

# 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 Times**Year 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	<b>Liberating Cultural Breakthroughs</b>	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	<b>Seeds of New Humanity</b>	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	<b>Challenging Oppressive State Powers</b>	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	<b>Jesus as God's Love Incarnate</b>	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	<b>The Birth of Jesus</b>	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	<b>Defending Children, Symbols of a New Beginning</b>	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.
<b>Included Sundays for Epiphany Season</b> (8 lessons)	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Lectionary Title</b>	<b>Scriptural References</b>	<b>General Concept</b>
(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	<b>The Inclusive Healing Ministry of the Church</b>	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	<b>Healing of Animosities</b>	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	<b>Healing as a Message of Salvation</b>	2 Kings 4:8-37 Luke 8:41-56	Salvation comes whenever healing happens.
(11) February 5, 2017	Fourth Sunday after Epiphany	<b>Healing of Social Divides</b>	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	<b>Healing of Broken Relationships</b>	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	<b>Healing from Demon Possession</b>	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	<b>Healing towards Transformation</b>	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	<b>Choosing our Destiny</b>	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	<b>Servant Messiah</b>	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	<b>Loyalty to God</b>	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	<b>Peace-building</b>	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	<b>Marks of the True Messiah</b>	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	<b>Jesus Encountering the Powers</b>	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	<b>Resurrection of the Righteous</b>	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	<b>Suppressing the Truth of the Resurrection</b>	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	<b>Moment of Human Frailties</b>	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	<b>Appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene</b>	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	<b>Failure to Recognize the Appearance of Jesus</b>	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	<b>Celebrating the Resurrection</b>	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	<b>Anticipating the Fullness of God's Reign on Earth</b>	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***

<b>Included Sundays for Pentecost Season (12 lessons)</b>	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Lectionary Title</b>	<b>Scriptural References</b>	<b>General Concept</b>
(28) June 4, 2017	Pentecost Sunday	<b>The Spirit Breaking through Cultural Captivity</b>	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	<b>The Holy Trinity in the Faith of the Church</b>	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	<b>The Holy Spirit Sustaining the Church</b>	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	<b>Defending the Powerless</b>	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	<b>Breaking Down Walls that Divide</b>	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	<b>Confronting Human Greed</b>	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	<b>Casting Out Demonic Powers</b>	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	<b>Being Present</b>	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	<b>Nurturing Hope</b>	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	<b>Reaching Out to Victims of Abuse and Social Evils</b>	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	<b>Pursuing and Building Peace</b>	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	<b>The Church Awakened to Do Mission</b>	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***

<b>Included Sundays for Kingdomtide Season</b> (14 lessons)	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Lectionary Title</b>	<b>Scriptural References</b>	<b>General Concept</b>
(40) August 27, 2017	First Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Mission Sunday	<b>Leaving Everything to Follow Christ</b>	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	<b>Mission to the Periphery</b>	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	<b>Humility-Powered Mission</b>	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	<b>Accountability in the Kingdom</b>	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	<b>The Kingdom as a Forgiving Community</b>	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	<b>Towards a Reconciled Community</b>	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	<b>Living the Faith</b>	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	<b>Being Accepted in the Kingdom of God</b>	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	<b>Reverence for Life</b>	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	<b>Discerning God's Ways through Jesus</b>	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	<b>Prayerful Life</b>	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	<b>Audacious Compassion</b>	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	<b>Learning from the Faith and Witness of Migrants</b>	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	<b>Service Motivated by Love</b>	Judges 5:6-13 Mark 2:1-12	Stewardship is manifested through the collective response of the faith community.



Season: **Pentecost**

Age Level: **Middle Elementary and Older Elementary**

**The Nurturing and Equipping Power of the Spirit**

23 July 2017

**Seventh Sunday After Pentecost**

*Old Testament:*

**Deuteronomy 31:8** (NRSV)

<sup>8</sup>"It is the LORD who goes before you. God will be with you; God will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."

**Psalms 40:1-3** (NRSV)

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm.

<sup>1</sup>I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. <sup>2</sup>He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. <sup>3</sup>He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.

*New Testament:*

**Revelation 21:3-4** (NRSV)

<sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them;

<sup>4</sup>he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.'

**General Concept:** The church embraces the ministry of presence to embody God who is Immanuel.

**Key Concept:** The Holy Spirit makes God always present in our lives so that we can trust in him and be not afraid.

### **Exegesis of the Biblical References**

Deuteronomy 31:8. Moses is now very old, and he has to pass on the reins of leadership to Joshua. So in an assembly before all Israel who were getting ready to cross the Jordan, Moses assures Joshua of God's abiding presence and utters these words of empowerment and encouragement.

Psalms 40:1-3. These verses are part of a psalm of thanksgiving by one who called on God and was saved. The text describes how the psalmist was helped by God, and because of this, a song of praise and thanksgiving naturally came forth. It tells about the importance of putting one's trust in God.

Revelation 21:3-4. This text depicts how God is really present with God's people, on top of having a covenant relationship with them. God will comfort them and ease their pain and sorrow, and promises that death will be no more. In God's alternate reality of a "new heaven and a new earth", God is God's people, Immanuel.

God is present in the lives of God's people since the beginning of the world. We are assured by God's word that God is always with us, Immanuel. May this knowledge enable and encourage us to forge forward as we continue to do the ministry God has entrusted to us as a church: that of ushering in God's Reign of love, kindness, and peace with justice.



**Objectives:**

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

- tell about the times when we are afraid and in doubt;
- realize that the Holy Spirit fulfills the truth that God is with us and present in our lives;
- explain that the presence of Christ in our lives will makes us strong and unafraid; and
- get involved in the ministry of presence in the church that would make us strong and courageous in serving others.

**Materials:** The Holy Bible (NRSV), offering plate, song chart, verse chart, paper clips, sheets of paper

**Learning Experiences:****A. Opening Worship**

1. Welcome time: Smile and greet the children as they come. Check the attendance.
2. Opening prayer: "Loving God who indwells the Church through the Spirit of Christ, be with us today as we study your great love for us and how we can demonstrate our gratitude to you. This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen."
3. Opening song: "Holy Spirit Truth Divine" (HFJ # 179) first and second stanzas

**B. Getting Ready**

1. Prepare the children to do this activity "Using Paper Clips."
2. Put some sheets of paper on the table. Divide the class into two groups.
3. Tell the first group to use a fan to blow the sheets of paper and let them say their observations (what happened to the sheets, number of sheets that flew, etc.)
4. Tell the second group to blow the sheets using an electric fan and let them say their observations (what happened to the sheets, number of sheets that flew, etc.)
5. This time let them do the same activity but they should put together their paper using paper clips. Let them say their second set of observations and compare them with their first set of observations.
6. Set aside their observations for later use.

**C. Learning Time**

1. Divide the class into three groups and assign each group to study the biblical references and be ready to retell what they have read.
  - a. *Deuteronomy 31:8*. Let the children read Deuteronomy 31:7 as a background to what Moses said. Answer: How did Moses pacify the Israelites when he was about to leave and let Joshua take over his leadership?
  - b. *Psalms 40:1-3*. This is a prayer in song during times of trouble. Answer: What can God do to help a person in trouble? How can patience and trust keep one from trouble?
  - c. *Revelation 21:3-4*. The Lord revealed to John about "a new heaven and a new earth." Answer: What are the things that will not happen anymore in the new heaven and earth?"
2. Say: Most of us want to be good and do the right thing. But this is a big challenge for us because it is a difficult task. We need help. Have them recall the paper clip activity and relate what the paper clips did to the paper to hold them together. God is like that. God's love for us is constant. God wants to hold us together. God wants us to be strong and courageous.

3. After the discussion, encourage the class to summarize the importance of God's presence in their lives as they face challenges. Ask them if they think that having Christ present in their life makes things perfect?

*D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time*

1. Prepare the class to do an activity to help them see how important God's presence is in their lives. First, ask them to think of a time when they were afraid and didn't know how to overcome their fear. Let them recall who helped them.
2. Tell the class that there is an alternative way to focus in order to conquer fear— a handshake. Do these steps with a child one at a time.
  - a. Hold hands with the child. As you swing hands, have your child say, "God is with me."
  - b. Face each other and hold your hands up to your eyes. Pretend that you are looking through a binocular. Both of you say, "God knows what hides in darkness!"
  - c. Still facing each other, say, "God will protect me!" and do a high five.

*E. Discovering the Biblical Truth*

Ask: Who helps the church fulfill Christ's promise of presence in our lives? (The Holy Spirit makes God always present in our lives so that we can trust in God and be not afraid.)

*F. Applying the Biblical Truth*

1. Have each group choose a key verse in the reference that they have read.
2. Write the following questions in strips of paper and put them in a bowl. Call one child at a time to get one question. Let them answer these questions and record their answers.

Is God there for us when we need God? (yes)  
Is God too busy for us sometimes? (no)  
Is God only with us when we are happy? (no)  
Is God with us when we are sad? (yes)  
Is God with us when we are afraid? (yes)  
Does God take a vacation so that God can be away from us? (no)  
Does God want us to be afraid? (no)  
Is God always with us? (yes)  
Does God's presence make us strong? (yes)  
Does God's presence make us fit to serve others? (yes)
3. Ask the class to make prayer requests and then pray together. Make them be certain of the knowledge that God is always be with us.

*G. Closing Worship*

1. Have the children recite the memory verse.
2. Offering
3. Closing song: "Holy Spirit Truth Divine" (HFJ # 179) third and fourth stanzas
4. Closing prayer: "Merciful and glorious God, we are grateful for your presence in our lives. We trust you. We are sure that you will help us and will not leave us. With the Holy Spirit that fulfills your presence, we can be strong and courageous in serving others to honor and glorify your name. May our lives be always pleasing in your sight. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."

**8th Sunday After Pentecost**

*Old Testament:* Exodus 4:1-17

Moses' Miraculous Power

<sup>1</sup>Then Moses answered, 'But suppose they do not believe me or listen to me, but say, "The LORD did not appear to you." ' <sup>2</sup>The LORD said to him, 'What is that in your hand?' He said, 'A staff.' <sup>3</sup>And he said, 'Throw it on the ground.' So he threw the staff on the ground, and it became a snake; and Moses drew back from it. <sup>4</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Reach out your hand, and seize it by the tail'-so he reached out his hand and grasped it, and it became a staff in his hand—<sup>5</sup>so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.'

<sup>6</sup>Again, the LORD said to him, 'Put your hand inside your cloak.' He put his hand into his cloak; and when he took it out, his hand was leprous,\*as white as snow. <sup>7</sup>Then God said, 'Put your hand back into your cloak'-so he put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored like the rest of his body—<sup>8</sup>If they will not believe you or heed the first sign, they may believe the second sign.

<sup>9</sup>If they will not believe even these two signs or heed you, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground; and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground.' <sup>10</sup>But Moses said to the LORD, 'O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.' <sup>11</sup>Then the LORD said to him, 'Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? <sup>12</sup>Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak.' <sup>13</sup>But he said, 'O my Lord, please send someone else.'

<sup>14</sup>Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses and he said, 'What of your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he can speak fluently; even now he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you his heart will be glad. <sup>15</sup>You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do. <sup>16</sup>He indeed shall speak for you to the people; he shall serve as a mouth for you, and you shall serve as God for him. <sup>17</sup>Take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs.'

*New Testament:* Exodus 4:1-17

Moses' Miraculous Power

<sup>1</sup>Then Moses answered, 'But suppose they do not believe me or listen to me, but say, "The LORD did not appear to you." ' <sup>2</sup>The LORD said to him, 'What is that in your hand?' He said, 'A staff.' <sup>3</sup>And he said, 'Throw it on the ground.' So he threw the staff on the ground, and it became a snake; and Moses drew back from it. <sup>4</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Reach out your hand, and seize it by the tail'-so he reached out his hand and grasped it, and it became a staff in his hand—<sup>5</sup>so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.'

<sup>6</sup>Again, the LORD said to him, 'Put your hand inside your cloak.' He put his hand into his cloak; and when he took it out, his hand was leprous,\*as white as snow. <sup>7</sup>Then God said, 'Put your hand back into your cloak'-so he put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored like the rest of his body—<sup>8</sup>If they will not believe you or heed the first sign, they may believe the second sign.

<sup>9</sup>If they will not believe even these two signs or heed you, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground; and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground.' <sup>10</sup>But Moses said to the LORD, 'O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.' <sup>11</sup>Then the LORD said to him, 'Who gives speech to



mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? <sup>12</sup>Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak.' <sup>13</sup>But he said, 'O my Lord, please send someone else.'

<sup>14</sup>Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses and he said, 'What of your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he can speak fluently; even now he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you his heart will be glad. <sup>15</sup>You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do. <sup>16</sup>He indeed shall speak for you to the people; he shall serve as a mouth for you, and you shall serve as God for him. <sup>17</sup>Take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs.'

**General Concept: The Holy Spirit instructs the faithful on the enduring faith of the church which equips them to face the challenge of the present realities**

**Key Concept: The Holy Spirit teaches us about faith in God.**

### **Exegesis of the Biblical References**

The second book of the Pentateuch deals with the departure of the children of Israel out of Egypt. The account in this story contains the story of the call of Moses to be God's prophet or spokesperson, to be the one to announce to the enslaved Hebrews that the Lord God is going to act in a very powerful and decisive manner to bring them out of the house of bondage. This is in response to the cries of the people earlier, crying for rescue and release from such condition. The Lord then heard their cries and had seen in-depth their affliction and became so moved with pity and compassion that God decided to act in a way that will prove to be a history-altering, game-changing event in the fate of Israel—the event that would mark the birth of the community of the people of God (3:7-10).

To carry out such a radical plan for the Hebrews to become God's people, God called on a fugitive Egyptian prince to be the primary instrument. Initially, Moses was very hesitant and appears even to have a very low regard for his own ability to be listened to and accepted by the people, expressing his fears that they may not believe what he would proclaim to them since he is known as an Egyptian prince just running away from his crime of killing an Egyptian taskmaster.

The Lord then showed to Moses three miraculous signs (4:2ff). All three signs involved changing something into something else. In the case of two signs, (Moses' staff turning into a snake, and his hand turning leprous) what got changed was immediately changed back to its original state, so that change was only temporarily frightening. In the case of the third (water to blood) what got changed stayed changed - and the consequences were far more widespread and life threatening. Moses' first two protests were of the formal sort, properly expressing humility before such a great assignment, but here his words still revealed the presence of uncertainty in his mind (v.10). God had already assured him in unmistakable language that the Israelite leaders would listen to him; now he wondered if he could be sure that this would happen - that they would believe his claim that the Lord had appeared to him and do what he said ("obey me" NIV "listen to me").

Indeed, God calls and equips anyone, even those who think that they are not qualified enough to become God's instruments in realizing the Lord's plan for the transformation of both church and society. It is God through the Spirit who will equip and uphold even those who think so lowly of themselves. It is not by their authority but by God's that they are going to speak and carry out the divine plan for the redemption of God's people.

Ephesus is a city of the Roman province of Asia near the mouth of the Cayster River. It was the most easily accessible city in Asia, both by land and sea. Its location therefore, favored its religious, political, and commercial development, and presented a most



advantageous field for the missionary labors of Paul and his disciples.

However, the residents of the city of Ephesus were generally known to be adherents of the cult of the goddess Diana. Here, the writer is able to look out on the church and view it in its entirety, to see the part it is to play in God's scheme for the restoration of the human race, to see God's purpose in it and for it and its relation to the creator of all. God's eternal and ultimate purpose is to gather into one the whole created universe, to restore harmony and reconciliation and peace among God's creatures and between them and the Lord. Its purpose is to set before the readers this great mystery of the church as God's means by which, in Christ, God may be able to restore everyone to union with Himself. The different gifts which the Christians have for the upbuilding or sanctifying of the church into that perfect unity which is found in Christ so that in the end it will be able and equipped enough to face the various challenges of the times.

### **Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users**

The faith received by the church through the apostolic witness to the events surrounding Jesus has endured through times of trials and has remained a vital force for its life and work. Amidst changing circumstances the church is holding fast to its truths, trusting in the Spirit, the Paraclete who is the teacher of truth.

Entire populations today are being held in thrall by information moguls whose access to the most sophisticated tools of technology have monopoly control of what people hear and see. The concept of truth has become obsolete since information on a global scale has turned into an instrument of mind control. This lack of truthful information has also impacted the church's proclamation of its truths.

The contemporary church is weighed down with an inherent handicap. Its symbols of faith remain dressed in the ancient apparels of its historic heritage. It has been slow in adapting to a language that is suitable to a fast changing age. To illustrate, this particular piece of literature written for the first quarter of the 21st century employs concepts, terminology and nuances originating from many centuries ago. The reason is not just the normal difficulties of learning new tools of communication. The problem is inherent in the nature of historical faiths: the fear of losing its historic content in the process of cultural adaptation.

This is a formidable obstacle that appears humanly impossible to hurdle. By all calculations, the Christian faith should have already been swept into the dustbin of history. But the fact that it has remained a vigorous and persistent critique of contemporary realities is a sign that the Christian faith is being kept alive by its author, Jesus Christ through his Spirit. As the author of truth, the Spirit is keeping the church as a repository of the enduring truth that human beings are created in the image of God and the earth is God's creation. The church's truths from the Spirit are a thorn on the flesh that deflates human hubris and cuts down to size the idols that pretend to be God. The church's message to the world is old, its language archaic but it will endure and ultimately prevail.

### **Objectives:**

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

1. state that our faith in Christ is enduring;
2. proclaim that through the Spirit of Christ, the church teaches us about God continuously;
3. name the church ministries that teach about God; and
4. express one's joy and appreciation of the work of the Holy Spirit in teaching the faith

**Materials:** The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), song chart, materials needed in the creative activity

**Learning Experiences:** A. *Opening Worship*

1. Welcome time: Welcome the children warmly/happily as they arrive.
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, thank you for this morning! Thank you for our teacher and classmates. May the wind of equipping and nurturing be upon us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen!"
3. Opening song: "Search Me, O God" (HFJ # 216)

B. *Getting Ready*

Prepare the class to do the Messenger relay. Use the following instructions:

1. Give time to introduce Ephesians 4:11-12 and let the learners get familiar with it. For them to be able to memorize it, you can try this game.
2. Form two teams with equal members. Explain that the teams will compete in a relay race. Place team members equal distances apart from each other around the track.
3. Say: "This is a three-step relay. I'm going to whisper the sentence with missing words (underlined words). On my signal, each player will whisper to the next player the sentence, but this time include the missing words. Tell the second player they must race to the second players and repeat the verse next to them. We continue until the last runner crosses the finish line and say the complete passage to me. The first team that finishes will give the 10 claps as their appreciation.
  - a. First relay: The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers
  - b. Second relay: To equip the saints for the work of ministry
  - c. Third relay: For building up the body of Christ.

C. *Learning Time*

1. Ask the class to say Ephesians 4:11-12 in unison. Remind the class that the church is helped by the Holy Spirit to teach about God's word.
2. Discuss each of the three major parts of Ephesians 4:11-12.
  - a. First part: The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers
  - b. Second part: To equip the saints for the work of ministry
  - c. Third part: For building up the body of Christ.
3. Write on the board the following table:

Knowing about GOD	Speaking about GOD	Doing things pleasing to GOD

4. Ask the class to determine which among the five gifts mentioned can be included in each category. Expect that all the gifts are included in each of the three categories. Emphasize the truth that the use of each gift needs learning about God, telling about God, and doing things in accordance to God's will. The three items in the table can be use in building up the body of Christ.

E. *Discovering the Biblical Truth*

Ask: How does God, through the Holy Spirit, teach us faith in God? (The church,

being the body of Christ, teaches, nurtures, and equips its members with patience and perseverance, through the intervention of the Holy Spirit, to preserve the enduring faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.)

**F. Applying the Biblical Truth**

1. Teach the memory verse: "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:12)
2. Present the list of the nurturing and equipping ministries of the church. Ask each learner to choose any one of these ministries that has helped him or her learn about God. Encourage the class to share the impact of this ministry in his or her life as a Christian.

Nurturing and equipping ministries of the Church	The impact of these ministries on my life
1. Divine Service	
2. Sunday School	
3. Vacation Church School	
4. Summer Camp/Christmas Institute	
5. Campus Ministry	
6. Lay Formation	
7. Retreats/Fellowships	
8. Community Ministry	

**G. Closing Worship**

1. Tell the class to recite the memory verse.
2. Reflective action: "Thank you for the Holy Spirit who teaches my faith in God."
3. Offering
4. Closing song: "Search Me, O God" (HFJ # 216)
5. Closing prayer: "Loving God, thank you for the equipping and nurturing power of the Holy Spirit! This is our prayer in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen."



6 August 2017

**9th Sunday After Pentecost****Old Testament: Ruth 2:1-16****Ruth Meets Boaz**

<sup>1</sup>Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband's side, a prominent rich man, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. <sup>2</sup>And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, 'Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone in whose sight I may find favour.' She said to her, 'Go, my daughter.' <sup>3</sup>So she went. She came and gleaned in the field behind the reapers. As it happened, she came to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

<sup>4</sup>Just then Boaz came from Bethlehem. He said to the reapers, 'The LORD be with you.' They answered, 'The LORD bless you.' <sup>5</sup>Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, 'To whom does this young woman belong?' <sup>6</sup>The servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, 'She is the Moabite who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. <sup>7</sup>She said, "Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the reapers." So she came, and she has been on her feet from early this morning until now, without resting even for a moment.'

<sup>8</sup>Then Boaz said to Ruth, 'Now listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. <sup>9</sup>Keep your eyes on the field that is being reaped, and follow behind them. I have ordered the young men not to bother you. If you get thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn.'

<sup>10</sup>Then she fell prostrate, with her face to the ground, and said to him, 'Why have I found favour in your sight, that you should take notice of me, when I am a foreigner?' <sup>11</sup>But Boaz answered her, 'All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. <sup>12</sup>May the LORD reward you for your deeds, and may you have a full reward from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge!'

<sup>13</sup>Then she said, 'May I continue to find favour in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, even though I am not one of your servants.'

<sup>14</sup>At mealtime Boaz said to her, 'Come here, and eat some of this bread, and dip your morsel in the sour wine.' So she sat beside the reapers, and he heaped up for her some parched grain. She ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over. <sup>15</sup>When she got up to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, 'Let her glean even among the standing sheaves, and do not reproach her. <sup>16</sup>You must also pull out some handfuls for her from the bundles, and leave them for her to glean, and do not rebuke her.'

**New Testament: Galatians 3:28**

<sup>28</sup>There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

**General Concept: The Holy Spirit breaks down barriers that divide the church and society to form an inclusive community.**

**Key Concept: The Holy Spirit makes us all brothers and sisters.**

**Exegesis of the Biblical References**

The name Ruth signifies "comrade" or "companion" or simply friend. This name and its meaning is significant enough due to the fact that it is being applied to a non Jew. A faithful non-Jew, a Moabite has become a faithful friend, and loyal companion of an aging and lonely Jewish widow. The book of Ruth details the history of one decisive episode by which Ruth became an ancestress of David and of the royal house of Judah. From this point of



view, its peculiar interest lies in the close friendship or alliance between Israel and Moab, which rendered such a connection possible.

At Bethlehem, Ruth employed herself in gleaning in the grain fields of Bethlehem during the harvest season. She arrived there from Moab with her mother-in-law Naomi who had migrated there several years ago. It was in Moab where they lost their respective husbands. One day, Ruth was noticed by Boaz, the owner of the field. She was gleaning at the time. Boaz was a relative or kinsman of her father-in-law Elimelech. Boaz gave her permission to glean as long as the harvest continued; and told her that he had heard and was so impressed by her loving and steadfast loyalty to her mother-in-law. Boaz then adopted the customary and legal measures to obtain a decision to marry Ruth. He summoned Ruth's late husband's next of kin before ten elders at the gate of the city, related to them the circumstances of Naomi's return, with his desire that Ruth should be married to the next of kin and be settled in her father-in-law's land as her marriage portion. But the next of kin declared his inability to undertake the requirements of the levirate law. Upon announcing his inability in legal form, it then favored Boaz who really wanted to marry her according to the ancient custom of Israel.

The life and history of Ruth are important in the eyes of the narrator because she forms a link in the ancestry of the greatest king of Israel. From a more modern point of view, the narrative is a simple idyllic history, showing how the faithful loving service of Ruth to her mother-in-law met its due reward in the restored happiness of a peaceful and prosperous home-life for herself.

The book is without the name of the author and there is no direct indication of the date. Its aim is to record an event of interest and importance to the family history of David, and incidentally to illustrate ancient custom and marriage law along with the proclamation that foreigners like Ruth can also play a very significant and decisive role in the ongoing history of God's people. Israel need not remain as a highly exclusivistic nation giving favor and regard only to fellow Jews as the only neighbor who can be the object of their concern, compassion and respect. Foreigners are to be regarded also and equally as fellow children of God.

The problem addressed in this letter of Paul was that the Galatian churches were troubled by a Judaizing teaching that required Gentile converts to keep parts of the Law of Moses especially the requirement of circumcision in order to be part of God's people.

The controversy started when circumcision becomes proposed by the Judaists as a supplement to faith in Christ, as the qualification for sonship to Abraham and communion with the apostolic church. After the council at Jerusalem (cf. Acts 15), they began to say outright "Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Paul's Galatian converts are to be admitted, and "be perfected" and attain full Christian status by conforming to Moses's law. With such conformity "Christ will profit" them much more, that is, if they add to their faith the matter of circumcision. This insidious proposal might seem to be in keeping with the findings of the Council; Peter's action at Antioch lent color to it. Such a grading of the Circumcision and Uncircumcision within the church offered a tempting solution of the legalist controversy; for it appeared to reconcile the universal destination of the gospel with the inalienable prerogatives of the sons of Abraham. Paul's reply is that believing Gentiles are already Abraham's "seed" - nay sons and heirs of God; instead of adding anything, circumcision would rob them of everything they have won in Christ; instead of going on to perfection by its aid, they would draw back unto perdition.

Paul argues, that the law of Moses tends to bring condemnation not blessing, on its subjects and that instead of completing the work of faith, its part of the Divine economy was subordinate. This event marks a great theological watershed for the eventual spread of Christianity that has now crossed all barriers of creed, race, political affiliation and others. Now, acceptance into the body of Christ no longer depends on the adherence to Jewish law but mainly in being confronted and accepting the claims and meaning of the Lordship of Christ in one's life. There should never be set forth any boundary or restriction on those who would like to respond in faith to the calling of Jesus to follow him all the way even up to the cross.

### Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Human beings are good and quick at erecting barriers that they can't remove. Old barriers often stay beyond the original purpose for which they were placed even as new barriers are added. This is true literally and metaphorically as the human community is broken up along ethnic, economic, social, ideological, gender lines and many other reasons. Eventually, these divisions lead to violent confrontations and even wars.

A broken world is an object of God's salvation. Through the Spirit, God works to tear down the barriers and turn them into level pathways connecting different parts of one human commonwealth under God. In the Book of Revelation the vision that the "sea is no more" (21:1) symbolizes the ultimate disappearance of barriers leading to the reunification of humankind.

Within the church there are invisible barriers that damage the fellowship. Biblical references are often cited to justify the discrimination and marginalization of members based on the conventional profiling of persons. Especially in rural areas, class stratification determines leadership in the church. An issue of special concern is about gender choice and sexual preference. The coming of age of gays and lesbians has turned out quite troubling to a large segment of the church.

These realities fall short of the new being created by the Spirit wherein the antagonisms and mistrust underlying the construction of barriers are banished. The existence of distinctions, however, remains. The distinctions based on the vast diversity of the natural order arise from the inexhaustible richness of God's creation. The church celebrates these distinctions but condemns the artificial barriers that human beings have established over them.

### Objectives:

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

- state that all people share commonalities, being children of God and created in God's image;
- talk about the way Paul showed God's love by telling the Galatians to be inclusive;
- list activities in the church that promote the welcoming spirit of the faith community; and
- express one's feelings through creative activities one's appreciation of the love of God.

**Materials:** The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), song chart, pictures of the story

### Learning Experiences:

#### A. *Opening Worship*

1. Welcome time: Greet the children as they arrive. You may welcome them by hug or

kiss.

2. Opening prayer: "Thank you dear Lord for gathering us again this Sunday. May the welcoming power of the Holy Spirit be with us. In your Son's precious name, we pray. Amen."
3. Opening song: "Jesus Loves the Little Children"

**B. Getting Ready**

After singing the opening song, present this quote: "I have a dream—little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers." (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.) Ask the learners to share their reactions on this quote and have them explain their answers.

**C. Learning Time**

1. Tell the class to read aloud Galatians 3:28 in unison. Explain that the verse says that God, through the Holy Spirit, gifts believers to become one with all the other believers.
2. Present the song "In Christ There is No East or West" written by William A. Dunkerley, 1908 with the music written by Alexander R. Reinagle, 1836. (HFJ # 271)  
In Christ there is no East or West,  
In Him no South or North;  
But one great fellowship of love  
Throughout the whole wide earth.

In Him shall true hearts everywhere  
Their high communion find;  
His service is the golden cord,  
Close binding humankind.

Join hands, then, members of the faith,  
Whatever your race may be!  
Who serves my Father as His child  
Is surely kin to me.

In Christ now meet both East and West,  
In Him meet North and South;  
All Christly souls are one in Him  
Throughout the whole wide earth.

**D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time**

Discuss the lesson. Ask these questions.

1. Read: *There is no longer Jew or Greek*. In which stanza tells about race? (Third stanza) According to the third stanza, how can we serve the Father? (We can join hands as members of the faith and serve the Father as God's children.)
2. Read: *There is no longer slave or free. There is no longer male and female*. Which phrases in the song tell that there is no distinction between people all over the world? (no East or west, no South or North, one great fellowship of love, true hearts everywhere, close binding humankind)
3. Read: *For all of you are one in Christ Jesus*. Which phrases in the song tell that believers are one with Christ? (serves my Father as His child, is surely kin to me, Christly souls are one in Him, now meet East and West, in Him meet North and south)

**E. Discovering the Biblical Truth**

Ask: How can the Holy Spirit make us all brothers and sisters? (Through the welcoming presence of the Holy Spirit, all the people of the world, created in the image



of God, can become children of God and so they become brothers and sisters.)

**F. Applying the Biblical Truth**

1. Teach the memory verse: "... for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28b)
2. *Creative activity.*

**For ME:** Tell the class to read the poem. Divide the class into two groups and let them prepare a pantomime that will show their interpretation of the poem.

"Hug O' War" (by Shel Silverstein)

I will not play at tug o' war. I'd rather play at hug o' war  
Where everyone hugs, instead of tugs,  
Where everyone giggles and rolls on the rug,  
Where everyone kisses, and everyone grins,  
And everyone cuddles, and everyone wins.

**For OE:** Make triads.

- a. Tell each group to talk about faith by answering these questions.
  - 1) Have you ever experienced being discriminated because of the color of your skin or other physical characteristics? How did you feel? Who did you turn to for help?
  - 2). How can you help someone who is bullied or discriminated by others because of their different physical characteristics?
- b. Make a jingle or poster to show how to be a friend to those who are not treated well.
- c. After the activity, let each group share their insights before the whole class.

**G. Closing Worship**

1. Ask the class to recite the memory verse in unison.
2. Offering
3. Reflective action: "We are all God's children."
4. Closing song: "In Christ There is No East or West" (HFJ # 271)
5. Closing prayer: "Loving God, we thank you for the welcoming presence of the Holy Spirit. Thank you very much for the love and care you've bestowed to us! This is our earnest prayer in Jesus' name. Amen."



13 August 2017

**10th Sunday After Pentecost****Old Testament: Genesis 33:1-17**

<sup>1</sup>Now Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two maids. <sup>2</sup>He put the maids with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all.

<sup>3</sup>He himself went on ahead of them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near his brother. <sup>4</sup>But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

<sup>5</sup>When Esau looked up and saw the women and children, he said, 'Who are these with you?' Jacob said, 'The children whom God has graciously given your servant.' <sup>6</sup>Then the maids drew near, they and their children, and bowed down; <sup>7</sup>Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down; and finally Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down. <sup>8</sup>Esau said, 'What do you mean by all this company that I met?' Jacob answered, 'To find favour with my lord.' <sup>9</sup>But Esau said, 'I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.'

<sup>10</sup>Jacob said, 'No, please; if I find favour with you, then accept my present from my hand; for truly to see your face is like seeing the face of God-since you have received me with such favour. <sup>11</sup>Please accept my gift that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have everything I want.' So he urged him, and he took it.

<sup>12</sup>Then Esau said, 'Let us journey on our way, and I will go alongside you.'

<sup>13</sup>But Jacob said to him, 'My lord knows that the children are frail and that the flocks and herds, which are nursing, are a care to me; and if they are overdriven for one day, all the flocks will die. <sup>14</sup>Let my lord pass on ahead of his servant, and I will lead on slowly, according to the pace of the cattle that are before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir.'

<sup>15</sup>So Esau said, 'Let me leave with you some of the people who are with me.' But he said, 'Why should my lord be so kind to me?' <sup>16</sup>So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. <sup>17</sup>But Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built himself a house, and made booths for his cattle; therefore the place is called Succoth.

**New Testament: Philemon 1:1-35**

<sup>1</sup>Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker, <sup>2</sup>to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the church in your house: <sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>4</sup>When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God <sup>5</sup>because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith towards the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup>I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we\* may do for Christ. <sup>7</sup>I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.

<sup>8</sup>For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, <sup>9</sup>yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love-and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. <sup>10</sup>I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. <sup>11</sup>Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful\* both to you and to me. <sup>12</sup>I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you. <sup>13</sup>I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel; <sup>14</sup>but I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced.

<sup>15</sup>Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back for ever, <sup>16</sup>no longer as a slave but as more than a slave, a beloved brother-

especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

<sup>17</sup>So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. <sup>18</sup>If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. <sup>19</sup>I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self.

<sup>20</sup>Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ.

<sup>21</sup>Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. <sup>22</sup>One thing more-prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be restored to you.

<sup>23</sup>Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, <sup>24</sup>and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow-workers. <sup>25</sup>The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

**General Concept: The Holy Spirit heals broken relationships.**

**Key Concept: The Holy Spirit enables us to become friends again with each other.**

### **Exegesis of the Biblical References**

After Jacob through the help of his mother Rebekah deceived Isaac when Jacob disguised himself as Esau to receive Isaac's blessing, he fled in fear of his brother's anger. Rebekah then instructed Jacob to go to her brother Laban in Haran until Esau's anger would subside. Jacob stayed with Laban and as the years went by Jacob married Laban's daughters Sarah and Leah. God blessed Jacob with children and vast properties. After his good relationship with Laban turned ill because of false accusation, Jacob was forced him to go back to his homeland as instructed by God in his dream.

Jacob prepared himself to meet with Esau with fear and anxiety after knowing that Esau will bring four hundred men to meet him. During Jacob and Esau's reunion, Jacob bowed down and humbled himself before Esau hopeful that Esau have forgiven and forgotten the sins he committed. Esau showed Jacob no grudge and hatred when he embraced Jacob and welcomed him and his household warmly. In return, Jacob offered to Esau livestock as his act of thanksgiving for receiving him and his whole family safely favorably.

The letter to Philemon was written while Paul was imprisoned in Rome. The letter is a plea that implies for Philemon to accept and forgiven a certain Onesimus who must have been a runaway slave whom Paul met and converted. The letter of Paul is to remind and encourage Philemon to uphold his Christian faith and character since runaway slaves would usually face harsh punishment even death when caught. Paul hoped that Philemon would treat Onesimus as a brother in Christ and receive him as a member of the community of faith.

The stories of Jacob and Philemon illustrate how the power of the Holy Spirit inspires individuals to forgive and lead people toward reconciliation despite the predicament and amidst the anger. Both stories show that through the power of the Holy Spirit, the hearts and minds of those whom it convicts will know humility, learn acceptance and become willing to mend broken relationships all in God's perfect time.

### **Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users**

Reconciliation completes the cycle of repentance and forgiveness. But a relationship once broken cannot be the same again. It is either thoroughly diminished or terminated or it turns into an enmity. Thus, the goal of reconciliation is not just to restore an old relationship but to raise it to a new level. It is a process of re-creating a new and better relationship out of the old one.



Two images in the Bible of creating a new reality out of the old one may illustrate the essence of reconciliation. The creation story in Genesis 1 depicts God's act of creating order in the universe from out of a state of chaos: "without form and void." A broken relationship is a non-relationship, that is, void of the things that make a true relationship, such as affection, trust, mutual respect and appreciation, and loyalty. Instead of order, harmony, continuity and predictability that characterize authentic relationship there is confusion, conflict or disengagement. God brought order, rhythm, sequence and harmony to create the universe.

The other biblical image that demonstrates the meaning of reconciliation is the image of the new being in Christ: "everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (2 Cor. 5:17.) The old being which is given to corruption and decay and headed towards death is rendered a thing of the past because a new one opposite it has come into being. The old may still be remembered but it has no more power to impose its will on the new.

The Genesis account shows the Spirit of God "moving across" the chaos for God to transform it into the universe. In Paul's Letter to the Galatians, the Spirit is God's power that renews and sanctifies the church. The church becomes a new creation as a fruit of reconciliation with God.

In the aftermath of wars and violent revolutions, various attempts have been made to constitute what is known as Reconciliation Commission. So far, these efforts ended up in failure largely because the protagonists at the opposite sides of the table didn't go through the process of forgiveness and repentance. The roots of the conflict, basically injustice, were not undone (repentance) - while the injuries suffered by the other party have remained open wounds (forgiveness). And neither side could agree on a common agenda of a new order.

It's in situations like this that the church ought to "let its light to shine" which means letting the world know that the church knows a few things that make for peace. First, the conditions for reconciliation—forgiveness and repentance—must be satisfied. And second, the establishment of a radically new order should be on top of a common agenda. It is by following the leading of the Spirit that the enormously complex and tedious process of reconciliation may find completion.

### Objectives:

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

- discuss the letter of Paul to Philemon to find the meaning of forgiveness and restoration;
- state that the role of the Holy Spirit in the story;
- explain how the church acts to make reconciliation possible among members; and
- express one's joy for being able to bring back one's friends.

**Materials:** The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), song chart, pictures of the story

### Learning Experiences

#### A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the children as they arrive. You can feel the Holy Spirit by being friendly and happy.
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, thank you Jesus for gathering us today! May this day a fruitful learning experience to us! This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen!"
3. Opening song: "Mushi-mushi Ollah"  
Mushi-mushi, Ollah olla, hellow hello, kumusta ka  
Mushi, Ollah, Hello, Kumusta ka  
Mushi, Ollah, Hello, Kumusta ka  
Kumusta ka halina't magsaya pumalakpak, pumalakpak



Ituro ang paa, padyak sa kanan, padyak sa kaliwa  
Umikot ka umikot ka, humanap ng iba.

**B. Getting Ready**

Help the children to unlock the meaning of these difficult words by showing situation based on experience.

1. Forgiveness
2. Reconciliation
3. Restoration

**C. Learning Time**

1. Tell the class to read Philemon 1:1-35 silently.
2. Give the background of the text. Say: "Philemon was a prominent Christian probably a member of the church at Colossae and the owner of a slave named Onesimus. This slave had run away from his master, and then somehow he had come in contact with Paul, who was then in prison. Through Paul, Onesimus became a Christian. This letter is an appeal to Philemon to be reconciled to his slave, whom Paul is sending back to him, and to welcome him not only as forgiven slave but as a Christian brother.
3. Divide the class into six groups. Tell each group to discuss the verses and make their insights.
  - a. Group 1: Salutation, verses 1-3
  - b. Group 2: Philemon's love and faith. Verses 4-7
  - c. Group 3: Paul's plea for Onesimus Part 1, verses 8-14
  - d. Group 4: Part 2, verses 15-18
  - e. Group 5: Part 3, verses 19-22
  - f. Group 6: Final greetings and benediction, verses 23-25

**D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time**

1. Let each group read the assigned verses in unison. After reading, ask a member to share the insights of the group.
2. Process the reports of each group. Encourage the class to relate their discussion the meaning of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

**E. Discovering the Biblical Truth**

Say: Paul writes to Philemon to make an appeal for Onesimus to be reconciled with Philemon not as slave but as Christian brother. Ask: Who do you think helped Paul to make an appeal and Philemon to reconcile with Onesimus? (The Holy Spirit)

**F. Applying the Biblical Truth**

1. Teach the memory verse: "Your love, dear brother, has brought me great joy and much encouragement! You have cheered the hearts of all God's people." (Philemon 1:7)
2. Engage the class in a short discussion. Say: "Reconciliation completes the cycle of repentance and forgiveness. Jacob and Esau reconciled with each other. Philemon, as a result, reconciled with Onesimus not as slave but as a Christian brother. We know the fact that the reconciling power of the Holy Spirit leads them to a new life of relationship. Be friends again." Ask the class about the ministry or program of the church that promotes reconciliation among its members.
3. Make a Faith Journal. Encourage the class to make a reconciliation-commitment entry. They may choose the person they have a mind.

*G. Closing Worship*

1. Tell the class to recite the memory verse.
2. Reflective song: "Forgive My Friend" (CPG # 167) or a related song available in the local church  
Forgive my friend, oh have I hurt you?  
I made you cry with pain and sorrow  
But now I know that Jesus loves you so  
He loves us all; so let's love each other too  
  
Our Lord has said: Father forgive them  
For them who caused him sorrow, pain and shame  
But now I know that Jesus loves you so  
He loves us all; so let's love each other too.
3. Offering
4. Closing song: "For You I Am Praying"
5. Closing prayer: "Dear God, we thank you for the reconciling power of the Holy Spirit. May that power be with us! This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen."



20 August 2017

**11th Sunday After Pentecost***Old Testament:* Isaiah 40:1-2

<sup>1</sup>Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. <sup>2</sup>Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

*New Testament:* Matthew 5:4, 11:28-30

<sup>4</sup>Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

<sup>28</sup>"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

**General Concept:** The Holy Spirit enables the church to bring comfort to the distressed and hurting and to sustain those who suffer in order for them to live in hope.

**Key Concept:** The Holy Spirit gives comfort to those who are sad and are in pain.

**Exegesis of the Biblical References**

Isaiah was an Israelite prophet who lived under the reigns of four kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. He personally knew the major political leaders of Jerusalem, and guided them through the serious social, political, and military challenges they faced. While he himself was a member of the elite, he was a vocal spokesman on behalf of the common people. He railed against corruption within the leadership, demanding that they begin to dispense justice and protection to the weaker members of Israelite society, such as the poor, orphans, and widows.

Starting from chapter 40 however, the events described concern the destruction of the first Temple and the Babylonian Exile, which occurred more than a century after Isaiah lived. Thus, the passage in Isaiah 40 was written by an unknown prophet using the name Isaiah. It was an attempt to continue the powerful legacy of the original Isaiah.

Entering into greater detail, the first verse demonstrates the deity of Yahweh as a bringer of comfort whom the prophet announces is Israel's incomparable God. In the midst of the misery of the exile, the prophet exhorts the people not to suppose that Yahweh is ignorant of, or indifferent to Israel's misery. Israel must wait for salvation which is coming very soon though they are clamoring for deliverance prematurely. The passage simply proclaims one main and central message of this prophet writing in the name of Isaiah: that their God Yahweh will soon act and make God's presence known as a real, comforting, liberating presence. For them who had been waiting for so long and isolated in a foreign land, unable to fully practice the worship of their God without their beloved temple, they should never lose hope for they will soon receive and experience the joy of real deliverance and homecoming as their God comes to lead the exiled people back to Jerusalem and Judah and enable them to rebuild their lives and even rebuild their temple. They will once again become a community of God's people worshipping Yahweh and living right in their homeland. This is because they have already been pardoned of all their sin and iniquity. Their rebellious ways before for which they have been punished through the exile is now forgiven and they are now restored as God's people. They can once again start anew as a covenant people. All these will happen all because of God's unmerited grace was extended to them in a time of their despair, grief and alienation.

The account of Matthew is an expansion of the kerygma concerning the blessings that can be received through Jesus. This is fundamentally the good news concerning the saving activity of God. This good news is primarily addressed to those who had been suffering the



tragic and oppressive burdens of life. They are those who mourn because of the terrible losses in life they have been experiencing as a result of very cruel and unjust policies of those who rule and control their lives. They are those who mourn the loss of their crops due to a terrible calamity like a prolonged drought or famine which is very common in the land. They are also those who mourn because of the loss of precious property due to foreclosures on account of unpayable debts with unregulated interest imposed on them or because of state confiscation because of failure to pay very high taxes. They are also those who mourn the loss of loved ones who had been unjustly prosecuted, imprisoned or executed for simply raising their voices against such oppressive policies or those who had actually lost their loved ones who were forcibly drafted into the Roman army.

In Mathew 5:4, those who thus mourn are promised comfort. These are the victims of those who have power in the land and use them to abuse and exploit the weak.

The traditional view that Matthew wrote primarily to prove that in Jesus of Nazareth is to be found the fulfilment and realization of the Messianic predictions of the OT prophets and seers is beyond doubt correct. Jesus comes to the victims of the oppressors of his time as the messiah they have long been waiting for, their savior and bringer of comfort to all of them who mourn.

### **Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users**

The Spirit is the Comforter that the risen Jesus sent to dwell among the disciples as he ascended to the Father. The Spirit alone is able to fathom the depths of suffering even more than the sufferers themselves. Subsequently, the church is empowered by the Spirit to bring comfort to those who are distressed and hurting that they may find hope even as they are loaded with burdens in their life journey.

Like Jesus, the church leans towards the suffering ones. This attitude has drawn comments that religion is for the weak or those who fail to keep in step with the others. At the onset of modern times, secular intellectuals regard religion as an illusion and an opiate. The Christian faith, they argue, serves this social function but it will fade away at humankind's coming of age.

But for as long as there are people who are burdened and broken under the weight of life's cares, the church will be there to give them succor and comfort. The Spirit leads the church to where people suffer from poverty, neglect, abuse, and injustice. Giving with generosity is among the gifts that the church has received from the Spirit. This is done out of compassion that they may be saved from despair and from giving up on God.

### **Objectives:**

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

1. conclude that the Holy Spirit helps us to comfort those who are sad and in pain;
2. observe some persons who are sad and in pain and name some activities that give comfort to them; and
3. express one's appreciation to the persons who comfort those that are sad and in pain.

**Materials:** The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), hymnal/song sheets, two backpacks, different items that can be placed inside the backpack, notebook/journal, pencil and other writing materials, materials for the game

### **Learning Experiences:**

#### **A. Opening Worship**

1. Welcome time: Greet the children joyfully.
2. Opening prayer: Dear God, thank you for the past days in our lives. Thank you for our family and friends. Continue to bless us as we study about the comforting and

sustaining presence of the Holy Spirit. Open our hearts and minds, O Lord, as we listen to our teacher. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen!

3. Opening song: "Si Jesus ang Sandigan "  
Si Jesus ang Sandigan di magigiba (2x)!  
Kasingtatag ng kabundukan di magigiba. [*Replace Jesus with: ako, ikaw, tayo*]

#### B. Getting Ready

1. Prepare the class to play the game "Heavy Relay". Divide the class into two groups and have each group form a line form according to height. Prepare the materials: two identical backpacks and different things that can be put inside the backpack. Give each group the needed materials. Set the starting and turning points for each group.
2. Let the first player put two items in the bag, wear the bag over her/his shoulders, walk fast to the turning point and come back to the starting point. The player then removes the backpack and gives it to the next player. This time, the next player adds another item inside the bag, wears the bag, walks fast to the turning point and returns to the starting point. Let the children continue doing this until the last player puts the rest of the items inside the backpack and finishes the relay. Record the time each group finishes the relay. The group that finishes the relay with a faster time wins. The winner thanks and congratulates each member of the losing team.
3. Process the activity and ask these questions.
  - a. How did you feel when you carried the weight? How did you feel when additional items were placed in the bag?
  - b. Would carrying less weight bring comfort to you? Why or why not?

#### C. Learning Time

1. Prepare two sets of paper in which incomplete phrases from Matthew 5:4 and Matthew 11:28-30 are written in blue and red. Make 5 phrases for each verse. Put these two sets in the different parts of the room.
2. Use the same grouping in the first activity. Call the first group the Blue Group and the second, the Red Group. Tell each group to get these scrambled parts of the text and let the learners unscramble the phrases to complete the whole text. Allow them to refer to the Bible to get the correct sequence. Remind them to use only their color so as not to mix colors.
3. Let each group read the texts in unison.

#### D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

1. Print the two texts on the board this way. If possible, ask the class to paraphrase them. Then let them answer the questions that follow.
  - a. "Blessed are those who mourn..." Who are the people that mourn (cry, lonely, sad)? What does Jesus say about them? (They are blessed. They are loved by God.) Why do you think they are mourning? (Maybe they are hungry. Maybe something happened to them at home. Maybe they are sorry for their mistakes.)
  - b. "...for they will be comforted." If Jesus finds these people who mourn, what does Jesus promise to do? (Jesus will comfort them.) How do you think Jesus will comfort the sad and lonely? (Jesus, through the Holy spirit will make others share their food and other things, take them to the park, take them home with them to make them happy.) How do you think Jesus will comfort those who are sorry for their mistakes? (Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, will forgive them.)
  - c. What is the cure for mourning? (Comfort) In the midst of our sorrow, do you believe God is good and ready to comfort us?
  - d. Tell the learners that there is an invitation to those who mourn and suffer. "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Who does Jesus invite? (Those that are weary (tired) and are carrying

heavy burdens (suffering people whose life's problems are difficult to carry). What does Jesus promise to give to these people? (Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, promises to give them rest (a break for their sufferings). Relate this item with the heavy relay that the learners did at the beginning of the lesson.

- e. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Say: The word yoke means a heavy load. Jesus offers an easy and light load, something that we can carry easily and happily. Jesus asks us to continue to do our work but this work should not be burdensome to us. What words describe the yoke offered by Jesus? (Learn from his gentle and humble heart to find rest for our souls)

*E. Discovering the Biblical Truth*

Ask: How does the Holy Spirit give comfort to those who are sad and are in pain?

*F. Applying the Biblical Truth*

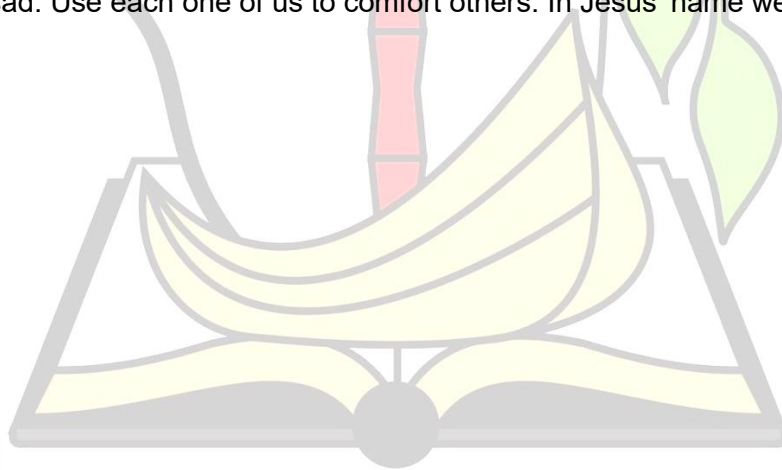
Tell the class to share life experiences related to the following situations:

1. A relative of your friend dies. (Sympathize with your friend and offer something that will help him or her bear the situation)
2. A parent of your friend goes abroad to work. (Be a friend in deed.)
3. Your best friend confessed that he is gay or she is lesbian and his family does not approve of it. (Learn to accept him or her and show this in deed so that others may do the same.)
4. A natural calamity happened. (Be a comforting person. Give/share what you have. Be of help to others in finding resources to help them.)

*G. Closing Worship*

1. Offering
2. Reflective action: Let the children extend a hand to the child next to them and say, "I promise to comfort others."
3. Closing songs: "Jesus Loves Me" and some good-bye songs
4. Closing prayer: "Loving God, we thank you for the presence of the Holy Spirit who comforts us when we are sad. Use each one of us to comfort others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

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