Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

Year C

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Scripture: Luke 5:1–11 NRSV

Gathering
Welcome

Prayer for Peace

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

Loving God, we believe all people have equal and inestimable worth as your children. Children we know and children we don’t know are equally and fully yours. We uphold children from backgrounds of wealth, privilege, and prosperity. May they know their worth in all challenges they face but also be raised as generous peacemakers who care for their neighbors, near and far.

Ring the bell and pause for silent prayer.

We uphold children born into poverty, disease, sickness, and various ailments. We hear their groans, and know you weep for them. May we be aware of systems that allow such suffering to continue. May we awaken from our complacency to see all children of the world as our own in the way that you do.

Ring the bell and pause for silent prayer.

We pray for all children who are children of the Earth. As we continue down disastrous paths of greed and consumption, our Earth is scorched, desecrated, and destroyed. The Earth itself and all of its creatures suffer greatly, but our own children will be the ones who carry the burden and suffering of our choices. May we awaken from the illusion that our world will produce without limits. May we seek to create a better world for our children, grandchildren, and their children. For in their welfare resides our welfare, and in our actions resides their hope.

Amen.
Spiritual Practice
Dwelling in the Word/Lectio Divina

I will read a scripture aloud. As you hear it, note the words, images, or phrases that come to mind. Try not to focus on them. Simply let them rest with you. After a brief silence I will read the scripture again. As you hear it, think how you could rewrite the scripture today to have similar meaning but in a different context.

Read Luke 5:1–11 NRSV:

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” Simon answered, “Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.” When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.

But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!” For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.” When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

Pause and allow a brief period of silence.

Say: Now think how you could rewrite the scripture today as I read the text a second time.

Read Luke 5:1–11 a second time. Pause and allow a brief period of silence. Read the following questions aloud and invite the group members to share their responses and reflections: What images and thoughts came to your mind while listening to this scripture the first time? How would you rewrite this scripture today?

Close the sharing time with a brief prayer of gratitude for all that has been shared.

Sharing Around the Table
Luke 5:1–11 NRSV

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Last week we read about Jesus preaching his first sermon in which he referenced Elijah and Elisha, who performed their greatest miracles for those at the edge of society. Today, we read about Jesus following the example of those Hebrew prophets and doing the same.

When Jesus performs the miracle of the full nets, Simon Peter is concerned, because he feels he is not worthy to receive it. Fishermen in Jesus’ time were exploited workers. They were peasants, and they paid for fishing licenses, taxes, and transportation tolls. Paying these fees meant the labor of the fishermen benefited the rich and powerful. As a result, fishermen often were dishonest to avoid paying the fees.

Jesus tells Simon Peter not to be afraid, and in doing so he declares Simon Peter is worthy, regardless of his low and exploited status. Jesus reaches outside the mainstream of Jewish society and performs miracles for those on the margins. In today’s story, he brings abundance to the poor.

In this passage, Jesus affirms the worth of the fishermen and calls them to join him in his ministry. He affirms their value, despite their low status in the community. He performs a miracle for these poor men and then calls them to a different work, where their labor will not be exploited by the powerful. This story calls us to consider harmful systems in our society that take advantage of people and hold them in poverty. This story invites us to envision ways we can help people break the poverty cycle.

Questions

1. What does the cycle of poverty look like in your community? Who benefits from this cycle?
2. How can we, as individuals and congregations, reach out to alleviate the suffering caused by poverty and break the cycle of poverty in our communities?

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 gifted each of us with 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 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

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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: blanket, to be used as a pretend fishing net.

Say: I want to tell you a story about a great miracle! One day Jesus was teaching people from a fishing boat. When he finished teaching, he told one of the fishermen to go to the deep water and cast his nets. The fisherman, named Simon, already had fished all night and had caught nothing! He decided to follow Jesus and lower the nets where Jesus had said.

Then, an amazing thing happened! They caught so many fish that the nets began to break! They signaled for help from another boat, and they filled both boats with so many fish that they were sinking! What a miracle this was! All the people were amazed.

Jesus told Simon that from now on he would be catching people, not fish. Simon left his boats behind and followed Jesus.

What do you think Jesus meant when he said the fisherman would be catching people? (Affirm all answers.)

In this story, Jesus was calling his disciples. When we think about catching people, it means we should think about sharing Christ with people.

Let’s practice fishing for people!

Ask one child to hold one edge of the blanket, and you hold the other. In this game you will approach each child, one at a time, and gently wrap each one in the blanket “net.” Once everyone has been caught and warmed in the blanket, remind the children that we all can share Christ with others and be fishers of people, just like Jesus and his disciples long ago!

Thank the children for participating.