



Community of Christ

COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS

YOUTH

23 APRIL 2017 — 11 JUNE 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.

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

LESSON 22
23 April 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: John 20:19–31

Lesson Focus: Jesus invites disciples to receive and share his peace.

Objectives

The learners will...

- read together the story of the disciples' first encounter with Jesus following his resurrection.
- understand that through the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ is present with us.
- respond to the challenge presented in Jesus' greeting, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

Supplies

- Bibles (NRSV recommended)
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition
- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Ping-pong balls or any available light-weight object or paper

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for John 20:19–31 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 64–65, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

The Power of Breath

Ping-pong Ball Relay: Form the class into two teams. Give each team one ping-pong ball. You may substitute any light-weight object, leaf, or piece of paper. Placing the ball on the floor, players take turns blowing the ball from one end of the classroom to the other and back again. (To make the game a little more difficult for older students, an obstacle course may be set up.)

Ask the youth what other activities depend on breath. (singing, blowing up balloons, playing some musical instruments, etc.)

Breath is one description the scriptures use for the Holy Spirit. How might the Holy Spirit be like breath or wind?

2 ENGAGE

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

Last week was Easter Sunday. We learned about the resurrection of Jesus and Mary's encounter with him in

the garden. The disciples did not believe her. Today we will read together how, while they were hiding behind a locked door, Jesus met them.

- Why might the disciples have been afraid?
- What might have caused them to hide?

Have a student read John 20:19–23.

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

This fear-filled gathering of disciples represents the faith community in general, not just the apostolic leadership. The peace Jesus offered was given to the whole community, freeing them from their fears, reminding them they need not be anxious when facing the Jewish authorities because he was with them. Jesus breathing on the disciples reminds us of other scripture stories such

as Genesis 1:7 NRSV, when God breathes the breath of life into the first human, and Ezekiel 37:9 when the breath of life came upon the dry bones.

Have another student read John 20:24–31.

²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

²⁶A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” ²⁸Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

This story centers on Jesus and his generous offer to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” Jesus did not scold Thomas for his need to touch the wounds. Jesus offered Thomas just what he needed in order to believe. Jesus’ love and care for his followers did not end with his death. This is a story of hope and promise both then and now.

- What would be your response to this scene if it were you sitting in the locked room?
- Would you have wanted to touch the wounds as well?

3 RESPOND

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

In *Sharing in Community of Christ*, the Holy Spirit is described this way: “We believe in the Holy Spirit, Giver of Life, holy Wisdom, true God. The Spirit moves through and sustains creation; endows the church for mission; frees the world from sin, injustice, and death; and transforms

disciples. Wherever we find love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control, there the Holy Spirit is working” (p. 14).

- Which words are familiar to your understanding of the Holy Spirit?
- Which words or phrases are new to you?
- How are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control evidence of the Holy Spirit?

4 SEND

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

Twice Jesus says to the disciples, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” These are words of commission, authorizing or directing the disciples and us to continue Christ’s mission. Jesus showed us what it means to share Christ’s peace and to have right relationships in sacred community with others. He shared with a person outside his culture and helping her change her life within her community, intervened on behalf of a person accused of adultery while her accusers were also sinners, and sat down to eat with those who were not respected so they might develop into disciples as well (*Of Water and Spirit*, p. 35).

- To what communities do you belong?
- How might you offer Christ’s peace within those communities?
- Are there specific persons you can think of (without naming them) who need you to bring Christ’s peace through conversation, crossing cultures, intervening on their behalf, or bringing respect to them? How might you take action for these persons?

5 BLESS

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

Sing verse one of “Breathe on Me, Breath of God” CCS 190.

Close with a circle prayer: “Jesus, breathe your Holy Spirit on us. We can share your peace by... Amen.”

(Go around the circle encouraging each person to say their idea how to share peace.)

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

LESSON 23
30 April 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 24:13–35

Lesson Focus: Like Jesus' followers after he died, we can feel sad or afraid and struggle to understand the meaning of the Easter experience. Jesus walks with us, though we are sometimes unaware, helping us with our feelings and questions through the Holy Spirit and the Blessings of Community.

Objectives

The learners will...

- hear the story of two of Jesus' followers who meet Jesus on the road to Emmaus after he has risen.
- discuss how the risen Lord meets us in the ordinary places and experience of our lives.
- learn how the Holy Spirit and the Blessings of Community can help us recognize, remember, and respond to God's presence.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition
- A variety of breads, bagels, or rolls (include gluten free options)
- Ball of yarn

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 24:13–35 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 66, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Breaking Bread

As students arrive, have a tray or basket of different breads for them to share. Allow a few minutes for them to talk among themselves while they eat.

2 ENGAGE

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

Many scripture stories involve table fellowship—eating, drinking, and talking together. Breaking bread is the foundation of the sacrament of Communion, remembering Christ's sacrifice for us. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote extensively about the fellowship of Christians and the depth of relationships in following Jesus together. Table fellowship is intentional time together, centered on

the shared physical need for food and the shared gratitude for God who supplies our need.

Bonhoeffer writes,

"The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists of listening to them. Just as love of God begins with listening to his word, so the beginning of love for our [brothers and sisters] is learning to listen to them."

—Life Together: *The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*, Harper & Row, 1954, p. 97

Today's story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus is filled with layers of meaning, hope, and application to our lives today. Luke 24:13–35 is believed by scholars to be an early tradition of the first-century Christian community. The story form of travelers being accompanied by heroes, angels, or gods in disguise would have been familiar throughout the Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures. The story is divided into four parts. Have different students read each part.

Part One: The Meeting

Luke 24:13–16

- What important details did you hear?

Part Two: The Conversation en Route

Luke 24:17–27

- What details did Cleopas share with “the stranger” regarding the happenings in Jerusalem?
- How did “the stranger” respond?

Part Three: The Meal at Emmaus

Luke 24:28–32

These five verses contain the dramatic moment Jesus’ identity is revealed. Aristotle wrote that “recognition is, as the name indicates, a change from ignorance to knowledge.”

- Imagine yourself sitting at the table. Your guest, “the stranger,” becomes the host blessing and breaking the bread, and you become aware this is Jesus. How would you respond?
- What did the disciples mean when they said, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us...?”

Part Four: The Return to Jerusalem

Luke 24:33–35

- Why do you suppose verse 34 notes that “the Lord has risen indeed and he has appeared to Simon” before Cleopas and his companion tell their story of what happened on the road?

3 RESPOND

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

We do not know why these two disciples were traveling to Emmaus. Were they going home, going there on business, or just getting away from the trouble in Jerusalem? This story illustrates that the risen Lord meets us on our “Emmaus road,” in the ordinary places and experiences of our lives, and in the places to which we retreat when life is too much for us. These disciples did not plan a sacred moment, but found one in sharing a meal with a stranger.

- When have you shared with someone you didn’t know well? Was it a good experience? What did you learn, feel, or do?
- Religious experiences happen in every context of life, not just at camps or in churches. The presence of God is described in a variety of ways from a still, small voice to roaring thunder. How can we become more aware of God walking beside us on the road?

In Community of Christ we affirm the Enduring Principle Blessings of Community:

- The gospel of Jesus Christ is expressed best in community life where people become vulnerable to God’s grace and each other.
- True community includes compassion for and solidarity with the poor, marginalized, and oppressed.
- True community upholds the worth of persons while providing a healthy alternative to self-centeredness, isolation, and conformity.
- Sacred community provides nurture and growth opportunities for all people, especially those who cannot fully care for themselves.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd edition, p. 13

Discuss:

- How do you understand the community as a blessing?
- Why would the gospel of Jesus Christ be expressed best in community life?
- How does the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus express these blessings of community?

4 SEND

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

Strength of Community

Group members form a standing circle. The first player starts by holding a ball of yarn. The player then shares a community to which they belong (e.g. family name, school name, team name, troop number, etc.) and tosses the ball of yarn to another player—while still holding on to the end of the yarn. This player shares a community to which they belong and tosses the ball of yarn to yet another player, keeping hold of the yarn before passing the ball. The ball of yarn should be passed across the circle in a random pattern having each player share several times. Do not pass it to the person next to you. Create a thick web of yarn. It should be strong enough at the end of creating the web of community that a person can lie down on the yarn and the group can pick him or her up, symbolizing the strength of community.

5 BLESS

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

Close with a prayer: “Jesus, open our eyes to see you walking with us on the road to our Emmaus.”

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

LESSON 24
7 May 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: John 10:1–10

Lesson Focus: Jesus calls us by our names. As disciples of Jesus, we listen for his voice and follow him.

Objectives

The learners will...

- hear Jesus' teaching about listening for his voice and following him.
- think about what distracts us from following Jesus' voice.
- explore how Community of Christ Enduring Principles invite us to hear and follow Jesus.

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for John 10:1–10 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 67–68, available through Herald House.

Supplies

- Bibles (NRSV recommended)
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition
- *Community of Christ Sings*
- M&Ms or other small candies in a serving bowl, spoon
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Markers
- Paper, pens or pencils
- Video projection capability and Internet (optional)

1 GATHER

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

What's in Your Name?

Pass a bowl of M&Ms or any small candies to the students, encouraging them to take as many as they want. Tell them, however, they can't eat the candy yet. Once everyone has some candy, explain that for every piece of candy they took, they have to volunteer one interesting fact about their name, nickname, or themselves.

2 ENGAGE

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

Have a student read John 10:1–10. Instruct the class to listen for metaphors and images contained in the story.

"Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way

is a thief and a bandit. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers." ⁶Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

- As a class, list the images the students identify on chart paper or a white board. (sheep, gate, pasture, shepherd, etc.)
- Ask the class what they know about sheep, shepherds, and raising sheep.

If possible, watch the video, *The Life of a Modern Day Shepherd in the Middle East*. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNTAQa2sVT4>)

Today's scripture text focuses on the relationship of the sheep, the shepherd, and the gate. The intimate relationship between the shepherd and the sheep is demonstrated by the flock's ability to recognize the voice of their shepherd. The shepherd calls "his own sheep by name and leads them out." This image Jesus offers of himself as the good shepherd has shaped the church, but in the moment of this story, those listening "did not understand what he was saying to them." Jesus then offers another image saying, "I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture."

These two images of shepherd and gate focus our understanding that Jesus is the way to life (the gate), and he *leads* the way to life (the good shepherd). While these are closely related, they are not the same. Neither the gate nor the shepherd has any meaning without the presence of the sheep. The relationship among all three is crucial. The identity of the faith community is determined by the shepherd's relationship to it and its relationship to the shepherd.

Ask students to discuss the characteristics of Jesus as the gate and then Jesus as the good shepherd. Have them compare and contrast these images.

3 RESPOND

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

In Community of Christ, we share Enduring Principles to help us hear and follow Jesus. Many of our Enduring Principles are represented in the relationship between shepherd and sheep—Grace and Generosity, Worth of All Persons, All Are Called, Responsible Choices, and Pursuit of Peace (Shalom).

Shepherds know their sheep by name, value each one, celebrate their diversity, protect the flock (community), and sacrifice for the flock. Likewise sheep know the voice of their shepherd and willingly follow.

Divide the class into three groups. Ask each group to create a list of connections between one of the following Enduring Principles and the metaphor of sheep, shepherd, and gate. Have the groups share their understandings.

Grace and Generosity

- God's grace, especially as revealed in Jesus Christ, is generous and unconditional.

- Having received God's generous grace, we respond generously and graciously receive the generosity of others.
- We offer all we are and have to God's purposes as revealed in Jesus Christ.
- We generously share our witness, resources, ministries, and sacraments according to our true capacity.

Worth of All Persons

- God views all people as having inestimable and equal worth.
- God wants all people to experience wholeness of body, mind, spirit, and relationships.
- We seek to uphold and restore the worth of all people individually and in community, challenging unjust systems that diminish human worth.
- We join with Jesus Christ in bringing good news to the poor, sick, captive, and oppressed.

All Are Called

- God graciously gives people gifts and opportunities to do good and to share in God's purposes.
- Jesus Christ invites people to follow him by becoming disciples who share his life and ministry.
- Some disciples are called and ordained to particular priesthood responsibilities and ministries for the sake of the community, the congregation, and the world.
- We respond faithfully, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to our best understanding of God's call.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, pp. 12–13

4 SEND

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

Like the first hearers of this story we sometimes miss the point, especially when we don't know much about raising sheep. Have the students act out the story as one person narrates John 10:1–10 as written in the paraphrased Bible, *The Message*, below.

Characters:

- Narrator
- Jesus
- Sheep
- Shepherd
- Sheep rustler (stranger, thief)
- Gate

He Calls His Sheep by Name

John 10:1–5: “Let me set this before you as plainly as I can. If a person climbs over or through the fence of a sheep pen instead of going through the gate, you know he’s up to no good—a sheep rustler! The shepherd walks right up to the gate. The gatekeeper opens the gate to him and the sheep recognize his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he gets them all out, he leads them and they follow because they are familiar with his voice. They won’t follow a stranger’s voice but will scatter because they aren’t used to the sound of it.”

Verses 6–10: Jesus told this simple story, but they had no idea what he was talking about. So he tried again. “I’ll be explicit, then. I am the Gate for the sheep. All those others are up to no good—sheep stealers, every one of them. But the sheep didn’t listen to them. I am the Gate. Anyone who goes

through me will be cared for—will freely go in and out, and find pasture. A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.”

5 BLESS

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

Sing “Sizohamba Naye/We Will Walk with God” CCS 377 or play the audio recording. After singing once, insert a student’s name in place of “We.” Sing until each student has been named.

Offer a simple prayer naming each person in the class: “Jesus, help [name] hear your voice and follow you.”

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

LESSON 25
14 May 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: John 14:1–14

Lesson Focus: To live in God’s house is to receive God’s love and share God’s love with others.

Objectives

The learners will...

- hear the story of Jesus talking to his disciples about preparing a place for them in God’s house.
- understand that Jesus asks us to do what he did.
- learn that we can do what Jesus did when we share our Disciple’s Generous Response.

Supplies

- Bibles (NRSV recommended)
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition
- Home magazines (optional)
- Internet access (optional)
- Chart paper and markers
- Supplies for Manna Bags (listed)

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 14:1–14 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 69–70, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Have group members describe their “dream home” and search for pictures in magazines or on their phones for images that show what that house might look like. Share them with the class. Next, ask the students to consider and to search for what homes might look like in other places around the world. Have the students share what they find or what they know about the standard of living in other countries. Ask the students, “What might people in other places consider a ‘dream home’?”

2 ENGAGE

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

Sometimes when we study scripture, we have a tendency to give attention to the parts of the story that make tangible sense for us and only remember pieces of the full picture provided by the text. Today’s scripture is one to easily focus on the tangible. It contains references to “my Father’s house,” “many dwelling places” (translated in the

King James Version as mansions), and the “place where I am going.” As we will read, these images confused the disciples.

Read aloud John 14:1–4.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father’s house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going.”

The story opens with the use of the adjective “troubled.” This word is referring to Jesus’ agitation and disturbance in the face of death, not the personal sadness of the disciples at his execution. They are encouraged to stand firm after he is gone. Jesus encourages them to believe and promises them care.

- Ask the students to offer literal interpretations of verses 2–4, inserting images of mansions, golden gates, and other examples of great wealth and riches.

Review Community of Christ statement on scripture (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd edition, p. 25) focusing on Affirmations Five, Six, and Seven.

Affirmation Five

Scripture is vital and essential to the church, but not because it is inerrant (in the sense that every detail is historically or scientifically correct). Scripture makes no such claim for itself. Rather, generations of Christians have found scripture simply to be trustworthy in keeping them anchored in revelation, in promoting faith in Christ, and in nurturing the life of discipleship. For these purposes, scripture is unfailingly reliable (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

Affirmation Six

Faith, experience, tradition, and scholarship each have something to contribute to our understanding of scripture. In wrestling to hear and respond to the witness of scripture, the church must value the light that each of these sources may offer.

Affirmation Seven

As the church tries to interpret scripture responsibly, it seeks the help of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised that the Spirit would guide his disciples into new truth (John 16:12–15). By the Spirit, the ancient words of scripture can become revelatory, allowing us to grasp what may not have been seen or heard before.

Scholars tell us it is critical to the interpretation of Jesus' words that "my Father's house" should not be considered as a synonym for heaven. This instead should be read in the context of the mutual indwelling of God and Jesus. The Gospel of John talks repeatedly of God being in Jesus and Jesus being in God, residing in each other. This idea of location is a symbol for relationship.

- How does understanding "my Father's house" as a relationship change your understanding of the scripture?

Have the students read aloud John 14:5–7.

⁵Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ⁶Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

Jesus' response to Thomas, "No one comes to the Father except through me," is sometimes used to exclude other world religions and appears narrow minded in our diverse world. In the context of the writer of John, this is a joyous affirmation of the Christian community about God whom they have come to know in the life and death of Jesus. The writer of John is not concerned with questions of who is right or wrong or the merits of different religious beliefs.

The writer is expressing the community's particular understanding of themselves: "This is who we are. We are the people who believe in the God who has been revealed to us decisively in Jesus Christ."

Have a student read aloud John 14:8–14.

⁸Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." ⁹Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father?' ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. ¹²Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it."

- How might Jesus have been feeling about Philip's response?
- Describe your understanding of Jesus' response.

3 RESPOND

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

Jesus says, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." What do we know about God from knowing Jesus? What actions did Jesus take that show us what God is like? What words did Jesus share that show us what God is like? On chart paper list the responses from the class.

- How can we do the same kinds of things that Jesus did?
- What specific actions can we take this week to be more like Jesus?
- As a class, what can we do together to be more like Jesus?

What we do to live like Jesus is a Disciple's Generous Response. Discipleship is a whole-life commitment we willingly make in response to God's wonderful generosity. Disciples place importance on generously sharing their time, talent, treasure, and testimony so others will know and be invited into relationship with Jesus. Living as Jesus and sharing the love of God with others challenge us to act on the ideas we listed on the chart.

4 SEND

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

Create Manna Bags (or copy instructions for youth to prepare at home)

Manna Bags (sometimes called Blessing Bags) are one way to respond with compassion to people you meet who ask for food or money. Prepare a bag (or several bags) to keep in your car, backpack, etc. Extend kindness by having a conversation with the person to whom you give the Manna Bag. Ask his or her name. Keep in mind counsel from Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a as you respond to requests for food or money with a Manna Bag:

God, the Eternal Creator, weeps for the poor, displaced, mistreated, and diseased of the world because of their unnecessary suffering. Such conditions are not God's will...Do not turn away from them. For in their welfare resides your welfare.

Use gallon-size plastic bags or small reusable bags. Fill each bag with any of the items listed below:

- Socks
- Bottled water
- Canned tuna or chicken—pull top (include spoon or fork)
- Bags of peanuts, sunflower seeds, mixed nuts
- Small boxes of raisins

- Granola/cereal bars
- Wrapped packages of crackers
- Fruit cups—pull top (include spoon or fork)
- Hard candy or mints
- Travel-size package of wipes
- Hand sanitizer
- Toothbrush/toothpaste
- Other travel-size toiletry items

Do not include homemade items, anything requiring refrigeration, unwrapped items, chocolate, fresh fruit, soft drinks, drinks in a bag, bottles with snap-off tops, glass bottles, money, cigarettes, or anything with a torn package or expired usage date.

Include a note of encouragement. Notes can include congregation contact information and a simple note of support and caring. Do not sign full name or include any personal information.

5 BLESS

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

Ask a student to close with a prayer remembering God loves all people and provides room for each of us to reside in him

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

LESSON 26
21 May 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: John 14:15–21

Lesson Focus: Jesus will not leave us alone! He loves us and sends the Holy Spirit as an Advocate.

Objectives

The learners will...

- hear Jesus' words of promise to be with us.
- learn that Jesus asks us to keep his commandments to love God, others, and ourselves.
- explore how we can keep Jesus' commandments by being an advocate for others.

Supplies

- Bibles
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition
- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Chart paper and markers

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for John 14:15–21 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 71, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Introduce the class to the song "Ubi Caritas et Amor," in CCS 152. The Latin text means, "Where there is charity and love, God is to be found." Have the class sing the song together repeating the verse several times. Ask the class to share what this text means to them and examples they have seen.

2 ENGAGE

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

Today's focus scripture passage describes two dimensions of the disciples' relationship with Jesus. First, loving Jesus and keeping his commandments are inseparable. To love Jesus is to live his commandments; to keep Jesus' commandments is to love him. Second, this love between Jesus and his followers is known through the Holy Spirit.

Have the students read aloud John 14:15–21 one verse at a time. After each verse ask the students to put the verse in their own words, and share what the verse means to them.

Record student responses on a flip chart or large writing surface.

Teacher Reference Notes on John 14:15–21 (based on *New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, Volume IX, Abingdon Press, 1995, p. 746)

14:15 This verse points to the whole of what Jesus says and reveals about God. Faithfulness is a mark of belonging to him.

14:16–17 Advocate comes from the Greek noun *parakletos* which can mean "the one who exhorts," "the one who comforts," "the one who helps," or "the one who makes appeal on one's behalf." The following words are used in various translations of the Bible: Advocate, Counselor, Comforter, and Paraclete. These words describe the function of the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit of truth" keeps the truth of Jesus present in relationship with the faith community.

14:18–20 Orphan was a common metaphor to describe disciples left without their master. Its use in this verse connects with the imagery of family that runs throughout Jesus’ teaching. His promised return, “I am coming,” indicates he will not abandon his own.

14:21 The third promise of presence highlights the connected nature of community life, the love of Jesus and keeping his commandments, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

3 RESPOND

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

Rudolf Bultmann, an important twentieth-century New Testament scholar and theologian, wrote, “The question therefore which activates the section (John 14:15–21) is this: what is this love, which is directed toward Jesus? ...Can the disciples still love him after he is gone? Can the next generation love him, without having had a personal relationship with him?” (*The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, Westminster John Knox Press, 1971, p. 613).

Ask the students to answer the following questions. Accept all responses and affirm there are no right or wrong answers.

- How do you love Jesus?
- Can disciples love Jesus without having a personal relationship with him? Explain.

John 14:15–21 affirms disciples can still love Jesus, but not by clinging to a memory of him or by keeping personal experiences of him to themselves. Rather, they can continue to love Jesus by doing his work and keeping his commandments. Living in this way continues the community’s relationship with Jesus beyond those who knew him personally to the generations that follow.

Read the following passage from *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 12.

God’s revelation in Jesus Christ and continuing presence through the Holy Spirit, as proclaimed by scripture, is the foundation of our faith, identity,

mission, message, and beliefs. In faithful response to our heritage and continuing experience with God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, we endeavor to uphold the following Enduring Principles (values, concepts, themes) as essential components of church identity and mission: Grace and Generosity, Sacredness of Creation, Continuing Revelation, Worth of All Persons, All Are Called, Responsible Choices, Pursuit of Peace, Unity in Diversity, and the Blessings of Community.

Form small groups or pairs and assign each group or pair one or more of the Enduring Principles listed above. Provide each group or pair with a large piece of paper and markers. Discuss how living the Enduring Principle demonstrates how disciples love Jesus and follow his commandments. Write or draw responses on the paper provided and share with the larger group.

4 SEND

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

Ask students to answer the following questions by writing or drawing their responses, sharing in groups of two or three, or sharing with the larger group.

- How has someone demonstrated one of the Enduring Principles to you in the past week?
- What Enduring Principles have you lived or experienced in the past week?
- Select at least one Enduring Principle and describe how you will demonstrate it in your home or at school in the coming week(s).

5 BLESS

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

Close class with a circle prayer having each student complete the sentence, “God help me show my commitment and love for Jesus this week by _____.”

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER, ASCENSION OF THE LORD

LESSON 27
28 May 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 24:44–53

Lesson Focus: Jesus blessed his disciples before he left them. Disciples bless others with words and actions.

Objectives

The learners will...

- hear the scripture passage about Jesus blessing his disciples and ascending to heaven.
- think about what Christ's commission means.
- learn that blessing means to "speak well of."

Supplies

- Bibles
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition
- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Chart paper and markers

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 24:44–53 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 72–73, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

In the ancient Celtic tradition, a prayer called Saint Patrick's breastplate (a piece of armor) includes the words below (adapted). Use this prayer to remember that as you follow Jesus, you are strengthened to share Christ's mission and message. Have students stand and create movements representing the action of the text as the prayer is read.

Christ be with me
Christ before me
Christ behind me
Christ beneath me
Christ above me
Christ on my right
Christ on my left
Christ where I lie
Christ where I sit
Christ where I arise
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me
Christ in every eye that sees me
Christ in every ear that hears me.
Salvation belongs to the Lord.
Amen.

—Of *Water and Spirit*, Herald House, p. 53

2 ENGAGE

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

The prayer of St. Patrick's breastplate expresses how we are loved by God and surrounded by Christ through the Holy Spirit. In Luke 24:44–53, we read the story of Jesus' last appearance. In these final verses of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus reminds them of all they have seen and heard while he was with them. He tells them "You are witnesses." Then Jesus blesses the disciples, and they respond with great joy and blessing.

Have a member of the class read aloud Luke 24:44–53.

Imagine you are standing with the disciples as Jesus speaks. Reread verses 44–48.

What is your response to Jesus' statement, "You are witnesses of these things"?

- How would you describe the word "witness" to a friend?
- Using Google or a dictionary, look up definitions of the word "witness." Which definition best fits with the passage from Luke? Explain.
- How are we witnesses today?

This passage includes a commissioning (to authorize, send on a mission) of the disciples. Luke 24:47 states “that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”

Form small groups of two or three and assign each group one of the following passages. Discuss how this passage compares with the passage from Luke. What is the same, and what is different? Share responses with the larger group.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

—Matthew 28:19–20 NRSV

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

—John 20:21

And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.”

—Mark 16:15

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

—Acts 1:8

3 RESPOND

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

The Easter season affirms our belief that the Lord is risen! Disciples of all generations must ask, “What shall we do?” Just like the first-century church, we must consider what it is the Lord has sent us to do. Community of Christ has been counseled that “the mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead” (Doctrine and Covenants 164:9f).

In Luke 4:18–19, 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.

The kingdom was present in Jesus’ ministry as described in the Gospels, and his disciples’ actions as described in Acts. Those first believers continued Christ’s mission by proclaiming the Living Christ, inviting all people into community, valuing the worth of each person, generously and compassionately meeting their needs, and pursuing justice and peace for everyone.

Our call is to reclaim that same vision and passion for the whole mission of Jesus Christ today through five life-changing, church-changing, and world-changing 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

How do these five Mission Initiatives encourage our response to Christ’s commission?

As a disciple, what Mission Initiative do you prioritize in your response to Jesus’ commissioning of you? Explain.

Form small groups of two or three. Ask each group to write, draw, or act out how the five Mission Initiatives are connected, and how they work best when lived together. Share with the larger group.

4 SEND

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

Luke 24:50 describes Jesus “lifting up his hands, [and blessing] them.” To “bless” people means to “speak good things” about them.

- What is significant about Jesus lifting his hands to bless the disciples?
- How has someone blessed you with their hands or by speaking good things about you?
- In what ways can you use your hands or words to bless another in your home? Your school? Your community?

5 BLESS

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

Close with this prayer attributed to St. Teresa of Avila (1515–1582). Consider your response to Christ’s commission as the prayer is read.

Christ Has No Body

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.

DAY OF PENTECOST/ ENDOWMENT SUNDAY

LESSON 28
4 June 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Acts 2:1–21

Lesson Focus: Jesus sent the Holy Spirit for all people in all places.

Objectives

The learners will...

- hear the story of Pentecost.
- talk about ways we understand the Holy Spirit.
- learn that Community of Christ is a worldwide church.

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Acts 2:1–21 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 74–75, available through Herald House.

Supplies

- Bibles
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition
- Video: *Let the Spirit Breathe*, available through the link below or at missionalleaders.org (optional)
- Internet access to research languages (optional)
- Copy of Languages of the Church handout for each youth, page 20

1 GATHER

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

As youth arrive, hand them the Languages of the Church handout. Have them research where the individual languages are primarily spoken around the world. Have the students try to pronounce the name of the church in the different languages. Ask:

- What language(s) do you speak?
- When someone talks in a different language, can you understand what he or she is saying?
- Do you have friends whose first language is different from your own?
- Translating from one language to another is more about conveying similar meanings in both languages than it is translating one word for the same word in the other language. Can you infer how this may impact common understanding?

2 ENGAGE

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

Last week we heard Jesus’ instructions for the disciples to “stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high” from Luke’s Gospel. This week we will read about the disciples receiving the “power from on high” on the day of Pentecost. Listen carefully to the images used to describe the Holy Spirit and the people’s responses to it.

Have several students share in reading Acts 2:1–21, stopping between each verse to note the action of the characters and hear students’ responses to the story.

- Have you ever been in a situation where the people around you were speaking different languages? How did you feel in that situation?

Invite students to find a comfortable position, even lying down, to hear the passage read again. Imagine they are

part of the crowd. As they listen to the passage, imagine what they see, hear, smell, and feel as the events take place. Share with the larger group.

As the crowd begins to wonder what is happening, they assume the disciples are drunk on new wine. Peter raises his voice to defend what they are witnessing as an act of God, an outpouring of the Spirit.

- Imagine you are Peter. How would you respond to the crowd? How would you explain what was happening?

3 RESPOND

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

The scripture passage today describes the Holy Spirit as a violent wind and divided tongues of fire.

- How do these images of wind and fire describe the Holy Spirit?
- What other images can you think of to describe the Holy Spirit? (Dove, Breath, Comforter, Advocate)
- Why are there so many images for the Holy Spirit?

Have a student read the following description of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the continuing presence of God in the world. The Spirit works in our minds and hearts through intelligence, comfort, guidance, love, and power to sustain, inspire, and remake us. God is with us and for us as revealed in Jesus Christ. God is also at work in us through the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works within our community of faith to conform us to the image of Jesus, God's Son."

—*Walking with Jesus*, Revised Edition,
Herald House, 2011, p. 83

- What word or phrase best describes your understanding of the Holy Spirit? Explain.
- How does this description compare and contrast with the passage from Acts?

4 SEND

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

The video *Let the Spirit Breathe* provides another image of the Holy Spirit. As you watch the video, consider your own response to the Spirit moving in your life.

Watch the video and respond to the following questions. (videos.files.wordpress.com/bkCfa3Cw/lcm_let-the-spirit-breathe_dvd.mp4)

- Describe how the dancer represents the Holy Spirit.
- How does this video express or challenge your understanding of the Holy Spirit?
- What do you think of the actors' responses to the Spirit's action?

If it is not possible to show the video, form small groups or pairs and have each one act out a description of the Holy Spirit. You may choose to use words or phrases from a reading in this lesson, or use your own understanding of the Holy Spirit. Act for the rest of the class and have them guess what is being described.

5 BLESS

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

Close with the Mission Prayer:

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



Community of Christ

Communauté du Christ
FRENCH

Comunidad de Cristo
SPANISH

Komunidad ni Kristo
TAGALOG

Gulu la Khristu
CHEWA

Содружество Христа
RUSSIAN

ქრისტეს თანამეგობრობა
GEORGIAN

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST/ TRINITY SUNDAY (ORDINARY TIME)

LESSON 29
11 June 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 28:16–20

Lesson Focus: Jesus told his disciples to “Go!” baptize and teach people to be disciples. Jesus also tells us to “Go!”

Objectives

The learners will...

- hear the scripture passage known as the Great Commission.
- explore Mission Initiatives Invite People to Christ and Develop Disciples to Serve.
- understand that discipleship requires action, sharing the good news with others.

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 28:16–20 NRSV in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 78–79, available through Herald House.

Supplies

- Bibles
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition
- World maps showing geography, population, economics, etc.
- Interactive world maps at www.worldpopdata.org/index.php/map
- Street map (map of area where students live, if available)
- Map of first-century Palestine
- Video *Invite*, available from the link below or at missionalleaders.org (optional)

1 GATHER

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

As students arrive, ask them to explore the maps you have collected. Ask them to locate where they live, places they have visited or would like to visit, where friends or family members live.

When everyone has arrived, ask the students to find the area on the modern map where Jesus lived. Identify what countries make up the area today. On the map of first-century Palestine, note the limited region where Jesus’ ministry took place. The Roman Empire was considered to be the known world. How far from Jerusalem did the first generation of disciples share the good news?

2 ENGAGE

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

Today we are studying the last verses of the Gospel of Matthew. This is often referred to as the Great Commission. Like the text from two weeks ago in Luke,

this appearance of Jesus combines instruction, worship, and sending or commissioning. Remember, commission means to instruct or charge with a task.

Read as a class Matthew 28:16–20.

Jesus’ commission is sending his disciples to tell all nations about him and to invite them to live as disciples. People are not called to become individual believers only; all are called to be disciples in community. Baptism marks the transition into discipleship within the Christian community. As disciples, Jesus’ commission is for us as well.

- How would you describe discipleship to a friend or new disciple?
- How would you describe the Great Commission to a friend or new disciple?

Community of Christ upholds the following definition of discipleship:

Being a Christian is more than holding a list of right ideas; it is about radical obedience to Jesus in every part of life. God’s boundless love sets us free for lives of responsible stewardship in which we generously offer our lives in service to God’s reign. Discipleship is both an inward and outward journey. Jesus calls us to follow him and to invite

others to experience the transforming power of his grace.

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

- What words or phrases fit your understanding of discipleship? Explain.
- What challenges your understanding of discipleship? Explain.

3 RESPOND

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

Form two groups and assign each group one of the following Mission Initiatives. Have them read the descriptive statements and discuss the questions that follow. Share responses with the larger group.

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

“This mission to ‘go and make disciples’ is one of our Mission Initiatives—Invite People to Christ! People are waiting to hear the good news!”

—*Of Water and Spirit*, p. 115

We are poised to share the peace of Jesus Christ with those who are waiting to hear the redeeming words of the gospel. We fulfill God’s ultimate vision as we...

- baptize and confirm many new members.
- open new congregations.
- launch the church in new nations.

As disciples we are all responsible to participate in the mission of inviting people to Christ.

- Describe how someone invited you to Christ.
- What encourages you to invite others to Christ?
- What keeps you from inviting others to Christ? Why is it difficult?
- How does your congregation model this Mission Initiative? What could your congregation do to be more invitational?

Develop Disciples to Serve—*Equip individuals for Christ’s mission*

Develop Disciples to Serve is another Mission Initiative.

“Being a disciple includes inviting others to be disciples and to live out their discipleship in sacred community. Such communities make positive changes in their neighborhoods, villages, towns, and cities.”

—*Of Water and Spirit*, p. 115

We are poised to equip women, men, and children to be true and living expressions of the life, ministry, and continuing presence of Christ in the world. We fulfill God’s ultimate vision as we...

- help all ages deepen their discipleship.
- empower priesthood for mission.
- grow pastors and leaders for mission.
- train and send ministers for mission throughout the world.

- In what ways are you developing as a disciple to serve in Christ’s mission?
- What are the sources supporting you in being a “true and living expression of...Christ in the world”?
- How does your congregation model this Mission Initiative?
- How have you, or can you, help another person develop as a disciple?

4 SEND

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

Sometimes Inviting People to Christ can be confused with inviting people to a movie, to dinner, and even church. People certainly can experience Christ’s peace in the theater, at a restaurant, and in the church. However, this invitation is to something much deeper. Christ lives through us as we, empowered by the Holy Spirit, live out the Great Commission with our hands, our feet, our words, our minds—literally our whole selves. Inviting People to Christ is not a sales pitch. Inviting People to Christ is not a scary speech to deliver on a street corner. Inviting People to Christ is sharing the transforming love of God found in the community of disciples.

Whom will you invite? To what are you inviting them?

Watch this Community of Christ video from missionalleaders.org, titled *Invite*. (videos.files.wordpress.com/bez3Mt2i/lcm5_invite_dvd.mp4)

- Can you elaborate on Jesus’ reason for invitation?
- Why might those around you need you to invite them to Christ?
- How might you do that?

If watching the video is not possible, use the following activity to role play opportunities for Inviting People to Christ.

Prepare in advance three to five different scenarios such as the following:

- There is a new person at school who is alone at lunch.
- Someone in your class uses hateful speech about people of different religions or ethnicities.
- Your sister or brother struggles with low self-esteem.

Select two people to role play a given scenario. What would they say or do in this scenario to share the peace of Christ? Talk about how sharing the peace of Christ begins with kindness, but extends to deeper relationships.

Think about a person in your family, school, or neighborhood with whom you can share the peace of Christ. Make a plan for how you will do this in the coming week(s). Share this with another person in the group to be your prayer partner of support as you invite others to Christ.

5 BLESS

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

Close with Doctrine and Covenants 164:9f–a. (Please note we will read the verses in reverse order.)

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

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

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

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

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

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