

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

CONTRIBUTOR NAME: ODYSSEY HEREDIA

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE/ LECTORY WEEK: Acts 17:22-31

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/
BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES: ¶163 The Political Community

OBJECTIVE: Students will reflect on how they can respond beyond the church walls.

SUPPLIES NEEDED: Sticky Notes

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Say: Let's begin by settling our bodies and our minds. Wherever you are seated, place your feet on the floor and take a comfortable posture. We will take three collective breaths together. I'll guide us.

Pause between breaths.

Say: Breathe in deeply through your nose... Hold for a moment. Breathe out slowly through your mouth.

Pause.

Say: Breathe in again, filling your lungs... Hold... Release.

Pause.

Say: One more breath in... and out.

Pause.

Say: As we center ourselves, we will enter into a call and response. After each prompt, everyone will respond with: "Guide us towards your justice."

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Say: Creator of life, we seek to know you. We have created the church as a way to grow closer to you. When the church shows up as you would want, and when the church fails to respond to the injustices of the world.

All: Guide us towards your justice.

Say: We admit that we are at times ignorant of the world's pain. We numb ourselves or ignore suffering in an attempt to look away. Lord, forgive us when we fail to respond.

All: Guide us towards your justice.

Say: The God who made the world and everything in it does not live in temples built by human hands. You are present in the most unlikely places, at the margins, and in the thick of it. Help us see you in unexpected places.

All: Guide us towards your justice.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say: Today we will read from Acts 17:22-31, where Paul speaks to the people of Athens about who God is and how God relates to the world. We'll read one verse at a time, moving in a circle so everyone has a chance to participate. You are welcome to pass if you'd rather listen.

Read Acts 17:22-31.

Discussion Questions:

- What do you think Paul means when he claims the Athenians were religious?
- What does religion mean to you?
- In what ways does religion help us understand God?
- How do you understand the relationship between the world and the church to be?
- How do you think the church should engage in the world? /Respond to injustice?
- What do the Social Principles say about the church's responsibility to the world's injustice?

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- In the preamble of the political community states, “As United Methodists, we acknowledge that love requires responsible political action and engagement aimed at the betterment of society and the promotion of the common good. We acknowledge that such political engagement demands humility and mindfulness of our own complicity in perpetuating injustice. It also necessitates compassion, prayer, and a willingness to discern God’s guidance.”
- How do we stay connected to the neighborhoods our churches reside in?
- How do we stay grounded and committed to our values in the face of injustice?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Who is God?

Say: Now we are going to reflect creatively on who God is. I'm going to pass out sticky notes and writing tools. On your sticky note, write one or few words or adjectives that describe God.

Say: God is personal. When Jesus asks Peter who he believes God is, Peter shares what he has heard, but Jesus is really asking about Peter's own understanding. Take a minute to reflect and write.

Pause while participants write.

Say: When you are ready, come forward and place your sticky note on the wall (or poster board.) This will become a shared picture of how we understand God.

Reflection Questions:

- Based on our understanding of God, how should Christians move in the world?
- What is our church doing in the world?

Say: As we continue to think about what the church is doing. Let's consider three categories.

Start: What should the church start doing?

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Stop: What should the church stop doing?

Continue: What should the church continue doing?

These can be about justice issues, community relationships, or how we treat one another.

Record responses.

Say: These reflections aren't just for today. We can return to them later in the year to see how we are growing and where God is still inviting us to change.

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN.)

Say: We will close like we started with a call and response. After each prompt, respond with "Guide us towards your justice."

Say: Compassionate composer, you have create a beautiful symphony. You have gifted us all with different abilities so that we may have a part in your divine sound. As we discern our role on your stage.

All: Guide us towards your justice.

Say: May our church be a reflection of your love as we start, stop, and continue practices that fulfill the vision of your kindom.

All: Guide us towards your justice.

Say: Lord, we seek your wisdom. We seek to know you and be instruments of your peace. With every moment forward.

All: Guide us towards your justice.

All: Amen.