

Sharing Services

Introduction

Section 163:10b of the Doctrine and Covenants ends with the words, “Be vulnerable to divine grace.” In modern culture being vulnerable is often equated with weakness or exposing oneself to danger. In this context being vulnerable refers more to being open or available. Grace is sometimes defined as the unmerited, unearned love that God has for us. Being vulnerable to divine grace implies that through our understanding acceptance of God’s grace and love we will be new creations seeking to build the peaceable kingdom.

Reunions and retreats are communities gathered to explore and understand the dimensions of Christ’s love and how to share the gospel and the love of Christ with others. From scattered places members and friends of the Community of Christ gather to share in laughter, play, singing, and a sacred and divinely blessed community. This year’s theme, “Be Vulnerable to Grace,” provides an opportunity to further explore divine grace and how it can help us on our sacred journey.

Individuals come with different gifts, talents, desires, and needs. During reunion there will be opportunity to witness and share with one another. A significant event is the prayer and sharing service. Encourage the participation of all ages in this service. Empower everyone to offer prayers, testimonies, or stories.

The themes for this year are designed with flexibility in mind. Seven themes are presented for your use. They are in no specific order and can be utilized where they would best fit your own particular reunion program. In other words, on your first day you might find that Theme 5 best fits your plans. We hope this added freedom is a blessing to you as you prepare the reunion experience for your campers.

The sharing service can be a blessing to the reunion experience. A suggested order for services follows:

1. Gathering and meditative music
2. Short story to introduce the theme
3. Welcoming and opening song
4. Opening prayer
5. Theme talk
6. Seasons of prayer/testimony/story
(interspersed with songs)
7. Closing song
8. Sending forth

Theme 1

Identity and Calling

“ ‘Community of Christ,’ your name, given as a divine blessing, is your identity and calling.” These words from Doctrine and Covenants 163:1 provide key words of affirmation for us as sacred community. The words “Community of Christ” create rich imagery suggesting that as a church we are called to be a community shaped and molded by the stories and lessons of Christ. We are a community that has been named. We are “of” Christ, suggesting that the continued presence of Christ is, indeed, within the community and that we come from Christ. Our calling is to then share the gospel with those who may not know it, have been hardened by life experiences, or have simply chosen to not be involved. Our identity and calling is important, and our expressions in living out our name are also important.

Story

Munsch, Robert. *Class Clown*. Toronto: Scholastic Inc., 2007.

Scriptures

Doctrine and Covenants 163:1
John 15:16 NRSV

Questions to Consider

Why are names important?

“ ‘Community of Christ,’ your name, given as a divine blessing, is your identity and calling.” What does this passage mean to you?

Are there times when it is difficult to embrace this name? Explain.

Are there times when it is easy to embrace this name? Explain.

How are you challenged to live out this name?

Hymn Suggestions

NS 35

SP 4, 36, 38

R-16

Theme 2

Pathways for Peace

There’s a line Yogi Berra used, telling people how to get to his home. He would simply say, “When you arrive at a fork in the road, take it.” His instruction, while confusing, made perfect sense, because regardless of which way you went, either fork would end at his home. It is not a surprise, but if the question was asked how you get to peace, there would be multiple responses and suggestions. There might be many forks, but would they deliver the same destination? Doctrine and Covenants 163:3a–c calls us to “create pathways in the world for peace in Christ.” This will challenge us to at times set aside our examples, prejudices, and personal belief systems to fully understand the dimensions of what it means to be faithful to Christ’s vision of the peaceable kingdom of God. This will provide us the opportunity to have productive dialogue as we explore what it means to live in peace.

Story

Tutu, Archbishop Desmond and Douglas Carlton Abrams. *God’s Dream*. Massachusetts: Candlewick Press, 2008.

Scriptures

Doctrine and Covenants 163:3a–c

John 14:27

Questions to Consider

What comes to mind when you think of the word “peace”?

Do you have a different idea of peace when you say Christ’s peace? What changed?

What can you do, or have you done, to create pathways in the world for peace in Christ?

Hymn Suggestions

NS 5, 35

SP 1, 3, 15, 19

Theme 3

In Their Welfare

Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a–c challenges us to look at current world issues, as they relate to those who are marginalized, as well as care for the planet. Also, the passage calls for “new generations of disciples to be prepared to bring fresh vision to bear on the perplexing problems of poverty, disease, war, and environmental deterioration.” The observation is also made that in our attention to those who are marginalized, resides our welfare. This scripture calls us to respond to the least, the last, the lost, and the labeled. It is but another expression of Matthew 25:31–45. The scripture from Matthew expresses the importance of reaching out to the stranger, the hungry, the imprisoned, the sick, and the thirsty. Reaching out and serving is not done out of fear of eternal judgment. It is intended to be an expression of helping Christ by helping others—reaching out to all individuals unconditionally, accepting all, just as Jesus did.

Story

Dr. Seuss. *The Lorax*. New York: Random House, 1971.

Scriptures

Doctrine and Covenants 163:4:a–c
Matthew 25:31–45

Questions to Consider

The scripture from the Doctrine and Covenants suggests that helping others impacts our welfare. How do you understand this passage?

Who are the least, the last, the lost, and the labeled? How can you impact and assure their welfare?

How have you extended ministry to others?

Hymn Suggestions

NS 6, 12, 27, 43
SP 27, 45

Theme 4

An Indispensable Witness

Doctrine and Covenants 163:7a–d provides prophetic guidance on the use and avoidance of abusing scripture. The passage offers clarity on the scriptures being an indispensable witness or testimony of the movement of God. Often scripture is used to defend or declare individual positions and values that may run contrary to the context and culture of the time the scriptures were written. A central premise of this scripture passage is that scripture is not to be used to diminish or oppress races, genders, or classes of human beings. Living out the gospel necessitates us looking at the example of Christ who modeled inclusion and unconditional love. This model of Christ’s ministry as recorded in scripture provides an indispensable witness of how we should minister to a world in need.

Story

Paterson, Katherine. *The Light of the World: The Life of Jesus for Children*. Singapore: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2008.

Scriptures

Doctrine and Covenants 163:7a–d
2 Timothy 3:16 NRSV

Questions to Consider

How have the scriptures equipped you for ministry?

How have the scriptures comforted you?

Exploring scripture allows us to be immersed in the story of God. Using the stories, how will you be an indispensable witness?

Hymn Suggestions

HS 58, 324
SP 9, 19, 31

Theme 5

A Sanctuary of Christ’s Peace

While the scripture of the day is Doctrine and Covenants 163:8a–c, the primary focus is found in verse c. “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.” Being a sanctuary involves creating sacred space and home for all individuals. It is possible that in many of our congregations we have become focused on self rather than others. We have created a sanctuary for us, but the call is to create safe, sacred space for all people, regardless of their station in life. This sacred space is about the providing of a relational sacred home for all God’s children. It will challenge us to look beyond the small confines of our walls—toward our global community and the needs of all—as an expression of sanctuary lived out.

Story

Dr. Seuss. *I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew*. New York: Random House, 1965.

Scriptures

Doctrine and Covenants 163:8a–c
John 14:1–12 KJV

Questions to Consider

What does sanctuary mean to you?

How have you experienced sanctuary?

The entire church is to become sanctuary where people may find a spiritual home. How do you think the church can live this out? How can you live this out?

Hymn Suggestions

HS 369

NS 3, 21, 36

Theme 6

Generosity Flows

Section 163:9 is a challenge to break free from conventional models and ideas of how life is lived out. The suggestion is to “break free of the shackles of conventional culture that mainly promote self-serving interests.” The supplementary scripture is Luke 21:1–4. This passage tells the story of the widow that gave all she had. This story when placed next to 163:9 might cause us to misunderstand generosity and “true capacity.” Instead it should help to clarify the issue. The widow, when faced with the opportunity to give, knew that even in her state of stressed financial means she was aware of how blessed she was. It was out of her meager abundance that she felt compelled to give all she had. She had been blessed and her offering was a true acknowledgment. This passage challenges us to review our own circumstance and conclude whether we do acknowledge our blessings and give according to our “true capacity.”

Story

Lucado, Max. *Jacob's Gift*. USA: Thomas Nelson, 1998.

Scriptures

Doctrine and Covenants 163:9

Luke 21:1–4 KJV

Questions to Consider

What does, “Give generously according to your true capacity” mean to you?

How have you been blessed in offering your abundance?

How can you be a blessing by giving?

How can you be a blessing by receiving?

Hymn Suggestions

HS 377, 484

NS 28, 47

SP 36

Theme 7

Forerunners

Doctrine and Covenants 163:5a–c provides guidance for how the Twelve and Seventy should work together to provide wholistic evangelistic ministry. This scripture amplifies Luke 10:1–5 where the seventy are sent out to “spread” the gospel. Doctrine and Covenants 163:5 expresses that “the seventy are to be forerunners of Christ’s peace, preparing the way for apostolic witness.” These scriptures taken together also provide a model of multiplication of ministry. The Twelve and the Seventy are multipliers of the message—the recognition there is strength in numbers. However, it is easy to defer to the apostles and the seventy by saying it is not our job to provide ministry when in fact it is the opposite. As an example, John the Baptist was a forerunner and prepared for Jesus. So, too, just as the seventy are forerunners for the apostles, we find ourselves as being forerunners for both.

Story

Munsch, Robert. *Just One Goal*. Toronto: Scholastic Canada Inc., 2008

Scriptures

Doctrine and Covenants 163:5a–c

Luke 10:1–5

Questions to Consider

How can you be a forerunner for the Twelve and Seventy?

What do you feel called to do?

How will you share your ministry?

Hymn Suggestions

HS 381, 409

NS 7, 36