Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

Year C

Ordinary Time (Proper 10)


Gathering
Welcome

Ordinary Time is the period in the Christian calendar from Pentecost to Advent. This part of the Christian calendar is without major festivals or holy days. During Ordinary Time we focus on our discipleship as individuals and as a faith community.

Prayer for Peace

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

God of peace,

We open our hearts today and feel the yearnings of our brothers and sisters as we strive for peace. Although we do not know everyone’s concerns, we invite them to share in the blessings of this community, created in the name of the One who suffered on behalf of all, the Prince of Peace.

Encourage us as we work to respect each life’s journey, even when it is broken and uncertain, for each person at times must walk alone. Help us be ready to listen and slow to criticize, lest judgments be unrighteous and unredemptive.

Remind us that we are your hands and feet and that if peace is to come, it must be through our actions. We pray in Christ’s name, amen.

—Doctrine and Covenants 161:3a–b, adapted

Spiritual Practice
Unity

I will read a scripture from I Corinthians and allow time for silent meditation. As I read the scripture think back over the past week and consider these questions.

• Who showed compassion when you felt sad or were suffering?
• Who rejoiced with you in the good times?
• Who in your circle of relationships suffered this week? How were you able to share this burden with them?
• Who in your circle rejoiced this week? How did you celebrate with them?

But God has so arranged the body... that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

--1 Corinthians 2:25-26 NRSV

Allow one minute of silence.
Read the questions again.
• Who showed compassion when you felt sad or were suffering?
• Who rejoiced with you in the good times?
• Who in your circle of relationships suffered this week? How were you able to share this burden with them?
• Who in your circle rejoiced this week? How did you celebrate with them?

Allow one minute of silence.
As you reviewed the past week, who and what came to mind?
Invite the group to share reflections, as they feel led. Close the time with a short blessing prayer of unity.

Sharing Around the Table
Luke 10:25–37 NRSV

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”
“Who is my neighbor?” The question is timely and timeless. This parable is one of the most familiar in the Gospels. So familiar, that perhaps we no longer hear the message.

The notoriously dangerous road from Jerusalem to Jericho is the setting for this story. As the track winds down the mountain, it twists and turns many times. There were places for robbers to hide every few hundred meters. Those traveling the road did so with fear.

We do not know who the injured man was. We are not told because the man’s identity is not important to the point of Jesus’ parable. Many people besides Jews and Samaritans traveled the road. He could have been anyone, from any nationality, faith, or ethnicity. How do those passing by know the injured man is not a decoy? How do they know muggers are not hiding nearby, waiting for someone to come along? It’s no wonder the priest and the Levite pass without helping.

Then along comes the Samaritan—not exactly hero material in the eyes of ordinary Jews. Because of their imperfect adherence to Judaism and partly pagan background, Jews despised the Samaritans.

Imagine the scene with the lawyer and a group of people standing around Jesus listening to this parable. For them, it was unthinkable that the Samaritan would stop to help the injured man. Jesus tells the story in such a way that the lawyer has no other choice than to respond that it was the Samaritan who showed mercy to the injured man. Imagine how difficult that must have been. A person thought of as worthless and outside the acceptable norm is the one who shows mercy, in sharp contrast to those who do not.

Being a neighbor is a two-way engagement. We need to be neighbors to others with whom we may not feel safe or acceptable. In addition, we need to be willing to receive neighborliness from others who may be outside our group of acceptable persons. Jesus calls us to be aware of our prejudices and divisions and be capable of ministering to and with all “neighbors.”

Questions

1. When have you witnessed an unexpected hero responding in a neighborly way?
2. The world can be a dangerous place. How can we overcome our fear and be a neighbor to those who need us most?
3. How can we overcome our fear and let those whom we need most (but may not know it) be our neighbors?

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 our discipleship, As we navigate our world of debt and consumerism, help us to save wisely, spend responsibly, and give generously. In this way may we prepare for the future and create a better tomorrow for our families, friends, the mission of Christ, and the world. Amen.
Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn

  CCS 589, “My Savior Said That I Should Be”

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.

We share in Communion as an expression of blessing, healing, peace, and community. In preparation let’s sing from *Community of Christ Sings* (select one):

- *CCS* 515, “In These Moments We Remember”
- *CCS* 516, “Coming Together for Wine and for Bread”
- *CCS* 521, “Let Us Break Bread Together”
- *CCS* 525, “Small Is the Table”
- *CCS* 528, “Eat This Bread”
Thoughts for Children

Today we are talking about this question: Who is your neighbor? Encourage children to respond to each question as they explore who their neighbor is.

- Are neighbors people we know or are some of our neighbors people we don’t know?
- Jesus teaches us that we should love our neighbors. Does that mean we only care about the people who live near us?

Jesus told a story about a man who was hurt. Several people from his neighborhood walked right by him and did not stop to help him at all. Finally a man did stop to help. The helper did not know the hurt man. He did not live near the hurt man. But he chose to treat him like a neighbor and care for him.

That is what Jesus means when he teaches us to love our neighbors. We are supposed to care for all the people we encounter, not just the ones who live near us, or look like us, or speak the same language that we speak.

What can you do to show love and care for your neighbors? Encourage the children to respond.

Offer a short prayer of blessing for the children as they show love and concern for their neighbors.