

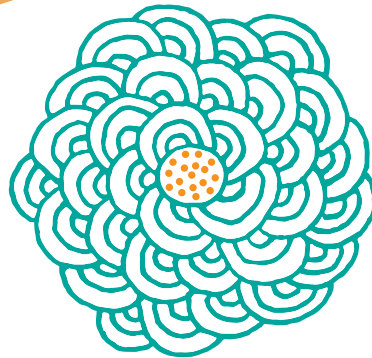
*This curriculum frees people to live their Reformed faith by*

**REMEMBERING • RECLAIMING • REARTICULATING**

WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT WHO GOD IS AND WHO WE ARE

SO THE PATTERNS OF OUR LIVES EMBODY THE

LIBERATING LOVE AND GRACE OF JESUS CHRIST.



TESTIMONY

**VOCABULARY OF FAITH**

• A SIX-WEEK CURRICULUM •

WHO IS GOD	1	ALMIGHTY
WHO ARE WE	2	IMAGO DEI
GOD IN RELATIONSHIP	3	COVENANT
GOD WHO SAVES	4	GRACE
GOD OF ACTION	5	LOVE
GOD OF BELONGING	6	CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

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Requester

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# OVERVIEW

How do we articulate what we believe fluently and in ways that clearly demonstrate our faith to the world? How do we live and move and have our being in ways that embody our deepest Christian commitments? These questions guided the creation of this curriculum. Having heard from church leaders that they struggled to find accessible, affordable, engaging materials from a Reformed theological perspective, the Presbyterian Outlook, sought a grant to fund a project that resulted in "A Vocabulary of Faith." The team that created this content wanted to offer the church material that could be used in-person or virtually, with people long steeped in the faith and with those new to Christianity. After energetic brainstorming sessions, lots of flipcharts and one well-used dry erase board, the idea of creating a vocabulary of faith emerged. What key concepts should be understood for discipleship to take hold and be embodied? What words and ideas do we need to remember, reclaim and rearticulate in our chapter of God's salvation history?

The curriculum writers, in good Reformed fashion, began with God. Unit one of "A Vocabulary of Faith" explores testimony: What do we know through Scripture, tradition and experience about God? Unit one covers various attributes and actions of God, inviting participants to not only intellectually assent to these theological and biblical concepts, but seek to live them in ways that demonstrate the liberating love and grace of Jesus Christ. Unit 2 of "A Vocabulary of Faith" focuses on our response to God through exploring the multiple ways we bear witness to the God who claims and calls us. Unit 1 and Unit 2 are a call and response that can be taught in sequence or as individual sessions.

"A Vocabulary of Faith" assumes that faith formation is lifelong. Disciples always have more to learn and God is always doing a new thing. The creators' hope is that each unit of "A Vocabulary of Faith" spurs conversation, invites real-life questions and encourages disciples of Jesus Christ to remember, reclaim and rearticulate what they believe about who God is and who in turn they are, all to the end of glorifying God and embodying the love and grace of Jesus Christ in the world. Such dynamic faith cannot be found apart from authentic, relational, trusting, intimate communities that offer the space to share openly, care deeply, foster accountability and welcome radically. The Presbyterian Outlook prayerfully hopes that with the help of the Holy Spirit "A Vocabulary of Faith" both nurtures and creates such sacred space.



## CORE VALUES

- » We can live into our baptismal vows.
- » We can learn to live our theological witness.
- » We live our best theological lives.
- » We manifest the transformational nature of our baptism by living into its radical reality.
- » We can intentionally decenter whiteness, achievement-based worth and other death-dealing practices and attitudes.
- » We value, live into and intentionally build authentic, relational, trusting, intimate communities so that the stories we tell ourselves and our children - about who God is and who we are - shape our embodied faith in ways that reflect the life-giving liberation of God's best intention for all who are created in the Divine Image.



T E S T I M O N Y

VOCABULARY OF FAITH

## Video Instructions

The video supplements for each session are available on the Outlook website using the link and password below. They can be viewed online together, via screen share in virtual gatherings or share this link and password with your class.

**[pres-outlook.org/TestimonyVideos](https://pres-outlook.org/TestimonyVideos)**  
**password: TestimonyVideo20**

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VOCABULARY OF FAITH  
**WHO IS GOD**  
**ALMIGHTY**

**TEACHING PROPOSITION**

Through Scripture's testimony to God as Creator, Almighty, Sovereign and Triune, we come to understand God's powerful choice of providential care and loving kindness, so that we can live in confident and assured faith.



## TEXTS

- » Genesis 1:1-3
- » Isaiah 43:1-21
- » Genesis 17:1-2
- » Exodus 6:1-8
- » Job 42:1-6
- » Romans 8:18-30
- » 2 Corinthians 3:14
- » Matthew 3:16-17
- » Matthew 28:19

## TEACHING OUTLINE

- » 5 min Welcome and Opening Prayer
- » 5 min What words would you use to describe God?
- » 15 min Remembering how God is described in Scripture and the confessions
- » 15 min Rearticulating who God is according to Scripture and the confessions
- » 15 min Reclaiming who God is here and now
- » 5 min Closing psalm

## LEADER PREPARATION (IN PERSON)

- » Make copies of Appendix A or write the four descriptors (Creator, Almighty, Sovereign, Triune) on Dry-erase board or Flipchart with related scripture passages underneath each one or create a PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi slide with the information on it.
- » Familiarize yourself with the teaching insights in Appendix B and weave it into your teaching remarks.
- » Download video and test it on equipment
- » Make copies of Appendix C

## RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- » Copies of Appendices
- » Dry-erase board or Flipchart and markers.
- » AV equipment for showing video and/or any media presentation.

## LEADER PREPARATION (VIRTUAL)

- » Prepare to email Appendices A, C and D to participants or post them in the chat function of your Videoconferencing platform or create a PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi slide with the information and prepare to share your screen.
- » Familiarize yourself with the teaching insights in Appendix B and weave it into your teaching remarks.
- » Ensure the settings on your Videoconferencing platform are configured for the best sound and video if you sharing screen.
- » Download video and test it on equipment

## RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- » Open appendices on computer so they are ready to screen share.
- » Open video on computer so it is ready to show in screen share.
- » Post appendices in chat function of Videoconferencing platform or email them to participants.

ARRIVE EARLY TO SET OUT BIBLES AND ARRANGE THE SEATS IN A WAY THAT IS CONDUCIVE TO TODAY'S SESSION, YOUR TEACHING STYLE AND THE PARTICIPANTS' LEARNING STYLES. IF TEACHING VIRTUALLY, TEST TECHNOLOGY; TEND TO VISUALS SUCH AS LIGHTING, BACKGROUND AND SOUND; AND EMAIL APPENDICES OR HANDOUTS TO PARTICIPANTS. OPEN ON YOUR COMPUTER AND HAVE READY ANY ITEMS YOU WILL USE IN SCREEN-SHARE MODE.

# GATHERING RITUAL

WELCOME PEOPLE AS THEY ARRIVE IN PERSON OR VIRTUALLY. WHEN IT IS TIME TO BEGIN, INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO JOIN YOU IN PRAYER OR YOUR REGULAR OPENING RITUAL. YOU MAY USE THIS PRAYER OR INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO SHARE THEIR JOYS AND CONCERNS, THEN LEAD THEM IN PRAYER.

Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth, we praise you for we are fearfully and wonderfully made. There is nowhere we can flee from you, no place or experience that is God forsaken. You made us in your image, claimed us as your own and called us to be stewards of your mysteries. You yearn to be in relationship with us, stopping at nothing, sending your only Son to redeem the world. You refuse to

leave us alone, giving us the Comforter, the Advocate, the Holy Spirit to remind us of your teachings, provide us the courage to follow them and grant us the words to share them. Trusting your promise to be in the midst of us when we gather, we rest in your presence and pray for your guidance that all that is done and said here today will glorify you. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

## • REMEMBERING •

SCRIPTURE'S TESTIMONY TO GOD AS CREATOR, ALMIGHTY, SOVEREIGN AND TRIUNE

IN THIS SECTION OF THE SESSION, YOU ARE ANSWERING THE QUESTION, "WHAT DO YOU WANT PARTICIPANTS TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT GOD?" THE SCRIPTURE EXPLORATION AND THE TEACHING POINTS IN THIS SECTION WILL HELP PARTICIPANTS UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE'S WITNESS TO WHO GOD IS AND IS NOT.



### ASK

- » What words would you use to describe God?
- » Complete this sentence: God is ...
- » Complete this sentence: God is not ...
- » Where did your descriptions of God originate? What is their source (hymns, Bible, mentors, teachers)?

MOVE INTO THE NEXT SECTION OF THE SESSION BY INCORPORATING THE FOLLOWING TEACHING POINTS INTO THE TRANSITION:



## TEACHING POINTS

- » Our understanding of who God is comes from many sources. Not all of our understandings are commensurate with the biblical witness.
- » We need to examine our understanding of who God is and see if it is consistent with what the Bible reveals and what our Reformed tradition articulates.
- » God is bigger than our human understanding. We can never possibly know God completely. Nonetheless, God does reveal God's self through Scripture, the person of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.
- » There are two ways to describe God: Who God is (cataphatic theology) and who God is not (apophatic theology). Both ways are important avenues to a fuller knowledge of God.

DIVIDE CLASS INTO FIVE GROUPS AND GIVE FOUR GROUPS A COPY OF THE SCRIPTURE READINGS ASSIGNED FOR AN ATTRIBUTE OF GOD (APPENDIX A) AND THE FIFTH GROUP A COPY OF THE CONFESSIONS (APPENDIX C). ASK THEM TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:



## REFLECT

- » What does this passage tell us about who God is?
- » Does this passage tell us anything about who or what God is not?
- » Have you experienced God in the way(s) this passage describes?
- » Read aloud the passage from the Book of Confessions.  
How is God described in this confession?

INVITE EACH GROUP TO SHARE RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS.  
MAKE NOTE OF KEY FINDINGS IN EACH TEXT.

# • RECLAIMING •

## GOD'S POWERFUL CHOICE OF PROVIDENTIAL CARE AND LOVING KINDNESS

HERE IS WHERE YOU, AS THE TEACHER, PROVIDE THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD TO INCREASE THE PARTICIPANTS' VOCABULARY OF FAITH. THIS IS THE SECTION OF THE SESSION WHERE YOU ARE ANSWERING THE QUESTION, "WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR OUR FAITH, OUR LIVES, OUR CHURCH, OUR COMMUNITY OR WORLD TO UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WHO GOD IS?" THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS TO DO THIS, AND THE DECISION WILL BE BASED ON YOUR TEACHING STYLE AND THE PARTICIPANTS' LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES. WE HAVE PROVIDED TWO RESOURCES FOR YOU TO WORK WITH TO CRAFT THIS PART OF YOUR SESSION:



## RESOURCES .....

- » **APPENDIX B** — At the end of this session you will find "Insights on Who God Is" (Appendix B). It provides theological content for understanding and teaching the characteristics of God. You can use the material to create a PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi, to craft a mini-lecture or to cull out particular points you want to share with the class. You may use this appendix to craft teaching points to weave into the discussion. Think of this as a "cheat sheet" that we have assembled so your research time is minimized.
- » **VIDEO** — A short 7-11 minute video is also provided for you to use. A professor, a pastor/educator and a lay leader each briefly share their thoughts on who God is. You can use this video to introduce the topic, to start the discussion or to reinforce the teaching points you developed from "Insights on Who God Is" (Appendix B). You may recap the key points of the video, biblical passages and confessions, then invite questions and discussion. You may also choose not to use the video.

WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED THIS SECTION, TRANSITION INTO A TIME OF DISCERNMENT.

# • REARTICULATING •

## SCRIPTURE'S TESTIMONY TO LIVING FAITH WITH CONFIDENCE AND ASSURANCE

IN THIS SECTION OF THE SESSION, EACH PARTICIPANT IS ANSWERING THE QUESTION, "HOW WILL I (MY FAMILY, THE CHURCH) LIVE DIFFERENTLY NOW THAT I UNDERSTAND BETTER WHO GOD IS?"

MOVE INTO THE NEXT SECTION BY INCORPORATING THE FOLLOWING TEACHING POINTS INTO THE TRANSITION:



### TEACHING POINTS

- » While Martin Luther may not have intended to break with the Roman Catholic Church, his insistence on the centrality of Scripture as our authority in matters of faith changed the trajectory of history.
- » Our own theological roots may lie with John Calvin, a second-generation Reformer, whose zealotness for Scripture as the primary way in which we come to knowledge of God reminds us that our confidence in who God is, and who God is not, comes from the Bible's testimony and not through our own means.
- » Calvin also taught that knowledge of God, which leads to knowledge of self, must always be in service to joining in God's ongoing work in the world. We cannot simply close the Bible and say to ourselves, "Well, that was interesting," and go on our merry way as if nothing has changed.
- » We should come to the study of Scripture with the hopeful expectation that we will be changed by our encounter with its living testimony and the work of the Holy Spirit.

EXPLAIN THAT THIS SECTION OF THE SESSION IS FOR DISCERNING THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN AND THROUGH US. DISCERNMENT ABOUT FAITHFUL LIVING IS BEST DONE IN COMMUNITY. USE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, OR THOSE OF YOUR OWN, TO GO DEEPER, TO PROMPT HONEST, VULNERABLE AND DEEP DISCUSSION ABOUT EMBODYING OUR FAITH IN THE WORLD. THIS CAN BE DONE AS A WHOLE GROUP, IN SMALL GROUPS OR IN PAIRS. IN THIS SESSION WE ARE CREATING SPACE FOR THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN BUILDING A BRIDGE BETWEEN WHAT WE BELIEVE AND HOW WE LIVE. BECAUSE DISCIPLESHIP IS A "TEAM SPORT," WE DO THIS TOGETHER, IN CONVERSATION WITH OTHER DISCIPLES WHO ARE ON THIS JOURNEY WITH US. THE KEY IS FOR EACH PERSON, IN COMMUNITY, TO WRESTLE WITH HOW THIS NEW UNDERSTANDING OF WHO GOD IS WILL CHANGE THE WAY WE THINK, HOW WE ACT AND WHO WE ARE AT THE CORE OF OUR BEING AS WE ALL SEEK TO LIVE INTO GREATER FAITHFULNESS.



## GOING DEEPER .....

- » What difference does it make in your life that God is the Creator, Almighty, Sovereign and Triune?
- » Are there particular aspects of God that are easier or harder for you to understand? to accept?
- » Why is it important to hold all of the many attributes of God together?
- » Is it more helpful for you to describe who God is or who God is not?
- » If you were asked by someone who God is to you, how would you respond?
- » When have you experienced God in one or more of the ways God is described in Scripture?

## SENDING RITUAL

USING THE BIBLE OR APPENDIX D, JOIN TOGETHER IN READING PSALM 145  
IN UNISON OR RESPONSIVELY.

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**WHO IS GOD**  
**APPENDIX A**



SCRIPTURE

# WHO IS GOD

## GROUP 1

### **Genesis 1:1-3**

In the beginning when God created\* the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God\* swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light.

### **Genesis 9:8-17**

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

SCRIPTURE

# WHO IS GOD

## GROUP 2

### **Genesis 17:1-2**

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, 'I am God Almighty;\* walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.'

### **Exodus 6:1-8**

Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh: Indeed, by a mighty hand he will let them go; by a mighty hand he will drive them out of his land.'

God also spoke to Moses and said to him: 'I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty,\* but by my name "The LORD"\* I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they resided as aliens. I have also heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are holding as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the Israelites, "I am the LORD, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgement. I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.'"

SCRIPTURE  
**WHO IS GOD**

**GROUP 3**

**Job 42:1-6**

Then Job answered the LORD:

'I know that you can do all things,  
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.  
"Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?"  
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,  
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.  
"Hear, and I will speak;  
I will question you, and you declare to me."  
I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,  
but now my eye sees you;  
therefore I despise myself,  
and repent in dust and ashes.'

**Romans 8:18-30**

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in\* hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes\* for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes\* with sighs too deep for words. And God,\* who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit\* intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.\*

We know that all things work together for good\* for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family.\* And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

SCRIPTURE

# WHO IS GOD

## GROUP 4

### **2 Corinthians 3:14**

But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside.

### **Matthew 3:16-17**

And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved,\* with whom I am well pleased.'

### **Matthew 28:19**

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

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# WHO IS GOD

# APPENDIX B

The bolded statements are the main Teaching Points.  
The material under them is information to give you  
confidence in teaching and responding to questions.

## INSIGHTS ON **WHO GOD IS**

**We talk about who God is in positive terms (who God is, cataphatic theology) and negative terms (who God is not, apophatic terms). For example, God is forgiving (cataphatic). God is not capricious (apophatic).**

**Scripture teaches us that God is the Creator of and sovereign over all. God is Triune, a relational God, described as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. While God is beyond all we can say or know, God reveals God's self in ways we can understand through the witness of Scripture, the person of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.**

### **Almighty God**

- » God describes God's self as Almighty. We read that nothing is impossible for God. God acts and speaks through ordinary (the burning bush) and extraordinary (a talking donkey) means. God does not allow human limitations to restrict how God works. There is no limitation to God's power and reign; God is the beginning and the end. God is Creator of all that is, seen and unseen. There is nowhere we can go where God is not present with us. Nothing and no one is forsaken by God.

### **Creator God**

- » God is relational, entering into covenants with human beings and working in conjunction with God's self in the Trinity. God sends the Son not to condemn the world, but to save it. The Son, God incarnate, God with us, reflects most fully who God is. We look to Jesus to reveal the character and will of God (saving, life-giving, merciful, forgiving, justice-bringing, servant, sacrificing, on the side of the vulnerable, seeking out the lost). The Holy Spirit provides human beings with insight, wisdom and knowledge of God's character, will and words. Further, the Holy Spirit is our Comforter and Advocate.

### **God's Providential Care**

- » Throughout Scripture, God says that provisions will be made for God's people. God will never abandon God's people. Manna will come each morning in the desert. Prophets will be sent to correct and guide those whom God has chosen and called. God names, claims and cares for creation. Perhaps the best summary of this trait of God comes in Psalm 139, when the psalmist declares that there is nowhere that God is not present: "I come to the end—I am still with you" (verse 18).

## **God's Loving Kindness**

- » God's care for us is marked by loving kindness. The care God provides for God's people is characterized by patience, attentiveness, goodness and compassion. God's care is not mere basic necessities, but generous and tender. Often this is expressed in Scripture as God loving us like a good parent cares for a precious child. Biblical stories such as the welcoming home of the prodigal son reveal the character of God's loving kindness. Before the son speaks a word, the father runs out to meet him and throws him a party. Such is the God we worship.

**Our Reformed confessions bear witness to the Scripture's testimony. The Reformed tradition helps us interpret Scripture and provides us with both historic and contemporary ways of understanding who God is. The authority of the confessions is always subject to their consistency with Scripture.**

## **Nicene Creed**

- » The Nicene Creed has three sections detailing what Christians believe about God. God the Father is described as "Almighty" and "maker of heaven and earth." Jesus is the "only Son," "begotten, not made." Jesus is not subordinate to God the Father. The Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father and the Son." The one-in-three nature of God is described in this ancient creed. The triune nature of God reveals God's ongoing relationship to the world. Each section explicates how God is made known to us through how God acts and how God communicates those actions.

## **Scots Confession**

- » Chapter 1 of the Scots Confession emphasizes that our worship is directed toward God and God only. God is "eternal, infinite, immeasurable, incomprehensible, omnipotent, invisible," and no other is worthy of our worship, trust or allegiance. Our worship of God furthers our relationship with and understanding of God. The statement *lex orandi, lex credendi*, or "the law of prayer is the law of belief," is one way of saying that our worship is inextricable from our beliefs; one shapes the other.

## **Westminster Confession**

- » Chapter 2 of the Westminster Confession uses the word "most" repeatedly when describing God. God is over the top, beyond our imagination, in need of nothing from us, but always wanting to be in relationship with us. We are invited to imagine all the positive adjectives in the world for God and then multiply their goodness by a hundred, a thousand, a million — and still we would not get close to God's gloriousness. God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good. Better than we could ever hope or imagine.



### **A Brief Statement of Faith**

- » The contemporary confession "A Brief Statement of Faith" is also structured around the three persons of the Trinity. It is book-ended with the affirmation that we belong to God and that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. The emphasis is on God's creation of us and God's commitment to us, no matter what. The confession repeats the refrain "We trust in. ..." Our faith calls us to trust the God who makes and sustains us regardless of our circumstances or that of the world. While God is always doing a new thing and change is constant, God's faithfulness and character are unchanging and sure.



**WHO IS GOD**  
**APPENDIX C**

BOOK OF CONFESSION GROUP  
**WHO GOD IS**

**The Nicene Creed**

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is,  
seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
and became truly human.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

## **The Scots Confession**

### **Chapter 1**

We confess and acknowledge one God alone, to whom alone we must cleave, whom alone we must serve, whom only we must worship, and in whom alone we put our trust. Who is eternal, infinite, immeasurable, incomprehensible, omnipotent, invisible; one in substance and yet distinct in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. By whom we confess and believe all things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, to have been created, to be retained in their being, and to be ruled and guided by his inscrutable providence for such end as his eternal wisdom, goodness, and justice have appointed, and to the manifestation of his own glory.

### **A Brief Statement of Faith**

#### THE STATEMENT

- 1 In life and in death we belong to God.
- 2 Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
- 3 the love of God,
- 4 and the communion of the Holy Spirit,
- 5 we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,
- 6 whom alone we worship and serve.
  
- 7 We trust in Jesus Christ,
- 8 fully human, fully God.
- 9 Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:
- 10 preaching good news to the poor
- 11 and release to the captives,
- 12 teaching by word and deed
- 13 and blessing the children,
- 14 healing the sick
- 15 and binding up the brokenhearted,
- 16 eating with outcasts,
- 17 forgiving sinners,
- 18 and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.
- 19 Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition,
- 20 Jesus was crucified,
- 21 suffering the depths of human pain
- 22 and giving his life for the sins of the world.
- 23 God raised this Jesus from the dead,
- 24 vindicating his sinless life,
- 25 breaking the power of sin and evil,
- 26 delivering us from death to life eternal.

27 We trust in God,  
28 whom Jesus called Abba, Father.  
29 In sovereign love God created the world good  
30 and makes everyone equally in God's image,  
31 male and female, of every race and people,  
32 to live as one community.  
33 But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator.  
34 Ignoring God's commandments.  
35 we violate the image of God in others and ourselves,  
36 accept lies as truth,  
37 exploit neighbor and nature,  
38 and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care.  
39 We deserve God's condemnation.  
40 Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation.  
41 In everlasting love,

42 the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a covenant people  
43 to bless all families of the earth.  
44 Hearing their cry,  
45 God delivered the children of Israel  
46 from the house of bondage.  
47 Loving us still,  
48 God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant.  
49 Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child,  
50 like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home,  
51 God is faithful still.

52 We trust in God the Holy Spirit  
53 everywhere the giver and renewer of life.  
54 The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith,  
55 sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor,  
56 and binds us together with all believers  
57 in the one body of Christ, the Church.  
58 The same Spirit  
59 who inspired the prophets and apostles  
60 rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture,  
61 engages us through the Word proclaimed,  
62 claims us in the waters of baptism,  
63 feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation,  
64 and calls women and men to all ministries of the Church.

65 In a broken and fearful world  
66 the Spirit gives us courage  
67 to pray without ceasing,  
68 to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,  
69 to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,  
70 to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,  
71 and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.  
72 In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,  
73 we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks  
74 and to live holy and joyful lives,  
75 even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,  
76 praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

77 With believers in every time and place,  
78 we rejoice that nothing in life or in death  
79 can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

80 Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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**WHO IS GOD**  
**APPENDIX D**



PSALM 145

# WHO GOD IS

I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.  
Every day I will bless you, and praise your name forever and ever.  
Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable.

One generation shall laud your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.  
On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.  
The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed, and I will declare your greatness.  
They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness,  
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.  
The LORD is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.

All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your faithful shall bless you.  
They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and tell of your power,  
to make known to all people your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.  
Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures  
throughout all generations.

The LORD is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds.  
The LORD upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down.  
The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.  
You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing.  
The LORD is just in all his ways, and kind in all his doings.  
The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.  
He fulfills the desire of all who fear him; he also hears their cry, and saves them.  
The LORD watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.

My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and all flesh will bless his  
holy name forever and ever.



VOCABULARY OF FAITH

# WHO ARE WE

# IMAGO DEI

## **TEACHING PROPOSITION**

The Imago Dei invites us to live as Christ lived by recognizing and honoring the image of God in — and our interconnectedness to — one another, so that we may embody the fullness of what it means to be human and faithful.

## TEXTS

- » Genesis 1:26-27
- » Psalm 8
- » Galatians 3:25-29
- » Philippians 2:1-8
- » Matthew 16:2-26
- » Matthew 20:25-28
- » Matthew 25:31-45
- » 1 Corinthians 11:1
- » Ephesians 5:1-2
- » Colossians 1:15-17 and 3:12-17
- » John 13:34-35
- » John 21:15-19
- » 1 John 4:7-12

## TEACHING OUTLINE

- » 5 min Welcome and Opening Prayer
- » 5 min What do you see?
- » 15 min Remembering the Imago Dei in each of us
- » 15 min Rearticulating our interconnectedness
- » 15 min Reclaiming the fullness of what it means to be human
- » 5 min Closing litany

## LEADER PREPARATION (IN PERSON)

- » Make copies of Appendices A and C or create a PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi slide with the information on it.
- » Familiarize yourself with the teaching insights in Appendix B and weave it into your teaching remarks.
- » Download video and test it on equipment

## RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- » Copies of Appendices
- » Bibles or Bible apps (if not using appendices)
- » Dry-erase board or Flipchart and markers.
- » AV equipment for showing video and/or any media presentation.
- » Half sheets of plain paper and markers

## LEADER PREPARATION (VIRTUAL)

- » Prepare to email Appendices A and C to participants or post them in the chat function of your Videoconferencing platform or create a PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi slide with the information and prepare to share your screen.
- » Familiarize yourself with the teaching insights in Appendix B and weave it into your teaching remarks.
- » Ensure the settings on your Videoconferencing platform are configured for the best sound and video if you sharing screen.
- » Download video and test it on equipment

- » Email participants and ask them to have plain paper and markers on hand for this session.

## RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- » Open Appendices on computer so they are ready to screen share.
- » Open video on computer so it is ready to show in screen share.
- » Post Appendices in chat function of Videoconferencing platform or email them to participants.
- » Remind participants to have plain paper and markers on hand for this session.

ARRIVE EARLY TO SET OUT BIBLES AND ARRANGE THE SEATS IN A WAY THAT IS CONDUCIVE TO TODAY'S SESSION, YOUR TEACHING STYLE AND THE PARTICIPANTS' LEARNING STYLES. IF TEACHING VIRTUALLY, TEST TECHNOLOGY; TEND TO VISUALS SUCH AS LIGHTING, BACKGROUND AND SOUND; AND EMAIL APPENDICES OR HANDOUTS TO PARTICIPANTS. OPEN ON YOUR COMPUTER AND HAVE READY ANY ITEMS YOU WILL USE IN SCREEN-SHARE MODE.

# GATHERING RITUAL

WELCOME PEOPLE AS THEY ARRIVE IN PERSON OR VIRTUALLY. WHEN IT IS TIME TO BEGIN, INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO JOIN YOU IN PRAYER OR YOUR REGULAR OPENING RITUAL. YOU MAY USE THIS PRAYER OR INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO SHARE THEIR JOYS AND CONCERNS, THEN LEAD THEM IN PRAYER.

Great God of majesty and splendor, you created the universe, set the planets in their courses and fashioned a world of complex beauty, and yet you chose to come and dwell among us as Incarnate Love. We give you thanks for your life-giving, self-giving grace and the ways in which it smoothes our jagged edges and provides

balm for our wounded places. Open us to new ways of being that more faithfully reflect your presence among us and your Spirit's work within us. Move us beyond our self-absorption and into a place that allows us to see one another as you see us. In Christ's name and for his sake. Amen.

IF THERE ARE NEW PEOPLE IN THE GROUP, INVITE ALL PARTICIPANTS TO INTRODUCE THEMSELVES.

## REMEMBERING

THE IMAGO DEI INVITES US TO LIVE AS CHRIST LIVED

IN THIS SECTION OF THE SESSION, YOU ARE ANSWERING THE QUESTION, "WHAT DO YOU WANT PARTICIPANTS TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT THE IMAGO DEI?" THE SCRIPTURE EXPLORATION AND THE TEACHING POINTS IN THIS SECTION WILL HELP PARTICIPANTS SEE THE WAYS IN WHICH THE IMAGO DEI INVITES US TO LIVE AS CHRIST LIVED.

INVITE EACH PERSON TO TAKE A SHEET OF PAPER. ON THE FRONT SIDE OF THE PAPER, WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU SEE WHEN YOU LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND/OR HOW OTHER PEOPLE SEE YOU. ON THE BACK OF THE PAPER, WRITE DOWN HOW GOD SEES YOU AT THE CORE OF YOUR BEING. WHEN EVERYONE HAS HAD A FEW MOMENTS TO COMPLETE THE TASK, ASK:



### ASK

- » In what ways are the two sides of your paper similar?
- » In what ways are they different?
- » Why do you think there are (if there are) inconsistencies?

ALLOW TIME FOR SHORT ANSWERS.  
THEN WEAVE THESE TEACHING POINTS INTO THE TRANSITION TO THE NEXT SECTION:



## TEACHING POINTS

- » Whether we feel it or not, whether we see it or not, we are created in the image of God.
- » From the beginning pages of the Bible through the final verses, the story of God's great pursuing love is told.
- » The Trinitarian God has the starring role — is the main character — but God created us to be an integral part of the story.
- » So integral that God created us in God's own image. The church's language for this belief is "Imago Dei."
- » Throughout history, people of faith have tried to define, or discern, exactly what it means to be created in the image of God.
- » Some have thought it is our ability to reason or to be rational, which is actually an ancient Greek notion.
- » Other have tied the Imago Dei to having a soul.
- » Still others have connected it to our ability to create or to be partners with God in creation.
- » Because Scripture is our primary source for understanding faith and the life of faith, we will begin there.

DIVIDE PARTICIPANTS INTO FOUR GROUPS AND ASSIGN EACH GROUP A SET OF TEXTS. IN APPENDIX A AT THE END OF THIS SESSION, YOU WILL FIND HANDOUTS, ONE FOR EACH GROUP, WITH THE SCRIPTURE TEXTS ON THEM. YOU MAY ALSO CHOOSE TO HAVE THE PARTICIPANTS USE THEIR OWN BIBLES, BIBLE APPS, OR THE BIBLES IN YOUR MEETING SPACE. ASK EACH GROUP TO READ THE SCRIPTURES, DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS BELOW AND BE PREPARED TO SHARE THEIR RESPONSES WITH THE WHOLE GROUP.



## REFLECT

- » What does this text tell us about the Imago Dei?
- » How does it deepen our understanding of the belief that we are created in the image of God?

INVITE EACH GROUP TO SHARE WHAT THEY DISCOVERED. THEN ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTION, POSTING RESPONSES.



## ASK

- » So, based on your reading of Scripture, how would you define what the Imago Dei means for us?

## • RECLAIMING •

LIVES THAT TESTIFY TO THE IMAGO DEI BY RECOGNIZING AND HONORING THE IMAGE OF GOD IN, AND OUR INTERCONNECTEDNESS TO, ONE ANOTHER

HERE IS WHERE YOU, AS THE TEACHER, PROVIDE THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS ON THE IMAGO DEI TO INCREASE PARTICIPANTS' VOCABULARY OF FAITH. THIS IS THE SECTION OF THE SESSION WHERE YOU ARE ANSWERING THE QUESTION, "WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR OUR FAITH, OUR LIVES, OUR CHURCH, OUR COMMUNITY OR WORLD, TO UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE IMAGO DEI?" THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS TO DO THIS, AND THE DECISION WILL BE BASED ON YOUR TEACHING STYLE AND THE PARTICIPANTS' LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES. WE HAVE PROVIDED TWO RESOURCES FOR YOU TO WORK WITH TO CRAFT THIS PART OF YOUR SESSION.



## RESOURCES

- » **APPENDIX B** — At the end of this session you will find "Insights on the Imago Dei" (Appendix B). It provides theological content for understanding what it means to be created in the image of God. You can use the material to create a PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi, to craft a mini-lecture, or to cull out particular points you want to share with the group. You may use this appendix to craft teaching points to weave into the discussion. Think of this as a "cheat sheet" that we have assembled so your research time is minimized.
- » **VIDEO** — A short 7-11 minute video is also provided for you to use. A professor, a pastor/educator and a lay leader each briefly share their thoughts on the Imago Dei. You can use the video to introduce the topic, to start the discussion or to reinforce the teaching points you developed from "Insights on the Imago Dei" (Appendix B). You may also choose not to use the video.

# • REARTICULATING •

## WHAT IT MEANS TO EMBODY THE FULLNESS OF HUMANNESS AND FAITHFULNESS

IN THIS SECTION OF THE SESSION, EACH PARTICIPANT IS ANSWERING THE QUESTION, "HOW WILL I (MY FAMILY OR THE CHURCH) LIVE DIFFERENTLY NOW THAT I UNDERSTAND THE IMAGO DEI?"

DISCERNMENT ABOUT FAITHFUL LIVING IS BEST DONE IN COMMUNITY. USE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, OR THOSE OF YOUR OWN, TO PROMPT HONEST, VULNERABLE AND DEEP DISCUSSION ABOUT EMBODYING OUR FAITH IN THE WORLD. THIS CAN BE DONE AS A WHOLE GROUP, IN SMALL GROUPS OR IN PAIRS. IN THIS SESSION, WE ARE CREATING SPACE FOR THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN BUILDING A BRIDGE BETWEEN WHAT WE BELIEVE AND HOW WE LIVE. BECAUSE DISCIPLESHIP IS A "TEAM SPORT," WE DO THIS TOGETHER, IN CONVERSATION WITH OTHER DISCIPLES WHO ARE ON THIS JOURNEY WITH US. THE KEY IS FOR EACH PERSON, IN COMMUNITY, TO WRESTLE WITH HOW THIS NEW UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMAGO DEI WILL CHANGE THE WAY WE THINK, THE WAY WE ACT AND WHO WE ARE AT THE CORE OF OUR BEING AS WE ALL SEEK TO LIVE INTO GREATER FAITHFULNESS.



## TEACHING POINTS

- » While Nelson Mandela was president of South Africa, he asked Archbishop Desmond Tutu to lead the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that would work to heal a nation deeply wounded by apartheid. In his book, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, Tutu writes about the South African idea of ubuntu (see "Insights on the Imago Dei" for more information). He acknowledges that the concept of ubuntu can be difficult for Western cultures, which prize and privilege individualism, to embrace. Ubuntu is belief that a person's humanity, a person's very being, is experienced through the humanity and being-ness of others. Listen to this quote and pay attention to how your mind, body and soul respond:

*"A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are."*

AFTER A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE, INVITE RESPONSES AND REFLECTIONS.

THEN, INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO PONDER AND THEN REFLECT ALOUD ON THESE QUESTIONS:



## GOING DEEPER .....

- » How would you live differently if you truly accepted and believed you are created in the image of God?
- » How would your relationships with those around you change if you intentionally and consciously lived into your Imago Dei with them?
- » How might the community change if we truly believed and lived “I am because you are” and “You are because I am”?
- » What would be the implications for the nation and the world if we were able to see and honor the image of God in one another?

## SENDING RITUAL

AS THE SESSION COMES TO AN END, MOVE INTO THE CLOSING LITANY (APPENDIX C).

THE LEADER WILL READ THE ITALICIZED PARTS AND  
THE PARTICIPANTS WILL READ THE BOLDED REFRAIN.



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**IMAGO DEI**  
**APPENDIX A**

SCRIPTURE  
**IMAGO DEI**

**GROUP 1**

**Genesis 1:26-27**

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

So God created humankind in his image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

**Psalms 8**

O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouths of babes and infants  
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars  
that you have established;  
what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.  
You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;  
you have put all things under their feet,  
all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,  
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

**Galatians 3:25-29**

But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

SCRIPTURE  
**IMAGO DEI**

**GROUP 2**

**Matthew 16:21-26**

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?"

**Matthew 20:25-28**

But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

**Matthew 25:31-45**

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as

SCRIPTURE  
**IMAGO DEI**

you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'

SCRIPTURE  
**IMAGO DEI**

**GROUP 3**

**1 Corinthians 11:1**

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

**Ephesians 5:1-2**

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

**Colossians 1:15-17**

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

**Colossians 3:12-17**

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. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**Philippians 2:1-8**

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross.

SCRIPTURE  
**IMAGO DEI**

**GROUP 4**

**John 13:34-35**

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

**John 21:15-19**

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

**1 John 4:7-12**

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.



# IMAGO DEI

# APPENDIX B

The bolded statements are the main Teaching Points.  
The material under them is information to give you  
confidence in teaching and responding to questions.



## INSIGHTS ON **IMAGO DEI**

**There are three inherently related aspects for understanding the Imago Dei: God's agency, Christ's agency and human agency.**

### **God's Agency**

- » To be created in the image of God is first and foremost about God, and then humanity.
- » God created male and female coequally with the intention of mutuality.
- » The dignity of each human being is granted by God upon creation.
- » Human worth and value are imbued by the Creator and are witnessed to in the theological understanding of the Imago Dei.
- » The creation of humanity in the image of God defies hierarchical superiority of gender, race or class; when we seek to create such unjust structures, we transgress the boundaries between the created and the Creator.
- » God's very being is relational, reflected in a Trinitarian understanding for Christians; therefore, we as humanity are created to be relational.
- » The Imago Dei is a decisive declaration that we are created for community — to be in relationship with God and one another, bound by a common act of grace from the Sovereign One.

### **Christ's Agency**

- » The Reformed faith teaches that the Imago Dei was marred and broken by human disobedience.
- » However, in Christ we are restored to right relationship with God; the image of God, reflected in and through humanity, is only possible because of Christ.
- » Jesus was the only perfect image of God, and it is to him that we look for guidance as to what the Imago Dei means.
- » For Christians, the Imago Dei is grounded in Christ — in Christ's priorities, beliefs, actions and way of life.
- » Anchoring the Imago Dei in Christ moves it from a noun to a verb.
- » Just as Christ loved God and neighbor before all else, including himself, so too are we to love God and live for one another as an expression of the Imago Dei.
- » The Christian life, or life of discipleship, is the way we live into the fullest, and most faithful, expression of our Imago Dei.

## **Human Agency**

- » The Imago Dei is the theological expression of what it means to be fully human and to live into the abundant life for which God created us.
- » We have been entrusted with a gift — a gift of relationship, a gift of human dignity, a gift of connectedness to God and to one another through Jesus Christ — and with that comes the responsibility to tend well that gift in each of us and between each of us.
- » The common dignity that resides within each of us, through the Imago Dei, is not fully realized in any of us until it is honored in all of us.
- » The image of God is not a static possession each human owns but is the process by which we live for one another as Christ lived for us. It is the quality that God treasures and loves enough to become incarnate and dwell among us.
- » Martin Buber, a Jewish philosopher and theologian, spoke of an “I-Thou” relationship between Creator and creature as well as between creatures. He taught that when we fail to see the “Thou” in one another, we reduce one another to an object, an “it,” which ultimately diminishes all of us.
- » In South African culture there is a philosophy, which Desmond Tutu crafted into a theology, called ubuntu (oo-BOON-too). It means if one person is dehumanized, all of humanity is dehumanized. Our well-being in life is connected to the well-being of others. This belief is often summed up in a common ubuntu phrase, “I am, because you are” and “You are, because I am.”
- » The Imago Dei makes us indissolubly connected to God and to one another.

**The Imago Dei in each of us, embodied in the quality of our relationships with others, is a common bond and connection that unites us beyond any differences.**

**It is only when we fail to recognize, and live into, the Imago Dei in another that we lose sight of who God created us to be.**

**Conversely, when we recognize, and live into, the Imago Dei in another, we can transcend our differences and begin to dismantle the barriers that lead to death.**

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**IMAGO DEI**  
**APPENDIX C**

IMAGO DEI  
**CLOSING LITANY**

"Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.'... So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

**I am because God is.**

"When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?"

**You are because God is.**

"As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

**We are because God is.**

"The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

**I am because Christ is.**

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

**You are because Christ is.**

IMAGO DEI  
**CLOSING LITANY**

"In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins."

**We are because Christ is.**

"Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

**I am because you are.**

"Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others."

**You are because I am.**

"Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus ... the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation."

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VOCABULARY OF FAITH

**GOD IN  
RELATIONSHIP  
COVENANT**

**TEACHING PROPOSITION**

Covenant is the primary way in which God relates to humanity through the work of the Spirit, binding us together into community so that we may experience the inbreaking of God's grace and love in our lives.



## TEXTS

- » Genesis 6:5-22, 9:17
- » Genesis 12:1-9, 15:1-6, 17:1-2
- » Exodus 2:23-25, 6:2-8, 19:3-8; Joshua 23:11-16
- » 2 Samuel 7:4-17; 1 Chronicles 17:7-14
- » Jeremiah 31:31-34; Isaiah 42:1-9; Luke 22:15-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26;
- » Ephesians 2:4-10; Hebrews 9:15

## TEACHING OUTLINE

- » 5 min Welcome and Opening Prayer
- » 5 min Brainstorming current covenants
- » 15 min Remembering and exploring biblical covenants
- » 15 min Rearticulating covenant relationships
- » 15 min Reclaiming covenantal living
- » 5 min Closing litany

## LEADER PREPARATION (IN PERSON)

- » Make copies of Appendices A and C or create a PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi slide with the information on it.
- » Familiarize yourself with the teaching insights in Appendix B and weave it into your teaching remarks.
- » Download video and test it on equipment

## RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- » Copies of Appendices
- » Bibles or Bible apps (if not using appendices)
- » Dry-erase board or Flipchart and markers.
- » AV equipment for showing video and/or any media presentation.

## LEADER PREPARATION (VIRTUAL)

- » Prepare to email Appendices A and C to participants or post them in the chat function of your Videoconferencing platform or create a PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi slide with the information and prepare to share your screen.
- » Familiarize yourself with the teaching insights in Appendix B and weave it into your teaching remarks.
- » Ensure the settings on your Videoconferencing platform are configured for the best sound and video if you sharing screen.
- » Download video and test it on equipment

## RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- » Open Appendices on computer so they are ready to screen share.
- » Open video on computer so it is ready to show in screen share.
- » Post Appendices in chat function of Videoconferencing platform or email them to participants.
- » Remind participants to have plain paper and markers on hand for this session.

ARRIVE EARLY TO SET OUT BIBLES AND ARRANGE THE SEATS IN A WAY THAT IS CONDUCIVE TO TODAY'S SESSION, YOUR TEACHING STYLE AND THE PARTICIPANTS' LEARNING STYLES. IF TEACHING VIRTUALLY, TEST TECHNOLOGY; TEND TO VISUALS SUCH AS LIGHTING, BACKGROUND AND SOUND; AND EMAIL APPENDICES OR HANDOUTS TO PARTICIPANTS. OPEN ON YOUR COMPUTER AND HAVE READY ANY ITEMS YOU WILL USE IN SCREEN-SHARE MODE.

# GATHERING RITUAL

WELCOME PEOPLE AS THEY ARRIVE IN PERSON OR VIRTUALLY. WHEN IT IS TIME TO BEGIN, INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO JOIN YOU IN PRAYER OR YOUR REGULAR OPENING RITUAL. YOU MAY USE THIS PRAYER OR INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO SHARE THEIR JOYS AND CONCERNS, THEN LEAD THEM IN PRAYER.

God of the ages and God of today, to our utter amazement you yearn to be in relationship with us. Your continuing and amazing grace beckons us to greater faithfulness, and for that and so many other things we are deeply grateful. Open us to the presence of your Spirit in this moment

that we may hear and understand your wisdom in new and renewing ways. Then, Holy One, quicken within us a desire to live in ways that reflect the gift of your grace, your amazing love and our continuing covenantal relationship. Amen.

IF THERE ARE NEW PEOPLE IN THE GROUP, INVITE ALL PARTICIPANTS TO INTRODUCE THEMSELVES.

## • REMEMBERING •

COVENANT IS THE PRIMARY WAY IN WHICH GOD RELATES TO HUMANITY

IN THIS SECTION OF THE SESSION, YOU ARE ANSWERING THE QUESTION, "WHAT DO YOU WANT PARTICIPANTS TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT COVENANT?" THE SCRIPTURE EXPLORATION AND THE TEACHING POINTS IN THIS SECTION WILL HELP PARTICIPANTS SEE THE WAYS IN WHICH GOD RELATES TO HUMANITY THROUGH COVENANTS.



### ASK

- » What comes to mind when we say the word covenant? (possible answers include marriage, baptism, employment or land contracts, peace or trade treaties)
- » What is a covenant? (Webster's Dictionary: a formal and binding promise)

MOVE INTO THE NEXT SECTION OF THE SESSION BY INCORPORATING THE FOLLOWING TEACHING POINTS INTO THE TRANSITION:



## TEACHING POINTS

- » Formal agreements existed between governments, kings and people before Scripture was written.
- » The word covenant takes on a whole new understanding and significance when God is at the center.
- » A careful look at the five major biblical covenants will bring insight as to the nature and character of God.

DIVIDE PARTICIPANTS INTO FIVE GROUPS AND ASSIGN EACH GROUP A SET OF TEXTS. IN APPENDIX A AT THE END OF THIS SESSION YOU WILL FIND HANDOUTS, ONE FOR EACH GROUP, WITH THE SCRIPTURE TEXTS ON THEM. YOU MAY ALSO CHOOSE TO HAVE THE PARTICIPANTS USE THEIR OWN BIBLES, BIBLE APPS, OR THE BIBLES IN YOUR MEETING SPACE. ASK EACH GROUP TO READ THE SCRIPTURES, DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AND BE PREPARED TO SHARE THEIR RESPONSES WITH THE WHOLE GROUP.



## REFLECT

- » Who initiates the covenant?
- » What is promised and/or expected of each party?
- » What are the characteristics of God in these texts?
- » What are the characteristics of people in these texts?
- » How would you characterize this covenant?

INVITE EACH GROUP TO SHARE THEIR RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS. MAKE NOTE OF SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE COVENANTS AS GROUPS SHARE THEIR FINDINGS.

MOVE INTO THE NEXT SECTION OF THE SESSION BY INCORPORATING THE FOLLOWING TEACHING POINTS INTO THE TRANSITION:



## TEACHING POINTS .....

- » What we learn from an exploration of Scripture is that covenants are the primary way in which God establishes relationships with creature and creation — with us and with the world.
- » Covenants tell us about who God is, who we are and the faithfulness to which we are called in daily living.

## • RECLAIMING •

### THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S INBREAKING GRACE AND LOVE IN OUR LIVES

HERE IS WHERE YOU, AS THE TEACHER, PROVIDE THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS ON COVENANT TO INCREASE PARTICIPANTS' VOCABULARY OF FAITH. THIS IS THE SECTION OF THE SESSION WHERE YOU ARE ANSWERING THE QUESTION, "WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR OUR FAITH, OUR LIVES, OUR CHURCH, OUR COMMUNITY OR WORLD TO UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COVENANTS?" THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS TO DO THIS, AND THE DECISION WILL BE BASED ON YOUR TEACHING STYLE AND THE PARTICIPANTS' LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES. WE HAVE PROVIDED TWO RESOURCES FOR YOU TO WORK WITH TO CRAFT THIS PART OF YOUR SESSION.



## RESOURCES .....

- » **APPENDIX B** — At the end of this session you will find a page "Insights on Covenant" (Appendix B) that provides theological content for understanding and teaching covenants. You can use the material to create a PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi, to craft a mini-lecture or to cull out particular points to share with the group. You may use this appendix to craft teaching points to weave into the discussion. Think of this as a "cheat sheet" that we have assembled so your research time is minimized.
- » **VIDEO** — A short 7-11 minute video is also provided for you to use. A professor, a pastor/educator and a lay leader each briefly share their thoughts on covenant. You can use this video to introduce the topic, to start the discussion or to reinforce the teaching points you developed from "Insights on Covenant" (Appendix B). You may also choose not to use the video.

# • REARTICULATING •

## THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT BINDING US TOGETHER INTO COMMUNITY

IN THIS SECTION OF THE SESSION EACH PARTICIPANT IS ANSWERING THE QUESTION, "HOW WILL I (MY FAMILY, THE CHURCH) LIVE DIFFERENTLY NOW THAT I UNDERSTAND COVENANTS AND WHY THEY ARE IMPORTANT?"

MOVE INTO THE NEXT SECTION BY INCORPORATING THE FOLLOWING TEACHING POINTS INTO THE TRANSITION:



### TEACHING POINTS

- » It is the Holy Spirit who binds our promises with God and one another in community.
- » It is the Spirit's ongoing work that keeps our covenant relationship vibrant and relevant still today.
- » Now that we have a better understanding of covenant, we must ask, "So what?"
- » Now that we have remembered and reclaimed covenant, let's consider how we will rearticulate it through the ways we live our faith in the world.

DISCERNMENT ABOUT FAITHFUL LIVING IS BEST DONE IN COMMUNITY. USE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, OR THOSE OF YOUR OWN, TO PROMPT HONEST, VULNERABLE AND DEEP DISCUSSION ABOUT EMBODYING OUR FAITH IN THE WORLD. THIS CAN BE DONE AS A WHOLE GROUP, IN SMALL GROUPS OR IN PAIRS. IN THIS SESSION WE ARE CREATING SPACE FOR THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN BUILDING A BRIDGE BETWEEN WHAT WE BELIEVE AND HOW WE LIVE. BECAUSE DISCIPLESHIP IS A "TEAM SPORT," WE DO THIS TOGETHER, IN CONVERSATION WITH OTHER DISCIPLES WHO ARE ON THIS JOURNEY WITH US. THE KEY IS FOR EACH PERSON, IN COMMUNITY, TO WRESTLE WITH HOW THIS NEW UNDERSTANDING OF COVENANT WILL CHANGE THE WAY WE THINK, THE WAY WE ACT AND WHO WE ARE AT THE CORE OF OUR BEING AS WE ALL SEEK TO LIVE INTO GREATER FAITHFULNESS.



## GOING DEEPER

- » What difference does it make in your life/the church/the world that God seeks to be in relationship with us and will never walk away?
- » In what ways will you live differently because of God's grace and faithfulness?
- » Where do you see the inbreaking of God's grace in your life/the church/the world?
- » What are the challenges or impediments to living in covenant relationship with God and one another? What are the opportunities?

## SENDING RITUAL

AS THE SESSION COMES TO AN END, MOVE INTO THE SENDING RITUAL OF A RESPONSIVE READING OF PSALM 136 (APPENDIX C).

YOU MAY WANT TO WEAVE THE FOLLOWING INTO YOUR TRANSITION:



## TEACHING POINTS

- » In most versions of the Christian Bible, the refrain of Psalm 136 reads, "God's steadfast love endures forever."
- » The Hebrew word for "steadfast love" is *hesed*, which translates into English as "God's covenantal love."
- » Because it is a covenant, the relational love between God and humanity endures forever.
- » The psalm rehearses the mighty acts of the majestic Creator God, who redeems and sustains us through the ages. It reminds us that it is this sovereign and faithful God who reaches out to us through covenants and will not let us go.

THE LEADER WILL READ THE ITALICIZED PARTS OF THE PSALM AND THE PARTICIPANTS WILL READ THE BOLDED REFRAIN

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**COVENANT**  
**APPENDIX A**



# SCRIPTURE

# COVENANT

## GROUP 1

### Genesis 6:5-22, 9:8-17

#### Noah

##### Chapter 6

The LORD saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, "I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created—people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the sight of the LORD.

These are the descendants of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw that the earth was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its ways upon the earth. And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; now I am going to destroy them along with the earth. Make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above; and put the door of the ark in its side; make it with lower, second, and third decks. For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing, of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind, two of every kind shall come in to you, to keep them alive. Also take with you every kind of food that is eaten, and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them." Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

## SCRIPTURE

# COVENANT

### **Chapter 9**

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

# SCRIPTURE COVENANT

## GROUP 2

**Genesis 12:1-9, 15:1-6, 17:1-22**

### Abraham

#### Chapter 12

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the LORD appeared to Abram, and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. From there he moved on to the hill country on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and invoked the name of the LORD. And Abram journeyed on by stages toward the Negeb.

#### Chapter 15

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." But the word of the LORD came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir." He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.

## SCRIPTURE

# COVENANT

### Chapter 17

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous." Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God."

God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. Throughout your generations every male among you shall be circumcised when he is eight days old, including the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring. Both the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money must be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

God said to Abraham, "As for Sarah your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her." Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, "Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" And Abraham said to God, "O that Ishmael might live in your sight!" God said, "No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. As for Ishmael, I have heard you; I will bless him and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year." And when he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

# SCRIPTURE

# COVENANT

## GROUP 3

**Exodus 2:23-25, 6:2-8, 19:3-8 and Joshua 23:11-16**

### Moses

#### Chapter 2

After a long time the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned under their slavery, and cried out. Out of the slavery their cry for help rose up to God. God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them.

#### Chapter 6

God also spoke to Moses and said to him: "I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name 'The LORD' I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they resided as aliens. I have also heard the groaning of the Israelites whom the Egyptians are holding as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the Israelites, 'I am the LORD, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.'

#### Chapter 19

Then Moses went up to God; the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites." So Moses came, summoned the elders of the people, and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. The people all answered as one: "Everything that the LORD has spoken we will do." Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD.

## SCRIPTURE

# COVENANT

### **Joshua 23**

Be very careful, therefore, to love the LORD your God. For if you turn back, and join the survivors of these nations left here among you, and intermarry with them, so that you marry their women and they yours, know assuredly that the LORD your God will not continue to drive out these nations before you; but they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a scourge on your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land that the LORD your God has given you. "And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one thing has failed of all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you; all have come to pass for you, not one of them has failed. But just as all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you have been fulfilled for you, so the LORD will bring upon you all the bad things, until he has destroyed you from this good land that the LORD your God has given you. If you transgress the covenant of the LORD your God, which he enjoined on you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and you shall perish quickly from the good land that he has given to you."

# SCRIPTURE COVENANT

## GROUP 4

### **2 Samuel 7:4-17 and 1 Chronicles 17:7-14** **David**

#### **2 Samuel Chapter 7**

But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings. But I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever. In accordance with all these words and with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

## SCRIPTURE

# COVENANT

### **1 Chronicles 17:7-14**

Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies before you; and I will make for you a name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall wear them down no more, as they did formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will subdue all your enemies. Moreover I declare to you that the LORD will build you a house. When your days are fulfilled to go to be with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from him who was before you, but I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever.



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# COVENANT APPENDIX B

The bolded statements are the main Teaching Points.  
The material under them is information to give you  
confidence in teaching and responding to questions.

## INSIGHTS ON COVENANT

**God always initiates the covenant relationship.**

**There are two primary kinds of covenants – unconditional and conditional.**

- » Unconditional covenants are promises made by God to the community without any expected actions in return. God simply decides to make a covenant, and a relationship is established (Noah, Abraham/Sarah, David, Jesus).
- » Conditional covenants, of which there is only one, come with the expectation that humanity is required to do something in order to receive the promised action (Moses).

**Covenant relationships are enduring.** They are never revoked or replaced.

**Covenants bind us to God and to one another.**

**Covenants are always communal.** The covenant may be made with one person, but the promise and the blessing of the covenant are always for community.

- » Noah did not have to do anything in order for the promise to be made. God simply decided to spare Noah and his family and ultimately promised never to destroy the earth by flood again. There was no condition. God simply broke in, proclaimed and promised.
- » Abraham and Sarah were roaming around minding their own business, and God broke into their lives with a promise and a blessing: “I will make you a great nation. I will bless you so that you can be a blessing to others.” God told Abraham to take his family and go to the land that God would show him ... and Abraham did. The covenant was struck, however, before Abraham responded. Two things were necessary for this covenant promise of a great nation – (1) land and (2) a large family with many descendants – neither of which Abraham had. He was an old, childless nomad whose wife was past child-bearing years. However, the covenant made with Abraham and the fulfillment of that promise would indeed shape the course of faith and history for centuries to come.
- » Moses also experienced God’s inbreaking in the burning bush, but this time the covenant was conditional. God heard the cries and groaning of the Hebrew people and acted. God freed them from bondage, orchestrated their escape from slavery, declared the Hebrews to be God’s own chosen people and provided them with a path to the Promised Land.

However, there was a condition: they must keep the commandments, statutes and ordinances God would give them through Moses. The fulfillment of the covenant with Abraham and Sarah was dependent upon their devotion to God, and only God, and the quality of their communal living. Their love of God was to be concretely expressed in their love of neighbor. For religious Jews, the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures provide a road map for living faithfully within the Mosaic covenant: love and serve only God, and live in a community where justice and kindness are the priority for all. For Christians, Jesus, grounded in his Jewish heritage and knowledge of the Torah, brings the expectations of this covenant into clear focus in his declaration that the two greatest commandments are love of God and love of neighbor.

**Even when humans cannot keep their part of the covenant, God remains faithful.**

There may be consequences, but God does not abandon God's people nor the covenant relationship.

- » The ancient Israelites were as human and fallible as we are today. They could not remain faithful to the commandments. They would do well for a while, and then they would become enamored with their own power or the ways of the world. They would worship other gods and fail to give justice to the marginalized and powerless. Even as they crafted and held impressive worship services, their practices throughout the week were inconsistent with God's expectations and made worship a hollow and empty ritual. God was not pleased. The prophets warned Israel and Judah of impending consequences if they did not return to faithful ways of living. Ultimately, they did not, and the land promised to Abraham, ruled by David and his descendants, fell into the hands of the Assyrians, the Babylonians and the Persians. The Babylonian exile was the most significant identity crisis for the Israelites. Who would they be without the Promised Land? without the Temple? Was the covenant gone as well? God would have been well within the terms of the covenant to walk away and establish a relationship with another people. However, here is where we see the inbreaking of God's love and grace so clearly. Even in the face of human unfaithfulness, God remained faithful to the covenant. Yes, there were consequences for their actions, but God did not end the covenant.
- » God used the prophet Jeremiah during the Babylonian exile to remind the people that while they were still living with the consequences of their disobedience, God had a plan for them — a plan for good. God made a new covenant with Israel. It would not be a conditional covenant that was dependent upon human capacity to keep the commandments. They had proven they could not remain faithful. This new covenant would be written on their hearts rather than on stone tablets. The covenant relationship between God and the people would be dependent upon God's grace and love — not

humanity's. The Lord would still be their God and they would be God's own people. God would forgive their wrongdoing and remember their sins no more.

- » A Christian reading of this covenant positions Jesus as the fulfillment of the new covenant. In his life, death and resurrection we see the love and grace of God incarnate. God breaks into our lives and brings us back into right relationship with God before we ever know to ask for it. God saw what we needed and provided us with that which we could not accomplish on our own: salvation, forgiveness and eternal life with God. In this unconditional covenantal relationship, we see it is God who initiates and secures our relationships by choosing us for salvation, and we live grateful lives in response to that unmerited gift of grace. God acted first. God loved first, and we respond in kind, showing our gratitude by love of God and love of neighbor.

**It is through covenants that we**

- » **See the relational and faithful nature of God who is ever with us.**
- » **Experience the inbreaking of God's grace and steadfast love.**



**COVENANT**  
**APPENDIX C**

PSALM 23

# A COVENANT REWRITE

- 1 O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**
- 2 O give thanks to the God of gods,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**
- 3 O give thanks to the Lord of lords,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**
- 4 who alone does great wonders,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**
- 5 who by understanding made the heavens,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**
- 6 who spread out the earth on the waters,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**
- 7 who made the great lights,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**
- 8 the sun to rule over the day,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**
- 9 the moon and stars to rule over the night,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**
- 10 who struck Egypt through their firstborn,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**
- 11 and brought Israel out from among them,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**
- 12 with a strong hand and an outstretched arm,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**
- 13 who divided the Red Sea<sup>[a]</sup> in two,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**
- 14 and made Israel pass through the midst of it,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**
- 15 but overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea,<sup>[b]</sup>  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**
- 16 who led his people through the wilderness,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**
- 17 who struck down great kings,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**

PSALM 23

# A COVENANT REWRITE

18 and killed famous kings,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**

19 Sihon, king of the Amorites,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**

20 and Og, king of Bashan,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**

21 and gave their land as a heritage,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**

22 a heritage to his servant Israel,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**

23 It is he who remembered us in our low estate,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**

24 and rescued us from our foes,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**

25 who gives food to all flesh,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**

26 O give thanks to the God of heaven,  
**for God's covenant love endures forever.**



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VOCABULARY OF FAITH

# GOD WHO SAVES GRACE

**TEACHING PROPOSITION**

The unmerited, eternal gift of God's grace is enough to save and sustain the world through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ so that humanity is free to participate in God's work of redemption with gratitude and joy.

## TEXTS

- » Matthew 18:1-14
- » Luke 7:36-50
- » Luke 15:11-32

## TEACHING OUTLINE

- » 5 min Welcome and Opening Prayer
- » 5 min Brainstorming what grace is...
- » 15 min Remembering and exploring biblical stories of grace
- » 15 min Rearticulating grace through Jesus Christ
- » 15 min Reclaiming our place in God's work of redemption with gratitude and joy
- » 5 min Closing litany

## LEADER PREPARATION (IN PERSON)

- » Make copies of Appendices A and E or create a PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi slide with the information on it.
- » Make copies of Appendices C and D
- » Familiarize yourself with the teaching insights in Appendix B and weave it into your teaching remarks.
- » Use 3 sheets of newsprint to write one of the following headings on each paper and post in the room: Humanity Is...;

God/Jesus is... ; Grace is ...

- » Download video and test it on equipment

## RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- » Copies of Appendices
- » Bibles or Bible apps (if not using appendices)
- » Dry-erase board or Flipchart (with tape if not using self-sticking paper) and markers.
- » AV equipment for showing video and/or any media presentation.

## LEADER PREPARATION (VIRTUAL)

- » Prepare to email Appendices A and E to participants or post them in the chat function of your Videoconferencing platform or create a PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi slide with the information and prepare to share your screen.
- » Prepare to email or post in the chat function of your Videoconferencing platform Appendices C and D
- » Familiarize yourself with the teaching insights in Appendix B and weave it into your teaching remarks.
- » Practice using the Dry-erase (or Whiteboard) function in your Videoconferencing platform to write down the

responses to the 3 prompts: Humanity is...; God/Jesus is...; Grace is...

- » Ensure the settings on your Videoconferencing platform are configured for the best sound and video if you sharing screen.
- » Download video and test it on equipment

## RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- » Open Appendices on computer so they are ready to screen share.
- » Email Appendices C and D to participants
- » Open video on computer so it is ready to show in screen share.
- » Post appendices A and E in chat function of Videoconferencing platform or email them to participants.

ARRIVE EARLY TO SET OUT BIBLES AND ARRANGE THE SEATS IN A WAY THAT IS CONDUCIVE TO TODAY'S SESSION, YOUR TEACHING STYLE AND THE PARTICIPANTS' LEARNING STYLES. IF TEACHING VIRTUALLY, TEST TECHNOLOGY; TEND TO VISUALS SUCH AS LIGHTING, BACKGROUND AND SOUND; AND EMAIL APPENDICES OR HANDOUTS TO PARTICIPANTS. OPEN ON YOUR COMPUTER AND HAVE READY ANY ITEMS YOU WILL USE IN SCREEN-SHARE MODE.

# GATHERING RITUAL

WELCOME PEOPLE AS THEY ARRIVE. WHEN IT IS TIME TO BEGIN THE SESSION, INVITE EVERYONE TO JOIN YOU IN PRAYER OR YOUR REGULAR OPENING RITUAL. YOU MAY USE THIS PRAYER, OR INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO SHARE THEIR JOYS AND CONCERNS AND THEN LEAD THEM IN PRAYER.

Gracious God, in gratitude for the time we will share, we hold space to remember the many pathways by which you've drawn us together as your people. We seek to encounter your holy Word. We are like Sarah. We walk and wait with anticipation, but sometimes we laugh at what might seem impossible. We are like Peter. We listen and hope, but sometimes we step out only to become afraid and doubt. We are like Elijah. We are better off in the hope and joy of community, but sometimes we

are exhausted and would rather escape altogether. Most of all, we are disciples of Jesus. We hop on the boat, meet you at the well, fall to our knees and stare at the empty tomb. We meet you in the upper room, the hospital room, the boardroom, the classroom, the virtual room, and especially on the streets with those who have no room at all. In every place we seek to encounter your holy Word — a word to live by, a story of truth and grace, a vocabulary of faith. Amen.

IF THERE ARE NEW PEOPLE IN THE GROUP, INVITE ALL PARTICIPANTS TO INTRODUCE THEMSELVES.

## REMEMBERING

THE UNMERITED, ETERNAL GIFT OF GOD'S GRACE IS ENOUGH TO SAVE AND SUSTAIN THE WORLD

IN THIS SECTION OF THE SESSION, YOU ARE ANSWERING THE QUESTION, "WHAT DO YOU WANT PARTICIPANTS TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT GRACE?" THE SCRIPTURE EXPLORATION AND TEACHING POINTS WILL HELP PARTICIPANTS SEE THE WAYS IN WHICH GRACE IS AN UNMERITED AND ETERNAL GIFT OF GOD THAT SAVES AND SUSTAINS THE WORLD.



### ASK

- » Ask participants to complete this phrase in as many ways as possible:  
Grace is ...

MOVE INTO THE NEXT SECTION OF THE SESSION BY INCORPORATING THE FOLLOWING TEACHING POINTS INTO THE TRANSITION:



## TEACHING POINTS

- » Grace is embodied in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as forgiveness, mercy and salvation.
- » Scripture is the first place to which we turn to begin to understand grace.
- » Although he taught about grace through parables, Jesus didn't use the word grace. Paul often engages the word grace as God's unmerited gift in Christ.
- » The Hebrew word for a parable, mashal (ma-shal), can be translated as "proverb." Parables and proverbs are classic forms of instruction.
- » Jesus used parables to teach truths while engaging hearers in thoughtful discernment.
- » Parables are stories that
  - Beckon us to examine who God is and who we are and the nature of our relationships
  - Give us a glimpse of God's vision for the world and for us
  - Pose questions about how we are to live in faithfulness

DIVIDE PARTICIPANTS INTO THREE GROUPS AND ASSIGN EACH A PARABLE FROM APPENDIX A. INVITE THEM TO TAKE NOTES ON THEIR PONDERING SHEET (APPENDIX C) DURING THEIR SMALL GROUP WORK AND THROUGHOUT THE SESSION. ASK EACH GROUP TO READ THE SCRIPTURE, DISCUSS THE PROMPTS FROM APPENDIX C (SEE BELOW) AND BE PREPARED TO SHARE THEIR RESPONSES WITH THE WHOLE GROUP.



## REFLECT

- » Humanity is ...
- » God/Jesus is ...
- » Grace is ...

INVITE EACH GROUP TO SHARE THEIR RESPONSES AS YOU WRITE THEM ON THE CORRESPONDING SHEET OF NEWSPRINT. AS YOU WRITE DOWN THE GROUPS' RESPONSES, YOU MAY WANT TO PROMPT THEM WITH THESE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS:



## REFLECT .....

- » Lost Sheep: The one sheep is/does ...; the flock is/does ...; the shepherd is/does ...
- » Prodigal: The younger son is/does ...; the older son is/does ...; the father is/does ...
- » Two Sinners: The woman is/does ...; the host (Simon) is/does ...; Jesus is/does ...

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS THAT CAN BE WOVEN INTO THE DISCUSSION OF EACH PARABLE CAN BE FOUND IN APPENDIX B, "INSIGHTS ON GRACE."

MOVE INTO THE NEXT SECTION OF THE LESSON BY INCORPORATING THE FOLLOWING TEACHING POINTS INTO THE TRANSITION:



## TEACHING POINTS .....

- » Covenantal grace is God's loving promise and pursuit.
- » Justifying grace is God's salvation in Jesus Christ.
- » Sanctifying grace is God's power by the Holy Spirit that sets us free.
- » Grace is who God is and what God does.

# • RECLAIMING •

## GRACE THROUGH THE LIFE, DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

HERE IS WHERE YOU, AS THE TEACHER, PROVIDE THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS ON GRACE TO INCREASE PARTICIPANTS' VOCABULARY OF FAITH. THIS IS THE SECTION OF THE SESSION WHERE YOU ARE ANSWERING THE QUESTION, "WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR OUR FAITH, OUR LIVES, OUR CHURCH, COMMUNITY OR WORLD TO UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GRACE?" THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS TO DO THIS, AND THE DECISION WILL BE BASED ON YOUR TEACHING STYLE AND THE PARTICIPANTS' LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES. WE HAVE PROVIDED TWO RESOURCES FOR YOU TO WORK WITH TO CRAFT THIS PART OF YOUR SESSION.



## RESOURCES .....

- » **APPENDIX B** — At the end of this session you will find "Insights on Grace" (Appendix B). It provides theological content for understanding and teaching. You can use the material to create a PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi, to craft a mini-lecture, or to cull out particular points you want to share with the group. You may use this appendix to craft teaching points to weave into discussion. Think of this as a "cheat sheet" that we have assembled so your research time is minimized.
- » **VIDEO** — A short 7-11 minute video is also provided for you to use. A professor, a pastor/educator and a lay leader each briefly share their thoughts on grace. You can use this video to introduce the topic, to start the discussion or to reinforce the teaching points you developed from the "Insights on Grace" (Appendix B). You may also choose not to use the video.

WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED THIS SECTION, TRANSITION INTO A TIME OF DISCERNMENT.

# • REARTICULATING •

HUMANITY'S FREEDOM TO PARTICIPATE IN GOD'S WORK OF REDEMPTION WITH GRATITUDE AND JOY

IN THIS SECTION OF THE SESSION EACH PARTICIPANT IS ANSWERING THE QUESTION, "HOW WILL I (MY FAMILY OR THE CHURCH) LIVE DIFFERENTLY NOW THAT I UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GRACE?"

MOVE INTO THE NEXT SECTION BY INCORPORATING THE FOLLOWING TEACHING POINTS INTO THE TRANSITION:



## TEACHING POINTS

- » Christ is the content of God's revelation of grace and God's character.
- » God's grace comes first. Repentance and gratitude are our responses.
- » We do not deserve grace. We cannot earn grace — it is a free and unmerited gift from God.
- » The promise of grace is eternal. The broken covenant is healed by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and are we are brought back into right relationship with God.
- » The gift of grace (in Christ) frees us from the constraints and heaviness of sin and death.
- » The power of grace (by the Holy Spirit) draws us toward a life of continual regeneration and joy together.
- » Now that we have a better understanding of grace, we must ask, "So what?"
- » Now that we have remembered and reclaimed grace, let's consider how we will rearticulate it through the ways we live our faith in the world.

DISCERNMENT ABOUT FAITHFUL LIVING IS BEST DONE IN COMMUNITY. USE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, OR THOSE OF YOUR OWN, TO PROMPT HONEST, VULNERABLE AND DEEP DISCUSSION ABOUT EMBODYING OUR FAITH IN THE WORLD. THIS CAN BE DONE AS A WHOLE GROUP, IN SMALL GROUPS OR IN PAIRS. IN THIS SESSION WE ARE CREATING SPACE FOR THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN BUILDING A BRIDGE BETWEEN WHAT WE BELIEVE AND HOW WE LIVE. BECAUSE DISCIPLESHIP IS A "TEAM SPORT," WE DO THIS TOGETHER, IN CONVERSATION WITH OTHER DISCIPLES WHO ARE ON THIS JOURNEY WITH US. THE KEY IS FOR EACH PERSON, IN COMMUNITY, TO WRESTLE WITH HOW THIS NEW UNDERSTANDING OF GRACE WILL CHANGE THE WAY WE THINK, THE WAY WE ACT AND WHO WE ARE AT THE CORE OF OUR BEING AS WE ALL SEEK TO LIVE INTO GREATER FAITHFULNESS.





## GOING DEEPER .....

- » What difference does it make in your life that you have been given grace based on nothing you have done or will do?
- » What difference would it make in the world if we based our relationships on grace rather than merit?
- » In what ways will you live in joy and gratitude because you have been freed from the ways of sin and death?
- » What are the challenges to living in joy and gratitude?  
What are the possibilities?

## SENDING RITUAL

AS THE SESSION COMES TO AN END, MOVE INTO THE CLOSING LITANY  
(APPENDIX E) AS YOUR SENDING RITUAL.



**GRACE**  
**APPENDIX A**

SCRIPTURE  
**GRACE**

**GROUP 1**

**Matthew 18:1-14**

**Parable of the Lost Sheep**

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks! Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes! "If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into the hell of fire. "Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven. What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.

SCRIPTURE  
**GRACE**

**GROUP 2**

**Luke 7:36-50**

**Parable of Two Sinners**

One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner." Jesus spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Teacher," he replied, "Speak." "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt." And Jesus said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." Then he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

SCRIPTURE  
**GRACE**

**GROUP 3**

**Luke 15:11-32**

**Parable of the Prodigal**

Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate. "Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"



# GRACE

# APPENDIX B

The bolded statements are the main Teaching Points.  
The material under them is information to give you  
confidence in teaching and responding to questions.

# INSIGHTS ON GRACE

Grace: The unmerited, eternal promise and gift of God's love to the world, given so that humanity is free to participate in God's work of redemption, gratitude and joy.

Grace is **who God is:**

God's character is revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Grace is **what God does:**

By the power of the Holy Spirit, God's promise, forgiveness and salvation free humanity to participate in God's work of reconciliation with gratitude, joy and peace.

## **Covenantal Grace**

- » God's covenant (*oath*) of grace is eternal, transcending all time and space and tethering the narrative of God's people throughout Scripture and beyond.
- » God's covenant of grace is rooted in God's steadfast love (in Hebrew, *chesed*/ he-sed).

*Theology professor Robert Hughes describes God's character as "the steadfastness of God's covenant love, God's chesed in the biblical history of suffering."*

- » God's faithful pursuit to be "at one" with humanity is persistent.
- » Grace is tenacious, honest and loving even in the face of suffering and failure.

*John 1:14, 16-17: And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. 16 From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

## » **Justifying Grace**

- » The prodigal son of this familiar tale was not simply a lost sheep; he lost sight of who he truly was and to whom he belonged. Sin separates us from God and one another.

*Self-centeredness (human pride) distorts our relationships with God and one another as we pretend to usurp the power and position of God by placing ourselves at the center of our thinking and doing. This persistent tendency began with Adam and Eve.*

- » Many Christians affirm their faith by “accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior,” but salvation does not rest upon our accepting, believing or doing. What Good News!
- » We cannot save ourselves. God must do what we cannot.
- » Grace must come first, otherwise all of salvation would depend on humanity’s imperfect, inadequate, incapable actions as opposed to God’s loving act of grace.

*“The atonement [is] a sovereign act of God’s Grace,” in which God chooses to cross “a yawning abyss” separating God from sinful humanity long before our knowledge or understanding of sin or even faith. This act of justifying grace and reconciliation is embodied in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.*

— Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV.1, p. 82

- » We are neither justified by our attempts to be good enough (the older son) nor justified by our “turning back” (the prodigal son). The father’s abundant and gracious love preceded both the older son’s understanding and the younger son’s repentance.

*Repentance is “the true turning of our life to God, a turning that arises from a pure and earnest fear of [God].” In this continual process, we die to our old selves and are born into a new and joyful life of the Spirit.* — John Calvin, *Institutes* 3.3.5

*“Cheap grace [as opposed to costly grace] is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession. ... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”*

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer

- » God’s saving grace is the unmerited, undeserved gift made accessible and eternal in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, once and for all. As Martin Luther and other Reformers attest, *sola gratia, sola fide* — salvation by grace alone, through faith alone.

### **Sanctifying Grace**

- » Redeemed and renewed by God’s grace, we are invited to participate in the redemptive work of God’s grace.



*“Before God, Christians are free from the sin that Jesus redeemed us from on the cross, and we participate in the gifts of eternal life through Christ’s resurrection. Simultaneously, as we live in the temporal realm in this world that is also God’s, the Christian, if s/he were to behave as a one-hundred-percent justified Christian, would behave with other people according to the bounty of the blessing of God’s grace.”*

— Alicia Vargas, associate professor of multicultural and contextual ministry studies at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

- » By the power of the Holy Spirit, God’s sanctifying grace sets us free. This freedom leads us toward a Christian life of continual regeneration, obedience and joy together.

*“As Jesus Christ is God’s assurance of the forgiveness of all our sins, so in the same way and with the same seriousness is he also God’s mighty claim upon our whole life. Through him befalls us a joyful deliverance from the godless fetters of this world for a free, grateful service to his creatures.”*

— The Theological Declaration of Barmen, *Book of Confessions* 8.14

*We often forget that humanity’s “chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy [God] forever.”*

— Westminster Shorter Catechism, answer 1

- » The grace of God in Jesus Christ is the sum of the gospel; it is God’s initiative and God’s identity revealed, promised, given, experienced and engaged.

*“God’s sanctification is God’s choice to make something God’s own, thereby allowing it to participate in God’s nature. ... If whatever God has made and loves is holy, then life is holy in itself, and to live life with love and joy means sanctifying it.”*

— Jürgen Moltmann (pp. 175–176)

*“Fragmented, unfulfilled individuals align their separated lives with all of life, so that as newly empowered individuals, they form community which will allow them to bring insights and concerns of the Christian faith to bear on altering the most oppressive situation in society.”* — Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*



**GRACE**  
**APPENDIX C**

# GRACE IS...

## PONDERING SHEET

**HUMANITY IS...**

**GOD/JESUS IS...**

**GRACE IS...**



**GRACE**  
**APPENDIX D**

## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

# GRACE

### **Covenantal Grace**

"Then he looked around, and discovered he was alone... That is, that all the sheep had gone. And he began crying aloud. And then the shepherd, who had many sheep, missed him when he got back to the folk, and he left his ninety and nine... and he went out to try to find this sheep that was lost. And Jesus says, "God is like that." Nothing heavy or theological about that... Just that here is a shepherd who loves his sheep..."

~ Howard Thurman, *Sermons on the Parables*. Orbis, 2018. (Maryknoll, NY). P.17

#### *Additional Texts for Exploration*

Genesis 9:8-13	Jeremiah 31:31-34
Genesis: 12:1-3	Psalms 136
Exodus 19:3-6	Psalms 139:7-12
2 Samuel 23:5	Luke 15:8-10
	Romans 8:31-39

### **Justifying Grace**

"The issue is that humanity turns from their source of fulfillment and to itself... Humanity becomes the lost son in a far country and fallen into a sorry plight. Yet, God has taken action in this reconciling-atoning event. We see here the inadequacy of humanity as a covenant-partner with God... The Incarnation means God takes up the lost cause of humanity... God with us reveals the glory of the divine grace and the horror of the plight of humanity. Therefore, we are also with God in that God summons us and awakens us to God. We become free for God... God awakens us to our true being. Salvation is from God."

~ George Plasterer on Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, IV.1.13.

#### *Additional Texts for Exploration*

Isaiah 53:6 (on sin)	Matthew 26:17-30
Psalms 22	Mark 5:25-34
John 1:14,16-17	Ephesians 2:8-9
John 3:16	Romans 3:23-25
Matthew 18:21-35	Romans 10:9-10
Matthew 9	Hebrews 10:10

## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

# GRACE

### **Sanctifying Grace**

"Salvation is defined and experienced within the framework of relationship. Salvation means having a relationship with God, a relationship that does not exist without love of neighbor; the two concepts are inseparable... Sin is viewed as that which hurts relationship. While sin is personal and harmful to one's relationship with God, it is not private because it negatively impacts the entire community."

~ Valerie Geer on a Mugerista theology of grace.

### *Additional Texts for Exploration*

Psalm 23	1 Corinthians 6:11
2 Thessalonians 2:13	2 Corinthians 5:17
Colossians 3:1	2 Peter 1:2-4
Galatians 2:20	John 15:1-4
Hebrews 10:14	Romans 6

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**GRACE**  
**APPENDIX E**



CLOSING LITANY: PSALM 23 AND JOHN 1:14, 16-17

# GRACE

One: And the Word became flesh and lived among us,  
and we have seen the glory of God's only son,

**All: O Holy God, full of grace and truth.**

One: The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures.

**All: O Holy God, full of grace and truth.**

One: He leads me beside still waters  
He restores my soul.  
He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

**All: O Holy God, we have all received, grace upon grace.**

One: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

**All: O Holy God, we have all received, grace upon grace.**

One: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

**All: O Holy God, we give you thanks,  
grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.**

One: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

**All: O Holy God, we give you thanks,  
grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.  
Thanks Be to God, Amen.**



VOCABULARY OF FAITH  
**GOD OF ACTION**  
**LOVE**

**TEACHING PROPOSITION**

Love is the concrete expression of our devotion to God, manifested through the character and quality of our relationships with our neighbors, so that our lives testify to the incarnational and transforming work of Jesus Christ in our lives and in the world.

## TEXTS

- » Matthew 22:34-40      13:9-10
- » Mark 12:28-34      » 1 Corinthians
- » Luke 10:25-37      12:31-13:13
- » Matthew 5:43-47      » Ephesians 2:4-10
- » John 13:33-35;      » Colossians 3:12-15
- 14:15-17, 21-24;      » 1 John 3:1-3, 11, 16-
- 15:9-16; 21:15-19      18; 4:7-12, 17-21
- » Romans 5:1-8;
- 8:28-39; 12:9-18;

## TEACHING OUTLINE

- » 5 min      Welcome and Opening Prayer
- » 5 min      What do you know about love?
- » 15 min      Remembering expressions of devotion
- » 15 min      Rearticulating the  
manifestations of love
- » 15 min      Reclaiming our testimony to  
incarnation and transformation
- » 5 min      Closing litany

## LEADER PREPARATION (IN PERSON)

- » Make copies of Appendices A, C and D or create a PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi slide with the information on it.
- » Familiarize yourself with the teaching insights in Appendix B and weave it into your teaching remarks.
- » Download video and test it on equipment

## RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- » Copies of Appendices
- » Bibles or Bible apps  
(if not using appendices)
- » Dry-erase board or Flipchart and markers.
- » AV equipment for showing video and/or any media presentation.

## LEADER PREPARATION (VIRTUAL)

- » Prepare to email Appendices A, C and D to participants or post them in the chat function of your Videoconferencing platform or create a PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi slide with the information and prepare to share your screen.
- » Familiarize yourself with the teaching insights in Appendix B and weave it into your teaching remarks.
- » Ensure the settings on your Videoconferencing platform are configured for the best sound and video if you sharing screen.
- » Download video and test it on equipment

## RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- » Open appendices on computer so they are ready to screen share.
- » Open video on computer so it is ready to show in screen share.
- » Post appendices in chat function of Videoconferencing platform or email them to participants.

ARRIVE EARLY TO SET OUT BIBLES AND ARRANGE THE SEATS IN A WAY THAT IS CONDUCIVE TO TODAY'S SESSION, YOUR TEACHING STYLE AND THE PARTICIPANTS' LEARNING STYLES. IF TEACHING VIRTUALLY, TEST TECHNOLOGY; TEND TO VISUALS SUCH AS LIGHTING, BACKGROUND AND SOUND; AND EMAIL APPENDICES OR HANDOUTS TO PARTICIPANTS. OPEN ON YOUR COMPUTER AND HAVE READY ANY ITEMS YOU WILL USE IN SCREEN-SHARE MODE.

# GATHERING RITUAL

WELCOME PEOPLE AS THEY ARRIVE IN PERSON OR VIRTUALLY. WHEN IT IS TIME TO BEGIN, INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO JOIN YOU IN PRAYER OR YOUR REGULAR OPENING RITUAL. YOU MAY USE THIS PRAYER OR INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO SHARE THEIR JOYS AND CONCERNS, THEN LEAD THEM IN PRAYER.

God of steadfast and transforming love, we give you thanks for your incarnational love made known to us in Jesus Christ. You provided for us that which we could not achieve or attain ourselves, a love so powerful as to cleanse and heal and save. Make us acutely aware that we

love because you first loved us and that with that love comes responsibility. With the Spirit's help, move us to manifest our gratitude and devotion to you in the concrete ways we love our neighbor. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

## • REMEMBERING •

LOVE IS THE CONCRETE EXPRESSION OF OUR DEVOTION TO GOD

IN THIS SECTION OF THE SESSION, YOU ARE ANSWERING THE QUESTION, "WHAT DO YOU WANT PARTICIPANTS TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT LOVE?" THE SCRIPTURE EXPLORATION AND THE TEACHING POINTS IN THIS SECTION WILL HELP STUDENTS SEE THE WAYS IN WHICH GOD RELATES TO HUMANITY THROUGH LOVE.



### ASK .....

» What do you know about love?

ALLOW TIME FOR SHORT ANSWERS. THEN MOVE INTO THE NEXT SECTION, WEAVING THESE TEACHING POINTS INTO THE TRANSITION:



## TEACHING POINTS

- » What we know about love comes from many places — experience, books, poetry, films and cultural commentary, to name just a few.
- » There are 740 instances in the Bible in which the Greek or Hebrew words are translated as love – 595 in the Old Testament and 145 in the New Testament.
- » It is unlikely that we could responsibly examine all those in one setting. So today we will look only at what the New Testament teaches us about love. Here are two things to keep in mind:
  - The God of the Old Testament is the exact same God we find in the New Testament.
  - Much of what we know about love in the New Testament is steeped in Jewish tradition, as it comes from Jesus, the Gospel writers and Paul, all of whom understood Judaism.
- » In the New Testament there are several primary words for love:
  - Eros – romantic, physical, desiring love
  - Phileo – kindred love
  - Agapao/Agape – love for and of God
- » All the texts we are working with today are from the agapao and agape understanding of love.

DIVIDE THE CLASS INTO FOUR GROUPS AND ASSIGN EACH GROUP A SET OF TEXTS. IN APPENDIX A AT THE END OF THIS SESSION, YOU WILL FIND HANDOUTS, ONE FOR EACH GROUP, WITH THE SCRIPTURE TEXTS ON THEM. YOU MAY ALSO CHOOSE TO HAVE THE PARTICIPANTS USE THEIR OWN BIBLES, BIBLE APPS, OR THE BIBLES IN YOUR MEETING SPACE. ASK EACH GROUP TO READ THE SCRIPTURES, DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS BELOW AND BE PREPARED TO SHARE THEIR RESPONSES WITH THE WHOLE GROUP.



## REFLECT

- » What do these texts say about God?
- » What do these texts say about love?

INVITE EACH GROUP TO SHARE WHAT THEY DISCOVERED. THEN ASK AND POST RESPONSES TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTION:



## ASK .....

- » What would you say are the characteristics and qualities of love as defined in Scripture?

## • RECLAIMING •

LIVES THAT TESTIFY TO THE INCARNATIONAL AND TRANSFORMING WORK OF JESUS CHRIST IN OUR LIVES AND IN THE WORLD

HERE IS WHERE YOU, AS THE TEACHER, PROVIDE THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS ON LOVE TO INCREASE PARTICIPANTS' VOCABULARY OF FAITH. THIS IS THE SECTION OF THE SESSION WHERE YOU ARE ANSWERING THE QUESTION, "WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR OUR FAITH, OUR LIVES, OUR CHURCH, OUR COMMUNITY OR WORLD TO UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LOVE AS SCRIPTURE DEFINES IT?" THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS TO DO THIS, AND THE DECISION WILL BE BASED ON YOUR TEACHING STYLE AND THE PARTICIPANTS' LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES. WE HAVE PROVIDED TWO RESOURCES FOR YOU TO WORK WITH TO CRAFT THIS PART OF YOUR SESSION.



## RESOURCES .....

- » **APPENDIX B** — At the end of this session you will find "Insights on Love" (Appendix B), It provides theological content for understanding and teaching about love. You can use the material to create a PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi, to craft a mini-lecture or to cull out particular points you want to share with the group. You may use this appendix to craft teaching points to weave into the discussion. Think of this as a "cheat sheet" that we have assembled so your research time is minimized.
- » **VIDEO** — A short 7-11 minute video is also provided for you to use. A professor, a pastor/educator and a lay leader each briefly share their thoughts on love. You can use the video to introduce the topic, to start the discussion or to reinforce the teaching points you developed from "Insights on Love" (Appendix B). You may also choose not to use the video.

WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED THIS SECTION, TRANSITION INTO A TIME OF DISCERNMENT.

# REARTICULATING

HOW LOVE IS MANIFESTED THROUGH THE CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR NEIGHBORS

IN THIS SECTION OF THE SESSION, EACH PARTICIPANT IS ANSWERING THE QUESTION, "HOW WILL I (MY FAMILY OR THE CHURCH) LIVE DIFFERENTLY NOW THAT I UNDERSTAND LOVE AND WHY IT IS SO IMPORTANT?"

DISCERNMENT ABOUT FAITHFUL LIVING IS BEST DONE IN COMMUNITY. USE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, OR THOSE OF YOUR OWN, TO PROMPT HONEST, VULNERABLE AND DEEP DISCUSSION ABOUT EMBODYING OUR FAITH IN THE WORLD. THIS CAN BE DONE AS A WHOLE GROUP, IN SMALL GROUPS OR IN PAIRS. IN THIS SESSION, WE ARE CREATING SPACE FOR THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN BUILDING A BRIDGE BETWEEN WHAT WE BELIEVE AND HOW WE LIVE. BECAUSE DISCIPLESHIP IS A "TEAM SPORT," WE DO THIS TOGETHER, IN CONVERSATION WITH OTHER DISCIPLES WHO ARE ON THIS JOURNEY WITH US. THE KEY IS FOR EACH PERSON, IN COMMUNITY, TO WRESTLE WITH HOW THIS NEW UNDERSTANDING OF LOVE WILL CHANGE THE WAY WE THINK, THE WAY WE ACT AND WHO WE ARE AT THE CORE OF OUR BEING AS WE ALL SEEK TO LIVE INTO GREATER FAITHFULNESS.

AS YOU MOVE INTO A TIME OF DISCERNMENT, ASK:



## ASK

- » What do you think is the most well-known Scripture about love?

INCORPORATE THIS INTO YOUR TRANSITION:



## TEACHING POINTS

- » 1 Corinthians 13 is a very popular text for weddings.
- » Many people can quote, and sometimes misquote, at least some of, its parts.
- » Let's take a closer look at this passage and its list of characteristics of love.

PASS OUT, POST, OR SCREEN SHARE THE 1 CORINTHIANS PASSAGE FROM APPENDIX C. INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO TAKE A MOMENT TO READ THE PASSAGE SILENTLY. ONCE EVERYONE IS FINISHED, ASK THEM TO ANALYZE THE CHARACTERISTICS AND QUALITIES OF LOVE IN THIS PASSAGE IN LIGHT OF WHAT THEY HAVE DISCOVERED ABOUT LOVE FROM YOUR DISCUSSIONS EARLIER IN THE SESSION. CONSIDER QUESTIONS SUCH AS:



## GOING DEEPER .....

- » Given what we've discussed thus far about love, what is easy about this kind of agape?
- » Why do you think this kind of love might be difficult?

ASK FOR TWO VOLUNTEERS TO READ SCRIPTURE ALOUD. HAVE ONE READ LUKE 6:27-36, AND THEN HAVE THE OTHER READ THE 1 CORINTHIANS PASSAGE, WITH NO DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE TWO READINGS.



## REFLECT .....

- » How does hearing Jesus' admonishment in Luke change how you hear 1 Corinthians?
- » In what ways do we treat our neighbors, or our enemies, with the love described in 1 Corinthians?
- » What does a concrete expression of this kind of love look like in our lives?

MOVE INTO THE NEXT SECTION BY INCORPORATING THE FOLLOWING TEACHING POINTS INTO THE TRANSITION:





## TEACHING POINTS

- » Love is many different things to many different people, but Scripture teaches us that love is
  - Tangible
  - Concrete
  - Embodied
  - Just
  - Transforming
  - Liberating
- » God's love for us is incarnate in Jesus Christ — a gift we neither earned nor deserve.
- » God's love for us is enduring and constant.
- » Our love for God is expressed through the quality of love in our relationships.
- » Our love for God manifests in the quality of our love for our neighbors.
- » Love of and for God is both vertical and horizontal.

## SENDING RITUAL

AS THE SESSION COMES TO AN END, MOVE INTO THE RESPONSIVE READING OF  
"TRANSFORMING LOVE LITANY" (APPENDIX D).

THE LEADER WILL READ THE ITALICIZED PARTS,  
AND THE PARTICIPANTS WILL READ THE BOLDED REFRAIN.



**LOVE**  
**APPENDIX A**

# SCRIPTURE LOVE

## GROUP 1

### Key passages on love from the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark & Luke)

#### Matthew 22:34-40

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

#### Mark 12: 28-34

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,' —this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

#### Luke 10:25-37

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came

## SCRIPTURE LOVE

to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

### **Matthew 5:43-47**

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 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; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?"

# SCRIPTURE LOVE

## GROUP 2

### Key passages on love from the Gospel of John

#### **John 13:33-35**

Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

#### **John 14:15-17, 21-24**

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

#### **John 15:9-16**

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.

SCRIPTURE  
**LOVE**

**John 21:15-19**

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

## SCRIPTURE LOVE

### GROUP 3

#### Key passages on love from Romans

##### **Romans 5:1-8**

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

##### **Romans 8:28-39**

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## SCRIPTURE

# LOVE

### **Romans 12:9-18**

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

### **Romans 13:9-10**

The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.



## SCRIPTURE LOVE

### GROUP 4

#### Key passages on love from the Epistles

##### **Ephesians 2:4-10**

But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

##### **Colossians 3:12-15**

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. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

##### **I John 3:1-3, 11, 16-18**

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another

We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

## SCRIPTURE LOVE

### **I John 4:7-12, 17-21**

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us....

Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

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# LOVE

# APPENDIX B

The bolded statements are the main Teaching Points.  
The material under them is information to give you  
confidence in teaching and responding to questions.

## INSIGHTS ON LOVE

- » **Love is the essence, the core, of who God is.**
- » **God does not act in ways that are inconsistent with God's very being.**
- » **God's love is initiative; God loved us before we knew what love was or could ask for it.**
- » **We love because God loved us first and taught us how to love.**
- » **God's love became incarnate in Jesus Christ — God's extravagant gift and act of self-giving.**
- » **God's love is transforming and liberating; when we encounter and experience God's love, we are changed.**
- » **God's love is persistent and pursuing.**
- » **God's love is constant and enduring; God's love never ends.**
- » **God's love, not our own achievement, is what defines our worth.**

William Sloane Coffin Jr. said it this way:

*"Of God's love we can say two things: it is poured out universally for everyone from the Pope to the loneliest wino on the planet; and secondly, God's love doesn't seek value, it creates value. It is not because we have value that we are loved, but because we are loved that we have value. Our value is a gift, not an achievement."*

- » **Love in the New Testament:**
  - The New Testament is written in Koine Greek, a version of the ancient Greek language that was different from the classical Greek used by Plato, Aristotle and other philosophers and writers.
  - There are three primary words for love in the New Testament: eros, phileo and agape/agapao (agape is the noun and agapao is the verb).
  - Eros is passionate or desiring love, which is connected to romantic feelings of love.
  - Phileo is the love and affection we have for our family and friends.
  - Agape/Agapao is selfless, compassionate, unconditional and all-encompassing love.
    - Agape/Agapao takes center stage in shaping our understanding of what it means to love through the theological lens of God in Christ.
    - It is the distinctive characteristic of what it means to be loved by God and to love God.
- » **Agape/Agapao is the expression of God's love for us and sets before us the standard by which we are to love one another.**
- » **Jesus Christ is the embodiment of love.**

- » **He lived his life as an expression of his devotion to God and called us to do so as well.**
- » **Jesus placed the commandment to love God and love neighbor as the highest priority for a faithful life.**
  - Our Jewish siblings believe there are 613 commandments that comprise the covenant made by God through Moses with the people.
  - Deuteronomy 6:4-9, is considered to be a summary of all the commandments. It is called the Shema, and the first word of the passage is "Shema," the Hebrew word for "hear."
  - The commandment to love neighbor is also in the Mosaic Covenant (Leviticus 19:18).
  - Jesus was drawing on his Jewish faith when he answered the question, "Which is the greatest commandment?"
- » **Jesus gives us a new commandment: love one another.**
- » **Jesus raises the stakes for love when he requires us to love not just those we like, who share our values, priorities and religion, but our enemies.**
- » **This ethic of love becomes the ethos of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ and the standard for all who follow him.**
- » **The characteristics of love as defined by Scripture raise the level of personal interactions with one another and public systems.**
- » **There is an expectation of mutuality, genuine respect and care for one another – even if it means treating the other person's needs as equal to our own.**
- » **The New Testament shows us that love of God and love of neighbor cannot be disconnected.**
- » **Our love for God is expressed and seen in our love of neighbor. For Christians, one without the other is impossible.**
- » **Love, as understood through the biblical and theological lens of the New Testament, is not simply an emotion but rather must be expressed. It is an action, a verb, that is**
  - Incarnate
  - Life-giving
  - Concrete
  - Tangible
  - Embodied

All of which foster transformation and liberation.

» **Love and justice are unalterably interwoven.**

- It is God's love of, care for and commitment to people, especially those who are most vulnerable, powerless and marginalized, that brings about the commandment and expectation of justice. Author and activist bell hooks provides an example:

- "There can be no love without justice. Until we live in a culture that not only respects but also upholds basic civil rights for children, most children will not know love."
- Personal acts of love are made tangible in relationships.
- The public or communal act of love is justice.
- Justice is the way in which God's love is codified through systems and governments.
- Cornel West's famous quote sums it up:  
"Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public."



**LOVE**  
**APPENDIX C**



# LOVE

I CORINTHIANS 12:31 - 13:1-13

But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.



**LOVE**  
**APPENDIX D**

# LOVE

## TRANSFORMING LOVE LITANY

*Come, Holy Spirit, move in and among and through us  
as we seek to embody God's liberating love.*

**But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.**

*The world is too dangerous from anything but truth and too small for anything but love.*

*William Sloane Coffin*

**If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love,  
I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.**

*Justice without love is not justice. Love without justice is not love.*

*Mother Teresa*

**And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge,  
and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love,  
I am nothing.**

*Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public.*

*Cornel West*

**If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast,  
but do not have love, I gain nothing.**

*Love has no meaning if it isn't shared. Love has to be put into action.*

*Mother Teresa*

**Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.**

*Love measures our stature: the more we love the bigger we are.*

*William Sloane Coffin, Jr.*

**It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice  
in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.**

*Justice is love correcting that which revolts against love.*

*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

**It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.  
Love never ends.**

*Amen.*



VOCABULARY OF FAITH

**GOD OF  
BELONGING  
CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**

**TEACHING PROPOSITION**

Created and sustained by the Holy Spirit,  
Christian community is marked by embodied  
compassionate love that connects us to one  
another and God so that we are encouraged  
and accountable in the direction of our  
common lives of faithfulness.

## TEXTS

- » Mark 12:28-34
- » John 14:15-31
- » Acts 2:1-13
- » Acts 2:37-47
- » Galatians 6:1-10
- » Psalm 133
- » Philippians 2:1-7

## TEACHING OUTLINE

- » 5 min Welcome and Opening Prayer
- » 5 min Brainstorming: accountability and encouragement activity
- » 15 min Remembering and exploring Christian community
- » 15 min Rearticulating church as community
- » 15 min Reclaiming communal power
- » 5 min Closing prayer based on Psalm 133

## LEADER PREPARATION (IN PERSON)

- » Make copies of Appendices A and D or create a PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi slide with the information on it.
- » Familiarize yourself with the teaching insights in Appendix B and weave it into your teaching remarks.
- » Copy Appendix C on to cardstock paper, cut apart and put on the walls of or tables around the room.
- » Choose a quiet song to play during activity with Appendix C.
- » Download video and test it on equipment

## RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- » Copies of Appendices
- » Bibles or Bible apps (if not using appendices)
- » Dry-erase board or Flipchart and markers.
- » Copies of cards from Appendix C and tape if you are putting the on the walls.
- » Audio file of quiet song for Appendix C activity
- » AV equipment for showing video and/or any media presentation.

## LEADER PREPARATION (VIRTUAL)

- » Prepare to email Appendices A, C.V and D to participants or post them in the chat function of your Videoconferencing platform or create a PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi slide with the information and prepare to share your screen.
- » Familiarize yourself with the teaching insights in Appendix B and weave it into your teaching remarks.
- » Ensure the settings on your Videoconferencing platform are configured for the best sound and video if you sharing screen.
- » Choose and test a quiet song to play during activity with Appendix C.
- » Download video and test it on equipment

## RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- » Open appendices on computer so they are ready to screen share.
- » Open video on computer so it is ready to show in screen share.
- » Open the audio file of the quiet song you chose for the activity in Appendix C.V
- » Post appendices in chat function of Videoconferencing platform or email them to participants.

ARRIVE EARLY TO SET OUT BIBLES AND ARRANGE THE SEATS IN A WAY THAT IS CONDUCIVE TO TODAY'S SESSION, YOUR TEACHING STYLE AND THE PARTICIPANTS' LEARNING STYLES. IF TEACHING VIRTUALLY, TEST TECHNOLOGY; TEND TO VISUALS SUCH AS LIGHTING, BACKGROUND AND SOUND; AND EMAIL APPENDICES OR HANDOUTS TO PARTICIPANTS. OPEN ON YOUR COMPUTER AND HAVE READY ANY ITEMS YOU WILL USE IN SCREEN-SHARE MODE.

# GATHERING RITUAL

WELCOME PEOPLE AS THEY ARRIVE IN PERSON OR VIRTUALLY. WHEN IT IS TIME TO BEGIN, INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO JOIN YOU IN PRAYER OR YOUR REGULAR OPENING RITUAL. YOU MAY USE THIS PRAYER OR INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO SHARE THEIR JOYS AND CONCERNS, THEN LEAD THEM IN PRAYER.

God of the ages and God of today, to our utter amazement, you yearn to be in relationship with us. Your continuing and amazing grace beckons us to greater faithfulness, and for that and so many other things, we are deeply grateful. Open us to the presence of your Spirit in this moment,

that we may hear and understand your wisdom in new and renewing ways. Then, Holy One, quicken within us a desire to live in ways that reflect the gift of your grace, your amazing love and our continuing Christian community relationship. Amen.

IF THERE ARE NEW PEOPLE IN THE GROUP, INVITE ALL PARTICIPANTS TO INTRODUCE THEMSELVES.

## • REMEMBERING •

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS MARKED BY EMBODIED COMPASSIONATE LOVE THAT CONNECTS US TO ONE ANOTHER AND GOD

IN THIS SECTION OF THE SESSION, YOU ARE ANSWERING THE QUESTION, "WHAT DO YOU WANT PARTICIPANTS TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY?" THE SCRIPTURE EXPLORATION AND THE TEACHING POINTS IN THIS SECTION WILL HELP STUDENTS SEE THE WAYS IN WHICH GOD RELATES TO HUMANITY THROUGH CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.



### ASK

- » Who comes to mind as a key person in your Christian faith journey? What is something special about that person that has affected your faith journey?
- » Can you think of a time when that key person encouraged you in your Christian faith?
- » Was there a time when that person held you accountable?

TEACHING POINTS TO WORK INTO THE TRANSITION TO THE NEXT SECTION:



## TEACHING POINTS .....

- » Christian communities are as diverse as the people that make them up, yet at the core is a desire to follow the direction of the God of all creation, through the person of Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- » Because listening for the voice of God can be mysterious, we need the power of communal discernment and curiosity to point us to how God has been revealed through the ages and to help us live in congruency with our faith.

DIVIDE PARTICIPANTS INTO FOUR LEARNING TEAMS AND ASSIGN EACH A SCRIPTURE PASSAGE. IN APPENDIX A, AT THE END OF THIS SESSION, YOU WILL FIND HANDOUTS, ONE FOR EACH GROUP, WITH THE SCRIPTURE TEXTS ON THEM. YOU MAY ALSO CHOOSE TO HAVE THE PARTICIPANTS USE THEIR BIBLES, BIBLE APPS, OR BIBLES IN ROOM. ASK EACH GROUP TO READ THE SCRIPTURE AND DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS (ALSO LISTED AT THE BOTTOM OF EACH SCRIPTURE HANDOUT):



## REFLECT .....

- » How is God involved in the unity of humanity?
- » What are the signs of unity in this passage?
- » What are the impacts of faithful community?
- » Where is encouragement evident or implied in this passage?
- » Where is accountability evident or implied in this passage?

RECONVENE AND INVITE EACH GROUP TO SHARE ITS RESPONSES. NOTE ANY LANGUAGE THAT IS SIMILAR OR LANGUAGE THAT SEEMS TO BE IN TENSION WITH OTHER FINDINGS.

MOVE INTO THE NEXT SECTION OF THE SESSION BY INCORPORATING THE FOLLOWING TEACHING POINTS INTO THE TRANSITION. OR SHARE FROM YOUR PERSONAL CHRISTIAN FAITH FORMATION STORY IF YOU SENSE IT WOULD BE ILLUMINATING AND HELPFUL TO THE GROUP.



## TEACHING POINTS .....

- » Christian community offers accountability to help our actions follow what we say we believe about who God is in the world and for us personally.
- » Christian community offers encouragement through the Word proclaimed, the sacraments rightly administered, the confession of our sin and brokenness, the assurance of God's steadfast love, and the work of the people (the definition of liturgy), both in worship and in sharing Christ's love and healing in the world.

## • RECLAIMING •

SO THAT WE ARE ENCOURAGED AND ACCOUNTABLE IN THE DIRECTION OF OUR COMMON LIVES OF FAITHFULNESS

HERE IS WHERE YOU, AS THE TEACHER, PROVIDE THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS ON CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN ORDER TO INCREASE THE PARTICIPANTS' VOCABULARY OF FAITH. THIS IS THE SECTION OF THE SESSION WHERE YOU ARE ANSWERING THE QUESTION, "WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR OUR FAITH, OUR LIVES, OUR CHURCH, OUR COMMUNITY OR WORLD TO UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY?" THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS TO DO THIS, AND THE DECISION WILL BE BASED ON YOUR TEACHING STYLE AND THE PARTICIPANTS' LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES. WE HAVE PROVIDED TWO RESOURCES FOR YOU TO WORK WITH TO CRAFT THIS PART OF YOUR SESSION.



## RESOURCES .....

- » **APPENDIX B** — At the end of this session, you will find a page "Insights on Christian Community" (Appendix B) that provides theological content for understanding and teaching about Christian community. You can use the material to create a PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi, to craft a mini-lecture, or to cull out particular points you want to share with the group. Think of this as a "cheat sheet" that we have assembled so your research time is minimized.
- » **VIDEO** — A short 7-11 minute video is also provided for you to use. A professor, a pastor/educator and a lay leader each briefly share their thoughts on Christian community. You can use this video to introduce the topic, to start the discussion or to reinforce the teaching points you developed from "Insights on Christian Community" (Appendix B). You may also choose not to use the video.

WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED THIS SECTION, TRANSITION INTO A TIME OF DISCERNMENT.



# REARTICULATING

THROUGH THE CREATIVE AND SUSTAINING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

IN THIS SECTION OF THE SESSION, EACH PARTICIPANT IS ANSWERING THE QUESTION, "HOW WILL I (MY FAMILY, THE CHURCH) LIVE DIFFERENTLY NOW THAT I/WE UNDERSTAND CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT?"

MOVE INTO THE NEXT SECTION OF THE SESSION BY INCORPORATING THE FOLLOWING TEACHING POINTS INTO THE TRANSITION:



## TEACHING POINTS

- » The Holy Spirit authors, animates, comforts, corrects and directs the faithful living of the people of God.
- » The Holy Spirit, in perfect union with God the Creator and Jesus the Christ, is the source of all right discernment of Scripture and true Christian faith and life.
- » The Holy Spirit draws people together in faith across human lines of division toward wholeness and justice.

DISCERNING HOW TO GO DEEPER IN CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY CAN BE DIFFICULT. IT FEELS VULNERABLE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE IMPERFECTIONS OF OUR CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES. OUR CHURCHES AND OTHER FORMS OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY EXIST IN THE NOW AND THE NOT YET OF THE REIGN OF CHRIST. HOWEVER, IT HELPS WHEN WE HAVE CLARITY AROUND THE COMPLEXITY OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN THE WORLD AS IT IS NOW. THE HOLY SPIRIT OFFERS US THE GRACIOUS GIFT OF REMEMBERING AND RECLAIMING, SO THAT AS MEMBERS OF THE CHRISTIAN BODY, WE CAN SHARE, LEARN AND DISCERN WAYS TO PROMOTE HEALING THAT CAN SUPPORT WELLNESS FOR THE ENTIRE BODY.

IF YOU ARE TEACHING IN PERSON: YOU WILL NEED APPENDIX C  
IF YOU ARE TEACHING VIRTUALLY: YOU WILL NEED APPENDIX C.V  
AS YOU TRANSITION TO INTO A TIME OF DISCERNMENT, SHARE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

- » Around the room are cards with responses to the statement "Christian community is ..." given by 48 members of the body of Christ.
- » The respondents were diverse in tradition, age, ethnicity, socio-economic position, regional location around the United States and church involvement.
- » Their responses are as varied as they are. Some seem more celebratory, some seem to lament, some offer definitions, some offer descriptions, some are overtly encouraging and some help hold us accountable for the work we still have ahead of us.

IF YOU ARE TEACHING IN PERSON: INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO “PRAYERFULLY MOVE AROUND THE ROOM AND FIND ONE RESPONSE THAT SPEAKS TO YOUR HEART, YOUR MIND, YOUR SPIRIT. BRING THE CARD WITH YOU BACK TO YOUR SEAT AND CONTINUE IN PRAYERFUL DISCERNMENT UNTIL ALL ARE SEATED.” PLAY A QUIET SONG WHILE PEOPLE ARE MAKING THEIR CHOICES.

INVITE EACH PERSON TO SHARE WITH ONE OTHER PERSON WHAT RESPONSE THEY CHOSE AND WHY IT SPOKE TO THEM OR AT THE END OF THE SONG.

ENCOURAGE PARTICIPANTS TO TAKE THE CARDS HOME WITH THEM AND PLACE THEM IN A PROMINENT PLACE WHERE THEY WILL SEE THEM EACH DAY AND BE REMINDED TO REARTICULATE AND EMBODY THEIR NEW AND DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN THEIR DAILY LIVES.

IF YOU ARE TEACHING VIRTUALLY: INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAYERFULLY READ THROUGH THE DEFINITIONS WHILE A QUIET SONG PLAYS. FIND ONE THAT SPEAKS TO YOUR HEART, YOUR MIND, YOUR SPIRIT. AT THE END OF THE SONG BE PREPARED TO SHARE WHICH ONE SPOKE TO YOU AND WHY.

## SENDING RITUAL

AS THE SESSION ENDS, MOVE INTO THE SENDING RITUAL OF A RESPONSIVE LITANY BASED ON PSALM 133 AND PHILIPPIANS 2:1-7 (APPENDIX D).

YOU MAY WANT TO WEAVE THE FOLLOWING INTO YOUR TRANSITION:



### TEACHING POINTS

- » In Psalm 133, the joy of unity is compared to an overflowing anointing of oil. There is a blessing of the mind, body and spirit made possible in faithful community.
- » In Philippians, the Christian community is invited to collectively participate in the self-emptying love of God made evident in Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit.
- » In Jesus’ death on a cross, there is the ultimate laying down of self-preservation for the sake of the other.
- » In community, real humility involves using what we have to uplift others and allowing others to do the same for us. Both are vulnerable positions of accountability and encouragement.

THE LEADER WILL READ THE ITALICIZED PARTS OF THE LITANY, AND THE PARTICIPANTS WILL READ THE BOLDED REFRAIN.

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**CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**  
**APPENDIX A**

SCRIPTURE

# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

## GROUP 1

### John 14: 15-31

#### Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

"I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

"I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us be on our way.

#### Based on this passage:

- » How is God involved in the unity of humanity?
- » What are the signs of unity in this passage?
- » What the impacts of faithful community?
- » Where is encouragement evident or implied in this passage?
- » Where is accountability evident or implied in this passage?

SCRIPTURE

# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

## GROUP 2

### Acts 2:1-18

#### The Arrival of the Holy Spirit

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

'In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams.  
Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.

SCRIPTURE

# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

**Based on this passage:**

- » How is God involved in the unity of humanity?
- » What are the signs of unity in this passage?
- » What the impacts of faithful community?
- » Where is encouragement evident or implied in this passage?
- » Where is accountability evident or implied in this passage?

SCRIPTURE

# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

## GROUP 3

### Acts 2: 37-47

#### The First Christian Community

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. 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. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

#### Based on this passage:

- » How is God involved in the unity of humanity?
- » What are the signs of unity in this passage?
- » What the impacts of faithful community?
- » Where is encouragement evident or implied in this passage?
- » Where is accountability evident or implied in this passage?



SCRIPTURE

# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

## GROUP 4

### Galatians 5:22 -6:10

### The Compassion of Christian Community

#### Chapter 5

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

#### Chapter 6

My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. For all must carry their own loads.

Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher.

Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

#### Based on this passage:

- » How is God involved in the unity of humanity?
- » What are the signs of unity in this passage?
- » What the impacts of faithful community?
- » Where is encouragement evident or implied in this passage?
- » Where is accountability evident or implied in this passage?



# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY APPENDIX B

The bolded statements are the main Teaching Points.  
The material under them is information to give you  
confidence in teaching and responding to questions.

## INSIGHTS ON

# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

### » **Christian community is gathered by divine invitation.**

- The Christian community doesn't choose to follow God. God searches out all people for relationship. From Mary the mother of Jesus' faithful agreement to follow the will of God, to John the Baptist's leap in his mother's womb and passionate sermons and baptisms in the wilderness that prepared the way to the fisher disciples ditching their nets, to the crowds gathering to learn and be healed by Jesus to the arrival of the Holy Spirit and beyond, God has always been the one to reach out to invite humanity into the community of followers of Jesus the Christ.
- God beckons the Christian community for worship and service.
- The Holy Spirit sent by Jesus to be a companion directs the movements of the Christian community.

### » **Christian community is a God-given blessing called to be a blessing to the world.**

- Christian community is a freely given gift of grace that shares the grace it has been given.
- As a community, the church is called to continue the ministry of Jesus in the now and not yet of his reign. The church is a vessel for the love, grace, justice and mercy of the Triune God.
- The church depends on the Holy Spirit to listen to the Creator and discern God's will as a visible witness of Christ Jesus on earth.

### » **The New Testament depicts the Christian community as a space of *koinonia* (coin-a-knee-a), an embodied collaboration of God and the followers of Jesus for the inbreaking of the reign of Christ in the common life of the faithful.**

- In Zimbabwe and South Africa, there is a term for the gift of showing *koinonia*. It is called *ubuntu* (oo-boon-too).
- Archbishop Desmond Tutu on *ubuntu*: "It speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say ... 'Hey so-and-so has *ubuntu*.' Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have."

### » ***Koinonia* is the New Testament term that denotes fellowship, connection, spiritual accompaniment with God and neighbor.**

- **Koinonia connects us to God and each other:**

"We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have *fellowship* with us; and truly our *fellowship* is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3)

- **Koinonia is the sharing that we experience at the Lord's Table.**

This is a mysterious and miraculous sharing of table with the communion of saints across time and space: "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a *sharing* in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a *sharing* in the body of Christ? (1 Corinthians 10:16)

- **Koinonia attends to the common needs of people** for spiritual support, interpersonal connection and tangible care, needs that all people share as they develop a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and *fellowship*, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2:42)

» **Christian community, in the world as it is, is imperfect.**

- Christian community, like the individuals who comprise it, is always changing and being made whole as we follow Jesus. **This change is called *sanctification*, and it is an ongoing process until Christ comes again.**

- **Christian community is alive and changing.** In the Reformed tradition, we inherit the motto *ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda*. We are reformed and always being reformed by the Holy Spirit.

- **In Christian community, we support each other through faithful disciplines that hold us accountable.**

- **Some disciplines are spiritual**, i.e., facilitating faithful worship and biblical interpretation, administering the sacraments, supporting prayer in its diverse forms and caring for the marginalized.

- **Some disciplines are reflected in the polity or governance of the community** to protect the vulnerable and encourage justice in the shared life of the Christian community. These polity disciplines are also led by the Holy Spirit.

» **Christian community is and has always been diverse.** The communion of saints spans time and space; it transcends all geographical, societal and cultural bounds. Yet each expression of Christian community is contextual and located in a tradition.

- Christian community is like a tree with many divergent branches that sometimes split and sometimes reunify.

» **Christian community is prophetic and pastoral.**

The Christian community is called in its words and actions to point toward and embody aspirational compassionate and faithful living that makes a difference: "You are the salt of the earth. ... You are the light of the world." (Matthew 5:13a, 14a)



**CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**  
**APPENDIX C**

# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

an act of the Holy Spirit, bringing sinners together into undeserved mutual love.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

Inclusive.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

Where we all accept the sacred privilege and duty of forming one another as disciples.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

Hard work.

# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

...not corporate culture.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

honest and  
questioning  
assumptions.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

Bearing and sharing  
one another's burdens  
and joys.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

loving one another as  
we have been loved.



# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

Exhausting, but can be deeply fulfilling if its honest and vulnerable.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

vital. We are not created to be alone. We need each other to live, serve, and seek the Holy - together.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

a place of healing, welcome and inclusion--else it is not true Christian community.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

pointless is if isn't helping to liberate through justice all of God's children

# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

## **CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...**

Necessary for faith  
and the life of faith

## **CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...**

an intention striving  
for excellence, not  
perfection.

## **CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...**

Supportive of each  
other in daily life and  
times of crisis.

## **CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...**

... anti-racist, cares for  
those Christ cared for,  
serving.

# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

... super messy!

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

kind, not nice  
open and inclusive  
a good idea  
anti-empire

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

where we learn to be  
better followers of  
Jesus by celebrating  
and challenging each  
other to strive to be  
closer to the perfection  
we see in Jesus.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

a boat load of work.

# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

a true "sanctuary of welcome for all people" that lives into the full definition of each word in that phrase.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

the body of Christ at work in the world today.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

Knowledgeable.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

fully inclusive  
wholeness,  
unconditional love, and  
wellness grounded in  
Christ.

# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

...like family, but harder. ...like marriage, where you have to keep choosing each other over and over every day. Some days that's easier to do than others.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

Not doing enough.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

Essential.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

Challenging.

# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

Welcoming!

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

founded on  
unconditional love  
from the Creator that  
calls us to love each  
other.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

Imperfect.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

experienced most  
when on mission  
together.

# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

...to bring about the kingdom of God here, in this time and place.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

the Church. And the Church is the Christian Community. Otherwise, folks, you might just be thinking of a building.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

love...for those we know and those we have yet to meet

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

Making and holding space in faith.

# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

Hope.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

how Jesus wants us to operate  
- sharing, worshipping and  
working together discovering,  
developing, serving, and  
experiencing wonder and  
grace in ways that would not  
happen if we were going it  
alone.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

God's love shared.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

Heaven.



# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

something that goes way beyond the walls of the church. Communal faith calls us to participate in works of the Sermon on the Mount.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

a community that engages and embraces the world in which it finds itself. Those two last words have at least two essential and complementary meanings.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

is being afraid of what your congregation might think if you address BLM or racial issues, from the pulpit.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

Loving one another

# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

## **CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...**

...never fully formed.

## **CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...**

...a beloved community

## **CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...**

a group of imperfect  
folk trying to follow the  
will of God together.

## **CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...**

friends who are really  
family capable of walk  
with each other in the  
good times and hard  
times.

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**CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**  
**APPENDIX C.V**

COMMUNITY IS ... CARDS

# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS...

1. An act of the Holy Spirit, bringing sinners together into undeserved mutual love.
2. Inclusive.
3. Where we all accept the sacred privilege and duty of forming one another as disciples.
4. Hard work.
5. Not corporate culture.
6. Honest and questioning assumptions.
7. Bearing and sharing one another's burdens and joys.
8. Loving one another as we have been loved.
9. Exhausting, but can be deeply fulfilling if its honest and vulnerable.
10. Vital. We are not created to be alone.  
We need each other to live, serve, and seek the Holy - together.
11. A place of healing, welcome and inclusion--else it is not true Christian community.
12. Pointless is if isn't helping to liberate through justice all of God's children.
13. Necessary for faith and the life of faith.
14. An intention striving for excellence, not perfection.
15. Supportive of each other in daily life and times of crisis.
16. Anti-racist, cares for those Christ cared for, serving.
17. Super messy!
18. Kind, not nice.
19. Open and inclusive.
20. A good idea.
21. Anti-empire.
22. Where we learn to be better followers of Jesus by celebrating and challenging each other to strive to be closer to the perfection we see in Jesus.
23. A boat load of work.
24. A true "sanctuary of welcome for all people" that lives into the full definition of each word in that phrase.
25. The body of Christ at work in the world today.
26. Knowledgeable.
27. Fully inclusive wholeness, unconditional love, and wellness grounded in Christ.
28. Like family, but harder. ...like marriage, where you have to keep choosing each other over and over every day. Some days that's easier to do than others.
29. Not doing enough.

COMMUNITY IS ... CARDS

# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

30. Essential.
31. Challenging.
32. Welcoming!
33. Founded on unconditional love from the Creator that calls us to love each other.
34. Imperfect.
35. Experienced most when on mission together.
36. To bring about the kingdom of God here, in this time and place.the Church.  
And the Church is the Christian Community. Otherwise, folks, you might just be thinking of a building.
37. Love...for those we know and those we have yet to meet
38. Making and holding space in faith.
39. Hope.
40. How Jesus wants us to operate - sharing, worshipping and working together discovering, developing, serving, and experiencing wonder and grace in ways that would not happen if we were going it alone.
41. God's love shared.
42. Heaven.
43. Something that goes way beyond the walls of the church. Communal faith calls us to participate in works of the Sermon on the Mount.
44. A community that engages and embraces the world in which it finds itself.
45. Those two last words have at least two essential and complementary meanings.
46. Is being afraid of what your congregation might think if you address BLM or racial issues, from the pulpit.
47. Loving one another.
48. Never fully formed.
49. A beloved community.
50. A group of imperfect folks trying to follow the will of God together.
51. Friends who are really family capable of walk with each other in the good times and hard times.

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**CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**  
**APPENDIX D**



# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

*Let us pray in the Spirit which empowers and enlivens, corrects and connects us.  
Thank you for those faithful people who have pour your love out upon us.*

**How very good and pleasant it is  
when kindred live together in unity!**

*Help us to support each other as we listen to Holy Spirit's direction as a faith community.*

**How very good and pleasant it is  
when kindred live together in unity!**

*Through our mouths, let there be encouragement in Christ and consolation from love.*

**How very good and pleasant it is  
when kindred live together in unity!**

*Through our hands, let there be a sharing in the Spirit*

**How very good and pleasant it is  
when kindred live together in unity!**

*Through our feet, let us move with empathy and concern.*

**How very good and pleasant it is  
when kindred live together in unity!**

*Through our minds, let us discern joy and love.*

**How very good and pleasant it is  
when kindred live together in unity!**

*From our fingers, let us release selfishness and conceit*

**How very good and pleasant it is  
when kindred live together in unity!**

*Through our lungs, let us breathe out humility and the appreciation of others and self.*

**How very good and pleasant it is  
when kindred live together in unity!**

*As the Body of Christ, let us compassionately love and be loved by God and neighbor.*

**How very good and pleasant it is  
when kindred live together in unity!  
Glory be to God. Amen.**



# TESTIMONY

VOCABULARY OF FAITH