



Community of Christ

# COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS

YOUTH

3 DECEMBER 2017 — 11 FEBRUARY 2018

# 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 OF ADVENT (HOPE)

LESSON 1  
3 December 2017

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Mark 13:24–37/13:38–55 IV

**Lesson Focus:** I am so excited! Guess who is coming!

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- identify the hope of Jesus from the scripture passage.
- find meaning in the Basic Beliefs of Community of Christ.
- expand their roles as disciples.

## Supplies

- Alphabet chart (end of lesson)
- Response cards—one set per student (end of lesson)
- HOPE ornaments—one per student (end of lesson)

- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition
- Bibles
- Pen or pencils
- Advent garland or hanging wreath (During Advent students will be creating ornaments to hang for each Sunday of Advent. One idea is to drape a garland and hang the ornaments off of the garland with paper clips; another would be a greenery wreath the ornaments could hang on, or even a poster wreath on which to tape the ornaments. The main purpose is for students to see and revisit their ornament[s] in the classroom each week of Advent.)

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Mark 13:24–37/13:38–55 IV in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, pp. 18–19 available through Herald House.

## 1 GATHER

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

Prior to class, make a copy of the alphabet chart at the end of the lesson.

Ask students to remember, but not share, a time when they were really excited that someone was coming to visit them (for example, Santa, relatives, or friends to their birthday party). Next ask them to think of words to describe how they were feeling in that moment. Now have the students share their “feeling words” to fill out a class alphabet chart, one word that starts with each letter of the alphabet. For difficult letters, like “X,” write a word that contains the letter. Keep the chart for later in the lesson.

Options:

- For large classes, work in groups of three or four and have each group do all letters. Keep each group’s answers separate for later in the lesson—do not try to combine.

- To complete in pairs, cut up the chart and assign a part of the alphabet to each pair. Then put the list together.

## 2 ENGAGE

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

Share with the class: Today is the start of the liturgical year where we, with many other Christians, begin with Advent to learn of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. We continue through the calendar until next Advent, when we start again.

For today, our scripture passage is Mark 13:24–37. Without any preface or preparation, jump right into the scripture and read it aloud. Students may be confused and surprised and wondering when they don’t hear any of the Nativity story but rather an end-of-times scripture.

Say: The focus for this first Sunday in Advent is HOPE.

- How do you feel about this scripture passage and our focus of HOPE? Explain your thoughts.

Let students process through their disappointment and confusion.

Let's reread the passage. (*It is helpful if they all have the words or a Bible in front of them.*) But before we start, listen and look for places in the scripture passage that convey HOPE.

Reread the passage.

- What parts of the scripture passage share HOPE for you? Jot these down to add to the alphabet chart later.

You may not have any responses and that is OK. Here are some helps for basic understanding of the scripture passage.

- Verses 24–27 of this reading describe the “signs of the times” using images and language from the Hebrew Scriptures (Isaiah 13:10, 34:4; Joel 2:10, 3:4, 15; Ezekiel 32:7–8; Daniel 7:13).
- Verses 28–31 contain a short parable of the fig tree with an image of tender, new life that is the forerunner of summer.
- Verses 32–37 can be summarized as a wakeup call.  
—*Sermon & Class Helps, Year B, pp. 18–19*

Help the students discover HOPE in the text.

- the fig tree image—Jesus is the fig tree and we have hope of his coming
- v. 31—God’s words will not ever pass away
- v. 33—keep alert—the time will come
- v. 34—be on the watch
- vv. 35, 37—keep awake

Say: It is easy to become complacent (passive or routine) in your discipleship because the text says we don’t know when he will come. But the reference to the master of the house coming should be viewed from the point of view of our alphabet chart completed at the start of class. We should be REALLY excited that Jesus is coming, even if we don’t know when!

Add the parts of the text the students relate to HOPE to the bottom of the alphabet chart.

## 3 RESPOND

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

With the class, define Advent—what it means to them. Advent is a time when we anticipate the coming of Jesus as a fulfillment of God’s promise.

Say: At the beginning of Mark’s Gospel, there is a Hebrew reference to what we in Community of Christ refer to as End Times. In our Basic Beliefs, we have a belief of the End Times.

(If your congregation has *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, the students would benefit to see the belief read directly from the book. Additionally, you can send them to the internet to find it on the church website at [www.CofChrist.org/basic-beliefs](http://www.CofChrist.org/basic-beliefs).)

We press forward together in service to God, knowing that our labor is not in vain. The future of the creation belongs to the Prince of Peace, not to those who oppress, dominate, or destroy. As we anticipate that future, we devote ourselves to seek Christ’s peace and pursue it. We do not know the day or hour of Christ’s coming but know only that God is faithful. With faith in God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, we face the future in hopeful longing, and with the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray: “Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 16

Say: Look back at the alphabet chart and the words you wrote. This is how we should be feeling after reading the passage from Mark—hopeful, longing, and excited at Christ’s coming. We can call it Hopeful Waiting.

- What stories and parables from the Bible help you feel these words about Jesus? Let students respond and share as much as time allows. Then direct them to the response cards.

### Students Respond

Lay out the response cards.

Let students pick the type of response they want to give. Allow them time to fill in the blanks, and then go around the group and let them read what they wrote. They should use words from the alphabet chart to fill in the first blank.

# 4 SEND

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

Hand out the HOPE ornaments. Have the students complete their ornaments using their response cards as guides. Then hang the HOPE ornaments in your classroom. See the supplies list for ideas of preparing for Advent.

# 5 BLESS

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

Offer a prayer for your students that they may fulfill what they wrote on their ornaments of HOPE.

Direct them to take their response cards home and hang it where they can revisit it over the next week. Invite them to use the card to share their HOPE with their families.

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>
<b>I</b>	<b>J</b>	<b>K</b>	<b>L</b>
<b>M</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>P</b>
<b>Q</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>T</b>
<b>U</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>W</b>	
<b>X</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Z</b>	

**HOPE**

I am living "thy will be done on earth" by  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.  
I can hardly wait for Christ to come again!

**HOPE**

I am living "thy will be done on earth" by  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.  
I can hardly wait for Christ to come again!

**HOPE**

I am living "thy will be done on earth" by  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.  
I can hardly wait for Christ to come again!

**HOPE**

I am living "thy will be done on earth" by  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.  
I can hardly wait for Christ to come again!

**Response Cards**

The "alphabet chart" word should go in the first blank.

Print one set more than the number of students you plan to have.

Jesus' coming makes me fell  
\_\_\_\_\_ because  
\_\_\_\_\_.  
His coming makes me realize I need to  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Jesus' coming makes me fell  
\_\_\_\_\_ because  
\_\_\_\_\_.  
His coming makes me realize I need to  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Jesus' coming makes me fell  
\_\_\_\_\_ because  
\_\_\_\_\_.  
His coming makes me realize I need to  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Jesus' coming makes me fell  
\_\_\_\_\_ because  
\_\_\_\_\_.  
His coming makes me realize I need to  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Jesus' coming makes me fell  
\_\_\_\_\_ because  
\_\_\_\_\_.  
His coming makes me realize I need to  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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Jesus' coming makes me fell  
\_\_\_\_\_ because  
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His coming makes me realize I need to  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Jesus' coming makes me fell  
\_\_\_\_\_ because  
\_\_\_\_\_.  
His coming makes me realize I need to  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Jesus' coming makes me fell  
\_\_\_\_\_ because  
\_\_\_\_\_.  
His coming makes me realize I need to  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

# SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT (PEACE)

LESSON 2  
10 December 2017

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Mark 1:1–8/1:1–6 IV

**Lesson Focus:** You are a product of the past and a maker of the future.

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- make connections from the Old Testament to the Gospel of Mark.
- deepen their understanding of repentance and sin as understood by Community of Christ.
- expand their role of disciple by understanding how to live the Enduring Principles.

## Supplies

- You Are There—one per student (end of lesson)
- Candle, matches or lighter
- Marker board, chalkboard, or poster/chart paper

- PEACE ornaments—one per student (end of lesson)
- Bibles
- Pens or pencils
- Advent garland or hanging wreath (During Advent students will be creating ornaments to hang for each Sunday of Advent. One idea is to drape a garland and hang the ornaments off of the garland with paper clips; another would be a greenery wreath the ornaments could hang on, or even a poster wreath on which to tape the ornaments. The main purpose is for students to see and revisit their ornament[s] in the classroom each week of Advent.)

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Mark 1:1–8/1:1–6 IV in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, p. 20, available through Herald House.

## 1 GATHER

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

Hand out “You Are There” to each student. Read the scenario while they follow along.

Have them write first and then share their answers to the questions at the bottom. The writing should take no more than five minutes. This is not the time for deep thinking but on the spot reaction. No discussion should take place and no judgment on what they write.

## 2 ENGAGE

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

Light the candle. Have the students focus on the flame as you read aloud the following:

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.

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:2a

If possible, leave the candle burning throughout the lesson.

Convey to the students that they are going to open the scroll from the “You Are There” story and find out what it says.

In their Bibles, turn to Mark 1. The students will be exploring this text in three parts.

Read Mark 1:1–3. Discuss.

Ask students if they have heard this passage before and if they know it is part of Isaiah’s prophecies. Help them understand that Isaiah is in the Old Testament and many parts of Isaiah are about the Messiah’s coming. This part of the reading for today helps us reach back to the past to remember God’s promises that were made to God’s people.

Encourage students to recall for a few minutes stories of the Old Testament that taught them about God’s promises. If they draw a blank, easy examples are Noah and the rainbow, Moses and the 10 commandments, David’s anointing, Samuel answering God’s call in the night, God’s promise to Abraham and Sarah and the stars in the sky.

Read Mark 1:4–6.

Discussion questions:

- Why do you think so many people wanted to hear and be baptized by John, who, by his clothing and food choices, was considered strange?
- What was he encouraging the people to do?
- Notice the people came from within and outside the city. Why did John use the words repentance and forgiveness of sin? Why do you think that was important to him?
- Why was it important for all the people to respond?

The definitions of repentance and sin as taught by Community of Christ:

Repentance: asking for forgiveness of those actions which hurt yourself or others.

—*Of Water and Spirit for Children, Facilitator’s Guide*, p. 59

Sin: God created us to be agents of love and goodness. Yet we misuse our agency individually and collectively. We take the gifts of creation and of self and turn them against God’s purposes with tragic results. Sin is the universal condition of separation and alienation from God and one another. We are in need of divine grace that alone reconciles us with God and one another.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 15

Read Mark 1:7–8.

Discussion questions:

- People want to follow the right person so their time is not wasted. Why do you think people wanted to follow John who really wasn’t leading but was instead preparing the way for someone else?
- John was up front about his purpose—to be a servant to the one he was called to serve. Why were they following a servant?

There is no right answer so let the conversation go where it may, but keep moving toward the Respond section of the lesson.

## 3 RESPOND

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

On a marker board or poster paper, draw the image below:



### Discussion

We have people in our history who prepared the way for us. Think of one person who prepared the way for you and tell us his or her name. If you want, you may briefly share how he or she prepared you in your understanding of God and Jesus.

In our present day, we are called to prepare ourselves.

- What is involved in preparing ourselves for the Lord today? (hopefully they mention baptism)
- Are repentance and confession part of that preparation?
- What other actions do we take to prepare ourselves?
- Which actions do we often emphasize? Which do we often neglect? Why do you think that is? (Offer no judgment; just encourage honest reflection.)

Say: Notice that in Mark 1:8, the people will be baptized by the Holy Spirit in the future! So let’s look toward our future with the Holy Spirit in mind.

- How do our Basic Beliefs and Enduring Principles help us work with the Holy Spirit in the rest of our lives? *(not expected to have deep discussion here, just short answers)*

Focusing on the Enduring Principle Pursuit of Peace, we expect to be “led by the Holy Spirit, working with God and others to restore peace to creation” (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 13).

We find in our Basic Beliefs that “Peace is God’s shalom... The Holy Spirit empowers us for the costly pursuit of peace and justice for all people” (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 16).

If you could see into the future, in what ways can you see yourself responding to the Holy Spirit to create God’s shalom? (Students might need to be encouraged to refrain from judging their future actions as not being “big enough” or “good enough.” Every time they participate in a conscious decision to live an Enduring Principle, which is an age-appropriate, concrete way for youth to engage, that is responding to the Holy Spirit.)

Once students have shared, invite them to listen to the following sentence (you may want to read it twice):

Jesus came to restore people to right relationships with God, others, creation, and themselves.  
—*Of Water and Spirit*, p. 31

Affirm to them that when they engage in the Enduring Principles they themselves are living as Jesus did. They are sharing the Peace of Jesus Christ.

## 4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived

*(10% of total lesson time)*

Hand out the PEACE ornaments. Have the students complete their ornaments. Then hang the PEACE ornaments in your classroom. See the supplies list for ideas of preparing for Advent.

Have them revisit their HOPE ornaments to help them recall the purpose of Advent.

## 5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope

*(5% of total lesson time)*

Have the students focus once more on the candle flame as you bless them with a promise from the past.

How beautiful are your feet: you the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”

—Isaiah 52:7, adapted

## YOU ARE THERE

Imagine you live in Galilee (a land north of the Jewish Promised Land primarily thought of as the land of Gentiles) around 70 CE. There's a war on. Some radical Jews have revolted against the empire of Rome, and Jerusalem (capital city of the Jews) is under siege (the city is surrounded, isolated, and is still being attacked). Reports are that conditions in the city are bad. People are divided. Some see God raising up leaders to push the infidels (people who don't believe in your God) from the Holy Land. Others urge submission to Rome as the path to peace and security. Everyone is anxious, caught between resentment of heavy-handed soldiers and fear of extremist guerrillas (people who are not members of a government's military or police force). In addition, Emperor Nero died last year, and there is unrest (no functioning government) in Rome. Four men have been acclaimed emperor, only to be assassinated. Now General Vespasian, who is besieging Jerusalem, has been crowned Emperor. What does this mean for the war? Your world is in turmoil.

Your village population is mixed, Jews and Gentiles, and tensions are high. Neighbors fear one another. Families are divided. One small group refuses to fight on either side. They are followers of a Galilean rabbi named Jesus, who was crucified for insurrection (opposing authority) about 40 years ago. Roman loyalists suspect them of continuing the alleged (unproven) insurrection of Jesus. The rabbis call the group heretics (a group that is in disagreement with Jewish teachings and beliefs), and the Zealot rebels (Jewish group of rebel fighters) dismiss Jesus' example as ineffective against the Roman Empire's oppression. You are intrigued (interested and deeply curious) by their claim that Jesus' crucifixion is a symbol of God's good news for Israel and Rome. Someone hands you a scroll with a title scribbled on it, "The Beginning of the Good News about Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God."

—adapted from "Theological Perspective,"  
*Feasting on the Word*, Year B, Vol. 1, pp. 44, 46

What do you do and why?

What questions do you want answered before you make a decision?



I am a preparer for Jesus.

Throughout my life I will share the peace of Jesus Christ by

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you, God, for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

# THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (LOVE)

LESSON 3  
17 December 2017

**Focus Scripture Passage:** John 1:6–8, 19–28/1:6–8, 20–28 IV

**Lesson Focus:** To what will you testify?

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- use the metaphor of light to interpret the mission statement of Community of Christ.
- adapt the mission statement of Community of Christ to a personal mission statement.
- use their mission statements to witness and invite people to Christ.

## Supplies

- Notecards or sticky notes
- Marker board, chalkboard, or poster/chart paper

- LOVE ornaments—one per student (end of lesson)
- Bibles
- Pens or pencils
- Advent garland or hanging wreath (During Advent students will be creating ornaments to hang for each Sunday of Advent. One idea is to drape a garland and hang the ornaments off of the garland with paper clips; another would be a greenery wreath the ornaments could hang on, or even a poster wreath on which to tape the ornaments. The main purpose is for students to see and revisit their ornament[s] in the classroom each week of Advent.)

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 1:6–8, 19–28 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, pp. 21–22, available through Herald House.

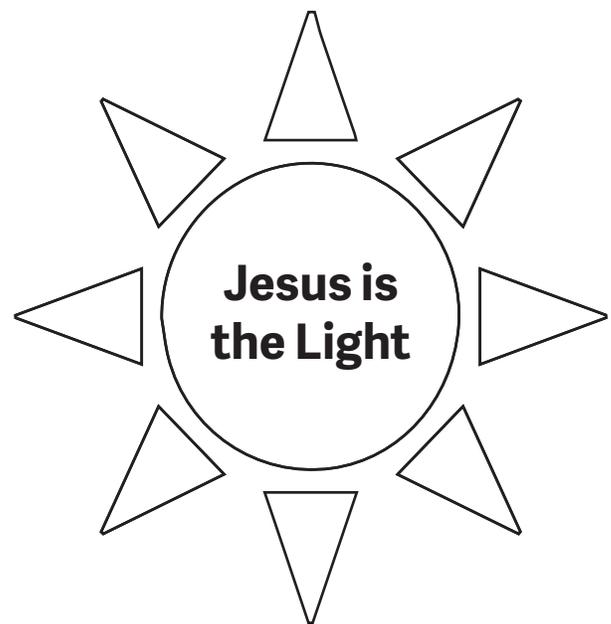
## 1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson

(15% of total lesson time)

Before class, on poster paper or on the marker board, draw a sun with rays, placing the words “Jesus Is the Light” in the center. Create question starter cards for your students on index cards or sticky notes with a question word on each one (example—would, will, how, what, or why). Pass out the cards to the students and have them generate questions on the topic “Jesus Is the Light.”

Model the process by posing a question you have about “Jesus Is the Light” such as, “What would Jesus be called if he had come when light bulbs and electricity were already a normal part of life?” Post your question on a ray of the sun. Then invite the students to share and add to the Question Sun.



## 2 ENGAGE

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

Before you begin, tell students that today's scripture passage comes from the Gospel of John and the main character in the scripture is John, but they are not the same person. The Gospel of John came at least 70 years after the John in today's passage.

Share with the students this part of the Gospel of John is known as "The Prologue," and a prologue is an event or action that leads to another event or situation. As you read, keep the definition of prologue in mind and listen for any ideas that can answer the questions you wrote and posted on the Question Sun.

Read John 1:6–8, 19–28 from the Bible.

Ask:

- What part(s) of the scripture passage helps us identify it as Prologue?
- What part(s) of the passage do you find confusing?
- Which, if any, of our questions were answered by the reading? How was the question answered?
- Who sent John? What was John sent to do?

A good way to describe John in this passage is John the Witness (unlike last week when he was John the Baptist)—he was witnessing that the Messiah was already about and on his way. John was very sure of who Jesus was and who he was not.

Ask:

- What do you think was meant by "the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal"?

Help the students understand that the job of a slave was to untie a guest's sandals whenever they came into a home. John is describing that he isn't even worthy to be the slave of the Messiah—that the one who is coming is so special and important. But he cautions that you won't even recognize the Messiah when he is with you.

## 3 RESPOND

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

Write Community of Christ's mission statement next to your Question Sun.

**We proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love, and peace.**

Using sticky notes or index cards, work in small groups or pairs to make connections how a community like the one described in our mission statement gives evidence that Jesus is the Light. Let the students share and post their ideas.

(If students need help, remind them of a time when they were afraid of the dark and used night lights or flashlights to help them feel safe. Since "Jesus is the Light" is a metaphor, help them understand darkness as emotional or spiritual darkness, feeling alone even though you may be surrounded by people. It is frightening to feel that way, and emulating Jesus' responses to those who were "in the dark" brings light into the darkness.)

Next, pass out the LOVE ornaments. Let students rewrite or edit the mission statement so that it is their own personal mission statement. Challenge them to be creative by adapting the phrase "Jesus is the Light" into their own words and including it in their statement. When they are ready, have them write their individual mission statements on their LOVE ornaments.

## 4 SEND

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

Have students read their mission statements to the class before hanging their ornaments up with the ornaments from the last two weeks.

If possible, have the students make a copy of their mission statement to take home or take a picture on their electronic device. They are encouraged to memorize their mission statement this week; they will revisit it again in class in the next weeks.

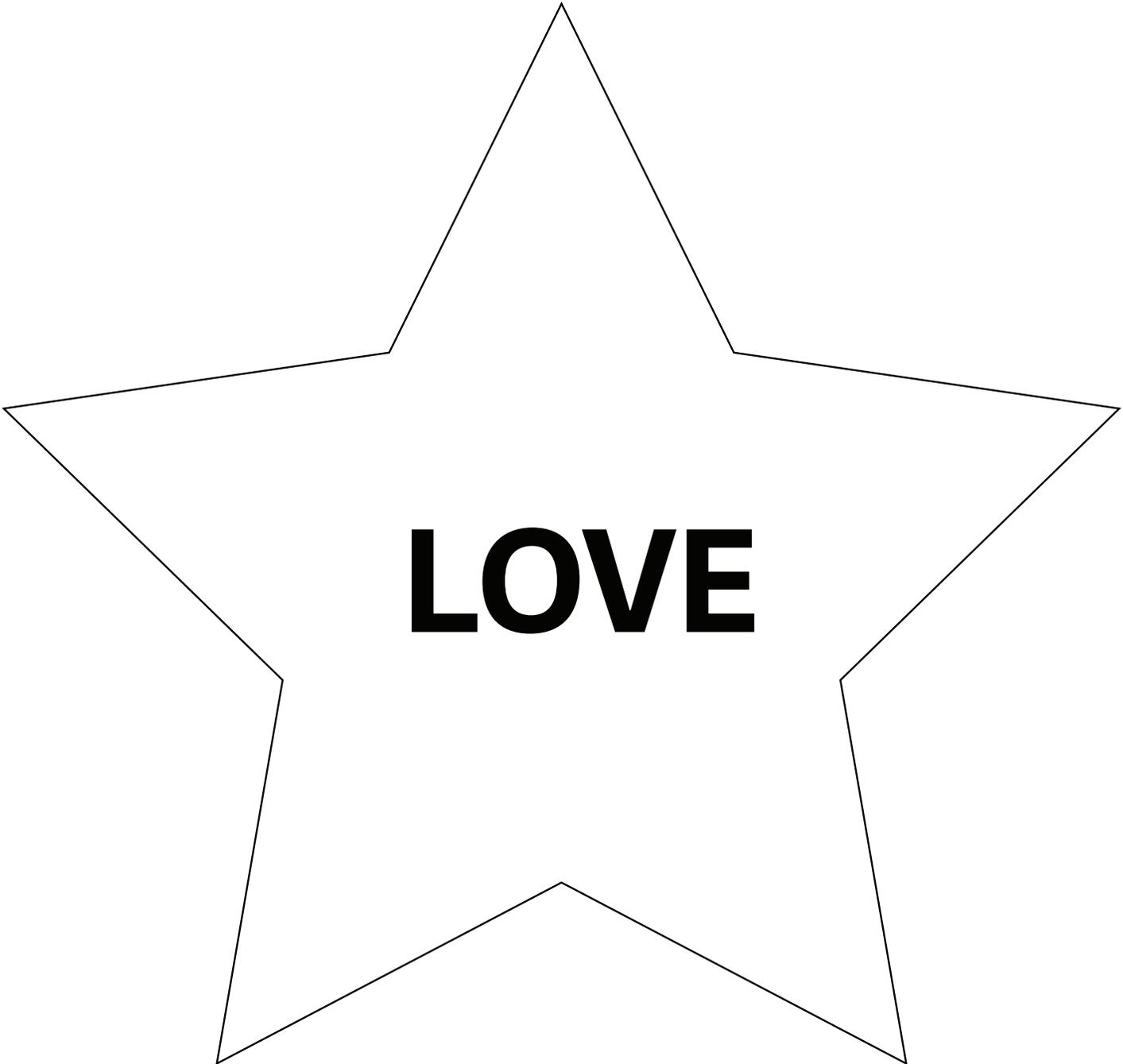
## 5 BLESS

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

Just as John came as a witness to testify to the light, so each of us is called as a witness to testify to the light. Your mission statement is one way to shape your life as a disciple. Let your mission statement help you to testify to the light.

Have a student read the mission prayer. If willing, please stand and hold hands in support of one another.

Lord, 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.



Testify to the Light

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# FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (JOY)

LESSON 4  
24 December 2017

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Luke 1:26–38

**Lesson Focus:** Joy is...spending time with God.

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- learn of the transformation of Mary from peasant to prophet.
- find similarities between the Joseph Smith Jr. grove experience and Mary's annunciation.
- define their "grove" in which they connect to God.
- find additional ways to connect and spend time with God and deepen their discipleship.

## Supplies

- The Annunciation of Mary True/False activity (end of lesson)
- Marker board, chalkboard, or poster/chart paper

- JOY ornaments—one per student (end of lesson)
- Crayons, pastels, markers, or colored pencils to draw with
- Bibles
- Pens or pencils
- Advent garland or hanging wreath (During Advent students will be creating ornaments to hang for each Sunday of Advent. One idea is to drape a garland and hang the ornaments off of the garland with paper clips; another would be a greenery wreath the ornaments could hang on, or even a poster wreath on which to tape the ornaments. The main purpose is for students to see and revisit their ornament[s] in the classroom each week of Advent.)

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 1:26–38 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, p. 23, available through Herald House.

## 1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson

*(15% of total lesson time)*

Before class, copy and cut up the Annunciation of Mary True/False activity sheet—one set per student or one class set—whatever works best for your group. Give the students time to sort statements as True/False as a prediction for today's scripture. (You might want to keep an uncut copy for yourself as a reference.)

As you work through the lesson, have the students check their choices and reposition their strips to correct any misconceptions.

## 2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

*(35% of total lesson time)*

Read Luke 1:26–38.

Have students fix any errors on their True/False activity sheet—discuss the misconceptions.

Give a bit of attention to Trinity in v. 35. *(Some students may be unfamiliar with the concept of the triune God. A quick and easy way to help is by referring to Saint Patrick and the use of the three-leaf clover—three leaves create one clover [Father, Son, Holy Spirit], but the clover is incomplete if one leaf is missing [God].)*

Notice that Mary begins as a peasant who is an insignificant person in her culture. She's an unmarried girl, and she doesn't understand or believe in what Gabriel is telling her. However, by the end of the passage her decision to "let it be with me according to your word" makes her a prophet, a mother of God, and she makes the choice of discipleship.

Mary transforms from who she thinks she is (how she is labeled in her society) to what God is actually calling her to be.

## 3 RESPOND

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

Born in 1805, Joseph Smith Jr. was the founder of our movement. His story began as a teenage boy kneeling in the woods in upstate New York, praying for answers to religious questions that had divided his family and neighbors. He went alone to a grove of trees when he was concerned about being a disciple of Jesus Christ. He wanted to pray and listen to God. The guidance he received in the grove began a lifelong journey with God that brought both exhilarating joy and heartache to Joseph and his family.

—"A Journey People," [www.CofChrist.org/history](http://www.CofChrist.org/history)

**Ask:** Based on what you know of this experience of Joseph Smith Jr., what similarities does the grove story have with the annunciation of Mary? (*age, economic status, free will or agency, decision to follow God's will instead of ignoring the call to discipleship, listening for God and having connection to the divine*)

Have students read each point below to the class, or copy each point on a sheet of paper and post on the wall as you read it.

- Mary had a visit from the angel Gabriel, and Joseph's experience in the grove with the Holy Spirit started his path in a new direction of discipleship.
- Discipleship is a whole-life commitment we willingly make in response to God's enormous generosity... all we are and have is a gift from God. If we devote ourselves fully to God, Christ's mission, and to God's

people, we will give to our true capacity. Our true capacity includes how we generously share our whole selves.

—*Of Water and Spirit*, p. 85

- Prophet President Stephen M. Veazey offered this guidance.

We respond to God's grace, especially as revealed in Jesus Christ, by giving generously and by graciously receiving the generosity of others. This is a deeply spiritual principle that arises from the nature of God. We are called, according to God's eternal purposes, to grow spiritually throughout our lives in grace and generosity.

—*Of Water and Spirit*, p. 86

- Advent reminds us to pause long enough to consider what all this "progress" is for. I enjoy modern conveniences as much as the next person, but I am beginning to pay closer attention to the habits I am forming and how they are forming me...like reaching for my phone in any moment of unoccupied time. I am wondering about the space that is being lost for the human heart simply to wander, to dream and discover, without the constant lure of a flashing screen. What ideas are never given time to rise to the surface of the soul? What inner transformation prompting outward healing action is being subdued in constant mind-numbing immediacy?

—Katie Harmon-McLaughlin, *A Surprising Hope—Seeking Wisdom in the Advent Night: A Spiritual Retreat*, p. 10

Hand each person a JOY ornament and provide crayons (pastels) or markers. Direct them to draw a picture of their personal space or spaces (it's okay to have more than one) where they go to listen for God. In essence, they will be drawing their "grove."

While drawing, consider discussing the following questions.

- Katie Harmon-McLaughlin writes about filling time by reaching for the phone. Could you be losing dreams and discovery?
- Do you have a space at home you would consider a grove? Would you consider creating a space over the winter break, if you have one?

Come together as a group and take turns describing some of the experiences students have had in their special places.

# 4 SEND

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

Before they hang their JOY ornaments, let them ponder the following question and answer as best they can:

- How have your actions or choices changed by taking time to go into your personal “grove” to speak to and listen for God?

—*Signal Communities...Live Christ's Mission, Lessons for All Ages, [www.cofchrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/all-ages-signal-community-lessons.pdf](http://www.cofchrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/all-ages-signal-community-lessons.pdf), p. 6*

# 5 BLESS

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

In the days and weeks to come, visit your grove or create a new one to spend time with God.

Be open to new ways of seeing and hearing God. Be willing to let the Holy Spirit inspire you and help you understand God's revelation.

Stand together as you pray this prayer or one of your own:

O Lord, we praise you for continually revealing your loving nature. Help us listen for your voice and give us courage to be bold in our response. In Jesus' name, Amen.

—*Signal Communities...Live Christ's Mission, Lessons for All Ages, [www.cofchrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/all-ages-signal-community-lessons.pdf](http://www.cofchrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/all-ages-signal-community-lessons.pdf), p. 7*



**JOY**  
is spending  
with God.

## The Annunciation of Mary

True	False
<p>Teacher, cut the strips below and mix up. Students place on the True/False mat above. They are placed in the correct columns below, so the teacher will have to do the cutting prior to class.</p>	
The angel Gabriel talks about the Holy Trinity—God the father, Jesus the son, and the Holy Spirit.	The annunciation of Mary is only found in Matthew and Luke.
Mary doesn't believe what she is hearing from the angel Gabriel.	The angel Gabriel was sent to Bethlehem in Galilee to speak to Mary.
Mary doesn't say much when Gabriel first appears to her.	Mary had to say yes to the angel.
Mary's relative, named Elizabeth, is also pregnant with a boy even though she is older than Mary.	Since Mary is Joseph's wife, and Joseph is from the House of David, then Jesus will be from the house of David, too.
Mary is told that her son will reign forever and of his kingdom there will be no end.	Gabriel tells Mary her son will be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.
Gabriel advised Mary to not be afraid.	Elizabeth, Mary's relative, sends a letter to Mary with the good news of her pregnancy so Mary decides to offer herself as the servant of the Lord.

The phrases are in the correct columns. The errors in the "False" statements are as follows:

- The annunciation is only in Luke's Gospel.
- The town was Nazareth.
- Mary did not have to say yes.
- Mary was not married to Joseph, but engaged.
- The names are from Isaiah; Gabriel does not use them in this scripture.
- **Elizabeth does not send a letter to Mary in our scripture.**

# FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS DAY

LESSON 5  
31 December 2017

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Luke 2:22–40

**Lesson Focus:** How is taking baby Jesus to the Temple anything like my church?

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- deepen their understanding of what it means to respond to the Holy Spirit.
- create meaning between the Enduring Principle Blessings of Community and the sacraments.
- use sacraments as a lens for hospitality at their church.

## Supplies

- Class ornaments from past four weeks of Advent and two sheets of paper or sticky notes/cut-up recycled paper and tape (see GATHER)
- Bibles

- List of sacraments:
- Create one or use the resource Fully Awake and Ready to Respond (2017 Reunion text) from Herald House pp. 55–59. You can also print the images found at [www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Reunion-2017-Worship-Services.pdf](http://www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Reunion-2017-Worship-Services.pdf), p. 40.

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 2:22–40 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, p. 25, available through Herald House.

## 1 GATHER

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

**Option A.** If your class made the ornaments during Advent, do the following:

Take two pages of paper. Write a 1 on one and a 5 on the other. Post the papers at either end of the room so students can move freely between them as on a scale; 1 is really low and 5 is really high, and they can move between to rate themselves.

Let them get their ornaments from the last four weeks of Advent and review what they wrote.

Tell them they are going to rate how they are doing in their discipleship based on what they wrote on their ornaments and using a scale in which 1 is low and 5 is high. After they have decided where they land for each ornament, ask some basic questions such as:

- Why did you rate yourself there?
- How would you alter what you wrote so you are moving toward a 5?
- What were some examples of success you had that demonstrate what you wrote?
- Were your actions easy or difficult to accomplish and why?

Hope: Thy will be done—I am doing God’s will when I...

Peace: I am a preparer—I share the peace of Jesus Christ by...

Love: I testify to the light—I live the mission by...

Joy: I spend time with God—I hear God when I...

Invite them to put the ornaments to the side. We will come back to them at the end of class.

**Option B.** If your class was unable to complete the ornaments during Advent, then do the following:

Provide each student with approximately 10 sticky notes or cut-up recycled paper and tape. Then announce, "Tell me everything you know about hospitality." Next, give students two minutes to individually write down their responses, one thought per sticky note.

Have students combine their sticky notes and place them on the marker board or wall. Remove or cluster redundant notes as needed. Next, ask the students to come up with categories and headings that fit their responses and rearrange sticky notes into those categories.

Leave the work up and at the end of the lesson, students can revisit their original thoughts and decide what should be added or removed.

## 2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

(35% of total lesson time)

Before you read the scripture passage, ask the students the following questions. It is ok if they don't know; you may ask some leading questions to help them form their responses.

- What is a ritual? (*a ceremony or action performed in a customary way*)
- What is a religious law? (*a rule that specifies what you can and can't do in your religion*)
- What is a sacrament? (*a symbol or ritual expressing God's love and blessing for us*)
- What is a covenant? (*our response to God's grace in Jesus Christ*)
- How is each of these different? How are they the same?

Have the students keep these words in mind when they read the scripture passage.

Read Luke 2:22–40.

Ask:

- Which part of the passage showed ritual and religious law?
- What do you think the significance of the turtle doves was? (*It was the least costly sacrifice offered at the Temple and showed the family was poor. Yet they made the financial sacrifice to offer to God what the religious law would have them do; they recognized following God's law was important for them and for the baby.*)

- Why was Simeon at the Temple?
- What did Simeon do that demonstrated hospitality?
- Anna, the prophet, fasted, which meant that she was in mourning, but as she was in the Temple, her mourning was for the people of God, not her husband. After her encounter with the young family, do you think she continued to mourn and fast the next day? Why or why not?

## 3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing

(35% of total lesson time)

In the Temple, Simeon and Anna visited with Joseph and Mary and the baby. Simeon offered a blessing and Anna praised God and spoke about the child to everyone who wanted to redeem Jerusalem. Mary and Joseph completed the ritual that the Jewish law required and went home to watch their child grow and become strong.

- Was it the turtle dove sacrifice or the interaction with the Temple community that was the blessing for the young family? Which Enduring Principle would fit here?

In Community of Christ, we refer to ourselves as covenant people. The Enduring Principle Blessings of Community is most fully experienced in covenant. Covenant in community is expressed through the sacraments.

—*Of Water and Spirit*, p. 38

Ask:

- What are your favorite sacraments?
- What is it about those sacraments you like so much?
- Have you ever had a visitor or guest with you during a sacrament? If so, what questions did the guest have about what was happening?
- Which sacrament(s) have you not participated in? What questions do you have about them?
- What would make you feel more comfortable in sacramental settings?

In the scripture passage, Simeon and Anna responded to the Holy Spirit. In Doctrine and Covenants 158:11c we are told, "The Holy Spirit enriches the sacraments." Let's focus on the Holy Spirit for this next part.

Based on the option you chose in the Gather section, select A or B below.

### A. Advent Ornaments

1. Pick one of your ornaments you feel you could respond to better.
2. On a sticky note or note card, rework/rewrite your response so you can respond and grow in your discipleship. Be mindful of the need for the Holy Spirit to be part of your life. Include how you will incorporate time with God.
3. Put the revision on your ornament, covering up the previous writing.

### B. Hospitality is...

1. Refer back to the sticky notes on the wall.
2. Identify those that demonstrate the workings of the Holy Spirit and/or sacraments. Mark them in some way, but do not move them yet.
3. Now look at the sticky notes that remain. Identify ones you regularly demonstrate when you go about your daily routine. Mark those, too.
4. Are there any notes not marked? Do they fit in our idea of Blessings of Community? Why or why not? Should you remove them?

# 5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope

(5% of total lesson time)

Ask the students to close their eyes and remember the sacrament they chose as their favorite.

Guide them through this meditation:

- Recall the details of words, touch, prayers, rituals, and symbols of your favorite sacrament.
- Experience again how the sacrament made you feel.
- Notice the working of the Holy Spirit in this sacrament.
- Be aware of how many people were participating in the sacrament with you.
- Offer a silent prayer of gratitude for the power of sacraments as they allow us to experience Blessings of Community.

—*Called by a New Name*, (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House), 2000, p. 17, adapted

# 4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived

(10% of total lesson time)

### A. Advent Ornaments

Tell the class where you will put your ornament when you leave church today so it can help you grow in your relationship with God. This is not a New Year's resolution. Rather it is a reminder of your response to God's grace in your life and a way to develop in your discipleship.

### B. Hospitality is...

Rearrange your notes in a way that demonstrates the Enduring Principle Blessings of Community. Consider putting them in a circle rather than an ordered list as if one were better than the other. Or be creative using a spiral with the words that are easiest to learn on the outside and the more difficult words toward the center.

# FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

LESSON 6  
7 January 2018

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Mark 1:4–11

**Lesson Focus:** The importance of Jesus' example of baptism

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- understand that baptism is not just for a select few.
- reaffirm that baptism is an extension of discipleship.
- develop their stories about their own baptisms.

## Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Piper video clip and means of showing it
- Small pieces of paper
- Writing utensils
- Story from different perspectives cut into strips

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Mark 1:4–11 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, pp. 29–30, available through Herald House.

## 1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson

*(15% of total lesson time)*

As the group gathers, ask them to write down what they know about baptism on some small pieces of paper, one thought per piece. Challenge them to contribute as many pieces of paper as they can. The information they contribute could be from personal experience (their own baptism) or observation (a fellow congregation member or from television). After they have exhausted their knowledge of baptism, instruct them to crumble each piece of paper and throw it to a central location in the room. Now have the students collect a few pieces each and read them aloud; this will prevent those who have not been baptized or know relatively little about baptism from being embarrassed. As the students are reading, use this as an opportunity to correct misconceptions or introduce Community of Christ understandings of baptism. Make sure to mention that baptism is a sacrament. If the youth

have little experience with baptism, you can also read to them the Community of Christ statement on baptism which is included below:

Baptism is a personal expression of faith in Jesus Christ. This is how we first express our commitment to lifelong discipleship. We are promising that we will welcome the stranger into our lives, feed the hungry, love our enemies, and visit the sick and the imprisoned.

Ministers of the church perform baptisms by fully immersing the person in water. A person must be at least 8 years old to request a baptism. In Community of Christ this is recognized as the age when a person can fully understand his or her baptism commitment. Some people baptized of water (age eight or older) in an attitude of humility and repentance and as an expression of faith in Jesus Christ may become Community of Christ members through confirmation.

—[www.CofChrist.org/sacraments](http://www.CofChrist.org/sacraments)

# 2 ENGAGE

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

Have student volunteers read the story of Jesus' baptism below. Ask the following questions to initiate discussion and deeper understanding of the passage.

Questions for after reading John's perspective:

- Why do you think God used John even though people thought he was crazy?
- What does remission of sin mean? To help guide the conversation on sin away from the "fires of hell," refer to the Community of Christ statement on sin recorded below:

God created us to be agents of love and goodness. Yet we misuse our agency individually and collectively. We take the gifts of creation and of self and turn them against God's purposes with tragic results. Sin is the universal condition of separation and alienation from God and one another. We are in need of divine grace that alone reconciles us with God and one another.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 15

- Have you ever faced a challenge in your life that you didn't think you were equipped for? How did God help you?

Questions for after reading Jesus' perspective:

- Why do you think it was important for Jesus to be baptized?
- What does "descending like a dove" represent?
- Who does God think is worthy of baptism? What are the requirements?

Questions for after reading a crowd member's perspective:

- How does sharing our baptismal experience help others decide about their own?
- If you have been baptized, what is something about the experience you think is important to share?

## John's Perspective

My whole life has been devoted to this task, devoted to preparing the way of the Lord and baptizing people for the remission of sins. I don't exactly fit in with everyone else. I dress differently and eat bugs and live in the desert, and yet, God loves me and uses what I can give to further God's Kingdom. Today, I was baptizing people in the Jordan River and an amazing thing happened. Jesus himself, the one I have waited for and prepared for, appeared and asked to be baptized! I am not even worthy to untie his shoes, and he wanted me to baptize him! Jesus insisted, telling me it was important for everyone to experience this sacrament and join in this covenant with God. I agreed and as he was coming out from the water, a dove flew down and landed on him, and I could hear God confirming that this was indeed his son! I am constantly humbled that God would choose me to be a messenger of this good news.

## Jesus' Perspective

I'd never met him before, well except when we were both still in our mother's wombs, but I knew it was him instantly. His name is John and he was baptizing people in the Jordan. I knew that my approaching time of ministry would be challenging and this covenant was an important part of my preparation. John told me he wasn't worthy to baptize me and instead tried to convince me to baptize him. I reminded him that to God we are all of inestimable worth and it was important for each of us to be baptized as part of our discipleship journey. He eventually agreed and baptized me. As I rose out of the water I saw a dove flying above me. When it landed on me I heard my God's voice, calling me son and telling me he was pleased. The dove showed that I had been baptized by water and by the Spirit.

## A Crowd Member's Perspective

Today I saw something I can't fully explain. I was watching an odd man, John the Baptist, baptizing people in the Jordan. Many people were getting into the water and being dunked underneath it. I thought about joining them, but I wasn't sure it was a good idea. The man was wearing camel skins for clothes, after all! Then, another man came and asked John to baptize him. At first John refused because he felt he wasn't worthy to untie the man's shoes, let alone baptize him. The man insisted and as he was being raised from the water, a dove landed on him. I heard a voice from heaven that I know belonged to God. The voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; and with him I am well pleased." In that moment, I knew I had just seen Jesus, the Messiah, be baptized and I knew that I, too, would follow his example. At first I was worried that I wasn't worthy enough to be baptized; I've made many mistakes in my life. But then, I remembered that God used John the Baptist, and God wants us all to be a part of that baptismal covenant, no matter what the world thinks of us.

# 3 RESPOND

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

Tell the youth that you have a short video clip you'd like to show them, and you want them to specifically be looking for how this clip relates to baptism and our lives. Show the class the Pixar short Piper, available at <https://vimeo.com/192224626>. It also plays before the movie Finding Dory and can be found on that DVD as well. Your congregation should have a CVLI license to legally show this video clip.

In this clip, a young piper bird is learning how to find food in the ocean for the first time. It is a traumatic experience for him, and he is scared to go deeper into the water. With encouragement from his mother, he finally goes out and discovers a whole new way of looking for food and looking at his world. He then goes back to the beach and shares his message with the other pipers so they, too, might have a fuller stomach and life. Ask the youth:

- How do you think the piper's experience is similar to a person's experience with baptism?
- What would have happened if the piper hadn't shared his experience with the other pipers?

If you are unable to show the movie clip, share your story of your own baptism or ask a guest to come in and share theirs. Talk about how you were transformed by the experience and mention a time or two in your life when you were able to share that experience with someone else. If time allows, open the conversation to the youth to share their experiences or experiences they have heard about. This is a great opportunity to allow them to share their stories without putting anyone who has not been baptized on the spot.

Remind youth of our Mission Initiatives. You can even challenge them to see if they can name all five. Mention that each is equally important, but ask which one they think Jesus' baptism most relates to. Answers may vary. Honor the answers shared, as each Mission Initiative could connect to this scripture. However, take specific care to highlight the Mission Initiative Invite People to Christ. Remind them that the sacrament of baptism was intended by God for anyone who wishes to journey as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Offer up that invitation to youth in your class who have not yet been baptized without naming anyone specifically. Let interested youth know whom they need to speak with further to arrange for baptism. Connect them with this person.

# 4 SEND

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

Challenge the class to look for ways this week to intentionally Invite People to Christ. Encourage them to notice times when the Holy Spirit is guiding them in this effort.

# 5 BLESS

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

Close by singing "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus" CCS 499, focusing specifically on the stanza asking, "Will you decide now, to follow Jesus?"

# SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

LESSON 7  
14 January 2018

**Focus Scripture Passage:** John 1:43–51

**Lesson Focus:** Our response to Jesus' call and how we can respond in ways that bless others

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- recognize that Jesus calls us all and gives us the choice of whether or not to answer.
- discuss what happens when we choose not to share our invitation to Christ.

## Supplies

- Two cellphones
- Bible (The Message, if available)

- Mission Prayer, copy that everyone can see
- Strips of construction paper (2 in x 11 in)
- Markers
- Tape or sticky tack

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for John 1:43–51 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, pp. 31–32, available through Herald House.

## 1 GATHER

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

For this gathering you might need to plan ahead and coordinate with someone who will let you borrow their cellphone. As the youth enter, make sure your cellphone is visible and the sound is on. Use the phone you borrowed to repeatedly call your cellphone (be discreet), but completely ignore it each time it rings. Another option is to coordinate with someone who will call your phone repeatedly from outside the classroom. Wait until one of the youth comments on your phone ringing, and use that as a way to begin discussing today's lesson. Tell students that Jesus calls us but also gives us the agency (choice) to decide whether or not to answer. Remind them the choice is theirs, but then ask them what is at stake if we do not answer?

## 2 ENGAGE

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

Share the scripture passage with the students. The version provided below comes from The Message and may be more easily understood than other versions of the same text.

<sup>43-44</sup>The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. When he got there, he ran across Philip and said, "Come, follow me." (Philip's hometown was Bethsaida, the same as Andrew and Peter.)  
<sup>45-46</sup>Philip went and found Nathanael and told him, "We've found the One Moses wrote of in the Law, the One preached by the prophets. It's Jesus, Joseph's son, the one from Nazareth!" Nathanael said, "Nazareth? You've got to be kidding." But

Philip said, "Come, see for yourself." <sup>47</sup>When Jesus saw him coming he said, "There's a real Israelite, not a false bone in his body." <sup>48</sup>Nathanael said, "Where did you get that idea? You don't know me." Jesus answered, "One day, long before Philip called you here, I saw you under the fig tree." <sup>49</sup>Nathanael exclaimed, "Rabbi! You are the Son of God, the King of Israel!" <sup>50-51</sup>Jesus said, "You've become a believer simply because I say I saw you one day sitting under the fig tree? You haven't seen anything yet! Before this is over you're going to see heaven open and God's angels descending to the Son of Man and ascending again."

This passage has a lot of information, but for the purpose of the class today we will focus on three actors in this scripture. Those actors are Jesus who issues the call, Philip who shares what he has heard, and Nathanael who is invited and believes.

- What is Jesus' call to Philip? What do you think he meant by "follow me"?
- Does Jesus issue a similar call to us today? What does it look like to follow Jesus in our time?
- What did Philip do immediately after he received his invitation? What would have happened if he had never shared his news with Nathanael? What would have happened if he had been discouraged when Nathanael doubted him at first?
- What happens as a result of Philip's invitation?

### 3 RESPOND

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

For this activity you and the youth will need some knowledge of Twitter. This social media outlet allows individuals to share their thinking in 140 characters or less in a "tweet" and post it for their followers to see. You are going to pose this question to the youth: what would Jesus tweet? If Jesus had a Twitter account, he would use it to issue a call to all people to come and be a part of God's

family. What do you think those tweets would say? To get the conversation started, you can share these examples:

Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.  
#matthew #4:19 #grabyournets

All are welcome in this place. #CofChrist #forever-  
eryoneborn #aplaceatthetable

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink... whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.  
#payitforward #worthofallpeople

He would also expect his followers to accept his invitation and share it with others. Today, the youth will be responding to the call issued by Jesus in their own lives by creating tweets of invitation and witness. Let them know that it is OK to create more than one tweet, so some of them can be funny, but at least one needs to be an invitation for a person or group (perhaps someone on the margins of society) to come join a Christ-centered community. Have strips of construction paper and markers available and allow the youth to display their tweets around the room. Some examples could be:

To the kid sitting alone in the cafeteria, I have a  
#placeatthetable for you. Come join me.

To the girl being made fun of on social media, you are of #inestimableworth in God's eyes. Don't forget that!

To my friends who don't know where their next meal is coming from, I can share. #loavesandfishes

### 4 SEND

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

Read to the youth the following poem from Teresa of Avila. As you read it, ask the youth to picture in their minds, as the hands and feet of Jesus, to whom God is calling them. Encourage them to act on this call in the coming week.

## Christ Has No Body

By Teresa of Avila (1515–1582)

Christ has no body but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
Compassion on this world,  
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,  
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the  
world.  
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,  
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.  
Christ has no body now but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
compassion on this world.  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

—[www.journeywithjesus.net/PoemsAndPrayers  
/Teresa\\_Of\\_Avila\\_Christ\\_Has\\_No\\_Body.shtml](http://www.journeywithjesus.net/PoemsAndPrayers/Teresa_Of_Avila_Christ_Has_No_Body.shtml)

## 5 BLESS

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

Close by saying the mission prayer together. Make sure everyone can see a copy of the prayer (write it on poster board, purchase cards from Herald House, show the YouTube video ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=nb4iEip9Sjk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nb4iEip9Sjk)), or print one out for each student).

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

# THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

LESSON 8  
21 January 2018

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Mark 1:14–20

**Lesson Focus:** Prioritizing our lives so we can follow Christ

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- understand that all are called and Jesus always gives us a choice.
- reflect on areas of their own lives where they may need to leave something behind in order to follow Christ.
- recognize that following Christ means aligning our decisions with Christ's mission, which requires prioritization.

## Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- Empty, clear container
- Big rocks
- Small rocks
- Sand

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Mark 1:14–20 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, p. 33, available through Herald House.

## 1 GATHER

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

As youth gather, ask them to share a time in their life when they had to choose between two things they wanted to do. For example, if band and softball practice were at the same time, they needed to select one. Ask them to share their decision-making process. What factors did they take into account as they were making their choices? What did they miss as a result of their choice? Were they OK with the decision, or did they wish they had made another? If youth are really struggling to provide examples, you can stretch their thinking to more ordinary things such as having to select which TV show to watch or what to have for breakfast. In today's scripture many people were faced with a tough decision. Invite the youth to try to put themselves in the decision-maker's shoes.

## 2 ENGAGE

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

Let the youth know that today they are going to be engaging in a spiritual practice to become familiar with the scripture passage. For those who don't know, tell the class that spiritual practices are ways that we can intentionally take time to be with God. For this spiritual practice the passage will be read three times. The first time, ask the youth just to listen and try to imagine being in that place. Pause after reading. The second time you read the passage, they should listen for words or phrases that stand out to them. The third time they should again listen for words or phrases that stand out to them. Ask them to share their experiences and reflect on why those words or phrases were important. Unless a student points it out, mention that you noticed the words "follow me" were repeated.

<sup>14</sup>Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” <sup>16</sup>As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup>And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” <sup>18</sup>And immediately they left their nets and followed him. <sup>19</sup>As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. <sup>20</sup>Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

- Why do you think the soon-to-be disciples didn't hesitate when Jesus said, “Follow me”?
- What did they lose when they followed Christ? What did they gain?
- What does this look like in our modern context? What things are we called to give up in order to follow Jesus?

This passage is a call to action as well as an opportunity for reflection as learners seek to align their priorities with God's will and Christ's mission. This passage reminds readers that All Are Called, as the Community of Christ Enduring Principle states.

### 3 RESPOND

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

Try this object lesson beforehand to make sure the visual model matches the discussion. Show the students your empty, clear container. Explain to them that this container represents their lives. Show them the other supplies as well. As you explain what they represent, ask them to give examples from their own lives that fit these categories:

- **The big rocks** represent the things God wants to be most important to them (God and family).

- **The small rocks** are the things that are important but do not take priority when compared to their big rocks (i.e. time with friends, time to relax, school).
- **The sand** represents the things in their lives that aren't important but still require their time and attention (i.e. sleeping in late, video games).

Begin by pouring the sand into the container. Explain that you like to have fun and sometimes sleep in when you have work to do. Next begin adding both sizes of rocks to the container, giving each an activity as you do. You should run out of room before you have used all of your rocks. Ask the youth to discuss why you were unable to fit all of the things you wanted into your life.

Empty your container and ask them to work together to find a better way to make everything fit. Hint: the trick is to put the big rocks in first and then the small rocks and sand.

- What does this activity teach us about our lives? About following Jesus?

### 4 SEND

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

Encourage students to begin each morning with a prayer asking God to help them organize their day so it reflects their commitment to prioritize and follow Jesus.

### 5 BLESS

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

Close with a circle prayer. Begin the prayer but do not say amen. Instead, when you are finished saying your part, squeeze the person's hand next to you and let them add to your prayer. This continues around the circle until you feel your hand squeezed again at which time you can finish the prayer.

# FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

LESSON 9  
28 January 2018

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Mark 1:21–28

**Lesson Focus:** Recognizing Christ's authority and being peacemakers in the world

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- understand where Christ's authority comes from.
- recognize that there are influences in the world that act with authority but are in opposition to Christ's mission.
- explore their role as peacemakers and actors in Christ's mission.

## Supplies

- Square pieces of colored paper, at least 6 in x 6 in
- Directions for making paper cranes ([www.origamiway.com/origami-crane.shtml](http://www.origamiway.com/origami-crane.shtml))
- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Mark 1:21–28 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, pp. 34–35, available through Herald House.

## 1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson

*(15% of total lesson time)*

As the youth gather, have them stand in the center of the room. Designate one side of the room as "A" and the other side as "B." Explain to them that as they make their choices they should move to the appropriate side of the room. Next, give them the following scenarios and ask them who has the most authority in a given situation. Begin with some of the easier examples below and move to the more difficult ones.

- Setting your curfew
  - A. your friends
  - B. your parents
- Determining due dates for assignments
  - A. your teacher
  - B. your soccer coach
- Giving a speeding ticket on the highway
  - A. a police officer
  - B. Highway Patrolperson
- Deciding if a law is just
  - A. the President
  - B. the Supreme Court

Just as some of these examples were easy to answer and others were more difficult, in life it is sometimes more difficult to know who has authority. It is important for us to discern prayerfully the will of God so we can avoid listening to the wrong influences.

## 2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

*(35% of total lesson time)*

Read Mark 1:21–28.

They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new

teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

We know now that many of the demons and unclean spirits referred to in scripture are probably undiagnosed mental and physical illnesses. However, this passage still has an important lesson for us. Because of the way Jesus spoke and acted, all those around knew he had the authority to teach and heal. He was able to bring peace and comfort to a man who was stricken with strife.

- Where does Jesus’s authority come from?
- With so many competing interpretations of Christ’s mission, how do we know who has the authority?

Doctrine and Covenants 163:3c says,

There are 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. That which seeks to harden one human heart against another by constructing walls of fear and prejudice is not of God. Be especially alert to these influences, lest they divide you or divert you from the mission to which you are called.

- According to this passage, what should we look for to know which influences have authority?
- What will influences that do not have God’s authority seek to do?
- What are some examples of those influences in our modern world?

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

Part of the mission to which we are called is creating shalom.

- What is shalom?  
Peace is God’s shalom: justice, righteousness, wholeness, and the well-being of the entire

creation. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, came to preach the kingdom and to be our peace through the cross. The Holy Spirit empowers us for the costly pursuit of peace and justice for all people.  
—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 16

We are called to be peacemakers, and when we are truly in alignment with Christ’s mission to Pursue Peace, we, too, can act with God’s authority. Anything we say or do that builds walls or categorizes people is not God’s will; it is not in pursuit of Christ’s peace.

Allow each student to choose a colorful square of paper. On one side ask them to write a situation in their life or in the world that they believe to be contrary to Christ’s peace. After everyone has had the opportunity to finish writing, show the youth how to fold a paper crane. As you work explain that in many places paper cranes are symbols of peace. Let them know that at the Community of Christ Temple, which is dedicated to the pursuit of peace, visitors can take a free paper crane with them so they can carry peace into the world. When everyone has finished folding, say a prayer for peace together.

Optional Activity: Have the youth write prayers for peace and submit them to Community of Christ for consideration for reading at the Daily Prayer for Peace at [dpp@CofChrist.org](mailto:dpp@CofChrist.org).

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

Invite the youth to intentionally look for opportunities to bring Christ’s peace into the world. If you have enough youth, form prayer partnerships and encourage them to pray for peace in each other’s lives.

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

Close by singing “Seek Ye First” CCS 599.

# FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

LESSON 10  
4 February 2018

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Mark 1:29–39

**Lesson Focus:** Spending time with God through spiritual practices and sacraments

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- understand that the sacraments are blessings of the church meant to be shared with others.
- learn the importance of taking time to be with God.

## Supplies

- Bible (NRSV is recommended)
- Spiritual practice supplies, depending on which practices you select to use

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Mark 1:29–39 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, pp. 36–37, available through Herald House.

## 1 GATHER

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

As the youth gather, ask them if they know how many sacraments Community of Christ has. Ask them if they know what any of the sacraments are. Finally, ask if they know how many of the sacraments are only for church members. After you’ve heard their answers, share with them the Community of Christ Basic Belief statement on sacraments:

Sacraments are special ministries given to the church to convey the grace of Jesus Christ to his followers and all those he yearns to touch with his compassion. Sacraments are baptism, confirmation, the Lord’s Supper, marriage, blessing of children, laying on of hands for the sick, ordination to the priesthood, and the evangelist blessing. In these ministries, God sanctifies common elements of creation to bless human life and to renew and form the church to seek the peaceful kingdom of God.  
—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, pp. 15–16

Share with youth that only one sacrament is limited to church members, and that is ordination. All of the other

sacraments are meant to be shared freely with all those who need to experience God’s grace and compassion.

## 2 ENGAGE

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

As you read Mark 1:29–39, ask the youth to listen for what Jesus did that resembles one of our sacraments.

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them. That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted

for him. When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Jesus healed people to bring peace and wholeness into their lives. Community of Christ offers laying on of hands for the sick to bring peace and wholeness.

- Did Jesus turn anyone away? Why do you think he didn't?
- What did Jesus do after he performed the healings?
- After Jesus spent time with God, what did he do next?

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

Explain to the youth that if we are to share the sacraments with others, it is important for us, like Jesus, to spend time with God. One way we can do that is by spending intentional time with God through spiritual practices. Give youth an opportunity to participate in some of these practices. You can find a list of spiritual practices on the

Community of Christ website by following this link ([www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Spiritual-Practices-for-Children.pdf](http://www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Spiritual-Practices-for-Children.pdf)).

You can either select a few and do them as a group or set up stations and let the youth decide which practices they'd like to try.

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

Encourage youth to try one of the spiritual practices they explored today all week long. Share with them supplies if needed.

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

Close your time together by offering a prayer of thanksgiving for the opportunity to be in relationship with God and to share the bounty of that relationship with others.

# LAST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

LESSON 11  
11 February 2018

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Mark 9:2–9

**Lesson Focus:** Discovering connections with God throughout our lives

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- reflect on times in their lives when God has felt especially close.
- discern how they are to use their own mountaintop experiences in their discipleship journey.

## Supplies

- A picture depicting the Transfiguration of Jesus
- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- Copies of "My Spiritual Biography," one for each student
- Pens or pencils
- Markers or crayons
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Mark 9:2–9 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, p. 45, available through Herald House.

## 1 GATHER

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

Find and print a picture on the internet depicting the Transfiguration of Jesus. Place the picture where everyone can see it. Ask youth what or who stands out to them. Ask them to share what they believe is happening in this picture.

## 2 ENGAGE

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

Tell the youth you will now read the scripture passage that tells the story of what is happening in the picture, and you want them to pick a place in the picture to be while you read. Invite them to be creative; they can be a person or an object within the picture.

### Mark 9:2–9

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

This passage tells of the Transfiguration of Christ which serves as another confirmation that Jesus is the Son of God.

- Do you remember another lesson recently in which we

discussed God confirming that Jesus was God's son?

- Where did you decide to be in the picture? What was your experience like from your chosen perspective?

Read the passage again; this time ask the youth to focus specifically on the disciples' response. This could be called a "mountaintop experience" for the disciples. This type of experience could be described as one where an individual or group feels especially close to God.

- What did the disciples propose immediately after seeing Jesus transfigured and standing with prophets of old?
- Why do you think Jesus didn't take his disciples' advice and stay on the mountain to live in a dwelling built to honor him?
- Have you had a mountaintop experience in your life?
- How does Jesus' decision to come back down from the mountain relate to your life in response to your mountaintop experience?

While Jesus was not ready for his disciples to confirm he was indeed the Son of God, he also didn't want his disciples to stay on the mountaintop. Sometimes we have "mountaintop experiences" at camps or other church events. When we leave camp, we spend much of our time wishing we could go back. It is not bad to want to be in a place where you felt especially close to God, but God calls us to something more than longing to be in God's presence. God calls us to take our mountaintop experiences with us, to be changed by them, and to go out into a desperate world and share those experiences with others who need to experience God themselves. Our experiences with God become part of our sacred story. Rather than building dwellings where Jesus can live, these stories help us become sanctuaries for Christ and make it possible for us to share Christ with others.

### **3 RESPOND**

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

As a faith movement, we have a shared sacred story developed through our exploration of scripture and our journey with God. We also have an individual story to tell.

Give each youth a copy of the handout "My Spiritual Biography" and a pen or pencil. It is also helpful to have markers available so the youth can decorate their timelines with important symbols and pictures in their lives. Remind them that in Community of Christ we uphold the Enduring Principle All Are Called. This belief is true regardless of a

person's background, age, or gender. As part of responding to their call, it is important for youth to begin to develop their sacred stories.

Tell them the straight horizontal line (along the bottom of the page) represents their lives. The vertical line represents how connected they have felt to God during specific times.

Ask the youth to spend some time reflecting on their lives and add to their timeline experiences when they felt very connected to God as well as moments when they felt disconnected from God. Have them place dots on the graph to indicate how close they felt to God at specific times during their lives. Make a small notation by the dot about what it represents. After reviewing their timelines, ask them to go back and think about the times between the dots. What other events during those times were important to note?

Next, have students draw lines connecting the dots to chart your relationship with God. Feel free to put dots below the horizontal line if there were times when they have felt cut off from or abandoned by God. Items to consider: special events, special places, special persons, scriptures, hymns, poems, symbols, and so on.

When everyone has had the opportunity to work on their timelines, encourage them to use this as a tool to practice sharing their story with others. In pairs or in the whole group, have youth share the experiences they feel comfortable sharing.

### **4 SEND**

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

Have youth spend a quiet moment reflecting on a mountaintop experience in their lives. If they don't feel they have one, encourage them to instead reflect on their experience with today's scripture passage. Ask them to pray that God will help them know how to use this mountaintop experience to spread God's love to all they encounter throughout the week.

### **5 BLESS**

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

Close by singing "Lord, Prepare Me" CCS 280, and remind the youth they can be sanctuaries for Christ.