Lessons for Youth (ages 12–18)

Live, Love, Share
Visibly One in Christ
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The words of counsel, brought to us by Prophet-President Stephen M. Veazey at the 2013 World Conference, challenge the church to “advance the response God desires” of certain principles, the Mission Initiatives, and divine vision. The words of counsel also give insight “for living the meaning of true community in Christ.”

These six lessons help youth explore the concepts in the words of counsel and discover, or discern, what it means for them, both personally and for the local and global community to which they belong.

Spiritual practices are explored in these lessons as ways to connect with God’s nature and will. Our visual theme for these lessons is the labyrinth, a new architectural feature of the Temple in Independence, Missouri, USA. Walking a labyrinth is a spiritual practice. Youth will make and walk a labyrinth for reflection and contemplation, and will learn other spiritual practices in these lessons as well.
The Labyrinth as a Spiritual Practice

A labyrinth experience is just one of many spiritual practices. For centuries, labyrinths have been used as meditation and prayer tools, as a metaphor for a spiritual journey to our own center and back out to the world. The labyrinth at Community of Christ Temple in Independence, Missouri USA brings meaning by creating sacred space, combining the imagery of the circle and spiral into a path that can help people as they grow in the life of a disciple.

Youth will create and experience the labyrinth in various ways through these lessons. They will also learn other spiritual practices to use as ways of personally discerning God’s will in community as we become a prophetic people.

We recommend that youth build a walking labyrinth close to their meeting space. If this is not possible, look for a labyrinth in your community. Directions are included for creating full-size and finger labyrinths.

The labyrinth is an ancient device used for spiritual contemplation, and it is one of the Temple’s newest architectural features in the continuing effort to provide opportunities for ministry.

Drawing the Labyrinth Design: Review the instructions below for creating a labyrinth so you can explain it to the youth in class. Have them practice drawing a labyrinth on paper. Begin by making a plus (+) sign, then draw right angles in each of the four right angles of the (+). From there, draw an arch from the top of the plus sign over to the top of the right-hand L shape. Continue creating the labyrinth design following the diagrams below. This is a typical seven-circuit labyrinth design.

Area Required: 45 ft/14 m by 45 ft/14 m for paths that are 3 ft/1 m wide, wide enough for people to pass going in opposite directions. Adjust the dimensions of the labyrinth to fit the available space.

Tools and Supplies: Choose whatever works best for your location and space.
- Clothesline or rope for a grassy area or asphalt
- Chalk for large paved areas or asphalt
- Stones, rocks, or bricks for a grassy or paved area
- Painter’s tape or other removable tape for indoor floors
- Paint and a large roll of canvas or carpet
- Stick, broom handle, or pole to scratch out the pattern in a sand volleyball pit or on a beach
- Bird seed, chicken corn, sawdust, sand, or water-based paint for outlining on the ground

(After walking a labyrinth of bird seed, sit quietly and watch the birds enjoy the labyrinth!)

How to Build a Labyrinth

1. Find the center of your space, then face east. (The opening of a labyrinth traditionally faces east). Put a marker there (stick, stone, brick—whatever you are using to build the labyrinth).
2. From there, make a plus (+) sign with your materials that crosses the center spot. Each of the four arms of the “+” should be 6 ft/2 m long.
3. Create the L shapes within the cross arms. Draw a large arch from the top of the cross over to the top of the right-hand L shape.
4. Continue following the method described earlier for creating a labyrinth.
How to Walk the Labyrinth

Ask a student to create a poster of these guidelines to place at the entrance to the labyrinth. Review the instructions before walking the labyrinth.
1. Walk the labyrinth at your own pace.
2. Spend time in the center if you wish.
3. Step to one side to allow another to pass by.
4. Don’t interact with others walking the labyrinth.

5. Walk the labyrinth in stages:
   **Releasing:** As you walk in, open the heart and quiet the mind.
   **Receiving:** In the center, stay as long as you wish to meditate and pray and receive what God has to offer.
   **Returning:** As you leave, follow the same path out of the center; join with God’s Spirit who helps you find and do the work you are called to do.
Lesson 1

Live, Love, Share
A Divine Vision
Focus
God’s divine vision calls us to be a church of seekers and doers engaged in Christ’s mission.

Focus Scriptures

Objectives
The learners will...
• meet, learn about, and introduce one another.
• distinguish the differences between a maze (meant to confuse) and a labyrinth as used in spiritual practices (meant to illuminate).
• study scripture stories that express Christ’s response to invitation, suffering, peace, and justice.
• be challenged to go, reflect, and pray about engaging in Christ’s mission.
• begin the work of creating a labyrinth.

Supplies
• Bible (NRSV)
• Doctrine and Covenants, including Section 164
• Community of Christ Sings (CCS)
• Newsprint, flip chart, or poster board
• Washable markers
• Materials for building a labyrinth
• Handouts 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3—one copy of each per student
• Mission Initiatives icons (at end of this lesson), photocopy on class posters

Gather
Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson

Icebreaker (if students don’t know one another):
Welcome students as they gather. Give each a sheet of paper and marker; instruct them to write their first names on the paper (in large letters to fill the paper). Have them tape their papers to a wall in the classroom.

When all students have arrived, pull any two of the papers with names; ask those two students to pair up. (Be intentional about matching two youth who may not know each other.) Do the same with all the other papers, so all students are partnered with another. One group may have three members.

Ask partners to take one minute each to learn about the other person. (Give a verbal time cue for each minute.) When two minutes are up, ask the pairs to introduce each other to the whole class. As they do, put their name papers back on the wall. Ask students to remain in pairs for next activity.

Welcome everyone to class. Introduce yourself, if needed.

Puzzling
Give each pair a pencil and a copy of Handout 1.1 Puzzles. Have youth find the solution to each puzzle; they may each choose one puzzle to solve, or they may work on both puzzles together.

When partners are finished, discuss the differences between the puzzles. Identify them as a maze (puzzle 1) and a labyrinth (puzzle 2). Write students’ ideas on a flip chart or newsprint.
• What was your experience with puzzle 1? With puzzle 2?
• Which one has twists, turns, and was designed to challenge or confuse you?
• Which one followed the same path, inside and out?

The students’ answers should define the differences between a maze and a labyrinth. If not, explain the differences.

Labyrinths or Mazes?
A maze is a puzzle with twists, turns, and blind alleys. A maze offers many choices and requires mathematical and logical thinking, a left-brain task.

A labyrinth, as used for spiritual practice, is designed to focus the mind, not confuse it. It has only one path (unicursal); the way in is the way out. A labyrinth is a right-brain task. It involves intuition, creativity, and imagery. With a labyrinth there is only one choice: whether to enter or not.

Ask questions to get students thinking about choices, direction, and vision, but allow discussion and reflection if students initiate it.
• Have you ever felt you were in a maze, just wandering, trying to find your way?
• Do you wonder what you should do with your life, not just in the future, but now?
• Do you ever wonder what you should do in a certain situation?
• Wouldn’t it be nice to know you are on the right track and are moving forward aware of God’s blessings and guidance?
In Community of Christ, we have a divine vision. As we open ourselves to God’s love, we have a vision of where we are to go, what we are to do, and with whom we will journey.

In our class time together, we have two main goals:
1. To explore the words of counsel presented to the 2013 World Conference by President Stephen M. Veazey
2. To learn spiritual practices we can use to open ourselves to God’s will, such as walking a labyrinth. We’ll get to that soon!

Offer an opening prayer of thankfulness and expectation for the journey ahead.

Engage
Invites exploration and interaction

A Church of Seekers
Ask students to think about these questions: How do we discover God’s vision? Where do we start?

Community of Christ has a rich history of being a church that seeks God’s direction and will. (Tell the story of the founder of Community of Christ.)

Community of Christ traces its origins to the faith and experience of a teenager. The movement’s founder, Joseph Smith Jr., was himself a young seeker. His study of scripture and his encounters with other Christians awakened in him a desire to find God’s love and guidance. According to Joseph’s earliest recollections, when he was about 14 years old, he opened the Bible and read, “If any of you lack wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously...and it will be given you” (James 1:5 NRSV, adapted). He took the yearnings of his heart into the woods near his home and began to pray. He described a powerful spiritual experience from which he received personal assurance and a sense of life’s purpose. This was an important part of his lifelong journey with God.

Words of Counsel
Community of Christ is a faith community seeking God’s will and to fulfill Christ’s mission. At World Conference 2013, President Stephen M. Veazey gave words of counsel to explore as individuals and in community.

Distribute Handout 1.2. Ask a student to read the following phrases from the handout:

Community of Christ, a divine vision is set before you. Presented over the years through various inspired phrases and symbols, it is expressed now through initiatives in harmony with Jesus Christ’s mission.

As a spiritual venture, boldly follow the initiatives into the heart of God’s vision for the church and creation.
— words of counsel, 2013

Boldly Follow the Initiatives
We are challenged to join the “spiritual venture” and “boldly follow the initiatives.” Three Mission Initiatives are highlighted in these words of counsel.

Tape three sheets of newsprint or poster paper to the walls. Add the title and graphic of a Mission Initiative to each one.

Mission Initiative: Invite People to Christ
Ask a student to read the following (see full text on Handout 1.2):

Lovingly invite others...to experience the good news of new life in community with Christ. Opportunities abound in your daily lives if you choose to see them.
—words of counsel, 2013

Inviting others begins with accepting all as persons of worth. This invitation can grow into friendships and create sacred community. Jesus asked many to “follow me” as he modeled the pattern of inviting and befriending.

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10); then ask:
• How did this invitation change Zacchaeus?
• How did the change in Zacchaeus change his community?

Sometimes a simple act of friendship can change someone’s life forever. Sometimes the friendship can change many persons’ lives.

Think about one of your friendships.
• What is it about this relationship that gives you joy? (record responses on the poster)
• Describe characteristics of the friendship. (record responses on the poster)

Mission Initiative: Abolish Poverty, End Suffering
Ask a student to read from the words of counsel:

Undertake compassionate and just actions that seek to abolish poverty and end needless suffering.

The scriptures are filled with accounts of Jesus putting an end to suffering: giving sight to the blind, healing illness, restoring health and wholeness, and bringing people back into community.
Write the following scripture references on a flip chart. Ask for volunteers to read each scripture story aloud; then ask the group after each story: How did Jesus end suffering in this story?

1. Matthew 15:22–28 (Canaanite woman asks Jesus to heal her daughter)
2. Luke 17:11–19 (Jesus heals 10 men who had leprosy)

Discuss:
- Can you think of someone—a world leader, a celebrity, a local hero, an organization—who responded to the needs of others? Tell about it. (record responses on the poster)
- What have you done recently (or what could you do) to help those in poverty or who are suffering? (record responses on the poster)

Mission Initiative: Pursue Peace on Earth

Ask a student to read from the words of counsel:

Pursue peace on and for the Earth.

The Bible contains more than 300 verses on poverty and social justice, clearly showing God’s concern for those trapped in poverty and injustice.

Peace and justice issues are much larger and more complicated than we can understand fully. Suffering and injustice are in all aspects of global politics and economics, trade, and the environment because of human choices. While the problems seem overwhelming, we can make significant changes with simple personal choices. Do we know where or how to start?

Distribute Handout 1.3, Peace Choices. Have students mark their choices and ideas on the handout. After all have finished, discuss their choices.

Tell them that we are exploring some of the words of counsel as a guide or vision for our lives as disciples of Christ in sacred community. Invite them to look at some ways we can focus on these words and make them part of our lives.

Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing

Spiritual Practices

Spiritual practices can help us become more Christ-like for the sake of others. They shift our center to God, and they open us to God’s Spirit. Spiritual practices can be prayer, meditation, writing in a journal, walking a labyrinth, and discernment. It can even be mindful cooking or nature gazing and praising.

President-Prophet Stephen M. Veazey says spiritual practices help us to be “immersed in God:”

To be immersed in God is to participate regularly, daily, several times a day, in proven spiritual practices that cause us to abide more and more deeply in God’s love and God’s Spirit. When we are immersed...[our] discipleship becomes a joy.


Labyrinth

The symbol chosen for these lessons is a labyrinth. The labyrinth is the newest architectural feature of the Temple in Independence, Missouri, USA. It is part of the rooftop garden. The new labyrinth reflects President Veazey’s words, “We’re going to continue to develop the Temple and its ministries as a global peacemaking center and a center for spiritual renewal” (Stephen M. Veazey, “A Presidential Q&A Part 1,” Herald, June 2014, 19).

- Have you walked the labyrinth at the Temple? Describe the experience.
- Have you walked a labyrinth somewhere else? Tell about it.

 Explain the history, significance, and practice of the labyrinth to students.

A labyrinth, as used in spiritual practices, is an ancient symbol that relates to wholeness. It combines the imagery of a circle and spiral into a meandering but purposeful path. The labyrinth represents a journey into our own center and then back into the world. Labyrinths have long been used as meditation and prayer tools. The labyrinth is a metaphor for life’s journey.

The labyrinth helps us let go of our thinking, judging mind and moves us into our feeling, heart space. It takes us on an inward and outward journey with no tricks or dead ends. First, we travel to the center, letting go of our thinking and opening ourselves to wholeness. Then, we travel back into the world with a wider understanding of ourselves and our path. The labyrinth has been used for art therapy, contemplation, meditation, problem solving, healing, grief therapy, and much more.
**Draw a Labyrinth**

Show students how to draw a labyrinth following the instructions in the introduction. Give students paper and pencils, markers, or crayons to practice drawing the labyrinth. If you want, photocopy instructions and diagrams for students.

**Send**

*Explores how the lesson might be lived out*

We began this lesson talking about a divine mission. Ask a student to read from the words of counsel presented at the 2013 World Conference (Handout 1.2).

Continue to align your priorities with local and worldwide church efforts to move the initiatives forward...

Let nothing separate you from this mission.

Sing “Come and Find the Quiet Center” CCS 151 or “O for a World” CCS 379.

Spiritual practices can open us to God’s will. In this lesson, we are building a labyrinth to use as a spiritual practice. Before our next class, think about what other spiritual practices you use and prayerfully engage in them.

*Collect Handout 1.2 each day for use in future class sessions.*

**Bless**

*Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope*

Many in the church have been praying the Mission Prayer. Ask students to repeat the prayer after you, breaking it into phrases:

- God, where will your Spirit lead today? *(students repeat)*
- Help me be fully awake *(students repeat)* and ready to respond.
- Grant me courage to risk something new *(students repeat)* and become a blessing of your love and peace. *(students repeat)*
- Amen. *(students repeat)*

**Build a Labyrinth**

During the last half of class, or during free time, build a labyrinth. Even if you have one on your church or campgrounds, the experience of building one is helpful in learning to create sacred space (for directions see “The Labyrinth as a Spiritual Practice,” p. 5).
Handout 1.1
Puzzles

Puzzle One

Puzzle Two
Handout 1.2
Words of Counsel

Until recently I thought words of counsel would not be given before or during the 2013 World Conference. However, over the past months, as I have prayed for the church and the world we serve, I have been surprised by regular promptings of the Spirit to offer words of counsel again.

Some themes of this counsel have been presented previously. Evidently, it is important to highlight and further clarify certain principles to advance the response God desires. Other parts of the counsel, while clearly related to previous instruction, begin to open new horizons for living the meaning of true community in Christ.

I pray these words will serve as a pathway for those who sincerely seek to discover God’s will through their own experience as we continue our faith adventure together. I do not intend to submit this counsel for inclusion in the Doctrine and Covenants now. I believe broad exploration of the spiritual concepts in this counsel should precede any formal consideration in that regard. At the same time, this counsel is shared as an expression of my calling as prophet-president of the church in response to God’s gracious revealing of the way ahead for this faith movement.

To the church:

Community of Christ, a divine vision is set before you. Presented over the years through various inspired phrases and symbols, it is expressed now through initiatives in harmony with Jesus Christ’s mission.

As a spiritual venture, boldly follow the initiatives into the heart of God’s vision for the church and creation. Then, in response to growing insight about God’s nature and will, continue to shape communities that live Christ’s love and mission.

Lovingly invite others to experience the good news of new life in community with Christ. Opportunities abound in your daily lives if you choose to see them.

Undertake compassionate and just actions that seek to abolish poverty and end needless suffering. Pursue peace on and for the Earth.

Let nothing separate you from this mission.

Continue to align your priorities with local and worldwide church efforts to move the initiatives forward. Additional innovative approaches to coordinating congregational life and supporting groups of disciples and seekers are needed to address mission opportunities in a changing world.

Free the full capacity of Christ’s mission through generosity that imitates God’s generosity. Discover deep joy and life’s meaning by promoting divine purposes on Earth. Listen to the testimonies of those who are responding and follow your soul’s yearning to come home to God’s grace and generosity.

Remember, a basic discipleship principle is growing Christ’s mission through both local and world mission tithes according to true capacity. Giving to other worthwhile organizations, while an important part of A Disciple’s Generous Response, follows world and local mission tithing and should not diminish or replace it. If a law is needed to focus and balance response, then let these tithing principles serve that purpose.

Tithing is a spiritual practice that demonstrates willingness to regularly offer every dimension of one’s life to God. When defined by faith, love, and hopeful planning, including resolving indebtedness, capacity to respond becomes much greater than initially assumed.

Following the approval of Doctrine and Covenants 164, I continued to prayerfully explore certain principles in it. A particular focus was paragraph 5, where the following words appear, approved by the World Conference as authoritative for our life together:

It is imperative to understand that when you are truly baptized into Christ you become part of a new creation. By taking on the life and mind of Christ, you increasingly view yourself and others from a changed perspective. Former ways of defining people by economic status, social class, sex, gender, or ethnicity no longer are primary. Through the gospel of Christ, a new community of tolerance, reconciliation, unity in diversity, and love is being born as a visible sign of the coming reign of God.

As indicated in the preface to Section 164, study of Galatians 3:27–29 was foundational to this counsel. Following the approval of Section 164, I persisted in asking God about the meaning and implications of paragraph 5 and Galatians 3:27–29. I sought additional understanding of the spiritual condition that would allow us to see ourselves and others from the changed perspective emphasized in Section 164:5.

My journey continued as I was encouraged to study John 17.

John 17 conveys the prayer of Jesus for his disciples as he
approaches death on the cross. As I reflected on this text, the Spirit urged me to invite the church to go much deeper in its understanding of the oneness with and among his disciples, who Jesus prayed for. Catching sight of the possible future, I marveled at the blessings that could be enjoyed by the church as we respond. I was left with two questions: “Are we willing to continue to become such a community for Christ and the cause of Zion?” And, “What will it take for us to truly be a community of oneness, mutuality, and revelation of divine love through Christ?”

The following words arose as the Spirit’s voice to the church in response to that experience and those questions:

More fully accept and embody your oneness and equality in Jesus Christ, who dwells in oneness with God. Oneness and equality in Christ are realized through the waters of baptism, confirmed by the Holy Spirit, and sustained through the sacrament of Communion. Embrace the full meaning of these sacraments and be spiritually joined in Christ as never before.

However, be aware, it is not right to profess oneness and equality in Christ through sacramental covenants and then to deny that equality by attitude, word, or action. Such behavior wounds Christ’s body and denies what is eternally resolved in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

You do not fully understand many interrelated processes of human creation. Through its wonderful complexity, creation produces both diversity and order. Be not consumed with concern about variety in human types and characteristics as you see them. Be passionately concerned about how God is revealing divine nature through sacred communities of love, oneness, and equality that embody God’s revelation in Jesus Christ.

Oneness and equality in Christ do not mean uniformity. They mean unity in diversity and relating in Christ-like love to the circumstances of others as if they were one’s own. They also mean full opportunity for people to experience human worth and related rights, including expressing God-given giftedness through the church community.

Regarding priesthood, God calls whomever God calls from among committed disciples, according to their gifts, to serve and reach all humankind. Priesthood policies and procedures provide a clear way for disciples to respond to calling. They also define the difference between a sense of call as potential and the need to align one’s life with principles of moral behavior and relationships that promote the well-being of the church community.

Involvement in Christ’s mission is enriched and focused through spiritual growth and guidance. Following direction already emerging, the presiding evangelist and the Order of Evangelists, in concert with their colleagues in ministry, should concentrate on spiritually forming communities of disciples and seekers that live deeply and generously in Christ’s Spirit.

For this purpose, offer the sacrament of evangelist blessing not only to individuals and congregations, but to families, households, and groups of people seeking spiritual guidance to more completely give themselves to Christ’s mission.

The presiding evangelist will provide instructions for implementation at the appropriate time. Nothing in the instruction should be construed to lessen the importance of the sacrament of evangelist blessing for individuals.

In conclusion, the following words also are shared in response to the radiant light and love of God’s Spirit:

Beloved Community of Christ, do not just speak and sing of Zion. Live, love, and share as Zion: those who strive to be visibly one in Christ, among whom there are no poor or oppressed.

As Christ’s body, lovingly and patiently bear the weight of criticism from those who hesitate to respond to the divine vision of human worth and equality in Christ. This burden and blessing is yours for divine purposes.

And, always remember, the way of suffering love that leads to the cross also leads to resurrection and everlasting life in Christ’s eternal community of oneness and peace.

Trust in this promise.

Amen.

Stephen M. Veazey
President of the Church
How do your choices have an impact on others? Read the following pairs of statements. Mark your choice. What are the pros and cons of each choice?

☐ Replace an old pair of hiking boots with a new pair, giving the old pair to someone in need, OR ☐ Replace an old pair of hiking boots with a new pair, giving the new pair to someone in need.

☐ Buy an inexpensive shirt from a large retail store, OR ☐ Buy a more expensive shirt from a local shirt maker’s family business.

☐ Throw away a disposable product, OR ☐ Recycle the disposable product.

Give other examples of choices that create justice and peace:

_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
Invite People to Christ
Abolish Poverty, End Suffering
Pursue Peace on Earth
Lesson 2

Live, Love, Share

Generously
Focus
God’s vision calls us to imitate God’s generosity.

Focus Scriptures

Objectives
The learners will...
• play a game to reveal their unique gifts.
• define generosity, true capacity, and tithing as spiritual practices.
• study parables that express God’s overwhelming generosity.
• create a plan to share, save, spend, their time, talent, and treasure.
• use the labyrinth to share from their true capacity.

Supplies
• Bible (NRSV)
• Community of Christ Sings (CCS)
• Newsprint, flip chart, or poster board
• Washable markers
• Self-adhesive notes, three colors
• Handout 2.1, words of counsel (from previous lesson)
• Handouts 2.1 and 2.2, one copy per student
• “With Every Act of Love” by Jason Gray available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Vqf9WRKYT5

Gather
Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson

The Best Game
As students gather, play The Best Game (adapted from “The Best Game,” www.greatgroupgames.com). Announce it as a game that will reveal unique and random talents anyone might have.

Divide the group into teams of about four people. Explain the rules: the teacher will announce a category for the group, such as “The Tallest” (from the list below). Each team selects one person they think could win the category of “The Tallest.” Now the teacher reads the rest of the description (that is, “The Tallest...Thumb”). The chosen person who best fits that category wins a point for his or her team. The team with the most points wins.

The Best Game
1. The Tallest...Thumb
2. The Fastest...Crab Walker
3. The Highest...Jumper
4. The Longest...Stare in a Staring Content
5. The Fastest...Alphabet Song Singer
6. The Smallest...Shoe Size
7. The Farthest...Length to Throw a Paper Airplane
8. The Largest...Bubble to Blow with Chewing Gum
9. The Strongest...Thumb for a Thumb War
10. The Longest...Hair
11. The Best...Coin Spinner
12. The Fastest...Paper Cup Stacker

If time allows, ask each group to come up with its own “Best” category.

Offer an opening prayer of thankfulness and anticipation for the journey ahead.

Engage
Invites exploration and interaction

In our first lesson, we talked about the divine vision that was brought to us in words of counsel from President-Prophet Stephen M. Veazey. We also talked about how spiritual practices, such as walking the labyrinth, can help us open to ourselves, to our sacred community, and to God’s divine will.

Today we explore: How can we share in Christ’s mission to our full capacity? What is needed to give the Mission Initiatives a greater impact on society? Ask someone to read the following phrase (see Handout 1.2 from the previous lesson):

Free the full capacity of Christ’s mission through generosity that imitates God’s generosity. Discover deep joy and life’s meaning by promoting divine purposes on Earth.

—words of counsel, 2013

Ask:
What is generosity? Record ideas on a flip chart as students share them aloud with the class.

The words of counsel encourage us to “imitate God’s generosity.” What do we know of God’s generosity? Jesus taught his followers about God’s generosity using parables.

Form three groups of students and assign the follow-
ing parables. Instruct groups to retell the parable in their own words, or act it out as a skit either as it is written or in a modern story form. Each group should also explain what Jesus was saying about God’s generosity. (You may write their insights on newsprint or a poster titled “God’s Generosity.”)

1. Luke 15:11–32 (parable of prodigal son)
2. Luke 14:16–24 (parable of the wedding feast)
3. Matthew 20:1–16 (parable of the landowner)

Can we imitate such generosity? Show the video “With Every Act of Love” by Jason Gray at www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Vqf9WRKYTs.

Point out the chorus phrase “Alive in us your light shines through, with every act of love, we bring the kingdom come.”

Ask students to give an example of an “act of love [that brought] the kingdom” they have experienced.

• How do you feel when you become inspired by something?
• Have you ever wanted to pour all your energy, your talent, your time, and even your money into something? What was it?

Have students turn to a partner and share something they feel strongly about, in which they could really invest their time, talent, and treasure. Afterwards, invite them to share with the entire group, if they wish.

Two Stories of True Capacity

Tell students two stories in your own words (or read these stories from the Bible): Mark 12:41–44 (the widow’s mite) and Luke 18:18–23 (the rich ruler).

Sometimes when we hear Jesus’ story of the poor widow, who gave all she had, or the rich ruler, whom Jesus challenged to sell all he had and give to the poor, we worry. Are we really expected to give everything we own? The words of counsel show us a way—to follow a basic discipleship principle called true capacity. Ask a reader to read aloud the following (see Handout 1.2 for the full text):

Remember, a basic discipleship principle is growing Christ’s mission through both local and world mission tithes according to true capacity.

—words of counsel, 2013

The word capacity by definition is the largest amount or number that can be held or contained. Capacity also means the mental, emotional, and physical ability to do something. Presiding Bishop Steve Jones defines true capacity this way: “We will give until we feel joy!” This reiterates the “crazy love” kind of giving.

Ask students: What is your definition of “true capacity”? Create a definition together, writing the students’ ideas on the flip chart.

Give each student a copy of Handout 2.1, Pillars of Light. Ask students to take turns reading sections of it aloud.

Apostle Mareva M. Arnaud Tchong defines generosity as “love in action.”

Discuss:
• How did Community of Christ show love in action to those in French Polynesia after a cyclone?
• Has someone shared his or her true capacity with you? Describe it.

Respond
Takes the learners from hearing to doing

Tithing as Spiritual Practice

In our first lesson we began talking about spiritual practices, such as prayer, meditation, and walking a labyrinth. The words of counsel define tithing as a spiritual practice, too.

Ask a student to read the following (see Handout 1.2 for the full text).

Tithing is a spiritual practice that demonstrates willingness to regularly offer every dimension of one’s life to God. When defined by faith, love, and hopeful planning, including resolving indebtedness, capacity to respond becomes much greater than initially assumed.

—words of counsel, 2013

To tithe means to give 10 percent. Words of counsel says that tithing includes “every dimension” of our life—10 percent of our treasure (money), but also our time and talent. (Write italicized words on a flip chart.)

With today’s urgent need for sustainability and survival, we might also consider reducing our impact by 10 percent. Read:

We are obsessed with managing paper currencies, but we must remember all of the other currencies we are blessed with. It is the work of the young to redefine language, suggesting maybe that tithing become reducing our fuel-powered energy usage by 10 percent a day.

—Anna Mullen, “Feeding Sheep, Generosity from a Young Adult’s Perspective,” Giving 16:24–25.

Distribute and have students fill out Handout 2.2. Tell students to think about tithing (giving 10 percent of their
time, talent, and treasure). Ask them to keep in mind the Mission Initiatives of Invite People to Christ; Abolish Poverty, End Suffering; and Pursue Peace on Earth.

Ask:

- What need is there in your congregation, neighborhood, or school in which you can invest your time, talent or treasure? What could make a difference in your sphere of influence right now?

Ask if anyone would like to suggest one idea about sharing 10 percent. Responses may be written on a flip chart under the appropriate heading—Time, Talent, Treasure.

It is difficult to estimate or even limit giving to 10 percent. Life is just not that tidy, but life allows us to be creative in our living and giving.

Ask:

- How could you make less of an impact on creation?
- What causes or projects are there to which you want to give more?

Something to consider: Without “crazy heart-wrapping” generosity, is it possible to abolish poverty, end suffering, invite others to Christ, and share peace?

Send

Explores how the lesson might be lived out

Sing “Let Your Heart Be Broken” CCS 353.

Give three colored self-adhesive notes to each student. Ask students to think about the choices they made for sharing 10 percent of their treasure, time, and talent, or perhaps reducing their use of time, talent, and treasure by 10 percent. Tell them to write an idea on each note, and walk the labyrinth again. They may wish to carry a pencil and write their ideas while walking. Place a basket or box in the center of the labyrinth to collect their tithing “gifts.”

Bless

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope

Offer a closing prayer of blessing and hope for us giving to our true capacity to the divine vision. Encourage youth to respond to others “with every act of love”!
Handout 2.1

Pillars of Light

By Mareva M. Arnaud Tchong, Council of Twelve Apostles

Adapted from “Called to Be Pillars of Light,” Herald, March 2014, 6–9

Naked, deserted, and desolate—the wake of Cyclone Oli reflected destruction. The southern islands of French Polynesia were affected most. There was not enough food for people, not enough milk for babies, and not enough blankets for warmth.

The storm destroyed fruit and vegetable plantations. The sea remained rough, so for a time there was no fishing. The only hope was in donations and products delivered by the government and the people of Polynesia.

One person said:

We were on the dock, waiting for the boat that came with basic necessities that would help us to continue, rebuild, and restore what was broken. We were waiting with hope and renewal. While the cargo was slowly approaching, what happiness we felt! There were tears in our eyes when we saw, on the cargo deck, hundreds of boxes stacked on each other, full of food and necessities for our children and seniors. On each box, it was written, “From Community of Christ.” Lord, thank you!

Generosity is love in action. It unites. It expresses the divine intent in living as a community. It acknowledges our interrelatedness. It means we feel responsible for one another, give and receive, honor the gifts of all persons, and respect the unique history, personality, and journey of each person.

When I returned home after the 2013 World Conference [where I was ordained as an apostle], my brothers and sisters in French Polynesia welcomed me in the traditional way of our customs with singing, shell leis, tears, hugs, and cheek kissing. Later, still according to our cultural traditions, I received a new name—“PouMarama,” which means “pillar of light.” I hold that name as a privilege and a challenge. We all are called to be humble pillars of light in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ that all might “come home to God’s grace and generosity.”
Handout 2.2

Sharing 10% of My Time, Talent, and Treasure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Time</th>
<th>My Talent</th>
<th>My Treasure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I share 10% of my time...</td>
<td>I share 10% of my talent...</td>
<td>I share 10% of my treasure...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(doing what?)</td>
<td>(doing what?)</td>
<td>(doing what?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_________________________</td>
<td>_______________________</td>
<td>________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I decrease 10% of time that I use...</td>
<td>If I decrease 10% of my talent that I use...</td>
<td>If I decrease 10% of the treasure I use...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(doing what?)</td>
<td>(doing what?)</td>
<td>(doing what?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_________________________</td>
<td>_______________________</td>
<td>________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can increase my capacity to...</td>
<td>I can increase my capacity to...</td>
<td>I can increase my capacity to...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_________________________</td>
<td>_______________________</td>
<td>________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My true capacity is:

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________
Lesson 3

Live, Love, Share
As One
Focus
God’s divine vision calls us to oneness and equality in Christ.

Focus Scriptures

Objectives
The learners will...
• choose from a menu of unique foods to understand some of the challenges of diversity.
• read Apostle Arthur E. Smith’s challenge with the diversity of food in various cultures.
• draw circles describing communities to which they belong, and explain the differences in those communities.
• read stories of early Christian leaders who also struggled with diversity expressed in food culture differences.
• explore ideas about how our differences should not divide us.
• walk the labyrinth and contemplate how they would respond to differences they encounter.

Supplies
• Bible (NRSV)
• Doctrine and Covenants including Section 164
• Community of Christ Sings (CCS)
• Newsprint, flip chart, or poster board
• Washable markers
• Handout 1.2 (from previous lesson)
• Handouts 3.1 and 3.2, one copy per student

Gather
Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson

As students gather, ask them to sit at tables as if someone were serving them in a restaurant.

Distribute Handout 3.1, the Global Café menu. Ask students to review the menu as if ordering a meal. After a few minutes, discuss:
• What is your first impression of the cuisine on the menu?
• What food would you choose?
• What food would be difficult for you to eat? Could you eat that food if your host would be hurt or embarrassed if you didn’t eat it?
• What food from your country might people from other countries consider to be “disgusting” (literally means unpalatable)?

Offer an opening prayer of thankfulness and expectation for the journey ahead.

Engage
Invites exploration and interaction

How Diverse Are We?
Our menu shows just one aspect of our diversity. These menu items were shared by Apostle Arthur E. Smith, who has been a minister in Central and South America, the Caribbean, and French Polynesia.

Distribute Handout 3.2, “One and Equal in Christ,” and ask students to take turns reading Apostle Art Smith’s story. Discuss after reading:
• What did Apostle Smith do when his host offered the fish? What would you have done in this situation?
• Have you had any similar experiences?

To show students the diversity in their communities, tell them to draw a circle and write their name in it. Draw another circle around the first, and write in their family’s name. Another circle around that, and write what bigger community they belong to, perhaps a neighborhood, or their local congregation. Around that, a bigger circle, including their city, county, state, or province. Go as far as you have time.

Now have students go back and write who else belongs in those circles, especially focusing on diversity of people.

Discuss:
• In what ways do we differ from one another?

Record thoughts on a flip chart as students share them aloud with the class. (Differences can include traditions, customs, values, ethics, world views, dietary practices, professions, hobbies, sports, fashion, and more.)

Diversity and the Church
Community of Christ is an international church, which has a presence in approximately 60 countries. These countries represent many cultures, tribes, languages, and more—all the ways we differ from one another. What a challenge and blessing to be a church of such great diversity!

In his article, “One and Equal in Christ,” Apostle
Smith said, “It could be that dealing with the diversity of the church is the biggest challenge of our time.” It was also a big challenge for the first Christians.

Form small groups of students (3–4 in a group) to look up and read one of these scripture passages. If your group is larger, give more than one group each scripture. Have each group retell the scripture message in their own words, create a modern version, or act it out as a skit. Groups should also tell the meaning of their scripture.

- Acts 10:9–16 and 27–48
- Galatians 3:27–29

God’s vision revealed in these messages to Peter and Paul did not mean that our diversity should be erased but that what is unique about each of us should no longer divide us from other people. God is still giving us this message today.

Ask a student to read the next paragraphs in the words of counsel (Handout 1.2):

More fully accept and embody your oneness and equality in Jesus Christ, who dwells in oneness with God.

Through its wonderful complexity, creation produces both diversity and order. Be not consumed with concern about variety in human types and characteristics as you see them. Be passionately concerned about how God is revealing divine nature through sacred communities of love, oneness, and equality that embody God’s revelation in Jesus Christ.

Oneness and equality in Christ do not mean conformity. They mean unity in diversity and relating in Christ-like love to the circumstances of others as if they were one’s own. They also mean full opportunity for people to experience human worth and related rights, including expressing God-given giftedness through the church community.

Jesus also spoke about oneness and equality when he said,

I ask...that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

—John 17:20–21 NRSV

Ask students to turn to a partner and tell about someone who is different from them, whom they feel “one” with, despite the differences between them. Have them consider these questions:

- Do others ever wonder how you are friends? Does that bother you? Why or why not?

Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing

Walk the labyrinth and engage in a version of the spiritual practice Apostle Art Smith calls mindful eating.

Cut the menu (Handout 3.1) into meal cards along the dotted lines. Spread the meal cards along the labyrinth path. Start students at different places along the labyrinth, one by each card. Encourage them to be mindful as they are presented with the unique food offerings from another culture. Ask them to read the food choice on each card and write yes if they would try it to show an acceptance of another’s differences. Continue until students have read and responded to all cards. They should then continue walking the labyrinth until they arrive at the beginning.

After all have completed the walk, discuss any thoughts or feelings they experienced on the way.

Share with students other ways to engage in the spiritual practice of mindful eating (see sidebar).

Ways to Practice Mindful Eating

Go to a restaurant that serves ethnic or cultural food you’re not familiar with. Order something the waiter or restaurant owner says people of your background usually don’t ask for and might even struggle to eat.

When the food arrives at your table, give thanks to God. Remember in prayer the people who eat this food regularly. Pray for oneness and equality in Christ.

Another possibility: browse the Internet or visit a library to learn about unusual foods eaten around the world. Look at pictures and read descriptions. Prayerfully remember the people who regularly eat these foods. Pray for oneness and equality in Christ.

Send

Explores how the lesson might be lived out

The words of counsel speak of oneness and equality. It does not mean that our rich diversity needs to be blended, but rather that we love and accept all amid our differences.
We are counseled not to eliminate our diversity, but to find new ways of seeing that diversity so our differences no longer divide us.


Find a quiet space to pray and listen for guidance. Think about someone you can welcome and call “friend,” despite the differences between you. Use the spiritual practice of hospitality, and invite this person to join you in a project, event, or meal. Reflect on what you would both enjoy doing together. (This exercise is for reflection rather than discussion.)

Bless
Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope

At a local garden, a wide variety of plants grew very close together. The gardener explained, “Diversity is stability in a garden. It helps the garden last longer and grow stronger.”

Sing “Senzeni Na” CCS 200

Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the blessings of diversity.
Our delicious cuisine comes from French Polynesia, Philippines, and Peru.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole Fish</th>
<th>Balut</th>
<th>Fafaru</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French Polynesia</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>French Polynesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This fish is cooked whole and cut in half, each half having part of the head and an eyeball. The head has juicy, flavorful flesh and delicious eyeballs.</td>
<td>A partly developed duck egg that is boiled and eaten in the shell.</td>
<td>Raw fish covered with a sauce made of shrimp heads, legs, and tails in seawater and mixed with coconut milk to make a yogurt.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fried Guinea Pig</th>
<th>Tocosh</th>
<th>Ceviche</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>Peru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooked whole and deep fat fried or grilled, fried guinea pig is eaten literally from head to toe. Many people raise their own guinea pigs to eat.</td>
<td>A pudding-like dessert with chunks of potatoes inside. Potatoes are left in pits beside streams that flow down the mountains until they are one or two years old. Then they are cooked with sugar and water.</td>
<td>A salad made of raw fish, onion, seasonings, and lime juice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Photos: Balut © Seanjeeves | Dreamstime.com, others Art Smith
I had traveled by car from my home in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, to the Toronto airport, by air to Los Angeles, California, and then on to Papeete, Tahiti, French Polynesia. From there we used a national air carrier to fly to the island of Manihi, where we boarded a boat for the island of Ahe.

I was on the other side of the world, but I was still with brothers and sisters in Christ, members of my church. It wasn’t long until I found myself sitting at a table, right on the beach, preparing to share a meal. Polynesians sitting with me watched as I gazed at the impressive spread of food. One dish seemed to stare up at me.

Until then, in my experience, fish usually was bought frozen and preferably was found on my table covered in breading. But on our seaside table, fish was served that had been cooked whole and cut in half. It did, indeed, seem to look at me.

I remember nervously stalling with a question for my new friends. “Which half is better, the head half or the tail half?” The question presented an unintended challenge to my Tahitian brothers and sisters.

Tahitians are masters of hospitality, so the host is practically obligated to offer a guest the head half, clearly, from a Tahitian perspective, the best part. The head, after all, includes the juicy, flavorful flesh around the skull and the succulent eyeballs. But my host had experience with North American guests. He knew many of us typically avoided eating anywhere near the skull, and if he offered this piece to me, the best part would go to waste.

Food has the power to bring us together, but it also can divide us. Faced with the idea of sucking on the eye of a fish, my feelings of unity with my Tahitian brothers and sisters faded fast. The shared meal typically draws us together and reinforces our sense of being one and equal in Christ. But sometimes I wonder how people would react if unexpectedly and suddenly our potluck tables were transformed to represent the diversity of foods from cultures represented in our international church.

Stand in the food line in the Auditorium during a World Conference and watch delegates from around the world trying to find something to eat. It turns out that it’s not just tocos that has the power to turn a stomach inside out. It all depends on your perspective.

It could be that dealing with the diversity of the church is the biggest challenge of our time.
Lesson 4

Live, Love, Share
Our Calling
Focus
God graciously gives people gifts and opportunities to do good and to share in God’s purposes.

Focus Scriptures
John 4:39; Acts 8:3, 9:3–8, 9:15; Doctrine and Covenants 119:8b

Objectives
The learners will...
• identify the gifts and talents of fellow classmates and reflect on the gifts classmates see in themselves.
• engage in the stories of Saul and the Samaritan woman to understand the Enduring Principle, All Are Called, and the words of counsel, “God calls whoever God calls.”
• identify ways to share their gifts in various venues: social media, community, and church events.
• engage in spiritual practice by creating a finger labyrinth to help reflect on their own gifts and calling.

Supplies
• Bible (NRSV)
• Doctrine and Covenants
• Community of Christ Sings (CCS)
• Plain paper (letter-size/A4), tape
• Mailing labels—each student should have enough for the total number of class members
• Newsprint, flip chart, or poster board
• Washable markers
• For finger labyrinth (per student): shoebox, small pizza box, or square box lid, photocopy of labyrinth (page 36) or permanent marker to draw one, puffy tube paint or glitter glue, white glue, colored or natural fine sand
• Handout 1.2 (from previous lesson)
• Handout 4.1, one copy per student

Gather
Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
As students gather, give each a set of blank mailing or other self-sticking labels. Give students enough labels so they have one for each of the other students in class. On each label, they are to write a classmate’s name along with one gift, trait, or talent they see in that classmate (one for each person in the class).

As they write, tape a sheet of paper (letter/A4) titled “I Am Called” onto the back of each student.
(Optional: Take a portrait-style photo of each student, print it, and add it to his or her “I Am Called” paper.)
When all students are finished writing their labels, invite them to circulate, sticking their labels onto others’ “I Am Called” sheets. When everyone has finished, have students remove their sheets, sit, and quietly read the comments shared by their classmates.
Discuss:
• How did you feel about identifying the gifts of others?
• How did you feel when you read what others see as your gifts?
• What impressions of others surprised you? Do you see that quality in yourself?
• What have you felt was your gift? How is that reflected in the gifts others see in you?
Offer an opening prayer of thankfulness and expectation for the journey ahead.

Engage
Invites exploration and interaction

Who Is Called?
Discuss:
• Based on the gifts and qualities identified during the Gather activity, think about your gifts. Tell how you express them.
• How do you feel your gifts fit with a call to share ministry?

As Community of Christ, we have always understood that “All Are Called” according to their gifts (Doctrine and Covenants 119:8b). It is an Enduring Principle:
God graciously gives people gifts and opportunities to do good and share in God’s purposes. Jesus Christ invites people to follow him by becoming disciples who share his life and ministry. We respond faithfully, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to our best understanding of God’s call.

Distribute Handout 4.1, God Calls. Organize students into two groups. Assign each group to read one of the stories from the handout. Have each group retell the story in their own words, create a modern version, or perform a skit. Groups should also tell the meaning of each scripture story. Ask:
• Does it seem odd that people such as Saul, the Samaritan woman, and the others were called to serve God? Why or why not?
Do you ever feel that God cannot use you because of something you did? Do these stories give you hope and new insight into the nature of God’s call for you? (Allow students to discuss, if they are comfortable.)

People do not earn callings based on what they do. God has created us with gifts and traits and talents that bring joy to us and to our community as we share with others. It is our choice to express and develop those gifts and use our gifts for God’s purposes. Apostle Barbara Carter wrote:

It is only when we see with God’s eyes that we can recognize calling in others. We see the Holy Spirit moving in and through individuals, shaping and preparing them through discipleship to serve in various aspects of the faith community and our world.


**Sharing Your Gifts**

Sharing our gifts should not happen only inside the church walls. Our gifts should be shared with all of God’s creation, in every place we are. Let’s think about how we can share our gifts in some of those places.

Divide the class into four groups or, if a small class, have the students work on this project all together. Give each group a sheet of newsprint or poster board and colorful markers. Assign each group one of the following topics and invite them to create a descriptive poster. (Students may suggest other topics if they wish.) Tell them to save some space for other students to write on during the follow-up activity.

1. Socially-networked media
2. Event where many are gathered: sporting event, movie theater, concert, school dance
3. Community event: a pet rescue, soup kitchen, community clean-up, or other
4. Congregational worship, vacation church school, peace club, or other
5. Group, such as family, congregation, school, sports team, drama club, or other organized group

Once the posters are made, have students tape them to the walls. Then invite all students to circulate and write how they can share their gifts or talents in each of those “places.” Discuss their ideas and answers with the whole group.

**Priesthood and Blessing**

The words of counsel speak specifically about God’s call for some to serve in priesthood ministry. Ask a student to read aloud the following (see Handout 1.2 for the full text).

Regarding priesthood, God calls whomever God calls from among committed disciples, according to their gifts, to serve and reach all humankind.

...offer the sacrament of evangelist blessing not only to individuals and congregations, but to families, households, and groups of people seeking spiritual guidance to more completely give themselves to Christ’s mission.

—words of counsel, 2013

Priesthood is a special way to share giftedness. Priesthood members are called to tasks that serve the faith community, individuals, and the world, and they specifically help people align their behavior and relationships for the well-being of the church community and the world.

In particular, the words of counsel state that the Order of Evangelists should “concentrate on spiritually forming communities of disciples and seekers that live deeply and generously in Christ’s Spirit.” One way to help is to offer the sacrament of evangelist blessing “not only to individuals and congregations, but to families, households, ...etc.”

At the 2014 International Youth Forum (IYF) in the USA, Kris Judd offered an evangelist blessing for the youth and leaders present. (If you wish to show the video, go to [www.youtube.com/watch?v=UO_62hlhjag](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UO_62hlhjag) (4.32 minutes).

- Have you received an evangelist blessing? Do you wish to tell about it? If this isn’t likely with your group, choose one of these ways to understand it: (1) invite someone who has had an evangelist blessing to share about it, (2) ask an evangelist to share with the group, or (3) watch the video “Journey of a Blessing” by Bryce Veazey about one young man’s journey for an evangelist blessing at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBNbNVHVNE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBNbNVHVNE).
- How do you think you could be blessed by receiving an evangelist blessing?
- How do you think an evangelist blessing would bless families, households, and groups of people seeking spiritual guidance? What group in your life can you think of that might especially benefit from this blessing?
Respond
Takes the learners from hearing to doing

Read what Apostle Barbara Carter has said about spiritual practices:

Spiritual practices are at the foundation of healthy relationships.... When we strengthen our relationship with God daily, we prepare ourselves to engage with people. The more we are grounded in God’s love..., the more we are called and strengthened to be in relationship with the world around us.

Today, through our relationships in this class, we identified gifts and callings of each other. Apostle Carter encourages us to strengthen our relationship with the Divine through spiritual practices. Such a spiritual foundation will strengthen our relationships with one another. We’ve walked the labyrinth several times in this class. Today we’ll create personal labyrinths to use anytime to commune with the Divine and strengthen our spiritual foundations.

Provide students with the supplies to create a finger labyrinth. Show them how to make one, following the instructions below. Encourage them to use this labyrinth when they cannot walk a larger one, but to use the same practices of contemplation, wonder, and openness when doing so.

Sand Tray Finger Labyrinth

Glue the photocopy of the labyrinth to the inside bottom of the box lid. Make sure all corners and edges are glued down. Trace the lines of the labyrinth using the puffy tube paint or glitter glue, thick enough so that when it dries it will create the edges of the labyrinth path.

When the paint is dry, pour a little fine sand into the box lid. Shake it around to spread it evenly. Now you can trace the path of the labyrinth through the sand with your finger, guided by the paint lines.

**Option:** While the puffy tube paint is still wet, sprinkle fine sand over it and let dry. This will create a sand-lined path. When this is completely dry, pour a different color of fine sand into the box. This sand-on-sand pattern is very pleasant, and just as easy to trace the path of the labyrinth with your finger!

**Note:** Box lids can be any size. If students want to create a smaller labyrinth, make photocopies of (or have them draw) labyrinths to fit inside their boxes.

Supplies
- Shoebox, small pizza box, or square box lid
- Photocopy of labyrinth (page 36) or permanent marker to draw one
- Puffy tube paint or glitter glue
- Glue
- Colored or uncolored fine sand
Other ideas for finger labyrinths:

- Use kitchen bisque tiles from a home improvement store or flat rocks; draw a labyrinth using permanent markers.
- Woodburn a labyrinth pattern onto a wooden box lid or wooden plaque, or use leather crafting tools to make one on a piece of leather.
- Glue a variety of seeds in a labyrinth pattern onto a wooden board or sturdy homemade paper.

Send

Explores how the lesson might be lived out

Apostle Carter said, “Blessing occurs as we intentionally develop relationships with others and God.” Think about a relationship in which you feel especially blessed. Reach out to that person in the next few days, sharing your giftedness and an appreciation for your relationship. (Perhaps you would like to make that person a finger labyrinth, or other gift to help them grow spiritually!)

Bless

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope

Offer a blessing of affirmation of God’s love for the students, and God’s empowerment to share their gifts and talents in sacred community.

Sing “Christ’s Word to Us” CCS 632.
Finger Labyrinth Pattern
Saul

Saul...was an educated Roman and a Pharisee. He is known for relentlessly persecuting Christians in Jerusalem after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

The scriptures tell us Saul would enter a house, drag out the women and men, and send them to prison (Acts 8:3). Saul traveled extensively, attacking Christians and using his authority and power to influence others to do the same.

And then one day, while traveling to Damascus to send many believers in Jesus to prison, an experience altered his life. He met the Risen Christ and was called (Acts 9:3–8).

From that time forward, Saul, who became Paul (Acts 13:9), began proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God. He became a determined witness of the resurrection of Jesus and the new life found through believing in the Christ.

Based on Saul’s history and actions, no one could have predicted that Paul one day would be a foundational witness to Christ’s mission.

Paul was trying to respond faithfully to what he thought was God’s call when God showed him a new way. In other situations, God calls people who are immersed in complicated situations and challenges them to change their lives.

Samaritan Woman at the Well

Consider the Samaritan woman who encountered Jesus at the well. First, Jesus talked to her, a woman and a Samaritan, which just wasn’t done. Jews and Samaritans were bitter enemies; men didn’t talk to women alone; the list goes on. He also revealed to her that she had no husband, but previously had five husbands and was not married to the one she was with. Some scholars insist that most likely after the woman’s first husband died, she became the “wife” of her husband’s brother, uncle, cousin, etc. as required by Jewish law.

Nevertheless, she was living outside the moral laws understood by her community, but she accepted a holy understanding of who Jesus was and the forgiveness and new life offered to her. She understood this was not for her alone, but was for all humanity.

So she returned to her village and told everyone she saw about her time with Jesus. Amazingly, they listened. Many became disciples of Jesus because of her witness (John 4:39).
Lesson 5

Live, Love, Share
Liberating Disruption
Focus

The message of Jesus liberates those who are suffering, even if it disrupts the status quo.

Focus Scriptures

Mark 2:1–12; Mark 10:46–52; Luke 8:1, 40–55; Doctrine and Covenants 163:3b, 4a, 10a–b

Additional scriptures describing God, Jesus Christ, and Holy Spirit

Objectives
The learners will...

• discover that Emmanuel means God with us.
• understand that sometimes interruptions or unwelcome people can provide opportunities to care for others.
• identify where we need to raise our voices to liberate.
• engage in the spiritual practice of journal writing after creating their own journals.

Supplies

• Bible (NRSV)
• Doctrine and Covenants including Section 163
• Community of Christ Sings (CCS)
• Computer, projector, and Internet access, if available
• Newsprint, flip chart, or poster board
• Washable markers, crayons, colored pencils, art supplies for decorating journals
• 15 sheets of paper plus one sheet of paper for each student for personal journals (letter/A4 or for larger journals, tabloid/11 x 17 in/28 x 43 cm)
• Handouts 1.2 (from previous lesson), 5.1, and 5.2 (pages 47–48), one copy per student.
• Brian McLaren video “Jesus and the Kingdom” http://vimeo.com/48124094
• “Peace through All People” at www.youtube.com/watch?v=lBQ-KsGo_BI

Gather

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson

Tape 15 sheets of paper on the walls around the room. Write one of the following scripture references at the top of each paper (allowing room to write below). As students gather, ask them to go to one of the papers, look up the scripture reference on it, and write the metaphor that describes God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit. Provide students with Bibles and markers.

God

1. Mark 14:36 (Abba, intimate term for God as father)
2. Isaiah 27:11 (creator)
4. Hebrews 13:20 (God of peace)

Jesus Christ

1. John 6:35 (bread of life)
2. 1 Peter 2:6 (cornerstone)
3. 1 Timothy 2:5 (mediator)
4. 1 Peter 2:25 (shepherd)
5. Philippians 2:7 (servant)

Holy Spirit

1. John 14:16 (counselor)
2. Romans 8:26 (helper)
3. John 14:17 (spirit of truth)
4. Isaiah 11:2 (spirit of wisdom)
5. Romans 8:26–27 (Spirit who intercedes for us)

When students have finished writing the metaphors, read each aloud, and then ask:

• Which metaphor describes the way you think of God? Of Jesus Christ? The Holy Spirit?
• What other metaphors would you use to describe Jesus Christ?

How we talk about God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit is the way we interact with and sense our relationship with God. In Mark 1.3, Jesus is described as Emmanuel, meaning God with us. Today we’ll focus on the quality of God as being with us in our pursuit of peace and shalom for all creation.

Offer an opening prayer of thankfulness and anticipation for the journey ahead.

Engage

Invites exploration and interaction

What Kind of God?

Show the Brian McLaren video “Jesus and the Kingdom.”

Ask:

While watching this video, was there an “Aha!” mo-
ment for you, something you hadn’t thought of before? (You may want to show it again and have students watch and listen closely for new ideas and perceptions of the kingdom.)

Brian McLaren talks about the kingdom as “that which can be, here on Earth.” His message was that when we use our money, voice, energy, and vote on behalf of others, we’re acting as a citizen of God’s kingdom. In that way, he says, God can be a liberating and disturbing message for people today. Why?

Divide the group into three teams, and give each team one of these scripture references to explore:

- Luke 8:1, 40–55
- Mark 10:46–52
- Mark 2:1–12

Invite groups to retell their scripture story to the class, act it out as a skit, or interpret it as a modern-day story. Ask:

- What did these three stories have in common?
  Stress that, besides healing in each story, Jesus was on his way somewhere else, or busy doing something else, when he was interrupted by someone’s need.

Apostle Rick Maupin writes:

In each of these stories Jesus’ attention was diverted in ways that some saw as interruptions. Those cries to be touched, healed, and loved did not fit neatly into his schedule. It meant the agenda, the “more important work” of the day, would have to be modified. However, Jesus showed that suffering love does not see interruptions, but opportunities, to invite others to liberation and peace.


Jesus truly represented “God with us,” a loving being who was present, who was “fully with” the people around him.

**Suffering Love, “Fully With”**

Ask a student to read from Doctrine and Covenants 163:3b:

_Courageously challenge cultural, political, and religious trends that are contrary to the reconciling and restoring purposes of God._

Ask this question and make notes on a flip chart of students’ responses:

- What cultural, political, or religious trends are contrary to God’s purposes? In what areas have people had to fight for justice, equal rights, or other humanitarian issues? Think about people who are struggling or suffering because of unjust laws or dangerous situations in their towns or country.

These issues may be bigger than we can comprehend or tackle on our own, but this is exactly the “liberating disruption” we are challenged to meet. By being like Christ—a friend, leader, healer, or helper—we can respond to needs and find peaceful solutions.

Distribute Handout 5.1, Liberating Love. Ask students to take turns reading aloud. Afterwards, discuss:

- What did you think about when you heard the paralyzed woman’s story?
- Have you ever been “fully with” other persons, bearing their burdens, hearing their story, struggling with their illness, poverty, marginalization, etc.? Describe why you did it, and how that experience affected you and them.
- Is there someone who would benefit from you being “fully with”? Who?
- How do these stories remind you of the scripture stories of Jesus responding to people in need?

Ask a student to read the following phrases from the words of counsel presented at the 2013 World Conference (Handout 1.2):

_Oneness and equality...mean full opportunity for people to experience human worth and related rights, including expressing God-given giftedness through the church community._

_And, always remember, the way of suffering love that leads to the cross also leads to resurrection and everlasting life in Christ’s eternal community of oneness and peace. Trust in this promise._

- What does the phrase “suffering love” mean to you? Do you love someone who is difficult in some way to love, to be with, or to help? Describe that relationship, if you wish.

**Respond**

_Takes the learners from hearing to doing_

A common spiritual practice is writing in a journal—writing about events, thoughts, perceptions, new ideas, worries and fears, interactions with others.

_Note:_ You may wish to engage in this activity after the Send and Bless times.
Give students a sheet of paper and a copy of Handout 5.2 that shows how to fold it. Provide watercolor paint, ink, colored pencils, crayons, or other art supplies for students to design and create a cover. For journal design ideas, go to http://danielleflanders.blogspot.com/2014/02/design-team-tips.html.

Optional: Provide a way for students to print out selfies and tape the photos inside their journal.

Encourage students to take this journal with them when they walk the labyrinth today, or as they sit in a favorite reflective place, and answer these questions (write them on the flip chart so students may copy them into their journals):

- When have I felt God’s radical “fully-with” love in my life?
- When have I shared that kind of suffering love with another?
- On what issue(s) have I felt compelled to take a stand for another?

Remind students to bring journals back to class, or collect them for distribution the next day.

Send
 explores how the lesson might be lived out

Play the video “A Defining Moment.” This is President Veazey’s call to the church in 2009. It affirms to the students that they are called, that God is awaiting their response, and that they will have God with them (Emmanuel) for the way forward.

Sing “Peace Salaam Shalom” CCS 310. If possible, use the video “Peace through All People.”

Bless
 time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope

Offer a blessing of affirmation that each will feel God’s liberating, “fully-with” love, and will share that liberating love with others. Read as a blessing:

God yearns to draw you close so that wounds may be healed, emptiness filled, and hope strengthened.

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:10a
Dominican Republic: A 60-year-old woman had been paralyzed since she was 17. The woman greatly wanted to be baptized, but there was concern about a full immersion with her condition. After much planning the baptism took place in a nearby river.

Following the baptism the woman did not want to leave the water. When asked why, she stated that this was the first time since she was 17 that she had been able to be bathed head to foot.

The woman views the day of her baptism as a point of liberation—liberation that followed acts of vulnerability by this sister and the ministry team.

Democratic Republic of Congo: It was a typical hot Sunday morning...with about 200 people attending. I had been asked to bring the morning Communion message, and Apostle Bunda Chibwe was interpreting into French. Brother Chibwe and I had moved into a good speaker-interpreter pace, and I was feeling a bit confident in my sermon.

In the middle of my sermon I noticed a man standing in the back corner. I paid little attention to him until he began walking down the aisle toward the front. I continued working “my agenda,” but the man was becoming a distraction to me. He was beginning to annoy me because he was distracting the congregation. Only a few feet away, he fell to the floor.

I am not proud to admit it, but as we knelt and prayed for the man, I was more focused on how I would regain the attention of this congregation than I was on the prayer. Later that day I discovered this man had been wrongly accused of a crime. As a result, he had endured much pain. This was his first participation in church since the accusation.

He said that after hearing the scripture about the woman touching Jesus’ garment and words about releasing pain and fear, the Spirit had moved him. What I interpreted as an interruption was the beginning of this man’s journey to liberation and wholeness.
Handout 5.2

Personal Journal

This makes a very small book. For larger books, start with a large sheet of paper (11 x 17 in/28 x 43 cm).


1. Start with a sheet of paper.

2. Fold in half shortwise.

3. Fold back one edge to the middle fold.

4. Fold back the other edge to the middle fold.

5. After unfolding the sheet, fold longwise.

6. Refold shortwise, then use scissors to cut along the line marked here in bold. Cut only along this line, but through the two layers of the folded paper.

7. Refold longwise. Holding each end, push to the middle to open up where you made the cut.

8. Push all the way in.

9. Fold the left edge over to create the cover. Now it is a book!
Focus
We are not only to speak and sing of Zion, but to live, love, and share with all. Now is the time to make it happen!

Objectives
The learners will...
• reflect on yesterday’s experience by answering questions in their journal.
• identify how learning a better way to work as community can diminish violence and poverty.
• define some qualities or traits of Zion.
• identify what spiritual practices they enjoyed and which ones they will continue practicing.
• create a closing message in art to represent what was learned and experienced in the lessons.

Supplies
• Bible (NRSV)
• Doctrine and Covenants
• Community of Christ Sings (CCS)
• Computer, projector, and Internet access, if available
• Newsprint, flip chart, or poster board
• Washable markers
• For closing activity: colorful construction paper, (or an unrolled sheet of newsprint), paper plates of finger paint (one color in each paper plate), markers, paper towels, and water to rinse hands (or a sink nearby)
• Handouts 1.2 (from previous lesson), 6.1, and 6.2 (pages 47–48), one copy per student.
• Student journals created in lesson 5
• “Do Something” by Matthew West at www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_RjnDJG0JX8.

Engage
Invites exploration and interaction
Divide students into two baseball teams. Ask each team to choose a manager for its team. They might also enjoy choosing a team name. Challenge each team to develop new rules that would ensure they would win most or all baseball games. (For instance, unlimited outs, no penalties, no strikes, etc.) Give each team a sheet of newsprint on which to write their new rules. When both teams are ready, have them tape their rules on the wall next to the other. Ask the managers to explain their rules.
Then ask:
• What are the benefits of each team’s rules?
• How would Team A’s rules have an impact on Team B? And conversely?
• Would these two teams be able to play baseball with these rules? Why or why not?
• What could result from teams trying to enforce their own rules?

Invite any students to share their real experience of playing games where the rules were not fair, not agreed to by all players, or other similar circumstances. What was that like?

While this activity may seem ridiculous, it could happen. In fact, it did happen and the results were very destructive.

Distribute Handout 6.1, The Double Play. Invite students to take turns reading aloud. Discuss:
We can see that greed and power can quickly disrupt a community, causing suffering, intolerance, and even danger. Yet creative solutions to resolve problems provide a foundation for creating authentic community.

Divide students into three or four groups. Give each group a sheet of newsprint and markers. Challenge each group to make a list of the characteristics that Zion, a community of shalom, ought to have.

After several moments, bring all sheets of newsprint together, tape next to each other at the front of the class area, and compare. What qualities did all groups choose? What are unique ideas that only one or a few groups identified? Discuss.
Discuss:

- Which quality is most important to you?
- When have you been in community and felt that it was “zionic”?

Ask a student to read the following phrase from Handout 1.2:

Beloved Community of Christ, do not just speak and sing of Zion. Live, love, and share as Zion: those who strive to be visibly one in Christ, among whom there are no poor or oppressed.

Discuss:

- When have you been in community and felt that it was “zionic”?

Ask a student to read the following phrase from Handout 1.2:

Beloved Community of Christ, do not just speak and sing of Zion. Live, love, and share as Zion: those who strive to be visibly one in Christ, among whom there are no poor or oppressed.

Distribute Handout 6.2, Onward! Ask students to take turns reading aloud in class. After reading, discuss:

- What was Apostle Stassi Cramm’s main message?
- Some people believe the best way to learn a language is to “jump into” the culture. How could building Zion be like that?

Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing

Apostle Stassi Cramm said this about our spiritual condition, which, in part, is created through spiritual practices:

“We need to tend to our spiritual condition. We’ve been told our ability to create zionic conditions in our family, with neighbors, at our workplace, and in interactions with others are dependent on our spiritual condition. If our cup is filled, we are more likely to be the hands, feet, and voice of Jesus in the way we live, love, and share.”


- As you have engaged in these lessons, which spiritual practices have you enjoyed most?
- Which practices seem to resonate or fit best with your spiritual senses, or “fill your cup”?
- How will you include your favorite spiritual practices at home?
- What is your plan to continue to practice them, and perhaps share them with others?

Note: Students may wish to learn more practices found at www.CofChrist.org/spiritual-formation, and record some of their experiences in their journals.

Send

Explores how the lesson might be lived out

How Will You Live, Love, Share?

Show the video “Do Something” by Matthew West.

Invite students to share a message they’ve felt, learned, or thought of during these lessons. Provide colorful construction paper, (or an unrolled sheet of newsprint), paper plates of finger paint (one color in each paper plate), markers, paper towels, and water to rinse hands. Students are to dip a hand in finger paint, make a handprint, and share a message of “Live, Love, Share.” The messages may be delivered around the building or campground, or at a closing worship or other event.

Note: You may wish to do this activity after the Bless activity. Students may also need to take apart the labyrinth that was created for class. Plan a time to do this.

Bless

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope

We end our class with the Mission Prayer, just as we did at the end of lesson 1. Ask students to repeat the prayer after you, breaking it into phrases:

God, where will your Spirit lead today? (students repeat)

Help me be fully awake (students repeat)
and ready to respond. (students repeat)

Grant me courage to risk something new (students repeat)
and become a blessing of your love and peace. (students repeat)

Amen. (students repeat)

Close by singing one or both of the following hymns: “Living Stones” CCS 279, “Lord, Prepare Me” CCS 280.
Baseball is the official national sport of Nicaragua. For poor children, it’s common to see kids playing baseball with sticks and rocks. For adults, it’s more serious business.

When the men in Llanito and surrounding communities first began playing, two sole leaders of the 14-team group had complete control, leaving little room for opinions and input from the players. Also, pricey annual fees kept many from participating. Naturally, the players became frustrated and those frustrations soon turned into aggression.

It became common for fights to break out between teams in the community sometimes involving the police. It didn’t stop with the players. Eventually it brought tension to the entire region, and family and friends were afraid to attend games.

Carlos, a local resident, has been playing baseball on the Llanito team for years. He endured what became incessant violence from the other players and struggled financially to maintain his membership. But [mostly], he was afraid for the life of his son. He would do anything to ensure his son’s safety.

So when a member of the Outreach International field staff came to Llanito, Carlos observed something he thought might just bring the league out of the depths of turmoil. Outreach International has worked in Nicaragua for years to help people learn problem-solving, community planning, and prioritizing of needs.

Families in the Llanito community opened up and strategized new ways to improve their living conditions together: ways to fix their roads, find clean water, and feed their malnourished children. They worked hard and looked to one another for support.

Carlos was confident that if they could just use the same approach for the baseball league, they might have a solution. So, after talking with other players of the team, they agreed to start their own fundraisers for league fees. Strategizing as a team...they started to see results. And the more they worked together, the better results they saw.

Other teams in the region quickly caught on to this approach and it spread like wildfire. Soon, several teams began working together to fundraise. The community and its camaraderie became more important than the sport, and the tension slowly faded.

“We all became involved, with one mindset,” said Carlos.

Today, the gang-like fighting has come to an end. The teams are cooperating so well they are even able to intermix players from teams all over the region.

“I am proud of this team,” said Carlos. “We’re successful, and we’ll continue to share this approach with future generations.”
Throughout our journey as a people, we have received many “words” on how we can help Zion happen: tend to our spiritual condition; have courage; witness; heed the call; create pathways for peace in sacred communities of generosity, justice, and peacefulness; hold to God’s covenant of peace; visibly be one in Christ; and more.

Words are funny things. They often mean different things to different people. For instance:

Learning a new language has underscored how complicated communicating with words can be. Maybe that is why Mark Twain wisely observed, “Action speaks louder than words but not nearly as often.”

I talked for years about becoming more fluent in Spanish. However, every time I thought about taking action, it seemed overwhelming. I wanted the “quick fix” without any real effort...the technology to insert a data card into my head and BAM! I am fluent in Spanish.

I had to relearn the Spanish alphabet to start learning the basic words and grammar rules. Then I had to move beyond just reading the rules and into the action of practicing them. I had to experiment with speaking and writing the words. I had to test everything I was learning. I had to be willing to be humble because of my countless mistakes.

When I visited Honduras, I realized my skill was equivalent to Honduran 2- to 3-year-olds. I saw Carlos Enrique teaching his grandson David a song to help him learn the alphabet. I almost cried when David could sing it better than I. I wanted to give up.

Learning a new language (or a new way of being) is really hard, time consuming, and most humbling. It goes beyond knowing the language. I am shaped and formed by the struggle. I would lose so much if I just waited for technology to do it for me.

We have filled volumes with beautiful words about Zion, but our words have limited impact on influencing others. If Mark Twain was right and our actions do speak louder than our words, then our inaction as we wait for

The cause of Zion is seen throughout the world, including a birthday celebration in Honduras.

God to bring about Zion is screaming an unfortunate message to a world in need.

With each new section in Doctrine and Covenants about Zion we have gone deeper in our understanding of the “alphabet” and basic grammar rules of Zion. Now we need to experiment by “testing God’s words.” We have to be willing to jump into living, loving, and sharing as Zion, striving to be visibly one in Christ. This means we have to get out of our homes and congregations and become involved in the community around us. As we prayerfully engage with others, God will open our eyes to the opportunities.

So, enough with the words! What are we waiting for?
Let’s build Zion! Onward!