For example, the issues include female submission, female genital mutilation, child brides, forced marriages, and sexual permissiveness. They include cleansing and exploitation of widows, harsh conflicts over same-gender attraction and relationships, and varying legal, religious, and social definitions of marriage, to name just a few.

Over the last several years the need to resolve various moral and justice issues has intensified and become more complicated because of the growing international diversity of the church. The church has been told in previous counsel that we have been given the struggles and joys of diversity for divine purposes (Doctrine and Covenants 162:4). In response to my prayerful pleas for light regarding God's purposes being worked out through our difficult struggles over various issues, God graciously blessed me with the following counsel:

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

6 a. 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. Such relationships are to be rooted in the principles of Christ-like love, mutual respect, responsibility, justice, covenant, and faithfulness, against which there is no law.

b. If the church more fully will understand and consistently apply these principles, questions arising

about responsible human sexuality; gender identities, roles, and relationships; marriage; and other issues may be resolved according to God’s divine purposes. Be assured, nothing within these principles condones selfish, irresponsible, promiscuous, degrading, or abusive relationships.

c. Faced with difficult questions, many properly turn to scripture to find insight and inspiration. Search the scriptures for the Living Word that brings life, healing, and hope to all. Embrace and proclaim these liberating truths.

7 a. A worldwide prophetic church must develop cultural awareness and sensitivity to distinguish between issues that should be addressed by the World Conference and those that are best resolved nationally or in other ways.

b. Fundamental principles of ethical behavior and relationships should be addressed by the World Conference. The Conference should not decide specific policies for all nations when those decisions likely will cause serious harm in some of them.

c. However, timely resolution of pressing issues in various nations is necessary for the restoring work of the gospel to move forward with all of its potential. Therefore, let the proper World Church officers act in their callings—as already provided in church law—to create and interpret church policies to meet the needs of the church in different nations in harmony with the principles contained in this counsel.

d. Where possible and appropriate, convene national or field conferences to provide opportunities for broader dialogue, understanding, and consent. In those gatherings, let the spirit of love, justice, and truth prevail.

The Council of Twelve and the Council of Presidents of Seventy have given ample attention to the previous instruction calling for the greatest collaboration possible among the leading missionary quorums. Because of their diligent efforts to create even-closer relationships to strengthen the church’s evangelistic and community-building mission, I now am free to offer the following counsel:

8 a. The importance of evaluating and aligning ministerial roles and relationships to reach individuals and nations most effectively with the liberating truths of the gospel is always incumbent on the church.

b. For this purpose, the number of quorums of seventy and presidents of seventy may be adjusted at times to respond to evangelistic strategies in apostolic fields. The First Presidency, in concert with the Council of Twelve and the Council of Presidents of Seventy, will provide procedures for determining the number, makeup, and roles of quorums of seventy and presidents of seventy.

c. Let the evangelistic ministries of the church accelerate.

While finishing this counsel, I paused for a time to rest with God in prayer and meditation, seeking added confirmation and clarity. From that devoted time with God, these closing words of challenge and promise unexpectedly sprang forth and found their place in this document:

9 a. 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.

b. When your willingness to live in sacred community as Christ’s new creation exceeds your natural fear of spiritual and relational transformation, you will become who you are called to be. The rise of Zion the beautiful, the peaceful reign of Christ, awaits your whole-hearted response to the call to make and steadfastly hold to God’s covenant of peace in Jesus Christ.

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

d. If you truly would be Community of Christ, then embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ.

e. 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 instilled call and vision?

f. The mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead.

The burdens of the prophetic office have increased dramatically since the last World Conference. However, my dedication to the church, my love for our people, and my conviction regarding the church's divine calling have not waned, but have grown stronger.

With deep trust in the spiritual competency and maturity of the church, I turn the words of this counsel over to you for prayerful consideration and continued discernment. As we continue our journey together, may the gracious Spirit that blessed me similarly bless those who seek divine affirmation of this counsel.

Stephen M. Veazey
President of the Church

INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI
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