

Human Degradation and Spirituality for a New Humanity

Calendar of Lessons

For Liturgical Year 2016-2017, the lessons are subdivided into these four scopes and strands:

- Scope 1: **Rootedness**
Strand 1: ***Jesus' Encounters with Human Degradation and its Transformations***
 - Advent and Christmastide (27 November 2016 – 1 January 2017)
 - Epiphany (8 January – 26 February 2017)
- Scope 2: **Identity: On Being and Becoming**
Strand 2: ***Jesus' Choice of the Kind of Messiah***
 - Lent (5 March – 9 April 2017)
 - Eastertide (16 April – 28 May 2017)
- Scope 3: **Unity and Solidarity**
Strand 3: ***The Church United to Respond to Human Degradation***
 - ***Pentecost (4 June – 20 August 2017)***
- Scope 4: **Fruitful Lifeworks**
Strand 4: ***The Church Manifesting the Marks of a Christ-like Life***
 - Kingdomtide (27 August – 26 November 2017)



Quadrennial Theme: Spirituality for These Critical TimesYear 3 Theme: **Human Degradation and Spirituality for a New Humanity 2016-2017**Scope 1: **Rootedness**Strand 1: ***Jesus' Encounters with Human Degradation and its Transformations***

Included Sundays for Advent and Christmastide Season (6 lessons)	Celebration	Lectionary Title	Scriptural References	General Concept
(1) November 27, 2016	First Sunday of Advent	Liberating Cultural Breakthroughs	1 Samuel 25:13-34 Matthew 1:18-24	There are cultural practices and beliefs that cause human suffering and degradation, thus, the church should make a cultural breakthrough in the transformation towards a new humanity.
(2) December 4, 2016	Second Sunday of Advent/Family Sunday	Seeds of New Humanity	Isaiah. 7:14 Luke 1:26-35	Like the enslaved people in Egypt, the new humanity emerges from among the victims who long for freedom and wholeness.
(3) December 11, 2016	Third Sunday of Advent/Human Rights Sunday	Challenging Oppressive State Powers	1 Kings 12:1-16 Luke 2:1-6	The church has the duty to expose and challenge state policies that violate human rights.
(4) December 18, 2016	Fourth Sunday of Advent	Jesus as God's Love Incarnate	Isaiah 49:1-3 John 3:11-17	In the midst of a broken humanity, God came in Jesus

				to mend it and make it whole.
(5) December 25, 2016	First Sunday after Christmas	The Birth of Jesus	Psalms 91:11 Luke 2:7-18 John 1:14	We joyfully celebrate the birth of Jesus in a world that longs for fullness.
(6) January 1, 2017	First Sunday after Christmas	Defending Children, Symbols of a New Beginning	Isaiah 43:18-19 Matthew 2:1-16	Upholding the rights and welfare of children makes a just and compassionate society now and in the future.
Included Sundays for Epiphany Season (8 lessons)	Celebration	Lectionary Title	Scriptural References	General Concept
(7) January 8, 2017	Epiphany Sunday	Channels of God's Healing	2 Kings 7:1-16 John 9:1-41	We are all healers to one another.
(8) January 15, 2017	First Sunday after Epiphany/Christian Unity	The Inclusive Healing Ministry of the Church	2 Kings 5:1-19 Mark 1:29-31	"The kingdom of God is present...where healing is given to the sick." (UCCP Statement of Faith)
(9) January 22, 2017	Second Sunday after Epiphany/National Bible Sunday	Healing of Animosities	Isaiah 11:1-9 Galatians 3:28	Respecting and appreciating differences is a condition for creative unity and harmony.
(10) January 29, 2017	Third Sunday after Epiphany	Healing as a Message of Salvation	2 Kings 4:8-37 Luke 8:41-56	Salvation comes whenever healing happens.
(11) February 5, 2017	Fourth Sunday after Epiphany	Healing of Social Divides	Ruth 1:1-21 Luke 13:10-17	Social division is eradicated when human fellowship, care, respect,

				and dignity are restored.
(12) February 12, 2017	Fifth Sunday after Epiphany	Healing of Broken Relationships	Genesis 32:1-32, 33:1-4 Matthew 5:24	Where there are broken relationships, it is the duty of the church to bring about reconciliation through forgiveness and repentance.
(13) February 19, 2017	Sixth Sunday after Epiphany	Healing from Demon Possession	1 Samuel 16:14-23 Mark 5:1-20	The Spirit of God drives away the demons of envy, fear, and greed for the Spirit to dwell in.
(14) February 26, 2017	Seventh Sunday after Epiphany/Transfiguration Sunday	Healing towards Transformation	Exodus 34:29-35 Mark 9:2-8	The transfiguration of Jesus is a preview of his resurrection which is our hope and destiny.

Scope 2: **Identity: On Being and Becoming**
 Strand 2: ***Jesus' Choice of the Kind of Messiah***

Included Sundays for Lent (6 lessons)	Celebration	Lectionary Title	Scriptural References	General Concept
(15) March 5, 2017	First Sunday in Lent	Choosing our Destiny	Jeremiah 1:4-10 Matthew 16:21-23	Jesus chose to obey God's will and it became his destiny. When we make a choice to follow Jesus, it becomes our destiny.

(16) March 12, 2017	Second Sunday in Lent	Servant Messiah	Isaiah 53:4-6 Mark 10:42-45	As a servant messiah, Jesus served the suffering ones. As a result, he suffered with them. When we serve the suffering ones, we also suffer with them.
(17) March 19, 2017	Third Sunday in Lent	Loyalty to God	Ruth 1:16-17 Luke 7:1-10	The love for God is the basis of our unwavering loyalty to God.
(18) March 26, 2017	Fourth Sunday in Lent	Peace-building	Jeremiah 1:9-10 Matthew 10:34	Building peace, as a messianic mission, requires forcible removal of obstacles to peace—inequitable distribution of resources, abusive relationships, and injustice.
(19) April 2, 2017	Fifth Sunday in Lent	Marks of the True Messiah	Isaiah 42:1-7 Matthew 11:2-6	The true messiah is known through his healing, liberating, and restoring deeds.
(20) April 9, 2017	Sixth Sunday in Lent/Palm Sunday	Jesus Encountering the Powers	Zechariah 9:9-10 John 12:12-19	Jesus enters Jerusalem to challenge the powers-that-be that cause human misery.

Included Sundays for Eastertide (7 lessons)	Celebration	Lectionary Title	Scriptural References	General Concept
(21) April 16, 2017	Resurrection Sunday	Resurrection of the Righteous	Daniel 12:1-3 John 11:25-27 Romans 6:5	Those who remain faithful to the end will not perish but have eternal life.
(22) April 23, 2017	First Sunday after Resurrection	Suppressing the Truth of the Resurrection	Jeremiah 28:15-17 Matthew 28:11-15	The response of the powers-that-be to the resurrection was to cover up the truth with a lie and criminalize those who believe.
(23) April 30, 2017	Second Sunday after Resurrection	Moment of Human Frailties	2 Samuel 21:10 Mark 16:1-8	After Jesus died, the disciples experienced a lacuna moment of mourning, confusion, fear, depression, and disbelief. This experience is not sin but needs to be accepted and brought to the Lord.
(24) May 7, 2017	Third Sunday after Resurrection	Appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene	2 Kings 7:7-20 Mark 16:9-11	The testimony of those who speak the truth are often discredited on account of their status in society.
(25) May 14, 2017	Fourth Sunday after Resurrection	Failure to Recognize the Appearance of Jesus	Genesis 18:1-15 Mark 16:12-13	Due to their extreme grief, the disciples were not able

				to apprehend the risen Lord. But Jesus overcomes our failure to discern and communes with us.
(26) May 21, 2017	Fifth Sunday after Resurrection/UC CP Sunday	Celebrating the Resurrection	Exodus 16:1-26 Luke 24:36-46	Jesus comes to commune with us in ordinary, basic, and common activities and struggles.
(27) May 28, 2017	Sixth Sunday after Resurrection/Ascension Sunday	Anticipating the Fullness of God's Reign on Earth	Daniel 12:13 Mark 16:15-20	Jesus ascends to heaven to receive God's authority to realize God's reign in its fullness.

Scope 3: **Unity and Solidarity**Strand 3: ***The Church United to Respond to Human Degradation***

Included Sundays for Pentecost Season (12 lessons)	Celebration	Lectionary Title	Scriptural References	General Concept
(28) June 4, 2017	Pentecost Sunday	The Spirit Breaking through Cultural Captivity	Joel 2:28-29 Acts 2:1-12	The Spirit enables the Gospel to be communicated in the languages and cultures of the people.
(29) June 11, 2017	First Sunday after Pentecost/Trinity Sunday	The Holy Trinity in the Faith of the Church	Genesis 1:26-27 Jude vv. 19:21	God is a community of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is the source and basis of the

				church as community.
(30) June 18, 2017	Second Sunday after Pentecost	The Holy Spirit Sustaining the Church	Jeremiah 7:1-11 Matthew 23:13-28	The Holy Spirit bids the church to unite with the people to confront the oppressive powers.
(31) June 25, 2017	Third Sunday after Pentecost	Defending the Powerless	Psalms 82:3-4; 146:5-9 Proverbs 31:8-9 James 1:27	The Holy Spirit sustains the church in its ministry of protecting the oppressed and the helpless and upholding their rights.
(32) July 2, 2017	Fourth Sunday after Pentecost	Breaking Down Walls that Divide	Isaiah 56:3-8 Amos 9:7 Luke 14:12-14	The church, by nature, is inclusive. It embraces differences and does not harbor animosities.
(33) July 9, 2017	Fifth Sunday after Pentecost	Confronting Human Greed	Deuteronomy 5:21 Acts 2:44-47; 4:33-35	The church confronts the issue of human greed which is the root of many evils and broken relationships.
(34) July 16, 2017	Sixth Sunday after Pentecost	Casting Out Demonic Powers	Psalms 103:2-5 Mark 1:23-27; 7:24-30	The church's ministry of healing requires the driving out of demonic powers that hold people in their sway.
(35) July 23, 2017	Seventh Sunday after Pentecost	Being Present	Deuteronomy 31:8 Psalm 40:1-3 Revelation 21:3-4	The church embraces the ministry of presence to embody God who is Immanuel.

(36) July 30, 2017	Eighth Sunday after Pentecost	Nurturing Hope	Job 5:15-16 Psalm 34:17-20 Matthew 11:28-30	The church journeys with people in the darkness of despair, reviving the hope and keeping it alive.
(37) August 6, 2017	Ninth Sunday after Pentecost	Reaching Out to Victims of Abuse and Social Evils	Isaiah 25:4 Matthew 18:21-35	The church is a community that provides comfort, assistance, shelter, and intervention to victims in their needs.
(38) August 13, 2017	Tenth Sunday after Pentecost	Pursuing and Building Peace	Psalm 34:11-14 1Peter 3:8-12	The church plants peace in a world rocked by conflict, violence, and wars.
(39) August 20, 2017	Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost	The Church Awakened to Do Mission	Isaiah 59:17 Ephesians 6:14	An awakened church girds up and equips itself for mission.

Scope 4: **Fruitful Lifeworks**Strand 4: ***The Church Manifesting the Marks of a Christ-like Life***

Included Sundays for Kingdomtide Season (14 lessons)	Celebration	Lectionary Title	Scriptural References	General Concept
(40) August 27, 2017	First Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Mission Sunday	Leaving Everything to Follow Christ	Isaiah 6:1-8 Luke 5:1-11	Obedience to Jesus means letting go of those cares that keep us from following him.
(41) September 3, 2017	Second Sunday in Kingdomtide/ CEN Sunday	Mission to the Periphery	1 Samuel 18:1-5 Philippians 2:5-8 2 Corinthians 8:9	Removing our self from the center of our life so that we can put others in its place.
(42) September 10, 2017	Third Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Children' Sunday	Humility-Powered Mission	Proverbs 15:33, 11:2 Luke 18:9-14	Behind genuine mission is a humble heart that seeks the well-being of others.
(43) September 17, 2017	Fourth Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Youth Sunday	Accountability in the Kingdom	2 Samuel 12:1-13 Luke 15:11-24	Being created in the image of God, we are responsible and accountable to each other.
(44) September 24, 2017	Fifth Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Fellowship of the Least Coin Sunday	The Kingdom as a Forgiving Community	Genesis 45:1-5 Acts 7:59-60	Being forgiving is a quality of those who belong to the Kingdom of God.
(45) October 1, 2017	Sixth Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Worldwide Communion Sunday/CYAP Sunday	Towards a Reconciled Community	Genesis 45:9-15 Philemon 1:10-20	True reconciliation moves relationships to a higher plane.
(46) October 8, 2017	Seventh Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Peace Sunday	Living the Faith	Esther 4:13-16 James 1:27	Forgiven and reconciled, we

				are freed to do good.
(47) October 15, 2017	Eighth Sunday in Kingdomtide/ UCM Sunday	Being Accepted in the Kingdom of God	Hosea 1: 1-3, 3:1 John 4:7-15	The Christian community is accepting of others unmindful of any advantage.
(48) October 22, 2017	Ninth Sunday in Kingdomtide/Solidarity with Indigenous People Sunday	Reverence for Life	Exodus 2:1-10 Luke 7:1-10	Life is respected beyond social class, ethnicity, and religion.
(49) October 29, 2017	Tenth Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Reformation Sunday	Discerning God's Ways through Jesus	Job 42:1-6 John 14:5-11	To know Jesus is to know God. The gospel makes faith simple to everyone.
November 5, 2017 (50)	Eleventh Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Church Workers Sunday	Prayerful Life	Daniel 6:6-23 Mark 14:32-38	Communing with God through prayers encompasses all of life.
(51) November 12, 2017	Twelfth Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Theological Education Sunday	Audacious Compassion	1 Kings 17:8-16 Luke 10:25-37	Those who have less in life or regarded low are the most compassionate.
(52) November 19, 2017	Thirteenth Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Migrant Workers Sunday	Learning from the Faith and Witness of Migrants	Psalms 137:1-6 1 Peter 1:1 James 1:1-4	Being steadfast in the faith makes us complete and whole.
(53) November 26, 2017	Fourteenth Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Stewardship Sunday	Service Motivated by Love	Judges 5:6-13 Mark 2:1-12	Stewardship is manifested through the collective response of the faith community.

Year 3 Theme: **Human Degradation and Spirituality for a New Humanity CC 2016-2017**

Scope 2: **Identity: On Being and Becoming**

Strand 1: **Jesus' Choice of the Kind of Messiah**

Season: **Easter tide**

Age Level: **Adults**

April 16, 2017

Resurrection Sunday: **Resurrection of the Righteous**

Old Testament: Daniel 12:1-3

¹"At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. ²Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. ³Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."

New Testament: John 11:25-27

²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

Romans 6:5

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

General Concept: Those who remain faithful to the end will not perish but have eternal life.

Key Concept:

Adult: Those who remain faithful to the end will not perish but have eternal life.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Daniel 12:1-3. During the time when the book of Daniel was written, the Jews were under persecution and oppression by a pagan king. This is one of the so called apocalyptic literature which often flourishes when there is crisis of any sort. The stories and the visions present in the book were utilized to embolden or encourage the people of that time, giving them hope that one day, God will rescue God's people from the fangs of their oppressors. The declaration of faith in this book is that God will rescue those who believe in God in spite of the various threats and dangers they may be facing. Even those who have perished and have greatly suffered in the hands of the persecutors will be restored and fully vindicated by God. They will receive the reward for faithful witnessing and steadfast service to their God even in the face of cruel and oppressive forces of persecution. Hope remains alive even for those who appear to have fallen in the midst of the most grievous and deadly circumstances.

John 11:25-27. The members of the Johannine community were not welcome where they were and were always under the suspicious eyes of the local synagogue authorities because of their belief in Jesus as Messiah and bringer of the Kingdom. The Roman authorities were also displaying the same attitude towards anyone who refused to worship the emperor. With their social condition, the writer of the book of John wrote this Gospel to inspire the Jewish Christians to endure the challenges and be able to hold on to their faith in Jesus. The writer stresses that Jesus is the Word (1:1-18), the bringer of God's message and that to deny him is to deny God.

As the believers were undergoing challenges, the writer utilized a significant point to encourage his audience: that there was this popular view that the dead would be raised bodily at the end. The hope of the resurrection is actually born in the midst of a situation surrounded always by the ever-present prospect of death in the hands of persecutors. It is proclaimed as the response to a rising spirit of despair, hopelessness and fear of losing one's own earthly life. Jesus is affirming that with his own death and resurrection he has demonstrated the truth that to die for the sake of Jesus does not actually lead to death or the extinguishing of everything about the life of the martyred faithful. It is a step towards a far more profound experience of life that is able to conquer the fear and the despair of death. To die in the name of Jesus is to receive the real new life, eternal life in his name.

The text portrays that believing in Jesus is the only required means to achieve resurrection. This resurrection is both a present and a future reality. In 11:4, it is highlighted that the resurrection of Lazarus is intended to "bring glory to God...and the means by which the Son of God will receive glory." (v.4b). This event proves that God in Jesus is the God who gives life and not the God of death. This is also a means for his disciples (v.15) and the unbelievers to believe in Jesus (v.42). Those who have witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus believe in Jesus. However, the Pharisees who deny Jesus as the Messiah and bringer of life were united to make a plan to silence him. They orchestrated and planned for Jesus' death (vv. 47-57).

This event reflects two attitudes of people. Those who believe and have faith in Jesus as the way to resurrection would hold on to their faith despite the various threats of death they may be facing. However, those who deny and do not recognize God's presence in Jesus would surely find a way to destroy him. The resurrection of Lazarus manifests the unfathomable love of God. In contrast, the attitude of the indignant Pharisees reflects the need to have resurrection of the heart and mind. And this kind of resurrection can only be achieved by believing and having genuine faith in the Son of God.

Romans 6:5. For the Jewish people, baptism is the actual means by which non-Jews are converted to Judaism. This act concludes the eradication of the so-called "Gentile impurity". By this act, one turns his or her back to paganism and sin, and promises to fulfill God's commandments and become a new person in accordance to Jewish Law. In the same way, anyone who becomes a follower of Jesus denies his or her old self, through sharing in Christ's death (Keener 1993, p.424). Death in this context is not the literal losing of breath. It means putting aside whatever that is sinful. It calls for renewal and a change of perspective and attitude towards oneself, to others, and to God.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Belief in Jesus' resurrection is the door that opens to the Christian faith. The Islamic faith regards Jesus as a prophet from God but denies his resurrection. People without faith put great value on Jesus' ethical teachings and his way of life but consider his resurrection irrelevant to what he has accomplished as a moral exemplar. Some Christians rightly put Jesus' resurrection as the anchor of their faith but conveniently neglect his prophetic and ethical teachings and example. This kind of being a Christian is not necessarily closer than non-Christians or to unbelievers to the truth that Jesus came for. According to the apostolic witness, Jesus' resurrection is but the first of the resurrection of the righteous.

Believing that God rescued Jesus from Hades, the fate of all morals, is the great entrance that ushers in believers to the Christian faith-community. But the benefits of the resurrection apply only to those whom God has declared justified (that is, forgiven sinners) through faith in Jesus Christ. The Protestant doctrine of "justification by grace through faith alone" (*sola gratia, sola*

fide) has suffered disfigurement from the time Luther introduced it in the 16th century up to the present among some Protestant communities.

In its distorted form, this great Protestant principle has been used as an excuse for removing doing good works from the balance sheet of Christian existence. On the contrary, the Protestant Reformers rightly understood Paul's teachings on the resurrection that transforms believers from a wanton sensual (pagan) existence to a spirit-driven way of life (Romans 12; Galatians 5). The point is that leading a righteous life is not a ticket to gain resurrection but a distinguishing characteristic of one who has received it as a gift from God through faith in Jesus Christ. Resurrection is not merely the power to overcome death when the time comes. It is a present power of a new life to overcome the power of sinfulness by which righteous living in a sinful world becomes a real possibility. Unmerited righteousness (justification) by faith continues on to an actual righteous life to the very end of earthly life. Here lies the paradox of eternal salvation: only the righteous will be resurrected because having received the gift of the resurrection, they will have conquered sinfulness and therefore are enabled to live righteously.

I. Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, the learners are expected to:

1. Express one's joy at the resurrection of Jesus whose power and authority was given by God
2. Realize that the resurrection of Jesus gives the people who are made righteous by Jesus before God the power of a new life
3. Conclude that our identification with the resurrection of Jesus in his physical death is the basis for our future resurrection
4. Participate in the church's ministry of love for others in response to God's love for us

II. Concept: Those who remain faithful to the end will not perish but have eternal life.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV)

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time. Joyfully greet each one with "Happy Easter! Have a blessed Resurrection Sunday!"

2. Opening Song:

"Christ the Lord is Risen Today"

Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!

Earth and heav'n in chorus say, Alleluia!

Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!

Sing, ye heav'ns, and earth reply, Alleluia!

Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!

Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!

Death in vain forbids him rise, Alleluia!

Christ has opened paradise, Alleluia!

Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!

Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!

Once he died our souls to save, Alleluia!

Where's thy vict'ry, boasting grave? Alleluia!

3. Opening Prayer: We are joyful indeed, dear God, during this Resurrection Sunday! Thank you for giving us your Son Jesus, who bears your power and authority. Thank you for His resurrection which gives us new life. Thank you that Jesus is alive and is

always with us, empowering us to be the real church, doing Your ministry here on earth just as Jesus did. Most of all, thank you for your everlasting love. This we all pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

B. Getting Ready

Have the class read the biblical references:

Daniel 12: 1-3

John 11: 25-27

Romans 6: 5

C. Learning Time

Discuss the contexts of the different biblical references.

Daniel: This book was written at a time when the Jews were under persecution by their colonizer. It was used to encourage the people and to give them hope that one day, God will rescue them. Even those who have died will be restored and will be rewarded for remaining steadfast in serving God and the people of God.

John: The Gospel of John was written because the Christians at that time suffered so much persecution under the rule of Pax Romana. The author of the Gospel of John wanted to inspire the people to continue to be faithful in spite of all the difficulties. Telling the story of Lazarus being raised from the dead aimed to strengthen the believers in the midst of despair, hopelessness, and possible death. Jesus message that "Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live", means that the believers' death will lead to real new life: eternal life in the name of Jesus, being remembered for being martyrs for God and God's people. The community in the Gospel of John believed and had faith in Jesus despite all the negative things they had to face. In Jesus, they were saved. This was possible because of God's love.

Romans: This text talks about turning away from everything sinful, include spurning the political system that keeps God's people in continued bondage. It calls for renewal and a change of perspective and attitude towards oneself, to others, and to God. It speaks about living a new life in Jesus, that is, a life lived for others.

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

Discuss:

1. In our Philippine context, how do you think the people suffer persecution today?
2. Give specific examples of persons or groups of people that you know who unduly suffer for doing what is right and just.
3. What must the church do in order to be a channel of God's love and saving grace for these people?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

- To believe in Jesus' Resurrection means to also follow how Jesus lived, even if it means possible martyrdom. It is not enough to believe that Jesus died and was raised from the dead. We must also do what Jesus did when he walked this earth. This is what it means to be saved and have new life in Jesus Christ.

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Have the learners list down the just and righteous things Jesus did during his ministry.

2. Have them mention ways by which they can also do what is right and just in our present context, that is of truly sharing God's love with others.
3. Let the learners commit to participate in programs of the church that truly does God's work of righteousness and justice.
4. If there are no such programs in your local church, have the learners discuss how they might start such programs and to write down their plans. Divide them into groups for this.

G. Closing Worship

1. Sing the song "Because He Lives"

God sent His son, they called Him Jesus
He came to love, heal, and forgive.
He lived and died to buy my pardon,
An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives.

Chorus:

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.
Because He lives, all fear is gone.
Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living just because He lives.

How sweet to hold a newborn baby,
And feel the pride and joy it gives.
But greater still the calm assurance,
This child can face uncertain days because He lives.

(Repeat chorus)

And then one day I'll cross the river,
I'll fight life's final war with pain.
And then as death gives way to victory,
I'll see the lights of glory and I'll know He lives.

(Repeat chorus)

2. Collect the offering while singing an appropriate song.
3. Have a learner lead this closing prayer:
Dear God, thank you for continuing to call us to be the church you want us to be today. Thank you for giving us the perfect example of doing ministry: Jesus. Empower us to continue to live a new life in Christ, that is by sharing your love with others and by doing what Jesus did when He lived on this earth, serving You and Your people. This way we will truly share in His Resurrection. Bless us as we put flesh into our plans of being a true church of the Resurrection. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

April 23, 2017First Sunday after Resurrection: **Suppressing the Truth of the Resurrection****Old Testament: Jeremiah 28:15-17**

¹⁵And the prophet Jeremiah said to the prophet Hananiah, "Listen, Hananiah, the Lord has not sent you, and you made this people trust in a lie. ¹⁶Therefore thus says the Lord: I am going to send you off the face of the earth. Within this year you will be dead, because you have spoken rebellion against the Lord."

¹⁷ In that same year, in the seventh month, the prophet Hananiah died.

New Testament: Matthew 28:11-15

¹¹ While they were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹²After the priests had assembled with the elders, they devised a plan to give a large sum of money to the soldiers, ¹³telling them, "You must say, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' ¹⁴If this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." ¹⁵So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story is still told among the Jews to this day.

General Concept: The response of the powers-that-be to the resurrection was to cover up the truth with a lie and criminalize those who believe.

Key Concept:

Adult: The response of the powers-that-be to the resurrection was to cover up the truth with a lie and criminalize those who believe.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

One of the challenges addressed by the prophet Jeremiah was the occurrence of false prophets. Jeremiah prophesied impending destruction unless people would repent. His message was greatly contradicted by the false prophets who proclaimed that everything would be alright. Jeremiah's criticism to the false prophets was mainly cited in 14: 13-16 and 23: 9-40. Prophets were called to deliver the message of God, whether that message is doom or destruction, salvation or calls for obedience. Unlike the popular but false prophets who only preach what is good to hear and reassuring for the people, God's true spokespersons may have to speak the unflattering, painful truth. This is one reason why God's prophets have been persecuted, arrested, tortured and sometimes even unto to death. Truth even if it is so disturbing and unflattering to the ears of the people will just have to be spoken by the true prophet and have to be listened to and obeyed by the people if they really want to live.

The soldiers guarding the tomb were the witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus. They knew what happened, but opted to keep silent. Roman guards could be executed if it is proven that they were sleeping on the job especially when they are guarding corpses of crucified victims. The chief priests had a way to hide the truth—they used their power and money to prevent the soldiers from telling the truth. The use of bribery was a tool of the rich and the powerful to silence a witness.

Truth will never come out as long as we remain silent when we are supposed to say the truth. The truth will remain buried when those witnesses refuse to tell the truth in exchange for money. This is when truth becomes sold and bought for the sake of hiding and preventing it from coming to the surface. The resurrection of Jesus is an affirmation that God's truth, no matter how we hide it, will surely come out. It comes out because it is more powerful than lies and deceit.

Not telling the truth as in the text in Jeremiah is tantamount to violating the call to become a real prophet. To hide the truth in exchange for money is burying the truth. However, the truth of the resurrection event is so true and powerful, no power on earth can prevent it from coming out and no one can stop its empowering effect on people who believe it.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

A wrong-doing or a crime is always followed with a cover-up or a contrived narrative intended to diminish or even turn truth into a lie. Truth may be suppressed but it does not die. One way or another it will find a place in the mind and hearts of people who will keep it and let it out. The Jewish and Roman authorities conspired to bury the truth about Jesus but this truth was kept alive by those who witnessed it, proclaimed it without fear and in due time converted the mighty Roman Empire. (Under the auspices of the Empire the truth of the gospel, however, suffered corruption but this is another chapter in the story of the Christian faith.)

The historical truthfulness of the resurrection narratives continues to be contentious in the field of academic and forensic science. But whatever their conclusion, they lack the expertise and tools to appreciate what the disciples had seen and experienced of the risen Jesus. Knowledge of Jesus' resurrection is a spiritual gift from God first received by the disciples and then passed on to us through the church from one generation to the next.

At each period in time, the church has the duty to renew the truth of Jesus' resurrection and revive the members' commitment to proclaim and live by it. Every truth, including universal truths, is time- and culture-bound in its actual and practical content. To remain alive and relevant, truth must be able to address the spiritual and practical issues of the time and provide answers to them. As spiritual truth, Jesus' resurrection is not to be rendered archaic with the passing of time but must constantly and purposively incorporate the spirit and temper of a given historical period in order to be eternally and universally true. This is an essential task of the church.

For the church, the proof is in the lives of the faithful as well as in the quality of its fellowship. Jesus' resurrection is true to the extent that believers manifest signs of the Jesus' resurrection in their lives. For whether Jesus rose from the grave or not is inconsequential if it leaves no impact on the believers' lives. The world will not believe in this truth not so much because the tale is unbelievable but more so because it makes no difference in the lives of those who profess it. Truth to say, in this pluralistic religious culture, there is no longer any effort from any quarters to suppress the truth of Jesus' resurrection largely because it is not worth the effort. It makes no difference in the world if it was true or not. In other words, if there is anyone who is succeeding in suppressing the truth he or she comes from within the church.

I. Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, the learners are expected to:

1. Compare the false prophecy made by Hananiah with the false testimony made by the guards regarding the resurrection of Jesus
2. Express the significance of professing the truth especially the truth of the Gospel
3. Get involved in the program of the church in proclaiming the truth

II. Concept: The response of the powers-that-be to the resurrection was to cover up the truth with a lie and criminalize those who believe.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), pens and notebooks/journals

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time. Greet everyone as they arrive with "Jesus is alive, halleluiah!"
Encourage each one to greet each other this way.
2. Sing these songs:
"Ho-Ho-Ho-Hosanna"
Ho-ho-ho-hosanna, ha-ha-ha-halleluiah!
He, He, He, He saved me, I've got the joy of the Lord! (repeat song)
3. Opening prayer: Dear God, thank for this Sunday and for bringing us once again to Sunday School to learn more about you and Jesus our Lord. Prepare our minds and hearts to receive Your Truth. Thank you for the truth about Jesus' Resurrection. Help us to always tell about it in our words and actions, being your true prophets of our time. Guide us to tell the truth at all times and to always show Your love to others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

B. Getting Ready

Have the class read the biblical references:

Jeremiah 28: 1-17

Matthew 28: 1-15

C. Learning Time

Prepare this table on a sheet of paper and reproduce it, or write it on the board and have the learners copy it in their notebooks. Have the learners fill up the table.

	<i>Hananiah's False Prophecy</i>	<i>The Guards' False Testimony</i>
What did he/they say?		
What did really happen?		
Was the prophecy/testimony positive or negative?		

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

Discuss:

1. Hananiah tried to make a positive prophecy (announcing peace and restoration), but it was still false.
2. The guards made a negative testimony, and of course it was not true.
3. What are the effects of not telling the truth, especially in the contexts of the two texts above?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Say: Whether we try to say something positive or negative, if it is not the truth, it will never be helpful. Real prophets bring the discerned message of truth from God, whether it is positive or negative. As true Christians, we must always be ready to

proclaim the good news of Jesus conquering death. As true Christians, we must always follow the Lord of Life, manifested in our words and deeds.

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

Discuss:

1. In our context today, what are the lies we often hear from persons and agencies of authority?
2. What are the realities vis-à-vis the lies that we hear?
3. What must we as a church do in order for us to be real prophets of our time and to be real followers of Jesus?

G. Closing Worship

1. Sing "I Would Be True"

I would be true for there are those who trust me
I would be pure, for there are those who care
I would be strong for there is much to suffer
I would be brave, for there is much to dare
I would be brave, for there is much to dare!
I would be friend of all, the foe, the friendless
I would be giving, and forget the gift
I would be humble for I know my weakness
I would look up, and laugh and love and live
I would look up, and laugh and love and live!
I would be pray'ful through each busy moment
I would be constantly in touch with God
I would be tuned to sense God's slightest whisper
I would have faith to keep the path Christ
I would have faith to keep the path Christ!

2. Collect the offering while singing an appropriate song.
3. Say the closing prayer: Dear God, thank you for teaching us again today and for every moment of every day. Empower us to be your prophets in our time, proclaiming your truth, even if it may hurt us and others. Help us to tell the good news that Jesus lives. May Jesus be seen in our lives always, as we strive to emulate Him. In His name we pray. Amen.

April 30, 2017Second Sunday after Resurrection: **Moment of Human Frailties****Old Testament: 2 Samuel 21:10**

10 Then Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it on a rock for herself, from the beginning of harvest until rain fell on them from the heavens; she did not allow the birds of the air to come on the bodies by day, or the wild animals by night.

New Testament: Mark 16:1-8

16 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ²And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ³They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" ⁴When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. ⁵As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." ⁸So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

General Concept: After Jesus died, the disciples experienced a lacuna of faith—a moment of mourning, confusion, fear, depression, and disbelief. This experience is not sin but needs to be accepted and brought to the Lord.

Key Concept:

Adults: After Jesus died, the disciples experienced a lacuna of faith—a moment of mourning, confusion, fear, depression, and disbelief. This experience is not sin but needs to be accepted and brought to the Lord.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

II Samuel 21: 10. There was a three-year famine during the time of David, and he asked God for the cause. He was told that the current famine was due to Saul's effort to wipe out the Gibeonites, as opposed to the agreement Joshua made with them (Joshua 9). Wanting to reverse the curse brought by the very gruesome act of Saul towards the Gibeonites, David asked them how he could restore the broken relationship between them. The surviving Gibeonites asked for seven male descendants of Saul to be hanged to death. They were hung in Gibeah, the very hometown of King Saul.

David chose seven males and two of them were the sons of Rizpah. She was a concubine of Saul, but had no power or authority to save her sons from hanging. As it is shown in the text, concubines possessed no authority to defend and refuse the demand of the king. This story presents two significant realities: first, that there were those in authority who use their authority and power to decide over the lives of others, and second, there are ordinary and innocent ones who always suffer for the wrongdoing committed by those in authority. It shows that life is wasted for the atrocities committed by those in power.

Rizpah had nothing more in her life. She was left alone. At that time, sons were important in every family especially for a widowed mother. How could Rizpah survive the challenges of the times when nothing is left for her? She grieved for the death of her sons who were innocent and were sacrificed to sew the broken relationship between David's kingdom and the Gibeonites. But widows like Rizpah had to depend on their sons for support. Rizpah's life

had ended with the death of her sons, yet as a loving mother, she tried to protect the corpses of her sons from wild animals. David sacrificed seven lives to patch up the broken relationship between his kingdom and the Gibeonites. Rizpah did what was best for her sons. She lovingly protected them from wild animals. Human frailties reinforced even by cultural demands in many ways produce situations that further victimize the already marginalized ones in society. Yet even in the midst of such frailties, what emerges still is the irrepressible power of a mother's love for her victimized child. This is the power that provides hope even in the face of the gloomiest and most inhuman of developments in any society.

Mark 16: 1-8. The book of Mark was addressed to Roman Christians, during the time of great persecution in Rome, about 64 CE. With this reality, the writer wrote the book to enhance the believers' faith in Jesus, and to remind them that suffering is an inevitable part of becoming a faithful servant of Jesus. Highlighted in the book is the fact that God listens to their prayers and God works through their witness and faith.

The dead was usually anointed with oil then rinsed with water before burial. Jesus died on Friday before the Sabbath began, thus the anointing had been postponed. In v. 7, the women were instructed or given the command to "go give the message to his disciples..." Yet in v. 8 the women were "distressed and terrified. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid." This is understood considering the kind of social condition believers were facing then. The women were afraid since Jesus their master was arrested and crucified by the Romans. Now, their immediate concern was to protect themselves from getting arrested as a possible consequence of their faith in Jesus. The women were ordered by the angel to meet his disciples in Galilee. Why Galilee? It was in Galilee where the disciples committed themselves to follow Jesus (Mark 1: 16-20). After the resurrection of Jesus, he wanted to meet his disciples again in Galilee for it was a place of solitude, a venue where the disciples can renew their commitment to follow the risen Lord.

The original ending of Mark may not be a good and invigorating one, but it was part of the writer's artistic presentation of unfolding the unique feature of the Gospel, to allow his readers to place themselves in the event. The women were afraid to speak because of the ongoing persecution of believers. The writer presents a realistic feeling of frightened believers. The sudden ending calls us to understand the intensity of the demand to become a true follower of Jesus. Thus, we are also encouraged to go back to our own Galilee in times when everything seems vague and our faith is clouded with uncertainties of life. The text is calling us to participate in witnessing to the risen Lord in spite of our fears and anxieties. This text is calling believers to go proclaim the message that Jesus Christ is risen. The Lord of life, has risen and in the midst of persecution he is there inviting us to go with him to anywhere, proclaiming the Good News.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Following Jesus' execution, the disciples fell into the abyss of despair. They entered Jerusalem buoyed by the belief that their nation was at the cusp of liberation and vindication from the hated Roman and Jewish authorities. The nation was going to have a king in the mold of King David. Then they saw their presumptive king hanging nailed on the cross. Everything went crashing down.

Nothing less—mentally, emotionally and spiritually moving—could lift them out of the abyss. They lost a loved one. The quest for freedom of many generations came to a sudden end. Their faith in Jesus, their messiah, was tested to the very limit. At this point, their faith failed them.

What happens to people when faith finally fails? This state of mind is almost impossible to happen to Filipinos who are religious in one degree or another. When nothing seems to work, at the very end there is God to turn to. But when this last resort disappears beyond our reach, what is left of us? This is what may be called a spiritual or existential lacuna—the utter absence of continuity in our existence where there is only nothingness in front of us and everything is gone behind us. That is the believer's state of being when faith fails. In that state, people may transfer their trust to another source of faith for the simple reason that no one can exist for long without some sort of faith. Former believers in God may simply reject God to become atheists who now put their trust in some universal principles and laws that govern nature's ways or the moral course of history. Atheism is actually a form of faith rather than a result of rational thinking in that there is no evidence to show that these principles and laws lie underneath nature's course or that of history. By and large, nature's and even more of history's behavior remain opaque to human scrutiny. And yet what is known of nature and history has served as a sort of guiding faith to many a human quest.

In the first century, atheism was not an option available to the disciples. A more practicable option would have been either to return to traditional Judaism or to any of the various Greek religions. But Jesus had shown to them that Judaism fell short in satisfying their spiritual quests. It appears that no other faith could replace the faith that Jesus taught and showed them. Unable to go elsewhere, the disciples underwent a severe existential and spiritual crisis.

The disciples' experience of absence of faith was also the moment of faith's rebirth. God did not consider their spiritual despair as an unforgivable offense but an opportunity for spiritual deliverance. God validated and vindicated their loyalty by resurrecting Jesus and enabling them to see the risen Jesus in his glorified state. The Risen Lord returned to meet with them, embraced their imperfect faith and commissioned them to spread the new faith despite its imperfection.

The church's faith and of the individual faithful cannot help but be tainted by the world's sinfulness. It will achieve perfection only when the faithful would be united with Jesus in his full glory. In the meantime, faith's journey will not be following a straight and smooth path. But it will grow with every crisis that it faces because Jesus has promised, "Behold, I will be with you until the end of time."

I. Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, the learners are expected to:

1. Profess one's faith in Jesus Christ especially in times of sorrow
2. Share personal experiences when they feel the presence of God
3. Describe the feelings of Rizpah when her sons were killed and the women who did not find Jesus in his tomb
4. Analyze and compare the feelings of the women in the OT and NT texts
5. Resolve to take all their sorrows to God in prayer
6. Get involved in the shepherding ministry of the church

II. Concept: After Jesus died, the disciples experienced a lacuna of faith—a moment of mourning, confusion, fear, depression, and disbelief. This experience is not sin but needs to be accepted and brought to the Lord.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), Learning Time table

III. Learning Experiences**A. Opening Worship**

1. Welcome time. Greet each learner with compassion as they arrive. Ask how each one is and listen attentively to how they respond.
2. Sing "I Would Be True"
3. Opening prayer: Dear God, thank you for this lovely morning that you have given us and for this day that you indeed have made. Thank you for bringing us to Sunday School. Thank you for our teachers and friends, our family and all our loved ones. Most of all, thank you for Jesus and thank you for your love that sustains us every day, especially in times of sorrow. Thank you that You are always with us. May we always feel Your presence with us, even as we strive to be Your presence to others who need you most. In Jesus' name. Amen.

B. Getting Ready

Have the class read the biblical references:

II Samuel 21: 10

Mark 16: 1-8

C. Learning Time

	Rizpah	Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome
What is her/their experience of sorrow?		
How did she/they cope?		
Do you think her/their response was acceptable? If yes, why? If no, why?		

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

Discuss:

1. When we hear of bad news, what do we feel?
2. When we hear of good news, what do we feel?
3. When we are sad, what makes us happy?
5. When we are happy, what do we do?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

In grief and in sorrow, it is still human nature to let true love shine through. It is this power of love that helps bring comfort and strength, then hope, then eventually joy.

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

Ask: When do you feel that God is with you?

Have the learners share experiences when they feel God is with them.

Ask: When your friend or loved one is sad, what do you do?

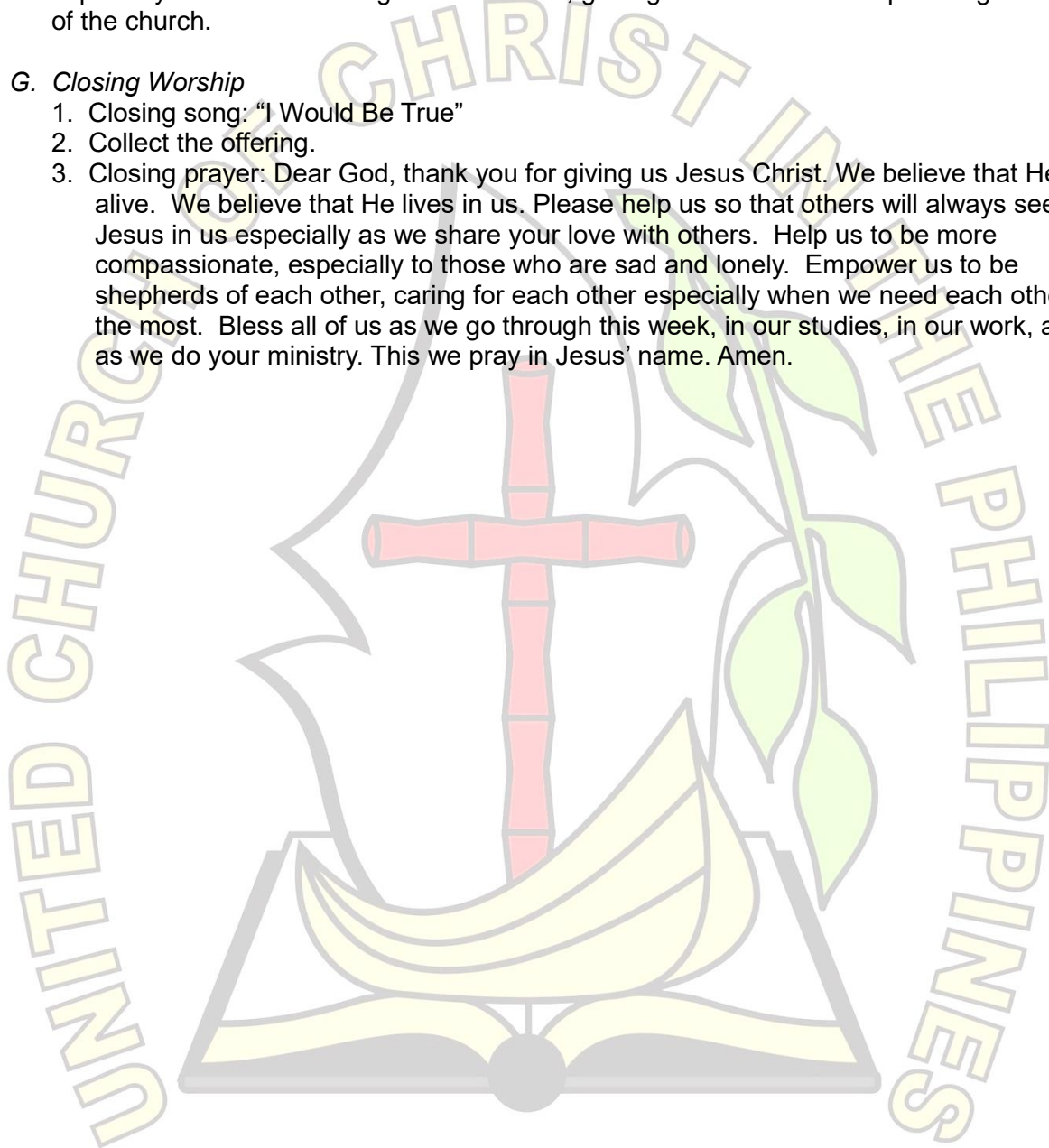
Encourage the learners to pray for each other and to show love and concern for others, especially those who are in grief and sorrow, getting involved in the shepherding ministry of the church.

G. Closing Worship

1. Closing song: "I Would Be True"

2. Collect the offering.

3. Closing prayer: Dear God, thank you for giving us Jesus Christ. We believe that He is alive. We believe that He lives in us. Please help us so that others will always see Jesus in us especially as we share your love with others. Help us to be more compassionate, especially to those who are sad and lonely. Empower us to be shepherds of each other, caring for each other especially when we need each other the most. Bless all of us as we go through this week, in our studies, in our work, and as we do your ministry. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.



May 7, 2017Third Sunday after Resurrection: **Appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene****Old Testament: 2 Kings 7:7-20**

⁷So they fled away in the twilight and abandoned their tents, their horses, and their donkeys, leaving the camp just as it was, and fled for their lives. ⁸When these leprous men had come to the edge of the camp, they went into a tent, ate and drank, carried off silver, gold, and clothing, and went and hid them. Then they came back, entered another tent, carried off things from it, and went and hid them.

⁹ Then they said to one another, "What we are doing is wrong. This is a day of good news; if we are silent and wait until the morning light, we will be found guilty; therefore let us go and tell the king's household." ¹⁰ So they came and called to the gatekeepers of the city, and told them, "We went to the Aramean camp, but there was no one to be seen or heard there, nothing but the horses tied, the donkeys tied, and the tents as they were." ¹¹ Then the gatekeepers called out and proclaimed it to the king's household. ¹² The king got up in the night, and said to his servants, "I will tell you what the Arameans have prepared against us. They know that we are starving; so they have left the camp to hide themselves in the open country, thinking, 'When they come out of the city, we shall take them alive and get into the city.'" ¹³ One of his servants said, "Let some men take five of the remaining horses, since those left here will suffer the fate of the whole multitude of Israel that have perished already; let us send and find out." ¹⁴ So they took two mounted men, and the king sent them after the Aramean army, saying, "Go and find out." ¹⁵ So they went after them as far as the Jordan; the whole way was littered with garments and equipment that the Arameans had thrown away in their haste. So the messengers returned, and told the king.

¹⁶ Then the people went out, and plundered the camp of the Arameans. So a measure of choice meal was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD. ¹⁷ Now the king had appointed the captain on whose hand he leaned to have charge of the gate; the people trampled him to death in the gate, just as the man of God had said when the king came down to him. ¹⁸ For when the man of God had said to the king, "Two measures of barley shall be sold for a shekel, and a measure of choice meal for a shekel, about this time tomorrow in the gate of Samaria", ¹⁹ the captain had answered the man of God, "Even if the LORD were to make windows in the sky, could such a thing happen?" And he had answered, "You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat from it." ²⁰ It did indeed happen to him; the people trampled him to death in the gate.

New Testament: Mark 16:9-11

THE SHORTER ENDING OF MARK. And all that had been commanded them they told briefly to those around Peter. And afterwards Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.

THE LONGER ENDING OF MARK. ⁹ Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. ¹⁰ She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. ¹¹ But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.

General Concept: The testimony of those who speak the truth are often discredited on account of their status in society.

Key Concept:

Adult: Age, gender, race or socio-economic status cannot keep us from telling the truth of Jesus' resurrection.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

2 Kings 7:7-20. The four lepers in the text did not keep to themselves the goods that they had ransacked from the Syrian army, but instead they went to the king's officer and told him everything. The officer did not believe what the men were telling him, yet the king ordered the officer to send some of his men to check the camp of the Syrians.

The report turned out to be true, and they were able to get what was left by the Syrians. As a consequence to the officer's unbelief and as prophesied by the prophet, the king's officer died. The officer's unbelief led to his own death, but the witness of the four lepers had saved Israel from famine. These men who suffered from a dreaded skin disease were put outside the city as they were considered outcasts because of their physical condition. Yet they became God's instrument in saving Israel from dying of famine.

Mark 16:9-11. This is the longer ending of the Gospel according to Mark. The risen Lord has instructed Mary Magdalene to go and give the message to his disciples. The disciples however did not believe the statement of the woman. If we look back at the social climate at that time, women's statements were considered "unreliable" as highlighted by the Jewish historian Josephus. Women's status in society was low. Not much attention were paid to the words of a woman. Thus, Mary Magdalene's claim of having seen the risen Lord could have been considered mere idle talk. But the text shows that Jesus recognized and used those most unlikely people to proclaim the good news. While culture might disregard women's witness, Jesus uplifted their spirit by choosing them to participate in spreading the Good News. Jesus is always beyond any expectation. He is God's revelation of the new perspective and new reality that is being inaugurated with his coming. God now no longer works out the divine plan through the powerful, but chooses the unknown powerless and marginalized to be God's vital instruments in giving birth to the new reality and new world that is now beginning to unfold.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

The way of the world is not the way of the Lord. As Paul declared in his First Letter to the Corinthians, the gospel is regarded foolishness by the learned. It is not spoken with wisdom but rather with the simplicity of this truth: Christ was crucified. The women's news of Jesus' resurrection was first received by the elite disciples as women's tale simply because it was said by "inferior" disciples. In the Gospels, those who recognized Jesus to be a teacher and prophet came from marginalized and despised elements of society. This prejudice has cut deep into the Jewish subconscious not sparing Jesus' disciples, perhaps including Jesus himself (his attitude towards the Syro-Phoenician woman). That is how the disciples received Mary Magdalene's first hand personal testimony.

The world today has not changed much particularly as regards women and the poor. In any social context, including in the church, the poor and the women (with some notable exceptions) are by and large silent. It has been observed that to a certain extent, some individual younger women avoid being assertive in airing their opinion for fear of losing their attractiveness to men. On the other hand, men of influence employ their economic and social capital to impose their views regardless of merit. As a result everybody ends up the loser. Truth often comes from the mouth of the innocent and the little ones. Psychologically, this may be due to the fact that people of status and means have a lot to protect, which determines their idea of truth. But there is a deeper, spiritual reason for it. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of God." Spiritual poverty may be understood as the opposite of pride and arrogance behind one's views of things. For example, pride based on intellectual supremacy may in fact prevent a person from recognizing

the simplest truths about life. They speak as though they know all things when in fact they are deceiving themselves. The most basic things that define decent human existence may escape the perception of people who are literally surrounded with material possessions.

For example, the poor farmers asking the government for food aid during the El Nino months should have persuaded local governments to undertake a nationwide emergency food aid program involving pertinent government agencies with adequate budgetary support. Instead, government officials saw the request for food aid in terms of the usual government policies and procedures obtaining during normal times. Thanks to its educated economists and experienced bureaucrats, government operation starts at policies and procedures down to the needs, rather than starting from the people's actual needs and using policies and regulations to expedite actual delivery. Government's basic problem is that it listens first to experts with a long list of academic credentials who will then craft programs and policies for the people because the people down below presumably do not know what is good for them and for the nation. It is a social blindness that the gospel has a cure for.

I. Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, the learners are expected to:

1. Accept the fact that even ordinary people or outcasts are used by God to address the needs of God's people
2. Practice spiritual discernment in telling the good news of God's salvation
3. Cooperate with the community leaders on how the church can help address the needs of the farmers, fisherfolk and local workers
4. Commit to involve in the making of policies in the church that are geared toward addressing the needs of the people of the community

II. Concept: Age, gender, race or socio-economic status cannot keep us from telling the truth of Jesus' resurrection.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), Learning Time table, pens and notebooks/journals

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time. Greet each one with "A blessed Sunday to you!" Ask the learners how their week went. Respond appropriately to their answers.
2. Sing "Magmahalan Tayo"
Magmahalan tayo, magmahalan, lalala lala lalala lala! (2x)
 Napakagandang pagmasdan kung tayo'y nagmamahalan! (2x)
 (Replace underlined words with "magtutulongan/nagtutulongan" and "magkaisa/nagakakaisa" as you repeat the song. You may sing this song with a hand play.)
3. Opening Prayer: Thank you for this blessed Sunday, dear Lord. Thank you for teaching us how to love the way Jesus loved, including especially the outcasts. May we always do good as your children and as believers of Jesus. Teach us to share the good news about Jesus through our words and actions, especially about his resurrection. Empower us to be more involved in the work towards the betterment of our community, the society, and the world. In Jesus' name. Amen.

B. Getting Ready

Have the class read the biblical references:

II Kings 7: 7-20

Mark 16: 9-11

C. Learning Time

Have the class analyze the biblical references by filling out this table.

	Lepers	Mary Magdalene
What is the event they/she witnessed?		
Did others believe when they/she told them about it?		
What is their/her standing in society? Why is that their/her social standing?		
Why do you think they were/she was not believed?		

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

Ask:

1. Has there been a time when you told the truth and others did not believe you? How did it feel? (Allow the learners to share their experiences.)
2. How do you think the lepers and Mary Magdalene felt when they were not believed?
3. Were they able to help others with what they did? How?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Outcasts of society and ordinary people are often used by God to address the needs of God's people, just like how God used the lepers and Mary Magdalene help save the life of others and help spread the good news of God's salvation.

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

Discuss:

1. Who do you think are the outcasts in our society today? (List down all the answers the learners will give. The list should include farmers, fisherfolk, workers, women, children, indigenous people.)
2. Why are they outcasts? Are they being listened to by people in power?
3. How can they be helpful in crafting a better society for all of us today?
4. As church people, how may you help them so that their voices are heard and that the good news of God's salvation be heard by all?

Have the learners note down their answers. If possible, invite a community leader so that the young people may discuss with her/him how they may participate in community empowerment programs.

G. Closing Worship

1. Closing prayer song: "Faith in the Service of the People"

Refrain: Faith in the service of the people, faith in the service of the poor;

This is our response to the call of God, faith in the service of the poor.

Children and the young have the vision of a future that's bright and free

They work and study, learn the lessons of the past, and not to repeat history.

(Repeat refrain)

People of the church have the vision of the Kin-dom of God on earth;

A kin-dom of justice & righteousness, a kin-dom of joy and love.

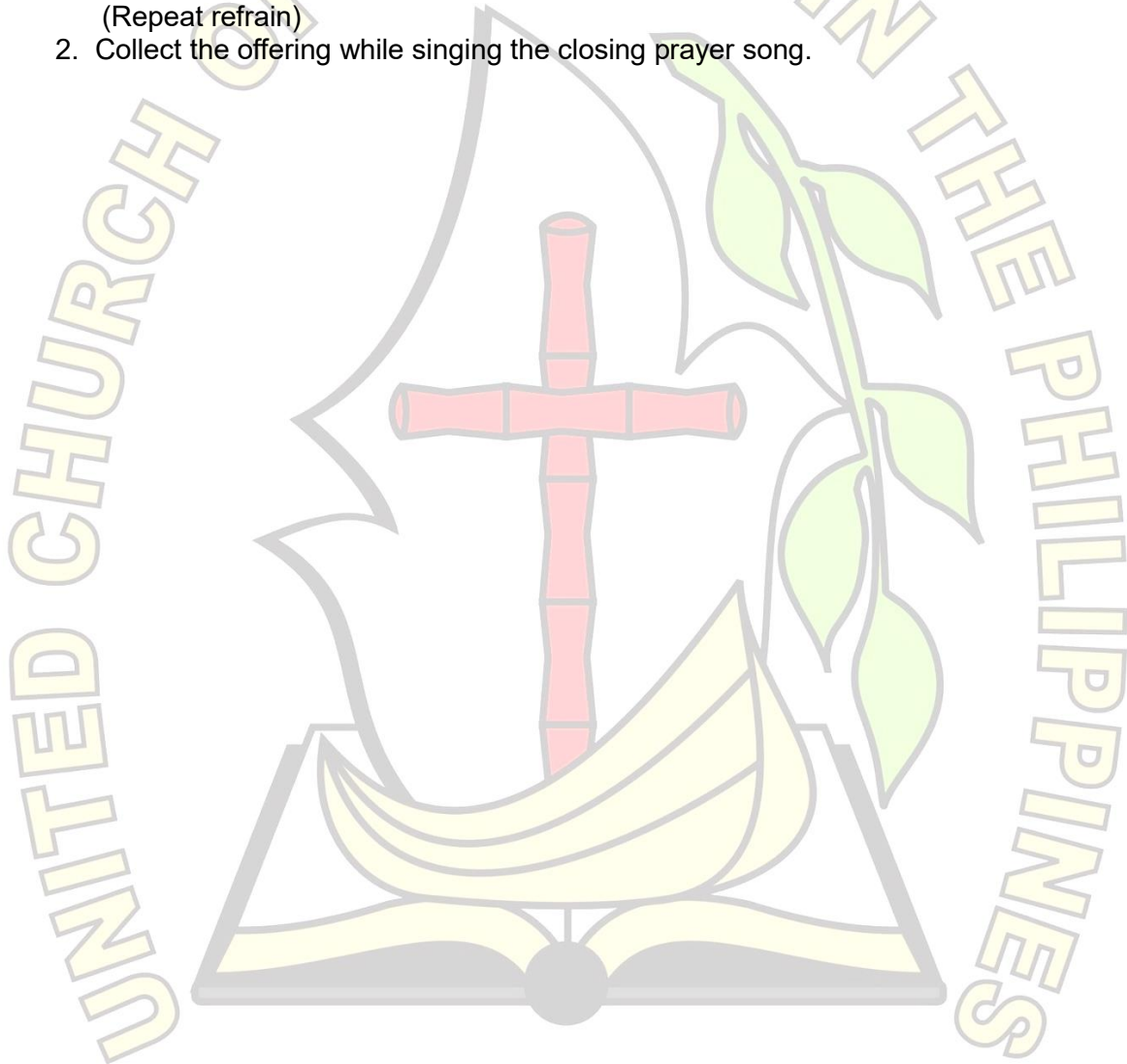
(Repeat refrain)

Let us come and celebrate together our joys in the service of God

And giving thanks for all the work well done, pray for the years to come.

(Repeat refrain)

2. Collect the offering while singing the closing prayer song.



May 14, 2017Fourth Sunday after Resurrection: **Failure to Believe in the Appearance of Jesus****Old Testament: Genesis 18:1-15**

A Son Promised to Abraham and Sarah

¹The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. ²He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. ³He said, "My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. ⁴Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. ⁵Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." ⁶And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes." ⁷Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. ⁸Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

⁹They said to him, "Where is your wife Sarah?" And he said, "There, in the tent." ¹⁰Then one said, "I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. ¹¹Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. ¹²So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?" ¹³The Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' ¹⁴Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son." ¹⁵But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. He said, "Oh yes, you did laugh."

New Testament: Mark 16:12-13

Jesus Appears to Two Disciples

¹²After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. ¹³And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.

General Concept: Due to their extreme grief, the disciples found it difficult to believe testimonies of the risen Lord.

Key Concept:

Adult: Even when no one believes us, we will continue to proclaim the good news of Jesus' Resurrection through our words and deeds.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Genesis 18:1-15. These verses center on narrating the lives of prominent men: Abraham, his grandson Jacob, and great-grandson Joseph. The story revolves around God's divine promise to Abraham. God's promise to Abraham contains several elements. First is the establishment of a nation that will manage the land of Palestine (or Canaan, as it was named in the Biblical text). Second is the rising of a future king coming from the lineage of the patriarchs who will become an instrument to bring God's blessing to all the earth, reverting the effect of rebellion of Adam and Eve against God. The covenant made by God with Abraham in 17:19, affirms that God initiates the act and would surely fulfill God's promise.

In Hebrew culture, women were expected to bear sons, as if it was the reason for their existence. Judges 5:30 considered a woman as "racham" meaning "womb." Thus every woman during the Old Testament time wanted to bear sons not as pride but as a source of security

when the husband dies. Failure to bear children was considered punishment. That was even a ground for the husband to divorce his wife. The text is a fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham in 17:19, at the same time a concrete manifestation of God's mighty power to use the unlikely old Sarah to fulfill God's promise. This old woman Sarah became part of fulfilling God's covenant to Abraham.

Mark 16:12-13. Two witnesses were needed to validate a statement or claim, however, still the disciples were adamant to believe the witness of the two followers. Their unbelief is caused by their inability to grasp Jesus' description of himself being the Son of Man, who will suffer, be killed and will rise to life on the third day (Mark 8: 31, 9:31, 10:33). Suffering, death and rising back to life are the real marks of Jesus as the true Messiah. He suffered and died on the hands of those who refuse to recognize Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God (Mark 14:1, 53-55; 15:1-3). His rising to life overcomes any power that deprives the flourishing of life. He is the God of life, and death has no power over the love of God. The disciples are called to proclaim that message.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Grieving over the death of their beloved teacher and friend, the disciples spent the days following his death remembering him and recalling his words and deeds. They remained bound to the Jesus that they once knew. But by his resurrection, Jesus had transcended his earthly being and assumed a new identity, the new life of the resurrection. It is in this new form that Jesus appeared to his disciples. That encounter emancipated them from the bondage of grief to a new freedom to follow him with eagerness and joy.

The disciples testified that Jesus lives on at a new plane of reality. They also said that believers and followers are able to commune with him from where we are at a different plane of reality. But is there a bridge that can connect us to Jesus of the new reality? It is certainly within our means to get connected to Jesus' historical identity as recorded in the Gospels. Perhaps, we can also relate to Paul's Damascus experience. But short of that, how is it possible for us to see Jesus?

Because we exist on two different planes of reality, there needs to have a means or agent of mediation to close what appears to be an infinite gap. Here comes the church. For Catholics, the church is the primary sacrament of the Lord, meaning to say, the church is his visible and concrete presence in the world, thus the Catholic dogma of the church as the mystical body of Jesus whose real presence is conveyed through the sacraments and the office of the clergy. For Orthodox Christians, the icons and rituals serve as an earthly window that gives worshippers but a murky glimpse of God's eternal plane. Protestant Christians consider the proclamation of the word from Scriptures by the preacher as a moment of encounter (also the word as acted out in the sacraments) when Jesus makes his presence humanly available to believers.

This means that Christ founded the church—the gathering of believers in worship to hear the word proclaimed (Protestant)—as his agent/means of mediating his spiritual presence in their midst. For Catholics, it is a physical communion with Christ through the sacraments; for Protestant it's a spiritual communion that involves the intellect, emotion, imagination and other human mental faculties.

It will not be the same as the original experience of the disciples but it conveys sufficient grace for a faithful and loyal obedience to Jesus.

I. Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, the learners are expected to:

1. Analyze the biblical texts to see God's plan of love to God's people and the effect on life by the resurrection of Jesus
2. Affirm one's role as a faith believer of Jesus' resurrection by involving in the church's ministry of proclaiming God's message of love and salvation
3. Encourage the church to be a mediation agent to fill the gap of unbelief and confusion on Jesus' resurrection among the unbelieving and confused

II. Concept: Even when no one believes us, we will continue to proclaim the good news of Jesus' Resurrection through our words and deeds.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV)

III. Learning Experiences**A. Opening Worship**

1. Welcome time. Greet each other a "Happy Sunday!"
2. Opening prayer: Loving God, thank you for this beautiful Sunday morning. Thank you that we can come to You at any time and feel Your presence. Empower us to do our responsibility of telling others about the truth of Jesus' Resurrection. Always be with us the church as we continue to do Your ministry. Be with us as we live a new life that is always acceptable to You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
3. Sing "We've a Story to Tell to the Nations"

B. Getting Ready

Have the learners read the biblical references.

C. Learning Time

Discuss:

1. Why do you think it was difficult for Sarah to believe that she can still become pregnant?
2. Why do you think it was difficult for the other disciples to believe that Jesus appeared to their companions?

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

Discuss:

1. Imagine the encounter of Jesus with the grieving disciples. How do you think they must have felt to be in Jesus' presence?
2. Mary Magdalene told the good news about Jesus' Resurrection. The two disciples told the good news of Jesus' Resurrection.
3. How can you tell the good news' of Jesus' Resurrection?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

We must always try to share the good news about Jesus' Resurrection to everyone. It does not matter if other people may not believe. The important thing is that we must tell the truth and continue to live a life that is acceptable to God.

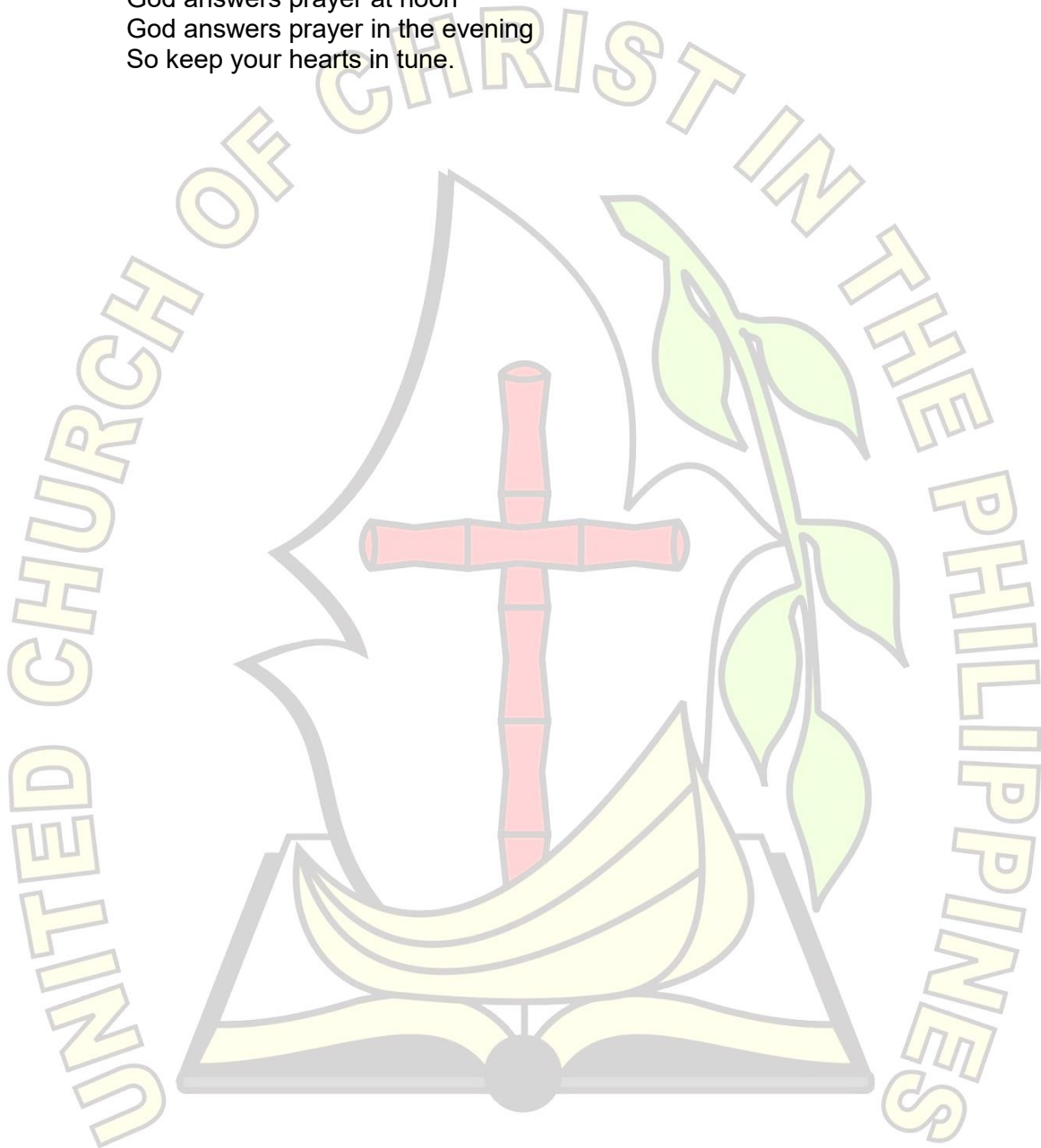
F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. As a class, list ways by which each one can help in the church's ministry of proclaiming Jesus' Resurrection.
2. Each learner may choose a task to do and commit to it.
3. Individually, have them write a prayer thanking God for always being present in their lives and asking for help at the responsibility each one has chosen to do in

proclaiming Jesus' Resurrection.

G. Closing Worship

1. Have each one read their prayers.
2. Closing song: "God Answers Prayer"
God answers prayer in the morning
God answers prayer at noon
God answers prayer in the evening
So keep your hearts in tune.



May 21, 2017Fifth Sunday after Resurrection/UCCP Sunday: **Celebrating the Resurrection****Old Testament: Exodus 16:1-26**

¹⁶The whole congregation of the Israelites set out from Elim; and Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. ²The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. ⁵On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days." ⁶So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, ⁷and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your complaining against the LORD. For what are we, that you complain against us?" ⁸And Moses said, "When the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the LORD has heard the complaining that you utter against him—what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the LORD."

⁹ Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, 'Draw near to the LORD, for he has heard your complaining.'" ¹⁰And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked towards the wilderness, and the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. ¹¹The LORD spoke to Moses and said, ¹²"I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'"

¹³ In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. ¹⁴When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. ¹⁵When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat. ¹⁶This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Gather as much of it as each of you needs, an omer to a person according to the number of persons, all providing for those in their own tents.'" ¹⁷The Israelites did so, some gathering more, some less. ¹⁸But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them needed. ¹⁹And Moses said to them, "Let no one leave any of it over until morning." ²⁰But they did not listen to Moses; some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul. And Moses was angry with them. ²¹Morning by morning they gathered it, as much as each needed; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

²² On the sixth day they gathered twice as much food, two omers apiece. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, ²³he said to them, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD; bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning.'" ²⁴So they put it aside until morning, as Moses commanded them; and it did not become foul, and there were no worms in it. ²⁵Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. ²⁶For six days you shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none."

New Testament: Luke 24:36-46

36 While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." 37 They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. 38 He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." 40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. 41 While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate in their presence.

44 Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, 46 and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day..."

General Concept: Jesus comes to commune with us in ordinary, basic, and common activities and struggles.

Key Concept:

Adult: Jesus comes to commune with us in ordinary, basic, and common activities and struggles. We need to believe and affirm this truth.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Exodus 16:1-26. Chapters 1-15 highlights the early beginnings of Moses, how he was rescued and raised by the Egyptian princess. He was nurtured and educated under Egyptian custom and tradition. By practice and breeding he may be one of the Egyptians but by blood he was always an Israelite. He witnessed how the task master treated his fellow Israelites and he cannot be at peace until he found justice for these workers. It was in such context that God called Moses to lead his people to the Promised Land. Moses became God's mouthpiece in delivering God's message to the Egyptian god-king.

God had used Moses to show His mighty powers over the Egyptian Pharaoh. The encounter of Moses with Pharaoh represents an encounter of God with the god-king. It was therefore a confrontation of power between the God of Israel and the god-king of Egypt. God's signs and wonders overcame the power of Pharaoh.

Chapters 15-18 narrates the Exodus event. It displays how the Israelites moved from Egypt to the Promised Land. It was not an easy road. They travelled by night and day in the wilderness, where they witnessed God's providence and protection, yet there were times when the people complained to Moses when food and water became scarce. God continued to listen to their complaints and responded to their needs. The God who rescued them from the harsh treatment under the hands of the task master remains faithful to God's promise to provide them their needs.

Luke 24:36-46. There was this popular Jewish belief spreading at that time, about the idea of supernatural beings like angels who can disguise themselves in various forms. The resurrected Jesus received also this same treatment when some of his disciples finally became persuaded that he is indeed the messiah risen from the dead.

The text also shows the disciples' attitude and little understanding about Jesus being the Messiah. Jesus had to explain to them again about his identity as the Messiah (vv. 46-48). Like

in Mark, the disciples in Luke could hardly accept the fact of a suffering Messiah because what they have expected was a Messiah who would free them from the colonial bondage of the Roman Empire (24: 21). They were expecting a political Messiah. Jesus leniently explained to the two (v.26), about the real character of the Messiah. In spite of their unbelief and little understanding he assured them that they would receive the Holy Spirit that comes from the Father. The resurrection of Jesus brings new understanding and new perspective to his disciples. His resurrection reflects the disciples' need to renew their commitment to the task they have accepted when they committed themselves to follow Jesus.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Although there is an infinite gap between the eternal and the earthly realms, Jesus Christ—the man who lived and died among us, and resurrected and ascended to God's eternal realm—has the power to bridge that gap. In him and through him we have access to God in the wider world. In fact, Jesus the Risen Savior, brings us outside the church in order to be together with us in our daily life and struggles. We may not say for certain that Jesus is there in the people's suffering and struggles, but we have the assurance that he is with us as we engage the world to follow him to where the people are.

There may be some among the believers who think that since Jesus has physically left the world and is present in the church only in spirit, it is perfectly all right to stay away from challenges that make people severely impoverished, oppressed and marginalized because these are non-spiritual matters. It is enough for them to sing "all glory, laud and honor" to the Lord and after church go back to their usual practice of cheating and hurting people to satiate their drive for personal pleasure, profit, glory, and honor.

This attitude is characteristic of Christian communities belonging to the so-called New Religious Movements, many of which have successfully penetrated local UCCP congregations. Loyal UCCP members have had their hands full trying to ward off their influence especially in worship and in Christian Education programs. Some pastors, for one reason or another, cater to their theological agenda to the extent of preaching a corrupted and disembodied gospel.

The true church of Jesus Christ seeks to continue his earthly ministry as a mark of faithfulness and loyalty to him. The UCCP endeavors to protect itself from the crawling invasion of New Religious Movement groups that in the end would make its local churches and congregations unfaithful and disloyal to the gospel of Jesus Christ. It may be considered an effort of the Devil to divide the church, corrupt its leaders and pastors and lead it to worship idols or mammon rather than the true God of the Bible.

Participating in the concrete social struggles along the Biblical prophetic tradition that Jesus himself pursued in his ministry is a hallmark of loyalty to Jesus. It certainly goes against the grain of popular culture that glorifies having more, success, being on top and personal freedom to obtain pleasure. If it does not, then it's not the true church of Jesus Christ. Fame, possession, power and influence, freedom from hardship, harm and illness are natural normal human aspirations but these are promises of New Religious Movements. It is not so difficult actually to recognize a faithful church: its life is sustained by the blood of martyrs.

I. Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, the learners are expected to:

1. Analyze and compare how God provides in the OT story and the promise of Jesus' presence to us through the Holy Spirit and the church in the NT story
2. Acknowledge the fact that Jesus is present in our daily lives and thank God for it

3. Explain how the church can proclaim the resurrection of Jesus as a new perspective in serving others and in accordance to the mission of Jesus
4. Demonstrate one's resolve to get involved in the church that remains faithful and loyal to the teachings of Jesus
5. List ways of celebrating the resurrection of Jesus as the assurance of future resurrection of God's people

II. Concept: Jesus comes to commune with us in ordinary, basic, and common activities and struggles. We need to believe and affirm this truth with thanksgiving.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), journals and pens

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time. Greet each other with "Happy Anniversary! Have a blessed UCCP Sunday!"
2. Sing "Faith of Our Parents Living Still"
3. Opening prayer: Dear God, thank you for Jesus Christ and the church that he started during his Resurrection. Thank you for the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, our beloved UCCP, which is a part of the church Jesus began. We celebrate our Church's anniversary today. Thank you for all the people who are part of the church and those who worked hard in order for the UCCP to be formed. We thank you for the first Christians who never lost hope despite the persecution they endured. Please bless your church as we continue to faithfully do Your mission today. In Jesus' name. Amen.
4. Sing: "A United and Uniting Church"

B. Getting Ready

Ask: Can someone share about the history of our Church, the UCCP?

Say: Today, we celebrate our Church's 69th anniversary. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines was formed on May 25, 1948. It is the same church began by Jesus Christ more than two thousand years ago during his Resurrection and that the early Christians persevered to uphold despite all the odds.

C. Learning Time

1. Read the biblical references.
2. Analyze and compare how God provides in the OT story and the promise of Jesus' presence to us through the Holy Spirit and the church in the NT story
3. Discuss how the presence of God and the presence of Jesus is manifested in the sharing of food both in the OT and NT texts.

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

Discuss: Do you think it is possible for us to see Jesus today?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

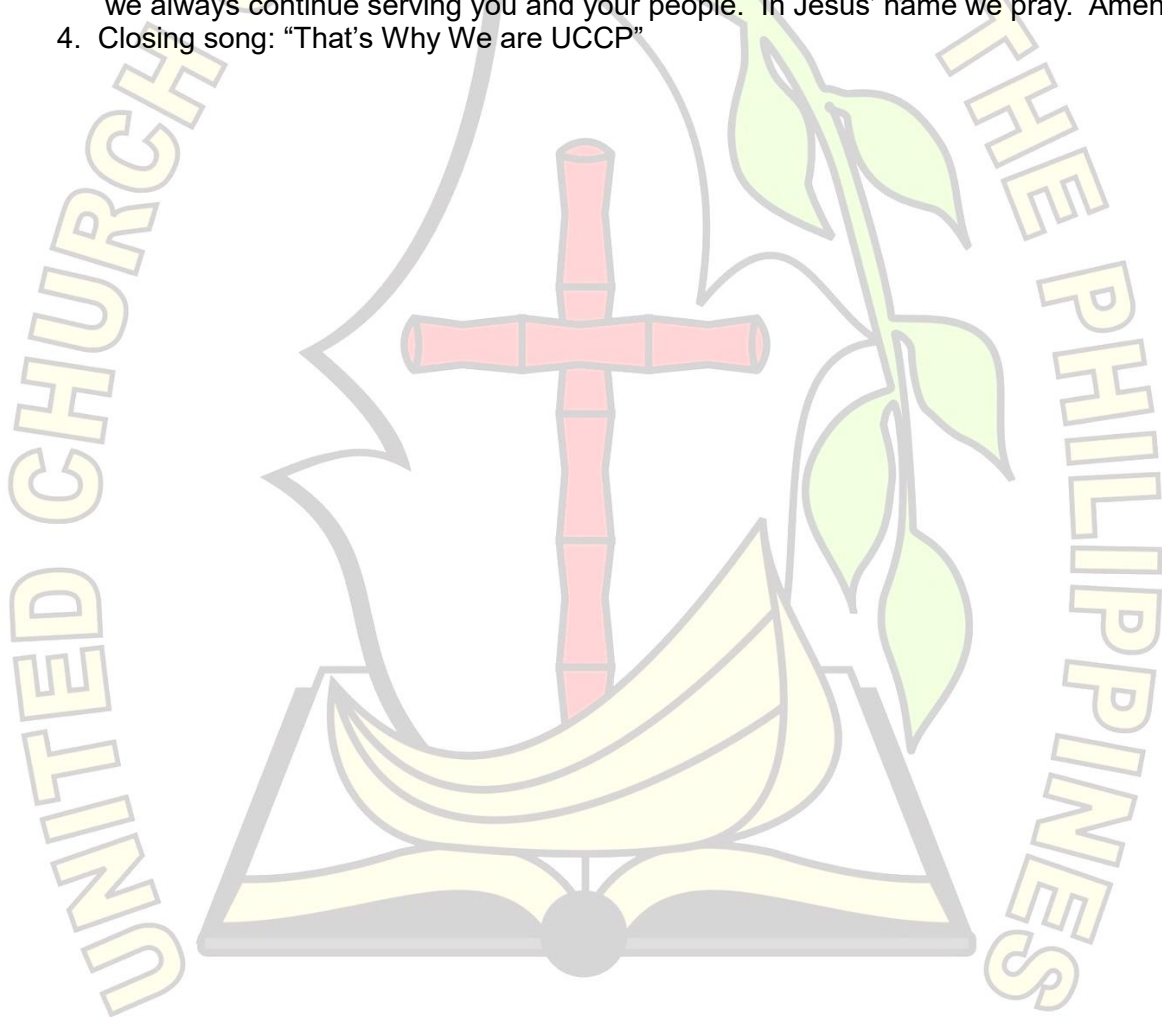
We see Jesus today in the Church. Remember that the Church is people. The church is you and I, all of us. We must see Jesus in each other. The only way we can show our love for Jesus today is to truly love each other. We know that Jesus is present in our lives because each one of us is here for each other, because we can feel the love others have for us and that we love them too. This is what Resurrection means and this we celebrate with joy and gratitude.

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Ask: What are the means by which the church can celebrate and proclaim Jesus' Resurrection by serving others and doing God's mission?
2. Brainstorm answers together then let the learners write in their journals their personal resolve of going about doing this.

G. Closing Worship

1. Encourage the learners to read what they have just written in their journals as an offering to God.
2. Pass the offering plate while an appropriate song is sung.
3. Closing prayer: Thank you, dear God, for this UCCP Sunday where we can celebrate being a Church and being Jesus Christ's presence for each other and the world. May we always truly show that we believe in Jesus' Resurrection and share His love with everyone. Thank you for your love shown by the love people show to us. May we always continue serving you and your people. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
4. Closing song: "That's Why We are UCCP"



May 28, 2017

Sixth Sunday after Resurrection/Ascension Sunday: **Anticipating the Fullness of God's Reign on Earth**

Old Testament: Daniel 12:13

¹³But you, go your way, and rest; you shall rise for your reward at the end of the days.

New Testament: Mark 16:15-20

¹⁵And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. ¹⁶The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover."

¹⁹ So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it.

General Concept: Jesus ascends to heaven to receive God's authority to realize God's reign in its fullness.

Key Concept:

Adult: Jesus ascends to heaven to receive God's authority to realize God's reign in its fullness.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Daniel 12:13. The theological value of the book of Daniel is indeed merited. Chapter 5, verse 21 speaks of the Most High God being the sovereign God over the kingdoms of earth. Daniel's vision as recorded in (7:11, 26-27, 8:25, 9:27, 11:45, 12:13) demonstrates God's triumph. The kingdom of the world is God's kingdom and of the coming messiah (2:44, 7:27). 12:13 has three significant key concepts, "faithful- to the end... will die but will rise... to receive reward at the end of time."

This underscores the importance of having faith in God especially in times of crisis and great tribulation, because it is through faith that Daniel was able to survive the fangs of death. He remained faithful when crisis had tried to drive him to denounce his faith in God. The promise is that though he will die he will rise again, a promise that continues in Jesus and is given to all those who believe in him. Daniel's faithfulness to God has given him the privileged to receive such gift.

The book of Daniel continues to call on those faithful ones to remain steadfast and faithful until they reach their end. The end of life is in their communion with God. They will experience death but will rise to receive their reward. Receiving a reward is inviting, but for believers it should not be the core foundation for demonstrating our faith in God, because putting that faith into action is the ultimate manifestation of our faith in God. Daniel invites us to do so, and remain faithful no matter what circumstances we are in.

Mark 16:15-20. In 6: 7-13 Jesus gave his disciples "authority over the evil spirits..." (v.7), he sent them out two by two (v.7). In verse 12, the disciples went out "and preached that people should turn away from their sins." In verse 13 "they drove out many demons, and rubbed olive oil on many sick people and healed them." This command has been repeated and well defined in 16:15-18. The same message will be spread and be proclaimed throughout the whole world

and the Gospel preached to all people. The Lukan writer stresses the idea that Jesus is the universal savior. In Isaiah 36:5-6, Isaiah emphasizes the concept that the Messianic period will be manifested by healing the sick, mute tongues would speak, and God's people would be God's witnesses for him (Isaiah 43:10). Luke picks up Isaiah's view which is now affirmed by Jesus when he indeed commands his disciples to perform the same miracles. Verse 17 includes all believers. Jesus now involves all believers in performing miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus recognized his disciples' weakness. Verse 14 states: "they did not have faith and because they were stubborn to believe those who had seen him." However, Jesus' still believes in their capacity to change and so he inspires them to go throughout the world. Jesus did not leave his disciples alone—he was with them and worked through them (v.20). The text shows us that God in Jesus continues to call anyone to participate in his universal mission. Regardless of status in life, the doubters and the sceptics like the first disciples, we too at times are adamant to go because we are afraid and doubts have clouded our vision but God will always be there to guide and to work in and through us.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

In the Christian sense of reckoning time, Jesus' ascension to God's glory to receive God's authority to bring creation to final fruition in time marks the penultimate chapter in the divine drama of salvation. In the final scene, God will reclaim his right as creator of the whole world from the Devil, the pretender. This is the ultimate human hope and vision that is being fed by trust in God's faithfulness to his word.

This is, however, not the scene envisioned by God's foes on earth. They want a frozen world that has no denouement. Every gain towards an ending according to humanity's hope and vision is ferociously blocked and reversed in order to preserve evil's hegemony over all of humankind. So, why doesn't Christ come down to earth and impose God's will over all oppositions? Unfortunately, it appears that that's not how God would save creation. The Scriptures provide us clues to the mystery of God's plan: liberation from evil and decay (Romans 8) is locked in creation's growing pains to its own rebirth. God will save humankind, as well as the whole earth, from ultimate self-destruction by the unfolding of freedom that has been implanted in creation at the beginning of time. Humankind has that special role of leading creation's freedom towards full fruition.

The task of the church is to unlock creation's mystery and proclaim it to the whole world. The clock is ticking—either to creation's final futility or to its rebirth. From the Christian point of view and perspective, Jesus' historical life and destiny as the Judge at the end of time is the key that will unlock the mystery of creation's suffering and destiny. In contrast, the world is inundated with propaganda, fake values and false ideals that serve as a smokescreen to hide evil machinations to prevent creation from reaching its true destiny. But against the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ, all these machinations will unravel and finally reveal the Devil's hand. Investigative journalists today have exposed the real reasons behind the seemingly endless wars that are literally killing millions of people and destroying the fabric of social existence of many nations, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa. They say it is a war to secure the vital highways that lead to huge oil reserves which is the way to control the world. The food security and ecological future of weak but resource-rich nations are pushed to the very edge in order to maintain the wealth of a few individuals and families who have monopoly control over the global economy. These interest groups are the hand of the Devil, God's arch-enemy, to remain in control of the world. As an American geopolitical expert said, "Control oil and you control many nations. Control food sources and you control all of humankind."

The effort and struggle to expose the Devil's hand and to give support and inspiration to those who are in the forefront of the fight against his minions on earth is the duty of every justice and freedom-loving person, Christian or otherwise. It is a matter of faith in so far as the church is concerned. As followers of Jesus Christ, we cannot opt out of his work to establish God's reign over the whole creation.

I. Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, the learners are expected to:

1. Describe the ascension of Jesus
2. Explain why Jesus ascended to the Father
3. Relate the three-fold meaning of the OT text with the ascension of Jesus
4. Demonstrate one's gratitude for the ascension of Jesus as part of the future of God's people and the whole creation
5. Get involved in the work of the church as a continuing work in establishing God's reign on the whole creation

II. Concept: Jesus ascends to heaven to receive God's authority to realize God's reign in its fullness.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV)

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time. Greet each other with "Peace be with you!"
2. Sing "Ang Kristong Buhay, Kakapit-Bisig ng Sambayanan"

Koro: Ikaw ang Diyos ng manga salat,
Ikaw ang Diyos ng manga dukha
Kakapit-bisig mo ang aking bayan
Sa daan ng liwanag ng buwang liwayway!

Sa munting sabsaban Ika'y isinilang
At doon nagkamulat ang dakilang kamalayan
Ang kristong tutubos sa kasalanang inutang
Ng iilang nakikinabanag sa pawis ng bayan. Koro

Sakada kung umaani sa malawak na lupa,
Maggagawa kang magdamag na hawak ang makina
Sa maiinit na araw nabibilang sa maraming
Nakapila sa paggawa't sahod ay hinihintay. Koro

Tinig mo sa lansangan ay tinira ng punglo,
Pinigilan ang tibok ng nag-aalab mong puso
Ang koronang tinik sa noo itinimo
Katawan mong nagdurugo sa Krus ipinako. Koro

Ang iyong iniwang halimbawa ay ganyan,
O Dakilang Poon ng Mapagpalayang kilusan
O Kristo ang aming bawat hakbang ay gabayan,
Tungo sa mithiing kinabukasan. Koro

3. Dear God, thank you for this Ascension Sunday. Teach us more all about it so that

we may learn more about you. As the youth of the church, there are many new and good things that we can learn and do. Thank you for this time of learning and sharing from and with each other. In Jesus' name. Amen.

B. Getting Ready

Read the biblical references.

C. Learning Time

Discuss:

1. In order to describe more fully the ascension of Jesus into heaven, it is necessary to look at other biblical references like Luke 24: 50-51.
2. Assign to read, discuss and share by group the biblical exegesis provided for each reference.

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

Discuss:

1. Do you often feel Jesus' guiding presence?
2. When you feel it, what new, good and empowering thing can you do, especially for the least of the least of our sisters and brothers?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Jesus is alive and He is always with us, guiding us. All we need to do is follow him.

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. As followers of Jesus Christ, what can we do to ensure that his mission continues?
2. Make a list and dramatize per group these things that we can do.

G. Closing Worship

1. Make the dramatization a part of the closing worship.
2. End with each one saying a sentence prayer. Teacher closes the prayer.