

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	Psalm 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/Christi an 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/Nation al 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.

Quadrennial Theme: **SPIRITUALITY FOR THESE CRITICAL TIMES**

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Breaking Down Walls that Divide

Old Testament: Isaiah 56:3-8 (NRSV)

³Do not let the foreigner joined to the LORD say, 'The LORD will surely separate me from his people'; and do not let the eunuch say, 'I am just a dry tree.' ⁴For thus says the LORD: To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, ⁵I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. ⁶And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant- ⁷these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. ⁸Thus says the Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered.

Amos 9:7 (NRSV)

⁷Are you not like the Ethiopians to me, O people of Israel? says the LORD. Did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?

New Testament: Luke 14:12-14 (NRSV)

¹²He said also to the one who had invited him, 'When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. ¹³But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ¹⁴And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. Sorrow will turn into joy.'

General Concept: The church, by nature, is inclusive. It embraces differences and does not harbor animosities.

Key Concepts in the Different Age Levels in Sunday School

N/K/YE: The Holy Spirit enables the church to teach children to accept others who are different from them.

ME/OE: The Holy Spirit enables the church to teach inclusion and not exclusion.

Y: The Holy Spirit enables the church to be inclusive by embracing social and cultural diversity to avoid animosities.

A: The Holy Spirit enables the church to be inclusive by embracing social and cultural diversity. The nature of the church does not harbor animosities.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Isaiah 56:3-8. Looking at the text there are four phrases that jumps out. These are the pronouncements of God's actions to those foreigners, eunuchs and even outcasts to the community of faith. "I will give" (Hebrew u.nththi); "I shall give" (Hebrew athn); "I will bring" (Hebrew u.ebiauthi.m); "I will gather" (Hebrew aqbtz). These are the things that God will do to those who we consider outsiders to join the community if they acknowledge and obey the divine will. These allow us to see that God is indeed breaking barriers and no one can prevent someone to be accepted by God.

It is important to remember that beginning with the 56th chapter of Isaiah until the last is considered to be Third Isaiah and its context was during the postexilic period and was a reaction to the emerging exclusivism of the Jewish faith. Hence this particular text is a counter-argument of this trend and speaks of God's inclusiveness as long as people even outside the faith community acknowledge and obey Yahweh.

Amos 9:7. Are you not like the Ethiopians[a] to me, O people of Israel? says the Lord. Did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir? In this text God is telling the Israelites that they as a people are not pure-bred Israelites but coming from other ethnicities and other nations. This is a reminder to the Israelites that they are like the Ethiopians (or Cushites) and their exodus from Egypt where their intermingling with the Philistines in Palestine has produced a race coming from various ethnic groups. This clearly shows that there is no pure race and God's sovereign power and grace can include all kinds of people for God is the ruler of all.

Luke 14:12-14. This text shows that God even in the New Testament is an inclusive God. We are encouraged to give luncheons or dinners to those who could not repay us for it is God who will repay us. Let us look at the transliteration of verse 14 "and happy you-shall-be that not they-are-having to-repay to-you shall-be-being-repaid for to-you in the up-standing of-the just-ones". It is very interesting to see that the "resurrection of the righteous" is transliterated as "up-standing of-the just-ones". It brings to mind that the reward may be given in the immediate future instead of the resurrection of the righteous which is believed to be at the end times. Regardless of when the reward will come, it is clear that God will repay us and we know that God's time is always on time. Still we are encouraged to be inclusive instead of exclusive.

The exegesis of the verse both in the Old and New testament points to the fact that God is an inclusive God. We have no business to exclude anyone from God's grace because it is God who continues to invite people to follow the divine will. As a community of faith believing in this inclusive God, we too are to reflect this kind of attitude, open to all to those who believe in the graciousness and sovereignty of God. Despite the differences it does not stop us from establishing relationships with others because all are invited to the family of God.



Nursery/Kindergarten/Younger Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

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

1. define the meaning of acceptance, similarities, and differences;
2. explain that people have similarities and differences;
3. demonstrate appreciation for the Holy Spirit that enables the church to be accepting of others despite differences;
4. share what each one can do in accepting others as an obedience to God.

II. Concept: The Holy Spirit enables the church to teach children to accept others who are different from them.

Materials: The Holy Bible (NRSV), offering plate, emoticons for different feelings (happy, sad, surprised, afraid, angry, anxious) decoration materials for a birthday party

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: "Dear Father, we are thankful for bringing us together to church today. Through your Spirit, be with us as we learn more about you with our teacher and classmates and friends. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."
3. Opening song: "When the Spirit of the Lord Is in Our Heart"
*When the Spirit of the Lord is in our heart, we can sing like Mary sang (twice).
 We can sing oh, Lord (twice). We can sing like Mary sang. (repeat this line)
 When the Spirit of the Lord is in our heart, we can lead like Moses led (twice).
 We can lead oh, Lord (twice). We can lead like Moses led. (repeat this line)
 When the Spirit of the Lord is in our heart, we can pray like Daniel prayed (twice).
 We can pray oh, Lord (twice). We can pray like Daniel prayed. (repeat this line)
 When the Spirit of the Lord is in our heart, we can dance like Miriam danced (twice).
 We can dance oh, Lord (twice). We can dance like Miriam danced. (repeat this line)*

B. Getting Ready

Call on several pairs of children (pair of girls who wear clothes of the same color; a pair of boys who have similar heights by different skin complexion; a pair of girls who have different hair (straight and curly or short or long); a pair of boys with different sports preference.) After presenting the pairs, introduce the words acceptance, similarities, and differences and discuss their meaning.

C. Learning Time

Prepare the children to listen to the story.

A Birthday Party

(Based on Luke 14:12-14)

It's three days before Ana's birthday. Mother and Father asked her what she likes to do on her birthday.

"I want to celebrate my birthday with my friends. But I also want to invite the street children near the church."

"Why is that, Ana?"

My Sunday school teacher said that when we have parties, we should not forget the poor because they are the ones who need help. God will be pleased."

"You are a good child!"

"Thanks, Father. Thanks, Mother."

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

Discuss the story. Tell the children to use their emoticons as they answer the questions.

1. Who is celebrating a birthday? (Ana) How do you think Ana felt? (Use of the chosen emoticon chosen) Why did you feel that way? (Expect different answers.)
2. Whom did Ana want to invite? (Her friends and the street children) What do you think is the difference with Ana's friends and the street children? (The street children are poor and they live in the streets.) How did you feel with Ana's choice? (Use of the chosen emoticon chosen) Why did you feel that way? (Expect different answers.)
3. Which of these traits did Ana show—kind, accepting, obedient, respectful? (Expect the class to choose the first three traits. Have them explain the reason for their choice.) Show how you feel with Ana's traits. (Use of the chosen emoticon chosen) Why did you feel that way? (Expect different answers.)
4. Do you agree with Ana's belief that God is pleased when we consider the poor? (Expect a Yes or No answer.) How do you feel when we obey God? (Use of the chosen emoticon chosen) Why did you feel that way? (Expect different answers.)
5. Can you accept others who are different from you? (Expect a Yes or No answer.) Why or why not? How do you feel with your answer? (Use of the chosen emoticon chosen)
6. Who do you think helped the church to teach about accepting others? (The Holy Spirit) How do you feel about the help of the Holy Spirit? (Use of the chosen emoticon chosen)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "Who helps the church to teach children about acceptance of others? (The Holy Spirit enables the church to teach children to accept others who are different from them.)"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach and explain the biblical verse in Luke 14:13-14a: "But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you...."
2. **N/K:** Ask each child to make a list of names that they will invite if they celebrate their birthday. Let them say their reasons for their choices.
3. **YE:** Tell the class to help decorate the room in preparation of a birthday party. Prepare some materials such as balloons, paper plates, glasses, straws, table cloths, streamers, etc. Ask each child to tell whom they will invite and their reason for inviting them.

G. Closing Worship

1. Ask selected children to recite the memory verse.
2. Offering
3. Closing songs: "When the Spirit of the Lord Is in Our Heart" and "In my Life Lord, Be Glorified" In my life Lord, be glorified (twice).
In my life, Lord, be glorified today.
Note: Replace *life* with *school, home, and church*.
5. Closing Prayer: "Dear God, thank you for teaching us to accept others even if they are different from us. Thank you for our church in teaching us to be obedient to you through the help of your Spirit. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."

Middle and Older Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

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

1. define the meaning of acceptance, inclusion, and exclusion;
2. explain that people have similarities and differences;
3. demonstrate appreciation for the Holy Spirit that enables the church to be inclusive rather than exclusive in accepting others despite differences;
4. share what each one can do in accepting others as an obedience to God.

II. Concept: The Holy Spirit enables the church to teach inclusion and not exclusion.

Materials: The Holy Bible (NRSV), offering plate

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Smile and greet the children as they come. Check the attendance.
2. Opening prayer: "Ever wise and merciful God who indwells the Church through the Spirit of Christ, be with us as we learn about you in our lesson today. This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen."
3. Opening song: "Spirit of God, Descend upon my Heart" (HFJ # 181)

B. Getting Ready

1. Ask the class to recall parties that they have been invited to. Let them describe what they see in these parties. Have them talk about their feelings during parties. Let them share the fun that they have experienced being invited to parties or to sleep-over or to play with their friends in their homes.
2. Point out the pain in their hearts when they are not invited at all. Encourage them to realize that God is a kind and considerate God when he invites us all into a relationship with him. Tell the class to express their joy by laughing joyfully.

C. Learning Time

1. Present the meaning of the following words:
 - a. Acceptance. It is a noun that is synonymous to welcome. The verb "accept" means more than just welcoming a person. It means more than just tolerating someone who is different from you. It means not avoiding a person who is different from you. It means befriending a person and making him or her feel a member of the fellowship. It means receiving a person who is different from you with warmth. It is Christian love that enables us to accept others despite their differences.
 - b. Inclusion. It is synonymous to acceptance.
 - c. Exclusion. It is an antonym of acceptance.
 - d. Eunuchs are persons who serve kings. To be able to do their work well and not get married, a body part that has been removed from them.
2. Divide the class into three groups. Assign each group each of the three scriptural references. Let each group say something about each reference.
 - a. Group 1: Isaiah 56:3-8
 - b. Group 2. Amos 9:7
 - c. Group 3. Luke 14:12-14

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. In Isaiah 56:3, what word means a person who is not from their place? (Foreigners) What word is also mentioned that is related to those who serve? (Eunuchs) What does God wants us to do with these persons? Do you agree or disagree? Why? (Expect varied answers but validate their answers by asking them to Isaiah 56:3-7.)
2. Why do you think it is difficult to accept these people mentioned by Isaiah? (They are different from us.)

3. What word summarizes what God wants us to do with all people? (Inclusion)
4. Why do you think Amos was saying that we need to accept other people? (Amos says that all of us are like the Israelites who lived as foreigners and yet God did not exclude them by taking them out of slavery from Egypt. God’s love for each of us is so great that we cannot but love others as well.)
5. What word was mentioned by Luke that means a big party? (Banquet)
6. Who should be invited by a person who is giving a banquet? (The poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind) Why? (They are the ones who cannot repay anyone who is giving a banquet.)
7. Does God want us to forget our friends when we give a party? (No. It simply means that we cannot exclude the marginalized who cannot repay us on account of their poverty, rather include them because it is in obedience to God’s will. It means that being generous is extended to those who are not expected to give us something in return. For God gave his son to die for all of us freely and willingly.)
8. What could happen when we exclude people? (We build walls that divide people.) What could happen when we accept people who are different from us? (We destroy the walls that divide people. We build bridges that lead to healthy relationships with other people. We follow God’s command.)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: How lesson does the Holy Spirit enable the church to teach? (The Holy Spirit enables the church to teach inclusion and not exclusion.)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Let the class discuss the memory verse: “And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. Sorrow will turn into joy.” (Luke 14:14)
2. **ME/OE:** Present this table and ask the class to list the ways that lead to exclusion and how these ways can be converted to being inclusive in obedience to God.

Ways that lead to EXCLUSION of others	Converting these ways that can lead to INCLUSION of others in obedience to God

3. **OE:** Instruct the class to act out the ways of being inclusive.

G. Closing Worship

1. Have the children recite the memory verse.
2. Offering
3. Closing song: “Spirit of God, Descend upon my Heart” (HFJ # 181)
4. Closing prayer: “Merciful God, we acknowledge your great love for us when you asked us to be inclusive. May the Holy Spirit help us always to accept others even when they are different from us and even when they cannot repay our goodness for them to make our lives be always pleasing to your sight. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen. “

Youth Level

I. Objectives

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

1. define the meaning of social and cultural diversity, acceptance, inclusion, and exclusion;
2. explain that people have similarities and differences and name some of their differences;
3. demonstrate appreciation for the Holy Spirit that enables the church to encourage inclusiveness by accepting others despite their social and cultural diversity;
4. share what each one can do in accepting others as an obedience to God.

II. Concept: The Holy Spirit enables the church to be inclusive by embracing social and cultural diversity to avoid animosities.

Materials: The Holy Bible (NRSV), worksheets

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: Loving God, we thank you for sending your Spirit. We plead for your presence through your Spirit when we study about your word. This is our prayer in your Son's name. Amen.
3. Opening song: "Spirit of God, Descend upon my Heart" (HFJ # 181)

B. Getting Ready

1. This can be done in advance. Encourage the youth to prepare an outreach activity by holding a party for the poor and the needy. Assist them in organizing it and preparing for all the necessary details of said party.
2. Process the outcomes and pay special attention to how the invited persons felt and how the organizers felt, as well.

C. Learning Time

1. Have the class look up in the dictionary the meaning of these words: acceptance; inclusion; exclusion; social and cultural diversity.
 - a. Acceptance. It is a noun that is synonymous to welcome. The verb "accept" means more than just welcoming a person. It means more than just tolerating someone who is different from you. It means not avoiding a person who is different from you. It means befriending a person and making him or her feel a member of the fellowship. It means receiving a person who is different from you with warmth. It is Christian love that enables us to accept others despite their differences.
 - b. Inclusion. It is synonymous to acceptance.
 - c. Exclusion. It is an antonym of acceptance.
 - d. Social and cultural diversity. These are the differences of people in their way of life as dictated by their beliefs. People do things according to what they believe in. The foreigners and eunuchs are examples of diversity in people.
2. Present the three biblical references and ask the class to read them in unison.
 - a. Isaiah 56:3-8.
 - b. Amos 9:7
 - c. Luke 14:12-14

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

Discuss the lesson and ask these questions:

1. What do you think are some reasons why it is difficult to accept others? (Being popular (well known and being with persons different from them may affect their popularity), prominent (struggle in being seen and noticed by their own class and mingling with people who are different may affect their prominence), and proud (people with false pride who think of themselves as superior)

2. Why do you think Amos supports Isaiah who is talks about an inclusive God? (Amos believes that being inclusive rests on the idea that God loves everybody, accepts everybody, protects everyone who is in pain and suffering, and considers everyone as God’s children.)
3. According to Luke, whom does God want to be invited to a banquet? (The poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind) Why? (They are the ones who cannot repay anyone who is giving a banquet.)
4. Does God really mean a literal banquet? (No. His invitation is for salvation of all his children.) Do you agree that God wants us in heaven with him? (Expect varied answers.)
5. Does God want us to forget our friends when we give a party? (No. It simply means that we cannot exclude the marginalized who cannot repay us on account of their poverty, rather include them because it is in obedience to God’s will. It means that being generous is extended to those who are not expected to give us something in return. For God gave his son to die for all of us freely and willingly.)
6. What could happen when we exclude people who are socially and culturally different from us? (We build walls that divide people.) What could happen when we accept people who are socially and culturally different from us? (We destroy the walls that divide people. We solve animosities among people. We build bridges that lead to healthy relationships with other people. We follow God’s command.)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: Who enables the church to teach the lesson on inclusiveness? (The Holy Spirit enables the church to be inclusive by embracing social and cultural diversity and to avoid animosities.)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Let the class discuss the memory verse: "But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. Sorrow will turn into joy." (Luke 14:13-14)
2. Tell the class to complete this table. Have them use it to make their action plans.

Ways that lead to EXCLUSION of others that can result to animosity between and among people	Converting these ways that can lead to INCLUSION of others in obedience to God

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "Spirit of God, Descend upon my Heart" (HFJ # 181)
3. Closing prayer: "Compassionate God, we thank you that through your Spirit, we are taught about acceptance of others who may be socially and culturally different from us. May we always have an accepting spirit in obedience to your will as we continue to use our spiritual gifts in serving others. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen."

Adult Level**I. Objectives**

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

1. define the meaning of social and cultural diversity, acceptance, animosity, inclusion, and exclusion;
2. explain that people have similarities and differences and name some of these differences that can sometimes lead to animosities;
3. demonstrate appreciation for the Holy Spirit that enables the church to encourage inclusiveness by accepting others despite their social and cultural diversity;
4. share what each one can do in accepting others as an obedience to God.

II. Concept: The Holy Spirit enables the church to be inclusive by embracing social and cultural diversity. The nature of the church does not harbor animosities.

Materials: The Holy Bible (NRSV), worksheets

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

1. Welcome Time
2. Opening prayer: Loving God, we thank you for sending your Spirit. We plead for your presence through your Spirit when we study about your word. This is our prayer in your Son's name. Amen.
3. Opening Hymn "Spirit of God, Descend upon my Heart" HFJ# 181

B. Getting Ready

Tell the class to revisit the ministries of the church especially the outreach program. Let them share their involvement in this ministry and tell what activities are related to acceptance of persons who are not socially and culturally the same with them. Explore their attitude on the matter and find out how this activity strengthens their faith in God.

C. Learning Time

1. Present to the class these words and their meaning. Ask each adult to relate any of these words with their personal experience.
 - a. Acceptance. It is a noun that is synonymous to welcome. The verb "accept" means more than just welcoming a person. It means more than just tolerating someone who is different from you. It means not avoiding a person who is different from you. It means befriending a person and making him or her feel a member of the fellowship. It means receiving a person who is different from you with warmth. It is Christian love that enables us to accept others despite their differences.
 - b. Animosity is a feeling of a strong dislike to a person that is sometimes displayed with a negative action against that person.
 - c. Inclusion and exclusion. Inclusion is synonymous to acceptance while exclusion is the opposite of inclusion.
 - d. Social and cultural diversity. These are the differences of people in their way of life as dictated by their beliefs. People do things according to what they believe in. The foreigners and eunuchs are examples of diversity in people.
2. Tell the male members of the class to read aloud Isaiah 56:3-8, the whole class to read Amos 9:7, and the female members to read Luke 14:12-14.
3. Let the class share what they think about these verses and why.

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

Discuss the lesson and ask these questions.

1. Why do you think it was controversial for the early Christians to understand acceptance of other people who are diverse socially, ethnically, and culturally? (The early Jews believe that to be accepted by God, people must first become Jews.)
2. Do you think that the early belief is still being followed today when Christians accept only those who are Christians and exclude people who are ethnically, socially, and culturally different from them? (Expect varied answers depending upon their exposure. Emphasize that God wants us, from the beginning, to know him and become his people.)
3. Do you agree or disagree with the saying that “actions speak louder than words”? Why? (Jesus is the model of doing the right thing rather than speaking about them. He is the epitome of humility when he inclusively accepted everyone in spite of their differences in heritage and ethnicity. When we begin to accept others despite our differences, we demonstrate humility.)
4. How can humility break down walls that divide people? (The ways to break down walls that divide people include: accepting others, being kind and generous to others even when they cannot return the favor, and being humble in serving others. In fact, these ways build bridges towards strong and healthy relationships with other people, who maybe different from us.)
5. What situations are there in our country that divide people and the possible solution to understanding is acceptance of others? (Expect different responses. Remind them about the goodwill of people who generously give something of themselves to help war-torn places, displacement of refugees and victims of natural calamities.)
6. What kind of invitation is God talking about? (His invitation is for all of us to be with him forever.)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: How can the Holy Spirit enable the church to avoid animosities among people, being humble in accepting others who are ethnically, socially, culturally diverse from her members? (The Holy Spirit enables the church to make programs on inclusion and not exclusion to avoid animosities among peoples.)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Tell the class to choose the verse that had a strong impact on them as they went through the lesson. Have them explain briefly why they chose that verse.
2. Encourage the adults to get involved in the ministry of accepting people in the church, in the workplace, or in the community. Instruct them to be guided with the fact that our God is a God of inclusion and not exclusion.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: “Spirit of God, Descend upon my Heart” (HFJ # 181)
3. Closing prayer: “Compassionate God, we thank you that through your Spirit, we are taught about acceptance of others who may be socially and culturally different from us. May we always have an accepting spirit in obedience to your will as we continue to use our spiritual gifts in serving others. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.”