Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

Year A

Focus: Second Sunday after Epiphany

Scripture: Isaiah 49:1–7 NRSV

Gathering
Welcome

Prayer for Peace

*Ring a bell or chime three times slowly.*

*Light the peace candle.*

Please join me in today’s prayer and meditation. Quiet your breathing and embrace God’s eternal grace as you become aware of your own responses to the guided prayer.

God, you are the still point of the circle within which all creation is found. I yearn to connect with your spirit of peace and experience the companionship of your presence in this moment. May I abide in the center of creation’s circle with you?

*Pause 15 seconds.*

Creator of horizons, help us draw the circle wider to include those I know and love, and even those I struggle to understand and accept. Fill this circle with the gifts of forgiveness, mercy, compassion, and peace. Give us the desire to include all whose paths cross ours into a place where acceptance is offered freely. Draw our circle wider.

*Pause 15 seconds.*

Giver of dreams, let the peace we’ve dreamed of expand to embrace all your children in all nations. Within this circle may we see the other as brother and sister and act as mutual stewards of one another. You call us to live without borders that exclude. Help us to draw the circle wider still.

*Pause 15 seconds.*

God of all living things, your world longs to be whole and in harmony. The dream of shalom includes caregiving for the water, earth, air, and all that has life in one great family. You created us with interdependencies. Give us mutual respect and tender care for all. Let this be our song: Nothing on your created Earth stands alone, but lives in shalom with all other living things. Draw the circle wide open.
Pause 15 seconds.

Architect of life and peace, may we be blessed by your vision of shalom this day. May our minds, hearts, and spirits be wide enough for all to find a home. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, God’s shalom. Amen.

**Spiritual Practice**

**Walking in the Light**

During Epiphany and the season after Epiphany our spiritual practice will be “Walking in the Light.” Take a few moments to quiet yourself. When you feel calm, begin by imagining you are walking on a path of light. As we pray, visualize the light surrounding you. As the prayer continues, offer the gift of light to those close to you, to friends and acquaintances, to those you dislike or with whom you are in conflict, and to your community at-large. Invite the group members to enter silence, close their eyes, release into a sense of calm, and imagine walking on a path of light.

As you hear each sentence, offer the gift of light to those mentioned.

May my loved ones be embraced in God’s light.

Pause 15 seconds.

May my family walk in the light of Christ.

Pause 15 seconds.

May my friends receive the gift of love and light.

Pause 15 seconds.

May my acquaintances sense the presence of light through our interactions.

Pause 15 seconds.

May the one with whom I am in conflict be surrounded by the light of Christ.

Pause 15 seconds.

May my community be blessed by the eternal light of God’s love and grace.

Pause 15 seconds.

Amen.

After the prayer invite people to share, as comfortable, any thoughts, emotions, or images they experienced during the practice of “Walking in the Light.”

**Sharing Around the Table**

**Isaiah 49:1–7 NRSV**
Listen to me, O coastlands, 
pay attention, you peoples from far away!
The Lord called me before I was born, 
while I was in my mother’s womb he named me. 
He made my mouth like a sharp sword, 
in the shadow of his hand he hid me; 
he made me a polished arrow, 
in his quiver he hid me away. 
And he said to me, “You are my servant, 
Israel, in whom I will be glorified.” 
But I said, “I have labored in vain, 
I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; 
yet surely my cause is with the Lord, 
and my reward with my God.”

And now the Lord says, 
who formed me in the womb to be his servant, 
to bring Jacob back to him, 
and that Israel might be gathered to him, 
for I am honored in the sight of the Lord, 
and my God has become my strength— 
he says, 
“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant 
to raise up the tribes of Jacob 
and to restore the survivors of Israel; 
I will give you as a light to the nations, 
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

Thus says the Lord, 
the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, 
to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, 
the slave of rulers, 
“Kings shall see and stand up, 
princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, 
because of the Lord, who is faithful, 
the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”

The servant knows God called him before he was born. God prepared him while still in his mother’s womb. Not because of a display of superior strength or intellect and not because of wealth or status. It has nothing to do with what he can accomplish on his own. Rather, it is all the work of God’s mercy and grace.

The servant is aware of his inability to accomplish on his own that to which he has been called. Yet, he also acknowledges that, in spite of everything, he remains steadfast in his commitment to serve the Lord. Rather than lowering the expectations for the servant, God raises the bar, sending him not only to the people of Israel, but to all the people of the world.
We, too, are called as children of God because of who God created us to be, rather than because of any merit we have earned or task we have achieved. God’s grace and trust in us reach beyond our failures and inadequacies, calling us to even deeper discipleship. God who created us does not let us wallow in our self-doubt, but gives us hope and encouragement to move forward in mission and to make manifest the light of God’s glory.

Questions

1. How are you sensing God’s call in your life?
2. How have you felt inadequate in your efforts to live your calling and giftedness?
3. How have you experienced God’s hope and encouragement, even in your doubt?

NOTE: If you are using “Thoughts for Children,” make time here for the children to share their lists of how God loves them.

Sending
Generosity Statement

“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” (Doctrine and Covenants 163:9).

The offering basket is available if you would like to support ongoing small-group ministries as part of your generous response.

The offering prayer for Epiphany is adapted from A Disciple’s Generous Response:

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

Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn

CCS 267, “We Wait in Hope for the 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.

Please join me in today’s prayer and meditation. Quiet your breathing and embrace God’s eternal grace as you become aware of your own responses to the guided prayer.

God, you are the still point of the circle within which all creation is found. I yearn to connect with your spirit of peace and experience the companionship of your presence in this moment. May I abide in the center of creation’s circle with you?

Pause 15 seconds.

Creator of horizons, help us draw the circle wider to include those I know and love, and even those I struggle to understand and accept. Fill this circle with the gifts of forgiveness, mercy, compassion, and peace. Give us the desire to include all whose paths cross ours into a place where acceptance is offered freely. Draw our circle wider.

Pause 15 seconds.

Giver of dreams, let the peace we’ve dreamed of expand to embrace all your children in all nations. Within this circle may we see the other as brother and sister and act as mutual stewards of one another. You call us to live without borders that exclude. Help us to draw the circle wider still.

Pause 15 seconds.

God of all living things, your world longs to be whole and in harmony. The dream of shalom includes caregiving for the water, earth, air, and all that has life in one great family. You created us with interdependencies. Give us mutual respect and tender care for all. Let this be our song: Nothing on your created Earth stands alone, but lives in shalom with all other living things. Draw the circle wide open.

Pause 15 seconds.

Architect of life and peace, may we be blessed by your vision of shalom this day. May our minds, hearts, and spirits be wide enough for all to find a home. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, God’s shalom. Amen.
Spiritual Practice
Walking in the Light

During Epiphany and the season after Epiphany our spiritual practice will be “Walking in the Light.” Take a few moments to quiet yourself. When you feel calm, begin by imagining you are walking on a path of light. As we pray, visualize the light surrounding you. As the prayer continues, offer the gift of light to those close to you, to friends and acquaintances, to those you dislike or with whom you are in conflict, and to your community at-large.

Invite the group members to enter silence, close their eyes, release into a sense of calm, and imagine walking on a path of light.

As you hear each sentence, offer the gift of light to those mentioned.

May my loved ones be embraced in God’s light.

Pause 15 seconds.

May my family walk in the light of Christ.

Pause 15 seconds.

May my friends receive the gift of love and light.

Pause 15 seconds.

May my acquaintances sense the presence of light through our interactions.

Pause 15 seconds.

May the one with whom I am in conflict be surrounded by the light of Christ.

Pause 15 seconds.

May my community be blessed by the eternal light of God’s love and grace.

Pause 15 seconds.

Amen.

After the prayer invite people to share, as comfortable, any thoughts, emotions, or images they experienced during the practice of “Walking in the Light.”
Listen to me, O coastlands,  
   pay attention, you peoples from far away!  
The Lord called me before I was born,  
   while I was in my mother’s womb he named me.  
He made my mouth like a sharp sword,  
   in the shadow of his hand he hid me;  
he made me a polished arrow,  
   in his quiver he hid me away.  
And he said to me, “You are my servant,  
   Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”  
But I said, “I have labored in vain,  
   I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;  
yet surely my cause is with the Lord,  
   and my reward with my God.”

And now the Lord says,  
   who formed me in the womb to be his servant,  
to bring Jacob back to him,  
   and that Israel might be gathered to him,  
for I am honored in the sight of the Lord,  
   and my God has become my strength—  
he says,  
   “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant  
   to raise up the tribes of Jacob  
   and to restore the survivors of Israel;  
I will give you as a light to the nations,  
   that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

Thus says the Lord,  
   the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One,  
to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations,  
   the slave of rulers,  
“Kings shall see and stand up,  
   princes, and they shall prostrate themselves,  
because of the Lord, who is faithful,  
   the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”

The servant knows God called him before he was born. God prepared him while still in 
his mother’s womb. Not because of a display of superior strength or intellect and not because of 
wealth or status. It has nothing to do with what he can accomplish on his own. Rather, it is all the 
work of God’s mercy and grace.
The servant is aware of his inability to accomplish on his own that to which he has been called. Yet, he also acknowledges that, in spite of everything, he remains steadfast in his commitment to serve the Lord. Rather than lowering the expectations for the servant, God raises the bar, sending him not only to the people of Israel, but to all the people of the world.

We, too, are called as children of God because of who God created us to be, rather than because of any merit we have earned or task we have achieved. God’s grace and trust in us reach beyond our failures and inadequacies, calling us to even deeper discipleship. God who created us does not let us wallow in our self-doubt, but gives us hope and encouragement to move forward in mission and to make manifest the light of God’s glory.

Questions

1. How are you sensing God’s call in your life?
2. How have you felt inadequate in your efforts to live your calling and giftedness?
3. How have you experienced God’s hope and encouragement, even in your doubt?

NOTE: If you are using “Thoughts for Children,” make time here for the children to share their lists of how God loves them.
Generosity Statement

“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” (Doctrine and Covenants 163:9).

The offering basket is available if you would like to support ongoing small-group ministries as part of your generous response.

The offering prayer for Epiphany is adapted from A Disciple’s Generous Response:

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

We come together to 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.

Let us celebrate the revelation of Christ in the world as we share in Communion as an expression of blessing, healing, peace, and community.

In preparation let’s sing from Community of Christ Sings 520, “God Extends an Invitation.”
Thoughts for Children

Materials: paper, pencils

Ask: How did you get your name? (Allow time for the children to tell how they were named.)

How important is a name? (It is how people call you, speak to you, know you.)

What about God? What name do we use for God? (God, Lord, Creator, Source of life, etc.)

In the Bible we discover that people have many, many names for God. Some names describe what people think about God; some are names about what God has done. Listen to some of the names people use to talk to God:

- Holy One
- Healing Presence
- Source of joy
- Ancient One
- Awesome God
- Compassionate One
- Gracious Creator
- Great Spirit
- Great “I Am”
- Beloved Friend
- Giver of Life
- Gentle Shepherd
- Mother-Father God
- Creator of beauty

We can use many names to describe our love for God. Now let’s use our names to describe God’s love for us.

Give each child a paper and pencil (young children can have a parent help).

Say: Write your name down one side of the paper. Ex:

J
A
M
E
S

Then think of something God loves about you, starting with each letter of your name. Ex:

J—Joyful
A—Animal lover
M—Makes funny noises
E—Energetic
S—Says prayers at bedtime
You will have time to share your lists after today’s lesson. Thank the children for participating and invite them to return to their seats.

Allow time for children to share what God loves about them at the end of “Sharing Around the Table.”