Ordinary Time runs 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 a faith community.

Prayer for Peace

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

Dear Lord, we praise you. We praise you that you are and that you always have been and always will be. Please open our eyes to see the world around us and help us to visualize the world as you intended it to be. Where there is hate may we exemplify love, where there is need may we be charitable, where there is loneliness may we give comfort, where there is misunderstanding may we seek for reconciliation. Where there is sorrow may we show compassion, for it is only in giving of ourselves that we can become instruments of peace in the world. Amen.

—Hilda F. Deem

Spiritual Practice

Body Prayer

Body Prayer is a spiritual practice that experiments with different postures for prayer. The purpose is to listen for God’s voice within as you hold postures in stillness. Feelings may differ with each posture.

- Today we will use three postures. (Model each posture for the group.)
- First posture: head bowed with hands folded.
- Second posture: sitting or standing with arms stretched upward.
- Third posture: hands clasped over the heart.

We will begin with some cleansing breaths, and then I will sound the chime to signal time for each posture. As you hold each prayer posture, focus on whatever prayer emerges naturally from within. Allow it to flow naturally through you. The chime will signal when it is

ORDINARY TIME; Scripture: Luke 14:1, 7–14 NRSV
time to move to the next prayer posture. We will hold each posture one minute and observe silence.

Lead the group in three deep cleansing breaths.
Ring the chime. Model the first posture: head bowed with hands folded; hold one minute.
Ring the chime. Model the second posture: sitting or standing with arms stretched upward; hold one minute.
Ring the chime. Model the third posture: hands clasped over the heart; hold one minute.
Ring the chime to signal the end of the practice.
Invite the group to share about the experience and how the postures helped members connect in meaningful ways.
Offer a brief prayer of gratitude for the Body Prayer and what the group shared.

Sharing Around the Table
Luke 14:1, 7–14 NRSV

On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely.

When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. “When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, ‘Give this person your place,’ and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

He said also to the one who had invited him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Wedding receptions in some cultures place a table at the front for the bridal party, and reserve nearby tables for family and close friends. Although this often is done today to honor the couple and their families, in Jesus’ time there were hidden motives. Public meals or banquets were occasions for the rich and powerful to display their superiority. People manipulated seating arrangements to make statements about power and status. These could convey negative or positive messages about those attending. It was a time to see and be seen. As the text states, everyone was watching Jesus closely—and he was watching them.

Jesus shared a parable centered on humility and hospitality. Instead of vying for the most prestigious place at the table like everyone else, Jesus told them to sit in the “lowest place.” Instead of seeking status at the table—or in society—Jesus invites us to a humble station, signaling the way of the Christ in contrast to dominant culture.

The way of Jesus is humble service, putting others first. Ministry is centered on other, not on seeking status or prestige. To give freely without thought or expectation of return is to give
without agenda. When we serve the least of those among us, with no means to repay, we let go of the messages culture would have us hear.

Although the world is very different than in the first century, the message of humility and hospitality remains the same. Jesus’ life and ministry were expressions of God’s love and grace. As disciples of Jesus Christ, lives that reflect love and grace in our world express faithful servanthood.

Questions
1. When have you felt honored by how someone treated you?
2. How did you respond? What does it mean to offer hospitality to someone who cannot repay you?
3. How is God calling you to offer humble service to someone else?

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 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 275, “Leftover People in Leftover Places”

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

Materials: pictures or drawings of animals—lion (the king or queen of all animals), elephant (the big animal), monkey (the happy animal), rabbit (the quiet animal), skunk (the stinky animal), pig (the messy animal).

Assign each animal to an adult. Share the characteristics of each animal as you give the pictures to the various adults (big, happy, stinky).

Say: You are going to have a party, and you have room to invite only three animals. Which will you invite?

Give the children a few moments to decide.

After the selections, ask the children questions. How did you decide which ones to choose? Why did you leave some animals out? Tell me about all these different animals. How do they act, and what are they good at doing? What makes the animals you chose good friends for you and others?

Affirm their answers and selections.

Say: How do you think Jesus chose his friends? Did he always choose the most important or the ones with the most money?

Jesus often chose to be friends with the people who might be left out, or overlooked by others. Jesus knew that each person has gifts to share, and each person is important, just like each of our animal friends has gifts and is important.

Do you know someone you can talk to or choose as a new friend? Affirm all answers.

Offer a brief prayer, asking God to help the children and adults see the Worth of All Persons.