Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

Enduring Principles Series
Facilitator Notes

*Sacred Space: A Small-group Resource—Enduring Principle Series* is primarily for people who come together in an informal Community of Christ setting to share a conversation and build relationships. The outline is meant to serve as a guide as people enter conversation, share their stories, ask questions, and express joys and concerns.

Small-group ministry also introduces Community of Christ to people and invites all who seek to follow Christ to be shaped and formed in his image.

Readings or scriptures are provided for specific elements of the gathering: Prayer for Peace, Sharing Around the Table, and Generosity Statement. These readings appear in the body of each outline. They also appear separately so an individual reading or scripture can be shared easily with persons responsible for a particular part of the gathering. For example, as people gather, invite someone to share the Prayer for Peace. Hand the person a hard copy for that specific portion of the gathering. Part of the facilitator’s role in an informal setting is to cue participants as the gathering unfolds. Only the facilitator will need the complete outline.

The handout section for each gathering outline also includes optional additions for Communion and Thoughts for Children, which can be integrated into the gathering as needed.

Each session begins with a Prayer for Peace and closes with a Generosity Statement, an invitation, a hymn, and a prayer. The main portion of each session is Sharing Around the Table, where we eat, study a scripture, and share. This sharing also can take place in a simple circle of chairs without food. In this way new relationships emerge, old relationships become stronger, and community forms. Bible references are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). Doctrine and Covenants scriptures are from Community of Christ Doctrine and Covenants.

Using the Sacred Space—Enduring Principle Series Materials

*Sacred Space—Enduring Principle Series* follows the Christian calendar and over the course of the year introduces participants to Community of Christ through the lens of the Enduring Principles. A variety of themes and scriptures are explored to deepen understanding of Jesus Christ and invite people into a life of being shaped and formed in his image. Each week explores tangible ways people can live Christ’s mission in the context of their everyday lives.

Forty-eight outlines—four per month—bring a focus theme and related weekly topics. The outlines for Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas can be adjusted according to where each holiday or season falls on the yearly calendar.

Four additional outlines cover months with a fifth meeting day. The additional outlines provide an alternative small-group experience.

Outline Helps

Gathering

Invite everyone to have a seat. Welcome guests and introduce folks to one another. A short time of sharing joys and concerns sometimes helps people to know each other.

Prayer for Peace

A bell or chime is rung three times to begin the Prayer for Peace. This allows group members to focus their thoughts on Christ’s peace.
The candle is lit to symbolize the peace of Christ illuminating the world. Community of Christ services often include candles to symbolize the Christ made real in our lives.

Note: When first-time visitors are present, it is helpful for the facilitator to share the above statements before the chime is rung, candle lit, and prayer read. This provides important context that allows visitors to engage fully in the shared experience.

Sharing Around the Table

Studying the scripture and questions is a time to learn more about scripture, discipleship, and Community of Christ in an informal setting. Sharing food around a table helps people build relationships, develop trust and the courage to share their authentic selves, and experience safe space to question and explore.

Make arrangements for snacks or a meal before the meeting date. If one person or family is hosting the weekly meeting, ask others to coordinate the snack or meal.

Remind participants that sharing is sacred, safe space. Information or experiences shared in these meetings is to be held in confidence.

Note: Sharing Around the Table also can be facilitated in a circle without food, depending on the context and needs of the group.

Generosity Statement and Invitation

Place a basket for financial contributions where people can see it. Sharing the Generosity Statement reminds people of the opportunity to contribute to ministries of Community of Christ. Have information cards available with instructions for eTithing. Growing numbers of people prefer to handle finances electronically. Participants may wish to have their contributions recorded and receipted. Check with your mission center financial officer for instructions.

Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper

Serving Communion is an option if appropriate Community of Christ priesthood members are available to serve. Traditionally Communion is served on the first Sunday of the month, but it can be adjusted depending on the needs of the group and the availability of Community of Christ priesthood members. (For example, if a group meets on the second and fourth Sundays of the month, Communion can be shared on the second Sunday. If Community of Christ priesthood members are available only once a month or less frequently, Communion can be shared whatever day they are present.)

Invitation to Next Meeting

Always state the date, time, and location for the next meeting. Provide handouts with full information, including directions.

Encourage participants to invite others who are seeking safe space to process their spiritual journey. It can help to create a secret Facebook group to share changes in schedule and location. This also helps people stay connected between meetings.

To learn more about secret Facebook groups and how to create one, read Facebook 101. Visit www.CofChrist.org/resources and search for “Facebook” in the Keyword Search on the page. If you have questions about Facebook, email Communications at Communications@CofChrist.org.
Prepare for Children

As facilitator, it is helpful to prepare for children. A blanket or quilt spread on the floor gives children a sense of place. Prepare activity bags with coloring pages, crayons, a small bottle of water, or other parent-approved snack. Quiet toys for infants also help.

The handout section of each gathering outline includes Thoughts for Children. This element easily can be added to the gathering when children are present. A list of materials appears at the top of the Thoughts for Children handout. Have these materials ready in a bag with the handout.

Materials

- Peace candle (see note) and lighter (Many facilities allow only flameless candles; check with your meeting place.)
- Chime or bell
- NRSV Bible
- Community of Christ Doctrine and Covenants
- Basket for people to offer financial contributions
- Information cards for eTithing
- *Community of Christ Sings* hymnals
- Hymnal recordings (on smart phone or computer with flash drive)
- Speaker
- Session outline
- Handouts for readings and scriptures (Prayer for Peace, Spiritual Practice, Sharing Around the Table, Generosity Statement)
- Snacks (It is helpful to ask people to take turns bringing snacks for each session.)

For Children

- Activity bags

Communion

- Communion prayer card
- Communion statement
- Communion trays, cups
- Bread, grape juice, water

Notes

At small-group gatherings it is helpful to have Community of Christ resources for first-time participants or those who would like more information about the church. Resources are available through Herald House (www.HeraldHouse.org).

Contact your mission center invitation support minister, mission center president, or your area’s president of seventy for more information about resources. Keep these resources on hand to give to seekers:

- *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*, 3rd edition
- *Community of Christ: an Illustrated History*
- Doctrine and Covenants
- Promise Cards
- Business cards with your contact information
Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

January

Focus: Revelation

Topic: Epiphany

Gathering
Welcome

Prayer for Peace

Ring a bell or chime three times slowly.
Light the peace candle.

Today in our prayers we remember the people of Pakistan (author unknown).

In the beginning you created all, so we petition you, our Heavenly Parent, to recreate peace within the minds of your children of this world.

Purge us of all unworthiness, prejudice, guilt, anger, arrogance, pride, indolence, and quarrels.

Lord of all, we expect your peace to reign amid this great whirl!

Today, we praise you for the great Beatitudes pointing the way to peace.

In this moment, open our minds to new ways of illustrating and understanding your concepts and—most of all—new revealments to enhance our earthly lease.

Great Prince of Peace, Immanuel among us, grant us that great longing we have for peace, and may it be visualized now in each person present and then acted on as we witness to the world that conflict can cease. May your healing powers be bestowed on the citizens of this planet, as we praise you for the spiraling possibilities of love and service.

Grant your peace in this moment of contentment through your Son, Jesus our Lord.

Amen.
In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

—Matthew 2:1–12 NRSV

Epiphany is observed 12 days after Christmas on January 6. Epiphany means “to Reveal” or “to make manifest.” In the Gospel of Matthew the story of the Magi traveling to find the infant king is told to illustrate the manifestation of God revealed to all the world, not just the people of Israel.

The revelation of God in Jesus Christ was not good news to Herod. He saw the infant king as a threat to his status and power.

Questions
1. How has the revelation of God been made real to you?
2. How is the message of Christ still a threat to power structures today?

Sending

Generosity Statement
“Sharing for the common good is the spirit of Zion” (Doctrine and Covenants 165:2f). We receive God’s grace and generosity. The offering basket is available if you would like to support ongoing small-group ministries as part of your generous response.

This month’s offering prayer is adapted from A Disciple’s Generous Response:
Gracious God, May we always be generous. You have gifted each of us with boundless grace and unending love. May our response to that love and grace be humble service to others, and may generosity be part of our nature. Amen.

Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn

* CCS 445, “Wise Men Came Journeying”*

Closing Prayer

Optional Additions Depending on Group

- Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper
- Thoughts for Children
Prayer for Peace

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Amen.
Sharing Together

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Questions

1. How has the revelation of God been made real to you?
2. How is the message of Christ still a threat to power structures today?
Generosity Statement

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Gracious God, May we always be generous. You have gifted each of us with boundless grace and unending love. May our response to that love and grace be humble service to others, and may generosity be part of our nature. Amen.
Communion Statement

We share in the Lord’s Supper “as a visible witness of loving Christian fellowship and shared remembrance of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection” (Doctrine and Covenants 164:4a). All committed followers of Christ are invited to partake, but no one should feel pressured to receive the emblems.

Our experience of being together as we share in Communion is an expression of blessing, healing, peace, and community.

In preparation, let’s sing Community of Christ Sings 516, “Coming Together for Wine and for Bread.”
Thoughts for Children

Materials: Small battery-operated flameless candles (one for each child).
Lesson: What gifts would we bring?
Share about Epiphany.

Epiphany takes place 12 days after Christmas. Epiphany often is called “Three Kings Day.” Through this day, we remember that when Jesus was born the magi (or three kings) saw a bright star in the night sky and set out on a journey to bring gifts to the baby Jesus. The magi brought gold, spices, and fragrant oils.

When we celebrate Epiphany we are celebrating that Jesus came into the world because God loves and cares about everyone. We light candles during Epiphany to show that we share the light of Jesus in the world.

Ask children: What gifts would you bring to the baby Jesus?

Sharing the light of Jesus: Give each child a small battery-operated votive candle. Have them share the light of Jesus with two or three people in the group. Pay close attention to make sure everyone receives the gift of light.

Thank the children for sharing the light of Jesus.
Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

January

Focus: Revelation

Topic: Baptism

Gathering
Welcome

Prayer for Peace
Ring a bell or chime three times slowly.
Light the peace candle.

Today in our prayers we remember the people of Germany (author Kerstin Jeske, Germany).

Great and just God, Creator of heaven and Earth,

As this building is dedicated to the pursuit of peace, we seek your presence as we strive to be instruments of your peace in our world. We recognize our need for peace in every facet of our lives: peace in our hearts, our minds, and our actions. Help us to nurture your peace in our own lives so we can share your peace in relations with others. Guide us as we strive for peace through justice in all communities and all nations. Help us go from here, each one of us a temple of peace.

In Jesus’ name, we humbly pray. Amen.

Sharing Around the Table

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

—Matthew 3:13–17 NRSV

Matthew 3:13–17 tells the story of Jesus’ baptism. Here we learn that John (called “the Baptist”) called people to repent. Repentance has to do with recognizing our
brokenness or incompleteness without God (sin) and turning to a life aware of and living for God. We call this discipleship.


The beauty of this account emerges from the difficult question of why Jesus was baptized. As Matthew reminds us, God was not absent from this experience for Jesus. Matthew invites us to see God present as God opens the heavens and publicly declares deep joy for the Son.

In this account we must hear the invitation to recognize and experience the great love God has for us. In baptism and confirmation, we signal our commitment to live in God’s rightness, which restores us to one another and to God.

Baptism is not an end to a journey, but a beginning. It launches a journey of discipleship into Christ’s mission for the sake and welfare of all human life. Baptism and confirmation are essential parts of forming our lives as disciples and forming us as a community that lives and serves as the body of Christ (www.CofChrist.org/worship-resources-08-january-2017).

Questions
1. Why do you think repentance is part of the baptismal experience?
2. If you have been baptized, how has that experience been an important aspect of your discipleship?

Sending
Generosity Statement
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Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn
CCS 495, “This is a Day of New Beginnings”

Closing Prayer

Optional Additions Depending on Group
- Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper
- Thoughts for Children
Prayer for Peace

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Sharing Together

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—Of Water and Spirit,
Herald Publishing House, 2014, p. 48

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**Communion Statement**

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All committed followers of Christ are invited to partake, but no one should feel pressured to receive the emblems.

Our experience of being together as we share in Communion is an expression of blessing, healing, peace, and community.

In preparation, let’s sing *Community of Christ Sings* 516, “Coming Together for Wine and for Bread.”
Thoughts for Children

Materials: Crayons, dove coloring pages
Lesson: What is baptism?
Encourage children to listen carefully to this story from the Bible:

Jesus was baptized and came up out of the water. Heaven opened, and Jesus saw the Holy Spirit coming down to him like a dove. And a voice spoke from heaven. The voice said, “This is my Son and I love him. I am very pleased with him.”

—Matthew 3:16–17 ICB, adapted

Ask:

• Who was baptized?
• What did God say?

When people are old enough (8 years old) they can be baptized, just as Jesus was baptized. Baptism is making a promise, or covenant, to follow Jesus. When we follow Jesus we are called disciples.

When Jesus was baptized the Holy Spirit came down like a _______?
The dove is a symbol that God’s Spirit is always with us.
Hand out dove coloring pages and crayons.
Thank the children for participating.
Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

January

Focus: Revelation

Topic: God

Gathering
Welcome

Prayer for Peace

Ring a bell or chime three times slowly.
Light the peace candle.

Today in our prayers we remember the people of Romania (author Lois Archer).

Creator God,

Many of your sons and daughters, God, live by wooded hills and rolling fields, by the music of rivers, lakes, oceans, or the noisy symphony of the city. They are educated, well-fed. They have purpose to their lives. They can celebrate their existence, and for this we give thanks.

But many of your people, God, live with the desecration of their lands, with hunger, poverty, and disease. They live in the shadow of greed, cruelty, domination, and destruction. You cry out for the liberation of your people who are oppressed.

Creator God, we cry out with you. We cry out for justice and order, for equity and sanity. We cry out for truth and knowledge, for reconciliation, and healing of the spirit.

On our knees we pray for the release of your healing goodness to empower men and women of goodwill everywhere to rise up and stand against the injustice that enslaves those in the wounded places of this Earth.

We pray that ignorance and superstition, apathy and aimlessness, will be overcome by your grace, by intelligence, love, and compassion. We pray that enlightened people will rise up and join all forces for good.

May the earnest prayers of all who unite at this moment rise in mission as we pray for peace and goodwill to all who dwell on the Earth.

We call upon the holy name of Christ Jesus. Amen.
Sharing Around the Table

For it is the God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

—2 Corinthians 4:6 NRSV

We believe in the “Living God...” One who truly loves, refreshes, and answers us, and that this One is the maker of heaven and Earth, and is alone worthy of our trust and worship.

...The God whom we have come to know through the sacred story is not remote or unconcerned, but present in the heart of all things, concerned for galaxies, whales, sparrows, and the child next door. God is not indifferent to the evil we do or the injustice we promote, for these things are contrary to God’s nature. Rather, this God has acted to release creation from evil, to forgive sins, to mend our lives and make all things new.

...According to the testimony of scripture and the church, the glory of God is revealed in the “face of Jesus Christ” and becomes known in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. God, Christ, Spirit: God is not a lonely, static solitary being but a living, dynamic relationship that has written community into the very nature of the universe.

...Community of Christ believes the God of Jesus Christ acts consistently...what we mean is that God is always reliable and trustworthy, that God is true to God’s own vital nature, that God's loyalty to the creation is unswerving. In practice this means that we realize discipleship and church life will be marked by change and growth. Faith in the Living God is a relationship in which we never settle for where we have been or what we have understood, but accept our call to be pilgrims always on the Way.


Questions

1. How have you experienced God’s concern for all things?
2. Although God’s nature is unchanging, our understanding of and experience with God is a dynamic and evolving relationship. In your faith journey, how has your understanding of God changed or evolved?

Sending

Generosity Statement

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Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn  
CCS 10, “How Shall We Find You”

Closing Prayer

Optional Additions Depending on Group
- Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper
- Thoughts for Children
Prayer for Peace

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Communion Statement

We share in the Lord’s Supper “as a visible witness of loving Christian fellowship and shared remembrance of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection” (Doctrine and Covenants 164:4a). All committed followers of Christ are invited to partake, but no one should feel pressured to receive the emblems.

Our experience of being together as we share in Communion is an expression of blessing, healing, peace, and community.

In preparation, let’s sing Community of Christ Sings 516, “Coming Together for Wine and for Bread.”
Thoughts for Children

Instructions: Be prepared to tell the story of Moses in words the children understand.

Moses was shepherding the flock of Jethro. He led the flock to the west end of the wilderness and came to the mountain of God. The angel of God appeared to him in flames of fire blazing out of the middle of a bush. He looked. The bush was blazing away, but it didn’t burn up.

Moses said, “What’s going on here? I can’t believe this! Amazing! Why doesn’t the bush burn up?”

God saw that Moses had stopped to look. God called to him from out of the bush, “Moses! Moses!”

Moses called, “Yes? I’m right here!”

God said, “Don’t come any closer. Remove your sandals from your feet. You’re standing on holy ground.”

Moses hid his face, afraid to look at God.

God said, “I’ve taken a good, long look at the affliction of my people in Egypt. I’ve heard their cries for deliverance from their slave masters; I know all about their pain. And now I have come down to help them, to get them out of Egypt and bring them to a good land with wide-open spaces, a land lush with milk and honey. I’m sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the People of Israel, out of Egypt.”

Moses answered God, “But why me? What makes you think that I could ever go to Pharaoh and lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?”

“I’ll be with you,” God said. “And when you have brought my people out of Egypt, you will worship God right here at this very mountain.”

Then Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the People of Israel and I tell them, ‘Your God sent me and they ask me, ‘What is God’s name?’ What do I tell them?”

God said to Moses, “I-AM-WHO-I-AM. Tell the People of Israel, ‘I-AM sent me to you.’”

—Exodus 3:1–14 The Message, adapted

Ask: What did Moses learn about God in this story?
Help the children with possible answers:

• Moses learned God sometimes does unusual things. Moses saw a bush that was on fire, but was not burning up.
• Moses learned God can speak and be heard even when not seen. God spoke to him from the burning bush.
• Moses learned God knows our name. “Moses, Moses.”
• Moses learned that coming into God’s presence deserves respect. “Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”
• Moses learned God cares for people. God led the Hebrews from slavery and gave them a new land.
  Ask: What is the most surprising thing you learned about God?
  After children share their responses, thank them for participating.
Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

January

Focus: Revelation

Topic: Continuing Revelation

Gathering
Welcome

Prayer for Peace

*Ring a bell or chime three times slowly.*

*Light the peace candle.*

Today in our prayers we remember the people of Belgium (author Annie Billings).

We love you, worship you, and adore you in your three forms.

As our God who brings us awe, we know you created us, control the very air we breathe, and know the very deepest, secret thoughts of our hearts.

As our Savior Jesus Christ, you stand with us through our mountaintop experiences and in the valley of sadness, discouragement, and grief, ever with us to encourage and cheer us on, on our faith journey back to you.

As the Holy Spirit you guide and direct us along the path of life. We thank you for the connections we can make in our lives, shown to us through the Holy Comforter.

We must confess we have made many mistakes, trying to find our way back to you by ourselves, by not waiting for your directions. For these we are very repentant.

The desire of our heart is that your peace shall reign on this Earth, as it does in heaven; that all of your children will have the things they need and be bathed in peace. We ask this prayer in Jesus’ holy name. Amen.

Sharing Around the Table

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us.

—1 John 1:1–2 NRSV
Who a person is becomes visible in their deeds. The story of their life reveals something of their real identity. Divine revelation is similar. In the story of a particular people, the people of Israel, God has made known in varied ways the divine identity and character. The culminating event in this story, the event in which God’s love, mercy, and blessing was poured out on the world, is the coming of Jesus Christ. In Community of Christ...we have come to call this story of God’s revelation the sacred story.

...Community of Christ believes the sacred story is not finished yet...the meaning of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ has been continuously unfolding. So we speak of continuing revelation.


Questions
1. What insight into the nature and character of God have you discerned through the life and ministry of Jesus?
2. How have you been invited to become part of the sacred story?

Sending

Generosity Statement
“Sharing for the common good is the spirit of Zion” (Doctrine and Covenants 165:2f). We receive God’s grace and generosity. The offering basket is available if you would like to support ongoing small-group ministries as part of your generous response. This month’s offering prayer is adapted from A Disciple’s Generous Response:

Gracious God, May we always be generous. You have gifted each of us with boundless grace and unending love. May our response to that love and grace be humble service to others, and may generosity be part of our nature. Amen.

Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn
*CCS* 66, “Speak, O Lord”

Closing Prayer

Optional Additions Depending on Group
- Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper
- Thoughts for Children
Prayer for Peace

Ring a bell or chime three times slowly.
Light the peace candle.

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We love you, worship you, and adore you in your three forms.

As our God who brings us awe, we know you created us, control the very air we breathe, and know the very deepest, secret thoughts of our hearts.

As our Savior Jesus Christ, you stand with us through our mountaintop experiences and in the valley of sadness, discouragement, and grief, ever with us to encourage and cheer us on, on our faith journey back to you.

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The desire of our heart is that your peace shall reign on this Earth, as it does in heaven; that all of your children will have the things they need and be bathed in peace. We ask this prayer in Jesus’ holy name. Amen.
Sharing Together

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us.

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In preparation, let’s sing Community of Christ Sings 516, “Coming Together for Wine and for Bread.”
Thoughts for Children

Materials: printed picture of a child (attached), enough index cards to cover the picture
Instructions: Before you begin the activity, lay the picture on the floor and cover it with index cards.
Lesson: What is revelation?
Ask children to take one card off the picture.
What is revealed (or uncovered)? What can we learn about the picture from what is revealed. Continue removing index cards one at a time. After each card is removed, ask what is revealed and what more we can learn about the picture.
Revelation is when God is uncovered, or revealed to us. We learn about God as God is revealed to us through scripture and through Jesus. Through the Holy Spirit, God promises to be with us and to guide us. God gives guidance to the church through inspired words, or “counsel.” These words help us to follow Jesus.
Encourage children to listen carefully for what they might learn about God as you read Doctrine and Covenants 161:4a:

Do not neglect the smallest among you, for even the least of these are treasures in God’s sight. Receive the giftedness and energy of children and youth, listening to understand their questions and their wisdom. Respond to their need to be loved and nurtured as they grow.

Ask: What do you think this tells us about God?
Possible answers:
• God loves children.
• Children are treasures.
• Children have gifts to share.
• God listens to children.
• God wants children to grow in love.
After they have responded, thank the children for participating.
Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

February

Focus: Reconciliation

Topic: Jesus Christ

Gathering
Welcome

Prayer for Peace

Ring a bell or chime three times slowly.
Light the peace candle.

Today in our prayers we remember the people of Luxembourg (author Marie Ellithorpe).

Gracious God,

Walk with me. Hold my hand. Whisper in my ear. Tell me your will. Open my heart and prepare my spirit. Fill me. Allow me to radiate the peaceful calm that is you.

Let there be peace in my words, my thoughts, and my acts. Let there be peace in my workplace, my church, and my home. Let me bring that peace everywhere I go. Weave it through my daily interactions. May everyone I meet today see your peace in me. Let them know your presence through me.

Where there are harsh words, let them be dulled. Where there are hard hearts, let them be softened. Allow me to offer your grace freely to those in need of it. Bring about your reconciliation.

This I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Sharing Around the Table

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he
came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

—John 1:1-9 NRSV

The glory of God is made known in Jesus Christ, a first-century Jew, born in Roman-occupied Palestine. The apostles testified to this, and the faith of the church is built on it. Jesus was:

...a real person, not a myth. The words of the witnesses also tell us there was something extraordinary to this otherwise ordinary man. Everything about him confronted his contemporaries and us with an unconditional claim and authority. But only faith could behold in him the glory of God incarnate [God in human form].


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

—www.CofChrist.org/we-proclaim-jesus-christ

In 1838 Joseph Smith Jr. wrote that the testimonies of the apostles and prophets regarding the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus were fundamentals of our religion. Jesus Christ continues to be the center of faith in Community of Christ.

Questions
1. What do you find extraordinary about the life and ministry of Jesus?
2. What does God in human form mean to you?

Sending

Generosity Statement
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This month’s offering prayer is adapted from A Disciple’s Generous Response:

Constant God, May we be dependable disciples. Your unconditional love for each of us is expressed through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. May we faithfully respond to that ministry as we are accountable to one another, to you, and ourselves. Amen.

Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn
CCS 38, “Who Is This Jesus”
Closing Prayer

Optional Additions Depending on Group

• Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper
• Thoughts for Children
Prayer for Peace

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Gracious God,

Walk with me. Hold my hand. Whisper in my ear. Tell me your will. Open my heart and prepare my spirit. Fill me. Allow me to radiate the peaceful calm that is you.

Let there be peace in my words, my thoughts, and my acts. Let there be peace in my workplace, my church, and my home. Let me bring that peace everywhere I go. Weave it through my daily interactions. May everyone I meet today see your peace in me. Let them know your presence through me.

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In preparation let’s sing from Community of Christ Sings 519, “In the Singing.”
Thoughts for Children

Materials: basket, coin, piece of bread, fish, Band-Aid, boat, bag of Goldfish crackers.
Lesson: Jesus Loves You
Read: John 3:16–17 CEB

“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him won’t perish but will have eternal life. God didn’t send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him.”

Jesus is God’s Son. God loves everyone, and God sent Jesus to show people how to love each other. Jesus fed hungry people. He healed sick people. He asked fishermen to come with him and be disciples. He encouraged rich people to share their treasure with poor people. He made friends with people who did not have many friends.

Many things remind us of what Jesus did and said.
Show basket with coin, boat, bread, fish, Band-aid. Then ask:
• How might Jesus have used the items in the basket? Encourage the children to share their responses.
• Jesus used these items to show people they were loved. How can we show other people that Jesus loves them?

We can show the love of Jesus by sharing with others. Share Goldfish crackers with the children and group members. Thank the children for sharing.
Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

February

Focus: Reconciliation

Topic: Forgiveness

Gathering
Welcome

Prayer for Peace

*Ring a bell or chime three times slowly.*

*Light the peace candle.*

Today in our prayers we remember the indigenous people of South America (author unknown).

Gracious and present God,

We have come to this place of worship seeking peace and rest. Here, we are away from the forces in our world trying to lead us into unnecessary conflict.

We recognize in ourselves the passions and temptations that lead us to conflict rather than peace. We yearn for peace, but we recognize, too often, we are part of the problem rather than the solution.

We recognize that this is why Jesus Christ was sent into our world. He was a victim of violence, prejudice, and misunderstanding, yet he was the Prince of Peace who brought hope and reconciliation into our world.

Through God’s Spirit, we are called to become more like Jesus. In our hope for peace, may we learn to seek God’s blessing in our daily lives as we become disciples of Jesus Christ and ambassadors of peace in the world.

In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

Sharing Around the Table

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
Psalm 51 is a prayer of confession, and it is thought that it was used in worship by early Christians. The first verses express an acknowledgement of one’s sin and human failing. Verses 10–12 plead for God’s mercy, reconciliation, and restoration. The Lenten season is a time when individuals and the church as a whole confess our participation in behaviors, practices, and institutions that contribute to injustice, brokenness, and pain in our relationships, communities, and the world. The hope that is Jesus Christ offers us forgiveness, healing, and right relationship with God, ourselves, others, and the Earth. We, like the psalmist, receive the restoration and joy of God’s abundant grace.

Questions
1. As you read through the psalm, what does it say to you about forgiveness?
2. The “heart” in scripture means something like “the center of one’s being that determines one’s choices, actions, and behaviors.” What then does it mean to have a clean heart?

Sending
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Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn
CCS 526, “Is There One Who Feels Unworthy?”

Closing Prayer

Optional Additions Depending on Group
- Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper
- Thoughts for Children
Prayer for Peace

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We recognize in ourselves the passions and temptations that lead us to conflict rather than peace. We yearn for peace, but we recognize, too often, we are part of the problem rather than the solution.

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In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.
Sharing Around the Table

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.

...Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

—Psalm 51:1–2, 10–12 NRSV

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In preparation let’s sing Community of Christ Sings 519, “In the Singing.”
Thoughts for Children

Materials: paper plates, napkins, raisins, small crackers, cheese cubes
Lesson: Forgiveness

Serve a snack with the foods suggested. As you hand out napkins, drop one before the person can take it. Say, “I’m sorry,” and retrieve the napkin. As you pass the plate, knock off a cube of cheese or piece of fruit. Say, “I’m sorry,” and pick up the item. Ask, “Now what shall I do with it?”

Talk about why we sometimes say “I’m sorry,” and what it means. When someone has an accident or makes a mistake, the person often says, “I’m sorry.”

In social relationships, we sometimes apologize when we do something wrong or hurt someone. Often the other person forgives us for making the mistake, and we are friends again. But when someone hurts another and is not sorry, it damages their future relationship. If someone apologizes and the other refuses to accept the apology, things will not be the same between them.

Everyone sins, makes mistakes, or breaks rules. But when you hurt something in God’s creation, you hurt God at the same time. We can apologize to the person injured, but we also need to talk to God about what we did. Repentance is a word for admitting to God you did something wrong, and you want to be forgiven.

Forgiveness, like rules, comes because God loves us. Though we sin over and over, Jesus offered his life on the cross to show us God’s willingness to forgive us over and over. But God wants us to learn from our mistakes and to choose to let Jesus’ life and teachings guide us in how to live better lives. God is always ready to listen. God is always ready to forgive.

Thank the children for participating and invite them to take their snack back to their seats.

Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

February

Focus: Reconciliation

Topic: Communion

Gathering
Welcome

Prayer for Peace

*Ring a bell or chime three times slowly.*
*Light the peace candle.*

Today in our prayers we remember the people of Mexico (author Darlene Caswell).

Our most gracious Lord,

We stand before you in love, appreciation, and awe. You are the source of forgiveness, and all that brings people together. You lead us to compassion and teach us to love. May your Spirit be ours.

Help us to recognize those times that we participate in injustice, where we structure systems that shut out or push aside. Forgive us our part and teach us new ways.

Plant your love deep in our hearts that it might be the seed of peace. May our deepest desires be expressed in actions that bring a rich harvest. May our actions bring people together and create homes of hope, communities of compassion. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Sharing Around the Table

When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”
Toward the end of his ministry, Jesus returned to Jerusalem, where he celebrated Passover with the disciples. Jesus changed the essential meaning of the Passover meal. We understand this as creating a new covenant and a new sacrament known as the Lord’s Supper or Communion. This new covenant was realized through God’s reconciliation in Jesus Christ in which all are forgiven, reconciled, and sent forth in the ministry of reconciliation.

Preparation for the Lord’s Supper includes reconciling with others through confessing our faults and shortcomings to God and seeking and offering forgiveness.

Community of Christ celebrates the Lord’s Supper using bread and grape juice where available. Following the Communion prayers, the emblems are served to each person by a priesthood member. All believers in Christ, members or not, are welcome to share in the Lord’s Supper. Community of Christ children under the age of 8 refrain from taking Communion until they are baptized and confirmed.

—Adapted from Of Water and Spirit, Herald Publishing House, 2014, pp.50–51

Questions
1. What experiences have you had with the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper?
2. What does it mean to be “forgiven, reconciled, and sent forth in the ministry of reconciliation?”

Sending

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Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn
CCS 516, “Coming Together for Wine and for Bread”

Closing Prayer

Optional Additions Depending on Group
- Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper
- Thoughts for Children
Prayer for Peace

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We stand before you in love, appreciation, and awe. You are the source of forgiveness, and all that brings people together. You lead us to compassion and teach us to love. May your Spirit be ours.

Help us to recognize those times that we participate in injustice, where we structure systems that shut out or push aside. Forgive us our part and teach us new ways.

Plant your love deep in our hearts that it might be the seed of peace. May our deepest desires be expressed in actions that bring a rich harvest. May our actions bring people together and create homes of hope, communities of compassion. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.
**Sharing Around the Table**

When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”


Toward the end of his ministry, Jesus returned to Jerusalem, where he celebrated Passover with the disciples. Jesus changed the essential meaning of the Passover meal. We understand this as creating a new covenant and a new sacrament known as the Lord’s Supper or Communion. This new covenant was realized through God’s reconciliation in Jesus Christ in which all are forgiven, reconciled, and sent forth in the ministry of reconciliation.

Preparation for the Lord’s Supper includes reconciling with others through confessing our faults and shortcomings to God and seeking and offering forgiveness.

Community of Christ celebrates the Lord’s Supper using bread and grape juice where available. Following the Communion prayers, the emblems are served to each person by a priesthood member. All believers in Christ, members or not, are welcome to share in the Lord’s Supper. Community of Christ children under the age of 8 refrain from taking Communion until they are baptized and confirmed.

—Adapted from *Of Water and Spirit*, Herald Publishing House, 2014, pp.50–51

**Questions**

1. What experiences have you had with the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper?
2. What does it mean to be “forgiven, reconciled, and sent forth in the ministry of reconciliation?”
Generosity Statement

“Sharing for the common good is the spirit of Zion” (Doctrine and Covenants 165:2f). We receive God’s grace and generosity. The offering basket is available if you would like to support ongoing small-group ministries as part of your generous response.

This month’s offering prayer is adapted from A Disciple’s Generous Response:

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All committed followers of Christ are invited to partake, but no one should feel pressured to receive the emblems.

Our experience of being together as we share in Communion is an expression of blessing, healing, peace, and community.

In preparation let’s sing Community of Christ Sings 519, “In the Singing.”
Thoughts for Children

Materials: chalkboard and chalk or whiteboard and markers
Lesson: What is Communion?
Instructions: Ask children to draw a big mess on the chalkboard.
Share: “At their final meal together, Jesus taught the disciples to remember him using the bread and wine as symbols of his body and blood. At Communion, we remember God’s grace and recommit ourselves to follow Jesus (as we did at baptism) and live in covenant community. We also try to resolve any problems in our relationships with others” (from Of Water and Spirit Facilitator Guide, Herald Publishing House, 2013, p. 60).
Communion is a good time to say you are sorry or ask forgiveness if you have hurt someone else. Sometimes it is good simply to ask God to forgive you and to begin again with a fresh start.
As you talk, erase the mess on the chalkboard.
Remind the children that each time we celebrate Communion we receive God’s grace and forgiveness. We are made clean, just like the chalkboard.
Thank the children for participating.
Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

February

Focus: Reconciliation

Topic: Lent

Gathering

Welcome

Prayer for Peace

*Ring a bell or chime three times slowly.*

*Light the peace candle.*

Today in our prayers we remember the people of Monaco (author Stassi Cramm).

We journey *as* individuals and *as* a faith community.

We journey *from* the temptations in our wilderness of the worldly images of power, success, exclusion, and hierarchy of worth.

We journey *in* confession...

We are weak and easily lured by these worldly images.

We sometimes serve our self-desire to achieve these images even when it hurts your creation and children.

We journey *in* repentance...

Forgiveness...

And your grace.

We journey *toward*...

A call to sacrifice these images of cultural norms.

The challenge to stand against worldly culture and to embrace your culture.

The invitation to be co-creators of your vision of shalom for the world...

Where power comes in the form of a baby.

Where success hangs on a cross and breaks free from the tomb.

Where walls of exclusion turn to dust and inclusion for all is the norm.
Where hierarchy of worth is equalized, and each person experiences worth and the worth of all others.

We journey with thankful hearts for...
The call to sacrifice,
The challenge to take a stand,

And the invitation to be co-creators with you and one another of a new world of shalom.

We journey in trust that you will give us what we need to make this journey...

Strength
Courage
Endurance
Wisdom
Compassion
Unconditional love

We journey to rebirth as embodying the Living Christ in your world in whose name we pray. Amen.

Sharing Around the Table

“Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

“So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

—Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18 NRSV

Ash Wednesday begins the Lenten season. Lent is the 40-day period before Easter appointed for reflection and building stronger relationships with the Divine, as individuals and
communities. Ash Wednesday and Lent feature a call to repentance—a renewed turning toward God so our relationships may be genuine.

The three topics addressed in the reading are almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. These three were basic spiritual practices.

Jesus asks his disciples to reflect on their motivation for engaging in these disciplines. The Greek word for “hypocrite” also referred to an actor on stage. By using this word, Jesus challenges his hearers to avoid turning spiritual disciplines into public performances. The purpose should not be to draw attention from peers. Instead, these practices are in response to God’s grace and generosity.

When done sincerely, these spiritual practices advance our formation as disciples, as well as Christ’s mission. This would not happen if done merely to impress a naïve audience. Actors might fool audiences. Hypocrites might fool peers. By suggesting that these spiritual practices should be performed for God’s purposes, Jesus challenges disciples to be sincere and to engage fully. God will not be fooled. God understands our true capacity and calls us to an ever-deeper self-examination. The question is not as much about whether these acts should be done in public as it is about whether we still would do them if we knew we did not have an audience (www.CofChrist.org/worship-resources-01-march-2017).

Questions
1. What has your experience been with spiritual practices?
2. How will you spend time during Lent drawing closer to God?

Sending

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Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn
CCS 453, “When We Are Tested”

Closing Prayer

Optional Additions Depending on Group
- Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper
- Thoughts for Children
Prayer for Peace

*Ring a bell or chime three times slowly.*
*Light the peace candle.*

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Thoughts for Children

Materials: strips of purple paper, tape
Lesson: What is Lent?
Lent is a season of 40 days (not counting Sundays!) celebrated each year in early spring. During Lent we focus on God and preparing for Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter. During the 40 days we focus on prayer, caring for the poor, and helping others.

Many people “give up” something for Lent to help them remember that Jesus gave his life for us. But during Lent you also can “take on” doing good things, just like Jesus did. You can pray, you help someone do their chores, or you can give money to help the poor.

Purple is a color used in churches during Lent. Purple reminds us that Jesus will sacrifice his life on the cross. We can wear purple as a way to remember Jesus and the season of Lent.

Instructions: After explaining Lent to the children ask if they would like to wear purple as a symbol of Lent. Use the paper strip as an armband, taping the ends together. Enlist other group members to help the children. Invite everyone in the group to wear a purple Lenten reminder.

When all have an armband, thank the children for participating.