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 thorough 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

July

Focus: Diversity

Topic: Diversity

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 China (author Margaret Huffman).

Creator in heaven,

Help us to feel the peace that comes through knowing you are in, of, through, and around all things of your creation, and that your love always protects and surrounds us.

Help us to have peace within ourselves, through recourse to the help provided by your Son, Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

Help us to be at peace with all people, knowing your love extends equally to all. Help us be at peace with the animals and the plants, as we have stewardship over them, and they are our responsibility and blessing.

Help us to be at peace with the Earth, as she is our nurturing mother.

May the peace that passes understanding enter and remain in our hearts, now and forever.

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Sharing Around the Table

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

—Doctrine and Covenants 164:5

This document, “We Are One, We Are Many,” was created in 2004 during the International Leaders’ Meeting and serves as a reflection of the diversity that is Community of Christ:

We are Community of Christ, and we are walking the path together. We sing “joy” in thousands of congregations. We say “hope” in scores of languages. We proclaim peace in almost 60 nations. We are one, and we are many. We are diverse, yet we are community, for we belong to Christ.

We live in a world where the face of Jesus is torn. Humans hurt each other, rending the body of Christ. Systems and institutions crush the spirit and imprison the mind. Christ mourns where bullets, barricades of burning tires, barbed-wire fences, cultural prohibitions, violence, and mine fields separate humanity. Christ shares the burdens of poverty, AIDS, orphans, imperialism, wealth, and conflict. Christ is persecuted with those who suffer in his name, and forsaken when his servants forget indigenous communities.

The church also tears the face of Jesus. We show the world the lamb and the lion and the child, but we fail to resolve conflicts in our own families and congregations. We are sometimes so focused on our own relationships that we risk losing our relationship with Jesus, who is also found in the stranger and the enemy. We are hostile to culture in some nations and taken hostage by culture in others. We risk division on the tense topics of human sexuality, rebaptism, and membership. We struggle to represent leadership from around the world as we decide important matters in the life of the church.

We, too, have torn the face of Jesus. Yet God chooses us.

We are many, but we are one.


Questions

1. “We Are One, We Are Many” was created from the voices of leaders from various cultures around the globe. How can cultural diversity be a positive aspect of a worldwide faith community? How can it be challenging?
2. How do you respond to diversity in your community?

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:

God, may we be a generous people in response to your boundless grace and unending love. Bless and magnify our gifts, and our service to others. Let generosity become part of our nature we pray. Amen.

Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn

CCS 330, “Summoned by the God Who Made Us”

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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Creator in heaven,

Help us to feel the peace that comes through knowing you are in, of, through, and around all things of your creation, and that your love always protects and surrounds us.

Help us to have peace within ourselves, through recourse to the help provided by your Son, Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

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Help us to be at peace with the Earth, as she is our nurturing mother.

May the peace that passes understanding enter and remain in our hearts, now and forever.

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.
Sharing Together

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

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1. “We Are One, We Are Many” was created from the voices of leaders from various cultures around the globe. How can cultural diversity be a positive aspect of a worldwide faith community? How can it be challenging?
2. How do you respond to diversity in your community?
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:

God, may we be a generous people in response to your boundless grace and unending love. Bless and magnify our gifts, and our service to others. Let generosity become part of our nature, we pray. 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 from Community of Christ Sings 532, “We Meet as Friends at Table,” verses 1, 2.
Thoughts for Children

Materials: bouquet of various flowers—real, silk, or plastic

Gather various flowers and show children the bouquet. Talk about each flower and its worth. For example, some people think the dandelion is a weed, but I like their beautiful yellow flowers and so do the bees. Some people complain about roses because they have sharp thorns, but they sure smell good. Farmers sometimes fuss about sunflowers, but birds and people eat their seeds. You can use any variety of flowers and facts that you like. The flowers belong to God because God made them. Explain to children that people are like flowers. Each has been created with special gifts, and they belong to God, who made them.

Lay out various flowers (real or artificial). Let each child choose one or two. Talk about what makes each one special—the flower and the person. Have them bring the flowers together to form one beautiful bouquet. Explain that this is why we work together. We all add something different and special. Let the children display the bouquet in a worship service, classroom, or at home.

Thank the children for participating.

(From www.CofChrist.org/unity-ideas-for-young-children)
Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

July

Focus: Diversity

Topic: Worldwide Church

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 Tanzania (author Evelyn Masek).

God who created us of one blood color within and many skin colors without—we come in praise and appreciation of our sameness and our differences. We know your love for each of us is the same as your love for all of us.

We long for peace and harmony in our lives, but so many things separate us: race, religion, wealth, sin, poverty, sickness. We need your help so we might grow in the kind of love that causes us to practice the art of not only listening but hearing each other; to listen with our hearts and not just our ears; to give and receive respect; to be thoughtful and caring.

Teach us to hurt when others hurt and rejoice when they rejoice. It is only through sharing that we will grow in understanding. Peace at home and throughout the world revolves around understanding and mutual respect.

We desire to plant the seeds of peace by our words and deeds so one day we may realize a bountiful harvest of goodness and earthly love.

We thank you for blessing us with your love that promises us a place of peace that passes all human understanding.

Make us instruments of that peace, we pray, that we might not only talk about your kingdom, but be your kingdom in this place.

We pray in the name of your Son, Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Amen.
Sharing Around the Table

Stand firm in the name of the One you proclaim and create diverse communities of disciples and seekers, rejoicing in the continuing fulfillment of the call to this people to prophetically witness in the name of Jesus Christ.

Heed the urgent call to become a global family united in the name of the Christ, committed in love to one another, seeking the kingdom for which you yearn and to which you have always been summoned. That kingdom shall be a peaceable one and it shall be known as Zion.

—Doctrine and Covenants 161:6a–b

For Community of Christ to be globally diverse and united in ministry and message is a challenge and a divine call.

Since 1960 [Community of Christ] has entered into a period of noteworthy global expansion, going from having members in twelve nations to more than sixty nations. This emerging new international consciousness resulted in the name General Conference being changed to World Conference in 1960. Today the international presence at World Conference, now held every three years, is evident in the various nationalities, races, styles of clothing, and languages spoken and translated. Decisions are increasingly made from an international rather than just a United States perspective… [I]nternationalization has expanded church members’ horizons, challenged them to reevaluate their understandings of the gospel, and made them think about mission in the world in the twenty-first century. An important question for Community of Christ has become, “How can the followers of Jesus be a relevant and positive force for good in a globalizing world threatened by poverty, war, HIV/AIDS, terrorism, and global warming?”


Questions
1. Are there aspects of your own life that are both challenging and divinely led?
2. Share an occasion or factor in your faith journey that caused you to reevaluate your understandings of the gospel.
3. How can we be a positive force for good in an increasingly globalized world?

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:
God, May we be a generous people in response to your boundless grace and unending love. Bless and magnify our gifts and our service to others. Let generosity become part of our nature, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn  
CCS 323, “Let Us Sing a Worldwide Anthem”

Closing Prayer

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

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Light the peace candle.

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God who created us of one blood color within and many skin colors without—we come in praise and appreciation of our sameness and our differences. We know your love for each of us is the same as your love for all of us.

We long for peace and harmony in our lives, but so many things separate us: race, religion, wealth, sin, poverty, sickness. We need your help so we might grow in the kind of love that causes us to practice the art of not only listening but hearing each other; to listen with our hearts and not just our ears; to give and receive respect; to be thoughtful and caring.

Teach us to hurt when others hurt and rejoice when they rejoice. It is only through sharing that we will grow in understanding. Peace at home and throughout the world revolves around understanding and mutual respect.

We desire to plant the seeds of peace by our words and deeds so one day we may realize a bountiful harvest of goodness and earthly love.

We thank you for blessing us with your love that promises us a place of peace that passes all human understanding.

Make us instruments of that peace, we pray, that we might not only talk about your kingdom, but be your kingdom in this place.

We pray in the name of your Son, Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Amen.
**Sharing Together**

Stand firm in the name of the One you proclaim and create diverse communities of disciples and seekers, rejoicing in the continuing fulfillment of the call to this people to prophetically witness in the name of Jesus Christ.

Heed the urgent call to become a global family united in the name of the Christ, committed in love to one another, seeking the kingdom for which you yearn and to which you have always been summoned. That kingdom shall be a peaceable one and it shall be known as Zion.

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For Community of Christ to be globally diverse and united in ministry and message is a challenge and a divine call.

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**Questions**

1. Are there aspects of your own life that are both challenging and divinely led?<br>
2. Share an occasion or factor in your faith journey that caused you to reevaluate your understandings of the gospel.<br>
3. How can we be a positive force for good in an increasingly globalized world?
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:

God, May we be a generous people in response to your boundless grace and unending love. Bless and magnify our gifts and our service to others. Let generosity become part of our nature, we pray. 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 532, “We Meet as Friends at Table,” verses 1, 2.
Thoughts for Children

Materials: globe or world map, slips of paper, pen or pencil
People share together in Community of Christ congregations and groups all over the world.

One way we can be reminded we are one community of faith is to pray for people, friends, families, animals, and plants in the world.

Using a globe or world map, ask the children to close their eyes and point to a place to pray for the people, animals, and environment.

Write the name of the country on a slip of paper. Encourage the children (and parents) to learn about that country this week. Ask them to keep this country in their heart and pray for it each day.

Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

July

Focus: Diversity

Topic: Worth of All Persons

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 Kiribati (author Gordon R. McKay).

*O Lord of heaven and Earth, we raise our voices to you in praise. As we do, we sense the great need in our world today for your peace—peace that would bind us as people of goodwill. Your world struggles for identity and equality. May the spirit of peace come to heal and make whole the loves of the world’s people. Amen.*

Sharing Around the Table

*When President Steve Veazey offered what would become Section 164 of Doctrine and Covenants to Community of Christ, he shared his testimony of the revelatory process that shaped the inspired counsel:* 

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

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

*While I studied this passage, the Spirit helped me see much broader dimensions of God’s grace working through Christ to transform human relationships in a divided world. As a*
result, I have an even-greater testimony than before of the power of the gospel of Christ to birth a new creation among those who dare to live its message in sacred community.
—Preface, Doctrine and Covenants 164

Galatians 3 is speaking to relationships between those who have power and those who do not.

The Enduring Principle of Worth of All Persons speaks to the imbalance of power in cultures and societies. It reflects Community of Christ’s core understanding that dignity, respect, and compassion are essential to all our relationships and human interactions.

**Worth of All Persons**
- God views all people as having inestimable and equal worth.
- God wants all people to experience wholeness of body, mind, spirit, and relationships.
- We seek to uphold and restore the worth of all people individually and in community, challenging unjust systems that diminish human worth.
- We join with Jesus Christ in bringing good news to the poor, sick, captive, and oppressed.


**Questions**
1. When have you felt your worth diminished by someone in power?
2. When have you inadvertently or intentionally diminished the worth of another person?
3. How can we live the message of Worth of All Persons in our communities?

**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:

God, May we be a generous people in response to your boundless grace and unending love. Bless and magnify our gifts, and our service to others. Let generosity become part of our nature, we pray. Amen.

**Invitation to Next Meeting**

**Closing Hymn**
CCS 285, “For Everyone Born”

**Closing Prayer**

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

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O Lord of heaven and Earth, we raise our voices to you in praise. As we do, we sense the great need in our world today for your peace—peace that would bind us as people of goodwill. Your world struggles for identity and equality. May the spirit of peace come to heal and make whole the loves of the world’s people. Amen.
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While I studied this passage, the Spirit helped me see much broader dimensions of God’s grace working through Christ to transform human relationships in a divided world. As a result, I have an even-greater testimony than before of the power of the gospel of Christ to birth a new creation among those who dare to live its message in sacred community.

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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 532, “We Meet as Friends at Table,” verses 1, 2.
Thoughts for Children

Materials: small paper hearts with “Worth of All Persons” printed on each.

Ask children to look around the room at all the people. How are they different from one another? Ask children to name all the ways people can be different (adults can help): age, hairstyle, size, shape, color, language, physical challenges, skills.

What things make you different from other children you know (name, sports, wearing glasses or braces, what you like to eat)?

All of these things make us different from one another, but none of these things makes one person better than another or worth more than another.

In Community of Christ we believe in the Worth of All Persons. All people belong to God, and all people are loved by God.

Ask children to give everyone a heart. Thank them for participating.
 Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

July

Focus: Diversity

Topic: Faithful Disagreement

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 Costa Rica (author G. Jerry van Rossum).

God, we gather today to be with each other and with you. We come from backgrounds that range from dependence on you to independence from you. We come deeply committed to the principles of living in a world where freedom is cherished, and we strive to fulfill needs, hopes, and dreams for our children, ourselves, our neighbors, and our nations. Though our history oscillates between the poles of peace and war, between community and isolationism, between selflessness and selfishness, between hope and cynicism, we come to you.

You have shared our triumphs and wept through our lost opportunities. You simply welcome us back with your love and compassion. Yet, as we attempt to live our visions of equality, opportunity, security—our dream of peace—they slip through our grasp because of our selfish need for power, control, and self-centeredness.

God, we understand our shortcomings and yet feel secure enough in our relationship with you to pray for guidance and inspiration to overcome our inability to transcend self. To strive for the slippery vision of peace, we pray for courage to name and redress injustice. We ask for wisdom to understand the difference between vindictiveness and justice. Help us to use the tools of commitment, hope, and love to stretch out our arms for peace, even when peace seems beyond our grasp and only a painful dream.

God, we ask much of you. And in this moment of tranquil relationship, we dare ask that your kingdom come on Earth as it is in heaven. God, help us keep the vision alive. Grant us the will to try. Inspire us to see what can be and recognize what was. It is in the name

JULY—Focus: Diversity; Topic: Faithful Disagreement
of Christ Jesus we come, in the name of Christ Jesus we pray, and in the name of Christ Jesus we leave our prayer in your memory. Amen.

Sharing Around the Table

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

—Ephesians 4:1–6 NRSV

The bond of peace refers to more than absolving conflict. Peace, or shalom, is the saving action of God in the world, redeeming and reconciling all creation to God. The bond of peace that unifies disciples is the willingness and commitment to be reconciled, to be in holy or “right” relationship with God, with others, ourselves, and the Earth.

Community of Christ practices faithful disagreement.

Faithful disagreement is defined as actions and/or responses by a person holding a different view about a specific policy, belief, principle, or other position of Community of Christ. This disagreement with a Community of Christ position or direction is helpful, responsible, faithful, and bounded by loyalty and commitment to the identity, mission, message, and beliefs of Community of Christ. A person who faithfully disagrees is welcome to share about the church position with which she or he disagrees. The intent of the sharing is to improve the overall faithful response of the church to God’s intended direction without classifying others as unfaithful.


Twelve principles for faithful disagreement honor an individual’s right to disagree while protecting the body from harm. Among them:

- Holding a differing view from the Community of Christ position on a specific matter does not lessen in any way a person’s participation as a faithful, generous, committed, and responsible disciple. Nor does having a differing view impact a person’s eligibility to hold a priesthood office or partake of the sacraments.
- Agreeing with Community of Christ positions, official and unofficial, is not a test of faith for priesthood, members, and friends.
- A person cannot ignore policies because he or she disagrees with a particular policy. Ethically, administrators must consistently apply the official policies and procedures of the church.
- At no time is any action that harms the body of the church considered in harmony with the principles in this document.

Questions
1. Ephesians calls followers to live united in the bond of peace. How do you navigate the tension that arises in community from diverse personalities and giftedness with your own willingness to be in holy relationships of reconciliation and peace?
2. How might the principles for faithful disagreement help maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace?

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:

God, May we be a generous people in response to your boundless grace and unending love. Bless and magnify our gifts, and our service to others. Let generosity become part of our nature, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn
CCS, 532, “We Meet as Friends at Table,” verses 3, 4

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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Communion Statement

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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* 532, “We Meet as Friends at Table,” verses 1, 2.
Thoughts for Children

Materials: three or four pieces of paper with statements written on them:

• The sky is blue.
• The best ice cream is strawberry.
• Swings are more fun than monkey bars.
• Penguins are the funniest animals.

Ask the children to agree or disagree with each statement as you show and read them aloud, one at a time.

Ask: Do we always have to agree? If I don’t agree with you, are you still my friend?

Faithful disagreement means we can disagree on things, even important things, and still be part of the same loving community. I can disagree with you and still love you, pray and serve with you, and comfort you if you are sick.

We can practice faithful disagreement by choosing to stay friends with people even when we do not agree. We grow as disciples when we look for things we have in common (like we both like swings better than monkey bars) rather than letting our disagreements separate us.

Thank the children for participating.
Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

August

Focus: Hospitality

Topic: Hospitality

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 Malaysia (author Bob Kyser of Independence, Missouri).

O God, Creator and Sustainer,

Today, in this moment of encounter with you, we pause to express our gratitude for the assurance of your divine presence with us.

We recognize your gift of peace, which comes to us through the Spirit of your Son, Jesus Christ.

As we seek to open that gift of Christ’s peace in our lives, may we also commit to sharing that gift with others. May our lives be a living witness, showing the fruit of that peace, inviting all to share.

We pray for peace in our relations, especially about family. May our family, your family, refocus from what divides us to that which unites us, thus moving toward your peaceable kingdom. May all your creation be blessed.

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

Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.

—1 Peter 4:8–10 NRSV

It would have been essential in early Christian communities for people with diverse backgrounds, resources, giftedness, and social standing to learn to form loving community. One way to do this is to offer hospitality to each other.

Practicing hospitality today brings to mind a list of things we can do to prepare to host in our home. We clean the house, turn off the TV, put on some music, and prepare snacks and beverages. The hospitality of the New Testament goes deeper into the heart of welcoming the other, the stranger, one who is different. It is to offer love to the outsider as if the person were one of your own family. To offer hospitality is to welcome the other with Christ-like love, mutual respect, responsibility, justice, covenant, and faithfulness.

These are the principles of holy relationship in Doctrine and Covenants 165:6a. These principles are essential in Christian community, and we can embody them as we invite others—even those quite unlike ourselves—to our tables, our activities, our social groups, and our spiritual journey.

Questions
1. How do you keep others at a distance? How can you be more open to connect with others?
2. To what activities could you invite someone?
3. How might you show hospitality with another person by sharing part of your spiritual journey?

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:

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 274, “God We Gather as Your People”

Closing Prayer
Optional Additions Depending on Group

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

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

In preparation let’s sing from Community of Christ Sings 533, “I Come with Joy, a Child of God.”
Thoughts for Children

Materials: large poster board, marker

Say: Today we will be learning about hospitality. Hospitality is when we welcome others into our lives and make them feel welcome.

Jesus modeled hospitality to others, and when we follow Jesus we show hospitality, too. Sometimes it is easy to offer hospitality to friends. We welcome them to our house, and we look forward to being with them. But lots of people in the world do not get invited or do not feel welcomed.

Ask: Who are the people who do not experience hospitality? Possible answers: sick, poor, homeless, foreigners.

Ask: Have you ever been unwelcome or unwanted? How did that make you feel?

On a large sheet of poster paper or card stock, create a welcome mat. Write WELCOME in large letters and then invite children to call out the people who need to be welcomed into our lives.

Write these words on the welcome mat and display it for all to see.

Offer a prayer that we all might offer God’s hospitality to others.

Thank the children for participating.

(Adapted from www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Focus-moments.pdf)
Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

August

Focus: Hospitality

Topic: Generosity

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 Japan (author Chika Kinugawa)

Dear God, Creator, We thank you for creating human beings and for your love of all equally. We live in different countries and speak different languages, but it doesn’t mean there is a border or a fence between us. Please lead us to keep the borders open between the hearts of the people.

O Lord, We are your gardeners. We will keep your beautiful garden, the Earth, which you created, clean, and manage for all people to live in peace. We promise we will hand over this garden to the children, the next generation. Children are the treasure and the hope for the bright future.

O God, Please love the children, and let it be possible for them to be able to show their talents equally all over the world.

In thanks we pray, Creator. Amen.

Sharing Around the Table

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?
In Community of Christ, World Mission Tithes and giving to the local group or congregation are called Disciples’ Generous Response. Both types of giving, tithing to World Church and funds given to the local expression of the church, are essential to what we understand as Zion, the peaceable reign of God.

Faithful disciples do not just initiate acts of generosity, they anticipate their transformative impact. Actions of uncommon generosity are prophetic, looking beyond the horizon of what is...to see what could be. Such acts bring changed people, changed communities, a changed world. The vision of transforming generosity inspires its beginning. It is the abundance of our collective capacity as Community of Christ that provides the resources needed for extraordinary acts. God’s vision of the future—the cause of Zion—is our driving vision. Our whole-life generosity brings that future into being and makes us the people we are called to be.

—Pathway to Abundant Generosity

Questions
1. What does it mean to you to share generously according to your true capacity?
2. What are some examples of a few generous disciples making a transformative impact for good?

Sending
Generosity Statement
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Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn
CCS 657, “Make Us, O God, a Church That Shares”

Closing Prayer

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

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—Doctrine and Covenants 163:9

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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 533, “I Come with Joy, a Child of God.”
Thoughts for Children

Materials: sheets of paper, pencils, or crayons

Say: Look at your hands. What do you do with your hands each day?

Place one hand on a piece of paper and trace around it.

Ask God to help you think of a person your hands could help. In the middle of your hand outline, write that person’s name and how you will use your helping hands for him or her. What do you think will happen when you use your helping hands? How will you feel? How will the person you helped feel?

When you help others, you act generously. God gives generously to us, and we share that generosity when we help others. Take home the picture of your hand as a reminder that you will use your hands to help others.

Thank the children for participating.

(Adapted from: www.CofChrist.org/grace-ideas-for-youth)
Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

August

Focus: Hospitality

Topic: Invitation

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 Swaziland (author Laurie Gordon).

Holy and Eternal God,

In this still moment and in this sacred place we gather to recognize you as the Source of being and the Bringer of peace. You are the One whose presence fills the empty places in the heart of every child, woman, and man; and you are the One who is the Light in our innermost beings. We come to pray for peace, to open our hearts to your Spirit of peace, and to offer our lives in bringing your peace into the world.

This peace for which we pray is a peace that may be born in our hearts in still moments such as this one, when we are aware of you. This peace we seek is a peace that feeds and is fed by the unfolding of compassion within, a peace that spills into our relationships with our loved ones and is extended into a troubled world. We want to offer our hearts to the Earth and to the world.

The Spirit of peace enters the world through us when our hearts know you. We know this kind of peacemaking is no easy task, yet we want to participate with you in this new creation. As instruments of your peace may we transform—by Your Spirit—violence, ugliness, and sorrow into peace, beauty, and joy. May the Spirit of peace in the temple of our hearts be free to spiral into the world.

In remembrance of the Christ, amen.
Sharing Around the Table

Community of Christ, a divine vision is set before you. Presented over the years through various inspired phrases and symbols, it is expressed now through initiatives in harmony with Jesus Christ's mission.

As a spiritual venture, boldly follow the initiatives into the heart of God’s vision for the church and creation. Then, in response to growing insight about God’s nature and will, continue to shape communities that live Christ’s love and mission.

Lovingly invite others to experience the good news of new life in community with Christ. Opportunities abound in your daily lives if you choose to see them.

—Doctrine and Covenants 165:1a–c

Community of Christ has been on a divinely inspired journey that calls for ongoing transformation while simultaneously honoring and bringing forward those parts of our story that have meaning and relevance today.

The call to this community of faithful disciples is to be places of sacred space where all will be valued and loved, discover or deepen their own spiritual journey, and participate in God’s transforming purposes of justice and peace.

Community of Christ congregations, small groups, and informal expressions of the church strive to value the worth of every person as a child of God. Together we shape and form ourselves as safe places for each person to explore the journey of faith, to participate in Christ-like service, and to gather in sincere expressions of community.

Questions

1. What aspects of safe space are essential for true community to form?
2. When do you find opportunities to invite others into meaningful conversation and authentic relationship?
3. Invite People to Christ is a Community of Christ Mission Initiative. What does this phrase mean to you?

Sending

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Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn

CCS 643, “Find Your Wholeness”

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

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As a spiritual venture, boldly follow the initiatives into the heart of God’s vision for the church and creation. Then, in response to growing insight about God’s nature and will, continue to shape communities that live Christ’s love and mission.

Lovingly invite others to experience the good news of new life in community with Christ. Opportunities abound in your daily lives if you choose to see them.

—Doctrine and Covenants 165:1a–c

Community of Christ has been on a divinely inspired journey that calls for ongoing transformation while simultaneously honoring and bringing forward those parts of our story that have meaning and relevance today.

The call to this community of faithful disciples is to be places of sacred space where all will be valued and loved, discover or deepen their own spiritual journey, and participate in God’s transforming purposes of justice and peace.

Community of Christ congregations, small groups, and informal expressions of the church strive to value the worth of every person as a child of God. Together we shape and form ourselves as safe places for each person to explore the journey of faith, to participate in Christ-like service, and to gather in sincere expressions of community.

Questions
1. What aspects of safe space are essential for true community to form?
2. When do you find opportunities to invite others into meaningful conversation and authentic relationship?
3. *Invite People to Christ* is a Community of Christ Mission Initiative. What does this phrase mean to you?
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:

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 to ourselves. 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 533, “I Come with Joy, a Child of God.”
Thoughts for Children

Materials: One piece of newsprint or poster board, markers or crayons, sheets of 8½x11-inch paper

Draw a large circle on a large piece of newsprint or poster board.
Hold up the circle so it is visible to the entire group.
Ask how many people will fit in the circle (have children call out answers).
Place the paper on the floor, circle side up, and have children try to fit as many people as possible inside the circle.

Ask: Is everyone in the circle? No, we drew our circle too small.
What should we do? (Make a bigger circle.)

Have each person draw a line, top to bottom, on a regular-sized piece of paper. Then ask for help arranging all the lines, end to end, on the floor to form a large circle.

Ask children to invite everyone into the circle. Keep adding lines until everyone fits.

Say: As disciples of Jesus we invite others into the circle. Let’s make sure we always make room for others.

Thank the children for participating.
(Adapted from: www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Focus-moments.pdf)
Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

August

Focus: Hospitality

Topic: Mission

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 Brazil (author Nina Mason).

Hear today, O God, our prayer for peace in this troubled generation. We need a peace that lives and grows in hearts and souls and prompts action in sharing life in true brotherhood and sisterhood. O God, help thy people to feel peace as serenity extending its magnetism of love into all accepting hearts.

Thank you for knowledge of the principles of living, which will bring us the jewel of peace that sustains and soothes all aspects of life. Accept our individual and universal prayer for peace. As Isaiah said, may we heed thy commandments, and peace will become our river and righteousness the waves of the sea. Amen.

Sharing Around the Table

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”
And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.


In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus began his ministry in the area of Galilee by making a public proclamation. While in Nazareth, Jesus went to the synagogue (as was customary for observant Jewish males), stood to read from the scroll of Isaiah, sat down, and commented on the reading. In doing so, Jesus proclaimed his ministry would be Spirit-led (“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me”) to bring about liberation, deliverance, restoration, and release from oppression. Jesus did indeed bring ministry to the poor, the blind, and the outcast. He offered healing to the sick, he blessed the weak and marginalized. Jesus also criticized the rich, the powerful, and the complacent.

This passage has become a primary scripture for Community of Christ. It is from Luke 4:18–19 that the Mission Initiatives evolved. The first three initiatives—Invite People to Christ; Abolish Poverty, End Suffering; and Pursue Peace on Earth—call us to Spirit-led ministries of bearing the good news and bringing about release, restoration, and liberation.

The last two initiatives—Develop Disciples to Serve and Experience Congregations in Mission—remind us to engage in the ministry and message of Jesus and to guard against individual and congregational complacency.

Questions
1. What does this proclamation of Jesus mean for you in your context and culture?
2. Which Mission Initiative speaks most profoundly to your heart?

Sending
Generosity Statement
“Sharing for the common good is the spirit of Zion” (Doctrine and Covenants) 165:2f.
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Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn
CCS 586, “The Summons”

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

Ask: Do you think God knows your name?

Say: One day, Moses saw a burning bush. God called to him, “Moses! Moses!” Do you know what Moses said? (Wait to hear the responses.)

Moses answered, “Here I am.”

One night a boy, Samuel, was sleeping, and he heard someone call his name several times. He answered, “Here I am.”

God was calling Moses and Samuel to participate in God’s mission. We also are called to work in Christ’s mission here on Earth. That mission is to:

• Invite others to be in relationship with Jesus.
• Care for the poor and help those who are suffering.
• Work for peace in our neighborhoods and in the world.

Like Moses and Samuel, we are called by name, and we can respond like they did.

Turn to the person next to you, and say his or her name. (If you don’t know it, find out!)

Pause to listen to everyone calling one another’s names.

After everyone’s name has been called, ask everyone to say together: “Here I am.”

Thank everyone for participating.

(Adapted from www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Focus-moments.pdf)