



Community of Christ



# COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS

CHILDREN

8 JANUARY 2017 — 26 FEBRUARY 2017

# COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS



Lifelong Disciple Formation in Community of Christ is the shaping of persons in the likeness of Christ at all stages of life. It begins with our response to the grace of God in loving community and continues as we help others learn, grow, and serve in the mission of Jesus Christ. Ultimately, discipleship is expressed as one lives the mission initiatives of the church through service, generosity, witness, and invitation.

We invite you to use these lessons for your class, group, or congregation.

**Lectionary-based:** The weekly lessons connect the *Revised Common Lectionary* for worship with Community of Christ identity, mission, message, and beliefs.

**Quick, easy:** The lessons are designed for approximately 45-minute class sessions with two to three pages of ideas, discussion starters, and activities. Additional preparation help may be found in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament* (with focus on the gospel according to Matthew).

Lessons are available for three age groups. Recognizing each age group represents multiple stages of development, the instructor is encouraged to adapt lessons to best meet the needs of the class or group. When possible, optional activities are provided to help adapt lessons for diverse settings.

**Children (multiage, 6–11):** Help children engage in the Bible and introduce mission and beliefs with stories, crafts, and activities.

**Youth (ages 12–18):** Engage teens in scripture study and provocative questions about identity, mission, and beliefs.

**Adult (ages 19 and older):** Deepen faith and understanding with reflective questions, theological understanding, and discussion ideas.

Note: Unless otherwise noted, all Bible scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) Bible, copyright 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

# FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY /BAPTISM OF THE LORD

LESSON 7  
8 January 2017

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Matthew 3:13–17/ 3:41–46 IV

**Lesson Focus:** Jesus was baptized. Our baptism is a first step in our journey in a community of disciples. All Are Called to share their giftedness as disciples.

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- tell the story of Jesus' baptism.
- understand that baptism is a first step on the journey of discipleship and demonstrates a desire to follow God.
- name ways they can live the Community of Christ Enduring Principle All Are Called by sharing their giftedness with others.

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Matthew 3:13–17 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 31, available through Herald House.

## Supplies

- Pitcher or bowl of water and napkins or towels
- Blankets or blue cloth
- Robes, cloth, or Biblical costumes
- Paper printout or drawing of a dove
- One half of a paper plate for each child
- One brass brad per child
- Printout of Jesus and sentences for Respond section (one for each child)
- Crayons or markers
- Soft ball or paper wad
- *Community of Christ Sings*

## 1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson

*(15% of total lesson time)*

Gather around a bowl or pitcher of water. Allow children to touch the water and talk about how it feels. Have the children think of ways we use water. We use it for bathing, brushing teeth, cooking, cleaning, and drinking. Our bodies are made up of water. It's essential to survival. Tell children our scripture passage today is about Jesus being baptized in water.

## 2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

*(35% of total lesson time)*

**Say:** When Jesus was baptized, he was showing everyone that he wanted to follow God.

Invite children to sit comfortably and close their eyes as they listen to the scripture story. Read the scripture story:

John gently dipped people under the water. This showed other people that they wanted to follow God. Jesus was traveling from a town called Galilee, and he came to where John was baptizing people. Jesus asked John to baptize him. But John thought Jesus was a greater teacher than he was, so he told Jesus, "You should baptize me."

But Jesus said, "I want to do what is right so people will know I want to follow God." So John baptized Jesus. When Jesus came out of the water, the Spirit of God landed on him like a dove. And God said, "This is my son. I am happy with him."

Tell children that as you read the story a second time, you want them to use their imagination and put themselves in the story. Invite them to notice what they see, hear, and feel.

Read the story again.

**Ask:** Imagine you were in the story. What did you see? What did you hear? What did you feel? What did you notice?

Invite children to act out the story. Provide materials such as blankets to represent water, a paper bird to represent

the dove, and perhaps robes or fabric for costumes. If you have several children, have them work in small groups of two or three to act out the story.

**Say:** When Jesus was baptized, he was showing everyone that he wanted to follow God. This means he would try to live the way God wanted him to live. He would try to help others and share God's love with others.

## 3 RESPOND

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

**Say:** When we are baptized, we become part of a community of disciples. We become part of the body of Christ. In Community of Christ, we believe that All Are Called. This means God graciously gives people gifts and opportunities to do good and to share in God's purposes. We are going to play a game that will help us think about the gifts and talents God has given us.

Children stand if they identify with these statements.

**Say:** Stand up if you can...

- sing to worship God.
- talk to someone who is lonely.
- make a new friend.
- pray.
- help a friend who is hurt.
- pick up trash.
- tell friends about Jesus.
- give money as a Disciple's Generous Response.
- give a hug.
- sit by a younger child during a worship service.
- help collect offering at church.
- participate in worship (prayer, reading).
- other (Offer other suggestions based on the gifts and talents in your class.)

### Craft: Jesus' Baptism

Provide each child with one half of a thin paper plate. Children can color it blue to look like water. Give each child a small picture of Jesus to color. Help children attach Jesus' feet to the plate with a brass brad so he can be tilted and "dipped" into the water to be baptized. Have each child complete the sentence on the printout and glue it to the paper plate.

Make a copy of the Jesus drawing and these sentences for each child:

- Jesus showed he would follow God by being baptized.
- I can show I follow God by \_\_\_\_\_.

## Going Deeper

For older children, read and discuss Doctrine and Covenants 164:3.

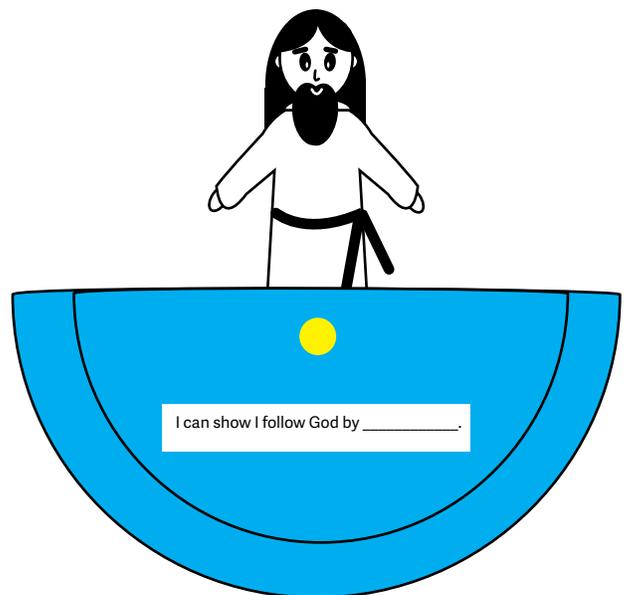
3a. All church members are urged to examine the depth of your baptismal commitment. Having been baptized and confirmed, become fully immersed in the servant life of Christ.

b. Live the meaning of your baptism daily as you grow in the skills and qualities of discipleship. Actively and generously support the ministries of the church, which was divinely established to restore Christ's covenant of peace, even the Zion of your hopes.

c. The Eternal Christ invites those who have yet to experience the blessings of baptism to "Follow me in the way of righteousness and peace." Be baptized of water and the Spirit and discover your spiritual home as a fully functioning member of the body.

Discuss:

- What does it mean to be "fully immersed in the servant life of Christ"?
- In the story of Jesus' baptism, how was Jesus "baptized of water and the Spirit"?
- Why do you think baptism was important for Jesus?





### Going Deeper

Ask some adults or older children in the congregation to come share with the class about their baptism and how they use their gifts to serve others as disciples.

## 4 SEND

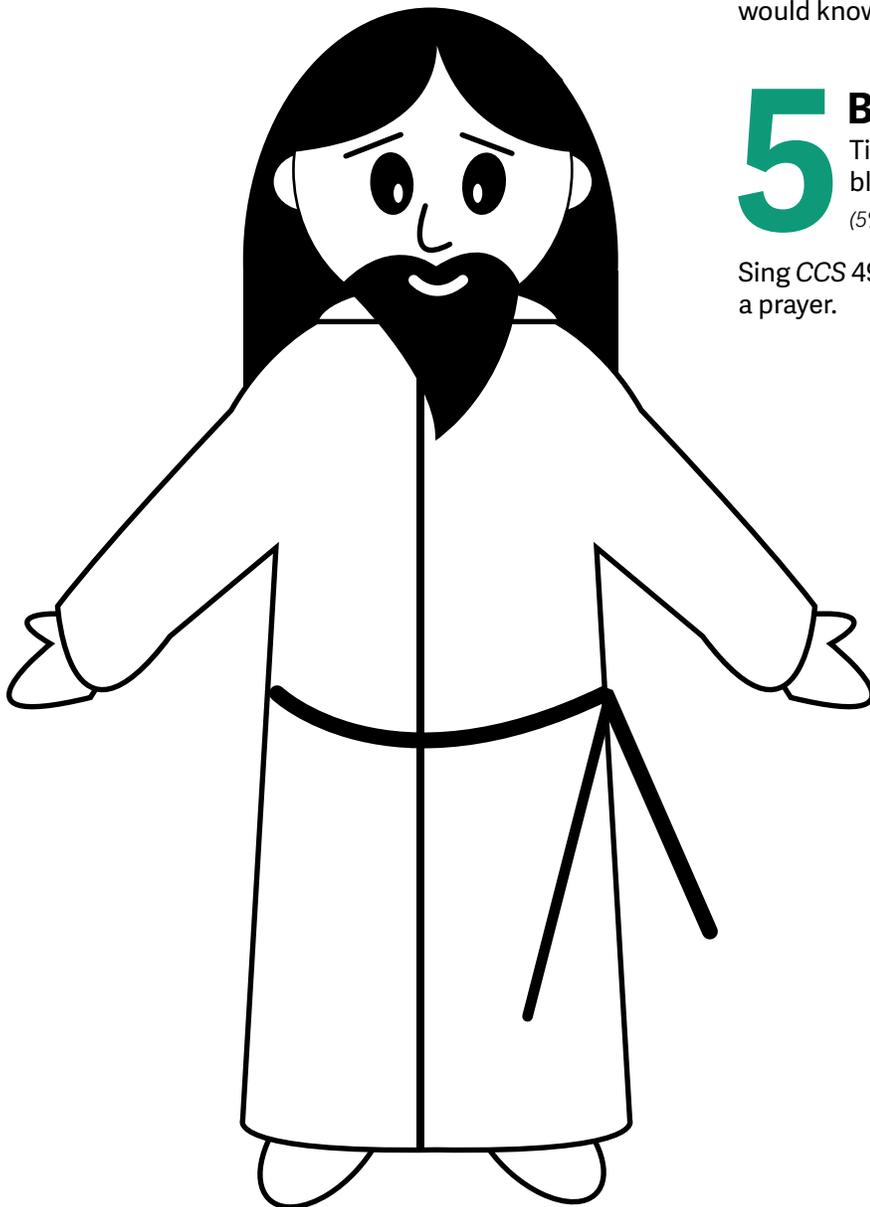
Explores how the lesson might be lived  
*(10% of total lesson time)*

Toss a ball or paper wad from person to person. When you catch the ball, tell the group something you plan to do to live out your discipleship. Play the game several times. In the first round, tell something you will do at church. In the second round, tell something you will do at home or in your neighborhood. In the third round, tell something you will do at school. Remind children that Jesus was baptized to show that he wanted to do what was right so people would know he followed God.

## 5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope  
*(5% of total lesson time)*

Sing CCS 499 "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus." Close with a prayer.



**Copy one Jesus outline and one commitment statement for each person.**

Jesus showed he would follow God by being baptized.

I can show I follow God by \_\_\_\_\_.

# SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

RACIAL JUSTICE DAY

LESSON 8  
15 January 2017

**Focus Scripture Passage:** John 1:29–42

**Lesson Focus:** Jesus invites us to “Come and see” what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

## Objectives

The learners will...

- understand that Jesus invites us to follow him.
- explore the Mission Initiative Invite People to Christ.

## Supplies

- Paper
- Pencils, crayons, or markers
- Building blocks (optional)
- Index cards or pieces of paper with statements written on them (see below)

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 1:29–42 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 33, available through Herald House.

Before class, hide index cards or pieces of paper around the room. On each card, write a statement about a blessing of discipleship. Starting with “Because I follow Jesus,” statements might include:

...I know God is always with me.

...I am part of a community of disciples.

...I have peace in my heart.

...I can tell others about Jesus.

...I can be a blessing to others.

...I can give generously.

...I have the love of God in my heart.

...I know all people have worth.

...I want to help others.

## 1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson

(15% of total lesson time)

Play Follow the Leader. Children walk in line behind a leader. Everyone should copy the actions of the leader.

**Say:** Today’s scripture story is about the first disciples who decided to follow Jesus. Today, Jesus still invites us to follow him as disciples.

## 2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

(35% of total lesson time)

**Say:** Our scripture story today begins on the day after Jesus was baptized. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. The next day, John saw Jesus and told everyone Jesus is the Son of God. A day later, John was standing with two of his

friends. Jesus walked by, and John said, “Look, there is the Lamb of God!”

- What do you think John meant? (*John wanted to tell everyone that Jesus was God’s son.*)

The two disciples started to follow Jesus. Jesus saw them following him, and he asked them, “What are you looking for?” They answered by asking him, “Where are you staying?” Jesus said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him all day. Later, they would tell others about Jesus, and those people would follow Jesus, too.

This scripture passage takes place at a time when just a few people followed Jesus Christ. Now there are over two billion people in the world who are Christians! How do you think all of those people learned about Jesus and decided to follow him?

Most people start going to church or learn about Jesus because someone they know invited them. In the scripture

passage today, John told others about Jesus. They followed Jesus; then they told more people about Jesus. Just as Jesus said, "Come and see," in today's scripture passage, Jesus invites us to "come and see" what it means to follow him.

### **3 RESPOND**

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

One of our Mission Initiatives in Community of Christ is Invite People to Christ. Because we have experienced the love of Christ, we want to share it with others! Provide paper and crayons, pencils, or markers. Invite children to create cards inviting a friend or family member to church. Have the children share their cards and tell about someone they would like to invite to church and why.

**Say:** Inviting people to church is one way to help others learn about Jesus. What are some other ways you can invite someone to learn about Jesus?

### **4 SEND**

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

Invite children to find the cards or papers with statements about discipleship that have been hidden around the room. When they find a card, they should say, "Come and see!" Other children should gather around them as they read (with help, if needed) the card to the group. Discuss the blessings the children have experienced as disciples.



### **Going Deeper**

Discuss what it means to follow Jesus. What challenges might you face when following Jesus? What blessings might you experience by following Jesus?

Play Amoeba Tag. Two children are "it." They hold hands. When they tag someone, that person joins them and holds hands with them. Play continues until all children are holding hands. Inviting others to Christ is like this game. No one is left out, and when a new person joins they can help "invite" even more people.

#### **Alternative activity for smaller classes:**

Work together to make a block tower. Imagine each block is a person who has been invited to Christ. Start with one block. What if that person invited two people? (Add two blocks to the base of the tower.) What if those two people each invited two people? (Add four blocks to the base of the tower.) Continue until the tower is as tall as possible. Look how high we can reach as a community, especially when we invite others to join us!

### **5 BLESS**

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

Offer a "popcorn prayer." Invite children to "pop" up with the name of someone they could invite to church. Say a prayer of blessing and thanks.

# THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

LESSON 9  
22 January 2017

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Matthew 4:12–23/ 4:11–22 IV

**Lesson Focus:** All Are Called to follow Jesus as disciples.

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- hear the story of Jesus calling the disciples to follow him and be fishers of people.
- learn what it means to “fish for people.”
- know that All Are Called to follow Jesus as disciples.

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 4:12–23 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 34, available through Herald House.

## Supplies

- Images of people (outlines available with this lesson) with phrases written on back
- A stick or dowel for each child
- String or yarn
- Fish shapes (available with this lesson)
- Hole punch
- Crayons or pencils
- Fishing net (optional)
- Colorful yarn cut into six-inch pieces

## 1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson

*(15% of total lesson time)*

Print images of people (end of lesson). If printer is not available, draw simple people on index cards or paper. On the back of each person, write needs people might have. For example, “I don’t feel like I have any friends,” “I am hungry,” “I am lonely,” “I don’t understand my school work,” “I don’t know who Jesus is,” “I wish I had a church family,” “I don’t feel loved,” “I wish I had a place to belong,” “I’m scared because my dad lost his job,” and “I wonder if God loves me.”

Place the people cards face up on the table, with the words facing down. Ask children if they have ever been fishing. Tell them we are going to fish for people. Invite each child to choose a “person” from the table and turn it over. After reading the back of the card, discuss how we could help that person.

In our scripture passage today, Jesus invites his disciples to follow him and become fishers of people. We will explore what that means for us today.

## 2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

*(35% of total lesson time)*

Read the story of Jesus calling the disciples, adapted from Matthew 4:12–23:

One day, Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee. He saw two brothers, Peter and Andrew, trying to catch fish. Jesus asked them, “Are you catching any fish?” They said, “No, not very many.” Then Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” Right away, Peter and Andrew left their nets and followed Jesus. Then they found two other brothers named James and John. James and John were fishing with their father Zebedee. Jesus called to James and John, and they immediately left their father and followed Jesus.

Discussion questions:

- What did Jesus mean when he said, “I will make you fish for people”?
- Do you think it was hard for them to follow Jesus? Why?

- Peter, Andrew, James, and John became disciples of Jesus. That means they were Jesus' followers and special helpers. What worries or fears do you think the disciples had as they started to follow Jesus?

### Game: Follow the Leader

Invite children to play Follow the Leader. One person gets to be the leader. **Ask:** Who was the leader in our Bible story today? (*Jesus*) The others will be the followers. **Ask:** Who followed Jesus in the story today? (*Peter, Andrew, James, and John*) The leader leads others in a line around the room. Followers mimic the leader's motions and actions.

## 3 RESPOND

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

**Say:** Jesus called the disciples to follow him. This means he invited them to follow him and help him with his work. In Community of Christ, one of our Enduring Principles is All Are Called. This means in Community of Christ we believe everyone is invited to follow Jesus and help with Jesus' work. Everyone! That means each of us in this room is called to be a disciple of Jesus and to help with Jesus' work. Jesus did not call only famous people to do his work. He called normal, everyday people.

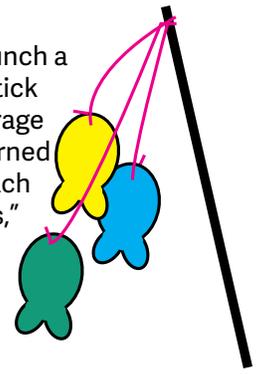
- Do you think the disciples were worried that they weren't special enough to follow Jesus?
- Like the disciples, do you ever worry that you don't know how to help Jesus?
- What does this story tell us about whom God calls?

**Say:** When we started our time together today, we talked about ways we could help people in need. We were being fishers of people! We were helping people know God's love. Each of us is called to share God's love with the world. It is not always easy to follow Jesus. Like the disciples who had to leave their boats and nets and families behind, we have to leave some things behind if we follow Jesus.

- What things do we need to give up or leave behind to follow Jesus?
- How does following Jesus make us give up our way of doing things?

### Craft: Fishing Poles

Help children cut out fish shapes, punch a hole in each fish, and tie them to a stick with a piece of string or yarn. Encourage children to write something they learned from today's scripture passage on each fish. For example, "I can follow Jesus," "All Are Called," "We can fish for people," or "I can help others."



## 4 SEND

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

### Project: Create a Prayer Net

Hang a fishing net on a wall of the classroom. Provide pieces of colorful yarn cut into six-inch-long pieces. Explain that this prayer net is a place where the children can tie a piece of yarn to the net to represent a prayer. Perhaps it is a prayer for help following Jesus, a prayer for help as they "fish" for people, or a different prayer. It can even be an unspoken prayer. Allow time for each child to say a prayer aloud or silently and to tie a piece of yarn to the net. The net can be left up for a short time, or it can become a permanent part of the classroom. Remind children that prayer is one way we draw closer to God.

**Note:** Adapt the project according to available supplies and meeting space. You may choose to create a prayer wall with fish shapes, or allow time for children to offer prayers aloud or silently.

## 5 BLESS

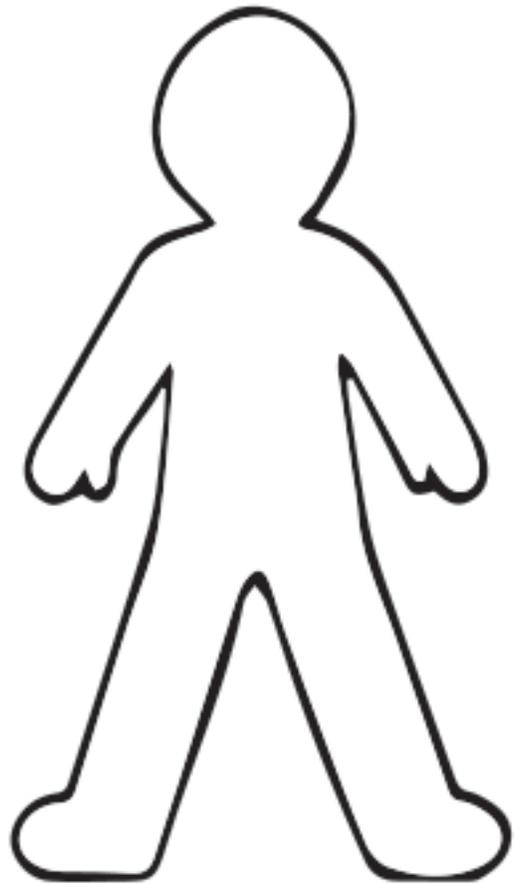
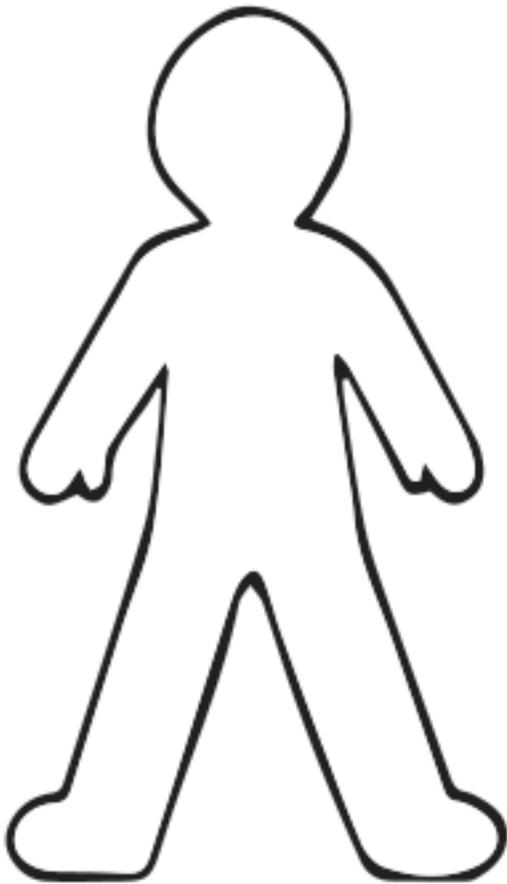
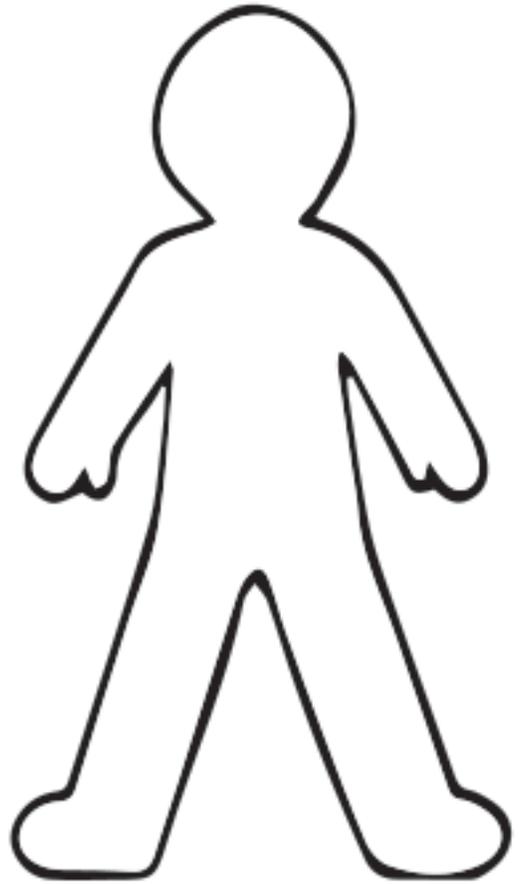
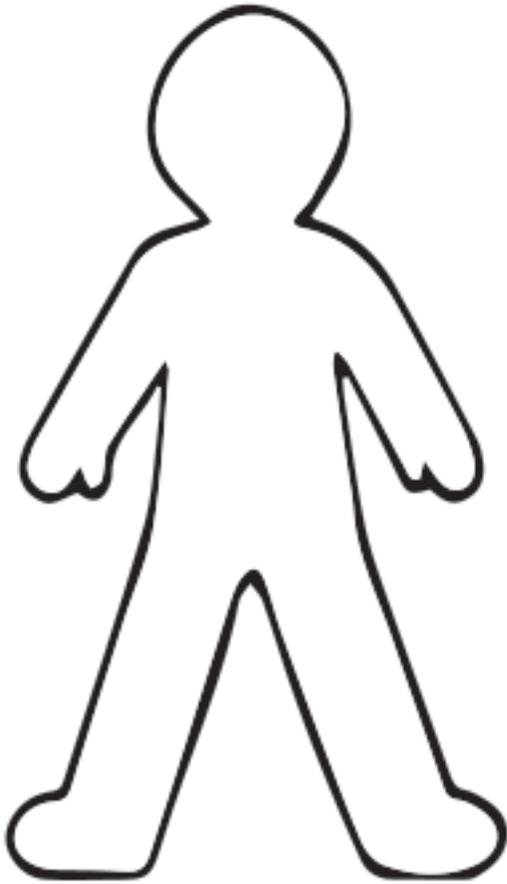
Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope  
(5% of total lesson time)

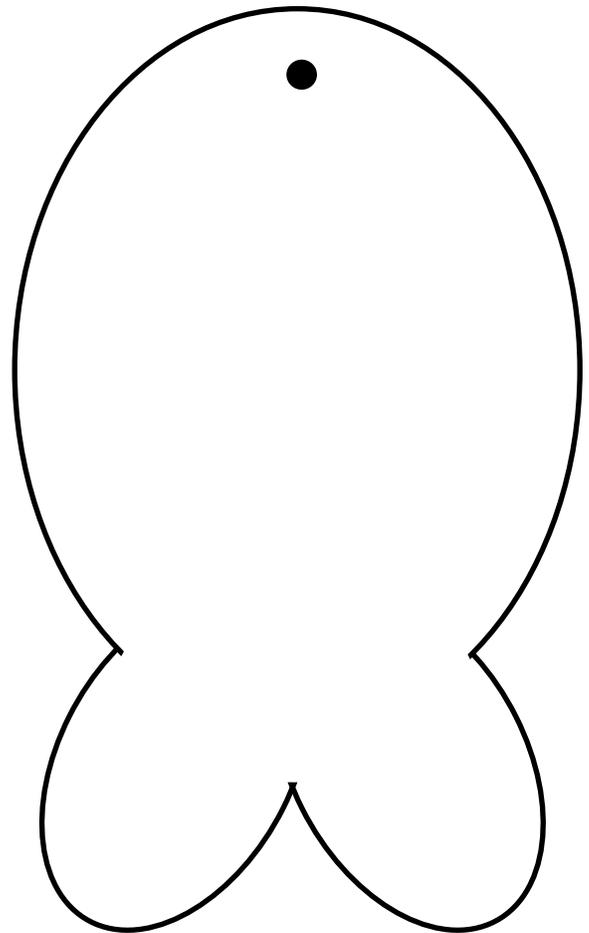
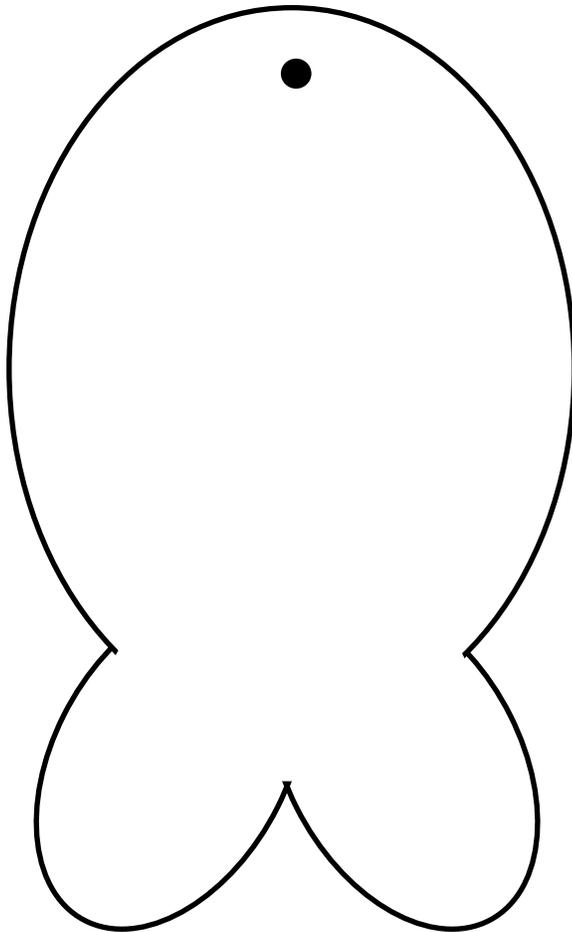
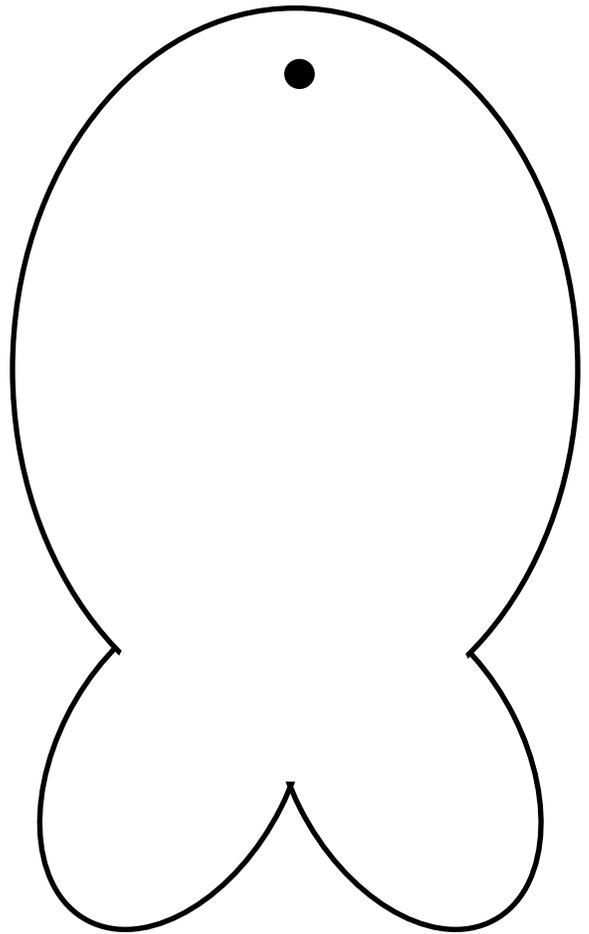
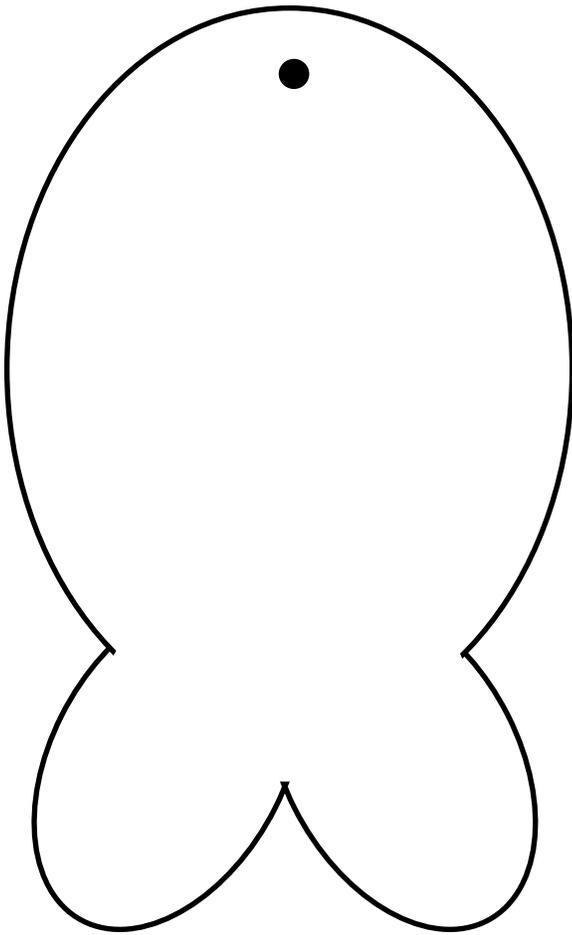
### Prayer:

Dear God, Thank you for calling all people to be fishers of people. Thank you for seeing what is special about each of us. Help us to give up the things that keep us from following Jesus. Please help us to see people who need us, so we can share God's love with them.

Give each child a chance to say a prayer beginning with "Thank you for..." or "Please help me..."

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.





# FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

LESSON 10  
29 January 2017

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Matthew 5:1–12

**Lesson Focus:** Jesus teaches about the Beatitudes.

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- explain the meaning of the Beatitudes.
- understand that God's blessings are for all people (Worth of All Persons).

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Matthew 5:1–12 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 35, available through Herald House.

## Supplies

- A piece of white paper and a white crayon for each child
- Watercolor paints
- A small toy
- An assortment of cardboard boxes and tubes, chenille stems, sticks, buttons, glue, foil, tape, and other craft items
- A small stone

## 1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson  
(15% of total lesson time)

Invite each child to use a white crayon to draw a picture of a blessing in his or her life. Of course, the drawing will not show up very well on white paper. Sometimes the blessings in our lives are hard to see, or we don't notice them. Help children paint over their drawings with watercolor paint. The drawing will show through. When we look at our blessings as God's gifts, we can see them more clearly. Our scripture passage today is about God's blessings.

## 2 ENGAGE

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

**Say:** In our scripture passage today, Jesus gave a talk called the Sermon on the Mount. Many people consider this to be one of the most important of Jesus' teachings. Matthew 5:1–12 is a part of the Sermon on the Mount called the Beatitudes. The word beatitude means "supreme blessedness." Jesus is telling people how they are blessed.

Jesus' words in the Beatitudes tell us about the good news of God's kingdom.

Read Matthew 5:1–12.

Discuss each blessing; then invite children to act out the blessing. For example:

Blessed are the poor in spirit (those who recognize dependence on God's grace), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. *(Have a child pretend to pray happily.)*

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. *(Have one child act sad and have another child comfort him.)*

Blessed are the meek (humble, selfless), for they will inherit the earth. *(Have a child pretend to let someone cut in front of them in line.)*

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. *(Have a group of children act out standing up to a bully to protect a friend.)*

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. *(Have a child pretend to help someone who is hurt or pretend to help a stray animal.)*

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

*(Have a child pretend to find a lost toy and return it to its owner instead of keeping it for himself.)*

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. *(Have a child pretend to solve a disagreement with a friend, such as arguing over a toy and deciding to take turns.)*

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. *(Have a group of children act out a scene in which one child is teased for befriending another child who was alone.)*



### Going Deeper

Discuss times children have felt blessed in times of struggle or hardship. Discuss how 2 Corinthians 12:9 is similar to or different from the Beatitudes: "but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness. So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

## 3 RESPOND

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

### Activity: Invent a Blessing

Gather an assortment of cardboard boxes and tubes, chenille stems, sticks, buttons, glue, foil, tape, and other craft items. Challenge children to invent something that would be a blessing to someone. These can be make-believe objects, like a machine that cooks meals for the homeless. Or they can represent real objects such as a car for delivering food to the elderly or a broom for cleaning the church. Share ideas with each other. Discuss how students can be a blessing to others.

**Note:** This activity can be done by drawing inventions or by using imagination to describe an invention that would be a blessing to people in their community.

## 4 SEND

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

Gather children in a circle.

**Say:** One of the Enduring Principles of Community of Christ is Worth of All Persons. The Beatitudes tell us that blessed are those who want to live differently and honor the Worth of All Persons fully—they will be satisfied by this goal in life.

Tell children to think of a person they know who might not feel that they are of worth to God. Pass a small stone or other object around the circle. When children receive the stone, they can say the name of the person (or think about the person) before passing the stone to the next child.

Say a prayer, such as "Lord, please help these people know that they are blessed and loved by God. Thank you for letting us know that you love everyone. Amen."

## 5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope  
*(5% of total lesson time)*

Go on a walking prayer of blessing. Take children on a walk around the church. Invite children to listen quietly and walk in rhythm to the blessings as you read them:

Blessed are the gentle children, for they will receive the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are the sad and hurt children, for their hurt will begin to heal.

Blessed are the shy children, for they will receive God's good gifts.

Blessed are the kids hungry for God, for they will know God as a friend.

Blessed are the kind, loving kids, for they will receive love and kindness.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God at work.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they are called children of God.

Blessed are those who are teased, for they will receive everything God has promised.

Repeat these blessings as necessary for the walk.

# FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

LESSON 11  
5 February 2017

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Matthew 5:13–20/ 5:15–22 IV

**Lesson Focus:** Jesus teaches us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- discover the meaning of Jesus' teaching about being the salt and the light.
- learn how Community of Christ Mission Initiatives help us live Christ's mission.

## Supplies

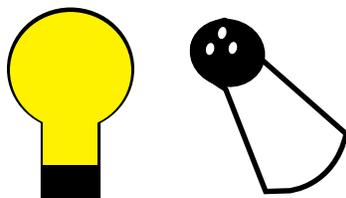
- Drawing or picture of a salt shaker and a light bulb with the words "Be These"
- Two bowls of popcorn: one with salt and one without
- Napkins or small cups for popcorn
- Small tea lights: one for Engage activity and one for each child for the Send activity (optional)
- Lighter or matches
- Bowl or glass large enough to cover a tea light (NOT a paper or styrofoam bowl) (optional)
- Salt dough: (optional)
  - 1 cup salt
  - 2 cups white flour
  - 1 cup warm waterMix ingredients well. Recipe can be doubled or tripled.
- Five pieces of paper, each with the name of a Mission Initiative written on it
- Tray or baking sheet (optional)
- Salt (optional)

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Matthew 5:13–20 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 36, available through Herald House.

## 1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson  
(15% of total lesson time)

Show a picture or drawing of a salt shaker and a light bulb with the words "Be These." Ask: What does this mean? What do you know about salt and light? Today we are going to learn why Jesus tells us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.



## 2 ENGAGE

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

If possible, let children taste some popcorn with no salt on it. Ask them to describe how the popcorn tastes. Then give them some salted popcorn. Ask them to compare. Which popcorn did they like better?

**Note:** If popcorn and salt are not available, begin by reading the following scripture passage.

Read Matthew 5:13. "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot."

We know salt makes food taste better, but there are more than 14,000 different uses for salt. Tell children about some of these. (<http://www.maldonsalt.co.uk/About-Salt-The-many-uses-of-Salt.html>)

- Salt can make bee stings hurt less.
- Salt is used to make plastic, paper, and many other products.
- Humans and animals depend on salt to live.

Ask children, “What do you think Jesus meant when he said we were the ‘salt of the earth?’” (*If salt is useful and makes life better, Jesus is saying we need to be the salt of the earth by spreading God’s love and making the world a better place.*)

Light a tea light (small candle). Ask children what we use candles for. We might use them for light, heat, beauty, or church rituals. Ask children what will happen if you put the candle under a bowl or glass. Demonstrate. The light will go out. Candles are supposed to give off light, but if we cover them up, they can’t stay lit.

Read Matthew 5:14–16: “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

**Say:** Jesus tells us that because we are his disciples, we are supposed to be the light of the world. This means we are supposed to let our light shine before others. Our light is God’s love that is in us. How can we let the light of God’s love shine for others?

**Optional activity:** Invite children to use a piece of salt dough to create something that shows how they can be the salt of the earth or the light of the world. For example, they can create a can of soup to represent sharing food with the needy, or they could make a representation of people who are peacefully solving a problem.

If salt dough is not available, children can illustrate their ideas with modeling clay, by drawing, or by acting or role playing.

## 3 RESPOND

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

In Community of Christ, we are all disciples who are trying to bring flavor to the world (like salt), and to share the light of God with the world. We have Mission Initiatives to help us find ways we can live the mission of Jesus Christ.

The five Mission Initiatives:

- Invite People to Christ—Christ’s mission of evangelism

- Abolish Poverty, End Suffering—Christ’s mission of compassion
- Pursue Peace on Earth—Christ’s mission of justice and peace
- Develop Disciples to Serve—Equip individuals for Christ’s mission
- Experience Congregations in Mission—Equip congregations for Christ’s mission

Hang five signs, each with the name of a Mission Initiative, around the room.

**Game:** The teacher reads a statement. Children stand under the Mission Initiative that they believe most closely fits the statement. For some statements, there is more than one right answer and there are no wrong answers in this game!

Statements for teacher to read:

- Collect food for a food pantry.
- Solve a problem with a friend in a peaceful way.
- Give money to charity.
- Help tell a Bible story at church.
- Help collect the offering at church.
- Invite a friend to church.
- Help at a community carnival at church.
- Donate school supplies to children in need.
- Give to Outreach International.
- Clean your church.
- Say a prayer at church.
- Pray for the leaders of your country.
- Tell someone about your church.
- Volunteer at a soup kitchen.
- Speak up for someone who is being treated unfairly.



### Going Deeper

The Mission Initiatives are based on Luke 4:18–19, where Jesus proclaimed his mission when he read from the writings of Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” In this scripture passage, Jesus proclaims his mission of evangelism, compassionate ministries, and peacemaking. Invite children to read this passage and discuss how the Mission Initiatives align with the mission of Jesus as stated in Luke 4:18–19.

# 4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived

*(10% of total lesson time)*

**Say:** As followers and disciples, we are called into the world to bring flavor like salt, to shine where there is darkness, and to be signal communities that stand for a new way of living life (*Sermon & Class Helps, Year A, p. 36*). The five Mission Initiatives help members of Community of Christ find ways to be the salt and the light!

Sing "This Little Light of Mine."

Have each child light a tea light and say something they will do this week to be the salt and the light, or to live the mission of Jesus Christ.

# 5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope

*(5% of total lesson time)*

Close with a Salt Tray Prayer. Pour salt on a tray or baking sheet. Invite children to take turns using a finger to write or draw something in the salt that represents a prayer. They may say the prayer aloud as well if they choose.

**Alternative Activity:** Sand can be used in place of salt for this prayer activity, or children can offer prayers in silence or aloud.

# SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPHIPHANY

YOUTH SUNDAY

LESSON 12  
12 February 2017

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Matthew 5:21–26

**Lesson Focus:** Jesus teaches about anger and reconciliation.

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- hear about Jesus' teachings about anger and reconciliation.
- use strategies to control their anger.
- use the Stop–Think–Peace strategy to solve problems peacefully.

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Matthew 5:21–37 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 38, available through Herald House.

## Supplies

- Bubble solution and bubble wands (optional)
- Two balloons per child (Use latex-free balloons in case of latex allergies. Do not use water balloons, as they tend to break easily.)
- Flour, dry beans, dry rice, or sand for filling stress balls
- Empty water bottle for each child: Cut off the top to use as a funnel.
- Ball or other toy

## 1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson

*(15% of total lesson time)*

Invite children to spend a few minutes blowing bubbles.

**Ask:** How do you feel when you blow bubbles. Does it help you feel calm or peaceful? Some people blow bubbles to help themselves calm down when they are feeling angry. Today we are going to learn what Jesus says about being angry and making things right when we have a problem with someone.

**Alternative Activity:** Lead children in some calming stretches. Lead them in counting to ten slowly as they take slow breaths. Discuss how they feel when they stretch and take deep breaths. Stretching and breathing help some people feel calm when they are angry or upset.

## 2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

*(35% of total lesson time)*

**Say:** In our scripture passage this week (Matthew 5:21–26), Jesus is preaching. Like last week, this is part of the

Sermon on the Mount, which is considered one of Jesus' most important sermons. In this passage, Jesus teaches about anger and disagreements with others.

He says: "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire."

Jesus is saying not only is it wrong to murder, but it is also wrong to stay angry or say hurtful things to someone. Then he tells us what we need to do about it:

"So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny."

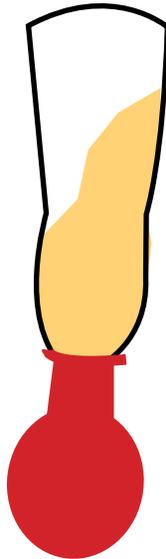
Here, Jesus is saying we need to reconcile with our brothers, sisters, and friends. Reconcile means to make

the relationship right again or to fix the problem. Today we are going to talk about a couple of things you can do to calm down when you are angry and to make things right with someone when you have an argument or problem.

Sometimes it is hard to calm down when we are feeling angry. We are going to make stress balls. Stress balls are supposed to help you calm down. You can squeeze them when you are feeling upset or angry, and when you start to feel better, you will be better able to work through a problem you are having with someone.

### Making stress balls:

- Give each child two balloons and the top of a water bottle (to be used as a funnel).
- Stretch the balloon. Fit the balloon over the funnel. Help the child fill the balloon with flour, dry beans, dry rice, or sand.
- When the balloon is full, help the child remove the balloon from the funnel and tie the balloon.
- Cut the tip off of the second balloon, and wrap the second balloon around the first balloon. This extra layer prevents breakage and hides the opening of the first balloon.



## 3 RESPOND

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

**Say:** Jesus says we need to find ways to control our anger. He also says we need to reconcile, or make things right, with people we have a problem with. In Community of Christ, we believe in the Worth of All Persons. That means all people are loved equally by God. God wants all people to have right relationships (*We Share*, by Monica Bradford, p. 12). One of the Mission Initiatives is Pursue Peace on Earth. Peace and right relationships are very important in Community of Christ, and our scripture passage today is just one example of Jesus talking about how important those things are to him, too.

Introduce children to a strategy that can help them have peaceful relationships with their friends and families. It is called Stop–Think–Peace (© Peace Pavilion, Independence, Missouri).

Invite two children to act out a scenario in which one child is playing with a ball (or any toy) and another says,

“Give me the ball. I want to play with it.” Have the children pretend to argue over the ball.

**Say:** It sounds like you need a peaceful solution to this problem. Let’s try something else. Let’s try using Stop–Think–Peace! The first step is to stop. If you are arguing with a friend, it’s time to stop and take a deep breath.

Show children the hand signal for “Stop.” (*Hold a hand up in front of you.*)

**Say:** The next step is to think. Think about some possible ways to solve the problem.

Show children the hand signal for “Think.” (*Point to your head with one finger.*)

**Say:** What are some possible ways these two friends could work out their problem? (*They could take turns with the ball, play with a different toy together, or play a game together with the ball.*)

**Say:** The next step is peace! These friends need to choose a peaceful solution to their problem that makes everyone happy.

Show children the hand signal for “Peace.” (*Make a peace sign by putting up two fingers in the shape of a V.*)

Ask the children who are acting out the scenario which peaceful solution they would like to choose. Have the children start the scene over. This time, when they start to argue, have the class say, “Stop! Think!” Have the children think of a few solutions to the problem. Then have the class say, “Peace!” The children acting out the scenario can act out the peaceful solution.

If time allows, other groups of children can act out other scenarios. For each scenario, have the children pretend to argue, then have them use Stop–Think–Peace to solve their problem. Possible scenarios:

- There is only one cookie left at snack time.
- Children are lining up and can’t agree on who can go first.
- Children are playing a board game and can’t agree on who should have the first turn.
- Children can’t agree on what game to play.

Review the hand signals for Stop–Think–Peace.

**Say:** Jesus said we should be reconciled with our brothers and sisters. This means we need to work out our problems peacefully with everyone. In Community of Christ, we believe in Pursuing Peace on Earth. Stop–Think–Peace is one way we can Pursue Peace!

# 4 SEND

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

Remind children to use their stress balls if they are feeling angry, and to use Stop–Think–Peace to solve problems. Another helpful strategy for controlling anger is deep breathing. Invite children to find a comfortable spot in the room to sit or lie. Count to ten slowly as they take deep, calming breaths.

# 5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,  
blessing, and hope  
*(5% of total lesson time)*

Say a prayer for the relationships in the lives of the children in your class. Pray for God’s help as children try to control their anger and solve problems peacefully. Allow children to blow bubbles one more time before they leave.

# SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPHIPHANY

LESSON 13  
19 February 2017

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Matthew 5:38–48

**Lesson Focus:** Jesus teaches about loving your enemies.

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- explain what Jesus says about loving our enemies.
- describe how an act of kindness could turn an enemy into a friend.
- pray for their enemies.

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 5:38–48 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 39, available through Herald House.

## Supplies

- Strips of paper with quotes about enemies (available with this lesson)
- Beanbag, small ball, or wad of paper (optional)
- Three baskets, labeled “Family,” “Friends,” and “Enemies” (optional)
- *The Recess Queen* by Alexis O’Neill (ISBN: 9780439206372) (optional)
- Chenille stems
- Beads

## 1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson  
(15% of total lesson time)

Print quotes and cut into strips with one quote per strip. Place the strips around the room. Invite children to take turns finding a strip and reading the quote on the strip. Discuss:

- What do you think the quote means?
- What do these quotes have in common? (*All are about how we treat our enemies or those who hurt us.*)

## 2 ENGAGE

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

**Say:** Today we are going to learn what Jesus says about how to respond to people who hurt us. Sometimes we call people our enemies if they hurt us.

Read aloud “Change Your Enemy into a Friend” from the *Lectionary Story Bible, Year A*, p. 65, or Matthew 5:38–48. Jesus tells us it’s not enough to love your neighbor; you need to love your enemy and pray for those who hurt you. That’s a pretty tough commandment!

**Ask:** Why do you think Jesus tells us to pray for our enemies? How could that change your enemy? How could it change your heart?

## Game: Love Your Enemies Beanbag Toss (optional)

Place three baskets or buckets at varying distances. Label the closest one “Family,” the next one “Friends,” and the farthest one “Enemies.” Let children take turns tossing a beanbag, small ball, or wad of paper into the basket. Which was easiest? Which was hardest? Children should recognize that this illustrates that it is easier to love our friends and family than to love our enemies.

## 3 RESPOND

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

**Say:** It is difficult to love our enemies. Let’s read a book that gives us some ideas how that might work.

Read aloud *The Recess Queen* by Alexis O’Neill. If the book is not available, tell a story about a school where there is a bully on the playground. The bully pushes kids on the playground, always goes first, and rules the school. Everyone is afraid to go near her. Then a new girl comes to school. The new girl doesn’t know about the bully, so she asks the bully to play with her. The bully has so much fun

playing with the new girl, she starts to be kind to the other children. Sometimes it just takes one act of kindness to soften someone's heart and turn an enemy into a friend. Invite children to discuss times they have seen an act of kindness change a situation.

In Community of Christ, one of our Enduring Principles is Blessings of Community. We think it is really important to take care of each other and have compassion for people. "True community includes compassion for and solidarity with the poor, marginalized, and oppressed" (*Sharing in Community of Christ, 3rd Edition*, p. 13). Jesus even wants us to invite our enemies into community, even when that feels difficult.

- How does loving your enemy show God's love to others?



### *Going Deeper*

Sometimes an enemy is not just someone you have arguments with. It could also be someone who is different from you, someone you are afraid of, or someone you have judged wrongly because you don't know them well. How can we show God's love to all people? How could our community be strengthened by their presence?

## 4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived

*(10% of total lesson time)*

Provide children with chenille stems and beads. Invite them to create something that reminds them to love their enemies. They might create a "person" to represent someone they want to pray for. They might create a bracelet with colored beads that represent prayers. Encourage them to be creative and make something that will remind them of today's lesson. Have them share their creation with the group.

## 5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope

*(5% of total lesson time)*

End with a musical chairs blessing. Place enough chairs for each child in a circle. Play some music. When the music stops, children sit in the nearest chair. Pause for a moment and invite children to silently pray for an "enemy" (someone who has been unkind to them or someone they have been unkind to). Repeat several times.

Quotes

“If anyone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other also.”

—Jesus

“You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.”

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.  
Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Love is the only force capable of turning an enemy into a friend.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

“If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work  
with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.”

—Nelson Mandela

“We must reach out our hand in friendship and dignity both to  
those who would befriend us and those who would be our enemy.”

—Arthur Ashe

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

—Jesus

“If anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your  
cloak as well.” —Jesus

“If anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile.”

—Jesus

“Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone  
who wants to borrow from you.” —Jesus

# TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY

LESSON 14  
26 February 2017

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Matthew 17:1–9

**Lesson Focus:** Jesus is transfigured. God wants us to listen to Jesus.

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- hear the story of the Transfiguration.
- understand that God was showing how important Jesus is.
- understand that we should listen to Jesus.

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 17:1–9 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 43, available through Herald House.

## Supplies

- Newsprint, poster board or chalkboard, marker or chalk
- Basket or bucket
- Recycled paper for making paper wads
- Helicopter pattern and paper clip, one for each child (print helicopters prior to class) [https://www.exploratorium.edu/science\\_explorer/roto-copter.html](https://www.exploratorium.edu/science_explorer/roto-copter.html)
- Paper for making paper airplanes (optional)

## 1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson  
(15% of total lesson time)

Invite children to sit quietly and listen. What sounds do they hear? Next, ask them to close their eyes as you make some noises and have them guess the noise. You might crinkle a piece of paper, tap a pencil, snap your fingers, or shut a book. Tell the children that today we will learn about how God wants us to listen to Jesus.

## 2 ENGAGE

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

Tell the story of the Transfiguration. If you choose, you might invite the children to act out the roles of Jesus, Moses, Elijah, Peter, James, and John. Or you could use puppets or small dolls to demonstrate the story.

Matthew 17:1–9, adapted:

The disciples, Jesus’ followers, had seen Jesus perform many miracles. He healed people. He brought the dead back to life. He even walked on water. So the

disciples knew Jesus was pretty amazing. But they were about to see what God thought about Jesus.

Jesus led his friends Peter, James, and John up a high mountain. When they got to the top, something amazing happened. Jesus’ face began to shine like the sun, and his face became amazingly white. Suddenly, someone very important appeared by Jesus. It was Moses. Moses is one of the most important people from the Old Testament. He is the one who received the Ten Commandments from God. On Jesus’ other side, another important person appeared. It was Elijah. Elijah was also an important prophet from the Old Testament. Moses and Elijah were talking to Jesus.

Peter was so amazed. He wanted Moses and Elijah to stay, and he wanted this wonderful moment to last forever. He said, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was talking, a bright cloud came down and covered them all. Then they heard a voice that said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!”

**Ask:** Who do you think was talking? The disciples must have known it was God, because they became afraid and fell down to the ground. Jesus walked over to them and

touched them. He said, "Get up. Don't be afraid." When they looked up, Moses and Elijah were gone.

Discuss:

- Why did God want the disciples to see Jesus talking to Moses and Elijah? (To show that Jesus was just as important, that he was also a prophet)
- Why did Peter want to build dwellings on the mountain? (*He wanted the moment to last—just like sometimes we want special moments to last.*)
- What did God say about Jesus? (*This is my Son; I love him; I am pleased with him.*)
- What important thing did God say the disciples should do? (*Listen to him*)

God wants us to listen to Jesus. Play this game to practice listening.

Send one child out of the room. Hide a small object in the room. When the child returns, he or she tries to find the object by listening to clapping clues given by the rest of the group. If the child is close to the hidden object, the group claps quickly and loudly. If the child is far from the hidden object, the group claps softly and slowly. Let several children have a turn.

- Was it difficult to find the object based on the way the group clapped?
- Is it sometimes difficult to listen?
- When can it be hard to listen to Jesus? (*when others are telling us to do other things*)
- How do we listen to Jesus? (*prayer, meditation, worship, scripture study, the "still, small voice" in our thoughts that leads us*)

### 3 RESPOND

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

In today's scripture passage, Peter wanted to build houses and stay on the mountaintop forever. Can you think of a time when you were very happy and you wanted that feeling to last forever?

Even though Peter wanted to stay on the mountaintop, Jesus had different plans for him. Jesus wanted Peter to go down from the mountaintop so he could serve others and tell others about Jesus. That's what Jesus wants us to do, too. We call it Christ's mission. Mission means special tasks that help people. Jesus' mission is to bring good news and hope to those who need it and to help people who are poor, captive, sick, or oppressed (*Of Water and Spirit*, p. 107). Jesus needs us to help live Christ's mission! The mission statement of Community of Christ states, "We proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of

joy, hope, love, and peace." Write the mission statement on a large piece of paper or chalkboard.

### Game: Christ's Mission

Supplies: basket or bucket, wads of paper (*recycle when finished*)

The disciples had to go down from the mountaintop to live Christ's mission.

Designate one side of the room to be the "mountaintop." The other side of the room is the "foot of the mountain." Place the basket on this side of the room and scatter paper wads on the floor surrounding the basket.

Divide children into two groups. Both start on the mountaintop side of the room. They are the "disciples." At your signal, they race to the other side, grab a paper wad from the floor, say a word or phrase from the mission statement, and put the paper in the basket. They might say "joy," "hope," "love," "peace," "community," or "proclaim Jesus Christ." Gathering the paper represents gathering people into God's community. Don't have teams compete against each other. Rather, count how many pieces of paper are in the basket at the end and celebrate together!

God wants us to listen to Jesus. Jesus tells us, "Do not be afraid!" He wants us to live Christ's mission by serving others and telling others about Jesus.



### Going Deeper

Give children copies of the Mission Prayer. Discuss its meaning and encourage them to say it often:

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

### 4 SEND

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

Cut out and assemble helicopters according to directions on the website below. Invite children to write a prayer or the name of someone they want to pray for on their helicopters. Then take them to a high place (the top of a stairway, for example) and drop the helicopters, symbolic of sending prayers down from the mountaintop.

[https://www.exploratorium.edu/science\\_explorer/roto-copter.html](https://www.exploratorium.edu/science_explorer/roto-copter.html)

**Alternative activity:** Have children write the name of someone they want to pray for on a piece of paper. Help them fold the paper into a paper airplane. Let them fly the airplanes from a high place.

# 5

## BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,  
blessing, and hope

*(5% of total lesson time)*

Say a prayer for the concerns the children wrote on their helicopters or airplanes. Also pray for the children to be able to listen to Jesus and not be afraid to live Christ's mission.