

Youth Resources

These materials are based on Section 163 of the Doctrine and Covenants. The overall theme is “Be Vulnerable to Grace.” The following secondary themes may be used to facilitate a retreat, short reunions, or a reunion that is five to seven days in duration.

1. Identity and Calling
2. Pathways for Peace
3. In Their Welfare
4. An Indispensable Witness
5. A Sanctuary of Christ’s Peace
6. Generosity Flows
7. Forerunners

Theme 1

Identity and Calling

Scripture Reading (from Doctrine and Covenants 163:1)

“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.

Materials

paper
pencils
flip chart
markers

Getting to Know You

This is a quick activity to help class participants get to know one another and see what they might have in common. Ask the class to arrange themselves in groups of twos, threes, fours, etc. Give each group a piece of paper and a pencil. Ask the group to come up with a list of things that are common to all the group participants. Some examples might be they all sing, play a sport, go to the same church, have the same hair color or eye color, etc. Allow three to five minutes for the groups to create their lists.

What’s Your “Eman”?

Your name identifies who you are. The following activity will help the class to learn each other’s names as well as have fun learning them. Ask each class participant to introduce themselves first by stating their name to the class. After they have all shared, ask each to say their name backwards by stating, “My eman is _____.” An example would be, “My eman is treboR (Robert).”

What’s in a Name?

Pass out paper and pencils to each class member. Ask the class to either use their name or their eman and write it down the left side of their piece of paper, creating an acrostic. An example is:

R
O
B
E
R
T

Ask each student to write qualities they have, starting with the letters contained within their name. For example, R-reverent, O-open, B-bashful, E-energetic, R-realistic, T-truthful. After they have

completed their list, ask them to share what they wrote with the class. When completed, create a master list of all the qualities shared.

What's My Calling?

There is a good chance that some participants in class will have a cell phone with them. These phones can be used to either call or text someone. Sometimes the conversations are simple, while other times they are complex. The same may be said for text messages. Phones are used to either send or receive messages. Part of adolescent development is the task of figuring out what they see is their calling or purpose in life. This is what the psychologist Erik Erikson referred to as: Identity vs. Role Confusion, the questioning of self. Who am I? How do I fit in? Where am I going in life? As an activity, use the cell phone keypad, and ask the youth to create a text message that includes a message about what they believe their calling or purpose is. If no one has a phone, create the following keypad on a flip chart. Pass out paper and pencils for each to write their message.

1	2 ABC	3 DEF
4 GHI	5 JKL	6 MN
7 PRS	8 TUV	9 WXY
	0	

From Me to We

The previous activity has explored the individual qualities and callings that each youth has. The following one will explore the identity and calling of the Community of Christ.

“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.

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:1

Supplemental Scripture

You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.—John 15:16 NRSV

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?—Micah 6:8 NRSV

What's in a Name?

Ask a youth to read Doctrine and Covenants 163:1. Ask the class what comes to mind when they hear the words “Community of Christ.” Do the same with the words “identity and calling.” Read the supplemental scriptures and suggest to the class that part of our identity and calling pertains to the scripture content of John 15:16. This scripture says that God has chosen “us.” It is advisable so this may be amplified that God chooses all peoples and has no exclusivity for one religion over another. The other scripture says that God requires us “to do justice.”

Our Identity and Calling

In order to expand the understanding of Section 163, explore the church's Faith and Beliefs statement. The identity and calling of the church is grounded in this statement.

If time allows, go over the statement and discuss it with the class. The following information is current as of 1/1/2008. Updated statements may be found at <http://www.cofchrist.org/ourfaith/faith-beliefs.asp>.

Our Mission

We proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love, and peace.

We Offer . . .

- a community of people where the gospel of Jesus Christ is the focus of worship, learning, caring, and mission.
- an opportunity for genuine spiritual growth and relationship with the Holy Spirit.
- local congregations where deep friendships are established, individual ideas are valued, and where those special needs find security, care, and support.
- a faith community that encourages the ministry of all people, including children and youth.
- a global community with a worldwide mission that values all cultures and celebrates the rich diversity of human life.
- meaningful opportunities to serve Jesus Christ by helping others and promoting peace.

Our Faith and Beliefs

Recognizing that the perception of truth is always qualified by human nature and experience, there is no official church creed that must be accepted by all members. However, through the years various statements, such as those listed below, have been developed to present the generally accepted beliefs of the church. All people are encouraged to study the scriptures, to participate in the life and mission of the church, and to examine their own experiences as they grow in understanding and response to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God

The one eternal, living God is triune: one God in three persons. The God who meets us in the testimony of Israel is the same God who meets us in Jesus Christ, and who indwells creation as the Holy Spirit. God is the Eternal Creator, the source of love, life, and truth. God actively loves and cares for each person. All things that exist owe their being to God who alone is worthy of our worship.

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is “God with us,” the Son of God, and the living expression of God in the flesh. Jesus Christ lived, was crucified, died, and rose again. The nature, love, and purpose of God are most clearly seen in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

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.

Salvation

God loves us even though we are sinful. Through the ministry of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit, we are able to turn to God and receive the gifts of salvation and eternal life. Those who accept the gospel are called to respond to Christ through baptism and committed discipleship. As individuals exercise faith in Christ and follow his example and teachings, they become new people.

The Church

Christian discipleship is most fully possible when it is pursued in a community of committed believers. The church, as part of the body of Christ, is the means through which the ministry of Christ continues in the world today. It is a community of people seeking to bring God's love to all through compassionate ministry, worship, the sacraments, and witness.

Revelation

The process through which God reveals divine will and love is called revelation. God continues to reveal today as in the past. God is revealed to us through scripture, the faith community, prayer, nature, and in human history.

Scripture

The scriptures provide divine guidance and inspired insight for life when responsibly interpreted and faithfully applied. With other Christians, we affirm the Bible as scripture for the church. In our tradition, the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants are additional scriptural witnesses of God's love and Christ's ministry.

Sacraments

The sacraments express the continuing presence of Christ through the church. They help us establish and continually renew our relationship with God. Through them we establish or reaffirm our covenant with God in response to God's grace. The sacraments of the church are baptism, confirmation of membership, the Lord's Supper (Communion), marriage, blessing of children, administration to the sick, ordination to the priesthood, and the evangelist's blessing.

Human Worth

God loves each of us equally and unconditionally. All persons have great worth and should be respected as creations of God with basic human rights. The willingness to love and accept others is essential to faithfulness to the gospel of Christ.

All Are Called

All men, women, youth, and children are given gifts and abilities to enhance life and to become involved in Christ's mission. Some are called to particular responsibility as ordained ministers (priesthood) in the church. The church provides for a wide range of priesthood ministries through calling and ordination of both men and women.

Free Agency

All people are free to choose, resulting in real consequences of good and evil to our lives, the lives of others, and our environment. Commitment to Christ, sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, and

participation in the faith community help people make responsible choices that enhance human life and respect creation.

Stewardship

All things were created by God and should be used for God's purposes. Stewardship is the wise management of gifts and resources to enrich personal, family, congregational, and community life, as well as utilizing natural resources for the good of all creation.

The Kingdom

God's kingdom is present wherever people acknowledge the lordship of God over life, relationships, and creation. The full coming of the kingdom awaits the final victory over evil when divine rule is established and justice, peace, and righteousness prevail.

Zion

The "cause of Zion" expresses our commitment to pursuing God's kingdom through the establishment of Christ-centered communities in families, congregations, neighborhoods, cities, and throughout the world.

Peace

Because of our commitment to Christ and belief in the worth of all people and the value of community building, we dedicate our lives to the pursuit of peace and justice for all people.

Resurrection

God conserves and renews life as revealed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, a sign of God's ultimate victory over death. In Christ's resurrection, we find hope and courage for living. Through resurrection, God transforms individuals, bringing them into the fullness of eternal life.

Judgment

Our eternal destiny is determined by God according to divine wisdom and love and according to our response to God's call to us. God's judgment is just and is based on the kind of people we have become in relation to the potential of our lives.

End Time

God is acting in history to reconcile all creation to divine purpose. The meaning and end to which history moves is revealed in Christ. The ultimate victory of righteousness and peace over injustice, evil, and sin is assured because of the unfailing love of God and the conviction that Christ is coming again.

If time does not permit completion of this in class, seek additional time to complete it. This may be the only opportunity to expose the youth to the Faith and Beliefs statement.

Whose I Am and Whose We Are

End class by offering prayers thanking God for creating us as individuals with unique identities and callings. Also offer thanks for the Community of Christ and its ministry and calling in the global community.

Theme 2

Pathways for Peace

Scripture Reading (from Doctrine and Covenants 163:3a–c)

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. 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. 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.

Materials

flip chart

markers

tennis balls

toys or other small objects

Bible

Bible concordance

poster board

1" x 1/4" pieces of wood

staple gun and staples

Peace Shout out

As a beginning, ask the class to shout out loudly what they think peace is. As they are shouting their definitions of peace, record their answers on a flip chart. Have a youth read Doctrine and Covenants 163:3a–c. When completed, ask the class to shout out the important words from the scripture that help them to understand Christ's vision of peace. Place a dictionary definition of peace on a flip chart and post it in the class.

peace

1: a state of tranquility or quiet: as **a:** freedom from civil disturbance **b:** a state of security or order within a community provided for by law or custom <a breach of the *peace*> **2:** freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions **3:** harmony in personal relations **4 a:** a state or period of mutual concord between governments **b:** a pact or agreement to end hostilities between those who have been at war or in a state of enmity **5**—used interjectionally to ask for silence or calm or as a greeting or farewell—**at peace :** in a state of concord or tranquility.

—Merriam-Webster Online

Finding Peace

In a rectangular area about 8' x 30' spread out either tennis balls or other objects to represent obstacles to finding peace. The starting point will be at one end of the rectangle and the finish point

at the other end, labeled peace. Use more or fewer tennis balls or objects to increase or decrease the difficulty of getting to the finish point. The goal will be to complete the course without touching the obstacles. Working in pairs, have one member blindfolded, positioned within the rectangle at the starting point. The other member is outside the rectangle. The sighted member will give verbal clues to the blindfolded partner to help them in getting to the other end. The sighted member is only allowed to give verbal clues and cannot touch the blindfolded partner. Allow all the blindfolded players to enter the obstacle course at the same time. If the blindfolded players touch any obstacles, they must return to the beginning and try again. At the conclusion of the class, ask the following:

1. What was difficult for the sighted person? What was easy for them?
2. What was difficult for the blindfolded person? What was easy for them?
3. Was there a time either party wanted to quit?
4. The obstacles in the game represent what the obstacles to peace might be. What do you think are obstacles to peace?

Christ's Peace

The scriptures tell several stories or include observations about Christ's view of peace. A couple of examples follow:

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. 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. 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.—Doctrine and Covenants 163:3a–c

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.—John 14:27 IV

Provide paper and pencils for the youth and ask them to use the Bible and concordances to find other examples of the use of the word peace. What do they think peace is in the eyes of Jesus? Record these responses on a flip chart.

Pathways to Peace

The class has focused on defining peace, recognizing obstacles to peace, and exploring Jesus' view of peace. Have the class select a path that is frequently used during the camp. This path may be from the cabins to the dining hall or to the bathhouse. Using the poster board, have the class create signs that express what the path of peace should include. Some examples may be feeding the hungry, helping the poor, etc. When they have completed the signs, staple them to pieces of wood and place them on the path previously selected. If there are several signs and the path is not long, the class can place them strategically around the camp. (They could be placed inside buildings in the event of inclement weather.)

Taking Peace with Us

As a closing, ask the youth to make one commitment to what they can do to make a more peaceable world. This can be expanded to include finishing the following statements:

1. I can create peace today by....
2. I can create peace this week by...

3. I can create peace in my community by...

Close with prayer.

Theme 3

In Their Welfare

Scripture Reading (from Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a–c)

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. 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. 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.

Materials

tin pan

spoon

blindfolds

What's the Chaos?

To get a small view of what chaos might be like, a game of tin pan bang-bang could be played. The class will listen to a leader who bangs a pan a particular number of times. The class then gathers that number of people in groups. An example would be the leader striking the pan four times and the class creating groups of four. At the conclusion of the game, the leader should strike the pan the same number of times as the number of people in the class, so no one is excluded. Ask the following questions at the end of the activity:

1. What did it feel like to be part of a group?
2. What did it feel like to be excluded?
3. Was it easier to be part of a small group or a large group?
4. Was it difficult or chaotic forming groups?

In Their Welfare and the Butterfly Effect

Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a–c contains a portion that reads, “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.” This suggests that we are connected with each other and our welfare depends on the welfare of others and vice versa. This can be compared to the chaos theory, a branch of physics that proposes that even one butterfly flapping its wings on one side of the world can have an effect on the other side of the world. Combining this scripture and the chaos theory is an illustration of our community and its interconnectedness. The following activity further exemplifies the connectedness and dependency we have on one another as we seek to build the kingdom of God on earth.

Spelling a Solution

Ask the class to spell out words used in Section 163:4a–c using their bodies as letters. (It would be helpful to post the scripture to refer to during the game.) Advise them that they have to use their bodies and not their fingers. If the class is large enough, divide it and have one group try to decide

what the first group is trying to spell out. After they have spelled words from Section 163:4a–c, have them spell out possible solutions to problems and issues referred to in the section.

Sheep and Goats

To expand the scripture for today, use the following scripture:

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.—Matthew 25:31–45 King James Version

While this scripture is used to explain the end judgment, it also explains the need for us as individuals to help one another. Ask the following:

1. When have you provided food for the hungry?
2. When have you provided water for the thirsty?
3. When have you welcomed the stranger?
4. When have you helped to clothe others?
5. When have you helped someone who was sick?
6. When have you visited someone who was being punished?

Helping Others

The following is a trust activity but may also be used to explain the connectedness we have with each other. You will need a blindfold for each class member. Ask the class to stand in a straight line and tie on their blindfolds. Once they have done so, ask them to grasp the hand of the person next to them. The leader (not blindfolded) will then grasp the hand of one person in the line, forming an unbroken chain. The leader states that the members in the group represent the people mentioned in Matthew 25. Some are sick, thirsty, lonely, etc. The task will be to get from a starting point to a finishing point, determined before class. The leader will provide instructions such as turn left, right, duck, and so on. Remain connected by holding hands. The members can share these instructions with the person next to them. When finished, provide a treat and ask the following:

1. Was it helpful to know you had someone next to you that was directing?
2. What was difficult about the activity?
3. What was easy about the activity?

4. Was your welfare dependent on the welfare of the person on each side?

Fly Away

As a closing, remind the class of the chaos theory and the butterfly effect. Suggest that in today's activities they can affect not only one person but several people. It is hopeful that they can also help in building a peaceable kingdom

Close with prayer.

Theme 4

An Indispensible Witness

Scripture Reading (from Doctrine and Covenants 163:7a–d)

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. 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. 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. 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.

Materials

Bible

Doctrine and Covenants

Book of Mormon

Statement on Scripture in the Community of Christ

Reporting the News

In this game, players pretend they are reporting the news by adding without any prior planning to the story as it unfolds. The directions are as follows:

1. Have the class sit in a circle. The object of the game is for each player to add three or four words to the story as it is passed around the group. The sillier the better.
2. Continue with the story slowly. The first player might say, "It was a cold day." The second player might add, "And the sky was dark." It is critical to keep the game moving along.

A variation of the game is to pass around an object and add three or words about its life story.

Share with the class how scripture is a history or story that has been created over many years. It is in essence a report of news that is critical to our faith tradition. The problem arises when the scriptures are viewed as the literal, inerrant words of God. Section 163:7a–d provides guidance on how scripture should be used responsibly. Scriptures are sometimes abused or used to make a point or place a specific value to an issue. It would be good to refer to 2 Timothy 3:16. All scripture is given by inspiration from God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. Explain to the class that reproof is a review with a critical eye. The next activity will

focus on how something can be viewed as both bad and good. This is not meant to imply that scripture should be viewed as bad or good, but it may help students gain some perspective about it.

Something Bad about Something Good

In this activity everyone will explore the bad traits of some very nice things.

Directions:

1. Ask everyone to think about one of their favorite things.
2. Have everyone think of its bad traits. What are its limitations?
3. Give each student a turn to describe a favorite thing in unfavorable terms without telling what it is. Encourage the students to make the things sound as awful as they can without lying. One example might be a balloon: A student can say that it doesn't last long and it can explode.
4. If the other students can't figure out what it is, suggest giving a clue about its good traits.

Allow all to share about their favorite things. At the conclusion, suggest that often scripture is used to support beliefs or values that run contrary to what the scriptures mean or were intended to teach.

Scripture in the Community of Christ

Often teens are concerned that they do not know what our faith's beliefs are. As a closing, review these statements about scripture in the Community of Christ. These should be used with today's focus scripture from the Doctrine and Covenants 163:7a–d. Discuss the affirmations with the class being sure to allow time for the students to gain a clear understanding of them. Use your time wisely, as this may be the only time the students are exposed to these statements.

Scripture in the Community of Christ

Preamble

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.

Affirmation One

We declare that Jesus Christ—who lived, was crucified, was raised from the dead, and comes again—is the Living Word of God. It is to Christ that scripture points. It is through Christ that we have life (John 5:39–40). It is Christ whom we must hear (Mark 9:7).

Affirmation Two

We find the Living Word in and through scripture. Scripture is the indispensable witness of the saving, transforming message that God has entrusted to the church. The church formed the canon of scripture so that it might always have a way to hear the good news, nurture its faith, measure its life, test its experience, and remember its identity.

Affirmation Three

Scripture is a library of books that speaks in many voices. These books were written in diverse times and places, and reflect the languages, cultures, and conditions under which they were written. God's revelation through scripture does not come to us apart from the

humanity of the writers, but in and through that humanity. In the earthen vessels of scripture we have been given the treasure of divine love and grace (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Affirmation Four

Scripture's authority is derived from the model of Christ, who came to be a servant (Mark 10:45). Therefore, the authority of scripture is not the authority to oppress, control, or dominate. If Jesus came to serve, how much more should the books that point to him be treated as a servant of the saving purposes of God.

Affirmation Five

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 (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

Affirmation Six

Faith, experience, tradition, and scholarship each have something to contribute to our understanding of scripture. In wrestling to hear and respond to the witness of scripture, the church must value the light that each of these sources may offer.

Affirmation Seven

As the church tries to interpret scripture responsibly, it seeks the help of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised that the Spirit would guide his disciples into new truth (John 16:12–15). By the Spirit, the ancient words of scripture can become revelatory, allowing us to grasp what may not have been seen or heard before.

Affirmation Eight

Disciples are called to grow in their knowledge and understanding of the scriptures so that they may ever increase in love for God, neighbor, and self (Matthew 22:37–40; Mosiah 1:49), uphold the dignity and worth of all persons (Doctrine and Covenants 16:3c–d), and faithfully follow the way of Jesus Christ.

Affirmation Nine

With other Christians, we affirm the Bible as the foundational scripture for the church. In addition, the Community of Christ uses the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants as scripture. We do not use these sacred writings to replace the witness of the Bible or improve upon it, but because they confirm its message that Jesus Christ is the Living Word of God (Preface of the Book of Mormon; Doctrine and Covenants 76: 3g). We have heard Christ speak in all three books of scripture, and bear witness that he is “alive forever and ever” (Revelation 1:18).

For our time we shall seek to live and interpret the witness of scripture *by* the Spirit, *with* the community, *for the sake of* mission, *in the name of* the Prince of Peace.

Close with prayer.

Theme 5

A Sanctuary of Christ's Peace

Scripture Reading (from Doctrine and Covenants 163:8a–c)

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. 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. 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.

Note: The focus of this scripture passage deals with the Temple being a symbol that calls people into relationship with God. The focus of this class will be the portion that calls the entire church to become a sanctuary of Christ's peace. The reason for this focus is that it has better application to congregational life and the call to be a sanctuary for all people.

Materials

paper

pencils

rug pads (available in small rectangles or squares)

Defining Sanctuary

Sanctuary for many is defined as the main room in the church building where worship occurs. The problem with using such a narrow definition is that it does not lend itself to becoming a sanctuary of Christ's peace as presented in today's scripture. To expand the definition, pass out paper and pencil and ask the class to write their definitions of sanctuary. When they have completed their definitions, ask them to share them with the class. After this, review the following definition:

sanctuary

1: a consecrated place: as **a:** the ancient Hebrew temple at Jerusalem or its holy of holies **b (1):** the most sacred part of a religious building (as the part of a Christian church in which the altar is placed) **(2):** the room in which general worship services are held **(3):** a place (as a church or a temple) for worship **2 a (1):** a place of refuge and protection **(2):** a refuge for wildlife where predators are controlled and hunting is illegal **b:** the immunity from law attached to a sanctuary.

—Merriam-Webster Online

The distinctives found in this definition include

- 1) a place of worship and
- 2) a safe place or refuge.

These points along with the scripture suggest that sanctuary should include both the place for worship (spiritual home) and a safe place (no dividing walls). It is perhaps easier to accept that the sanctuary is for worship, but to extend it to being a safe place for all may be more difficult. The following activity will explore the aspects of sanctuary as a safe place or refuge.

Finding Sanctuary

This activity involves the group traveling from a starting location to an ending one. The ending location is defined as sanctuary. Provide enough rugs so there is one fewer than the number of people in the group. For example, a group of ten people would need nine rug pads. The rules of the game are as follows:

1. Anyone touching the ground between the boundaries must return to the starting point.
2. The rugs may be defined as the Pathway to Peace (sanctuary). These rugs, once laid down as the path, must be in contact with someone always. If the rug is not in contact, the choice of the leader is to either provide a challenge to the person (blindfold them, don't allow them to speak, have them only use one hand) or make the person return to the beginning.
3. The boundaries set might require that some of the rugs will need to be used again and some people may have to go twice.
4. The activity is completed when all participants reach the end of the path (sanctuary).

When completed, ask the following:

1. What was difficult?
2. What was easy?
3. Is it easy to find sanctuary?
4. Is it difficult to make sure all people may find sanctuary?

Sanctuary of the Chair

Before Jesus' crucifixion, he shared with his disciples that he would be leaving and would be preparing a place for them. This passage of scripture is found in John 14:1–12. In some versions of the scripture the word "house" is substituted with the word "mansion." In some cultures the word "mansion" is not translatable and the word "chairs" is substituted instead. This passage closes with the challenge that those that believe in Jesus will do those same works and greater works also. As a closing, read the scripture and challenge the class to think of the world's population as all having one of these chairs. Ask the class what tasks they need to be involved in so all may have sanctuary.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

—John 14:1–12 KJV

Close with prayer.

Theme 6

Generosity Flows

Scripture Reading (from Doctrine and Covenants 163:9)

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?

Materials

paper
pencils
gift boxes
materials to decorate the boxes
index cards

A Day in My Life (My Time)

Provide paper and pencils for each student. Ask them to create a chart or table that demonstrates how they spend their days. Recommend that they use the academic year to do this task. When they complete the activity, ask them to share. Consider the following:

- 1) How do you spend most of your time?
- 2) What is the best use of your time?
- 3) What is your biggest time waster?
- 4) What are ways that you express generosity?

Gift Exchange

Have gift boxes for each participant. Provide time to decorate the boxes. When they have completed their gift box, pass out index cards so each participant has the number of cards equal to the number in the class. Instruct the students that just as we express generosity in how we spend our time, we also do so in how we share our gifts. Ask the youth to write on one card describing what they believe is their giftedness. Allow time for each to share what they have written. When all have shared, ask them to write what they see as others' giftedness. They should have a response for each classmate. Provide time for these to be shared and placed in their gift boxes

Treasure Hunt

Generosity often focuses on giving monetary resources or assets. We have already explored how important time and talent is in being generous. The following will be an exploration of how being generous with treasure is just as important. Ask the following:

1. What are some ways that you waste money?
2. What are some ways you give generously?
3. Can you think of how you can be more generous?

What Might I Give

Read the following scripture:

And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.

—Luke 21:1–4 KJV

This scripture is an affirmation of Doctrine and Covenants 163:9. The Doctrine and Covenants scripture suggests that while generosity is important, it should be based on true capacity. The widow was still within her true capacity in her giving. She made the sacrificial choice. Jesus points out that she gave much because it was a sacrifice. True capacity involves an element of sacrifice that is not mentioned. Explore with the class what sacrifice is for them. This could include what they might be willing to give up to be more generous. Also explore what true capacity means to them.

Generosity Flows

Share the following scripture from John 4. This scripture is the story of the woman at the well. It is a story of Jesus meeting with a Samaritan woman. While the focus is on securing a drink of water, it is expanded to include Jesus' invitation to her and his sharing that he is the living water. This act of generosity models for us how we may be living water for others by acting generously.

Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.—John 4:5–14 KJV

Generosity Today

As a closing, ask the class what ways they can express their generosity
today,
this week,
in their community, and
in the church.

Close with prayer.

Theme Seven

Forerunners

Scripture (from Doctrine and Covenants 163:5a–c)

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

forerunner

1: one that precedes and indicates the approach of another.—*Merriam-Webster Online*

Materials

Bible

paper

pencils

flip chart

markers

Name Game

Doctrine and Covenants Section 163:5 talks about the importance of the apostles being ministers of peace and the seventy being forerunners of Christ's peace. In exploring this section the history of the first apostles will be explored as well as the ministry of the seventy and the current apostles that are ministering in the field. The first activity involves naming the first apostles. Provide paper and pencil and ask the youth to list the names of the first apostles. Allow 120 seconds to complete the task. Check with the class and list the names on the flip chart. If the names have not all been listed, allow extra time for the class to explore the Bible for the correct responses. The answers are found in Mark 3.

Simon surnamed Peter

John the brother of James

James

Bartholomew

Thomas

Simon the Canaanite

James the son of Zebedee

Andrew

Philip

Matthew

Thaddaeus

Judas Iscariot

The Seventy as Forerunners

Ask the class what the word “forerunner” means. It is defined at the beginning of the lesson. The seventy are to be forerunners of Christ’s peace. In essence this means they prepare the way or survey the needs and how best to fill them. The following scriptures can aid in describing the ministry of the seventy.

Doctrine and Covenants 104:11e, 13a

The seventy are also called to preach the gospel, and to be especial witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world—thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling; and they form a quorum equal in authority to that of the twelve especial witnesses, or apostles, just named.

The Seventy are to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve, or the traveling high council, in building up the church, and regulating all the affairs of the same, in all nations; first unto the Gentiles, and then to the Jews;

Luke 10:1–5 KJV

After these things the LORD appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest. Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way. And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house.

Name My Apostle

Briefly allow time for the class members to name their jurisdiction’s apostle. The list of apostles may be found at <http://www.cofchrist.org/council-12/default.asp>.

Partners in Peace

Section 163:5 discusses the ministry of the Twelve and the seventy as ministers of peace. This is a huge task, using all to be partners in peace. Ask the class for input that may be shared with the Twelve and Seventy International Headquarters offices. This information may be sent to 1001 West Walnut, Independence, MO 64050, C/O Poul Wilson.

- 1) What do you need the apostles and seventy to do to create an environment where peace is possible?
- 2) What can you do to help create an environment where peace is possible?
- 3) What do you feel you may do to be a forerunner for the seventy and the Twelve?
- 4) What ministerial help do you need to make this possible?

Close with prayer.

