LIVING JESUS... LIVING PEACE
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Produced by Community of Christ
1001 W. Walnut St.
Independence, MO 64050–3562

Herald Publishing House
P.O. Box 390
Independence, MO 64051–0390

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This Community of Christ resource is produced with your Worldwide Mission Tithes. To help continue this mission, give at www.CofChrist.org/etithing.
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LIVING JESUS … LIVING PEACE

INTRODUCTION

by Matt Frizzell

Jesus Christ is the center of our identity, message, mission, and call to live as disciples. Doctrine and Covenants 163:1a prophetically leads us to rediscover who Jesus is and what it means to be a community of Christ’s disciples throughout the world.

To embrace the full meaning of Community of Christ is to discover our future. Doctrine and Covenants 156:5 clarifies that becoming a people of the Temple means becoming a people who embody the life and witness of Jesus Christ. The mission of the church is to proclaim Jesus Christ and the peace of Jesus Christ in this world and for this world.

Theologians Tony and Charmaine Chvala-Smith describe Community of Christ as a church in transition. The evolution of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints to Community of Christ is described as a progression from a church-centered movement to a Christ-centered community. For more, listen to Project Zion Episode 72, “Percolating on Faith: The Three Eras” released April 28, 2017 and available at https://www.projectzionpodcast.org/episode-73-percolating-on-faith-the-three-eras.

The church’s leading quorums along with members and priesthood are discerning God’s future. Doctrine and Covenants 163:3c warns about “subtle, yet powerful, influences in the world, some even claiming to represent Christ, that seek to divide people and nations to accomplish their destructive aims.” In response, Community of Christ rejects an image of Jesus and Christian faith that hardens one human heart against another and constructs walls of fear and prejudice. We reject a personal savior who divides the human family, eternally condemns sinners ([or those unlike us]) to hell, and culturally represents nationalism, global systems of unbridled consumption and unnecessary poverty, justifies war, or accepts environmental degradation (Doctrine & Covenants 163: 3c, 4a-c). This is a prophetic 21st-century witness of who Christ is for us today.

Instead, we prophetically proclaim a historical Jesus and Christ of faith who is the embodiment of God’s shalom and invites all people to come and receive divine peace in the midst of the difficult questions and struggles of life (Doctrine and Covenants 163:2a). We proclaim Jesus Christ who, himself, proclaimed and revealed God’s Kingdom among the poor, displaced, mistreated, and diseased of the world (Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a). We proclaim a redeemer who suffered and died as one of those rejected, fully experiencing their humanity, suffering, and ultimate rejection. We proclaim a savior who brings all the dimensions of salvation restoring persons to healthy or righteous relationships with God, others, themselves, and the Earth (Doctrine and Covenants 163:2b). We follow a prophet and rabbi who revealed and taught that each of our welfare resides in our neighbor’s welfare (Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a).
As a global family, Community of Christ shares a faith that rests in the revelation, teaching, and proclamations of Jesus Christ. Our Mission Initiatives express God’s compassion and Christ’s mission in and for this world as revealed in Jesus’ proclamation of Isaiah 61:1-2 in Luke 4:16-20. Our Enduring Principles are not only principles illuminating Community of Christ belief, but are the Enduring Principles of discipleship in Community of Christ. Our Enduring Principles enlighten what practical discipleship means today.

We begin our journey to rediscover what it means to proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love, and peace. Our name, Community of Christ, proclaims the most basic principles of invitation and belonging in Christ, and our response as disciples in Christ’s community. May we rediscover in Christ’s name our divine blessing and calling to community. Our baptism. Our faith. Our future. The Restoration. The church. It’s all about what is revealed in Jesus Christ.
USING THIS STUDY GUIDE


This study guide is designed for camps, reunions, retreats, and small-group settings.

Themes and readings explored:

Lesson 1: On the Way—current contexts that shape understandings of Jesus
Readings:
- “Preface” and “Invitation,” A Way of Life, pages 9–22

Lesson 2: Living Jesus Today—what it means to follow Jesus in the 21st century shaped by an understanding of first-century Jesus
Readings:
- Chapter 6: “Jesus Christ: God with Us, God for Us,” A Way of Life, pages 53–56
- “Introduction,” Living Jesus … Living Peace, pages 4–5

Lesson 3: The Audacity of Shalom—Jesus reveals the boldness of God’s vision for creation
Readings:
- A Way of Life
  - Chapter 8: “The Kingdom of God: Jesus’ Vision of Life,” pages 65–71
  - Chapter 10: “The Church: Tasting New Life in Community,” pages 79–84

Lesson 4: Toward the Peaceful One—growing into salvation through whole-life response
Readings:
- A Way of Life
  - Chapter 9: “Humankind: The Broken Mirror,” pages 73–77
  - Chapter 12: “New Life in Christ: Renew a Right Spirit within Me,” pages 93–96
• Choose Generosity: Discovering Whole-life Stewardship
  o “Whole-Life Response,” pages 12–17
  o “Discovering Stewardship as a Whole-life Response,” pages 18–20
• Sharing in Community of Christ, 4th Edition
  o Enduring Principles, pages 27–32
  o Mission Initiatives, pages 22–23
  o Principles of A Disciple’s Generous Response, pages 40–42

Lesson 5: Living Hope—sharing the peace of Jesus Christ in all of its personal, interpersonal, community, and worldwide dimensions

Readings:
• A Way of Life
  o Chapter 17: “A Living Hope: Facing the Future,” pages 129–134
• Choose Generosity
  o “Practice Earth Stewardship,” pages. 108–110
  o “Promote Economic Justice,” pages 110–111
• World Conference Resolutions 1224 and 1312 (at the end of Lesson 5)

Readings are not included in this study guide. They must be purchased separately or downloaded at www.CofChrist.org. Participants do not need copies of the study guide, but journal books or paper for written responses are helpful. Invite participants to bring journal books, and provide extra books or paper as needed.

Guiding Difficult Conversations

Living Christ’s peace confronts the status quo. We are called to “courageously challenge cultural, political, and religious trends that are contrary to the reconciling and restoring purposes of God” (Doctrine and Covenants 163:3b). As you explore these challenges in a group setting, it is important to engage in meaningful dialogue that welcomes all perspectives and honors the worth of all persons.

Upholding the following principles will help guide difficult conversations:

• Honor all perspectives and hold safe space for all to share. Vary opportunities for sharing, such as sharing in pairs, writing or drawing responses, or sharing in small groups. Pay attention to perspectives that challenge your own, but remember the purpose is not to debate or change perspectives.
• Practice active listening by paraphrasing what has been stated to ensure each participant’s point is correctly interpreted.
• Encourage participants to speak as “I” instead of “We,” speaking for oneself instead of one’s “side,” and avoid generalizations.
• Approach divisive topics without personal agenda to gain understanding of different perspectives. Stay true to the gospel, and uphold Community of Christ identity, mission, message, and beliefs without diminishing the perspectives and life experiences of others.
• Uphold unity in diversity, recognizing oneness in Christ does not mean sameness.
• Recognize the Holy Spirit’s presence and movement through authentic sharing and holy listening.

These principles are provided in bookmark format on p. 8 to copy and distribute to each participant.
Guiding Difficult Conversations

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- Practice active listening by paraphrasing what has been stated to ensure each participant’s point is correctly interpreted.
- Encourage participants to speak as “I” instead of “We,” speaking for oneself instead of one’s “side,” and avoiding generalizations.
- Approach divisive topics without personal agenda in order to gain understanding of different perspectives. Stay true to the gospel, and uphold Community of Christ identity, mission, message, and beliefs without diminishing the perspectives and life experiences of others.
- Uphold unity in diversity, recognizing oneness in Christ does not mean sameness.
- Recognize the Holy Spirit’s presence and movement through authentic sharing and holy listening.
LESSON ONE
ON THE WAY

FOCUS
Learners will explore contexts that shape the understanding of Jesus and our discipleship.

READINGS
• A Way of Life: Understanding Our Christian Faith
  ○ “Preface” and “Invitation,” pages 9-22
• Sharing in Community of Christ, 4th Edition
  ○ “Scripture in Community of Christ,” pages 63-67

SUPPLIES
• Reading materials for each participant
• Projection equipment
• Journal book or paper for each participant
• Pens or pencils

Show the video Who Is Jesus to Me.

Invite participants to write their response to the following question in five words or fewer:

Who is Jesus to me?

After time for personal responses, designate four areas as either Seeker, New Disciple, Experienced Disciple, or Questioning Disciple (use designations suitable to your context). Ask participants to go to the area that best describes where they are in their spiritual journey.

Allow a few minutes for people to introduce themselves in their chosen groups, or in the larger group, and share what brings them to this place. Then invite each person to find a partner from a different group.

Have partners share their five-word responses to “Who is Jesus to me?” Share the greatest influence that shapes their response.

Offer a prayer of gratitude for each life journey that enriches this community.

GATHER
Activates background knowledge; prepares and motivates for lesson
(15% of lesson time)

“Every attempt to understand our faith reflects a perspective and a context” (A Way of Life, page 21).

As this journey begins it is important to honor the diversity of perspectives, life experiences, and other faith journeys present in the group. These activities encourage personal reflection and a closer community.

ENGAGE
Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

In A Way of Life: Understanding Our Christian Faith, author Chvala-Smith invites readers to consider contexts for understanding our Christian faith. This includes cultural, political, and religious realities
that challenge our understanding of what it means to follow Jesus as a way of life.

**What current realities shape or challenge understanding of your Christian faith?**

From Chvala-Smith:

In our time the language of faith is regularly impressed into service of ignorance, exclusivism, violence, the diminution of those who are different, unrestrained greed, a cavalier disregard for the creation, and xenophobic nationalism. Ironically and sadly, it is usually Christians themselves who in these ways deface the coinage of the faith (A Way of Life, page 10).

So what is our current context? To put it simply, in the Western world and northern hemisphere, the credibility of Christianity has ebbed so much that many thinkers wonder if there is a future for this faith. This new situation is mostly a self-inflicted wound: “Christianity” for many people now equals irrationality, anti-science, bigotry, intolerance, and the support of tyrannical ideologies that divide people and degrade societies (A Way of Life, page 14).

Jesus did not invite people to ponder a theory, join an association, or receive elite member status in a club. He invited them into something much more radical: a whole pattern of living marked by his own self-emptying. ...Christian discipleship is a whole self-emptying way of living, not a list of ideas that magically gives its holder a “pass” to heaven (A Way of Life, pages 12–13).

- What does a self-emptying way of living look like?
- What cultural or religious trends are contrary to a self-emptying way of living?
- How does self-emptying challenge a prosperity gospel (God favoring the faithful with financial blessings)?

“Discipleship is life *in via*: on the way. ...Unfortunately, many Christians stress the word *the* and not the noun *way*. So “The Way” has become a watchword of exclusion, not a metaphor for spiritual pilgrimage” (A Way of Life, page 15).

- How does an understanding of Christian discipleship as “The Way” lead to exclusion?
- Discuss how spiritual pilgrimage is a more inclusive or holistic metaphor for Christian discipleship.

For discussion:

- In what ways do you agree or disagree with these statements?
- Give examples that inform your perspectives on these statements.

**Discuss the following statements about Christian discipleship as a large group or in small groups. In small groups, assign each group one of the statements to discuss. Share insights with the larger group.**

**RESPOND**

Takes the learners from hearing to doing

(35% of lesson time)

**Discuss these statements.**

What examples of Community of Christ identity, mission, message, and beliefs support these statements?
I am convinced Community of Christ has glimpsed something breathtaking, restorative, and transforming: a vision of the Christian faith that not only critiques shallow distortions, but offers a luminous way of life shaped by an ongoing encounter with the Living Christ (A Way of Life, page 10).

One of my working assumptions is that the contemporary faith of Community of Christ is profound, rich, provocative, and potentially world-transforming (A Way of Life, page 17).

Scripture in Community of Christ informs our understanding of Jesus and how we are called to live our discipleship.

Refer to “Scripture in Community of Christ” found in Sharing in Community of Christ. Form pairs or small groups and assign one of the affirmations to each pair or small group.

- How do these affirmations support or challenge religious trends in your context?
- What examples in your context support Chvala-Smith’s statement: “…the Bible, sadly, is used too often as a tool of abuse, instead of a library of liberation” (A Way of Live, page 13)? How does this affirmation challenge the examples shared?

In his closing sermon to the 2019 World Conference, President Stephen M. Veazey asked:

Are we moving toward Jesus, the peaceful One? Or are we retreating from Jesus by reverting to our old humanity and its destructive ways of interacting with others and creation?

At the end of each lesson, participants are invited to reflect on how the topics and discussions support, challenge, or shape understandings about what it means to live Jesus … live peace. How is the Spirit forming new awareness and new ways of being as you consider the following responses?

I believe …
I confess …
I commit …

Allow time for personal reflection and sharing in pairs or small groups (optional).

Lord Jesus Christ, Word and revelation of the eternal God, come, we pray, and take possession of our hearts, and reign where you have right to reign. So fill our minds with the thought, and our imaginations with the picture of your love, that there may be in us no room for any desire that is discordant with your holy will. Cleanse us, we pray, of all that would make us deaf to your call or slow to obey it, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit are one God, blessed forever. Amen.

— Anthony J. Chvala-Smith, November 2018
LESSON TWO
LIVING JESUS TODAY

FOCUS
Learners will gain an understanding of Jesus’ life and ministry in the first century and how that informs discipleship in the 21st century.

READINGS
- A Way of Life: Understanding Our Christian Faith
  - Chapter 6, “Jesus Christ: God with Us, God for Us,” pages 53-56
- Living Jesus … Living Peace
  - “Introduction,” pages xx
- Sharing in Community of Christ, 4th Edition
  - “We Proclaim Jesus Christ,” pages 58-62

SUPPLIES
- Reading materials for each participant
- Journal book or paper for each participant
- Pens or pencils

To the facilitator: Church leaders from several USA denominations collaborated on resources regarding the Christian faith in a time of political crisis. The statement, “A Confession of Faith in a Time of Crisis” can be found at ReclaimingJesus.org. Also, Reclaiming Jesus, a video, is at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oheb3MpL5HE (used by permission of Sojourners).

The statement and video uphold common beliefs about Jesus, and challenge political trends that are contrary to those beliefs. While they represent a USA context, you might find similarities in your context. Refer to principles for guiding difficult conversations in the Introduction on page xx.

GATHER
Activates background knowledge; prepares and motivates for lesson (15% of lesson time)

DWELLING IN THE WORD
Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. …

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

—John 6:35, 51

Invite participants to breathe deeply and rest in God’s presence and peace.

As you read John 6:35, 51 the first time, invite participants to pay attention to words or phrases that capture their attention.

Pause for silent reflection.

As you read the passage a second time, invite participants to prayerfully consider what new understanding of Jesus emerges, or what questions it raises.

Pause for silent reflection.
Share insights with the larger group or in small groups or pairs. Offer a prayer of gratitude for this time of learning and sharing.

ENGAGE
Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

To fully understand what it means to follow Jesus in the 21st century, it is important to understand the radical nature of his ministry in a first-century context.

God’s eternal Word became a flesh-and-blood first-century Jew. Jesus of Nazareth was born in Roman-occupied Palestine during the reign of the emperor Augustus, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius. The church’s faith is not based on idle speculation, but on events that took place in time and space. ...Everything about him confronted his contemporaries and us with an unconditional claim and authority.
— A Way of Life, page 54

Chvala-Smith explains how Easter is the heart of our faith. “Easter casts its light backward ... and reveals what always was true about him: He was and is Christ, he was and is for all time God’s Son. ... And Easter casts its light forward, revealing a glimpse of a glory yet to be: the renewal and mending of creation” (A Way of Life, page 55).

- In his description of Jesus’s cross, Chvala-Smith illustrates how we see God’s reign in Jesus’ death: “not in coercive power, but in vulnerable love and mercy” (A Way of Life, page 55). How does this support or challenge your understanding of the cross?
- Consider the statements (A Way of Life, page 55), “The cross lays bare who we are ...” and “The cross also makes plain who God is ...” How does this inform what the cross means to you?
- What does the cross reveal about Jesus as the peaceful One?

The final paragraph of page 54 in A Way of Life begins with, “Jesus’ words and deeds reveal the glory of God.” What follows in this paragraph on page 54 are examples of Jesus’ ministry that revealed God’s nature and will. They also challenged his first-century disciples, as well as religious and political leaders.

- What is a common theme about those to whom Jesus ministered?
- What are parallel examples of marginalized people with whom God calls us to share Christ’s peace today? How does this challenge the culture of our time and context?

RESPOND
Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

“In Jesus’ words and deeds God’s reign came near. Indeed, Jesus was the kingdom of God in person” (A Way of Life, page 55).

Read and discuss the Introduction to this study guide written by Matt Frizzell.
He recognizes what Chvala-Smith calls a transition from church-centered movement to Christ-centered community.

- Whether you are a seeker, visitor, or lifelong member of Community of Christ, what does this transition mean to you?
- What changes have taken, or could take, place as a result of this transition?
- How does an understanding of Jesus in the first century inform what it means to be a Christ-centered community in the 21st century?

Refer to “We Proclaim Jesus Christ” found in Sharing in Community of Christ. Form small groups or pairs and assign each a statement from this document. Discuss how it challenges followers of Jesus to live in the world. Pay attention to where you find peace with the statement, and where you experience resistance. Share insights with the larger group.

Send
Explores how the lesson might be lived
(10% of lesson time)

In his closing sermon to the 2019 World Conference, President Stephen M. Veazey asked:
Are we moving toward Jesus, the peaceful One? Or are we retreating from Jesus by reverting to our old humanity and its destructive ways of interacting with others and creation?

At the end of each lesson, participants are invited to reflect on how the topics and discussions support, challenge, or shape understandings about what it means to live Jesus … live peace. How is the Spirit forming new awareness and new ways of being as you consider the following responses?

I believe …
I confess …
I commit …

Allow time for personal reflection and sharing in pairs or small groups (optional).

Bless
Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and help
(5% of lesson time)

Read these statements and have participants offer their responses (aloud or silently) as the closing prayer.

God with us, God for us,
We believe… (silent or spoken responses)
We confess… (silent or spoken responses)
We commit… (silent or spoken responses)
Amen.
LESSON THREE
THE AUDACITY
OF SHALOM

FOCUS
Learners will explore the boldness of Jesus’ mission and the church’s mission of justice, peace, and restoration.

READINGS
- A Way of Life: Understanding Our Christian Faith
  - Chapter 8, “The Kingdom of God: Jesus’ Vision of Life,” pages 65–71
  - Chapter 10 “The Church: Tasting New Life in Community,” pages 79–84

SUPPLIES
- Reading materials for each participant
- Journal book or paper for each participant
- Pens or pencils

GATHER
Activates background knowledge; prepares and motivates for lesson (15% of lesson time)

DWELLING IN THE WORD
Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you…
—Matthew 6:9–14

Invite participants to breathe deeply and rest in God’s presence and peace.

As you read Matthew 6:9–14 the first time, invite participants to pay attention to words or phrases that capture their attention.

Pause for silent reflection.

As you read the passage a second time, invite participants to prayerfully consider what new understandings or questions emerge.

Pause for silent reflection.

Share insights with the larger group or in small groups or pairs.
- What does this prayer reveal about the nature of God?
- What does this prayer reveal about how we are called to live in community?

Offer a prayer of gratitude for this time of learning and sharing.
ENGAGE
Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

The title of this lesson, “The Audacity of Shalom,” implies boldness and risk in living Christ’s peace ... God’s shalom.
- In what ways do you agree or disagree with this statement?
- How would you describe the kingdom of God that Jesus revealed?

“Jesus did not come to his people to teach them how to get to heaven. Jesus came proclaiming the dawning of the kingdom of God” (A Way of Life, page 65). In Jesus’ native language of Aramaic, and in Greek, kingdom does not mean a place, it refers to an action (A Way of Life, page 66).
- How does this support or challenge your understanding, as well as common religious understandings in your context?
- Has your understanding shifted over the years? Explain.

“Everything Jesus did and said communicated the presence of God’s kingdom” (A Way of Life, page 67).

Select from the list of examples and scripture references on page 67. Discuss as a group or in small groups and make connections to current examples.
- In what ways was each act audacious in that time?
- What does it look like today?

The reality of Jesus’ mission was dangerous news in Roman-occupied Palestine. “Roman rule was founded on violence, domination, and conquest. God’s rule, as Jesus proclaimed, was founded on mercy, love, and compassion” (A Way of Life, page 68).
- Discuss examples of how Jesus’s mission challenged political leaders and systems.
- What comparisons can be made in your current context?
- What kinds of bold risks will it take to make God’s rule of mercy, love, and compassion the cultural norm?

RESPOND
Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

“Community of Christ believes that it is called to be a prophetic people” (A Way of Life, page 83). Tony Chvala-Smith upholds bold actions as examples of what it means to be a prophetic, Christ-inspired community.

As a large group, or in small groups, discuss these actions with the following questions in mind: In what ways do you see sacred community living this bold action? What changes can better position communities to respond to these challenges?
- Discern God’s ever-new ways of reaching out to our wounded world
- Watch and listen with the eyes and ears of prophets to respond to the new thing God is doing in the world
- Hold fast to love and justice
- Take up roles of sanctuary and advocate
In his closing sermon to the 2019 World Conference, President Stephen M. Veazey asked: Are we moving toward Jesus, the peaceful One? Or are we retreating from Jesus by reverting to our old humanity and its destructive ways of interacting with others and creation?

At the end of each lesson, participants are invited to reflect on how the topics and discussions support, challenge, or shape understandings about what it means to live Jesus ... live peace.

How is the Spirit forming new awareness and new ways of being as you consider the following responses?

I believe …
I confess …
I commit …

Allow time for personal reflection and sharing in pairs or small groups (optional).

“Your kingdom come! Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

We pray that Jesus’s mission might truly become our own; that we will learn to embody wholeness, freedom, justice, compassion, and mercy. Jesus’s prayer links the future of creation with our response to God’s gracious will as it is revealed in the gospel. It calls the church to the task not of looking to heaven but bringing heaven to Earth.
LESSON FOUR
TOWARD THE PEACEFUL ONE

FOCUS
Learners will explore what it means to “grow into salvation” through whole-life response.

READINGS
- A Way of Life: Understanding Our Christian Faith
  o Chapter 9: “Humankind: The Broken Mirror,” pages 73–77
  o Chapter 12: “New Life in Christ: Renew a Right Spirit within Me,” pages 93–96
- Choose Generosity: Discovering Whole-life Response
  o “Whole-Life Response,” pages 12–17
  o “Discovering Stewardship as a Whole-life Response,” pages 18–20
- Sharing in Community of Christ, 4th Edition
  o Enduring Principles, pages 27–32
  o Mission Initiatives, pages 22–23
  o Principles of A Disciple’s Generous Response, pages 40–42

SUPPLIES
- Reading materials for each participant
- Journal book or paper for each participant
- Pens or pencils

GATHER
Activates background knowledge; prepares and motivates for lesson
(15% of lesson time)

In preparation for the opening practice, ask: What does stewardship mean to you?

DWELLING IN THE WORD

Choose one of the these scripture passages for this practice. Optional: form three groups and invite each group to use a different passage, having a member of the group read the passage.

Doctrine and Covenants 147:5a
Stewardship is the response of my people to the ministry of my Son and is required alike of all those who seek to build the kingdom. The spiritual authorities are urged to so teach with renewed vigor in recognition of the great need, and let nothing separate them from those who have more specific responsibilities in the temporal affairs of the church.

Psalm 86:11–12
Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart to revere your name.
I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever.

Titus 2:11–12
For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to
renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, …

Invite participants to breathe deeply and rest in God’s presence and peace.

As the scripture passage is read the first time, invite participants to pay attention to words or phrases that capture their attention.

Pause for silent reflection.

As the passage is read a second time, invite participants to prayerfully consider what new understandings or questions emerge.

Pause for silent reflection.

Share insights with the larger group or in small groups or pairs.

- In what ways does stewardship take on new meaning as a response to the self-giving love of God in Christ? As whole-life response in the audacity of God’s shalom?

Offer a prayer of gratitude for this time of learning and sharing.

**ENGAGE**

Invites exploration and interaction (35% of lesson time)

“Among the most sacred values of Community of Christ is the Worth of All Persons” (*A Way of Life*, page 76).

In chapter 9, Tony Chvala-Smith upholds the opposing realities of human nature revealed in sacred story: humankind is created in the image of God, and the very beings called to reflect God’s glory actually distort it (*A Way of Life*, page 74).

“To be created in the image of God, then, does not mean that we are in some way divine. Rather, it means that God created us to be living ‘reminders’ of God to one another and to the creation of which we are part” (*A Way of Life*, page 74).

“Jesus’ message of the reign of God recalls us to our true humanity. …In Christ’s outreach to the poor and the broken, we behold the action of God, who refuses to leave any beloved creatures lost or marred” (*A Way of Life*, page 75).

- Discuss how these statements invite deeper understanding of what it means to proclaim the worth of all persons.
- What are differences between understanding Worth of All Persons as an Enduring Principle of belief, and embracing Worth of All Persons as an Enduring Principle of discipleship?
- How does this challenge the cultural, political, or religious status quo in your context?

To live the Enduring Principles of Community of Christ as principles of discipleship is to embody the life of Christ in community. It also calls us to the hard work of living God’s shalom into being. This calls us to a deeper understanding of salvation as more than a personal reward in the afterlife.

**Salvation**

The gospel is the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ: forgiveness of sin,
healing from separation, brokenness, and the power of violence and death. This healing is for individuals, human societies, and all of creation. This new life is the loving gift of God’s grace that becomes ours through faith and repentance. Baptism is how we initially express our commitment to lifelong discipleship. As we yield our lives to Christ in baptism we enter Christian community (the body of Christ) and have the promise of salvation. We experience salvation through Jesus Christ, but affirm that God’s grace has no bounds, and God’s love is greater than we can know.


“In baptism the whole person is immersed into the costly love of God, and so Community of Christ theology insists that discipleship concerns every part of life. God’s grace has claimed us entirely. Universal, and not just individual, transformation is what we seek to let the kingdom come to our relationships, work, leisure, economic life, neighborhoods, and ecosystem—in short, to every dimension of created life” (A Way of Life, page 96).

In chapter thirteen of A Way of Life, Chvala-Smith explores what it means to practice whole-life stewardship. Additionally, whole-life response is explored in Choose Generosity on pages 12–20, through the Enduring Principles, Mission Initiatives, and six principles of A Disciple’s Generous Response. Grace and Generosity is more than a principle of belief; it is foundational for shaping our whole-life response to the lavish love of God.

“Community of Christ always has believed everything is spiritual. ...Our Restoration story began with the connection between discipleship, stewardship, and the call to build Zion. ...This call is about using our whole life in a way that helps bring about God’s purposes on the Earth” (Choose Generosity, page 15).

RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

—

“Grace calls us to discipleship, and discipleship is nothing less than radical obedience to Jesus. ...The church is called to ‘grow into salvation’” (A Way of Life, page 94).

- What does it mean to grow into salvation?
- In what ways does this deepen an understanding of salvation? In what ways does it challenge common understandings about salvation in your context?
- How does growing into salvation help us move with Jesus, the peaceful One?

“To help us grow toward the fullness of new life, God has provided four means of grace: the scriptures, the church, the sacraments, and spiritual practices” (A Way of Life, pages 94–95).

- Discuss these means of grace Chvala-Smith presents on pages 95–96.
- How do these work together to shape a holistic understanding of growing into salvation?

- How does this statement shape a fuller understanding of whole-life stewardship ... beyond a giving formula to a way of living in community.
- How does this shape our giving?
- How is this understanding as much about what we keep as what we give?
Form small sharing groups and assign each group one of the following: Enduring Principles, Mission Initiatives, Principles of A Disciple’s Generous Response. Invite groups to discuss:

- How are these expressions of whole-life response?
- What does it look like in your community when these move from concepts or beliefs to tangible actions of discipleship?

After time for sharing in groups, invite each group to develop a slogan (be creative) that expresses their principles or initiatives as whole-life response to God’s generosity. Share with the larger group.

Allow time for personal reflection and sharing in pairs or small groups (optional).

**BLESS**

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and help
(5% of lesson time)

God with us, God for us,

In our movement with Jesus, the peaceful One, help us remember that all means ALL. We offer All we are for the sake of All your beloved creation.

Amen.

**SEND**

Explores how the lesson might be lived
(10% of lesson time)

In his closing sermon to the 2019 World Conference, President Stephen M. Veazey asked:
Are we moving toward Jesus, the peaceful One? Or are we retreating from Jesus by reverting to our old humanity and its destructive ways of interacting with others and creation?

At the end of each lesson, participants are invited to reflect on how the topics and discussions support, challenge, or shape understandings about what it means to live Jesus … live peace.

How is the Spirit forming new awareness and new ways of being as you consider the following responses?

I believe …
I confess …
I commit …
LESSON FIVE
LIVING HOPE

FOCUS
Learners will explore what it means to share the peace of Christ in all of its personal, interpersonal, community, and worldwide dimensions.

READINGS
- A Way of Life: Understanding Our Christian Faith
  - Chapter 17: “A Living Hope: Facing the Future,” pages 129–134
- Choose Generosity: Discovering Whole-life Response
  - “Practice Earth Stewardship,” pages 108–110
  - “Promote Economic Justice,” pages 110–111
- World Conference Resolutions 1224 and 1312 (at the end of this lesson)

SUPPLIES
- Reading materials for each participant
- Copy of “Checklist for Green Congregations” https://www.cofchrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Green-Congregation-Checklist.pdf for each participant
- Journal book or paper for each participant
- Pens or pencils

GATHER
Activates background knowledge; prepares and motivates for lesson (15% of lesson time)

DWELLING IN THE WORD
Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God’s shalom, invites all people to come and receive divine peace in the midst of the difficult questions and struggles of life. Follow Christ in the way that leads to God’s peace and discover the blessings of all of the dimensions of salvation.

Above all else, strive to be faithful to Christ’s vision of the peaceable Kingdom of God on earth. Courageously challenge cultural, political, and religious trends that are contrary to the reconciling and restoring purposes of God. Pursue peace.
—Doctrine and Covenants 163:2a, 3b

Invite participants to breathe deeply and rest in God’s presence and peace.

As you read Doctrine and Covenants 163:2a, 3b the first time, invite participants to pay attention to words or phrases that capture their attention.

Pause for silent reflection.

As you read the passage a second time, invite participants to prayerfully consider what new understandings or questions emerge.

Pause for silent reflection.
Share insights with the larger group or in small groups or pairs.

- What is the Holy Spirit’s invitation?

ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction (35% of lesson time)

“Generosity also must extend beyond actions into our attitudes toward others and the planet. To belittle the poor for their situation is cruel and contrary to the Spirit of Jesus. To protect ourselves from the cries of those who suffer is to wall off our hearts to God’s own tears. To refuse to use less in our endangered world is to work against the renewal of Earth. To withhold one’s gifts, when they would make a difference to the work of God’s reign, is to miss an opportunity to embody the revolutionary vision of Jesus” (A Way of Life, p. 103).

- In what ways do these statements expand an understanding of growing into salvation through whole-life response, as explored in the previous lesson?
- In your context, where do you see examples of what Chvala-Smith upholds in these statements?
- What ministries of the church help disciples and communities respond to these challenges and opportunities?

“Community of Christ believes the Risen Lord has called us to pursue peace and establish the cause of Zion. We understand this as the call to share the peace of Jesus Christ in all of its personal, interpersonal, community, and worldwide dimensions” (A Way of Life, p. 133).

- How would you describe what it means to share the peace of Christ in all its dimensions?
- What does this look like in your life, congregation, or community?

“As Easter restored the broken community of the disciples, so the cause of Zion calls us to promote local and worldwide communities that signal the peaceful reign of God on Earth by working to mend neighborhoods, nations, and nature” (A Way of Life, p. 133).

- In what ways does this shape a new understanding of what it means to be signal communities?
- In what ways does this shape a new understanding of what it means to be a restoration movement?

RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing (35% of lesson time)

Living Jesus … Living Peace … Living Hope

“To care for our planet, to be makers of peace, and friends of justice for the poor and marginalized is to embody creation’s future in this present moment” (A Way of Life, p. 132).

Practice Earth Stewardship

“We must actively engage in efforts that heal the Earth and its inhabitants and protect them from further damage. How we treat the Earth is part of our faithful response to a loving God who provided us creation in the beginning and made us stewards over its care” (Choose Generosity, p. 109).
• What is the greatest environmental threat in your community? What efforts relieve this challenge?
• What cultural, political, or religious trends challenge environmental stewardship in your community? What efforts challenge these trends?

The 1992 World Conference supported World Conference Resolution 1224, which established the Earth Stewardship Team as a standing committee. The team focuses on issues of environment and development and gives guidance to the church. Read more about this team and efforts you can pursue at www.CofChrist.org/earth-stewardship.

Distribute copies of Checklist for Green Congregations. Allow time for participants to read and discuss.
• What steps can your congregation take to be a signal community in practicing environmental stewardship?
• Encourage participants to use the Checklist for Green Congregations to develop an action plan in their congregation or community for practicing Earth stewardship. Use worship suggestions to plan a worship service in celebration of Earth Day or similar observance (include coloring pages for use with all ages).

Promote Economic Justice

The world is living a nightmare of pain and despair. God is calling for a massive exodus of people from poverty and related suffering. Will we be the prophets standing before crafty politicians and predatory hoarders of wealth, saying with conviction, “You had better let God’s people go?” God sees a church that doesn’t just speak and sing of Zion. God sees one that lives, loves, and shares as Zion: those who strive to be visibly one in Christ, among whom there are no poor or oppressed (inspired by Doctrine and Covenants 165:6a). The only way there will be no poor or oppressed is for the rest of us to change our ways. Zion is the divine vision that awakens our nobler natures and potential for sharing in community.


• What are the greatest challenges to economic justice in your context? What efforts address these challenges?
• What cultural, political, or religious trends challenge economic justice in your community? What efforts challenge these trends?
• What steps can your family, group, or congregation take to be a signal community in promoting economic justice?

The 2016 World Conference supported World Conference Resolution 1312, “Opposition to Predatory Loan Practices.” What effects do predatory loan practices have in your community? What ministries or practices address these circumstances?

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In his closing sermon to the 2019 World Conference, President Stephen M. Veazey posed the following questions: Are we moving toward Jesus, the peaceful One? Or are we retreating from Jesus by reverting to our old humanity and its
destructive ways of interacting with others and creation?

At the end of each lesson, participants are invited to reflect on how the topics and discussions support, challenge, or shape understandings about what it means to live Jesus…live peace.

How is the Spirit forming new awareness and new ways of being as you consider the following responses?

I believe …
I confess …
I commit …

Allow time for personal reflection and sharing in pairs or small groups (optional).

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.

—Doctrine and Covenants 165:6a-c
World Conference Resolution 1224

Earth Stewardship Committee

*Adopted April 9, 1992*

*Supersedes WCR 1211*

**1224.** Whereas, The protection of the environment is a concern of critical importance for which the church should give significant attention;

Whereas, The 1990 World Conference in response to this concern adopted WCR 1211 (Stewardship of Ecology), which assigned “the study and development of recommendations related to the stewardship of preserving and enhancing the ecology of the planet” to the World Peace Committee, WCR 1212 (Towards More Environmentally Sound Practices) for the implementation of which the First Presidency created the Environmentally Sound Practices Committee to monitor the operations of the World Church headquarters and to “develop more holistic approaches to our support of life on this planet, specifically by providing resources to help increase our advocacy for and commitment to Third World poverty and justice issues as well as life-promoting actions locally,” and WCR 1213 (Our Common Future—A Sustainable Global Perspective), which mandated that the World Peace Committee prepare “a major statement to the 1992 World Conference concerning the role of the church, including Temple ministries, in response to the 1987 Brundtland Commission Report,” but which provided for no continuing study beyond such report; and

Whereas, An Earth Stewardship Committee should be created to avoid duplication of effort and to further the work of the church toward the protection of the environment; and

Whereas, The church should continue to be in the forefront of those who would mediate the needless destruction of the environment (Doctrine and Covenants 150:7); therefore, be it

*Resolved,* That an Earth Stewardship Committee be established as a standing committee to consider issues of environment and development and to give guidance to the church; and be it further

*Resolved,* That WCR 1211 be rescinded; and be it further Resolved, That the responsibilities delegated to committees pursuant to WCR 1212 be delegated to the Earth Stewardship Committee, and that the Environmentally Sound Practices Committee be dissolved.
World Conference Resolution 1312

Opposition to Predatory Loan Practices
Adopted June 10, 2016

1312. Whereas, The Hebrew Bible in several instances speaks to the immorality of high usury, e.g., Nehemiah shouts out, “Let us stop this taking of interest” (Nehemiah 5:10 NRSV); and
Whereas, Genesis 7:23 (IV) says, “And the Lord called his people, Zion, because they were of one heart and of one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there were no poor among them”; and
Whereas, Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a says, “God the Eternal Creator weeps for the poor, displaced, mistreated, and diseased of the world because of their unnecessary suffering. Such conditions are not God’s will...”; and
Whereas, Doctrine and Covenants 164:6a says, “...God the Creator of all, ultimately is concerned about behaviors and relationships that uphold the worth and giftedness of all people and that protect the most vulnerable”; and
Whereas, Around the world various predatory loan practices flourish; and
Whereas, Each year predatory loans catch countless people in a “debt trap” by making short-term, high-interest loans at triple-digit interest rates, driving households into sustained poverty; therefore, be it

Resolved, That Community of Christ condemns predatory lending practices as immoral and sees them as a threat for luring vulnerable individuals and families into a debt trap that often pulls them into poverty; and be it further

Resolved, That Community of Christ partner with other faith groups and community organizations to advocate for reform of short-term, high-interest loans (such as payday and title loans) at national and sub-national levels around the world; and be it further

Resolved, That Community of Christ work with other faith groups, non-profit organizations, and financial institutions to create new options for individuals and families to get affordable, small loans for justifiable emergency expenses and to develop training for these individuals to help them effectively manage their financial affairs; and be it further

Resolved, That members and friends of Community of Christ be encouraged to use their time, talents, and treasures to develop and support resources for small loans with affordable interest rates and terms and to recognize this as work that pursues the mission of Jesus Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That the First Presidency be requested to collect success stories from the worldwide church to be reported periodically in the Herald and other church Page 75 of 83 media to create moral economy models for others to follow and to help members and friends recognize the blessings of ministry to those who are most vulnerable financially; and be it further

Resolved, That Community of Christ’s leadership be requested to look for ways to assimilate these success stories into a model that can be replicated by congregations and communities throughout the world as appropriate.