Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

Year A

Focus: Fourth Week of Lent

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:1–13 NRSV

Gathering

Welcome

Lent is a time for personal and community spiritual renewal. The Lenten season is the 40 days (excluding Sundays) between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday. As we journey with Jesus we are called into the wilderness to prepare for something new. In this wilderness we confront the most painful parts of ourselves, face our weaknesses, and await the transforming power of grace, hope, and resurrection.

Prayer for Peace

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

During the Lenten season we will use a verse from CCS 221, “Spirit of Christ, Remember Me,” as our prayer for peace.

I will read aloud verse 4. Then I will read it phrase by phrase, and you will repeat each phrase after me. I will close with Amen.
Read verse 4 aloud from CCS 221, “Spirit of Christ, Remember Me.”
Say: “Repeat after me.”
Read the first phrase of CCS 221, verse 4, aloud. Wait for congregation to repeat.
Proceed in that way through the entire verse.
Close with, “Amen.”

Spiritual Practice

Practice of Silence

Practicing silence may be difficult at first. The mind may run wild. Allow yourself grace in this practice. We will begin when I ring the chime. We will be silent for five minutes. I will ring the chime again at the conclusion of our time of silence.
Remember to breathe deeply. Focusing on each breath can help quiet the mind. Become aware of your surroundings; notice how the air feels on your skin; trust that you are in the presence of the holy—fully surrounding and embracing you. Allow your inner conversations to stop for a while, being fully present with the One who is fully present with you.
Ring a chime to begin.
Wait five minutes.
Ring the chime to conclude the period of silence.
Ask: How does it feel to be present with God in silence?


Sharing Around the Table
1 Samuel 16:1–13 NRSV

The Lord said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.” Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.” And the Lord said, “Take a heifer with you, and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.’ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.”

Samuel did what the Lord commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, “Do you come peaceably?” He said, “Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.” And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is now before the Lord.” But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”

Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen any of these.”

Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.” He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, “Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.” Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

The prophet Samuel served as kingmaker and chief counselor to Saul, the first king over the tribes of Israel. But Saul was ineffective and unstable. God wanted to call a new leader from the sons of Jesse in Bethlehem.

Samuel expected God to choose one of Jesse’s tall, strong sons, but one by one the sons are rejected. It is the youngest son, David—still unwashed from the fields—who is anointed as the king-to-be.

Samuel anointed David by pouring oil over him. Anointing with oil represented God’s blessings, poured in profusion on a person’s head. In anointing David, Samuel was asking God to bless the new king, the people, and the nation the king would serve. These ancient practices and symbols are the foundation for using oil in the sacrament of laying on of hands for the sick.

FOURTH WEEK OF LENT; Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:1–13 NRSV
David’s calling occurred to remedy Saul’s failure. God’s mercy and God’s judgment are in tension in this story. There is within each of us a Saul who is rebellious, protective of power, and wavering in faith. God places before us a vision of what can be and calls the best within us to step forward and take responsibility. Even if we fail again in the future, God keeps calling us to be reconciled to God’s divine presence.

Questions
1. When have you felt like you failed in responsibility? How did you experience God’s call to anoint a better self within you to take control and fulfill the responsibility?
2. How does an understanding of the ancient symbol of oil help you more fully understand the sacrament of laying on of hands for the sick?

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 Lent is adapted from A Disciple’s Generous Response:

Ever-present God, Forgive us when we are less than loving, less than hope-filled, less than you have created us to be. Your mercy and grace are always with us. May we find strength in your presence, and may we respond to your love with generous spirits.
Amen.

 Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn

CCS 608, “Take My Life and Let It Be”

Closing Prayer

Additional Options Depending on Group

• Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper
• Thoughts for Children
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**Practice of Silence**

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—Adapted from a *Guide for Lent*, www.CofChrist.org/a-guide-for-lent
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Communion Statement

Choose one scripture to read from this selection: 1 Corinthians 11:23–26; Matthew 26:17–30; Mark 14:12–26; Luke 22:7–39.

Invitation to Communion

All are welcome at Christ’s table. The Lord’s Supper, or Communion, is a sacrament in which we remember the life, death, resurrection, and continuing presence of Jesus Christ. In Community of Christ, we also experience Communion as an opportunity to renew our baptismal covenant and to be formed as disciples who live Christ’s mission. Others may have different or added understandings within their faith traditions. We invite all who participate in the Lord’s Supper to do so in the love and peace of Jesus Christ.

During this Lenten season let us share in Communion as an expression of blessing, healing, peace, and community. In preparation let’s sing from Community of Christ Sings 526, “Is There One Who Feels Unworthy?”
Thoughts for Children

Materials: Church Seal coloring page, crayons, or washable markers
Hand out the coloring page and ask the children to describe it.
Say: This is called the Church Seal. A seal is an image or symbol that represents something. This seal represents Community of Christ and our commitment to the peace of Jesus Christ.
What do you see that is peaceful in this image? Encourage the children to respond.
Affirm their answers.
The Bible helps us understand God’s love for all people and all of creation. One description of God’s love at work in the world is:

The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid [baby goat],
the calf and the lion and the fatling [young animals] together,
and a little child shall lead them.

—Isaiah 11:6 NRSV

This is called God’s peaceable kingdom. Ferocious animals live with small, tame animals in such a peaceful manner that even a small child can lead them around without any danger. For us, it represents a way to live with one another without violence, hate, prejudice, and fear.
This seal symbolizes a way of living where all of creation is at peace.
What can you do to live peacefully?
How can you share peace with others?
Hand out crayons so the children can color the seal at their seats.
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