

CONNECTING FAITH & JUSTICE

YOUTH CURRICULUM

Lectionary Year A



CHURCH & SOCIETY

The United Methodist Church

Living **FAITH** Seeking **JUSTICE** Pursuing **PEACE**



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WHY AND THE HOW

If you have a room full of youth pastors and directors, you will quickly realize that they have two things in common. One, they love working with youth, and two, the struggle to find a curriculum that intersects faith and justice is REAL. We hope that this curriculum will help to ease that struggle and provide a space for students to engage in scripture and their world creatively, actively, and critically.

WHY THE LECTIONARY?

We realize United Methodist churches come in all shapes and sizes. Some follow the lectionary and others sermon series throughout the year. For churches that follow the lectionary, this will provide students shared content to connect with parents and other adults during the week. For churches that do not follow the lectionary, an issue index is provided. All lessons are standalone lessons and are not dependent on previous lessons. It's flexible!

WHAT'S THE FORMAT?

Each one-hour lesson highlights one (or more) lectionary reading(s) for that Sunday. All lessons start with a centering moment, scripture study, group activity and a closing moment.

You will see references to "Faith and Fact Cards," they can be found here: <http://www.umcjustice.org/resources> (pdf or print) or ordered here: <https://store.umcjustice.org/#!/Faith-&-Facts-Cards/c/12681533/offset=0&sort=normal>.

WHO WROTE THE CURRICULUM?

The curriculum lessons were written by a diverse group of educators, youth pastors, elders, deacons, deaconesses, practitioners, professors, emerging leaders and missionaries from all over the globe who want to support youth in their faith development. Learn more about them in the contributor biography section.

HOW SHOULD I START?

We encourage you to begin the curriculum by starting with the bonus lesson plan created by Susan Greer Burton, former Director of Women and Children's Advocacy at the General Board of Church and Society, which introduces students to the concepts of mercy and justice.

*The Youth Lectionary Curriculum Year A, B, & C was first released in 2018 and is aligned to the 2016-2020 Social Principles.

LECTIONARY CALENDAR YEAR A

BONUS

MERCY AND JUSTICE

11

Matthew 23:23-24; Micah 6:8;
Matthew 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46
Susan Greer Burton

ADVENT

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

16

Isaiah 2:1-5
Kim Johnson

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

22

Isaiah 11:1-10
Rev. Rosa Yeonshin Lee

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

24

Luke 1:46b-55
Rev. Allie Rosner Bass

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

29

Matthew 1:18-25
Jeehye Kim Pak

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

37

Matthew 2:13-23
Craig Moore

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

41

John 1: (1-9), 10-18
Nura Zaki

EPIPHANY

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY/ BAPTISM OF THE LORD

44

Matthew 3:13-17
Nura Zaki

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

48

Isaiah 49:1-7
Kim Johnson

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

53

1 Corinthians 1:10-18
Rev. Sungrae Kim

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

57

Micah 6:1-8
Rev. Dr. Dale M. Weatherspoon

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

61

Matthew 5:13-20
Rev. Anna Guillozet

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

67

Matthew 5:21-37
Katie Matson-Daley

TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY

71

Matthew 17:1-9
Tura Foster Gillespie

LECTIONARY CALENDAR YEAR A

LENT		EASTER	
FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT	75	EASTER	103
Matthew 4:1-11		John 20:1-18	
<i>Rev. Caleb Yongmin Hong</i>		<i>Kelly Lee</i>	
SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT	81	SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER	107
Genesis 12:1-4a		John 20:19-31	
<i>Rev. Bromleigh McCleneghan</i>		<i>Rev. J. Paige Boyer</i>	
THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT	85	THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER	113
John 9:1-41		Luke 24:13-35	
<i>Rev. Neal Christie</i>		<i>Kelly Lee</i>	
FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT	93	FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER	116
1 Samuel 16:1-13		Acts 2:42-47	
<i>Aimee Hong</i>		<i>Aimee Hong</i>	
FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT	96	FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER	120
Ezekial 37:1-14		Acts 7:55-60	
<i>Simon Pak</i>		<i>Rev. Jung Pyo Hong</i>	
PALM SUNDAY	99	SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER	124
Matthew 21:1-11		Acts 17:22-31	
<i>Rev. Jung Pyo Hong</i>		<i>Rev. Anna Guillozet</i>	
		SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER	128
		John 17:1-11	
		<i>Rev. Katie Monfortte</i>	
		PENTECOST	133
		Acts 2:1-21	
		<i>Jeannie Lee</i>	

LECTIONARY CALENDAR YEAR A

ORDINARY TIME

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	138
2 Corinthians 13:11-13	
<i>Jesse St. Clair</i>	
SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	141
Matthew 9:35-10:8 (9-23)	
<i>Rev. Jay Campbell</i>	
THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	148
Romans 6:1b-11	
<i>Rev. Emily Peck-McClain</i>	
FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	153
Matthew 10:40-42	
<i>Jesse St. Clair</i>	
FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	157
Romans 7:15-25a	
<i>Katie Matson-Daley</i>	
SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	161
Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23	
<i>Aimee Hong</i>	
SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	165
Genesis 28:10-19a	
<i>Rev. Courtney McHill</i>	
EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	167
Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52	
<i>Rev. Katie Monfortte</i>	

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	174
Matthew 14:13-21	
<i>Rev. Seokchane Suh</i>	
TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	177
1 Kings 19:9-18/ Psalm 85:8-13	
<i>Kim Johnson</i>	
ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	182
Isaiah 56:1, 6-8	
<i>Rev. Esther Inuwa</i>	
TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	187
Matthew 16:13-20	
<i>Rev. Daniel Cho</i>	
THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	190
Matthew 16:21-28	
<i>Simon Pak</i>	
FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	194
Exodus 12:1-14	
<i>Rev. Daniel Cho</i>	
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	199
Matthew 18:21-35	
<i>Rev. Thy (Betty) Nguyen</i>	
SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	203
Jonah 3:10-4:11	
<i>Rev. Deborah Sperry</i>	
SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	210
Exodus 17:1-7	
<i>Aimee Hong</i>	

LECTIONARY CALENDAR YEAR A

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Matthew 20:1-16

Rev. Jay Campbell

214

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20

Rev. Paige Boyer

222

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Matthew 22:15-22

Craig Moore

228

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Matthew 22:34-46

Aimee Hong

233

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Matthew 23:1-12

Tura Foster Gillespie

237

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Amos 5:18-24

Rev. Seokchane Suh

241

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Matthew 25:14-30

Rev. Dr. Emily A. Peck-McClain

245

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Matthew 25:31-46

Dionica (Nica) Sy

249

ADVENT — LECTIONARY YEAR B

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Mark 13:24-27

Rev. Julio Hernández

252

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Mark 1:1-8

Aimee Hong

260

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11/ Luke 4:16-21

Lisa Jo Bezner

263

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Luke 1:46b-55

Lisa Jo Bezner

265

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

LISA JO BEZNER is the Intentional Faith Development Director at First UMC Los Alamos in New Mexico. She is a two-time graduate of Boston University School of Theology with an emphasis in Church and Society, then Emotional and Spiritual Care for Communities Affected by Trauma. Bezner served as the communications intern at GBCS in 2006.

REV. PAIGE BOYER serves as the Associate Pastor of Outreach & Youth Ministries/ Simpson Metro West Campus Pastor at Westlake United Methodist Church in Westlake, Ohio. She is a graduate of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.

REV. JAY CAMPBELL is a provisional elder in the Virginia Annual Conference serving at Mount Vernon United Methodist Church in Alexandria, VA. He received his M.Div. from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington DC and has been in ministry for almost ten years. He lives with his wife Katie and dog, Rue, in Northern Virginia.

REV. DANIEL CHO was born in the US but as a child was blessed to have lived in many different parts of the world, especially Russia. He graduated from the State University of New York at Buffalo and obtained his M. Div. at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington DC. It was there that he met and married his beautiful wife Cathy, and now has three children Abby (6), Ethan (4), and Elizabeth (3). He was commissioned and ordained in the New York Annual Conference. He is currently serving at KUMC of Greater Washington in McLean, VA.

REV. NEAL CHRISTIE serves as Assistant General Secretary with Church and Society and leads the agency in its worldwide trainings, workshops, seminars, and internships. He coordinates curriculum related to the UM Social Principles and is an elder in the Greater New Jersey Conference. He served as a hospital chaplain and has served in both rural and urban communities. Neal has been devoted to the ministry with Church and Society for over 20 years.

TURA FOSTER GILLESPIE serves as the Chair for United Methodist Ecumenical & Interreligious Training-USA and Co-Chair at the National Workshop on Christian Unity. She received her Master of Divinity from Wesley Theological Seminary with a focus on Ecumenics.

REV. ANNA GUILLOZET serves as the Senior Pastor at Linworth United Methodist Church in Columbus, Ohio. She is married to Garrett, her spouse of 11 years and is a parent of their 4-year old daughter. She is passionate about building relationships and communities that are focused on the life-changing love of Jesus. She also completed 3 marathons.

REV. JULIO HERNANDEZ serves as the Family Ministries Director at Christ Crossman United Methodist Church in Falls Church, VA. He is ordained in the Baptist tradition and is currently a student in the Doctor of Ministry program at Duke Divinity. His dream is to visit the Shire and share meals with a whole lot of crazy creatures.

AIMEE HONG serves as the Director of UM Seminar Program at the General Board of Church and Society. She facilitates and designs seminars for diverse groups

on issues of justice and peace. Aimee is deeply interested in the intersection of social justice and living out one's faith. She received her M.T.S. and M.Div. from Candler School of Theology, Emory University. Prior to Church and Society she served as a local pastor and education director for large and small Korean immigrant congregations.

REV. CALEB YONGMIN HONG has been the lead pastor of Faith UMC of Orland Park, Illinois since 2010. Prior to this appointment, he served as a youth/young adult pastor for 12 years.

REV. J.P. (JUNG PYO) HONG is the lead pastor at Christ Crossman UMC in Falls Church, VA. He has been ordained since 2000 but took a break to teach elementary students in Baltimore, Maryland, and Southeast Washington D.C. He lives in Northern Virginia with his wife and two children.

REV. ESTHER INUWA is ordained and is a member of the Southern Nigeria Annual Conference in the Nigeria Episcopal Area, West Africa Central Conference. She is currently a student at Wesley Theological Seminary.

KIM JOHNSON has been doing youth ministry for more than 20 years in various United Methodist churches in Virginia and North Carolina Conferences. She has an M.A. in Christian Education from Union Presbyterian Seminary. Kim loves Jr. High ministry- especially Jr. High youth group games. She has two little boys and is married to a United Methodist pastor. When she's not doing ministry, her 'actual job' is the Communications Coordinator for the Arlington and Alexandria Districts in the Virginia Conference.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

JEEHYE KIM PAK serves as the Communications Manager at the General Commission on Religion and Race. She also serves as the Children and Youth Minister at Dumbarton United Methodist Church in Washington DC. She lives in Washington, DC with her husband Simon, son Lev, daughter Noa and two cats (Junior and Mr. Big Cat.)

REV. SUNGRAE KIM currently serves as the Youth and Family Minister at the United Japanese Christian Church in Clovis, California. He is a graduate of Candler School of Theology, Emory University where he completed his Master of Divinity. In May (2019), Sungrae received his Ph.D. from Graduate Theological Union. Sungrae has served at Green KUMC in the Bay Area.

JEANNIE LEE is one of the founding members of HA:N UMC, a reconciling progressive Korean American church in NYC. She works at Auburn Seminary as the Director of Facilities and Hospitality and previously worked at the General Board of Global Ministries.

KELLY LEE is a graduate of Drew Theological School. After seminary, she spent four years in Seoul, South Korea working with women in Asia leading leadership programs for young women and learning and about her Korean heritage. She is currently back in the US serving as a youth and young adult pastor in a Korean immigrant church for the last two years.

REV. ROSA YEONSHIN LEE is an ordained elder serving at Grace United Methodist Church in Dixon, Illinois. Prior to this appointment, she served as the Director of the Wesley Foundation at Northern Illinois University. She also served as a youth pastor at various

churches and served as a missionary in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and India with “Youth with a Mission” from 2008-2010.

KATIE MATSON-DALEY has served in children’s and youth ministries in United Methodist Churches in the Twin Cities for fourteen years. She holds an M.A. in Community Ministry Leadership and is an M. Div. Candidate at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities with a concentration in United Methodist Studies.

REV. BROMLEIGH MCCLENEGHAN is a United Methodist clergy currently serving at a United Church of Christ church in the Chicago Area. She is the author of the book “Good Christian Sex: Why Chastity Isn’t the Only Option- And Other Things the Bible Says About Sex.”

REV. COURTNEY MCHILL has served in four appointments in Oregon from larger congregations to starting a church with houseless neighbors. After 13 years of appointed ministry, she is writing and traveling in Berlin, Germany after a transformative pilgrimage along the Camino De Santiago. She is learning about how theology changes in the places we are as well as learning about the world from a different perspective.

REV. KATIE MONFORTTE is the Internship Coordinator and Communications Assistant at the General Board of Church and Society. She works with Church and Society’s interns as they unpack the intersection between faith and social justice. She also shares the organization’s work through Church and Society’s social media. Katie is passionate about walking with people and creating opportunities to look at justice as a

spiritual discipline. She wants to continue to help the church equip young leaders as they live out their faith and commit to serving the worldwide church.

CRAIG MOORE is a writer and former United Methodist minister living in Amman, Jordan with his wife. His work focuses on how political and economic issues in the Bible relate to current justice issues, especially related to poverty and migration.

REV. BETTY (BICH THY) NGUYEN currently serves as the Congregational Resource Minister of the Mile High Metro District of the Mountain Sky Conference. She was born and raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan and attended Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary. Betty lives in Denver, CO with her husband and three children. In her free time, she loves to cook, bake and offer hospitality in ways that she can.

SIMON PAK is a graduate of Wesley Theological Seminary. He has spent over a decade in youth, college, and family ministries. He no longer works in ministry, but is an active member at Dumbarton United Methodist Church. He lives and works in Washington DC with his wife Jeehye, son Lev, and daughter Noa.

REV. DR. EMILY PECK-MCCLAIN is the Visiting Professor of Christian Formation and Young Adult Ministry at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. She is the author of *Arm and Arm with Adolescent Girls: Educating into the New Creation*, and one of the contributing editors of *We Pray With Her* and *Speaking Truth*. She lives in Maryland with her spouse, three kids, one dog, and a house full of chaos.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

REV. ALLIE ROSNER BASS is a pastor of Arlington Temple UMC in Arlington, VA which is probably the only church in the country built on top of a gas station. Her favorite parts of ministry are helping people relate the Bible to everyday life and building a community with unhoused people. She also spends a lot of time chasing after her two daughters.

REV. DEBORAH SPERRY serves as a pastor who identified her call to ministry through the various places of need she saw in the world: immigration policies, inclusion in the church, racial injustices, child abuse, and sexual and domestic violence. In each place she has served, God has shown the specific needs of the community and used those to grow the heart of the church. She's a wife and mother who loves her family and her ministry and tries to balance the needs and joys of both. She currently serves at Moscow First UMC in Moscow, Idaho.

JESSE ST. CLAIR is currently completing her Masters of Theological Studies at Wesley Seminary this year. Her passion in ministry surrounds mental health and

wellbeing for all people. She does ministry with youth and children at Nestor UMC in San Diego- learning and growing in faith and knowledge together.

REV. SEOKCHANE SUH is clergy from the Virginia Annual conference. He is passionate for ministry of justice and compassion. He received his M.Div at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary and also a degree in International Studies at American University. During that time he interned at General Board of Church and Society. He lives in Northern Virginia with his wife and dog.

NICA SY is an undergraduate student at the University of Washington (UW) serving as the Student Fellow for Advocacy and Activism at Wesley Club at UW. She is also the Youth Coordinator at Beacon United Methodist Church in Seattle. Nica is an emerging leader of the Greater Northwest Area working to envision a more liberated church. She is also a 2018 Ethnic Young Adult Alum of Church and Society.

REV. DALE WEATHERSPOON has served in four cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments in the California-Nevada Annual Conference and is now serving a predominately African-American congregation. Rev. Weatherspoon, a cultural competency trainer, and community organizer has served as a board of directors on the General Board of Church and Society and The General Commission on Religion and Race.

NURA ZAKI is a native of Chicago, Illinois and has grown up in the United Methodist Church as the daughter of two pastors. As a college student, Nura was an Ethnic Young Adult Fellow through the General Board of Church and Society where she grew in her understanding of faith and justice, particularly in public life. Currently, she continues to build these connections through environmental justice and electoral organizing.

MERCY & JUSTICE

CONTRIBUTOR NAME SUSAN GREER BURTON

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JUSTICE ISSUE: LIVING THE FULLNESS OF MICAH 6:8, ADVOCACY, POVERTY

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE	Matthew 23:23-26, Micah 6:8, Matthew 26:36-46, Luke 22:39-46
SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES	None
OBJECTIVE	To help participants understand the terminology and concepts of mercy and justice more clearly. To serve as a self-reflective tool that helps participants draw their own conclusions about the work that they and others in their community are doing to change structures of injustice. To raise the consciousness of engagement without diminishing service while strengthening the call for justice.
SUPPLIES NEEDED	2 sheets of butcher paper, easel, markers, Bible, Limits of Charity article- which can be found at http://www.davidhilfiker.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13:limits-of-charity&catid=8:justice-essays&Itemid=17 .

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Welcome the group

Opening Prayer.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

Ask a few questions to develop a context for understanding the scripture passage (Matthew 23: 23-26). The goal of asking the questions is to have the participants begin to think about the meaning of “you strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.”

Ask:

- Who here knows what a gnat is? How many of you grew up with gnats around? What are gnats like? How big are they? (typical responses, small, fly around, annoying)
- Are gnats dangerous? What would happen to you if you crossed through a field with a whole bunch of gnats? (typical responses, annoying but not dangerous)
- Now, what is a camel like? How big are they? Has anyone seen a camel in the flesh? What would happen to you if you crossed through a herd of camels? (typical responses, big, would be trampled if crossed through herd)

NOTES

Express from the beginning your interest in learning from the group.

Note: If participants have a hard time coming up with words to define mercy and justice, ask for a volunteer to read the beginning of David Hilfiker’s “The Limits of Charity” and respond with words that stand out to them regarding these two words. You may want to do this even if they are not having a hard time, as the definitions David uses may have aspects that they do not come up with.

MERCY & JUSTICE

JUSTICE ISSUE LIVING THE FULLNESS OF MICAH 6:8, ADVOCACY, POVERTY

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Say:

So the impact of a camel would be much larger than that of a gnat, right?" (Establish a difference in significance)

Read Matthew 23: 23-26 (Ask for a volunteer).

Ask:

What do you think this passage means?

Defining terms – Mercy and Justice

Ask:

- "How would you define 'Mercy'? Not examples...what words would you use to describe what it is? [write down responses]
- "How would you define 'Justice'? When you think of justice, what words come to mind? [write down responses]

Be prepared to differentiate between Jesus'/restorative definition of justice and societal/punitive definition of justice.

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Instructions:

Write "Poverty" at the top center of the paper. Most people have had some kind of experience responding to poverty and will be able to participate in the following exercise.

Write "Responses" on the left-hand side of the flipchart paper.

NOTES

1 & 2

Poverty	
<u>Responses</u>	<u>Causes of Poverty</u>

Ask:

When you see someone experiencing poverty or suffering in some way, how is it that you respond? How does your church or school respond?" (Record responses.)

Make sure that you have some examples of common direct service/donation activities in mind to offer to the group, e.g., angel tree, meal programs, food drives, in case they are having a difficult time identifying things they have done.

Once you have a list, write "Causes of Poverty" on the right-hand side of the same piece of paper creating.

Ask:

What are the causes of poverty?" (Record responses in a list as with the responses.)

Prepare to hear and unpack stereotypes.

- e.g., addiction - what combination of issues causes poverty because there are plenty of people in recovery who are not living in poverty
- Make sure racism, sexism, heterosexism, etc. are named and be prepared with concrete examples
- If not included, suggest war as a cause of poverty. In addition to people experiencing poverty in their homelands because of war, people in our own country who have fought in war may experience poverty as a result of physical or psychological damage incurred while fighting.
- Suggest natural disasters (tsunami, earthquakes) and man-made disasters (oil spill, mining accidents) that destroy lives and livelihoods.

Ask:

How many of these "Responses" on the left address the "Causes of Poverty" on the right? [Circle ones they mention]

NOTES

4

Poverty	
<u>Responses</u>	<u>Causes of Poverty</u>

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JUSTICE ISSUE LIVING THE FULLNESS OF MICAH 6:8, ADVOCACY, POVERTY

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Draw a line to the right of the “Responses” column and the left of the “Causes” column creating a 3rd column in the center of the page.

Ask:

Why do you think it is that we spend so much time doing things on the left-hand side that don’t address the things on the right?” (Frequent responses include: overwhelming; long haul; don’t have tools to change/don’t know how; risky – financially & socially; mercy is short-term; easier to schedule.)

Affirm the responses of the group by telling the story of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46 or Luke 22:39-46.)

Ask:

- What did Jesus ask the disciples to do when he was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane anticipating the soldiers would carry him to his death? (Stay awake. Keep watch. Pray)
- How many times did they fall asleep?
- Did this mean that they were “bad” or “lazy”? They had given up their livelihoods to follow Jesus.

Say:

Just as the disciples fell asleep. So too do we. It is likely that the disciples felt the same way you did when I asked why we spend time on responses that respond to immediate needs rather than the causes: overwhelmed, afraid of the risk, depressed, unsure what to do...

(Refer back to the scripture and ask “What is the conjunction that Micah and Jesus used? Is it mercy or justice or faith?” [Typical response, no, it is *and*].

Affirm the importance of mercy, justice, and faith and that they are all interrelated and necessary.

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JUSTICE ISSUE LIVING THE FULLNESS OF MICAH 6:8, ADVOCACY, POVERTY

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Through experiences working directly with people experiencing poverty, we can (we don't always – so don't want to assume) build relationships that make us committed to working for justice to change the causes of poverty.)

Say:

To address the causes of poverty, we must be grounded in a relationship with God that sustains us and motivates us to persist through the depression, fear, and exhaustion

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

3-2-1

Ask the group to write down:

- Three people with whom they will talk about what they learned
- Two causes that they want to learn more about
- One way that they will connect – mercy, justice, and faith in their own lives

E.g., initiate a letter writing offering in their youth group or church on one of the causes of poverty.

Wrap up with a closing prayer.

NOTES

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

CONTRIBUTOR NAME KIM JOHNSON

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JUSTICE ISSUE: PEACEBUILDING/PEACEMAKING, GUN VIOLENCE, NON-PROLIFERATION

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE/ LECTIONARY WEEK

Isaiah 2:1-5

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 *Social Principles* ¶165.A and C, 2016 *Book of Resolutions*

#6126 ACTIVE

Focusing on Advent through the lens of peacemaking—Nations will not likely be turning swords into farming tools this Advent; what do we do with that? How do we make a dent and a difference?

SUPPLIES

Needed: paper, pencils, markers/crayons, a copy of the *Book of Resolutions* #6126 text, Bibles, LOTS of scrap paper or newspapers for the “Paper War” game, Handout 1.

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Play the game of ‘Paper War’ together.

Ask:

How did it feel to be ‘at war’ with one another?

Pray:

God of Love, as we enter this season of joy, this season of miracles, and this season of Advent; we ask that You help us slow down. Help us wait. Help us look for peace in ourselves. Help us bring peace to our world. Help us long for peace as we await the birth of that tiny baby. Help us calmly wait for Your Jesus born into humble poverty surrounded by lowly shepherds.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

Ask:

It’s the first Sunday of Advent! What does that even mean? What is Advent anyway? (Students will either know that Advent is the waiting season to prepare for Christmas OR will offer more traditional Christmas-y answers. Help steer them toward reflecting on the preparation part of Advent!)

NOTES

Paper War:

- Divide your group into halves or quarters or however many teams you want to have.
- Provide each team with a large pile of scrap paper (helps to collect the office recycling/church bulletins for a few weeks prior)
- Then have students ball up the paper and throw it across the room toward the other team(s)
- The winning team will have the least amount of paper in their zone when you call time.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE PEACEBUILDING/PEACEMAKING, GUN VIOLENCE, NON-PROLIFERATION

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Have students take a piece of paper and divide it in half either by folding or drawing a line.

In the top section have students draw the Christmas scene they know by heart—that of Jesus' birth. (You can read Luke 2:1-14 if they get stuck.)

Read Isaiah 2:1-5

Now have students move to the second box and draw the scene from Isaiah (2:1-5) that they just read and discussed. (Read it again out loud---slowly--- and have them draw it as you read. Be sure to emphasize verse 4 as you read, and they draw.)

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

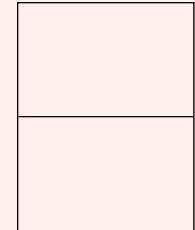
Have students find a partner (or a group) and compare their drawings.

Ask:

- What is different about the two drawings you made (Luke vs. Isaiah)?
- Which feels more Christmas-y?
- What stands out to you about your drawing of the Isaiah passage?
- What stands out about your partner's drawing of the Isaiah passage?
- Do you see a house on a mountain and a manger in a field?
 - How are these drawings different?
 - How are these pieces of the Christmas story different?
 - *Note: These images seem in stark contrast—a house on a mountain—the Lord's house—that will bring forth peace and a shed/barn/cave and a tiny baby—who we know will change the world forever. Talk about that together.*

NOTES

Have students take a piece of paper and fold it in half as pictured. Provide markers, pens, pencils, crayons for their creativity.



Guide students through the questions and encourage them to answer with their partners/groups.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE PEACEBUILDING/PEACEMAKING, GUN VIOLENCE, NON-PROLIFERATION

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Focus back on the Isaiah Scripture passage. It may help to read it again.

(Collect pencils/markers/etc. back to encourage students to focus back on Scripture study and lesson without distraction.)

Say:

What would it mean to be a people who do not lift up a sword against a nation or do not learn war anymore?

Have a student read verse 4.

He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore.

Ask:

- What does this verse make you feel?
- Do you think we will ever beat our swords into plowshares?
- What would that mean for our country?
 - For our world?
- Does the violence and war that is prevalent in the world affect you? Does it impact our community?
 - What kinds of violence DO affect you?
 - [Opportunities to discuss violence in your context—are your students most concerned with foreign wars and family military service, with gun violence in their own neighborhoods, with desires for peace within our own country among parties and politics?]

NOTES

Note: you could swap the justice issue here for Social Principal ¶165.C Book of Resolutions #6129 about Non-Proliferation and Disarmament.

Or, in some contexts where gun violence is more prevalent, focus on the Book of Resolutions #3428 may be more appropriate here.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE PEACEBUILDING/PEACEMAKING, GUN VIOLENCE, NON-PROLIFERATION

Page: 4 of 6

The United Methodist Church stands for Peace. Consider looking at the *Social Principles* ¶165. A and C as well as *Book of Resolutions* #6126.

Provide students with the following in printed form: (Handout 1)

Read:

God's earth is aching for peace. Domestic strife, interpersonal violence and abuse, civil conflict, ethnic and racial clashes, religious schism and interfaith rivalry, terrorist attacks, wars between nations, and threatened use of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons—all of these prevent us from achieving God's shalom. In response, we who are disciples of Jesus Christ are called to be peacemakers for the transformation of the world.

For the United Methodist Church, peacemaking is an essential task for achieving success in other initiatives. Working with the poor to eliminate poverty, caring for children, and conducting global health initiatives can be most successful in stable and just societies free from armed conflict. —Book of Resolutions #6126

Say:

Nations are unlikely to turn their weapons into farming tools any time soon. So, how do we take these words from Isaiah—God's desire for our world—and these words from our *Book of Resolutions*—our United Methodist desire for our world—and do something for peace this Advent?

Ask students to brainstorm ways they can make peace this Advent in their world—in their schools, their communities, or the larger world.

Have students write their ideas for peacemaking change on the back of their drawings.

Have students share their ideas with one another either in small groups or with the large group together.

Offer ideas and suggestions for how they can attempt to accomplish these goals.

NOTES

Have students write their ideas for peacemaking change on the back of their drawings. Hang these drawings around your space if possible for the remainder of the Advent season. Refer to them each week, reminding students of the words written on the back—their ideas for making peacemaking change in the world—and check in on their progress.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE PEACEBUILDING/PEACEMAKING, GUN VIOLENCE, NON-PROLIFERATION

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Collect the drawings to be used in your space and referenced each week. (See *facilitator notes*.)

Ask:

How do you think looking for peace and taking steps for peacemaking will change your Advent season?

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Pray:

God as we look toward Christmas Eve, anticipating the miraculous birth of a tiny baby boy, we ask that you help us to make peace in our world. Just as Jesus started as a small boy in a manger and grew to make a great change in our world and our lives, we too can start small and do big things. Help us to take action for peace in our community and our world this Advent.

NOTES

Inserting actual examples of ways your students want to take action into this prayer would be awesome!

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE PEACEBUILDING/PEACEMAKING, GUN VIOLENCE, NON-PROLIFERATION

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HANDOUT

Book of Resolutions #6126

God's earth is aching for peace. Domestic strife, interpersonal violence and abuse, civil conflict, ethnic and racial clashes, religious schism and interfaith rivalry, terrorist attacks, wars between nations, and threatened use of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons—all of these prevent us from achieving God's shalom. In response, we who are disciples of Jesus Christ are called to be peacemakers for the transformation of the world.

For the United Methodist Church, peacemaking is an essential task for achieving success in other initiatives. Working with the poor to eliminate poverty, caring for children, and conducting global health initiatives can be most successful in stable and just societies free from armed conflict.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. ROSA YEONSHIN LEE

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JUSTICE ISSUE: PEACE BUILDING

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Isaiah 11:1-10

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 *Social Principles* ¶165. A, 2016 *Book of Resolutions* #6126

OBJECTIVE

Help students to envision what the kin-dom of God looks like.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Bible, *Book of Resolutions*, Large butcher paper, markers, *Social Principles*, (Optional) magazine & printed images & newspaper, scissors, glue, large butcher paper.

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Have students share where they witnessed God during the week.

Close with a prayer.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

Read Isaiah 11:1-10

Optional: 1-2 volunteers can read the passage while the other students are invited to close their eyes and visualize the reading.

Ask:

Vs. 1-5

- Describe the characteristics of the Spirit in vs. 2.
- Who will finally receive fairness and justice?

Vs. 6-9

- Something 'odd' is described in vs. 6-9. What's going on? (optional- highlight the predators and the prey)
- What does "the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord" refer to?
- What does the Kin-dom of God look like?

NOTES

These verses articulate the deep and persistent hope for justice and peace and a glimpse into what the Kin-dom of God looks like.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE PEACE BUILDING

Pages: 2 of 2

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Make two groups (Group A and Group B)
(Feel free to make a list or be creative by using magazines/printed images for the activity)

Group A

Create a list of the marginalized/oppressed in our society.

Group B

Create a list of systems that marginalize and oppress people in our society.

Gather together and place the lists side by side. If there are pairs that match, circle them or place them together.

Ask:

- Why are these two paired together?
- What can we do as a society, as Christians, to transform the situation?

(Continue until pairs are matched and discussed)

Group A reads *Social Principles* 165.A

Group B reads *Book of Resolutions* #6126 "A Call for Peacemaking."

Share with the larger group what the *Social Principles* & the *Book of Resolutions* in their own words.

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Ask each student to share one way they will bring "peace" into their lives and others this week.

Close with a prayer.

NOTES

Supplies: Large paper and pens/pencils/markers

(Optional) Magazine & printed images & newspapers that your students can find the oppressed/oppressing situation or people. Scissors & Glues & Colored pens & butcher paper

Book of Resolutions: A Call for Peacemaking

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/a-call-for-peacemaking>

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. ALLIE ROSNER BASS

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JUSTICE ISSUE: HUNGER AND POVERTY, FOOD JUSTICE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Luke 1:46b-55

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶160.H and ¶163.E

OBJECTIVE

Students will see how God sees hungry and powerless people through the words of the Magnificat.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Slips of paper equal to the number of students (See Hunger Banquet Instructions); simple snack food that can be easily divided into discrete amounts and shared, Handout of Psalm 146. Optional: a few food items that come from different places around the world (you may ask students to bring these.)

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Provide handout to the students

Psalm 146 (read responsively)

I will praise the Lord with my whole life,

I will sing praises to my God as long as I live.

The person whose help is God, whose hope rests on God,

Is truly happy.

God: the maker of heaven and earth,

God, who is faithful forever,

Who gives justice to people who are oppressed,

Who gives bread to people who are starving!

God, who frees prisoners and makes the blind see,

Who straightens those who are bent low, and who loves the righteous.

God, who protects immigrants and helps orphans and widows,

But who thwarts the ways of the wicked.

God will rule forever!

Praise the Lord!

NOTES

The Book of Psalms is the prayer book of the Bible, used by ancient and modern Jews and Christians in worship. It was also Jesus' prayer book: he quoted and prayed from the Psalms all the time. When we read Psalms together, we are praying to God in the same words Jesus did.

You can find a Psalm to help you pray about almost anything: thanksgiving, sickness, fear, loneliness, guilt, betrayal, justice, wisdom, you name it. Psalm 146 invites us to praise God who not only made the world but who cares for the people in it, especially the poor and oppressed.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE HUNGER AND POVERTY, FOOD JUSTICE

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SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say:

This “song” that Mary sings is often called the Magnificat, for the first word in the Latin translation. When Mary sings this song, she has just found out she is pregnant with Jesus, and she goes to another town to see her older relative Elizabeth, who is also miraculously pregnant with John the Baptist at the same time. Luke writes that when Mary arrives, John “leaps in Elizabeth’s womb” and Elizabeth blesses Mary because she is “the mother of my Lord” (1:43).

Ask:

- How do you think Mary must have been feeling at the time? How do you think her community must have reacted to the idea that she is young, unmarried and pregnant?
- Why do you think she went to see Elizabeth? How do you think she felt after Elizabeth’s reaction?
- Who would you go to first if you got big news? Why?

Say:

When Mary sings, she doesn’t just sing about how wonderful this event is for her, but how God is using Jesus to bless all the people of Israel and the whole world. One of the main characteristics of the Magnificat is that it is a song of reversals. Mary sings that God has “scattered the proud,” “brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly,” and “filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.” The Bible is full of reversals! Can you think of others?

Ask:

- Who or what groups of people do you think would go in the “powerful” and “rich” categories? Who would be “lowly” or powerless or “hungry”? What categories would YOU fall in?
- Have you ever been hungry? Where does your food come from? How much do you know about the people who grew your food and got it to you? Where do you think would they be in this song?
- How do you think Mary’s song would sound different to those in the “powerful” group and those in the “lowly” group?
- Why do you think God likes reversals so much? Is it fair for God to turn the tables like that?

NOTES

Some examples of biblical reversal:

- “The first shall be last” (Matthew 19:30)
- “Blessed are the poor” (Luke 6:20)
- Younger sons like Jacob getting a blessing and inheritance (Genesis 27)
- Parable of rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)

Note also: Mary sings in the past tense, even though the things she says haven’t happened yet. This is a sign of her confidence in God that these things have begun in Jesus.

Help students to think about where their food comes from immediately, like “the grocery store,” and less immediately, like the farm, where it is imported from, etc. If you can, bring in or have students bring in food items that are products of different countries.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE HUNGER AND POVERTY, FOOD JUSTICE

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GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Divide students into groups to read and discuss the 2016-2020 Social Principles ¶160.H, “*Food Justice*” and ¶163.E, “*Poverty*.”

Ask:

- How have you seen or experienced poverty? In your own community? In another region or another country? How do people live in different ways according to how much they have?
- *What do you think causes or contributes to poverty? What do you think we can do to make sure everyone has enough?*

Gather back into the large group for activity – Mini Hunger Banquet

Tell your students that it is snack time, but the snack they get will be determined by a slip of paper that they draw. You will need enough slips of paper for all the students in your group. 60% of the slips should indicate the lowest income level, 30% a middle-income level, and 10% of the slips should indicate the highest income level, representing the people in the richest countries in the world.

Use whatever snack food you want to represent the global distribution of food: for example, packaged cookies. Those who draw the lowest income level get one cookie. Those who draw the middle-income level get two cookies. Those who draw the top income level get as many cookies as they want. Tell them not to eat the cookies yet. Now stop and explain what you are doing and what the cookies represent.

Ask:

How does it feel to be in the poorest group? The middle group? The top group? Is it fair? How do you think God sees it?

Say:

Wait – surprise! Before the students can eat their snack, we’re going to experience a biblical reversal! Those in the top income group now get one cookie and have to give the rest of their cookies to the lowest income group, who can now have as many as they want. Talk again about how it feels and if it’s fair. If not, ask your students to figure out how to make the distribution fair.

NOTES

A hunger banquet is a meal that simulates the food disparity between people around the world. For more ideas or ways to modify this Hunger Banquet activity, Google options from Oxfam, Catholic Charities, and The World Food Prize (which has a great modified youth version.)

Some causes of poverty: Unemployment, lack of education, generational poverty, famine, laws or policies surrounding food, weather conditions and famine, proximity to fresh and healthy food

Some ideas for action:

- Participate in a CROP Walk to benefit local hunger organizations and Church World Service (www.crophungerwalk.org)
- Research how much an average family receives in SNAP (food stamp) benefits in your state. Encourage your family to designate a week or more to spend only that amount on food, and donate the rest to an organization that combats hunger in your community.
- Volunteer at a local food pantry or feeding ministry.
- Help plan an event with Rise Against Hunger (www.riseagainsthunger.org) at your church.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE HUNGER AND POVERTY, FOOD JUSTICE

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Ask:

What more can we do? (See suggestions on the notes side.)

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Circle up in your full group or have students divide back up into their smaller groups. Ask them to share their prayer concerns, both personal and for the world around them. Have a volunteer (in each group or the full group) pray, or conclude with silent prayer or the Lord's Prayer together.

NOTES

- Plan a letter-writing campaign to your congressional representatives through Bread for the World (www.bread.org)

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JUSTICE ISSUE HUNGER AND POVERTY, FOOD JUSTICE

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HANDOUT

Psalm 146 (read responsively)

I will praise the Lord with my whole life,

I will sing praises to my God as long as I live.

The person whose help is God, whose hope rests on God,

Is truly happy.

God: the maker of heaven and earth,

God, who is faithful forever,

Who gives justice to people who are oppressed,

Who gives bread to people who are starving!

God, who frees prisoners and makes the blind see,

Who straightens those who are bent low, and who loves the righteous.

God, who protects immigrants and helps orphans and widows,

But who thwarts the ways of the wicked.

God will rule forever!

Praise the Lord!

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

CONTRIBUTOR NAME JEEHYE KIM PAK

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JUSTICE ISSUE: POVERTY, PRIVILEGE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Matthew 1:18-25

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶163.E, 2016 Book of Resolutions, #6139

OBJECTIVE

To gain insight and understanding of the issues of poverty as it relates to our communities.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

painters tape, 3 colors of index cards (such as red, yellow, and blue), Bible, Social Principles, GBCS Faith & Facts Card (<https://www.umcjustice.org/documents/45>), handout.

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Option 1:

Invite everyone to share in a short sentence their highs and lows of the week. If there is time, also have them share how they encountered or saw God that week. (Keep in mind that for some this may be a more difficult question to answer.)

Option 2:

Pass around a bowl of M&M's candy. Have each person take a few (2-3). Go around and have everyone share according to the colors of M&M's they took:

For every red M&M say one thing that makes you happy.

For every brown M&M say one thing that makes you sad.

For every green M&M say one thing that makes you angry.

For every yellow M&M say one thing that makes you excited.

For every blue M&M say one poor choice you made today and what you could have done differently.

For every orange M&M say one good choice you made today.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Pass out index cards. Ask everyone to write their name on one side. Then ask them to write words or draw images that represent the meaning of their name.

NOTES

Option 1: Mutual invitation works well for this portion. Be mindful that some people are introverts and some are extroverts. In mutual invitation, the first person shares and invites another person to go next. That person can share their answer or pass and then invites another.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE POVERTY, PRIVILEGE

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Ask:

Does anyone have a story behind their name? What does your name mean? Do you know why you were given that name?

(Have a few people share)

Read Matthew 1:18-25

Explain that in Matthew's version of this Christmas story, we see the story from Joseph's point of view.

Say:

Joseph is faced with a dilemma. Joseph had legally promised to marry Mary, but during this time of engagement, she becomes pregnant. Usually, if this happened, the man would divorce the woman. Matthew characterizes Joseph as "being a righteous man" because he did not want to expose Mary to that kind of shame.

Then he had a dream when an angel appeared to him. He receives news that this child is the Son of God.

Ask:

- After that dream do you think it was easy for Mary and Joseph?
- What would you have done if you were Joseph?
- What about if you were Mary?

Say:

They remained together but they both experienced shame and great worry for their future.

Mary and Joseph weren't particularly special people. As you know, Jesus, the Son of God was born in a very humble circumstance. He could have been born to a wealthy family instead of a family of modest means. He could have been born in a palace in Jerusalem instead of a small village of little significance.

NOTES

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But that wasn't God's plan. It is to such people and in such circumstances that God chooses the Son of God to be born. God is born to a lowly, persecuted, itinerant, and a largely anonymous couple. Into a yet unformed family, into their insecurity, anxiety, and fears, Jesus is born.

Ask:

- Why do you think God chose to bring Jesus into the world in such a humble way?
- What is the significance of Jesus' humble beginnings?

Say:

As seen in the ministry of Jesus, God always reminds us to care for the poor, the hungry, and the forgotten.

Read Matthew 25:37-40

Ask:

- What do you think Jesus is saying?
- What could we do in our lives that might reflect welcoming a stranger, clothing the naked, and visiting someone sick or in prison?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Prepare the room with tape and hand out cards to the students. Instructions in the notes/resources section.

Say:

Line up shoulder-to-shoulder across the room on the taped line. Listen and follow my instructions.

If you have a blue card you grew up speaking English as your first language—take two steps forward. If you have a yellow card you grew up speaking English as a second language, but eventually learned English well—take one step forward. If you have a red card you never really learned English until you were an adult—take one step backward.

NOTES

This is an example of an effort to help participants reflect on the “unequal playing field” that benefits some while making it more likely that others will be left behind.

What you will need:

Tape

3 colors of index cards (red, yellow, blue). There should be more yellow than any other color and only a few blue cards. For example, if there are 30 participants, have 3 blue cards, 20 yellow, and 8 red.

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JUSTICE ISSUE POVERTY, PRIVILEGE

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If you have a red card you had to go through winters without heat and summers without air conditioning—take a step back. If you have a blue or yellow card you did have these things—take a step forward.

If you have a blue or yellow card you had your own bed growing up and didn't have to share with your siblings or parents—take a step forward.

If you have a blue card you were able to travel on an airplane as a child to go on a trip, see new places, visit relatives, etc.—take one step forward.

If you have a yellow or blue card you had health insurance and access to a doctor or hospital if needed when you were growing up—take a step forward. If you have a red card you didn't have these things—take a step back.

If you have a blue or yellow card you breathed clean air growing up—take a step forward. If you have a red card you lived, played, and went to school in a place where the air was very polluted—take a step back.

Every fourth person with a red card, you or your parent was disabled—take a step back.

If you have a red card and are standing to the left of the middle line, take another step back. You didn't receive a good education in grade school or high school. You may have lived in an area with a failing school system, or your school may have had very limited resources and students did not have access to the materials or education needed to succeed—take another step back. Or, perhaps you did not have regular access to education because of money, sickness, or another reason at some point in your life.

If you have a blue or yellow card you always had access to a computer and the internet when you needed it—take two steps forward. If you have a red card you didn't have this access—take a step back.

If you have a yellow or blue card you always knew where your next meal would come from—take a step forward.

NOTES

Place a piece of tape on the floor in the center of a large room. Then ask participants to line up shoulder-to-shoulder across the room. The participants in the middle of the line should be standing on the taped line on the floor so that the group is shoulder-to-shoulder in a line across the center of the room. Ask participants to listen carefully and to follow the instructions given.

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JUSTICE ISSUE POVERTY, PRIVILEGE

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NOTES

If you have a red card you sometimes had to skip meals because your family didn't have enough money—take a step back.

If you have a red card and are standing to the right of the middle line, the community where you grew up experienced severe drought which limited your access to food, or flooding which destroyed homes—take a step back.

If you have a red card you were homeless as a child or had to live with relatives, another family, or in a shelter—take three steps back.

If you have a blue card you had a bank account, savings account, or some other financial savings created for you as a child—take two steps forward.

If you have a yellow card your family saved some money for you in a college fund—take one step forward.

If you have a red card your family did not have a checking account or paid cash for large and small purchases—take three steps back.

If you have a red card your family was affected by high levels of debt growing up, such as credit card debt, difficulty making mortgage payments, or fear of (or actual) foreclosure on a home—take two steps back.

If you have a blue or yellow card you made visits to the public library to check out books, borrowed or bought books from elsewhere, or had a habit of reading regularly as a child—take two steps forward.

If you have a red card you grew up in a poor community where industrial pollution from factories or chemical plants caused sickness or disease in your community—take one step back.

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JUSTICE ISSUE POVERTY, PRIVILEGE

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Ask:

- What thoughts or reactions do you have to this activity? What surprised you?
- Did your perspective about your own or others' privilege (or lack of) change as a result of the activity?
- Which "step backward" statements were most memorable for you? Why?
- How might some of the "step backward" experiences be connected to poverty?
- If you were someone who mostly stepped forward rather than backward, what responsibilities go along with the privileges you have received?
- If you mostly stepped forward during this activity, how did you feel while moving ahead of the pack?
- If you mostly stepped backward during this activity, how did you feel about slipping behind the pack?
- Does this activity help you to identify some of the "root causes" of poverty? Which ones?
- Which causes of poverty are missing from this activity?

Read the 2016-2020 *Social Principles* ¶163.E

"In order to provide basic needs such as food, shelter, education, health care, and other necessities, ways must be found to share more equitably the resources of the world." (Social Principles ¶163.E)

"As a church, we are called to support the poor and challenge the rich. To begin to alleviate poverty, we support such policies as adequate income maintenance, quality education, decent housing, job training, meaningful employment opportunities, adequate medical and hospital care, humanization and radical revisions of welfare programs, work for peace and efforts to protect creation's integrity." (Social Principles ¶163.E)

NOTES

You may want to Google the national poverty level and policies in your area that assist low-income families. Is there any new legislation coming up to expand assistance? Are other states doing different things that might be beneficial to your area? Do a little bit of research for your own context that might help the students connect it to their own community.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE POVERTY, PRIVILEGE

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Ask:

- What are the ways the poor are visible and hidden in your community, particularly during this holiday season?
- What are some examples and ways your church is supporting the poor and challenging the rich?
- What are some policies in your area that are helping to alleviate poverty? (SNAP, minimum wage increase, housing subsidies, etc.)
- What more can be done to alleviate poverty in your community?

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Say:

Let's go back to our names. In our scripture reading today, the angel tells Joseph: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." This is a great reminder that God is with us no matter our circumstances. God is with those who are especially living in poverty, and God is with all of us to encourage and guide us to help those in the margins of our society.

Take turns reading lines from this prayer, written by Marian Wright Edelman, President of the Children's Defense Fund.

(Handout)

NOTES

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE POVERTY, PRIVILEGE

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HANDOUT

Marian Wright Edelman, President of the Children's Defense Fund

God help us to end poverty in our time.

The poverty of having a child with too little to eat and no place to sleep, no air, sunlight and space to breathe, bask, and grow.

The poverty of watching your child suffer hunger or get sicker and sicker and not knowing what to do or how to get help because you don't have another dime or a car, money, or health insurance.

The poverty of working your fingers to the bone every day taking care of somebody else's children and neglecting your own, and still not being able to pay your bills.

The poverty of having a job which does not let you afford a stable place to live and being terrified you'll become homeless and lose your children to foster care.

The poverty of losing your job, running out of unemployment benefits, and having no other help in sight.

The poverty of working all your life caring for your own children and having to start all over again caring for the grandchildren you love.

The poverty of earning a college degree, having children, opening a day care center, and taking home \$300 a week—or a month—if you're lucky.

The poverty of loneliness and isolation and alienation—having no one to call or visit, tell you where to get help, assist you in getting it, or care if you're living or dead.

The poverty of having too much and sharing too little and having the burden of nothing to carry.

The poverty of convenient blindness and deafness and indifference to others.

The poverty of low aim and paltry purpose, of weak will and tiny vision, of big meetings and small actions, of loud talk and sullen grudging service.

The poverty of believing in nothing, standing for nothing, sharing nothing, sacrificing nothing, struggling with others for nothing.

The poverty of pride and ingratitude for God's gifts of life and children and family and freedom and home and country and not wanting for others what you want for yourself.

The poverty of greed for more and more and more, ignoring, blaming, and exploiting the needy, and taking from the weak to please the strong.

The poverty of addiction to more and more things, drugs, drink, work, self, violence, power, fleeting fame, and an unjust status quo.

The poverty of fear which keeps you from doing the thing you think is right.

The poverty of convenient ignorance about the needs of those around you and of despair and cynicism.

God help us end poverty in our time, in all its faces and places, young and old, rural, urban, suburban and small town too, and in every color of humans You have made everywhere.

God help us to end poverty in our time in all its guises—inside and out—physical and spiritual, so that all our and Your children may live the lives that you intend.

Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

CONTRIBUTOR NAME CRAIG MOORE

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JUSTICE ISSUE: REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Matthew 2:13-23,

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶ 162.H, 2016 Book of Resolutions #6025, #6028

OBJECTIVE

Recognize the Gospels as a useful resource to understand and respond to ongoing refugee crises, particularly in the Biblical Holy Land.

SUPPLIES

Pencils, Pens, Paper, Book of Discipline, *Book of Resolutions*

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Say:

Today we will be reading a story in which people have to flee their home due to violence and oppression. Populations like these are of particular concern to the United Methodist Church. We are called to pray for people who have fled their homes due to violence and oppression and to support them in meeting their needs.

Ask:

Can you think of any examples in the modern world who have to flee their homes?

Say:

One of particular interest to our class today is the Syrian Refugee Crisis which is happening not very far from the story in today's Scripture study.

NOTES

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

JUSTICE ISSUE REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

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SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Read Matthew 2: 13-23

Ask:

- What sticks out to you in this story?
- Why do Mary, Joseph, and Jesus need to flee from Bethlehem?
- Why does King Herod want to destroy Jesus? (vs 13)
 - When Herod realizes that he has been tricked by the wise men, he orders all the children under two years old to be killed. Why does he do this?
- Optional: Can you think of anyone else in the Bible who acted this way? (If they cannot think of any, ask someone to read Exodus 1: 15-22.)

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Ask participants to get into groups of 2 to 3 people.

Each group will be assigned a different identity from a group of people in Matthew 2. They will write a story to read or perform to the class describing their group's experience of "The Massacre of the Innocents" in Matthew 2: 13-23.

NOTES

- In the course of the discussion, provide information about Herod to the group which could include the following.
- Herod was born in Idumea, a region south of the Dead Sea in what's now Israel and Jordan. His father was from Idumea, and his mother from Nabatea in modern-day southern Jordan (Petra). Due to Herod's heritage in Idumea and Nabatea, many Jews in Roman Palestine did not consider Herod fully Jewish. They sometimes insultingly referred to Herod as a "half-Jew".
- An Idumean and Nabatean heritage would likely make Herod ethnically Arab. His grandfather was a convert to Judaism, likely by force, during the conquest of the Maccabees.
- Herod's questionable Jewish identity meant that he was distrusted in Jerusalem. He tried to bolster his Jewish identity through marriage and through building projects like the temple in Jerusalem.
- Herod was crowned King of Judea in 40 BCE on a trip to Rome by the Roman Senate. He ruled in the interests of Rome before the people of Judea.
- Herod used Roman troops, alongside locals and Idumeans, to conquer Judea in a brutal, three-year war. He was particularly violent in Galilee where he slaughtered common people in towns and villages before finally capturing Jerusalem, killing many people in the city.
- Herod ruled with an iron fist. He responded with extreme violence to any sign of dissent or rebellion. He executed many people throughout his reign, including members of his own family. Herod even executed three of his sons.
- Jesus, introduced by the wise men in Matthew as "King of the Jews," would be seen as a serious threat to Herod's rule.
- Herod's wars and brutal rule forced many people to leave their homes to find refuge in other areas. These displaced people leave for the same reasons Joseph, Mary, and Jesus leave in Matthew 2 – they fear for their lives.
- Consider reading: *Book of Discipline ¶162.H* and/or (parts of) *Book of Resolution # 6028*, particularly Section IV "Biblical Perspectives: Justice and Shared Resources".

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

NOTES

- Group 1: Mary, Joseph, and Jesus
 - Guiding questions: Describe the angel appearing to Joseph in the dream. What was it like escaping in the night? What did you take with you? What was it like living in Egypt away from family and friends? Were people kind and welcoming? What kind of help did you need?
- Group 2: Villagers in Bethlehem
 - Does your family have anyone under the age of 2? What happened to you? How did you feel? Did you stay in Bethlehem afterward or did you move somewhere else? How do you feel about King Herod? What kind of help did you need?
- Group 3 (optional depending on time and group size): King Herod
 - Describe the story from Herod's point of view. Why is Jesus such a threat? How did you feel to be tricked by the wise men? If you are "King of Judea" and Jesus is "King of the Jews" can the two of you get along? Your wars in the past have cost many lives, but isn't it better to have one person die than to have the whole nation go to war (John 11:50)?
- Group 4: Syrian Refugee Family
 - For a modern comparison, tell the story of a Syrian family with young children fleeing violence in modern-day Syria. What was home like before the war? Why did you decide to leave? What was it like to flee? What did you take with you? What is it like living in a new country? Have people been kind and welcoming? What kind of help do you need?

Ask:

- How are these stories similar?
- What type of help do all these people need?
- Take a moment in silence to think about refugees' needs

- Group 4 may need assistance from the facilitator regarding details of the Syrian refugee crisis.
- For quick information about the Syrian refugee crisis and the lives of refugees consider visiting <https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/syrian-refugee-crisis-facts>

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

JUSTICE ISSUE REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Pray.

Good Shepherd, no refugee is a stranger to You, and no one is ever far from Your loving care. Watch over children and families as they travel to refugee camps or relocate within their country. Shelter their souls and their bodies. Heal the hearts of refugees who have endured unimaginable tragedy and trauma.

(Prayer from World Vision, Pray for Refugees)

NOTES

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

CONTRIBUTOR NAME NURA ZAKI

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JUSTICE ISSUE: DIVERSITY, INCLUSION

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE	John 1: (1-9), 10-18
SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES	2016-2020 Social Principles ¶162.A
OBJECTIVE	To see the many faces of Christ
SUPPLIES NEEDED	N/A

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Gather youth together to begin. Thank everyone for coming and acknowledge new friends that may have joined you for the first time.

Acknowledging that each youth may be at a different mental space entering the group, invite everyone to show how they are feeling at the beginning of the gathering simply by using their hand as a measure by giving a “thumbs up”, “thumbs down”, or somewhere in the middle.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Ask:

We just welcomed a new year, 2020. What comes to mind when you think of beginnings? (Ex: Returning to school, starting a new job, welcoming a new member of the family, learning to live with a recent loss, etc.)

Say:

Today's Bible passage starts with a beginning. It wasn't long ago that Christians celebrated the Nativity story during the Christmas season when Jesus was born as a baby to Mary and Joseph in a manger. It may

NOTES

To encourage friendship among newer youth, invite everyone to introduce themselves by sharing their name and a fun fact.

For this brief activity, if a youth is unable to use their hands you can modify this way of measuring how they're doing by verbally asking them, etc.

There is no wrong way of feeling- this exercise is to recognize that youth can come as they are into the Bible study, and even bring those feelings into the discussion to find some resolve, compassion, and solidarity.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

JUSTICE ISSUE DIVERSITY, INCLUSION

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be easy to think that Jesus was created at this point and did not exist before. However, in the book of John 1:1-18, we learn that Jesus has always been.

Ask:

- What more can we learn from Jesus' example as God in human form on Earth?
- What can we understand better from having Jesus live out the Word in actions while Jesus was on Earth?
- How do these examples help you to live more like Christ?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Read *2016-2020 Social Principles ¶162.A*

Say:

Just as today's Bible passage describes the different forms of Jesus, expressed in God and the Word, humans have various identities that, with the Holy Spirit, help to display Christ to the World.

"Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."
(John 1:12-13)

Ask:

- How might we be missing out on the different faces of Christ in our neighbors?
- In your own neighborhood community, and faith community, do you see different expressions of Christ?
- How are they limiting/expanding your picture of Christ in the World?

NOTES

Examples of different expressions of Christ include different styles of worship services, worship music, prayer, traditions, etc.

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JUSTICE ISSUE DIVERSITY, INCLUSION

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Close with a word of prayer asking God to reveal God’s self to us anew and open our eyes to see God in our neighbors in new ways.

Encourage the youth by saying that this work is a process that takes time, but can be so rewarding if we begin with small steps today.

NOTES

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY/ BAPTISM OF THE LORD

CONTRIBUTOR NAME NURA ZAKI

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JUSTICE ISSUE: INCLUSION, RELIGIOUS MINORITIES, YOUNG PEOPLE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Matthew 3:13-17

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES *2016 Book of Resolutions #8031 (specifically "Baptism as God's Gift to Persons of Any Age"), 2016-2020 Social Principles*

¶162.B OBJECTIVE

Jesus invites us to participate in His work

SUPPLIES

2016 Book of Resolutions, 2016-2020 Social Principles

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Gather youth together to begin. Thank everyone for coming and acknowledge new friends that may have joined for the first time.

Acknowledging that there may be a number of circumstances on the minds of the youth as they enter into the gathering (related to the news, current events, family or friendship matters, etc.) make the space for youth to briefly and voluntarily offer that to the group.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Read Matthew 3:13-17 (ask for a volunteer).

Say:

Today's passage in the Bible describes the Baptism of Jesus.

Ask:

- What is Baptism?
- What is its significance to the church? To us?
- What does it mean that Jesus was baptized?

NOTES

To encourage friendship among newer youth, invite everyone to introduce themselves by sharing their name and a word for this new year. (*Ex: Joy, Courage, Empathy, Patience, etc.*)

Allowing youth, to be honest with where they are in a given gathering, whether out-loud or privately, can serve to practice sharing our burdens, and offer our full selves to the Bible study.

Baptism can be described as a symbolic expression of someone's personal decision to accept Jesus Christ as the Savior of their lives. It's when someone acknowledges and repents of their sins, and wants to make their relationship right with God. Water is used to symbolize washing away one's death to sin and new life in Jesus Christ.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY/ BAPTISM OF THE LORD

JUSTICE ISSUE INCLUSION, RELIGIOUS MINORITIES, YOUNG PEOPLE

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Say:

In some traditions, it is not uncommon to view baptism as a routine instead of being a life-changing, personal choice.

Ask:

- How may this passage change/add to our perspective of what it means to be baptised?
- Has the sacrament of baptism ever made you feel excluded? Included?

Say:

Jesus' baptism is recorded in other books of the Bible like Mark (Mark 1:9-11), Luke (Luke 3:21-22), and John (John 1:30-34) but Matthew's account of what took place mentions something that the others do not- John the Baptist's hesitation to baptize Jesus.

Ask:

- Why was John the Baptist hesitant? Can you relate to John?
- How did Jesus' response to John the Baptist help change his mind about it?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Read the passage from the 2016 *Book of Resolutions* #8031 subtitled, "Baptism as God's Gift to Persons of Any Age." There it reads:

*"There is one baptism as there is one source of salvation—the gracious love of God. The baptizing of a person, whether as an infant or an adult, is a sign of God's saving grace. That grace—experienced by us as initiating, enabling, and empowering—is the same for all persons. All stand in need of it, and none can be saved without it. The difference between the baptism of adults and that of infants is that the Christian faith is consciously being professed by an adult who is baptized. A baptized infant comes to profess her or his faith later in life, after having been nurtured and taught by parent(s) or other responsible adults and the community of faith...While the baptism of infants is appropriate for Christian families, **the increasingly minority status of the church in contemporary society demands more attention to evangelizing, nurturing, and baptizing adult converts.**"*

NOTES

Keep in mind that it should not be assumed that all youth in your group have been baptized, nor do they have the same reference of baptism. For example, some youth may know baptism as a ritual for newborn babies, while others may associate it with adults being fully immersed in a pool of water. There are many expressions of the commitment- it is not too late to make it, or renew it.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY/ BAPTISM OF THE LORD

JUSTICE ISSUE INCLUSION, RELIGIOUS MINORITIES, YOUNG PEOPLE

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Say:

The resolution recognizes that fewer families are baptizing their newborn children in contemporary society.

Ask:

- Do you agree that there is more attention needed to seeking out youth, young adults and older adults to make this life-giving decision?
- How can we be a part of continuing this work of nurturing people after baptism?

Read:

2016-2020 *Social Principles* ¶162, on “Religious Minorities”, some of which may be those we seek to include in the Church.

“...We also support the right of individuals to choose their own faith, and we reject attempts to impose beliefs on people or to coerce or manipulate them into joining or remaining a part of a religious tradition when they have decided to disaffiliate.”

Ask:

- Is it possible that in our attempts to include more people into the Faith, we miss the mark and end up making people feel excluded?
- What must we do in our attempts to share our personal testimony of transformation, to ensure that we do no harm in the process?

Instructions:

Charades- select 4-5 words/scenes from the Bible passage for the youth to act out. For example *Dove, Jordan River, Heaven opening up, Lamb of God, etc.* You can allow them to use their Bibles for clues. For groups, less than 15 people, have 1 person volunteer to stand in front of the group and act out a scene at a time. They are allowed to use their fingers to communicate how many words, and the rest of their bodies to communicate with the group without using words, as they guess. For larger groups, you can split the youth into two teams with 1 volunteer each communicating to their team the same scene in competition with the other group.

(10 minutes)

NOTES

Consider this: As the first Sunday after Epiphany, the Christian Church is coming out of a high-visibility season where our celebrations of the Christmas story, Three Kings Day, etc are on the public's mind. Are there ways to use this time to communicate the meaning in the tradition, just like we can with baptism? What would it look like to start communicating what this season means to us personally?

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY/ BAPTISM OF THE LORD

JUSTICE ISSUE INCLUSION, RELIGIOUS MINORITIES, YOUNG PEOPLE

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Say:

Baptism is an outward, public expression of an inward, personal decision. Similarly, the game of charades relies on us using symbols and expressions to represent and communicate a message that's much bigger.

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

If all of the students are baptized, have them turn to each other and say, "Remember that you are baptized, and rejoice!"

If not, have the students turn to each other and say, "Remember God loves you and so do I!"

NOTES

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

CONTRIBUTOR NAME KIM JOHNSON

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JUSTICE ISSUE: ADVOCACY, CHANGE-MAKERS

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE Isaiah 49:1-7

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES None.

OBJECTIVE YOU are chosen. YOU can make a difference.

SUPPLIES NEEDED superpowers from the list, paper, pens/markers/crayons, Articles from the following websites—can be printed into handout form or used in other means: <http://www.inspiremykids.com/topics/make-a-difference/>; <http://mentalfloss.com/article/521444/amazing-kids-who-are-making-world-better-place>

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Begin by distributing a superpower to each person in your group. If you have a smaller group, you may want to give each person two.

Give students 1 minute to bounce around the room and find someone else (can form in pairs or groups of up to 4) with a different superpower.

Have students quickly draw a picture of a superhero that possesses each of the superpowers from their group.

Present the superheroes to the group—and then have students choose which superhero/which combination of superpowers they would choose to be.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Ask:

- Why did you choose the superhero you did?
- What characteristics do you think are most important for a superhero?

NOTES

Use the list of superpowers' handout and put one superpower each on a small piece of paper or notecard.

Pass out paper and coloring tools to groups.

May want to hang drawings at the front so all can be seen.

A quick show of hands vote would be good.

Leaders will need to be prepared to kickstart the conversation with characteristics about themselves that are superpowers

- Organization
- Sports skill
- Kindness

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JUSTICE ISSUE ADVOCACY, CHANGE-MAKERS

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- For a supervillain?
- What characteristics do WE have as teenage humans that are our superpowers?
- Put differently—what cool stuff about you makes you unique and special

Read Isaiah 49:1-7

Read through once all the way through.

Read through again verse by verse, pausing after each verse.

Ask:

List the superpowers noted in this Scripture passage.

Talk a bit about what it means to be called by and chosen by God.

Talk about what it means to be an unlikely servant.

Ask:

Do you think you have been chosen as a servant of God?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Take some time to share with students things that other kids have done to act for justice in our world. (See notes for references.)

Ask students in small groups to choose one example of kids making a difference and spend some time thinking about that. [if you've printed articles from the sites mentioned, give each group one]

NOTES

- Ability to listen
- Financial resources
- Etc.

****Leaders, make note of the characteristics shared here—you will use them later when you close the evening.**

Spend some time with these verses focusing on the fact that the Lord called this servant, and equipped the servant to do the good work.

Here are some articles with different real-life stories of students who are making a difference in the world. You may want to choose a few and print them out to share with students or pull up the sites during your time together and show them—whatever works for your group.

<http://www.inspiremykids.com/topics/make-a-difference/>

<http://mentalfloss.com/article/521444/amazing-kids-who-are-making-world-better-place>

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JUSTICE ISSUE ADVOCACY, CHANGE-MAKERS

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Have students present to the larger group about the difference-making kid they've read about.

Ask:

- What skills or superpowers did that kid use to make this difference?
- What areas in your world do you see that need a superhero?

Have groups brainstorm areas in their community/world that need a superhero. Think about the problems they see around them.

Ask:

How are YOU going to be a kid who makes a difference?

Have groups think about the super skills they listed earlier and the areas that need help and think about ways they can take action.

Refocus on the Scripture.

Read Isaiah 49:1-7 again after spending time thinking about the justice areas and actions in your own community.

Ask:

- Is there anything you hear differently in the Scripture now, as we read it again?
- What pieces of the Scripture are speaking to you tonight?
- What stands out from the passage?

Remind students that they are called, they are chosen, they have God-given super skills, and that they can make a difference.

NOTES

May need to refer to the list above of 'normal' traits that can be superpowers.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JUSTICE ISSUE ADVOCACY, CHANGE-MAKERS

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Close in prayer together, giving thanks for the traits/superpowers students have lifted up throughout the night.

Pray for the areas of need in the community students have lifted up and brainstormed about helping to change.

And pray a prayer over each student present,

“Before (name of student) was born, the Lord called him/her.”

Give thanks for the gifts and talents provided by God and the fact that EACH of us is CHOSEN by God to do good work in the world.

NOTES

Here is where that list of traits you made earlier in the night come back—students feel heard and validated when the things they’ve shared are remembered and prayed for by name later.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JUSTICE ISSUE ADVOCACY, CHANGE-MAKERS

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HAND OUT

List of Superpowers

1. Superstrength
2. Speed
3. Durability
4. Agility/reflexes
5. Healing/regeneration
6. Sensing danger (spider-sense)
7. Longevity/immortality
8. Climbing/wall-crawling
9. Swimming/water-breathing
10. Flight
11. Teleportation
12. Exceptional leaping
13. Phasing/intangibility
14. Time travel
15. Control of Electricity
16. Control of Light
17. Control of Darkness and/or shadows
18. Control of Gravity
19. Control of Energy
20. Control of Sound
21. Super-intelligence
22. Telekinesis (moving objects mentally)
23. Telepathy (reading minds)
24. Mind-to-mind communication
25. Mind-control
26. Memory manipulation (may include creation/alteration/deletion)
27. Ability to locate someone mentally
28. Forcefields
29. Acid/poison

* from: <http://www.superheronation.com/2007/12/30/list-of-superpowers/>

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. SUNGRAE KIM

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JUSTICE ISSUE: RACISM, IMMIGRANTS

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

1 Corinthians 1:10-18

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶162. A and ¶162.H

OBJECTIVE

To help the students understand that we all belong to Christ and hence we all belong to each other.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Copy of 2016-2020 Social Principles

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Check-in / Icebreaker Questions

- How are you doing? Go around and share your “roses, thorns, and birds?”
- Roses: highlights
- Thorns: lowlights
- Birds: something looking forward to

Introductory Question (Optional)

- Who is stronger between Superman and Batman? Why?

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Provide background information on 1 Corinthians.

Say:

1 Corinthians is a letter that was written to the Christians in the city called, Corinth by the apostle Paul. Corinth was a large and prospering urban center with an ethnically, culturally, and religiously diverse population. It was the capital city of the Roman province of Achaia and its port was very important for people from big cities like Athens to travel to Macedonia.

NOTES

- Encourage the students to go around and share their highlights (roses), lowlights (thorns) in their past week and something they’re looking forward to (birds) next week.
- The metaphor of “roses and thorns” reminds them that something good in their life may come with difficulties and challenges as well.
- Please pay close attention to “thorns” and “birds” and help them to pray for one another at the closing.
- Some may feel comfortable with sharing what’s going on in their life but some may not feel comfortable with sharing. You don’t need to force them to share. Make sure to tell them they may not have to share if they feel not comfortable with it.

Resources:

- Harper Collins Study Bible
- The Writing of The New Testament by Luke Johnson

Video: “1 Corinthians” by The Bible Project: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yiHf8kICCc4>

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JUSTICE ISSUE RACISM, IMMIGRANTS

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You may think that Corinth was a harbor city like San Francisco or New York in the U.S. where you may encounter all kinds of people from all over the world.

The congregation of the Corinthian church was predominantly Gentile (1:1). It looks like some of the members, like Erastus (mentioned in Roman 16:23), was a massive deal in their prosperous city. However, most church members must have been persons of lesser means and lower social standing (1:26).

Therefore, perhaps it was inevitable that there were divisions and quarrels among the church members. Imagine a community consisted of people from many different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds. They all have a different way of thinking and a different way of doing things. It must be extremely difficult for all of them to have the same mind, right?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:10-18

Ask:

- What was the issue? (vv.11-12)
- Why do you think people were divided by “where I belong to?”
- What was Paul’s answer? (vv.14-17)
- Why do you think Paul wanted to emphasize that he did not baptize many of them?

NOTES

- Apollos played an important role in the early development of the churches of Ephesus and Corinth (Acts 19:2-6)
- Cephas = Peter
- Perhaps people were seeking security by the question of “where I belong to.” Or, they were debating over “who is more powerful?”
- This question is like “who is more powerful between Superman and Batman?” By this question, people usually try to prove that “I am right” even when it is meaningless. Or they seek security by proving that “I’m on the stronger side.”
- I believe Paul wanted to emphasize that he didn’t baptize many of them because he didn’t want them to think that they belong to him at all. We all belong to Christ and Paul knew his role clearly: to direct people to Jesus.
- Paul’s answer to this issue was this: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved.” (10:31-33)

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JUSTICE ISSUE RACISM, IMMIGRANTS

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NOTES

- Take a moment to think about social cliques in your school. How groups are divided? Do you see that, for example, there is a group of “more social and popular kids” and a group of “nerds”?
- Why do you think people are divided by groups in school?

Say:

One of the issues the Corinthians were debating about was the question of whether or not it was okay to eat the foods sacrificed to idols. Imagine you are a church member of Corinth and think about these questions:

- You went to a meat market and the owner said, “this is really good quality meat with an unbelievable price, and it was from the animal sacrificed to Poseidon!” And the owner knows that you are a Christian. Would you still get the meat or ask for another meat? Why?
- You are invited to a neighbor’s house for dinner. You are there thinking that it is a good opportunity to share the gospel with them. The person who invited you offered you a well-prepared meal and says, “This has been offered in sacrifice.” What would you do? Why?
- How can we respect each other and at the same time share our convictions honestly?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Read this passage from *2016-2020 Social Principles* ¶162

... We affirm all persons as equally valuable in the sight of God. We, therefore, work toward societies in which each person’s value is recognized, maintained, and strengthened. We support the basic rights of all persons to equal access to housing, education, communication, employment, medical care, legal redress for grievances, and physical protection. We deplore acts of hate or violence against groups or persons based on race, color, national origin, ethnicity, age, gender, disability, status, economic condition, sexual orientation, gender identity, or religious affiliation. Our respect for the inherent dignity of all persons leads us to call for the recognition, protection, and implementation of the principles of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights so that communities and individuals may claim and enjoy their universal, indivisible, and inalienable rights.

If this passage is too long, you may shorten it by highlighting some of the important sentences.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JUSTICE ISSUE RACISM, IMMIGRANTS

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Ask:

- Diversity: How do you evaluate this statement? Why do you think UMC makes such a statement? If you can, how would you revise this statement?
- Justice: Do you think our church (our school or our society) is representing this social principle? Is your school or our society keeping this principle well? How would you evaluate its score, if you may? (1-10 points)
- Action: What can we/I do to make a community where everyone is welcomed? How can we make our youth group/church be more diverse and accepting?

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Hold hands together and take turns praying:
“God I thank you for... and God I ask you....”

Close with the Lord’s Prayer

NOTES

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. DR. DALE M. WEATHERSPOON

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JUSTICE ISSUE: JUSTICE, ADVOCACY, CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Micah 6:1-8

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

OBJECTIVE

To become agents of God's justice and righteous

SUPPLIES

Needed: Bible, Notebook, Handout

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Opening Prayer (Handout)

Let us pray in one voice:

Merciful and loving God, in the words of the prophet Amos we are to "let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Open our eyes that we may see where your life-giving water is needed. Then guide and use us to be your instruments of healing and transformation so that others' thirst for justice, truth and righteousness may be quenched.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Using the Lectio Divina method of Bible Study, read the text two times (we will save the third reading for the group activity)

Say:

During the first reading listen for what God is saying to the Israelites and those gathered. What words, phrase or images stand out for you? What do you see, hear or feel in hearing this text? What disturbs you? What resonates with you?

Take time for each person to share without asking questions. Listen actively and intently. After sharing choose one of the questions below to discuss.

NOTES

God is merciful and loving.

What are the ideas generated by this prayer? What is and whence comes this water?

God is talking

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JUSTICE ISSUE JUSTICE, ADVOCACY, CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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Ask:

- Who do the mountains represent to which God instructs the people to plead?
- Who are the hills?
- What is the controversy the Lord has with the people of Israel?
- What does it mean to be a living sacrifice and not give just out of our possessions, abundance or comfort zone?

Read the passage a second time.

Say:

During the second reading, what do you hear God saying to the church today? What is God calling the church to do or be today?

Again, pause and take time for each person to share without asking questions. Listen actively and intently.

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say:

One must be aware of who is standing in the need of justice in order to work for justice. What parts of our body are needed to become aware of the injustices around us? What feelings or thoughts arise in you at the sight of injustice? What types of injustice have you experienced personally?

Sit in silence for two minutes and reflect on these questions.

Break the silence by reading the scripture passage a third time.

After the reading, break the larger group into smaller groups with three or four people in a group.

NOTES

The prophetic role and matters of justice

What is my relation to justice and such matters around me?

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JUSTICE ISSUE JUSTICE, ADVOCACY, CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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Each group should pick one of the following questions to discuss (ensure that two groups do not have the same question unless there are more than five small groups).

Ask (in small groups):

- What does it mean to be fair? What is the difference between equality and equity? Which brings about justice?
- What values are needed in order for justice and compassion to be present? i.e.: generosity, grace, honesty, etc.
- The scripture calls and requires us to, “Do justice, love kindness and to walk humbly with God.” What does it mean to “walk humbly with God” from a dominate cultural perspective? What does it mean to “walk humbly with God”, from an oppressed perspective?
- What people or groups are working for justice in your community? What systems do you see being transformed by their acts of justice?
- In the Service of Baptismal Covenant in The United Methodist Church, the question is asked, “Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?” How would you or how are you responding to this question?

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Say:

Remember, to some, the word justice means just us. We are not in this work alone. We must be in this work of justice together, siblings from every race, culture, ethnicity, gender, faith tradition, educational level, and socio-economic background, joining our hands, hearts, feet, and voices. Let us pray in unison.

Pray:

God of righteousness and justice, throughout history, you have delivered us time and again from oppression and injustice. Help us to always remember what it is like to be free so that we may work for justice and the liberation of our sisters and brothers enslaved in mind, body or spirit. We pray this prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen and Amen!

NOTES

For justice in community and relationships to exist, what are the building blocks/core values?

Who is the “us” the scripture is calling?

Goals: Appreciation for the work of justice.

God is; deliverer, help, liberator

“Us” – The Church, Methodism, those are free

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JUSTICE ISSUE JUSTICE, ADVOCACY, CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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HANDOUT

Opening Prayer

Merciful and loving God, in the words of the prophet Amos we are to “let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” Open our eyes that we may see where your life-giving water is needed. Then guide and use us to be your instruments of healing and transformation so that others’ thirst for justice, truth and righteousness may be quenched.

Closing Prayer

God of righteousness and justice, throughout history, you have delivered us time and again from oppression and injustice. Help us to always remember what it is like to be free so that we may work for justice and the liberation of our sisters and brothers enslaved in mind, body or spirit. We pray this prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen and Amen!

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. ANNA GUILLOZET

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JUSTICE ISSUE: PUBLIC WITNESS/PROTEST, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Matthew 5:13-20

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 *Social Principles* ¶164.F

OBJECTIVE

To help students form their own understanding of what public witness means for themselves.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Students' Bibles, highlighters, refrigerator box (or box large enough for a student to sit in), United Methodist *Book of Discipline*, Salt Packet (1x student)

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Say:

"Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public." By Cornel West.

Ask:

- Do they talk with friends about their faith?
- Do they invite them to church?
- Do they carry their Bible in school?

If students have chosen to keep their faith private, ask them why?

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say:

Take a moment to silently read Matthew 5:13-20, in whatever Bible you have in front of you.

Give the handout with the *Message* version to the students.

Have a volunteer then read the passage from the Message paraphrase for contrast/comparison.

Ask students to highlight any word or phrase in the scripture handout that talks about public/shared parts of life.

NOTES

It would be helpful for you to prepare the scripture lesson from the Message paraphrase before the lesson.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JUSTICE ISSUE PUBLIC WITNESS/PROTEST, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

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NOTES

Divide students into partners/small groups to discuss:

- Where have you witnessed someone with a public faith?
- Was their public example in alignment with the words of Jesus in our scripture lesson?

Invite students back together to share in a large group.

(Have a box large enough for a student to sit inside or a cover so that they are sitting in the dark.)

Ask for a student volunteer to sit in the box/darkroom.

Hand the student a sheet of paper with the following verse printed on it, but have the sheet folded in half. Instruct the student to not open the sheet until told to do so.

Isaiah 59:10 -

*“We grope like the blind along a wall,
groping like those who have no eyes;*

We stumble at noon as in the twilight...”

Explain to all the students (loud enough so that the student in the box can hear) that you are waiting a few moments for the student’s eyes to adjust to the darkness.

After a few moments, ask the student to unfold the paper and try to read the scripture.

Ask the student to return to their place and thank them for volunteering.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JUSTICE ISSUE PUBLIC WITNESS/PROTEST, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Page: 3 of 6

NOTES

Ask:

- To the student in the box - "Was it easy to read the scripture?"
- To all - "What are ways that you could have helped your friend?" (given the friend a flashlight... opened the box lid... asked that the student be allowed to come out of the box before reading)
- To all - "Why didn't you help your friend with the reading?"

Say:

Sometimes we do not offer to help out, try to make things fair, or challenge what a leader asks of us simply because we think that it is the way it is supposed to be. But sometimes, Jesus calls us to rethink how we live out what we have been told.

Ask:

- In verse 19, what commandments is Jesus talking about?
- In this passage of scripture, who are the "rule-makers?"
- In our lives, who are the "rule-makers?"

Invite the students into a moment of quiet reflection.

Ask:

- Have you ever disagreed with a rule or with a person in charge? How did that make you feel? What did you do about the rule you disagreed with?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Ask:

What is more important: a rule or the intention behind a rule?

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JUSTICE ISSUE PUBLIC WITNESS/PROTEST, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

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Instructions:

- Divide the students into small groups and ask them to create a silly rule that has a real intention.
- Give each group a piece of construction paper (or other paper thick enough to not be able to read through)
 - Ask them to write the rule on one side and the intention on the other side.
 - Example: Rule - *All carpet must be brown.* Intention - *Keep coffee stains from appearing on carpets*

Bring everyone back together and ask each group to share only their rule.

Ask other groups to reflect upon that rule.

- Does it make sense?
- Does it seem fair?
- Who does the rule impact?
- Who does the rule benefit?

Then ask the group to share the intention of the rule.

- Was the rule effective in addressing the intention?
- How else could the rule have been created/phrased?

Ask:

Which rules in our life together (both society and in the church) may not most fairly and effectively address the intention of the rule?

Ask for a volunteer/volunteers to read the United Methodist Social Principles about Civil Obedience and Disobedience

NOTES

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JUSTICE ISSUE PUBLIC WITNESS/PROTEST, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

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Ask:

Do you know any ways to address rules you find problematic or unjust according to the Jesus they are learning about?

Writing letters to leaders/lawmakers, Weighing the consequences of disobeying the rules, Speaking out about the rules, *Students share the rest of their ideas.*

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Hand each student a packet of salt. Share that there are over 14,000 uses for salt and remind them that each of them has a unique way of being a witness for Jesus in the world. Ask them to write one thing they are committing to do after this lesson on the salt packet.

Ask the students to then hold their salt packets while you read Matthew 5:13-16.

Lead the students in prayer (below or extemporaneous):

God of all flavors, we ask that you would remind us of your call upon our lives to be salt and light. Let us add your flavor into the world and to shine your light into all places. In the example of Jesus Christ, help us to ask wise questions and to interact with people and systems of authority in the ways that you would have us act. We thank you for your rule-reframing gift of Jesus Christ. Amen.

NOTES

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/political-community#civil-obedience>

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JUSTICE ISSUE PUBLIC WITNESS/PROTEST, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

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HANDOUT

Handout Matthew 5:13-20 from *The Message*

“Let me tell you why you are here. You’re here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You’ve lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.

Here’s another way to put it: You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We’re going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don’t think I’m going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I’m putting you on a light stand. Now that I’ve put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you’ll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.

Don’t suppose for a minute that I have come to demolish the Scriptures—either God’s Law or the Prophets. I’m not here to demolish but to complete. I am going to put it all together, pull it all together in a vast panorama. God’s Law is more real and lasting than the stars in the sky and the ground at your feet. Long after stars burn out and earth wears out, God’s Law will be alive and working.

Trivialize even the smallest item in God’s Law and you will only have trivialized yourself. But take it seriously, show the way for others, and you will find honor in the kingdom. Unless you do far better than the Pharisees in the matters of right living, you won’t know the first thing about entering the kingdom.”

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. KATIE MATSON-DALEY

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JUSTICE ISSUE: BULLYING, -ISMS AND MENTAL HEALTH

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Matthew 5:21-37

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶161.R

OBJECTIVE

To reflect on the impact of our words and the opportunity to make amends and be reconciled when there has been harm.

SUPPLIES

Handout, Bibles, Optional whiteboard or chart paper

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

The centering time is a group prayer in a circle.

Say:

Our words have the power to bring life or death. When Jesus was baptized, God's voice was heard saying, "This is my son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased."

Ask the group to think of a compliment or a word of encouragement someone has said to them before. Go around the circle and:

1. Share your name (ex. "My name is Katie,"
2. Share the word of encouragement, (ex. "my friend Amy recently told me that she was inspired by me to be brave.")

Then as a group greet the student with a reflection of God's words to Jesus "[Name] you are God's child, whom God loves, with you God is well pleased."

Continue around the circle until each person has shared a word of encouragement they have received and been affirmed with God's word by the group.

NOTES

If your group is very large it may be worthwhile to split into smaller groups for this exercise.

If your group knows each other well and has a high positive regard for each other it may be worthwhile to have each student give a compliment or a word of encouragement to the person next to them in the circle.

Encourage students to listen to their peers sharing their stories of compliments or words of encouragement without commenting. It would be devastating to have a student say for example that they are creative, and have another student say, "No, you aren't creative, that's stupid." The point of the exercise is to affirm the giftedness and beloved-ness of each member of the group.

It may help to give the adults in your group time to think about this ahead of time so that they can be ready to share and model the courage to share early.

Jr. High/Middle School youth are often so aware of what they are not good at and the way they do not measure up, we want to start this lesson with an affirmation of their capacity for blessing.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JUSTICE ISSUE BULLYING, -ISMS AND MENTAL HEALTH

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If time permits, ask for reflections about what it was like to name a strength or a gift, and what it was like to hear the words of affirmation from the group.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say:

Today's scripture comes from Matthew chapter 5 and is a part of Jesus' sermon on the mount. People gathered to hear Jesus teach, and this is one small section out of a much larger collection of Jesus' teachings.

One thing that Jesus does in this "sermon," is that he takes common basic teaching from his culture, and the scriptures and says, "You have heard that it was said . . . , But I say to you . . . So . . . " This is just one section that uses this pattern.

Read Matthew 5:21-26

Ask:

Can you find those sections? You have heard? But I say? So? What are they in this passage?

Say:

Jesus is basically saying, yes, it's good not to murder people, but when your anger causes you to insult people that has consequences too.

NOTES

The lectionary text for this week (Matthew 5:21-37) covers a lot of ground: anger, name-calling; adultery. Each of these topics could be a lesson in and of themselves. It's up to you if you want to look at the entire passage or the smaller passage about anger and name-calling. This lesson plan focuses on Matthew 5:21-26.

Be Reconciled:

To make peace between people or groups that have a dispute or who have wronged one another. It involves saying we're sorry for the wrong we've done, agreeing to stop doing the wrong, and doing what we can to make things right.

Come to terms with your accuser:

If someone accuses you of doing wrong, look within and see if you have done wrong. You may or may not have done it intentionally, but sometimes our unintentional actions have a harmful impact. When that happens we go back to "be reconciled."

You may want either a printout, or a whiteboard, or chart paper to help look at the different sections of this passage:

You have heard:

But I say:

So:

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JUSTICE ISSUE BULLYING, -ISMS AND MENTAL HEALTH

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Ask:

- The so section can be a little hard to understand. What does it mean to be “reconciled?”
- What does it mean to “come to terms quickly with your accuser?”

Ask:

Jesus spoke these words nearly 2000 years ago and the writer of Mathew wrote them down a few years later. What do these words have to do with life for students today? Do we deal with angry words? Angry fights between people? Unintentionally harming someone and being accused of something we didn’t mean to do?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

See handout – Readings and discussion questions

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Circle up –

Do a fist bump blessing – Each person gives a fist bump to the person next to them and says, [Name] go now in peace, be peace and make peace.

Close with a prayer that feels appropriate for your group after the blessing.

NOTES

At the time of writing the lesson the story of the soccer team in Jordan is all over social media and Youtube if you’d like to find the clip you can search: “ Rival Players Shield Footballer From View After Her Hijab Comes Loose During Match”

This discussion could be done in small groups or in pairs, or in a large group depending on the size of your group and their comfort level with one another.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JUSTICE ISSUE BULLYING, -ISMS AND MENTAL HEALTH

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HANDOUT

Hand out for Group Activity:

In the fall of 2019, two stories were shared widely on social media about two different women's soccer games. Read through each story and discuss them with your group.

On October 15, in Minnesota, USA, Como Park High School a school with a lot of students who are the children and grandchildren of Hmong and Vietnamese Immigrants, played Mahtomedi High School, a school that is predominantly European American.

During and after the game, High School boys from Mahtomedi in the bleachers yelled, "go back to where you came from," to the Como Park girls, they referred to the girls on the Como Park team as different Asian foods.

How might the words shouted by the boys in the stands impact the girls on the field?

Based on your reading from Matthew 5:21-26, how might you respond if you were:

One of the girls on the Como Park team?

One of the girls on the Mahtomedi team?

Sitting in the stands near the Mahtomedi boys who were yelling at the Como Park girls?

Imagine now that you were one of the boys from Mahtomedi shouting to the Como Park girls on the field. At the moment you were having fun, you didn't mean to be cruel, you were just caught up in the moment. The next week, after hearing about how your words impacted the girls at Como Park and reading Matthew 5:21-26 you decide that you'd like to be reconciled. What would you do?

The same week, a video from a 2018 women's soccer game in Jordan, went viral on social media. In this video, the hijab (a religious headscarf worn by many Muslim women) of player 16 on the Amman team starts to slide off. Her opponents from the Shabab Al Urdon club who were not wearing hijabs stopped play and made a human shield around their opponent so she could readjust her hijab without being exposed. This act was celebrated around the globe.

How might the actions of the women from Shabab Al Urdon have impacted the woman on the other team?

When we meet, talk or play with people who are different than us in some way, we can react in kindness or in anger. Why do you think some people react with bullying?

TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY

CONTRIBUTOR NAME TURA FOSTER GILLESPIE

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JUSTICE ISSUE: ADVOCACY

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Matthew 17:1-9

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶166

OBJECTIVE

To remind students what it feels like to please God and the effort it takes

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Large pieces of paper/markers for brainstorming as a group, copies of *Our Social Creed* ¶166 to pass out

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Meditation:

Have the students sit not touching each other, in a quiet, comfortable position. Ask them to close their eyes while you walk them through the story.

Say (slowly and calmly):

Breathe in. Breathe out.

You are walking a beautiful path up a mountain with some of your closest friends.

Look around you. Identify who they are. Look at the scenery in your mind.

Breathe in. Breathe out.

As you arrive at the top, the sun is coming through the clouds perfectly. The view from the top is amazing.

Take a few deep breaths as you take it all in.

Then, as you share this moment with those close friends, you hear a voice coming from around you: You are my beloved child, with you, I am well pleased.

(Longer pause)

Say:

This is clearly an amazing experience. You want to stay there. You want to live in this moment forever.

Breathe in. Breathe out.

NOTES

If you think it will help, dim the lights, use white noise of some kind to give an ambiance that will help the students be calm.

TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY

JUSTICE ISSUE ADVOCACY

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Unfortunately, there comes a time when you have to come down the mountain. But the way down is just as peaceful and beautiful as the way up. You are still smiling from that amazing moment.

Breathe in. Breathe out.

Ask:

As you open your eyes and come back to this room, bring to mind an amazing moment that you wanted to live in forever? Was it something you can describe and someone else will understand or was it a “you had to be there” moment? Did you share it with anyone?

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Read Matthew 17:1-9, however, it is best for your group to read aloud and follow along.

Ask:

- Have you ever had a “mountain top experience”? (no need to share stories, just raised hands or nods of heads)
- Without sharing the whole story, how did it make you feel? Or if you haven’t had one, how did that meditation make you feel? Can you even describe the feeling?
- How did you feel just now in the meditation when I said: “You are my beloved child, with you, I am well pleased”?
- Have you heard that phrase before? Is there another story in the Gospels where a voice says this about Jesus? (Remind them of Matthew 3:13-17, the baptism of Jesus.)
- Awe and fear often come together in the Bible. How do you think they go together? Have you ever had a moment in your life where those two things went together? If you heard a big, booming voice (or even a small, quiet one) and you or one of your friends had a sudden transformation, would awe and fear both come?

NOTES

TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY

JUSTICE ISSUE ADVOCACY

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- What instructions are given to the disciples in this passage? v5, “listen to him,” v7 “get up and do not be afraid,” v9 “tell no one...”)
- We talked a little about the last one. Telling no one might be in part because no one would believe it or at least they wouldn’t understand. But what about the other two? How can we take those instructions now?
- Jesus tells us in the Lord’s Prayer that his Heavenly Parent is OUR Heavenly Parent, too. (Matthew 6:9) How can we make sure that our Heavenly Parent is “well pleased” with us? Do you think it’ll be easy?
- How can we share what happens on our mountain tops without “telling” someone?
- Is this feeling available to everyone? What might keep someone from attaining that feeling?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Brainstorm a service project and a fundraiser that would offset the cost of the project.

Hand out the copies of Our Social Creed and read it together.

Ask:

What sticks out to you as a challenge in our community and what can we do about it?

Start with writing down the challenges on a brainstorming sheet. Once they come to a consensus on what is most important to them, brainstorm with them what they might be able to do to help.

Ask:

- In order to take action, what is needed? Just people and time? Are there travel costs? What materials are needed? Can they be donated or do they need to be purchased?

NOTES

TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY

JUSTICE ISSUE ADVOCACY

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NOTES

- What barriers would people have to participate in our project? Economic barriers can be faced with a fundraiser to cover the costs of the project—what can be done as a cost-free fundraiser? Who do we ask for money? How do we ask?
- What other barriers are there? Time? How do we help someone free up time?
- Transportation—how can we make sure everyone who wants to participate can get to our location?
- What about an invitation? Only three disciples got to experience the transfiguration because only three were invited. Who could you invite to make sure the experience is shared?
- Would God be “well pleased” with what we’re doing and how we plan to go about it?

Once you have the beginnings of a plan, be sure to mentor the youth through actually doing the work. Empower them to do as much of it as possible.

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

As they are all excited about being heard and being empowered to plan their own ministry, bring them back to their center by reading *Our Social Creed* together one more time adding this prayer:

Pray:

Heavenly Parent,

Bless us to bless others in this world. Give us the courage to climb mountains. Give us the warm feeling of your presence. Remind us that when we come back down the mountain, we can help others feel your presence through our kindness and love. Be with us as we go from this place, that we may be your children with whom you are well pleased. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. CALEB YONGMIN HONG

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JUSTICE ISSUE: HUNGER, POVERTY

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Matthew 4:1-11,

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016 Book of Resolutions #4051, 2016-2020 Social Principles, ¶ 163.E

OBJECTIVE

Encourage students to learn about hunger and do something about it.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Plate of freshly baked cookies, sign that says “Do Not Touch”, Print copies of the “Poverty Quiz” for the students and the “Poverty Quiz Answer Sheet” for the leader (links provided in the notes section)

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Word of Welcome

Opening Prayer – ask for a volunteer to pray

Ice Breaker – “Share your name and your favorite dessert.”

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Ask for 3 volunteers to read each section of Scripture:
The narrator, Jesus, Devil

Say:

Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell the story of Jesus’ baptism and temptation. Let’s consider the nature of each temptation.

Read Matthew 4:1-4

Ask:

- What does it mean to “fast?” How long did Jesus fast? Describe how you feel knowing that you cannot eat these cookies until the end of our study. (v1-2)

NOTES

Have the plate of freshly baked (or store-bought) cookies sitting in the center of the gathering space with a sign “Do Not Touch.”

The leader should be prepared to pray if no one volunteers to offer opening prayer.

Offer Ice Breaker and invite each student to share responses.

Note: if there are enough students, ask for different sets of students to read each Temptation. Also, if you have an outgoing group, this is a fun Scripture to act out in an impromptu drama!

Matthew 4:1-4:

Fast – to abstain from food (and water) for a set time; often practiced to promote physical and spiritual well-being

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- Think about the longest time you've been without food or water. If you hadn't eaten for over a month and the devil reminded you of your power to turn stone to bread, how would you have responded to this temptation? (v3)
- In your own words, how does Jesus respond to this temptation? (v4)

Read Matthew 4:5-7

Ask:

- Why does the devil want Jesus to throw himself from the pinnacle of the Temple? (v5-6)
- Think of a time when you've "tested" a friendship or had your friendship "tested" by a friend. What does it mean to "test" God? (v7)

Read Matthew 4:8-11

Ask:

- In your own words, what is the nature of the third temptation? Why does the devil show Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and all their splendor? (v8-9)
- What does it mean to "idolize" something? What are some things you're tempted to "idolize?"

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say:

For the sake of time, we'll focus the remainder of our study on the 1st Temptation, which is centered around FOOD/HUNGER.

NOTES

Matthew 4:5-7:

The "holy city" is the capital city of Jerusalem. The Temple in Jerusalem was the center of worship for the Jewish people in Jesus' time. If the crowds saw Jesus jump from the Temple and not get hurt, they would immediately worship him. The devil offered this temptation as an alternative path to crucifixion.

Test – Think of an experience when you experienced "peer pressure" by friends to do things you ordinarily would not do.

Matthew 4:8-11:

The focus of the third temptation is idolatry. Idolatry is more than bowing down and offering sacrifices to an inanimate object. It's making anything (other than God) your top priority, the source of your hope, the object of your devotion. For a junior high student, invite them to consider how they (or their peers) relate with their cell phone.

Invite students to read sections under "READ."

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NOTES

Say:

In our Scripture, Jesus chose to fast and refrain from eating. Unfortunately, many people who experience hunger do not have a choice.

Let's learn about hunger and what we can do to fight hunger and poverty."

Say:

Here are some facts about hunger and poverty from the Faith and Facts Card. Did you know that:

- *Every 33 seconds a baby is born into poverty in the United States.*
- *14% of households – over 48 million men, women, and children – experience food insecurity in the U.S.*
- *Despite progress in cutting extreme poverty rates around the world, the number of people living on less than the equivalent of \$1.25/day remains nearly 1.2 billion.*
- *21% of all U.S. children live in homes with income below the federal poverty level. State rates range from 11% in New Hampshire to 32% in Mississippi.*
- *In 2016, over 43 million U.S. residents received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits.*

Say:

The Book of Resolutions #4051 says,

"It is especially important to note that the causes of hunger are intricately related to the problems of poverty and greed. Hunger cannot be dissociated from people and systems that keep people in poverty." 2016 Book of Resolutions, #4051

And the 2016-2020 Social Principles ¶163.E says,

"In order to provide basic needs such as food, shelter, education, health care, and other necessities, ways must be found to share more equitably the resources of the world."

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Choose one of the three activities.

Activity Option 1:

Divide students into groups of 2 or 3.
Have them take Poverty Quiz. (see notes)
Return to the large group.
Provide answers to Quiz and discuss.

Activity Option 2:

Divide students into pairs to learn more about poverty, hunger, and food insecurity in your state/region.
Give 10 minutes for each pair to research and 5 minutes to share findings.

Suggested Research Sites:

Visit the Food Research Action Center ([frac.org](https://www.frac.org)) and learn about the household food insecurity rate in your state.
<https://www.frac.org/research/resource-library/household-food-insecurity-rates-2016-2018>

Visit the Food Research Action Center ([frac.org](https://www.frac.org)) and learn about the profile of hunger, poverty, and federal nutrition programs in your state.
<https://www.frac.org/research/resource-library/state-of-the-states-profiles>

NOTES

Activity Option 1

This activity is based on resources provided by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCC).

Download and make copies of “Poverty Quiz”

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/who-we-teach/youth/upload/Lesson1-Participant-Handout-1A.pdf>

Download and print a copy of “Poverty Quiz Answer Sheet” for leaders

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/who-we-teach/youth/upload/Lesson1-Leader-Handout-1A.pdf>

Activity Option 2

This will require wifi access and/or access to computers that have internet access. If you don't have computers available, invite students to use their phones if your church has wifi access.

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Visit the Food Research Action Center ([frac.org](https://www.frac.org)) and learn about the 8 Strategies Essential to Ending Hunger in America (start on p10).
<https://www.frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/plan-to-end-hunger-in-america.pdf>

Visit the Food Research Action Center ([frac.org](https://www.frac.org)) and learn about SNAP (especially p1-2).
<https://www.frac.org/wp-content/uploads/hunger-health-role-snap-improving-health-well-being.pdf>

Activity Option 3: Pack “Blessing Bags”

Materials Needed (see notes):

- Gallon freezer bag
- Bottled water
- Hygiene products (toothpaste, toothbrush, washcloth)
- Lip balm
- Sunscreen
- Clean Socks
- Non-perishable food (breakfast bars, trail mix, etc)

(Have enough supplies so every student can pack at least 3 bags.)

Prepare items on table(s) in the order they will be packed (ie. heaviest items first.)

Give each student a freezer bag and invite them to fill their bag with items (eg. water, hygiene products, etc.)

After each student packs 3 bags, discuss ideas for “Blessing Bag” distribution.

NOTES

Activity Option 3

“Blessing Bags” will take more preparation than other activities.

First, create a “Materials Needed” list for your Blessing Bag. You can establish your own list. (A sample list is provided.) You may also contact a nearby homeless shelter or check out their website for a possible list.

Second, determine how you’ll collect materials for Blessing Bags.

Third, have a plan for how you’ll distribute Blessing Bags. You may ask the homeless shelter if they will receive your Blessing Bags. If so, delivering the Blessing Bags can become a field trip (and possible service opportunity).

3 ideas for collecting materials:

1. purchase items by using the church budget
2. announce to the congregation that you’re packing Blessing Bags and ask for donations (cash or specific supplies)
3. contact teen parents and invite them to send specific items with their teen to youth group

To learn more about Blessing Bags, check out the website: <https://thriftyguardian.com/homeless-kit/>

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Conclude the Group Activity Section with a group discussion (5-7 minutes).

Say:

“Mother Theresa said, ‘We can do no great things – only small things with great love.’”

Ask:

- What small things can we do in our community to care for our neighbors who are hungry?
- What are the temptations that try to stop us from serving our neighbors?

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Close by inviting students to pray together the Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi.

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.
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.*

NOTES

Share cookies at the close of activity!
Invite students to pass them around and
serve them to each other.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. BROMLEIGH MCCLLENEGHAN

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JUSTICE ISSUE: INCOME INEQUALITY

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Genesis 12:1-4a

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶163E, 2016 Book of Resolutions #4135, #4101

OBJECTIVE

To reflect on blessing, wealth, and poverty.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

The Game of Life or The Oregon Trail; paper, pens, a calculator, pennies, projected image of a starry night sky

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Say:

Today's biblical passage features the Lord God gently encouraging a man named Abram to leave his home country and travel to a new land. If Abram should go, the Lord promises to bless him. A few chapters in Genesis later, Abram still isn't feeling very blessed, so he calls upon the Lord, asking after that missing blessing. The Lord makes a promise to Abram: *Look at the heavens and count the stars. That's how many your blessings will be.*

Ask:

Look at the image of all the stars in the sky. Can you count them? The number is infinite.

Can you take a moment to think of all the "blessings" you have in your life? Offspring? (JK) People, who love you? Opportunities to grow and learn and serve? Anyone care to share?

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say:

Our scripture lesson for the day is a short little passage from the book of Genesis, a collection of stories about beginnings and origins. In it, God speaks to a man named Abram. Take a minute to look back at Chapter 11 and see if there's any back story for Abram.

Pause

No? Just a bit about his lineage, and, maybe surprisingly, his wife's name.

But then, all of a sudden, it seems he's caught God's eye. God asks him to leave his homeland and then promises to bless him.

NOTES

Set up the image of the starry night sky where everyone can see it.

Pray after any sharing: Loving God, we give you thanks for all the ways in which we know your blessing. Amen.

Hand out bibles. Have students find the passage: Genesis 12:1-4a

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Ask:

- Can someone read the verses?
- Does anyone want to reflect on why God reaches out to Abram? What do we know about him?
- How does he respond?

Say:

He *does* go. And when Paul and Jesus, among others, talk in later centuries about Abram, they talk about his faith.

Ask:

- But what does it mean that God wants to bless him? Any ideas?
- What do you think of when you think of blessings? Do you think God actually blesses some people and curses others?
- Have you ever seen the word blessed outside the Bible? On a coffee mug or sticker? What do people mean when they say they're blessed? Do they think God gave them whatever they're thankful for?
- Did God withhold blessings from others? That doesn't sound much like God.
- Can a blessing mean a material thing?

Say:

In some dominant strands of United States culture, blessing seems to be equated with wealth, privilege, or opportunity. Thinking of our economy, of wealth and money in that way, however, implies on the flip side that people who don't have what they need to survive and thrive are lacking God's blessing and favor.

Ask:

Does that sound true?

NOTES

Kids with smartphones could google images of items marked with variations of "blessed" and start a class list of the types they find.

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GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Set up the *Game of Life* Game or the *Oregon Trail* game.

Looking at these games, we can see that you set your economic position, via your profession, at the beginning of the game. Everyone picks a different role. Then, note that you get paid each time you pass a payday. Play the game for a while, but rig it a bit (in plain sight), affixing a different profession to each pair of players. Not at each payday the discrepancy both in salary but in ease of accusing. Ask students to count their money and share their totals regularly. After a bit, just ask them to count their money. Ask them how they felt in each of their positions.

Ask:

- Did the discrepancies multiply? Or get bigger or smaller?
- How did you feel if you made more? Or less?

Share some information about income inequality.

Ask:

What are some reasons some groups might fall behind? (Institutional racism/legacy of slavery; health crisis, no access to good jobs or schooling)

Read the *2016-2020 Social Principles* ¶163E.

Ask:

What does the United Methodist Church say about unjust economic orders?

NOTES

Pull out and set up either The Game of Life or Oregon Trail

Assign roles or professions to players.

One example: <https://www.stlou-istfed.org/open-vault/2019/august/wealth-inequality-in-america-facts-figures>

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JUSTICE ISSUE INCOME INEQUALITY

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Say:

As we go out into the world, let's pray to keep our eyes open, to see things in new ways.

Pray:

Dear God, when we see injustice or inequality, help us to always ask what is going on. If something is unfair, we should pay attention, and attempt to do what we can for the healing of what's wrong. We ask for your guidance. Amen.

NOTES

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CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. NEAL CHRISTIE

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JUSTICE ISSUE: BULLYING

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

John 9:1-41

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016 *Book of Resolutions* #3425, 2016-2020 *Social Principles* ¶161.R, ¶162.V

OBJECTIVE

To address the causes and effects of blaming or scapegoating in our communities and in our own friend groups and to imagine creative responses to stop the scapegoating of vulnerable peoples and to proactively stop forms of bullying.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Bible, markers, index cards, fishbowl or plastic bowl.

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Big Wind Blows

Invite the class to gather first sitting in a circle on chairs. Tell the students that a statement will be said and if the statement applies to them, they have to get up and move to a new chair.

Stand in the center of the circle and notice something that several persons in the circle will have in common.

Say:

“A big wind blows for...” and then name that one thing. For example, “A big wind blows for everyone wearing a tee-shirt,” or “A big wind blows for everyone who brushed their teeth this morning” – pause for a moment for everyone to move.

Encourage the one left standing in the center of the room to come up with a creative attribute that may not always be obvious, for example, “A big wind blows for anyone who has ever spent time in hospital,” “A big wind blows for anyone who has ever been bullied or picked on in school,” or “A big wind blows for everyone who has ever not been picked to be on a team,” or “A big wind blows for anyone who has ever

NOTES

The goal of this game is to encourage non-verbally students to observe their own behavior and the behavior of others in the class; to notice with whom they have had common experiences of inclusion or exclusion, bullying or standing up to advocate for justice.

Prior to students arriving, set up chairs in a circle – make sure that there is one less chair than the number of students.

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spoken up to a bully or stood up to do the right thing even when it cost them something.”

Repeat as necessary.

Invite students to sit quietly and notice how they feel after the game. Ask them to quietly imagine what else the big wind blows for and what it feels like to be the one who stands alone or is left out of the common attributes.

Close with a prayer.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Read John 9:1-41

Read the passage the second time either as a dialogue line by line with the students each taking a line in the passage. Or, assign students different roles in reading the Scripture so that one student is:

- The Narrator
- Disciples
- Neighbors
- Jesus
- Person who was blind
- Pharisees

Ask:

What would you (as the role they read) want others to know about their perspective/circumstance?

NOTES

There are several ways to tease out this text. Be creative. Encourage students to take on the role of different players in the text.

Examples of questions to help students go deeper in their reflection/action.

- What did it feel like for Jesus to heal the blind person? How did they respond? What do they want Jesus to do?
- What will happen to the blind person who has been healed?
- How will this change their community?
- What does this healing say about who Jesus is and how Jesus behaves?
- What does this healing say about those who were spectators?

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Say:

In our passage, people were looking for other people to blame. Who is responsible? Who can we blame for this person being blind? His family? Maybe he even deserved it? Most societies have done the same thing; blamed and scapegoated vulnerable people for what could not be explained or understood or for a tragedy that happened. People are stigmatized, labeled, and it's hard to overcome that experience. It defines who we are and who we see ourselves able to become. Notice we never learn the person's first name. He's just called the blind man.

Because this person was blind he likely became a burden to society and his family. Someone had to take feed him, clothe him, and provide him shelter or a home.

Who is responsible for this? Is a burden or a full member of society like everyone else?

People asked a lot of questions. Count the number of times someone asks "Why?" The question of why can make us feel defensive. Jesus is not interested in their questions.

First, Jesus declares that the man's blindness is not the result of sin, neither his parents nor his own.

Second, Jesus moves the questions away from past causes and toward future possibilities. We are more than our past—our parents, our culture, what we inherit and what we cannot control. But sadly, a lot of us define ourselves by our past and not our future.

Third, the person's blindness becomes an opportunity for Jesus to illustrate something radical about God. God values those who are disabled or differently-abled. God sees those who see God in this world because they have hope in the One who loves and accepts and affirms them; the scapegoat, blamed, those considered a burden.

Ask:

Who are "they" in your school? Community? Church? World?

NOTES

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Read the following statements to the group:

“Prohibition of Bullying” 2016 Book of Resolutions #3425

“The rights and privileges a society bestows upon or withholds from those who comprise it indicate the relative esteem in which that society holds particular persons and groups of persons. We affirm all persons as equally valuable in the sight of God. We, therefore, work toward societies in which each person’s value is recognized, maintained, and strengthened. We support the basic rights of all persons to equal access to housing, education, communication, employment, medical care, legal redress for grievances, and physical protection.”

Social Principles: The Nurturing Community - Bullying ¶161.R

“Bullying is a growing problem in parts of the connection. It is a contributing factor in suicide and in the violence we see in some cultures today. We affirm the right of all people, regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, race, religion, disability, age, physical appearance, sexual orientation, and gender identity, to be free of unwanted aggressive behavior and harmful control tactics.”

“As the Church, we can play a pivotal role in ending this problem. We urge churches to seek opportunities to be trained in responding to the needs of those who have been bullied, to those who perpetrate bullying and to support those in authority who may witness or be called to intervene on behalf of those who have been bullied. Churches are urged to connect with community associations and schools in this outreach.”

“We encourage churches to adopt a policy of zero tolerance for bullying, including cyberbullying, within their spheres of influence; stand with persons being bullied, and take a leadership role in working with the schools and community to prevent bullying.”

Social Principles: The Social Community ¶162.V

“Health is a condition of physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being. John 10:10b says, ‘I came so that they could have life—indeed so that they could live life to the fullest.’ Stewardship of health is the responsibility of each person to whom health has been entrusted. Creating the personal, environmental, and social conditions in which health can thrive is a joint responsibility—public and private. We encourage

NOTES

“Prohibition of Bullying” 2016
Book of Resolutions, #3425 [https://
www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/
social-principles-and-resolutions/
prohibition-of-bullying-3425](https://www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/social-principles-and-resolutions/prohibition-of-bullying-3425)

Social Principles: The Nurturing
Community Bullying [http://www.umc.org/
what-we-believe/the-nurturing-community](http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/the-nurturing-community)

Social Principles: The Social Community
[http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/
the-social-community](http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/the-social-community)

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individuals to pursue a healthy lifestyle and affirm the importance of preventive health care, health education, environmental and occupational safety, good nutrition, and secure housing in achieving health. Health care is a basic human right.”

“Providing the care needed to maintain health, prevent disease, and restore health after injury or illness is a responsibility each person owes others and government owes to all, a responsibility government ignores at its peril. In Ezekiel 34:4a, God points out the failures of the leadership of Israel to care for the weak: ‘You don’t strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the injured, bring back the strays, or seek out the lost.’ As a result, all suffer.”

Ask:

How do the Social Principles on Health Care and Bullying relate to the story of the healed blind person?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Group Activity 1.

Instructions:

Have the students sit in a circle or around a table.

Pass the basket or bowl and invite them to close their eyes and pick one phrase from the bowl.

Have each student read aloud the “blaming” statement and instruct the group to discuss briefly.

Ask the students to give examples of how easy it is to blame other people for what others have done or for what they have had no control over.

Focus on distinguishing between:

- A. The healthy practice of taking responsibility for our own actions
- B. The impact of blaming and scapegoating entire groups of people and its effect on the society we live in.
- C. Naming the hypocrisy of claiming to know Jesus by refusing to see who Jesus chooses to heal and hang out with.

NOTES

Prepare for the bowl exercise prior to the group gathering with the following “blaming” phrases in the bowl/basket. Write the following phrases on separate pieces of paper and place them in the bowl/basket:

- It’s not my fault!
- She started it!
- He made me do it!
- I can’t help it!
- It’s my mom’s fault that I am late!
- If you listened to me, everything would be fine!
- Why did you make me do that?
- You ruined EVERYTHING!

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Group Activity 2:

A Historical Example of Scapegoating: The Internment of Japanese Americans Directions:

Say:

Tell students that there are many examples of how scapegoating has taken place throughout history both in the United States and around the world. Groups of people have been blamed for economic problems, diseases, unemployment, drug addiction, and war.

One example of how stereotypes, prejudices and discriminatory practices against a group of people led to scapegoating was the treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Ask:

Ask students to share the knowledge they have about the period of Japanese American relocation and internment.

Allow a few minutes for sharing.

Say:

Shortly before 8:00 a.m. on December 7, 1941, Japanese military aircraft attacked the naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. By the time the attack was over, a large part of the U.S. Naval Fleet in the Pacific Ocean was lost.

The United States immediately declared war on Japan and entered World War II. Many people in the United States were angry and afraid. They began to worry that if the Japanese would attack Hawaii, they might also be able to attack other cities on the West Coast.

Fear, prejudice, discrimination, and racism against Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans did not start with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. In fact, Japanese Americans had faced discrimination in both employment and education since they began immigrating to the United States in the late 1800s. Which other immigrant groups faced blame, discrimination, scapegoating in U.S society?

NOTES

Look for photos of the Japanese Internment camp.

<https://www.history.com/news/japanese-internment-camp-wwii-photos>

Consider analogous experiences from other groups of people such as migrant children on the Southern border.

<https://www.thedailybeast.com/shocking-new-photos-hundreds-of-migrants-crammed-into-border-facility>

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Pause for answers.

Say:

Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the U.S. military was able to pressure the government to suspend many Japanese Americans' Constitutional rights.

Many people were afraid that people of Japanese ancestry were a threat to the United States, they wanted to keep them in an area where they could be watched constantly.

Once the government decided to relocate people of Japanese ancestry to internment camps, they were told where and when they were to report and what they were allowed to bring or not bring (e.g., no pets were allowed, people could only bring what they could carry).

Ask:

What would you take if you were suddenly told you had to leave your home for an indefinite amount of time and could only take what you could carry?

Explain to students that there were many factors that led to the treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Tell students that you want them to think about the following questions:

Ask:

- What were some stereotypes about Japanese Americans that people believed prior to World War II?
- What were some of the prejudices against Japanese Americans?
- How was the internment of Japanese Americans an example of discrimination supported by so many in the U.S.?
- How did rumors and misinformation create a distrustful attitude toward Japanese Americans following the bombing of Pearl Harbor?

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- Do you think people felt they had to blame someone for the bombing of Pearl Harbor?
- How were Japanese Americans scapegoated?

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Ask the students to say how it feels when someone stares at them as compared to when someone actually takes time to recognize them. What is the difference between being stared at and actually being seen?

Say:

Reflect on the following questions/statements.

- Who does the scripture call us to be?
- What does the scripture call us to change?
- Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." Amen.

NOTES

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

CONTRIBUTOR NAME AIMEE HONG

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JUSTICE ISSUE: PERSONAL AND SOCIAL HOLINESS, RIGHTS OF...

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

1 Samuel 16:1-13

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 *Social Principles* ¶162.A-J

OBJECTIVE

Help students to know that God looks at the heart of a person and not at outward appearances. Small

SUPPLIES

containers of play-doh for each student. Copies of 2016-2020 *Social Principles* ¶162.A-J

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

ENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Gather.

Ask the students to share a “thumbs-up” and/or “thumbs-down” moment from the week.

Pray:

We thank you for this time to gather together- just as we are- to learn more about you. Lord, we ask that our hearts, minds, and eyes open to hear your voice. Amen.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say:

A little background before reading our passage for today. Right before this passage, God told Samuel of God’s regret over making Saul King- Saul did not obey God’s commandment. In our reading for today, Samuel is on the search for a new King.

Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13 (have a volunteer read the entire passage or take turns reading two verses each.)

Ask:

- Why is Samuel afraid? (Scared of Saul’s vengeance)
- What does God tell Samuel to do? (Take a heifer to sacrifice and invite Jesse to the sacrifice.)

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JUSTICE ISSUE PERSONAL AND SOCIAL HOLINESS, RIGHTS OF...

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- What does God tell Samuel to consider when choosing the next King? What characteristics do we usually ascribe to a King?
- Who is anointed as King? How is he described? (Vs. 11 describes David as the youngest. Vs. 12 describes David as “ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome.” This seems like an odd description considering God instructed Samuel to look at the heart of a person.)

Say:

David is unlike Saul. Saul is described as a military leader that had a lot of populist support. David is described as a child with no experience.

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Ask:

What are some pressures that we get from society about how we should be on the outside to be accepted or to be taken seriously? (clothing, sports, school, age, etc., Everyone is a part of this system in some way – by your acceptance of it or your denial to participate in it.)

Pass out small containers of Play-doh to each student.

Say:

It’s easy for people to think that they know who we are by just looking at us. Take some time and think of what is in your heart that you wished people knew about you. And when you are ready, use the Play-doh and make a symbolic version of that part of you.

15 minutes

NOTES

If time allows, have the students read
2016-2020 *Social Principles* ¶162.A-J

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

JUSTICE ISSUE PERSONAL AND SOCIAL HOLINESS, RIGHTS OF...

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Ask:

If you want to, share with the group what you created and why.

(Some students may be shy, and it can be a scary experience to share something close to their heart with the group. Feel free to let the students skip.)

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Gather the students in a circle. Have them hold what they made in their hands in front of them.

Say:

Look around at the circle and in your own way acknowledge that you see them- their heart. You can wink, smile or say "I see you." (Most likely this will produce awkward laughter, but it's ok!)

Pray:

Lord, thank you for seeing us. For truly seeing our hearts and to know us. We thank you for our brothers and sisters in this room and we ask that as we leave from this place that we are reminded to not be so easily persuaded by the outside, exterior things but to be drawn to what is real, what is good, and what is of you. Amen.

NOTES

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

CONTRIBUTOR NAME SIMON PAK

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JUSTICE ISSUE: SUICIDE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE	Ezekiel 37:1-14
SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES	2016-2020 <i>Social Principles</i> ¶ 161.O
OBJECTIVE	Breathing life back into hurting individuals
SUPPLIES	None.

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

If the group is not familiar with each other welcome one another by sharing names and hometowns.

After a moment to think, share an interesting fact about each participant.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Read Ezekiel 37:1-14

Say:

We are a community and communities are made up of individuals. Individuals come with individual personalities, individual cultures, and individual quirks.

Communities are also filled with individuals that are hurting due to trauma or mental illness. Often suicide is the result of untreated depression, or untreated pain and suffering.

NOTES

The facilitator can either choose a theme for an interesting fact or allow the participants to choose for themselves.

We can argue all day long whether the valley of the dried bones was an actual valley filled with the bones of the dead that came back to life. It wouldn't be too difficult to argue the actual valley since Israel and other cultures of the time were in a constant struggle for survival and existence. Maybe valleys were used to dispose of the dead. Maybe there was a large battle that resulted in the deaths of many Israelites.

Some may argue the validity of the miraculous act of bringing back the vast multitude of the dead with Ezekiel's prophesy. Did it happen? Did it not?

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

JUSTICE ISSUE SUICIDE

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Ask:

Answers in parenthesis are of the writer's opinion.

- The bones first became bodies, but the passage states that the bodies had no breath. If you had to guess, what in God's breath gave the bodies life? (peace, security, a sense of joy, purpose, and belonging)
- Ezekiel prophesied that God would give Israel its own land. Why was this so important to the people of Israel? Why was it tied so closely with what gave them life? (for me, it was security, safety, and peace. All things that are necessary to NOT be depressed, NOT feel hopeless, NOT be scared)

Say:

Most times, we feel ill-equipped to help those who are hurting. Most time, you would be right. Many of us are not medical professionals, we should not diagnose or attempt to heal anyone that might be suffering from depression or mental illness, but is there anything that we could do or say to hurt individuals to help? (letting someone know, maybe not even with words, that they are not alone. letting someone know that they are important to you and others)

Ask:

- What positive actions can be taken so that suffering individuals can feel as if they are a part of the community? (invite individuals to community events. if there are obvious cries for help, especially in social media, take it seriously and maybe ask how they're doing and help them realize that there are people listening and watching)
- Take a moment to think about what may cause hopelessness in the lives of others. Could it happen to you? Is it happening to you?
- Take a moment to think about the lives of those who are living in depression. Could this be you?
- Take a moment to think about what it must be like to be isolated. What it must be like to be truly lonely. Have you ever felt truly lonely?

NOTES

Regardless of whether this is simply a story or an example of a time when God performed a miracle, I ask that we think of these bones as a representation of Israel. As a nation, as an army, as a people, Israel was constantly under attack. Between the Babylonians, the Assyrians, and the Medes, they were constantly enslaved or displaced or oppressed. They were constantly anxious about a place to call home and a life that might be lived in peace. What did the future hold for these people? What hope did they have to escape the clutches of powerful nations and cruel armies? What was life outside of oppression? They were a people so beat down by life that they were essentially the walking dead. Those with no hope. Those with no joy. Those who allowed despair to define them. Those who allowed hopelessness to define their lives. Israel was a valley of dried bones.

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

JUSTICE ISSUE SUICIDE

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GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Sardines is reverse Hide and Seek.

Instructions:

One person hides and the group tries to find them. If a member of the group finds the person hiding, the group member stays with the person hiding until the whole group finds them.

Designate a game area. Hiding is not allowed outside of the game area. Choose someone to hide and give them 2 minutes to find a hiding place. This game is probably more fun in the dark, but it can be played at any time.

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Ask:

Do you know anyone who has committed suicide? Or has been affected by suicide?

Say:

It's quite terrible to think about, but being affected by something as terrible as suicide perpetuates depression, pain, and suffering.

Try your best to focus on these words:

"I can break the cycle of pain and suffering in my community. I, with the help of my community, can bring light into darkness. We will be hope for the hopeless. We will bring joy to cast away despair. We will breathe life back into dried bones."

NOTES

PALM SUNDAY

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. JUNG PYO (JP) HONG

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JUSTICE ISSUE: CIVIL OBEDIENCE AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Matthew 21:1-11

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶164.F

OBJECTIVE

To understand Jesus' entry into Jerusalem as a subversive political theater.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

easel pad, blue painter's tape, white paper, markers

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Gather

Get into pairs and share on the following (one or both)

- How have you experienced God's presence this past week?
- How have you experienced God's absence this past week?

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Read Matthew 21:1-11 (invite or assign a reader)

Ask:

In pairs (2) or groups (3-4), discuss the following:

- What word, phrase or image captures your attention as you listen to this reading?
- Imagine you are Jesus' disciples. What are your expectations marching with Jesus into Jerusalem? What about the crowd? What are they wanting? And what about those already in power (whether Rome or the Jewish establishment)? How do they feel watching Jesus marching into Jerusalem to the shouts of "Hosanna to the Son of David"?

NOTES

FYI:

- some commentators, noting the ease in which the two animals (donkey and colt) are located and commandeered, argue Jesus is engaging in political street theater, with props good to go
- Matthew misreads Zechariah 9:9 (intentionally?), which reads, "Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."
- for Zechariah, the colt and the donkey are one and the same, whereas Matthew has Jesus riding both; awkward!
- we are left to make sense of a triumphant and victorious king not quite looking the part
- Jesus subverts both Jewish and Roman expectations
- He refuses to be the Messiah who liberates through armed resistance
- Jesus also refuses to legitimize kingship that is won through military might and power (as Rome has done over and over) and chooses instead to resist with non-violence and sacrifice

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- Verse 10 says *the whole city was in turmoil, asking, “Who is this?”* It’s a great question, suggesting Jesus’ identity is not entirely obvious. In what ways have your own expectations and understanding of Jesus changed?

Jesus’ entry as subversive street theater

Introduce participants to the idea of subversive action: behavior that challenges established norms and ways of seeing and doing things.

Ask:

How is Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem subversive? What norms are being challenged?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

K-W-L: Rosa Parks was Subversive Too! Oh-My!

Instructions:

- Invite participants to get into groups of 3-4
- Distribute paper and marker to each group, and fold the paper into a tri-fold (landscape orientation)
- Ask one person in each group to serve as a scribe and label the sections of the paper “K”, “W”, and “L”; explain what the letters stand for

NOTES

FYI:

- A **K-W-L chart** is an organizing tool that helps identify what participants already **KNOW**, what they **WANT TO KNOW**, and what they **LEARNED** by the close of the session
- Tear 3 sheets from the easel pad, labeling them “K”, “W”, and “L”; hang them on a wall next to each other using blue painter’s tape (test to make sure markers won’t bleed through to the wall)
- the most common mis-telling of the Rosa Parks’ story is that she sat at the front of the bus (i.e. the white section); in actuality she was sitting in the front row of the colored section when asked by the driver to move to make room for a white passenger. Follow this link (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/evangelical-history/no-rosa-parks-was-not-sitting-in-the-white-section-of-the-montgomery-bus-and-four-other-myths/>) for a detailed telling of what ensued.

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Say:

Most of you have heard of Ms. Rosa Parks. Take 5 minutes to see what you already know about her in your group. If you're not sure, fact-check the information on your smartphone before the scribe writes it down on the paper under "K". You have 5 minutes! Go!

Once finished, have each group share 1 piece of information from their "K" section that hasn't been shared yet; go around group by group until finished; write all that's shared on the large easel sheet labeled "K".

Say:

There's one more piece I want to add under what we already "Know". And that's this: Rosa Parks' decision to not move from her seat was SUBVERSIVE (like Jesus)!

Invite participants to share what they think you mean by this.

Ask:

What more do you want to know from Ms. Rosa Parks? If she was here to be interviewed, what would you ask her?

Write down those questions under the "W" sheet.

Ask:

- How did you know it was the right time to not do what was asked of you? To engage in civil disobedience?
- How was Rosa Parks like Jesus?

NOTES

PALM SUNDAY

JUSTICE ISSUE CIVIL OBEDIENCE AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Have the group form a circle (holding hands, optional).

Invite each participant to say one sentence about something they **LEARNED** during this session (whether about themselves, Jesus, Rosa Parks, life).

Then together, ask to repeat this prayer:

Father, Mother, Teacher of how to live – we’re told to follow the rules. To not rock the boat. To stay out of trouble. But sometimes You lead us into troubled waters. Because to stay silent is not just. To do nothing is not right. When we need to disobey, give us the strength to do so in love. AMEN.

NOTES

Keep in mind:

- You can change and adapt any of this to better fit the needs of your community and youth!
- Have fun, keep it real and don't be afraid to leave questions unanswered; there's always next time.

EASTER SUNDAY

CONTRIBUTOR NAME KELLY LEE

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JUSTICE ISSUE: PERSONAL AND SOCIAL HOLINESS

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE	John 20:1-18
SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES	2016-2020 Social Principles ¶166 and Our Social Creed
OBJECTIVE	Being able to recognize God's resurrection in the midst of darkness.
SUPPLIES NEEDED	Paper, writing utensil, Bible, UMC Hymnal

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Sing *Blessed Assurance* found in UMC Hymnal page 369.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Ask:

- Have you ever waited for something for a long time and have been disappointed with the results?
- Have you ever lost someone significant to you?
- How did you feel in those moments?

Take a few minutes to share.

NOTES

Located in UMC Hymnal 369.

Alternative if instruments are not available and/or singing poses a challenge:

Choose some students to read each verse and refrain aloud.

Have your students close their eyes.

Have the volunteers read the verses out loud like a prayer.

Be mindful that when asking about what is different about Mary, it is not to put down the other character and uplift Mary. Everyone responds differently to difficult situations (you can see how Jesus reaches out to the disciples in their own timing and according to their needs). We want to emphasize Mary lingering by the tomb to mourn her loss and how Jesus meets her at this moment.

EASTER SUNDAY

JUSTICE ISSUE PERSONAL AND SOCIAL HOLINESS

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Say:

As Christians, we celebrate Easter as the day of resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. We celebrate life beating death. We rejoice over renewal and rejuvenation of all things that were lost. But today's passage does not start this way. We enter today's scripture at the chasm between the death and life of Jesus.

Read John 20:1-20

Ask:

- Who are the characters in this passage?
- What were the actions of each character?
- What was different about Mary?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Divide the students into small groups or in pairs.

Ask the students to put themselves in the place of each of the characters. Encourage the students to write what each person might be thinking when they saw the empty tomb. Also, include what Jesus might have been thinking, witnessing each person. It might be helpful to provide paper and a writing utensil.

1. Peter

Before the empty tomb:

Witnessing the tomb:

After the tomb:

2. John

Before the empty tomb:

Witnessing the tomb:

After the tomb:

NOTES

Leaders should have a good understanding of what happened leading up to Jesus' resurrection.

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JUSTICE ISSUE PERSONAL AND SOCIAL HOLINESS

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NOTES

3. Angels

Before the empty tomb:

Witnessing the tomb:

After the tomb:

4. Mary

Before the empty tomb:

Witnessing the tomb:

After the tomb:

Share answers with pair/smaller group and also with the larger group.

Ask:

- Why do you think Mary stayed behind by the tomb?
- What do you think was in her heart? How do you think she felt?
- What did Jesus call Mary to do after she recognized him?

Say:

God is in the midst of us despite our inability to initially recognize God's presence. We especially struggle to see God in moments of darkness and struggle—much like what the followers of Jesus were experiencing. They had just witnessed the death of their teacher and were scared for their own lives. Fear, sadness, and grief can provoke us to respond in many different ways.

For Mary, her response was to stay by the tomb. It was when Jesus calls Mary by name, she is able to recognize him. And it was when she recognized him, she was able to understand her call. She was to go and tell the truth of Jesus' resurrection in the world.

Read *Our Social Creed*, ¶166 in our 2016-2020 *Social Principles*.

EASTER SUNDAY

JUSTICE ISSUE PERSONAL AND SOCIAL HOLINESS

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“...We dedicate **ourselves to peace throughout the world**, to the rule of justice and law among nations, and to individual freedom for all people of the world.”

Ask:

Discuss some areas in our world today that need resurrection and life? Where is God? What is our call in response to these areas?

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Pray this together.

“Blessed are those who find strength in you,
In whose hearts are your ways,
Who trudging through the plains of misery
find in them an unexpected spring,
a well from deep below the barren ground,
and the pools are filled with water

They become springs of healing for others,
Reservoirs of compassion to those who are bruised.
Strengthened themselves they lead courage to others,
and God will be there at the end of their journey”
~Jim Cotter’s version of Psalm 84

NOTES

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. J. PAIGE BOYER

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JUSTICE ISSUE: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

John 20:19-31

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶160.F, D; 2016 Book of Resolutions, #1035

OBJECTIVE

Students should understand the UMC view on the value of science and why this matters for climate justice.

SUPPLIES

Video, Bibles, White Board or Newsprint for discussion, internet access and/or research needed for the activity, paper for writing letters, video or audio recording equipment (optional, phones are fine), Globe (or a map if no globe is available)

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Gather:

Invite youth to come into the room and find a comfortable space to sit.

Explain that as we begin our time today, we are going to engage in a time of mediation using a video.

During the video, pay attention to how you feel about the images and movement of the film.

Watch: "The Observable Universe"

Say:

This video shows the observable universe starting at planet earth and going outward through space, before turning inward to plant life, a drop of water, molecules, atoms, electrons, neutrons, protons and quarks.

Ask:

- Have you ever seen a molecule in real life? What about an Atom?
- Have you seen Pluto or Uranus?
- Do you believe that these things exist even though you haven't seen them?

NOTES

Once youth are gathered, if it is comfortable and safe to do so, turn off the lights so that the video can be the focal point during the meditation.

Watch "The Observable Universe" on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/HiN6Ag5-DrU>

Here, we want them to consider/ponder the things they believe in that they have never seen.

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

JUSTICE ISSUE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

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SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

For this part of the gathering, you will apply the scientific method to the story.

Say:

John 20:19 picks up right after the Easter story. Mary Magdalene has found the empty tomb; Peter and the beloved Disciple have gone to also see the empty tomb. That evening, most of the disciples are gathered. But one disciple is missing.

Read: John 20:19-31

Say:

Not every disciple got to participate in this experience though.

Ask:

Who was missing? What did he miss out on? (*Thomas. Seeing Jesus; including the wounds in his hands and at his sides.*)

Say:

Thomas wants to see and touch Jesus so that he can truly believe that Jesus has risen from the dead.

Ask:

Why do you think he would have wanted this?

Say:

Sometimes, we need physical evidence of something to believe that is true. Perhaps, your adult needs to take your temperature to believe you are sick, or you need to show your homework to prove that you understand what you've been learning. Wanting physical evidence of something is normal and is part of how we understand the world.

NOTES

Set the stage for this story so the youth have an understanding where in the timeline we are.

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JUSTICE ISSUE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

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We use our five senses to understand the world around us. These senses become central to our experience of the world and help us to believe that things are happening.

Thomas sometimes gets a bad reputation for wanting to see Jesus, to touch him, to be close to him. But really, he just wants what the other disciples have received.

He wants to “test” the knowledge given to him by his friends.

He wants physical evidence of the resurrection.

Ask:

What is the process by which we test knowledge today? How might we seek to “prove” something?

Say:

Scientists use a process called “The Scientific Method” to test and prove hypotheses.

I’m sure you didn’t come to church thinking you’d talk about the scientific method! Did you know that the United Methodist Church values science as a discipline? The UMC Social Principles say this: “We find that as science expands human understanding of the natural world, our understanding of the mysteries of God’s creation and word are enhanced.” (§160.f)

So, we’re going to use the scientific method to engage this story.

NOTES

If you need a reminder of the scientific method and how it works, there’s a good article on “Kahn Academy” that offers an overview.

<https://www.khanacademy.org/science/high-school-biology/hs-biology-foundations/hs-biology-and-the-scientific-method/a/the-science-of-biology>

1. Make an observation.
2. Ask a question.
3. Form a **hypothesis** or testable explanation.
4. Make a prediction based on the hypothesis.
5. Test the prediction.
6. Iterate: use the results to make new hypotheses or predictions.

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

JUSTICE ISSUE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

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Ask:

- What did the Disciples observe? (The tomb was empty; they've been told he rose from the dead)
- What question did they ask? (Where is he, where is his body?)
- What was their Hypothesis? (He is no longer dead, he is risen.)
- How have they tested that hypothesis? How are they engaging their senses to test this hypothesis? Using which senses did the disciples experience the presence of Jesus?
- Now, Thomas isn't there the first time, so he wants to re-test their hypothesis, so how does he test it?

Say:

There's nothing wrong with wanting physical proof of something. Thomas, like many people, wants proof before he believes something to be true.

The challenge to our faith is that we don't have a chance to get physical proof of Jesus resurrection, so we are asked to trust experts and those who had a chance to experience things live and in-person (eyewitnesses), which is why John writes: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." (John 20:29b).

Ask:

Are there things you believe because an expert or an eyewitness told you?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Climate Justice is a major issue for youth today – it is something about which many young people have a passion, so for our activity today, encourage them to use their voices to help make a change.

NOTES

You may need to ask each sense individually: How did they see, touch, smell, taste, and hear Jesus.

Good studies can be replicated, so here, Thomas is replicating the other disciple's study.

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

Ask:

- Who should we contact? (Have students begin by researching the position of their national and state representatives on climate justice.)
- How should we contact them?
- (Youth can write a letter together, record a video or make an audio recording to share with their representatives.)
- What should we say? If their representatives are supportive of climate justice, have them say “Thank you,” naming specific things they have done. If they are “climate deniers” invite youth to brainstorm some of the recent occurrences that seem to be hard evidence for the way the climate is changing. These include any new studies, any extreme weather patterns or other news items that experts say result from global climate change.

You could also include in your video or letter some of the statements from the United Methodist Church about why climate justice matters to people of faith.

Some examples include:

“All creation is the Lord’s, and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it. Water, air, soil, minerals, energy resources, plants, animal life, and space are to be valued and conserved because they are God’s creation and not solely because they are useful to human beings. God has granted us stewardship of creation. We should meet these stewardship duties through acts of loving care and respect.” (Book of Discipline ¶ 160)

Resolution #1032, “Climate Change and the Church’s Response” also provides good information about why climate justice matters to our faith.

<https://www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/social-principles-and-resolutions/climate-change-and-the-church-s-response-1035>

NOTES

To find representatives at the state/national level visit: <https://whoismyrepresentative.com/>

This map outlines positions of those who deny climate science: MAP

For those supportive of climate justice, consider having kids Google the name of their representative/senator along with climate justice.

If wifi isn’t available, do this research ahead of time and have the youth read what you found.

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

JUSTICE ISSUE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Using a globe (or a map, if no globe is available), invite students to pray for the healing of the planet.

Invite students to gather around the globe and place their hands on the planet.

Pray this prayer over the planet and the youth:

We ask your forgiveness, Loving God,
for the harm we have done to your creation.

Help us to trust in the knowledge known to us through science and to begin to care anew for the earth and all her people.

We lay our hands upon the earth,
in the name of the holy and triune God,
Asking for healing from the harm we have inflicted upon the earth.
May the power of God's indwelling presence
heal the earth of its illnesses, of water, air, soil and disconnection
That we may serve God with a loving heart through the care of all creation. Amen.
(Prayer adapted from a prayer for healing in the *Book of Worship, Service of Healing I*)

NOTES

This prayer can be read by a single voice
or prayed in unison.

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

CONTRIBUTOR NAME KELLY LEE

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JUSTICE ISSUE: PUBLIC WITNESS

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE	Luke 24:13-35,
SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES	2016-2020 Social Principles ¶164
OBJECTIVE	Being nourished by God in times of political unrest and weariness.
SUPPLIES NEEDED	Large paper, writing utensils, Bible

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Gather.

Go around and share one thing that the group might not know about you.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Read Luke 24:13-35

Divide into groups or pairs to discuss your answers. Write the answers down on large poster paper. Have each group present their answers.

Say:

In the minds of the disciples, Jesus was just brutally murdered. For three years, they spent time with the poor and healed the sick. They witnessed miracles and the teachings of Jesus. The disciples fled Jerusalem out of fear that they too would also be charged and killed. Walking on the road to Emmaus, they were feeling distraught and lost.

Ask:

- What was at stake for the disciples in the text?
- What are the conflict(s)?

NOTES

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JUSTICE ISSUE PUBLIC WITNESS

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- What wisdom(s) can you find in the text and by whom?
- Is there liberation in this text? What kind of liberation, and why is it liberation?
- Who is the one liberating who? And from what?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Regroup and share about a time when you were fed by an experience with God.

Ask:

- How did you feel?
- What were you motivated to do?

In your groups, create body shapes/ formations expressing this feeling or image of motivation. Take turns describing what the formation represents.

Say:

Jesus doesn't feed his disciples to simply prove a point of his resurrection. Jesus' intention to meet his followers was to remind them of their calling to restore Kin/dom justice. He listened to them, he nourished them, and then he opened their eyes so they can remember the task that is left before them.

Read the *2016-2020 Social Principles* ¶ 164.B

"The strength of a political system depends upon the full and willing participation of its citizens. The church should continually exert a strong ethical influence upon the state, supporting policies and programs deemed to be just and opposing policies and programs that are unjust."

Say:

As Christians, we are responsible to God for political and social life to protect the rights of God's people, especially those on the margins and whose voices are unheard.

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Hold hands and pray:

Bless our eyes, so that we may continue to see new visions and new horizons together.
Bless our thoughts, so that we may think powerfully and confidently.
Bless our mouths, so that my words bring healing and transformation.
Bless our ears, so that we may hear our own words, thoughts, and feelings and those near us.
Bless our hearts, so that I may be open to deeper friendships and new loves.
Bless our bodies, so that I might be in touch with our creative energies and the value of life.
Bless our feet, so that we may travel each step firmly and with courage during our journeys.
Bless me and my neighbors as leaders seeking to restore your Kingdom.
Amen.

NOTES

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

CONTRIBUTOR NAME AIMEE HONG

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JUSTICE ISSUE: POVERTY, PUBLIC WITNESS, ECONOMIC JUSTICE, PERSONAL AND SOCIAL HOLINESS

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE Acts 2:42-47

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES None.

OBJECTIVE To help students understand how the first Christian communities lived in early Jerusalem and how it's still possible today.

SUPPLIES Easel Pad/ Whiteboard; markers, uncooked spaghetti, and marshmallows

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Gather.

Ask:

When you hear the word “community” what images come to mind?

Write the answers on the easel pad

Pray:

Lord, we thank you for our time together today. We thank you for this community that gathers to learn more about you and to have fellowship with each other. Be with us. Amen.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say:

Here is a little background on the verses we will be studying today. This is after the Pentecost (something that we will be studying in a few weeks) and this is right after Peter gave a sermon and many thousands were baptized and joined the Christian community.

Read Acts 2:42-47

You can have one volunteer read the verses or take turns.

NOTES

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

JUSTICE ISSUE JUSTICE ISSUE: POVERTY, PUBLIC WITNESS, ECONOMIC JUSTICE, PERSONAL AND SOCIAL HOLINESS

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NOTES

Ask:

What is unique about this community? (They sold all their possessions and equally distributed them. They spent their time teaching, in fellowship, eating and in prayer. They were all together and God blessed them.) Do you know of any communities like this now?

Say:

It does sound counter to society – a community that sells all their possessions and equally distributes amongst them- since the society we live in is so steeped in capitalism, getting the nicer car, the bigger house, the nicer clothes.

But we do have examples of this early Christian Community today.

“In 1995, dozens of homeless families had moved into an abandoned Catholic church building in North Philadelphia. They were told by the Archdiocese that they had 48 hours to move out, or they could be arrested. With nowhere to go, these courageous mothers and children hung a banner on the front of the building that said, “How can we worship a homeless man on Sunday, and ignore one on Monday?” The families held their own press conference and announced that they had talked with the real “Owner” of the building (the Lord Almighty!) – and God said they could stay until they found somewhere else to go. A few years after the takeover of the church ended -- in January 1998 -- some of the students who had been a part of that movement pooled their money together and bought 3234 Potter Street. They took an old shoe repair store and made it their home. Before long they grew into other abandoned houses on the block.” (www.simpleway.org/our-story)

This community called “The Simple Way” still exists and the creation of this community was inspired by the passage that we read today about the early Christian community. Today the block has grown into a neighborhood. They still eat together and have fellowship together, and give freely to those in need. But they also do more- they work on issues that impact their community, like food insecurity and they also advocate for systemic change so that everyone can grow and flourish.

The students might know who Shane Claiborne is, he is one of the founders of the Simple Way.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

JUSTICE ISSUE JUSTICE ISSUE: POVERTY, PUBLIC WITNESS, ECONOMIC JUSTICE, PERSONAL AND SOCIAL HOLINESS

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Ask:

- Would you like to be part of this community? Why or why not?
- While it might be difficult for us to drop everything that we have and know to live like the early Christians; there are things that they did that we can also do. We know that there was teaching, fellowship, eating (could be interpreted as real meals or communion) and praying.
- What can we add to the identity of our youth group so that we can become more like the early Christian community?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Instructions:

Break up the group into small groups (4-5). Give each group a box of uncooked spaghetti and large marshmallows.

Say:

As a team, build the tallest tower you can with the uncooked spaghetti and marshmallows. The group that builds the tallest wins. Get ready set go!

10-15 minutes

Say:

Stop!

Walk around with a tape measure and measure all of the towers. Give candy to the team that won.

NOTES

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

JUSTICE ISSUE JUSTICE ISSUE: POVERTY, PUBLIC WITNESS, ECONOMIC JUSTICE, PERSONAL AND SOCIAL HOLINESS

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Ask:

- How did it feel to build the tower as a team?
- Was it difficult working together? Any clashing strategies?
- How did you solve them?

Say:

The early Christian community, like the one described in Acts, did not last. But it provides us inspiration even today for what a true Christian community can be. Like the game that we just played, building a tower, building a community, it can be difficult but it can also be rewarding.

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Ask:

What is one thing that you value about the early Christian community?

Pray:

Lord, we thank you for the people in this room, for the community that you provide for us. We learned about the early Christian community and how they lived and it inspires us to be like them. Help us to (list what the students value about the early Christian community) and help us to bring that into our community here. Amen.

NOTES

Feel free to have the students “popcorn style” the values during the prayer.

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. JUNG PYO (JP) HONG

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JUSTICE ISSUE: DEATH PENALTY

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE Acts 7:55-60

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES 2016-2020 Social Principles ¶164.G

OBJECTIVE To examine biblical contradictions on just retribution and vengeance in light of Jesus' moral teachings on forgiveness and love.

SUPPLIES NEEDED post-its (3 colors), paper (to be crumbled into fake stones), markers, and copies of the "Faith and Facts Card – Death Penalty" (downloaded from the General Board of Church and Society website)

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Ice-Breaker: For & Against

Instructions:

- Participants are given three (3) post-its, each a different color
- One color is "FOR", another "AGAINST", and the last has "JESUS" written on it
- Designated one wall area "FOR" and another "AGAINST"
- Ask participants to write down an argument they've heard "FOR" and another "AGAINST" the death penalty, then have them place their post-its on the appropriate wall area
- Last, ask participants to stick their "JESUS" post-it on the side they think Jesus would most likely support
- Quickly review and summarize the arguments posted up; invite participants to share initial observations

NOTES

Keep in mind:

- Disagreements on the death penalty can run deep, especially when someone has experienced personal trauma and loss.
- Remind participants it is okay to choose not to participate because the subject matter hits too close to home (have a volunteer or staff person on hand who can work with those not wanting to participate for this reason).

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

JUSTICE ISSUE DEATH PENALTY

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SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Read Acts 7:55-60 (invite or assign a reader)

Ask (in pairs or in small groups):

- What word, phrase, or image captured your attention as you listened to this reading?
- From the perspective of the crowd, what makes it morally right and just to stone Stephen? What might be their justification for what we would now consider barbaric and cruel?
- Verse 57 says, "But they covered their ears". How are we prone to "cover [our] ears" when we seek retribution for perceived wrongs? Can you share an example?

Discuss Additional Readings: Genesis 4:15; Leviticus 24:17-21, Matthew 5:38-39, 43-44; Romans 12:9.

Assign a different reader for each text AND/OR have these texts written on chart paper (or projected) for everyone to see and share.

Ask:

- We often ask ourselves, "What would Jesus do?" And the Jesus post-its represents where we think Jesus would stand on the issue of capital punishment. What we don't do enough is ask, "WHY?"
- Why do you think Jesus takes the position you think he takes? What in Jesus' tradition, personal experience, reading of scripture (for Jesus the Old Testament texts), and reasoning makes him choose the side you think he does?
- How do you think Jesus dealt with the O.T. texts that both supported and contradicted capital punishment?

NOTES

Keep in mind:

- Be sure to provide context prior to the reading of Acts (who is Stephen? what is he under trial for? and why are the people so incensed?).
- Commonly referred to as the martyrdom of Stephen, we typically focus on the Christ-like act of forgiveness; what is often ignored is the normative use of capital punishment to maintain "law and order".
- Keep in mind other periods in history when religion and faith was used to justify brutality and crowd "justice" (e.g. public lynchings, segregation, tribal genocide, shame-killings, the expulsion of Native Americans from tribal lands).
- You may want to provide a list of additional Old Testament scripture supporting and opposing capital punishment.

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

JUSTICE ISSUE DEATH PENALTY

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GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Read 2016-2020 *Social Principles* ¶164.G (which is also included in the Faith & Facts card – see supplies).

Particularly emphasize the following statement: *We believe all human life is sacred and created by God and therefore, we must see all human life as significant and valuable.*

“Throwing Rocks into Foundation Stones” Activity Instructions

- Participants are paired up and asked to sit facing each other, about 3-4ft apart, and provided with paper and marker.
- Ask each person to write an emotion or belief that might lead someone to hurt or kill another person; provide examples (e.g. hatred, racism, tribalism, anger, “you’re not one of us!”, “I’m better than you”, etc.).
- By turns one person reads what they wrote, crumbles the paper into a “rock” and throws it at the other person (make sure participants know NOT to throw it at the person’s face); then their partner does the same.
- Have participants open up the crumbled “rock” they were “hit” with, spread it out again into paper, and on the reverse side, write a biblical value taught by Jesus affirming the dignity and worth of all persons; give some examples if needed (e.g. “love your enemies”, we are all God’s children, Jesus died for everyone, God forgave me and you, etc.).
- Then as a whole group, have each person share what they wrote, crumble it back into a “rock”, and lay it down in a designated space (e.g. the middle of the room), adding one rock to another, piling up even, as foundation “stones”.
- Share how rocks were essential to laying foundations (e.g. “the cornerstone”) for buildings, and how rocks were used to build altars to God as the Israelites journeyed from place to place.

Ask:

What would it look like for us to turn throwing rocks into foundation stones?

NOTES

Keep in mind:

- The Faith & Facts card includes three (3) ACTION for justice suggestions; consider including one of these as a follow-up to the “Throwing Rocks into Foundation Stones” activity.

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

JUSTICE ISSUE DEATH PENALTY

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Have the group around the foundation stones (with the option to hold hands).

Invite each participant to say a good or kind word for the person on their right and left (this can be done quietly or aloud, at the same time, so no one feels too awkward).

Then together, ask to repeat this prayer: *Father, Mother, Author of all life – we are made in your image. And no matter how far we fall, we remain Your beloved child. Forgive us when we see some life as more valuable than others. And teach us to love. To forgive. To let go of wrath and vengeance. To seek justice that heals and reconciles. Amen.*

NOTES

Keep in mind:

- You can change and adapt any of this to better fit the needs of your community and youth!
- Have fun, keep it real, and don't be afraid to leave questions unanswered; there's always next time.

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. ANNA GUILLOZET

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JUSTICE ISSUE: ADOPTION

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Acts 17:22-31

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶161.M

OBJECTIVE

To help students understand the deep love of God for all of God's children.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Paper and pen for each student, print-outs of the United Methodist Social Principle on Adoption (The Nurturing Community), discarded magazines and newspapers, glue sticks, scissors, tape

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

On your paper make a list of statuses/roles that you have:

For example:

- student
- daughter
- niece
- runner
- bookworm

Ask students to identify which of these roles are permanent and which are/could be temporary. Then ask students which of these statuses is most important to them? To their family? To their friends? To God?

Pray:

God our Mother, our Father, our Parent; we praise you for who you are and for all of the ways that you pour out your love upon us. Be with us as we journey through this life, and be with the families in which we reside. For the relationships that nurture and sustain us, we rejoice. For the relationships that challenge and test us, we ask your peace. We pray this in the name of Jesus, your beloved Child. Amen.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Ask students to locate Acts 17:22-31. Explain that we will each read one verse before passing the reading turn to the person on our left. If a student does not wish to read, they may simply say, "Pass."

NOTES

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

JUSTICE ISSUE ADOPTION

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Ask:

If you had to choose some describing words to use for Paul, the speaker in this passage, what words would you use?

Say:

Paul was known for traveling, teaching, and writing about his faith in Jesus and his desire for others to share in that faith. The problem, however, was that most of the people to whom he taught and wrote had a very different cultural lens. Even though Paul shared that every person was loved by God through Jesus Christ, often his words took on a “holier than thou” tone. He was not always approachable. Paul starts out by flattering his audience, “I see how extremely religious you are in every way,” but then he quickly turns that by drawing attention to the God that does not live in the shrines to gods built by the Athenians.” While it seems like Paul is being dismissive and a little bit arrogant, he was participating in a teaching and debate in the place where the Greek people gathered to hear new ideas (Acts 17:21).

Ask:

When was the last time that a new idea caught your attention? Did you agree with it outright or did the thinking of whether or not you agreed add to the energy?

Say:

Paul states that he observed an altar built “to an unknown god.” This could have been the Greek people’s way of saying that they wanted to cover all of their bases and not leave a god out, but more so they were trying to make sure they did not anger a god who would feel left out and make that god retaliate toward them. For people who valued logic, reason, and new ideas, this “catch-all altar” seems a bit foolish.

It is for this reason that Paul shared with them the boundless love of the God he knows. Paul shares with them that each of them is God’s offspring.

NOTES

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

JUSTICE ISSUE ADOPTION

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Say:

Paul writes that in God we *live, move, and have our being*. It is important to know that this phrase used by Paul is not from the Hebrew Bible, and many scholars believe that it is Greek in origin.

Ask:

What words or phrases are culturally relevant that we might be able to use in sharing our faith in God?

Divide students into 3 groups and ask each one to come up with a brief demonstration of what it means to live in God, move in God, and have our being in God. Encourage their creativity!

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Have students prepare to “popcorn” answer the following prompts:

- My parents show me they love me by:
- My friends show me they love me by:
- My siblings show me they love me by:
- My family shows me they love me by:
- God shows me that God loves me by:

Then have student “popcorn” answer the following prompts:

- I show my parents I love them by:
- I show my friends I love them by:
- I show my siblings I love them by:
- I show my family I love them by:
- I show God I love God by:

NOTES

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

JUSTICE ISSUE ADOPTION

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Spend a few moments with the students reflecting on the similarities and differences between each set of responses.

Read the United Methodist Social Principle on Adoption ¶161.M (The Nurturing Community).

Working in pairs, ask students to highlight or underline any words or phrases within the Social Principle that seem in alignment with their understanding of God.

Reconvene the entire group and ask if anyone wants to share their observations.

Distributing the newspapers/magazines, give students 10-15 minutes to make a collage to represent “God’s Family.” Ask the students to present their collages to the group.

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Place a cross and a Bible on a table to create a small, informal altar space. On the wall behind the altar, ask the students to each hang the collage they created on the wall.

Say:

Even in our biggest understanding of God’s love for us, our understanding is limited. Each of us, together, broaden our understanding of God’s love. Just as our Social Principles remind us, parenting takes many forms. God’s love for us covers all of our needs, and we are each God’s beloved children.

Read Galatians 4:1-7

Close by inviting students to gather into a circle and share a word or phrase in a prayerful spirit. You may close them with an additional prayer, or simply by saying “Amen.”

NOTES

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/the-nurturing-community#adoption>

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. KATIE MONFORTTE

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JUSTICE ISSUE: UNITY IN THE MIDST OF DIVISION AND POLITICAL DIFFERENCE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

John 17:1-11

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶164

OBJECTIVE

Our understanding of the political community is often a place of division but as the people of God we seek unity in our differences so that we may work towards the common good.

SUPPLIES

Masking tape and a notepad for facilitator notes.

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Pray:

God, We thank you for your Spirit that moves us into unity, instead of division. A Spirit that turns us away from war, strife, poverty, and human pride. It is Your vision of oneness that moves us to protect the rights and privileges of neighbors, so that all may live in dignity. Grant us the courage to live into this oneness in every aspect of our lives, in the values we hold, the decisions we make and the systems we put into place. Amen

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

(***For this lesson, start with the group activity first.)

Say:

We are going to further unpack our activity in light of the passage we are studying today in John 17:1-11.

To give some context, we know that Jesus has been living with his disciples, preaching and teaching a different way than the world. He has shown the power and the promise of God and God's reign through his performing signs. Signs that bring God glory.

Jesus is well aware of the pain and suffering of this world. He has encountered the sick and brought healing, he has visited with the outcast and brought welcome. Jesus has fed those left without food. He has offered the lost community. He has challenged religious leaders and political systems.

NOTES

This is Jesus' final prayer before his crucifixion. He has spent much time instructing and being in the company of his disciples but knows that this world is one of division (poverty, hatred). The disciples will face great insecurities and be separated from one another. Jesus' final prayer for them is one of unity.

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

JUSTICE ISSUE UNITY IN THE MIDST OF DIVISION AND POLITICAL DIFFERENCE

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Note to the group that this passage is Jesus' final prayer for the disciples before he is arrested and crucified.

Ask:

What do you think Jesus' final prayer for his disciples would be? Why?

Have a youth read John 17:1-11 out loud. Sit with the passage for a few moments before asking the group to summarize.

Ask:

- What was the central desire of Christ for his disciples?
- Have we as Jesus' disciples lived into this call for unity despite our differences?
- What divides us today?
- How can we seek unity in the midst of division or difference of opinions? How can we share our life experiences without judging others' points of view?

Dialogue and conversation, spaces (like church, youth group and, public forums) are needed to share our stories and build trust.

Say:

As the people of God, we are called to be people of peace, seeking reconciliation in conflict and to organize for the common good of our society. We are reminded that it is our oneness in God, our Christian values of love of God and neighbor, that transform this world.

NOTES

Name some of the "cross the line" prompts/issues that showed visible differences in the group.
Use this time to share some political differences in your community.

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

JUSTICE ISSUE UNITY IN THE MIDST OF DIVISION AND POLITICAL DIFFERENCE

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GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say:

We are going to start today's lesson with an activity called "cross the line." Through this exercise we will see that we all have different experiences, beliefs and understand the systems and structures that govern our society very differently.

Activity: Place a line of masking tape across the middle of the floor, with space on either side for all.

Say:

I'm going to call out experience or an idea and if you have had that experience or agree with that notion, "cross the line" and then turn around to face those people on the other side of the line. Take a moment to think about how you feel to have crossed the line or stayed put. If you do not feel comfortable crossing the line, even though you are part of that group, that is okay. You can stay right where you are. We will remain silent throughout the activity. We will have time to share our reactions and responses after."

- Cross the line silently if you were taught the U.S. is the land of opportunity for all people....
- Cross the line silently if your family immigrated to the U.S...
- Cross the line silently if English was not your first language...
- Cross the line silently if you believe everyone should have a right to food, clothing, shelter, education, health care...
- Cross the line silently if you have ever gone without food for a day because your family did not have any to give you...
- Cross the line silently if you eat fast food more than once a week...
- Cross the line silently if you or your family member did not have access to health care and was seriously ill....
- Cross the line silently if you are afraid of how you will pay for education....
- Cross the line silently if you ever have been unhoused or lived in a shelter...

NOTES

The goal of this activity is to draw attention to some of the barriers (ideas, beliefs, systems, and privileges) that can divide people and that continue to perpetuate visible and unspoken/ hidden injustice in our world community. This activity is best for groups that have already built trust.

When you tell the group that crossed the line to return, they will return to their original places on the other side of the tape, so that the entire group is standing together and in the same direction.

After each of the "cross the line" prompts, you will: 1) Pause until the students who have crossed the line have turned to face the others; 2) Say as reminder: "Take a moment to notice how it feels to have crossed the line and notice how it feels to watch others cross the line. Notice who is with you. Notice who is not with you;" 3) After every "cross the line" prompt ask everyone to come back to their starting point facing the same direction on the line.

Take note of "cross the line" prompts of significant difference.

Do not feel you have to run through all of these "cross the line" prompts. You know your group best, the hope is these prompts will generate more examples for you and your group.

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

JUSTICE ISSUE UNITY IN THE MIDST OF DIVISION AND POLITICAL DIFFERENCE

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NOTES

Majority of prompts are developed from UMC Social Principles on Political Community ¶164.

- Cross the line silently if you have ever had a relationship/friendship with someone who has fought in a war...
- Cross the line silently that you would like to join the military...
- Cross the line silently if you believe that prayer should be required in schools and public spaces...
- Cross the line silently if you believe that you and others have the right to disobey unjust laws...
- Cross the line silently if you believe in the death penalty for some crimes....for no crimes...
- Cross the line silently if you know someone who has gone to jail or prison...
- Cross the line silently if you believe that jail or prisons are filled with black and brown people because of systemic racism...
- Cross the line silently if you believe that no Christian should fight in a war...
- Cross the line silently if you believe that nuclear weapons keep us safe...
- Cross the line silently if you have ever been the victim of violence...
- Cross the line silently if you believe in climate change...
- Cross the line silently if you believe that non-violence is a good strategy to make social change...
- Cross the line silently if you believe that war is not compatible with Christian teaching...
- Cross the line silently if you believe that international peace is possible....

Ask:

- What feelings did you have during this activity?
- Was there an experience that was uncomfortable for you to “cross the line” for?
- What did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about others?
- Can we name some advantages and opportunities we have had that others may not have?

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

JUSTICE ISSUE UNITY IN THE MIDST OF DIVISION AND POLITICAL DIFFERENCE

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

For the closing moment sing or read the words to “They’ll Know We Are Christians by Our Love” from *The Faith We Sing* #2223.

*We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord;
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord;
And we pray that all unity will one day be restored.*

*Chorus: And they’ll know we are Christians by our love,
by our love, yes, they’ll know we are Christians by our love.*

*We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand;
We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand;
And together we’ll spread the news that God is in our land.*

*We will work with each other, we will work side by side;
We will work with each other, we will work side by side;
And we’ll guard each man’s dignity and save each man’s pride.*

*All praise to the Father, from whom all things come;
And all praise to Christ Jesus, His only Son.
And all praise to the Spirit who makes us one.*

NOTES

PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME JEANNIE LEE

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JUSTICE ISSUE: INCLUSIVENESS/DIVERSITY

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE Act 2:1-21

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES None.

OBJECTIVE Discovering how to be inclusive in our diversity – recognizing, embracing and celebrating our diversity and removing barriers that keep us apart.

SUPPLIES NEEDED Chart paper and markers (optional)

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Share one high point and one low point this past week.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Distribute a copy of the Scripture handout to the students.

Say:

Remember that Jesus came, lived, died and was just resurrected and visited his disciples. Imagine the confusion and awe of his resurrection and visitation created. As if that wasn't already dramatic enough. Here comes Pentecost Sunday...

Share in the reading of Acts 2:1-21 together. Each person should read 2-3 vs.

Recommendation – as the group leader, read vs. 9-11 which lists different languages that are not easy for most to read without proper preparation.

Ask:

Reflect in your own words what happened in vs. 1-12

NOTES

The format of the scripture study is such that the students are the ones to decipher the text by reading and parsing it together.

Note that in vs. 14-21, Peter was challenging social norms/stations in the community. Prod students to consider these and the implications.

Ask:

- Who was there? Were they the same? How were they different from each other?
- What happened? (For instance: what happened when the Holy Spirit – “sound like the rush of a violent wind...divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them”?)
- How would you have felt if you were in the room at this moment?
- How did the people in this story feel?
- What was Peter saying to the crowd in verses 14-21?
- How do you think this experience impacted the people? Did they change? If so, how?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say:

The purpose of this activity is to identify what keeps us apart and name what needs to be done to bring us together.

Ask students to list what keeps us apart or makes us different from each other.

(Answers to be considered)

- Different languages
- Different abilities (physical and mental)
- Race
- Gender (include the range of gender identities)
- Sexual Orientation
- Socio-economic status

NOTES

If chart paper and markers are available, please list these out. This creates a common focal point as ideas are being shared.

Ask students to list solutions to overcoming barriers that keep us apart.

For example, to overcome different languages, where would translations need to appear and how? Is translation only needed verbally for those who can hear? What about those who have different visual or audio needs (the blind and deaf)?

If possible, identify one action from the list of solutions that can be addressed in the church or local community.

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Provide Closing Moment handout to the students.

Say:

Diversity should not keep us apart, diversity makes us stronger. Recognize the joy in our diversity. Know that our diversity creates variety in our lives and makes it richer. As Christians, though we are all different, we are the united – children of God, called to the ministry of Jesus, in the name of the Holy Spirit.

Ask students to share the blessing in different languages. Invite students to add other translations of “Peace” not listed.

- Together repeat each translation of peace several times until most are comfortable with the dictation.
- Go around the group and ask each student to select one of the translations to say – ask them to say it loudly in the chosen language.
- Together speak the blessing in the different languages several times to create the cacophony of sound that was experienced in that room on Pentecost – recreating understanding of what each other is saying in the chaos – getting louder if possible.

Ask each student to share one word of how this moment of shouting “Peace” in different languages felt.

Close in prayer and thanks.

NOTES

The end should feel chaotic which is good because that's what the early Christians felt on Pentecost. This end should feel good because in the chaos the students will hopefully feel connected (because they know what the other is saying) in the chaos which is not unlike what they probably experience in life.

The link for the ASL translation if needed is <https://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-signs/s/serenity.htm>.

HANDOUT

Scripture Study - Acts 2:1-2 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

2 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem.⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?"⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?⁹ Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power."¹² All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"¹³ But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.¹⁵ Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning.¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ 'In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

¹⁸ Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹ And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰ The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,

before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

²¹ Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

Closing Moment – Communal Blessing

English - **Peace**

Latin - **Pacem**

Arabic – **Salam** (سالم)

Korean – **Pyeong-hwa** (평화)

Mohican - **Anachemowegan**

Creole - **Lapè**

American Sign Language – **Place your hands together as if signing the concept “BECOME.” Then twist the hands once and smoothly bring them apart, down, and toward your sides.**



Chinese – **héping** (和平)

Spanish – **Paz**

Swahili - **Amani**

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME JESSE ST. CLAIR

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JUSTICE ISSUE: IMMIGRATION, MIGRATION

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

2 Corinthians 13:11-13

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶162

OBJECTIVE

To learn about holy moments in the midst of tragedy and how we are called to help.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Paper, writing utensil

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Pray:

God, we need your help keeping our lives together, listening to advice, and learning how to agree with one another. We want to live in peace and we need your love to help us get there. Amen.

Sit in a circle. Instead of holding each other's hands, only touch your pinkies.

Take slow deep breaths altogether. Find a rhythm of breathing that works for everyone – agree with one another on the speed.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Read 2 Corinthians 13:11-13 twice.

Ask:

Is there anything that strikes you as odd from the reading?

Say:

The idea of a “holy kiss” seems weird in today's context. What exactly is a holy kiss? A holy kiss is a sign of love between believers. It was a part of worship, just like passing the peace with a handshake or a hug. However, there are many people and many cultures who still share a kiss on the cheek when they say hello. They also share a holy kiss on the cheek during worship. Within the church, this is completely normal for some and quite surprising for others.

NOTES

Here is a good time to have youth answer aloud. We're looking to talk about a “holy kiss” but there might be other ideas to explore.

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Ask:

- Do you know anyone who greets people with a kiss?
- What are some cultures that say hello with a kiss instead of a handshake?
- How do you greet people at church?

Say:

At a small church in San Diego, California, it is normal for the congregation to greet one another with a kiss on the cheek and say, “Dios te bendiga,” which means “God bless you.” This happens in worship each and every Sunday. It is a part of the culture of the church and the larger Latinx culture. Only a few miles away is the border wall between San Diego and Tijuana, Mexico. Friendship Park is a place where people can see their loved ones on the other side, but only through a pinky-sized hole. There is a border church that worships every Sunday on the Tijuana side. Because of the iron fence with teeny holes, worshippers have to pass the peace with their pinkies through the wall and with one another.

Ask:

- How do you think it feels to pass the peace with a kiss on the cheek?
- How do you think it feels to have to pass the peace with your pinky instead?

Say:

Because of immigration policies, there are families that have been separated and torn apart. They can only see through an iron grid fence and can only touch pinky to pinky. See what the United Methodist Church says:

“We oppose immigration policies that separate family members from each other or that include detention of families with children, and we call on local churches to be in ministry with immigrant families.” (2016-2020 *Social Principles* ¶162)

Ask:

We’re supposed to do something as the local church, what can it be?

Pray the opening prayer out loud as a group.

NOTES

Losing ways in which your culture worships and greets one another is painful. At the border church, there is more than losing culture and ritual. There is a loss of being with loved ones.

Search Faith and Facts Card Immigration to the US for more information on the church’s stance and an action plan.

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JUSTICE ISSUE IMMIGRATION, MIGRATION

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GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Instructions:

1. Brainstorm ways that you can talk about families being separated because of immigration policy with your church, your friends, and your family.
What will be some challenges?
How will you overcome them?
2. Write an article for the church newsletter and/or a prayer for the bulletin so that the congregation knows why immigration is an important justice issue.
3. Write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper. Explain why the youth group believes that immigration systems must be addressed from a faith perspective.
4. Make a plan to have a supply drive to make UMCOR kits or a fundraiser to donate to UMCOR relief funds.
5. Write a letter to our members of Congress and say that we need to keep families together and “fix our broken immigration system.”

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Say:

God can make all things holy. Whether it be a holy kiss, a holy handshake, or a holy touching of pinkies, our coming together in holy moments can never be taken away.

Pray:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you and all of the world.

Sit in a circle. Instead of holding each other’s hands, only touch your pinkies. Take slow deep breaths altogether.

NOTES

Pick any two of these options or as many as time allows.

Repeat the centering moment with the knowledge of why the pinkies are important. Allow youth to decompress after what can be an emotionally challenging conversation.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. JAY CAMPBELL

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JUSTICE ISSUE: HEALTH CARE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Matthew 9:35-10:8

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶162.V

OBJECTIVE

To see that in this bible passage, Jesus healed all people, not just some and as the Church, we are to do the same by advocating for universal health care.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

A few sheets of paper and a bowl/hat/basket

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

As you begin your time together, share that today's theme will focus on Jesus healing those who are sick and the church's role to help make sure all people have access to health care.

Open with a prayer for those who are sick and those who are worried about being able to pay for the care that they need.

Allow space for youth to name aloud people in their lives who are sick, who might be in the hospital, or are homebound. You can also pray for those in the church who are dealing with sickness and may be in the hospital.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

The scripture for this day packs a lot in just a few short verses.

Assign someone to read Matthew 9:35-10:8.

Say:

Let's unpack what we just read. In Matthew 9:35, Jesus is traveling. Jesus is often traveling and journeying to different places and to encounter new people. His ministry extended to many places. He went to all the cities and villages, teaching and proclaiming the good news of God's reign. His teaching was connected to the healing of all who were around him. He cured every disease and every sickness.

NOTES

If you are unsure of who might be sick in your church, speak with the pastor or the congregational care team beforehand. If time permits the youth can write and sign cards to mail to those who are sick, in the hospital or homebound in your church. It will mean the world to people to receive cards from the youth of the church.

A professor of mine in seminary shared that this passage shows Jesus' heart and call for free universal health care. Jesus healed every person - cured every disease and sickness and did it for free! Jesus didn't discriminate. He didn't say some qualified and some didn't. He didn't say, how much can you pay? Your request for coverage for this sickness has been denied. He healed all who needed it.

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In verse 36, his motivation for this was compassion. Compassion translates to “*suffer with.*” It’s not pity, it’s something that is deep within us and joins us to one another. He was moved by them and he responded. How do people respond today when we see someone sick or on the side of the street sleeping on a bench or living under a bridge? If we are honest, most of the time we often turn away, keep going and try to ignore them. But Jesus was moved to compassion and he acted.

In verse 38, to his disciples, he said, “the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out more laborers into the field.”

Ask:

In what ways is the harvest plentiful today? What is the work of God needed in our world today? (Responding to global poverty, human trafficking, environmental injustice, etc...)

Say:

There is much work to be done in our world today that God is calling us to, but there are not enough workers for the work.

Ask:

Do you think there are enough people today working on these pressing issues you have all named? Who are some people who are working on them? If there are not enough people working on these issues, why is that the case?

Say:

Jesus then asks his disciples to pray that God will send out more people to do this kind of work: more people to advocate for free universal health care, more people to help protect our environment, etc...

NOTES

The disciples got a front-row seat to the healing and ministry of Jesus. Can you imagine being in their shoes? What would it have felt like to see him do this with your own eyes?

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In Chapter 10:1-4, Jesus immediately summons his disciples and gives them authority. He empowers them to cast out unclean spirits and to cure every disease and every sickness. Jesus empowers them to live as he lived. To cure every sickness. To make sure no one is denied access to a healthy and abundant life.

Ask:

In what ways today has Jesus given us the authority, power, and resources to ensure that no one is denied access to health care and abundant life, especially for those in the US who live in the world's richest country, and yet millions of people do not have access to affordable health care?

Say:

In verses 5-8, Jesus sends them out together to proclaim the good news, to share that the reign of God is near when the sick are cured and the lepers cleansed. When healing comes and life is restored - the reign of God is here. The disciples are instructed to give without payment. Give away free health care! Jesus is not about people getting rich but about people having abundant life, about people being able to be healed and cured of sickness without the fear and anxiety of wondering if they can pay for it.

If we are convinced that Jesus sought free universal health care for the communities he visited, then let's look at some of the facts today and see why we are still commissioned to that work:

Say:

Here are some facts:

- Over 30 million people in the US lack health insurance, many of whom are low-income working families.
- In 2015, 54% of the federal discretionary budget was spent on Defense while just 6% was spent on health.

NOTES

That same seminary professor (see above) said these verses here show the power and danger of prayer. Notice that the ones who asked God to send out more workers are the very ones who get sent out. In Isaiah's call story he says, "Here I am! Send me!" Not, "here I am, send someone else" (Isaiah 6: 1-9)

If your students are getting a little restless, consider making sharing the facts here a True or False game. Have students get and move to one side of the room if they believe the statement is true or false. And then ask one or two on each side why they believe the statement is true or false. For the social principles and what the UMC says - make one side of the room 'agree' and the other side 'disagree'

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- As of 2012, per capita, spending on health care in the US is \$8,745. That is 42% higher than the second-highest per-capita spending country (Norway), and nearly 90% higher than many other industrialized nations
- In 2007, illness and medical bills contributed to 67% of American bankruptcies.

Say:

Here is what the United Methodist Church believes.

Health Care is a basic human right - *Social Principles: Paragraph 162.V*

Health is a condition of physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being. *Social Principles: Paragraph 162.V*

We encourage hospitals, physicians, and medical clinics to provide access to primary health care to all people regardless of their healthcare coverage or ability to pay for treatment. *Social Principles: Paragraph 162.V*

It does not take long for us to see that the harvest is still very plentiful. There is much work for the Church to be engaged in. Will we pray for God to send out more workers? And are we courageous enough to pray this knowing that we are the ones who will be sent?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

The activity for this lesson has multiple names. I know it best as the Fish Bowl activity.

Instruction:

This will invite students to debate each other. Print out the questions below and cut them out to have one question on a piece of paper. Fold the paper and place it into a bowl. Place two chairs in front of your room. One chair will be “for” and one chair “against.”

NOTES

You can find this helpful information through the Faith and Facts Card on Health Care. consider printing one out for each person. <https://www.umcjustice.org/what-we-care-about/health-and-wholeness/healthcare-in-the-united-states>

A speaker from United Methodist Family Services spoke at our church and challenged us with the question: “If not you, then who?” If we do not respond, then who will?

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Either you or a youth will pull out of the statements from the bowl and a youth will sit in each chair and argue the statement from a 'for' or 'against' position. If a student is struggling with their argument or even if they are doing well, other youth can tag in and take their seat and continue the dialogue.

The hope is that the youth will be able to think critically and theologically about these statements. If you do find that all of your youth seem to be taking the same side of the argument each time, then consider having an adult leader argue the opposing side - or follow the instructions in the "notes to facilitator" section and have youth placed in the side before the statement is read so that both chairs/positions are filled.

Encourage the youth to offer arguments based on their understanding of what Jesus believed, taught, and practiced. Hopefully, the dialogue can be informed and youth won't just say "I just feel this is right or wrong." Tell us why you believe it is right or wrong. We can all have an opinion about anything but is that opinion and view formed and grounded, especially in a theological practice of Jesus' teaching and life.)

Statements for fishbowl:

1. The United Methodist Church believes health care is a human right for all people. Argue for or against this belief.
2. Everyone should be entitled to receive full and free health care
3. Health care costs too much for the average person in our country
4. In our scripture passage, Jesus healed all who had a sickness or disease. That means we are to do the same
5. One argument against universal health care in our country is because of the amount of money it will cost. Where do you think the money for universal health care should come from?
6. As shared earlier in 2015, 54% of the federal discretionary budget was spent on defense, while only 6% was spent on health. Our country has the wrong priorities in spending so much more on military and war than on health care for our own people.

NOTES

You can have youth decide which chair they want to sit in after hearing the statement or have them sit in the chairs before the statement is read and then they may have to argue a side they don't believe in. Do what works best for your group

Feel free to use as many or as few of these questions as seems fit for your group. Let them also stir your imagination to come up with your own questions for your group.

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NOTES

This is not a for or against argument but can provide honest dialogue about our country's values.

*<https://www.cnn.com/2019/10/30/politics/us-children-health-insurance/index.html>

Check out more about RIP Medical Debt at <https://ripmedicaldebt.org>

7. It is our responsibility to care for those who do not have insurance by paying their unpaid hospital bills.
8. Churches should be at the forefront of advocating for free and universal health care.
9. Churches should not be involved in health care policy and should let the government figure it out without our input
10. *From 2016-2018 the number of children without health insurance increased by 400,000 to around 4.1 million children. The church should be doing something about this.
11. Hospitals, physicians, and medical clinics should provide access to primary healthcare to all people regardless of their healthcare coverage or ability to pay for treatment.
12. Jesus is concerned about our physical health

Or you can use - Jesus is only concerned about our spiritual health and not our physical well-being

Say:

Health care is a complicated, enormous and complex system. And it can be very overwhelming. We know this lesson will not solve the problems, but we hope that youth will begin thinking about why it's important for all people to have access to health care and that to live as a true community of God's people, people should not have to delay getting essential care simply because they cannot afford the high costs.

Here are a few practical ways we can respond and do something:

"RIP Medical Debt" is a group that buys people's medical debt for pennies on the dollar. If you donate and give to them you can help forgive people's medical debt. Currently, for every dollar you give, you can forgive \$100 of medical debt that real people currently have. Consider doing a youth-led church fundraiser to help eliminate medical debt in your state, or take up an offering during your youth group to help erase debt people have from seeking to get well. This is a practice of the biblical call of jubilee. We live out God's desires for our world through debt forgiveness!

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Contact elected leaders

Let your local, statewide and federal elected representatives know what is important to you. Remind them again and again that you support increased access to health care for all.

Keep learning

Stay up to date with Church and Society and follow their campaigns. Especially stay up to date when health care is in the news, Church and Society will keep you informed and share our United Methodist values and ways we can act.

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Together as a group, end with the reading of the following prayer from the book *Pastoral Prayers for the Hospital Visit* by Sara Webb Philipps

Worried About Paying the Hospital Bill

“Loving God, we lift up the concern of your people who are sick and who struggle with worries of how they are going to pay their hospital bills. We pray the day will come when all people will no longer have to worry over such things as bills, finances, food, housing, medical coverage, and the day-to-day matters that make our lives such a struggle. Help us understand that you are indeed the supplier of all our needs. Hear the cry of your people, “Lord, have mercy on us.” In Jesus name; Amen.”

NOTES

Go here <https://www.umcjustice.org/what-we-care-about/health-and-wholeness/healthcare-in-the-united-states> to learn talking points on what to say to your elected representatives and online forms you can send. Perhaps you can encourage the youth to all write letters and mail them or schedule a meeting and deliver them in person as a group.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. EMILY A. PECK-MCCLAIN

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JUSTICE ISSUE: SUSTAINABILITY

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE Romans 6:1b-11

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES 2016 *Book of Resolutions* #1033

OBJECTIVE Help the youth see how human sinfulness is connected to how we treat the earth and realize we can do things differently.

SUPPLIES NEEDED Magazines that have pictures similar to where you are located if choosing this option for the Group Work.

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Say:

I invite you to pray with me as we begin our Sunday school lesson. I will offer a few sentences of prayer and end them by saying “you are great and do wondrous things” and then I invite you to respond with the words, “you alone are God.” These phrases come from Psalm 86:10.

Say:

Leader: O God, you have created everything that is, out of nothing. Everything we see and everything we are comes from you. You are great and do wondrous things;

Youth: You alone are God.

Leader: We breathe the air you created, live in bodies you created, and move those bodies around plants and animals you created. You are great and do wondrous things;

Youth: You alone are God.

Leader: We know that we are called to enjoy your creation, and also find ways to live in it that show we respect how wonderful it is. You are great and do wondrous things;

Youth: You alone are God.

Leader: Be with us during our time together today, O God, inspire our conversation and help us learn about how to be faithful in caring for your creation, including us. You are great and do wondrous things;

Youth: You alone are God.

Amen.

NOTES

Note:

You may want to invite your youth to practice the response a few times so they feel confident during the prayer. Say your line and then help them say their line; after a few times, they should be good to go with the prayer.

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SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Youth are invited to pair up and read through the scripture together. Ask them to think about what questions it raises for them. (7 minutes)

Come back together and share questions from the pairs with the whole group. (8 minutes)

- Ask the youth if there are some similarities in questions. Try to help them come up with two big questions that connect their questions
- Write these out on a chalkboard, whiteboard, or quickly make a new slide. If need be, you can write on a big poster board.
- If their two questions do not include something about “How come we still sin when according to this passage we don’t have to because we are baptized?” Please add it to the list.

Spend some time talking with the youth through their questions using the notes to help aid you. (5 minutes)

Ask:

- Do you remember your baptism or anyone else’s baptism? What did you see happening? (Direct the youth to think literally here – there was prayer, promises, and water.)
- How did this bring someone into the church? (Direct the youth to think metaphorically here – Paul says we’re baptized into Christ’s death so we can walk in newness of life.)

NOTES

Invite your youth to turn in their Bibles to today’s scripture lesson, Romans 6:1b-11. Alternatively, you can create a slide with the scripture lesson or print out paper copies of it. Given that today we are thinking about sustainability, please try to use paper copies only if you have no other option, and print on reused paper (using the clean side) if at all possible.

If your youth are younger or newer to Christianity, it might be helpful to show them how to locate a book in the Bible and talk through how to find chapters and verses in them. Today’s scripture also offers the opportunity to talk about how some verses can be split apart, like today’s “1b.”

Notes:

Romans 6 is a perfect place to see Paul’s theology at work. It might be helpful to know that Romans was a letter written to a community Paul had not visited. He didn’t found the church there, and he didn’t know the people. This is different from his other letters. This part of Romans holds a key to Paul’s thinking. He believes that when we are baptized we are truly incorporated into Christ’s life, which is life after death. He thinks of Sin and Death as very powerful forces and once someone has died, they no longer hold any power over the person. This is the case for those who are baptized into Christ. In fact, Paul doesn’t use the word “Christian” and instead prefers “those who are in Christ.”

The question he is asking the Romans is why are you still sinning when you have no real reason to? His answer is, “Sin doesn’t have any power over you because you are in Christ. You are free to really live in Christ.”

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Say:

For Paul, the newness of life meant you don't have to sin anymore.

Ask:

What would life look like for humans if we didn't sin? When you think about God's creation – the world and all that is in it – how would humans live in the world if we didn't sin? (5 minutes)

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Invite the youth to observe the world around them, especially the environment, for 10 minutes. Invite them to look for two things: 1) evidence of God's wondrous works and 2) evidence of human sinfulness.

Spend some time gathering the youth's observation of these two things. (5 minutes)

Say:

In the United Methodist Church, we say "All creation is the Lord's, and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it. Water, air, soil, minerals, energy resources, plants, animal life, and space are to be valued and conserved because they are God's

NOTES

A lot of questions that come from reading this part of Romans is about how confusing it is. We don't literally die in baptism, but still, Death has no power. And we have the same question Paul does: Why do we keep sinning if we're supposed to be saved? Talking through this confusion with the youth will be a rich conversation, also a challenging one, especially for younger youth who tend to still be more literal and less metaphorical. Sit in the paradox with them and let it be mysterious. **The main point is: we are able to live differently because we are in the Body of Christ.**

Notes: Depending on your group, your location, and supervision available, you can do this activity by going outside as a whole group or in smaller groups and an adult with each group. If it is not possible for your group to go outside, this can be done by looking through magazines or even as an imaginative exercise. If using magazines, make sure they reflect your location. For example, if you are in an urban area, make sure there are pictures of urban areas in the magazines and not only rural ones.

It will be helpful for you to have a look through the area surrounding the church or magazines ahead of time so that you can help direct the youth's reflections if they need it. They may be more prepared to see sinfulness in human action to other humans rather than human action to the environment. Look for evidence of litter, excessive development, pollution, runoff, etc. so that when the group comes back from their observation walk you can help them identify the things you see that they might miss. They may also see things you missed.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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creation and not solely because they are useful to human beings. God has granted us stewardship of creation. We should meet these stewardship duties through acts of loving care and respect” (Book of Resolutions #1033). As we read in Romans, we know that we can live a new life as Christians. We don’t have to join with others in the sin of abusing our planet. Instead, we can take care of the world through acts of loving care and respect.

Ask:

- What are some acts of loving care and respect we can do for our planet?
- What are some acts of loving care and respect we can do as a youth group (or Sunday school class or congregation)?
- What are some acts of loving care and respect you can individually do?

(10 minutes)

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Leader: O God, you have created everything that is, out of nothing. Everything we see and everything we are comes from you. You are great and do wondrous things;

Youth: You alone are God.

Leader: We thank you for all the ways we see your creativity in the world around us. You are great and do wondrous things;

Youth: You alone are God.

NOTES

Notes: This is a way for youth to begin by thinking about what people, in general, can do, and then think about what they, in particular, can do.

Youth may need suggestions to come with things they can do. The Faith & Facts card on Sustainability gives helpful ideas for categories of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Refuse, Rethink. These are great places to start for ideas. Your group might come up with ways they can use cloth napkins at Sunday school or cups they take home and wash. They can decide to carry stainless steel straws. Maybe your group can design reusable shopping bags and sell them to the congregation to cut down on the use of plastic bags. Encourage ideas and help them commit to follow-through.

The closing litany will be an echo of the opening litany. Remind the youth of the call and response, practice again a few times if they need some help to remember.

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Leader: We know that we are called to enjoy your creation, and to care for it with our love and respect. Inspire our actions to reflect this understanding and responsibility. You are great and do wondrous things;

Youth: You alone are God.

Leader: Teach us to know deep in our hearts that because we are your beloved children, we can walk in a new way and do the actions we know will help your creation. Give us the confidence and strength to do them out of love for you and your world. You are great and do wondrous things;

Youth: You alone are God.

Amen.

NOTES

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME JESSE ST. CLAIR

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JUSTICE ISSUE: CLEAN WATER

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Matthew 10: 40-42

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016 Book of Resolutions, #1029

OBJECTIVE

Think about how God wants us to share clean water with each other, but many people don't have clean water to drink.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Bibles, paper, writing utensils, large ice cubes, a box with lid (shoebox), clean trash/recyclables (paper, foam), ruler (measuring tool).

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Say:

Close your eyes.

Imagine we are outside on a super sunny day. We are helping a church member with yard work.

Ask:

- How does the sun feel on your skin?
- We have been working for two whole hours! Are you sweating?

Say:

We finally sit down to take a break. The church member gave you some water at the beginning of our work and you are looking forward to taking a drink. You are expecting a nice cool sip of water, but the water has been sitting in the heat the whole time!

Ask:

- How does the water feel in your mouth?
- Is warm water as refreshing as cool water?
- Something to think about: Does water have to be cold to be hydrating?

NOTES

Instruct youth to close their eyes. We want to talk about water and what it means to have "good" water.

There is a scenario provided but cater to your setting. Talk about how it is hot in your area of the world – humid, sunny, dry, etc.. Use a setting that matches your own. If you live near hiking trails you might talk about a nature walk. If you live in an urban area, you might talk about cleaning up a park. Another example might be leaving your water bottle in the car. Use your creativity!

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE CLEAN WATER

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SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Read Matthew 10:40-42

Ask:

- How many times does Jesus say “welcome” in our scripture reading?
- Do you think Jesus might be trying to say something about how it’s important to love and support others by saying it six times?
- What is a specific thing Jesus tells us to do towards the end? (Check verse 42 if you need a little reminder.)

Say:

Jesus tells us that we should welcome each of the little ones with a cup of cold water. We thought about how cold or cool water is more refreshing than warm water when you’re thirsty. Now think about how thirsty you would be sitting in 115° heat with the sun beating down. Coldwater would be a treat!

So, when Jesus says we need to give “cold water” when we welcome others he means we need to give something extra special. Cold water would need to be drawn from a deep well. Giving cold water would require extra work. Cold water means that Jesus wants us to give above and beyond the bare minimum.

There is something else here too. Cold water from a deep well is probably the safest water to drink in the ancient world. Today there are millions of people around the world that don’t have safe water to drink. Warm water, cool water, and cold water might all be dangerous and make them sick. How can we make sure that everyone has cold and clean water? How can we take care of creation so that water isn’t polluted?

Ask:

In some places, especially after natural disasters, plastic water bottles are the only way people can get clean water. But, plastic bottles add to the pollution of our water. How can we avoid using disposable plastic and still have safe water to drink? Can we both donate plastic water bottles of safe water *and* work hard so that everyone has clean water?

NOTES

Allow 10-20 seconds at minimum for think time between questions. Allow youth time to answer one another.

Search for Clean Water Faith and Facts Card in the Church & Society website. This card provides even more details and examples surrounding the United Methodist stance and suggestions for what to do next.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE CLEAN WATER

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Say:

Justice is really difficult. Sometimes it seems like we're just going around and around. But, it is okay to say "No!" to plastic water bottles while knowing that some people need them to survive.

Ask:

How does the contradiction between advocating against plastic bottles and the need for clean water feel in your gut? How does this challenge feel in your shoulders?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say:

We're going to have a competition to see who can keep a block of ice frozen the longest. You have twelve minutes to insulate your shoebox. Then we will set a timer for ten minutes. The winner will be decided based on the group with the biggest ice cube left!

NOTES

Supplies:

Large ice cube (freeze in a glass or small dish)
Shoe boxes (or other small boxes)
"Trash" and recyclables

Ask church members and/or youth to bring clean recycling materials so they can insulate the box and slow the melting process.

Break into pairs or split the group in half. You can do this as a whole group if there are only a few present.

Try to make the ice cubes the same size and large enough to last ten minutes in the open air.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE CLEAN WATER

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Ask:

- Is it difficult to keep water cold? Is it necessary to have cold water?
- Jesus tells us to give people cold water, but there are 780 million people who don't have clean water. How can we help?
- How can we teach the congregation about the importance of clean water in the world?

Pray:

God of ever-flowing streams and deep, deep wells, soak us in your love and fill our hearts to overflowing so that we see the dirty water and work to make it clean again. Together we will share a cup of clean, cold water in your name. Amen.

NOTES

Take a moment to reflect on the importance of water.

The Clean Water Faith & Facts Card suggests being mindful of water use, protecting creation by limiting disposable plastic use and advocating local officials.

The youth might be able to hold a plastic water bottle recycling drive where the whole church saves water bottles for a week/month and piles them up to measure how much waste.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME KATIE MATSON-DALEY

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JUSTICE ISSUE: CLIMATE CHANGE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Romans 7:15-25a

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶160.D

OBJECTIVE

To reflect on the ways that our actions impact climate justice and to identify ways of overcoming the obstacles to taking action toward a healthier global climate.

SUPPLIES

United Methodist Hymnal 92 "For the beauty of the earth," bibles, note cards or scratch paper, whiteboard, chart paper or tablet, laptop, and projector.

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

This week's centering moment is a hymn. If you have hymnals in your church it is hymn 92 in the United Methodist Hymnal, "For the Beauty of the Earth." You can also find recordings of this hymn with lyrics on Youtube.

Sing (or listen) to this hymn.

Ask:

- What are we praising God for in this hymn?
- Have you ever had a sense of being close to God while in nature or in seeing some part of God's natural creation?
- What was that like?

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Ask:

- Have you ever tried to do something good and then not been able to? (Example: I decided to go 40 days without complaining and caught myself complaining within the first half-hour.)
- Can you give an example? What was that like?

NOTES

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE CLIMATE CHANGE

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Say:

Our scripture today comes from Paul's letter to the Romans. Some parts of this letter get a little confusing, so let's read this slowly to try and understand what he's saying.

Read Romans 7:15-25a

Ask:

If you were to summarize what Paul is trying to say in this passage? What would you say is the main point?

Say:

Earlier, we sang about God's creation. One effect of Sin is that humans have been treating God's creation pretty poorly, not only that, but even those who want to take care of creation and who want to fight for climate justice often don't live up to their own standards.

Ask:

How does this relate to what Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans?

Say:

If this passage was the only part of the Bible that we had, it would be pretty sad and frustrating. But this is not where God's story ends. We struggle to do what is good, but God offers hope.

As people turn toward God, God turns towards us. Through the power of the Holy Spirit and our own practices in what we call spiritual disciplines we become more and more like God. We grow to be able to love God and love our neighbors better. Christians call this sanctification or growing in holiness. Being people who not only care about the earth and climate justice, but who actually do the good we want to do is a part of becoming holier people.

Prayer, study, and doing climate justice actions are the ways that we will begin to become people who do the good we want to do.

NOTES

vv. 15-16 Paul contrasts "what I want," with "what I hate," he wants to live according to God's purposes and plans "the law," but doesn't.

Jesus sums up the law as loving God and loving neighbor.

We tend to think of "sin," as individual bad things that individual people do. But for Paul, "sin," is lots of different things:

1. It's the part of us that keeps us from doing what is right.
2. It is the way that not only individual people but also communities and societies miss God's mark.
3. It's the power of harm and evil in the world.

People want to live in ways that are good. People want to live in ways that honor God. But the power of sin keeps us from living for good and for God.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE CLIMATE CHANGE

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GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say:

As Christians, we care about climate justice because:

1. The earth is God's and we are called to love God.
2. The earth is filled with God's children, our neighbors who are impacted by their climate.

We sometimes think of "climate change," as the same thing as "global warming," but the reality is that climate change can have lots of different impacts around the world. Some places will be drier, some wetter, some colder, some hotter, some will have more storms, and some will have more variation.

Ask:

- How might changes in the climate impact people in our region, state or city? What about in other places across the country? What about in other countries around the world?
- What does loving our neighbor look like if our neighbor is experiencing climate change?

Say:

Brainstorm a list of ways that we can impact climate justice, if you need some help think in broad categories: impacting decision-makers in government or business; food; transportation; household supplies; school; church; water; energy – you may come up with others.

Ask:

- What keeps us from taking any or all of these actions?
- Are there ways to overcome the obstacles that keep us from doing good?

NOTES

The UMW Children's study, "God's Extravagant Garden" has a great chart on page 43 that may help students reflect on different kinds of climate change. If you have access to it, it could be a great resource here. If you don't it is not necessary here.

This would be a great place to use a whiteboard, chart paper, or a tablet or computer with a projector.

Sin is part of the answer. So are excuses, fear, convenience, not knowing, being a student (not having a lot of power)

Prayer, asking for help, taking the first steps and then the second, learning more, using the power that we do have (even as young people).

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE CLIMATE CHANGE

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

In a circle -

(Hand out 2 index cards per person or even better the backside of already printed scratch paper. Ask each person to write down one good thing they want to do in the coming week for climate justice, write this on both cards.)

Say:

We are going to close with a group prayer, as we go around the room, each person will tell us their step and we will respond with God help [her/him/them] to do the good [she/he/they] want to do. Then that person will pass the extra card to the person on their left.

Go around the circle in prayer. Close the prayer any way that feels right for your group.

Say:

Now, as you have your devotion time this week. Remember the good that you wanted to do. Also, remember to pray for the person whose card you have and pray for the good that they want to do.

NOTES

(Ex:

Katie: I want to make sure that we don't leave extra lights on, or that we leave empty chargers plugged in.

Group: God help her to do the good she wants to do.

Terry: I want to walk to send an email to the Pastor to ask him about energy usage at the church.

Group: God help him to do the good he wants to do.)

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME AIMEE HONG

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JUSTICE ISSUE: OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES, FARMWORKERS JUSTICE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016 *Book of Resolutions* #6111

OBJECTIVE

To help students see the parable of the sower from a different perspective- the different obstacles (bad ground) that Palestinian farmers face, farming on Occupied Palestinian Territories.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Copies of "Occupied Palestinian Territories" Faith and Fact Card, Copies of the *Washington Post* article https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/small-farmers-struggle-worldwide-but-palestinian-farmers-really-have-it-rough/2017/03/20/903475e8-ee56-11e6-a100-fdaaf400369a_story.html

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Gather

Pray the following prayer by Howard Thurman

Lord, open unto me

Open unto me — light for my darkness.
Open unto me — courage for my fear.
Open unto me — hope for my despair.
Open unto me — peace for my turmoil.
Open unto me — joy for my sorrow.
Open unto me — strength for my weakness.
Open unto me — wisdom for my confusion.
Open unto me — forgiveness for my sins.
Open unto me — love for my hates.
Open unto me — thy Self for my self.
Lord, Lord, open unto me!

Amen.

NOTES

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES, FARMWORKERS JUSTICE

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SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Read Matthew 13:1-9

Ask:

- How many of you planted a vegetable or fruit seed?
- How many fruits and vegetables were you able to harvest?
- What were some difficulties and obstacles?

Say:

Our passage today is a parable of a sower, a farmer that went out to sow seeds on different terrain.

Ask:

What were some obstacles that he came across? (bird, rocks, the sun, lack of soil)

Say:

All of these obstacles prevented the sower to reap the goods of the seeds that were planted.

In the second grouping of verses, Jesus interprets the parable. Some people receive the parable as a reflection on their soul- how good is your soul to hear the good news of Jesus? Does your soul have a lot of obstacles? Does it lack soil so you experience a “retreat high” and quickly come down?

We are going to spend some time looking at this parable from a different angle.

NOTES

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES, FARMWORKERS JUSTICE

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GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say:

The crowd that followed Jesus was a diverse crowd. It could be said that Jesus knew his audience well when he shared this parable because he knew that most likely many of them were Palestinian farmers that were all too familiar with farming.

If possible, provide a copy of the *Washington Post* article to each student.

Take turns reading the article.

Provide copies of "Occupied Palestinian Territories" Faith and Fact Card.

Ask the students to spend a few minutes reading the card.

Ask:

- What are some obstacles that the Palestinian farmer Fawzi Ibrahim is facing when farming his land?
- What would the United Methodist response be to the *Washington Post* article. Are you surprised that the United Methodist Church has a stance on Occupied Palestinian Territories?

Say:

Seeds fall on the ground. The bird may come and eat it, or the sun will scorch it because it has no root.

A few questions to ponder- why is soil not equally distributed on the ground? Why are some areas richer in soil than others? Who owns the good soil? Who owns the land? Who owns access to water? Is there freedom to work the land?

NOTES

Washington Post article:

https://www.washington-post.com/world/middle_east/small-farmers-struggle-worldwide-but-palestinian-farmers-really-have-it-rough/2017/03/20/903475e8-ee56-11e6-a100-fdaaf400369a_story.html

PDF of the Faith and Fact Card

<https://www.umcjustice.org/news-and-stories/occupied-palestinian-territories-faith-and-facts-card-417>

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JUSTICE ISSUE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES, FARMWORKERS JUSTICE

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Blessing Prayer

Bless the hands of the people of the earth,
The hands that plant the seed,
The hands that bind the harvest,
The hands that carry the burden of life.

Soften the hands of the oppressor and
Strengthen the hands of the oppressed.

Bless the hands of the workers,
Bless the hands of those in power above them
That the measure they deal will be tempered
With justice and compassion. Amen.

(Prayer from *National Farm Worker Ministry*)

NOTES

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. COURTNEY MCHILL

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JUSTICE ISSUE: OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD. GOD IS FOR ALL.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE Genesis 28:10-19a

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES N/A

OBJECTIVE To help students reflect and become aware of God's presence in all aspects of our lives.

SUPPLIES NEEDED Markers, paper, other art supplies as wanted, a few objects to create a place marker.

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Go around the room and say one place that you have seen God this week.

Ask:

Did you see God in nature, at school, at church? What was the physical location?

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Read Genesis 28:10-19a out loud.

Say:

In this text, Jacob is en route and lays down to sleep. Jacob has an encounter with God in a dream but assigns that encounter to the physical location. It is so important that Jacob marks the spot where God has appeared and already was.

Ask:

- Have you ever felt as though God was in a physical spot? What happened? What did God look like?
- What would it be like to see God wherever you go? Could you assume that God is where you arrive or while you are on the way to somewhere else?
- Have you ever been on a journey and God shows up unexpectedly?

NOTES

If the group needs a little prompting be the first one to share where you saw God this week.

- Did you see God in nature, at school, at church? What was the physical location?

In this passage, God shows Godself to Jacob in a dream. Jacob realizes that God met him in a physical space and Jacob marks that space with a physical item.

To solidify this covenant, God even makes a vow with Jacob in the midst of his dream.

When Jacob awakes he realizes that God is present in that place (Bethel means the place of God) but also that God will travel with Jacob as well. It is not our job to bring God to locations but we can see God already in places that are unknown to us. Part of our job is to recognize God's presence in our midst wherever we are.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD. GOD IS FOR ALL.

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- What would it be like to dream about something that God is trying to tell you? Have you ever had such a dream? What would it be like?
- What is it like to see God in your everyday life?
- Jacob uses a rock to mark the spot where God is and has been. What would you use to mark that God is there?
- What if those markers already exist? What shows that God is someplace?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say:

Part of exploring this Genesis text is to realize that God is already present wherever we go, no matter who we encounter, no matter what we look like or who we are. There is no us and them, only places that God resides already.

You already know these locations but now your task, with a partner, is to create a visual of how you would mark where God has shown up for you.

You can make a map, draw the scene, or even create a marker to remember the spot. We will present our ways to show where God is after 20 minutes. Jacob used a rock to build a spot. Get creative and use whatever you need to create a way to show God has been here.

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Take a deep breath. Breathe in God's goodness and know that God is present here.

Pray:

O God, you are here and wherever we might be. We are not better than those we come into contact with. You are present with all of your children. Walk with us as we go back out into the world. Amen.

NOTES

You will need art supplies and perhaps a few stones. If you want to bring other items for the students to get creative with, that is up to you. Enjoy!

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. KATIE MONFORTTE

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JUSTICE ISSUE: FARMWORKER JUSTICE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶ 160. H & Book of Resolutions #4134

OBJECTIVE

In this lesson, we will describe the kingdom of God and consider how we can live into the kingdom of God through farmworker justice.

SUPPLIES

Paper (4 large sheets and a small sheet for all participants), a handout for each student and copies of the Faith and Facts Cards on Farmworker Justice, markers, access to the internet (youth phones or computer and projector).

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Gather.

Pray.

Holy One make us more mindful of your presence in this world. Open our minds and hearts to what you are revealing to us about your present and coming kingdom. Amen.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say:

Today we are going to be looking at a few parables that Jesus uses in the book of Mathew to describe what the kingdom of God is like.

Ask:

How would you define what a parable is?

Be sure to inform the youth that parables often times use similes. Ask if they know what similes are? A comparison using “like” or “as” to depict or shed light on what the kingdom of God is.

NOTES

We know that Jesus used parables (a story that Jesus often shares that paints a picture of what the kingdom of God is like). The parables speak to the audience to which Jesus was preaching and teaching. There were merchants, tax collectors, fishermen, farmers all around so he used comparisons to the kingdom of God that they could relate with.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE FARMWORKER JUSTICE

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Read Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52 (leader or student volunteer)

Say:

In our parable, we are told that the kingdom of God can be described as or compared to a mustard seed that grows into a tree, active yeast in bread, a man who is willing to give up everything for a treasured pearl, and a net filled with fish too many for us to keep for ourselves. These comparisons truly spoke to people in Jesus' time. They could visualize a tiny mustard seed becoming a new habitat for birds. Households would have had yeast in the kitchen ready to make their bread rise. Merchants would understand the eagerness of the man who would sell all he owned for treasured pearls. Fishermen could smell and know the weight of a full net of fish.

In order to unpack this parable further, we are going to divide into four groups.

Instructions:

Each group will be asked to create their own twist on this parable. Each group will be asked to describe in their own words and with an image what symbolizes to them "What the kingdom of God is like."

- Group 1 will be given the prompt of The Mustard Seed
- Group 2 will be given the prompt of Active Yeast
- Group 3 will be given the prompt of Treasured Pearl
- Group 4 will be given the prompt of The Full Net

NOTES

You could invite 4 youth to read dividing the passage as follows

- Matt 13:31-32 (mustard seed)
- Matt 13: 33 (yeast)
- Matt 44: 44-46 (treasured pearl)
- Matt 44: 47-52 (full net)

Thank the readers.

Each participant should be given a sheet of paper for brainstorming. Each of the 4 groups should be given a large piece of paper to do their report back. The heading on this large sheet of paper should read "The kingdom of God is like..."

Prompts and questions for brainstorming can be printed out or written as a worksheet for each group. See handout.

The visual example could be an image created by the group or found through a Google search. This gives students who are not the most comfortable with word-smithing the ability to contribute.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE FARMWORKER JUSTICE

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Give each group 10- 15 minutes to think of what would be modern-day examples of these similes. What would be the mustard seed of today?

Allow the groups to create: 1) a written example of their modern similes (this could be a couple of words or a sentence comparison), and 2) a visual example to accompany the written description.

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say:

I have an example of what the kingdom of God is like... but I am going to take some time to explain it.

The kingdom of God is a dinner table set for all. It is a table where everyone who shows up has a seat and there is enough for everyone to eat.

The kingdom of God is the meal prepared with love and generosity. We thank the earth for growing up the produce we eat and thank the animal for the substance it provides us.

Have you ever thought about the many people involved in getting you food you are to eat at your table? The hands that prepare your dinner. The grocer who makes your products available to sell? The farmer who picked the produce you eat?

We are going to look at the business of agriculture and the vulnerabilities of farmworkers.

NOTES

As the groups are working, move around to each group and listen to their discussions.

Take note of each modern-day comparison and visual example created by the youth. We will use these examples in the closing prayer for the lesson.

If time permits encourage the students to name: 1) Who prepares their meals? 2) Where do their families buy groceries?

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE FARMWORKER JUSTICE

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Watch the YouTube video from the Coalition of Immokalee workers: “CNN Freedom Project - the Fair Food Program”

Ask:

- Have you ever thought about how hard it must be to work in a field all-day picking fruits and vegetables like tomatoes?
- Why do you think farmworkers have been victims of unsafe working conditions (lack of water and shade, lack of transportation,)....low wages...been fearful for speaking out about the abuse (violence in the fields and sexual assault) and harm some have encountered (no sick time?)

Say:

Many farmworkers come from vulnerable communities, they need to work and do not feel safe to raise issues or complaints about their working conditions. The United Methodist Church has been a longtime advocate for living wages and safe working conditions.

We have specific calls to action around farmworker justice. Throughout Scripture, we are taught the importance of respecting and rewarding work. The prophets decried economic systems that denied workers fair compensation and dignity and Christ’s ministry was centered on those individuals marginalized by society. Today, workers whose hands gather the fruits of God’s good earth are among the most marginalized—both economically and socially—in our communities. As the cries of the harvesters continue, we are called as a church to respond.

NOTES

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers has been working alongside farmworkers to ensure the human rights of farmworkers are protected. They have organized around fair wages and to stop modern-day slavery. They have started the Fair Food Alliance (video on this <https://youtu.be/Ny9YaJczqjY>) that works to keep businesses and buyers from exploiting farmworkers. For more info visit - <https://ciw-online.org/>

Farmworkers often times are vulnerable because they are immigrants (some leave their home country because of insecurities or loss of land). Many are undocumented workers who may not know the language or that they have protected rights as workers.

<https://www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/social-principles-and-resolutions/the-1908-social-creed-of-the-methodist-episcopal-church>

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE FARMWORKER JUSTICE

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Book of Resolutions (BOR) #4134 says,

“Farmworkers call on us to stand in solidarity with them to change unjust conditions and scripture calls us to respond. As Christians, we cannot sit silently as our brothers and sisters are exploited and abused, but rather following the teachings of Christ we must ensure that the men and women who harvest our food are invited to share fully in the fruits of their labor.”

Share with the group The Farmworker Justice Faith and Facts cards (digitally or print outs).

Encourage the youth to share with at least one person what they have learned about farmworkers.

Encourage youth to take some time the next time they go to the grocery store to see if their produce has a fair food alliance seal.

NOTES

You can print out and share The Farmworker Justice Faith and Facts cards in English and Spanish <https://www.umcjustice.org/documents/13>
<https://www.umcjustice.org/documents/64>

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JUSTICE ISSUE FARMWORKER JUSTICE

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Say:

When we encounter the parables we have to think about all the complexities that description or comparison brings to mind. The kingdom of God changes our everyday reality. We must actively seek it and change our hearts and minds to truly understand its teachings. The kingdom of God reveals the injustice of this world and promises a new way...change. The fullness of life for all.

Close in prayer :

The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed that changes the landscape and "Group 1s examples."

The kingdom of God is like active yeast that changes bread from and "Group 2s examples."

The kingdom of God is like a treasured pearl that we are willing to give up everything for and "Group 3s examples."

The kingdom of God is like an overflowing net of fish that promises security, abundance and "Group 4s examples."

The kingdom of God ushers in justice for farmworkers. The kingdom of God is a table set for all, a meal prepared without harm to our neighbor.

Amen.

NOTES

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE FARMWORKER JUSTICE

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HANDOUT

Group 1: The Mustard Seed

The kingdom of God is not always noticeable. It is like a seed that starts off small and grows into a mustard tree. The tree is no longer small but noticeable. A tree changes the landscape and creates a habitat for other living creatures.

Is there something you know is small that over its lifetime transforms into something that cannot be ignored?

Imagine what action you could take that might have a big impact?

Have you ever made a small decision that led to a big change?

Group 2: The Active Yeast

Yeast is a typical household item used in the making of bread. This active ingredient changes the bread, it will not be flat but will be full and rise.

What pushes you to rise up and change things?

What ingredient is needed to liven up your favorite dish or meal?

Group 3: Treasured Pearl

The Pearl is a great treasure that we are so eager and excited to have. It is so valued and treasured that we would be willing to give up all that we possess to keep it.

What is the most precious or valuable thing you have ever desired?

Is there something you would be willing to trade in all of your possessions for?

What is the best gift you have ever been given?

Group 4: The Full Net

Jesus knew many fishermen and that their livelihood was dependent on catching good fish. We see an abundance of fish. An overflow of food. The fisherman can rest well knowing he has enough fish to sell and eat.

Where would you see an abundance?

Think of a time/celebration where/when there is more than enough food for everyone present?

Have each group share their original prompt and their modern-day written and visual examples of the similes.

Say:

“Kingdom of God is like” all the comparisons and examples you made. The kingdom of God is revealed in complexity, simplicity, imagination, and hope that you generated in your modern-day comparisons.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. SEOKCHANE SUH

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JUSTICE ISSUE: FOOD INSECURITY, HUNGER, POVERTY

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Matthew 14:13-21

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶ 160.G and ¶160.H

OBJECTIVE

To help students learn about food insecurity and how Jesus calls us to respond.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

2 Small Bag of Chips

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Pray the following prayer. Followed by a few moments of silence. After the prayer ask the students what they feel about the prayer.

Pray:

O Lord, God of life, who cares for all creation, give us your peace. May our security not come from arms, but from respect, May our force not be of violence, but of love. May our wealth not be in money, but in sharing. May our path not be of ambition, but of justice. May our victory not be from vengeance, but in forgiveness. Open and confident, we want to defend the dignity of all creation, sharing, today and forever, the bread of solidarity and peace. In the name of Jesus, your holy son, our brother, who, as victim of our violence, even from the heights of the cross gave us all forgiveness. Amen.

(Poverty, Peace and Justice. A prayer from an ecumenical conference in Brazil, calling for an end to poverty as the first step on the path to peace through justice.)

NOTES

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE FOOD INSECURITY, HUNGER, POVERTY

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SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Have volunteers read a few verses each of Matthew 14:13-21.

Say:

This is the only miracle of Jesus that is recorded in all four gospels. (Mt 14:13-21; Mk 6:30-44; Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-15)

In pairs or in small groups, assign each of them the Matthew passage and one other gospel passage to compare.

Ask:

- What differences from Matthew do you find? And what commonalities do you find? (*Things in common: feeding of the 5000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish of course. Jesus had compassion, 12 baskets of leftovers! Differences: No boy like the gospel of John.*)
- When Jesus said, “you give something to eat (v.16)” What do you think Jesus meant by it? (*What is important to note here is that disciples just told Jesus that they need to send the crowds away to the villages to buy food (v.15). Yet, Jesus says something weird, “you give something to eat (v.16b)” Huh?! Didn’t disciples just tell him that they need to be sent away to eat? What Jesus is perhaps suggesting is that feeding them is not only MY job but it is OUR job to do. We work together. It is an invitation. You give something to eat.*)
- How do you understand this miracle? What if this is an invitation of Jesus to share food with one another so that we can all eat together? (*There have been different attempts to “explain” the miracle. The most popular one is that people were moved by Jesus’ generosity, people brought what they were hiding in their clothes or travel pouches. Everyone shares and there was enough for all with leftovers.*)
- What moved Jesus? (*It is compassion that moved Jesus.*)
- What would move you to share? Or, why do we have to share?

NOTES

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE FOOD INSECURITY, HUNGER, POVERTY

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GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Ask:

Think about world hunger, the world produces enough food that the whole world can be fed but yet about 11% of the world population suffers from hunger. Why do you think that is? (5min)

America still experiences food insecurity. Why do you think we, one of the richest countries in the world have people that are food insecure? (5min)

Open a bag of chips and make participants take a turn and have as much as one wants. Open another bag of chips, this time ask them to eat the bag of chips thinking about those that don't have a bag of chips to eat. Ask the students how they felt eating the chips the first time and comparing it to the second time.

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

- Option 1
Recite or read the Lord's Prayer together.
- Option 2
This is the first Sunday of the month. If your church is planning to have a communion table, be mindful of what is happening with the bread.

NOTES

- More information can be found on the link <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/327/5967/812>
 - One of the reasons why we have food insecurity is because we have a lack of a welfare system and we control our food production for price control.¹ Find a local church address and see if you are near or in the food insecurity area. And think of another way how to help that. <https://map.feedingamerica.org/>
 - Have a size of snack that is right for your group size. The goal is for some participants to experience a lack.
-
- Ask before recite or read the Lord's Prayer, what does it really mean, "*give us this day our daily bread.*"
 - This one bread represents the body of Christ and we're part of that bread which means we are all little part of that body of Christ. You and I, and each one in the world is also part of that one body. My greed may affect someone else's needs.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME KIM JOHNSON

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JUSTICE ISSUE: STUDENT'S CHOICE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

1 Kings 19:9-18 and Psalm 85:8-13

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

SO MANY (Lesson allows for student's interests/passions to dictate which issue(s) to focus on. Here are some references—*Global Migration and Refugees: Social Principles ¶162.H, Book of Resolutions #6025, #6028; Immigration: Book of Resolutions #3281, Social Principles ¶162; Food Justice: Social Principles ¶160, ¶160.H, ¶162.Q, ¶163.H; Hunger & Poverty: ¶163.E, Book of Resolutions #4051, #4053; Racism: Social Principles ¶162.A; Mental Health: Social Principles ¶162.X; Climate: Social Principles ¶160; Clean Water: Social Principles ¶160, Book of Resolutions #1029; Human Sexuality: Social Principles ¶161.G*

OBJECTIVE

Fighting for Justice is HARD and LONELY and can be discouraging. God uses you AND others.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

newsprint, markers, spaghetti noodles, marshmallows

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Ask:

Have you ever felt like you are the ONLY one fighting for something good?

Share an example of your own life to get the conversation moving.

Ask:

What does/did it feel like?

Say:

As Christians, it is our job to fight for justice in our world.

Talk for a few minutes about the issues that are important to your students.

Make a list together of the things your group has passion about—*what are the areas in our world that need help?* Where can we make a difference?

NOTES

A current event [ish] example might be the example of Greta Thunberg and her fight for climate change justice.

She is one girl, and she is fighting a good fight--- but there are also many others behind her and fighting as well.

Gather these on a large piece of newsprint.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE STUDENT'S CHOICE

Page: 2 of 5

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Before you begin, offer this as background.

Say:

Elijah has been fighting the good fight for God—he has helped defeat the prophets of Baal (folks offering worship to other false Gods). He's currently being chased/pursued by Queen Jezebel who wants him dead. He is tired. He is alone. He feels abandoned.

Read 1 Kings 19:9-18

Take the first part: vs 9-10 and talk about what you've read.
Highlight "I alone am left".

Then the second part: vs 11-14 and talk about what you've read.

Ask:

- What do you think it was like to NOT find God in the REALLY BIG things (wind, rocks, fire)?
- What do you think it was like to find God in the quiet?
- Have you ever found God in the quiet?

Note that once again Elijah says "I alone am left."

Now look at the third part: vs 15-18 and talk about what you've read.

NOTES

Offer the background before you dive in.

Read it all the way through and then take it in pieces as noted to dig deeper into the Scripture.

Spend some time here noting that Elijah is tired and feeling alone and feeling frustrated with God.

It is OK to feel frustration with God—and to feel like you are working hard doing the right things, but it feels like it's not enough.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE STUDENT'S CHOICE

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Ask:

- So, is Elijah alone?
- What do you think it means that Elijah was to go anoint all of these other people?

Point out the 7,000 additional fighters of Baal.

Ask:

If there were 7,000 folks also fighting the same fight, why do you think Elijah felt so alone?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Instructions:

Give every student a pile of marshmallows and a pile of spaghetti noodles [uncooked!]. Give them 2 minutes to make the tallest self-standing tower they can make using the materials provided.

After 2 minutes, form groups of 2 or more, combine materials and resources and continue to build spaghetti towers. Give them 3-5 minutes to create spaghetti towers in groups, once again with the goal to make the tallest, most stable, self-standing tower.

Ask:

- Was it easier or harder to build alone?
- Were you able to have a stronger base when you had extra hands to help build?
- Was it helpful to have additional materials for your building?

If students answer NO—it was better to do it myself, spend some time talking about that. Ask WHY? Ask how that would translate to a larger project—building an actual building, for example.

NOTES

The hope here is that it will be easier to work together and that the towers will be more stable and taller when they have been built by many hands and more materials.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE STUDENT'S CHOICE

Page: 4 of 5

Go back to what was shared at the beginning of feeling like you are the only one fighting for something and draw connections.

Say:

Different people bring different ideas to the table. This is true in the spaghetti tower building and in life—as we seek to fight for justice in our world, there is no one “right” way to do so.

Go back to your list of areas in the world that need help. Choose 2 or 3 and spend some time looking at those. If they are areas that have UMC Social Principle implications, use those to guide the discussion.

After discussion of and choosing of 2-3 issues, spend a few minutes thinking about the different action steps that you CAN take both as individuals and together as a group.

Use the newsprint/markers to brainstorm ideas for action.

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Close this lesson using the second Scripture passage from Psalms 85:8-13.

Have someone read the Scripture.

8 Let me hear what God the Lord will speak,
for he will speak peace to his people,
to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.

NOTES

Leaders may have to help draw these connections and comparisons—especially with a younger or shy-er group.

- Global Migration and Refugees: Social Principles ¶162.H, Book of Resolutions #6025, #6028
- Immigration: Book of Resolutions #3281, Social Principles ¶162
- Food Justice: Social Principles ¶160, ¶160.H, ¶162.Q, ¶163.H
- Hunger & Poverty: ¶163.E, Book of Resolutions #4051, #4053
- Racism: Social Principles ¶162.A
- Mental Health: Social Principles ¶162.X
- Climate: Social Principles ¶160
- Clean Water: Social Principles ¶160, Book of Resolutions #1029
- Human Sexuality: Social Principles ¶161.G

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE STUDENT'S CHOICE

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9 Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.

10 Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;
righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

11 Faithfulness will spring up from the ground,
and righteousness will look down from the sky.

12 The Lord will give what is good,
and our land will yield its increase.

13 Righteousness will go before him
and will make a path for his steps.

Spend a moment to talk about what the writer is asking—let me HEAR God because God WILL speak peace to us.

Remind students that our God works for good as we work for good in God's world.

Use the Psalm as your closing prayer.

All read the words together to close.

NOTES

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. ESTHER INUWA

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JUSTICE ISSUE: ADVOCACY

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE Isaiah 56:1,6-8

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES 2016-2020 *Social Principles* ¶161-¶162

OBJECTIVE In the house of God, justice includes everyone.

SUPPLIES NEEDED Handout, Copies of 2016-2020 *Social Principles* or copies of the *Nurturing Community* and the *Social Community* for each student, paper and writing utensil

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Provide handout for the responsive reading

Psalms 82 (NRSV)

A Responsive Reading

1 God is seated in the divine council, and in the midst of the gods holds judgment:

2 “How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?

3 Give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.

4 Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

5 They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

6 I say, “You are gods, godlike offspring, all of you;

7 nevertheless, you shall die like mortals, and fall like any prince.”

8 Arise, O God, judge the earth; for to you belong all the nation!

NOTES

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE ADVOCACY

Page: 2 of 5

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say:

The book of Isaiah is unlike other books that have one author. Isaiah's authorship has different views among scholars, some believe that it was one Isaiah that wrote the book, others said there are two authors, while yet others believed that there are three authors. Even though we may not be sure who wrote Isaiah, what is clear is that it is concerned about justice and righteousness (1:21; 5:7, 16, 9:7; 16:5, 28:17; 32:1, 16).

Our passage today finds the Israelites asking themselves how to remain connected to God and maintain the Temple. Their concern was how to be a faithful community.

Read Isaiah 56:1

Ask:

What does God want?

Say:

Justice involves bringing people into a right relationship with God and each other and these right relationships produce righteous lives.

Ask:

What does it mean to be in a right relationship with God and with others?

Read: Isaiah 56:6-7

Ask:

- Who are all the groups of people that God mentions? (Highlight foreigners)
- What privileges does God offer to these people?

NOTES

The question of how to maintain the Temple and how to remain connected to God so they could not fall back into sin surround their thoughts. The concern now shifted on how to build a community that will serve God truthfully, so they don't repeat the error that led them to exile. While Israel is always tempted to define its service to God by the performance of cultic duties such as ritual sacrifice, Sabbath observance, ceremonies, the prophets keep reminding them that justice is a basic duty of the faith community.

God's law:

- Requires witnesses to be honest and impartial (Exodus 23:1-3, 6-8).
- It requires special consideration for widows, orphans, and other vulnerable people (Deuteronomy 24:17).

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE ADVOCACY

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Say:

Under normal circumstances, foreigners or Gentiles in our passage could only enter the outermost courtyard of the Temple. But in our passage, where does God want them? (with God)

Say:

Remember that the temple is a symbol of the presence of God and access to God. God wants to break down barriers that keep people away from God.

Read Isaiah 56:8

Ask:

- Who is God gathering? (the outcasts) Who are the outcasts in the bible? (foreigners, eunuchs, lepers, orphans, widows, the blind, etc.,)
- Who are considered outcasts in our society?
- Are there groups of people in our society that do not receive the same privileges as others?
- What is inclusivity? What does it have to do with justice?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say:

Think about the list that we made earlier about those that are considered outcasts in our society. With a partner, look at the *2016-2020 Social Principles*. Underline the groups/ people that are mentioned. (Feel free to limit to the *Social Community*, and the *Nurturing Community*.)

Ask:

- In what ways does our church have a stance on protecting people of different backgrounds: race, nationality, age, sex, social status, and others?

NOTES

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE ADVOCACY

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- What does it mean for the church “to work toward societies in which social groups and individual values are organized, maintained, and strengthened?”
- What can we do at our church to make sure that “outcasts” are included?

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Pray:

Dear God, help us to treat and accept all people in our homes and congregations, and to know that all are created by you. Help us to maintain justice and do the right thing so that we can participate in the coming salvation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In our quest for justice, help us to welcome all and support the basic rights of all persons without discrimination. Amen.

NOTES

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE ADVOCACY

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HANDOUT

Opening Prayer

Psalm 82 (NRSV)

A Responsive Reading

1 God is seated in the divine council; and in the midst of the gods holds judgment:

2 “How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?

3 Give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.

4 Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

5 They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

6 I say, “You are gods, godlike offspring, all of you;

7 Nevertheless, you shall die like mortals, and fall like any prince.”

8 Arise, O God, judge the earth; for to you belong all the nation!

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. DANIEL CHO

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JUSTICE ISSUE: CULTURE AND IDENTITY

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Matthew 16:13-20

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶161.A

OBJECTIVE

Help students to reflect on the question, “Who do you say that I am?”

SUPPLIES NEEDED

None.

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Welcome the students and invite them to the classroom.

Open in prayer.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Read Matthew 16:13-20

Say:

People desire saving and freedom in this world. If you are familiar with Superman, he has said, that “everyone is longing for a savior.” Do you think that’s true?

Ask:

What do we need saving from? What about those in our community? Globally? (Possible answers are bullying, human trafficking, violence are a few examples.)

Say:

In verse 13 and vs. 15, Jesus asked what others say about Jesus to his disciples, but that wasn’t the question he really wanted to know. He really wanted to know “Who do you say I am?”

NOTES

The goal of the scripture study is to help students capture the main points we have chosen.

1. Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.
2. Some say the Son of Man is John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.
3. Blessed are you, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven.
4. You are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE CULTURE AND IDENTITY

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Ask:

If Jesus asked you “Who do you say I am?” how would you respond? Not who your friends say, your parents, social media or other distractions, but who is Jesus to you?

Say:

Like Peter’s response, if you truly believe you are blessed and Jesus is the savior of the world, we have a task to be done. Jesus has and will build that church on the heart and passion of yours to bring other people into freedom.

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say:

I’m going to ask a question and I want you all at the same time to answer that question out loud to each other until I say stop.

Here is the question:

Who is Jesus to you?

Pause for a few minutes.

Call stop and ask the students to have a seat.

Ask:

- What do you think of this activity? Did you enjoy it?
- Was it frustrating?
- How long do you think you could talk or think in that kind of setting? Is it more enjoyable to talk to someone who’s talking at the same time, or would you rather talk with someone who’s actually listening to your words? Why?
- Is it possible to have a good conversation in this environment?

NOTES

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE CULTURE AND IDENTITY

Page: 3 of 3

Say:

There are many distractions in this world, and there many facts and information flying around, there are many people talking and listening all at the same time. Trying to listen and talk at the same time is impossible if we really want to hear what the other person has to say and if we want to be heard. Let's really think and listen to what other people are saying and what the Bible says about Jesus.

Ask:

- What do other people say about Jesus?
- Who do you say Jesus is?

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Provide a quick summary of the lesson and challenge them with anything from the lesson. Encourage them to memorize the Bible verses.

Ask each student to find a partner or two.

Encourage students to pray for one another that God would provide opportunities, wisdom, and open ears, minds and hearts to listen to God.

As it seems like the prayers are winding down say, "we lift these prayers to you. Amen."

NOTES

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME SIMON PAK

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JUSTICE ISSUE: MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES, RIGHTS OF ...

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Matthew 16:21-28

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶166

OBJECTIVE

Understand what is stated in the Social Creed when it states that we commit ourselves to the rights of men, women, children, youth, young adults, the aging, and people with disabilities; to the improvement of the quality of life; and to the rights and dignity of all persons.

SUPPLIES

Paper, writing utensils

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Say:

Take a few moments and think about (write down if possible) something, an object or a person or anything that you can think of, that is precious to you.

Ask:

- What makes this “something” important in your life?
- What, if anything, would cause you to sacrifice this “something?” How difficult would it be?

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say:

One of our Social Principles as Methodists states that we commit ourselves to the rights of men, women, children, youth, young adults, the aging, and people with disabilities; to the improvement of the quality of life; and to the rights and dignity of all persons.

Ask:

Committing to anything requires sacrifice. What sacrifices must one make to commit to the wellness of those in our communities?

NOTES

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES, RIGHTS OF ...

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Read Matthew 16:21-23

Ask:

- There are moments in the bible when Jesus wishes to preserve his life. Can you think of any? (ie: Matthew 26:39, Luke 22:42)
- There are moments in the bible when Jesus put the wellness of others before himself. Can you think of any? (ie: pretty much any time there's a crowd, Jesus will stop and teach or heal or address the crowd in some way)
- Can you think of some examples of how Jesus committed himself to the rights of men, women, children, youth, young adults, the aging, and people with disabilities; to the improvement of the quality of life; and to the rights and dignity of all persons? (ie: Luke 17:11-19, John 9:1-12, John 4:4-26, etc)
- What does it mean for us to commit to such a thing?
- What would our communities look like if we committed to preserving the dignity of those around us? (depending on where you live, this may mean different things)
- Have you ever been in a situation where you were the one who needed an advocate?
- Have your rights every been violated?
- Has your dignity as a person ever been put into question?
- Have you ever been a part of a community that committed to these ideals?

NOTES

Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

The most interesting part of this passage is Jesus' rebuke of Peter for wanting to protect someone that Peter considered a teacher, a companion, and a dear friend.

It's as if Jesus was saying to Peter, "It's hard enough to think about dying! It's hard enough to think about the terrible things that I have to face! This is something that NEEDS to happen, so please stop making it harder!"

It's hard to think of Jesus as a human being. It's hard to think about the flesh part of "word made flesh." The crucifixion of Jesus is the story of a tortured man. It's a story of someone who endures the horror and cruelty that mankind has created to punish criminals. In order to redeem and restore Christ was broken down and destroyed. Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for the salvation of humankind.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES, RIGHTS OF ...

Page: 3 of 4

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

(MOVIE SPOILER AHEAD!)

Say:

In the movie Avengers: Endgame, during the final battle, Iron Man asks Dr. Strange what is the one thing that needs to happen in order to defeat Thanos. Dr. Strange tells Iron Man that if he tells Tony what is required to defeat Thanos, that it would not happen.

If Iron Man knew that sacrificing his life was the only way to beat Thanos and preserve the universe, it may not happen. This isn't because Iron Man is a selfish human, but because human beings strive hard to preserve life.

If everyone's seen the film, share what you know happens at the end of Endgame.

During this time, think of and list films from your life that exemplify a great act of sacrifice (whether it leads to heroism or even demise). Also, think of films where a character makes the "ultimate sacrifice."

Discuss why this example is inspiring and how it impacts those depicted in the film.

NOTES

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES, RIGHTS OF ...

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Share an event in life that required you to make a great personal sacrifice.

If you don't have a personal story, think of someone in your life that may have had to make a great personal sacrifice.

Ask:

Have you ever been the beneficiary of someone else's act of sacrifice?

Say:

Sacrifices are made all the time for the benefit of others. We, as Methodists, have committed to the wellness of those around us. I hope this reminds us that no matter how great a personal sacrifice is made for the good of someone else, that someone else is giving just as much for your well being also. I pray that this understanding of sacrifice will invade our communities and enrich our lives and the lives of all around us.

NOTES

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. DANIEL CHO

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JUSTICE ISSUE: COMMUNITY, INCLUSION

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Exodus 12:1-14

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 *Social Principles ¶166 A Company Litany to Our Social Creed*

OBJECTIVE

The goal is that students will examine the origin and significance of Holy Communion, a reminder of God's love for us.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

UMC Hymnal, Music to be played during the Love Feast and Closing Reflections, Grape Juice, Bread, Plate

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Welcome the students and invite them to the classroom.

Open in prayer.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say:

Communion is a powerful way for us to remember Jesus' sacrifice and forgiveness on the cross as well as to live out, out of gratitude to God and to each other. It is a reminder of God's love for us all and that we all have a seat on the table through Christ Jesus.

Read Exodus 12:1-14

Say:

Exodus 12:1-14 tells us the origin of the Passover meal. It is the finale of the plagues God sent to Pharaoh and the Egyptians. It tells us of the sacrificial lamb. In the New Testament, Jesus represents the sacrificial lamb, slain for our sins.

This Passover meal, as well as Holy Communion, is a reminder of God's love for Israel, a reminder of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and the reminder of God's love for you.

NOTES

Many students who have gone to church all their lives have heard the term "holy communion" before but they may not fully understand the powerful significance and the meaning behind the "bread and the wine (juice)." It is one of the only times in our church practices where we use ALL of our five senses (sight, taste, smell, touch, sound) to experience God.

In this scripture study, we hope students will learn the origin of holy communion so that they can know how it is important and applicable to their lives as well as assist them to remember God's great and sacrificial love for them.

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Say:

Hundreds of years before Jesus, the Israelites were enslaved by the Egyptians, and God used Moses to free the people from Pharaoh, who was the king of Egypt. The Pharaoh initially refused Moses, so God sent nine plagues to convince the Pharaoh to change his mind. Finally, God issued a warning for the tenth and final plague, and it was a big one- God said that the firstborn son in each family would die. God had a plan to protect the firstborn son of the Israel families- they had to put the blood of a sacrificed lamb on their doorway. This blood symbolized the high price to be paid for their freedom. If a home had the blood on its door, the angel of death would pass over the house and the child would live. The morning after the Passover, all the Egyptian firstborn sons were dead, including the Pharaoh's son. He was so heartbroken that he freed the Israelites from their slavery and allowed them to leave Egypt. Even in the New Testament Jesus and his disciples celebrate the Passover feast, which the Jews remembered every year how God saved Israel from captivity in Egypt.

Ask:

There was a high price to be paid for the Israelites' freedom. Are there instances where you had to make a sacrifice for someone else that was costly in terms of time, energy, money or effort? What impact did your sacrifice have on the other person?

Say:

In Holy Communion, like the Passover, Jesus takes the bread and wine (juice) which symbolizes his body broken for our sins. He did this right before he gets crucified on the cross. He tells his disciples that his body will be broken. Jesus uses the wine to symbolize his blood being poured out for the new covenant that would be made right between us and God through the price that Jesus paid for us. This wine represents the lamb's blood on the doorway that Jesus sacrificed so that death may "pass over" all of us. So like the Passover, the Holy Communion is an incredible way for us to remember Jesus' sacrifice.

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Ask:

Israelites were desperate for God, they needed to be rescued from slavery. Is there a time when you have gotten yourself into something too deep- in over your head- and couldn't get out without help? Is there a time when you needed God's help? Did God meet your needs?

Say:

When you participate in Holy Communion, it is a reminder of how much God loves you. God loves you so much that God sent Jesus to this world. Communion is a reminder of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for our sins. Our sin separated us from a holy, loving, and just God. When Jesus took those sins upon himself by dying and then rising from the dead, he provided a way for us to be right with God. We receive forgiveness for our sins when we choose to follow Jesus as our personal leader, forgiver, lord and savior.

Ask:

- Holy Communion can be seen as sharing a meal together.
- Who are some people that you most enjoy sharing a meal with? Why?
- Why do you think Jesus chose a meal to have this conversation with his disciples?
- Imagine yourself as a disciple. What are you feeling? What is going on in your head? What are you smelling, seeing, tasting, feeling and hearing at that moment?
- We are told to remember these great acts of love done for us. What kind of things do you tend to be forgetful of? What are the biggest things you have forgotten to do?
- The sacrifice of Jesus was for all. For those that were his followers but also to those who wished him harm. How often do you think we need forgiveness from our sins?
- How easily do you hold grudges?
- Why might it be hard to forgive someone who hurt you?
- What are some things we can do if we are struggling to forgive someone?

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GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say:

Think about all the possessions you have. All the stuff you have in your house or with you. All the things most valuable to you.

Ask:

- If you could help or save another person by sacrificing one of those things, would you do it? Why or why not?
- Why is sacrifice for another so powerful and meaningful?
- What is the biggest sacrifice someone else has made for you?
- What are some of the biggest sacrifices we hear on the news, or social media or from others?

Say:

Sacrifice is a powerful statement of love and concern. A sacrifice is an act of giving up something valued for the sake of something else regarded as more important or worthy. In chess, sacrifice is a move intended to allow the opponent to win a pawn or piece, for strategic or tactical reasons, for a greater purpose to win the game. In baseball, a bunted ball that puts the batter out but allows a base runner or runners to advance is called a sacrifice. In the Bible, it is an act of slaughtering an animal or person or surrendering a possession as an offering to God.

If you are able, you may lead a “Love Feast” or Holy Communion. It may be led from the UMC Hymnal but try to lead it more intimately instead of just reciting words. Break it down and explain why we do certain things within the Holy Communion liturgy. In times of confession or giving thanks, try to get students to say their own confession or prayers of thanks. This would be a great opportunity to get students to lift up words flowing from their hearts.

NOTES

Play background music.
Grape Juice
Bread

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Play some music in the background. Give some time for the students to reflect on their experience today on Holy Communion.

Say:

Remembering Jesus' love for us, pause and speak with God. Thank God for the love, forgiveness, and the gift of Jesus Christ.

Encourage students to pray for one another.

As prayers wind down. Say, "Amen."

NOTES

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. BICH THY (BETTY) NGUYEN

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JUSTICE ISSUE: RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE Matthew 18:21-35

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES None

OBJECTIVE To invite students to consider what forgiveness might mean for us personally and as a community.

SUPPLIES NEEDED Paper, Large sheets of paper, pencil/pen, markers, access to the internet through computer, tablets, and/or phone (optional)

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Invite the students to sit in a posture that will allow them to be still and mindful of their breathing. Invite them to close their eyes.

Ask the students to take a few deep breaths.

Ask the following questions, allowing some time in between for personal reflection.

- Recall a specific time when you knew/felt that you had done something that required forgiveness, asked/sought it and received it.
- Recall what was the situation, who was involved, and how did you ask/sought forgiveness.
- How did it feel when you were forgiven? Take note of how you are feeling now, recalling this memory.
- Recall a specific time when someone hurt you, asked/sought forgiveness from you and you offered it.
- Recall how it felt to have someone ask for forgiveness. How did it feel to forgive?

Ask the students to open their eyes and come back to the group.

Pray:

God, we are thankful that you are gracious. We are grateful that there are times forgiveness and reconciliation come easily, but confess that there are other times when we are confused, overwhelmed, and not sure how or if we can forgive. Thank you for journeying with us through it all. Amen.

NOTES

Depending on how your room is set up, students can sit on a chair with their backs straighten or legs crossed while on the floor.

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SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Read Matthew 18:21-22

Instructions:

Distribute paper and a writing utensil to each student or group. Have them make tally marks that total 77. Because some scholars believe that Jesus said 70 X 7, have students begin to make tally marks that totals 490 (do not let them make all 490 tally marks, but just enough for them to begin seeing or imagining how much it would be).

Once you have asked them to stop, have them quickly think about how many people they know and imagine what it would be like spending their entire life keeping track of how many times they forgave another. Have them share their answers.

Ask:

- What do you think this passage says about God?
- What do you think this passage says about us?
- What do you think this passage calls us to live into/be?

Read Matthew 18: 23 – 35

Ask: (to respond within a large group or in small groups to then report back to the whole group):

- What do you think this passage says about God?
- What do you think this passage says about us?
- Looking at the two passages, what themes are similar, what are different?
- What do you think this passage says about forgiveness?

NOTES

You can have students do this individually or in small groups.

Try to help the students imagine having a small notebook that they would carry around or an app on their phone to keep track of.

Matthew 18:24 A talent was worth more than fifteen years' wages of a laborer

Matthew 18:28 The denarius was the usual day's wage for a laborer

You can have students respond as a big group or in small groups followed by reporting back to the entire group.

The first passage does not have anyone asking for forgiveness.

The ending of the second passage does not seem to reflect the sentiment of the first one.

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GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

As one large group or in small groups, brainstorm and/or look on the internet for popular sayings, memes, etc. about forgiveness.

Ask:

- Which ones do you agree with? Why? If appropriate, ask students for real-life examples.
- Which ones do you not agree with? Why? If appropriate, ask students for real-life examples.

Personal/Easy

Instructions:

Each group gets a large piece of paper and markers. Have the students draw 2 lines, dividing the paper into 4 (a big cross or “x”) equal parts.

Have them label each quarter:

- Personal/Easy
- Personal/Difficult
- Communal/Easy
- Communal/Difficult

Have the students take some time to brainstorm, doodle, write, draw pictures within each quarter, reflecting on instances that may require forgiveness (another way to put it may be, examples of hurt, pain, disappointment and/or harm that have occurred). If working in small groups, have them share back to the larger group some of what they came up with.

NOTES

(As you know, inappropriate images can come up if there are no parental controls when searching the internet. Perhaps having some pre-selected memes and sayings printed out for the students to view as another option.)

Some examples:

Personal/Easy:

A friend accidentally spilled something on favorite clothing items.

Personal/Difficult:

A friend went onto your social media and posted something inappropriate or hurtful.

Communal/Easy:

Someone promised to bring something to a party and they forgot or got the wrong thing.

Communal/Difficult:

Racism

(Depending on your group, some heavy topics may come up such as abuse, murder, injustice within our systems such as clean water, police abuse of power, immigration...etc. Knowing your group, please set up safe, courageous, and confidential spaces for sharing.)

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Ask:

- Based on these specific passages and the brainstorming we have done today, what does forgiveness look like for us, followers of Jesus Christ?
- Consider the Communal/Difficult quarter on your paper, who are the people impacted?
- What role do you play? Are you someone who is in need of seeking forgiveness? Are you in a position to create change? And if so, what are some ways you can?

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Pray:

God, even when it is tough, please give us the courage to seek forgiveness when we have done harm. Please give us the strength to forgive when others seek it from us. Please help us recognize when there is pain within the community and find ways to relieve and change it. And Lord, when the hurt is too deep and it seems impossible to forgive, please fill us with your love and surround us with those who can support me. Amen.

NOTES

Affirming that forgiveness might not be so easy, straight forward, and can be quite complex. That sometimes forgiveness may come easy, sometimes not. Perhaps sometimes forgiveness seems/is impossible.

Help students begin thinking about:

- Racism
- Bullying
- Racial Profiling
- History/Relationship with Native Peoples

Help students begin thinking about:

- How they can address bullying in schools
- What does it mean to be an ally
- Can they participate in organizations that help change unjust laws

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. DEBBIE SPERRY

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JUSTICE ISSUE: PEACEBUILDING

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE Jonah 3:10-4:11

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES 2016-2020 Social Principles 165A & 165 C, 2016 Book of Resolutions #6126

OBJECTIVE To see how God calls us to challenging places and people and our faithfulness is about God's will and desires, not our own.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Handout script of the story of Jonah
- Bibles and/or the Voice translation (addendum to the curriculum) to read the scripture
- Paper and writing implement for each student
- Current newspapers or news magazines for students to find current events and situations involving conflict
- **Optional: small candies or other prizes as a reward
- Markers/pens/crayons, cardboard or legal size plain paper for posters in the activity
- **Optional: paint sticks or tongue depressors or sticks to make the poster like a picketing sign

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Invite the students to find a comfortable position, close their eyes and take a deep breath.

Pray:

Holy Spirit, you are welcome here. Enter our hearts and minds so we can focus on you. Open our ears and help us be willing to listen. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Invite the students to stay silent and listen for God's leading as you ask the following questions. Tell them, in their mind, they may see someone, or see or hear a word, or have some other image that shows up.

Ask:

- What is it God asks you to do that is hard? (hold silence for 30 seconds, repeat the question, hold silence for another 30 seconds)
- What do you do to avoid doing it? (hold silence for 30 seconds, repeat the question, hold silence for another 30 seconds).

Invite students to write down or draw anything that might have come to them in the quiet reflection.

NOTES

It is preferable that the room be free from major distractions. Students may want to sit on the floor or in their chair, they could even stand. It is helpful to be comfortable and still.

If students are squirrely, remind them to take a deep breath and be quiet.

Students may struggle to know if what was in their mind was what was "supposed" to be in their mind. I would say, if it came to mind during the reflection, write it down. They/you can sort out later if it was the Spirit leading or their own musings.

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Pray:

Holy Spirit, thanks for being with us. Keep speaking to us. Keep showing us where you need us. Give us the courage to listen and do what you ask. In the name of the Triune God, Amen.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Set the scene (10-15 minutes).

Read the 1-page handout script provided or give a little background on the story of Jonah. (Handouts)

There are 3 readers and 2 groups who are part of this reading. Feel free to double up parts, or spread them out so more students can participate.

1. Go to Nineveh and preach against it for its wickedness.
2. He refused. Got on a boat in the opposite direction.
3. They believed (as it is written in the scripture) that the storm was a punishment from God
4. Throw Jonah in the sea.
5. Jonah was swallowed by a fish* and stayed there 3 days until he prayed and the fish spit him out.
6. God ordered Jonah to go to Nineveh and warn them of their pending destruction.
7. They repented (full-on with ashes and sackcloth and everything).

Ask:

- What did God ask Jonah to do?
- What was Jonah's response?
- How did he and the men interpret the storm?

NOTES

*You don't have to believe Jonah was REALLY swallowed by a whale for this story to have value. Its symbolism is powerful and shows the ways we run from God, the way we can feel trapped in our disobedience, our need to repent, and God's redemption of our behavior and the situation.

(Voice translation provided—any translation is fine, but the voice can make readers theater style fun and easy. You'll need a narrator, voice of God, and voice of Jonah).

- You may want to use a whiteboard or sheet of paper to write down what the students share. Some will do better to see what is said and not just hear it.
- Meaning, what words or phrases stand out to them?

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- What was their solution?
- What happened next?
- Then what?
- What did the people of Nineveh do?

Studying the passage (10-15 minutes).

After understanding what happened in the first 3 chapters, then, read the assigned scripture for the day: Jonah 3:10-4:11

Ask students to listen again to Jonah's prayer (vs 2)

Ask:

- What do they hear?
- How does Jonah describe God?
- How does Jonah feel toward God?
- Do Jonah's characterization of God and his anger make sense together? Why or why not?
- Did Jonah like the people of Nineveh?
- Did God ask Jonah to like the people of Nineveh?
- What was it Jonah was asked to do to/for/with them?

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GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say:

Part of what God does is try to reach people. Sometimes God tries to reach individuals and get them to change something about their behavior, and sometimes God tries to reach whole groups of people and get them to change something about their behavior. This is part of what God did with Jonah. God saw the people of Nineveh were behaving poorly and God wanted that to change. So God sent Jonah as a prophet.

Ask:

- Did Jonah need to like the people?
- Did God care what Jonah did?

Instructions:

- Use newspapers or news magazines
- Tell students: find a story that talks about groups of people that might need to know more about God's messages of peace, care, and love.

Once they have their story have them share the answers to the following:

Ask:

What message might God want them to hear? (**optional candy or treat if they can provide a biblical reference—knowing the scripture even without knowing the chapter and verse counts)

Say:

Imagine you are a modern “Street Prophet” holding a sign/poster with God's message for the people. Create a poster to help the people in your article see/hear God's message.

Say:

Look back at what you drew or wrote after the listening meditation at the beginning of our time.

NOTES

(no)
(yes...that's why God persisted until Jonah went to Nineveh)

If the students need some help you might suggest:

- 10 commandments (Ex 20)
- the Golden Rule (Mt 7:12)
- Blessed are the peacemakers (Mt 5:9)
- Overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21)

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Ask:

If you saw or heard something at that time, did it make sense to you? Does it make any more sense now that you've heard the story of Jonah?

Say:

Turn to your partner, and ask

- How do you think you could be a peacemaker?
- What will you do if you don't like "them"? or are afraid of how they might respond?

Ask (to the large group):

- How do we make sure our messages are more about God than about us?
- Is it based in love?
- Is it filled with bias?
- Are we saying it with kindness?

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Ask:

- What is a challenging place/people God is calling you to?
- What do you need in order to do what God is asking?

Pray for one another. Model by praying for the student on your right.

Dear God, please help _____(name) hear you clearly and _____ (do what God has asked). Give _____ (name/pronoun) the _____ (whatever their second answer was) they need to be faithful.

NOTES

You might want to take notes on what students share to use as your guide for prayer. Or tell the students before you begin that they will be praying the person on their right, so pay extra attention when they share so they can pray for one another.

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HANDOUT

Jonah goes to Nineveh (ad lib)
by Frances Jones

CHARACTERS

Narrator, reading the story

God

Jonah

Other characters as the group allow

NARRATOR: God wants Jonah to go to Nineveh.

(Tell what God says.)

NARRATOR: But Jonah does not want to go.

(Tell what Jonah says.)

NARRATOR: Jonah got on a ship that was going the other way.

(Tell what Jonah says to the ship captain.)

(Tell what the captain says.)

NARRATOR: A big storm comes. The wind blows. The waves come over the ship. But Jonah is still sleeping.

(Tell what the men on the ship say.)

(Tell what the captain says.)

NARRATOR: Jonah tells the men why he is on the ship.

(Tell what Jonah says)

(Tell what the men say.)

NARRATOR: The men throw Jonah into the sea. Then a big fish swallows Jonah. Jonah prays to God.

(Tell what Jonah prays.)

NARRATOR: The fish spits Jonah out on dry land.

(Tell what Jonah says when he is on dry land.)

NARRATOR: God talks to Jonah again.

(Tell what God says to Jonah.)

NARRATOR: This time Jonah listens to God. He goes to Nineveh. He calls the people of Nineveh.

(Tell what Jonah says to the people of Nineveh.)

NARRATOR: People begin to listen to Jonah. The king comes to talk to Jonah.

(Tell what the king says.)

NARRATOR: The people of Nineveh change. They put on sackcloth. They sit in the dust and ashes. They tell God they are sorry.

NARRATOR: But Jonah is not happy. He goes to the city gate and makes a little tent. He sits in it. God asks Jonah if he is angry.

(Tell what God says.)

(Tell what Jonah tells God.)

NARRATOR: God talks to Jonah about the vine.

(Tell what God says.)

(Tell what Jonah says.)

NARRATOR: Then God tells Jonah how he feels about the people in Nineveh.

(Does Jonah have an answer?)

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HANDOUT

Jonah 3:10-4:11 (the Voice Translation)

¹⁰ God saw all they did and how they turned from their evil ways. So He relented and decided not to unleash the disasters He said He would *through His servant Jonah*.

4 The mercy God extended toward Nineveh upset Jonah terribly. *The more he thought about it, the angrier he became.* ²So he prayed to the Eternal.

Jonah has time to think of how greatly the Assyrians are oppressing Israel, and he can't reconcile their deliverance.

Jonah: Eternal One, isn't this what I said *would happen* when I was still in my own country? This is exactly the reason I ran away to Tarshish in the first place. *I know how You are!* I know *that You are not like other gods*, that You are full of grace and compassion, that it takes a lot to make You angry, and that Your loyal love is so great that You *are always ready to relent from inflicting misery.* ³Eternal One, *since You didn't kill them*, please take my life away from me. For my death *now* is so much better than my life *tomorrow*.

Eternal One: ⁴*Jonah*, do you have any good reason to be angry?

⁵ Jonah headed east out of the city *instead of west toward his home* to look for a place *high above the city* to sit down. He found a suitable spot and built a shelter from the hot sun. He sat there waiting to see what might happen to the city. ⁶Then the Eternal God chose a gourd plant to grow up and to shade Jonah from the discomfort of *the intense heat. The large, thick leaves of this vine made Jonah very, very happy.* ⁷But at dawn the next day, God chose a worm to chew through the *gourd's vine; that night*, it shriveled. ⁸Then when the sun rose, God chose a scorching east wind to *blow*. As the sun beat down *from a cloudless sky* on Jonah's head, he became faint. Again, he asked to die.

Jonah: My death *now* is so much better than my life *tomorrow*.

Eternal One: ⁹Do you have any good reason to be angry about this *gourd's vine*?

Jonah: Yes, *I do*. I'm angry enough to die.

Eternal One: ¹⁰*Jonah*, *don't you understand?* You care about this *gourd's vine*, and yet you didn't do anything to make it grow; *you didn't plant it, water it, or protect it.* It appeared one night then died another. ¹¹Should I not have pity on that great city of Nineveh where there are more than 120,000 people who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?

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CONTRIBUTOR NAME AIMEE HONG

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JUSTICE ISSUE: CLEAN WATER

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Exodus 17:1-7

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶160, 2016 Book of Resolutions, #1033 and #1029.

OBJECTIVE

Help students to understand that water is a gift from God for everyone.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Big bowl of water, paper, pens/pencils

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Gather.

Thumb up/Thumb down

In a circle, take turns to share a thumbs up moment from the week and a thumb down moment from the week.

Pray:

Lord, thank you for all the places that we see water.

Thank you for the beautiful calm lakes, the waves of the ocean and the calming streams of rivers.

Thank you for clean and safe water that we are able to drink, to bathe with and to fill swimming pools.

Thank you for water that grows all the living things on our earth, so that we can breathe, eat, and receive coverage from the sun.

We pray for those that don't have access to clean and safe water. For the ways that we did not take care of the earth and the areas that use to be vibrant and green are turning dry.

Lord give us a thirst for righteousness and justice in our world.

Open our hearts and minds. Help us to be your hands and feet.

Amen.

NOTES

Place the bowl of water at the center of the room or in the middle of the room as a focal point.

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JUSTICE ISSUE CLEAN WATER

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SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Read Exodus 17:1-7

The group leader can read it or the group can take turns reading a verse each.

Say:

Here's a little background to the passage that we just read. Exodus is the story of the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. It's the story of Moses encountering God, confronting Pharaoh (10 plagues) and delivers the Israelites out of Egypt. The Israelites wander the Wilderness and in each step of the way, God provides (pillar of cloud and fire, water, quails, manna.) Even though God has been providing for them, we come to our passage when the Israelites question God providing for them.

Ask:

- Why do you think the Israelites were so quick to forget and lose trust in God?
- Have you ever doubted God? Do you think it's bad to question your faith? Why or why not?
- How did God answer their doubts?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Hand out paper and writing utensils to students

Ask:

Think back on this week and write down every time you used water. (Drinking, eating, cleaning, sports, gardening...)

Pause for 5-10 minutes for students.

Say:

Turn to a partner and share your list.

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Pause 5 minutes

Say:

Now, with your partner, brainstorm what would happen if you didn't have clean water or access to water. (Sick from drinking unclean water, illness from improper sanitation, might not be able to go to school or work because you are sick, vegetation might not grow or die, drought, animals could die, no food...)

Pause 10 minutes. After 10 minutes ask the group to share their answers with the larger group.

Say:

Did you know that according to UNICEF, 780 million people worldwide lack access to safe and clean water and over 2.5 billion lack access to proper sanitation? Because of these reasons, over 1,900 children die every day from diseases related to lack of clean water and sanitation.

Ask:

Does anyone know what happened to Flint, Michigan?

(The Flint water crisis began in 2014 when the drinking water source for Flint changed from Lake Huron and the Detroit River to the Flint River because it was a cheaper source. There was insufficient water treatment and lead leached from water pipes into the drinking water, exposing over 100,000 residents to elevated lead levels and illnesses related to high levels of the lead in their bloodstreams.)

Ask:

What are some ways that we can be mindful of the water that we use? (Use reusable water bottles, turn off the tap while brushing, shorter showers, etc.,)

Say:

From the list, let's all pick one that we will commit to this week.

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JUSTICE ISSUE CLEAN WATER

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Have the bowl of water ready to be used by the group.

Ask the students to sit in the circle. Place the large bowl of clean water in the middle of the circle. Ask the group to gather and dip their fingers in the bowl.

Pray:

Thank you, Lord, for the living water that gives us life. Thank you for all the ways that we encounter water around us - in oceans, lakes, rivers, rain, snow, and fog. We thank you for access to clean water that we can drink and not get sick. It's a gift that you provide for all of creation. We know that we are privileged to have clean water. We ask that you will use us to be advocates so that others can receive clean water too. Amen.

NOTES

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. JAY CAMPBELL

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JUSTICE ISSUE: ECONOMIC JUSTICE/LIVING WAGE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Matthew 20: 1-16

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 *Social Principles* ¶163.C; 2016 *Book of Resolutions* #401

OBJECTIVE

To see that Jesus desires all who work to receive pay that is fair and generous.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Paper, pens, butcher paper, *Living Wage* Faith and Fact Card

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Welcome the students.

Say:

Think about those who work at the places they encounter (school, favorite restaurants, places they shop and hang out spots, extracurricular activities, etc.,)

As you pray, say a prayer for your community for all people to have a job and a job that treats them with respect and pays them enough to live. Invite youth to name aloud the places they go as a way of praying for the workers there.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Today's scripture passage is a parable. Before reading the scripture ask students if they can explain what parables are.

Ask:

Anyone know what a parable is? (A parable is a form of storytelling, often used by Jesus, to communicate about the reign of God using everyday illustrations and examples. Jesus uses examples of everyday life that the listeners would be able to connect to in order to share about the vision Jesus has for our world.)

NOTES

This lesson will focus on living Jesus' values to ensure that everyone is able to work and have a living wage. We encounter people working every day and every place we go to.

Before you pray, invite the youth to think about those who work at the places they encounter (school, favorite restaurants, places they shop and hang out spots, extracurricular activities, etc....).

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Ask:

- What are some of your favorite stories? What are some lessons that you learned from these stories? (i.e., Harry Potter, Star Wars, Hunger Games)
- Why do you think Jesus used storytelling to teach and communicate what he believed was important?
- This parable deals with work. When you think of work, what kind of jobs come to your mind? (Most likely youth will speak to the experience they have seen in their families.)

Read the parable together as a group. (See notes for creative ideas to read the parable.)

Ask:

- What are your first impressions after this reading?
- What do you think Jesus is trying to communicate?
- Is it fair that the workers who came at the end of the day received the same amount as those who worked all day?

Say:

The parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard is most commonly used in the Church to talk about eternal life. God is seen as an employer and the wage given to workers is eternal life. So it makes sense that those who come to faith later in life will receive the same eternal life as those who have been living their faith throughout the majority of their lives.

NOTES

Something To Try:

Engaging the text differently: Before reading the scripture you can have the youth act it out. You or another adult should be the narrator. Have the youth who are workers act out some form of work or do some task of cleaning the youth room, helping out at different stages like in the text. Then the landowner can give a little payment (pieces of candy) to each worker but will give the same amount to each person regardless of the work not being equal, then ask the youth to share their reflections about it.

Jobs shared might be a primarily white-collar or blue-collar. Are most jobs shared high paying and require certain levels of education or if are low paying and hourly jobs? If time permits you can reflect on this. Our level of privilege and affluence reflects the kind of jobs we assume we will get and/or have access to.

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Ask:

Have you heard this interpretation before? Do you agree or disagree with it?

Say:

Now we are going to look at this passage through a justice lens. What might this passage have to say about life in our world today through a justice lens? We are going to look at this passage through the lens of work and economic justice.

It appears there is a place in the community of the original listeners where people without steady work would gather each morning hoping to be picked up for a day's work.

The availability of workers suggests that there was a surplus of workers, not enough jobs and thus unemployment.

In this parable the landowner, we assume, is wealthy. He is wealthy enough to go out multiple times a day to hire workers and to pay them. The landowner tells them, "come and work the day, and I will pay you what is right."

Imagine you were being picked up in the morning for a day's work and you were not told how much you would receive, but that you would receive what is right? How would that make you feel? Nervous? Confident? Trusting? Suspicious?

The landowner comes back to the marketplace multiple times throughout the day (early morning, 9:00, 12:00, 3:00 and 5:00), each time hiring new workers to work in his vineyard.

NOTES

For deeper engagement:

*Catherine and Justo Gonzalez wrote, "Surely those who have lived with the knowledge and experience of God's love and mercy for fifty years should not complain about those who come to such knowledge only a few weeks before they die! Rather, those early believers should rejoice that they lived with such joy and grace so many years."

Are there places in your community where this happens? In my community, each morning, there are workers waiting to be hired for the day in the parking lot of Lowes and Home Depot. Ask your youth if they have encountered this before. And ask them to try and place themselves in the shoes of those who are waiting each day to be picked up for work? What must that be like?

In this situation, who has the power? The landowner, clearly. Notice he doesn't share how much he will pay, he will pay what is right, which means, he as the landowner, the one with the means and resources, gets to determine what is right.

"Justice looks different to those who are employed than to those who seek work and do not find it. Whose perspective are we to take in our search for justice?" Catherine and Justo Gonzalez*

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Now imagine you are one of the workers waiting in the marketplace to be hired. Can you imagine what that might feel like? Most likely you will be hired by someone you do not know and you will have to trust them. There is the possibility you may not get hired for the day, which means you lose a day's pay and you may not be able to provide food for your family or have enough money to pay rent. There are many people who simply cannot afford to miss a day of work and pay. Everyday work and pay is essential to be able to get life's basic necessities for one's family and oneself. No work means no food. Imagine how stressful that can make each day.

Now, as the working day comes to an end, the landowner calls the workers forward to receive their pay, he starts with those who were hired last and he gives them a full days pay (often referred to a denarius, which was considered enough for what we would call a livable wage). The workers who were hired first in the early morning saw this and got excited, they thought they would get more than a day's wage because they worked all day and not just a couple of hours. However, when they received the same amount as everyone else they complained. The landowner responds, "Friends, I am not doing you any wrong, we both agreed that you would work the day for the payment you received; I chose to be generous to those who were not hired early in the day. Can I not be generous with what belongs to me?"

Remember this parable is teaching us about the reign of God. If we assume the landowner is God, we don't have to worry about a fair and right price being given to the workers. We trust in God's generosity and we also see a testimony to God continually at work to make sure people have the opportunity to work and to receive fair pay in order to be able

NOTES

Throughout this lesson, keep inviting the youth to try and place themselves in the shoes of those looking for daily work. It can be easy in our country for people to so quickly judge those who are different than us and those who do not have the same opportunities as we do. Trying as best we can to see from the workers' point of view can help us be more compassionate and emphatic instead of making judgments about people who we do not know.

Highlight what the UMC says about the right to work and a living wage:
"Every person has the right to a job at a living wage." (*Social Principles* ¶163.C)

"A living wage in a safe and healthy workplace with reasonable hours of work is a universal right not restricted by national borders." (2016 Book of Resolutions, #401 Living Wage Model)

"In many of these situations today, even those who work all day are denied a good wage. Especially if those hired are immigrants – and particularly if they are immigrants without papers – employers may feel free to deny them any wage at all when they have labored all day. The desperation is there in almost all day-labor pool: no work, no food. No human being should live in such desperation. Those who live in the security of employment need to feel the fear of those who lack such security." Catherine and Justo Gonzalez*

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to buy life's necessities. God is relentlessly engaged to make sure we are all being cared for. If that is a picture of what the Reign of God looks like then it is a model for how the Church is to be.

We can trust God to pay a livable wage for each worker. Unfortunately, we know that is not the reality everyone in our country and world experiences. What can the Church do to help make sure people are able to work in safe conditions and to receive pay that is fair?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Invite students to break into groups and create their very own business. Tell them they are in a sense the landowner from the parable and must figure out how they will treat their employees. They can be creative and imaginative, but also to try and be realistic.

Ask:

- What kind of business will they have (retail, non-profit, phone app, restaurant, etc...)? Will the business be online or in a building where people come to for services or purchasing?
- How many employees will they have? How much will they pay their employees (yearly salary or by the hour)? How much vacation will they give and will they give paid sick days?
- How will their business earn money? How will they communicate their business to their community? How will their business impact the community they are in?

After you have given them time (10-15 minutes) – invite the youth to share their business plan with everyone.

NOTES

Print out the Living Wage Faith and Facts Card and give them out to everyone. You can find a PDF version at the bottom of this web page: <https://www.umcjustice.org/what-we-care-about/economic-justice/worker-justice>

**Preaching God's Transformative Justice: A Lectionary Commentary, Year A. Ed by Ottoni-Wilhelm, Allen and Andrews. 2013 Westminster John Knox Press*

Give groups paper, pens and/or butcher paper on the wall

Tell them they can be fun and creative with this but to also think seriously about running a business with values that reflect Jesus' teaching on the reign of God

Encourage them to come up with exact amounts that are realistic (not where everyone who works there becomes a millionaire). When they share ask why the group felt that the salary or hourly pay they give to their employees reflects a living wage.

See if any groups tried to calculate a living wage and how much the cost of living is in your community and if that guided any of their salary decisions for their employees.

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This could be a fun exercise for the group and youth can get carried away. Encourage the fun but help them think about running their business as the landowner who is generous. Is it harder to be generous when giving means there will be less for you, the landowner?

Once they finish their business plan and share it with the group, you can ask them what it would be like to not be the boss but an employee of this company that was just created. Now that they are on the other side .

Ask:

- Do you feel the pay is fair?
- Do you feel you were treated in a way that is right?
- How does the way you started thinking of your business plan reflective of the generous landowner who makes sure everyone has work and enough money to live?
- How does your business plan reflect Jesus' values?

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Close your time with this responsive prayer from Interfaith Worker Justice. (Handout)

One – Let us continue to recognize the many people whose work is a blessing, and to call those who are in leadership positions to act with justice.

All – God of Compassion, hear our prayer

One – We pray for construction workers who build our homes and places of work and worship

All – God of Compassion, hear our prayer

One – We pray for farmworkers, and poultry workers who help provide us with our food but who often work in dangerous conditions and struggle to provide food for their own families.

All – God of Compassion, hear our prayer

One – We pray that our legislators and elected officials act on the cries for justice in our community.

All – God of Compassion, hear our prayer

NOTES

There will most likely not be enough time for the groups to come up with every aspect of their business, but the hope is that they can think about work from a perspective that loves God and loves neighbor.

You can find a printable color copy here: <http://www.iwj.org/resources/bulletin-insert-prayer-for-workers>

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One – We pray that all owners and managers recognize the dignity of workers and uphold the standards of our faith traditions by providing living wages, affordable benefits and the freedom of association.

All – God of Compassion, hear our prayer

One - God of the Exodus, you went to your people in Egypt, saw their pain and set them free – free from the bondage of their oppressor. You walked with them to freedom. Walk with all who struggle for dignity in the workplace, for a living wage and for fair benefits. Bless all of us as we continue working to bring forth your vision – a vision of justice and peace, kindness and compassion, grace and mercy.

Amen.

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HANDOUT

Responsive prayer from Interfaith Worker Justice.

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Amen.

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CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. J. PAIGE BOYER

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JUSTICE ISSUE: MULTILATERALISM; WORKING TOGETHER AS A GLOBAL COMMUNITY

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES *2016 Book of Resolutions #6129, 2016-2020 Social Principles ¶165.D*

OBJECTIVE Students will understand how rules help us to live together and how shared global rules help create a global community.

SUPPLIES NEEDED UM Hymnals, bible, video, index cards/post-it notes, Cork Board and Pins OR a large table, United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Begin by asking youth to get a hymnal and invite them to look at the lyrics for the following hymns:

- UMH 437 – This is My Song
- UMH 426 – Behold a Broken World
- UMH 428 – For the Healing of the Nations
- UMH 435 – O God of Every Nation

Ask:

- Do you know these hymns?
- Do we sing these in our church?

Watch: Independence Day Tribute: “This Is My Song”

In this reedition of “This is My Song,” the song is sung showing images from around the world. Have students watch the video while noticing what countries are featured.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Before reading the scripture passage for today, it is important to set the stage for the Israelites who are receiving the law from God.

NOTES

The “This is My Song” video can be seen here: https://youtu.be/6OxSYe8_e4Y

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Say:

The Story of Israel up to this point:

The people of Israel – the 12 sons of Jacob – came to live in Egypt after a difficult famine in their homeland. One of the brothers, Joseph, was sold into slavery by his brothers but rose up the ranks in Egypt because he helped that nation prepare for the famine. When his brothers are hungry, they come to Egypt seeking assistance and discover the brother they'd sold into slavery. He forgives them and they bring their families to this new land and are welcomed by the Egyptians and their Pharaoh.

However, after this ruler of Egypt dies, a new Pharaoh rises to power. He is threatened by the Israelites and enslaves them. They are forced into labor and this new Pharaoh seeks to kill any newborn boys to keep the Israelites from growing stronger.

Born in this time is a boy named Moses who is saved from death by Pharaoh's daughter and eventually raised in his household.

Moses eventually calls for the freedom of the Israelites from Egyptian rule, and through a series of dramatic events, with God's help, Moses leads the Israelites out of slavery.

They have been freed from their enslavement to make their way back to their homeland. This journey of 40 years in the desert is a time in which they are formed as a new society and people under the grace of God.

Part of forming a new society is talking about how things work and how people will work together. It is this context that we meet the Israelites at the base of Mount Sinai, where God gives them rules and laws for how they are to live as a people.

Read Exodus 20:1-20

NOTES

Depending on the biblical knowledge of your group, they may be able to recap this story on their own.

(Genesis 39-50)

(Exodus 1-2)

(Exodus 3-14)

(Exodus 15-19)

These commandments are rules for a group of people governing themselves for the first time. Up until now, they've been governed by another group.

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NOTES

Ask:

- Why do you think the people needed these rules?
- Does it surprise you that any of them had to be recorded? Are there any that feel obvious today?
- Do you have any questions about any of these rules?

Say:

These commandments are rules for a group of people governing themselves for the first time. Up until now, they've been governed by another group.

Ask:

- What are some rules that help govern the people you spend time with?
- Are there rules in your family? At your school? In our church?

Say:

Rules exist to help us work together as a group and as a society.

These 10 rules were for a relatively small group of people wandering in a relatively small area. They have a shared experience of slavery and then freedom that binds them together. They have things in common with each other, including worshiping One God.

Rules are also necessary for how we relate to one another across differences.

Ask:

- Do you know anyone whose family or group has different rules from the ones you know?
- How can rules help us to relate across differences?

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GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say:

We are now living in a world where we are asked to relate across the whole world. We know that society is connected, that decisions on the side of the planet can impact people all over the world. There is a governing body that helps to establish and keep countries working together.

Ask:

- What is this group called? (The United Nations)
- Did you know that the UMC is supportive of the work of the United Nations?

Say:

In our Social Principles it says this: “Believing that international justice requires the participation of all peoples and nations, we endorse the United Nations, its related bodies, the International Court of Justice, and the International Criminal Court as the best instruments now in existence to achieve a world of justice and law.” (*Book of Discipline* ¶ 165.D)

Activity: Writing Commandments for living in a Global Society.

Say:

As the world is changing, and we need to work together across nations and cultures, we might need new rules to work together.

Ask:

If you were in charge of making or writing these rules, what 10 rules would you write?

Say:

First, working alone, what are 5 rules you think we need to work together as a global society?

NOTES

Alternative Activity: This is a great opportunity to review or establish rules for your own youth group.

Use the “Think, Pair, Share” model here to invite youth to develop these rules.

Allow for a few minutes for youth to work alone. Consider playing an instrumental version of one of the hymns in the Centering Moment to keep this time.

Invite the youth to work together to review their lists.

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Say:

With a partner or in groups of three, compare your lists. What do they have in common? How are they different?

Have youth write their rules on index cards or post-it notes, with one rule per card/note. Have them make a note on the card if more than one person in the group had the same rule.

Take their index cards and lay them out on a flat surface or pin them to a corkboard, inviting them to put similar rules together.

Working as a group combine and organize the cards into your own commandments of a global society. Record these rules on newsprint.

Introduce the United Nations the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Compare your group's rules to the rules of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Ask:

- What rules does your document share with the UN Declaration?
- What rules are you missing?
- What rules do you have that the UN doesn't have?

Conclude by inviting youth to consider what they might do with the rules they created. Should they share them with the church? With their adults? With others?

NOTES

If you have a small group, have the youth record their rules individually and then skip the sharing part of the activity.

Read these here: <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>

The illustrated version is another way to invite youth to engage with these rules: https://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Say:

Working together as a global society is part of today's world, and working with others can help us experience God's presence through difference and diversity, as well as through the things we share.

The work of international engagement helps us to live in our new globalized society for the betterment of all people.

As we began in song, let us also conclude our time together in song.

Sing:

UMH 431 – "Let There Be Peace on Earth" together as your closing prayer.

NOTES

Not a musical bunch? Consider reading the lyrics out loud together or listening to a recording online.

There are many versions on Youtube.
**Note that many versions online do not have the same inclusive language found in our hymnal.*

This audio recording is good for singing along too: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SX2QfzOcQQc>

This one is lovely and includes lyrics and shows images of children from around the world.
<https://youtu.be/57-0i7qghhU> **Note this version does not use inclusive language.*

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CONTRIBUTOR NAME CRAIG MOORE

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JUSTICE ISSUE: PERSONAL AND SOCIAL HOLINESS, CHURCH AND STATE RELATIONS

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE Matthew 22:15-22

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES 2016-2020 Social Principles ¶ 164 and ¶165

OBJECTIVE To better understand conflicts between competing loyalties in Matthew 22:15-22, in our churches, and in our own lives.

SUPPLIES Low-value rewards like a large bag of inexpensive candy. You may also use items like stickers or pennies. Markers/pens and paper for each participant.

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Ask:

- What conflicts have you faced recently where there were no good choices?
- Can you share a time when you feel like you were trapped between only bad options?

The facilitator may share an experience of his/her own.

Pray for God's guidance and wisdom in these difficult choices.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

***For this class, I recommend doing the group activity before the Scripture Study.

Ask:

- Who are the Pharisees? And who are the Herodians? Why are they working together?
- Are they asking Jesus an honest question?
- What is the consequence of answering "yes"? What is the consequence of answering "no"?
- What is Jesus's answer?
- What belongs to God? And, what belongs to Caesar?

NOTES

- Paying taxes to Rome was a very controversial issue.
- Jesus's opponents were using this as an opportunity to trap Jesus in order to arrest him.
- Common people hated the tax because they were poor. Many believed that paying taxes to Rome was a violation of the Torah, specifically the first two commandments.

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Say:

The Pharisees and the Herodians try to trap Jesus by asking him a question in which either a yes or a no answer would result in Jesus losing. But instead of choosing one, Jesus refuses to play. He neither answers yes nor no. In the conflict between loyalty to Rome and loyalty to God, Jesus reminds us that our first priority is to God, not to anything else. When we face no-win situations in our personal life or in public, we can also ask what belongs to God.

Ask:

Can you think of any no-win situations in which you could find yourself? Revisit any from the centering moment.

Like Jesus and the Roman tax, what conflicts might exist between faith in God and demands from civil society? (Answers depend on interpretation but may include, participation in war, the death penalty, obligations to migrants and refugees, civil disobedience, taxes, etc.)

You may read parts of ¶ 164 and ¶ 165 in the *2016-2020 Social Principles* for further information on these topics.

Ask:

- Do people from other backgrounds, communities, or nationalities face different conflicts than you?

NOTES

- The Herodians were supporters of the Herodian dynasty and were strong supporters of Rome. They believe that paying the tax is required.
- The Pharisees encouraged Torah observance among the common people. They opposed the tax because it violated the Torah but were fearful of Roman violence. They did not tell people to stop paying taxes.
- If Jesus answers “yes” that it is legal to pay taxes to the emperor, he would be in violation of the Torah, and the people will think he has sold them out.
- If Jesus answers “no”, then he will be arrested for rebellion.
- Instead, Jesus answers, “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s and to God the things that are God’s.” This forces us to ask:
- What belongs to God? *Everything*
- So, what then belongs to the emperor? *Nothing*
- Therefore, Jesus avoids answering the question but affirms that they do not owe the emperor anything because they owe everything to God.

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GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Below are two games to play. You can choose to play one or both, depending on time and resources.

Game 1: Split or Steal

Instructions:

- Divide the class into two equal groups and move them to separate areas.
- The teams will compete to win low-value prizes, referred to here as “candy”.
- The facilitator explains that 10 pieces of candy are at stake. You may also choose to use 1 piece of candy for each 1 participant.
- Each team decides if they will “split” or “steal”.
 - If both choose “split”, everyone receives an equal amount of candy.
 - If one team chooses “split” and the other “steal”, the “stealing” team receives all of the candy.
 - If both teams choose “steal”, no one receives candy.
- Have the team write down their choice. Bring the teams together and have them reveal their choice at the same time.
- After a few rounds, you may change the rules by letting the teams negotiate with each other.

Ask:

- What did you learn?
- Was it better to split or steal?
- Did discussing it beforehand help?

NOTES

Notes:

- If you don’t know what the other person is going to do in *The Prisoner’s Dilemma*, blaming always loses you the least amount of candy.
- If your partner chooses to cooperate, you lose less candy by blaming. 0 pieces lost vs 1 piece lost.
- If your partner chooses to blame, you again lose less candy by blaming. 5 pieces vs 10 pieces lost
- The same logic works for *Split or Steal*.
- If your partner chose to split, you earn the most candy by choosing to steal.
- If your partner chooses to steal, you end up with zero candy either way.

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Game 2: **The Prisoner's Dilemma**

Instructions:

- The Facilitator says that everyone has been accused of stealing candy and will be interrogated.
- Randomly match participants with a partner.
- The participants have two choices: "Cooperate" or "Blame". They can cooperate by both admitting to stealing, or they can blame it on their partner.
- Participants decide in secret which choice they will make and write it down. Participants cannot negotiate with each other.
- Explain the outcomes are as follows:
 - If both "Cooperate", each loses one piece.
 - If both "Blame", each loses five pieces.
 - If one "Cooperates" and the other "Blames", the cooperator loses 10 pieces and the blamer loses nothing.
- Have the students reveal their choices with the rest of the class watching.

Ask:

What did you learn? Why did you make your choice? Is it better to cooperate or to blame?

Say:

When people play this game over and over again, they increasingly choose "blame" because in *The Prisoner's Dilemma*, blaming is the better choice. *This game is a trap*. No matter what you choose, you're going to lose.

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Ask:

Sometimes we find ourselves in no-win situations. What do we do? (You should probably give participants their candy back!)

Ask:

Can you think of a new way to respond to *The Prisoner's Dilemma* or *Split or Steal* after hearing about Jesus in Matthew 22: 15-22?

- For example, participants could choose not to play the game out of a desire to do no harm or not to take advantage of others, or they could attempt to turn the participants against the facilitators.
- Strong relationships between participants could encourage cooperation rather than stealing or blaming.

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Close with prayer.

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TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME AIMEE HONG

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JUSTICE ISSUE: ROOT CAUSE, ADVOCACY

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE Matthew 22:34-46

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES: None

OBJECTIVE Help students to learn that the love that God wants from us is an active love and not a passive love.

SUPPLIES NEEDED Butcher paper, markers, and crayons

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Gather.

Invite the students to reflect on a God moment this week.

Pray:

Creator God, thank you for another opportunity to gather together. Thank you for always being with us and especially the moments where we were able to see glimmers and glimpses of you.

(If students are willing, ask them to share their God moments from the week.)

Be with us during our time together.

Amen.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Give a short background prior to this passage.

Say:

A few verses prior to our passage today, the Pharisees went to listen to him to test Jesus. They tested him by asking Jesus about taxes to the emperor. Jesus asked for a coin and asked them whose face is on the coin, they responded “the emperor” and he responded by saying give what is the emperor’s and give God what belongs

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JUSTICE ISSUE ROOT CAUSE, ADVOCACY

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to God. The Sadducees then asked a question about the resurrection (vs. 23-33). The Pharisees after hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees gathered together and one of their own that was a lawyer to ask Jesus a question. Which brings us to our passage for today.

Read Matthew 22:34-40

Ask:

- What was the question asked by the lawyer? (Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?)
- What was the answer that Jesus gave? (You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.")
- What are the three things that we are to love? (God, Neighbor, Self)
- What does it mean to love God? (Help the students to understand that loving our neighbors and ourselves is a way to also love God.)
- What does it mean to love our neighbors? Who are our neighbors? (Encourage the students to think outside of their circles, to those that live in a different neighborhood, and globally.)
- What does it mean to love our neighbors as yourself? What does it mean to love yourself? (This might bring up sensitive answers of self-worth - be open and sensitive to the conversation.)

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Place butcher paper (size of the table) on the table with markers/crayons.

Draw a simple picture of a church at the center.

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JUSTICE ISSUE ROOT CAUSE, ADVOCACY

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NOTES

Ask:

Let's list the ways that our church helps our neighbors. (Common ones include: meals for the unhoused, clothing drives, fundraisers, shelters, etc.)

Write the answers around the picture of the church. This can be done by the teacher or a student.

Ask:

Let's think of more ways that we can help our neighbors. Try to think of things that would have long-lasting effects. (Encourage the students to think of root causes of the issue.)

Provide markers/crayons for the students to draw/write their answers around the ministries of the church.

After 10 minutes, ask the students to share what they wrote/drew.

Ask:

Let's pick one or two things that our group can work on together at church to add to what our church is already doing.

Brainstorm ideas: try to schedule one week from now, one month from now. A simple one can be to participate in the church ministries but to take time speaking with and creating relationships with those that the church serves and finding out what specifically they may need (immediate need) but also identifying long term needs.

Say:

The love that is mentioned in the greatest commandment is not a passive type of love. It's an active type of love.

Madeleine L'Engle said: "The Best Way to Help the world is to start by loving each other, not blandly, blindly, but realistically..."

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JUSTICE ISSUE ROOT CAUSE, ADVOCACY

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Prayer (St. Francis of Assis)

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace
Where there is hatred, let me sow love
Where there is injury, pardon
Where there is doubt, faith
Where there is despair, hope
Where there is darkness, light
And where there is sadness, joy

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
And it's in pardoning that we are pardoned
And it's in dying that we are born to Eternal Life
Amen

NOTES

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME TURA FOSTER GILLESPIE

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JUSTICE ISSUE: POVERTY, INCOME INEQUALITY, LIVING WAGE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Matthew 23:1-12

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶163

OBJECTIVE

To remind students to have empathy, we don't know what burdens others carry.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Backpack, enough books of various sizes to fill it completely

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Opening Prayer:

God of All,

Open our hearts to understand how you would have us apply your Word in our lives. Be with us as we study and as we do life together. Let us feel your presence and see you in every person we encounter. Amen.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Have a student read verses 23:1-3

Ask:

- Who remembers who the “scribes and Pharisees are”?
- Do you know anyone who gives good advice but doesn't follow it themselves? Someone who doesn't “practice what they teach”? This is what the scribes and Pharisees were seen doing.

Have another volunteer to read verses 4-7.

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JUSTICE ISSUE POVERTY, INCOME INEQUALITY, LIVING WAGE

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Ask:

Does anyone know what “phylacteries” are? (Explain what they are if no one knows. Point out that it was the “right” thing to wear if you were serious about your study in the temple. Ask students for accessories that would now be seen as showing importance at church or at school. (Big cross necklaces, etc. for the church; the “right” footwear or jewelry for school.)

And another volunteer to read verses 8-10.

Ask:

- What does Jesus mean here?
- Why would someone want to be “called rabbi or teacher”? What titles show importance in your lives?
- Why is it important for us to remember we all share the same Father?

You might remind them about what historic inheritance laws come with people having different “fathers/parents.”

A final volunteer should read verses 11-12.

Ask:

- What does it mean to be humble?
- What does it mean if someone else “humbles” you?
- What would it look like to be “exalted”?
- Why do you think Jesus is turning things upside-down when he’s talking to this crowd?

NOTES

If you can have a printout or a tablet screen picture of traditional Jewish study wear (phylacteries and tallit fringes), it might help them picture the actual gear.

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JUSTICE ISSUE POVERTY, INCOME INEQUALITY, LIVING WAGE

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GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Ask for a volunteer to put on the empty backpack.

Ask:

What pressures do you feel that you have little to no control over? Or what pressures do you see on your friends? (If they need prompting: Do you feel pressure to wear the right clothes? How about to get good grades? To be seen with the “right” people?)

As each student names a pressure, have them add a book to the backpack. You can dig deeper and have them choose the size of the book that reflects how much pressure they feel. If they run out of ideas before the bag is full, ask them about burdens that poverty might add, like their family had a hard time affording a place to live or food. Ask if getting credit for the good things they do is important. That’s another book or two.

Now, ask the volunteer in the backpack how they are feeling. Ask if they would like to be rid of the “burden.” Ask the students who put books in the backpack how they felt about adding to the burden of their peer. How does it feel to see someone with a burden and know you are part of why they carry it?

Ask:

- Who would want to carry this backpack around all the time?
- Would any of you be willing to take it from your friend because you see how it is affecting them?
- Would you all be willing to take a few books so the burden is more even?

Say:

This is what we can do by working toward justice for a living wage.

Remind them of Matthew 23:4 that they just read.

Say:

If we allow our economy to continue to take advantage of some people to benefit others, we are contributing to the burden and we are the “scribes and Pharisees” who “are unwilling to lift a finger.”

NOTES

This is when the backpack and books of various sizes are needed. Be sure you are aware of any current arguments about wages or poverty happening in your context in case your students see the parallel and ask questions. If, for instance, there is a movement for higher minimum wage that is in the news, make yourself aware of what the different sides are arguing.

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JUSTICE ISSUE POVERTY, INCOME INEQUALITY, LIVING WAGE

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Pass the backpack around and tell each student or pair of students to take something out of the backpack to share the burden.

Closing prayer:

Jesus,
Thank you for teaching us that we should share one another’s burdens. Help us remember to be humble and kind, to empathize because we do not know what burdens others carry. Bless us to live free lives knowing that you carry our burdens with us. Amen.

NOTES

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. SEOKCHANE SUH

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JUSTICE ISSUE: POVERTY, ECONOMIC JUSTICE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Amos 5:18-24

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶163.E

OBJECTIVE

To learn about injustices in the world today and what we as the church can and should do.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Newspapers of different days, scissors, glue

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Ask participants to share the news that they heard this week. Ask them how they feel about what they heard.

After sharing, pray together:

God the Holy Spirit, You are the restless breath of love that sweeps through the world. You move where you will, breaking down barriers, stirring hearts to change, making all things possible. Inspire each one of us to hunger and thirst for justice! Come, Spirit of God, sweep through our world bringing great change. May the bounty of your goodness be shared more justly, so all may share in the rich blessings of your creation. And, for us, bring transformation in our praying and living, so that we may act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with you all the days of our lives. Amen.

- *Adopted from Third Space blog.*

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say:

To understand the text (5:18-24) we need to have a background understanding of the book of Amos.

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TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE POVERTY, ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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Ask:

Amos is a layperson prophet. Not a clergy or priest. God works through a person like you and me. When you hear the word 'prophet' what does it make you think?

Say:

Amos is certainly a bad news bearer. He said things that were not in favor of authorities, which made him expelled from the Northern Kingdom of Israel (7:12-13).

It is believed that Amos was active during the time of Uzziah and Jeroboam. It was a time that is believed to be a time of peace and prosperity. Yet God is speaking through Amos that not all is good and peaceful and to open his eyes to the evils occurring.

Amos witnessed how certain people of his days were abusing their wealth and their power against the poor and the weak.

Here are some things that Amos witnesses in his days.

(1:3- 2:16 ; 4:1-3; 5:10; 8:4-8)

- War Crimes
- They sell the righteous for silver.
- They sell the needy for a penny.
- Sexual abuse.
- Heavy interests on the poor.
- Fraud.
- Oppression of the poor.
- Discrimination in the court.

NOTES

- Ask what makes participants think when they hear the word, "prophet". Many times, it makes us think of "foretelling". But foretelling is not everything that prophets did. More importantly, they did "retelling" and "forth-telling". "Retelling" is to say their wrongs in the past and "forth-telling" means they stand up and go to the powers that be to point out and say what is wrong in their own time. Then it makes it easier to understand why Amos was expelled from his home country. (*Limburg, James. Hosea – Micah. Louisville, KY: WJK, 2011*)
- Many of us in the US are living in the time of peace and prosperity too. What would be the injustices we witness in this country today?

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JUSTICE ISSUE POVERTY, ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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And Amos makes clear that God's attention is to the weak and the poor.

Amos also points out that the people in his time were eager to go to worship without pursuing and practicing justice and righteousness (4:4-5).

In the scripture, *The Day of The Lord* is something that people in the days of Amos were expecting with joy and hope. The day that God would judge other nations. Amos reminded them they were also complicit in the injustices. That is why he says the Day of the Lord is dark, not light.

Chapter 5, Amos is urging the people of his time to seek justice and righteousness, reminding them that God rejects their offerings and worships when they only pay attention to their greed, not on the poor and the needy.

Ask:

What does justice mean for you? In the Bible?

Read Isaiah 10:1-4

Ask:

- Who else can be the weak and the oppressed in the US today?
- What is the purpose of worship? Amos' idea is that "to find the Holy one not the holy place"
- What do you think is the task of the church in the world today?

Say:

This is what the Book of Discipline says about our mission: "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by proclaiming the good news of God's grace and by exemplifying Jesus' command to love God and neighbor, thus seeking the fulfillment of God's reign and realm in the world. The fulfillment of God's reign and realm in the world is the vision Scripture holds before us."

NOTES

- Pair of sandals is an expression of a really cheap price.

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JUSTICE ISSUE POVERTY, ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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Justice in the bible usually means to become advocates for the marginalized people. Bible often lists them as the poor, widow, orphan and the foreigners.

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Ask participants to form groups.

Instructions:

Bring newspapers of different days and provide a newspaper to different groups and ask them to find examples of social injustices.

Have participants to cut them and to present one or two examples of injustice they found in the newspaper.

Ask:

Share the injustice that you found. What would be a way that the church can respond?

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Pray:

Most merciful God, we remember before you all poor and neglected people whom it would be easy for us to forget: the homeless and destitute, the old and sick, and all who have no one to care for them. Help us bring healing to those who are broken in body or spirit, turning their sorrow into joy. Through the power of Jesus Christ who, for our sake, became poor that we might be made rich. Amen.

*Adapted from the Book of Common Prayer.

NOTES

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. DR. EMILY A. PECK-McCLAIN

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JUSTICE ISSUE: LIVING WAGE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Matthew 25:14-30

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶163

OBJECTIVE

Introduce students to the federal minimum wage in conversation with the biblical text and offer them the opportunity to write to their elected officials to ask for higher minimum wage to be implemented.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Census information for Group Work, to be put onto an information sheet by the teacher. Copies should be available for each student. Computers and/or smartphones or printed letters, envelopes, and stamps for the youth to sign and address.

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Breath Prayer:

Do not fear (breathe in)
I am with you (breathe out)
Do not be afraid (breathe in)
I am your God (breathe out)
I will strengthen you (breathe in)
I will help you (breathe out)

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Read Matthew 25:14-30 together

Say:

At the beginning of Matthew 25 (which we didn't read for today), we hear that Jesus is telling some stories in order to describe what the kingdom of heaven is like. This analogy is pretty interesting! In this passage, the master

NOTES

Notes: Depending on the makeup of your class, you may have youth who are part of families with a lot of economic wealth and/or families with very little. The way you lead this conversation will largely depend on who is present in the room and what Good News they need to hear. Be careful not to make assumptions or use "us/them" language. (For example, "we need to advocate for those who do not have a living wage" assumes all in the room are part of families with a living wage and "those others" do not.).

The Centering Moment today will be a breath prayer when you pray one line when breathing in and one line when breathing out. Invite your students to settle in and calm their bodies and minds. Explain to them that you will be repeating a few lines and they should breathe in with one and out with another. You can demonstrate first and they'll be able to pick it up quickly. These lines are from Isaiah 41:10. Plan to go through the lines about 3 times.

Notes: Because of the length of this scripture passage it may help youth pay attention more if the scripture is read by different voices. Select some strong readers ahead of time, preferably giving them the scripture a week beforehand so they can practice it. Parts include: Narrator/Jesus, Master, 3 slaves. If you have a particularly dramatically inclined group, encourage them to act the passage out while they say their lines.

Notes: Slavery was a fact of life in the first century, though it was different from the slavery practiced in the United States. Treatment of slaves depended on their masters, some of whom were harsh and some were not. The Bible includes a lot of verses addressing slavery, in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. In this passage we see Jesus doing what he always does when he is teaching people – using examples from their lives so they can understand. In the history of the United States, slaveholders used the Bible to justify their position. Likewise, abolitionists often turned to scripture to support theirs. The kind of slavery practiced in the United States would never have been condoned by Jesus. You may want to do some more research on

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JUSTICE ISSUE LIVING WAGE

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gives each of three slaves a large sum of money while he goes away on a journey. This was a large amount of money! One talent was equivalent to about 20 years of income for the average worker. That means that giving 5 talents was like giving someone the amount of money a person would make working for 100 years. Clearly, the master in this story is very wealthy!

Ask:

- What would you do if you had as much money as the average person makes in 100 years?
- What do you think it would have been like to be entrusted with this much money? How do you think the slaves felt about it? Why do you think the master do this?
- Why do you think Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is like this?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Instructions:

Divide youth into small groups of 2 or 3. Pass out the information sheet you have made. Remind the youth that this information is 10 years old now because a new census has been taken this year. It is likely that the statistics available through the census website will not yet reflect the 2020 numbers.

Ask the youth to spend time looking at the information you have given them. Now they have real numbers to consider: What would 20 years of average income equal? What about 100? If they had this much money, what could they buy?

NOTES

this topic before this Sunday school lesson so that you are prepared to answer any questions that may come up.

Notes: Perhaps the most common way to interpret this passage is to think of the master as the “Jesus figure.” But since we know Jesus is not a greedy master who just wants to make more money, we also know we need to interpret this text differently. In the context of Matthew’s gospel, Jesus likens himself not to a wealthy slave master, but instead to the hungry, thirsty, naked, stranger, and prisoner (Matthew 25:31-46, which comes up in the lectionary next week). After you gather the answers from your students to this question, say, “In this parable, Jesus is showing us that when we get a bunch of money and use it to get more money, we might be rewarded, but we won’t be being faithful. It is actually the third servant, the one who buries the wealth, who shows us what the kingdom of heaven is like. It is not like ‘entering into the joy’ of a harsh and wealthy master who just wants you to make him more money. It is like waiting for Jesus by focusing not on wealth, but on taking care of others, which we’ll hear more about next week.”

Notes: For this part of the lesson, you will need to do some research ahead of time. You can go to factfinder.census.gov and put the zip code for your church into the search engine under “Community Facts.” There you will find lots of information about your location. Look on the lefthand menu and click on “Income.” You’ll also want to look at “Poverty.” Other areas of interest might be “Education,” “Housing,” and “Race and Hispanic Origin.” Gather some information to share with your youth about what income levels are in your area, what housing costs, and what poverty levels are like. You might have interesting information to share as well as race and education and how those factors relate to income and poverty. You should compile these facts that you see are particularly interesting for your group and put them on a document. You can type it or handwrite it, but copies should be available for each youth.

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JUSTICE ISSUE LIVING WAGE

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Ask the youth if they know how much a loaf of bread costs, a gallon of gas (and how much gas goes into a car's gas tank), a gallon of milk, a year of in-state college tuition. Be prepared to offer them the answers to these questions, especially younger youth who may not know. In front of them will be the average housing costs.

Say:

The federal minimum wage is \$7.25 an hour, and has been since 2009. The minimum wage for someone who earns tips, like a server in a restaurant is \$2.13 plus tips an hour. This is the minimum legal amount someone must be paid for an hour of work in the United States. Some states have a higher minimum wage, but no one can have a lower one. The federal poverty level for a family of two adults and one child is \$20,160 per year. Someone working full time and earning the minimum wage makes \$15,080 per year. You may think, then the other parent can also get a job, and then they will have more than the poverty level. Keep in mind that not every family has two parents, not every family has two parents who can work, and if there are two parents and both parents are working full time, then they must also pay for childcare, either full time, before and/or after school care, and extra care for times when school is closed for holidays or summer vacation.

Say:

We know from our scripture that the kingdom of heaven doesn't look like trying to just earn more and more money for a greedy master. Instead, Jesus teaches us to care for others. For those who are seeking to earn enough money to feed and clothe and house them and their families, they are not trying to be like the first two slaves. They are trying to survive. If we are to be like Jesus, we are to make sure everyone, ourselves and our neighbors, those we know and those we don't, have enough income to live healthy and safe lives.

Ask:

What do think you can do to help people have enough money to live lives out of poverty? Do you think the minimum wage needs to be higher for people living in your area?

NOTES

Notes: Look up your state's minimum wage so you can also share that number with your youth.

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JUSTICE ISSUE LIVING WAGE

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Say:

As United Methodists, we support a Living Wage for all workers. The only way the Federal Minimum wage can be higher is if a new law is put into place. Our elected officials need to hear from us that we support a higher minimum wage and need them to do so as well.

Write:

Letters to your Representatives and Senators asking them to raise the minimum wage.

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Close today by offering an opportunity for the youth to offer any prayer joys and concerns they have. Pray together including all the things the youth have mentioned, especially including those who struggle to support themselves and their families because of a low wage job, whether they are in the room or not, in the church or not. Pray that everyone might indeed have a living wage and that our elected officials will be moved by our letters.

NOTES

Notes: This is most easily done through the GBCS website. A pre-written letter is available, you just have to fill in personal information. Visit <https://www.umcjustice.org/what-you-can-do/advocacy/take-action/raise-the-minimum-wage> to do this. If you do not have access to computers and/or smartphones during Sunday school, you can print out letters with the same text (copy and paste from the GBCS site) for the youth to sign.

Senators can be written to at:

Office of Senator (Name)
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510.

Representatives can be written to at:

Office of Representative (Name)
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515.

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME DIONICA (NICA) SY

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JUSTICE ISSUE: MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE Matthew 25:31-46

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES 2016-2020 Social Principles ¶162, ¶163

OBJECTIVE To recognize our role in seeing and responding to the needs of the marginalized, and to recognize that these needs are met through both immediate and systemic change.

SUPPLIES NEEDED Whiteboard/large sticky note pad, sticky notes (two different colors), pens and markers

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Lead the group in the following mindfulness activity and opening prayer:

1. Think of a word that seems calm or soothing. This could be a word like “peace” or “love” or “peaceful” or “snowflake” or “sunlight” or “hum” or “calm.”
2. Think the word to yourself. Say it silently and slowly in your mind. Say your word to yourself with each breath you take, in and out. Keep your attention gently focused on your word.
3. When your mind wanders, guide your attention back to your word, and keep saying it gently and slowly while you relax and breathe.

After one minute, or whatever length of time feels right for you and your group, end with the following prayer:

Holy One, open our eyes to see and recognize all that you have for us today. Amen.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Invite a member of the group to read Matthew 25: 31-46

Read Matthew 25: 31-46 again yourself, inviting the group to think about what words stand out.

Ask each group member to share one word from the scripture that resonates with them.

NOTES

This mindfulness activity, entitled “Mindful Word,” can be found on KidsHealth (<http://bit.ly/mindfullyouth>).

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JUSTICE ISSUE MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION

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Ask: (in small groups)

- Tell the story of a time you had a need, and someone met it. What was that experience like?
- Tell the story of a time you saw the need of someone else and you were able to meet it. What was that experience like?
- This scripture talks about seeing the needs of the community and providing/caring for them. What are the needs you have seen in your community?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Instructions:

As a large group, write on the board the community needs named in the small group.

Pass out sticky notes in one color and have people write actions they (individually or as a group) can do to address those immediate needs.

Next to the community needs, brainstorm a list of possible root causes of the needs previously listed.

Pass out sticky notes in another color and have people write actions they (individually or as a group) can do to address the root causes of the needs.

Have everyone place their sticky notes on the board below where the needs and root causes are listed. Read all of the written actions to the group.

NOTES

An example of this could be, “I really needed someone to talk to, and one of my friends offered to listen. It felt really good to express myself and to feel understood.”

Be clear in how you or your group define “community,” as it may shift what needs are named. The community you name can be as large or as small as you’d like, but it is important to be clear. It may be good to remind the group that God calls us to be in community with the whole world (reference to *2016-2020 Social Principles* ¶165).

If groups struggle with naming needs they see in their community, take a moment to question why that might be. What is getting in the way of seeing these needs? Is our privilege getting in the way of seeing others’ needs? Have we not defined our community-wide enough?

Thinking of root causes may require some prompting for you. Example: if a need is housing (the problem is homelessness), the root cause may be rising rent costs, gentrification, etc.

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JUSTICE ISSUE MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

As a group, choose a few issues and their correlated sticky notes to tackle as a group. Invite the students to take remaining sticky notes with them, committing to pursue the actions within the next week/month.

To close, read the following benediction:

May God bless us with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that we may live deep within our hearts.

May God bless us with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that we may work for justice, freedom, and peace.

May God bless us with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, and war, so that we may reach out our hands to comfort them and turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless us with enough foolishness to believe that we can make a difference in this world so that we can do what others claim cannot be done.

Amen.

(A Franciscan Blessing)

NOTES

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. JULIO HERNÁNDEZ

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JUSTICE ISSUE: CREATION JUSTICE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Mark 13:24-27

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶160

OBJECTIVE

To help students be aware of the wonder of the earth—God’s creation.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Handout of the Mary Oliver Poem. Dependent on Group Activity.
- Decoration Ideas: Good soil in a pile in the center of the room.
- Art Activity: Blank Paper and supplies to illustrate any variety available (coloring pencils, paints, charcoal, scrap paper for mosaics).
- Option 1 Group Activity: Trowels or shovel, a container to place soil samples, a Ziplock bag, plastic container or small bucket to mix soil samples (approximately 5 cups of soil), mailing envelope, and payment for testing soil.
- Option 2 Group Activity: Old paper (worksheets, newspaper, junk mail, etc.), Seeds, Bucket or plastic bin for soaking paper, Blender or food processor, Strainer or colander, Optional: Paper shredder, Cookie cutters.

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Taste of the Earth

Instructions: Choose four volunteers. Blindfold each volunteer. Each student will taste the fruit or vegetable and describe what they taste. Once they have given different adjectives for the food item, they can guess what they are eating. If you have a larger group, you can have a competition among different groups and keep score who can guess the most fruits or vegetables.

After the game ends, discuss where the fruits/vegetables come from.

Say:

We are people of the earth. All of our nourishment comes from our relationship from the land. You have just tasted something that grew from this land. In Genesis, we get a picture of creation. In Genesis 1, the Hebrew words for Adam and earth are very similar, it is similar to saying earth and earthling. At the heart of the biblical narrative, there is a close relationship between the earth and humans and God. We will be exploring this today.

NOTES

Preparation: I encourage you to read both the scripture and the article “Reconnecting With the Soil, We Heal the Planet and Ourselves” by Leah Penniman (included in handouts).

Note on the Fruits/Vegetables: Whenever possible try to use homegrown produce. The objective is to return to the earth created by God. By using locally grown produce we are trying to get as close to the earth as possible.

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE CREATION JUSTICE

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SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Pray the Great Spirit Prayer:

Oh, Great Spirit,
Whose voice I hear in the winds
and whose breath gives life to all the world.
Hear me! I need your strength and wisdom.
Let me walk in beauty, and make my eyes
ever hold the red and purple sunset.
Make my hands respect the things you have made
and my ears sharp to hear your voice.
Make me wise so that I may understand
the things you have taught my people.
Let me learn the lessons you have hidden
in every leaf and rock.

Help me remain calm and strong in the
face of all that comes towards me.
Help me find compassion without
empathy overwhelming me.
I seek strength, not to be greater than my brother,
but to fight my greatest enemy: myself.
Make me always ready to come to you
with clean hands and straight eyes.
So when life fades, as the fading sunset,
my spirit may come to you without shame.
(Translated by Lakota Sioux Chief Yellow Lark in 1887.)

Read Mark 13:24-31 together.

Provide supplies for students to draw.

NOTES

Supplies:
Blank paper and coloring utensils (color
pencils, watercolors, paint, and markers).

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE CREATION JUSTICE

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Ask:

In verses, 24 to 27, use art to describe the emotion in this passage. What are images that stick out to you? What colors or textures do you see?

Pause for students to draw

Ask:

These are intense words. Would someone like to share their artwork and how it captures the emotions of these verses?

Say:

We have spent some time reflecting on these verses. Now let us think about the relationship of this verse with the earth. In Mark, we see this wide expansiveness of the Kingdom of God. The passage starts off from the Sun to the moon, sky, heavenly bodies, to a particular tree, a fig tree. We are drawn from this universal to a very specific tree. And we are called to observe the tree's growth. It is almost as if the health of this tree is a sign of God's kingdom. Let's now reflect on the last part of our passage.

Read Mark 13:32-37 together.

Reflection through art (7 minutes)

Say:

Illustrate verses 32 to 37. You have heard people talk about being "woke," Jesus gives us the same imperative. Reflect what it means to stay awake. Draw or write about what it means to stay awake/aware.

Ask:

Jesus reminds us to stay awake and aware. What do you think Jesus is asking us to be aware of in these verses?

NOTES

Mark 13:24-27

This is the first Sunday of Advent. The Lectionary brings us to a passage that is calling the church to a double awareness of Jesus in the manger and Jesus glorified and upon the throne (Philippians 2).

This passage is calling us forth into a new epoch under Jesus the crucified one. There is a cataclysmic language that we can skip over easily. Take time to pray for God to help you enter into the emotion of this passage.

Mark is using cosmic language that harkens back to Genesis 1, the creation of the world. A cosmos that starts in a garden.

The gathering of the people from all over the world is imagery of the vast dominion of God's people.

Mark 13:32-37

Jesus' words center around the *Parousia*, a Greek word with lots of theological meaning. It refers to Jesus' second coming. At the same time, we are called to remember Christ in the manger—a helpless baby. In a world that at times can seem like there is no hope we live in anticipation for Jesus' return. We are celebrating the coming Jesus Emmanuel, "God with us" and we are celebrating the coming Kingdom of God.

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE CREATION JUSTICE

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Read ¶ 160 in the 2016-2020 Social Principles on *The Natural World*
“All creation is the Lord’s, and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it.”

Ask:

One thing that Jesus is asking of us is to be aware that we live in God’s good earth. What does this mean for our stewardship of creation? Take a few suggestions.

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Read Romans 9:19-23

Option 1:

Say:

In this passage, creation groans for redemption and renewal. We are part of that in-breaking of Kingdom of God on earth. Did you know there is a type of justice worker named: safe-soils activist. These are people that work for soil to be free of toxins and harmful metals that can affect peoples’ health. Leah Penniman is one of these activists. She began her justice work when she discovered her 18-month old daughter had elevated levels of lead from the soil she played in the community garden in Worcester, Massachusetts. Now Leah works on an urban farm helping restore the land back to health. Now we are going to test our own soil on our church grounds.

NOTES

This Kingdom is here but not yet.

The cosmic language reminds us that there is a realm that we cannot control, but then we are brought to a very real parable of a tree. This tree is for us a sign of God’s coming kingdom. Here is the king Jesus that came to earth as a particular person. The earth is the place where we operate as agents of this Kingdom. We embody the Kingdom here and now in a particular place.

The fig tree is a harkening back to the fig tree in Mark 11 that is fruitless. Here the tree is budding. There is a redemptive element in the in-breaking kingdom. God is restoring the earth.

There are two options. The first option is to test the soil of your church grounds. Second, option is to make seed balls.

Resources

By Reconnecting With the Soil, We Heal the Planet and Ourselves by Leah Penniman
National Farm Workers Ministry

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

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Soil Testing: Instructions

Take small samples from your soil. If you are gardening for food consumption, then dig 6 to 8 inches deep. Get a container large enough to hold all the earth collected. Remove any debris, like pebbles, leaves, or roots. Next, mix soil and put 1 cup of soil into a plastic bag. Make sure soil is dry, but do not use anything to dry the soil. Mail the bag to a soil testing lab.

When you get your results you can watch this University of Delaware video to interpret your report. You can invite a master gardener from your community to help you understand your results.

After collecting samples and preparing to mail:

Ask students to predict the health of the church's soil.

Do you think we could grow edible plants or fruits on our soil?

Option 2:

Say:

Part of taking care of God's good creation is to be caretakers of the earth. We sow seeds for all kinds of reasons. What do you think are some reasons we sow seeds?

Write these out for everyone.

Say:

Today we are going to make some seed balls or shapes. Let's see how we can use these seeds for good.

Making Seed balls – instructions in the handout.

NOTES

*Many universities test soil for a low cost, usually between \$10 to \$20. Google to find the best site to test your soil.

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Say:

This Advent season let us celebrate Jesus with us, Emmanuel, who walked the earth. God inspires us to live as bearers of the Kingdom on this earth. May this Advent season open us more to God’s world.

Read Poem (Handout)

“Making the House Ready for the Lord”

by Mary Oliver See the handout below for the poem.

NOTES

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HANDOUT

“Making the House Ready for the Lord”

By Mary Oliver

September 25, 2006

Dear Lord, I have swept and I have washed but
still nothing is as shining as it should be
for you. Under the sink, for example, is an
uproar of mice it is the season of their
many children. What shall I do? And under the eaves
and through the walls the squirrels
have gnawed their ragged entrances but it is the season
when they need shelter, so what shall I do? And
the raccoon limps into the kitchen and opens the cupboard
while the dog snores, the cat hugs the pillow;
what shall I do? Beautiful is the new snow falling
in the yard and the fox who is staring boldly
up the path, to the door. And still I believe you will
come, Lord: you will, when I speak to the fox,
the sparrow, the lost dog, the shivering sea-goose, know
that really I am speaking to you whenever I say,
as I do all morning and afternoon: Come in, Come in.

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

HANDOUT

How to Make Seed Balls from Recycled Paper

Materials for Making Seed Balls:

Repurposed paper (worksheets, newspaper, junk mail etc.)

Seeds (It is best if you plant seeds native to your area or seeds beneficial to your surroundings. For example, milkweed is beneficial for monarch butterflies, but some people see this plant as a nuisance, so consider your neighbors.)

Bucket or plastic bin for soaking paper

Blender or food processor

A few bowls or containers

Strainer or colander

Drying Rack or Racks depending on how many you make.

Optional: Paper shredder

Optional: Cookie cutters if you want to make your seed balls into shapes. (You could use cookie cutters that are relevant to Advent for your community. You could use stars, Christmas trees, or candle cookie cutters.)

Tip: ask a local nursery or a hardware store if they have any seeds to donate.

Directions for Making Seed Balls

Collect paper to make the seed balls. Newspaper, worksheets from school (which kids would really like to destroy old homework), junk mail, paper towels, and any paper product on-hand.

Next you want to make paper into small shreds. A paper shredder is also a good tool for this job.

Place paper into a bin and cover with water.

Put paper pulp into blender about a third of the container and same amount of water as pulp. Then blend. WARNING: make sure to use the blender or food processor safely.

Blend until you have mushy the consistency of oatmeal, the more fine the pulp the better.

Place a colander into a bowl. Then place pulp into the colander. Blend all the soaked paper and then squeeze out water until it is damp enough to hold together into ball. If it falls apart add some of the water from the container of the soaked paper back to the mix.

Next, you will mix seeds by hand into the pulp.

Now you can shape into whatever works. You can roll some out flat and use cookie cutters. Squeeze out any water and then place seed ball on a drying rack. Keep shapes and balls as thin or small as possible. It can take up to three days to dry out. If you place in hot sun it will dry out faster.

Once dried they are ready to plant. You can place them in a burlap bag as a nice gift.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

CONTRIBUTOR NAME AIMEE HONG

Page: 1 of 3

JUSTICE ISSUE: ADVOCACY

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Mark 1:1-8

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 *Social Principles* ¶166

OBJECTIVE

To help students realize that the coming of Jesus is a promise to break the chains of oppression.

SUPPLIES

Copies of *Our Social Creed* (2016-2020 *Social Principles* ¶166) for each student. Copies of *Letter to Birmingham Jail* for each student. Abridged version https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/coretexts/_files/resources/texts/1963_MLK_Letter_Abridged.pdf

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Gather

Share a “thumbs-up” or “thumbs-down” moment from the week.

Pray:

Lord, we thank you for gathering us here today. We thank you for (list all of the names of the students) and how you were with us through all of our “thumbs-up” and “thumbs-down” moments of the week. We ask that you open our hearts, our minds, and our ears so that we can more clearly hear your voice. Amen.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Read Mark 1:1

Say:

The writer of Mark is very strategic from the first verse. It might seem harmless to us but from the first verse Mark is calling out Caesar. Caesar at the time of his reign referred to himself as the Son of God. Mark from the first verse delegitimizes Caesar’s claim.

Read Mark 1:2-8

Feel free to ask the students to dramatize the reading.

NOTES

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE ADVOCACY

Page: 2 of 3

Ask:

Can someone summarize what we just read?

Say:

The passage tells us about John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus. Isaiah 40:3 says “A voice cries out: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’”

Ask:

Does this sound familiar? (sounds like verse 3)

Say:

The writer of Mark is referring to a verse from the Old Testament because Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecy in the Old Testament. Jesus is the one promised to break the chains of oppression.

Ask:

- In many ways, Jesus brought upon a movement - a change. Do you think the people of Jesus’s time were ready for Jesus?
- Do you think we, our communities, the world would be ready for Jesus today?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say:

In April of 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. was arrested for his involvement in a massive direct action campaign in Birmingham to attack the city’s segregation system. The day that he was arrested, eight Birmingham clergy members wrote a criticism of the campaign in the *Birmingham News*, saying that the campaign was “unwise and untimely” and appealing “to both our white and Negro citizenry to observe the principles of law and order and common sense” (*A Call for Unity*).

NOTES

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE ADVOCACY

Page: 3 of 3

The “Letter from Birmingham Jail” was King’s response to *A Call for Unity*.

The letter is long but a very powerful piece. If time allows, take turns reading the whole letter. There is also an abridged version as well.

Ask:

- King wrote, “For years now I have heard the word “Wait!” It rings in the ear of every Negro with a piercing familiarity. This “wait” has almost always meant “never.” Why do you think the 8 clergymen that wrote the criticism and to wait; wrote what they did?
- King also wrote, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” Do you think King is right?
- How do you think the clergymen who wrote *A Call to Unity* felt reading King’s response?

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Gather the students together.

Pass out *Our Social Creed (2016-2020 Social Principles ¶166)*.

Close the lesson by praying the Social Creed together.

NOTES

You can find the letter here:

http://okra.stanford.edu/transcription/document_images/undecided/630416-019.pdf

Abridged Version:

https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/coretexts/_files/resources/texts/1963_MLK_Letter_Abridged.pdf

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

CONTRIBUTOR NAME LISA JO BEZNER

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JUSTICE ISSUE: MENTAL HEALTH CARE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE	Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 and Luke 4:16-21
SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES	2016-2020 Social Principles ¶162.X
OBJECTIVE	To bring awareness to mental health and our response as the church.
SUPPLIES NEEDED	Copies of <i>Faith We Sing</i> 2217, UMH 512, and Scripture passages, pencils/colored pencils

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Sing or read *Faith We Sing* #2217 “By the Babylonian Rivers.” Alternately you may find a recorded version on YouTube.

Ask people to share their concerns about current events.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say:

Read Luke 4:16-21 silently while marking any phrases that stick out to you.

Ask for volunteers to read the passage and ask youth to underline any new phrases they notice. Let them share what they notice.

Ask:

- Why do you think the people of Nazareth rejected Jesus?
- What do you think he is preaching about?

Say:

Now turn to Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 and repeat the reading and marking process.

Give them time to imagine between prompts:

- Imagine how you would feel if you watched the city you lived in destroyed by enemies.

NOTES

“If you’re going to read it, you may want to provide in the form of poetry without the musical setting.

Provide copies of Luke 4:16-21 with Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 on the opposite side.

The “year of the Lord” is the year of Jubilee in Lev. 25:8-12 or debt relief when the land was returned to the original owner every 50 years.

The book of Isaiah contains the destruction of Jerusalem and the Northern Kingdom in 596 BCE, their captivity or exile in Babylon and the return to Jerusalem around 539 BCE. This section is attributed to Deutero-Isaiah or a third author of the book.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE MENTAL HEALTH CARE

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- Imagine how you would feel if those enemies forced you to move to their city and work for them.
- Imagine how you would feel if after 50-70 years you were allowed to return home.

Say:

In the NRSV, Isaiah 61:1 includes the phrase “to bind up the brokenhearted,” which is translated as “To bind up the wounded of heart” in the Jewish Study Bible.

Ask:

What do you think the difference is?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say:

In the 2016-2020 *Social Principles* ¶162.X it states “The World Health Organization defines mental health as ‘a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.’ ”

Have them look at the passages they marked in their initial reading.

Ask:

- How many of you relate to physical relief and how many to mental or emotional relief?
- What do you think of when you hear the term “mental illness”? Why do you think there is such a stigma around mental illness?
- What can you do to remove the stigma in your community?

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Sing or read UMH 512 *Stand By Me*.

NOTES

If you know of any mental illnesses in your group, find out more about it through the National Institute of Mental Health (www.nimh.nih.gov) or Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development (<http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/>)

Youth Mental Health First Aid courses may be offered in your community: <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/about/mental-health-first-aid/>

It can be done as a call and response.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

CONTRIBUTOR NAME LISA JO BEZNER

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JUSTICE ISSUE: SEXISM

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE Luke 1:46b-55

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES 2016-2020 Social Principles ¶162.F

OBJECTIVE Identification of subtle sex-role stereotypes in texts we normally don't question.

SUPPLIES NEEDED Copies of *United Methodist Hymnal* 198-200 for the students to write on, pencils/pens

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Either sing UMH 198 *My Soul Gives Glory to My God* or responsively read UMH 199 *Canticle of Mary*

Ask:

- Luke 1:46b-55 is often called the “Magnificat” and is read as the Psalm reading or Gospel reading every year during Advent. What message do you hear?
- How do you think Mary felt?

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say:

Luke 1:46b-55 is thought to draw on Hannah's plea and prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. Read Hannah's prayer and compare it to Mary's prayer.

Break into pairs and highlight verses that are the same.

Ask:

- What do you notice about the verses that are different?
- What does that tell you about the difference between Mary and Hannah?

Say:

Luke 1:48 is thought to be drawn from 1 Samuel 1:11. Compare these two verses.

NOTES

Make copies of UMH 198 through UMH 200 for the youth to write on.

One of the verses that should stick out is Luke 1:48 “for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.” In 1 Samuel 2:1, Hannah doesn't claim to be a servant but rejoices in her victory.

The biggest difference is Hannah is asking to be looked upon so she can become pregnant, whereas Mary is already pregnant.

UMH 200 does not appear to have that verse in it.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE SEXISM

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Ask:

- What is different?
- What does it tell you about Mary and Hannah?
- With that verse in mind, look at UMH 200 *Tell Out, My Soul* by Timothy Dudley-Smith. Where do you see that verse reflected in the hymn?
- With that verse in mind, look at UMH 198 *My Soul Gives Glory to My God* by Miriam Therese Winter. Where do you see that verse reflected in the hymn?

Say:

We've been paying particular attention to that verse because of the way it has traditionally been ignored or explained.

Bede in *Homilies on the Gospels* wrote: "In the following words she teaches us how worthless she felt of herself and that she received by the heavenly grace that was lavished on her every sort of good merit that she had."

John Wesley in *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* wrote the Magnificat was said: "Under a prophetic impulse, several things, which perhaps she did not then fully understand." In connection with v. 48, Wesley wrote: "In like manner has He regarded our low estate; and vouchsafed to come and save her and us, when we were reduced to the lowest state of sin and misery."

Raniero Cantalamessa in *The Mystery of Christmas: A Commentary on the Magnificat, Gloris, Nunc Dimitis* writes " ... that God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong ..."

Ask:

Can you think of times in history when women had to appear less knowledgeable or weaker in order to be heard?

NOTES

Luke 1:48 appears in the second half of the first verse.

Quoted in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*.

Bede (672/673-735), Benedictine monk raised in the Northumbrian monastery from age 7.

However, Mary utters the phrase not from a lowly state like when Hannah pleads, but from a blessed state of pregnancy.

Quoted by Justo L. Gonzalez in *Belief* commentary on Luke.

Many female mystics say they are unlearned even though their words show their education.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE SEXISM

Page: 3 of 3

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Ask:

- Reflect back over the recent election. Were there times you saw female candidates being treated harsher than male candidates?
- Can you think of words that are applied to females that are harsher than the word used to describe the same male behavior?

Randomly distribute index cards with one word from the list on them. Youth can work singly or in pairs to define the words and answer the following questions:

Ask:

- Do you associate this term with males or females?
- What is the equivalent term for other genders?
- Do you use this term yourself?
- Would you use it as a friendly or affectionate term for a friend?

Discussion depending on time:

Robin Lakoff (University of California, Berkeley, linguist) in 1973 wrote:

1. "In appropriate women's speech, strong expression of feeling is avoided, expression of uncertainty is favored, and means of expression in regard to subject-matter deemed 'trivial' to the 'real' world are elaborated."
2. "If the little girl learns her lesson well, she is not rewarded with unquestioned acceptance on the part of society; rather, the acquisition of this special style of speech will later be an excuse others use to keep her in a demeaning position, to refuse to take her seriously as a human being."

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Read UMH 199 responsively leaving "a lowly servant" out.

NOTES

Wordlist (compiled from 1998 study by Deborah James at the University of Toronto)

1. Airhead
2. Bitch
3. Loser
4. Geek
5. Hag
6. Dog
7. Pip-squeak
8. Asshole
9. Slut
10. Jerk
11. Douchebag
12. Wuss
13. Idiot

Questions:

1. Do you still see this today?
2. Provide examples.
3. Do you see this in the comments on Luke 1:48?

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