Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

Year A

Focus: Ascension of the Lord


Gathering

Welcome

Ascension Day is when Jesus hikes with his disciples to a mountaintop. There he blesses them and tells of the coming Holy Spirit before he ascends into heaven.

Prayer for Peace

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

Lord, Creator of all life, we are aware of your presence in this space and in our hearts.

Let us pray in silence.

Thank you for this time of holiness. We gather in worship and praise for all you have given, shared, and done. We gather in peace, seeking your peace.

Let us pray in silence.

Grant us your grace. Forgive us for all we have left ungiven, unshared, undone.

Let us pray in silence.

Help us more fully understand the gift of your Son in our lives and to all peoples.

Let us pray in silence.

Open our hearts and minds. Connect us through our worship that we might deeply embrace the call of your kingdom as a congregation, mission center, and global faith community.

Let us pray in silence.

Lord, we thank you for all things. In Jesus’ name. Amen.
**Spiritual Practice**

**Jesus Prayer**

Today we will experience an ancient spiritual practice from Orthodox Christianity. It is a way of connecting with the gracious spirit of Christ as we ask to receive mercy. The prayer comes from the scripture of the blind man calling for Jesus to heal him. We will practice this prayer together for three minutes in the context of a breath prayer.

Sit with a relaxed posture. If you are comfortable, close your eyes. Center yourself and let your breath become slow and even. I will say the prayer aloud for the first few breaths, and then you will continue praying, silently repeating the phrases as you breathe.

Take a breath in and let it out. As you take your next breath in pray silently, “Lord Jesus Christ.” Then exhale in silent prayer, “Have mercy on me.”

Inhale: “Lord Jesus Christ.” Exhale: “Have mercy on me.”

(Repeat these instructions as you breathe two more times.)

Monitor the time. Occasionally give instructions. Inhale: “Lord Jesus Christ.” Exhale: “Have mercy on me.”

After three minutes share the following instructions:

Close your prayer with a final repetition of the prayer words. When you are ready, take a deep breath and open your eyes.

When everyone is finished say aloud, “Amen.”


**Sharing Around the Table**

**Luke 24: 44–53 NRSV**

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them.

While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven.

And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

Jesus tells the disciples he is sending what God has promised them. He tells them to stay in Jerusalem until they receive power from on high. The power they will receive is a gift from the Divine. Because they are to wait for it, they have a heightened sense of expectancy and excitement.

Jesus leads his followers to Bethany and blesses them. The Greek word the author uses for bless means “to speak well of.” Jesus speaks well of them and praises them. It is a blessing of
well-being, and wholeness. After being blessed, the disciples return to Jerusalem with great joy and continually bless or “speak well of” God.

Questions

1. What gifts from God have you received? How do you use these gifts in your discipleship?
2. When has someone “spoken well of you” or blessed you with well-being and wholeness?
3. How do you bless others?

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

God of wisdom and love, May the gifts we share be in response to the generous gifts you have given us. May the monetary offerings we give be received in love and used with wisdom. Amen.

Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn

CCS 636, “I Have Called You by Your Name”

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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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.

The Spirit is present with us as we share in Communion as an expression of blessing, healing, peace, and community.

In preparation let’s sing Community of Christ Sings 524, “For Bread Before Us Broken.”
Thoughts for Children

Materials: large paper or poster board, marker

After Jesus finished teaching the disciples, he went back to heaven. He told the disciples to share the stories of Jesus with all people.

We are disciples, too. We also are called to tell people about Jesus.

Let’s list all the things we know about Jesus. If children are hesitant to share, ask other group members to offer what they know. List responses on paper.

When several things are listed, say: This is a wonderful list of things we can tell people about Jesus.

This week I want you to try to be like Jesus’ disciples and do what Jesus told his disciples to do: Tell someone something you learned about Jesus.