

# Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

## Year A

### Focus: Ordinary Time, Proper 7

### Scripture: Matthew 10:24–39 NRSV

## Gathering

### Welcome

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.*

Spirit of peace, Today as we consider how we can effect PEACE in our daily lives, we ask that you help us to:

Speak and act KINDLY, as it is amazing how far a little kindness goes in setting the tone in our lives, our homes, and those around us.

LAUGH often to share the joy of our love with our family, friends, and those we meet.

Give GENEROUSLY to share our time, our talents, and our treasures. To give with a grateful heart brings joy to our souls and furthers your work in your kingdom.

LOVE unconditionally to share our love and your love with everyone we meet. We may be the key to making a difference in one person's life; help us to not miss that opportunity.

This is how we can effect PEACE in our small corner of the world. Let the efforts we make have a rippling effect in your world. Amen.

## Spiritual Practice

### Holy Listening

Read the following to the group:

The Enduring Principle we are focusing on today is All Are Called. We believe all people have unique gifts, and we are given opportunities in community to share our giftedness with one

another. By practicing Holy Listening, we can learn more about the gifts people share in community, how they feel called to serve, and how we can support one another in discipleship and ministry.

Read the following to the group:

Ask the person next to you to join you in conversation. Find a spot to get comfortable and face one another. You will take turns sharing what you see as your giftedness and how you feel called to share that giftedness with others. It can be anything: friendship, music, compassion, reading aloud, laughter, or tidying up. You each will have three minutes to share. During this time the listener will listen and nod, but not comment. At the end of the three minutes, the listener may respond with this one sentence. "I noticed that..." Then switch places and repeat.

Read the following to the group: Before you start this exercise please repeat this prayer with me. "Help me be wholly present to this person."

You may begin your conversation.

Start the timer. After three minutes let the listeners say a one-sentence response and then ask them to switch places.

Start the timer again.

When each person has shared, invite the group to share reflections on this spiritual practice.

## **Sharing Around the Table**

**Matthew 10:24–39 NRSV**

"A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

"So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

"Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

For I have come to set a man against his father,  
and a daughter against her mother,  
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;  
and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”

Remember your place. Keep your priorities straight. Share with others what I share with you. Expect persecution and be prepared to have family and friends turn against you. But remember, if you do all this, I’ll say good things about you to my Father.

Not exactly the reassuring words of a recruitment speech by the Prince of Peace. Especially if your understanding of peace includes protecting the comfort and status of some at the expense of others. To persons holding such an understanding of peace, the peace of Christ is like a sword.

Like the community of disciples to whom Matthew wrote, we are to proclaim the kingdom of heaven coming near while remaining focused on the mission and doing what we must to attend to the Spirit’s leading. Jesus helps us understand that following him is about being liberated from the expectations of others and being grounded in what God desires. Faith is about discovery, not simply defending positions or defining people according to predetermined standards.

Jesus does not say to love someone instead of him, but to love no one more than him. It is about loving more rather than instead of other relationships. Our value is immeasurable to God, and God’s love for us is always promised. It is in that promise that we can lose our life.

## Questions

1. What is your understanding of the kind of “peace” Christ came to bring?
2. How have you experienced peace that comes from following Jesus?
3. How have the expectations of others conflicted with how you feel the Spirit is leading you?

## 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 these ways 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 289, "Friend of the Streetwalker"*

## **Closing Prayer**

## **Optional Additions Depending on the Group**

- Communion
- Thoughts for Children

## Prayer for Peace

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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.

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):

- 515, "In These Moments We Remember"
- 516, "Coming Together for Wine and for Bread"
- 521, "Let Us Break Bread Together"
- 525, "Small Is the Table"
- 528, "Eat This Bread"

## Thoughts for Children

Ask the children to share about their favorites. For example:

What is your favorite food?

What is your favorite game?

What is your favorite animal?

What is your favorite time of day?

Then say: We all have favorite things. But do you know who does not have favorites? God does not have favorites! God created the world and everything in it. God created each person. God's love is so great, so immense, and so tender that God has enough love for everyone and everything. God loves everyone the same. No favorites.

In fact, God loves each of us so much that God even knows how many hairs are on our heads!

Do you know how many hairs are on your head? Try counting...

Wait 15 seconds then say: Have you counted all the hairs on your head? No! There are too many for us to count. But God loves each of us so deeply that God already knows all about us and loves us all the same.

Let's tell everyone here that God loves us all. Ready? Say it with me: God loves us us all!

Thank the children for participating.