Create Shalom: Abolish Poverty, End Suffering

Community of Christ
Lessons for Youth Ages 12–18
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Purpose of the Lessons
Many of us respond to the call to provide for needs in
our communities. We have pantries. We serve meals.
We offer affordable clothing. We give money to good
social services. We are now called to meet poverty and
suffering face-to-face. We are sent to work on changing
the systems and circumstances that create poverty and
suffering.

The Mission Initiative to Abolish Poverty, End Suffering,
reminds us we are called to be Christ’s hands and feet,
reaching out through compassionate ministries to
serve the poor and hungry and stop conditions that
diminish the worth of persons. We are called to develop
relationships with people including those who are poor
and suffering—but also those who are in positions of
power who can change the systems and circumstances
that oppress. We are called to engage in systemic ways to
truly abolish poverty and end needless suffering.

These lessons look at the challenges of responding to
the Mission Initiative to Abolish Poverty, End Suffering,
with a particular focus on world hunger. Sequentially,
they look at broadening places where we are called
to challenge the status quo. They invite us to struggle
with the issues of hunger, poverty, and suffering and
encourage us to go deeper in our involvement.

Foundational Scripture Texts
Isaiah 58:6–9 and Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a
Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds
of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the
oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not
to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the
homeless poor into your house; when you see the
naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from
your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and
your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator
shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be
your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will
answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here
I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the
pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,

—Isaiah 58:6–9 NRSV

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. Open your ears to hear
the pleading of mothers and fathers in all nations
who desperately seek a future of hope for their
children. Do not turn away from them. For in their
welfare resides your welfare.

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a
Focus
What does it mean to create shalom, abolish poverty, and end suffering? What are the challenges of world hunger?

Focus Scriptures
Isaiah 58:6–9
Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a

Objectives
The learners will...
• explore how shalom, the Mission Initiative Abolish Poverty, End Suffering, and world hunger are connected.
• explore how poverty is related to world hunger issues.
• explore how community, sustainability, and generosity have an impact on world hunger.

Resources and Supplies
• Three or more sheets of flip chart paper or poster board
• Easel
• Copy paper
• Pens or pencils
• Markers
• Option 1: copies of “Listening to God through Silence” handout
• Option 2: one or more Bibles; a book with very small print; a piece of white paper with fingerprints on it (use an ink pad to make them); several pages from a newspaper; a copy of a magazine; a copy of Where’s Waldo (optional); either individual magnifying glasses for each student or enough larger ones for four to five students to share one
• One cardboard box for each group of six students (boxes should be close to the same size)
• Index cards, one for each group of six students
• A copy of Outreach International’s Sustainable Village map for each group of six students
Before students enter the class area, have the following three concepts defined on a flip chart, poster board, or projected on a wall or screen if technology is available. All students should be able to see all three definitions at the same time:

**Shalom**

Fullness and well-being. Sometimes used interchangeably with the word peace, shalom is a Hebrew term for both greeting and farewell, with great richness of meaning. Not just a lack of conflict or war, shalom suggests full personal and societal well-being. It is coupled with the righteousness of God and God’s intent for humankind and the whole creation and it is only possible as a gift received.

**Abolish Poverty, End Suffering**

The second of the five Community of Christ Mission Initiatives calls us to be Christ’s hands and feet, reaching out through compassionate ministries that serve those who are poor and hungry and put a stop to conditions that diminish the worth of persons.

**World Hunger**

The want or scarcity of food in nations around the world. The technical term is malnutrition or undernutrition which refers to a lack of some or all nutritional elements necessary for human health. Specifically it includes protein-energy malnutrition—a lack of calories and proteins—the most lethal form of hunger.

—adapted from www.worldhunger.org

Welcome each student as he or she enters the class area by saying “shalom.” Have students pick up a piece of white copy paper and something with which to draw. Have available pencils, pens, and markers of various colors. Assign each student one of the definitions and ask them to individually draw a symbol representing it. When all students are finished, have them get into a circle and share their names, where they live, and how their drawings represent their assigned definitions. Be sure to join with them and introduce yourself to the group.

Ask students what they know or remember about shalom. Have they come across this word in their lives or studies? Write any responses on flip chart paper. What about “Abolish Poverty, End Suffering”? What do they remember or know about the issue of world hunger? Thank students for their responses; don’t worry if they have only a few or no responses.

Share with them the purpose of the lessons from the introductory information by either reading or restating it in your own words. Ask if students have any questions and write those on flip chart paper. Provide answers or explain that their questions will be answered in one of the six lessons.

**Option 1: Listening to God through Silence**

Distribute copies of “Listening to God through Silence” found at the end of the lesson. Talk with the students about the two scripture passages at the top of the page. Have Isaiah 58:6–9 from The Message read aloud. Explain that this text is attributed to Isaiah, one of the major prophets of ancient Israel. Prophets were and are focused on calling God’s people to right the injustices of their world. Have Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a read aloud. Answer any questions about the two passages. Emphasize that these two scriptures are the foundation for the six lessons in this study.

Let them know the other passage on the handout is a story about Elijah and where he experiences God’s voice. Explain that students are to go where they can be alone, yet within the sound of your voice. Ask them to read the handout and spend five minutes in silence reflecting on the questions. At the end of five minutes, call the students back together and have them turn to one other person to discuss how they sensed God is calling them to respond to the questions. Bring the entire class back together and ask:

- What was the period of silence like for you?
- Would any of you like to share your responses to the questions with the entire class?

After responses, share the following statements about shalom:

The vision we share is God’s vision of reconciliation, salvation, wholeness, justice, and peace expressed in the scriptural definition of shalom. Shalom means a fullness or completeness of peace. God yearns to establish a lasting covenant of peace with
humankind and with all of creation.

—“We Share a Vision of Creation,” Sharing in Community of Christ, 3rd ed., p. 4

Ask how these two passages tie to shalom. Be sure to reference the definition of shalom posted or projected earlier in the lesson.

**Option 2: Changing Your Perspective**

Before class, set all the following items on a table either out of view from your class area or hidden under a cloth: one or more Bibles, a book with very small print, a piece of white paper with finger prints on it (use an ink pad), several pages from a newspaper, a magazine, and a Where’s Waldo book (optional).

Tell the students they have just one minute to look at everything on the table. Lead them to the table or remove the cloth. When the minute is up have them turn around with their backs to the table. Ask them to describe what was on the table. Ask what specific things they noticed. Follow up with specific questions about the items you put on the table (the section of the newspaper, the name of the magazine, what version of the Bible, or the author of the book with small print).

Next, invite them to have a second look. Give out magnifying glasses and ask them to work together. Encourage them to notice the details, particularly those things they did not notice the first time. Allow them several minutes to examine the objects.

Ask: How did your perspective change when you used a magnifying glass? What details did you notice the second time that you missed the first time?

Like this experience, when we look at the world through God’s lens of justice we pay attention to what we may not have noticed before. Have one or more students read aloud Isaiah 58:6–9 The Message and Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a (both passages are available on the handout at the end of the lesson).

Ask: Instead of a fast from food, what did God really expect from God’s people? Why are these issues important? How would you describe God’s perspective on justice? How is this related to shalom, the Mission Initiative Abolish Poverty, End Suffering, and world hunger?


Brainstorm with students a list of items needed by people living in poverty. Record their responses on flip chart paper or poster board. Here’s a list of items to get them started:

- Food
- Water
- Shelter
- Education (school supplies)
- Utilities (for warmth, lighting, and communication)
- Transportation
- Health care
- Child care
- Clothing
- Toiletries

**Poverty Scavenger Hunt**

Before class, stage in places outside the class area items (or pictures of items) that fit the categories above. Divide the class into small groups of no more than six. Be sure there are at least two groups. Give each group a cardboard box and have them copy on an index card or piece of paper the group’s list of items.

Tell participants to find and bring back items that best represent those basic needs. Let the groups know they have three minutes to discuss their strategy, ideas, and plans, and then you will announce the start of the “hunt.” Give them roughly 10 to 15 minutes based on the distance they need to walk to find the items. They should use the boxes to carry the items.

At the end of the assigned time, have each group show what they brought back. Discuss difficulties they had as a group in finding items, whether some groups took more than their share, whether any groups were willing to trade what they had, and how those issues might relate to the difficulties, greed, and shortages faced by people living in poverty. Discuss if it is fair for those who win or have the most to have even greater advantages than those who have less, and how might they make life equal for everyone.

Ask how poverty relates to the issue of world hunger. Then ask how all of these tie to shalom.
Keeping the same groups, share a copy of the Outreach International Sustainable Village map found at the end of this lesson. Share the following information about Outreach International:

Outreach International, an affiliate of Community of Christ, has been working since 1979 with the world's most marginalized people living in poverty, helping people create new and brighter futures for themselves.

Its mission is simple: they believe in long-term investments that bring about sustainable solutions and long-lasting change for the better. They call it sustainable good.

Outreach International is a humanitarian organization that currently works in 10 impoverished countries around the world, helping hundreds of thousands of people overcome the effects of poverty each year.

In small groups, have students study the Sustainable Village map. Assign each group one or more of the 12 community improvements labeled on the map. Make sure all 12 are assigned to at least one group. Allow students 15 minutes. Have them imagine they live in this village; study the map; and discover how the community improvement they were assigned helps make the village sustainable, helps abolish poverty and end suffering, and how it might create shalom. Each group will compile its responses. Then a spokesperson for each group will share the responses in a brief report to the entire class. Assign a time limit based on the class schedule.

The map is also available on the Outreach International website: http://support.outreach-international.org/site/DocServer/06-11_SustVillageMapwBorder8x14.pdf?docID=701. (Permission granted to copy for Community of Christ reunions and classes.) It includes a sidebar which provides some of the answers. An expanded version of the sidebar (not shown) including all 12 community improvements is provided below:

**The Sustainable Village**

The goal of Outreach International is to help the poor learn to solve their own problems to improve their lives and become free of dependency on others.

When residents come together in community meetings, they identify their most pressing issues. Following much discussion, they develop a plan of action—working together and learning how to create sustainable change.

Working together, village residents often create private and community gardens, using improved seeds, fertilizer, and even irrigation systems for greater yields. Terrace gardens provide extra crops and reduce erosion. Reducing erosion and creating added food crops are also possible through reforestation.

More food means improved health for everyone. A surplus at harvest time means there are crops to sell at the market, which provides residents funds to buy much-needed supplies and pay tuition for children to attend school. Access to the market and more land is made possible by building community infrastructure such as a bridge to cross rivers; otherwise the distance is too great.

Working cattle make the job of tilling the soil much easier. Often, small cooperative stores are created in the village, saving residents the long walk to market for essentials.

Contaminated water threatens the welfare of every person within a village. By digging a community well deep into the ground, residents can access clean, safe water. This helps community members avoid serious bouts of water-related illnesses. Building latrines leads to better health and improved sanitation. However, when residents do become sick, it is good to have a simple health clinic and pharmacy within the village. Often a resident will become trained in basic healthcare to care for the sick and give medicines for simple illnesses.

—Adapted from Outreach International. Used with permission.
BLESS
Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope

Share the following story. You may have one or more students read it aloud or act it out as a narrator reads. Explain that the story represents a blessing between two brothers, but could also represent a blessing to villages or nations. The foundation for ending hunger; Abolishing Poverty, Ending Suffering; and creating shalom begins with love and generosity such as explained in the story.

Two Brothers
A long time ago in ancient Israel, lived two brothers who were both farmers. They tended their crop on opposite sides of a hilltop. One brother was married and had a large family. The other lived alone. They farmed the land, and harvested equal amounts of produce. Every night the two brothers, each in his respective home—on opposite sides of the hill—would lie awake in thought.

The brother with the large family would think to himself, “My brother is alone, and has no one to take care of him. Surely he needs more of the crop than I.” Meanwhile, the single brother wondered, “My brother has many children to feed. Surely he and his wife need more of the crop than I.”

So each night, long after everyone was asleep, the married brother would gather bundles of wheat and carry them across the field quietly placing them among his brother’s harvest. And likewise, the single brother would gather some of his bundles late at night, and secretly deliver them to his married brother.

Years passed, each brother unaware of the other’s generosity.

One clear starry night, the two brothers met as they carried their bundles of wheat across the field. Realizing what the other had been doing all these years, they dropped the produce, held out their arms, and embraced. Weeping together, they realized the true meaning of brotherly love.

The hill on which their field sat was Mount Moriah, and the spot where the two brothers wept was to become the holy temple built by King Solomon—for only such a place of extraordinary giving could serve as the bedrock for the holiest site of the Jewish people.


Listening to God through Silence

Explain to students what a fast is, then read aloud and have them reflect on the following two scriptures.

Fast (Abstain from Food): Abstinence from food for purposes of religious devotion and spiritual practices. Fasting is often associated with focused prayer and scriptural meditation. A “Fast Day” is part of the Jewish tradition to abstain from food for an entire day. There are seven traditional fast days in the Jewish year.

“This is the kind of fast day I’m after: to break the chains of injustice, get rid of exploitation in the workplace, free the oppressed, cancel debts. What I’m interested in seeing you do is: sharing your food with the hungry, inviting the homeless poor into your homes, putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad, being available to your own families. Do this and the lights will turn on, and your lives will turn around at once. Your righteousness will pave your way. The God of glory will secure your passage. Then when you pray, God will answer. You’ll call out for help and I’ll say, ‘Here I am.’”

—Isaiah 58:6–9 The Message

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. Open your ears to hear the pleading of mothers and fathers in all nations who desperately seek a future of hope for their children. Do not turn away from them. For in their welfare resides your welfare.

— Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a

Questions to Consider

• How is God calling me to break the chains of injustice, get rid of exploitation where I work or go to school, free the oppressed, or cancel debts?
• How is God calling me to share food with the hungry? Invite people who are homeless and poor into my home?
• How is God calling me to help others get clothes?
• How is God calling me to be available to my own family?
Read this scripture:

“Go, stand on the mountain at attention before God. God will pass by.”

A hurricane wind ripped through the mountains and shattered the rocks before God, but God wasn’t to be found in the wind; after the wind an earthquake, but God wasn’t in the earthquake; and after the earthquake fire, but God wasn’t in the fire; and after the fire a gentle and quiet whisper.

When Elijah heard the quiet voice, he muffled his face with his great cloak, went to the mouth of the cave, and stood there. A quiet voice asked, “So Elijah, now tell me, what are you doing here?”

—1 Kings 19:11–13 The Message

Move to where you are alone as much as possible and spend five minutes in silence thinking about how God is calling you to answer the questions above. After five minutes, either write your response on the back of this handout or turn to one other person and talk about it.
It's the goal of Outreach International to help the poor learn to solve their own problems to improve their lives and become free of dependency on others. When residents come together in community meetings, they identify their most pressing issues. Following much discussion, they develop a plan of action – working together and learning how to create sustainable change.

Addressing Hunger

Working together, village residents often create community gardens, using improved seeds, fertilizer and even irrigation systems for greater yields. More food means improved health for everyone. A surplus at harvest time means there are crops to sell at the market, which provides residents funds to purchase much-needed supplies and pay tuition for children's education.

Working cattle make the job of tilling the soil much easier. Often, small cooperative stores are created in the village, saving residents the long walk to market for basic essentials.

Safe Drinking Water & Improved Health

Contaminated water threatens the welfare of every person within a village. By digging a well deep into the ground, residents can access clean, safe water. This helps community members avoid serious bouts of water-related illnesses. Constructing latrines leads to better health and improved sanitation. However, when residents do become sick, it is good to have a simple health clinic and pharmacy within the village. Often a resident will become trained in basic healthcare to care for the sick and administer medicines for simple illnesses.

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Focus
How does sitting around a table help build relationships and change lives?

Focus Scripture

Objectives
The learners will…
• explore the importance of meals as the catalyst for transformation.
• explore hospitality and how it relates to ministry.
• explore how world hunger affects people, communities, and societies.

Materials
• Healthy snack from another culture for each student
• Tables to seat all students at once (could use different types of tables, such as TV trays or card tables)
• Roll of butcher paper or flip chart paper (enough to cover all tables)
• Pens, pencils, markers (make sure markers will not bleed through paper onto tables)
• One thin paper plate for each student (not cardboard type)
Invite students to sit at one or more tables when they enter the class area. Have snacks on the tables ahead of time and invite everyone to share equally. If possible, provide snacks that are from a specific culture or nationality which might be different from most of the students.

Explain that this lesson focuses on how we are transformed when we sit together and share around tables. If large tables are not possible, use TV trays or other small tables. Another option is to sit on rugs or mats on the floor with the snacks on a tray in the middle.

At tables, invite each student to tell the story of an enjoyable or memorable meal in which they took part. Tell about the food, who was with you, the setting, the reason you were together, the hospitality, and anything else you can remember about it. To begin, tell your own story of a memorable meal. Tell students they each have two minutes to share (if there are five or six people at each table).

Afterward, ask the entire group: What were some of the key ingredients in the stories of the meals you just told? How were you changed because of the meal?

Much of Jesus’ ministry was eating with others—sharing at tables—and it includes stories of how people were transformed during the meals.

In table groups have students read aloud this lesson’s focus scripture passage, Luke 24:13–35.

Next, based on what they’ve just heard, ask them to imagine themselves projected into the story. They are unnamed disciples walking with Jesus. Ask: What might keep you from recognizing Jesus even when he’s right next to you? What would have to happen to you for you to open your eyes and recognize Christ’s presence?

Invite students to describe experiences when they were surprised to find God-Jesus Christ-Holy Spirit with them.

Tell students that scholars have been unable to corroborate historical evidence that Emmaus ever existed. A modern theologian, John Dominic Crossan, has suggested the journey to Emmaus never happened—rather, it always happens. It happens over and over, not just to those in the past, but to those of us today when we are open to noticing Christ in the world around us and are willing to be Christ in our hospitality toward others.

What would it look like for you to be Christ in your hospitality toward others? When have you been Christ in your hospitality toward others?

Continue with the same table groups. Cover the tables with white butcher or flip-chart paper. Provide each table with a collection of markers (which will not bleed through the paper), pens, and pencils. Also give each student a paper plate.

Explain to students the Mission Initiative Abolish Poverty, End Suffering, grounded in Christ’s mission of compassion, includes helping those who hurt, feeding...
the hungry, supporting compassionate ministries, and responding in times of crisis. World hunger is one issue that ties to all four of those descriptors.

Share the information found on “Facts and Figures on World Hunger” with the students. It is provided at the end of the lesson. Give each table group a copy of the handout. Ask one person from each table to read one of the statements until all the statements are read.

Have students discuss ways in which hunger affects individuals, communities, and societies. Have them write their responses on the paper covering the table.

Continue by having students discuss the possible causes of hunger. Again, have them write their responses on the paper covering the table.

Next, have students brainstorm possible actions to take to solve the problem of hunger and write them on the paper plates.

Ask each table group to share some of its responses to each topic:

• Ways hunger affects individuals, communities, and societies.
• Possible causes of hunger.
• Possible actions to take to solve the problem of hunger.

Ask the entire class:

• What actions do you think we could take to reduce hunger in our community?
• What did you learn about hunger from this activity?
• What could we do every day to make a difference?

Option: If technology is available, show “The Table” video, from Leading Congregations in Mission, Retreat 2. (It is just over three minutes long and was made available to mission center presidents, and pastors and other leaders taking part in the Leading Congregations in Mission pilot.)

Tell students that helping others, including helping with world hunger, begins with the spiritual practice of hospitality. Give each student a copy of “Transformation at the Table Menu” found at the end of the lesson.

Students will have five minutes to think about ways they can provide hospitality at meals throughout a typical day. Assure them it is okay if they can't think of an idea for each of the four meal times. After five minutes, ask them to discuss their ideas as table groups. Have them write down ideas they think they might be able to do on their own menus. Encourage them to look at all the ideas and circle one they most likely can do during the next few days. Ask each person to describe what he or she circled and say why this is something he or she is willing to do.

As a way of closing this lesson, have each table group come up with a prayer for food (saying grace). Encourage them to be creative allowing options such as poetry or song. Have each group present their prayer to the entire class.
Facts and Figures on World Hunger
from the World Food Programme of the United Nations

870 million people in the world do not have enough to eat. This number has fallen by 130 million since 1990, but progress slowed after 2008.¹

Most hungry people (98 percent) live in developing countries, where almost 15 percent of the population is undernourished.²

Asia and the Pacific have the largest share of the world’s hungry people (some 563 million) but the trend is downward.³

If women farmers had the same access to resources as men, the number of hungry in the world could be reduced by up to 150 million.⁴

Poor nutrition causes nearly half (45%) of deaths in children under five—3.1 million children each year.⁵

One out of six children—roughly 100 million—in developing countries is underweight.⁶

One in four of the world’s children are stunted. In developing countries the proportion can rise to one in three.⁷

80 percent of the world’s stunted children live in just 20 countries.⁸

66 million primary school-age children attend classes hungry across the developing world, with 23 million in Africa alone.⁹

WFP calculates that US$3.2 billion is needed per year to reach all 66 million hungry school-age children.¹⁰

This information is from www.wfp.org/hunger/stats.

1.  Source: State of Food Insecurity in the World, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2012
10. Source: Two Minutes to Learn About School Meals, World Food Programme of the United Nations (WFP), 2012
## Transformation at the Table Menu

### Breakfast
How might you offer Christ-like hospitality at breakfast?

### Lunch
How might you offer Christ-like hospitality at lunch?

### Dinner
How might you offer Christ-like hospitality at dinner?

### Late-night Option
How might you offer Christ-like hospitality later at night?

### Other Times
How might you offer Christ-like hospitality at other times during the day?
Focus
How do we move from providing aid to ending hunger on the street?

Focus Scripture
Matthew 15:32–39

Objectives
The learners will…
- explore how compassion and generosity are linked.
- explore how world hunger is a local issue.
- explore how world hunger is tied to many other issues like health, clean water, sanitation, education, family, monetary policy, gender, and poverty.

Materials and Resources
- Ten or more street signs
- Research on hunger issues in your area
- Paper
- Pencils with erasers
- One Bible (NRSV preferred) for each small group of four or five students
- Copies of the 10 Advocacy Cards found at the end of the lesson. These should be copied and cut apart actual size or larger if possible.
- Markers
- Ball of yarn
- Easel with flip-chart paper or poster board
Have the class area decorated with 10 or more street signs before students arrive. You can make your own signs based on signs found at the end of this lesson. Include one or more stop, yield, speed limit, dead end, one-way, no U-turn, and do not enter signs.

Most important, before students arrive do research on hunger and poverty in your local community, state, or province.

As students arrive, provide them each with a white piece of copy paper, a pencil, and an eraser. Ask them to draw a map of the street on which they live. As much as possible have students draw in nearby landmarks and mark who lives in the houses next door, on both sides, and across the street. If students live in a rural area, they will need to draw to a smaller scale to mark who lives closest to them.

Ask students to imagine they invited people living around them to a “street party” or maybe a “barn party.” At these parties everyone brings food, some bring music and decorations, and others bring drinks. Ask them to identify who would bring what. Have them mark the people or families around them who would be most generous by circling their names or houses on their maps.

If students are having a tough time identifying their neighbors, have them list the families of their closest friends and then follow the rest of the instructions.

How do you know who would be the “most generous”? What characteristics describe them?

Explain this lesson is about how, by working together for the greater good, we can help abolish poverty and end suffering—specifically hunger—with God’s blessing.

Ask how far students believe they live from those who live in poverty? How far do they live from those who live in homes which struggle to provide food? Share with them some information about your local community, state, or province. Explain that while hunger affects many people worldwide, it can include us and people near us.

Have students get into small groups and read aloud the focus scripture.

Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way.” The disciples said to him, “Where are we to get enough bread in the desert to feed so great a crowd?” Jesus asked them, “How many loaves have you?” They said, “Seven, and a few small fish.” Then ordering the crowd to sit down on the ground, he took the seven loaves and the fish; and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all of them ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. Those who had eaten were four thousand men, besides women and children. After sending away the crowds, he got into the boat and went to the region of Magadan.

—Matthew 15:32–39 NRSV

Ask groups to answer the following questions:

1. What is the main theme of this passage? (God/Jesus cares for all people)

2. How does this story explain the generosity of both God and the disciples? (God uses all we bring; this encourages disciples, even the poorest of believers to do what they can for Christ’s mission)

3. What do the “broken pieces left over” represent? (God will provide with little to spare; as long as there is no greed or waste, no one will go hungry.)

Streets and Alleys

Play a game of “Streets and Alleys.” Ask for three volunteers and then have the rest of the students line up in rows of equal numbers facing you. They should make a square as much as possible so if you have 16 remaining students they form four rows of four students (see figure 1). Students should be close enough together that they can touch fingers with the other players in their row, and they should also be able to touch fingers with the players in their column when they turn left 90 degrees. When they touch fingers
with the players in their row, it forms “streets” (see figure 2). When they touch fingers with the players in their column, it forms “alleys.” The students need only to rotate 90 degrees to switch from alleys to streets. You should have the students practice switching from streets to alleys and back several times before starting the game.

One volunteer is assigned to be “Hungry,” another is the “Grocery Store Manager” and the third is the “CEO” (Chief Executive Officer). Hungry is, well, hungry and wants to catch the Grocery Store Manager and take the bag of food (could be a bag of chips or fruit), but has no money. The Grocery Store Manager has been hired by the CEO to sell the food, so must keep away from Hungry and keep the food. When the CEO calls “streets” or “alleys” everyone should do their best to turn accordingly. The CEO owns more than the grocery store—basically owns the entire town! If Hungry catches the Grocery Store Manager, the food item should be given to Hungry. No one should run! Hungry should be at the opposite end of the grid from the Grocery Store Manager when the round begins.

Rounds should only last two or three minutes before they are called if Hungry doesn’t get the food. Have extra food available and play through three or four rounds allowing students from the grid to take on the other roles.

If volunteers are too speedy, make up challenges, such as Hungry is so hungry, he or she must run around holding his or her stomach while bent over at the waist. The Grocery Store Manager might have to carry the food on his or her head.

After the last round, ask students to sit down and discuss the following questions:

• What’s wrong with this scenario? Who has the power?
• Who has control over food?
• How would you describe the issues of waste and greed, related to food, in our society?
• How might the food be divided so no one goes hungry?

**RESPOND**

_Takes the learners from hearing to doing_

Divide the class into 10 groups or pairs and give each one of the Advocacy Cards found at the end of the lesson. If you have fewer students, create pairs, but give them multiple Advocacy Cards. The cards should be reproduced full size.

Explain that the class will look at ways in which different issues are related to poverty, hunger, and disease. The card(s) each group has represents how it is to advocate for a particular issue. It is the group’s job to share why it is advocating for an issue and then explain the link between what is on the card(s) and the issues represented by the other groups.

Give all groups about five minutes to discuss their cards and brainstorm possible ideas and connections. Key words in bold print on their cards may help them identify possible other advocate groups with which to connect. Give each group a piece of paper and create a name tent or sign showing which advocate role they are serving. Have groups sit in the class area in such a way that all groups can read the other groups’ signs.

Give the Hunger Advocate group a ball of yarn. The group should make a short statement advocating for their group (not reading the card), such as:

_We are advocating about the issue of hunger. One cause of hunger is poverty. People who are impoverished cannot buy food, so they experience hunger. This is why we join with the Extreme-poverty Advocate group to work on alleviating both hunger and poverty._

The Hunger Advocate group would then toss the ball of yarn to the advocate group to which they are connected. The group receiving the ball of yarn would repeat the process, advocating for its position, and then passing the yarn to the next group. The process should continue until all 10 issues have been connected. If some advocacy groups are connected more than once it is okay.

Afterward, discuss the questions:

• What connections are the most obvious to you? The least obvious?
• What are some other connections that haven’t been made already?
• How does this activity influence your feelings about the struggle against injustice?
• Do you think more could be done if advocacy groups work together?

**SEND**

_Explores how the lesson might be lived out_

Place all 10 advocacy cards on a flat surface. Have students form discussion groups based on the cards.
They should choose the card and group with the issue they feel most compelled to work on (not just for this activity, but if they were actually to get involved in their community).

Allow each group to have about five minutes to come up with ways it might be able to advocate for its issue in the community. The group members may address the issue in their community directly or get their community involved with the issue to serve another part of the community. Each group should be prepared to share ideas in one to two minutes depending on class time.

To add to the challenge, give each group one of the traffic signs decorating the class area. The group needs to incorporate the sign into its presentation in some way. For instance, if given a do not enter sign, the group must describe some places (either a physical place or an activity) where one is likely to be told “do not enter” and how might someone overcome it. A stop sign might signal an action by a group your group members think should be stopped.

Ask: How has advocating for a specific issue raised your awareness? How does serving as an advocate for one of the issues show God cares for all people?

**BLESS**

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

Share with students the following prayer by Apostle Ron Harmon. Have it printed on flip-chart paper or poster board so the entire class can read it aloud together. It is known as “The Mission Prayer”:

God, where will your Spirit lead today? Help me 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.
Advocacy Cards

**Hunger Advocate**

Around the world, one person in seven goes to bed hungry each night. In essence, hunger is the most extreme form of poverty, where people or families cannot afford to meet their most basic need for food. Undernourishment negatively affects people’s health, productivity, sense of hope, and overall well-being. We need to address hunger not just by giving food, but helping farmers in poor countries grow better crops and helping countries build farm-to-market roads so farmers can supply distant cities.


**Health and HIV/AIDS Advocate**

More than 38 million people around the world are infected by HIV/AIDS, 25 million people on the African continent alone. The spread of HIV/AIDS has quickly become a major obstacle in the fight against hunger and poverty in developing countries. Because most of those getting AIDS are young adults who normally harvest crops, food production has dropped dramatically in nations with high rates of HIV/AIDS. Left untreated, AIDS leads to an early death for people in their most productive years who are needed to raise crops and families, teach school and care for the sick.


**Clean Water and Sanitation Advocate**

One person in seven has no access to clean water for drinking, cooking, or washing. Besides spreading disease, this has multiple negative effects—girls growing up in villages without water are far less likely to attend school because they are too busy spending hours walking to and from the nearest water source. Bad health caused by poor sanitation has a secondary effect on the family economy and nutrition. Building safe water supplies, improving sanitation through well-built latrines and teaching communities about safe hygiene practices are a few ways to improve the health of many around the globe.

(Source: WaterAid www.wateraid.org)

**Education Advocate**

Parents around the world know that education is crucial to their children’s future. But around the world, 121 million children do not go to school because their parents cannot afford fees, books, or uniforms. Providing education for women and girls would have a dramatic impact on the poor in developing countries.


**Orphans and Childrens Advocate**

There are 2.2 billion children in the world—1 billion who live in poverty. Around the world, millions of children have already lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS—15 million are orphaned. Every year 2.2 million children die each year because they are not immunized. Children are more vulnerable to disease, because their bodies are weakened from hunger.

**Advocacy Cards**

**Fair Trade Advocate**
As much as people in poor countries appreciate development aid, no one wants to rely on a handout—they want to trade their way out of poverty—but international rules make it difficult. Farm and trade policies in the United States and the European Union are creating hardships for family farmers everywhere. Seventy-five percent of poor people in developing countries—some 900 million—depend on agriculture for their livelihood. A fair trade system would give people in poor countries the chance to earn their way out of poverty by taking part in the world economy.

(Source: Oxfam America, www.oxfamamerica.org)

**Anti-corruption Advocate**
While corruption is harmful to governments, losing resources to corrupt leaders is particularly devastating in poor countries where every dollar lost results in one less child in school or one less well dug to provide clean water. Contrary to popular opinion, a large portion of the United States Agency for International Development aid is channeled through existing private relief and development agencies, like Catholic World Relief, World Vision, CARE, Mercy Corps, and many others. Education is essential for understanding the reality of global development.


**Debt-cancellation Advocate**
Every year sub-Saharan Africa, the poorest region of the world, spends billions of dollars repaying debts to the world’s richest countries and international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. For example, the civil conflict in Burundi resulted in an increase in health problems related to malaria, a decrease in education for children and emotional trauma from years of civil strife. But the money needed to address these concerns is diverted to pay off international debts. Though we’ve made efforts to relieve the unpayable debts of many nations, poor countries still spend more each year on debt than on health care or education.


**Extreme-poverty Advocate**
Extreme poverty means living on less than the equivalent of US$1.25 a day, unimaginable to those who live in the developed nations. In the developing world, more than a billion people currently live below the international poverty line. Many people cannot feed their families, because they cannot make a decent wage to buy or produce food.


**Women and Girls’ Advocate**
Throughout the world, women work to provide for themselves and their families. They labor hard, but often their work is valued far less than that of men. In many families, women and girls are the last in line not just for food but for medical care as well. Pregnant women and new mothers who breastfeed infants and children are among the most at risk for malnourishment.


—By Alabama Cooperative Extension System and Auburn University. Used by permission.
Focus
What happens when neighbors serve one another to end hunger and poverty, bringing justice to the neighborhood? Barriers are dismantled.

Focus Scriptures
Mark 7:24–30 NRSV

Objectives
The learners will…
• explore how separation and justice are interrelated.
• explore how working toward solving world hunger helps overcome separation.
• explore opportunities for ministry in and around their neighborhoods.

Materials and Resources
• A wall of curtains or two sheets through which students must pass or a group of cardboard boxes for students to climb over to get to the class area.
• One road map of local areas (from where students live) for each group of four students
• Easel with flip-chart paper or poster board
• Markers (at least eight different colors)
• Bibles for each group of four students
• Eight large pieces of poster board
• Copy of each of the eight obstacles provided at the end of the lesson
• Tape
• Optional: copies of “Walking the Neighborhood” for small groups

“In a crumb of bread the whole mystery is.”
—poet Patrick Kavanagh, The Great Hunger
Before students enter, create a “wall” of two or more curtains or sheets which students have to come through to get to the class. Another option is to have cardboard boxes of varying sizes stacked up so students have to climb over. As students enter, encourage them to go through the wall or over the boxes.

Once everyone has arrived, distribute a collection of road maps of areas representing as many of the students as possible. Have enough maps so approximately four students share one (one to each side of the map). Have them look at the map and see if they can determine boundaries for neighborhoods. What physical barriers separate neighborhoods?

Share the following, written by Apostle Ron Harmon:

In Eugene Peterson's The Message Bible there is a unique rendition of John 1:14: “The Word became flesh and moved into the neighborhood.” Jesus of Nazareth fully embodied (that is he gave a tangible or visible form to) the nature and will of God on a relatively small piece of geography and for a limited time span.

Explain this lesson is about finding justice in our neighborhoods—and sometimes that includes overcoming obstacles or searching through an unfamiliar territory (both geographical and issue-related). Ask students to brainstorm a list of issues that might separate neighborhoods or neighbors from each other. Write their responses on flip-chart paper or poster board. Ask them how Jesus moving into a neighborhood might change it. Record those responses on flip-chart paper as well. Thank them for their work and ask one or more students to pray for the things on the list.

Have students remain in their map groups and read aloud Mark 7:24–30. Explain a few key points by asking questions and helping students more fully understand this passage.

1. Why was Jesus trying to get to a place where no one would know he was there?

2. Where is Tyre and why would Jesus choose to go there?

   The city of Tyre, centuries before Jesus, was on an island off the coast. Alexander the Great conquered the area and connected the island to the mainland. The city is now part of modern-day Lebanon. We might say “Jesus had left his neighborhood.”

3. Why did the woman ask Jesus to “cast the demon” from her daughter?

   In Jesus’ time, physical illness was viewed as the effect of sin. In the case of a child it might have been the parents’ sin. To heal would have been to forgive the sin, and as such “cast out” whatever was causing the problem for the little girl. Then and now such a healing, regardless of the cause, would be considered a miracle.

4. Why might it have been important to say who the woman was?

   The woman was a Gentile and Syrophoenician. Jesus was a male, Jewish, and a Nazarene. The culture of the day would not have permitted him to speak to her.

5. Who are the children Jesus referred to, and why did he call the woman a dog?

   The children he referred to were the Jews. The dogs would have been the Gentiles, including the woman. They were considered unclean and beneath the Jews in their culture. Jesus may have been tired needing rest and to pray. This “neighbor” was pressing in on him (as many had done before).

6. Why did Jesus change his mind and heal the woman’s daughter?

   From the dialog, especially the woman’s comment “even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs,” it seems the woman tapped into Jesus’ broader understanding of his mission of infinite compassion and mercy—one not for just the Jewish people, but one for the entire world, including the Gentiles. In compassion he could not withhold his healing grace.

Explain how the metaphor of children being fed and crumbs for dogs reminds us of the separation and division people create between one another.

Play three or four of rounds of the game “I Love My Neighbor Who…. ” Explain how to play as needed.
Students should form a circle sitting in chairs. One person is assigned to be “it” and stands in the center of the circle. “It” begins the game by saying “I love my neighbor, especially my neighbor who…” “It” completes the sentence with a piece of information that is true for her or him.

Example: “I love my neighbor, especially my neighbor who was born out of state—loves to play basketball, has a pet, is an only child, etc.”

As soon as “it” is finished with the statement, everyone (including “it”) who the statement applies to stands and moves to an empty chair across the circle; it cannot be a chair right next to the one they were in.

Because there is one fewer chair than the number of persons, one person remains standing. That person then begins a second round of the game.

After three or four rounds stop the game and ask:

- What differences did the persons who were “it” in each round bring up?
- Have these differences ever been a way to separate or create divisions among people in history?
- What might separate people from one another in the future?

In the world today many people are separated by economics—and a whole host of related issues, including those who have enough food and those who do not.


SEND
Explores how the lesson might be lived out

Review all eight obstacles through a different lens.

Ask if any of the solutions might be projects for a congregation, youth group, or youth camp. Divide the class into small groups based on the students’ interest or passion. If the class is smaller, have the class vote on which one to work on based on interest or passion.

Have the class or groups select one or a combination of solutions and brainstorm ways to make it happen. What would be the outcome? Who would benefit from the project? Who would need to be involved? What challenges would you have to overcome to make it happen? What might be a timeline to get it done?

Talk with the students about the spiritual discipline of “Walking the Neighborhood,” available at the end of this lesson. Explain this might be a place to start if they want to make a difference in their own neighborhoods or the neighborhood around the church meeting place.

Distribute copies to each student and have volunteers read each paragraph. Start with the passage from Doctrine and Covenants 163. Talk briefly about how this scripture passage calls us to be open to others who are suffering. Then have class members read aloud the process, paragraph by paragraph. Afterward, challenge each student to find a way to make this happen—with parental approval or involvement.

BLESS
Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope

This prayer reflects on some of the most challenging obstacles humans must overcome to bring justice to our
neighborhoods. Consider having students read one line at a time until completed.

**Prayer of Francis of Assisi**

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring love.
Where there is injury, let me bring pardon.
Where there is discord, let me bring union.
Where there is doubt, let me bring faith.
Where there is error, let me bring truth.
Where there is despair, let me bring hope.

Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.
Where there is darkness, let me bring light.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBSTACLE 1</th>
<th>OBSTACLE 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are families in your community where adults and children often miss meals because of food insecurity.</td>
<td>There are some elderly people in your community who live alone, who have little social contact, and often don’t have healthy meals to eat.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>OBSTACLE 2</th>
<th>OBSTACLE 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You learn there are young people in India who would like to communicate with youth in your country about hunger and need ideas for how to get this going.</td>
<td>There are families living in rural communities in Kenya who experience hunger because of a serious drought which is the worst in more than 60 years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>OBSTACLE 3</th>
<th>OBSTACLE 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many people in your community do not know very much about the problem of hunger and do not seem to care.</td>
<td>A family from Pakistan has moved to your community and the two kids in the family attend your school. Some other kids are making fun of them and excluding them because they are different.</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<th>OBSTACLE 4</th>
<th>OBSTACLE 8</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are poor children who live in rural developing countries who could receive food at school if more money was donated. It takes about 30 cents to feed a school child for one day.</td>
<td>You find out that some of the students at your school experience food insecurity (going hungry for several days per week).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Walking the Neighborhood

Many times people in the neighborhood watch us come and go to our homes or our church building. Often there is very little conversation with those in the neighborhood but God is moving in their lives and we are being invited to connect with where God is moving.

The objective is to learn to listen and pay attention to what is happening in the lives of people in your community in a familiar setting. Additionally, it is an opportunity to discern ways you and your congregation can respond to the needs and opportunities where God is moving in your neighborhood.

The foundation for this practice is one of our Enduring Principles, the Worth of All Persons. We engage with people because we are called to be in relationship with others and discover the blessings of relationships and community. This is not about engaging in relationships with a motive other than connecting with other people and being open to what God is up to in these relationships.

Take a family member or go with a friend and begin walking in your home neighborhood or in the neighborhood around your church building. As you walk, pray about each home and the blessing of God in the lives of the people who live there. Also, if people are out in their yards or on their porches greet them and wish them a good day.

As you become a regular presence in the neighborhood, begin to have conversations with the neighbors. As you walk through your chosen neighborhood, ask God to lead you to the people with whom God wants you to share in conversation. Listen for where God is moving in their lives. Consider offering the following prayer as you walk in the neighborhood: “God, who’s out there that you want me to trade stories with? I need to listen to their stories and they need to hear mine. God, bring me together with the people you would like for me to be in a witnessing relationship with. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.”

Be creative by taking some cookies to offer to people on your walk, or some freshly picked vegetables—anything you can offer them as a way of sharing God’s love in a practical way. Listen for what God is doing in their lives or what their experiences have been in their individual walks of faith. Between walks share in prayer and conversation about the people you meet and where God may be leading you in mission. Now “step out” in faith!


3a. Open your hearts and feel the yearnings of your brothers and sisters who are lonely, despised, fearful, neglected, unloved. Reach out in understanding, clasp their hands, and invite all to share in the blessings of community created in the name of the One who suffered on behalf of all.

b. Do not be fearful of one another. Respect each life journey, even in its brokenness and uncertainty, for each person has walked alone at times. Be ready to listen and slow to criticize, lest judgments be unrighteous and unredemptive.

c. Be patient with one another, for creating sacred community is arduous and even painful. But it is to loving community such as this that each is called. Be courageous and visionary, believing in the power of just a few vibrant witnesses to transform the world. Be assured that love will overcome the voices of fear, division, and deceit.

d. Understand that the road to transformation travels both inward and outward. The road to transformation is the path of the disciple.

4a. Do not neglect the smallest among you, for even the least of these are treasures in God’s sight. Receive the giftedness and energy of children and youth, listening to understand their questions and their wisdom. Respond to their need to be loved and nurtured as they grow.

b. Be mindful of the changing of life’s seasons, of the passage from the springtime of childhood and youth to the winter years of life. Embrace the blessing of your many differences. Be tender and caring. Be reminded once again that the gifts of all are necessary in order that divine purposes may be accomplished.

—Doctrine and Covenants 161:3a–4b
Focus

How does a village (or community) move from taking handouts to adopting ways of caring for everyone so all can experience wholeness?

Focus Scripture

Matthew 25:35—36

Objectives

The learners will…

• explore the idea of wholeness.
• explore reciprocity—caring for the other.
• explore the Mission Initiatives, Enduring Principles, and Basic Beliefs and connect them to wholeness.

Materials

• Blank puzzles (enough so each student gets one piece; sample provided at the end of this lesson)
• Pens
• Markers
• One or more tables depending on the size of the class
• Bible for each group of six students
• Paper
• Supplies for spontaneous melodrama (see list provided in body of lesson)

Resources

• Sharing in Community of Christ, 3rd ed., (available from Herald House or online)
• One copy for each group of six students of the Enduring Principles, Basic Beliefs, and Mission Initiatives provided at the end of the lesson
GATHER
Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson

Ahead of time, make copies of the blank puzzle at the end of this lesson on cardstock or heavy paper, or purchase blank puzzles at a craft store. Make sure you have more than enough pieces for each student. Place the remaining puzzle pieces on flat surfaces around the room so the puzzles are partially assembled. If using more than one puzzle and the patterns of the puzzles are different, make sure each student knows to which puzzle his or her piece belongs.

As students arrive hand each a piece of a blank puzzle and a pen or marker. Ask them to write on one side one thing that makes someone “whole.” After everyone has finished, ask them to come to a table or flat surface, share what they’ve written and add their pieces to the puzzle. The unused puzzle pieces should be already assembled. Ask students to remain around the table until the puzzle is completed. Have them write on the remaining blank pieces anything else that might make someone whole. For larger classes divide into small groups and have each group work on a puzzle.

Let them know there are many ways to identify wholeness and that a wide variety of answers are good. Share with them the point of the lesson is how an entire village (or neighborhood, or community) can experience wholeness.

ENGAGE
Invites exploration and interaction

Divide the class into six or fewer groups, have them open their Bibles, and read Matthew 25:31–45. Have each group discuss the following questions for up to 10 minutes:

- When and where do you think those who were considered “sheep” may have done what Jesus said they did?
- Why do you think they were seemingly unaware of doing the good deeds?
- Share in your group a time when you did something like what is described in this passage. What motivated you to do it? What does it mean “just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me”?

After discussion winds down, assign each group one of the following ideas from Matthew 25:35–36 and give students five minutes to brainstorm examples—both literal and metaphorical—they have seen happen in their congregations or communities:

I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,
I was a stranger and you welcomed me,
I was naked and you gave me clothing,
I was sick and you took care of me,
I was in prison and you visited me.

—Matthew 25:35–36 NRSV

Give each group paper and something to write with. Have them start with literal examples and work their way to using the statements as metaphors. If they need help getting started, go to each group and offer leading questions, such as:

- What else can you be hungry for besides food?
- What can you thirst for besides something to drink?
- What are other circumstances in which someone is welcomed?
- When are people vulnerable and how can you help them? (naked/clothing)
- When do you take care of people besides when they are sick?
- When are people isolated or lonely besides in prison?

When time is up, have each group share its ideas in the order outlined in the passage. Share with students these actions of kindness move a community toward increasing wholeness.

RESPOND
Takes the learners from hearing to doing

Melodrama

Note: This activity uses food items. To avoid wasting food, it should be wrapped or packaged so it can be used later. Another option is to actually make stone soup and have a meal with all the food items as a part of this lesson. Cooking will take more preparation and will depend on class size. Cooking will also extend class time. Be sure to use edible “stones” rather than real ones to prevent the release of chemicals into the soup. Please be careful, exercise good stewardship, and have fun!

Explain to students they are going to do a spontaneous
melodrama. It needs no preparation. Audience response makes it better. It needs several participants who are chosen right out of the audience and told who they portray but not what they will do. Be sure to let volunteers know before selecting that if they are chosen, they need to be spontaneous, melodramatic, and willing to be embarrassed in front of other people. These are important requirements that should be emphasized. Volunteers have no lines to read or memorize. All they have to do is act out the story as it is read by the narrator. They will repeat any dialogue immediately after the narrator reads it. When you select volunteers, try to choose people who are uninhibited and willing to give it their best effort. Try to match the right personalities with the parts (see script at the end of the lesson). Be sure to read through it ahead of time. Either you (the teacher) or another adult should serve as the narrator—be sure to be melodramatic, too.

**Cast (in order of appearance)**
The Sun (holding a cardboard cutout of the sun)
Three Travelers (stars of the melodrama)
- Traveler 1
- Traveler 2
- Traveler 3
The Village, the People, a.k.a. the Townspeople (not everyone in the class is assigned a part)
- Man of the House
- Man of the House’s Wife
- Owners (two or more)
- Door (could be cardboard for a smaller class)
- Two Children
- Old Woman
- Old Man
- The Next Person I Point To (Don’t assign ahead of time, just point at someone and have him or her read the line back to you)

**Debrief**
After the melodrama, discuss the following questions:
1. How would you describe the villagers before the three travelers visited?
2. What positive things happened during the creation of the stone soup?
3. What do you think might have been a lasting impact of the visit by the travelers?
4. How did what happened to the townspeople bring wholeness to the village?

**Supplies** (not required, but could add some fun)
- Large cardboard cutout of the sun
- Firewood
- Big pot (water/no water depending on how you want to do this)
- Bag with three small (clean) stones
- Big wooden spoon
- Salt and pepper
- Bag of carrots
- Bag of onions
- Bag of cabbage

Hidden around the room (or not)
- A can of sardines or tuna
- A bag of potato chips
- Small container of margarine or butter
- A can or bag of beans
- Other vegetables (veggie chips)
- A packet or bottle of herbs
- A small carton of milk—regular or dried milk

Optional
- Bread
- Crackers
- Soda pop

**SEND**
*Explores how the lesson might be lived out*

Bringing wholeness to the village begins where we are. However, in a Western, mobile, technology-savvy society it is easy to take for granted where we are. Most people no longer live near where they were born; in the United States it is six out of 10 people. With advances in technology it is now possible to “visit” with people face-to-face across the continent and around the world. So even though we might “be” in a physical location our minds can “be” somewhere else.

Divide the class into small groups to create a definition of wholeness. Hand out paper, pens, and pencils. Have each group write its definition. In Community of Christ there are some key features in our definition of wholeness. Make these available to each of the small groups.

- Mission Initiatives (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd ed., pp. 8–9, also at the end of the lesson)
- Enduring Principles (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd ed., pp. 12–14, also at the end of the lesson)
Once students have a working definition for their group, create a list of all the different places they visit in the community during a week: their home, a friend's home, school, bank, gas station, church, library, shopping mall, etc.

Select one location and answer the following question: How can we create an atmosphere for wholeness to be experienced by people (as defined by the group) in such a place? Have them record their ideas and move through as many locations as time allows. Allow about 15 minutes. Encourage them to be as specific as possible.

Have each group share with the entire class their definitions of wholeness, locations they chose, and answers to the question.

**BLESS**

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

Close the lesson with this prayer by Jim Cotter, a priest in the Church of England. It is from his book *Prayer in the Morning* (Sheffield: Cairns Publications, 1989).

God bless this city and move our hearts with pity lest we grow hard.

God bless this place with silence, solitude and space that we may pray.

God bless these days of rough and narrow ways lest we despair.

God bless the night and calm the people's fright that we may love.

God bless this land and guide us with your hand lest we be unjust.

God bless this earth through pangs of death and birth and make us whole. Amen.
Once upon a time, just as the sun was setting, three weary travelers came to the edge of a village. Their feet were blistered. Their mouths were dry and their bellies were aching with hunger.

“I’m starving,” moaned the first.

“I’m exhausted,” groaned the second.

“Let’s stop in this town and ask for help,” said the third.

Now the people who lived in this town were by no means rich and what little food they had, they always kept for themselves—hiding it even from their friends and family. When they looked out of their houses and saw the three travelers, they said to each other, “Look! Hungry strangers! We know what they want! Quick! Let’s hide all the food and pretend we have nothing!” And that’s exactly what they did (have the Villagers repeat the quotes).

The travelers came to the first house and knocked gently on the door.

“Good day and peace be with you,” said the first. “Will you please kindly share with us a little of your food?”

“And a corner where we can sleep for the night?” added the second.

“We’ll tell you all about our travels in return,” promised the third.

The man of the house said, “Sorry, we gave all our spare food to the travelers who came here last week.”

“And there’s only one room in this house,” said the man’s wife. Both of them were lying.

The travelers sighed and went to the next house.

The owners, yelled through the door, “Go away! The harvest was very bad this year and every bit of food we had is gone!” They too were lying.

At every house the answer was the same. The townspeople always found an excuse: their children were sick; they had relatives staying; they were going away; a plague of mice had eaten everything—one lie after another! The travelers knew they were being lied to, but what could they do?

They were just about to give up and leave the town, when one of the travelers had an idea. “The people here have a lot to learn,” he said. “Let’s play a little trick on them and teach them a very big lesson!”

“An excellent idea,” said the second.


“Gather round and I’ll tell you,” said the first. And so, in whispers and secret signs, he did. And as he explained the plan, his two companions nodded and grinned from ear to ear.

As soon as they were ready to put their plan into action, the first traveler spoke in a big, booming voice so that the nearby townspeople were sure to hear. “How terribly sad that the poor people in this town have no food,” he said. “But never mind. We three shall go to the town square and there, as night falls, we shall make a pot of our delicious and nutritious stone soup!”

When they heard this, the townspeople were extremely curious. They’d never heard of stone soup and wondered how it was made and what it tasted like.

“How do you make stone soup?” asked the townspeople.

“We’ll gladly show you,” replied the first traveler.

“Follow us,” said the second traveler.

“And bring a big empty pot with you and some firewood too,” said the third traveler. So they did.

Arriving in the town square, one of the travelers made a fire, another filled the empty pot with water and the third placed it over the fire to boil.

“And now… for the special ingredients,” said the first traveler. With a grand and dramatic flourish so everyone could see, he reached into a bag, took out three smooth round stones and plopped them into the pot of water. “Soon we shall feast!” the first traveler exclaimed, stirring the pot with a big wooden spoon.

As the rumor of a feast spread round the town, an excited crowd began to gather in the square. “Just as we planned!” whispered the first traveler to his friends.

(continued)
After the pot of water had been boiling for some time, the travelers began to sniff the air and lick their lips. “And now I will taste it!” said the first traveler. As the traveler lifted a spoonful of bubbling water to his mouth, the crowd craned forward to see and to hear his verdict. “It is completely...delicious!” he announced.

At this, the crowd gasped and gurgled with delight.

The traveler said, “True, some people might say that it needs a little salt and pepper, but apart from that it is practically perfect.”

No sooner had he said this, than the townspeople sent two of their children hurrying home to fetch salt and pepper, which the clever travelers added to the pot.

After a while, the second traveler tasted the soup. “Mmm!” he said, rubbing his belly and moaning with appreciation. “These extraordinary stones do indeed make an excellent soup! Although...perhaps just a few carrots would make it even more delicious.”

Just then, an old woman in the crowd called out, “Now that I think of it, I believe I may have a carrot or two in the house!” And straightaway, she scurried home and back she hobbled carrying a whole sack full of sweet crunchy carrots, which the travelers quickly added to the pot.

“I suppose a perfect stone soup should also have some onions and perhaps even some cabbage too,” said the third traveler. “But what’s the point of dreaming about ingredients we simply haven’t got?”

At this, an old man’s voice was heard from the middle of the growing crowd. “I’ve got some onions!” he cried. “And cabbages too!” And off he shuffled, returning a few moments later wheeling a barrow full of onions and fresh green cabbages, which again the travelers quickly put in the pot.

After another tasting session, the first traveler paused with a look of pure ecstasy on his face, before finally declaring: “This stone soup is totally scrumptious! Although...I suppose a few little fishes and possibly some potatoes and perhaps some oil or margarine would improve the flavor ever so slightly, but apart from that—and maybe some beans and some other vegetables and some herbs and a drop or two of milk or cream—I can truly say that the [insert “president” or leader of your nation or group] would be happy to eat this most delicious and nutritious stone soup!”

When the crowd heard these words, they were deeply impressed and off they ran to fetch all the food they had hidden earlier that evening (around the room). Soon they returned with sacks and handfuls of tasty ingredients, which the travelers piled into the pot as quickly as they could. “Food fit for a [insert leader’s title]!” murmured the townspeople. “And all made from stones! Isn’t it amazing?”

Finally, the travelers announced that the soup was ready. “But don’t worry,” said the first. “There’s enough for everybody!” Tables and chairs were placed in the square and bowls and spoons and napkins too. Torches were lit and decorations hung. In the middle of the hustle and bustle, the next person I point to called out, “A soup as special as this deserves nothing but the best! Let’s fetch bread and crackers and soda pop [or water, lemonade, tea, etc.]!” And so the feast began and everyone agreed they’d never tasted anything so delicious in their lives.

And when the feast was over, the townspeople listened with attention as the travelers told their tales from far and wide. And the townspeople told the travelers all about their lives in the town. And then there was singing and dancing until late into the night. Early in the morning, just as the sun was rising, the travelers departed. “Thank you so much for teaching us how to make stone soup,” said the townspeople.

“You’re very welcome,” replied the travelers, nodding and grinning. “Be sure to visit us again,” said the townspeople.

“We certainly will,” said the travelers.

And they did. And they all lived happily ever after.

—© 2008 Kevin Graal
Based on a version of the traditional folktale “Stone Soup” by storyteller Kevin Graal written for the World Food Programme to celebrate World Food Day 2008.
Mission Initiatives

Mission Made Real

Christ’s mission is our mission. From this point forward, all ministries, personnel, and resources of the World Church will be focused on the whole mission of Jesus Christ through five, life-changing, church-changing, and world-changing Mission Initiatives.

Invite People to Christ

*Christ’s mission of evangelism*

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/confirm many new members
- Open new congregations
- Launch the church in new nations

Abolish Poverty, End Suffering

*Christ’s mission of compassion*

We are poised to be Christ’s hands and feet, reaching out through compassionate ministries that serve the poor and hungry and stop conditions that diminish the worth of persons. We fulfill God’s ultimate vision as we…

- Help those who hurt
- Feed the hungry
- Support compassionate ministries
- Respond in times of crisis

Pursue Peace on Earth

*Christ’s mission of justice and peace*

We are poised to restore Christ’s covenant of peace, even the Zion of our hopes. The hope of Zion will become a reality when we live Christ’s peace and generously share his peace with others. We fulfill God’s ultimate vision as we…

- Establish the Temple as a center to promote peacemaking throughout the world
- Engage children in peacemaking around the world
- Seek justice, create peacemakers around the world
- Unite with others to make peace around the world

Develop Disciples to Serve

*Equip individuals for Christ’s mission*

We are poised to equip men, women, 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

Experience Congregations in Mission

*Equip congregations for Christ’s mission*

We are poised to become congregations that are the true and living expressions of Jesus Christ, woven together by the Spirit, and sent into the world as evangelistic witnesses, compassionate ministers, and justice and peacemakers. We fulfill God's ultimate vision as we…

- Nurture congregations of Christ’s love and peace
- Experience God's presence through worship
- Become a people of peace, reconciliation, and healing of the Spirit

Christ’s Mission—Our Mission—YOUR Mission

In response to God’s Spirit we are moving from being a church defined to a great extent by organizational needs to being a church driven by Spirit-led mission. You are invited to put your heart and soul into mission: the divine mission of evangelism, compassionate ministries, and justice and peacemaking for which Jesus Christ lived and gave his life!
Enduring Principles

The Foundation: God, Christ, Holy Spirit

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, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, we endeavor to uphold the following Enduring Principles (values, concepts, themes) as essential components of church identity and mission.

Enduring Principles define the essence, heart, or soul of church identity, mission, and message. They describe the personality of the church as expressed through its participants, congregations, and affiliate organizations throughout the world.

Some call Enduring Principles core values. Others call them foundational concepts. Use whatever terms make the most sense in the setting where you are writing, sharing, teaching, or preaching. For general official purposes, the World Church will use the term Enduring Principles.

Each principle follows with statements that help explain its meaning. Each set of statements ends with “we” statements that emphasize calling and desired response. The statements following each principle are not meant to be limiting or comprehensive. They are provided as helps. Use phrases, illustrations, stories, testimonies, scripture passages, and additional points to provide clarity and understanding for those with whom you are sharing.

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.

Sacredness of Creation

• In the beginning, God created and called it all good.
• Spirit and material, seen and unseen, are related.
• Creation’s power to create or destroy reminds us of our vulnerability in this life.
• God is still creating to fulfill divine purpose.
• We join with God as stewards of care and hope for all creation.

Continuing Revelation

• Scripture is an inspired and indispensable witness of human response to God’s revelation of divine nature.
• God graciously reveals divine will today as in the past.
• The Holy Spirit inspires and provides witness to divine truth.
• In humility, individually and in community, we prayerfully listen to understand God’s will for our lives, the church, and creation more completely.

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.

(continued)
Enduring Principles (continued)

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.

Responsible Choices
• God gives humans the ability to make choices about whom or what they will serve. Some people experience conditions that diminish their ability to make choices.
• Human choices contribute to good or evil in our lives and in the world.
• Many aspects of creation need redemption because of irresponsible and sinful human choices.
• We are called to make responsible choices within the circumstances of our lives that contribute to the purposes of God.

Pursuit of Peace (Shalom)
• God wants shalom (justice, reconciliation, well-being, wholeness, and peace) for all of creation.
• Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God’s shalom (peace), reveals the meaning of God’s peace in all aspects of life.
• The vision of Zion is to promote God’s reign on Earth, as proclaimed by Jesus Christ, through the leavening influence of just and peaceful communities.
• We courageously and generously share the peace of Jesus Christ with others.
• Led by the Holy Spirit, we work with God and others to restore peace (shalom) to creation.

• We celebrate God’s peace wherever it appears or is being pursued by people of good will.

Unity in Diversity
• The Community of Christ is a diverse, international family of disciples, seekers, and congregations.
• Local and worldwide ministries are interdependent and important to the church’s mission.
• The church embraces diversity and unity through the power of the Holy Spirit.
• We seek agreement or common consent in important matters. If we cannot achieve agreement, we commit to ongoing dialogue and lovingly uphold our common faith in Jesus Christ and the mission of the church.
• We confess that our lack of agreement on certain matters is hurtful to some of God’s beloved children and creation.

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 can not fully care for themselves.
• We value our connections and share a strong sense of trust in and belonging with one another—even if we never have met.
• Some disciples are called and ordained to particular priesthood responsibilities and ministries for the sake of the community, the congregation, and the world.
• We are called to create communities of Christ’s peace in our families and congregations and across villages, tribes, nations, and throughout creation.
Basic Beliefs of Community of Christ

Preface

The good news of Jesus Christ is at the center of the faith and beliefs of Community of Christ. We are a worldwide community and are committed to follow Jesus, bring forth the kingdom of God, and seek together the revealing, renewing presence of the Holy Spirit. We offer here our Basic Beliefs, not as the last word, but as an open invitation to all to embark on the adventure of discipleship. As we seek God's continuing guidance, we encourage all people to study the scriptures and think about their experiences as they engage in the life of the church.

God

We believe in one living God who meets us in the testimony of Israel, is revealed in Jesus Christ, and moves through all creation as the Holy Spirit. We affirm the Trinity—God who is a community of three persons. All things that exist owe their being to God: mystery beyond understanding and love beyond imagination. This God alone is worthy of our worship.

Jesus Christ

We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, the Word made flesh, the Savior of the world, fully human and fully divine. Through Jesus' life and ministry, death and resurrection, God reconciles the world and breaks down the walls that divide. Christ is our peace.

The Holy Spirit

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.

Creation

As an expression of divine love, God created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, and called them “good.” Everything belongs to God and should be cherished and used justly according to divine purposes. God sees creation as a whole without separation of spirit and element. God calls people of every generation to join with God as stewards in the loving care of creation.

Humanity

Every human being is created in the image of God. In Jesus Christ, God took on the limits of human flesh and culture, and is known through them. We therefore affirm without exception the worth of every human being. We also affirm that God has blessed humankind with the gift of agency: the ability to choose whom or what we will serve within the circumstances of our lives.

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.

Salvation

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

The Church

God intends Christian faith to be lived in companionship with Jesus Christ and with other disciples in service to the world. The church of Jesus Christ is made of all those who respond to Jesus' call. Community of Christ is part of the whole body of Christ. We are called to be a prophetic people, proclaiming the peace of Jesus Christ and creating communities where all will be welcomed and brought into renewed relationship with God, and where there will be no poor.

Revelation

We affirm the Living God is ever self-revealing. God is revealed to the world in the testimony of Israel, and above all in Jesus Christ. By the Holy Spirit we continue to hear God speaking today. The church is called to
Basic Beliefs of Community of Christ (continued)

listen together for what the Spirit is saying and then faithfully respond.

**Scripture**

Scripture is writing inspired by God’s Spirit and accepted by the church as the normative expression of its identity, message, and mission. We affirm the Bible as the foundational scripture for the church. In addition, Community of Christ uses the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants—not to replace the witness of the Bible or improve on it, but because they confirm its message that Jesus Christ is the Living Word of God. When responsibly interpreted and faithfully applied, scripture provides divine guidance and inspired insight for our discipleship.

**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.

**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.

**Ministry**

Ministry is humble service offered according to the model of Jesus, who calls every disciple to share in ministry for the world. Some disciples are called by God and ordained to priesthood offices to serve the mission of the church in specialized ways. The Holy Spirit gives complementary gifts and abilities to all disciples to equip the body of Christ for its witness in the world.

**The Reign of God**

The Reign of God is the coming triumph of love, justice, mercy, and peace that one day will embrace all of creation. Jesus’ life and ministry were the living expression of this promise. He taught his disciples to pray for the kingdom’s full coming and sent them out into the world to be living emblems of that new creation. “Zion” expresses our commitment to herald God’s peaceable kingdom on Earth by forming Christ-centered communities in families, congregations, neighborhoods, cities, and throughout the world.

**Peace**

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.

**Resurrection and Eternal Life**

Christ is risen! Thus we believe that God is God of life, not of death. By faith we share in eternal life even now. In Christ, God’s love finally will overcome all that demeans and degrades the creation, even death itself. Easter also gives us hope that the tragic suffering and death of victims, throughout history, is not the last word. We believe the Holy Spirit will transform all creation to share in the glory of God.

**Judgment**

The living God whom we serve is a God of justice and mercy. God cares about how we treat our neighbors and enemies and how we make use of creation’s gifts. It matters supremely to God how we welcome the poor, the stranger, the sick, the imprisoned, and the rejected. We affirm in scripture’s light that Jesus Christ is advocate and judge of the living and the dead.

**End Time**

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.”
Focus
How can we—as disciples of Jesus Christ—bring about systemic change to Abolish Poverty, End Suffering and eliminate hunger through compassionate service?

Focus Scripture
John 21:15–19

Objectives
The learners will…
- explore committing to lifelong discipleship.
- explore compassionate service and ministry.
- explore systemic change and an anti-oppression framework.

Materials
- Bible for each small group of six students (NRSV recommended due to specific wording)
- Resources for Building Bridges activity listed in lesson
- Easel with flip-chart paper or poster board
- Markers
- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- Copy of “Anti-oppression Windows” handout for each student
After students arrive, engage them in an activity called “Forced Choice” using the following questions or make up your own. The final questions should lead students to think about compassionate service. Have everyone stand together in the center of the class area. Explain that you are going to read aloud a question with two options. Students move to the left if they choose the first answer or right if they choose the second answer. Then, ask questions such as: Why did you choose your answer? Why do you think others chose the different answer?

Questions: Would you rather...

- kiss a dog on the mouth or lick the bottom of a cat’s foot?
- eat pepperoni pizza every day for a year or never have it again the rest of your life?
- win free tickets to a professional football game or baseball game?
- live without TV for one year or be homeless for one month?
- win a million dollars all at once today or get $1,000 a week for the rest of your life?
- work during the summer or stay at home all day during the summer?
- serve in a downtown food kitchen or work in a garden for low-income families?
- work overnight in a homeless shelter or rehabilitate homes for low-income families?
- collect toys for low-income children during Christmas or organize local restaurants to donate food to shelters and food banks?
- lead classes for migrant farm children or cook a holiday meal for the homeless?

Explain the purpose of this lesson is to look at how we (as disciples of Jesus Christ) bring about systemic change to Abolish Poverty, End Suffering and eliminate hunger through compassionate service.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” A second time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.” (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, “Follow me.”

—John 21:15–19 NRSV

What if you had been Peter and Jesus asked you three times “do you love me?” How would you have felt? Why do you think Jesus asked the question three times?

If Jesus were to ask you “do you love me more than all else?” what would be your response?

After each of the three questions, Jesus responds with: “feed my lambs,” “tend my sheep,” and “feed my sheep.” Who do you think Jesus is talking about when he’s talking about lambs and sheep? What’s the difference between lambs and sheep? What’s the difference between tend and feed?

Share with students the following as conversation breaks:

One possible implication of the differences in these words is a commitment to lifelong discipleship. Jesus may have asked three times and responded differently to suggest a passage of time and a commitment to helping others as we grow and they grow.

More questions to have groups consider: What would a commitment to lifelong discipleship look like? What might you need to change to make such a commitment? What do you need from your friends, ministers, or others?

Hand out paper and pencils and have students draw timelines of their lives with markers for every 10 years. Have them place on their timelines three or more events...
or experiences that pointed to lifelong discipleship. How might they “feed my sheep” when they are 20, 30, 50, and 70? Encourage creativity. When complete have students share their timelines with a partner.

**RESPOND**

*Takes the learners from hearing to doing*

In an address to the church, President Stephen M. Veazey challenged disciples about being engaged in Christ’s mission, saying:

…it is not enough just to care for people in their suffering. The mission includes ministries that release people from unfair or crushing conditions that cause suffering. Jesus’ mission is about restoring people to wholeness in healthy community.

So we must address the root causes of poverty, hunger, discrimination, and conflict. These conditions keep large numbers of people from realizing their potential while others flourish.

*(To read in context visit www.CofChrist.org/presidency/sermons/041011Veazey.asp)*

Addressing root causes includes changing societal and global systems that keep people oppressed, in poverty and malnourished. Let’s begin by thinking about systems in general.

**Building Bridges**

For the following activity you will create a space in which youth will need to build bridges. You will need at least three 2 in. x 4 in. (50 mm. x 100 mm.) boards, two of which are seven feet (2.5 m.) long and one of which is five feet (1.5 m.) long; masking or duct tape; a hard surface such as a cement or tiled floor. Before the activity, place 1 ft./30 cm. square pieces of cardboard (or mark on a hard floor with tape) as follows:

- 6.5 ft. (2 m.) between squares one and two
- 6.5 ft. (2 m.) between squares two and three
- 4.5 ft. (1.5 m.) between squares three and four
- 4.5 ft. (1.5 m.) between squares four and five
- 6.5 ft. (2 m.) between squares five and six
- 4.5 ft. (2 m.) between squares six and seven

You may adapt the lengths of the boards—be sure to change the distances between the squares as well. The boards should be long enough to reach from inside one square to inside the next square when placed on the floor. You may also have multiple sets of boards if your class has many students. Another option is to use pieces of cardboard instead of boards.

Also ahead of time make up a basket or box of food for each team to carry across. The “food” could be real or representative—but make sure it’s a challenge for your students. It should be overflowing or be fairly heavy.

Explain the challenge will be to look at systems by having teams build a community bridge and take food across the bridge to hungry people on the other side. Divide the class into two or more groups of six to eight students. If you have a small number of students the entire class should do the activity. Each member of the team has to cross the bridge making sure everyone gets to the other side without “falling off” the bridge; all food in the basket or box must make it across also.

If team members step off the bridge accidently or on purpose, explain they have “lost their voice” (can no longer speak to their team) or “lost their sight” (their eyes must remain shut or be blindfolded) or they cannot use an arm or a leg for the duration of the activity.

Allow teams three to five minutes to plan before they start. As team members cross the bridge, they travel one section at a time by handling the boards one at a time. Where they put the boards is determined by the seven squares. The boards have to fit from inside one square to the next or they cannot be used. Certain boards will only fit into certain spaces. This will cause the team to strategize to move people and the food across each section.

**One possible layout:**

![Diagram of bridge construction with distances marked.](image-url)
Have one team go first. After they have finished have the second team go. If you have a larger class with multiple teams, make sure at least one team gets a chance to go only after watching a team do the activity.

After all teams have completed the activity, discuss the following questions:

1. How did those who needed help crossing the bridge feel during the activity?
2. How did your team respond once you figured out some boards didn't fit between some squares?
3. What were the advantages of going first? What were the advantages of going later?
4. Thinking about “systems,” what part of the system we had in place to build the bridge could have been changed to make building it easier?
5. What part of the system could we have changed to make getting food across the bridge easier?

Ask the group to define oppression and put their responses on flip-chart paper. Use the following to help them develop a more complete definition:

Oppression is the unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary). It is usually based on perceived unequal human conditions such as gender, age, sexual orientation, ability, and class.

Ask more questions about the bridge-building activity:
What things in our system or activity were metaphors or examples of oppression? Was there anything that reduced oppression?

Explain that systems are often necessary, but sometimes limit our thinking about possible solutions. Because the systems set up the patterns, we often assume the patterns are appropriate and do not examine them for justice issues. To find solutions to issues related to world hunger we need to rethink some of the systems in our societies and around the world that keep people oppressed.

One way to work toward helping release others from oppression and develop their full potential is to work from an anti-oppression framework. This framework is “a tool to understand and respond to the complexity of the experience of oppression” (B. Burke and P. Harrison, “Anti-oppressive Practice” in Communication, Relationships and Care: A Reader, 2003, p. 131). Much of the oppression in the world is based on multiple issues that form an interlocking system “that are mutually enforcing and cannot be addressed in isolation” (http://accessalliance.ca/antioppression). For instance, the most vulnerable to hunger-related issues are poor African children living in developing nations. This includes the issues of status, race, age, and accessibility.

An anti-oppression framework includes:

- Actively working to recognize and shift power toward inclusiveness, accessibility, equity, and social justice for all people.
- Ensuring that anti-oppression is embedded in everything you do by examining attitudes and actions through a lens of inclusiveness, access, equity, and social justice.
- Creating a space where people are safe, but can also be challenged.

Anti-oppression Windows

Using the handout from the end of the lesson, ask students to form groups based on one of the six human conditions listed in the left column. Ask students if they are aware of any other human condition that is used by others to oppress people. For younger students you may wish to assign them to a topic or not work on topics they are not ready to handle.

Once in groups, give each student something to write with and a copy of the handout. Have them brainstorm and decide one way the group can help its particular population with each of the areas listed across the top, focusing on the question offered. Allow groups 10 minutes to work then have someone from each group share the group's responses. Encourage students to write the responses on their own worksheets.

Tell the class each square represents a window of opportunity to work on oppression as part of Christ’s mission “to let the oppressed go free” (Luke 4:18–19 NRSV). How we work on these opportunities during our lifelong discipleship will be related to the skills and gifts we have now and will develop over time.

Thank students for their participation in this lesson and all previous lessons. Close the lesson with the following, “Our Gifts are Gifts of Hope,” from Searching
Our yearning after God,
our hope for a better way
creates infinite possibilities
to touch the lives of the untouched
to reach the hearts
of the unreached
to heal the wounds
of the unhealed
to feed the bodies
of the unfed
to accept the personhood
of the unaccepted
to love the being
of the unloved

Our gifts are gifts of hope;
O God,
touch
reach
heal
feed
accept
and love us
that we might love one another.

**OR** Remind students we are all “sheep” as disciples of Jesus Christ and we all need to be “fed.” But we are also the ones who “feed others.” Form a circle and explain that each person will offer a prayer for the person on his or her right. Before the prayer have each student share with the person on the left one thing that would “feed” him or her. When all have prayed, send them from the class with the words “Go, feed my sheep.”
## Anti-oppression Windows

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Inclusiveness</th>
<th>Accessibility</th>
<th>Equity</th>
<th>Social Justice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How can you work to include all people?</td>
<td>How can you work to make sure all people have access to what they need?</td>
<td>How can you work to make sure all people are treated equally?</td>
<td>How can all people reach their full potential and thrive?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong>—Oppression related to being too young or too old</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong>—Oppression related to gender identification (female, male, transgender, other)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sexual Orientation</strong>—Oppression related to sexual preferences (hetero-, homo-, bisexual, or asexual)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ability</strong>—Oppression related to differing abilities from the majority</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Class</strong>—Oppression related to social or economic status</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong>—Oppression related to the race in which you were born (or mixed race)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong>—Oppression related to another human condition not listed: ____________</td>
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</tbody>
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