Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

Enduring Principles Series
Facilitator Notes

_Sacred Space: A Small-group Resource—Enduring Principle Series_ is primarily for people who come together in an informal Community of Christ setting to share a conversation and build relationships. The outline is meant to serve as a guide as people enter conversation, share their stories, ask questions, and express joys and concerns.

Small-group ministry also introduces Community of Christ to people and invites all who seek to follow Christ to be shaped and formed in his image.

Readings or scriptures are provided for specific elements of the gathering: Prayer for Peace, Sharing Around the Table, and Generosity Statement. These readings appear in the body of each outline. They also appear separately so an individual reading or scripture can be shared easily with persons responsible for a particular part of the gathering. For example, as people gather, invite someone to share the Prayer for Peace. Hand the person a hard copy for that specific portion of the gathering. Part of the facilitator’s role in an informal setting is to cue participants as the gathering unfolds. Only the facilitator will need the complete outline.

The handout section for each gathering outline also includes optional additions for Communion and Thoughts for Children, which can be integrated into the gathering as needed.

Each session begins with a Prayer for Peace and closes with a Generosity Statement, an invitation, a hymn, and a prayer. The main portion of each session is Sharing Around the Table, where we eat, study a scripture, and share. This sharing also can take place in a simple circle of chairs without food. In this way new relationships emerge, old relationships become stronger, and community forms. Bible references are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). Doctrine and Covenants scriptures are from Community of Christ Doctrine and Covenants.

**Using the Sacred Space—Enduring Principle Series Materials**

_Sacred Space—Enduring Principle Series_ follows the Christian calendar and over the course of the year introduces participants to Community of Christ through the lens of the Enduring Principles. A variety of themes and scriptures are explored to deepen understanding of Jesus Christ and invite people into a life of being shaped and formed in his image. Each week explores tangible ways people can live Christ’s mission in the context of their everyday lives.

Forty-eight outlines—four per month—bring a focus theme and related weekly topics. The outlines for Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas can be adjusted according to where each holiday or season falls on the yearly calendar.

Four additional outlines cover months with a fifth meeting day. The additional outlines provide an alternative small-group experience.

**Outline Helps**

**Gathering**

Invite everyone to have a seat. Welcome guests and introduce folks to one another. A short time of sharing joys and concerns sometimes helps people to know each other.

**Prayer for Peace**

A bell or chime is rung three times to begin the Prayer for Peace. This allows group members to focus their thoughts on Christ’s peace.
The candle is lit to symbolize the peace of Christ illuminating the world. Community of Christ services often include candles to symbolize the Christ made real in our lives.

*Note:* When first-time visitors are present, it is helpful for the facilitator to share the above statements before the chime is rung, candle lit, and prayer read. This provides important context that allows visitors to engage fully in the shared experience.

**Sharing Around the Table**

Studying the scripture and questions is a time to learn more about scripture, discipleship, and Community of Christ in an informal setting. Sharing food around a table helps people build relationships, develop trust and the courage to share their authentic selves, and experience safe space to question and explore.

Make arrangements for snacks or a meal before the meeting date. If one person or family is hosting the weekly meeting, ask others to coordinate the snack or meal.

Remind participants that sharing is sacred, safe space. Information or experiences shared in these meetings is to be held in confidence.

*Note:* Sharing Around the Table also can be facilitated in a circle without food, depending on the context and needs of the group.

**Generosity Statement and Invitation**

Place a basket for financial contributions where people can see it. Sharing the Generosity Statement reminds people of the opportunity to contribute to ministries of Community of Christ. Have information cards available with instructions for eTithing. Growing numbers of people prefer to handle finances electronically. Participants may wish to have their contributions recorded and receipted. Check with your mission center financial officer for instructions.

**Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper**

Serving Communion is an option if appropriate Community of Christ priesthood members are available to serve. Traditionally Communion is served on the first Sunday of the month, but it can be adjusted depending on the needs of the group and the availability of Community of Christ priesthood members. (For example, if a group meets on the second and fourth Sundays of the month, Communion can be shared on the second Sunday. If Community of Christ priesthood members are available only once a month or less frequently, Communion can be shared whatever day they are present.)

**Invitation to Next Meeting**

Always state the date, time, and location for the next meeting. Provide handouts with full information, including directions.

Encourage participants to invite others who are seeking safe space to process their spiritual journey. It can help to create a secret Facebook group to share changes in schedule and location. This also helps people stay connected between meetings.

To learn more about secret Facebook groups and how to create one, read Facebook 101. Visit [www.CofChrist.org/resources](http://www.CofChrist.org/resources) and search for “Facebook” in the Keyword Search on the page. If you have questions about Facebook, email Communications at Communications@CofChrist.org.
Prepare for Children

As facilitator, it is helpful to prepare for children. A blanket or quilt spread on the floor gives children a sense of place. Prepare activity bags with coloring pages, crayons, a small bottle of water, or other parent-approved snack. Quiet toys for infants also help.

The handout section of each gathering outline includes Thoughts for Children. This element easily can be added to the gathering when children are present. A list of materials appears at the top of the Thoughts for Children handout. Have these materials ready in a bag with the handout.

Materials

- Peace candle (see note) and lighter (Many facilities allow only flameless candles; check with your meeting place.)
- Chime or bell
- NRSV Bible
- Community of Christ Doctrine and Covenants
- Basket for people to offer financial contributions
- Information cards for eTithing
- *Community of Christ Sings* hymnals
- Hymnal recordings (on smart phone or computer with flash drive)
- Speaker
- Session outline
- Handouts for readings and scriptures (Prayer for Peace, Spiritual Practice, Sharing Around the Table, Generosity Statement)
- Snacks (It is helpful to ask people to take turns bringing snacks for each session.)

For Children

- Activity bags

Communion

- Communion prayer card
- Communion statement
- Communion trays, cups
- Bread, grape juice, water

Notes

At small-group gatherings it is helpful to have Community of Christ resources for first-time participants or those who would like more information about the church. Resources are available through Herald House (www.HeraldHouse.org).

Contact your mission center invitation support minister, mission center president, or your area’s president of seventy for more information about resources. Keep these resources on hand to give to seekers:

- *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*, 3rd edition
- *Community of Christ: an Illustrated History*
- Doctrine and Covenants
• Promise Cards
• Business cards with your contact information
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Fifth Week

Coloring Pages and Sharing

Preparation
Print coloring pages

Materials
- Community of Christ coloring pages
- Colored pencils
- Felt-tip markers
- Crayons for children
- *Community of Christ Sings* hymnals
- Hymn accompaniment: flash drive, computer and speaker, or smartphone and speaker
- Generosity basket
- Snacks or a meal (arranged prior to group meeting)

Opening Prayer and Blessing
Sit around the table and share in a meal or snacks.

Coloring Pages and Sharing
Have coloring pages, colored pencils, and markers on the table. Invite everyone to try coloring, even those who might not find this to be their usual pastime.

As people color and share snacks, ask them to tell about their journey of faith. Take turns responding to these questions:
1. On your journey, what have you learned about yourself that surprised you?
2. What challenges have you faced?
3. What affirming moments have you experienced?
   - When a coloring page is complete, have the person tell why he or she chose it and what it means.

   Take time to answer any questions that may arise from the information on coloring pages.

Sending

Generosity Statement
“Sharing for the common good is the spirit of Zion” (Doctrine and Covenants 165:2f).
We receive God’s grace and generosity. The offering basket is available if you would like to support ongoing small-group ministries as part of your generous response.
This month’s offering prayer is adapted from A Disciple’s Generous Response:
Constant God, May we be dependable disciples. Your unconditional love for each of us is expressed through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. May we faithfully respond to that ministry as we are accountable to one another, to you, and ourselves. Amen.

Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn

CCS 332, “Sing of Colors”

Closing Prayer
Thoughts for Children

Coloring Together

Materials: Community of Christ coloring pages
Instructions: Coloring together is an intergenerational activity. Invite all ages to participate in coloring and sharing.
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Fifth Week

Dwelling in the Word

Materials
- *Community of Christ Sings* hymnals
- Hymn accompaniment: flash drive, computer and speaker, or smartphone and speaker
- Generosity basket
- Printed handouts with scripture and questions (select from three handouts below)
- Snacks or a meal (arranged prior to group meeting)

Opening Prayer
Take time to introduce everyone.

Dwelling in the Word

Dwelling in the Word is a way to listen for God’s guidance through hearing scripture and responding to questions. We recognize that God continues to speak in our current context and daily lives.

Dwelling in the Word is not a way to learn more about a scripture. Rather, it’s a way to imagine how God is calling to us and is present with us on our faith journey.

Steps:
1. Provide a copy of the scripture passage and questions handout (see below). This allows participants to hear and read for reflection.
2. Ask participants to listen for a word, phrase, or image that stands out, that they wonder about, or that they feel led to explore (see below).
3. Read the scripture passage and provide a few moments for quiet reflection.
4. Ask participants to share the word, phrase, or image that caught their attention.
5. Before reading the passage a second time, ask participants to focus on question two (see below).
7. Ask participants to share their reflections to the question.
8. Before reading the passage a third time, ask participants to focus on question three (see below).
10. Ask participants to share their reflections to the question.

Blessing on the Snacks and Sharing
Gather around the table for snacks and talk about what you experienced.
**Sending**

**Generosity Statement**

“Sharing for the common good is the spirit of Zion” (Doctrine and Covenants 165:2f).

We receive God’s grace and generosity. The offering basket is available if you would like to support ongoing small-group ministries as part of your generous response.

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

Covenant God, As we navigate our world of debt and consumerism, help us to save wisely. In this way may we better 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* 192, “O Lord Hear My Prayer” (sing three times)

**Closing Prayer**
Thoughts for Children
Dwelling in the Word

Instructions: Dwelling in the Word is a way to listen for God’s guidance through listening to scripture and sharing what we think about it or how we feel when we hear it read aloud. Encourage children to listen carefully to the scripture and think about what they would like to share. If a child does not wish to share, simply thank him or her for listening quietly while others share.
Handout: Dwelling in the Word Scripture and Questions
Mark 12:28-34 NRSV

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘he is one, and besides him there is no other’; and ‘to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,’ and ‘to love one’s neighbor as oneself,’—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that no one dared to ask him any question.

Questions
1. As you were listening to the scripture, what word, emotion, feeling, phrase, idea, or image do you sense God drawing you to dwell on?
2. What do you sense God is leading you to explore or give attention to?
3. To what new understanding, new question, or new phase of your journey with Christ are you being called?
Handout: Dwelling in the Word Scripture and Questions
2 Corinthians 4:5–16

For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake. For it is the God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—“I believed, and so I spoke”—we also believe, and so we speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. So we do not lose heart.

Questions
1. As you were listening to the scripture, what word, emotion, feeling, phrase, idea, or image do you sense God drawing you to dwell on?
2. What do you sense God is leading you to explore or give attention to?
3. To what new understanding, new question, or new phase of your journey with Christ are you being called?
Handout: Dwelling in the Word Scripture and Questions
Doctrine and Covenants 164:9a–f

Beloved children of the Restoration, your continuing faith adventure with God has been divinely led, eventful, challenging, and sometimes surprising to you. By the grace of God, you are poised to fulfill God’s ultimate vision for the church.

When your willingness to live in sacred community as Christ’s new creation exceeds your natural fear of spiritual and relational transformation, you will become who you are called to be. The rise of Zion the beautiful, the peaceful reign of Christ, awaits your whole-hearted response to the call to make and steadfastly hold to God’s covenant of peace in Jesus Christ.

This covenant entails sacramental living that respects and reveals God’s presence and reconciling activity in creation. It requires whole-life stewardship dedicated to expanding the church’s restoring ministries, especially those devoted to asserting the worth of persons, protecting the sacredness of creation, and relieving physical and spiritual suffering.

If you truly would be Community of Christ, then embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ.

The challenges and opportunities are momentous. Will you remain hesitant in the shadows of your fears, insecurities, and competing loyalties? Or will you move forward in the light of your divinely instilled call and vision?

The mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead.

Questions
1. As you were listening to the scripture, what word, emotion, feeling, phrase, idea, or image do you sense God drawing you to dwell on?
2. What do you sense God is leading you to explore or give attention to?
3. To what new understanding, new question, or new phase of your journey with Christ are you being called?
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Fifth Week

Scripture and Story

Materials
- Several copies of Community of Christ scriptures: Bibles, Books of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants
- Community of Christ Sings hymnals
- Hymn accompaniment: flash drive, computer and speaker, or smartphone and speaker
- Generosity basket
- Snacks or a meal (arranged prior to group meeting)

Opening Prayer and Blessing
Sit around the table and share in a meal or snacks
Take time to introduce everyone.

Sharing Scripture and Story
- Provide copies of Community of Christ scriptures.
- Ask people to identify and look up a scripture that has meaning or importance in their life journey.
- Ask people to share the scripture and tell what they experienced that made the scripture meaningful.
- Remind the group that this is sacred, safe space. Trust is important. Things shared will not be repeated outside the group. To do so is to injure another person.
- Allow plenty of time for people to share. (Laughter is good. Tears are good. Sharing with one another is good.)
- Affirm each person’s sharing by responding with a statement such as “Thank you for trusting us with your story.” Or, “Thank you for sharing this meaningful experience with us.”
- If appropriate, pray for one another.
- Bring sharing to a close.

Sending

Generosity Statement
“Sharing for the common good is the spirit of Zion” (Doctrine and Covenants 165:2f).
We receive God’s grace and generosity. The offering basket is available if you would like to support ongoing small-group ministries as part of your generous response.
This month’s offering prayer is adapted from A Disciple’s Generous Response:
Gracious 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 280, “Lord Prepare Me”*

Closing Prayer
**Thoughts for Children**

**Scripture and Story**

Instructions: Sharing scripture and story is an intergenerational practice.

- Ask children to share something about Jesus or the Bible that is meaningful for them.
- Affirm each child’s sharing by responding with a statement such as: “Thank you for sharing with the group.” Or, “Thank you for sharing this meaningful experience with us.”
Walking Meditation

Preparation
Check the route you will be walking together. Note any street crossings where parents will need help with children. Be aware of steps or rough patches. Time the route for a slow walk to be about 30 minutes.

Materials
- Community of Christ Sings hymnals
- Hymn accompaniment: flash drive, computer and speaker, or smartphone and speaker
- Generosity basket
- Snacks or a meal (arranged prior to group meeting)

Opening Prayer
Take time to introduce everyone.

Walking Meditation (30 Minutes)
The purpose of the walk is not to reach a destination, but to appreciate everything you see along the way. Participants walk together, but in silence. Move slowly and don’t leave anyone behind. Practice reverence wherever you go. Don’t think, just look and feel the immense wonder of creation.

Blessing on the Snacks and Sharing
When you return, gather around the table for snacks and talk about what you experienced and where you felt God most strongly.

Sending
Generosity Statement
“Sharing for the common good is the spirit of Zion” (Doctrine and Covenants 165:2f). We receive God’s grace and generosity. The offering basket is available if you would like to support ongoing small-group ministries as part of your generous response.
This month’s offering prayer is adapted from A Disciple’s Generous Response:
Covenant God, As we navigate our world of debt and consumerism, help us to save wisely. In this way may we better 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 171, “Open My Heart”

Closing Prayer
**Thoughts for Children**

**Walking Meditation**

Instructions: Walking meditation is an intergenerational practice. Remind children to walk quietly with the group.

Take time to look around and see the beauty of God’s creation.

When you return, invite the children to share what they saw and how they experienced God with them on the walk.
all together now

Community of Christ
all together now

Intergenerational Lessons and Coloring Materials

Community of Christ
What Is Church?

People sometimes use the word *church* to refer to a type of building that often includes a tall steeple, stained-glass windows, and a chapel — like when we say: “Let’s go to the church.” Other times people use the word to mean the kind of meeting that takes place inside the building: “Let’s start church now.” Church also can mean the people who make up the congregation or community: “We are the church.”

This last meaning—the community of people—is much more important than the type of building or meeting. In Community of Christ, we all become the church when we gather together in community to build meaningful relationships and to live our shared mission.
Mission Initiatives

The word *mission* refers to an important goal or purpose. In Community of Christ, we share five Mission Initiatives. Each has a symbol to help us remember it:

1. Invite People to Christ
2. Abolish Poverty, End Suffering
3. Pursue Peace on Earth
4. Develop Disciples to Serve
5. Experience Congregations in Mission
Peace Seal

Community of Christ’s seal or logo is a picture of a lion laying down with a lamb being led by a child. This is a vision of a truly peaceful world, which we also call Zion, the peaceable kingdom, the commonwealth of God, and Community of Christ. Although the vision is something that may never be fully possible, we nevertheless work to make our world more like Zion by pursuing peace and justice everywhere.

see Isaiah 11:6
Enduring Principles

Our nine Enduring Principles define the essence, heart, and soul of our community. They describe the personality of our church as expressed throughout the world. Each principle has its own symbol:

Grace & Generosity  Sacredness of Creation  Continuing Revelation

Worth of All Persons  All Are Called  Responsible Choices

Pursuit of Peace (Shalom)  Unity in Diversity  Blessings of Community

Community of Christ  all together now
In our hymnal *Community of Christ Sings*, we have a song or hymn called “Who Is God” (Hymn 9). The lyrics or words to the song read:

*Who is God—young or old?*
*Near or far? She or he?*
*All of these and none at all,*
*loving all, loving me.*

*God is young, God is old,*
*God is she, God is he,*
*mother’s kiss and father’s hug,*
*loving all, loving me.*

“All of these” and “none at all” are opposite ideas. Having two or more contradictory answers to the same question is called a **paradox**. Humans naturally like to have simple answers to questions, but in life we sometimes find that not all questions have simple answers.

People use words like *God* and the *Divine* to refer to many different ideas, including: Source of everything, One from which everything else derives, Creator, our heavenly Parent (heavenly Father, heavenly Mother), meaning itself, holy wisdom, that which is beyond everything, the infinite, that which connects us all, that which is good, joy, hope, love, peace, and much more.

Rather than having one simple answer, we share and struggle with many different answers as we continually learn and grow in life.
The Sacraments

Community of Christ celebrates eight special rituals known as sacraments. As with all spiritual practices, they point us to God and allow us to experience the Divine in our lives and in our community.

- **Baptism**
- **Ordination**
- **Evangelist Blessing**
- **Confirmation**
- **Blessing of Children**
- **The Lord’s Supper**
- **Marriage**
- **Laying on of Hands for the Sick**

Community of Christ  all together now
The church was organized or founded by a small group of people in the towns of Palmyra and Fayette, New York, in 1830. Emma and Joseph Smith Jr. were among the first members along with their relatives and friends in the Smith and Whitmer families. At the time, the USA was a new country. Immigrants from Europe and Africa were continually moving westward into the lands of native American Indians. Church headquarters also moved westward, first to Kirtland, Ohio, where members built a temple, and later to Far West, Missouri, and Nauvoo, Illinois. The church grew very quickly as new members were excited to invite their neighbors to Christ.
Emma Hale Smith

• Lived 1804–1879
• Among first members
• Selected hymns for four church hymnals
• President of a charity, “Nauvoo Relief Society”
• Her son, Joseph III, became prophet 1860

The “Elect Lady” and Mother of the Restoration
Kirtland Temple

Called the “House of the Lord,” the temple was dedicated March 27, 1836, in Kirtland, Ohio. Although the members were extremely poor, they sacrificed nearly everything (and even went bankrupt) to build this sacred structure, which was the first place of worship built by the church.

Emma Smith’s first hymnal was published in time for the dedication, when members sang “The Spirit of God Like a Fire Is Burning.”
The Temple in Independence, Missouri, USA, is the international headquarters of Community of Christ.

The Temple is built in the shape of a spiral that represents life’s journey of continually learning and growing.

The Temple is dedicated to peace, and every day people there say a special prayer for peace.
Worldwide Community

Community of Christ is established in 46 countries and has a presence in many more.

Flags continue on next page
Flags of the countries where Community of Christ is established, continued from previous page

Democratic Rep. of Congo (1981)
Dominican Republic (1981)
Zambia (1987)
Cote d’Ivoire (1988)
Jamaica (1989)

El Salvador (1990)
Malawi (1992)
Nepal (1999)
Bolivia (2000)
South Africa (2002)

Aruba (2007)
Chile (2007)
Zimbabwe (2007)
Russian Federation (2007)
Ukraine (2007)

Republic of the Congo (2007)
Nicaragua (2007)
Spain (2015)
Angola (2016)
Togo (2016)

Sierra Leone (2016)