

# CONNECTING FAITH & JUSTICE

## YOUTH CURRICULUM

Lectionary Year C



**CHURCH & SOCIETY**

The United Methodist Church

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



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## WHY AND THE HOW

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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 junior high students to engage 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 junior high youth shared content to connect with parents and other adults during the week. For churches that do not follow the lectionary, an issues index is provided. All the lessons are standalone lessons and are not dependent on the previous lesson. It's flexible!

### WHAT'S THE FORMAT?

Each lesson highlights one (or more) lectionary reading(s) for that Sunday. Each lesson connects the scripture passage to a justice issue and is an hour long. All lessons start with a centering moment, scripture study, group activity and a closing moment. Youth groups come in all shapes and sizes, and the group activity section can be done in pairs or in larger groups. You will see references to "Faith & Fact Cards" which can be found here: <https://www.umcjustice.org/resources> (pdf to print) or ordered here.

### WHO WROTE THE CURRICULUM?

The curriculum lessons were written by a diverse group of educators, youth pastors, elders, deacons, deaconesses, practitioners, professors, 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 C

BONUS **MERCY & JUSTICE** 12  
 Matthew 23:23-24; Micah 6:8;  
 Matthew 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46  
*Susan Greer Burton*

## ADVENT

**FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT** 16  
 Jeremiah 33:14-16, Psalm 25:1-10  
*Minoka Gunsekera*

**SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT** 19  
 Luke 3:1-16  
*Rev. Ivan Milosi*

**THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT** 21  
 Luke 3:7-18  
*Rev. Ivan Milosi*

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT** 25  
 Luke 1:39-55  
*Rev. Dr. Emily Peck-McClain*

**FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS** 31  
 Luke 2:41-52  
*Aimee Hong*

## EPIPHANY

**EPIPHANY OF THE LORD** 38  
 Matthew 2:1-12  
*Rev. Daniel Ogle*

**BAPTISM OF THE LORD** 42  
 Luke 3:15-17, 21-22  
*Rev. J.P. Hong*

**SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY** 46  
 Isaiah 62  
*Rev. Debbie Sperry*

**THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY** 49  
 Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10  
*Katie Matson-Daley*

**FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY** 54  
 Jeremiah 1:4-10  
*Katie Monfortte*

**FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY** 58  
 Luke 5:1-11  
*Katie Monfortte*

**SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY** 62  
 Luke 6:17-26  
*Julie O'Neal*

**SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY** 68  
 Luke 6:27-38  
*Hye-In Lee*

**TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY** 71  
 Luke 9:28-43a  
*Rev. Melissa Hinnen*

**ASH WEDNESDAY** 77  
 Isaiah 58: 1-7  
*Amber Feezor*

# LECTIONARY CALENDAR YEAR C

## LENT

<b>FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT</b>	81
Deuteronomy 26:1-11 <i>Rev. Jay Campbell</i>	
<b>SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT</b>	86
Philippians 3:17-4:1 <i>Dr. Dan Dick</i>	
<b>THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT</b>	89
Luke 13:1-9 <i>Michelle Wood</i>	
<b>FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT</b>	92
Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32 <i>Rev. Danny Yang</i>	
<b>FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT</b>	96
Philippians 3:4b-14 <i>Leigh Finnegan-Hosey</i>	
<b>LITURGY OF THE PASSION</b>	102
Luke 23:32-43 <i>Rev. Dr. Arlindall Burks</i>	
<b>GOOD FRIDAY</b>	108
John 18:1-19:42; John 8:3-11; John 10:10; Isaiah 53:8-9; Exodus 20:13; Ezekiel 33:11; Matthew 5:38-39, 43-44 <i>Chasity Opphile</i>	

## EASTER

<b>EASTER</b>	113
Psalm 118 <i>Leigh Finnegan-Hosey</i>	
<b>SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER</b>	116
Acts 5:27-32 <i>Yvonne Agduyeng</i>	
<b>THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER</b>	134
Acts 9:1-20 <i>Rev. Melissa Hinnen</i>	
<b>FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER</b>	138
Psalm 23 <i>Rev. Dr. David Wilson</i>	
<b>FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER</b>	144
Acts 11:1-18 <i>Rev. Dr. Arlindall Burks</i>	
<b>SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER</b>	150
Acts 16:9-15 <i>Rev. Joseph Kim</i>	
<b>SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER</b>	153
Acts 16:16-34 <i>Rev. Michelle Ledder</i>	
<b>PENTECOST SUNDAY</b>	160
Acts 2:1-21 <i>Rev. Gad Mpoyo</i>	

# LECTIONARY CALENDAR YEAR C

## SEASON AFTER PENTECOST/ORDINARY TIME

<b>TRINITY SUNDAY</b>	166
Psalm 8 <i>Katie Matson-Daley</i>	
<b>SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST</b>	171
Luke 8:26-39 <i>Rev. Joseph Yoo</i>	
<b>THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST</b>	174
Galatians 5:1, 13-25 <i>Rev. Patricia Bonilla</i>	
<b>FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST</b>	179
Luke 10:1-11, 16-20 <i>Dr. Dan Dick</i>	
<b>FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST</b>	182
Luke 10:25-37 <i>Julie O'Neal</i>	
<b>SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST</b>	188
Amos 8:1-12 <i>Rev. Don Hanshew</i>	
<b>SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST</b>	198
Genesis 18:20-32 <i>Rev. Caleb Hong</i>	
<b>EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST</b>	207
Luke 12:32-40 <i>Rev. Dr. Emily Peck-McClain</i>	

<b>NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST</b>	212
Isaiah 1:1, 10-20; Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23; Genesis 15:1-6; Psalm 33:12-22; Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16; Luke 12:32-40 <i>Rev. Neal Christie</i>	
<b>TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST</b>	218
Psalm 82 <i>Rev. Clayton Childers</i>	
<b>ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST</b>	225
Isaiah 58:9b-14 <i>Rebekah Bled</i>	
<b>TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST</b>	231
Luke 14:1, 7-14 <i>Rev. Rosa Lee</i>	
<b>THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST</b>	234
Psalm 1 <i>Rev. Debbie Sperry</i>	
<b>FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST</b>	238
Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28 <i>Deaconess Olma Olay-May</i>	
<b>FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST</b>	242
Jeremiah 8:18-9:1 <i>Michelle Wood</i>	
<b>SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST</b>	246
Amos 6:1a, 4-7 <i>Rev. Don Hanshew</i>	
<b>SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST</b>	257
Luke 17:5-10 <i>Rev. Ben Roberts &amp; Whitney Kinsey</i>	

## LECTIONARY CALENDAR YEAR C

### **EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST** 262

Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7

*Rev. Gad Mpoyo*

### **NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST** 267

Jeremiah 31:27-34; Psalm 119:97-104;

Genesis 32:22-31; Psalm 121;

2 Timothy 3:14-4:5; Luke 18:1-8

*Rev. Neal Christie*

### **TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST** 276

Joel 2:23-32

*Kim Johnson*

### **TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST/ ALL SAINTS DAY** 281

Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4

*Rev. Grace Han*

### **TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST** 285

Psalm 17:1-9

*Rev. Ben Roberts & Whitney Kinsley*

### **TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST** 290

Isaiah 65:17-25

*Rev. Allie Rosner Bass*

### **TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST** 295

Psalm 46

*Chris Wilterdink*

## LECTIONARY A – ADVENT

### **FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT** 300

Isaiah 2:1-5

*Kim Johnson*

### **SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT** 306

Isaiah 11:1-10

*Rev. Rosa Yeonshin Lee*

### **THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT** 308

Luke 1:46b-55

*Rev. Allie Rosner Bass*

### **FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT** 313

Matthew 1:18-25

*Jeehye Kim Pak*

### **FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS** 320

Matthew 2:13-23

*Rev. Dr. Grace Cajuat*

# CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

**YVONNE AGDUYENG** was born in the Philippines and grew up in the Seattle area. She graduated from Wesley Theological Seminary and graduated with her M. Div. and is currently serving as a Global Mission Fellow in Bremen, Germany working alongside refugees and migrants at Erlöserkirche Methodist Church.

**REBEKAH BLED** is the Mission Mobilizer at First United Methodist Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma where she facilitates congregation wide on-ramps and support structures for healthy missional engagement. She holds an M.A. in Intercultural Studies and Church Planting (Asbury Theological Seminary) and has held ministry roles in North and South America as a Youth Minister and a College and Young Adult Minister, as well as in missions with *Youth with a Mission* (YWAM) in Central America and Europe. Rebekah lives in Tulsa, OK with her husband.

**REV. PATRICIA BONILLA** serves at Christ UMC in Deerfield, IL as the Children and Youth Minister. She is a native of the Northwest Suburbs, growing up in the Vernon Hills area. She received her M.A. in Christian Education from Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary and an M.A. in Philosophy from Drew University- School of Theology. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary.

**REV. DR. ARLINDALL BURKS** was born and raised in Gary, IN. She is a veteran of the United States Navy with 26 years of honorable service. Dr. Burks is presently appointed to Arlington UMC, in Jacksonville, FL. She has two children and two grandchildren.

**REV. DR. GRACE CAJUAT** brings more than 35 years of teaching and ministry experiences to her work. She is an internationally recognized musician, minister, professor and inter-culturalist. She serves a local church, facilitates diversity and inclusion/intercultural communications trainings, and creates and leads worship for national organizations. She has worked as an international opera conductor, studying voice, language, and opera in Italy. In addition, Grace received her Master of Divinity and Master of Sacred Theology from Boston University. She is an ordained elder in the Wisconsin Conference.

**REV. JAY CAMPBELL** is the pastor of 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. CLAYTON CHILDERS** is the Director of Annual Conference Relations at the General Board of Church and Society. He believes our ministry should be grounded in prayer, built on strong relationships, and emphasize education that leads to action. He is an elder in the South Carolina Conference. He's pastored churches in a variety of contexts — from the inner city to a textile mill village.

**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 20 years.

**DR. DAN DICK** serves as an Assistant to Bishop Hee-Soo Jung in the Wisconsin Conference. Dan served at the General Board of Discipleship in Nashville, Tennessee for fifteen years, and is the author of fourteen books, as well as the blog, *United Methodeviations*.

**AMBER FEEZOR** serves as the Senior Coordinator for Ministry with the Poor and the UM Seminar Program. Amber felt called to work for social justice while studying Public Relations at Arkansas Tech University. Prior to Church and Society, she was a US-2 serving at Church and Society.

**LEIGH FINNEGAN-HOSEY** is a graduate of Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington DC. Leigh served as a youth minister at Crossroads UMC for two years and now serves as a chaplain both at Georgetown University and at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital. She and her husband David live on campus with their adorable dog, Penny Lane.

**OLMA OLAY-MAY** is a Deaconess in the Virginia Annual Conference serving as the Multi-Ministry Director at Resurrection UMC in Chesapeake, VA. She works with children with differing abilities in the public school system. She is also a student working on her 2nd degree in TESL. And is a mom to Alex.



## CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

**SUSAN GREER BURTON** serves as the Director of Women's and Children's Advocacy at the General Board of Church and Society. She educates, encourages and equips people of faith to stand up for the health, safety, and rights of women and girls around the world.

**MINOKA GUNESKERA** was born and raised in Blacksburg, Virginia by two Sri Lankan parents. She grew up in the United Methodist Church and now work at Duke Divinity School where she received her M.Div. in 2017. She is also a 2011 Ethnic Young Adult Alum.

**REV. GRACE HAN** is the lead pastor at Trinity United Methodist Church in Alexandria, Virginia. She graduated from Yale Divinity School in 2009 with her M.Div. and was ordained in the Virginia Annual Conference in June 2017.

**REV. DON HANSHEW** was reared in rural Virginia, USA, and a small United Methodist Church. He has been a United Methodist pastor since 2002 and served on various community and Holston Conference teams. Don and his wife Carol are passionate about creating transformative communities that are inclusive of all of God's people. They have two wonderful children who keep them laughing and enjoying life.

**REV. MELISSA HINNEN** is the pastor of Asbury United Methodist Church in Croton-on-Hudson, New York and is the co-chair of the New York Annual Conference Board of Church and Society.

**AIMEE HONG** serves as the Director of the United Methodist Seminar Program at the General Board of Church and Society. She received her M.Div. and M.T.S. from Candler School of Theology, Emory University. She facilitates and custom designs seminars for diverse groups on issues of justice and peace. She loves working with students of all ages but has a soft spot for engaging with young people.

**REV. CALEB HONG** has been the lead pastor of Faith UMC of Orland Park, Illinois since 2010. Before that, 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.

**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.

**JEEHYE KIM-PAK** serves as the digital communications and media production specialist at the General Commission on Religion and Race. Jeehye manages

GCORR's website and social media, develops and designs multimedia communications and provides planning and support at GCORR-sponsored events. 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 and two cats (Junior and Mr. Big Cat.)

**REV. JOSEPH KIM** currently serves as the Lead Pastor of Bothell United Methodist Church in Bothell, Washington. He has served in both the local church and at the General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church, most recently as the Director of Children's Rights Advocacy. Joe is husband to an incredibly talented artist and justice seeker, Joann; dad to their fun-loving, music-playing son, Asher; and best friend to their dog, Leigh.

**WHITNEY KINSLEY** is the Director of Family Ministries at Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington DC. She has been in ministry for 13 years in six US States and two countries. She enjoys running, coaching figure skating, reading and travel. She and her partner live in Washington, DC with their dog, Rio.

**REV. MICHELLE LEDDER** is the Director of Program Ministries at the General Commission on Religion and Race, Michelle crafts and facilitates initiatives focusing on the Institutional Equity priority of GCORR's Ministry Model. She works to help all levels of the connection create the beloved community with systems, policies, and processes that level the playing field for everyone.

## CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

**HYE-IN LEE** works at the Asia-Pacific Regional Office of the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries. She served in Tokyo, Japan as a Global Mission Fellow cohort from 2014-2016 and she was a Church and Society Fellow at the General Board of Church and Society in the fall of 2016.

**REV. ROSA YEONSHIN LEE** serves as the Director of the Wesley Foundation at Northern Illinois University. Prior she served as a youth pastor at various churches and also 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. IVAN MILOSI** is an ordained elder in the UMC from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), in the South Congo Annual Conference. Ivan is a double degree graduate from Africa University in Zimbabwe with a Bachelor of Divinity and an M.A. in Peace, Leadership and Governance and is now pursuing an M. Div. at Wesley Theological Seminary. Ivan is currently working as the Program Coordinator Revision of the *Social Principles* at the General Board of Church and Society.

**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.

**REV. GAD MPOYO** comes from the Democratic Republic of Congo. He is the organizing pastor of Shalom International Ministry. The church is located in Clarkston, Georgia and serves mainly immigrants and refugees from over 16 countries. He holds a Masters of Divinity and Theology from Candler School of Theology, Emory University. He is fluent in English, French, Swahili, and Lingala.

**REV. DANIEL OGLE** is the pastor at Colonial Heights United Methodist Church in Knoxville, Tennessee. He is married to Erin and the father of Georgia. A former newspaper reporter, Daniel now writes about the intersection of faith and life at [danielogle.com](http://danielogle.com).

**JULIE O'NEAL** is a 5<sup>th</sup> generation United Methodist and a 4<sup>th</sup> generation Arizonian. She has a wide range of experience in the church and has held various leadership positions throughout the denomination. She graduated

with a Masters of Theological Studies from Saint Paul School of Theology and has worked at several general agencies of the UMC. She is a member of Dayspring UMC in Tempe, AZ where she nurtures her passion for justice, tends to sustainability/environmental issues and engages others in conversations about privilege.

**CHASITY OPPHILE** is the Outreach and Education Coordinator at Christ UMC in Newcomerstown, Ohio. As part of that position, she is the youth pastor for Meta Student Ministries, a community-wide, student-led youth ministry that takes place at Christ UMC. Chasity is most passionate about empowering and equipping teens and young adults to make a difference in the world through the life-changing power of Jesus. She is also pretty passionate about hanging out with her awesome husband and family, mission work to Cuba, traveling, sweet tea, all things Spanish and cooking.

**REV. DR. EMILY A. PECK-MCCLAIN** is an ordained United Methodist pastor from the New York Annual Conference and the Visiting Professor of Christian Formation and Young Adult Ministries at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington D.C. She has a deep interest in what the wisdom scripture offers the church as we seek to grow in our faith. Emily is very proud of the publication of her book "Arm in Arm with Adolescent Girls: Educating into the New Creation."

## CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

**REV. BEN ROBERTS** is a North Carolina native from Oak Island. He currently serves as the Associate Pastor and Director of the Social Justice Ministries at Foundry UMC in Washington DC. He is a graduate of Wesley Theological Seminary.

**REV. ALLIE ROSNER BASS** is the 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 community with unhoused people. She also spends a lot of time chasing after her toddler daughter.

**REV. DEBBIE 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.

**REV. DR. DAVID WILSON** serves as the Conference Superintendent of the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference. He is a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. He has worked extensively with youth and young adults throughout his ministry.

**CHRIS WILTERDINK** is the Director of Program Development for the USA for Young People's Ministries at the Discipleship Ministries of the UMC; meaning he manages the US-based staff, creates resources, and develops events for leaders. He also works to identify needs in young people's ministries for the denomination and seek to meet those needs.

**MICHELLE WOOD** currently serves as the Associate pastor at FUMC Paris (TX) and also as the Director of the Wesley Center at Paris Junior College. She is a graduate of Wesley Theological Seminary.

**REV. DANNY YANG** is the Senior Pastor of Westbury United Methodist Church in Houston, Texas. Danny has ministered in a variety of contexts: Asian-American youth, college campus, young adults, poverty advocacy, and adult faith formation. He loves learning and teaching the Bible so that all might discover the unique ways God has created each of us to serve in the world.

**REV. JOSEPH YOO** is the Associate Pastor at First UMC in Pearland, Texas. He is a West Coaster living in Houston, Texas with his wife and son.

# MERCY & JUSTICE

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** SUSAN GREER BURTON

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: LIVING THE FULLNESS OF MICAH 6:8

<b>SCRIPTURE PASSAGE</b>	Matthew 23:23-26, Micah 6:8, Matthew 26:36-46, Luke 22:39-46
<b>SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES</b>	None
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	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.
<b>SUPPLIES NEEDED</b>	2 sheets of butcher paper, easel, markers, Bible, Limits of Charity article- which can be found <a href="#">here</a> .

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Welcome the group.

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

1. 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.”
  - 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)
2. Establish a difference in significance: (along the lines of) “So the impact of a camel would be much larger than that of a gnat, right?”

### 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.

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3. Ask for a volunteer to read the following scripture passage: Matthew 23: 23-26

- Ask participants what they think this passage means/reflect on passage.

4. Defining terms – Mercy and Justice

- Ask participants “How would you define ‘Mercy’? Not examples...what words would you use to describe what it is? [write down responses]
- Ask participants “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)

1. 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.
2. Write “Responses” on the left-hand side of the flipchart paper.
3. Ask the group, “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.
4. Once you have a list, write “Causes of Poverty” on the right-hand side of the same piece of paper.
5. Ask the group, “What are the causes of poverty?” Record responses in a list as with the responses.

### NOTES

1 & 2

#### Poverty

Responses

4

#### Poverty

Responses      Causes of Poverty

6. 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.

7. Once this list has been established, ask, “How many of these “Responses” on the left address the “Causes of Poverty” on the right? [Circle ones they mention]

8. 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.

9. 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.)

- 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.

## NOTES

# MERCY & JUSTICE

**JUSTICE ISSUE** LIVING THE FULLNESS OF MICAH 6:8

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- 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.
- 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.
- 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** MINOKA GUNSEKERA

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: FOOD INSECURITY

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Jeremiah 33: 14-16, Psalm 25:1-10

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶163.D & E, ¶160.H, 2016-2020 Book of Resolutions #4051

**OBJECTIVE**

To help students understand the plight of food insecurity.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

A simple snack, 2016-2020 Social Principles 160.H, 163.D, 163.E, 2016-2020 Book of Resolutions 163.E (Optional Faith and Fact Cards on Food Justice; Hunger and Poverty in the US; Hunger and Poverty), 2016-2020 Social Principles

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Create two groups and assign them a passage to read:

- Group 1: Jeremiah 33:14-16
- Group 2: Psalm 25:1-10

Come back together as a large group and name three words from their passage that stood out to them.

Repeat those six words together twice as a centering prayer to focus the mind on the text at hand.

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

Option: Work in pairs/groups and report answers back to the larger group or work as a large group.

Share with the students that the lesson will be centered on food insecurity.

#### Psalm 25:1-10 Questions

1. Read verses 3-5. What does the word “wait” mean in this passage? When was the last time you had to wait for something? Where do people wait?
2. Verse 4 includes the word “teach.” What do you think God is trying to teach us in this Psalm? What might God be teaching us when it comes to *how we think about our food*?
3. Verse 5 is about being led and guided by God. How does God lead us? If so, name some ways.

### NOTES

Before beginning, give everyone five minutes to read the text that they had not read.

Whenever possible have a youth volunteer to read.

1. Wait here means the wait that a waiter does, more like service than merely sitting still. Help the students think about those who “wait” in their community (particularly those associated with food.)

3. How is God leading us to address food insecurity in our community.



# FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

## Jeremiah 33: 14-16 Questions

1. Verse 16 is about safety. What does it mean to feel safe? How do you know when you are safe? How do you know when you are not safe?
2. What do we learn about God in Jeremiah that we didn't in the Psalm passage?

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

In the Advent season, we learn about waiting. Waiting for the King (Jesus) to be born but also waiting for God's promise of restoration. *Sometimes waiting can be unfair, like in food insecurity. There are many hurdles that those that are food insecure must face to receive the aid that they need. Some neighborhoods and communities lack fresh food in their neighborhoods. There are those that wait for their "Meals on Wheels" program to bring them food, and there are those that wait at soup kitchens for a meal.*

### (10 minutes) Game:

Everyone should find a partner. When you find your partner go to the ends of the room. Choose one person to be the mover and one person to be the timer.

- The Timer periodically says "freeze," and the mover has to stop immediately. When they say "unfreeze" they can move again.
- *The timer is trying to make sure their partner doesn't get to the snack.*
- *The mover is trying to get to the snack!*

After 4 minutes, switch roles.

## NOTES

### Jeremiah:

1. To feel safe is to have your boundaries respected, to be known and loved.
2. We learn about restoration and safety. We see that God is always trying to bring goodness to God's people. These promises of restoration – fulfilled in part under Ezra and Nehemiah, fulfilled in whole with the completion of the new covenant – these promises were a remarkable contrast to the present state of destruction in Judah and Jerusalem.

After pairs find themselves at the ends of the room, put the snacks in the middle of the room.

# FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE FOOD INSECURITY

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(5 minutes) Come back together and answer the following questions:

- How did it feel to wait and be frozen?
- Was it hard to wait for food? What did it feel like to see the food but not be able to get to it?
- How did it feel to be in control of someone's ability to get a snack or not?

(10 Minutes) What does the UMC Say?

Read 160.H, 163.D, 163.E

(Optional *Faith and Fact Cards on Food Justice; Hunger and Poverty in the US; Hunger and Poverty*)

1. What does the sections say about food justice, consumption, and poverty?
2. How can we help people in our community have more access to healthy food?
3. How can our church (or conference) reduce food waste?

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

**Pray:**

God of steadfast love and faithfulness. You gave Jerusalem safety and the promise of restoration. Lead us in Your truth so that we can help those around us into abundant life through Christ Jesus. May Your Holy Spirit dwell in us, so that we may not waste the precious gifts You have given to us. Amen.

## NOTES

### Discussion on Social Principle

In the last 10 minutes talk about food insecurity and how many children have to wait (or are stopped/prevented) from getting vital, nutritious food due to things like war, famine, etc. but also things like no healthy options in their homes or in local food pantries.

Remind students to be aware of those who are waiting or “frozen” out of food in their communities. How can this group help “unfreeze” people from food insecurity?

# SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. IVAN MILOSI

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Luke 3:1-6

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 *Social Principles* ¶162 Introduction paragraph

**OBJECTIVE**

To help students prepare for Jesus by identifying the “crooked” and “rough” roads in our world.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Envelopes, Paper, Pen/Pencil, Bibles, *Social Principles*, *Faith and Fact Cards* (full set)

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Share a moment when you were able to witness God this week.

As 2019 is quickly approaching, what is one thing that you are excited about?

Wrap up this time with a closing prayer.

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

#### Read Luke 3:1-6

**Ask:**

1. Who was the emperor? (Tiberius Caesar- provide a summary of the character of Tiberius found in the notes)
2. Who was the governor of Judea? (Herod tetrarch of Galilee)
3. Who are the high priests? (Annas and Caiaphas)
4. Who is John the Baptist’s father & mother? (Zechariah & Elizabeth)
5. Why do you think the word of God came to John and not to the high priests?

### NOTES

**Background:**

The author of Luke was a physician by profession, an evangelist by call and a close friend and companion of the apostle Paul.

Chapter 3 begins when Israel was under the Roman Emperor Tiberius. Tiberius was considered one of the worst Caesars. He was a bad leader, given to greediness, drunkenness, and cruelty.

John the Baptist was the son of Zechariah who was a priest, and his mother was Elizabeth, the cousin of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

# SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**JUSTICE ISSUE** CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Pages: 2 of 2

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Read ¶162 Introduction Paragraph of the Social Principles.

(If you have *Faith and Fact Cards* – let the students look at them to help come up with the list.)

As a group, make a list of some of these “crooked” and “rough” roads in our world.

Hand each student an envelope, pen/pencil, and paper.

Give each student/or in pairs an opportunity to write down how they can help make straight the “crooked” and “rough” paths in their lives and in their community.

Tell the students that the envelopes will be kept at church and will be given to them later to remind them of the list that they created and to check how they are progressing.

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Those who want to share what they wrote, they can share their list.

With envelopes in hand, close with a prayer for strength and courage to work on what they wrote in their envelope.

### NOTES

Students may bring up issues like immigration, Black lives matter, Flint water crisis, natural disasters, wars, refugees, etc., Help the students to name the issues that hit closer to home.

Return the envelopes every 2-3 months as a reminder.

# THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. IVAN MILOSI

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: VARIETY (DEPENDING ON STUDENT'S PREFERENCE)

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Luke 3:7-18

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

(depending on student's preference)

**OBJECTIVE**

To help students understand that in the midst of hopelessness there is a path of hope.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Handout, Paper, Pencil, Full collection of the *Faith and Fact Cards*

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Share a God moment from the week.

Ask the students to sit with their backs against the back of the chair and to close their eyes.

#### Read Isaiah 12:2-6

Ask the students to share one word from the reading.

#### Read Isaiah 12:2-6 again

Ask the students to share a phrase from the reading.

Close with a prayer for God's presence.

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

#### Read Luke 3:7-18

**Ask:**

1. What is the tone of John's message? How can you tell?
2. How does John respond to the crowd's "What should we do then?" (vs 10, vs 14) What is the tone of the crowd's response?

### NOTES

The tone of John the Baptist changed from the previous verses (Luke 3:1-6) from an invitational proclamation of the good news to a harsh message of wrought and punishment.

# THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**JUSTICE ISSUE** VARIETY (DEPENDING ON STUDENT'S PREFERENCE)

Pages: 2 of 4

3. What does repentance mean and what does it require?
4. John the Baptist felt the hopelessness of the crowd and introduced the one that is to come. Who is it?

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### Say:

The world we are living in today is not that different from the world of John the Baptist. Turn on the TV on any given night or read the headlines of the newspaper (print and online!) and there are heartbreaking headlines. Many painful things are happening in our schools, community, neighborhood, nation, and the world. Most of the time we look at all these things, and we feel very small, powerless, hopeless and scared.

Have each student pick up one card/issue from the *Faith and Facts* collection that speaks to their heart.

Give each student paper and pencil/pen. Ask each student to read the card that they picked and to brainstorm what they can do to bring change to that issue.

After a few minutes, have the students find a partner and share with their partner about the issue that they picked and why they are passionate about that issue.

Reconvene the larger group and in a circle have everyone share the issue that they picked.

### NOTES

Feeling of powerlessness and hopelessness is not a sin. Instead, it is a sign that reminds us of our limitations as human beings.

True repentance requires accepting the sin against God and neighbors and not to continue on the road of complacency- of seeing our community/neighbors suffer and not responding to their need.

The activity is similar to the one from last week. If the students already did this exercise, have them share what they came up with and brainstorm actions for the coming week: for themselves, the youth group, for the larger church.

# THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**JUSTICE ISSUE** VARIETY (DEPENDING ON STUDENT'S PREFERENCE)

Pages: 3 of 4

## **CLOSING MOMENT** (5 MINUTES)

Close with the reading of the “Companion Litany to Our Social Creed” which can be found on page 60 of the *Social Principles* handbook and also on the Handout.

### NOTES

# THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**JUSTICE ISSUE** VARIETY (DEPENDING ON STUDENT'S PREFERENCE)

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## HANDOUT

### A Companion Litany to Our Social Creed

God in the Spirit revealed in Jesus Christ,  
calls us by grace

**to be renewed in the image of our Creator,  
that we may be one  
in divine love for the world.**

Today is the day

God cares for the integrity of creation,  
wills the healing and wholeness of all life,  
weeps at the plunder of earth's goodness.

**And so shall we.**

Today is the day

God embraces all hues of humanity,  
delights in diversity and difference,  
favors solidarity transforming strangers into friends.

**And so shall we.**

Today is the day

God cries with the masses of starving people,  
despises growing disparity between rich and poor,  
demands justice for workers in the marketplace.

**And so shall we.**

Today is the day

God deplores violence in our homes and streets,  
rebukes the world's warring madness,  
humbles the powerful and lifts up the lowly.

**And so shall we.**

Today is the day

God calls for nations and peoples to live in peace,  
celebrates where justice and mercy embrace,  
exults when the wolf grazes with the lamb.

**And so shall we.**

**Today is the day**

**God brings good news to the poor,  
proclaims release to the captives,  
gives sight to the blind, and  
sets the oppressed free.**

**And so shall we.**

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# FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. DR. EMILY A. PECK-MCCLAIN

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: MATERNAL HEALTH

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Luke 1:39-55

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶161.V, 2016-2020 Book of Resolutions #3203

**OBJECTIVE**

Help students understand the lack and need for maternal health.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Printouts of handout (Luke 1:39-45 and Luke 1:46-55), colored pencils/pencils/pens for each youth to have one, a Study Bible or commentary like *New Interpreter's Bible* for Luke or *The People's New Testament Commentary* (a pastor, church library, or town library might have these resources you can borrow). 2016-2020 Social Principles and 2016-2020 Book of Resolutions. Paper.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Invite your youth into a time of silence.

**Say:**

Think of a time when you got the best news ever. What was the news? You got the part you really wanted in a school play? You got onto the travel sports team? You found out your aunt was having a baby and you were going to have a little cousin? Who told you this best news ever?

What did you do when you heard the news?

After a final moment in silence, invite the youth to open their eyes and share how it felt to receive this good news in a word or two to the whole group.

**Say:**

As we do our Bible study today, I hope we can remember these joyful feelings and words because we are learning about Mary's deep joy at learning she was pregnant with Jesus. Imagine Mary feeling feelings like yours when you got the best news ever.

**Say a prayer, for example:**

O God our Savior, we thank you for the times in our lives when we have been joyful at hearing some really good news. As we discover more about Mary's joy today at hearing what really was the best news ever in the history of the world, teach us ways we can contribute to the joy of others. Amen.

### NOTES

It may be helpful to turn down the lights and ask your youth to close their eyes to help the room be as quiet as possible.

As you voice each prompt, leave some silence before voicing the next prompt/question.

If you notice anything about them during this centering movement, share it with them – could you see them smile when they thought of their best news ever? Could you see the joy even though their eyes were closed? Did their bodies take a different shape as they thought of good news?

# FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE MATERNAL HEALTH

Page: 2 of 6

## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

(5-8 minutes) Give each youth a handout of the scripture passage and a colored pencil/pencil/pen. Ask the youth to read to themselves and use their colored pencil to mark it up:

Underline words that are confusing or don't make sense.

Circle any names.

Put a square around anything that sounds joyful.

Put a check mark next to anything surprising.

(10 minutes) If you have more than two youth, this next part can be done in two groups. If you have two youth, then do this part together. Have the youth share what they noticed about their section. Help translate any words they underlined, turning to the commentary or Study Bible when you need help. Encourage the youth to look it up with you so they can learn how to use these resources.

### NOTES

This is a long Scripture passage! If you attempt to read it all out loud, you may lose the attention of your youth. If your group doesn't have strong readers in it, however, this may be your best option.

There are two stories, both wonderful and certainly connected, in these verses. The first is Mary and Elizabeth, both implausibly pregnant (Mary because she was not married and Elizabeth because of her age), greeting each other. The second is Mary's Song, her response to Elizabeth's blessing of her and the baby Jesus growing inside of her. It is important to note that this well-known part of scripture, Mary's Song, comes as a response to Elizabeth. Her praise of God, her soul rejoicing, comes from a connection with someone else, a sisterhood with Elizabeth. It is also important to note that Mary's Song is an echo of Hannah's Song in 1 Samuel 2:1-10, another woman with an unlikely pregnancy following years of infertility. Read this passage ahead of time, and familiarize yourself with her story.

Come prepared to help the youth find answers to the questions they have about the scripture passages. A Study Bible or commentary like the *New Interpreter's Bible* or *The People's New Testament Commentary* can help.

Before class, do the exercise you ask the youth to do – noting the different things in the passage for yourself. Then read through the pages in the Study Bible or commentary on these verses.

Bring your resource(s) to Bible study so that your youth can look up answers to their questions in these books with your help.

# FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

## Ask:

What emotions are in your section? Why do you think these are the emotions the speakers – Elizabeth or Mary – express?

(5 minutes) Share some information about this passage with the youth. Having read in a commentary or Study Bible ahead of time, share insights you found particularly interesting or confusing. Be sure to tell the youth that Elizabeth and Mary were both pregnant and neither one “should” have been. Be sure to also tell the youth that someone they met a couple of weeks ago, John the Baptist, was the baby growing inside Elizabeth. If there is time, read Hannah’s Song in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 and briefly tell them her story. If there is not enough time, then tell them that Mary’s Song echoes Hannah’s, another woman from the Old Testament who had wanted to be pregnant for a long time and found out that she was.

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### Say:

Pregnancy is an amazing gift from God – it is how God has designed humanity to continue. Pregnancy can also be complicated. Today we have learned about three women, Elizabeth, Mary, and Hannah, with pretty amazing pregnancy stories. Elizabeth and Hannah wanted to be pregnant for a long time before they were. Mary was pregnant through a miraculous encounter with God when she said yes to the invitation to carry God’s Son in her belly. Many women grieve over not being able to get pregnant. Some, like Elizabeth and Hannah, do become pregnant after a long time of waiting, but some never do. Times like Advent and Sundays like this one can be painful reminders to these women. We want to be sure to keep women in prayer during this season of the church who may be feeling particularly sad when the church is particularly happy. Many women do get pregnant when they want to. Many women are surprised by pregnancy – either happily or not. While some choose not to get pregnant. The other truth is that not all women can receive the health care they need for themselves and their babies when they are pregnant. See? It can be really complicated!

## NOTES

Bear in mind that you may have youth in your youth group whose lives have been touched by maternal health complications or maternal or fetal or infant death. Be prepared to talk about these topics with sensitivity and make adjustments to the lesson plan based on your knowledge of the experience of your youth. Be ready to provide pastoral care and/or connect youth with someone else who can provide pastoral care if these topics are especially difficult for some to discuss.

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

JUSTICE ISSUE MATERNAL HEALTH

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(5 minutes) Ask the youth to split up into pairs or groups of three. Invite them to write down some reasons they can think of why women might not be able to get the health care they need while pregnant. Invite them to consider the whole world, not only their own communities when they think of reasons.

(10 minutes) Come back together as a group and share what reasons each pair/group came up with.

Share with the youth what you learned from Resolution #3203 about why maternal health suffers, especially in the developing world, and about maternal or fetal or infant death.

### Say:

The United Methodist Church advocates for comprehensive family planning, that is, information provided to men and women, girls and boys, so that they can know and have access to different ways to prevent unwanted pregnancies. The church also says that maternal health is important and maternal death is a tragedy.

Our church calls on us to:

1. Support United Methodist projects around the world working on maternal health and family planning;
2. Advocate with policymakers at all levels to increase access to maternal health and family planning services; and
3. Support local health initiatives that expand access to information and services for women's health. (BOR #3203)

### NOTES

Familiarize yourself with paragraph 162.V in the *Social Principles* and #3203 in the *Book of Resolutions* (this is also available online at <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/maternal-health-the-churchs-role>). As noted in the Resolution, maternal health in developing countries is more of a risk; however, maternal mortality is also on the rise in developed countries like the United States. In the United States, Black women are at much higher risk than white women. This article from April of 2018 in the New York Times is one place you can read about this: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/11/magazine/black-mothers-babies-death-maternal-mortality.html>

You may also want to look at paragraph 161 of the *Social Principles*, depending on how the conversation with your youth goes, there might be a number of items in that may be helpful to know what the church says.

If your group is having a hard time coming up with ideas, you can prompt them. Some ideas might be: Write letters to legislators at the state or national level. Research what local organizations are committed to supporting women's health and find out how they can get involved.

# FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

(5 minutes) Invite the youth back into their pairs or groups of three.

**Ask:**

What is one thing our youth group can do to respond to one of those things the church calls on us to do? Each pair or group of three should come up with one thing they think their youth group can do.

(3 minutes) Come back together and share each group's idea of one thing they can do.

Invite them to pray about this list of ideas over the next week and come back together next week ready to vote on which one they think they should do first.

**CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)**

Invite the youth to recall the best news ever that they began today's Bible study remembering. Pause for a moment for them to recall.

Invite the youth into a time of prayer.

**Say:**

God of women, men, children, and babies, we know that you want for all of us to live abundant lives. We remember with joy when we have felt abundance in our lives. We are saddened by the fact that so many women around the world suffer from poor healthcare during their pregnancies and even die in childbirth. We know this is not what you want for your beloved children. We pray that you inspire us during this week as we try to find a way to help. We especially think of Mary, who endured great hardship while pregnant and giving birth to Jesus. We thank you that Jesus was born healthy and Mary survived. We hope for a time when this is true for all women around your world. In the name of Christ, we pray, Amen.

NOTES

Empty space for taking notes.

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

### HANDOUT

#### Luke 1:39-45

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.'

#### Luke 1:46-55

And Mary said,  
'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.  
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.  
His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.  
He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.  
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.  
He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham, and to his descendants forever.'

# FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** AIMEE HONG

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: RIGHTS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Luke 2:41-52

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶162.D

**OBJECTIVE**

To help students know that the voices of young people are powerful and can change the world.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Copies of 2016-2020 Social Principles ¶162.D, paper, pen/pencil, Handout 1 (cut into slips)

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Ask the students if they ever had an experience when they felt like their voice wasn't valued.

After each student shares their story, say "I hear you and I value your voice."

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

#### Read Luke 2:41-52

**Ask:**

1. How old is Jesus in this story?
2. Why were they in Jerusalem?
3. How do you think Mary and Joseph felt when they couldn't find him? Did this ever happen to you? Ever get "lost?"
4. Mary and Joseph, are for good reason upset and relieved to have found Jesus. Does this passage make Jesus more relatable?
5. What is Jesus' response to his parents? (This is a hint to his mission as the Son of God.)

### NOTES

Be prepared to share a story of your own.

Luke is the only gospel that provides a story of Jesus' childhood.

The Old Testament required three pilgrimages a year (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles; Ex 23:14-17; 34:22-23; Deut. 16:16). At Jesus' time, due to the dangers, many made just one pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Passover was a major feast celebrated at the beginning of the Jewish year (around March/April.)

Only men were required to make the journey, so Mary's presence shows her commitment to her faith.

# FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

## Read “Rights of Young People” ¶162.D

1. What is the issue that this statement is trying to address?
2. Do you feel like your voice is included at your school? Your church? A sports team?

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### Handout

Give each participant a bio of a young person that has/is changing the world.

### Say:

Each of you have a story of a young person that is currently or has changed the world in some way. Their age didn't stop them from contributing and making a difference. They each faced a struggle or witnessed an injustice and tried to do something about it. Take a minute and read the short bio.

(give a minute or two to read)

### Say:

Turn to the person sitting next to you (person on your right) and take turns sharing about this person. What adversity did they go through or witness? What did they do to address the issue? What is the impact of their action?

(5-7 minutes)

### Say:

Find a new person and share about your person. Answer the same questions. What adversity did they go through or witness? What did they do to address the issue? What is the impact of their action?

## NOTES

There are 14 bios in the handout. More can be found in the link provided on the handout.



# FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

## Optional Activity:

Invite the pastor(s) and the leadership team of the church to come to the youth bible study time. Have everyone sit in a circle and share one thing they like about the church/ministry.

Have just the students share what they would like the church to do/grow. With the adults, pick one activity/issue to work on as a church with the youth taking leadership and the adults providing support.

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

### Say:

Close your eyes and take a moment. Think about your personal life, your school, church, neighborhood, community, country, the world. Is there an issue that you feel called to address?

(take a moment in silence)

Invite the students to share (it's ok if students are not ready to share).

Close in prayer.

## NOTES

# FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

## HANDOUT

### “These 30 Incredible Kids Really Changed the World”

(<https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/inspirational-stories/g5188/kids-who-changed-the-world/?slide=1>)

(Cut into strips)



#### **Malala Yousafzai**

At 17, Yousafzai became the youngest Nobel Prize laureate for her humanitarian efforts. She captured the world’s attention after being shot by the Taliban in Pakistan on her way to school because she was an advocate for women pursuing education. She is currently working towards her bachelor’s degree at Oxford’s Lady Margaret Hall while continuing her charity work through her organization, The Malala Fund.



#### **Sophie Cruz**

Cruz made a name for herself at five years old when she visited Washington D.C. with her family. As representatives of an L.A.-based immigration advocacy group, they were there to deliver a letter to Pope Francis urging him to speak out on behalf of undocumented workers and support the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans Act. The Pope discussed the issue in a meeting with Congress the following day. Cruz’s activism earned her an invitation to meet President Obama in 2016 even though her parents couldn’t accompany her because of their undocumented status. She took part in the Women’s March in D.C. where, as the featured speaker, she spoke in both Spanish and English saying, “We are here together making a chain of love to protect our families. Let us fight with love, faith, and courage so that our families will not be destroyed.”



#### **Iqbal Masih**

Masih was Pakistani boy who escaped child slavery at 10 years old and became a leader in the movement to put an end to it once and for all. He helped over 3,000 children escape bondage and traveled the globe speaking out against the issue. Masih was assassinated when he was 12 and roughly 800 people attended his funeral service. However, his legacy lives on well beyond his death. In 2009, Congress started an annual award in his name given to activists fighting to end child labor.



# FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

## HANDOUT



### **Claudette Colvin**

Colvin was 15 when she became a major player in the Civil Rights Movement by refusing to give up her bus seat to a caucasian rider. This was nine months before Rosa Parks was arrested for the same thing. She was one of the four plaintiffs involved in the Supreme Court case that ultimately outlawed segregation on Alabama buses. Colvin has said about her experience, “I feel very, very proud of what I did. I do feel like what I did was a spark and it caught on.”



### **Jazz Jennings**

At five years old, Jennings made headlines as one of the youngest publicly documented people to identify as transgender. She has used her platform to advocate for LGBTQIA issues, specifically regarding trans rights. With the assistance of her parents, she founded the TransKids Purple Rainbow Foundation to help transgender youth. Jennings also wrote a children’s book and a memoir about her experience in addition to starring in a TLC reality show documenting her journey. She has been honored by GLAAD, Out magazine, Advocate, Logo TV, and the Human Rights Campaign.



### **Xiuhtecatl Martinez**

Martinez is an environmental activist who spoke at the U.N. three times by the age of 15 urging leaders to take action against climate change. He and 21 other people around his age are the plaintiffs in a lawsuit against the federal government arguing that ignoring climate change means they are denying the constitutional right to life, liberty, and property. Martinez has even turned his message into music with a hip-hop song called “Speak for the Trees,” which was chosen as the theme song for the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference.



# FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

## HANDOUT



### Anne Frank

The teenage diarist passed away in 1945, but the words she put down in her notebook while her family was in hiding during World War II have proven to be timeless. It's a literary reminder of the horrors of war and hate through the eyes of a young girl. Anne's diary has been translated into more than 60 languages since its original publication in 1947.



### Katie Stagliano

Katie Stagliano was in third grade when she came up with her plan to help feed the homeless after growing a 40-pound cabbage in her yard. That single crop fed 275 people at her local soup kitchen. It also inspired her non-profit, Katie's Krops, which builds vegetable gardens for the sole purpose of donating the food to the homeless. Now, there are more than 100 gardens in over 30 states being operated by young people like Katie.



### Boyan Slat

At 16, during a fishing trip in Greece, Slat discovered massive amounts of plastic in the water. Two years later, the Dutch inventor launched his non-profit, Ocean Cleanup, to research using circulating currents to address the pollution issue. The group has raised over \$31.5 million in donations to help achieve Boyan's goal.



### Gitanjali Rao

Rao was awarded \$25,000 at 11 years old for inventing a device that can detect lead in drinking water. She was motivated by the Flint, Michigan water crisis and built her prototype (called Tethys) for a little more than \$20. Rao believes that her invention is more accurate than current test options and would also be the more affordable option. The invention earned her the title of "America's Top Young Scientist."



# FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

## HANDOUT



### Yash Gupta

Gupta was inspired to collect eyeglasses for children in need at 14 years old after breaking his own corrective lenses and having to wait a week for a replacement pair. He read a statistic that 12 million children around the world are living without the glasses they need to see clearly, which prompted him to launch his Sight Learning organization. The group collects used glasses and delivers them to children who need them. They have given out over \$1.5 million worth of eyewear in places like Mexico, Honduras, Haiti, and India.



### Jack Andraka

As a high school student, Andraka made a major contribution to the health community by inventing a type of sensor that could detect early signs of pancreatic and other forms of cancer. The prototype won him a \$75,000 prize in Intel's science fair. He's been called "The Teen Prodigy Of Pancreatic Cancer" by the Smithsonian.



### Louis Braille

Braille was only 12 when he learned of a communication system used by the French army, which laid the groundwork for his own system of reading and writing used by the blind. He completed his alphabet of raised dots by the time he was 15. It was first adopted by France's Royal Institute for Blind Youth until two years after his death at the age of 43. It has since spread throughout the world and is still in use today.



### Julia Bluhm

Bluhm is on a quest to promote body positivity one magazine cover at a time. At 14, she successfully convinced the editor-in-chief of Seventeen to feature images of real girls and healthy models without photoshopping. She continues to address feminist issues as a blogger for TheLaLa.com and for Spark Movement.



# EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. DANIEL OGLE

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Matthew 2:1-12

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 Social Principles 162.H, 2016-2020 Book of Resolutions #3281

**OBJECTIVE**

To help students connect the threat Herod represents to Jesus with the threats faced by vulnerable people today.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

magazines, newspaper, tape, scissors, a place to post images or headlines

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Begin the gathering with a time of checking in. As this is the first Sunday of the new year, you can engage the group with questions about their hopes for the new year. Questions that might provoke conversation could include, “What are you hoping for in the new year?” or “What do you hope will be different about this year than last year?”

Depending on the answers, you can encourage participants to expand these questions beyond their own individual desires to desires for communities or even God’s desire for the world. As you experience the conversation winding down, close the centering time with a prayer, asking God to be present in your study, learning and conversation.

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

#### Read Matthew 2:1-12

#### Questions for discussion:

1. Herod is threatened by the birth of Jesus. Why do you think that is? What would motivate him to want to find out the location of the child’s birth?
2. At the center of this story is the question of power. How have you experienced power being used? Is there a time when you can remember power being negatively used against you? Are there groups of people in your school who are frequently the victims of the abuse of power?

### NOTES

#### Background on the passage:

This passage hinges on the faithfulness of a group the Bible describes as magi. Other translations render this phrase wise men. The magi, or wise men, were, according to Eugene Boring in *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary Series*, experts in the field of astrology and the interpretation of dreams. Your students might connect this passage to “We Three Kings,” a hymn that might even be assigned for the day in worship.

# EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

3. The magi choose to go another way home because they receive a message from God. What do you think it means to listen or to hear from God? Can you think of a time in your life when you felt certain that God was telling you something? How do you know whether or not God is speaking to you?

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### Say:

The magi, in this passage of Scripture, find themselves in a vulnerable position relating to Herod. They act with extreme courage to refuse the request of a king, a king who was known to use violence to achieve his own ends and purposes. This passage reminds us that the use of power and force against the vulnerable is not a new development. Throughout Scripture, we see moments where rulers participate with God to advance God's mission and also, as in this case, create opposition to God's mission.

As people of faith, we are responsible for being in ministry with those who are oppressed and find themselves being targeted and attacked by

## NOTES

However, not only are the magi not kings, but the Bible doesn't specify how many were involved in the journey to Bethlehem.

As you might expect for those concerned with the study of the stars, they observed a star doing something out of the ordinary. They report this to King Herod, who takes an interest, not from astrology, but out of concern for a threat to his power. Herod tells the wise men to go and see the child who has been born and then return to him with a report, ostensibly so he may worship him, but truthfully so that he might prevent this child king from threatening his own power.

The historical King Herod came to power through a military conquest against his own people, but in this story, his role is to serve as a threat to the reign of God. Herod's presence in this story is a reminder that God's will always faces obstacles, and often in the form of institutions that are familiar to us – economic, political and social.

They do what he had told them to, but after encountering Mary and Joseph and worshipping the child, they receive a warning from a dream. And they heed the advice of the dream, and instead of reporting back to Herod, follow another way home.

Supplies for this activity include newspapers, magazines, tape, and a place to post images they have selected. If you don't feel comfortable placing them on a wall, make time for them to share the image or phrase and discuss it with the group.

For communities with access to technology, you might prime your students by showing images of communities affected by power inequities. Possible images to look for include the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, undocumented immigrants at the Southern Border, and controversies around policing and Black Lives Matter.

Although there are any number of groups that could fit such a topic, newsworthy conversations around policing, immigration, incarceration, and school violence could generate discussion.

# EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

those in positions of power. The great judgment, according to Jesus later in Matthew's Gospel, will center on how we did or did not engage in ministry with who Jesus called the least of these.

## Activity:

Divide your students into pairs or small groups (whatever seems most appropriate) and invite them to discuss and name groups of people or cite examples of those who find themselves at odds with power in our society. One way to get them to engage the topic would be to bring newspapers or magazines and ask them to cut out or find headlines that demonstrate groups of people who face the consequences for being at odds with the powerful.

Before you begin this work, read part of the statement from the United Methodist Social Principles on Immigration (§162.H) and invite students to respond to it:

*The United Methodist Church affirms the worth, dignity, and inherent value and rights of all persons regardless of their nationality or legal status. United Methodist churches throughout the United States are urged to build bridges with migrants in their local communities, to learn from them, celebrate their presence in the United States and recognize and appreciate the contributions in all areas of life that migrants bring. (2016-2020 Book of Resolutions #3281)*

## Questions:

1. How can individuals and communities who are frequently targeted by those in power experience a different way of life?
2. What steps need to take place, for example, for predominantly African-American communities and the police to rebuild trust? How can we improve the lives of vulnerable populations like immigrants?
3. Can you think of one thing you could do this week to make a difference for the people you have named this morning?
4. Is there a way to make a difference that would involve a more sustained action as a Sunday School class or youth group? How could our church make a difference in a practical way?

## NOTES



# EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

**JUSTICE ISSUE** MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

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## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Close with a prayer, emphasizing God's love for those who are vulnerable and our call to be courageous advocates for those who are threatened by power.

NOTES

# BAPTISM OF THE LORD

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. J.P (JUNG PYO) HONG

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶161.B

**OBJECTIVE**

To understand the meaning of baptism (whether as an infant, child, or adult), that we are each and every one of us a beloved member of the family of God.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

A bowl, water, sponge for each group (the group made up of 3-4 students), markers, post-it notes

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

#### Option 1: Name Calling

- Participants are given six post-its each.
- Ask them to write down three negative and three positive names either they themselves or others have been called.
- Be sure to start with yourself as an example.
- Have a negative and positive location in the room where they can stick what they've written.
- Invite anyone, if willing, to share the impact any of these names have/had on them growing up.

#### Option 2: My Name

- Participants are asked to share what they know about their given names (e.g., I was named for my mother's aunt who was really like a mother to her; my parents picked my name because it means "light of God"; etc.)
- If they have no idea, tell them they can find out and share the next time the group gathers
- Close by reminding them whatever the story or meaning behind their name, there's no doubt it was given in love

### NOTES

#### Option 1 Notes:

- Keep gage on how participants are feeling
- This exercise can bring up strong emotions, whether as those called or those calling others negative names
- Consider closing this time with an invitation to pray both for forgiveness and for healing

#### Option 2 Notes:

- Start by sharing the story or meaning behind your own name

# BAPTISM OF THE LORD

## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

Read Luke 3:15-17 and 21-22 (invite two readers)

- In pairs (2) or groups (3-4), address the following questions:
  - (1) What word, phrase or image connects with you most?
  - (2) How does John's description of baptism compare with what happens with Jesus? What's similar? Different?
  - (3) What does baptism mean to you as you read this scripture?
- Invite participants to share with the whole group what they discussed in pairs or groups.

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### Activity 1: Baptism, Water, & Family

- Ask participants to get into groups (3-4)
- Each group is given a bowl or glass of water
- The assignment is simple: why does the church use water as a symbol and liturgical element of baptism? come up with as many reasons as you can, incorporating common sense, your physical senses (see, hear, taste, feel, smell), scripture, and/or church liturgy
- Share response as a whole group, and compare responses with the traditional meanings of water and baptism (washing, cleansing, nourishing, birthing, dying)

### Read

*Social Principles* ¶161 on The Nurturing Community, the introduction paragraph, and part B) *The Family*

## NOTES

- Remind participants the lectionary reading is tied to the Baptism of the Lord Sunday.
  - Often we read scripture with alignment and synthesis in mind (part A will fit with part B), but its possible John and Jesus have strong differences in how they experience and understand baptism.
  - John's understanding strikes a chord of fear, God's judgment and wrath that will separate the "wheat" from the "chaff"; his language includes words like "fire," "power" and "not worthy."
  - Jesus experiences baptism as an affirmation, and the image is that of a "dove"; the voice of God declares a foundational truth: "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you, I am well pleased."
- 
- as participants explore the meaning of water and baptism, you may wish to have in hand the *United Methodist Hymnal* or *Book of Worship*, as it includes liturgy for the service of baptism
  - the meaning of baptism most difficult for us is that of dying
  - recall stories from scripture where water destroys or wipes out (e.g., Noah and the flood; Pharaoh's army drowning; the stormy waters Jesus calms)
  - yet our faith includes dying as essential to new life; whether literally or figuratively, we are asked to "lay down our lives" for the sake of another
  - either activity can be chosen, or if there is time, both
  - you may want to have some recent news that connects with how families and communities are being harmed and broken (e.g., the fear of gun-violence; the separation of children from their families) or nurtured and strengthened (e.g., companies adopting innovative parent-friendly policies)

**Ask:**

- What connection do you see between the meaning of baptism and our *Social Principle* value for nurturing communities and the human family?

**Say:**

Like Jesus, baptism is our way of reminding the whole community each infant, child, and adult is a beloved part of the family of God (and therefore of our family)

**Follow-up**

- What responsibility do we have then to each member we baptize and receive?

**Activity 2: Baptism, Compassion, & Justice**

**Write:**

- Amos 5:24 — “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an overflowing stream.”
- Ask participants to get into groups (3-4).
- Each group is given a bowl or glass of water and sponges of varying sizes

**Ask:**

- Imagine each sponge is something that dries up or takes away water and all that it signifies in baptism (healing, growth, new possibilities, the compassion to lay down one’s own life for another, etc.); what are some examples of things that hurt communities and our value for families? (you may want to help get conversations started by giving a few examples: poor public education, violence in homes, fear of neighbors, etc.)
- Participants can choose to write on each sponge (e.g., FEAR) or not, but as they name something that harms communities and families, put the sponge in the bowl.

**Ask:**

- What can we do to help replenish our bowls? (we can add more water, OR we can address the sponges and squeeze them out); what would that look like?

# BAPTISM OF THE LORD

## Say:

- Our baptism is integrally tied to how we treat our friends, neighbors, and even those strange “cousins” we haven’t met yet

Have participants gleefully squeeze the water back in and throw out each sponge.

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

- Get into a full circle (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, Head of Our Shared Household — help me to remember my baptism and be thankful. Remind me I am beloved by You. That we are all Your beloved children. Then teach us to share this good news with others. Help us to support families in their struggles and to rebuild communities of trust, nurture, and love. AMEN.

## NOTES

Large empty rectangular area for taking notes.

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. DEBBIE SPERRY

Page: 1 of 3

### JUSTICE ISSUE: CARING FOR THE LEAST, THE LOST, AND THE HOPELESS

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Isaiah 62

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES** 2016-2020 Social Principles ¶162

**OBJECTIVE**

To learn to look for those who are hurting and think of ways we can be helpful.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Whiteboard/dry erase or butcher paper/markers; a map of your city, or an image from google maps that shows major roads and/or neighborhoods.

### LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

#### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

##### Ice Breaker: What's in a name?

Quote from "Romeo and Juliet" by William Shakespeare:

"Tis but thy name that is my enemy;  
thou art thyself though, not a Montague,  
What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot,  
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part  
Belonging to a man. O! be some other name:  
What's in a name? that which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet;

In Shakespeare's classic play, Juliet asks the famous question..."What's in a name?" That's part of our discussion today.

##### Discussion questions:

- What nicknames are you known by?
- How do you feel about your nickname/s?
- Do you feel like they describe you well?
- If you could be given a nickname that would then transform who you are or what you can do, what nickname would you want?

#### NOTES

These should be more than just diminutives of their given name (e.g., Dave for David, or Beth for Elizabeth, or Lupe for Guadalupe), but more like "princess," "champ," "shorty," etc.

# SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

**JUSTICE ISSUE** CARING FOR THE LEAST, THE LOST, AND THE HOPELESS

Page: 2 of 3

## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

### Pray:

Dear God, we thank You for this time together. We are gathered in Your name and invite You to guide us in our Bible study and conversation. In Jesus' name. Amen.

### Read Isaiah 62:1-15

### Discussion questions:

- 1) What does verse one tell us about how the author feels about Jerusalem?
- 2) What do verses 1 and 2 tell us about what the author desires for Jerusalem?
- 3) What does verse 4 tell us about Jerusalem's\* nicknames?
- 4) What does it mean for a city to be forsaken or forgotten? What would that look like?
- 5) How would you describe your own city? Or your part of town? Your neighborhood?
- 6) What does verse 4 tell us about how Jerusalem will be known?
- 7) If you could give your city/town/part of town a new name, what name would it be?

### NOTES

Feel free to use the sample prayer, or do one of your own, or invite one of the youth to pray.

Re: Discussion questions

\*Jerusalem means "peace."

3) Jerusalem is considered forsaken and forgotten because this is after a time of exile. The Israelites were kicked out of Jerusalem and lived in exile for 50 years. While in exile, they could remember Jerusalem like it used to be. But then when they were allowed to return, the city had been ravaged and was nothing like they remembered it. This chapter in Isaiah is aimed at the Israelites who are heartbroken and disillusioned at what has become of their beloved city.

7) In the Bible, names are used to help describe a person... "Sophia" is a wise person (and that's what her name means). And, a change in names marks God's work in someone's life. Abram becomes Abraham, Sarai becomes Sarah, Jacob becomes Israel, Saul becomes Paul. So, the new names for your city/town should reflect what students want their city/town to become.

# SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

**JUSTICE ISSUE** CARING FOR THE LEAST, THE LOST, AND THE HOPELESS

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## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

- 1) Are there communities or neighborhoods that we know of today that have been forsaken or forgotten?
- 2) Think about our city, are there people or groups of people that are forsaken or forgotten?
- 3) What can the church (community of Christians) do to remember those whom others have forgotten?
- 4) What can we do in our city to make a difference?
  - As a group, make a brainstorming map (using a whiteboard, chalkboard, or butcher paper).
  - Put your map on the board, or draw a general outline/map.
  - Put the phrase “forgotten and forsaken people in my community” as a title
  - List as many groups as you can that others forget about (or would like to forget about). Think about particular neighborhoods...who lives there...who is forgotten there?
  - Then, next to each group, list ideas for how the church can remember them.
  - Spend time in thoughtful prayer and discern, or listen for one thing that God wants you to do.

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

### Make a commitment.

Today you talked about things we could do to make a difference and to see people more readily. What are you willing to commit to doing? How long will it take for you to follow through? Write down each person’s answers and make a covenant to check back in and see how you’re doing after a few weeks or a month.

### Close with the Serenity Prayer:

Lord, grant me the serenity to acknowledge the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen.

## NOTES

Current Application:

2) You might need to define forsaken. Some places/neighborhoods might feel obvious; others might be harder. Some indicators they could think about and look for in their minds are:

- are there services available,
- are the schools good,
- does public transportation go that way (how do people without a car get around)
- are they considered “safe” neighborhoods
- are there standard grocery stores with quality products or mostly liquor stores or places with poor products



# THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

CONTRIBUTOR NAME KATIE MATSON-DALEY

Page: 1 of 5

## JUSTICE ISSUE: LEISURE, LIVING WAGE

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10

### SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶163. C

### OBJECTIVE

Using the story of Nehemiah, research on living wages, and the human need for leisure time, students will consider ways to pursue economic justice for workers.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

Bibles for students, or printed copies of the scripture, Copy of the *Social Principles* particularly ¶163, Chart paper, whiteboard, chalkboard or laptop for translating ¶163.C, calculators (or cell phones with calculators), "Living Wage" *Faith and Fact Cards* (optional), postcards, postcard stamps and addresses for elected leaders, a basket to collect postcards.

\*Before the lesson go to <http://livingwage.mit.edu/> to find out what the living wage and the minimum wage for different family groups in your community. Print the charts for your county for your group.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

#### Check-ins:

Highs and lows since you last met (or if this is your first time together, highs and lows over the last week).

High: What was the best thing in your life since we met last?

Low: What was the hardest thing in your life since we met last?

After all the highs and lows have been shared a student or leader can pray for the week that students have had and for the time together

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

#### Say:

We just shared our "highs and lows," with each other. The book of Nehemiah is a book with a lot of emotional highs and lows. It's not a very long book of the Bible, but it is 13 chapters which is more than we have time to read in one session. So, before we look at our scripture for tonight, here's a quick summary of what happens in the first seven chapters of Nehemiah.

### NOTES

Middle schoolers are intensely relational and often want to share their lives.

Depending on the familiarity the students in your group have with each other, and the size of your group, you may want to put some boundaries around their answers. For example, "In one sentence, tell us the best thing in your life since we last met." Or "in one breath."

You can also set the guidelines that unless someone is in danger what is shared in the highs and lows will stay in the group and not be shared outside of the group.

If you have a very small group, they can act out the entire summary, and if you have a larger group, you can divide into groups so that each group would act out either one chapter or however else you want to divide it up. You're not looking for a well-rehearsed play, just a quick spontaneous pantomime done on the fly.

## THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

**JUSTICE ISSUE** LEISURE, LIVING WAGE

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We'll read each chapter summary, and you can act it out.

1. Nehemiah is working for the king of Persia when he hears about how his hometown, Jerusalem is ruined. He cries a lot and prays about it.
2. Nehemiah wasn't supposed to be sad in front of the king, but he took a risk and was sad when he went to work. This prompts the king to ask, "What's going on?" Nehemiah tells him about how bad things are in Jerusalem. The king tells him he can go back and have resources to rebuild the city. Nehemiah goes to Jerusalem looks at all the walls of the city and decides they have to rebuild.
3. Nehemiah organizes different families and groups to build different parts of the wall. The whole city is involved in the rebuilding, and everyone has their own job to do.
4. Some other people who live nearby try and get Nehemiah in trouble for doing the work.
5. Nehemiah deals with the people who are trying to block his work.
6. The people who are bothering them get in trouble
7. The wall is completed after 52 days of work, and Nehemiah counts all the people.

This brings us to our scripture for today, Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10. The wall has been completed, and it is a holiday for the people of Jerusalem. Ezra is the priest.

**Read: Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10 again**

### Questions:

1. In the midst of a huge job, like building a wall for 52 days, why would there be a break to talk about a holiday?

### NOTES

Students may wonder why the people were weeping in verse 9, and why Nehemiah told them not to weep. The people were likely feeling guilt for their sin after Ezra read from the book.

Nehemiah is telling them that today is a day to eat and celebrate what God has done.

What does Nehemiah mean when he says, "send portions of them to those for who nothing is prepared?"

## THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

**JUSTICE ISSUE** LEISURE, LIVING WAGE

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2. Why do you think Nehemiah says, “Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine. . . for the joy of the Lord is your strength?” (vs. 10.)
3. How do the times that you spend resting, worshipping, celebrating and having fun help you? How would your life be different if everything you did was work, chores or school work? Why do we need downtime from work?

### GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Using the chart from <http://livingwage.mit.edu/> for your county, figure out how many hours/week at minimum wage an adult would have to work to meet their family’s basic needs.

- 1 single adult
- 1 single adult with 1 child
- 2 adults with a stay at home parent and 1 child
- 1 single adult with 3 children
- 2 adults working with 2 children in childcare

[Required annual income before taxes]/52 weeks a year= Required weekly income

Required weekly income/your local minimum wage = how many hours

Do these hours leave much room for leisure time?

**Read:** ¶163. IV. *The Economic Community Work and Leisure*

### NOTES

Even on this day of celebration poor people in the community and non-Jewish people in the community may have been hungry and unable to celebrate the holiday. Nehemiah is asking them to make sure that the poor and the immigrants who didn’t have enough to eat were able to feast that day as well.

Some students may not be familiar with some of the words or terms.

- Leisure – free time
- Private sector – businesses not under government control
- Discretionary time – free time.

## THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

**JUSTICE ISSUE** LEISURE, LIVING WAGE

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In partners or small groups:

**Ask:**

1. How would you write this paragraph in familiar terms? What words would you use?
2. What do you think you can do to help people earn a living wage, and to make sure that they have access to leisure time?

Allow students to brainstorm, then share these ideas.

Here are some ideas adapted from the Faith & Facts card on “Living Wage.”

*Use your purchasing power to support companies that pay their workers a living wage.*

*Write to your elected representatives at the state and national level to support efforts to increase the minimum wage and make it a living wage.*

*Find out if your local church has adopted a living wage model for its entire staff. (Talk with your Pastor and SPRC about living wage and economic justice.)*

### **CLOSING** (5 MINUTES)

Before students leave, explain that as a closing prayer tonight they will each be “putting feet,” on their prayers. They can use their own words, or they can use the letter below. Ask them to pray for their letter and the policymaker who will receive it before they put it into the basket that you are collecting them in.

Light a candle or ring a bell to signify that this is not just another activity but a way to pray and put our prayers into action.

### NOTES

## THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

**JUSTICE ISSUE** LEISURE, LIVING WAGE

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Dear (Policy Maker's Name),

I am a student at (Your Church's name). We've been learning and praying about how many hours families need to work to make ends meet. The minimum wage in our state is too low for workers to support their families. Please work to make the minimum wage in (your state) a livable wage.

Sincerely,

(Your name)

### NOTES

# FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** KATIE MONFORTTE

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: THE CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Jeremiah 1:4-10

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶165.C and ¶161.R

**OBJECTIVE**

Our world is full of violence, but as people of faith we are called to speak out against violence in our communities and center our lives on justice and compassion. Our age does not disqualify us.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Magazines, newspapers, newsletters, advertisements, and pictures. Each participant will need access to a pair of scissors, a glue stick and an 8.5X 11 blank sheet of paper, access to Youtube (computer, tablet, smartphone)

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

**Pray:**

God, help us to be open to your word, open our ears to hear, open our mind to understand and our heart to feel your call in our world today.

**Watch**

“Love Letters to God”

**Say:**

“So many parts to a heavy heart....”

In this video we see violence erupting as the Native American community at Standing Rock speaks out against the destruction of sacred land. This act of putting one’s body on the line for justice. Jeremiah knew the sacrifice of this public witness too.

### NOTES

Offer a prayer to open the group’s time together.

Watch “Love Letters to God” on YouTube  
<https://youtube/E-QGkYNc0Ls>

Use this music video to help center your group as you prepare to engage the biblical text

# FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JUSTICE ISSUE THE CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

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## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

Read: Jeremiah 1:4-10

Say:

Jeremiah and his community know firsthand the horrors of war, violence, and conflict. They have experienced the fall of Jerusalem and are in exile. We as readers today cannot turn away from this reality of violence. This is the backdrop for Jeremiah's call and commissioning.

Ask:

- Where do you encounter violence and war in your everyday life?

Say:

- Our lectionary text, Jeremiah 1:4-10, reminds us that God calls us all; God calls Jeremiah as a youth. Jeremiah does not feel ready when he is called, naming his "being a boy," his young age, as a disqualifier.

Ask:

- In what ways has your youthfulness been used by others to disqualify your wanting to do or say something?
- Have you ever stepped back from doing something because you felt like you were not old enough for the task?

Say:

- God responds by reminding Jeremiah that God knows everything about him. God knows that he has been prepared for this calling, even before his birth. Jeremiah's formation, his family history, the ancestors who are part of a priestly line, have been passing on the traditions and values of Israel.

Ask:

- We have been shaped by the values, traditions, and cultures of our families and the communities we are a part of. What are some of these traditions and values that reflect God's hope, peace, and justice for this world that have been passed down to you?

Say:

- God knows the gifts and passions Jeremiah will bring to his people. God knows the deepest desires of our hearts. We are equipped to do what God calls us to do.

### NOTES

Examples can be video games (especially video games based on real wars), violence in our favorite movies, videos of fights and other forms of violence that go viral on social media, bullying, fights at school, etc...

As the leader, you should share a personal story where maybe you wanted to say or do something but didn't. In sharing about your experience and what you have learned from it, youth will see you being vulnerable and honest and can remind them they are not the only ones who don't always do what we believe we should do.

# FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

## Ask:

- What injustices do you see in your community? What violence unsettles you?
- Have you ever felt like you were meant to deliver a message you felt in your heart, but don't have words for?

## Say:

- Jeremiah was called and prepared by God. The message he was tasked to speak was not welcomed by those in power. He may have initially felt fearful or unprepared, but he is remembered for his bold proclamation of restoration and hope (planting and building) but also deconstruction (destruction and overthrow) of the of the war economy, an economy that favored the rich and continued to perpetuate conflict.

## Ask:

- Have you ever been asked to speak publicly about or share with your community a message that was unwelcomed? What was that experience like for you? What did you learn from it?

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Group leader should distribute magazines, newspapers, newsletters, advertisements, and pictures. Each person will need a pair of scissors, a glue stick and an 8.5X 11 blank sheet of paper.

Have the students collect images that represent violence in their communities. What words or images depict the pain of injustice and suffering that is occurring in our world today?

Have the student paste these images and words on their sheet of paper.

After 10-15 mins of collecting images and pasting those on the sheet, invite the youth to think about ways they might speak out against or act to change this painful reality. Invite them to write their action or words of resistance on their collage.

Let them know that writing this out, naming the ways they change the painful reality, is an act of prayer and the first step in changing this injustice.

## NOTES

Name some injustices that the group members are aware of and may not be aware of: gun violence, poverty, hunger, the separation of families at the border, the stigmatization of people having mental health issues, the destruction of creation and violence against indigenous peoples protecting their sacred lands (like the video "Love Letters To God" we started with).

Remind the youth gathered that their being unsettled about an injustice or the passion they feel to disrupt the way things are is a good indicator of what God may be asking them to address through their prayers and action.

This activity invites the participants to reflect upon our time in scriptural study.

Play instrumental music in the background as the youth create their collages.

Walk around to take in what the participants are creating.



# FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

**JUSTICE ISSUE** THE CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

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## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

**Say:**

As a closing meditation, we have an art display to reflect on. We have spent our time today examining the violence we see in our community, how we participate in violence and have considered how we might act to stop the culture of violence in our communities.

May this art display of physical weapons of violence move us from a place of complicity to action.

### NOTES

Link to 3D - Anti-Gun Art by Michael  
Murphy  
[https://www.youtube.com/  
watch?v=l-GR9IVjU54](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-GR9IVjU54)

# FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** KATIE MONFORTTE

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: JUST ECONOMIC ORDER – ACCESS TO ABUNDANT LIFE

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Luke 5:1-11

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶163.E, 2016-2020 Book of Resolutions #4051, and the UM Social Creed

**OBJECTIVE**

God's economy is one of abundance and ensures that all people have what is necessary to thrive.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Faith and Facts card on [Hunger in the US](#), space for students to move around, and access to the internet.

### LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

#### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Start your time together by inviting each person to name what their favorite item to sneak into the shopping cart.

After everyone is given a chance to name an item of indulgence, offer an opening prayer that names our gratitude for all the tasty food options that are available to us.

#### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

If time allows invite different youth to read and/or act out different characters. You can have youth read/play the role of Simon, John, James, Jesus, and the crowd.

##### Read Luke 5:1-11

**Say:**

Jesus comes to the fishermen/disciples in the boat. He comes to us where we are. He knows our gifts and our abilities, and he also challenges us to try something new, trusting that in acts of newness there is abundance.

**Ask:**

1. Simon, James, and John were fishermen. What role did their work/job play in the food economy of their day?
2. How dependent do you think the community were on Simon, James, and John to always have a good catch?

#### NOTES

Many of Jesus' disciples were fishermen. This was the career that provided for their livelihoods. This is the work that enabled them to contribute to their society. This labor was a part of the larger economy of the time. The fishermen would have sold their catch at the local market.

Fishermen know their territory waters; this is Simon's skill set, this is the work he knows and was likely trained in as a young boy.

For Simon, John, and James catching no fish means empty bellies and no income for the day.

# FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

**JUSTICE ISSUE** JUST ECONOMIC ORDER – ACCESS TO ABUNDANT LIFE

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3. How would you feel if you had been stuck out in a small boat for hours on end without any fish to take home or sell? (We can get disappointed and discouraged when we work hard and gain a poor outcome.)
4. Why do you think Jesus told them to cast their nets on the other side? What significance do you think that has?
5. As we reflect on God's abundance and generosity, what does it mean that the disciples left everything to follow Jesus? (Reflecting on God's abundance in this text and yet this text shares of three people who gave up everything)

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Begin your group activity playing "This Way or That Way."

Divide the room into two sides and ask the following questions. Invite the youth to move from one side of the room or the other depending on their answer.

### Questions for "This Way or That Way"

1. Have you ever seen the shelves of a grocery store empty (in preparation for a natural disaster)? **Yes or No**
2. Would you say that your refrigerator or pantry is more often filled or empty? **Full or Empty**
3. Do you see more fresh fruits and vegetables in your home or canned? **Canned or Fresh**
4. Are you allowed to have anything you would like for an after-school snack or are there only a few snack items your parents let you choose from? **Free For All or A Few Selected Items**
5. Do you eat meat? **Yes or No**
6. Have you ever been to a farm? **Yes or No**
7. Do you help in preparing meals? **Yes or No**
8. Does your family grow food in a garden? **Yes or No**

## NOTES

How can a new pattern or a simple change alter our perspective? Could Jesus' direction to cast the nets in new place be a physical embodiment of a needed change?

The disciples chose not to accumulate money (as they may have just received from 2 full boats of fish) but to trust in Jesus for provision of needs.

Youth often get very passionate/energetic during games like this, and they may desire to argue why their answer is better than the other side. If it is in a fun and respectful way, let the youth share the reason for their answers and the side they are on.

Depending on the time, feel free to come up with additional questions here that connect to the theme.

You can ask one or two youth to say more about their response each time.

The hope in this activity is to get the group moving and thinking about their connection to food.

If your church does not have a food pantry/closet, ask the youth if they are interested in starting one. If so, start coming up with ideas for how the youth can lead the church into beginning this ministry.

# FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

**JUSTICE ISSUE** JUST ECONOMIC ORDER – ACCESS TO ABUNDANT LIFE

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## Say:

Our scripture passage highlighted the promise of God’s abundance being demonstrated in our economy. We see that James, John, and Simon are so enthralled by this vision that they are willing to leave the life they know to share this vision with Jesus. As United Methodist, we are committed to caring for the needs of our neighbor and eliminating poverty. We know that for this vision to become a reality, we must look at our personal lives and our social structures that continue cycles of poverty.

## If time permits:

Have the students look at the **Faith and Facts card on Hunger in the US** in small groups. Ask the students if they feel connected to or understand how the food that is on their plate gets there how there? Have they ever been a part of a free or reduced lunch program? Have they ever known anyone who was hungry? How might the church care for those who are hungry today? How can the church advocate for programs that reduce hunger?

## After The Game:

If your church has a food pantry or any collection of food and canned goods, go and visit it. See if it is full, empty or somewhere in between. Engage the youth in conversation about what each one means. If it is full does that mean people do not know about it, or is there a day coming up soon when families and individuals can come and receive? If it is empty, does that mean much food has just been given out, or that donations are not coming in?

If time allows, go to [frac.org](http://frac.org) (Food Research and Action Center). Explore the percentage of the population by regions that are food insecure. Take a look at the communities that your youth are a part of. Are the numbers surprising? Consider how these numbers are people your youth may know, may represent or may be disconnected from. How should the church respond, especially when we believe in a God who desires all people to have an abundant life? There is enough food for everyone, so what does it say when not everyone can have enough food to survive?

## NOTES

These questions are just a starting point, be sure to ask what is best for your context and the intimacy of the group.

On the FRAC website go to the Resource Library under the Research and Data tab, then click on Food Insecurity rates by Census Region

Explore this website beforehand so that you can find the information you need and have it readily available for your lesson.

# FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

**JUSTICE ISSUE** JUST ECONOMIC ORDER – ACCESS TO ABUNDANT LIFE

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## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

End with a prayer for those who are food insecure in your community, especially friends and peers in their schools who are on free and reduced lunches and who may only be able to eat at school.

NOTES

# SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** JULIE O'NEAL

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: UNDERSTANDING PRIVILEGE

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Luke 6:17-26, Matthew 5:3-12

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 *Book of Resolutions* # 3422, 3425, 3427, 3428

**OBJECTIVE**

To examine the systems around us that enhance and/or reinforce earthly standards vs. God's standards. To emphasize with privilege comes responsibility. To affirm the worth of all persons and the hope of living out God's desires in our world today.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Flipchart paper, markers, pens, paper, magazines, newspapers, internet access, contemporary translations of the bible such as *The Message* or *Common English Bible*, optional: "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" movie, common or popular board game; *Book of Resolutions*, *Faith and Fact Cards*.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Have the students sit comfortably with their back against the back of the chairs.

Ask them to close their eyes and listen.

**Say:**

"God created human beings so that we would need one another."  
(repeat twice)

Ask them to open their eyes and share what they heard.

Share about Catherine of Siena (in the notes).

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

**Read: Luke 6:17-26**

#### NOTES

One of the great saints of the church was Catherine of Siena. She was a saint who wanted to help others follow Christ more perfectly and attain Christian perfection. She said, "God created human beings so that we would need one another." She recognized the importance of community and depending on one another for support. For it is in true community where we bring our selves: our imperfect, shy, lonely, unworthy, insecure, messy, trying-to-figure-out-life selves with the promise that God is present and at work in our lives and in the lives of those around us.

Printout or have two people read these two versions. Highlight the places of similarity and difference. What lessons can be learned in each version? (Luke 6:17-26 and Matthew 5:3-12)

## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

### Say:

In the bible, this part of Jesus' teachings is called *The Sermon on The Plain*. In other gospels, it is called *The Sermon on the Mount*. These sermons are places where Jesus was teaching people around him about God and what God's kingdom is like. Compare this passage with Matthew 5:3-12. What similarities and differences do you notice?

### Read Matthew 5:3-12

### Say:

This is a message for all people. We learn in this story that all sorts of people came to hear Jesus speak. They weren't just curious; they were passionate and excited to hear what Jesus had to say to them. They were perfectly imperfect people who were aware of the power Jesus had to change their lives. All of them wanted to learn and wanted to be healed or cured. They were drawn to him because of his healing power and charisma.

In those days the people who were considered blessed were people who were rich, people who were tax collectors, people who were healthy men in society. Those who were considered poor were those who did not have a lot of resources, those who were slaves, children, women and the elderly.

Jesus was saying radical things. It might not seem so strange today, but in Jesus' time, he was confronting people who thought they were righteous and who thought they were God's favorite. He made a lot of people very uncomfortable and very angry by saying these things. He was going against everything that people knew or thought in that day. I'm sure some walked away thinking "How dare he say those things! Who does he think he is?" It wasn't just hard for people to hear what he had to say, it was impossible for them even to imagine what he was saying could be the slightest bit true.

Today, in some places, value is placed on things such as having multiple cars, the latest iPhone, having the highest test scores, or having a swimming pool. In other places, value is placed on things like spending time with family or volunteering at a food bank or shelter.

### NOTES

Even today, we are drawn to people who have charisma. Charisma is a personality trait that is appealing to others. It could be a smile, a friendly manner, a powerful way of speaking, or a charming personality. Who in your community might be considered to have charisma?

## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

### Ask:

What ways does the community around you define value? How does social media influence these definitions? What are some limitations in defining someone as blessed based on the things they have versus the things they do?

### Say:

It might be difficult to imagine a world that is not everything we see and hear and touch today. It is tempting to be consumed with the things of today. It is also a privilege to have access to the things that we sometimes take for granted such as healthcare, clean water, fresh fruits/vegetables, stable family situations, new clothes or shoes, electricity, immigration status. Identify some areas in your life where these things are easy to come by.

### Ask:

What does it mean to accept the fact that you have privilege by having these things? What does this story teach us about equal rights for all?

### Say:

We have the power to affect change around us. It can be change for good or change for harm. Our actions can guide us to enact change in our individual lives, in our families, with friends, at church, school and beyond. One voice can join others to build a movement that could stretch far and wide. This is the power of community. How can joining others help build up God's kingdom in the places around you?

### NOTES

Look at magazine/newspaper/online articles that reinforce today's society and culture. And search for places where God's world is reflected. What did you discover? Which one did you find more examples of?

Reference The 2016 United Methodist *Book of Resolutions*  
Resolution #3422, #3425, #3427, #3428

Reference the many applicable topics in the *Faith and Facts cards*.

Privilege is a right, immunity or benefit enjoyed only by a person beyond the advantages of most (Merriam-Webster's Dictionary) and can often be rooted in race, gender, economic status, education, and other advantages. It will be important to clarify the fact that privilege is not something that people ask for or enjoy on purpose or makes them a bad person. It isn't something that is meant to cause guilt or shame. Instead, it is an opportunity to recognize the inequities around us and change the systems that create and sustain them. With privilege comes responsibility. Discussion of privilege is meant to examine ways we are responsible for caring for all persons and how systems of power try to keep those persons and things who benefit from privilege in place.



# SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

(Many options are provided- pick two from below)

### Blessed/Poor

In pairs, make a list of those in our society who are considered blessed? Make another list of those who are considered poor? As a group, come back and share your answers. Consider these questions:

- What do you think when you see the “blessed” list?
- The “poor” list?
- Why are some on the list and some not on the list?
- Which one do you think is more valued?

### Modern Rewriting of the Beatitudes

If you were to re-write the beatitudes (Blessed are those... Woe to those...), how would you re-write them to fit today’s context? Split the group into two or three groups (depending on size). Give each group 10 minutes to re-write the beatitudes. After time is up, have each group share their version.

### Cost of Discipleship

Jesus’ message was not always a welcomed one. Some were so angry and upset by his message that they wanted him killed. Even today, choosing to follow Jesus can be hard. In many countries, people are being persecuted, and their freedom to practice their religion is being denied.

Highlight modern-day role models such as

- March for Our Lives students
- The movie “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” based on Rev. Fred Rogers
- Local school teachers

## NOTES

### Supplies for “Blessed/Poor”

Flipchart, markers, pens, paper

### Notes for “Modern Rewriting of the Beatitudes”

Give one or two examples to get them started. Reference *The Message* or *Common English Bible* for suggestions.

### Notes for “Cost of Discipleship”

In *The Faith We Sing*, look up the hymn called “The Summons” # 2130. If the group is musically inclined, sing through the hymn. Otherwise, read through each verse, paying attention to the words. What phrases stick out to you? How might you be called to shape the world around you (your church, school, home, community)?

Consider how each of these persons introduced concepts that are/were considered radical in their day. Reflect on these questions:

- What are the risks that these people took for the sake of following Jesus?
- How did their witness help bring forth justice around them?
- How did their actions challenge power structures around them?
- How did they model the life of Jesus?
- How does their example fit into what Jesus was talking about in the Beatitudes?

## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

- Rev. Lorenza Andrade Smith  
<https://bit.ly/2LuTJgp> or <https://bit.ly/2LS6t09>
- The movie: “Black Panther”
- Shane Claiborne <http://www.shaneclaiborne.com/>

### Topsy/Turvy

Choose a popular game where the outcome/winner is determined by the most money, points, cards, etc. such as monopoly, mancala, Uno, etc. Have the group play the game with the regular rules. Play for several turns and then pause the game. Declare a twist to the rules where the person that is currently winning gets a bonus and receives extra cards, points, etc. Continue the game and end after each person has had a certain number of rounds/turns. At the end of the game, declare the winner not by who has the most but by who has the least.

### You Are Worthy

Figuring out who we are, who our family and friends expect us to be, learning what God is calling us to be – all of this can be overwhelming. Sometimes it is hard to know how to do the right thing when everyone or everything says to do something different. Thankfully, we don’t have to figure it out all at once. Moment to moment, day to day, week to week and year to year, God’s grace goes with us to guide us along the way. We have done nothing to earn God’s grace; it’s just always there. It affirms us when we are loving and kind, upholds us when we feel ‘less-than’ and forgives us when we make mistakes and poor choices. This grace, along with God’s love, is part of our identity as people of faith. It becomes our most valuable possession.

### NOTES

#### Notes for “Topsy/Turvy”

Engage the group in the following questions:

- During the game, how did it feel to be the one with the most/least?
- How did it feel when the bonus was announced?
- How did it feel when the winner was announced?
- Consider these things in light of Jesus’ message in the Beatitudes, depending on if you had the most or least amount of money/points/cards, etc.

#### Notes for “You Are Worthy”

To challenge the messages that say that our flaws make us weak (today’s standards) and to affirm that our whole selves are valued (God’s standards). Have each person take a piece of paper and something to write with. Make a line down the middle of the page, dividing it into half lengthwise. On one side, make a list of what we and the world consider our flaws. On the other side, challenge each person to write an affirmation that counters the flaw on the opposite side. This might be challenging for some but keep encouraging them to seek grace with themselves. Encourage the group to reflect on what they have written. Pray over the group, reminding them that they are beautifully and wonderfully made.

# SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Say:

As you go about your normal routine this week, consider these things:

- Where do you see people who put their worth in material things? Where do you see people for whom material things are not a priority or are non-existent? How would Jesus call you to interact with these persons?
- Where in your life are you storing up your possessions? What are the things that you are doing that bring you closer to God? How can you start to focus less on material things and more on the things God wants you to have?

### Closing Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank you for the material blessings you have given me and for showing me Jesus' example of true blessings. Help me in my struggle, not rely on material things for my happiness and fulfillment but on the things that bring me closer to you. Guide my priorities and teach me ways to embrace the cost of following you, even when it is scary and hostile.

Amen.

### NOTES



# SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** HYE-IN LEE

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: INCLUSION

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Luke 6:27-38

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 *Social Principles* ¶162 Introduction Paragraph

**OBJECTIVE**

Our identity as Christians is to love those that are difficult to love.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Paper, Pen, *Social Principles*

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

#### Ice Breaker

- 1) How was your week?
- 2) Any God moments that you witnessed?

#### Prayer:

“Thank You, God, for giving us this wonderful day to start a new week. We are gathered here to know more about You and to learn more from You. Please guide us at this time. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen. “

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES.)

#### Read:

Luke 6:27-38 (Have the students take turns reading a verse each.)

#### Say:

The Gospel of Luke is a story of salvation and focuses on the underprivileged in the world. God came to Israel to save the lost. Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection brings restoration to everyone, especially those forgotten or hurt by society.

Luke 6 tells us that Jesus teaches the disciples the essence of discipleship. The attitude we need to take as Christians. In the Gospel of Luke, we find that Jesus not only commanded his people to love their enemies but also lived that out by choosing nonviolent resistance against evil and praying for the enemies even on the cross.

#### NOTES

# SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

## Ask:

1. How do you define your “enemy”? (*You may receive a wide range of answers that can be hurtful words to difference in appearance. It can also be differing levels of personal relationships to something that is systemic and happening in the world or community around them.*)
2. What are some reasons why you might label someone/something as your “enemy”?
3. Why do you think Jesus tell us to love our enemies?

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Ask the students to fold the paper in half and then half again to create four sections.

- Section 1: Write the names of your “enemies.”
- Section 2: Write the reasons they are “enemies.”
- Section 3: Write the actions that we need to take as a response to today’s passage.
- Section 4: Write a plan with details of how I will make these actions happen this week.

The answer may be personal so ask for volunteers to share.

## Read¶162 Introduction Paragraph

With a partner, summarize the paragraph in your own words.

Share with the larger group.

## NOTES

Brainstorming together is important to help process and answer these questions with one another. Students learn from each other when they share answers and might realize more things through the process.

Emphasize to your students that bullying is never appropriate and that if they are being bullied that they should speak with someone.

Try to focus on the forgiveness, not on revenge. Students might ask the facilitators about this.

# SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

**JUSTICE ISSUE** INCLUSION

Page: 3 of 3

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

**Ask:**

Describe what you have learned through this lesson from God with a single word. Think about this word as we pray.

**Pray:**

“Dear God, thank You for giving us this time to reflect deeply with this community. We confess that we sometimes judge people quickly and define some people as our enemies. Help us to open our minds and hearts to love the way that You taught us to love. May we be examples of Your love to those that we meet in our daily lives. Amen.

NOTES

# TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. MELISSA HINNEN

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

<b>SCRIPTURE PASSAGE</b>	Luke 9:28-43a
<b>SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES</b>	2016-2020 Social Principles ¶162.I
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	Help students to see everyone the way God sees us.
<b>SUPPLIES NEEDED</b>	Handout, Pen/Pencils

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

(Handout)

#### Call and Response (based on Psalm 99):

Mighty Ruler, lover of justice

**We come to praise your great and awesome name.**

Mighty Ruler, lover of justice

**Show us how to establish equity**

Mighty Ruler, lover of justice

**Guide us to execute justice and righteousness**

Let us praise God's great and awesome name!

**Holy are you, Mighty Ruler, lover of justice!**

#### Opening Prayer

Justice Loving God,

Remove our veils so that we may see Your glory.

Keep us woke with a desire to be agents of equity and justice, forgiveness and righteousness. Transform and transfigure us today, so that in our hope we may act with boldness in the name of Jesus. Amen.

### NOTES

# TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY

## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

### Say:

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:12 “Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness.”

In the Stars Wars movie, *Rogue One*, Jane Eryso says something similar:

“We have hope. Rebellions begin with hope.”

When pressures in your life feel so big, it’s easy to lose sight of hope. We can feel powerless about injustice that we see in our lives and in the world.

That’s how the early Christians felt too. They sometimes wondered if following the teachings of Jesus could really make a difference. In his second letter to the people in Corinth, Paul reminds them that as long as they hold on to hope, they will have the courage to not only survive but to boldly confront anything that tries to get in the way of hope.

As we read the Gospel today, be aware of the people who exhibit hope and when people act with great boldness. And notice where there is fear and lack of action.

### Read Luke 9:28-36, (37-43a)

### Ask:

Where in this passage do you see people acting boldly? (or instead acting with fear or confusion?)

### Say:

Let’s look at a few of these people closer.

### PETER, JOHN, JAMES

The disciples are struggling to stay awake . . . It’s been an exhausting few weeks of teaching, healing, feeding. They go up to the mountain to rest and pray. In their faithfulness, they struggle to stay awake even though they were “weighted down with sleep.”

### NOTES



# TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY

Yet in spite of their weariness, they are witnesses to a dizzying visual encounter with the Divine. We see in this Gospel reading: Moses – representative of God’s law and Elijah, representative of the prophets and Jesus - the Son of God. Jesus momentarily transfigures – his face and his clothes change. There is a brilliant glow coming from him. Let’s have a closer look at some of the people we encountered in our passage.

## PETER:

Can you imagine? It is no wonder that Peter wants to bottle this moment by building three dwellings. In the midst of his fear and confusion, he acts in the way that he feels is appropriate. But sometimes staying in the moment and listening to gain clarity is the best response. Sometimes it is a bold response to just listen.

As we prepare for the season of Lent, we listen for God. Just as the Scripture tells us, “a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” In the midst of all of the light, and the visuals, the dazzling distractions, God commands us to listen to what Jesus has to teach us.

## JESUS:

When Jesus came down from the mountain, he headed toward Jerusalem – for his “departure, which he was about to accomplish” – knowing he would be betrayed, arrested, beaten, and executed as an enemy of the state before being resurrected in full glory. Jesus knew that there are glimpses of God’s glory not always on the mountaintop but also in the very valley of the shadow of death. Jesus boldness gives us hope.

## THE FATHER

A man whose son is possessed by a demon (other Scriptures explain the boy has epilepsy) boldly interrupts Jesus. “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.” This man has hope that Jesus can heal his son. *He begs Jesus to look at him.*

## NOTES

# TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### Read: ¶162.I (Rights of Persons with Disabilities)

Give Handout “Look at Me Scavenger Hunt” to students and a pen/pencil.

#### Discussion:

- What are some the things that you noticed about people by intentionally looking at them that you hadn’t noticed before?
- What are some things that you can’t tell about people just by looking at them?
- Based only on the Scripture reading, what do you know about the boy whose Father begged Jesus to look at him? (“Teacher, I beg you to look at my son.” The son in the Gospel reading is described by his disability.)
- How often do we meet people but we don’t really “see” them, or we look at them filling in our own expectations about who they are or what they can do?

#### Partner Work (Optional)

Working with a partner, construct a story about the boy that takes away the focus from his disability. Be mindful of some of the limitations he might have but think about what Jesus might have seen when he stopped and really looked at the child. What did he look like? What did he say after he was healed? Did he have friends? What are some of his favorite activities? How old is he? How was his life transfigured in his encounter with Jesus?

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

#### Say:

Transfiguration Sunday is an opening bookend to the season of Lent (and a closing bookend to the revealing season after Epiphany).

We now enter six weeks of contemplation as we journey with Jesus to the cross.

#### NOTES

# TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY

On Wednesday, you may come to participate in the ancient ritual of the imposition of ashes. And for six weeks, we will prayerfully engage in following Jesus to the cross *with the promise of resurrection always before us.*

My prayer for you is that you will prayerfully choose one discipline that you will follow for these forty days to help you look at your neighbors through the eyes of Jesus.

Be filled with the possibility of the miracles we are invited to be a part of — the bold hope-filled miracles that transcend the sadness and brokenness and join in the healing and love of all God’s children.

Open yourself up to the possibility of the transfiguration of God’s broken world.

Open yourself up to the possibility of your own transfiguration with the confidence that you are loved.

*(Each person shares a “personal and social holiness” Lenten discipline s/he will follow)*

**Say:**

Throughout this week remember that you are each a beloved descendant of Moses, Elijah, and God’s own son, Jesus.

With that confidence, go into the world with the boldness of people who have hope.

*Blessing (standing in a circle and looking at each other)*

**Pray:**

May the Triune God lead you to be an agent of peace with justice. May the Holy Spirit fill you with a spirit of joy, so that all who you meet. Will know the love and grace of Jesus Christ. Amen.

NOTES

Empty space for notes.

# TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY

## HANDOUT

Centering Moment:

**Call and Response (based on Psalm 99):**

**Mighty Ruler, lover of justice**

We come to praise your great and awesome name.

Mighty Ruler, lover of justice

**Show us how to establish equity**

Mighty Ruler, lover of justice

**Guide us to execute justice and righteousness**

Let us praise God's great and awesome name!

**Holy are you, Mighty Ruler, lover of justice!**

Group Activity:

**"Look at me" Scavenger Hunt**

Directions: without talking, find people in the group who have characteristics on the list (or others that work in your context). Write the name of someone who is/has:

- painted fingernails:

---

- brown eyes:

---

- left-handed:

---

- a different ethnicity than you:

---

- taller than you:

---

- shorter than you:

---

- a piercing:

---

- is wearing the same color socks as you:

---

# ASH WEDNESDAY

CONTRIBUTOR NAME AMBER FEEZOR

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: FAITHFUL FASTING AND HUNGER

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE	Isaiah 58: 1-7
SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES	2016-2020 Book of Resolutions #4051
OBJECTIVE	Students will learn what it means to observe the practice of fasting and how to do so in a way that honors God.
SUPPLIES NEEDED	Bibles, copy of <i>Resolution #4051</i> , paper and writing utensils

### LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

#### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Ask the students where they witnessed God in their life this week.

The group might be meeting before/after the imposition of ashes. Ask them how it feels to have something very visual on their face. Let them know that the lesson will focus on another “visual” act of faith.

#### Pray:

Merciful God, look upon us as we enter these Forty Days, bearing the mark of ashes, and bless our journey through the desert of Lent. May our fasting be hunger for justice; our alms, a making-of peace; our prayer, the chant of humble and grateful hearts. All that we do and pray is in the name of Jesus, for in His cross you proclaim your love forever and ever. Amen.

#### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

##### Read: Isaiah 58: 1-7

Read the passage for the group three times aloud, pausing between each reading for a moment of silence and reflection.

1. Define terms in the reading that might be new to students.

#### NOTES

1. **Rebellion:** Opposition to one in authority  
**Righteousness:** Free from guilt or sin  
**Forsake:** To renounce or turn away from entirely  
**Ordinance:** A law set forth by a governmental authority  
**Humble:** Not proud  
**Oppress:** To crush or burden by abuse of power  
**Yoke:** A device placed on the necks of animals (like oxen) for them to work together.  
Symbolically, a yoke represents captivity or slavery.

2. Why is God not pleased by the fasting in Isaiah?
3. Why did/do people fast?
4. How should we fast/how should we not fast?
5. How does fasting relate to the season of Lent?

**Say:**

While the United Methodist Church does not establish guidelines for fasting, our founder John Wesley had strong opinions on the observance.

Wesley taught that fasting was an act of repentance from sin. In his sermon “*When You Fast*,” Wesley gave warnings of attempting to “establish our own righteousness” through fasting, and trying to fulfill our needs “by our works and not by grace.” He argued that these feeble acts of sacrifice were insufficient efforts that might humble the body but would not benefit the soul. Additionally, Wesley expressed the necessity of caring for those who have been oppressed while fasting so that it would be pleasing to God.

## NOTES

- 2.a. God tells Isaiah that the observance of fasting has not been done with pure intentions. Those who fast have been doing so with expectations to be rewarded for their sacrifice, which is not the purpose of fasting.

Further, God criticizes those who fast for seeking their own self-interest. They are fasting in order to receive and think that this will be pleasing to God. Meanwhile, they ignore opportunities for true sacrifice by failing to think of others first (“Is this not the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is I not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?” V. 6-7).

The Israelites believe they are following the law and have been faithful by fasting. This message from God, to be delivered by Isaiah, challenges their belief that they have done what is required of them.

In addition to fasting, Jewish law expressed concern for the oppressed and required Israelites to provide for those in need. (Example: Deuteronomy 15: 7-11). God reminds them that they have been picking which parts of the law to follow while ignoring others, and that doing so was not a faithful act.

3. **Fasting:** The act of willingly giving up food for a determined period of time. Some choose to sacrifice otherworldly delights instead of food.

- 3.a. **Reasons for fasting:** Fasting can be done for many reasons, from medical to spiritual. With religious fasting, giving up food and other things that bring us joy is an opportunity to draw closer to God and rediscover our true source of delight.

Throughout history, fasting has been a time of: showing remorse for sins, connecting to God through prayer, seeking guidance from God, overcoming temptation, and acknowledging and giving thanks for abundance.

- 3.b. **How to fast:** As we fast, we have to remember the reasons why do it. If the general purposes for fasting are grounded in devotion and obedience to God, it is important that all of our actions while fasting are pleasing to God.

For example, we may choose to sacrifice eating our favorite snack to acknowledge and give thanks for the abundance of food available to us. While this sacrifice is not bad; it might be more pleasing to God if we acknowledge that others might not have an abundance of food available to them and decide to do something to help.

**How NOT to fast:** Understanding why we fast also helps us know what practices are not faithful during a fast. For example, spiritual fasting is not a means of losing weight and should not be done for the sole purpose of restricting food. Faithful fasting is also not meant to be done to gain attention. Consider the words of Jesus in Matthew 6 that say fasting should not be obvious but done in secret so that only God knows of the sacrifice being made.

- 3.c. **Relation to Lent:** The Christian season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday and ends just before Easter. It is a time of remembering the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness fasting and resisting temptations of evil. Many Christians choose to fast during the Lenten season to imitate this sacrifice that Jesus made.

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### Say:

While some may choose to fast from a certain dietary item or fast a certain meal for the forty days, there are those in our community, country, and world that miss a meal because of food insecurity.

For ten minutes in pairs, students should make a list of ways that they can focus on the issue of hunger for the Lenten season. Have them consider the following questions as they brainstorm:

1. How can our church learn more about hunger in our community/state/country?
2. Who experiences hunger in our community?
3. Why are people hungry in our community?
4. What are ways people in our community currently try to help the hungry?
5. How does our church help those who are hungry? What else can we do?

For the last 15 minutes, have students come together as a group to talk about their ideas. Have them decide how they can focus on hunger during the season of Lent as a means of acknowledging the abundance in their lives. Consider the handout with suggestions while brainstorming. Resolution #4051 from the United Methodist *Book of Resolutions* may also be helpful in planning next steps.

Discuss how their actions of helping others is pleasing to God in a season that asks us to embrace sacrifice.

## NOTES

Some suggestions for Lenten activities that focus on hunger:

- Organize a fast with your youth group or whole church in solidarity with those who experience hunger.
- Plan opportunities to volunteer at food pantries or soup kitchens.
- Learn how hunger impacts your community and state.
- Write letters to your Congressional leaders to emphasize the importance of programs like SNAP.
- Read Resolution #4051 from the United Methodist *Book of Resolutions* to find ways of involving the whole congregation in ending hunger.

# ASH WEDNESDAY

**JUSTICE ISSUE** FAITHFUL FASTING AND HUNGER

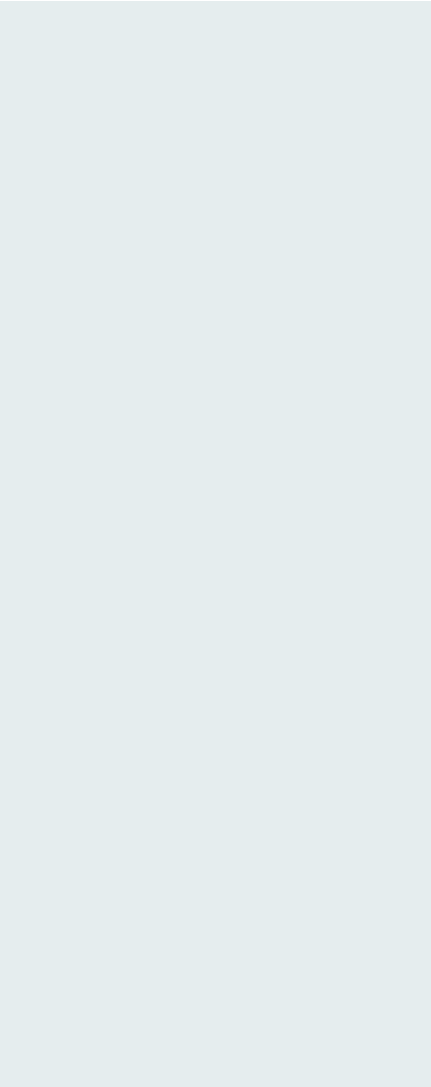
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## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

**Pray:**

Pray as a group for the hungry people in your community, state, country, and world. Be sure to give thanks for the abundance in your lives, and rededicate yourselves to working for that same abundance for all.

**NOTES**





# FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. JAY CAMPBELL

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: CARE FOR IMMIGRANTS/REFUGEES

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 *Social Principles* 162.H, 162; 2016-2020 *Book of Resolutions* #6025, 6028, 3281

**OBJECTIVE**

To be Christians who offer our gifts to the ministry of God.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Paper, pens, pencils, color pencils, butcher paper, and supplies found around the church.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

As you begin your time together with your group, give each person a blank piece of paper and something to write/draw with.

This biblical text speaks of a community on a journey and remembering those who have gone on before us. Invite students to write, draw, or map out their own journey so far in life. Allow them to be as creative as they would like as they create a timeline of their life.

Who are the key people in their lives who have influenced them, especially influenced their faith? What are key events or experiences that have shaped them so far? Where have they encountered God? For each one, place it on the timeline.

Before you invite them to write for a few minutes, open with a short prayer asking God to guide your time together. Share with your students that in these few minutes, they will most likely not finish, and that is ok. This is about helping them begin the process of thinking about the people and experiences in their life that have shaped them.

### NOTES

You will need paper and something to write with for each person. I recommend a few different writing utensils: pens, pencils, color pencils, etc.

It's quite possible that for Jr. High students, they may feel they have not had many "significant" events in their lives, especially in their faith journey, to put down. Help them think about if there are any mission trips or retreats, or helping lead worship on a youth Sunday or anything they have participated in at the church. Events on the timeline don't have to be world changing to be included.

Note – if youth are also struggling to think about key people, offer them the invitation to put people down who may influence us but that we have never met (i.e., John Wesley, Mother Theresa, Martin Luther King Jr., people's whose life and work inspire us today).

# FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

**JUSTICE ISSUE** CARE FOR IMMIGRANTS/REFUGEES

Page: 2 of 5

## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

### Read Deuteronomy 26:1-11

#### Say/Summarize:

Deuteronomy consists of laws, the laws of forming Israel as the people of God and how they are to live and act as God's people. The laws in this book are aimed to shape a covenantal people who embody God's love and justice through neighborly and communal practices. Our text is the ending of the formal law code. Israel has received lots of instruction about how to live in relationship to God and to one another. Special concern and attention to the neighbor and to the most vulnerable play a consistent role in the shaping of God's covenantal community of Israel found in the instructions of Deuteronomy.

#### Ask:

In verses 1-3, Israel has not yet arrived to the Promised Land, but they are given hope that they will be arriving and given the land by God. They are given instructions that when they arrive, one of their very first acts is to give an offering back to God. Why would that be? (An offering is an expression of gratitude and thankfulness to God, who is the giver of all things, especially the giver of this new land.)

(Help the students think about when they give gifts to a friend, family member, or other loved one. We find joy in giving to those who mean so much to us. Perhaps you can share a personal story about finding joy in giving a memorable gift to someone in your life, or someone who really enjoyed giving you a gift.)

#### Say:

Giving to God is no different. Gratitude results in giving to God. Giving is an expression of thankfulness. Here God asks them to give of their first fruits.

#### Ask:

What does it mean to give God our first and not our leftovers?

### NOTES

For helpful resources on this text consider: The New Interpreters Study Bible; Feasting on the Word Year C, Vol. 2; and/or [www.workingpreacher.org](http://www.workingpreacher.org) for helpful commentaries on this text and where the inspiration for this study came from.

Offering the first fruits of the harvest might be an easier connection to make if your church is in a rural setting with farmers in your community. If your church is not in a farming community, help your youth brainstorm ways to make the connection work for your context. In an urban, metropolitan, or suburban area, what does it mean to offer the first fruits of your harvest? (i.e., offer the first fruits of your allowance, or Christmas money, or first part of each day in a few minutes of prayer, etc....)

What does the act of placing the offering at the altar mean? If your church has a traditional sanctuary, then your youth have most likely seen the altar space. Perhaps your youth have come and knelt there during communion, placed an offering on the rails or have seen the collected offering brought to and placed on the altar each Sunday. Ask your youth what significance they believe this has. This is an act of gratefulness humility we recognize that these gifts have come from God and we are giving our gifts back to God as an offering – the altar is a place where we also kneel and offer our lives, not just our first fruits to God.

# FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

**JUSTICE ISSUE** CARE FOR IMMIGRANTS/REFUGEES

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## Say:

In verse 5, we see the mention of “a wondering Aramean who was my ancestor.” This points to a community who remembers their ancestors. We remember those who have gone on before us: who are those in our own lives who have left imprints on our lives? You could share about people who have passed away in your church that have left imprints on your church’s community; you could also share about those in the communion of saints who have left imprints on Methodism and/or the church’s work for justice. We remember those who have come before us and we give thanks for them and their testimony.

## Ask:

How can we carry on their tradition? Why is it important to carry on their tradition?

## Say:

This ancestor was from Northern Syria. With the crisis happening in Syria today, what does it mean for us to consider and remember that in our religious tradition, we have ancestors from Syria. We are connected to Syria. How then shall we respond? (Share about the situation in Syria with your youth if they are not aware)

Consider sharing from our *Social Principles* (paragraph 162.H and *Book of Resolutions* #6025, #6028), for our theological foundation as Methodists on ministry with refugees and migrants.

## Say:

Israel experienced oppression, slavery, and forced labor at the hands of the Egyptians. They cried out to the Lord, the God of their ancestors, who heard their cries, saw their pain and oppression and responded with power and liberation.

## Ask:

Who are the communities crying out today? Who in our community and our world are crying out? Who are trapped and forced to a life of hard and oppressive labor/work?

## NOTES

Support for refugees can be a politically charged and controversial issue in the church with people on varying sides of the issue. This will be important to share the United Methodist position. Consider getting the *Faith and Facts Card on Global Migration*. Check out Church World Service and their work on Immigrants and Refugees for resources - <https://cwsglobal.org/our-work/refugees-and-immigrants/>

You could focus here on human trafficking and slave labor that is happening in our world today. Check out [umcjustice.org](http://umcjustice.org) for resources.

Consider looking up past news stories and/or finding videos to share about this. Share/highlight a personal story or two from on the persons traveling

# FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

**JUSTICE ISSUE** CARE FOR IMMIGRANTS/REFUGEES

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## Say:

God brought the Israelites out from oppression and slavery and led them on a journey towards the Promised Land. This journey was not always easy, nor quick. Invite students to share about current day examples of difficult journeys that people experience now? They could be journeys that perhaps a youth's family has faced, or your church's community, or other communities.

One example is the stories of the caravans of immigrants who have journeyed from Central America to the US border asking for asylum. They are seeking refuge, safety, and provision of needs for their families. Are their cries reaching God? Are their cries reaching the people of God?

## Say:

The gift of the land and the harvest was not only for the Israelites. It was to be shared with the Levites and immigrants. They are being reminded of their communal obligations to their neighbor. Our offerings and gifts to God are most profoundly present in our inclusion and offering of our resources to those who are different than us. In verses 12-15 of this chapter, we see instructions to give the tithe of the produce from the third year to the immigrants, orphans, and widows. These were the three most vulnerable people in a patriarchal society because they had no male advocate. God is instructing God's people to be a community that cares for the most vulnerable. Through the land God is giving, God's generosity and provision is made available and accessible to all people.

## Ask:

This text calls for the inclusion of all those in the community. Who in our communities are not fully included today? Who are not fully included into our society, who are pushed out and pushed down? Who are not fully included into our church, both local church and global church?

Israel gives thanks for receiving the land by offering the first fruits of their harvest, could this mean that our giving, our offering to God, is to ensure that all persons have access to life's necessities?

## NOTES

Check out our *Book of Resolutions* #3281 "Welcoming the Migrant to the US" and our *Social Principles* ¶162 about our theological stance on ministry with immigrants.

Please note there is more here in the text than time will allow for deep conversation, so see where the conversation leads and remember you are the expert on your context, you know where your group needs to focus on. Be mindful of the time so you can have the time you need for your activity.

All of the questions listed in each paragraph are encouraged for you to ask your group for conversation or for them to share in conversations with a partner or small group.

# FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

**JUSTICE ISSUE** CARE FOR IMMIGRANTS/REFUGEES

Page: 5 of 5

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Invite the youth to design and build an altar in your youth space. Because this is the first week of Lent, you can share that it will stay up throughout Lent, or if the youth group really loves it, it can become a permanent part of your youth worship space.

Our text speaks of an altar where the first fruits of the community's offerings were brought to God for ministry. The youth will get to create their own altar that will serve as a reminder that we are called to offer our gifts, and in fact our very lives, in thankfulness to God and to the ministry of Jesus Christ to care for all people, especially refugees and immigrants.

Feel free to print out images of a variety of altar spaces to help spark the creativity in the youth, but let the creation of the altar be theirs so that it will be more meaningful. Share with them they do not need to recreate the images, but you are offering them as examples.

After the altar is placed, you can share with them that each week when you all gather together for youth group, you will all be invited to bring your offering to the altar. Youth can be invited to bring their prayers each week for the world to this altar as well. They could physically kneel at the altar to pray during worship, or could bring written prayers or news stories to lay at the altar, trusting them into God's care.

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Place a poster or a large piece of butcher paper on the wall in your room, or depending on how many youth you have, place it on the floor so more people can gather around it. When everyone is finished, you can place it on the wall, and youth can add to it each week.

For a closing prayer, invite the youth to write on the butcher paper their prayers for the communities who are crying out and who are hurting today.

You can also have the youth write how they will prayerfully respond and what they will give as an offering to God to participate in God's liberation of these communities.

## NOTES

Don't feel that you have to go and buy lots of supplies. Invite the students to be creative with what they find in the church. It can be more meaningful to find items that perhaps have significance to the youth (from past trips), worship items that are not being used, arts and craft materials from your resource room. Youth can travel the grounds of the church on a scavenger hunt to find items that speak to them.

Make sure to keep an eye on the time, because youth can get carried away with this.

### Optional:

Encourage youth to bring a financial offering each week, even if it's just a dollar. Encourage them to be generous givers to the work of God. Have the offering go to the work of Church World Service or to UMCOR's work with refugees (Advance #3021057) and/or their work with on the Global Migration Project (Advance # 3022144)

You will need a poster and/or butcher paper and markers.

Have it cut and ready to be used before youth group begins.

# SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

CONTRIBUTOR NAME DR. DAN R. DICK

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: ECONOMIC JUSTICE

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Philippians 3:17-4:1

### SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶163, 163A, B, C, D, & E

### OBJECTIVE

To raise awareness about global reality; to differentiate equity and equality, and to call for reflection on modern cultural values in various geographic regions.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

Map or globe; Faith & Facts cards on Economic Justice; Book of Discipline/Book of Resolutions/2016-2020 Social Principles; Wikipedia, computer with internet access, speakers, projection capability (if possible); pens/pencils for each participant; note paper.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Make sure each person has a notepad and something with which to write. After welcoming the group, ask each member to take one-to-two minutes to make a list of their most prized/cherished possessions. What do they own that they most enjoy, treasure, or revere, and why is it important to them?

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

#### Read Philippians 3:17-4:1

Ask for two or three volunteers to read the Philippians passage. Ask the remaining group members to do three things:

1. Listen for words or phrases they find interesting, weird, troubling, or exciting.
2. Try to grasp the general concepts Paul is attempting to communicate.
3. Answer the question: “so what?” What are we being asked to DO in this passage?

In pairs, or with the whole group, discuss each of the questions.

### NOTES

Reflection on the blessings we enjoy in our lives; that we often take for granted.

Have them share as they are comfortable. Use this opportunity to reflect on people who have more good things to treasure, as well as those who have less.

Some talking points:

- Paul is writing to a Christian community – there are many calling themselves Christian who are not living out what they say they believe. (Perhaps define “hypocrisy” and note that it has been a problem in the church from the very beginning).
- Paul highlights a contrast: those living selfishly, valuing things of less importance, and feeling superior to those with less versus those who care for others, value faith and relationship with God over “stuff,” and are generally satisfied with the things they have.
- For Paul, God is everything and the resurrection of Jesus the Christ is the most important thing that has ever happened in the history of the world. EVERYTHING else pales in comparison to Jesus.

Set a context for “Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things.”

In the early Christian movement, the good of the whole community was more important than the needs, wants, or desires of individual members. To survive, members needed to share resources with each other – food, clothing, shelter, furnishings, medicine, and money. There were few actions more serious than withholding property or caring only for oneself and one’s family. The New Testament provides us with a vision for true economic justice.

## SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

JUSTICE ISSUE ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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### GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

#### Say:

We will explore some basics about “economic justice” ¶163 of our *Book of Discipline* in our *Social Principles* is dedicated to The Economic Community.

With the group:

1. Distribute *Faith & Facts* cards; or,
2. Distribute *Social Principles* booklets; or,
3. Pass around a copy of the *Book of Discipline*.

In pairs or trios, take five minutes to read through *Faith & Fact* cards; or paragraphs 163A, B, C, D, & E of the *Social Principles*.

Have the groups briefly share a summary of the information they explored.

Using whatever technology is available in the room (Smartphones, tablets, computers, etc.) have pairs/trios look up various countries on Wikipedia, and look for information on A. Property, B. Collective Bargaining, C. Work and Leisure, D. Consumption, or E. Poverty (or information related to Faith & Facts cards).

Take some time to discuss how our *Social Principles* relate to the daily lived reality of members of the group.

#### NOTES

Don't take a long time with this – have the group members skim the information for things they find interesting.

Suggested countries to explore:  
Cambodia, The Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, the Philippines, Ethiopia, North Korea, South Korea, Russia, China, the Sudan.

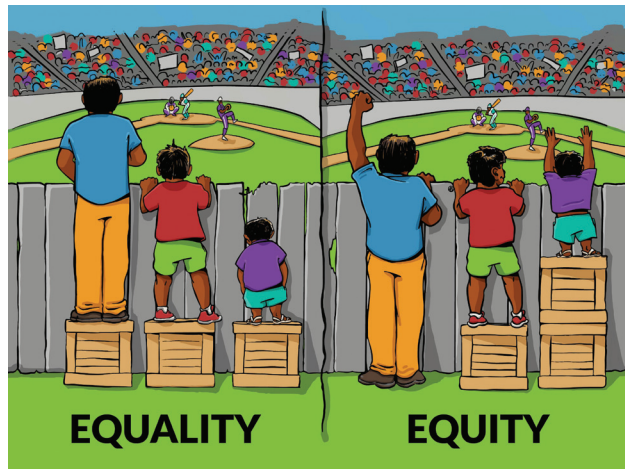
Try to move from general comments to concrete examples.

## SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

JUSTICE ISSUE ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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Talk about the contrast of our daily lived reality to some of the places that groups looked up. Ask the group members to offer thoughts and feelings about economic disparity and lack of fair distribution of resources. Look at the image:



This image is free to use with attribution: "Interaction Institute for Social Change | Artist: Angus Maguire."

Close discussion with the question: "What needs to change in our world that all people have a fighting chance at equity?" (Tie this back into the passage from Philippians.)

Play song: "A Better Place" – Playing for Change (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVHOqrw3Jks>)

### CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Ask group members, as they are comfortable, to remember the things they enjoy, treasure, and revere from the opening time, and give thanks to God for this blessing. Wrap up the prayer time with a general recognition and appreciation of the many ways we are blessed, and ask that we be mindful of those around the world with so much less.

### NOTES

We talk a lot about equality without thinking through the implications. Equity changes the conversation. A common cliché is "to level the playing field," yet this is what the Hebrew and Christian scriptures call us to time after time. (source page for illustration: <http://interactioninstitute.org/illustrating-equality-vs-equity/>)

The closing is to help the young people not be embarrassed about what they have, but to be grateful for their blessings, and to be aware that there is great inequity in our world.



# THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

CONTRIBUTOR NAME MICHELLE WOOD

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: SUSTAINABILITY

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Luke 13:1-9

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016- 2020 Book of Resolutions #1033

**OBJECTIVE**

To repent for the ways in which we disregard God's Creation and to explore ways of ecologically sustainable living.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

recycled goods, scissors, construction paper, glue, and tape

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Share a moment when you experienced/witnessed a God moment.

Once everyone has shared, pray extemporaneously or pray the prayer written below.

**Pray:**

Dear God,

Thank you for journeying with us through this last week and guiding us back to be in this space together. You know our hurts and our joys and have never left our side. Please be with our group today and help us to hear your words and to feel your Presence among us. In your Son's name, we pray. Amen.

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

Read Luke 13: 1-9 (*Student volunteer*)

1. What questions are raised for people?
2. Why do people need to repent? What does that mean?
3. Jesus said, "unless you repent, you too will all perish" (Luke 13:3). What do you think about that statement?
4. Do you think Jesus was talking about a literal or figurative death?

### NOTES

**Helpful Insights:**

It was common for people in Jesus' time and earlier to believe that God controlled all things. So, if a person was killed, that person must have done something to deserve that act. Their theology did not take into account free will and the fact that bad things can come from people making bad choices. Jesus does not offer up an easy answer of why the people in this passage died but refutes that they were at all to blame. Jesus offers the people grace that the society was not.

## THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

JUSTICE ISSUE SUSTAINABILITY

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### Say:

Sometimes Jesus uses concrete parables to describe abstract, figurative concepts. In the fig tree parable, the gardener gave the fig tree a second chance.

### Ask:

When were you given a second chance? What did you do with that opportunity?

### Say:

Sometimes it can be easier to give up on a person or object because they/it is not performing as you wish. This parable extends mercy to those who need extra help to thrive. If the tree can thrive, providing it with a little extra time is good for the tree and the man. Showing mercy leads toward life.

In the 2016 *Book of Resolutions*, #1033, "Caring for Creation: Our Call to Stewardship and Justice," the UMC has stated that "Confronted with the massive crisis of the deterioration of God's creation and called to a ministry of reconciliation between God, humankind, and creation, we ask God's forgiveness and commit ourselves to a new way of being that integrates environmental, economic, and social justice."

### Ask:

- In what ways do we need to seek forgiveness for the deterioration of God's creation? How about our church?
- How can we repent or do something different? What are achievable ways of cutting down on our weekly waste?

### NOTES

The New Interpreter's Bible offers helpful insights into the fig tree parable. "The parable of the barren fig tree is similar to the stories of unfruitful trees that appear in ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature. The late versions of Ahikar, for example, contain the following story: And I spake to Nathan thus: Son, thou hast been to me like a palm-tree which has grown with roots on the bank of the river. When the fruit ripened, it fell into the river. The lord of the tree came to cut it down, and the tree said: Leave me in this place, that in the next year I may bear fruit. The lord of the tree said: Up to this day hast thou been to me useless, in the future thou wilt not become useful.

The differences between this story and Jesus' parable are substantial. In Ahikar, the lord of the tree refuses to allow the tree another year in which to prove itself. In Jesus' parable, the gardener intercedes on behalf of the tree, pleading that it be given another year. Nevertheless, although there is mercy in Jesus' parable, it is still a warning of the urgency of repentance. The time until the judgment is extended for just a short time.\*\* Once again, Jesus extends more grace than what is being shown by his wider community while still calling for repentance. Repentance means to turn around and go in the opposite way. Asking for forgiveness is one component, but repentance requires actions that follow the words that are spoken.

\* New Interpreter's Bible. "Luke 13:1-9, A Call for Repentance: Commentary In *Luke*. Ministry Matters edition.

# THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

**JUSTICE ISSUE** SUSTAINABILITY

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## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Split everyone up into partners and give each group some recycled goods, scissors, construction paper, glue, and tape.

### Reuse Challenge:

Maybe you think something has been used to all of its abilities and the only thing you can do is throw it away, but is there another alternative? In your groups, use the goods in front of you that were headed to recycling or the landfill and create something that you can use in a new way.

Leave time at the end for groups to share what they created.

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

### Pray:

God of Creation,  
Thank You for constantly working to make all things new. We repent of the ways in which we knowingly or unknowingly bring about pain and destruction in the world. Strengthen our resolve to live in a way that honors Your creation, of which we are one part. Journey with us this week as we try to live within Your loving and life-giving will for our lives. Amen.

### NOTES

This would be a good time to also tap into the bottoms of your church's craft drawers.

# FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. DANNY YANG

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: COST OF FORGIVENESS, RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE, RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶164.H

**OBJECTIVE**

What does it cost to forgive someone?

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Watch Youtube video, and view a painting (print-out or screen)

### LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

#### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Welcome everyone into the room.

**Discussion: You can't find your phone!**

Q: What do you do first?

Q: Still can't find your phone, what's next?

Q: What is life like without your phone?

Q: How do you react when you suddenly find your phone?

Q: What would you hate losing more than your phone?

#### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

**Read Luke 15:1-3**

**Ask:**

- At your school lunch, how do you decide where to sit?
- What happens when someone sits at the wrong table?
- Why did Pharisees care who gathered around Jesus?
- How would you respond? What parable would you tell?

#### NOTES

The lectionary passage skips Two parables: lost sheep & lost coin  
Jesus tells stories of lost things

## FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

**JUSTICE ISSUE** COST OF FORGIVENESS, RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE, RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

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### Read Luke 15:11b-32

#### Ask:

- What happened to the younger son?
  - Asking for inheritance  
Equivalent to saying to Father "I wish you were dead."
  - Fraternizing with sinners  
Wasting inheritance money on sinful things
  - Feeding pigs  
Pigs were unclean, filthy animals in Jesus' time
  - Longing for pig slop  
Shows how far son has fallen to want an unclean animal's food

Define prodigal: wastefully extravagant, having or giving something on a lavish scale.

The younger son is often called the prodigal son.

#### Ask:

1. How is he the prodigal in the story?
2. How did the son get lost?
3. Why doesn't the father seek out after his son?

Watch the retelling of parable on social media

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RNW-dZ8G0m0>

#### NOTES

# FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

**JUSTICE ISSUE** COST OF FORGIVENESS, RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE, RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

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## NOTES

### Ask:

1. What do you think the video got right?
2. What would you change or add to the video?
3. How do you celebrate that which was lost?
4. Whose wealth was spent to welcome the younger son back? (Everything left belonged to older brother, so anything spent by the father is reducing what the older brother would inherit.)

### GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### Ask:

1. What happens next? How has this drama changed each person (or not)?
2. How has the father changed?
3. How has the younger brother changed?
4. How has the older brother changed?

### Activity: The Cost of Forgiveness

Ask two people to face each other, standing close.

Now invite rest of group to shout out different ways that one person might hurt/sin against the other – from the trivial to the heartbreaking. After each offense is named, ask one of the two people to step back a distance that corresponded to the depth of hurt.

After enough rounds to show how sin divides people, ask the group – what would it take to reconcile, to forgive, to come close together again?

## FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

**JUSTICE ISSUE** COST OF FORGIVENESS, RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE, RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

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### NOTES

Forgiveness requires a different understanding of justice. Some offenses cannot be repaid; a debt must simply be let go. For the father (and the older brother) to welcome the younger brother home requires that debts be canceled, and costs overlooked.

Read *Social Principles* ¶164.H

**Ask:**

1. How would you define retributive justice? Restorative justice?
2. What would retributive justice look like in this story?
3. How does the parable model restorative justice?

### CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Invite the group to look at Rembrandt's painting of the "Return of the Prodigal Son"

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/rembrandt/the-return-of-the-prodigal-son-1669>

**Ask:**

1. How does the painting bring themes of this parable to light for you?
2. Where do you see the need for restorative justice in your home, in your schools, or the world?

Close in prayer by lifting up each of these places – that we might be willing to bear the cost of forgiveness when God calls us to act.

# FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

CONTRIBUTOR NAME LEIGH FINNEGAN-HOSEY

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: PRIVILEGE

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Philippians 3:4b-14

### SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶162.A

### OBJECTIVE

For students to recognize privileges that they have as individuals and community and what they can do for others.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

Bible. Aluminum baking tins (one tin for 4-5 students). Skittles (enough for 30 per person). Snack bags (1 per person). Privilege questionnaire (for facilitator).

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

#### Prayer of Examen (Abridged)

##### Say:

Close your eyes or simply focus them on the ground and think back on the previous day/week.

##### Ask:

Can you recall one thing for which you are grateful – be it a person, a belonging, or an experience.

##### Say:

Hold this blessing in your mind and soak in the way it makes you feel.\* (Does it make you feel happy? Grateful? Or Peaceful?)

Finally, offer a silent prayer to God in thanks for the blessing you received this week/day.

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

#### Summarize/Say:

Philippians is a letter sent by the Apostle Paul to the Church in Philippi, a city in the North East region of Greece. The population of Philippi was largely Gentile (non-Jews), though some Jewish communities resided there and established synagogues (Jewish houses of worship and study). The city was governed by the Roman Empire, a military power that ruled most of the world at that time. However, living under Roman rule did not

#### NOTES

*Pause for 30 seconds of silence between each prompt.*

\*If students have difficulty focusing their thoughts, consider prompting them with a few open-ended or leading questions. For example: "How did you spend your mornings? Who or what stood out to you this week? What experience gave you a sense of peace or joy?"

Leaders may also consider setting the stage for this passage by playing a relevant video or handing out age-appropriate articles.



# FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

JUSTICE ISSUE PRIVILEGE

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automatically gain you Roman citizenship. Rather, citizenship was granted to a select group of people who already held a relative place of privilege in their society. Roman citizenship came with a number of perks. Citizens had the right to vote, the right to hold property, the right to a legal trial, and an exemption from torture and the death penalty. Not only was Paul a Roman citizen, but he also played an important role in the Jewish community. Many people within the Philippian church did not have access to these privileges.

**Read Philippians 3:4-13** (Ask a student volunteer to read the scripture passage)

Invite the youth to split into groups of two or three people and share their initial thoughts/feelings about the passage. Then, ask them to consider what they think Paul is trying to communicate.

Come back together to share as a large group.

## Key Point:

Highlight what Paul says about his *privilege* as a Roman citizen and leader in the Jewish community.

## Ask:

1. What does Paul think about his special privileges in light of his faith in Jesus Christ?
2. Why do you think he calls his privileges “rubbish”?
3. What does Paul have to gain by acknowledging and renouncing his privilege? And what does he have to lose?

Explain to the group that *privilege* (i.e., special rights or unearned power) is something that exists in every society today. We are now going to explore what types of privilege we have as a group and as individuals.

## NOTES

The BBC has an excellent site called “Bite Size” devoted to helping children understand world history. To access this resources, go to:

1. [www.bbc.com/education](http://www.bbc.com/education)
2. Click the link for “Secondary Education, ages 11 – 16+.”
3. And choose “England, KS3” (or Key Stage 3) and “History” and then “Roman” for learning guides and clips about the Roman Empire.

\*It is likely that students will have lots to say about these questions, but possible responses might include:

- *What does Paul think about his special privileges in light of his faith Jesus Christ?* Paul seems to think his “special status” isn’t worth as much as the love, joy, and community he has found among the church.
- *Why do you think he calls his privileges “rubbish”?* What Paul once considered a gift that made him better than others; he now sees a barrier to true belonging in God’s community, where everyone is valued regardless of status.
- *What (if anything) do you think Paul has to gain by acknowledging and renouncing his privilege?* Owning what separates him from people of a lower social status puts him at odds with the Roman way of life. On the other hand, it builds trust with people in the church who look to him for support and guidance in their own journey of discipleship.

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### The Skittles Exercise

#### Say:

This exercise is meant to explore privileges we enjoy based on our social and individual identity in the United States. Please note that this exercise is not meant to make anyone feel guilty or ashamed of her/his/their privilege or lack of privilege. Rather, the exercise seeks to highlight the fact that everyone has SOME privilege, even as some people have more privilege than others. By illuminating our various privileges, we can recognize ways to use our privileges individually and collectively to work for equity and social justice. Also, note that each list is not meant to be exhaustive or comprehensive. You may think of other items that should be on the list.

#### Explain:

Each youth will receive a bag containing 26 skittles. Four to five students will be arranged around a baking tin and asked to close their eyes. The facilitator will read a series of 26 questions pertaining to issues of privilege and inequality. If the question can be answered in the affirmative, the student will drop a skittle into the tin. For example, *“If you have ever felt uncomfortable about a joke related to your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, drop a candy.”* If the answer to this question is “yes,” you should drop a candy in the tin while keeping your eyes closed. It is important the group **remain silent** throughout the activity to ensure that everyone can hear how their peers relate or don’t relate, to the questions. This exercise can bring up a variety of emotional responses. Be ready to receive student’s reactions non-judgmentally and with empathy.

#### Do the exercise in silence.

#### Ask:

1. In one word, describe how you felt about this activity?
2. What (if anything) about your peers answers surprised you?
3. Do you think it is important to talk about privilege? Why or why not?

### NOTES

#### Set Up:

Place baking tins on the floor a few feet apart from one another.

Fill the plastic snack bags with 26 skittles a piece for each person in your group.

Arrange 4-5 youth around each tin facing inwards and hand them a bag of skittles.

Ask the youth to close their eyes, or find a spot on the floor to concentrate on during the exercise. The point of this instruction is to respect confidentiality.

Skittles that fall on the floor can be thrown away; the rest may be given to the group as a snack!

## FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

4. What does it mean for us to have multiple, intersecting identities—where we experience some privileges (around some identities) AND some oppression (around others)?
5. Following Paul’s example, how do you think we should approach the issues of privilege and inequality in our church? What about as a nation?

Wrap up the conversation by reading this selection from the Social Community portion of the Social Principles:

¶162.A

*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.** 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.*

### NOTES

# FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

**JUSTICE ISSUE** PRIVILEGE

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## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

### Ask:

What is one thing you can do this week to build trust with someone who does not have the same privilege as you?

### Pray:

Holy One, we thank You for the many gifts You give us in life. We are grateful for our families and friends, our skills and talents, and for creating us as unique individuals. Please help us to see the special rights we have that set us apart from one another. Give us the strength and humility to own our privilege, and act in ways that promote equality in our communities and in our nation. Remind us of the joy, love, and peace we gain by embracing the way of Jesus. Amen.

### NOTES

Consider having the students write their commitments down in a letter, which you can give back to them at the end of the day or mailed to them at a later date.

You might have the group form a circle and hold hands for this prayer.

# FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

## PRIVILEGE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE FACILITATOR:

Please do not talk during this phase of the exercise.

1. If you and your family have enough food to keep you healthy and fed... (drop a skittle)
2. If you have easy physical access to any building...
3. If you grew up with children's books that featured characters of your same race or gender...
4. If you are a citizen of the United States...
5. If you have ever been taunted, teased, or ostracized due to your race, ethnicity, physical ability, size, sexual orientation or gender identity...
6. If your family has access to medical insurance...
7. If you are a Christian...
8. If you can go shopping with an employee monitoring you...
9. If you have ever been told to change how you naturally act or speak in front of an "important" decision makers (e.g., a principal, teacher, or boss)...
10. If your parents have warned you about how to behave around police officers because of your race...
11. If you can easily find makeup or band-aids that match your skin tone...
12. If your family owns a vehicle...
13. Mainstream media routinely depict people of my race in a wide range of roles...
14. If you learned about the history of your race or ethnicity in school...
15. If someone in your family is or has been incarcerated (i.e., put in jail)...
16. If you can walk down the street without fear of harassment or "cat calling"...
17. If your religious views are embraced by a majority of political leaders...
18. If your parents have full-time work...
19. If you have ever been asked to speak on behalf of your race or gender...
20. If your neighborhood is generally free of violence or drugs...
21. If you have ever attended a camp, international mission trip, or retreat...
22. If you have ever been pressured to lose weight...
23. If you have clean (or safe) drinking water in your home...
24. If you attend a private school...
25. If you are afraid to call the police in an emergency...
26. If you can use the bathroom that correctly corresponds to your gender identity...
27. If your expression of faith has ever been considered "weird"...
28. If you own a smartphone...
29. If your school offers free breakfast or after school snacks during the weekdays or weekends...
30. If someone that shares your gender identity has never been elected president...

# LITURGY OF THE PASSION

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. DR., ARLINDALL BURKS

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: STEREOTYPES/DISCRIMINATION/RACISM/PREJUDICE

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Luke 23:32-43

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶162 A-J

**OBJECTIVE**

Each participant will learn how stereotypes and discriminatory practices are barriers to building an inclusive community where all members are valued and welcomed.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Post-its/10 per participant, pen/pencil, Video/Book, Rudolph, The Red-Nosed Reindeer.

### LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

#### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Welcome

Opening Prayer

Participants use one post-it for each response. They should keep their post-its and not share their responses with others.

Tell them you will return to the responses later.

**Say:**

Please write your first thought, on the post-its provided. One response per note. Please be honest in your responses. What you have said or heard someone say about the following:

Pick five prompts from the list in the notes section

**Prompts:**

Homeless People

People who wear hijabs

Affluent Americans

Muslims/Christian

Liberals

White Privilege

Black Lives Matter/Blue Lives

Conservatives

LBGT

Matter

Confederate Flag

Women

The Police

African/Asian/Hispanic/

Men

Immigrants

Caucasian/Jews Native/Americans

Heterosexual

#### NOTES

Have participants take five post-its and respond with the first word that comes to mind using the following prompts: (Choose 5 from the list below). There should be no sharing of answers. Be prepared for some quiet/nervous laughter/giggling.

(This is not all-inclusive. If there are issues for your context not on this list, include them.)

**Note:** Use the prompts appropriate for your context.

# LITURGY OF THE PASSION

JUSTICE ISSUE STEREOTYPES/DISCRIMINATION/RACISM/PREJUDICE

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## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

### Read Luke 23:32-43

#### Say:

As the people of God, we know the power of the words of our Savior because those words forever changed the world.

“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”

Jesus has been falsely accused, rejected, mocked and beaten. He was forced to march to his own death, humiliated as he passes by his followers and opposition. *He knows what’s coming and there is no turning back.*

They come to the place called The Skull where Jesus is laid upon the ground, and his hands and feet are nailed to the cross. He is hanging on the cross between two criminals. He could have called a host of angels to come to his aid. But he did not. Instead of crying out, Father, “Save Me,” his first thoughts were of those who were tormenting him. In the midst of all his was going through, His first thoughts were of us.

Too often our first thoughts are about, how does this affect me? What if our *first thoughts* were thoughts of forgiveness for those who have hurt us, even if they know what they are doing, instead of thoughts of revenge?

What if our *first thoughts* were to seek forgiveness from those we have harmed instead of trying to find ways to justify our behavior.

#### Ask:

1. What does “think before you speak, and when you do speak, be mindful of what you say” mean?

## NOTES

One of the most important lessons my mother taught me was the power of words.

She constantly reminded my siblings and me to “think before you speak, and when you do speak, be mindful of what you say.” “Words can be hurtful, she’d say, “and once they are out of your mouth, there is nothing you can do to pull them back.”

I have thought of these words often, and they have saved me from “myself” more times than I can count. She also taught us that words can also love, encourage, heal and forgive. “Be mindful of your words,” she told us, they will show what’s in your heart.”

While I was on active duty one of the jobs I did was to train equal employment opportunity specialists for the Department of Defense. It was a sixteen - week training program that provided potential specialists the skills necessary for filing and investigating grievance complaints. However, for the specialist to identify if the complaint was real, he or she needed to be able to identify their own biases, prejudices, and stereotypes about those who were different from themselves.

During the first week of training, we conducted an exercise that created an opportunity for the students to examine their *words* as a method to look at themselves...as a way of looking at their own hearts. One of the tools we used to help them with that process was a simulated exercise we called, “First Thoughts.”

During the exercise, the students are instructed to say the first thing that comes to their mind when a particular ethnic, race, gender group name was called. They could respond with something they had said or heard somebody say. As they called out the words, the instructors wrote them down on chart paper and posted the results around the room. After four years of conducting this exercise and observing the responses from hundreds of students, I found one constant. There was always a look of horror and shame on their faces when they had an opportunity to see the words that had come out of their mouths.

They knew the impact of their own words. I have come to the conclusion that they were most horrified that there were so many *hurtful words* that are the *first thoughts* to come out of our mouths.

I am reminded of the lessons my mother taught me about the power of language and my experiences while training EEO specialists and now as we deal with a seeming lack of civility in the public arena; an increase of individual acts of discrimination; and increasing propensity within our culture for accepting those behaviors as individual freedoms.

# LITURGY OF THE PASSION

2. Why do you think Jesus said what he said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing”?
3. What would it look like if, we the people of God, responded as Jesus did to those who did him harm?
4. What could be our first thoughts when we are:
  - a. Stuck in traffic
  - b. Encounter a rude person
  - c. Waiting for someone that’s late
  - d. Meet someone who is different from me

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Have participants leave their post-its on their desk/chair or bring to facilitator face down. Have the students step out of the room for a few moments. Post the responses on a whiteboard/easel, etc.

When the participants return, have them, without talking, review the responses and take their seats.

### Ask:

1. Were there any surprises/disappointments in what you read?
2. Is anyone angry by what you read?
3. How do we learn discriminatory practices?

Share with participants that our negative first thoughts of the “other” is most often based on stereotypes. We can avoid the practice of stereotyping “others” by asking questions.

## NOTES

**Note:** Generations of children have enjoyed the story of Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. The story focuses on the needs of Santa’s dilemma on a “foggy Christmas Eve” and overlooks the inappropriate discriminatory behaviors of the community, including Santa! While Rudolph is finally vindicated and saves Christmas, it does not address any of the inappropriate behaviors. This cute story has a serious moral flaw. Using this story is effective because everyone knows it, accepts it and likely have never considered the shortcomings of the story. It is a simple way to provide youth with tools that will enable them to recognize discriminatory behaviors in themselves and others.



# LITURGY OF THE PASSION

## Questions:

1. What does “stereotype” mean?
2. What does “prejudice” mean?

Share briefly the five stages of prejudice (look at notes) and ask for examples for each stage.

1. Antilocution
2. Avoidance
3. Discrimination
4. Physical Attack
5. Extermination

## Play video:

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer - show scene where Rudolph is identified as different, ostracized and is considered an outcast first by the leaders who then teach the younger reindeer to reject him also.

<https://youtube/IVzrKF0HxIU> play: 17:23-18:40

## NOTES

**Leader:** Give a short presentation on the nature of prejudice utilizing Gordon Allport’s Model, The Five Stages of Prejudice. **(10 minutes)**

**Define Stereotype:** A *stereotype* is a preconceived notion, especially about a group of people. Many *stereotypes* are racist, sexist, or homophobic.

### The Five Stages of Prejudice.

**Stage 1 – Antilocution** – occurs when an in-group freely proposes negative images of an out-group. Although antilocution itself may not be harmful, it could set the stage for more severe outlets for prejudice. Hate speech is included in this stage. One of the most common ways this is seen is in ethnic jokes and the use of disparaging terms to refer to certain ethnic groups.

**Stage 2 - Avoidance** – Members of the in-group actively avoid people in the out-group. No direct harm may be intended, but psychological harm often results through isolation.

**Stage 3 – Discrimination** – The out-group is discriminated against by denying them opportunities and services, putting prejudice into action

**Stage 4 - Physical Attack** – the in-group vandalizes, burns or otherwise destroys out-group property and carries out violent attacks on individuals or groups. Physical harm is done to members of the out-group.

**Stage 5 - Extermination** – the in-group seeks extermination or removal of the out-group. They attempt to eliminate either the entirety or a large fraction of the undesired group of people.

# LITURGY OF THE PASSION

JUSTICE ISSUE STEREOTYPES/DISCRIMINATION/RACISM/PREJUDICE

Page: 5 of 6

Ask students which stages of prejudice can be identified in the scene or the lyrics provided below. (Stages 1, 2 &3)

## “Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer”

Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer  
had a very shiny nose  
and if you ever saw it  
you would even say it glows  
**all of the other reindeer  
used to laugh and call him names  
they never let poor Rudolph  
join in any reindeer games**  
then one foggy Christmas eve  
Santa came to say:  
“Rudolph with your nose so bright  
won’t you guide my sleigh tonight?”  
then how the reindeer loved him  
as they shouted out with glee (yippee)  
“Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer  
you’ll go down in history.”

Share with participants that most people never get to Stage 4- physical attack. That does not preclude or let us off the hook for the first three stages. In fact, many people don’t realize they are prejudice let alone actually acting it out.

The most important part of this exercise is that participants understand that discriminatory behavior begins with words, which on the surface seem harmless AND they too often, if not checked, can empower people to take the next step to act out prejudicial behaviors. Those behaviors have a starting place...the heart!

NOTES

# LITURGY OF THE PASSION

## Ask:

How does your first thoughts about those who are different reflect in your behavior?

How does your first thoughts reflect your identity as a Christian?

Have the participants to take the remaining post-its and write down their first thought about something they would like to know about any of the groups identified in the opening exercise.

Note: The closing exercise provides an opportunity for participants to rethink their earlier responses and choose instead to seek more information from the members of the group.

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

### Pray:

God,  
We know that our “first thoughts” too often fail to reflect your love and grace. Forgive us we pray. Jesus said, “For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. We lean now into the power of the Holy Spirit to cleanse our hearts; so, the overflow of our mouths will be words of love and grace; welcome and inclusion.

We pray, O Lord that our first thoughts are like those of Jesus; that our *first thoughts* are for the well - being of others before ourselves. Amen.

### References

Allport, Gordon, *The Nature of Prejudice: 25th Anniversary Edition*, 1979, Perseus Books Publishing, L.L.C.  
May, Robert, L., *Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer*, 1964, Pearson PLC.

## NOTES

Ask if there are questions or points of clarification.

Invite a participant to pray or use the adjacent prayer.

# GOOD FRIDAY

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** CHASITY OPPHILE

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: DEATH PENALTY

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

John 18:1-19:42, John 8:3-11, John 10:10, Isaiah 53:8-9, Exodus 20:13, Ezekiel 33:11, Matthew 5:38-39, 43-44

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶164.G

**OBJECTIVE**

To allow students to correlate the unjust execution of Jesus with some of the injustices in our current justice system related to the death penalty and to give them space to discuss their views openly alongside the views of the United Methodist Church.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Handout (Closing Moment), Rocks for each student, Sharpies, 2016-2020 Social Principles, Copies of <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/documents/FactSheet.pdf>

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

**Say:**

As we begin discussing Good Friday, let's take a moment to center ourselves by listening to the song, Once and For All by Lauren Daigle. Close your eyes and really focus on the lyrics and how they relate to the enormity of what Jesus did for us on the cross.

<https://youtube/Btfz9qKXUIk> (Lauren Daigle- Once and For All)

**Discuss:**

How does this song speak to you personally?

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

**Read John 18:1-19:42**

(this is a long passage- consider breaking it up into sections and have student volunteers)

**Ask:**

1. What jumps out at you from these scriptures or what feelings do they bring up?
2. Why do you think Simon Peter fought so hard to keep Jesus from being arrested?
3. Why do you think it is important to note that Pilate found no fault in Jesus and tried to release him several times?

### NOTES

Blank area for taking notes during the lesson.

## Read Isaiah 53:8-9

### Ask:

1. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus was innocently put to death on the cross?
2. What social justice principle do you think this could lead us to discuss?
3. Do you know where the United Methodist Church stands on the issue of the Death Penalty?

## Read ¶164.G (Death Penalty)

### Ask:

How do you feel about the United Methodist's Church's stand on the death penalty? What do you agree or disagree with?

### Say:

Now that we have heard what the United Methodist Church believes about the death penalty let's take a look at what the Bible says.

**Read Exodus 20:13, Ezekiel 33:11, Matthew 5:38-39, 43-44, John 8:3-11 and John 10:10** (assign verses to students and read them aloud)

### Ask:

- How do these verses line up with the UMC stand on the death penalty?
- Do these verses help shape your own opinion? If so, how?

### Say:

Now let's take a moment to look at some current information about the death penalty.

## NOTES

\*Print and share, or choose some of the statistics from the following resource to discuss with the group:  
<https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/documents/FactSheet.pdf>

Spend some time discussing the sheet or the facts of your choosing and then ask something like:

**Ask:**

1. What surprised you about the facts we discussed? Why?
2. What didn't surprise you? Why?
3. How do the facts line up or not line up with the United Methodist stance on the death penalty and the scriptures we read?
4. Do these facts influence your opinion at all? Why or why not?

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

**Say:**

Placing stones as a way of remembering can be found in a few different places in the old testament. In 1 Sam. 7:12 it talks about a stone raised by Samuel to commemorate a victory over the Philistines at Mizpeh. Also, in Joshua 4 we see God commanding Joshua to have his people stack up twelve stones so that people for generations could pass by them and remember what God had done for the Israelite people.

In addition to this, it is Jewish tradition to place a stone of remembrance on a loved one's grave, which very much parallels the stone placed in front of Jesus' tomb.

We are going to take a moment to pile up our own remembrance rocks today as a way to help us remember what Jesus did for us on the cross when he was innocently crucified.

\*Give each student a stone and a sharpie.

NOTES

# GOOD FRIDAY

**Say:**

Take the stone and sharpie and find a quiet place away from the group. As you hold the stone in your hand, think of the things you have done that held Jesus to the cross. On one side of the stone, write a word that represents those things. Then, spend some time in prayer both asking God to take any guilt you have been carrying over those things and asking for forgiveness, as well as thanking Jesus for his sacrifice. When you have finished praying, write a word on the blank side of the stone that represents the way you feel about Jesus' sacrifice on your behalf and then quietly place it at the foot of the cross.

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

**Say:**

Hopefully, this has been a time for you to not only focus on what Jesus has done for you but also a time to think about others who have been condemned to death, many also innocent.

As we close, let's say the following prayer together in unison. As we pray, really think about the words and their meaning in your own life.

**Good Friday Unison Prayer (Handout):**

We all, like sheep, have gone astray.

We have all turned to our own way.

We have sinned and have been the cause of Christ's suffering.

Please forgive us, we pray.

Remove the sins that distance us from you and from those we love and care about.

Remove our selfishness, our pride, our envy, and our greed.

Remove from us our thoughtless acts and words that hurt one another.

Remove from us the tendency to hurt others out of revenge and anger.

Forgive us, please.

Create in us a clean heart, O Lord.

And renew in us a right spirit. Amen.

### NOTES

It may be good to have some background music playing as the students complete this activity.

# GOOD FRIDAY

## HANDOUT

### **Good Friday Unison Prayer:**

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We have all turned to our own way.

We have sinned and have been the cause of Christ's suffering.

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Remove from us the tendency to hurt others out of revenge and anger.

Forgive us, please.

Create in us a clean heart, O Lord.

And renew in us a right spirit. Amen.



# EASTER

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** LEIGH FINNEGAN-HOSEY

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: MAINTAINING HOPE IN SEASONS OF HOPELESSNESS

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Psalms 118

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

Preamble of the *2016-2020 Social Principles* and statement from the *Social Creed*

**OBJECTIVE**

The goal of this lesson is to inspire hope based on our trust in God's faithfulness through all seasons, good or challenging.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Paper, markers/pens/pencils, Bible.

### LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

#### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

##### Centering Prayer

Invite the students to let go of any thoughts and distractions by spending 3-5 mins in silence – eyes can be closed or opened.

Prayer Posture – Sit up straight, feet grounded on the floor. When a thought interrupts your focus, simply notice and return focus to your breath.

End with a prayer, phrase, or with a simple “Amen.”

#### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

##### Say/Summarize:

Psalms 118 was written during the Jewish exile in Babylon. This Psalm- unlike many others from this period – celebrates God by expressing gratitude, joy, and praise. The Psalm uses repetition to emphasize God's faithfulness in the midst of difficult circumstances Jesus quotes Psalm 118 in Matthew 21, where he compares himself to the “stone the builders rejected.” This Psalm was a favorite of the Protestant reformer Martin Luther, who wrote: “This Psalm has been of special service to me. It has helped me out of many great troubles when neither emperor nor kings nor wise men nor saints could help.”

#### NOTES

Leaders may consider asking the youth to meditate on a specific, meaningful word during prayer.

## Read Psalm 118

### Discussion Questions:

Break the youth into groups 2-3. Invite them to answer the questions as a small group. Later, one person will report what they discussed to the larger group.

### Ask:

1. What word, phrase, or idea stood out to you and why?
2. How does knowing that this Psalm was written during a difficult period in Israel's history shape your understanding of it?
3. Have you ever experienced God's love and/or power during a difficult time in your life? If so, when? How did you experience God's presence/work?

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### Life Mapping

The point of this exercise is to remind ourselves that God's love and presence are with us (individually and as a community) through all the seasons of life, both good and challenging.

1. Create a timeline of your life featuring major events, good or bad. (E.g. My birth, birth of a younger brother, parents divorce, graduating elementary school, winning the baseball finals, etc.) This timeline can look any way they want.

### Sample:

Birth → Aiden's Birth → Mom and Dad's divorce → Graduating elementary school → Winning the baseball finals!

2. Ask the youth to choose three (more if the group is small, fewer if the group is large) of these events to share with the group.
3. Have someone begin by sharing one of their important life moments. The group as a whole will respond with the phrase "*God's steadfast love endures forever*" after each person has shared. Go around the room, one person at a time, until everyone has shared their three events.\*

## NOTES

\*The flow of sharing should look like this:

- Person #1: "I was born."
- Group: *God's steadfast love endures forever!*
- Person 2: *My family moved to Maryland.*
- Group: *God's love endures forever!*  
Etc.

# EASTER

Read these sections taken from the beginning of the Social Principle's Preamble, and the final statement of the Social Creed:

## Read

*We, the people called United Methodists, affirm our faith in God our Creator and Father, in Jesus Christ our Savior, and in the Holy Spirit, our Guide, and Guard. **We acknowledge our complete dependence upon God in birth, in life, in death, and in life eternal. Secure in God's love,** we affirm the goodness of life and confess our many sins against God's will for us as we find it in Jesus Christ.*

*We believe in the **present and final triumph of God's Word in human affairs** and gladly accept **our commission to manifest** the life of the gospel in the world. Amen.*

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

In closing, ask the group to jot down one pressing issue facing our country. Use the same format\* to name these issues and end with a prayer asking God to help us set things right.

## NOTES

The flow of sharing should look like:  
Person #1: Mass deportations...  
Group: *God's steadfast love endures forever!*  
Person #2: Racism  
Group: *God's steadfast love endures forever!*  
Etc.

# SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

CONTRIBUTOR NAME YVONNE AGDUYENG

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE	Acts 5:27-32
SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES	2016-2020 Social Principles ¶164.B, C, F, G, H; 2016-2020 Book of Resolutions #5031
OBJECTIVE	What if speaking truth to power gets me in trouble?
SUPPLIES NEEDED	Big pieces of paper, crayons and/or markers, copies of the <i>Social Principles</i> , Handout (for group activity)

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Ask youth to provide three words that describe how they are feeling. Go first and model.

Wrap up the check-in with a prayer.

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

#### Say:

Leading up to Acts 5:27-32, the Apostles are arrested because they escaped prison and were found teaching in the temple by the authorities (5:21-26).

#### Read Acts 5:27-32

#### Ask:

1. Why were the apostles brought before the council?
2. What was Peter's response? What was the aftermath?
3. What does "speaking truth to power" mean?
4. What are some examples of "speaking truth to power?"
5. What happens if no one "speaks truth to power?"

### NOTES

There may be youth who want to speak more. You can assure them that there will be more time for dialogue.

#### Historical Context

The Acts of the Apostles is highly regarded as a sequel to the Gospel of Luke and assumed the genre of a *history* of the early church.<sup>1</sup> It is written from the perspective of the late first century to try and address the various challenges that the early church was facing – including addressing the cultural and political environment of Rome.

#### Original Audience

Luke-Acts was most likely written between 80 and 90 CE during the emergence of the Roman empire and the early church.<sup>2</sup>

#### Motivations of the author

Acts recounts the evangelistic efforts that is talked about in the letters of Paul. That is – to proclaim the gospel to the marginalized and despised Gentiles, offering to them the new dispensation of God's love, mercy, and grace.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Williams, Demetrius. *The Acts of the Apostles: True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary*, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

# SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

JUSTICE ISSUE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

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## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### World Café

Purpose: To dig deeper into Acts 5:27-32 and to make connections to our political responsibility as United Methodists in civil disobedience and criminal justice reform using the *Social Principles* and the *Book of Discipline*.

People sit four to a table with big pieces of paper and crayons/markers on each table. You can also set up beverages or snacks at each table. Each table will have a specific section of the *Social Principles* of the *Book of Discipline* with a guiding question for each. Participants are encouraged to doodle or write out their thoughts on the topic using the paper and crayons at the table while they talk as a group. At the end of the round, one person remains as the host and the other three travel to

## NOTES

### Notes on the Questions

The authorities bring them before the council again and instruct them that they are now allowed to teach in Jesus' name. The Apostles refuse, and Peter answers, "we must obey God rather than any human authority" (v. 29). This infuriates the council, and they want to kill the Apostles. Acts 5 continues and explains that there was one among the council who convinces the others not to kill them.

This story has always reminded me to keep speaking truth to power when we see injustice happening. Sometimes it is so much easier to be quiet about the things we see on the news that is happening around our country...but this is not what God is calling us to do. The Apostles were sharing God's love, mercy, and grace because there was none of that happening around them. It was the good news to the folks who were marginalized and set aside by the empire. The Apostles did not want to be silent but proclaim that God is bringing about a new world order; one that abounds in justice, love, and peace for all people. So what is God calling us to do? To not be silent in the face of injustice. To speak truth to power wherever we are...even if we go against those who are more powerful than us.

Explain in your introduction that World Café is an open-ended exploration and not a problem-solving or decision-making exercise.

Randomly stagger tables and not in straight rows if possible.

I would encourage tables to sit no more than 6.

For bigger groups, you can have sections of each question and clearly instruct that certain tables have the same questions.

For smaller groups, you can have three people to a table. If there are not enough people, engaging in the topic as one group.

<https://www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/social-principles-and-resolutions/humanizing-criminal-justice-5031>

<https://www.umcjustice.org/what-we-care-about/civil-and-human-rights/criminal-justice-reform>

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

other tables for a second round (they do not stay together as a “group”). At the start of the second round, the person who stayed at the table will briefly explain the last group’s thoughts on the topic. Afterward, the new group will engage in the topic and then move on to different tables, while one person stays at the table, and so on. The person that stayed at the table can move with the next group.

List of Table Statements and guiding questions are available on the Handout (choose as many as needed from the list).

### CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

#### Circle Wrap-Up

To close, gather together in a circle. Ask people to respond to or evaluate the day in seven words or less. Go first and model.

\*Closing Prayer from Walter Brueggeman's *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth* called “We do not want to be arrested.”

There is, we discover late and often,  
an arresting quality about Your word to us.  
We do not want to be arrested or even pause,  
for our days are planned out.  
And certainly we do not want to be arrested by the authorities,  
not for speeding,  
not for trespassing,  
not for shoplifting,  
Surely not for truth-telling.  
Minister to us in our cowardice and timidity.

#### NOTES

<https://www.umcjustice.org/what-we-care-about/civil-and-human-rights/death-penalty>

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

I've provided lots of quotes here from the Book of Resolutions and from the Social Principles that you can pick and choose depending on the needs of your youth group.

\*Just a suggested prayer

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

**JUSTICE ISSUE** CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Page: 4 of 18

Set us to be as bold as You are true,  
to meet the authorities who resist and arrest...  
our ancient mothers,  
our old convictions,  
powerful ordaining communities,  
and last, even, city hall.

We bid mercy for those of our faith  
Who this day are arrested for truth-telling;  
Your word is truth, and we live by it,  
frightened or bold,  
free or not,  
in the manner of Jesus' own life among us.  
Amen.

### NOTES

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

### HANDOUT

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#### Table 1:

“A justice system that reflects God’s desires for the world is one that is healing and restorative. Those who have been victimized by crime and the communities in which they reside need healing. Healing can come as safety and security are restored, and the broken bonds of mutuality and shared existence are mended.” *Humanizing Criminal Justice, 2016 Book of Resolutions, #5031*

Guiding Questions per table:

- What does a healing and restorative world look like in terms of criminal justice?
- How does your community model a healing and restorative world? How can your community improve?
- How does your church model a healing and restorative world?
- How does this statement connect with Acts 5:27-32?
- How is the church an agent of healing and systemic change?
- What systems are in place that prevents your community from being an agent of healing and systemic change?
- What actions are you willing to take to speak truth to power in terms of criminal justice reform?
- How is God calling you to speak truth to power?





## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

### HANDOUT

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#### Table 2:

“A justice system must be first and foremost about humanization since God’s justice always works to bring reconciliation. Systems of retribution breed only violence and isolation.” *Humanizing Criminal Justice, 2016 Book of Resolutions, #5031*

Guiding Questions per table:

- What does a healing and restorative world look like in terms of criminal justice?
- How does your community model a healing and restorative world? How can your community improve?
- How does your church model a healing and restorative world?
- How does this statement connect with Acts 5:27-32?
- How is the church an agent of healing and systemic change?
- What systems are in place that prevents your community from being an agent of healing and systemic change?
- What actions are you willing to take to speak truth to power in terms of criminal justice reform?
- How is God calling you to speak truth to power?



## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

### HANDOUT

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#### Table 3:

“We cannot punish our way to a healthy society.” (Laura Magnani and Harmon Wray, *Beyond Prisons: A New Interfaith Paradigm for Our Failed Prison System*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press [p. 5]).

Guiding Questions per table:

- What does a healing and restorative world look like in terms of criminal justice?
- How does your community model a healing and restorative world? How can your community improve?
- How does your church model a healing and restorative world?
- How does this statement connect with Acts 5:27-32?
- How is the church an agent of healing and systemic change?
- What systems are in place that prevents your community from being an agent of healing and systemic change?
- What actions are you willing to take to speak truth to power in terms of criminal justice reform?
- How is God calling you to speak truth to power?



## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

### HANDOUT

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#### Table 4:

“Retributive systems of justice form barriers to the realization of the vision of restorative justice because they are tainted with explicit and implicit racial and ethnic bias, they punish children as harshly as adults, and they accommodate a two-tiered system that serves those with wealth and subjugates those without.” *Humanizing Criminal Justice, 2016 Book of Resolutions, #5031*

Guiding Questions per table:

- What does a healing and restorative world look like in terms of criminal justice?
- How does your community model a healing and restorative world? How can your community improve?
- How does your church model a healing and restorative world?
- How does this statement connect with Acts 5:27-32?
- How is the church an agent of healing and systemic change?
- What systems are in place that prevents your community from being an agent of healing and systemic change?
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## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

### HANDOUT

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#### Table 5:

“More than 10 million people are held in penal institutions throughout the world, according to data compiled in 2013. The Church is concerned for the health and well-being of all detained and incarcerated people. Those confined in institutions, regardless of the length of their mandated stay, have basic human rights that must be protected by administrators and government officials.” *Humanizing Criminal Justice, 2016 Book of Resolutions, #5031*

Guiding Questions per table:

- What does a healing and restorative world look like in terms of criminal justice?
- How does your community model a healing and restorative world? How can your community improve?
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## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

### HANDOUT

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#### Table 6:

“Systems of justice based on retribution further harm society. Seeking to punish rather than heal, they breed more brokenness. Racism, sexism, classism and other oppressions distort law and order. Justice systems marked by these characteristics inhibit community. They deny the sacred worth of all people. They are not just.” *Criminal Justice Reform*, [www.umcjustice.org/what-we-care-about/civil-and-human-rights/criminal-justice-reform](http://www.umcjustice.org/what-we-care-about/civil-and-human-rights/criminal-justice-reform)

Guiding Questions per table:

- What does a healing and restorative world look like in terms of criminal justice?
- How does your community model a healing and restorative world? How can your community improve?
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## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

### HANDOUT

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#### Table 7:

The church supports “measures designed to remove social conditions that lead to crime, and we encourage continued positive interaction between law enforcement officials and members of the community at large.” *Social Principles*, ¶164.H

Guiding Questions per table:

- What does a healing and restorative world look like in terms of criminal justice?
- How does your community model a healing and restorative world? How can your community improve?
- How does your church model a healing and restorative world?
- How does this statement connect with Acts 5:27-32?
- How is the church an agent of healing and systemic change?
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## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

### HANDOUT

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#### Table 8:

“In the love of Christ, who came to save those who are lost and vulnerable, we urge the creation of a genuinely new system for the care and restoration of victims, offenders, criminal justice officials, and the community as a whole.” *Social Principles*, ¶ 164.H

Guiding Questions per table:

- What does a healing and restorative world look like in terms of criminal justice?
- How does your community model a healing and restorative world? How can your community improve?
- How does your church model a healing and restorative world?
- How does this statement connect with Acts 5:27-32?
- How is the church an agent of healing and systemic change?
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- How is God calling you to speak truth to power?



## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

### HANDOUT

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#### Table 9:

The UMC says, “The death penalty denies the power of Christ to redeem, restore, and transform all human beings.” *Social Principles ¶164.G*

Guiding Questions per table:

- What does a healing and restorative world look like in terms of criminal justice?
  - How does your community model a healing and restorative world? How can your community improve?
  - How does your church model a healing and restorative world?
  - How does this statement connect with Acts 5:27-32?
  - How is the church an agent of healing and systemic change?
  - What systems are in place that prevents your community from being an agent of healing and systemic change?
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  - How is God calling you to speak truth to power?
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## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

### HANDOUT

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#### Table 10:

“We oppose the death penalty (capital punishment) and urge its elimination from all criminal codes.” *Social Principles ¶164.G*

Guiding Questions per table:

- What does a healing and restorative world look like in terms of criminal justice?
- How does your community model a healing and restorative world? How can your community improve?
- How does your church model a healing and restorative world?
- How does this statement connect with Acts 5:27-32?
- How is the church an agent of healing and systemic change?
- What systems are in place that prevents your community from being an agent of healing and systemic change?
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## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

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#### Table 11:

“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.” *Social Principles, Political Responsibility* ¶164.B

Guiding Questions per table:

- What does a healing and restorative world look like in terms of criminal justice?
  - How does your community model a healing and restorative world? How can your community improve?
  - How does your church model a healing and restorative world?
  - How does this statement connect with Acts 5:27-32?
  - How is the church an agent of healing and systemic change?
  - What systems are in place that prevents your community from being an agent of healing and systemic change?
  - What actions are you willing to take to speak truth to power in terms of criminal justice reform?
  - How is God calling you to speak truth to power?
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## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

### HANDOUT

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#### Table 12:

“We believe that the state should not attempt to control the church, nor should the church seek to dominate the state. The rightful and vital separation of church and state, which has served the cause of religious liberty, should not be misconstrued as the abolition of all religious expression from public life.” *Social Principles, Church and State Relations* ¶164.C

Guiding Questions per table:

- What does a healing and restorative world look like in terms of criminal justice?
- How does your community model a healing and restorative world? How can your community improve?
- How does your church model a healing and restorative world?
- How does this statement connect with Acts 5:27-32?
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## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

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#### Table 13:

“We recognize the right of individuals to dissent when acting under the constraint of conscience and, after having exhausted all legal recourse, to resist or disobey laws that they deem to be unjust or that are discriminately enforced. Even then, respect for the law should be shown by refraining from violence and by being willing to accept the costs of disobedience. We do not encourage or condone any form of violent protest as a legitimate exercise of free speech or civil disobedience.” *Social Principles, Civil Disobedience ¶164.F*

Guiding Questions per table:

- What does a healing and restorative world look like in terms of criminal justice?
- How does your community model a healing and restorative world? How can your community improve?
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## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

### HANDOUT

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#### Table 14:

“Through God’s transforming power, restorative justice seeks to repair the damage, right the wrong, and bring healing to all involved, including the victim, the offender, the families, and the community. The Church is transformed when it responds to the claims of discipleship by becoming an agent of healing and systemic change.” *Social Principles, Criminal Justice and Restorative Justice* ¶164.H

Guiding Questions per table:

- What does a healing and restorative world look like in terms of criminal justice?
  - How does your community model a healing and restorative world? How can your community improve?
  - How does your church model a healing and restorative world?
  - How does this statement connect with Acts 5:27-32?
  - How is the church an agent of healing and systemic change?
  - What systems are in place that prevents your community from being an agent of healing and systemic change?
  - What actions are you willing to take to speak truth to power in terms of criminal justice reform?
  - How is God calling you to speak truth to power?
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# THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. MELISSA HINNEN

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Acts 9:1-20, Psalm 30

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

Civil and Human Rights

**OBJECTIVE**

Help students see the transformative power of God.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

markers, flipchart or big pieces of paper, Handout (Centering Moment), *Faith and Fact Cards* (Civil and Human Rights), laptop/computer/tablet/smartphone and projector to show video.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

*Each person shares a high point and a low point of the week.*

**Call and Response (based on Psalm 30):**

We gather in the name of the resurrected Lord Jesus

**We sing praises to God and give thanks**

Weeping may linger for the night,

**But joy comes with the morning**

You have turned our mourning into dancing

**And clothed us with joy**

**God of joy, we give thanks to you forever!**

**Pray:**

Reconciling God,

As we gather today open our eyes to experience the risen

Christ in new ways that nourish us and make us instruments  
to share Your love and grace with all Your children

In the name of the One whom we follow,

Amen

### NOTES

# THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

### Say:

As we read the Scripture today, think about:

- What happens when we become so fundamental in our rules that anyone who believes differently is seen as a threat?
- Who are the people today who experience persecution (religious or otherwise)?
- What does Jesus mean when he says “I am Jesus, the one whom you are persecuting?”
- Is there anything we can do that would be too terrible for God to give up on us?

### Read Acts 9:1-20

Storyboard/Partner Work (using markers and four sheets of flipchart paper)

Depending on the number of students, break into four groups/pairs. Each group draws a picture depicting part of the reading from Acts 9.

Group 1: Verses 1-2

Group 2: Verses 3-9

Group 3: Verses 10-16

Group 4: Verses 17-20

One or two people from each group retell the account of Saul’s conversion using the storyboard panel developed by that group. As time allows discuss what parts of the story stand out to the students. How do they feel about Saul’s conversion considering “how much evil he has done?”

### Say:

In Saul’s transformation, we begin to understand the power that comes with belonging to “The Way.” Through the love of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

### NOTES

The first Christians were Jewish people who were preaching, teaching, healing and inviting others to “The Way” of Jesus. It was not so much a religion with rules and beliefs but a way of life. They were leaving their homes and local synagogues to live together with a passion for sharing about Jesus and following his teachings.

The roots of Methodism follow a similar model. John Wesley was not trying to start a new denomination but intended to start a movement, “a way” of life within the Anglican Church. He was developing “a method” - for how we can faithfully follow “The Way” of Jesus Christ as his disciples.

Many religious authorities in the early church believed that “The Way” of Jesus went against the teachings of Moses and God. They arrested, imprisoned, and even killed men and women who were followers of “The Way.”

Saul was one of the leaders who was so legalistic in his faith that he made it his mission to arrest and condemn followers of “The Way.” Luke (the writer of Acts) tells us that Saul was “breathing threats and murder.”

## THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

JUSTICE ISSUE CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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### GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Each group selects a *Faith and Fact* card related to Civil and Human Rights: *Death Penalty, Religious Freedom, Indigenous Peoples, Immigration, Global Migration, and Criminal Justice Reform*.

Saul's conversion includes themes of persecution, grace, and redemption. Discuss each part of the selected card in small groups or with a partner. Identify where in the account of Saul's transformation this concern is addressed. Reading the "Take Action" section, discuss what you or your church or school can do to stand up for civil and human rights in your community.

Watch *Honey Maid: Love*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBC-pRFt9OM>

### NOTES

Through God's grace, as followers of "The Way," even the most negative and hurtful parts of ourselves can be transformed into healing messages and actions of love.

And as that transformation happens, God also takes the best parts of us and strengthens and multiplies that love. The good news is that this grace is available to all of us - however, God made us, whatever our ethnicity, whoever we love, and no matter what we have done, God celebrates our unique spirit.

As followers of "The Way," when we turn to God for help, God takes what is broken and brings it back to wholeness. That's what God did for Saul. That's what God can do with our church. That's what God does with you and me.

God loves us so much that even after humans broke the body of God's own son, hanging him on the cross as a political prisoner, God still offered us an amazing promise through the way of resurrection. God reminds us that Love Always Wins!



# THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

**JUSTICE ISSUE** CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

### Pray:

*Blessing (standing in a circle and looking at each other)*  
May the Triune God lead you to be an agent of peace with justice.  
May the Holy Spirit fill you with a spirit of joy so that all who you meet  
Will know the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

*Sending (Leader or a student)*  
Go from here with the confidence that  
You are invited to be an instrument of God's amazing grace  
You are invited to follow *The Way of the risen Jesus*  
You are invited to share the Good News that Love Always Wins!

### NOTES

# FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. DR. DAVID WILSON

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: CREATION CARE, WATER

<b>SCRIPTURE PASSAGE</b>	Psalms 23
<b>SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES</b>	2016-2020 Social Principles ¶160
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	To understand the sacredness of water.
<b>SUPPLIES NEEDED</b>	Cups for everyone, drinking water, basin, water, pitcher.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

**Say:**

Many tribes and nations in this country understand the sacredness of water as the nourishing gift by Creator God. Water is used in many ceremonies today by tribes and nations in this country and around the world. When people gather for the ceremony, they are given water, and especially before a meal. They drink the water before they do anything as a reminder of the sacredness of water and life. If the ceremony is outdoors, they will pour water into the ground and then drink it.

Take the water that has been prepared for you in the cups and drink the water as a reminder of the sacredness of water. Not only do tribes recognize the role of water, but Jesus the Christ did as well. If the group is outdoors, pour some of the water back into Mother Earth as your act of prayer.

**Following this ritual/ceremony, read this prayer:**

Chihowa, Wakonda, Ateus, Daw-Kee, Creator of the world.  
We assemble today for a time to gather our thoughts, to pull ourselves together, to reflect upon your presence in our lives and in this world. Giver of Life, Water Bearing One, refresh us this day with the water that brings and gives life daily in our lives. May the sound of the waters, and the touch of the water compel us to respond to your call upon our lives. Thank you for calling us from many directions today to worship and serve you. Amen.

### NOTES

Empty space for notes.

# FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

**JUSTICE ISSUE** CREATION CARE, WATER

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## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

### Read:

The Natural World of the *Social Principles* (paragraph 160) states that “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 useful to human beings.”

### Say:

Beginning in 2016, the tribe members and hundreds of other Native people protested the construction of the Dakota Access pipeline. When built, the pipeline will stretch more than 1,100 miles from oil fields in North Dakota to a river port in Illinois. The tribe claims that the pipeline could threaten their sole water source and that, more importantly, they were not consulted before the pipeline was approved. A portion of the pipeline will travel under the Missouri River which is a part of their reservation. The pipeline was approved just recently by the U.S. government, and it is close to completion.

In groups of two or three, read the Psalm listed below. This Psalm is one of the most well-known and used Psalm today. The writer of the Psalm portrays God as one who is a comforter, blessing, and protector. After reading the Psalm, answer the following questions in your small group. Assign one person to report your finding back to the entire group.

### Read Psalm 23

1. What commonalities do you find in the Psalm and the story of the Water Protectors at Standing Rock?
2. What images of the Psalm stand out to you in relation to the two?
3. How does this Psalm and story relate to this study of water in the *Social Principles*?

### NOTES

Area for taking notes during the Scripture Study.

# FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

**JUSTICE ISSUE** CREATION CARE, WATER

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## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### The Water Ceremony- Caddo Tradition

The Water Ceremony from the Caddo tradition is usually done beside a body of water early in the morning. However, the Water Ceremony can also be done inside as a part of worship.

Items needed are a pitcher of water and basin. Read through the Water Ceremony and take time for the directives for reflection and prayers. *Instead of immersions, bow.*

At the conclusion, we will pass one by one as water is poured from the vessel into the hands and then wiped on the face.

#### Directives for Reflection & Prayers (adapt as needed)

(Point to the east)

Let's all face east as we begin.

Each person steps into the water, facing the East and then immerses the body up and down to the neck four times. Each of the immersions represents the four directions: the four phases of the moon, the four seasons, and the four phases of human life (infancy, youth, adult and elder).

Remaining in the water, a morning prayer is the offered:

Giving thanks and gratitude for the new day.

Let us offer our own silent prayers.

Let's now pray for constant awareness.

Now let's ask for direction on how to be helpful to the creation today. This is a time for remembrance.

One is in touch with water from which creation began, in touch with water which surrounded life in the mother's womb, in touch with one's baptismal waters, in touch with the Mystery.

#### NOTES

# FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

**JUSTICE ISSUE** CREATION CARE, WATER

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Following the time of prayer and moments of quietness, the person then immerses the body in the water two more times (the fifth immersion representing the earth, and the sixth, the sky).

All six immersions combined represent the one Spirit of God, and become part of the great thanksgiving. "Amen" is not said during the ceremony until the end of the day because the whole day becomes a personal prayer. After leaving the water and again facing the East, walk into the day as your prayer and life one.

*You are invited one by one, to walk by the basin, where you can pour water over your hands. Then you will wipe your faces with the water. You may take time at the altar for prayer or return to your seats.*

*Adapted from Caddo tradition Water Ceremony from VOICES, PG 83 by Dayton Edmonds (Caddo), retired Church and Community Worker, Used with permission.*

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Divide the group up in twos or into various sides of the room and read the following prayer paragraph by paragraph. Consider how in your life and your environment that Mother Earth is being affected. (Handout)

### Native American Prayer

Great Spirit,  
Give us hearts to understand  
Never to take from creation's beauty more than we give,  
Never to destroy want only for the furtherance of greed,  
Never to deny to give our hands for the building of earth's beauty,  
Never to take from her what we cannot use.

Give us hearts to understand  
That to destroy earth's music is to create confusion,  
That to wreck her appearance is to blind us to beauty,  
That to callously pollute her fragrance is to make a house of stench,  
That as we care for her, she will care for us.

## NOTES

## FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

**JUSTICE ISSUE** CREATION CARE, WATER

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Give us hearts to understand  
We have forgotten who we are.  
We have sought only our own security.  
We have exploited simply for our own ends.  
We have distorted our knowledge.  
We have abused our power.

Great Spirit,  
Whose dry lands thirst,  
Help us to find the way to refresh your lands.

Great Spirit,  
Whose waters are choked with debris and pollution,  
Help us to find the way to cleanse your waters.

Great Spirit,  
Whose beautiful earth grows ugly with misuse,  
Help us to find the way to restore beauty to your handiwork.

Great Spirit,  
Whose creatures are being destroyed,  
Help us to find a way to replenish them

Great Spirit,  
Whose gifts to us are being lost in selfishness and corruption,  
Help us to find the way to restore our humanity.

~Author Unknown

### NOTES

## FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

**JUSTICE ISSUE** CREATION CARE, WATER

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### HANDOUT

#### Native American Prayer

Great Spirit,  
Give us hearts to understand  
Never to take from creation's beauty more than we give,  
Never to destroy want only for the furtherance of greed,  
Never to deny to give our hands for the building of earth's beauty,  
Never to take from her what we cannot use.

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That to callously pollute her fragrance is to make a house of stench,  
That as we care for her, she will care for us.

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We have forgotten who we are.  
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We have distorted our knowledge.  
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Great Spirit,  
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Great Spirit,  
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Great Spirit,  
Whose beautiful earth grows ugly with misuse,  
Help us to find the way to restore beauty to your handiwork.

Great Spirit,  
Whose creatures are being destroyed,  
Help us to find a way to replenish them

Great Spirit,  
Whose gifts to us are being lost in selfishness and corruption,  
Help us to find the way to restore our humanity.

~Author Unknown

# FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. DR. ARLINDA BURKS

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: INCLUSIVITY

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Acts 11:1-18

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶162 A, B

**OBJECTIVE**

Each participant will learn the importance of external influences that affect our perceptions of self and its' impact on how we perceive the "other."

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Handout 1 "Who Influences Me?" Pen/Pencil/Two sheets of writing paper for each participant, Handout 2 "Who/What Influences Me?"

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Share one word or phrase that was a high point this week and one word or phrase that was a low point this week.

Opening Prayer

In silence, have the student's complete "Who Influences Me?" handout (Handout 1.)

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

Ask for volunteers to share their responses on "Handout 1."

**Ask:**

1. How do you define "value/value systems?"
2. How do you think your influencers (on handout 1) influenced your values?
3. Was there ever a moment when your value system was challenged?

Facilitator using "Handout 2" share how values/value system influence how we perceive the world.

**Read Acts 11:1-18**

### NOTES

Before the lesson, fill out Handout 1 to share with the class.

To create a space of sharing, as the students are sharing their responses, share your responses.

If there was ever a time for the importance of understanding the influence of socialization (the way we learn, understand and facilitate the world) around us, it is now.

As we are surrounded by conversation around topics of immigration, gender equality, full inclusion of LGBTQ persons and race relations (to name a few) we need to pause and examine our behaviors interacting with people that are different from ourselves.



# FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

## Ask:

1. Peter just had a significant moment when his values/value system was challenged, what happened?
2. What did Peter learn from God?
3. In vs. 17 Peter says, "If God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?" Are their people/groups that we exclude from our lives?
4. How is God challenging me to open my arms to include others?

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Have participants take out paper and pencils/pens provided and write a poem entitled, "Where I'm From." Encourage them to refer to the sheets they filled out earlier.

Put participants in groups of no more than three to share their poems. (10 minutes)

Reconvene group and encourage them to share in the large group format.

## NOTES

Many of us rarely reflect on how the people, circumstances, education and other factors influence our lives and how we perceive others. How we decide who is "in" or "out." We most often adopt the value/value systems of our parents, friends, the faith community, etc.

*Value/Value System: a value represents something important in one's existence, a type of belief, centrally located within our self-concept, about how we ought or ought not to behave.*

*A value system is a set of values adopted by an individual or society, influencing the behavior of the individual member of society, often without conscious awareness.*

*Significant Emotional Event (S.E.E): these events can come in various forms as sources such as deaths, births, traumatic events, etc., these are events that may force us to change our core values.*

1. Peter had his values challenged by other Jewish (circumcised) believers for eating with uncircumcised men. They were questioning his actions because they were influenced by their religious training which was integral to their identity; which he was also familiar with. Their challenge was not about food or dinner but about who is considered "in" or "out" based on their value system.
2. Peter's encounter with God contradicted what he was taught about dietary requirements as listed in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. He learned that God is no longer making a distinction between Jews and Gentiles or between the circumcised and uncircumcised believers.

Approximately 10 minutes

It is a good idea if the facilitator has written their own poem, "Where I am From" and can use it as an example of what the participants are trying to accomplish.

I have attached a copy of my own poem as an example of what we are trying to accomplish.

When we think, even quickly, about the influences that have shaped us, we gain a greater appreciation and respect for the stories of others.

After the participants are done, invite those who are willing to share their poems.

# FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

**JUSTICE ISSUE** INCLUSIVITY

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## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

**Pray:**

Gracious and loving God,  
Grant us the grace we will see our sisters and brothers,  
No matter where they are from,  
As You see us all; Yours. Amen.

### NOTES

Ask if there are questions or points of clarification.

Invite a participant to close in prayer or use the adjacent prayer.

# FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

## HANDOUT 1

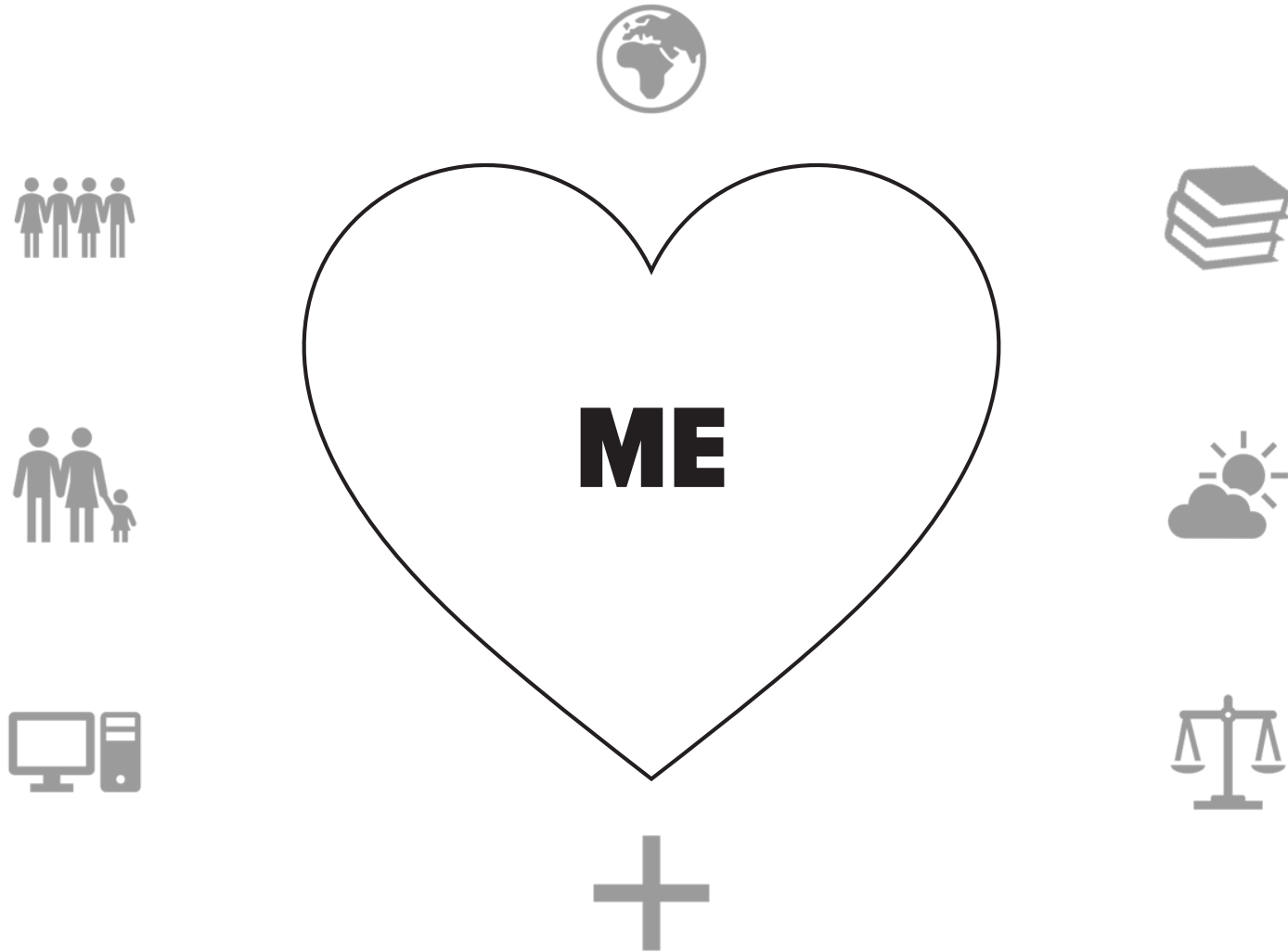
### WHO/WHAT INFLUENCES YOU?

A large heart shape is centered on the page. Inside the heart, the word **ME** is written in bold, black, uppercase letters. Surrounding the heart are seven empty rectangular boxes for writing, arranged as follows: one box centered above the heart, three boxes in a vertical column to the left of the heart, and three boxes in a vertical column to the right of the heart.

# FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

## HANDOUT 2

### WHO/WHAT INFLUENCES YOU?



# FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

## HANDOUT 3

### Where I'm From

I am from 25th Ave,  
Dr. Watts hymn singing  
and old-time deacon praying.  
I am from, "you must get your education"  
and no coloreds or girls allowed.  
I am from "I'm too tired to give up my seat on the bus"  
and from "Ask not what your country can do for you,  
but what you can do for your country."  
I am from "I have a dream" and a "dream deferred."

I am from be respectful, be fair, be helpful  
and always try.  
I am from "you can do and be  
anything you want if you work hard."  
I am from the smell of fresh bread cooking,  
fish on Fridays and the best  
cornbread dressing ever made.

I am from the basement of 2512 Washington Street,  
the halls of Roosevelt High School and I am  
the daughter that sprang from the minds  
of Miss Belle, Mr. Cannon and Mr. Rogers.

I am from "We Shall Overcome", "Anchors Away"  
and "Amazing Grace."  
I am from "It's a Wonderful Life"; "Brother to a Dragonfly",  
"The Good Earth", and "To Kill a Mockingbird."

I am from Katie and Joe, Bert, Lula and Willie Mae.  
I am from the daughters and sons whose names  
are forever lost to history.

I am from a Dad who died too soon and  
a mother who never gave up.

I am from a world that declared no entry  
was possible.

I am from a world of infinite possibilities.

—Arlindall Burks

# SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. JOSEPH D KIM

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: GENDER EQUITY

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Acts 16:9-15

### SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶162.F

### OBJECTIVE

To recognize the oppression of women, especially in the church, and to work together to cultivate a safe and welcoming community.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

Bibles, the Internet is ideal to look at updates

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

- Take time to curate the space together
  - If the group is not familiar with one another, share names out loud
  - Share highs and lows from the previous week (or previous gathering)
  - Take a moment to center by taking a few deep breaths collectively as a group
  - Read from Rumi's poem *The Guesthouse* [<http://www.sagemindfulness.com/blog/rumi-s-poem-the-guest-house>], recognizing that everyone is bringing something different into the space and that everyone will encounter something different by the space

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

#### Say/Summarize:

- Paul and Silas continue their ministry having been prevented from going to Asia to share the Gospel (Acts 9:6).
- Instead, they are re-routed to Macedonia. It is interesting to note that it was a vision of a man who asked Paul and Silas in a dream to come and help in Macedonia (Acts 9:9), but there is no mention of that man in the text. Rather, they meet Lydia down by the river.

#### Read Acts 16:9-15

### NOTES

#### About Lydia:

Lydia is an independent businesswoman from the coastal town of Thyatira, known for its stronghold on the market of purple dye. The cloths were made by extracting the dye from the shellfish found in and near Thyatira.

It can be inferred that Lydia had a stronghold on the market for purple dye, given the proximity between Thyatira and Philippi.

# SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

## Ask:

1. Think about Lydia's identity. In what ways might she have been ostracized by society?
2. What are the differences between Lydia's identity and Paul's? [i.e., citizenship, gender, etc.]
3. Are there times when God re-directs us?
4. Does God direct us towards the marginalized?

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Depending on the size of the group, it could be interesting to divide the group into pairs or smaller groups to do the "scavenger hunt."

- One group can look at the milestones for women in society throughout history – Who are some of the famous women in US History? When did women get the right to vote? When were women admitted into college or university? When did women...? See what they find, what is interesting to them.
- Another group can look for milestones in the story of Methodism. Who are some of the famous women in Methodist history? When did women get ordained? When did women get admitted into seminary? When did women...?
- A third group can look for disparity between men and women today. What is the pay gap? What is the disparity between men leading companies and women leading companies? Research the "ceiling" that is often labeled for women.

## NOTES

It cannot be inferred that Lydia was a widow, though that may be the tendency given the role and status of women in the first-century Roman Empire context.

Lydia is the head of her household (Acts 9:15).

Lydia is already a worshipper of God, though maybe not monotheistic, and regularly gathers to worship on the Sabbath by the River.

We are not sure of Lydia's citizenship, as a resident of the Roman colony.

# SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Come back together and share findings. Invite students to share personal stories as well. How many people grew up seeing female pastors?

Talk about next steps: Why is it important for the United Methodist Church to name in its Social Principles the Rights of Women? How can each of us be part of promoting a culture of inclusion and equality for all, but especially women, in our society and in our church?

Name resources that the students can turn to: COSROW, United Methodist Women, etc.

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Close by inviting each person to lift up the name of a woman who has influenced them and a sentence on why. It could be a person in their family or someone they know personally, or it could be someone in history or someone from Scripture.

End the time in prayer – thanking God for the role of women in the world and in our lives, and praying for the strength and courage to advocate for the rights of women.

### NOTES



# SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. MICHELLE LEDDER

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: SLAVERY, POVERTY, LIVING WAGE, ECONOMIC JUSTICE

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Acts 16:16-34

### SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

Variety

### OBJECTIVE

To recognize resistance to economic oppression as a “Wesleyan Means of Grace;” necessary for our spiritual development/discipleship.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

Different color post-it notes, wall-size paper (2), scripture passage, markers, computer/smartphone/tablet or printouts of economic oppression summaries, tea light, two bowls/basins, tray.

\*\*Please use the handout to prepare for this lesson.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Quickly introduce “Wesleyan Means of Grace” wall size post-its by having one participant read the definition of “means of grace” written on the first post it.

#### Say:

“John Wesley – the “founder” of United Methodism – used the phrase “means of grace” to help us see how God helps us grow into God’s freely given grace with internal spiritual practices (works of piety) and external spiritual practices (works of mercy).”

Split the class into smaller groups ensuring that each group will have at least 2 or 3 of the “means of grace post-its” you created before class. With a smaller class, and based on the personality of your class, students can work individually or in pairs with a set of at least 2 or 3 post-its.

Direct the participants/smaller groups/pairs to place their means of grace post-its on the column where they fit – ask them to figure out/best guess whether each post-it is a “works of piety” (internal spiritual practice) or a “works of mercy” (external spiritual practice). Give them 1 minute and time them. GO!

After one minute, “let’s see how we did” – *read the list of 18 means of grace from your preparation time in order* – tell the group that the first group are all “works of piety” and together they can switch any post-its that need to go in that column. Then, tell them the 2nd group are “works of mercy” and read those having the participants make any final corrections.

### NOTES

The Centering Moment is to introduce Wesleyan Means of Grace and involve the participants in learning which “means” are works of piety (inward) and which are works of mercy (outward). This is meant to set the stage for making connections for resisting economic oppression as a means of grace & therefore, a necessary part of their spiritual development/discipleship. It is done in a quick, game-like fashion, so learning is hands-on, energetic, and introductory. This exercise has a lot of directions below but should be done in a pretty quick manner – read through the instructions below to get a feel for the exercise flow so that when you do it with your class no time is wasted in between directions, actions, and the prayer. This section CAN be done in 5 minutes, I promise!

# SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

**JUSTICE ISSUE** SLAVERY, POVERTY, LIVING WAGE, ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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## Recap and Transition:

In the first few minutes we've looked at Wesleyan Means of Grace which God uses to help us experience the grace that God gives us freely and categorized different spiritual practices into internal practices (works of what? piety) and external practices (works of what? mercy).

## Let us pray:

Dear God, thank you for freely giving us your gift of grace. Help us to recognize means of grace in today's Bible lesson and use that knowledge for our own transformation and the transformation of the world. AMEN.

## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

**Ask 3 participants to read one of the following sections of Acts 16:16-34: [1] vs. 16-18; [2] vs. 19-24; [3] vs. 25-34.**

### Ask:

How are the following people in the text using the Wesleyan Means of Grace?

Have participants count off in fours (1,2,3,4... 1,2,3,4...). Assign the 1s to search for how the enslaved girl is engaged in the means of grace. Assign the 2s the enslaved girl's captors (often named as "owners" in texts). Assign the 3s Paul/Silas (before prison). Assign the 4s the magistrates.

- Give each group a few post-its with different colors if possible (one color would visibly represent different people in texts).
- In their groups, have them write one means of grace their person/people are engaged in on one post-it. If their person/people are engaged in more than one means of grace, have them use a different post-it for each new means of grace.

## NOTES

The following study helps participants examine the text themselves. By asking them to look at the text and answer/respond to the questions "based in the text," they will be engaged in "exegesis," specifically literary exegesis. In other words, they are trying to figure out how to interpret the text not based in what someone else tells them to believe – rather – they are literally questioning the text themselves and asking the text to teach them what the text is saying. Participants of all ages can do this and get something out of it. Based on your preparation decisions, determine which student or group of students will get which question to ask the text so they can fully participate at their level. Help the participants practice sharing with the group "where in the text" they found their responses. Always point back to the text – even when you are offering your suggestions or perspective.

## SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

**JUSTICE ISSUE** SLAVERY, POVERTY, LIVING WAGE, ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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### NOTES

- Have each group post their post-its on the wall in a different spot (you may want to take one post-it and write enslaved girl, another post-it and write Paul/Silas, etc. and have them place the means of grace post-its below the name).
- If your class is small or if some of your participants are shy, you can have them work as pairs. If the class is small and participants would be working alone, go through the text together as a whole class; each participant could be the “writer” for one person in the text, but the whole class works through the scripture to find the answers.
- Use your answers/responses from your preparation time to help add responses that may not have been considered. Remember to show the class exactly where in the text you found your response.

#### Ask:

1. How do verses 25-34 help us to think about the following questions?
2. Why are Paul and his companions sent to prison? What does the text say? Also, think about what means of grace you noticed them engaged in before they went to prison.
3. What means of grace do Paul and his companions engage in while they are in prison?
4. Which, if any, lead to their freedom?
5. Who else gains freedom because Paul and his companions engage in means of grace while they are in prison?

#### Ask:

(for any participants with stronger critical thinking skills, for participants who are more reflective than action-oriented, or for participants who are getting ready for high school)

1. How do works of piety (internal spiritual practices) help other people know/feel God’s grace more?
2. How do works of mercy (external spiritual practices) help us know/feel God’s grace more?

# SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

**JUSTICE ISSUE** SLAVERY, POVERTY, LIVING WAGE, ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

- Learn about:** Use a smartphone or the article provided to learn about one form of economic oppression that exists today (do you remember why the girl in the text was enslaved?)
  - [1] Nestle Corporation Labor Abuses (<https://laborrights.org/industries/cocoa>)
  - [2] People In U.S. Working for Less than a Living Wage (research Poor People's Campaign <https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/>or Fight for 15 <https://fightfor15.org/>);
  - [3] Human Trafficking out of Hartsfield Jackson Airport in Atlanta, GA;
  - [4] College Athletes (NCAA rules regarding athlete income and student v pro status).
- Connect Means of Grace:** Ask people/subgroups to think about the means of grace people from the scripture used (see post-its on the wall under each name, and the responses to which means of grace did Paul and Silas engage in while they were in prison). Have people write down one means of grace per post-it that they could use to fight the economic injustice they just learned about. Help them think about additional options.
- Connect Means of Grace with Specific Actions:** What, specifically, can they do to engage in that particular means of grace that will resist that economic oppression. For example, they might choose prayer – ask them where could they pray that would be powerful based on what the economic oppression is – like praying outside an arena where an NCAA game is being played or planning a prayer protest outside a major retail store that stocks Nestle chocolate.... at Easter.
- Choose a Means of Grace and Make a Plan:** How, When, Where, Who, Why? Write the responses down and a timeline to get started. Commit to completing your task/s anywhere between one week and three months. Then, contact the United Methodist News Association with an article about what you did, why you did it, and invite others to do the same. Have your class make a presentation to the entire church.

## NOTES

This section helps to connect means of grace and our work as current day disciples, to connect the enslavement of the girl for profit in the text with modern day economic oppression, and to connect participants' understanding of the scripture with their call and responsibilities as Christian disciples. To the extent they are able, allow participants to wrestle with these unjust realities and determine what critical, even if small, steps they can take to engage means of grace for their own freedom and the freedom of others.

# SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

**JUSTICE ISSUE** SLAVERY, POVERTY, LIVING WAGE, ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

- **Recap Centering Moment:** Have participants read the definition of Means of Grace and tell you the two types (works of piety and works of mercy). Have them identify which is internal spiritual practices (works of piety) and which are external spiritual practices (works of mercy).
- **Recap Scripture:** Have participants respond popcorn style with means of grace that people from the text engaged in (if they can't remember, point them toward the wall where the small post-its are listed from that part of the lesson and have them read from there).
- **Recap Group Exercise:**
  - **If Candles:** Have each person think of a one-sentence prayer about resisting the economic injustice they learned about. Have each participant come up to tray/foundation and place their tea light down, light it (with or without help as needed), and say their one sentence prayer out loud, then return back to the group. Have each participant do this. If a large group, you can split them up into smaller groups so multiple people can do this at the same time.
  - **If Water Bowls/Basins:** explain that one bowl/basin is for cleansing and one is for restoration. Have each person think of a one-sentence prayer about resisting the economic injustice they learned about. Have each person come to the bowls/basins and dip hands in the bowl of cleansing, say their one-sentence prayer, then dip hands in the bowl of restoration, have them return back to the group.
- **Let us Pray:**

Dear God, the One who helps us experience more of your free gift of grace by works of piety and works of mercy. Give us the passion and the power to complete the commitments we made today to resist the economic oppressions of our day – just like the enslaved girl and Paul and Silas did from our scripture lesson. We offer these and all things to You, in the name of Jesus, our Savior and our Friend, we pray. AMEN.

## NOTES

Sometimes just a plan – even on a piece of paper – remains just a good idea. However, when combined with a ritual it can take on new significance. For some, a ritual cements what was learned during the lesson with a tactile experience. For others, a ritual deepens the connections between what we said we were going to do and what we actually are going to do. Rituals also provide a powerful opportunity to ask God to break the chains of injustice and provide power to our resistance to oppression, economic or otherwise.

## SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

JUSTICE ISSUE SLAVERY, POVERTY, LIVING WAGE, ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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### PRE-CLASS PREPARATION HANDOUT FOR FACILITATOR

- **Read Acts 16: 16-34** in the NRSV translation. In your own words, **paraphrase the story** (either write it down in a journal or tell it to someone else).
- **Centering Moment Preparation:** ([www.umc.org/how-we-serve/the-wesleyan-means-of-grace](http://www.umc.org/how-we-serve/the-wesleyan-means-of-grace))
  - **Use one wall-size post-it to create a backdrop for “Wesleyan Means of Grace”** – write this title at the top center and underline it. In the rest of the post-it – write in large print – the definition of Wesleyan Means of Grace (paraphrased from UMC website): “Means of Grace are spiritual practices that God uses to help us grow into the grace that God gives us freely.”
  - **Use another wall-size post-it to create a 2nd backdrop for “Wesleyan Means of Grace”** – write this title at the top center of the post-it and underline it. Draw a 2nd line down the center of the empty space creating 2 columns. Title the left column “works of piety” and the right column “works of mercy.”
  - Using regular-sized post-its, **write down one “means of grace” on each** (18 post-its total):
    - ◆ Don’t write the numbers – just the names below – the numbers are for your reference;

[1] reading;	[7] sharing our faith with others;	[13] visiting those in prison;
[2] studying scriptures;	[8] take communion;	[14] feeding the hungry;
[3] prayer;	[9] group Bible study;	[15] donating money to ministry;
[4] fasting;	[10] having a friend to share struggles with;	[16] seeking justice;
[5] go to church;	[11] doing good works;	[17] ending oppression & discrimination;
[6] healthy living;	[12] visiting the sick;	[18] fighting poverty.
    - ◆ Hold onto this list for class (during exercise – you’ll need to know that 1-10 are “works of piety” and 11-18 are “works of mercy.”
  - Mix them up so that they are not in the same order that they are listed above, and have the post-its ready for easy distribution on class day.
- **Scripture Study: Acts 16:16-34**
  - Reread the text.
  - Answer the questions for yourself. You will be asking the class participants to do this during class. You want to do it for yourself ahead of time because it is very difficult (if not impossible) to process and facilitate at the same time. Even though the participants may come up with different answers than you do (which is great! Different perspectives and life experiences will garner different responses to the same questions and help us all see the text – and God – more fully!)

# SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

**JUSTICE ISSUE** SLAVERY, POVERTY, LIVING WAGE, ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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## PRE-CLASS PREPARATION HANDOUT FOR FACILITATOR

- **Select questions for class participants.** Based on what you know about the participants of your particular middle school class and the questions, you may want to pre-select which students you will assign which questions.
- ♦ **If students will be answering different questions:** have each group sit together in different sections of the room; assign and offer directions to each group; give them 10 minutes to go through their questions; ask each group to choose 1 or 2 representatives to share their responses with the other group (up to 5 minutes each).
- ♦ **If students will be answering the same questions:** utilize the whole participant group when assigning each question/set of questions; have them do sharing with each other one question at a time. For example, the whole group would be split into four smaller groups who would focus either on enslaved girl, captors/"owners," Paul/Silas (before prison), or magistrates. Each of the smaller groups would share their "post-its" with each other.
- **Group Activity: "Our Discipleship"**
  - **Determine whether students have access to smartphones.** Participants will take 10 minutes to learn (at least the basics) about a particular expression of economic oppression (profit over the safety, well-being, and wholeness of people). If students have smartphones (even enough for pairs or trios to share), you'll have them do some internet research. If they don't, determine whether you or other leaders can share theirs or whether you will need to print out a short article that includes the basics of the particular economic oppression – see lesson below.
  - **Choose the particular economic oppressions to focus on.** There might be an area of interest (i.e., college athletics) that you realize your whole group would get excited to learn about. There might be a form of economic oppression that is too mature or difficult for your participants to learn of or about (i.e., human trafficking). Do some preliminary research about each of the economic oppressions listed in the lesson and determine which ones to focus on and which to leave out of the discussion altogether.
- **Closing Moment:**
  - **Determine whether or not you can have lit candles in the space.**
    - ♦ If yes, bring one tea light for each participant and enough trays to place candles on as well as something to light candles with.
    - ♦ If no, bring two basins to fill with water for a hand washing ceremony.
  - **Choose a closing ritual song** you will play during candle lighting or hand washing and determine **how you will play it** (on your phone, from a computer, on a tape deck, etc.)

# PENTECOST SUNDAY

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. GAD MPOYO

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: GLOBAL MIGRATION /INCLUSIVENESS /DIVERSITY

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Acts 2:1-21

### SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

*Faith and Fact Cards on Global Migration; 2016-2020 Social Principles ¶162.H*

### OBJECTIVE

Help students discover that the coming of the Holy Spirit calls us to spread the good news of peace and justice to the world by embracing unity in diversity as a gift from God.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

Bible, Faith and Fact Card on Global Migration, Handout (group activity)

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the time of fellowship with God and with one another.

#### Ask:

1. What holidays do you celebrate with friends and/or family?  
(Expect students to say holidays such as Thanksgiving, Easter, Labor Day, Christmas, July 4th, etc.)
2. What do people do when they gather in those holidays?  
(Eat together, play games, watch fireworks.....)

Today's story covers one of the holiday festivals recorded in the book of Acts of Apostles.

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

#### Read Acts 2:1-21

Participants and facilitator can read scripture together or take turns reading verses.

#### Ask:

1. Pentecost was a new experience for both the disciples and the crowd. They had never experienced such a thing before. What was the impact it had on their identity as individuals as well as a community?
2. How did they see themselves before and after the coming of the Holy Spirit?

#### NOTES

Background of the story of Acts 2:1-21

Luke wrote one of the earliest accounts of Jesus' life and death. Luke did not stop there. He continued the story in a second volume in the Acts of the Apostles – commonly referred to as simply *Acts*.

#### **Pentecost**

Pentecost comes from the Greek word meaning fiftieth (50). This was a Jewish



# PENTECOST SUNDAY

3. What changed and what remained the same?
4. Who are the people of the story and what do we know about them? Where did they come from?

## Ask:

The coming of the Holy Spirit resulted in the creation of a diverse community of equals by bringing people of different nations, cultures, gender, and theologies together.

1. Where do we see the Holy Spirit at work in our community, church, and school?
2. Why is unity in diversity important for our church, school, and community? What are the challenges that come with diversity and how do we overcome them?
3. How do we resist the temptation of seeing diversity as a threat rather than a gift from God?

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### Say:

What would Pentecost look like if it happened today in our current world? There is a small community near Atlanta, Georgia called Clarkston. Clarkston happens to be one of the most diverse square miles in the country because of it has embraced people from all over the globe. Its nickname is "Ellis Island South," and it is home to thousands of refugees.

## NOTES

festival of harvest fifty days following the festival of Passover. Thousands of people came to Jerusalem at Pentecost including devout Jews from all cultures, languages, nations along with other international visitors. All of them gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost.

Through the Holy Spirit, God used Pentecost to unify the family of Israel that was scattered because of exile to bring God's Peace and Justice into the world.

Pentecost marks the beginning of a multiethnic, international church from which missionaries were sent into the world to preach the Good News.

Pentecost celebrates the face of Christ in all theological, cultural and liturgical diversity found in the world. It creates in the community a sense of common good rather than individual gain.

# PENTECOST SUNDAY

## Question:

Look at *Faith and Fact Card* on *Global Migration*. Share one thing from the card that you didn't know about migration and refugees.

## Acting out a modern-day Pentecost (Handout)

**Characters:** Narrator, Crowd 1, Crowd 2, Crowd 3, Kamba

**Narrator:** When the whole youth group had gathered at Kamba's house for Thanksgiving worship and fellowship, a wind like a tornado, rumbled through the house. Then things heated up like the house was on fire, the Spirit, which is the presence of God, overwhelmed them. Filled with the Spirit they began speaking different languages, some in Swahili, some in French, some in Farsi...

There were many religious people who lived in the neighborhood, and people from all over the world who had moved to Clarkston to escape war and violence. When they heard the shouts from Kamba's house, they came running to see what was happening. As they got close enough to hear clearly, they realized they could understand every word because they were speaking in their language. They were confused, "Isn't Kamba Congolese? And these kids, they usually speak Swahili with each other? But it sounds like our language."

Arabic and Nepali

Chin, Karen, Karenni, Burmese, Rohingya

Swahili, French, Farsi, Vietnamese, Spanish, Kinye-Rwanda, German! Every language you could think of, they spoke!

From the crowd, someone shouted.

**Crowd 1:** "They're speaking our languages, all of them, and they're talking about the powerful things God has done through Jesus!"

## NOTES

# PENTECOST SUNDAY

## NOTES

**Narrator:** Everyone seemed to be in shock. They'd never experienced anything like it.

**Crowd 2:** "This is crazy! What's going on?"

**Crowd 3:** "I think they lost their minds!"

**Narrator:** Then Kamba stood up, and everyone got quiet.

**Kamba:** "Friends, all of you are our neighbors. You know us. Let's get one thing straight. No one has lost their minds. This is happening just like God's messages said it would.

The prophet Joel said,  
"In the Last Days," God says,  
    "I will pour out my Spirit  
on every kind of people:  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
Your young people will see visions,  
    your old folks dream dreams.  
When the time comes,  
    I'll pour out my Spirit  
On those who serve me, men and women both,  
    and they'll prophesy.  
I'll set wonders in the sky above  
    and signs on the earth below,  
Blood and fire and billowing smoke,  
    the sun turning black and the moon blood-red,  
Before the Day of the Lord arrives,  
    the Day tremendous and marvelous;  
And whoever calls out for help  
    to God, will be saved."

# PENTECOST SUNDAY

## Ask:

1. How different does this story sound when read in -our current context as compared to the NRSV version?
2. How is God calling you outside your upper room (youth group, church, and community) to share the good news of the things that God has done in your life?
3. What action can you take to bring unity in this age of increasing cultural diversity, religious pluralism and the current debate around race, class, and sexual orientation?
4. What action do you see yourself taking to bring God's family together especially those who feel rejected, excluded: in our family, schools, church, and community

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Share God's blessings in a language other than English. Write each the blessing on a separate piece of paper and let the participants pick one language as a blessing to other participants.

**English:** God bless you

**Swahili:** Mungu Aku Bariki

**Lingala:** Nzambe a pampolayo

**Arabic:** Rabana Yahmik

**Spanish:** Dios te Bendiga

**French:** Que Dieu vous Benisses

## NOTES

*Write the blessings before class for distribution.*

# PENTECOST SUNDAY

## HANDOUT

**Characters:** Narrator, Crowd 1, Crowd 2, Crowd 3, Kamba

**Narrator:** When the whole youth group had gathered at Kamba's house for Thanksgiving worship and fellowship, a wind like a tornado, rumbled through the house. Then things heated up like the house was on fire, the Spirit, which is the presence of God, overwhelmed them. Filled with the Spirit they began speaking different languages, some in Swahili, some in French, some in Farsi...

There were many religious people who lived in the neighborhood, and people from all over the world who had moved to Clarkston to escape war and violence. When they heard the shouts from Kamba's house, they came running to see what was happening. As they got close enough to hear clearly, they realized they could understand every word because they were speaking in their language. They were confused, "Isn't Kamba Congolese? And these kids, they usually speak Swahili with each other? But it sounds like our language."

Arabic and Nepali

Chin, Karen, Karenni, Burmese, Rohingya

Swahili, French, Farsi, Vietnamese, Spanish, Kinye-Rwanda, German! Every language you could think of, they spoke!

From the crowd, someone shouted.

**Crowd 1:** "They're speaking our languages, all of them, and they're talking about the powerful things God has done through Jesus!"

**Narrator:** Everyone seemed to be in shock. They'd never experienced anything like it.

**Crowd 2:** "This is crazy! What's going on?"

**Crowd 3:** "I think they lost their minds!"

**Narrator:** Then Kamba stood up, and everyone got quiet.

**Kamba:** "Friends, all of you are our neighbors. You know us. Let's get one thing straight. No one has lost their minds. This is happening just like God's messages said it would.

The prophet Joel said,  
"In the Last Days," God says,  
"I will pour out my Spirit  
on every kind of people:  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
Your young people will see visions,  
your old folks dream dreams.  
When the time comes,  
I'll pour out my Spirit  
On those who serve me, men and women both,  
and they'll prophesy.  
I'll set wonders in the sky above  
and signs on the earth below,  
Blood and fire and billowing smoke,  
the sun turning black and the moon blood-red,  
Before the Day of the Lord arrives,  
the Day tremendous and marvelous;  
And whoever calls out for help  
to God, will be saved."

# TRINITY SUNDAY

CONTRIBUTOR NAME KATIE MATSON-DALEY

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: HUMAN DIGNITY, RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION, PROTEST

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Psalm 8

### SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶162.A

### OBJECTIVE

Using Psalm 8; the *Social Principles* and the story of the Birmingham Children's March, students will explore God's gift of human dignity, the ways that racism denies that gift and the way that children have been instrumental in restoring that gift.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

Bell or a candle (means of signifying that it's time for prayer), Drawing paper, Colored pencils, markers and or gel pens, Bibles for students or copies of Psalm 8 printed on paper, Copies of ¶162, Whiteboard; chalkboard; or chart paper for writing new vocabulary words. *UMH Hymnal* for closing prayer

### OPTIONAL (ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING)

- Book *Let the Children March*, by Monica Clark-Nelson (takes 6-8 minutes to read)
- *No More: The Children of Birmingham 1963 and the Turning Point of the Civil Rights Movement*  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCxEGi\\_SzoQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCxEGi_SzoQ)
- <https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/film-kits/mighty-times-the-childrens-march>  
(if your session allows for this time – this is a 41-minute film)

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

#### Modified Lectio Divina

Have drawing paper, colored pencils, pens and/or markers available for students.

#### Say:

We are going to do a special kind of listening prayer, where you will listen to a piece of scripture read aloud, three times. While you listen to the scripture, there may be words that you are unfamiliar with, that's ok. Focus on what you do understand and don't worry about what you don't.

There are different drawing supplies in front of you. As I read the scripture, the first time, just listen to the words. Notice if anything sticks out to you. You'll be drawing or doodling while we do this kind of prayer, but this isn't an art project, it's not about being a good artist or a bad artist, it's just about trying to connect with the word of God in a new way. After I'm done reading the scripture, I'll pause for a minute and give you some time to reflect on what you heard or to just rest with God. Alright, let's begin our prayer time.

*Ring a bell or light a candle to signal that it is time for prayer.*

#### NOTES

This Psalm has many evocative images. Explain that while they will be drawing in this centering activity, it is not to create a product for display, and they won't be asked to share. This is a way for students who are visual learners, and for those who are kinesthetic learners to connect with the Holy Spirit and the word of God through drawing.

This is also a time for students to become familiar with the passage before digging into it in the study.

Ring a bell or light a candle to signify that this is a time of prayer.

# TRINITY SUNDAY

**JUSTICE ISSUE** HUMAN DIGNITY, RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION, PROTEST

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## Read Psalm 8

*Pause for one minute*

### Say:

This time I'm going to read the scripture again, and I want to invite you to doodle or draw in response to what you hear. Maybe there's an image that you hear. This is time for you and God.

## Read Psalm 8 again

*Pause for one minute*

### Say:

We're going to read the scripture a third and final time and this time, you can either keep drawing the images that you hear in the Psalm, or you can draw how you feel when you listen to this Psalm.

## Read Psalm 8 a final time

*Pause for one minute*

### Say:

Amen

*Blow out the candle or ring the bell.*

## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

### Ask:

- What do you know about the book of Psalm?

*Read the Psalm (depending on your group dynamics they may like to read it to themselves first quietly or read it out loud chorally, or each take turns reading one verse at a time – you know your group)*

## Read Psalm 8:1-9

## NOTES

(Some students will be familiar with the book others will not, the psalms are different than the typical Bible stories that they may have encountered in children's ministry.)

The book of The Psalm is a collection of poems or songs written as prayers. One fun trick for finding the book of Psalm in a paper Bible is that if you open to the

# TRINITY SUNDAY

## Ask:

1. Are there any words in this passage that you don't know?
2. What does the author of this Psalm want to praise God for?
3. What does this Psalm say about humans in general? What does it especially say about young people?
4. Does it matter that it is children and infants (young people) who silence God's enemies in this passage?
5. When you think of people who do important things for God do you typically think about young people? Who do you typically think of?

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Read the introduction to ¶162 the Social Community together. Then divide into groups to look at *The rights of racial/ethnic persons; The rights of children; and The rights of young people*. What does the UMC say about these groups of people?

## Say/Summarize:

In 1963 the African American adults of Birmingham Alabama were tired of segregation. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. came to town to organize a protest, but the adults of the community were afraid that they would lose their jobs and their homes if they participated in the protests. The African American kids decided that they would protest instead. Thousands of kids protested segregation in their city. Some were as young as 6, and some were as old as high school.

## NOTES

middle of the book, you will probably open to the book of Psalm.

This Psalm is a hymn of praise to God, and it's particularly about how valuable and loved human beings are to God.

The NRSV translation of this Psalm has some words that may not be familiar to most 21st Century Jr. High and Middle School Students. Without going too deep into a vocabulary lesson:

- \* gittith is probably a melody that this song was sung to.
- \* bulwark a defensive wall
- \* avenger someone who inflicts harm in return for an injury done to oneself or another
- \* sovereign a supreme ruler, like a king or a queen
- \* mindful aware of something
- \* dominion control and responsibility

I've included a quick summary of the Birmingham Children's March in the lesson plan, but the children's book *Let The Children March* is good, and the two optional video links are good too. It's too long to show in a one hour lesson, but the 41-minute film from teaching tolerance is excellent. So if you have a session longer than 60 minutes I recommend showing the full 41-minute film.



These kids were arrested, sprayed with high power fire hoses, and attacked by dogs. The violence against the children protesting was led by Bull Connor, who was a member at a Methodist Church in Birmingham. Because the protests and police response were broadcast on television, lots of people from around the world contacted President Kennedy who pushed to have desegregation efforts accelerated.

*(If time permits – reading the picture book **Let The Children March** or watching one of the videos might help the students connect more personally with the history).*

**Say/Ask:**

Psalm 8 talks about how much God loves and trusts humans. All humans have dignity, given to them by God. What do policies like segregation do to people’s dignity?

What do you think the kids who got arrested, hosed or attacked by dogs felt? How do you think their parents felt? How do you think the people watching on TV felt?

**Say/Summarize:**

The Methodist Church has a complicated history with racism in America. John Wesley and many of the early Methodists were against slavery, but after Wesley died people began excluding African Americans from the church. Some Methodist people fought against segregation, and there were Methodist people like Bull Connor who fought for segregation. What response do you have when you hear about that?

Legal segregation is over in the United States, but we still have enormous differences in the ways people from different ethnic and racial groups get treated. What stories in your lifetime have you heard about people being treated differently because of their race?

The Birmingham Children’s march showed that kids and teens have dignity and can make a difference. God loves justice, these kids shut down injustice, like Psalm 8 says, they were a bulwark against segregation and injustice.

**NOTES**

# TRINITY SUNDAY

**JUSTICE ISSUE** HUMAN DIGNITY, RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION, PROTEST

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## Ask:

- How could kids today silence racism and injustice?
- What can you do to silence racism and injustice this week?
- What could you do if you had a little more time to plan? Like over the course of a week or a month or a year?
- What could you do if you committed your whole life to ending racism?

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Read **Psalm 8** as a closing prayer. Read responsively from the *UMH Hymnal* – Page 743 and 744.

Light a candle or ring a bell at the beginning and ending of the reading to signify that this is a time for prayer. Designate one student, leader or group to read the light text, and the rest of the group will read the dark text.

## NOTES

If you don't have access to the *UMH Hymnal*, you can read the Psalm in unison from the Bible, or do a popcorn reading where each person or group reads one verse.

# SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. JOSEPH YOO

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: HUMAN DIGNITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Luke 8:26-39

### SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶164.A

### OBJECTIVE

The challenge to let others know that they are loved and valued.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

Crayons or markers or color pencils, paper.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Gathering Time: Ask for a word or phrase about the week. Where did you witness/experience God this week?

Close with an opening prayer.

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

#### Read Luke 8:26-39

#### Ask:

1. What are some places/areas that you've been told to stay away from? What was the reason?
2. Is there ever a situation when breaking the rule is the right thing to do? Explain.
3. Jesus asked for the man's name. Why is it important to know people's names?
4. The people of Gerasenes witnessed a miracle, but instead of being in awe, they

#### NOTES

1. Share with the students why going to the "other side of the lake" was like a place that they have been told to stay away from. *The other side of the lake is Decapolis which is Gentile Central, basically someplace good; law-abiding Jews would avoid. The disciples might've been hesitant to go because it would mean that they'd be unclean by associating with unclean folks.*
2. The demon possessed man was considered wholly unclean. He lived in the tombs — which most likely means Jesus is walking in a cemetery which also makes him unclean. But instead of avoiding this man, Jesus engages him — ignoring purity laws. In fact, Jesus only interacts with this man. He sailed across a lake, through a storm, onto a cemetery just to engage this man.
3. People believed that knowing a demon's name meant that you have power over that demon and it can no longer torment you or mess with you (think of Rumpelstiltskin). Also, the name "Legion" would've been a familiar word that would strike fear (and anger, perhaps) into the hearts of those listening. A legion is made up of 5600 specialized soldiers (think Marines). In 66 AD, 4 Roman legions were sent to Jerusalem to end a revolt. The Romans were merciless. They destroyed Jerusalem, tore down the Temple, and killed over a million Jews. It was a clear message sent by the dominating power: don't mess with us.
4. At the time Luke was written, there would still be people who lived through the legions destroying Jerusalem — and the word Legion would've been a trigger for those who survived the ordeal (similar to 9/11 for us here in the States). But what Luke is doing is showing how even the words of Jesus is more powerful than a legion of Roman soldiers. Legion comes and *begs* Jesus for mercy, even pleading for its life. Luke is double-downing on the fact that the Power of God is no match — not even a close one — for the demons/evil.

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** HUMAN DIGNITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

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were afraid and begged Jesus to leave immediately. Why do you think the people asked Jesus to leave?

5. Why do you think Jesus told the man to “return home?”

### GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

**Say:**

1. Draw your favorite part of the story and share with everyone why you chose to illustrate that part of the story.
2. What makes someone: unpopular; a misfit; an outsider; a “loser”; unwelcome; unwanted; unlovable; etc. Has there been a time where you felt like that? How did people respond to you? Did anyone help you feel like you belonged?
3. Who do you think the demon-possessed man represents in our city/schools today?
4. Jesus sailed through a storm; broke Jewish laws by sailing to a cemetery; all for the purpose of reminding this man of his humanity and worth in God’s eyes. So how can our church help someone feel like they fully belong and are deeply loved? What are some things you can do to help someone know that they are worthy and valuable in God’s eyes?

### NOTES

Jesus was an outsider— He was a Jew in the midst of Gentiles. He demonstrated power and in doing so, wiped out a pig farm. But since Jesus is an outsider, perhaps the people were wondering what if Jesus starts using that power against them? What if Jesus is here to bring calamity and death and destruction? It was hard to trust Jesus because he was not one of them — and we’re always cautious when someone who’s on the outside displays tremendous amount of power.

5. Two of the earliest evangelists were non-Jews (Samaritan woman at the well, John 4; and this man). By being told to stay behind, this man was able to tell many people in a Gentile area about Jesus — folks who would’ve never encountered Jesus himself.

# SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** HUMAN DIGNITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

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## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

End with a challenge to engage in an act of blessing, hope, love, and grace with someone during the week. Come prepared to share with the group next week what they did to help someone see that they are loved.

Close in prayer for courage to live out love.

### NOTES



# THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. PATRICIA BONILLA

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, EQUALITY

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Galatians 5:1, 13-25

### SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶164.F and ¶162.J

### OBJECTIVE

In his message to the Galatians, Paul emphasizes freedom from the constraints of unjust laws and reminds them that Christ calls us for love and service to one another, as demonstrated in v. 13 “for you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another.”

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

NRSV Bible, Portraits/pictures of people from around the world, large newsprint, markers, paper and pens, pre-organized bags with game items, such as balls, hula hoops, bowling pins, nets.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

**Centering question:** How have you experienced God in your life this week?

Use pictures/portraits of people from around the world. The pictures can be still portraits or people in action. Spread out the pictures on a table and have the students sit around the table.

Ask the students to pick a picture that stands out to them. Give them a minute to choose one; music can be playing in the background. They will be asked to go around and share their picture with the group and how that picture helps them explain how they are experiencing God this week? Why did they choose that picture?

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

Provide a summary of the background information on Galatians and Paul (located in the Notes/resources section)

#### Read Galatians 5:1, 13-25

#### Ask:

1. Who makes the rules in your school? How about the laws in your city? Are all rules or laws just? How do you determine if a rule or a law is unjust?

### NOTES

Pictures  
Portraits  
Devotional music

*Often youth might understand their faith as a to-do list or a list of rules. They believe that if they follow the rules, they are good with God if they don't then they have fallen out of God's favor. Paul's insistence on faith can help young people understand that our relationship with God is the core of our faith and not rules that they think they have to follow.*

Emphasize the Imago Dei; we are created in the image of God. This is a powerful

## THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, EQUALITY

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2. Do we have rules and laws that exclude certain groups of people from participating in certain spaces?
3. Does the church exclude certain groups of people?
4. Can you think of a time when you have been excluded from a group or when you were unwelcomed? How did that make you feel?
5. What do you think Paul means when we asked the Galatians to walk by the Spirit?

### NOTES

message for young people who can be overwhelmed by divisions between themselves, (i.e., the jocks, the popular kids, the intellectuals, the goof-balls, etc.) To learn that we all belong to God no matter what clique we have been put into can be transformational.

#### **Background information on Paul**

Paul's missionary efforts after his conversion were to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ beyond his Jewish community. He felt himself called to preach to the Gentiles, a term used for non-Jewish nations. Peter was seen as the missionary to the Jews, in contrast, Paul was the missionary to all other nations. Paul started his career as a Pharisaic Rabbi (follower of the Law) (Acts 22:33) and later had a conversion toward Messianic Judaism (follower of Jesus), as chronicled in Acts 9:3-19. Paul was a strict follower of the Jewish law before his conversion; he was the student of a well-known Pharisee during his time. After his conversion, he still maintained his Jewish identity, but the law was not the only thing that defined him. He was now a follower of Jesus. Paul was a Jewish reformer; he never used the word Christian because he was Jewish and his ministry was a reform movement within Judaism.

#### **Background Information on the Letter to the Galatians**

Paul functioned as a church planter in the cities of Southern Galatia (present-day Turkey). In the letter to the Galatians, Paul is responding to challenges posed by other Jewish teachers who wanted Paul's gentile followers in the region of Galatia to convert to Judaism and follow the Jewish laws and rituals, including circumcision before they could be fully accepted as followers of Jesus.

The letter to the Galatians is a harsh reprimand to the Gentiles in these churches, asking them to resist the teaching of adopting Jewish laws including the practice of circumcision. Paul reminds his Gentile followers that they are justified by their faith in Jesus alone. This letter is a reminder to the Gentiles that God made a covenant with Abraham, and that covenant was based on obedience and belief in God alone.

Paul sums up his point in verses 14-15, "For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command-Love your neighbor as yourself- If you bite and devour each other, watch out, or you will be destroyed by each other." Paul invited the Galatians, instead of fighting with each other, to embrace the new family of Jesus followers who cared for each other as brothers and sisters regardless of social, political and ethnic differences.

Note: freedom in Christ manifests itself in forming communities where the old barriers of nation, race, class, gender, etc. are overcome through the power of the Holy Spirit.

## THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, EQUALITY

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### GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Begin the activity by sharing some of this information (note 1) and using the school uniform debate as a starting point before showing the movie clip.

Supplies needed: 1995 Movie *Clueless*, large newsprint, markers, paper and pens, pre-organized bags with game items, such as balls, hula hoops, bowling pins, nets.

Three different exercises are presented in this lesson plan. If time does not permit all three, choose two.

#### Exercise 1:

In recent years there have been discussions about requiring public schools to administer uniforms to students. The argument made is that it would eliminate the marked distinctions created by clothing styles. It would also alleviate the peer pressure of conforming to a social clique (i.e., the need to wear all designer clothes). Private schools adopt this policy and administrators believe it helps young people focus on school work as opposed to making a fashion statement or pledging an allegiance to a particular group. This discussion will help open up the conversation.

#### Questions to consider:

- What if you had been following all the rules and requirements set by a club you were a member of, all of a sudden it opened up its membership to all students, and those new students did not have to follow any of the rules. How would you feel? Would you continue to follow the rules, why or why not?
- What distinctions separate cliques or groups of people today? How would you work on eliminating those distinctions?
- How can rules get in the way of our beliefs?

*Use the clip from the movie Clueless (minute 23-26) depicting the different High school cliques.*

#### NOTES

##### Note 1:

Paul was opening up the Jesus movement to include all, not just law-abiding Jews. This was a radical endeavor as he began preaching to gentiles and Jewish diaspora communities, (some diaspora Jews had assimilated to their host culture and no longer followed Jewish law). Many Jews did not agree with Paul because they saw his new audience as unclean people because they did not follow the same ritual, purity and dietary laws that they did. Social cliques in school can be seen in a way like the boundaries that the Jews set against other non-Jews. Every clique has its set of norms (i.e., dress codes, same interests, common habits-like sitting at the same lunch table all the time, etc.).



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**JUSTICE ISSUE** CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, EQUALITY

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### Exercise 2:

*Rules or No Rules* (15 minutes)

Prepare a bag filled with items for each group. They do not have to be identical. Items could include a ball, a net, a few bowling pins, ping pong balls, a hula hoop, etc.

Divide the youth into a few groups of 6-8. Give each group a bag with the prepared items. Tell the groups that they have 5 minutes to play the game. GO.

If the youth say they don't know how to play the game, challenge them to figure something out. Let them know when they have a minute left. Invite the youth to express what they are feeling. Very likely it will be confusion and frustration. This game is very much like life. It could be frustrating and confusing if we do not know what we are doing.

Paul understood the law of Moses (the Ten Commandments and other laws) to be a way of disciplining our lives. It was a way for the Jewish community to cultivate a relationship with God. There were requirements for prayers and rituals, festivals and celebrations and rules about structuring our social lives together. According to Paul, the laws were not supposed to be gods in and of themselves, and they were not supposed to serve as markers of distinction between communities of Jesus' followers.

### Exercise 3:

*Rules for Youth Group*

Put up a few sheets of newsprint on the wall and ask the students to work with a partner. Give each pair a few markers. Ask a youth to read Galatians 3:21-25.

### Question:

If we had to come up with rules that governed our time together in our youth group based on Paul's criteria for Christ followers what would they be? Ask them to write their answers on the newsprint. Have each group share their responses with the larger group.

NOTES

# THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, EQUALITY

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## **CLOSING MOMENT** (5 MINUTES)

Take time to go over prayer concerns with one another.

Close in prayer.

NOTES

# FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** DR. DAN R. DICK

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: GLOBAL MIGRATION, IMMIGRATION

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶162.H, 2016-2020 Book of Resolutions #3281, 6025, 6028

**OBJECTIVE**

Encourage empathy and understanding for immigrants and refugees; to act in solidarity.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Faith & Facts cards on Global Migration and Immigration; Book of Discipline/Book of Resolutions/2016-2020 Social Principles; computer with internet access, speakers, projection capability (if possible); pens/pencils for each participant; note paper.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Welcome all who have gathered, and introduce the topic for the session: *Better Understanding of what Immigrants and Refugees face.*

Ask participants to envision their favorite place – where do they most enjoy spending time; where do they feel most comfortable; where do they go when they want to feel safe and secure?

**Ask:**

“What makes this space somewhere you like to go?”

**Pray:**

“Gracious God, we give thanks for safe spaces, where we can feel secure, comfortable, peaceful, and content. For the places that make us feel happy, for the places where we can rest, and for the places that we feel most at home, we offer our thanks. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

**Read Luke 10:1-11, 16-20** (student volunteer or facilitator)

Prepare to read this passage yourself, or if you have a good reader in your group, ask if they will read it.

### NOTES

You may want to offer short definitions of “immigrant” and “refugee.” You may take these directly from the “Faith & Facts” cards.

Don’t rush through this if young people are not quick to respond. Be ready to share your own answer to the question.

Some talking points:

- Jesus is launching the early movement that came to be known as “Christianity.” This was not an organized church or movement, but this was a way for the “good news” (gospel) of Jesus Christ to spread.

# FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** GLOBAL MIGRATION, IMMIGRATION

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Ask the participants to listen to the story, placing themselves in the position of one of the seventy. Have participants answer these questions in pairs or trios, then share some of the answers with the whole group.

## Ask:

1. How would you feel if you received these instructions?
2. What would be the hardest for you to leave behind?
3. Which of these instructions do you think would be the most difficult to follow?
4. How would you feel differently if you did not have a choice in the matter, but were forced to leave your home with no purse, no bag, or no sandals?

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Ask was there ever a time of “displacement” – a time when they were far from home. This could be camp, vacation, visiting relatives, a class trip, a church mission trip, etc. Many people describe feeling “homesickness.” What does this feel like? Let anyone willing share their story, thoughts, and feelings.

Look at *Social Principles* ¶162.H, and *Book of Resolutions* #3281, 6025, 6028.

Assign pairs/trios to read through each (or do this together in smaller groups). Follow the four-fold questions of the “Faith & Facts” cards and share with the larger group:

1. What does the Bible say about Global Migration, Immigration, and Refugees?
2. What does The United Methodist Church say?
3. What do the broader facts say?

Play on video (or audio, if video not available), “Why We Build the Wall” by Anais Mitchell

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxIJ5fTxKhg>

## NOTES

- The instructions Jesus gives guarantee the integrity and credibility of the message – the messengers are getting nothing out of it. In fact, they are making great sacrifices.
- The focus here is on what it feels like to leave every familiar comfort to go to a strange place with little more than the clothes on one’s back.

The more this can be made real to the participants, the better. The plight of refugees and immigrants in our world is much more than a “political issue;” it is about God’s children dislocated and displaced.

# FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** GLOBAL MIGRATION, IMMIGRATION

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You may wish to ask participants how the scripture references on the “Faith & Facts” cards relate to the music video.

4. What do you (we) say?

Work together as a group to determine one action your group or group members will commit to on behalf of refugees and immigrants.

What might your group do to raise awareness and educate members of your congregation?

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Play “One Love” as the closing moment:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xjPODksI08>

### NOTES

*Playing for Change* is a global network of artists who are attempting to bring unity and harmony across the planet through music. The essence of “One Love” is as essential as gospel love, mercy, and compassion to a world welcoming the refugee and immigrant.

# FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** JULIE O'NEAL

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: PRIVILEGE, POWER, HATE CRIMES

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Luke 10: 25-37

### SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶161.R, 162; 2016-2020 Book of Resolutions #3425, 3422

### OBJECTIVE

To recognize how our choices impact and guide us and how some choices come with risk. Reiterate the gospel lesson that Jesus calls us to compassion and tenderness to those considered less fortunate or marginalized.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

Flipchart paper, markers, tape. Alternatively, a whiteboard or chalkboard can be used. Paper, markers, crayons, pencils, pens, paint, paintbrushes. Handouts from links below.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Ask the students where they saw God this week.

Close with an opening prayer.

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

The characters in the story are key to help identify how the law during the time of Jesus prevented people from helping the man on the road.

Introduce the story and identify five people to read the various parts of the story.

Person 1 = vs. 25-28

Person 2 = vs. 29-30

Person 3 = vs. 31-32

Person 4 = vs. 33-35

Person 5 = vs. 36-37

### Say/Ask:

In Jesus' day, a neighbor was considered someone who was the same as someone else. This usually meant someone from one's own religious group or racial identity. In the passage, Jesus challenges this idea and says

### NOTES

# FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** PRIVILEGE, POWER, HATE CRIMES

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that a neighbor is anyone who demonstrates kindness to another. Do you think this view of neighbor can be found in our society today? If so, what does it mean to love a neighbor as one's self?

In this story, which characters had the power in society? When have you faced a choice to help or pass by and what were the factors that you weighed? When was a time when you were helped by someone unexpectedly?

**Read Luke 10:25-37** (with the five readers)

**After reading the scripture, highlight the various characters:**

## **The Lawyer**

In the first part of the passage, the lawyer really wanted to know what he could do. Once Jesus told him, he decided he might want to take the easy way out. The lawyer recognized how hard choices are and he wanted to justify not taking action.

## **Priest and Levite**

The Priest was the highest religious leadership, and the Levite was a top leader in the synagogue. Their main focus was obeying the Torah or law. When they passed by the man on the road, they knew that by touching him, they would be considered "unclean" and would not be allowed to perform their duties. They chose not to help the man because they did not want to break the rules of church law.

## **The Samaritan**

The Samaritan was from a town called Samaria which was considered the center of impurity. People from Samaria were hated and despised. By the law, they were judged as religious outsiders and yet, in the end, the Samaritan was the one who ended up doing what God was asking.

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## Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a process that helps you read and reflect on a Bible passage in a deeper way. It is a way of getting quiet and listening to the way God is speaking to you through the Scripture.

Have the group close their eyes and take 1-2 deep breaths. Tell the group that you will be reading the passage and as they listen, invite them to listen for a word or phrase that stands out to them.

Read the passage slowly followed by a few moments of silence. Call the group together and invite them to open their eyes. Invite discussion on what word or phrase stuck out to them and why? Where did they feel God speaking to them?

Hand out supplies listed. Repeat the process of reading, this time focusing on what they are feeling. Invite them to keep their eyes open and draw, color, sketch or paint the emotions that arise when they hear the passage. Again, invite discussion on what they were feeling and why.

Repeat the process a third time, asking the group to focus on what God is calling them to do? How might they find opportunities this week to respond to God's call?

## The Shema

In verse 27, Jesus gives what some consider to be the greatest commandment: to love God with one's heart (mind/will), soul (self/vital being) and might (full devotion) and in some translations with one's mind (intellect). This commandment signifies the importance of putting God first over all of one's life. But doing so requires making choices. Hard choices. In the story of the Good Samaritan, each person who passed by faced a choice. The Priest and Levite weighted the choice to stop and become unclean or pass by. The Samaritan also had a choice, and he decided to stop. But he didn't just stop and help him to his feet and keep going. He went the extra mile. Even though he might have had somewhere else to go or something he could have used the money for; he risked all of these things to make a choice and help the man.

## NOTES

### Notes for Lectio Divina

Choose a key phrase or section of this passage. Possible ones are Luke 10:25-28 or 10:29-35. Another option is to choose a contemporary translation such as The Message or The Common English Bible.

Paper, markers, crayons, pencils, pens, paint, paintbrushes.

### Notes for "The Shema"

Compare with Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 22:23-40; Mark 12: 28-31

Ask the group to reflect upon the choices they made this past week. When were there times when they passed by when the risk was too great? When were there times when they chose to stop and help?



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**JUSTICE ISSUE** PRIVILEGE, POWER, HATE CRIMES

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## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### Say:

Many around us are oppressed. They are outcast, considered “less than” and despised, hated and even harmed. Can you name some in your community who are in this category? Why do you think they are considered these things?

The story of the Good Samaritan exposes the fact that there are significant cultural differences between the man who was robbed and the Samaritan who helped him. By helping him, the Samaritan defied cultural expectations. Where in your communities do acts of violence and hate occur because of significant differences?

Sometimes the fear of “the other” prevents us from seeing one another as God sees us. Fear of something unknown or unfamiliar can be a powerful force. But it is not impossible to overcome. Ignorance and fear can be weakened by knowledge and relationships. If you know someone from another culture and have a relationship with them, fear of them disappears.

### Reaching out to Those who are Despised/Hated

Sometimes it is hard to do the right thing because family, friends, church leaders or others in your community might not want to “cause a stir” or “make a fuss” about it. They might even condone or participate in the violence. They might prioritize upholding civil law is more important than following God’s law. Violence, targeting, harassment is occurring more frequently in places near and far. What are some expressions of hate and violence in your community?

What are some obstacles that prevent people from reaching out to those who are oppressed in your communities? How is God calling you to act boldly and stand up for those who are experiencing violence and hate?

## NOTES

Some differences could be:

- race/ethnicity
- gender identity
- citizenship/immigration status
- age
- religious beliefs
- economic differences
- Challenge the group to identify/name specific oppressed groups in your community?

Review the handout “10 Honorable Ways to Learn about Another Culture” <http://www.gcorr.org/10-honorable-ways-to-learn-about-another-culture/>

Begin to brainstorm ways the group can start practicing the suggestions on the handout.

### Notes for “Reaching Out to Those Who are Despised/Hated

Reference The 2016 United Methodist *Book of Resolutions* #3422, 3425, 3427, 3428

*Faith & Facts* cards: *Domestic Violence*

### Make a Covenant

A covenant is a commitment or promise that a person or group of people make together to uphold a set of values. What are some values that the group can uphold as a way of acting for justice and for the dignity of all persons? This covenant could apply to the group itself, or it could extend beyond that each person will covenant to carry these values wherever they go. What ways will the covenant be upheld? What needs to happen for all members of the group to abide by the covenant?

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## Going the Extra Mile

Think of a time when you went the extra mile for someone who needed help. What were the factors in the situation? What were the risks you took in doing so? What compelled you to go the extra mile?

What would it look like for you to go the extra mile? Perhaps that is with a family member or loved one, a friend, someone you are at odds with, or a stranger. What changes would you have to make to your lifestyle to better love God with all of your heart, soul, might, and mind? What would it take for you to go the extra mile in living out your love for God, for others and for yourself?

How will your decision to go the extra mile reflect that they are a follower of Christ? What ways can you choose acts of mercy and acts of piety over the coming weeks and months? What might your group choose to do?

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

### Say:

Look around the places you normally visit. This could be the grocery store, school, church, the library, sports practice, etc. Pay attention to those who you might not have noticed before, people who might be considered outcast, despised or hated. Watch and see how others interact with those persons. Begin to raise your awareness of those who are less fortunate in your community.

This is a story about choices. Sometimes choices are easy to make when helping someone and sometimes the risk and sacrifice are influential and overwhelming. This week, try to focus on each moment as it comes. The little choices you make can add up. Ask yourself, how will this

## NOTES

### Notes for “Going the Extra Mile

Using flipchart paper and markers, write out the Wesleyan Means of Grace diagram:

<http://www.umc.org/how-we-serve/the-wesleyan-means-of-grace/>

and

<https://blog.umcdiscipleship.org/works-of-piety/>

On one page, write “Works of Mercy” across the top. Draw a line down the middle of the page and write individual works on one side and communal works on the other. Repeat on another page for “Works of Piety.”

Using the diagram above, have the group spend 5 minutes silently reflecting on ways they each can do a means of grace both individually and communally. Bring the group together and invite the group to share their answers, writing on the pages above.

Begin to consider what each person can do and what the group might do. Revisit these over the coming weeks or months and add to the list.

Often the Priest and Levite in the story are looked down upon for passing by the man who needed help. But it may have been that they just weren’t observant to those around them who needed help.

Choose a time this week when you are doing a mundane task (putting on shoes, in the shower, traveling to school/ home, etc.). During that time, commit to praying for those

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decision reflect the fact that you are a follower of Christ? How will this decision show that you stand for compassion and justice?

### **Pray:**

Loving God, thank you for the varieties of people you have made. Thank you for their unique perspective they bring to the world. Help us to recognize and honor each person as your child. Give us the courage to act when it is hard and guide our choices so that others may see your love and compassion in our actions. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.

### NOTES

in your community who are outcast, despised or hated. Ask God for guidance on how you can reach out and show love and compassion to those persons.

# SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. DON HANSHEW

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: TAKING ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE OF THE POOR AND MARGINALIZED

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Amos 8:1-12

### SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶163 Opening Paragraph

### OBJECTIVE

Participants will gain a deeper understanding of the history and content of the book of Amos as well as discover specific ways to prophetically respond to issues in their own context.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

Bibles, paper and pencils, *Social Principles* (perhaps use devices the youth may have, or the use of technology that can allow it to project onto a wall): <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/economic-community>. It would be helpful to narrow down and adapt the study to sections within these principles that are contextually relevant and important to the community in which this study will be facilitated.

### OPTIONAL SUPPLIES AND POTENTIAL OBJECT LESSON TOOLS

- 1 It is not required, but if questions can be presented for all students to see (projector, paper on a wall, chalkboard, etc.), participation will be increased.
- 2 Enough fruit for each child to take home as a snack or eat during the session (to emphasize the pun in 8:1-2 between summer fruit and end/destruction)
- 3 A pair of sandals or shoes (8:6), some type of scale or balance (8:5), etc. as object lessons that will serve as a centerpiece for the room. Be mindful that you only need to bring an item you feel will best contextualize the scripture to your teaching environment.

*Note: This curriculum is written for a group of 6-10 students. Larger groups will need to omit some questions and/or focus on a narrower portion of the scripture to keep within the 60-minute threshold for this study.*

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Welcome the students and do a simple check-in by asking each to share their name, their favorite fruit, and why they like the fruit. To give the students a few moments to gather their thoughts and to lead by example, you as the leader should be prepared to give your example first.

For example, *My name is Don. I like mangos because they are smooth, juicy, and sweet.*

After all, have shared, offer a prayer of invitation for the Holy Spirit to guide your time and ask God for a special blessing for each of the students. If the group is not too large, speak each of their names in your prayer.

### NOTES

To help the students feel valued, and if learning names is hard for you, write their names down with the fruit of their choice.

If possible, have some fruit in a basket in the center of the area. At the conclusion of the study, allow the students to eat the fruit as a snack or take them home.

Why fruit? There is a pun in 8:1-2 between summer fruit and end/destruction. In the original Hebrew language, the word for

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## Pray:

Most holy and wonderful God, we ask that You would guide our time today to once again hear Your ancient words come alive in our life. Give us the courage to speak our questions, and faithfulness to wrestle with the answers. May You especially touch (names of youth) with Your wisdom and power. Guide me as a facilitator so that I can share Your word in a way that helps us live a holy and just life. Amen.

## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

Break the group into smaller groups of 2-3 by using some random variable that will move the students around. The goal is to have a fun way for students to meet others as they jump into the study. For example: Invite all of the students with blue on to line up, or who liked a specific fruit, in the order of shortest to tallest. As a facilitator, you could count off 1, 2, 3 as a way to break this group into groups of 2-3.

*Once groups are established, as a facilitator, you will ask the following questions.*

### Questions For Small Groups:

Draw the attention of the students to the fruit at the center of the table (or pictures of fruit displayed, or drawn based on the answers they gave at the start of Centering Moment).

### Ask:

1. Have you purchased/bartered for food for you or your family before? Where did you shop? Why?
2. How does the price of food impact what you eat and where you shop?
3. Are shops open on every day in your community, or are they closed on some days? Why or why not?
4. What do you hold in common with your small group about how you purchase your food?  
What is different?

## NOTES

summer fruit and end would be seen as a pun. Many images in Amos have a double meaning or are a pun. If you were oppressed and disenfranchised, Amos would have been a little cheeky and entertaining to listen to! The wealthy would have found it very off-putting.

Once groups are established, your goal is to help the students understand the tension of the cost and need of food in their context. This will help open their minds to the larger issues of economic justice and lending practices as they read the scripture later in the study. In some contexts this tension is obvious. In other tensions, this is less so.

**Amos:** Help the students understand that Amos was a prophet. How we understand the application and interpretation of prophecy is deeply influenced by context. However, several characteristics do remain constant. Almost all prophecy is deeply rooted in politics, the social and moral life of the people, and/or the issues of economic injustice.

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### Questions for Large Group:

What similarities or differences do you find in your group in answering the questions?

(Some youth will never have purchased food on their own, others will have helped an adult, and others may purchase and even prepare food.)

As a facilitator, highlight how the price of food has an impact on what you eat and how often. For example, high protein foods and fresh foods are often more expensive and consumed less frequently by many people. Also note that in some communities certain stores/markets are closed on specific holidays, days of the week, etc. For example, Christmas, Sunday, or other non-Christian religious holidays. Making this point now will help them understand the scripture more fully later in the study (Amos 8:5).

While the youth remain in these groups, explain the following context. Be sure to adapt as necessary.

### Say:

Today we are going to look at some scripture found in a book of the Bible called Amos. Amos is found in the Old Testament. It was written about 2,800 years ago. It is amazing to consider that something written down that long ago has survived, almost completely unchanged, until now!

### Questions For Larger Group:

1. Why do you think we have something so old in our Bible?  
(Some answers may be: It was important then. What Amos shared came to pass. It still has meaning today.)
2. Why do you think it is important to look at this today?  
(We can learn something from it today that will help us in our faith. It will reveal something to us about how we can understand God in our community.)
3. Amos was a prophet. What do you think that means?

### NOTES

There are five basic categories of a prophet in the Bible. Here are some examples: 1-an intermediary of God's will in times of war (Deborah in Judges 4, 5), 2-as a kingmaker or king breaker (Samuel in both I and II Samuel), 3-Nathan as a conscience or critic of the king (II Samuel 7, 12), 4-Elijah as a wonder-working-holy person (book of Elijah and 1 Kings 17), 5-Miriam's role in communal prophecy and the phenomenon of visions or ecstasy (Exodus 15:20). Amos could be placed in a number of categories; however, he most clearly aligns with the last example as a prophet speaking to the community and interpreting visions from God.

There are 15 prophetic books in the Bible. Amos is classified as a minor prophet, and during the postexilic period, we find it written on the same scroll along with Hosea, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. As a unit, these prophets are understood as corresponding to the Major Prophets, which are Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. The terms minor and major do not represent a categorization of their merit but are representative of longer or shorter narratives.

Notice the sum of the total of Minor Prophets—12. This is representative of the 12 tribes of Israel, and a literary device to illustrate completeness, emphasizing that all people fall under these prophetic voices.

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### Say:

In the time of Amos, food seldom came in packaging. You would go to the market and put purchased food in your satchel, basket, or container. It would have been a very noisy and busy place. Food was weighed on scales and then purchased in bulk. Weights and scales were generally standardized by the governing authorities, yet sometimes dishonest vendors/sellers would take their measuring weight (think round iron ball or wafer) and grind off a small portion. (If you have access to a simple balance weight scale or see-saw playground toy, this will help the students understand the scripture better.)

### Ask:

Why would a seller of grain make their weight lighter?

(Encourage them to understand that a lighter weight would mean you could charge the customer more for the food.)

### Say:

In the time of Amos, an ephah was a measure of dry weight, equal to about 35 liters. A shekel was a common unit of money for the Hebrew people. To decrease the weight and increase the price (Amos 8:5) sellers would take advantage of the poor, uneducated, and desperate.

### Ask:

1. Can you think of items for sale in your community that take advantage of the poor, uneducated, or marginalized people in your community?

(Fresh food, property, pawn shops, money lending business, lottery tickets, etc.)

2. How do you think God feels about people taking advantage of others?

3. Why do you think God feels this way? Have you read this before, heard this? Does it just “feel” wrong to take advantage of others?

(This question is to help you understand the importance of scripture in the life of the students and their level of comprehension. The answers to this question will help you pace the time around the Biblical context and life application.)

### NOTES

Historically, the Book of Amos has received little attention from Jewish or Christian communities as a whole. Why the neglect? Most scholars and many religious leaders have by the very nature of their education and upward mobility, are from or entering into a place of privilege in the community. Additionally, many spiritual leaders are searching for words of hope and comfort for the community in which they offer spiritual influence. Amos offers scant little comfort to those who are wealthy, hold a privileged status in the community, or who sway power in the marketplace. The book of Amos is by in large a book of hope for the oppressed and those that advocate for justice. Furthermore, the Revised Common Lectionary generally cites Amos during a season that many in the Western World would refer to as a time of vacation.

The historical context of Amos is also important, but not required for this study. A Biblical timeline is helpful to understand the overlapping events and political realities from which Amos is speaking and how he intersects with other prophets of their era.

As on one of the first prophets of the 8th century, notice what access Amos had to the king and other officials and to what he was specifically prophesying against. His use of puns, poetry, and prose is a wonderful, yet striking, critique of any society that indulges in conspicuous consumption.

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4. How do you think God would feel if just a few very wealthy people set the price of food so high that people would have to sell their land, and even their lives into slavery, to just have food to eat? (Amos 8:6)

### Read Amos 8:1-12

Have the students read Amos 8:1-12: Invite the students to be different voices in the scripture. You will need three volunteers: the voice of Amos (the longest reading), the voice of God, and the voice of the wicked wealthy people. Depending on the size and creativity of the group, encourage them to embrace the parts and make the reading dramatic! This is participation by choice, so if necessary, you as a facilitator should be prepared to read and “voice” the different parts.

### Ask:

1. In your own words, what was happening in this passage?  
(God was really angry with some people, and now will not listen to them. This may raise questions about God’s fairness, love, and grace. Remind the students that this is pre-Jesus, but that this anger and frustration came from a place of love and care. This anger and discipline is similar to that of a parent to a wayward child. Think of how a parent would respond if a child was pushing another child into a life-threatening situation, such as into a busy intersection. God’s anger is justified in such a situation.)
2. What feelings do you hear in this passage? Be specific. How does God feel, the wealthy people feel, the poor people feel?  
(It is important to help the students understand that God’s love of all people means God gets angry at people who treat people, other people, poorly. For example, the ten commandments are about how we treat God, others, and ourselves. Additionally, the last commandment Jesus gave before he was crucified was “love one another” in John 13:30.)
3. We all have done something we know we should not have. Sometimes we get caught. Sometimes we don’t. If you are playing a game with friends, like soccer or a video game, and an adult in your life tells you to stop...do you always stop immediately? What happens if you don’t stop? How does the adult respond?

### NOTES

Lastly, it is important to understand the difference between the career of a prophet and the career of the book. The prophetic pronouncements were most likely collected and written down by the prophet’s disciples. The editing and arranging of these documents is something seldom talked about but is given clear evidence of in the Bible itself. Consult Jeremiah 36 for an example of material written down and then destroyed, to be written again with additional words! This is all evidence that collecting and editing of documents most likely happened for logical reasons, such as the death of a prophet, response to a national crisis, or the rejection of the words. What we read now are for sure the words of the prophet, but the scribes and disciples who transposed them also influenced their outcome.

It would be helpful to have printed out, or access to some way of projecting or reading portions of the *Social Principles* of the United Methodist Church. The sections highlighted for this study may not necessarily connect most directly with the students. You are encouraged to adapt as necessary.

For further reading, consult one of the following. These were accessed July 2018.

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/economic-community>



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(Adults in the lives of the students may get angry, yell, or even be forceful when their instructions are not obeyed soon after they are given. Some students may have been abused. Help the students understand that God was trying to turn the people around and get them to come back to God. God is not abusive. Amos was speaking to the “students of Israel/Jacob” after they refused to listen for 100’s of years.)

### Say:

God had given specific rules, or guardrails, for the people of Israel to live within. They were breaking these rules by how they were treating other people. They were not faithful, just, compassionate, or kind. Instead, they were being very greedy, had a disregard for human life, and were gluttonous with their consumption of material resources. All of this is in disregard to the overarching themes of God’s teachings in the Old and New Testament. Amos was a prophet. This means he spoke on behalf of God. He used very creative phrases to paint word pictures that were easy to remember, and graphic. He was also a master at using puns. He likely had objects, or prop’s, to help make the point even more memorable as he spoke on behalf of God. For example, the Hebrew pun in 8:1-2 between summer fruit (qayits) and end/destruction (qets) would have been very memorable. The people had sown seeds of faithlessness, and now after a long growing season, there would be a predictable harvest of their unfaithfulness.

In the time of Amos, some very wealthy people were accumulating property and wealth in such a way that others could never work out of their indebtedness. This created a very large gap between the “haves” and “have-nots.” The tribes were to work together, and by design, God had established specific rules to create a sense of equality and justice in the life of the community. However, as Amos indicates, people were sold for shoes. The life of the “have not’s” was not valuable.

### Ask:

1. As you read the scripture, what do you think the root of the anger God expressed through Amos? (Some students may be troubled by the idea of an angry God. Indeed God does get angry when we treat others poorly. Yet, God is a God of love and grace.)
2. What would a world look like if we treated other people with the dignity and respect that Jesus treated others?

### NOTES

<https://www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/social-principles-and-resolutions/greed-4056>

<https://www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/social-principles-and-resolutions/a-call-for-faithful-lending-practices-4064>

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(Some students may not be familiar with the teachings of Jesus. If needed, this would be a good time to remind the students that God does not chase people down to punish them, but to save them. For example, the Lost Sheep story in Luke 15:3-7.)

3. What if we were intentional about how we treated people with dignity and respect?  
(Again, see the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 7:12, the “Golden Rule.”)
4. What would this look like in our community?
5. How could this change our community?

### GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

**Say:**

As United Methodist, we have a Biblically grounded and well-researched understanding of how sustainable economic systems should work. See the copies or access the digital pages referenced. Be sure to find a topic that is contextually relevant to your context. Have a printed version of the following. This is the opening paragraph for the “Social Principles: The Economic Community,” found at <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/economic-community> and accessed in July 2018.

**Read this statement, or have the students read this, in their small groups.**

“We claim all economic systems to be under the judgment of God no less than other facets of the created order. Therefore, we recognize the responsibility of governments to develop and implement sound fiscal and monetary policies that provide for the economic life of individuals and corporate entities and that ensure full employment and adequate incomes with a minimum of inflation. We believe private, and public economic enterprises are responsible for the social costs of doing business, such as employment and environmental pollution, and that they should be held accountable for these costs. We support measures that would reduce the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. We further support efforts to revise tax structures and to eliminate government support programs that now benefit the wealthy at the expense of other persons.”

### NOTES

Again, note that this material is prepared for a group of 6 youth. A larger group, or more talkative group, will require this material to be simplified and streamlined.

## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** TAKING ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE OF THE POOR AND MARGINALIZED

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**Or, assign the groups a section of one of the *Social Principles* that is contextually relevant to their life and community. Give them 7-10 minutes to do the following:**

1. Read the section of the *Social Principles* assigned to your group.
2. Restate the core of the section in your own words.
3. Think of an instance in your country, state, or local community that either does this well or does this poorly.

**Ask:**

1. Why would the United Methodist people have a statement like this?
2. Was it hard to think of an example, or easy? Why?

**Say:**

Justice is getting what you deserve. Mercy is getting only part of what you deserve. Grace is getting nothing you deserve. Help the youth understand that God loves all people and that God is a God of grace for our souls and life. God is also a God that seeks justice in systems that hurt people. Though God allows natural and predictable consequences to unfold in this world, God is always beside God's students in their suffering. God frequently does miracles, but scripture illustrates that God's preferred mode of intersecting in our lives and the world is through the faithfulness, sacrifice, and service of people like you and me.

Some of these economic problems seem very large and difficult. However, God consistently calls us to take action. That action can be something as simple as changing how you shop, where you spend your money, and how you understand the origins of the products you purchase. Additionally, God may be calling you to advocate for change on a legislative and relational level in your community that may change laws, boycott businesses, and protest non-violently.

### NOTES

## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** TAKING ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE OF THE POOR AND MARGINALIZED

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Amos had a message to share from God. He used creative and memorable images to have an impact on the outcome of a just society that needed to change.

In your groups, think of three different ways you could do something that would have an impact on the economic challenges of your community. The three different actions need to meet the following criteria:

1. One needs to be something you can do from the comfort of your home (letter writing, social media, inform others in your home of the issues at stake and seek their input, etc.).
2. One needs to be something that will require you to talk with someone you don't know and/or visit a place you may not normally visit (that is safe for a child to visit with an adult).
3. The third can be your own choice, but you have to explain how it can have a helpful impact on the issue at hand.

As a facilitator, encourage discussion that opens their minds to the thought that they may have a prophetic influence on shaping a new generation of people in being a follower of Jesus.

Help them understand that we do live in a world that does have physical limits. However, the finiteness of resources is not to be a threat. Instead, it creates a more intentional community that forces relationships to be respectful and patient as they manage these resources in such a way that we are able to be healthy and do the most good. God's economy ensures that all people have what they need to flourish.

### CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

This closing exercise could be done verbally or written. For example, with one sheet of paper per student, invite the student to write down one of the ways they can do something in response to what they have learned within the next seven days. After a few moments have passed for the students to write their answer, invite the student to share their answers. As a facilitator, be prepared to participate as well. In lieu of paper and pencils, invite them to think of one thing and then share it.

#### NOTES

## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** TAKING ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE OF THE POOR AND MARGINALIZED

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Invite the students to hold hands and make a circle as you prepare to close in prayer. Make an open invitation for a student to close the session in prayer. If none offer, as a facilitator, be prepared to close with a prayer similar to the following:

**Prayer:**

Most gracious and loving God, we thank You for the privilege of having the time and space to study and listen to Your word to direct our thoughts and actions. Our hopes and thoughts join together with millions of others around this world who are seeking peace, justice, and being an example of Your love and grace. Guide us to be courageous as Amos in sharing what You have put in our hearts. Protect us from evil. Help us always trust in the power and name of Jesus. And all of God's people said, Amen.

### NOTES

# SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. CALEB HONG

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: PEACE BUILDING

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Genesis 18:20-32

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶165.A and 165.C

**OBJECTIVE**

Students will wrestle with God's love for enemies/unrighteous ones and be invited to imitate God's compassion/mercy.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Bible, copies of Handout 1, copies of opening group exercise (optional), Handout 2 (closing moment)

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Greeting & Welcome

Moment for everyone to share a God moment from the week.

Or

Optional Group Exercise – *“Emotional Dashboard”*

Invite students to (briefly) share how they're feeling today.

Opening Prayer – offered by student or facilitator

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

**Say/Summarize:**

Genesis 18 opens up with the story of Abraham offering hospitality to three guests. As they're leaving, they share the reason for their travels with Abraham.

**Read:**

Ask for three volunteers to read Genesis 18:20-32.

- 1 – narrator
- 2 – Abraham
- 3 – God

### NOTES

Break up into groups of 3-4. If you have less than five students, stay together as one group.

“Emotional Dashboard” is an optional opener which can be found in the *Serendipity Student Bible “Interactive Exercises” (M41)*.

**Interesting note:**

Earlier in Genesis 13:13 as Lot and Abraham part ways, scripture says, *“Now the people of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.”*

So – consider Abraham's request. If Sodom was a city with 1000 people, he's asking God to spare the entire city for the sake of 10 (out of 1000).  
Math quiz – that's \_\_\_\_ %.

# SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

## Discuss (Handout 1):

When is the last time you bargained with your parent(s) for something you wanted (or needed)?

What is Abraham trying to convince the Lord to do?

- Survey the city
  - Sweep away only the wicked of the city
  - Spare the whole city for the sake of the righteous
  - Other:
- 

What do you think is motivating Abraham's debate with the Lord?

- Compassion for the people of Sodom/Gomorrah
  - Concern for his nephew, Lot (see Gen 13:10-12)
  - Concern for God's reputation
  - Other:
- 

What do you think is motivating God's willingness to engage in debate with Abraham?

- Compassion for the people of Sodom/Gomorrah
  - Concern for Abraham's nephew, Lot
  - Desire to teach Abraham and stretch Abraham's faith
  - Other:
- 

What does this Scripture reveal about God's \_\_\_\_\_?

- Justice (i.e., How is God just in this passage?)
  - Mercy (i.e. How is God merciful?)
  - Compassion (How is God compassionate?)
  - Other:
- 

## NOTES

### Additional note:

Try to steer clear of extended conversations/debate about the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah.

# SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE PEACE BUILDING

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## Activity:

*Who is more compassionate?*

Invite the group to engage in a 7 Minute Debate:

*Genesis 18:20-32 reveals that...*

*“Abraham is more compassionate than God.” vs.*

*“God is more compassionate than Abraham.”*

## Instructions:

1. Divide into two groups.
2. Give each group 5 minutes to prepare their response.
3. Facilitate the group debate:
  - 1-minute opening statement by each side on why their position is the correct position.
  - 1 1/2 minute rebuttal by each side (respond to other team’s strongest argument.)
  - 1-minute closing statement by each side.

While this argument could go either way with this particular text, here’s what else the Bible says about God’s compassion:

(Ask for volunteers to read.)

- Isaiah 30:18 “Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.”
- Lamentations 3:22-23 “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”
- Matthew 5:9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

## NOTES



# SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE PEACE BUILDING

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- Colossians 3:12-13 “As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.”

## Ask:

What do these Scriptures reveal about God’s compassion?

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### Read:

Ask for volunteers to read...

*Social Principles* ¶165.A

*“We recognize that no nation or culture is absolutely just and right in its treatment of its own people, nor is any nation totally without regard for the welfare of its citizens... While recognizing valid differences in culture and political philosophy, we stand for justice and peace in every nation.”*

*Social Principles* ¶165.C

*“We believe war is incompatible with the teachings and example of Christ... As disciples of Christ, we are called to love our enemies, seek justice, and serve as reconcilers of conflict. We insist that the first moral duty of all nations is to work together to resolve by peaceful means every dispute that arises between or among them.”*

### Discuss:

How would you describe the relationship between The United States and the following nations? What do you hear (read) in the news?

- a. Russia
- b. Iran
- c. Iraq
- d. Syria
- e. North Korea

## NOTES

# SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE PEACE BUILDING

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How does the portrayal of these nations (in the media/by government officials) impact our treatment of their citizens seeking to immigrate (or find refuge) in The United States?

- a. Promotes suspicion and fear
- b. Promotes faith and friendship
- c. I don't know. It's totally confusing.
- d. Other:

How does the portrayal of these nations (in the media/by government officials) impact our treatment of U.S. citizens (and/or legal residents) with family connections to these countries? \*

- a. Promotes suspicion and fear
- b. Promotes faith and friendship
- c. I don't know. It's totally confusing.
- d. Other:

How does Jesus teach us to treat our "enemies?"

## Read:

Ask for volunteers to read...

Matthew 5:44-45 *"But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven."*

Romans 12:20 *"To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."*

## NOTES

- \* When discussing the impact of US citizens/legal residents with ties to "hostile" nations, the facilitator could share ancestral roots and invite students to do the same.
- How does your ancestral roots impact your family's life/your life?
- Are your ancestral roots ever a source of concern or tension?
- Does it impact how others in school (teachers or students) treat you?

# SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Romans 12:21 *“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*

## Ask:

In what ways can we “love our enemies, seek justice, and serve as reconcilers of conflict”? (SP para 165.C)  
(Invite students to brainstorm ideas. Write down ideas. Discuss which ones can they act on in the coming week.)

Students can either choose one of the ideas they brainstormed OR work on the following project (“Getting to Know You.”)

## Take It Home:

If you want to love your enemy/neighbor, it helps by getting to know them.

### 1. “Getting to Know You” (Individual Project)

Assign each student to research one of the nations listed above. Be prepared to share a brief presentation at the next youth group gathering.

Students should be prepared to share five facts about the nation (e.g., popular food, culture, geography, history, sports, famous people past/present, etc.)

Invite students to pray for the people of their nation every day in the coming week.

### 2. Getting to Know You” (Group Project)

Assign one nation listed above to the youth group.

Each student will research a different aspect(s) of the country in the coming week (e.g., popular food, culture, geography, history, sports, famous people past/present, etc.)

Be prepared to share findings at the next youth group gathering.

Invite students to pray for the people of the nation every day in the coming week.

## NOTES

# SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** PEACE BUILDING

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## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Prayer – read together (Handout 2)

Prayer of Saint Francis

*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;*

*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.*

NOTES

# SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

## HANDOUT 1

### Scripture Study Questions

When is the last time you bargained with your parent(s) for something you wanted (or needed)?

What is Abraham trying to convince the Lord to do?

- Survey the city
- Sweep away only the wicked of the city
- Spare the whole city for the sake of the righteous
- Other:

---

What do you think is motivating Abraham's debate with the Lord?

- Compassion for the people of Sodom/Gomorrah
- Concern for his nephew, Lot (see Gen 13:10-12)
- Concern for God's reputation
- Other:

---

What do you think is motivating God's willingness to engage in debate with Abraham?

- Compassion for the people of Sodom/Gomorrah
- Concern for Abraham's nephew, Lot
- Desire to teach Abraham and stretch Abraham's faith
- Other:

---

What does this Scripture reveal about God's \_\_\_\_\_?

- Justice (i.e., How is God just in this passage?)
- Mercy (i.e., How is God merciful?)
- Compassion (How is God compassionate?)
- Other:

---

### Group Activity Questions

How would you describe the relationship between The United States and the following nations? What do you hear (read) in the news?

- Russia
- Iran
- Iraq
- Syria
- North Korea

How does the portrayal of these nations (in the media/by government officials) impact our treatment of their citizens seeking to immigrate (or find refuge) in The United States?

- Promotes suspicion and fear
- Promotes faith and friendship
- I don't know. It's totally confusing.
- Other:

---

How does the portrayal of these nations (in the media /by government officials) impact our treatment of U.S. citizens (and/or legal residents) with family connections to these countries?

- Promotes suspicion and fear
- Promotes faith and friendship
- I don't know. It's totally confusing.
- Other:

---

How does Jesus teach us to treat our "enemies?"

# SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE PEACE BUILDING

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## HANDOUT 2

### Prayer of St. Francis

*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;  
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.*

# EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. DR. EMILY A. PECK-MCCLAIN

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: ECONOMIC JUSTICE

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Luke 12:32-40

### SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

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

### OBJECTIVE

Students will engage with the lectionary text in order to examine their connection to abundance and/or scarcity in issues of economic justice.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

Printouts of the Scripture passage or Bibles for everyone in your group in the NRSV translation. Paper and drawing materials (crayons, colored pencils, markers). Powerpoint slide or print out of the first part of Resolution #4051. Candle and matches or lighter (optional).

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Invite youth to close their eyes for a time of meditation on different scripture verses. Invite them to consider how each of these verses makes them feel.

#### Read:

Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is God's good pleasure to give you the kin-dom. (Luke 12:32)

I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. (John 10:10b)

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. (Acts 2:44-45)

God is a stronghold for the oppressed,  
a stronghold in times of trouble. (Psalm 9:9)  
...if you offer your food to the hungry  
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,  
then your light shall rise in the darkness  
and your gloom be like the noonday. (Isaiah 58:10)

### NOTES

Read the verses out loud slowly - do not include the scripture reference as you read (they are included for your information), but you can make those available afterwards if you'd like. Each one is provided in the NRSV translation, but gendered references have been replaced with non-gendered variations of the words.

# EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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## Pray:

O God who cares for us all, sometimes in ways we don't expect, we pray that You guide our conversation and study today, that we may grow closer to You and Your vision for how we care for one another. In the name of Christ who came to bring abundant life, we pray, Amen.

## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

Read the Scripture passage out loud, have your youth follow along from the print out you provide or in their Bibles.

### Read Luke 12:32-40

## Say:

There are several parts of this passage that stand out – metaphors and challenging language and instructions. Take 5 minutes and draw a picture that represents a part of this passage that stands out to you.

After the youth have drawn their pictures, have them go around and share their picture with the group, along with why that part of the passage stood out to them and why they chose to draw what they did.

Ask the youth to briefly share what they noticed about the drawings. Some possible questions are: Were there several drawings on the same part of the passage? Were they all on different parts? Were some of the representations similar? All different?

## NOTES

If you are concerned about inclusive language or do not want to use “Father” language for God because of reasons particular to you and your youth, you can substitute “Parent” or “God” instead. If you are doing this, you may want to print out the Scripture passage with your changes for your youth, so they are all the same as what you are reading.

Pass out paper and drawing materials. Reassure your group that stick figures are just fine, but also let them know that they will be sharing their pictures with the group so that they are prepared. The instructions are to draw a picture that represents the part of the passage that stands out to them, so it may or may not follow what is literally on the page.

If your group is large, you may want to divide into smaller groups in order to give everyone a chance to share in the allotted time. If you have a small group, they can have more time to draw, and you can invite questions to each artist after they have shared.

You may need to help guide the reflection here so be sure you are paying attention during the sharing and can make some observations to get the youth thinking in this way. Knowing the make up of your group (race, class, socio-economic status, immigration status, gender identities, etc.) there may be things that stand out more (or less) to your group than it would to a different group of youth. Knowing the anxieties of the youth in your group, what part is standing out to them the most? What do they skip over because it seems unrelated to their experience? Your job in this time is to help them see some patterns that you notice, even if they don't know why.



# EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### Say:

Although globally enough food is produced to feed everyone, 805 million people are undernourished, 791 million (98%) of them in the developing world (State of Food Insecurity in the World 2014, FAO). Children and elderly are, particularly at risk. Nearly half of all deaths in children under five are attributable to under-nutrition. This translates into the unnecessary loss of about 3 million young lives a year (<http://www.data.unicef.org/nutrition/malnutrition#sthash.9k0zPUqe.dpuf>).

It is estimated that 80% of the world's hungry live in rural areas and are largely dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods; approximately 50% are smallholder farmers cultivating marginal lands prone to natural disasters like drought or flood, 20% are landless families working on other people's land, and 10% depend on herding, fishing or forest resources (World Food Program: <http://www.wfp.org/hunger/who-are>).

Ask the youth to split up into partners and "decode" the fancy language. What is this church resolution actually saying?

After a few minutes, have the youth come back together a share their summaries.

Invite the youth to go back to their partners and look at their drawings and the Scripture passage again and consider these questions: What does this passage have to say to our youth group and our church when we consider the facts and figures we've just heard? Would I draw the same or a different picture now that I have those facts and figures in mind while I think about the passage? Why or why not?

## NOTES

This text comes from the United Methodist *Book of Resolutions* #4051 (the full text can be found online at <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/the-united-methodist-church-justice-and-world-hunger>)

Because it involves a lot of words and figures, it will be helpful to print this out for your youth or project it on a screen so they can see what it is saying a little more easily.

The key points you want to make sure the youth can take away from this with are:

- There is enough food in the world to fulfill everyone's needs.
- Most of those who are hungry are in the developing world. (You may need to explain what the "developing world" means to your youth. A good definition is "low-income countries confronting severe structural impediments to sustainable development. They are highly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks and have low levels of human assets." From un.org definition of the "least developed countries.")
- Most at risk of death from hunger are children and the elderly.
- Most of those who are hungry live in rural areas; many of whom are small farmers working on their land or the land of others.

You will notice when you read Resolution #4051 that there are several ways each local church (charge, cooperative parish, district, etc.) and each United Methodist are encouraged to act in response to wealth inequality, food injustice, and hunger and poverty around the world. Do some research about what is going on to address these needs – finding local as well as international efforts is best. The General Board of Global Ministries and UMCOR World/Hunger Poverty Advance are great places to see what the denomination is doing globally.

# EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**Say:**

We know from Scripture that Jesus wants everyone to have an abundant life, that is not happening when people die of hunger. We also know from today's passage that we are to "dress ourselves for action" and give to those who are poor.

**Ask:**

What does it look like to "get dressed" (aka prepare for – make our whole appearance be that of action for justice) for action against poverty and world hunger?

Present a few ideas to your youth group as examples of justice work in this particular area. Ask the youth if they know of other initiatives or projects from your church, conference, etc. that help address poverty and world hunger.

**Ask:**

How can each of you simplify your life and spend less time buying stuff and more time caring?

OR

**Ask:**

How can we reach out and care for others when we ourselves have needs?

## NOTES

There are several options for action offered in the Resolution itself, and although it is August, the youth can start planning toward future projects like World Food Day in October or the Souper Bowl of Caring. There may also be local opportunities for service.

Be sure to point out to your youth that although poverty and world hunger are huge challenges, they can play a little part that will contribute to abundant life for others (and themselves). Resolution #4051 calls on United Methodists to "simplify their lifestyles, moving away from consumerism and toward caring."

Depending on the make up of your group – whether they are suffering from excess or scarcity, there are two different questions here. Some groups may be in a more consumer culture than others. Choose the question that reflects your group most.

# EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Invite the youth into some silence to pray.

Invite the youth to consider how they are dressed and what it might be like to be dressed for action instead.

Invite them to consider what it would look like for them to live simply.

Invite them to think about abundant life, and how that might be different than living excessively.

Invite them to think about how their caring for others is part of preparing for Christ's presence in our lives.

After a moment of silence

### **Pray:**

O God who cares for us all, we pray that You guide us to simplify our lives and care for others as Your own arms and legs. We pray that we may grow closer to You as You push us closer to others. We thank You that Your world has enough in it to fill the hungry stomachs of everyone and we hope for a time when no one is hungry. In the name of Christ who came to bring abundant life for all, we pray, Amen.

### NOTES

Lighting a candle and turning off lights can help the space be quiet and contemplative for this closing moment.

Offer each invitation slowly, with some silence in between (this will echo the Scripture verses read in this way at the beginning of today's study).

# NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. NEAL CHRISTIE

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: PRACTICING FAITH IN COMMUNITY, SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE, NATIONS AND CULTURES, WAR AND PEACE

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Isaiah 1:1, 10-20; Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23; Genesis 15:1-6; Psalm 33:12-22; Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16; Luke 12:32-40

### SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 *Social Principles* ¶162, ¶162.Q, ¶165.A, ¶165.C

### OBJECTIVE

Connect our faith in God and God's faith in us as people and as nations to do justice for the most vulnerable among us.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

Bible, *Social Principles*, map or globe, flip chart and markers, pictures for collages (diversity of images of people, nature of different situations), paper, scissors, glue, flashlights or battery operated tea-lights.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Invite students to sit comfortably and dim the lights. Place tee-candles in the center of the room.

**Read Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23**

**Reread the Scripture a second time**

Invite students to imagine being in a large room surrounded by stars and sand. Imagine having a conversation with God and hearing God make this promise to you.

**Ask:**

- What would be your first feelings? Wonder? Disbelief?
- Imagine the same room with God speaking between the stars and the sand and speaking through the Psalmist. What would be your first response? Appreciation? Wonder?
- Reflect for a moment quietly on the words faith, worship, justice, and peace.

Invite students to lift up prayers from the week—who do they want to pray for and what do they need to pray about?

### NOTES

Create a space that will help students to explore the connection between faith in God and the faith of the prophets, Abram and Sarai, and Jesus, that leads to practicing acts of justice and peace.

# NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

Decide which of these passages to read. Consider reading two passages but referencing the other passages if needed:

Invite students to take turns reading the passages.

Invite students to share the most important parts of the passage.

### Scripture Options (Pick TWO)

#### Isaiah 1:1, 10-20, *Social Principles* ¶165.A, ¶162 Introduction paragraph

1. What is the most meaningful part of worship for them on Sundays? Why is it meaningful?
2. What does it feel like when we do good for others who are in need?
3. Could our actions be a way we worship God? Why, why not?
4. How can we motivate our churches to act justly and reflect these actions in our worship on Sundays?

## NOTES

### Isaiah 1:1, 10-20

Isaiah loves the nation of Israel enough to speak truthfully and directly to those in a position of authority who claim they have been blessed by Yahweh to maintain their positions of privilege as a result of manifest destiny, scorched-earth wars of conquest against the nation of Judah. Policies and practices that oppress others have consequences, first in distancing ourselves from the God who has sustained a relationship with us and second, in destroying our relationship with those who are most vulnerable without our own nation.

Those in authority who listen to the prophet's critique believe they represent a blessed, exceptional nation. God loves Israel as "God's own children" but Israel's oppressive public policies and practices that neglect the needs of the oppressed, ignore those orphaned by war or poverty, and further isolate surviving widows, has been replaced and legitimated by an increase in elaborate ritual worship and blood sacrifice. As a result, those in authority are culpable for their hypocrisy. Their hands are "stained with blood."

First, God through the prophet invites God's children Israel to come to their senses: justice toward the least of those in their nation will lead the nation to flourish. There will be enough resources for all. Second, securing justice for the most socially vulnerable is perhaps the most sincere form of worship of Yahweh that we can offer.

Our faith in God is not demonstrated in costly and elaborate public worship, the songs we sing, the way we look in church, even the beauty of the church we worship in. No matter how well-intentioned, genuine worship involves our distributing public resources to those in need, standing beside those who suffer, creating a community for people who have been left out. Our motivation to worship God comes from our desire to secure justice for marginalized people.

# NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

## Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23

How can we show our love and faith in God through care for creation?

## Genesis 15:1-6, Social Principles ¶162.Q

What do you imagine life will look like 50 years from now, 100 years from now, 200 years from now if we practice a justice-oriented faith like Abram and Sarai?

## Psalm 33:12-22

1. Brainstorm- what kinds of harm do people do to each other? Verbal, physical, etc. Encourage them to be concrete in their examples.
2. What causes people to harm each other?
3. What prevents people from harming each other?
4. What prevents people from practicing habits that do not harm other people?
5. How do we practice our faith in peace-building, resolving conflict, preventing conflict?

## NOTES

### Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23

The Psalmist uses the language of a courtroom to make a point. First, God establishes a covenant or promise or legal agreement with all creation including the animals, mountains, forests, to care for creation forever. Everything comes from and belongs to Yahweh. Second, the Psalmist affirms that Yahweh has made a particular covenant with Israel based on the people's willingness to practice just and equitable relationships. Salvation, security, wholeness is the result of our keeping that covenant.

Our faith in God, creation's faith in God, is evidenced in acknowledging that all comes from God and God cares for how we live out our relationships.

### Genesis 15:1-6

The writer retells the story of God's promise to Abram that he would be the father of more children than the "stars in the sky." In response to Abram's trust in God, God would bless all those who claim to be children of Abram—today this included a diversity of peoples, nationalities, cultures, and faith's that identify as Jews, Christians and Muslims.

We are invited to practice the kind of faith Abram, and Sarai practiced. Acting justly, caring for the earth and all people, with an eye toward the generations that have not yet been borne, leaving them environmental systems and economic systems that are equitable and sustainable.

### Psalm 33:12-22

The Psalmist begins by affirming both the public and personal relationship God has with people and nations. God has chosen to call nations whose policies and practices are to achieve just ends, reflecting their relationship with God as creator. God also knows people's hearts, their intimate intentions, and often unspoken desires, because God created and loves each of us.

The Psalmist goes on to offer a word of advice: the God who created the communities and nations we live in and the God who knows our hearts, is not the God who achieves just ends through weapons of war or the strategies of national leaders. The consequences of war are famine, poverty, and want. God waits for us to place our trust in God and the ways of love and justice as our only real hope in the world.

Nothing destroys our faith in God more than the harm we do toward one another, in our personal and social relationships and economic and political relationships and the deprivation it inflicts. Conflicts that escalate into protracted violence and war have lasting impacts.

# NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

## Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

1. Can you describe the people who have influenced you who lived out their faith in God by practicing justice and peace-building with creation and with others in community?
2. Name the people who have influenced you to do the right thing, to be hopeful, to keep faith, to do good – what characteristics do they have in common?
3. Who do you have an opportunity to influence in your life?

## Luke 12:32-40, *Social Principles* ¶165.C

1. When have you felt most awake, alive, exhilarated?
2. When have you had to make a decision to do the right thing without considering the consequences of how you will look?
3. What happened? Who was with you? How do you pass that on?

## NOTES

### Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

The author of Hebrews tackles two challenges: first, weaving the emerging faith of the Jesus movement into the rich and long past by detailing people's desire to trust in God, beginning with Abel and ending with Abraham and Sarah; second, the author of Hebrews reminds us that placing faith in God not only sustained individual people but it bound together entire peoples, nations, societies as they worked to discern what it means to have faith in God the creator.

### Luke 12:32-40

In this text, Jesus gets serious with his disciples. Get ready! Don't wait! Stay alert! Keep awake! Jesus evokes the image of a wedding day that is about to start, a thief coming in the night! At first, this may be off-putting. "Jesus, isn't faith for the long haul? Life is busy, how about tomorrow?" Jesus urges his disciples and anyone who would follow after him to take a risk, to be decisive, to put into practice what they know is right, good, loving, just. Notice that Jesus is speaking to the disciples as a group. No one goes to a Birthday party or a wedding alone—at least two people will be there! The text seems to be saying it's not enough to claim I have faith in God and not put it to use or save it for tomorrow or a convenient time. It is to be used now!

# NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** PRACTICING FAITH IN COMMUNITY, SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE, NATIONS AND CULTURES, WAR AND PEACE

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## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

1. Write on the classroom walls the words Faith, Worship, Justice, and Peace.
2. Ask students to brainstorm what words come to mind when each word is said. Write them on the flip chart paper.
3. Read the Scriptures Isaiah 1:1, 10-20 and discuss the suggested questions and read Luke 12:32-40; discuss the suggested questions.
4. Share images from magazines, newspapers, the internet of a diversity of images from nature, of people, of different situations. Work with the students to create a collage that reflects the themes of living out the faith we have inherited and taking actions for justice that influence and make a better future.
5. Consider how this collage pictures where we have come from and where we are going because of our faith in God and God's faith in us.
6. Ask the students where it is more important *to have faith in Jesus* or *to have the faith of Jesus* that led him to do what he did: stand up for widows, welcome children when the disciples turned them away, question whether a rich man could inherit the kingdom. Use examples of Jesus' ministry that are most meaningful for you.
7. End by discussing specific ways that either:
  1. The Sunday Worship service could reflect what Isaiah is calling for, or
  2. Ways students can act out their faith in the community.
8. Remind students that standings for justice and alongside people who are oppressed increases our faith in God.

## NOTES



# NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** PRACTICING FAITH IN COMMUNITY, SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE, NATIONS AND CULTURES, WAR AND PEACE

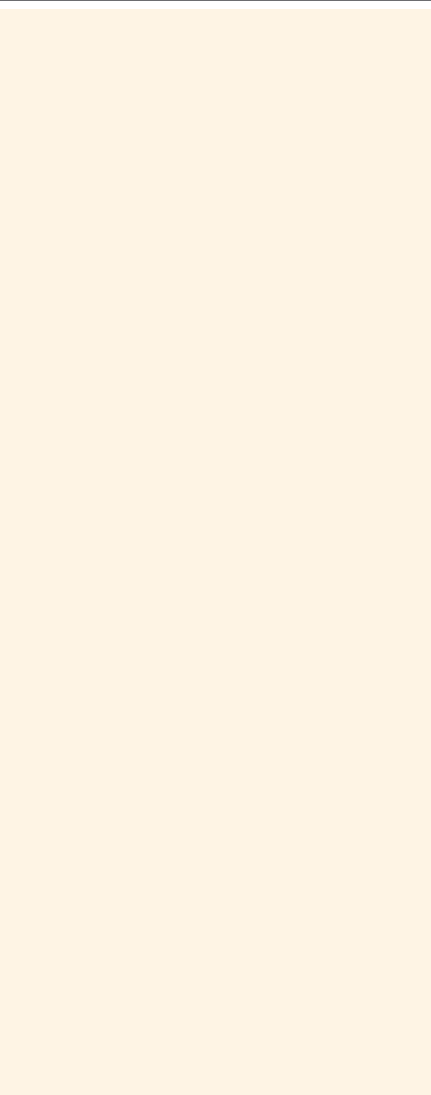
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## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Invite students to pray with the map or globe in their circle. Invite prayers for the week—appreciations, concerns, and for people.

Close by taking the collage to worship and blessing the work the students have done in the context of Sunday Worship

### NOTES



# TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. CLAYTON CHILDERS

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: ADVOCACY, MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Psalms 82

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶163.E

**OBJECTIVE**

To challenge students to take some action by standing in solidarity with those in need – the “poor,” the “destitute,” the “orphan,” the “weak.”

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Bibles, “Four Quadrants of Compassion” & “Why do they fit where they do?” handout (1 per participant), paper, pens or pencils.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

As students gather, give them a blank sheet of paper and a pen/pencil.

Invite them to sit in a circle.

Invite students to take a moment and remember a time when they felt welcomed into a group, included. How did that make you feel?

**Say:**

Today’s scripture is about God’s call to be an inclusive church and community. What can we do to ensure that all people feel welcomed and included?

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

**Say:**

During the time this passage was written, most tribes around Israel believed in polytheism, the belief in more than one god. Many also believed that there was one “supreme” god, overseeing the work of the other gods. In this passage, the supreme god calls the other gods into a “council.”

**Read Psalm 82** (invite students to read one verse each)

### NOTES

The leader should take time to welcome the group and explain that our lesson today is about God’s special concern for those in need. It will be based on a review of Psalm 82.

Understanding the passage:

There are three key aspects of this passage to share with the group.

- 1) There the supreme god condemns the lesser gods for not being just in the oversight of their various realms. Instead of being fair, they show bias against the weak, the poor, the needy and favoritism toward the wealthy, the powerful, and those given higher status in the eyes of the world.

The supreme god condemns the gods who show bias against the poor and weak while favoring those of higher status.

# TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE ADVOCACY, MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

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## Ask:

1. What does the supreme god condemn the lesser gods for doing?
2. What does the supreme god say will happen because of their actions?
3. Compare James 2:5 to Psalm 82. What is God's preference?

## Read ¶163.E of the *Social Principles*

## Ask:

The *Social Principles* says, "As a church, we are called to support the poor and challenge the rich." How do you think this passage relates to Psalm 82?

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Divide into groups of three.

Introduce the diagram called "Four Quadrants of Compassion."  
(Handout 1)

## Say:

The church engages issues of poverty in a number of ways. These can be summarized using the categories of Charity, Mutuality, Advocacy, and Solidarity. All are appropriate and needed, but most church members tend to think of the first two categories and not the last two.

## Ask:

What are the differences?

## NOTES

- 2) Second, the premier god condemns the "gods" because their "playing favorites" threatens the "foundations" of creation. Favoritism of the wealthy and powerful turns God's vision favoring justice and compassion for the poor and needy upside down. Down is up and up is down.
- 3) Read together James 2:1-7. Society may teach us to favor the rich over the poor, but the Bible calls followers of God to be fair to all and to work for justice for the poor and needy.

If the foundations of a church or a society begin to crumble the church or the society will suffer and eventually collapse.

Finally, the Psalm also teaches that our actions matter more than our words. In verse 6-7 we see that the gods are condemned to death (like humans) because of their *actions of bias against the poor and needy*. The condemnation of the gods reinforces the theology of monotheism proclaimed by the Hebrews. The supreme god has the last word, and the corrupt lesser "gods" of polytheism are defeated.

The first two, Charity and Mutuality, can be considered "ministries of mercy" while the second two, Advocacy and Solidarity, are "ministries of justice."

Ministries of Mercy address immediate needs. They are reactive – where there is a crisis ministries of mercy are critical in sustaining and assisting persons in need. They are also voluntary. Ministries of mercy are not required, but a voluntary choice made by an individual or group who see a need and decide to help.

Advocacy and Solidarity are "ministries of justice." Justice is not optional. No one wants to live in an unjust society and where there is injustice we have a moral obligation to demand and work for change. Ministries of justice also are proactive, they address system change, provide long-term solutions, and promote sustainability.

Many people, when they think about "justice" think of the criminal justice system. People who are caught doing wrong and are punished for what they have done. The Biblical understanding of justice is different. Justice in the Bible is a beautiful image of a world where all people are able to flourish and thrive.

# TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** ADVOCACY, MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

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## Summarize/Say:

Charity responds to the immediate and is voluntary. It can be something as simple as giving money to a congregational “community needs” fund. The relationship between giver and receiver is minimal. A danger is paternalism which can actually degrade “self-worth” and do more harm than good by reinforcing a sense of powerlessness.

Mutuality focuses on relationship, being in “ministry with” not “ministry for.” It may be as simple as making eye contact and acknowledging the humanity of the one in need. Many homeless people testify that one of the hardest things about being on the street is the way people look away, and by refusing to make eye contact, they feel like they no longer are fully human. Genesis teaches just the opposite – all are made in the image of God, all are born with dignity and deserve to be treated with dignity.

Advocacy goes beyond charity as it seeks to change “systems” that keep people oppressed. It digs deeper, trying to discover root causes and then attempts to mobilize support for systemic changes that go “upstream” to alleviate suffering at its core. Often solutions are found by a change in government policies or in public programs. For instance – Charity would give money for a sick person to go the doctor, mutuality would accompany a sick “friend” to the doctor; advocacy would change systems to ensure all people have a right to healthcare and can see a doctor on their own, without depending on others.

Solidarity goes beyond advocacy by ensuring that all people can speak for themselves. This truly is a ministry where persons stand shoulder to shoulder with the poor and oppressed. They become allies and support the poor as they tell their own story and demand systemic change. Solidarity is advocacy in relationship with the oppressed and conducted in ways that guarantee the voices of the poor are heard. Long-term community change requires that all voices are heard and that the voices of the oppressed preeminent.

## Small group exercise (2-3 per group)

Students will be given Handout 2 “Why do they fit where they fit?” with several examples of compassion and ask to identify each example as representing one of the four categories.

## NOTES

A group of youth visited the United Methodist Building on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC a number of years ago. They came from a church near St. Louis. As they toured the building youth were asked: “What does justice mean?” A young woman said: “Justice means making the world look the way Jesus would want it to look.” Such a simple vision of what a truly just world would look like.

Students will also notice that the diagram has a vertical axis. This provides a reminder that there are acts of compassion which we can do without being in a direct relationship with persons in need. The left side of the quadrant can be said to be “General” acts of compassion while the right side involves a direct relationship with persons in need. Charity often takes a General “outreach” in which persons give funds to address needs but not necessarily personal. The same can be said for advocacy. Writing a letter to Congress or a letter to the editor page can help promote a cause but is not necessarily connected to persons directly impacted by unjust structures and systems. Acts of mutuality and solidarity require direct relationships with particular persons or families suffering the effects of poverty or injustice.

It would then be good to explain each of the four quadrants.

# TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** ADVOCACY, MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

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Afterward, the leader will walk through the list and talk about each one. Handout 3 is the facilitator’s version with answers.

They can then discuss how students have seen each form of compassion expressed and how they might act in the future to support persons in need using each of the four.

## **CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)**

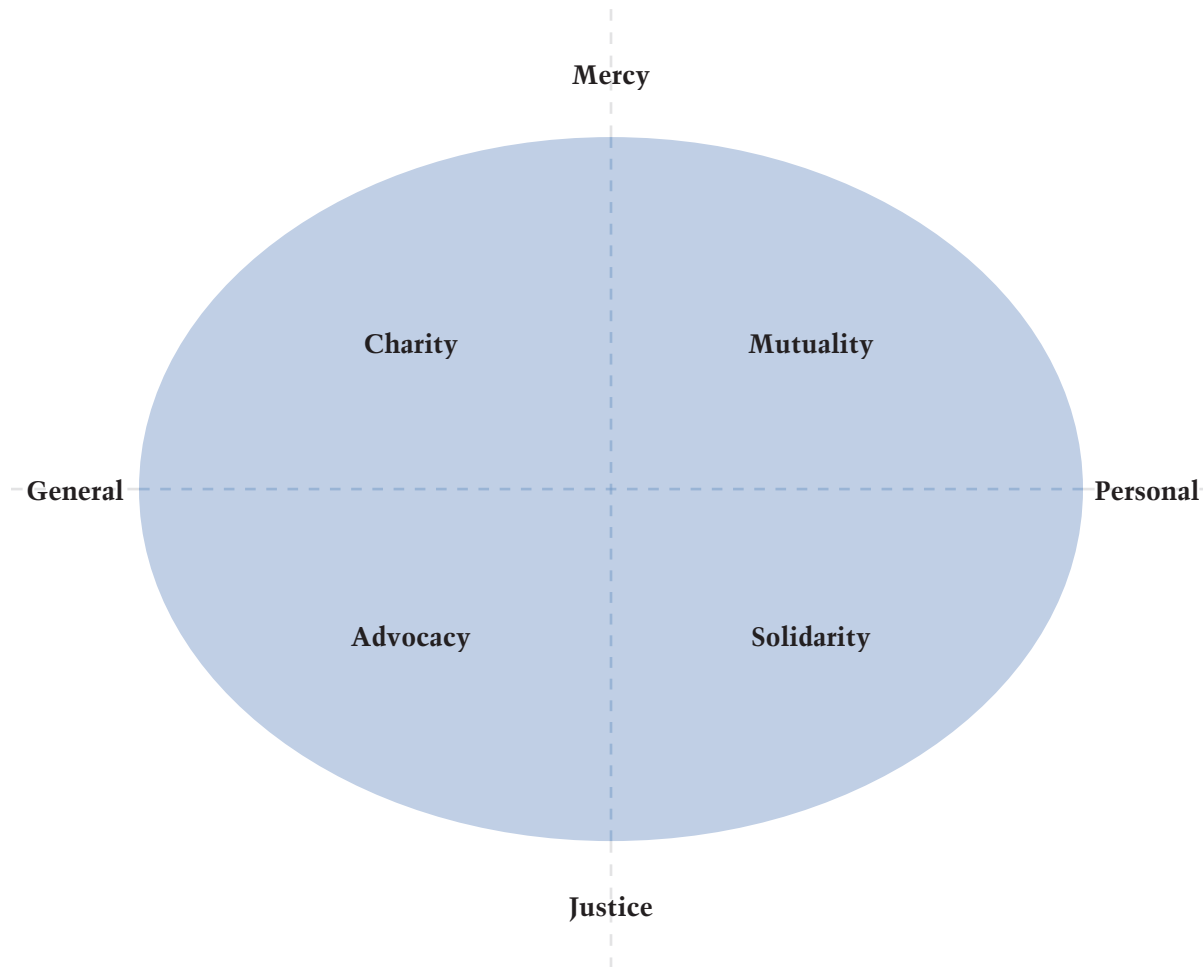
Think together about some action you might take either as individuals to show compassion to persons in need. Will the action represent charity, mutuality, advocacy or solidarity? How might the action be adjusted to make it even more effective? Perhaps it will involve cultivating a new relationship or building on already established relationships. Think about ways to build and ensure the dignity every person involved is preserved and enhanced. No one ever should become the “project” of another; that is not genuine mutuality.

After giving the group time to share some of their small group reflections invite them to stand and join hands and close in prayer. Invite them to lift up one group that suffers injustice, is excluded and needs to know that they are not forgotten and are precious to God. Encourage them to not use personal names. After hearing several groups lifted up for special concern, close with a short prayer.

NOTES

# TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

## HANDOUT 1 "FOUR QUADRANTS OF COMPASSION"



# TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** ADVOCACY, MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

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## HANDOUT 2 (STUDENTS)

### Why do they fit where they fit?

- 1) Buy a coat for an unhoused person.
- 2) Write a letter to the local paper about humane prison reform.
- 3) Pray for "the hungry."
- 4) Have an unhoused person speak at church.
- 5) Teach a person a skill or trade.
- 6) Give money to church to pay for meals for the impoverished.
- 7) Join with the unhoused to march for better housing.
- 8) Write a letter to Congress about unfair tax structure.
- 9) Become friends with an impoverished family.

# TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** ADVOCACY, MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

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## HANDOUT 3 (FACILITATOR'S VERSION)

### Why do they fit where they fit?

- 1) Buy a coat for an unhoused person (mercy for individual person – upper right).
- 2) Write a letter to the local paper about humane prison reform (advocacy for general group of people. Not personal – lower left).
- 3) Pray for “the hungry” (upper left – general mercy prayer, no personal connection with a particular individual).
- 4) Have an unhoused person speak at church (personal justice step/give individual voice, hearing).
- 5) Teach a person a skill or trade (Bottom right. Justice for individual. Root cause of poverty).
- 6) Give money to church to pay for meals for the impoverished (upper left. General mercy gift).
- 7) Join with the unhoused to march for better housing (justice in partnership with individuals. Bottom right).
- 8) Write a letter to Congress about unfair tax structure (general advocacy – lower left).
- 9) Become friends with an impoverished family (Bottom right – long-term commitment to support the root cause of poverty for individual family.)



# ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REBEKAH BLEED

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES, ADVOCACY

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Isaiah 58:9b-14

### SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

*Our Social Creed (in the Social Principles)*

### OBJECTIVE

To help students begin to identify outsiders in their communities and ways in which they might practice justice and mercy with outsiders.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

Either a whiteboard & markers or paper & pens for group activity, Handout.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Take a moment to center your hearts and minds as a group by doing a responsive reading of today's scripture passage (Handout)

Bold: Leader/Student Volunteer

Regular Font: Class

**If you remove the yoke from among you,  
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,**

**<sup>10</sup> if you offer your food to the hungry  
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,**

then your light shall rise in the darkness  
and your gloom be like the noonday.

**<sup>11</sup> The LORD will guide you continually,  
and satisfy your needs in parched places,  
and make your bones strong;**

**and you shall be like a watered garden  
like a spring of water,  
whose waters never fail.**

### NOTES

Instruct students to take several deep breaths in and out at the beginning of this session.

Tell students "We are breathing out distractions and breathing in the hope of meeting with God today."

After students have taken 3-5 deep breaths, lead them in reading the scripture together. Choose a leader from among the group, or you yourself read the bold lines, while the rest of the group responds by reading the lines not in bold.

# ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES, ADVOCACY

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**<sup>12</sup> Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;**  
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;

**you shall be called the repairer of the breach,**  
the restorer of streets to live in.

**<sup>13</sup> If you refrain from trampling the Sabbath,**  
**from pursuing your own interests on my holy day;**

if you call the Sabbath a delight  
and the holy day of the LORD honorable;

**if you honor it, not going your own ways,**  
**servicing your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs;<sup>[a]</sup>**

**<sup>14</sup> then you shall take delight in the LORD,**  
and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth;

**I will feed you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob,**  
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

### Ask:

1. What did you notice about the scripture passage we just read together?
2. Did you hear anything new or in a new way as we read?
3. Who do you think is speaking in this passage?
4. Who is the speaker talking to?

### NOTES

Begin by asking students a series of questions. Be careful not to answer the questions with your own thoughts, or to rush quickly to the next thing. The goal of the questions is reflection and engagement with the scripture, and this can take some time.

# ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES, ADVOCACY

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## Say:

This passage gives us a peek of God talking to the Israelite people about justice. The Israelites fasted and did religious rituals, but didn't notice or care for the poor and oppressed in their very own city.

God points out that the Israelites' blessing depends on how they treat "outsiders." God knows the secret judgments and attitudes in each person's heart and reminds the Israelites that the point isn't to do good things at church, it is to love and care for people who can't care for themselves or who are outside our usual line of vision. In this way, both the Israelites and we today can act out our love for God.

## Ask:

1. Can you think of anyone who may have been an outsider in the scripture passage today?
2. Think about your school now. Can you think of anyone or any group of people who may be an outsider there?
3. How do you know they are outsiders/what makes them outsiders?

## Say:

This passage was written to God's people to explain what it looks like to follow God in everyday life. As God's people, our everyday life should revolve around care for others, and include acts of justice when we notice others are being oppressed.

## Ask:

Remember the people you said were outsiders at your school. What would justice look like for them? What would care look like from their perspective?

## Say:

God does not give commands to us without also giving God's presence through the Holy Spirit. When we follow God in loving, caring and advocating for others, we do so through the presence and empowering of the Holy Spirit – not alone.

## NOTES

If students get stuck when you ask them for examples of outsiders in scripture, remind them of some common Bible stories they may have heard such as the Prodigal Son, the Woman at the Well, the Good Samaritan. Asking who was an outsider in these stories may get the ball rolling for students to come up with their own ideas.

It is possible that a student will say they are the outsider in their school. You have two options here: say, "thank you for sharing," or dig a little deeper asking, "how does that make you feel," or "what makes you feel like an outsider at school." You want the student to feel relationally safe, not just give a good answer so use your sense of discernment and knowledge of the group in making the decision here.

# ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES, ADVOCACY

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## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### Part I

**Say:**

The *Social Principles* ¶166 says,

“We dedicate ourselves to peace throughout the world, to the rule and justice of law among nations, and to individual freedom for all people of the world. We believe in the present and final triumph of God’s Word in human affairs and gladly accept our commission to manifest the life of the gospel in the world”

**Ask:**

1. What do you think about this statement?
2. Why does the United Methodist Church have a statement saying “we dedicate ourselves to peace throughout the world”?
3. Do you think in places where people are treated like outsiders there can be peace? Why or why not?

### Part II

**Say:**

Now we are going to look at the scripture again and paraphrase it with our own words. Think about what these words might mean when applied to your school or family and write that down.

It can be tricky to think of saying something that’s already written in a different way, so let’s practice together first!

**Ask:**

1. What kinds of “evil” are spoken at your school? (e.g., gossip, hating on one another, social media trolling.)
2. So if we were going to rewrite, “remove the speaking of evil from among you” in language that would make sense at your school, what would we say?

### NOTES

Part II of this activity will require both a whiteboard and markers for a large group activity or pen and paper for each smaller group if you break the students up into groups/pairs.

For part II of this activity, a large group can have students split into groups of 3. For a small group have students split into pairs or work on this activity as one group.

Students may need some help brainstorming to get their “creative juices flowing” for part II, but once the brainstorming phase is finished, let students complete the activity using their own ideas and interpretation. They may surprise you with their insight!

# ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES, ADVOCACY

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Large groups: Break students up into pairs or groups and instruct each group to choose one verse to “translate” or re-write.

Small groups: Have students give input on which verse they would like to “translate” or re-write.

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

### Say:

Now we are going to close with something called a one-word prayer. I will open by saying, “God, we are thankful for...” and then we’ll go around the circle and each say one word that we are thankful for. When it gets back to me, I will say, “God, we ask for help...” And we will go around again, and each say one word or a few words about what we are asking for help with this week. When it gets back to me, I’ll close by saying “Amen.”

Pray together!

### NOTES

If students are used to a formal and structured prayer time, this could feel silly. However, it is an introduction to praying in community and is worth trying. Orient students to the experience by explaining that prayer can happen in all kinds of ways and this is one of those ways. God loves communicating with us, and so that’s what we are going to do!

It’s ok if students laugh during the prayer. Middle schoolers especially will laugh when they feel nervous. Just stay focused and ignore it as long as it isn’t too disruptive. If laughter disrupts the experience, simply redirect by saying the name of the next person in the circle.

# ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES, ADVOCACY

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## HANDOUT

Isaiah 58:9b-14

**If you remove the yoke from among you,  
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,**

**<sup>10</sup> if you offer your food to the hungry  
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,**

then your light shall rise in the darkness  
and your gloom be like the noonday.

**<sup>11</sup> The LORD will guide you continually,  
and satisfy your needs in parched places,  
and make your bones strong;**

**and you shall be like a watered garden  
like a spring of water,  
whose waters never fail.**

**<sup>12</sup> Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;  
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;**

**you shall be called the repairer of the breach,  
the restorer of streets to live in.**

**<sup>13</sup> If you refrain from trampling the Sabbath,  
from pursuing your own interests on my holy day;**

if you call the Sabbath a delight  
and the holy day of the LORD honorable;

**if you honor it, not going your own ways,  
serving your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs;<sup>[a]</sup>**

**<sup>14</sup> then you shall take delight in the LORD,  
and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth;**

**I will feed you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob,  
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.**

# TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. ROSA YEONSHIN LEE

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: MARGINALIZED INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Luke 14:1, 7-14

### SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

Many, depends on the list created in the group activity.

### OBJECTIVE

To help students be advocates of change to live into the kin-dom of God with humility.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

Bible, *2016-2020 Book of Resolutions* and *2016-2020 Social Principles* (multiple copies of each of printouts of relevant sections), post-it notes, pens/pencils, contemplative music (optional)

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Sit in a circle (if the group is a large group, sit in smaller circles)

Ask the students to quietly reflect on the following statements:

1. Who am I?
2. What is something that I can do that I am proud of?
3. What do I want to do in the future?
4. Who are my neighbors?

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

Ask two volunteers to read the scripture passage

#### Read:

Volunteer 1: Luke 14:7-11

Volunteer 2: Luke 14:12-14

### NOTES

(optional) Play quiet music to help students calm down and become centered.

Jesus encouraged his followers not to seek honor but to serve others in humility. Similar wisdom can be found in Proverbs 25:6-7. Humility is not to be feigned as a strategy for recognition. Humility is a quality of life open to persons who know that their worth is not measured by recognition from their peers but by the certainty.

# TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** MARGINALIZED INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

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## Ask:

1. What is the lesson from the first reading vs. 7-11?
2. What is the meaning of humility?
3. In vs. 12-14, who does Jesus say we should invite for a meal?
4. At school, who do you eat lunch with? Is there anyone that you do not want to eat lunch with?
5. If Jesus showed up at your school cafeteria, what do you think Jesus would do?
6. Why do you think Jesus paired the parable of the banquet about humility with the lesson on serving the poor and the marginalized?
7. How can we participate in living in the Kin-dom of God here and now?

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Directions: Stand and find a partner and try to identify what is written on the post-it. The partner is only able to answer by providing examples of how to help/be an advocate. For example post-it states “the unhoused” the hint provided is “affordable housing and social services” the wrong hint is “this person is without housing.” Once both of the partners have their answers, look up what the *Social Principles* and the *Book of Resolutions* say the church should do.

(Prior to the class create a list and write each answer on a separate post-it note. Also, make copies of the *Social Principles/Book of Resolutions* that relates to what is on the list.)

## Ask:

Who are the vulnerable and the marginalized in our society?

Place the post-it notes on the students back- make sure that they can't see their own post-it note.

## NOTES

Jesus had meals with those that he “shouldn't have” and broke barriers and boundaries. It was a powerful act of inclusivity and love for all.

Please remind your students that the Kin-dom of God is not the place only after death but also the place we are making here and now as we follow Jesus Christ.

Through this activity, the students can think of ways to address the issue and be an advocate for change and live into the kin-dom of God.



# TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** MARGINALIZED INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

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Purpose of the game is for students to find ways to address the need.

Once everyone is done – report and share with the larger group what they learned.

If possible, pick one or two that they can focus on as a youth group or as the larger church.

## **CLOSING MOMENT** (5 MINUTES)

---

Sit in a circle with their post-it note from the activity.

Ask them to hold the post-it note in their hands and silently offer up a prayer for those that are represented on the post-it and how they can become advocates and/or an ally for the cause.

Facilitator wraps up the prayer time with a closing prayer.

NOTES

# THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. DEBBIE SPERRY

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: TAKING A STAND, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, ADVOCACY

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Psalm 1

### SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

Leader to select specifics for group activity. Recommendations include: 160D (global climate stewardship), 161R (bullying), 162A (rights of racial and ethnic persons), 162H (rights of immigrants)

### OBJECTIVE

To learn about the Social Principles and discuss ways to take action. To see “righteousness” isn’t happenstance, it’s about how we choose to live.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

“Do Something” by Matthew West (available on Youtube), one copy of Psalm 1 Mad Libs worksheet for every two students; *Faith and Fact Cards* or *Social Principles*; *UM Hymnal*.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Start out a little silly. Put your students into pairs. Have them fill in the mad libs psalm BEFORE reading the actual Psalm. Just like in mad libs, one partner will write the answers. The other has to come up with the words not knowing how they fit in the sentences until the final version is read.

Have each pairing share their final draft with the group

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

#### Pray:

O God who teaches and guides us, we ask for Your wisdom and discernment. Help us to see with clarity and truth. Use this time for Your glory. In Your precious and holy name, Amen.

### NOTES

- Students may need help remembering which type of word is which.
- Verb: an action word (like run, jump, fly)
- Noun: a person, place or thing (like a chair, horse, building)
- Adjective: a describing word (happy, mean, cordial)
- Adverb: a describing word for how you do a verb (like leave abruptly, or talks quickly—typically adverbs end in “ly”—they aren’t used in this mad lib, but some students may confuse them with adjectives)

# THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** TAKING A STAND, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, ADVOCACY

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## Read Psalm 1

### Ask:

1. What do the students think about how their psalm compares to the actual Psalm?
2. What does it mean to you for someone to be “wicked”?
3. What do you think the psalmist meant by “wicked”?
4. What does it mean to you for someone to be “righteous”?
5. What do you think the psalmist meant by “righteous”?
6. In this passage, righteousness is associated with happiness, fruitfulness, and goodness—does it seem to you like those who are righteous are the happy ones who do well? Share an example.
7. How can you practice humility and look for your own wickedness and your own righteousness?
8. In partners, share one place where you want God to help you change and be more righteous, and one place where you feel like you’re doing pretty well.
9. Verse 2 tells us “on [God’s] law [the righteous] meditate day and night”—does that sound like something you would do?
10. The Old Testament has over 600 laws! Would you really want to think about all of them?
11. Which “laws” (or maybe principles) do you think we should count as the most important for us as Christians?
12. How do we value “man’s laws” vs. “God’s laws”? Are they equal? Are we supposed to do anything to change unjust laws in our community or country?

## NOTES

Psalm 1 (along with Psalm 2) serves as an introduction to the Psalter (all the Psalm put together.) It is “a collection of prayers and songs composed through Israel’s history.” (Source: Harper Collins Study Bible).

10) Suggestions might include The Greatest Commandment (love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself) or Matthew 25—whatever you have done to the least of these you have done to me.

# THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** TAKING A STAND, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, ADVOCACY

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## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Play the song “Do Something” by Matthew West

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b\\_RjndG0IX8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_RjndG0IX8)

### Ask:

1. What lyrics stand out to you?
2. Do these word/beliefs give you confidence or hope? Why?
3. Are they challenging?
4. When we see wickedness or injustice, whose job is it to change it?
5. Did you know the UMC advocates that we take a stand on injustices around the world?
6. And as a church, we have specific statements about things like racism, immigration, voting rights, treatment of children, the environment and more.
7. Read through a *Social Principle*. How do you see the wickedness of the world or a call to righteousness in this statement? Is it easy to get behind or does it ruffle your feathers?
8. If you were to take action on this belief what do you think you might do?

### NOTES

Choose 2-5 of the *Social Principles* /or *Faith and Facts* cards to share with the students for reflection

# THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** TAKING A STAND, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, ADVOCACY

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## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Prayer for Martin Luther King Jr. Day in the *UM Hymnal*

**Say:**

“We remember Martin Luther King Jr.’s lament that ‘the contemporary church is often a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. It is so often the arch-supporter of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the Church the power structure of the average community is consoled by the Church’s silent and often vocal sanction of things as they are. Therefore, let us pray: [Dear God, let it be] that neither this congregation nor any congregation of Christ’s people may be silent in the fact of wrong, but that we may be disturbers of the status quo when that is God’s call to us.”

### NOTES

# FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** DEACONESS OLMA OLAY-MAY

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: ECONOMIC JUSTICE

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Jeremiah 4: 11-12; 22-28

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 *Book of Resolutions* #4115

**OBJECTIVE**

To have an understanding that faith in God is reflected in our actions and how we spend our wealth resources.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Song: Come, Emmanuel (by Twila Paris), paper plates, crayons/colored markers, *Faith and Fact* Cards, *Book of Resolutions*.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

**Read:**

Psalm 24: 4-9

<sup>4</sup> Make me to know your ways, O Lord;

teach me your paths

<sup>5</sup> Lead me in your truth,

and teach me

for you are the God of my salvation;

for you I wait all day long

<sup>6</sup> Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and

of your steadfast love,

for they have been from of old.

<sup>7</sup> Do not remember the sins of my youth

or my transgressions;

according to your steadfast love

remember me,

for your goodness' sake, O Lord!

<sup>8</sup> Good and upright is the Lord;

Therefore [God] instructs sinners in the way.

<sup>9</sup> [God] leads the humble in what is right,

and teaches the humble [the Lord's] way.

Song: Come, Emmanuel by Twila Paris (optional)

### NOTES

# FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

### Read Jeremiah 4: 11-12; 22-28

#### Ask:

1. Jeremiah spoke against the bad behavior of the people of Israel. People ignored him. Have you ever had to take a difficult and unpopular stand against something?
2. Truth may be difficult to pinpoint. Jeremiah was sure of the truth he was sharing. How can you be sure your thoughts are the real truth and not just your own perspective?
3. If you were Jeremiah, would you have had the courage to speak against everyone in your community?
4. In hindsight, it's easy to see that Jeremiah was right and everyone else was wrong. However, we don't have the benefit of hindsight when we are involved in a real situation. What strategies can we use to keep our faith in difficulties?
5. Jeremiah spoke out against idolatry. What forms of idolatry are present today?
6. How does idolatry affect our lives today? What are some of the consequences of idolatry?
7. Have you heard of the upside-down Kingdom of God? Frequently Jesus valued things that the world rejects. What the world rejected, Jesus valued. Jesus valued giving. The world values accumulating more and more. Jesus valued helping others. The world values helping ourselves to more. Many forms of idolatry are celebrated today. How can we build a better Kingdom of God here and now while wrestling with the tension of worldly kingdoms?

## NOTES

### Historical Context:

Jeremiah was written about the last days of Judah, ending with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 587 BC. This crisis is one of the main shaping events of the entire Old Testament.

The Babylonians, to the north of Judah, became a major power in the region when they defeated the Assyrians. The Babylonians had ambitions of expansion and Judah would become a target. Judah also had the Egyptian power to the South. Egypt and Babylon were enemies, and Judah was a buffer zone. Judah was squeezed between two larger and more powerful nations. Judah tried to go back and forth and make peace between the two enemies, but this ultimately proved futile. Babylon would move against Judah, destroying Jerusalem and the temple. The best and brightest citizens of Judah would be forced to move to Babylon to live in exile.

### Original Audience:

Jeremiah warns the people of Israel before the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 587 BCE.

### Motivations of the Author:

The preaching of Jeremiah speaks sharp words of judgment to an idolatrous people. Initially, Jeremiah speaks in the hope that they will turn from their wicked ways, but when they show a lack of repentance the prophet reveals an inevitable judgment. The temple of the Lord had stood in Jerusalem for more than 300 years. Surrounding nations had heard of Israel's God and how great God was and that God's throne was in Jerusalem. Yet the people of Israel did not follow God. They worshiped other gods, they pursued acts of injustice, and they ignored God's laws. God had enough. Israel would fall due to their disobedience.

# FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

In pairs or in small groups of 3-4, hand out the paper plates and color pencils/markers to each pair/group. Tell the students that the paper plate symbolizes the federal budget (think pie chart).

### Ask:

If you have the power to make the federal budget. How would you itemize the budget? (*Optional: before this activity come up with a list of things that the federal budget pays for – example: Social Security, Military, Education, etc., - links in the notes provides information*)

Share with the larger group.

### Say:

God made a promise to Israel, “You will be My people, and I will be your God” (Jeremiah 30: 22), but Israel abandoned their covenantal promise. They turned against God by worshipping other gods and disobeying God’s laws. They lived idolatrous lives – enriching themselves while neglecting the poor and the marginalized. They have valued material wealth and power over their relationship with God and other people. In today’s world, we can still see different forms of idolatry.

Let us take a look at the United States Federal budget (or another country’s federal budget). What does the budget tell us about its priorities? How do we as people of faith evaluate the budget in the lens of God?

In small groups/pairs look at the *Faith & Fact Cards* and the *Book of Resolutions*:

(Faith & Fact Card) *Budgets and Taxes*

(Faith & Fact Card) *Sustainability*

*Book of Resolutions* “*Negative Implications of US Deficit Spending*” (#4115, 2008 BOR)

Have each group share and report back on what they read.

## NOTES

Link to the U.S. Federal budget in 2017  
<https://www.cbo.gov/publication/53624>

<https://www.nationalpriorities.org/budget-basics/federal-budget-101/spending/>

Budget of the U.S. Government  
<https://www.usa.gov/budget#item-213709>

President’s Budget  
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/>



# FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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## Questions to consider in a larger group:

Government deficit spending is spending from tax revenues or borrowed money. With this current system, how does it affect families especially those in low socio-economic status? Who benefits from this system? Why is it important for the community of faith to be mindful of the Federal budget?

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

### Say:

Hubert H. Humphrey said, "The moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in shadows of life, the sick, the needy, and the handicapped."

### Pray:

O God, forgive us when we forget our covenant.  
Open my eyes that we may see the needs of others;  
Open our ears that we may hear their cries;  
Open our hearts that we may feel their anguish and their joy.  
Let us not be afraid to defend the oppressed, the poor, the powerless, because of the anger and might of the powerful.  
Show us where love and hope and faith are needed, and use us to bring them to those places.  
Open our ears and eyes, our hearts and lives that we may in these coming days be able to do some work of justice and peace for you. Amen.

(adapted from Sabeel prayer)

## NOTES

# FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** MICHELLE WOOD

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: MULTILATERALISM

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Jeremiah 8:18-9:1

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 Book of Resolutions, #6129

**OBJECTIVE**

To celebrate the cultural differences present in the world and the ways that the UMC works to build connections between countries.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Candle, Missionary bios, one bio per student ([www.umcmision.org/Explore-Our-Work/Missionaries-in-Service/Missionary-Profiles](http://www.umcmision.org/Explore-Our-Work/Missionaries-in-Service/Missionary-Profiles)), paper, pens, envelopes, stamps.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Light a candle in the middle of the space and invite your students to participate in this opening as you read.

**Say:**

You may focus on the candle or close your eyes, whichever posture feels more prayerful. Sit up where you are and feel your feet touching the ground in some way. Focus on your breath. There's no need to change it, just notice it. *Pause*

Your mind may wander. That's normal. When you notice it happen, there's no need to criticize yourself, simply focus back on your breath. Feel your breath traveling down your arms and into your fingers. Feel your breath surrounding any tension or pain in your body. Feel your breath spread down your legs to the tips of your toes. God is present in your breath. God is with you. *Pause*

Open your eyes as you feel ready.

### NOTES

# FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

Summarize background on Jeremiah (located in notes)

### Read Jeremiah 8:18-9:1

#### Ask:

1. What do you notice in this text?
2. Why is Jeremiah so upset? (Be ready to add to this component with information from the notes.)
3. Have you ever felt as though God was far away or absent? Are you willing to tell us about it?
4. How did God begin to feel close again or has God begun to feel close again?
5. Do you consider this scripture to be faithful to God? Why or why not?
6. How do you think God feels about our doubts and fears?  
(Sharing your doubts and fears with God can help to make your relationship with God stronger. Sometimes it can be tempting to want to be a “good, strong Christian” who never doubts God or God’s presence. Perhaps what God wants is you, just as you are, all of you. When you open yourself up to God, God can be there for you and give you what you need in that moment. There is incredible strength in being honest and vulnerable before God. God is big enough to handle your sadness, hurt, anger, and anxieties.)

## NOTES

### Background on Jeremiah

Jeremiah was most likely written as the Israelites were in exile from their homes and grappling with their theological beliefs. In 1 Kings 8, we learn about the arc of the covenant coming to the temple in Jerusalem and about how God’s presence filled the temple. Solomon then built a house for the Lord to reside in forever. The Israelites at the time believed that the temple housed the very presence and being of God. That temple, the one with God in it, was destroyed in 587 BCE by the Babylonians and the Israelite people were left traumatized and reacted in many ways. Some of those reactions are recorded in Jeremiah as the people wrestled with whether God was dead or how God continued to live and move in the world. These heartbreaking experiences forced the Israelites into a time of mourning and inventive theological reimagining.

Jeremiah seems chaotic and disjointed in terms of the plot line and literary themes. Some may call this impossibly confusing and inhibiting, but Kathleen O’Connor proposes that the beauty of such a style is that it reflects the pieces of shattered memories that were birthed from a nation having undergone trauma. She talks about this as pieces of shattered glass. Broken pieces of memories shining out of a traumatic event. Jeremiah was most likely compiled after the fall of Jerusalem, so the value of the text then resides in people looking back and trying to reconstruct their individual and collective stories out of the rubble. Stories to answer “Why us?” and “Where were you, God?” Jeremiah speaks less about who God is and more about how a traumatized people collectively integrates their experiences to meet the God of their ancestors in a new and profound way.

This text manifests the pain and anguish that exile is causing. Jeremiah’s people are being slain, and God seems distant. He asks if there is no balm in Gilead. “The area of Gilead, east of the Jordan, was noted for trading in balm, a kind of aromatic resin that was regarded as having properties that either eased pain or covered the smell of festering wounds. Yes, there should be healing in Gilead, so why not healing for the people?”\*

\* New Interpreter’s Bible. “Jeremiah 8:4–9:1, No Balm in Gilead” In Jeremiah. Ministry Matters edition.

# FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE MULTILATERALISM

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## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### Say:

The sorrow that is recorded in the book of Jeremiah reflects the pain that was inflicted by the Babylonian empire through the destruction of Jerusalem. In today's world, countries still inflict pain and destruction over other countries. In 2016, United Methodists adopted a statement, which says, "We, as United Methodists, must build the conditions for peace through development of confidence and trust between peoples and governments. Peace and societal harmony are greatly enhanced when peoples and nations cooperate to address global concerns for economic and environmental justice, for peace and security, and for human dignity and human rights. Addressing these in a manner that invites all peoples and nations to just, participatory, and democratic processes is the hallmark of international law and cooperation, which are the cornerstones of multilateralism" (2016 *Book of Resolutions*, #6129 "The United Methodist Church and Peace").

### Ask:

1. What do you think multilateralism means?
2. It means working together with other countries to address global concerns, rather than trying to fix global problems on our own.
3. If the foundation of peace is cooperation and trust between people and governments. How do you think we can begin to do that? (If someone is inspired with an idea, keep asking questions to see what all is needed to make it happen!)

### Say:

One way to build up trust is to build relationships with people from different countries. As the United Methodist Church, we have missionaries from all over the world, serving all over the world.

Today, we're each going to write a letter to a missionary who is currently serving. Each of you will get a paper with a missionary's name and some information about them. Take a minute to read it and then we'll come back together.

## NOTES

Print out bios of currently serving missionaries for your group to write to. Have enough for each person to get one. These bios can be found at [www.umcmmission.org/Explore-Our-Work/Missionaries-in-Service/Missionary-Profiles](http://www.umcmmission.org/Explore-Our-Work/Missionaries-in-Service/Missionary-Profiles) There is an advanced search function that can help you find people based on their category of service, service location, or where they are from. Consider choosing some Global Mission Fellows, who are 20-30 years old.

For the protection of our missionaries, their addresses are not online, but they will be shared when you email [infoserv@umcom.org](mailto:infoserv@umcom.org)

# FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** MULTILATERALISM

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What do you want to include in your letter?

(Record ideas on a board if possible to help spark ideas for some who might struggle with this. Be ready to assist anyone who needs extra help writing or spelling.)

Turn on some music in the background and make sure to give a five-minute warning before time is up.

## **CLOSING MOMENT** (5 MINUTES)

### **Closing Prayer:**

God of All, we are thankful for all the ways that You are working throughout the world. Help us to not be afraid of difference, but to approach differences with curiosity and celebration. We are sorry for the ways in which we feel entitled to take more than our share. We recognize that Your gift of creation is for all of Your children. Help us to work together and to show Your love to all that we meet. Amen.

### NOTES

# SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME REV. DON HANSHEW

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: CONSUMPTION

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Amos 6:1a, 4-7

### SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶163.E and ¶163.D

### OBJECTIVE

In addition to contextualizing the book of Amos, participants will constructively look at how they consume resources in their own context.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

Bibles, paper and pencils, *Social Principles* (perhaps use devices the youth may have, or the use of technology that can allow it to project to a screen/wall): <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/economic-community>. It would be helpful to narrow down and adapt the study to sections within these principles that are contextually relevant and important to the community in which this study will be facilitated.

### OPTIONAL SUPPLIES AND POTENTIAL OBJECT LESSON TOOLS

1. It is not required, but if questions can be presented for all students to see (projector, paper on a wall, chalkboard, etc.), participation will be increased.
2. If it is available, gather a few advertisements, or internet screenshots, of merchandise that targets wealthy people (i.e., Rolex, Fortune magazine, other business magazines). Additionally, gather pictures or screenshots of outdoor marketplace vendors in developing countries or in impoverished portions of the western world.
3. If possible, research how to purchase local food or consumable items in your community. The closing activity works best if the students have a specific action they can embrace. If printed materials are available, bring a few to the study. If someone who is a local producer is available to participate in the study, invite them to share during the group activity portion about how food as a local grower is the same and different than a non-local grower. Ideally, select a producer that is an organic and uses sustainable practices.

*Note: This curriculum is written for a group of 6-10 students. Larger groups will need to omit some questions and/or focus on a narrower portion of the scripture to keep within the 60-minute threshold for this study.*

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Welcome the students and do a simple check-in by asking each to share their name, and the name of a place they would like to shop if money was not an issue.

To give the students a few moments to gather their thoughts and to lead by example, you as the leader should be prepared to give your example first.

For example, *My name is Don. If I had a pocket full of money, I would go to a shop that sells fishing equipment.*

### NOTES

Establishing a sense that each child is important will ensure greater participation and better learning. To help the students feel valued, and if learning names is hard for you, write their names down with the fruit of their choice.

# SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE CONSUMPTION

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After all have shared, offer a prayer of invitation for the Holy Spirit to guide your time and ask God for a special blessing for each of the students present. If the group is not too large, speak each of the names of the students present in your prayer.

*For example:*

Most holy and wonderful God, we ask that You would guide our time today to once again hear Your ancient words come alive in our life. Give us courage to speak our questions, and faithfulness to wrestle with the answers. May You especially touch (names of youth) with Your wisdom and power. Guide me as a facilitator so that I can share Your word in a way that helps us live a holy and just life. Amen.

## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

Break the group into smaller groups of 2-3. The goal is to have a fun way for students to meet others as they jump into the study. For example: Invite all of the students with blue on to line up, or who liked a specific store to shop, in the order of shortest to tallest. As a facilitator, you could count off 1,2,3 as a way to break this group into groups of 2-3. Have fun with, not at the expense of, the kids.

Once groups are established, as a facilitator, you will ask the following questions. It is best if you have a way to write/project these questions for all to see. However, just asking the groups to work with the questions as you share them verbally is also fine.

### Questions For Small Groups:

(optional) Draw the attention of the students to the pictures at the center of the table or displayed on the wall.

1. What is the most expensive thing you have ever personally seen for sale? Where was it?  
(Some students may exaggerate or overstate prices. This is not a fact-finding session as a facilitator. You only want them to visualize the issues at hand in Amos.)

## NOTES

(optional) If you have pictures of markets or high-end advertisements of places to shop, have these available on the table for all to see.

As a facilitator, you may be tempted to make this a moral issue right out of the gate. That is a good idea but don't. Relax and just have fun. There will be an opportunity in the study to address issues of morality and justice. The purpose of this centering moment is to check in as a facilitator on where the students are on issues of consumption.

Once groups are established, your goal is to help the students understand the tension around consumption and meeting basic needs. This will help open their minds to the larger issues of conspicuous consumption and poverty later in the study. In some contexts this tension is obvious. In other tensions, this is less so.

Depending on the size of your group, you may need to be flexible on the questions you ask. This material is written for a group of 6-10 students. A larger group will need to omit some questions to finish in 60 minutes.

As you ask questions, remember that it takes at least 15 seconds for an introvert to process a deep question. Extroverts

# SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

2. In our community, what do you think is the most expensive thing you could buy?  
(Some students may mention land. This answer is a good answer, but challenge them to think of something that is expensive and not land.)

## For Large Group:

- Invite the students to share their answers with the larger group. Note any similarities and differences. Again, this is not a fact-finding session, just a contextualization of the issues in Amos for your local community. In some communities, there may be deep animosity between those who can purchase expensive things and those that cannot. Attempt to not feed this animosity.

As a facilitator, highlight how some people in wealth and some people in poverty are so insulated and familiar with their patterns of life that they are not aware of other issues and conditions in which others may live.

While the youth remain in these groups, explain the following context. Be sure to adapt as necessary.

## Say:

Today we are going to look at some scripture found in a book of the Bible called Amos. Amos is found in the Old Testament. It was written about 2,800 years ago. It is amazing to consider that something written down that long ago has survived, almost completely unchanged, until now!

## Questions For Larger Group:

1. Why do you think we have something so old in our Bible?  
(Some answers may be: It was important then. What Amos shared came to pass. It still has meaning today.)
2. Why do you think I (as a facilitator) feel it is important to look at this today?  
(We can learn something from it today that will help us in our faith. It will reveal something to us about how we can understand God in our community.)
3. Amos was a prophet. What do you think that means?

## NOTES

often start talking before they have something to say and process their thoughts externally. Allow silence and refrain from criticizing the students for not being courageous to share an answer or for being too chatty.

It is helpful to establish a few ground rules for how students can answer questions. For example, encourage students to wait for another student to answer a question before they answer yet another question. Clarify you are okay with silence as they think about their answers. Both of these “rules” will help create space for your introverted students to participate and help keep more vocal students from dominating the discussion.

**Amos:** Help the students understand that Amos was a prophet. How we understand the application and interpretation of prophecy is deeply influenced by context. However, several characteristics do remain constant. Almost all prophecy is deeply rooted in politics, the social and moral life of the people, and/or the issues of economic injustice.

There are five basic categories of a prophet in the Bible. Here are some examples: 1-an intermediary of God’s will in times of war (Deborah in Judges 4, 5), 2-as a kingmaker or king breaker (Samuel in both I and II Samuel), 3-Nathan as a conscience or critic of the king (II Samuel



# SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Help the kids understand that these words are old, were very important then, and have an important role in helping us be a follower of Jesus in the present.

## Ask:

- Put yourself in someone else's shoes. How could a child your age who is really, really, really (emphasize really) wealthy not understand how a child your age who is really, really, really poor live? Think of how they get food, go to school, go to church, find something to read, listen to music, etc.
- How about the opposite? How could a child who is really, really, really poor not understand how someone who is really, really, really wealthy live?

The point of these twin questions is to humanize both ends of the economic spectrum. In short, you are trying to help the kids see that when you are so focused on survival or entertainment, you often do not look up to notice how others live. Additionally, you may not even ask why there is a difference.

## Say:

In the time of Amos, the rich were becoming VERY rich, and the poor were becoming VERY poor. How? There had been a number of bad years of crop production. This meant that the more economically vulnerable people ended up eating much, if not all, of their seed grain. With little financial resources or physical capital to sell, they had to sell or borrow against the ancient land of their ancestors to buy seeds for the following growing season. These farms and plots of land had been in families for many hundreds of years. Additionally, specific Biblical laws limited how land could be sold between Hebrew tribes and families within the tribe, and how much interest could be charged (think low, if at all).

In many cases, this land would be returned to their original family after a number of years (7 or 50). This would ensure an equitable forward movement of a balanced economy. However, due to the string of poor years of crop production, the very wealthy were taking possession of the land of the economically fragile and allowing them to stay on the land as tenant farmers. This in itself is not a bad practice. However, the wealthy were charging a substantial amount of interest on the crop produced each year. This means that the tenant farmers were not able to save at a rate that would keep them financially stable or save enough in hopes of ever owning their own

## NOTES

7, 12), 4-Elijah as a wonder-working-holy person (book of Elijah and 1 Kings 17), 5-Miriam's role in communal prophecy and the phenomenon of visions or ecstasy (Exodus 15:20). Amos could be placed in a number of categories; however, he most clearly aligns with the last example as a prophet speaking to the community and interpreting visions from God.

There are 15 prophetic books in the Bible. Amos is classified as a minor prophet, and during the postexilic period, we find it written on the same scroll along with Hosea, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. As a unit, these prophets are understood as corresponding to the Major Prophets, which are Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. The terms minor and major do not represent a categorization of their merit but are representative of longer or shorter narratives.

Notice the sum of the total of Minor Prophets—12. This is representative of the 12 tribes of Israel, and a literary device to illustrate completeness, emphasizing that all people fall under these prophetic voices.

Historically, the Book of Amos has received little attention from Jewish or Christian communities as a whole. Why the neglect? Most scholars and many religious leaders have by the very nature of their education and upward mobility, are

# SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

land again. Their poverty also made them vulnerable to small bands of raiders who would travel the outskirts of the kingdom. This accumulation of the land by the wealthy, at the detriment of the poor, is (get ready for the \$50 word of the day) latifundialization. As the case in many communities, the very wealthy lived on top of the mountain and were very able to “look down” on the poor tenant farmers. Can you guess the name of the mountain where most of the very wealthy lived? It was called Mount Samaria. (Amos 6:1a)

## Ask:

1. How do you think God feels about the importance of work?
2. Why do you think God feels this way? Have you read this before, heard this? Does it just “feel” wrong to take advantage of others?  
(This question is to help you understand the importance of scripture in the life of the students and their level of comprehension. The answers to this question will help you pace the time around the Biblical context and life application. You may want to reference how God is a creating God and worked for six days creating and working, then rested on the 7<sup>th</sup>.)
3. How do you think God would feel if just a few very wealthy people made their money by forcing others to work hard in the heat and without much chance of ever getting a chance to go to school, improve their life, or accumulate resources so that they could have money in case of an emergency?  
(Amos 6:4-7)

## Read Amos 6:1a, 4-7

Invite the students to volunteer to read one verse at a time. Invite the students to be very expressive in their reading, adding drama and lots of hand motions if desired. This is participation by choice, so if necessary, you as a facilitator should be prepared to read and dramatically interpret the tone of the scripture.

## Ask:

1. In your own words, what was happening in this passage?  
(The conspicuous consumption of the wealthy was at the expense of the very poor. God warns that their prosperity was ill gained, and that judgment is coming. This judgement will fall first on the wealthy.)

## NOTES

from or entering into a place of privilege in the community. Additionally, many spiritual leaders are searching for words of hope and comfort for the community in which they offer spiritual influence. Amos offers scant little comfort to those who are wealthy, hold a privileged status in the community, or who sway power in the marketplace. The book of Amos is by in large a book of hope for the oppressed and those that advocate for justice. Furthermore, the Revised Common Lectionary generally cites Amos during a season that many in the Western World would refer to as a time of vacation.

The historical context of Amos is also important, but not required for this study. A Biblical timeline is helpful to understand the overlapping events and political realities from which Amos is speaking and how he intersects with other prophets of their era.

As on one of the first prophets of the 8th century, notice what access Amos had to the king and other officials and to what he was specifically prophesying against. His use of puns, poetry, and prose is a wonderful, yet striking, critique of any society that indulges in conspicuous consumption.

Lastly, it is important to understand the difference between the career of a prophet and the career of the book. The prophetic pronouncements were most likely collected

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2. What feelings do you hear in this passage? Be specific.
3. How do you think the wealthy people felt when they heard Amos share these words? The poor?  
(A consistent theme in Amos is that God is deeply displeased with those who take advantage of the poor. God does love all people, but our choices matter. A good example for the students to reference is the parable of the rich man and the poor man in Luke 16:19-31.)
4. All of us have purchased things we did not need. Nobody is perfect in how they use their resources. However, have you thought of how the things you purchase are made and who makes them?  
(Some students may be familiar with issues of Fair Trade, others may not. Humanize the collection of raw materials, development, production, shipping, and selling of products.)

### Say:

Many of us have not thought about our relationship with our money or those who make the things that we purchase or use regularly. We often underestimate the power we have given our resources and money. How we use money can identify what many of our values and hopes, good and bad. Remember, money is not a product of nature, it is created so that we can share and exchange goods and services. At some point in all of our lives, we will struggle with the power we give money in our lives. At some point our communities and world allowed money to over-reach its original role: to make the exchange of necessary goods easier and more efficient.

In the time of Amos, and probably in our own context, you can see examples of where we have made money more important than humans. Even at times, more important than the life of other humans and the conditions they have to work in order to produce the things that we need and “want.” Every nation, people and tribe have committed deplorable things in the pursuit of money: lie, cheat, steal, murder, enslave others, and enslave themselves for the empty joy of pursuing it.

When we are honest, most of us have a complicated relationship with money. Money is not evil. It is the love of money that is evil (1 Tim 6:10). Additionally, because many of us do not understand how the things we use daily are made, our relationship with what we purchase is often at odds with our Christian values, principles, and commitments.

### NOTES

and written down by the prophet’s disciples. The editing and arranging of these documents is something seldom talked about but is given clear evidence of in the Bible itself. Consult Jeremiah 36 for an example of material written down and then destroyed, to be written again with additional words! This is all evidence that collecting and editing of documents most likely happened for logical reasons, such as the death of a prophet, response to a national crisis, or the rejection of the words. What we read now are for sure the words of the prophet, but the scribes and disciples who transposed them also influenced their outcome.

It would be helpful to have printed out, or access to some way of projecting or reading portions of the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church. The sections highlighted for this study may not necessarily connect most directly with the students. You are encouraged to adapt as necessary.

For further reading, consult one of the following. These were accessed July 2018.

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/economic-community>

<https://www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/social-principles-and-resolutions/greed-4056>

<https://www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/social-principles-and-resolutions/a-call-for-faithful-lending-practices-4064>

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God had given specific rules, or guardrails, for the people of Israel to live within. They were breaking these rules by how they were treating other people. It is easy to point this out as we live on this side of history. However, we are probably equally guilty. Amos was a prophet. He spoke a hard word that is not easy to hear.

## What does the United Methodist Church Say? (Optional Group Activity)

### Say:

As United Methodist, we have a Biblically grounded and well-researched understanding of how sustainable economic systems should work. See the copies or access the digital pages referenced. Be sure to find a topic that is contextually relevant to your context. Have a printed version of the following.

Divide the groups in such a way that at least one will read and discuss the section on poverty and another will read and discuss the section on consumption. If there is only one group, pick the section that is most contextually relevant to your context. See the statements below.

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/economic-community> (accessed July 2018)

**Read: ¶163.E Poverty (first sentence)**

**Read: ¶163.D Consumption (first sentence)**

### Give them 7-10 minutes to do the following:

1. Read the section of the *Social Principles* assigned to your group
2. Restate the core of the section in your own words.
3. Think of an instance in your country, state, or local community that either does this well or does this poorly.

## NOTES

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## Ask:

1. Why would the United Methodist people have a statement like this?
2. Was it hard to think of an example, or easy? Why?

## Say:

Some of these economic problems seem very large and difficult. However, God consistently calls us to take action. That action can be something as simple as changing how you shop, where you spend your money, and how you understand the origins of the products you purchase. Additionally, God may be calling you to advocate for change on a legislative and relational level in your community that may change laws, boycott businesses, and protest non-violently.

Amos had a message to share from God. He used creative and memorable images to have an impact on the outcome of a just society that needed to change.

In your groups, think of three different ways you could do something that would have an impact on the economic challenges of your community. The three different actions need to meet the following criteria:

1. One needs to be something you can do from the comfort of your home (letter writing, social media, inform others in your home of the issues at stake and seek their input, etc.).
2. One needs to be something that will require you to talk with someone you don't know and/or visit a place you may not normally visit (that is safe for a child to visit with an adult).
3. The third can be your own choice, but you have to explain how it can have a helpful impact on the issue at hand.

As a facilitator, encourage discussion that opens their minds to the thought that they may have a prophetic influence on shaping a new generation of people in being a follower of Jesus.

## NOTES

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Help them understand that we do live in a world that does have physical limits. However, the finiteness of resources is not to be a threat. Instead, it creates a more intentional community that forces relationships to be respectful and patient as they manage these resources in such a way that we are able to be healthy and do the most good. God's economy ensures that all people have what they need to flourish.

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### 3 Options for Group Activity:

1. "If you have a guest."
2. "If you are not using a guest."
3. "What does the United Methodist Church Say?" (activity found in the Scripture Study Section)

### If You Have A Guest:

By this point in the study, the students may feel a little guilt or frustration about how they spend their resources. Introduce your guest to the students. Invite the guest to share how and why they do what they do, and the process through which they farm. Make sure your guest is aware of time constraints and/or pre-plan with the adults/custodians of the students that this session may be longer.

### If You Are Not Using A Guest:

By this point in the study, the students may feel a little guilt or frustration about how they spend their resources. Help the students see this as a step that can help them do something that can make a difference this week.

### Brainstorm:

Basic rules on how to make brainstorming work best:

- Everyone participates (more ideas, the better)
- No idea should be blocked.

## NOTES

Again, note that this material is prepared for a group of 6 youth. A larger group, or more talkative group, will require this material to be simplified and streamlined.

# SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

- All ideas are allowed, even if they seem absurd or foolish for the author.
- All ideas will be respected and not evaluated.
- Ideas already mentioned must be avoided.
- Ideas should not be detailed.

Question to brainstorm around:

Where is there a place or issue in our community where we could change the way we purchase items that would benefit the farmer, the environment, and you as a long-term consumer?

Depending on the setting (rural or urban, developed or developing), this question may need a little spark to get the ideas going. It would be appropriate to give some examples. For example, seasonal food that is produced locally, clothing or household supplies that are produced locally, etc.

Write all ideas for all to see. Take only about 3-5 minutes for the brainstorming.

Sorting:

See if the kids can sort the ideas into categories. Create at least two categories of brainstorming answers. For example, agricultural, textiles, services, etc.

Making A Decision:

Help the students understand they will be prioritizing the brainstorming results. Allow them to use a multi-vote technique with sticky dots or pencil marks.

This is how you do it. Draw a line to the side of each header you created (textiles, agriculture, etc. for example). Allow the kids to vote only once per issue, and for no more than three votes total. This is assuming that you have at least 5 or 6 categories. Invite the students to vote in silence so as not to influence the decision of their neighbor. Give only a few minutes to do this.

## NOTES

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## What To Do:

Unless a runoff is required, once it is clear that your group has made a decision ask the youth to decide what they feel they could do to have an impact on this issue this week. For example: Could they influence the adults in their life to purchase one, or more, locally sourced items for just one week? Could they do collective research to better understand the issues that face their community around local sourcing of food (laws, regulations, etc.). Encourage them to take clear steps and to clarify what they feel is a reachable goal in 7 days.

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

As a closing exercise invite the kids to understand that being a prophet is not necessarily a career or life-long calling. Amos was a “grower of sycamore figs” and a shepherd (Amos 7:14-15). He was called by God to give a word of justice for only a short season. Help them understand that they may very well be an Amos for their community, if only for such a time as this.

Invite the students to hold hands and make a circle as you prepare to close in prayer. Make an open invitation for a student to close the session in prayer. If none offer, as a facilitator, be prepared to close with a prayer similar to the following:

## Pray:

Most gracious and loving God, we thank You for the privilege of having the time and space to study and listen to Your word to direct our thoughts and actions. Our hopes and thoughts join together with millions of others around this world who are seeking peace, justice, and to be an example of Your love and grace. Guide us to be courageous as Amos in sharing what You have put in our hearts. Protect us from evil. Help us always trust in the power and name of Jesus. And all of God’s people said, Amen.

## NOTES



# SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. BEN ROBERTS AND WHITNEY KINSEY

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: ACTS OF MERCY & JUSTICE

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Luke 17:5-10

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

Personal and Social Holiness

**OBJECTIVE**

Youth will explore the idea that even small acts can add up to something great, and that for those who have much, much is expected.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Paper and Pens, Magazines, Rubber Bands, Heavy Book, Bibles preferably two different translations.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

**Ask:**

What are big events that have happened this week

- in your life
- in your community
- in our country

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

Pass out paper and pens

**Read Luke 17:5-10**

- Read through silently
- Read through second time aloud
- Record any immediate reactions to what they just hear (questions, whether it's something they didn't understand, something that made them happy/mad, etc.)
- Read a third time in a different translation (if anyone has other language skills, read it in that language as well) and create a translation from that language

### NOTES

Everything that we bring into the space will flavor how we read the scripture, so we want to be aware of all that is happening around us and what is most fresh on our minds.

# SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** ACTS OF MERCY & JUSTICE

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## Ask:

1. Did the other translation give you clarity on a question you had earlier?
2. Locate the passages for what is happening immediately before and immediately after (i.e., what is happening immediately before our passage, what is happening after? Are they on a journey, is there a particular place? Are there characters who are appearing and disappearing? Who is not present?)
3. Is it kings and queens? Disciples? Random unnamed people? Who has the voice? Who does not have a voice?

## Say/Summarize:

Our verses and parable brings to a close a section of teaching by Jesus to the disciples. In the opening of the chapter, Jesus warns against being a stumbling block to someone's faith (vs. 1-2). Then a second teaching about confrontation, forgiveness, and repentance (vs. 3-4). This is where our verses pick up with the Disciples requesting Jesus increase their faith so that they can do the thing Jesus has asked; not be a stumbling block, rebuke an offender, forgive someone over and over.

Jesus answers, like Jesus does, with a parable. The disciples' questions assume they have faith that can increase. They also say that faith is dynamic. That is something that can change in quantity or quality. In verse 6 Jesus essentially says the disciples have no faith, for if they had even a little the size of a mustard seed, they could do amazing things.

Finally, Jesus gives instructions on servanthood. In the first century context of our author of Luke, the audience would be familiar with the daily work of servants or slaves. A servant's task was always to care for the need of the master before tending to their own needs. In this parable, the disciples (and you) are asked to consider yourself to be the master. Consider verse 7, "would any of you" give special compensation to a servant who did their job? The expected answer is, "No," the servant didn't do anything special, they just did their job.

## NOTES

Reflection from contributor:

I doubt my own faith some days, but I still work to take small steps in faith to make a difference for my church, community, and neighbors. Even as I work, members of my community work also. As we layer upon one another our small acts of faith, we can make movement occur on large challenges.

At Foundry UMC in Washington, DC the community works weekly to help unhoused or low-income neighbors purchase their birth certificates or non-driver's identification cards. These are small acts, but they are a critical step on the route to ending someone's homelessness, unemployment, or ability to enroll in school. These less than mustard seed size acts of faith serve God and neighbor in the battle to end homelessness.

# SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** ACTS OF MERCY & JUSTICE

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Now, consider who is our (and the disciples') master? Are we our own master or is it Christ? We are called and asked to be servants of God; to love God and our neighbor in all we do. Do we do acts of service because we expect or want a reward? Or do we do acts of service because it is a life of servanthood into which God has called us?

Our world is fraught with monumental challenges like war, poverty, racism, income inequality, sexism, homophobia, violence, and gender discrimination.

## Ask:

1. How can we as small individual servants of God and neighbor be expected to make a difference in the face of all that swirls around us? Jesus reminds us of the mustard seed. Faith, even the size of this smallest of seeds, can be enough to become massive trees.
2. Think about this passage in terms of small acts of service. What are small things that you can do or participate in that add up to a lot?

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### Say:

We are going to do an activity today that requires some teamwork and ingenuity. We are going to have a contest to see who can build the tallest structure you can with these magazines that will support the book on top of it. It needs to be at least 4 inches off of the surface you build on. NOTE: building a higher structure does not give you more "points," you just need to build it at least 4 inches off the table or ground. Once I have passed out the supplies and when I say go, get to work! You have 5 minutes.

Each group should go find the space that they want to work in (preferably as far apart as possible), and I will bring around the supplies.

### Distribute Supplies:

Hand out the book, at least four newspapers, and several rubber bands.

## NOTES

Four magazines or newspapers and one heavy book per group. A handful of rubber bands or tape.

# SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

## Ask:

What did you decide to do for your building project? How did it work?

If no group has already figured it out, you can now reveal the way to make the magazines strong enough to hold the book. By rolling each magazine and then securing the roll with the rubber band, you make a strong pillar. Depending on the size of the book, a magazine pillar at each corner or one large clump of pillars at the center is strong enough to hold the book off the ground.

If you want to go further with this activity, you can introduce additional newspapers or magazines that can be used to create triangular trusses to prevent twisting and assist in stabilizing the pillars. Give students a chance to re-engineer if time permits.

## Say:

Today we read the story about faith the size of a mustard seed. Even this small amount of faith (and often smaller) can accomplish big tasks. By layering small acts of faith in an organized way, we can accomplish much for God and our neighbors.

Much like the layering and organizing of our small pieces of paper to hold a large book, we can layer and organize our service in the world to support the needs of our communities.

Solicit from the group and list big challenges in your community? (homelessness, poverty, food insecurity, addiction, racial justice, unemployment, etc.)

How are the services offered by your church layered with other services in your community to make a larger impact? List the services your church provides (pastoral care, support groups, language classes, resume preparation, job placement, clothing closets, food pantry, medical care, etc.)

## NOTES

# SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** ACTS OF MERCY & JUSTICE

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## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

**Say:**

We're going to select one organization to learn more about this week that directly addresses one of the issues that we listed today. Each of us is going to go home and learn more about this organization and what they do to help members of our community in need. Once we know more about what this organization does, we will schedule an activity to either serve directly with them or to do a fundraiser or mission project that will directly benefit them.

Close with a prayer keeping the needs that were raised in your class today in mind.

### NOTES

Leader, come prepared with a list of local organizations that are working to address some tangible needs in your community.

# EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. GAD MPOYO

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: GLOBAL MIGRATION/IMMIGRATION

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶162

**OBJECTIVE**

Help students seek the *Shalom* of their community because it is in seeking its Shalom that they will also find their *Shalom*!

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Bible, Faith & Fact Cards on Global Migration, paper, marker, laptop/projector or cell phone (optional)

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the time together and with God.

Pick a video or audio recording in a language other than English for 2 minutes and ask them the meaning of the song of this music video or audio?

Then ask, “How did you feel not being able to understand the language?”

This lesson will cover the story of Israelites’ life in a foreign land (Babylon) while in Exile as recorded in the book of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 29:1,4-7).

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

Provide a short background/context (provided in the notes/resource section) to the students, so they have some background context prior to reading the text for the day.

#### Read Jeremiah 29:1,4-7

Read the text together. Each person can read a verse.

#### Say:

Imagine yourself in the shoes of an exiled Jew in Babylon. Your Spirit is broken, your people have been humiliated and captured in a foreign land (Babylon). Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army has vandalized

### NOTES

YouTube Video of Sona Jobarteh

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtmmlOQnTXM>

In case the youth group does not have access to a projector or laptop to play the video, the facilitator can either play an audio speech or song in a language other than English using his or her cellphone/tablet.

#### Background and historical context:

This letter came to the people of Israel through the prophet Jeremiah. It happened when Babylon ruled the world. Nebuchadnezzar was a powerful king at that time. He sought to assimilate any nation and/or people who resisted its dominance.

During this time, Jeremiah accused the leaders of becoming corrupt, for abandoning the Torah and covenant, which led to a

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the temple. You have prayed for God to take you out of Babylon and return to your homeland. Then you hear that God has a message for you! God has heard your prayers! You are prepared to hear the message which comes from Jeremiah who says

“<sup>4</sup> Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: <sup>5</sup> Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. <sup>6</sup> Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. <sup>7</sup> But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. (Jeremiah 29:4-7)”

Keep imagining yourself in the shoes of one of the exiles in Babylon on that very day you received the news.

**Say:**

As someone that is in Babylon in exile – how do you feel hearing this from God?

(Wait for responses)

**Say:**

In my mind, I would say, “This can’t be true! Staying here for seventy years! What about all the prayers I prayed? Did they go in vain? I did not pray to God to stay here for seventy years! I did not sign up for this!

## NOTES

tragic result: social injustice. The most vulnerable people are the ones most affected: widows, orphans and immigrants.

### Who is Jeremiah?

This text is attributed to the prophet Jeremiah. You are probably familiar with Jeremiah’s name, but less familiar with who he was and what he wrote about. He’s not as popular as the prophet we know as Isaiah. Isaiah is full of powerful images of restoration (*Comfort ye, my people; prepare a highway in the wilderness. Isaiah 40:1*).

Jeremiah was a priest who lived and worked in Jerusalem in the final decade of the kingdom of Southern Judah. Called to warn Israel for breaking their covenant with God through idolatry and injustice, he warned them that the empire of Babylon would come as God’s servant to bring judgment on Israel by destroying Jerusalem and taking the people into Exile for 70 years. Unfortunately, his words became reality. Jeremiah lived through the siege and destruction of Jerusalem and witnessed the exile personally. After twenty years of being in ministry, God asked Jeremiah to put together his sermons, poems, essays. He hired a guy by the name of Baruch who compiled everything for him. Jeremiah is known as a messenger of God’s justice and grace.

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Think about someone who is 70 years old, what happened in their lifetime? Seventy years seems to be a long time.

**Ask:**

What major events happened in the past 70 years around the world and in this country?

Examples:

1940-1945: World War II

1946: First United Nation meeting

1948: Civil right icon Gandhi is assassinated in New Delhi

1965: Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and more than 2600 people are arrested in Selma, Alabama during a three-day demonstration against voter-registration rules

1960-1968: Vietnam war

1980: Congress passes the Refugee Acts

2008: US vote first black president Barack Obama

2018: France wins the soccer World Cup

**Ask:**

1. Why do you think the children of Israel were in exile in Babylon?
2. What are some of the main causes of global migration in our time? (War, political instabilities, search for better life, greed)

**Say:**

Hear/watch the story of Fony Joyce Vuni. Her story is just one of many in our world today that left their home for safety.

Show the story of Fony Joyce Vuni (YouTube) <https://youtube/1ucpGD4NddY>

Read the *Global Migration Faith and Fact Card* under the “What does the UMC Say?”

## NOTES

Fony’s story takes place in Nairobi, and she talks about her experience living in Kenya and the responsibility that goes with it. She also talks about wanting to go back to South Sudan, her home country, to reunite with her family (Those who survived the war).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ucpGD4NddY>



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Break up into groups/pairs (4). Each group take a statement and summarize the statement in your own words. Share with the larger group.

**Ask:**

What are some of the struggles mentioned in the *Faith and Fact Card* that refugee's today encounter?

**Say:**

Again imagine yourself as one of the exiled, you hear a word that has profound meaning in your native tongue, the word "Shalom."

**Ask:**

What does Shalom mean to you?

(Hebrew word Shalom means peace, prosperity, wholeness, welfare, etc.).

**Say:**

God is asking the people of Israel to pray and seek Shalom not only for themselves but also for the cities of Babylon. Then tells them that their wellbeing is tied up to the wellbeing of the Babylonians.

**Ask:**

Why do you think God is asking them to seek the wellbeing of the Babylonians?

**Say:**

God wants to give them a new identity, not as a captive, but as a messenger of Shalom. This new identity gives hope for the future of Israel, and it brings Israel back to its calling of bringing peace and justice to the world.

**Ask:**

1. Where has God placed you to live as an agent of Shalom?
2. How can you translate this same identity and lifestyle into your context as the Jewish exiles had to activate theirs?
3. What is your vision for shalom in your community?

## NOTES

This context of seeking the *shalom* of the community is similar to the African concept of Ubuntu. For a better understanding of Shalom, the facilitator can share with participants this short story: *One day an Anthropologist proposed a game to the African tribal children. He placed a basket of sweets near a tree and made the children stand 100 meters away. Then announced that whoever reaches first would get all the sweets in the basket. When he said "ready steady go"...*

*Do you know what the children did? They all held each other's hands, ran together towards the tree, divided the sweets equality among themselves, ate the sweets and enjoyed it. When the Anthropologist asked them why they did this, they answered. "Ubuntu" which meant- "How can one be happy when others are sad? How can I have while others don't?"*

Ubuntu means I am because we are. My life is inextricably connected to the life of the other as the God through Jeremiah was reminding the Israelites that their lives were connected to those of Babylonians; therefore they had to seek the wellbeing of the Babylonians as they sought their wellbeing.

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## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Supplies: Paper, Pen/Pencil

Divide the group into two groups. Group A is made up of Babylonians, and group B is made up of Israelites in Babylon.

Let each group read Jeremiah 29:4-7

Group A needs to come up with a strategy of working with strangers, people from a different culture, ethnicity and language (Israelites).

Group B: How would you and your community seek Shalom in Babylon? Remember you are in exile under the Babylonians and do not know much about Babylon (language, culture, etc.). What strategies will you put in place to make Babylon your home? (home, plant, marry, children, etc.,)

Once they have come up with strategies, have them share their plans.

### Ask:

1. What did you learn from this activity about what it might be like for refugees and for recent immigrants?
2. What are some things that you and the church can do to be a more welcoming church to refugees and immigrants?

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Hold hands together and pray for peace around the world by asking participants to name countries and communities that have been affected by war, political and economic instabilities.

### NOTES

- Things to consider:
- Building a home
  - Planting a garden (food)
  - Learn new customs/culture
  - Learn language
  - Education
  - Etc.

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**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. NEAL CHRISTIE

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: STRUGGLING TO BE PERSISTENT FOR JUSTICE

<b>SCRIPTURE PASSAGE</b>	Jeremiah 31:27-34; Psalm 119:97-104; Genesis 32:22-31; Psalm 121; 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5; Luke 18:1-8
<b>SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES</b>	2016-2020 <i>Social Principles</i> ¶163.B, 163.E, 161.A, the “Companion Litany to our Social Creed” 161.F, 164.F
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	Help students to be persistent for justice.
<b>SUPPLIES NEEDED</b>	<i>Social Principles</i> , Index Cards, Pen/Pencil, tape.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Invite students to sit comfortably and dim the lights. Place tea-candles in the center of the room.

Select two Scriptures to read from the lectionary (Jeremiah 31:27-34; Psalm 119:97-104; Genesis 32:22-31; Psalm 121; 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5; Luke 18:1-8). Either invite students to read them or share the reading between yourself and the second adult in the classroom.

Slowly reread the Scriptures a second time.

Ask the students to reflect on an image from the reading and ask these questions:

1. When I hear this Scripture, I imagine that...
2. When I listen to this Scripture, I feel...
3. This Scripture reminds me of...
4. What is one image from the Scripture that you want to share with the group?

### NOTES

The facilitator should be ready to slow down the centering time so that students are given time to reflect on the questions.

Answering the questions is not the main part of the exercise; reflecting on the Scripture is more important than answering all the questions.

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## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

Choose TWO of the following:

Read **Jeremiah 31:27-34**, *Social Principles* ¶163.B and ¶163.E

### Ask:

1. Have you ever felt like your conscience was speaking so loud that you just had to listen? Have you had to wrestle with your conscience?
2. What are some examples? What did your conscience have to say?
3. Is it possible that God wrestles with us to radically change people's hearts?
  - a. An example may be civil and human rights movements which have pricked the conscience of nations and moved them from following the rules or laws that oppressed people and to using their power to change laws and expand God's love and justice. A few examples might be the U.S. Civil Rights movement, the Anti-Apartheid Movement, the Anti-Nuclear Movement, Immigrant Welcoming Movements, Care for Creation Movements, Anti-Gun Violence Movement.
4. Think about how God is working through people from simply following the rules to making new rules that benefit brokenhearted people.

### Alternative activity:

As students are discussing the Scripture, you may want to engage them visually.

Ask students as you are explaining the passage and answering the questions, to draw on a common piece of paper images that come to mind. Invite them not to take too much time on one image but to sketch out their first impressions from the Scripture and/or the *Social Principles*.

Three sections could be "Enough," "Less than Enough," and "More than Enough."

### NOTES

#### Jeremiah 31:27-34

Jeremiah was a passionate prophet from the small country of Benjamin, a region controlled by its dominant neighbors; he is witness to the worst forms of economic and social abuses by ruthless landowners who maintained a concentration of the agricultural means of production and its resulting wealth in the hands of a few. This text hopes for a day when the land resources will return to those who labor and live on it when God will enter into a new covenant with the people and inscribe those things that God requires on people's hearts.

The image evokes not only the God of past liberation, who opposes slavery to economic exploitation but a God who holds the future and who brings people and the nation back to its best self. Jeremiah presumes the external expectations of the law which includes love of the widow, the orphan, the migrant and then extends it to include an internal appreciation for the law that offers comfort to a brokenhearted people.

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Read *Social Principles* ¶163.E

**Ask:**

1. What do you think of when I say the word law? What words or feelings do you associate with it?
2. Are they positive or negative or both? Who writes the laws? How about God's laws?
3. What is the greatest law in the Bible? (Mark 12:29-31 and Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

**Alternative activity:**

Check out a video of Dr. King on Youtube and his struggle for economic justice, human dignity and peace. Check out the Poor People's Campaign.

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/poor-peoples-campaign-asks-america-to-face-the-injustices-keeping-millions-in-poverty>

Read Psalm 119:97-104, *Social Principles* ¶161.A

**Ask:**

1. Have you ever felt like your conscience was speaking so loud that you just had to listen? Have you had to wrestle with your conscience?
2. What are some examples? What did your conscience have to say?
3. Is it possible that God wrestles with us to radically change people's hearts?

## NOTES

### Reflection on Question 3

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Love without power is anemic and sentimental. Power without love is reckless and abusive."

We need the law to help guide us to ensure justice and fairness for all people, but we also need love to help us feel empathy and compassion for those who suffer.

### Notes for Psalm 119:97-104

The Psalmist offers up words of appreciation and thanksgiving for the law. What is so curious is that keeping the law brings a sense of assurance and peace. If we understood the law as only keeping the rules to avoid severe consequences, it is hard to imagine the Psalmist describing the law as sweeter than honey!

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## Read Genesis 32:22-31

Invite students to do two brainstorms:

- “I don’t need to struggle with this because I’ve got it together...”
- “I still struggle with these things because....”
- “I see others struggling with this....”
- “When I see other kids struggling I tend to do....”

Ask students to include social issues other youth struggles within school or church or the town they live in or the city they live in.

## Read the Companion Litany with your students

**Ask:**

1. Ask them what struggles they see/hear in the Litany?
2. How does God and we as a church help people overcome struggle?
3. In what ways are we blessed because they invite us to support them in their struggle?

## NOTES

### Notes for Genesis 32:22-31

This familiar story describes Jacob wrestling with God. Jacob’s family was vulnerable; his wealth and safety depended on the care of God, and he was more open to God than ever. We will all have to wrestle with God about some things. Sometimes when we wrestle with God, we are wrestling with something in ourselves. Jacob “grasped” after the things he wanted. He was also a manipulator. He manipulated his father Isaac and his brother Esau. But God loves Jacob so much that God was willing to wrestle with him, to break him and then pick up the pieces.

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## Alternative activity:

Invite students to write a Litany for use in worship that reflects the struggles they see and hear about. Give them some ideas by referring to the Social Creed Litany or *Social Principles*. Share the Litany with the pastor and congregation.

## Read Psalm 121

One option if you would like to use this Psalm is to incorporate it into the Centering time at the opening or close of the class.

## Read 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

One option if you would like to use this Epistle is to read it in the context of the social struggle—who is persecuted not only for saying they believe in Christ but also for following Christ in the public square, in our broader society, in our political sphere?

## Read Luke 18:1-8, *Social Principles* ¶161.F and ¶164.F

### Ask:

1. What does it mean to lose heart? Does it mean to give up or to feel down or really get depressed? What else? (*Explain that when we lose heart, we lose our sense of focus and direction. We pay attention to our small, immediate desires. When we lose heart, the world is diminished and revolves around us.*)
2. Ask why was Jesus aware that those who followed his ways may lose heart.
3. Where were the widow's sons or brothers on whose generosity she relied? (We would expect her family to advocate for her, but they are entirely absent. Can you image standing alone and standing for your rights and for what you need and no one standing with you?)
4. Have you ever been put in a situation where you could not speak for yourself? How did it feel? How did people know what you wanted and needed?

## NOTES

### Notes Psalm 121

This brief Psalm emphasizes God's care in times of struggle. When we question, who will be there night or day this Psalm reminds us of God's abiding love and presence.

### Notes 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

Paul who has taught Timothy encourages Timothy during a time of increased social persecution of those who follow Jesus to persist and stay true to who Christ is.

### Notes Luke 18:1-8

"Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart." Perhaps this parable offers an illustration of two things: first how not to lose heart in the midst of injustice, and second, what prayer—insistent and persistent prayer that seeks justice—looks like in the public square.

In sharp contrast, this unnamed widow is the very picture of an expanded heart and purposefulness. She knows her need, knows its urgency, exactly where to go and whom to ask and then what to demand to meet a need. She does this with no guarantee that this need will be addressed.

In the first century, Palestine military occupation and economic exploitation was the new normal. Their world was broken as ours, defined by extreme gulfs in gender and class. The text does not say how she came to be a widow or how her spouse had

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5. Do you ever see the world divided into those who people treat as Respectable and those who people treat as Expendable?
6. Who has power in this parable? How did they get their power? Does it remind you of anything today?
7. Did the unjust judge ever convert, apologize, or admits he was wrong? No. And still, he finally changes his behavior and gives in to the widow.
8. What caused him to change his behavior if not public pressure?
9. How often have you waited for someone who acted unjustly to change their minds? How did you respond when they would not or when they would?
10. Have you ever wondered how long to keep asking? Or, can I trust this person or this system to treat me fairly?

## Alternative activity:

1. Ask the students to role-play the passage from Luke. You will need four characters: The Widow, the Unjust Judge, the Crowd who watches at the gate or Public Square.
2. Ask students to act out the parable and then ask:
3. Who did you really empathize with and why?
4. What did the widow really need?
5. Did she get justice?
6. What does this persistence show us about the kind of prayers we are to offer up to God?
7. What do these kinds of prayers say about who we are as Christians?

## NOTES

died. Perhaps he was a sharecropper working sixteen hours a day to pay off debts and died of a heart attack and lack of access to health care. Perhaps he died in an accident while fishing, or worked as a bricklayer and lacking a union his family lost death benefits. He may have been robbed on the Jericho Road on his way home, or he was imprisoned for an inability to pay his debts and died among the mass incarcerated. Maybe he could have been pressed into service by the Roman army and died as collateral damage in a colonial war fighting people he had never met to extract resources he would never benefit from.

The word widow in Hebrew means the “silent one” or “one who is unable to speak.” In Greek, widow is synonymous with “poverty.” But this woman is anything but silent! Maybe a prominent landlord forbid her to glean his fields as required by Mosaic Law or her home was foreclosed by a wealthy family in hopes of gentrifying the neighborhood.

First, the widow is an example of prayer. Notice that she does not wait for a prominent leader in the community to take up her case. She speaks for herself and voices her complaint again and again. Second, the unjust judge is an example to the world’s injustice. He belongs to a group of what I call “Respectables,” because he strives to accentuate his self-image over the plain-truth, fear over love, rule over law over generous grace,



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## Say:

Prayer also took place in the public square, and this is where Christianity grew. It did not grow in the Synagogue or among families. It happened at the city gate and in the public square where the rich and poor met and where those who made decisions that affected society met with those who lacked power or influence in society.

Sometimes prayer is the most meaningful not when we say it but when we act on it by helping those in need and speaking up to the powerful about what is right.

The Gospel changed the minds and hearts and behavior of those on the top and those on the bottom of society.

## Alternative activity:

If you read the *Social Principles*, then take your time. Several issues raised in each Social Principle may need to be explained in words that make sense to the youth. Explain that the *Social Principles* are not just what we say we stand for as a church, but they can be a prayer to God and a prayer for others because they explain what we want to see changed in the world and what we want to commit to doing to make a difference in the world for God's Kin-dom.

## NOTES

conformity rather than beloved community. The unjust judge was likely elected by an all-male group of village elders or appointed by a politician, and so political peonage ensured that their interests would be represented.

The judge says in verse 5, "She keeps bothering me" which literally in the Greek *anah* means to 'browbeat,' 'to strike under the eye,' 'to give a black eye.' Like all black eyes, the widow's relentless publically shaming of the judge causes him to give in and to avoid further embarrassment. If only we are patient enough, then things will change? The widow has to make a costly choice every single day.

Third, the widow illustrates how prayer and social action in the public square go hand in hand and march side by side. She meets the unjust judge at the gate. The gate was where the market was located and where farmers sold their produce. It was where workers who lived outside the city gate met the wealthy who lived inside the security of the city gate. Judges only heard cases in the public square and at the city gate where those two worlds met.

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## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Ask the students to take on the role of the Widow, the Unjust Judge, the Crowd who watches at the gate or public square.

Ask what new things the students learned from taking on their different roles. If you have time ask the students to act out the parable with different students taking on different roles a second time.

Another way to demonstrate this is by assigning the students three different roles. Ask the students to write on index cards their thoughts when they think of what each of the characters have done in the story.

Take the cards and tape them to three volunteer students who represent each character in the parable. Read out what was said about each character.

Ask each student who plays the role of a character in the parable how it felt to hear these things said about them. Ask them how it felt. Ask them what they needed and what would resolve the conflict.

Ask how this parable and the other Scriptures point to persistence in the face of an injustice, persistence to ask for what is needed to resolve a conflict, persistence to struggle for what is right.

Brainstorm what students (like the first Disciples) need to this long journey of justice—what do they need to take with them on this struggle to see God’s kin-dom “on earth as it is in heaven”?

Ask students to select five people from the congregation to interview. Decide on the questions to ask. Consider videoing their responses.

Guide students, ask members of the congregation questions about their struggles for justice, when they had to be persistent, who stood with them and who stood against them, how they felt, why others did or did not support them, what they learned from those struggles to do the right thing and pursue justice that they want others to remember.

Do an inventory of your community and choose one social justice struggle the students want to support.

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## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Invite personal prayers for the week.

Remind students to pray for places that struggle in the world today and to remember places that have overcome injustice through persistent struggle.

Close with the "Social Creed Litany."

NOTES

# TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** KIM JOHNSON

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: BASED ON STUDENT'S INTERESTS/PASSIONS

<b>SCRIPTURE PASSAGE</b>	Joel 2:23-32
<b>SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES</b>	Lesson allows for student's interests/passions to dictate which issue(s) to focus on.
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	Help student overcome what is broken and eliminate shame.
<b>SUPPLIES NEEDED</b>	Large sheets of paper (flip chart size), Markers (multiple colors), Bibles.
<b>OPTIONAL</b>	Broken tiles, tile adhesive, frame; Copies of the <i>Social Principles</i> .

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Question for opening reflection:

**Ask:**

Have you ever had or experienced something get broken, left to ruin, or destroyed and then...after time...rebuilt?

Offer an example to begin that is contextual of your area—is it a destructive storm that required rebuilding? Is it a fire somewhere in your community that was, after time, rebuilt? Perhaps it is a field or playground or community space that was once beautiful that became neglected, and then was restored?

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

**Read Joel 2: 23-32** (have students take turns reading individual verses or grouped sections 23-24, 25, 26, 27, 28-29, 30-32).

**Ask:**

- What kind of Scripture passage is this—are we lamenting (sad) or are we rejoicing (happy)?

### NOTES

To begin this lesson, help students think about things that were once whole, then were broken/destroyed/left to ruin, and then were restored.

The goal is to help them identify with the joy and hope that comes with that restoration. While also reflecting on that middle space where things were broken and dark before being made new.

This mindset will help guide your conversation and study of the passage.

It will be helpful for leaders to read the entirety of Joel before taking on this lesson. As one of the lesser known (and in youth ministry—lesser studied!) prophets, the insertion of Joel into the lectionary is awesome...and easily overlooked.

## TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** BASED ON STUDENT'S INTERESTS/PASSIONS

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Offer a bit of context for students from Joel 1-2:23 highlighting that this Scripture is the end of the story—a story that starts with locusts eating all the crops—great destruction, and then a call for repentance, and then God's promises resulting in this HAPPY passage of Scripture—we rejoice (2:23), we praise and are satisfied (2:26). (see notes/resources to facilitator)

Reflect together on our assigned portion of Scripture.

### Say:

Where are we in relation to this passage?

Most of us are persons who have what we need—we have food, clothing, shelter, in abundance. We are living into this prophecy, as people to whom God has given much.

### Ask:

1. What do you think is happening here—especially in verses 23-26?
2. How do you think it would feel to have abundance—great piles—of food where there once was scarcity?
3. What do you think about the word “repay” in verse 25?  
What does it mean to be repaid for something that was destroyed or taken away?
4. What are the broken places in our world that need to be restored? (We will work with this question in our group activity.)
5. What do you think God wants us to do to restore them?

### Say:

Look at the repeating language that closes verses 26 and 27.

*“And my people shall never again be put to shame.”*

### NOTES

Our Scripture passage comes in the middle of the book. We jump into the rejoicing and bountiful harvest as well as the promises that all will “eat plenty and be satisfied.” (2:26)

But this comes on the heels of what the NRSV subtitles “*Lament over the Ruin of the Country*” highlighting the locust plagues that ravage the crops and the invasions that leave ruined crops, destroyed grain, and joy withered away. (1:10-12)

The praise and joy seen in our passage is the aftermath, says our prophet, of all the ‘bad stuff’ being followed by a call to repentance (2:12-17) and God’s response: “Then the Lord became jealous for his land, and had pity on his people.” (2:18)

# TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

## Ask:

1. What do you think this repeated line means?
2. What does it mean to feel shame?
3. Why do you think those who'd suffered from the locust destruction of the crops felt shame?
4. Should those persons feel shame? Are the circumstances beyond their control?
5. What other areas or broken places in our world can cause feelings of shame?

## Say:

Reflecting on what is broken in our world and what causes shame can open the door to SO MANY different conversations on such varying topics. Based on how these conversations go, guide your students through the associated and appropriate Resolution or Social Principal. (*see facilitator notes*)

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### Say:

In this group activity, we will return to the question: *What are the broken places in our world that need to be restored?* And students will wrestle with some who/what/why questions therein.

Have students break up into groups or pairs. (*Having a leader in each group or floating between groups will be helpful—especially when you get to quadrant 4-ME!*)

Provide each group with a large sheet of paper and some pens/markers.

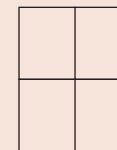
Have students divide the paper into four quadrants and label them World, Community, School, & Me.

## NOTES

There are SO MANY social issues that can be discussed through the lens of this passage—select the best one for your context—and/or follow your students' lead as they brainstorm and work through the passage together.

- Indigenous peoples: *Book of Resolutions* #6025, #3321, #3334, #6025
- 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: *Social Principles* ¶163.E, *Book of Resolutions* #4051, #4053
- Racism: *Social Principles* ¶162.A
- Human Sexuality: *Social Principles* ¶161.G

Take your large sheet of paper and divide it into four quadrants.



Label the quadrants: World, Community, School, & Me

Note- the 'me' quadrant might be hard and/or awkward for students—encourage them to write in code or symbols if that is easier for them.

## TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE BASED ON STUDENT'S INTERESTS/PASSIONS

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### Ask:

What are the broken places that need to be restored? For each of the quadrants. Have them list as many as they can think of for each in the time allowed. (6-8 minutes)

Have each group share some of the areas they've identified with the large group.

### Ask:

How can I help heal something that is broken?

### Reread Joel 2:28

Highlight for students that God has empowered **all people** in this passage.

*I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;  
your **sons and your daughters** shall prophesy,  
your old men shall dream dreams,  
and **your young men** shall see visions.*

Ask students to circle 1 area in EACH quadrant that they can make a difference in.

Help students brainstorm ways to begin or ideas for how to take that action.

Share these ideas with others in your church and create partnerships to empower students to take the first steps!

Note: Can use the optional mosaic activity during the Scripture Study portion—give students something to do with their hands while talking! Or, can do it here after reflection.

### NOTES

(bold text my emphasis)

Provide additional paper if necessary.  
Having different color markers to circle the one area for change will help give visual emphasis and will help with closing prayer.

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## Optional Activity:

Additional questions to go along with *Broken Made New* activity.

1. When you looked at the pile of broken tile pieces when we began our project, what did you think?
2. How did your opinion of these broken pieces change during our project?
3. Now that we have something NEW created from these broken pieces, what do you think?
4. How does all of this relate to what we've been talking about today?
5. These pieces will never form solid tiles again, but, instead are something pretty that reminds us of this time together and of our God... that's pretty cool. How does this relate to God's view of broken things?

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Close with a prayer, mentioning each of the circled action areas by name, and remembering to emphasize God's desire to remove the shame from such circumstances.

## NOTES

### Optional Activity: Broken Made New

Have students create a mosaic with tiles (these can be purchased or, at times, donated from a hardware store as samples).

Pre-break the tiles into pieces. Grab a frame from a craft store and some tile adhesive from the hardware store. As you discuss the brokenness and reflect on the questions in this lesson, have students be arranging the broken pieces of tile into a pattern (can be a shape like a cross, or a pattern of your choice). Then, use the additional *Broken Made New* reflection questions to reflect on this experience together. Hang your creation (once it dries) in a common space to remind students of their God who makes broken into new.

Simple instructions for mosaics can be found here:

<https://www.wikihow.com/>

[Make-a-Mosaic-from-Broken-Tiles](#)



# TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST/ALL SAINTS DAY

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. GRACE HAN

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: ADVOCACY

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

1908 Social Creed (pg. 9 of *2016-2020 Social Principles* handbook)

**OBJECTIVE**

How to make sense of injustice in the world. How to respond when it seems like God isn't listening or answering prayers.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Bibles, Newspapers/magazines/tablets, Large Paper, Pens/Pencils/Markers, *Faith & Fact* Cards, *Social Principles*, *Book of Resolutions*

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Check-In and Opening Discussion:

What is one headline you saw in the news this week that you had a question about?

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

Read the passage together as a group once. Explain that it is a conversation between Habakkuk and God.

Break up into two different groups/pairs (if the group is too big, break up into groups of 3-4 people).

**Read**

#### Group 1: (HABAKKUK GROUP)

Read: Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1

Discuss the following questions:

1. What is Habakkuk saying to God?
2. Why is Habakkuk upset?
3. What does Habakkuk do in 2:1?

#### Group 2: (GOD GROUP)

Read: Habakkuk 2:2-4

### NOTES

Bring in newspapers/magazines/tablets for youth to look through to see various media outlets. Limit news outlets to one or two nonpartisan news sources.

# TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST/ALL SAINTS DAY

## Ask:

1. How does God respond?
2. What do you think it means that there is a vision for the appointed time?
3. Why is God critical of “the proud” in 2:4?

Come back together to share and discuss.

Ask each group to share and present their answers.

## Give historical context:

Habakkuk is a minor prophet writing during the rise and advance of the Chaldeans (Babylonians). Most likely this was in the mid-late quarter of the 7th century. While the exact date isn't known, what we do know was that it was during the time when the Babylonians were growing in power and were on the verge of seizing Jerusalem. He is afraid that Judah will be wiped out. In part, he was right, because after the Babylonians seized power in Jerusalem, the Israelites were exiled from their land and forced to live in Babylon.

What is important to know is that there was great devastation and violence that had broken out across the land and justice has been replaced by injustice.

Habakkuk felt like God wasn't listening to his prayers.

## Ask:

Knowing this context, how does that help us understand Habakkuk's laments?

## Group discussion:

1. When have you felt like God didn't listen or answer your prayers? (Focus here on personal prayers.)
2. Do you ever feel like God doesn't listen or answer prayers around the world? (Focus here on larger community or global injustices?)  
(Write these out on a sheet of paper)

## NOTES

### Deeper Dive:

Use ancient Biblical maps to show where Babylon was in comparison to Judah.

### Deeper Dive:

What is the role of Lament in the Bible and the relationship between God and God's people? Read together Psalm 137. This is a Psalm of Lament written while the Israelites were in exile.

NOTE: If you have a more introverted group, each person could write down their answers to these questions. We will go back to them.)

**For Question 2:** larger community or global injustices, if students have a hard time coming up with them, bring up recent issues that they are struggling with.

# TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST/ALL SAINTS DAY

JUSTICE ISSUE ADVOCACY

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3. Do you ever feel like some people's prayers are answered more than others?
4. How does Habakkuk respond to these injustices?  
(2:1 "I will stand at my watchpost and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what he will answer concerning my complaint."  
(While Habakkuk was in a place of doubt and perplexity, we also see that Habakkuk was at the watchpost actively listening for God.)
5. How does God respond?  
(2:2-3, "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay."
  - God hasn't forgotten about God's people.
  - He assures Habakkuk and his people that there is a future for them, a vision that is coming.)

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### Ask:

1. When we see injustices, what should we do?
2. How does this passage tell us to respond?  
(There are four things that Habakkuk does, what are they?)
  - Praying to God
  - Protest to God
  - Listening on Watchposts
  - Writing Visions on Tablets
3. How does this passage help us understand the role of protest in our faith?
4. How does my church respond to these issues?

### NOTES

**For Question 3:** This is an opportunity to talk about Privilege.

**Question 1:** This is an opportunity to revisit some of the injustices named before in the Scripture study.

**Question 3:** This could be a very interesting conversation about the role of peaceful protest. Talk about the Civil Rights Movement, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, March on Washington, Freedom Summers.

**Question 4:** Have Social Principles available so that the youth can engage with what the church is doing.

# TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST/ALL SAINTS DAY

JUSTICE ISSUE ADVOCACY

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## ACTIVITY: Writing Visions on Tablets

Go back to the paper about issues and injustices around the community and world where it felt like God didn't listen or answer prayers.

Have some in-depth conversation about the issues that are listed. If the youth haven't named institutional injustices, the facilitator should bring some up:

(This can range from world hunger and poverty, separation of immigrant families, deportation of undocumented immigrants, racial injustice including "Black Lives Matter" movement, racially motivated police activity, including shootings and deaths.)

As you have this conversation, invite the youth to think about how these injustices should be resolved.

Each person/group will write out their own vision on tablets.

(Can have tablets cut out of paper, or if able, use computer tablets)

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Go around and share the visions written on their tablets.

Close with Prayer.

## NOTES

Read together What the Methodist Episcopal Church stands for (p.9, *Social Principles of the United Methodist Church*)

Use the *Faith and Facts* booklet to see what the church says about various "hot topic" issues in the news.

# TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. BEN ROBERTS AND WHITNEY KINSEY

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: PERSONAL AND SOCIAL HOLINESS

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Psalms 17:1-9

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

Personal and Social Holiness

**OBJECTIVE**

We can bring ourselves to God however we are, whether that's through crying, yelling, speaking, anger – no matter what, God will hear us – how can we hear those around us and respond to them no matter where they are coming from?

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Pen, Paper, Blindfold.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

What are the big events that have happened this week

- in your life
- in your community
- in your country

### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

#### Read Psalm 17:1-9

Pass out paper and pens

- Read through silently
- Read through second time aloud
- Record any immediate reactions to what they just hear (questions, whether it's something they didn't understand, something that made them happy/mad, etc.)
- Read a third time in a different translation (if anyone has other language skills, read it in that language as well) and create a translation from that language

**Ask:**

1. Did the other translation give you clarity on a question you had earlier?

### NOTES

Everything that we bring into the space will flavor how we read the scripture, so we want to be aware of all that is happening around us and what is most fresh on our minds.

Need Paper and Pens

## TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

2. Locate the passages for what is happening immediately before and immediately after (i.e., what is happening immediately before our passage, what is happening after? Are they on a journey, is there a particular place? Are there characters who are appearing and disappearing? Who is not present?)
3. Is it kings and queens? Disciples? Random unnamed people? Who has a voice? Who does not have a voice?

### Summarize/Say:

When confronted by a challenge we often encourage and/or communicate with God through prayer. The psalmist is writing a prayer essentially saying they are under threat and need help. If we look at the broader context of the Psalm (the second half of Psalm 17), we notice the Psalmist justifies their prayer by comparing their own goodness to the wickedness of enemies.

According to the New Interpreters Bible Commentary, the full Psalm follows this pattern:

- A. v. 4 the psalmist's non-violence
- B. v. 5 the psalmist's stability
- C. v. 6 the psalmist's humble speech
- D. vs. 7-9 central petition (re-read vs. 7-9)
- C. v. 10 the wicked's evil speech
- B. v. 11 the wicked's attempt to destabilize
- A. v. 12 the wicked's violence<sup>6</sup>

This may sound like an odd way to communicate one's problems. We do not condone or encourage each other to make your own point by saying other people are bad. However, this is what the Psalmist chose to do. They felt their best chance of having their central petition heard by God or gaining favor with God was to display their own goodness while calling other bad. The Psalmist may seem self-righteous, prideful, braggadocios, or conceited. Does it sound bad to you?

<sup>6</sup> McCann, J. Clinton. Psalms, pg.740. *The New Interpreters Bible. The First Book of Maccabees, the Second Book of Maccabees, Introduction to Hebrew Poetry, the Book of Job, the Book of Psalms.* IV, Abingdon, 1996.

### NOTES

## TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** PERSONAL AND SOCIAL HOLINESS

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Whatever you may feel about the author, their ultimate goal was to be heard by God in a season of challenge. How do you communicate with God when experiencing a challenge or desperation? Have you ever noticed your neighbors communicating in a way different from what you consider “normal?” Perhaps a neighbor or someone you see in the media yells, or use different languages, or choose to communicate through actions over words.

At the end of the day, we all want to be heard by God or by one another. In the midst of great difficulty, we cannot be expected to be perfect communicators. Our emotions, locations, or choice of words may be a barrier to neighbors hearing us. When you or a neighbor is experiencing a challenge, how can you listen beyond the way the person communicates to hear their central petition?

Many of us desire a connection to God and answers to our prayers just like the psalmist did. We don’t know about you, but for us, often God shows up or communicates through the people we meet.

### GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

**Say:**

Today, we’re going to play a game that helps us hear from and work together with people who may have a different way of hearing or communicating.

(Play as many rounds as you have time for, switching roles each time).

**Say:**

In this activity, the goal will be to line up in a specific order (shoulder to shoulder, stretching across your meeting space). However, in this game, we are going to simulate different ways to communicate and to receive communication.

### NOTES

Supplies needed:

Blindfold

Paper and Pen

Prep Ahead of Time:

Cards with instructions such as “cannot talk,” “can only communicate in writing,” “can only use items in the room to communicate.”

Note: those with severe limitations on how they can communicate may become frustrated. Allow some room for this, but also be sure to step in if your group is not being accommodating.

## TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** PERSONAL AND SOCIAL HOLINESS

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### Say:

I will pass out a card that will describe your communication style. You may find that your card allows you to talk and hear, that you are blindfolded, that you can only write, etc. Throughout each round, you cannot change or alter what is on your card, and you are limited by what it describes.

Allow everyone to ask questions and to understand what their role is. After this has happened, you say: Now, we will communicate ONLY using what is printed on your card. Please do not break your communication style until this round is over.

For this first round, I want you to line up in order of your birthdays. Only the day and month matter (i.e., April 1 would be before May 2 but after February 27). Allow them time to work on it, reminding them that they should ONLY communicate with the style they've been given.

For the second round, I want you to line up in order of the number of siblings. Those with the most siblings should be on my left, and those with the fewest sibling should be on my right.

### **SMALLER GROUP MODIFICATION** (best for groups less than 5)

Assign the kids into pairs or trios. Assign them a task (could be something as simple as a walk around the room in a particular pattern). Pass out the cards and have them try to accomplish these tasks with the communication challenges listed on the cards.

Have everyone sit in a circle and debrief:

### Ask:

1. What felt frustrating about this experience?
2. For those of you who had some type of communication difficulty, what did you find to be the most difficult?
3. For those who could fully communicate, what did you find to be the most difficult?
4. Did anyone feel that they were overlooked and/or not listened to? What happened?

### NOTES

When you switch to the next scenario, make sure that person gets to play another role.



# TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** PERSONAL AND SOCIAL HOLINESS

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## Transition:

1. Who are some people that are overlooked or not listened to?
2. How do you think it must feel to be overlooked or not listened to?
3. What are some things we can do to be a listener or to be someone who sees another person, whether in your family, in your school, community, or church?

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Have your youth write down their answer to the last two questions. Ask them to take this paper home with them and put it somewhere where they can see it each day.

Close with a prayer asking God to help us see and hear our neighbors who might be overlooked. Help us to show God's love through the compassionate act of seeing someone else.

## NOTES

Paper/Pens

# TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** REV. ALLIE ROSNER BASS

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE/SUSTAINABILITY

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Isaiah 65:17-25

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶160, 2016-2020 Book of Resolutions #1032 and #1033

**OBJECTIVE**

Students will look at the topic of environmental justice and our responsibility for a sustainable world through Isaiah's vision of a new heaven and a new earth.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Paper, printer-sized or mural; newspapers/magazines/online printouts to look for headlines related to environmental justice; glue sticks; optional map (link provided) or Study Bible with map section, Handout, *Faith & Fact Cards*, *Social Principles*, *Book of Resolutions*.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

**Psalm 65** (read responsively)

Handout

**Read:**

God, you are the hope of all the ends of the earth

**And of the farthest seas.**

By your strength you established the mountains;

**You silence the roaring of the seas;**

Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs;

**you make sunrise and sunset shout for joy.**

You visit the earth and water it,

**You provide the people with food,**

You water it abundantly,

**Blessing its growth.**

You crown the year with abundance

**The roads overflow with richness.**

The pastures of the wilderness overflow,

**The hills rejoice,**

The meadows clothe themselves with flocks,

**the valleys deck themselves with grain,**

**they shout and sing together for joy.**

### NOTES

The Book of Psalm 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 Psalm all the time. When we read Psalm 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 65 praises God for the beauty and abundance of God's creation, which gives a foundation for our Christian belief in environmental justice and stewardship.

## TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUSTICE ISSUE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE/SUSTAINABILITY

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### SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

#### Read Isaiah 65:17-25

**Say:**

The people of Israel had been through a lot by the time Isaiah wrote these words. Long ago, Israel had split into two kingdoms, north, and south. The Northern Kingdom was conquered by the Assyrian Empire in 722 BCE. The Southern Kingdom – including Jerusalem – escaped, only to be conquered by the Babylonian Empire in 587 BCE. The Babylonians captured the rich, powerful, and educated people from Jerusalem and forced them to move across the empire. (This was called “exile.”) Only the poor people remained.

**Ask:**

What do you think life must have been like for the people who stayed? For the people who were forced to move? Do you know of any countries or people who are ruled by other countries or people today?

**Say:**

The Prophets had different ideas of why God allowed the exile to happen. Some of them thought that it was because God’s people hadn’t been obedient. But the Prophets also didn’t believe that the exile would last forever. They envisioned a day when the people would be allowed back in Jerusalem and the surrounding land, and they would be able to have a new and better relationship with God. Isaiah’s vision of “new heavens and a new earth” is one example of this hope for a better day.

Isaiah lists a number of things that will be better in this time to come: no one will have reason to cry, no one will die before their time, the people will be in the land and the land will bear fruit for them, and not even animals will hurt each other anymore.

**Ask:**

What would you add to Isaiah’s list? What would be part of a “perfect world” or “new earth”?

**Say:**

Isaiah can help us think about what it means to live in a place, or the world, long-term. The people built houses and planted vineyards as a sign of their new relationship with God and their plan to not leave the land

#### NOTES

You can find a map of the Northern and Southern kingdoms online (for example, <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/tools/map-gallery/i/map-israel-and-judah>) or in a study Bible.

There were two main ways the Prophets thought people had been disobedient: 1) they worshiped the gods of the surrounding peoples, and 2) the rich didn’t treat the poor well.

Optional: Read Genesis 3, the story of the fall. List the curses put on the land in this chapter – do you hear those curses being healed or reversed in this chapter of Isaiah?

## TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE/SUSTAINABILITY

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again. We can also live in a way that indicates our desire for ourselves and future generations to be in our world long-term as a “new earth.”

### GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Divide students into groups to read and discuss UMC *Social Principles* ¶160 (intro); *Book of Resolutions* #1032 and #1033 (Excerpts from GBCS “Faith and Facts: Sustainability”)

#### Ask:

1. Isaiah talks about people living in exile, or separated from the land that is their home. When we don’t pay attention to the ways we use up resources and how our land is affected, that is also a way we are separated from the land that is our home (Even when we still live here!)
2. Do you see the effects of how we disregard God’s creation – for example, by using too much of the earth’s resources, like gas and heat and food we waste – in your own life? How do you hear other people talking about this, such as your parents or people on the news? If you don’t see effects in your own life, who do you think sees the worst effects?
3. How are you responsible for keeping our environment healthy – or renewing it when it’s not? What do you already do? What could or should you be doing?

Gather back into the large group for activity – New Earth mural

Set out supplies including paper, newspapers, glue sticks, markers. Divide mural into two sections: “Exile” and “New Earth.” If you aren’t using mural paper, divide kids into two groups to do their own collages.

The “Exile” group will make a collage of ways we are “exiled” or not living in a healthy relationship with our land, using headlines, handwritten words, and/or drawings.

#### NOTES

Students may need help understanding how poor people are disproportionately affected by pollution and the overuse of earth’s resources. You might use Hurricane Maria and how it has affected Puerto Rico as an example. As climate change creates more extreme weather, poor people are sometimes unable to rebuild their homes or seek refuge elsewhere (e.g., the mainland US.) They also may lack the political power that would draw attention to their homes and neighborhoods (for example, to get electricity back.) You can find more facts about who has access to earth’s resources and who doesn’t in the GBCS “Faith and Facts” book (Clean Water, Food Justice, Sustainability.)

Some ideas for action:

- Find ways with your family to reduce your carbon footprint (ideas: walk to school instead of driving, try “Meatless Mondays,” turn the heat down a few degrees.)
- Look for ways to buy and use less disposable plastic, like taking reusable bags to the store.
- Look around your church for ways to reduce waste and promote sustainability (ideas: replacing Styrofoam cups

# TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE/SUSTAINABILITY

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The “New Earth” group will do the same, but making a collage of what God’s renewed creation might look like – and how we can help God in making it new and sustainable. Afterward, have kids share what they have found or drawn.

**Ask:**

What more can we do? See suggestions to side.

**CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)**

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**

with mugs during coffee hour, making sure lights are turned off when people are done in rooms.) If your church has a committee that does something like this, ask if you can attend a meeting.

# TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE/SUSTAINABILITY

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## HANDOUT

### Centering Moment Prayer

**Psalm 65** (read responsively)

God, you are the hope of all the ends of the earth

**And of the farthest seas.**

By your strength you established the mountains;

**You silence the roaring of the seas;**

Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs;

**you make sunrise and sunset shout for joy.**

You visit the earth and water it,

**You provide the people with food,**

You water it abundantly,

**Blessing its growth.**

You crown the year with abundance

**The roads overflow with richness.**

The pastures of the wilderness overflow,

**The hills rejoice,**

The meadows clothe themselves with flocks,

**the valleys deck themselves with grain,**

**they shout and sing together for joy.**

# TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** CHRIS WILTERDINK

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS – SECURITY/SAFETY

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Psalms 46

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 Book of Resolutions #1033

**OBJECTIVE**

Help youth understand that the movement of people should be more like the movement of God, not limited by obstructions created by people.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Wall-building supplies (foodstuffs like marshmallows, peanut butter, etc. or a mix of paper and craft supplies), small sized action figures. Small balls (ping pong, golf, tennis, etc.) Water, a small ramp (made of construction paper or lightweight wood)

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Welcome and say hello. Say a prayer to open the lesson. Consider using or modifying Pope Francis' "A Prayer for Our Earth" found at <http://time.com/3925814/pope-francis-climate-change-encyclical-prayers/>

**Pray:**

**A prayer for our earth**

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor,

help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives,

that we may protect the world and not prey on it,

that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts

of those who look only for gain

at the expense of the poor and the earth.

### NOTES

Determine the best way to read the prayer. Either read as the leader or invite the group to pray together if they are comfortable reading aloud.

# TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**JUSTICE ISSUE** CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS – SECURITY/SAFETY

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Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,  
to be filled with awe and contemplation,  
to recognize that we are profoundly united  
with every creature  
as we journey towards your infinite light.  
We thank you for being with us each day.  
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle  
for justice, love and peace. AMEN

## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

### Read Psalm 46:1-3

#### Ask:

1. How do you understand chaos? Where do you see chaos in your world?
2. What does refuge mean? Do you know anyone who is currently seeking refuge?
3. Take a “Selah” and reflect on where you go and what you do when you need refuge from chaos.

### Read Psalm 46:4-7

#### Ask:

1. When something is waterproof, what is it designed to keep out? What are walls designed to do?
2. How could the way that a river, or stream, moves make God glad?
3. The City of God and the “holy habitation” are usually considered Jerusalem and the temple where the Ark of the Covenant were kept. Why would people want to be close to God for protection?
4. Take a “Selah” and reflect on the desire for protection, and things that people design to create a sense of protection.

## NOTES

The author of Psalm 46 was familiar with the Old Testament beliefs about creation, including the concepts of chaos. Out of chaos, God brings order. God provides strength and refuge using the image of a city fortress. Back in the day, cities would often have a specific god, with a statue or temple for that god in the city. It was thought that as long as the god remained in the city, it would be protected. For people living in the city, being under the protection of that God gave comfort.

Our understanding of God is that God is not limited to a city or a building, but that God is in all things. Therefore the imagery of mountains, seas, rivers, and sun can be read as ways of appreciating the protection that God offers us through nature. To not care for nature is to not care about God. The word “Selah” is often translated as a “holy pause” or break between readings or songs. It is a chance



# TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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## Read Psalm 46:8-11

### Ask:

1. Why would God end wars?
2. What earthly resources do people find themselves fighting over?
3. Take a “Selah” and reflect on how you can “be still” and “know God” even in the midst of fighting.

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### Say:

Ancient cities were thought to be protected by their gods like we read in verses 4-7. They were also protected by tall and thick walls. In times of war, these walls would keep invaders out and citizens of the city in. Let’s see how well you can build walls to create places of refuge.

Get the variety of wall building supplies and action figures. This can be as messy or as neat as you make it. Youth are challenged as pairs or groups to create a wall that will create a place of refuge for their action figure (meant to be the city). The wall will first protect the action figures against the lightweight balls, then heavier balls, and finally water. The balls are meant to symbolize people outside the city or “invaders.”

Take out the ramp and demonstrate how the youth’s creations will be put to the test at the bottom of the ramp. The ramp should have enough slope that the balls and water will run smoothly down toward the wall creations.

Give youth 5-7 minutes to build their walls. When they are complete, have the youth arrange their walls at the bottom of the ramp and test the strength of the walls with the balls. If you provided heavier items to build the walls, and something to act like a mortar (like peanut butter or glue) the walls should create a place of refuge for the action figures.

Take a moment to celebrate the protection that was created, then say something like:

## NOTES

to take a breath and reflect. This lesson encourages the use of “Selah” time in both the scripture study and the group activity. Each “Selah” can be from 1-3 minutes. It can simply be silence, or it could include paper and a writing utensil for youth to write their reflections.

There are more questions than can be tackled in 25 minutes. Provide 5-7 minutes to build the walls and another 2-3 to try and knock them down.

This leaves about 15 minutes for questions or exploring the *Social Principles* related to migration and the freedom of movement.

The wall building supplies should be prepared ahead of time, and creative. **DO NOT MAKE THE WALLS WATER TIGHT WITH RUBBER**, etc. If using food, consider using supplies for S’mores (chocolate, marshmallows, graham crackers, maybe peanut butter) The group can then snack on leftover items after construction.

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### Say:

Great job on protecting your action figure (city). Let's take a minute to talk about those walls. They did an excellent job of separating your action figure from the balls. In our scripture, we read that God is in the midst of the city. Therefore, we did a great job of protecting God, right? But we know that God is actually in all things. When we built our walls, what we really created was a separation between God and other people. We actually prevented people from coming in to contact with God.

God does not move like people do. God is in all things, and in all the world. Verse 4 talks about a river that makes the city of God glad. The river is full of water, that moves a bit more like God moves. Let's see how your walls hold up to water.

Arrange walls at the bottom of the ramp, pour enough water that water begins to seep through the constructed walls. Each and every wall, given enough time, should see water make it through (as long as you didn't provide rubber!)

### Say:

"See how the water tends to get in no matter what we do? God is like that. God is not limited to one place, but moves freely touching and changing lives all over the world."

### Ask:

1. Instead of finding refuge behind walls, how can we be still and find peace with God no matter where we are in the world?
2. If we let people move like God moves, freely and in contact with each other, what would be different in the world?
3. What barriers do you know about that prevent people from moving to places of refuge or getting to know God?
4. Consider referring to Social Principles ¶ 163E. Consider the following questions: What factors are listed as barriers to the free movement of people? How can we better understand strangers and sojourners?

### NOTES

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## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

**Say:**

Thank you for the time together today. I hope we have all come to remember that God does not move like people move. Our roles as Christians is to help the love of God flow like water across any man-made barriers.

### NOTES

Add in the sharing of joys and concerns, or additional questions that came from the activity. Close with a prayer from a participant.

# FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**CONTRIBUTOR NAME** KIM JOHNSON

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

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Isaiah 2:1-5

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

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

**OBJECTIVE**

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.

### 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, 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.

#### 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.

Pray this prayer together to begin.

# FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

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

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## 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!

Have students take a piece of paper and divide it in half by folding.

(5 min) 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

(5 min) 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:

1. What is different about the two drawings you made (Luke vs. Isaiah)?
2. Which feels more Christmas-y?
3. What stands out to you about your drawing of the Isaiah passage?
4. What stands out about your partner's drawing of the Isaiah passage?

### 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

## NOTES

5. Do you see a house on a mountain and a manger in a field?

- a. How are these drawings different?
- b. 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.*

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

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

### Say:

What would it mean to be a people who do not “lift up sword against 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:

1. What does this verse make you feel?
2. Do you think we will ever beat our swords into plowshares?

# FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

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3. What would that mean for our country?

For our world?

4. Does the violence and war that is prevalent in the world affect you? Does it impact our community?

a. What kinds of violence DO affect you?

b. [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?]

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)

## 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

## 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

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## 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.

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 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

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.

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



# FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

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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

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Isaiah 11:1-10

### SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES

2016-2020 *Social Principles* ¶165. A, 2016-2020 *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.

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Have students share where they witness 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

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### 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:**

1. Why are these two paired together?
2. 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* say 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 & newspaper 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 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, “Food Justice” and ¶163.E, “Poverty.”

### OBJECTIVE

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

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

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

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

#### 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 Psalm 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 Psalm all the time. When we read Psalm 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 MINUTES)

### 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:

1. 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?
2. Why do you think she went to see Elizabeth? How do you think she felt after Elizabeth’s reaction?
3. 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:

1. 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?
2. 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?
3. How do you think Mary’s song would sound different to those in the “powerful” group and those in the “lowly” group?
4. 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 an blessing and inheritance (Genesis 27)
- Parable of rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)

Note also: Mary sings in 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 MINUTES)

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

### Ask:

1. 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?
2. 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 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?

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.

### Ask:

What more can we do? (see suggestions in the notes)

## 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](http://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](http://www.riseagainsthunger.org)) at your church.
- Plan a letter-writing campaign to your congresspeople through Bread for the World ([www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org))

# THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**JUSTICE ISSUE** HUNGER AND POVERTY, FOOD JUSTICE

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## **CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)**

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

# THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**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

### 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 to the issues of poverty as it relates to our communities.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

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 MINUTES)

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

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Ask the question: 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

(Students can take turns reading verses.)

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

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?

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.

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 largely anonymous couple. Into a yet "unformed" family, into their insecurity, anxiety, and fears, Jesus is born.

## 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 an blessing and inheritance (Genesis 27)
- Parable of rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)

Note also: Mary sings in past tense, even though the things she says has yet to happen. 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.

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## 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?

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 is Jesus 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 MINUTES)

(Setup for group activity found in notes.)

When all the students have their index cards and are standing in a line. Read the following 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 backwards.
- 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.

## 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, such as red, yellow, and blue. There should be more yellow (or whatever color you are substituting for yellow) cards than any other color and only a few blue (or the substitution) cards. For example, if there are 30 participants, have 3 blue cards, 20 yellow, and 8 red.
- Place a piece of tape on the floor in the center of a large room. Then

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- 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.
- 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.

### NOTES

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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- 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.

### Now ask the following questions:

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

### NOTES

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**Social Principles:** What does the *Social Principles* say about poverty?

“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)

## Questions for Discussion

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

## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

### 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 circumstance. 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*

## NOTES

You may want to Google the national poverty level and policies in your area that assist low-income families. Are there any new legislations 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

## HANDOUT

Prayer by 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** REV. DR. GRACE CAJIUAT

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: MIGRATION/HUMAN RIGHTS OF IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

Matthew 2:13-23

**SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES**

2016-2020 Social Principles ¶ 162

**OBJECTIVE**

To understand that the plight of migrants is part of our faith story and we need to empathize and act justly.

**SUPPLIES NEEDED**

Bibles, Easel pads, markers, glue or tape, poster boards or large newsprints, newspapers, printed copies of news pertaining to the plights of migrants and refugees, bullying.

### LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

#### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Check-in: Acknowledging Christmas

**Ask:**

1. How was your Christmas?
2. What are you thankful for? What are you grateful for?
3. What's coming up? Example: school starting, family gathering/leaving, vacation
4. What's going on in your community?
5. What would you like to pray for?

**Moment of Prayer:**

Ask the group to share any joys or thanksgivings. End each prayer of joy or thanksgiving with "with gratitude" and everybody responds with "We give you thanks."

Ask the group to share any concerns. End each prayer of concern with "in your mercy." And everybody responds with "hear our prayer."

#### NOTES

It's important that participants know their voice is important. But it is also important to let them be quiet and reflective to respect their learning and participatory style.

You may use this time to have a feel for the participants and where they are in their lives, acknowledging Christmas to segue to the plight of the Holy Family. You can give a summary of the story and what Joseph had to go through to protect his family. Also shows where God is and who God is to Joseph.



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End the prayer with:

“O God of creation, who gave us the greatest gift, Yourself in the life of a baby, we give You thanks. We thank You for the time of celebration, taking time off school to be with family and friends. As we continue this Christmastide, let us be mindful of all Your children who need You. May we get to know them through Your servant Joseph, earthly father of Jesus, who is part of our own faith story. May we learn how to hear You like he did and like him, follow you with courage. In Jesus name. Amen.”

## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MINUTES)

### Read Matthew 2:13-23

Ask different participants to read different passages out loud.

Ask them to tell the story in their own words.

On the board or an easel pad, ask who the characters are and the events:

- The angel
- Joseph
- Herod
- Archelaus, son of Herod who took over Judea when Herod died

1. Why were Joseph, Mary, and Jesus escaping to Egypt?
2. What did Herod order when he found out he was tricked by the wise men?

## NOTES

Scripture readings pertaining to migrants:

- Leviticus 19:33-34
- Matthew 25:35b
- Hebrews 13:2
- 1 Corinthians 12:24b-26a

You may want to put these scripture readings on paper and post them everywhere in the room.

Evil happened in this story, so we might ask where God was in all of this. It isn't that evil has no place in our lives when we believe, but that we acknowledge God does not cause evil but is present in times of evil and guides us to peace and safety; being present in the healing of our pain, and leads us to love than to hate.

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3. Who was Joseph?
  - A Jew who was a refugee because he feared for his family's life.
  - He migrated to Egypt for some time to stay away from Herod, who wanted to kill Jesus.
  - He was on his way back to Bethlehem, his hometown, but because of Archelaus and knowing they were still in danger, he went to the district of Galilee, in the town of Nazareth.
  - He then was a migrant, who sought refuge in a different place, so his family could live.

Ask participants to reflect on their own experience of feeling unsafe.

1. Like Joseph, have you ever experienced feeling unsafe?
2. Have you been afraid for your life? Have you been bullied in school or in your neighborhood? Have you seen someone bullied, attacked, harassed? How did you feel? What did you do?
3. Who is Joseph now?
  - People, men and women, who flee their homes because their lives are in danger,
4. Who was Herod?
  - Herod had the power and used his authority to try to kill a threat (Jesus) to his rule.
5. Who is Herod now?
6. Who has the power and use their authority to harm people?
7. What has happened recently that reminds you of atrocities like the massacre of the infants?
  - Children fleeing their homes
  - Children separated from their parents
  - What else?

## NOTES

Matthew's narrative touches on the fulfillment of scripture: Bethlehem in Micah 5:2, Egypt in Hosea 11:1, Galilee in Isaiah 9:1. Matthew attributes Jesus being raised in Nazareth to a prophecy in Isaiah.

For our study, what is in focus is the forced departure of Jesus and his parents—a powerful story that brings to light the awful reality of our brothers and sisters in many parts of the world, that then bring them to the US and to other countries.

We look then at how God is present when we hear God and act through our faith, discipleship, social activism.

Coming from a personal experience, relate those experiences with empathy to a migrant's experience of being unsafe in their own country, like in Honduras, where women and children are harassed, raped, and sometimes, killed.

Check the website [workingpreacher.org](http://workingpreacher.org) for exegesis on Matthew 2:13-23 to give you different insights and interpretations on the passage.

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## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

### Say:

Proverbs 31:8-9 “Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

For your neighbors who are threatened...

Define refugee – is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.

Not all movements—migration or immigration—are unhampered and chosen freely. Forced migration is a denial of human dignity and a violation of human rights. Addressing forced migration at countries of origin is the way to address its root causes.

### Optional Group Activities:

Pray for migrants and refugees in corporate worship. Have group write a prayer petition to be offered in corporate worship the next Sunday.

Create a poster board of the plights of migrants and refugees from the news (either online or papers) to let congregation know what the group learned as well as educating the congregation. Include the social services available in your community that offer help to migrants and refugees.

Ask the pastor if they can have a station where their poster boards can be seen. Have the youth be present with the poster boards for people to ask questions as well as offer tidbits.

Write letters to the congress people and representatives requesting compassionate just treatment for migrants and refugees.

Write a petition that the whole congregation can sign during the education presentation. Urge your government to adopt policies for just and hospitable welcome of refugees and migrants. Advocate for just and expeditious processing of refugee applications.

Tell your member of Congress to fix our broken immigration system. (Refer to GBCS’s statements: [www.umcjustice.org](http://www.umcjustice.org))

## NOTES

Take this time to talk about the big picture of violence and harm towards a person—from a personal and individual experience (bullying) to a group and societal experience, like the Palestinian plight in their own country, Rohingya refugee crisis, the separation of families in the US, Syria, Sudan, and other countries.

Check out GBCS’s Faith and Facts literature on Civil and Human Rights, Peace with Justice.

Read ¶ 162 and ¶ 165 in the 2016 Book of Discipline, Social Principles

Some websites to check for more information:

- Church World Service: [www.cwsglobal.org](http://www.cwsglobal.org)
- General Board of Church and Society: [www.umcjustice.org](http://www.umcjustice.org)
- Justice for Our Neighbors: [www.njfon.org](http://www.njfon.org)
- United Methodists for Kairos Response: [www.kairosresponse.org](http://www.kairosresponse.org)

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## CLOSING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

At the closing, form a circle, go around the circle, and have each participant offer one word that captures their experience of this Bible Study (hope, faith, concern, etc.).

As in the beginning, ask what they would like to lift up to God (petition) and end each petition with “In your mercy”... everybody responds “Hear our prayer.”

Invite them to lift up a joy and or hope to look forward to. End each petition with “With gratitude”... everybody responds “We give you thanks!”

End with a prayer followed by the Lord’s Prayer.

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