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](http://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](http://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

September

Focus: Journey

Topic: Sacred Story

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 Latvia (author: Danny Belrose).

Each a Living Sanctuary

Whirling, swirling skyward
—here, in this sacred space we sense your Spirit, God,
—not because the other places where we walk, talk,
and live out our daily lives are less sacred.

Every sanctuary large or small, humble or ornate
—every living room, field, forest, mountain stream
dedicated to your praise and peace
awakens us to your presence.
We come expectant.
We come in search of you, of ourselves,
of those we know and do not know
who need to be blessed and to be your blessing.
How many feet have journeyed
this Worshiper’s Path, God?
How many faces, races, friends, families, stranger?
Heads bowed in silence.
Hearts filled with hope and anticipation.
Upward. Inward. Slowly, reflectively,
winding their way into spiraling space.
Bringing you here, meeting you here
—taking you with them, God.
Opening themselves, once again,  
   to your ever-abiding presence at all corners of life.  
And somehow awakening to the wonder that they, too,  
   are your temple  
—each a living, loving sanctuary of peace,  
   reconciliation, and healing of the Spirit.  
May this shining symbol escape its footings and foundation.  
May it wander far and wide in crepe soles,  
   sandals, high-heels, bare feet, and sneakers  
—its walls wrapped in suits, saris,  
   shirts, and sundresses.  
Let its face be a rainbow of cultures,  
   young and old, weak and strong  
—each a living sanctuary of Christ’s peace.  
And may those who never enter its doors, become its doors  
   welcoming all they meet with the  
gift of grace and holy acceptance.  
In Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Sharing Around the Table**

Be respectful of tradition. Do not fail to listen attentively to the telling of the sacred story, for the story of scripture and of faith empowers and illuminates. But neither be captive to time-bound formulas and procedures. Remember that instruction given in former years is applicable in principle and must be measured against the needs of a growing church, in accordance with the prayerful direction of the spiritual authorities and the consent of the people.

—*Doctrine and Covenants 161:5*

From a small grove in New York to the islands of the South Pacific and the savannahs of Africa, diverse places and peoples make up Community of Christ’s story. Our history has grown and is now shared by hundreds of thousands of believers across the world. It is a story of hope for an impoverished people, a shared lesson on justice and equality in ministry, and a unique testimony of the forgiving grace of God. And our collective story will continue to resonate in the hearts and minds of our people long into the future.

Community of Christ shares a common, sacred history with all of Christianity. In common with fellow Christian denominations, our historical and spiritual roots come from the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. For early Community of Christ members, Jesus’ powerful teachings on the worth of all persons, the importance of sacred community, and the belief in a loving, forgiving Creator spoke powerfully, just as they do for us today. We are part of a “cloud of witnesses” stretching back generations. [The church] celebrates the discipleship of our ancestors, while acknowledging that they and we are ever in need of grace, forgiveness, and healing.”

Questions
1. Have you visited any Restoration historic sites? Which ones? What was your experience?
2. How does understanding that persons in Restoration history were flawed persons such as ourselves help you to better understand your place in the sacred story?
3. The sacred story goes back to the life, ministry, and scriptural heritage of Jesus. How do you connect with the redemptive story of Jesus?

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:

Generous God, Be with each of us as we manage our time, talent, treasure, and testimony. May we use all our resources in ways that express our desire to bring blessings of healing and peace into the world. May we focus our giving on your purposes, and may our hearts be aligned with your heart. Amen.

Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn
CCS 96, “Now in This Moment”

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* 515, “In These Moments We Remember.”
Thoughts for Children

Say: In Community of Christ we use three books of scripture. The Bible is our foundational book of scripture. In addition, we use the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants. The scriptures tell the sacred story of God’s love and care for the world. The sacred story helps us learn about Jesus.

In addition to scripture, the sacred story is about how God works in our lives and the lives of our family, friends, and community. We can hear these stories by reading books and by listening to people tell about their walk with God.

Ask: If you were to share your sacred story about how God loves you, what would you share?

Invite children to listen today as people share parts of their sacred story.

Thank the children for participating.

Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

September

Focus: Journey

Topic: History

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 Guatemala (author Denver Congregation of Denver, Colorado).

Eternal Parent of all creation...countries...oceans...seas...plains...mountains...peoples; you have blessed your children throughout history and have extended your love and grace to all. No one is outside your spirit of love and compassion.

Help us express your peace, not only in words, but in deeds and actions. Help us be courageous, and let our fears neither divide us, nor keep us from joining with those from different cultures.

Please help us find peace within ourselves and others, being always mindful of how our thoughts and actions impact those around us. We humbly ask your forgiveness for any pain or anguish we have caused. We thank you for your faithfulness and seek thy presence to become aware of your directing guidance for all humanity.

Help us continue thy work, accepting our differences and growing stronger together on our peace journey.

In thy holy name, amen.

Sharing Around the Table

Listen carefully to your own journey as a people, for it is a sacred journey and it has taught you many things you must know for the journey yet to come.
Listen to its teachings and discover anew its principles. Do not yearn for times that are past, but recognize that you have been given a foundation of faithful service, even as you build a foundation for what is yet to be.

—Doctrine and Covenants 162:2a–b

In 2008 President Stephen M. Veazey shared some insights regarding his own exploration of Restoration history.

I have explored books and articles from a wide spectrum of scholars, authors, and publishers, ranging from the faithful to the skeptical and in between. Truth has nothing to fear from scrutiny.

During recent decades there has been a mounting wave of added information as religious historians have gained access to more source material and have written with increasing frankness on various topics. Also, in the past few years, the media spotlight—including several high-profile television series and political campaigns—has been turned on to Latter Day Saint history.

Because of my exploration of various credible works, and probing discussions with historians, some of my previously held notions have been challenged and adjusted in the face of additional knowledge. The “apologetic” approach to church history—presenting our story in as favorable a light as possible—is not sufficient for the journey ahead. That approach does not evidence the integrity that must be fundamental to our witness and ministry.

While I have adjusted some personal perspectives, I have mainly found a deeper understanding of the many complex, interrelated factors that shaped the church over the years. I have come to see more clearly how God’s Spirit worked in the lives of imperfect, but highly dedicated people to shape a faith movement that continues to play a vital role in God’s unfolding purposes today.

—“Perspectives on Church History”

Community of Christ’s “Church History Principles” guide the reflections and discussion of our story. Among other things, these principles encourage honest and responsible scholarship; see the faithfulness and the flaws in the story; approach history with intent to learn, repent, and be transformed; and foster respectful dialogue.

Questions

1. President Veazey states that “truth has nothing to fear from scrutiny.” When have you felt fearful about questing aspects of your religious history?

2. How have your preconceived notions about Restoration history been challenged or adjusted?

3. How might principles for approaching Restoration history be helpful for individuals and the faith community?
Sending

Generosity Statement

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Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn

 CCS 570, “God, Whose Grace Redeems Our Story”

Closing Prayer

Optional Additions Depending on Group

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

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2. How have your preconceived notions about Restoration history been challenged or adjusted?

3. How might principles for approaching Restoration history be helpful for individuals and the faith community?
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Generous God, Be with each of us as we manage our time, talent, treasure, and testimony. May we use all our resources in ways that express our desire to bring blessings of healing and peace into the world. May we focus our giving on your purposes, and may our hearts be aligned with your heart. Amen.
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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* 515, “In These Moments We Remember.”
Thoughts for Children

Materials: poster board with “Our History” written at the top, marker.
Share: History is a story of people and creation from the beginning of time until today. We learn about history to better understand what happened long ago. Everybody has a history. Yours might include where you were born, who your parents and grandparents are, where they were born, where they lived, and their occupation.

When we learn about our history we learn where we came from, and we hope to better understand where we are now and even decide about what might happen in the future.

We participate in a community of faith that has a valuable history. It is a beautiful story of people responding to God’s call. It also can be a sad and shocking story as people made mistakes. But it is an exciting story, because we participate in what will happen in the next chapter!

Show a large piece of poster board with “Our History” written at the top.
Say: This group has a history. We learn about its history by asking questions:
• Who started this group? (Encourage children to ask people for the answers.) Write answers on the poster.
• When did it start?
• Who is here today (first names only)?
• We can help write the next chapter by including ourselves in the story (add names of children).
• When did we start attending?
• Who brought us?
• How do we experience God here?

Show children the “Our History” poster and ask, “Is it finished? Complete?” (No, it will grow as new people come, and as we grow in our discipleship.)

Thank the children for being part of the history of this group.
Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

September

Focus: Journey

Topic: Journey

Gathering
Welcome

Prayer for Peace

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

(adapted from a prayer at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, by Joseph Smith Jr., founder of Community of Christ)

O Holy One,

Our hearts flow out in sorrow because of the grievous burdens and afflictions that are upon us and this world. Break off, O Lord, this yoke of suffering. Let it be replaced with a testimony of peace that we might go out and proclaim thy word to all peoples. Let us be filled, as with a rushing mighty wind, [with] thy glorious Spirit.

Remember the kings, the princes, the nobles, and the great ones of the Earth, and all people, and the churches. Remember the poor, the needy, and the afflicted ones of the Earth. We pray that the hearts of all may be softened, that their prejudices may give way before the truth, that all the ends of the Earth may know thy voice, and dwell in the holy city that shall be manifested in your name.

Remember all thy church, O Lord, with all their families, and all their immediate connections, with all their sick and afflicted ones. Remember all the poor and meek of the Earth, that the kingdom which thou hast set up without hands may become a great mountain and fill the whole Earth. We pray that thy church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and be adorned as a bride for that day when thou shalt unveil the heavens and cause the mountains to flow down at thy presence, and the valleys to be exalted, the rough places made smooth, that thy glory may fill the Earth.

We ask that thy disciples may go forth from this house bestowed with thy power and that thy name may be upon them, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels
have charge over them. We pray that from this place they may bear exceeding great and
glorious tidings in truth unto the ends of the Earth, that they may know that this is thy
work and that thou hast put forth thy hand to fulfill that which thou hast spoken by the
mouths of thy prophets.

It is in and through the name of Jesus Christ that we pray. Amen.

Sharing Around the Table

Continue your journey, O people of the Restoration. You have been blessed thus far but
there is so much yet to see, so much yet to do. Go forth with confidence and live
prophetically as a people who have been loved, and who now courageously choose to
love others in the name of the One you serve.

—Doctrine and Covenants 162:8c

Community of Christ speaks of itself as a people on a journey. Our spiritual ancestors
journeyed from distant places to gather as a people of God. Their journey led from New York, to
Ohio, to Missouri and the western frontier, and beyond. The church has been on a journey of
faith as well.

Our understanding of Zion has transformed from a literal, geographical center place to a
spiritual condition and a way of living in the peaceable reign of God. We continually explore our
history to better understand the past and reflect the light of Christ into the future. We have
learned to embody the Worth of All Persons through our journey to ordain women and in many
nations to approve marriage and ordination for people of same-gender orientation.

As we continue our journey,

We, a people with a sometimes violent and unfaithful history, can become a people who
abandon violence and fully embrace social justice, then there is hope that other people
compromised by violence can also change. Our own repentance can perhaps provoke
the repentance of others. Then our witness is not in vain, and Christ’s mission has
indeed become our mission...as we continue to sing the song of a peaceable Zion. “A
great and marvelous work is [still] about to come forth.” And Jesus calls today, as he
calls in every age, “come, follow me.”

—In Pursuit of Peace: Community of Christ’s Journey,
Herald Publishing House, 2016, p. 119

Questions
1. We are called to continue to live prophetically as a community of faith. What does this
mean to you?
2. How would you describe your own journey of faith?

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Generosity Statement

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Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn
CCS 170, “In the Crossroads of This Moment”

Closing Prayer

Optional Additions Depending on Group
- Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper
- Thoughts for Children
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Light the peace candle.

(adapted from a prayer at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, by Joseph Smith Jr., founder of Community of Christ)

O Holy One,

Our hearts flow out in sorrow because of the grievous burdens and afflictions that are upon us and this world. Break off, O Lord, this yoke of suffering. Let it be replaced with a testimony of peace that we might go out and proclaim thy word to all peoples. Let us be filled, as with a rushing mighty wind, [with] thy glorious Spirit.

Remember the kings, the princes, the nobles, and the great ones of the Earth, and all people, and the churches. Remember the poor, the needy, and the afflicted ones of the Earth. We pray that the hearts of all may be softened, that their prejudices may give way before the truth, that all the ends of the Earth may know thy voice, and dwell in the holy city that shall be manifested in your name.

Remember all thy church, O Lord, with all their families, and all their immediate connections, with all their sick and afflicted ones. Remember all the poor and meek of the Earth, that the kingdom which thou hast set up without hands may become a great mountain and fill the whole Earth. We pray that thy church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and be adorned as a bride for that day when thou shalt unveil the heavens and cause the mountains to flow down at thy presence, and the valleys to be exalted, the rough places made smooth, that thy glory may fill the Earth.

We ask that thy disciples may go forth from this house bestowed with thy power and that thy name may be upon them, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them. We pray that from this place they may bear exceeding great and glorious tidings in truth unto the ends of the Earth, that they may know that this is thy work and that thou hast put forth thy hand to fulfill that which thou hast spoken by the mouths of thy prophets.

It is in and through the name of Jesus Christ that we pray. Amen.
Sharing Around the Table

Continue your journey, O people of the Restoration. You have been blessed thus far but there is so much yet to see, so much yet to do. Go forth with confidence and live prophetically as a people who have been loved, and who now courageously choose to love others in the name of the One you serve.

—Doctrine and Covenants 162:8c

Community of Christ speaks of itself as a people on a journey. Our spiritual ancestors journeyed from distant places to gather as a people of God. Their journey led from New York, to Ohio, to Missouri and the western frontier, and beyond. The church has been on a journey of faith as well.

Our understanding of Zion has transformed from a literal, geographical center place to a spiritual condition and a way of living in the peaceable reign of God. We continually explore our history to better understand the past and reflect the light of Christ into the future. We have learned to embody the Worth of All Persons through our journey to ordain women and in many nations to approve marriage and ordination for people of same-gender orientation.

As we continue our journey,

We, a people with a sometimes violent and unfaithful history, can become a people who abandon violence and fully embrace social justice, then there is hope that other people compromised by violence can also change. Our own repentance can perhaps provoke the repentance of others. Then our witness is not in vain, and Christ’s mission has indeed become our mission...as we continue to sing the song of a peaceable Zion. “A great and marvelous work is [still] about to come forth.” And Jesus calls today, as he calls in every age, “come, follow me.”


Questions

1. We are called to continue to live prophetically as a community of faith. What does this mean to you?
2. How would you describe your own journey of faith?
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:

Generous God, Be with each of us as we manage our time, talent, treasure, and testimony. May we use all our resources in ways that express our desire to bring blessings of healing and peace into the world. May we focus our giving on your purposes, and may our hearts be aligned with your heart. 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 515, “In These Moments We Remember.”
Thoughts for Children

Say: Today we will be talking about how God has been present in the journey of Community of Christ. God promises to be present with each of us throughout our life journey. Have you noticed how God is always present?

The following examples may be helpful:

- Share a time when God helped you forgive someone.
- Share a time when God made you more aware of the beauty in ever-changing nature.
- Share a time when you felt afraid, and God provided comfort and strength.

After children share, close with a prayer that children always will recognize God’s presence with them. Thank them for participating.
Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

September

Focus: Journey

Topic: Temple

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 Kazakhstan (authors Barbara and Richard Howard).

Come be reconciled, my people,
In my body you are healed.
I am with you is my promise,
In my love am I revealed.
Let my Spirit gently lead you,
Let my mercy all embrace;
To a world that yearns for freedom,
Give compassion; trust my grace.
May the Temple rise in beauty—
Shining symbol of my love.
To a world of war and anguish
May my peace come as a dove.
Let my Spirit move among you
Freeing you from hate and fear,
Healing wounds with love's anointing,
Bringing peace and justice near. Amen.

Sharing Around the Table

Become a people of the Temple—those who see violence but proclaim peace, who feel conflict yet extend the hand of reconciliation, who encounter broken spirits and find pathways for healing.
Fulfill the purposes of the Temple by making its ministries manifest in your hearts. It was built from your sacrifices and searching over many generations. Let it stand as a towering symbol of a people who knew injustice and strife on the frontier and who now seek the peace of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

—Doctrine and Covenants 161:2a–b

The Kirtland Temple, “House of the Lord,” was dedicated in 1836 and served the early church as a place for worship, education, and development of church administrative structure and doctrine.

The Temple in Independence, Missouri, also is a place of worship, education, and church administration. It was dedicated in 1994 to the “pursuit of peace, reconciliation, and healing of the spirit.” The Temple is a sacred space and public space. A prayer for peace in the world is offered daily, and visitors, members, church staff, and people from the local community all are welcome.

A sermon shared by President Steve Veazey on June 10, 2007, at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple Visitor and Spiritual Formation Center said:

Both temples—in Kirtland and in Independence—remind us that, above all else, Jesus Christ seeks to restore us to life as we were created to experience it; life as God intends it to be; life characterized by love, generosity, relationships of mutuality, sharing, and peacefulness.


Living as people of the Temple means we commit to the journey, or pilgrimage, of transformative discipleship. The Temple is a symbol of God’s call to enter into this journey and to make our way into the center of who we are in Christ.

As we journey from the Temple, we go as people of shalom, returning to communities, neighborhoods, and villages, carrying peace, reconciliation, and spiritual blessing to share in the world.

Questions
1. What does the dedication of the Temple (peace, reconciliation, and healing of the spirit) mean to you?
2. As people of the Temple we are called to be sanctuaries of Christ’s peace. What does this mean to you?

Sending

Generosity Statement

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blessings of healing and peace into the world. May we focus our giving on your purposes, and may our hearts be aligned with your heart. Amen.

Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn

CCS 281, “Can Steel and Stone and Swirling Spire”

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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In my body you are healed.
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Let my Spirit gently lead you,
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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 515, “In These Moments We Remember.”*
Thoughts for Children

Materials: the Temple coloring page, crayons
Say: The Temple in Independence, Missouri, is dedicated to peace, reconciliation, and healing of the spirit. Anyone can visit the Temple, walk the Worshiper’s Path, and participate in the Prayer for Peace, which is offered for a different country each day. The spire (top) of the Temple looks like the nautilus seashell. It reminds us that we journey in to the center of the Temple to worship, pray, and learn. Then we journey out, ready to share the peace of Jesus Christ in the world.
Ask: How do you share peace with others?
Hand out coloring pages and crayons so children can color the Temple with colors of peace.
Thank the children for their participation.
The Temple in Independence, Missouri, in the USA is the International Headquarters of Community of Christ.

The Temple is built in the shape of a spiral that represents life's journey of continually learning and growing.

The Temple is dedicated to peace and every day people say a special prayer for peace there.

- Dedicated 1994
- 300 ft /91 meters tall
- open to everyone
- church headquarters
Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

October

Focus: Discipleship

Topic: Symbol

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 Zambia (author Gil Porter).

O Creator of our being,
the One who loves the smallest, busy, black ant
and the graceful, bulky, blue whale,
But who, in particular, loves us—each one—
in our uncomprehending unconcern
and in our heart-filled overflowing
and joyful acknowledgement.

Increase our awareness of each other
and all of your creation.

In our tentative touching of life to life
stimulate our responsiveness and awareness
of the warmth of loving concern and
supporting sensitivity.

May we allow room for each one to be—
To be the precious one we know we are in your sight
and in your all-pervading, surrounding presence.

We find the peace of wholeness
of our life,
our neighbor’s life,
and our place in the land and community,
where we have our calling.

Peace with your creatures
and especially your people
is our calling today—
peace and wholeness for all.

Amen.

Sharing Around the Table

Be patient with one another, for creating sacred community is arduous and even painful. But it is to loving community such as this that each is called. Be courageous and visionary, believing in the power of just a few vibrant witnesses to transform the world. Be assured that love will overcome the voices of fear, division, and deceit.

Understand that the road to transformation travels both inward and outward. The road to transformation is the path of the disciple.

—Doctrine and Covenants 161:3c–d

Symbols are signs or icons that have meaning. The spiral is found in the physical universe in the form of galaxies and in the natural world with living creatures, including snails and nautiluses. In Community of Christ, we use the spiral to symbolize our journey through life, our calling to continually grow, and our desire to connect with God. The Temple in Independence is built in the shape of a spiral. As you approach the sanctuary at the center of the Temple, you enter the Worshiper’s Path, which draws you ever inward and upward along the spiral.

—adapted from John Hamer, Community of Christ Coloring Book, 2016, used with permission

The spiraling, Christ-centered symbolism of the Temple and its defined purposes reveal the essence of God’s presence with us. These images and concepts focus the church on its true identity, message, and mission. As we become a people of the Temple, we will be led to embrace what “matters most” in the life of the church. Without the ongoing influence of the Temple, we would not be as focused as we are on:

- The need to approach the Divine in awe and wonder in an increasingly skeptical age.
- God’s vision of peace for creation.
- The interconnectedness of the physical and spiritual dimensions of the universe.
- Peace, reconciliation, and healing of the spirit as the essence of Jesus Christ’s ministry.
- Wholeness of body, mind, and spirit as a desirable condition for all.
- The essential meaning of the restoration as healing and redeeming agent.
- The disciple’s lifelong inner and outer journey as depicted by the Temple’s symbolism.
- The church’s call to “pursue peace” and be “a sanctuary of Christ’s peace” throughout the world.
- The call to engage in ecumenical and interfaith relationships because the Temple is a house of prayer for all faiths.

Questions

1. The spiral of the nautilus shell is found in the Temple: inside as we walk the Worshiper’s Path and outside as we look at the spiraling roof and spire. How does the spiral symbolize your inward and outward journey of faith?
2. What aspects of creating sacred community are most difficult? What is essential in sacred community for you to feel heard, loved, and accepted?

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 of rejoicing, We share our gifts joyfully and with thanksgiving in response to the generous gifts you have given us. May the offerings we share bring joy, hope, love, and peace into the lives of others, that they might experience your mercy and grace. Amen.

Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn

CCS 450, “Lead Me, 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.*

Today in our prayers we remember the people of Zambia (author Gil Porter).

O Creator of our being,
the One who loves the smallest, busy, black ant
and the graceful, bulky, blue whale,
But who, in particular, loves us—each one—
in our uncomprehending unconcern
and in our heart-filled overflowing
and joyful acknowledgement.

Increase our awareness of each other
and all of your creation.

In our tentative touching of life to life
stimulate our responsiveness and awareness
of the warmth of loving concern and
supporting sensitivity.
May we allow room for each one to be—
To be the precious one we know we are in your sight
and in your all-pervading, surrounding presence.
We find the peace of wholeness
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and our place in the land and community,
where we have our calling.
Peace with your creatures
and especially your people
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Amen.
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In preparation let’s sing *Community of Christ Sings* 528, “Eat This Bread.”
Thoughts for Children

Materials: a star, a picture of a rooster, an apple, a knife to cut the apple in pieces to share with children following the lesson, additional apples so there are enough for all children, a heart, a picture of a spiral (save for last)

Hold up one picture at a time and ask children to identify the things it symbolizes or “means” (for example, a rooster means early morning or corn flakes, an apple symbolizes health, a heart means love, a star could mean a sheriff, Bethlehem, or 100 percent correct on homework).

Show the spiral.

Say: In Community of Christ, the spiral symbolizes the path or journey of a disciple. As we walk with Jesus we are drawn closer and closer to the center of the spiral, where we have significant encounters with God’s Spirit. Then as we journey outward, we take what we have learned and share it with others. Disciples do this over and over all through their lives.

Have children hold out one hand, palm up. With the other hand show them how to trace a spiral on their hand (Inward journey…outward journey).

Thank the children for learning about symbols and invite them to share the apple(s).
Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

October

Focus: Discipleship

Topic: Discipleship

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 Malawi.

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 vast and empty reaches of space; and you are the One who is the Light of the universe. We come to offer our lives in bringing peace into the world.

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

We do not expect your peace to be easy, merely an absence of conflict; rather we expect intense participation in life that fiercely embraces the reality of difficulty and harshness, as well as delight and joy. We would participate in life in a new way, a transforming way.

We recognize also that our hearts are hard, resistant, often rigid, and unyielding to your Spirit. Yet, you ask us to let our hearts be broken. So we open ourselves to you. We ask you to soften the rigid places in our hearts that we might embrace life with an intensity that is at once gentle and strong; that we may give ourselves more intently to the children, lonely ones, our families, and those without family; that we might care for this Earth and all creatures on it. Then we will learn something about softening and opening the heart of the world to your peace.
As instruments of your peace may we transform, by your Spirit, violence and sorrow into peace and joy. May the Spirit of peace in the temple of our hearts be free to spiral into the world.

Amen.

**Sharing Around the Table**

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

—Mark 8:34–38 NRSV

The mission of Jesus challenges cultural expectations of greatness, success, and power. To “take up your cross,” is to give up social privilege and position, instead becoming a servant to all. To “deny self” is to abandon the struggle to control or have power over others. Following Jesus is to put the ministry, message, and vision of Jesus before one’s own. This costly, but true, discipleship is the willingness to accept the cost and live in a way counter to a culture of accumulation, over-consumption, greed, and control.

[Discipleship] is more than holding a list of right ideas; it is about radical obedience to Jesus in every part of life. God’s boundless love sets us free for lives of responsible stewardship in which we generously offer our lives in service to God’s reign. Discipleship is both an inward and outward journey. Jesus calls us to follow him and to invite others to experience the transforming power of his grace.


**Questions**

1. How is discipleship in Christ different than your cultural reality?
2. When do you feel the struggle between cultural expectations and discipleship?
3. How does “radical obedience to Jesus” differ from obedience to culture, people, or institutions?

**Sending**

**Generosity Statement**

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Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn

CCS 558, “Take the Path of the Disciple”

Closing Prayer

Optional Additions Depending on Group

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

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God of rejoicing, We share our gifts joyfully and with thanksgiving in response to the generous gifts you have given us. May the offerings we share bring joy, hope, love, and peace into the lives of others that they might experience your mercy and grace. Amen.
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* 528, “Eat This Bread.”
Thoughts for Children

Engage the group in a short game of follow the leader, using these and similar commands:
Raise your hands over your head. Stand on one foot. Touch the ground. Turn around.
Ask: How did you do? What does it mean to follow the leader?
To be a good follower, what do you have to do? (*We have to watch the leader closely to know what to do.*)

How can we watch what Jesus did so we can become good followers? (*Listen to stories from the Bible.*)

Jesus asks us to be his disciples. Disciple means follower. A disciple follows Jesus and cares for people like Jesus did.
What are some ways Jesus cares for people? (He heals sick people, talks with outsiders, feeds people, and washes disciples’ feet.)
What are some ways you can care for people? (Pray for others, talk to friends who are sad, offer to help someone at school, and make a new friend.)
Choose one thing you will do this week to follow Jesus. (Have children call out answers.)
Pray that we all can follow Jesus.
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

October

Focus: Discipleship

Topic: All Are Called

Gathering
Welcome

Prayer for Peace

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

Author: Steven L. Shields

Compassionate and Eternal God,

We call on you this day, as do many others of different faith communities, in a united spirit of prayer for peace. We marvel at the diversity of your human creations—the different expressions of faith that have emerged in various cultures around the planet—and we know that it is in such diversity we find distinct and unparalleled beauty.

We recall the experience of the children of Israel, who so many centuries ago found themselves in captivity by the waters of Babylon. There, as they sat and wept, they wondered how they could worship their God in a strange land. They had a marvelous revelation when they realized that you, O God, were more than just a local God tied to physical geography. They came to know that you were the One to whom all humankind must give humble and joyous worship.

We join countless millions today who pray to you through the experiences of their own times and places—and their rich cultural and religious communities—and pray for peace in the world. Bring, O God, peace—peace to each of us and to all men, women, and children wherever they may be. Send us teachers who will guide us just as Jesus and others taught generations past. We offer this prayer with humble expectation. Amen.
Sharing Around the Table

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

—Ephesians 4:11–13 NRSV

[God calls people in different ways. The call to discipleship] may come without fanfare and in many ways—nature, art, music, poetry, a blaze of color, a touch, or a feeling—reminding us of God’s investment in life and our place in it. We may experience it in a hymn, a verse of scripture, the beauty of a sunset, the clasp of a hand, or the hope in a child’s face. God’s call presents us with opportunities to witness and share the blessings of our time, our money, and our talents. God’s call to discipleship comes as a challenge to explore our giftedness and to enter paths of service we may have never considered.

—Walking with Jesus,

The Enduring Principle of All Are Called is an expression of Community of Christ’s understanding that God gifts each person in a variety of ways, so each may participate in humble service to Christ, church, and community.

All Are Called

• God graciously gives people gifts and opportunities to do good and to share in God’s purposes.
• Jesus Christ invites people to follow him by becoming disciples who share his life and ministry.
• Some disciples are called and ordained to particular priesthood responsibilities and ministries for the sake of the community, the congregation, and the world.
• We respond faithfully, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to our best understanding of God’s call.


Questions

1. How has responding to God’s call informed your life decisions?
2. Part of accepting the call to discipleship in Community of Christ is the commitment to additional study, continued formation, and education. Why is this important for disciples?
3. What are some areas of giftedness you offer in service to Christ?

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 582, “You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore”

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.*

Author: Steven L. Shields

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Questions

4. How has responding to God’s call informed your life decisions?
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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 528, “Eat This Bread.”
Thoughts for Children

Materials: Post-it notes, pencils

God’s love is not for a small, limited group. We are to proclaim God’s word to the entire world. In Community of Christ, we believe All Are Called to be disciples, and we believe in the Worth of All Persons—that God’s love, grace, and salvation are for all.

Ask participants to think of a person who is different from them whom they would like to know better, or someone whom they would like to meet or befriend.

Give each person a small stack of self-adhesive notes and a pencil. Ask everyone to write that person’s name (if they know it) on a sticky note. Tell them to post these at home, around a mirror, on the refrigerator, a place where they will see it daily.

Encourage them to find a way to show they care about this person in some small way (ask children for ideas).

We are called to share God’s love with the world. If we start with just the people we know, won’t the world be a better place—a world of love?

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

October

Focus: Discipleship

Topic: Scripture

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 Nigeria.

Eternal God,
Hear our prayer for peace.

Peace you’ve promised to give us.
We stand in fear behind locked doors.
Teach us how to accept your peace.

Standing in “broken idols of our pride”
We long to hear your mercy words:
Peace be with you.

Open our hearts to hear
that healing word: peace, peace, peace.

Peace you promised to give us.
Teach us how to accept it.
Teach us how to accept it.

We believe you want us to live in peace.
Help us now,
In this moment,
In this place,

To listen as you say to us,
Even so. Amen.
Sharing Around the Table

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

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

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

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

—Doctrine and Covenants 163: 7a–d

There are many reasons to study scripture. *Walking with Jesus* (Herald Publishing House, 2011, pp. 32–33) gives us four of those reasons:

1. To “remind us who God is and what God calls disciples to be and to become.” We read scripture to keep focused on the message and ministry of Jesus Christ.
2. “To renew our faith.” Dwelling in scripture opens us to experience God’s presence and purposes.
3. To “reassure us of God’s steadfast presence.” Scripture bears witness that God is with us in good times and in times of darkness and despair.
4. “So God’s Spirit can remake us.” Discipleship is a journey of transformation, and scripture plays a guiding role.

Scripture is essential to understanding the story of God’s interaction with, and purposes for, all of creation.

Thoughtful and responsible scripture study is critical to understanding the sacred story and growing as a disciple. Guidance was given to the church about responsible scripture study and application. Read Doctrine and Covenants 163:7a–d.


Questions

1. When has scripture reminded, renewed, reassured, or remade you in your spiritual journey?
2. In history, how has scripture been used to harm others? What about your culture and context? Have you seen scripture misused to cause physical or emotional violence?

3. What is your practice of scripture study? What resources help? (You may find study helps by reviewing “Some Reliable Tools for Serious Scripture Study” at www.CofChrist.org.)

**Sending**

**Generosity Statement**

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**Invitation to Next Meeting**

**Closing Hymn**

*CCS 65, “The Living Word of Scripture”*

**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.

Today in our prayers we remember the people of Nigeria.

Eternal God,
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In preparation let’s sing Community of Christ Sings 528, “Eat This Bread.”
Thoughts for Children

Materials: Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, slips of paper with scripture verse (Matthew 22:38–39) written out

Show the three books of scripture.

Say: Here are three books we call scripture: the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants. Scripture is one way we learn about God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. The scriptures are stories, poetry, songs, histories, visions, and guidelines that have been passed down for generations.

The people who wrote the scriptures did their best to share what was most important, or most helpful, for people to know as they journeyed with God.

We are always careful to remember that scripture is not used to prove things or to make some people seem bad or unwanted. Scripture always tells us that loving God and loving others are the most important things we can do as disciples.

Let’s learn this scripture from Matthew 22:38–39 NRSV (hand out slips of paper with this scripture printed out):

“This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Ask the children to repeat after you, phrase by phrase, then ask everyone to say it with you.

Say: Let’s always remember this important scripture.

Thank the children for participating.