



Quadrennial Theme: **SPIRITUALITY FOR THESE CRITICAL TIMES**Season: **Kingdomtide**Age Level: **Youth**

August 27, 2017

1st Sunday in Kingdomtide/Mission Sunday**Love as a Kingdom Value***Old Testament:***Deuteronomy 6:5 (NRSV)**

⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

*New Testament:***1 Corinthians 13:13 (NRSV)**

¹³And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

General Concept: Underlying everything, what the church does is love, without which, her works are nothing. It is the sacrificial love lived out by Jesus.

Key Concept: The church, as a loving community, is a welcoming community.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Deuteronomy tracks down Moses and the Israelites in the territory of Moab in the area where the Jordan flows into the Dead Sea. As his final act at this time of transmitting leadership to Joshua, Moses conveyed his farewell addresses to prepare the people for their entry to Canaan. In them, Moses highlighted the laws that were specifically needed at such a time, and he presented them in a way applicable to the situation. Here, the words of Moses come to us from the heart as this servant of the Lord presses God's claim on God's people Israel.

Deuteronomy 6:5 - Love the Lord. Primarily in view here is the love shown by a subject to a king. To love King Yahweh is to be his loyal and obedient servant (Israel was the Lord's kingdom people). Love for God and neighbor is based on and constructed upon the love that the Lord has for His people, and on His identification with them. Such love is to be total, involving one's whole being. "With all your heart" points toward total involvement and commitment. The phrase is applied not only to "how the Lord's people should seek God but also to how they should fear (revere) God, live in obedience with God, love and serve God."

The letter (1 Corinthians) revolves around the theme of problems in Christian conduct in the church. It has to do with progressive sanctification, the continuing development of a holy

character among those who have become followers of Christ. Obviously, Paul was personally concerned with the Corinthians' problems, revealing a true pastor's (shepherd's) heart.

This last and final verse (1 Corinthians 13:13) in Paul's exposition of love acts as the conclusion telling the people that without it all of the traits and gifts mentioned above is down to nothing.

The triad of faith, hope and love is found often in the New Testament. Faith produces action. Hope, is not unfounded wishful thinking, but firm confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ and His return. But the greatest of these is love because God is love and has communicated His love to us and now commands us to love one another. Love therefore, supersedes all the gifts because it outlasts them all, whether they are wonderful gifts of prophecy and speaking in tongues, or that of wisdom and knowledge, or that of teaching and healing (1 Cor. 12:4-10). Long after these sought-after gifts are no longer necessary, love will still be the governing principle that controls all that God and God redeemed people are to manifest and carry out.

Here, in these passages, we can see the importance of love as a virtue in building up the kingdom of God. The church therefore, being God's representative here on earth has the accountability to make known that love of God embodied in and exemplified by Jesus the Christ.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Mission is essentially an extension of God's love in history as concretely demonstrated in the life and work of Jesus. And the church is the historical extension of the risen Lord. Hence, God's mission was Jesus' mission which is none other than the mission of the church. Spreading God's love throughout the world in myriad ways is the essential content of the mission of the church. There are several core tasks for the realization of the church's mission which are integrally linked to each other. The whole gospel unfolds as these tasks are accomplished. There is no actual order of priority but the task of proclaiming the gospel logically comes first. Then comes the educational task consisting of the passing on of church traditions representing the historical elucidation of the gospel and its implications for current issues faced by the church. The other tasks serve as signs of the reality and efficacy of the gospel in concrete life: social advocacy and action that serve the cause of justice and equity, people's welfare, relief from distress and others. An emerging but urgent task is the recovery and defense of ecological integrity. Although these tasks sound contemporary, for the church they are derived from the ministry of Jesus. Every time Jesus brought benefits to people, such as healing, liberation from demonic powers, restoration to community and others, he conveyed to them the gospel of God's love in the most personal and concrete ways. Part of the mission thrust of the church is the establishment of local congregations. Church growth (in terms of new congregations added) is an evidence of the kingdom unfolding. This task aims at broadening the sphere of God's grace through the church for others' sake, not for the church's glory. Otherwise, it's not church mission but human pride, not about not about the kingdom of God but empire-building

Objectives:

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

1. describe that love is the basis of a welcoming church;
2. appreciate and respect the differences of people in the church;
3. realize and accept that the church is made up of people of different backgrounds/ orientation; and
4. list down ways on how the church can be a welcoming community as part of the church's mission.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), song charts

Learning Experiences:*A. Opening Worship*

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: "Loving God, we thank you for bringing us to church today. We come together today because we want to trust in you and believe in you because that is what it means to love you. Please help us to grow in love with you. This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen."
3. Opening song: "They'll Know We are Christians by Our Love"
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord (twice)
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored.
Refrain: And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.
We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand (twice)
And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land.

B. Getting Ready

1. Tell the class to do the game "Disappearing words" by replacing the blanks. Have them use their Bibles as their reference.
 - a. "You shall (love) the Lord your (God) with all your (heart), and with all your (soul), and with all your (might)." (Deuteronomy 6:5)
 - b. "And now (faith), (hope), and (love) abide, these three; and the greatest of these is (love)." (1 Corinthians 13:13)
2. Ask the class which word appeared the most. (love). Tell the class that Jesus came to us because of God's love for God's people.
3. Share with the students that the Hebrews called this verse as the "shema" which means "hear". The Hebrew people wanted everyone to hear about their confession of faith, describing who God is, and what their duty is to God. On the other hand, the NT text is also called the gift of God to God's people.

C. Learning Time

1. Tell the class to read Deuteronomy 6:5 and discuss it using the given key sentences:
 - a. Love God completely because God first loved us completely (1 John 4:19).

- b. Love God with all your heart. Our relationship with God must come from within us. The heart is the source of springs of life (Proverbs 4:23). Our heart's will, desires, and thoughts must be aligned with God's will.
 - c. Love God with all your soul. When God breathed in us the breath of life, we became living souls (Genesis 2:7).
 - d. Love God with all your might. The word "might" is translated in Greek as "power" and in the Aramaic language "wealth". So when we love God, we offer to God our whole power and wealth.
2. Tell the class to read 1 Corinthians 13:13. Then let them read first the whole chapter and look for the answers to the following questions.
 - a. Why are the gifts of prophecy, knowledge, talents, power, and faith become nothing when done without love? (Refer to 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.)
 - b. What is love? (Refer to 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.)
 - c. When Jesus comes back, what will be realized for God's people? Why do you think love will prevail until the end as compared to faith and hope?

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Ask these questions:

1. What are some of the challenges of our youth today which hinder them (you) not to go to church?
2. How does our church respond to these problems? How could the church welcome everyone even if they differ in many ways?
3. As members of the church, what are the evidences that our church is really a 'welcoming church'?
4. In what ways can our church be a 'welcoming' community to everyone?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: How can the church, as a loving community, welcome everyone as part of the church's mission?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Tell the class to recite the two biblical texts.
2. Ask the class to write ways of welcoming people who are not members of the church, who belong to a different tribe, who look different from them, and who live in the streets.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "Welcome to the Family"
Welcome to the family, we're glad that you have come
To share your life with us; as we grow in love and
May we always be to you, what God would have us be
A family always there to be strong and to lean on.
May we learn to love each other more with each new day

May words of love be on our lips in everything we say
May your spirit fill our hearts and teach us how to pray
That we might be a true family.

3. Closing prayer: We have many questions O God about what it is to be a church.
We have so many questions because we want to understand and do what is right
and do your will. But we will continue to listen to you so we may understand and do
what is right, true, and pleasing to you. Amen.



September 3, 2017

2nd Sunday in Kingdomtide

Joy as a Kingdom Value

Old Testament:

Psalms 100 (NRSV)

All Lands Summoned to Praise God

A Psalm of thanksgiving.

¹Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth. ²Worship the LORD with gladness; come into his presence with singing. ³Know that the LORD is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. ⁴Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name. ⁵For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Habakkuk 3:17-18 (NRSV)

Trust and Joy in the Midst of Trouble

¹⁷Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines; though the produce of the olive fails and the fields yield no food; though the flock is cut off from the fold and there is no herd in the stalls, ¹⁸yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will exult in the God of my salvation.

New Testament:

Philippians 4:4-7 (NRSV)

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

General Concept: The church rejoices in the midst of adversities.

Key Concept: The church can experience joy amidst problems and difficulties.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

The Book of Psalms is traditionally attributed to David, although not all Psalms is of his own writing. The book actually is divided into several themes that depict the worship life of the Israelites. Walter Brueggemann offers 3 schemes to understand the theological path of these powerful poems: These are the 1. Psalms of orientation; 2. Psalms of disorientation and 3. Psalms of reorientation. Psalms, according to him point us to a twofold movement of faith. First, we move from a settled orientation to a season of disorientation. Then we move unto a new orientation that comes to us as a surprise gift of God's grace.

Psalm 100 points us to a call to all the people of Israel to give thanks and rejoice knowing that they are God's people. It has a special similarity with Ps. 95:1-2, 6-7. Why is there a need for Israel to praise the Lord? Because God is above all gods, and there is nothing in the universe that do not belong to God. The word "all the lands" or "all the earth"

gives us an idea of the inclusive nature of this call. Although it is very clear here that God has a special relationship with Israel, these words give us an idea that the call goes out to the whole world, "all the lands" with all its peoples which ought to acknowledge the Lord because "the Lord is indeed good, His steadfast love endures, and His faithfulness to all generations" of peoples.

Among the prophetic writings, Habakkuk is somewhat unique because it seems that there is no oracle addressed to Israel, like that of other prophetic writings. It contains, however a dialogue between the prophet and God. In this writing, Habakkuk was somehow confused of the "going ons" in Israel, especially of the rise of the ruthless Babylonians, and with God seemingly doing nothing about it. Habakkuk then wrestled with the question: "How could God, who is "too pure to look on evil" (1:13) appoint such a nation to "execute judgment" (1:12) on a people "more righteous than them" (1:13)? God makes it clear however, that eventually the corrupt destroyer will itself be destroyed. In the end, Habakkuk learns to rest in God's sovereign appointments and await God's working in a spirit of worship. He learns to wait patiently in faith (2:3-4) for God's kingdom to be expressed universally (2:14).

Habakkuk 3:1-18 is actually a prayer of Habakkuk expressing his confusions and his resolve to patiently wait for God's ultimate expression of making known God's kingdom universally. Thus, he would just continue to rejoice in the Lord no matter what happens around him trusting fully that when God promises, God fulfils. This is truly rejoicing in the Lord even in the midst of deep adversities.

Paul's sole purpose in writing this letter to the Philippians is to express his gratitude for the gifts they sent to him when they learned that he was detained in Rome. He made use of this opportunity to express his other desires: to make known his own circumstances; to encourage the Philippians to stand firm in the face of persecution and rejoice regardless of circumstances that they face.

An exhortation of Paul to the Philippians (4:4-7) is to rejoice in the Lord under all kind of circumstances, including suffering. Thus, they should embody Christ-like gentleness and consideration for others, especially for the leaders. They should not be anxious or self-centered or worried but they should be prayerful to attain the peace of God which is not merely a psychological state of mind, but an inner tranquility based on peace with God. It is the kind of peace that passes all understanding because it comes purely as a gift of God. It cannot be forced or imposed by some other powers. It cannot even be banned or prohibited. It is the kind of peace that transcends all kinds of tribulation that can ever be faced by those who would become loyal followers of Christ. It is the kind of peace that enables the faithful exemplified by the early church to rejoice even in times of extreme persecution and repression of their faith. It is all because we know and are assured that we have a God who is with us and who fights with and for us. The whole UCCP has been threatened, criticized and attacked nowadays because of the distinct faith expression and faithful prophetic witness it is rendering to the least of our brothers and sisters. This is precisely what the prophets, the apostles and the early church and finally Jesus himself had experienced, yet they persisted with great joy, serenity and steadfast persistence. Because of their kind of historical witness, we the Church have become what we are today: called to continue what they have done. But let this be a reminder, that we are not alone; that we

should not be moved but remain joyful in the Lord in whatever circumstance we may be facing in this life.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

The church is bound to suffer especially when it must give up part of itself for the sake of others as Jesus did. But the right response to the experience of suffering is not to wallow in self-pity but to find joy in it, which is a fruit of the Spirit for those whose hope is in the coming of the kingdom of God. The joy that comes from the Spirit is intimately connected with doing the mission of the church.

Some Christians are drawn to congregations offering experiences that are supposed to induce happy feelings. They find no satisfaction in a church that preaches a message that disturbs their peace. For them the church is the one place in the world that can hide them from the daily fares of troubles, hurt, sadness and burdens in life. They wish to follow a kind of mission that's self-gratifying and self-fulfilling. This is a false gospel that only leads sincere and gospel-starved Christians to damnation.

Joy as a fruit of the Spirit in us is the one experienced and shared by the apostle Paul at his most trying moments when he was incarcerated with a real prospect of execution. His last word to the Christians in Philippi was for them to rejoice rather than mourn for his impending departure. This is the epitome of genuine Christian joy that is available to all who suffer for the sake of the gospel. Christian joy is not to be found in the pursuit of personal happiness for its own sake. It is a unique kind of joy that one finds in suffering for the gospel. The joy of the Spirit makes the pursuit of the kingdom light rather than burdensome, delightful rather than mournful.

Objectives:

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

1. discuss problems and difficulties young people experience;
2. explain what the biblical texts tell about being joyful in the Lord in the midst of problems and difficulties;
3. thank God for the gift of joy by the Holy Spirit; and
4. express one's commitment to be part of the church's ministry in making her members rejoice in the Lord in all circumstances.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), worksheets

Learning Experiences:

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, we acknowledge your goodness in our lives because you are the source of all good and perfect gifts. Be with us today as we listen and learn together the gifts of joy that come from you alone. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."
3. Opening songs: "Rejoice, Give Thanks in the Lord Always" (HFJ # 174) and "I've Got Joy Down In My Heart"

I've got joy down in my heart, deep, deep down in my heart.
J-O-Y down in my heart, deep, deep down in my heart.
Jesus gave it to me and no one can destroy it. Destroy! Destroy! Oopss!!!
I've got joy down in my heart, deep, deep down in my heart.
J-O-Y down in my heart, deep, deep down in my heart.

B. Getting Ready

Form triads. Let each group share their experiences as young people and the possible cause of such anxieties. Let them write the first three and be ready to share them to the whole group. (Before this lesson, the teacher can ask assistance from guidance counselors or psychologists to anticipate how to respond to the troubles experienced by young people.) Set aside the list for use later.

C. Learning Time

Tell the class to read the texts in unison. Explain that praising God is a way of acknowledging who God is and what God has done for us. Divide the class into three groups and assign each group one of the biblical texts. As much as possible, provide each group a copy of the information they would need to discuss their assigned text.

1. *Psalm 100*. This psalm is attributed to King David.

- a. Verse 1. *The Lord is the ruler of the whole creation and God created human beings for God's glory.* God commands us to make a joyful noise unto God.
- b. Verse 2. *God wants us to praise and worship God as a service to the Lord.* We express this by singing joyfully.
- c. Verse 3. We are reminded that God will always take care of us, despite everything. *God's abiding presence in all our circumstances, is something we, God's people, can rely on.*
- d. Verse 4. *God wants us to come into God's presence with gratitude and thanksgiving.* We need to thank God for everything that happens to us because God knows what is best for each of us.
- e. Verse 5. *God is good. God loves us eternally. God's love for us never fails. God remains faithful to us forever.* God seeks to give us a future and a hope.

2. *Habakkuk 3:17-18*. Habakkuk is a prophet who wrote and spoke during a difficult time when God used Babylon to conquer Israel and punish it for its iniquities. He speaks gratefully for and sings joyfully unto God for Who God is and God's unchanging love for God's people. His use of the words "although" and "yet" explain his undying trust and devotion to God.

- a. *Thank God anyhow.* Although people may experience troubles, yet, they need to thank God.
- b. *Thank God. God's love, power and sovereignty change not.* Although we are not certain about God's plan for our lives, yet, we are certain of God's love and care for each of us and we know God has the best plan for each of us.
- c. *Thank God. God's plan of salvation ceases not.* Although we experience life's troubles and our hands are tied, yet we are assured of God's deliverance and rescue for each of us.
- d. *Thank God for God's strength fails not.* Although in our human sight, we are

troubled on all sides, yet, the peace of God, the peace that can come only from God will make us stand according to God's will and power.

3. *Philippians 4:4-7*. Paul writes this letter to the church in Philippi and its central message is to rejoice in the Lord for everything.
- Verse 4. This verse talks about *gentleness of spirit* that should be made known to everyone. Gentleness is a product of rejoicing unto God. It is a product of knowing that *God is near* and that God watches over us and protects us.
 - Verse 5. Paul tells us to free ourselves from anxiety because we have the *peace of God*. This peace can make us free from being anxious for life's challenges to free us from unwanted worry, we are reminded to *make all our requests to God in prayer with thanksgiving*.
 - God's peace will make sure that we can rely on God for spiritual blessings that will accompany us in our life's journey. *God's peace will guard our hearts and minds against anxiety*.

D. *Deepening Activity/Sharing Time*

Ask questions:

- Which of the following concepts is/are common to the three biblical texts? Explain your choice.
 - God loves us forever.
 - God's people will experience troubles in life.
 - God's peace will free us from our anxiety.
 - God listens to all our requests in prayer done with thanksgiving.
 - God wants us to sing, praise, and worship God joyfully.
- Why do you think David wrote Psalm 100? (David personally experienced God's love and peace. He wrote this psalm because he wanted to express his gratitude to God for all the blessings he received.)
- Why do you think Habakkuk was troubled? How did Habakkuk overcome his struggle of understanding God when God allowed Babylon to conquer Israel? (The prophet Habakkuk understood that there will come a time that we may experience full enjoyment of our comfort but we should consider that there may come a time when we shall be stripped of them all. He understood that when all is gone, his God is not gone.)
- What does Paul say about the surest formula for people to live in harmony and face life free from anxiety? (God's love and peace will never fail. God's people will always have access to God for all their requests in prayer with thanksgiving.)
- Using the list of troubles experienced by the youth and their possible causes, how can they be helped by the truths made known in the three biblical texts? (The three texts talk about God's love and peace. These truths will assure the youth of this love of and peace from God as they face their life's challenges.)
- How can the church be an instrument of God in helping her members to experience the love of and the peace from God? (The church ministries and programs)

E. *Discovering the Biblical Truth*

Ask: How can the church assist God's people to experience joy amidst problems and difficulties in life? (The church will institute programs that will help people live a Spirit-filled and prayer-filled life.)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Tell the class to go back to their triads at the beginning of the lesson and use their list of life's challenges. Using newsprint, encourage each group to write a prayer using the following template (to be presented to the whole group later):
Thank you, God, for (list their requests such as wisdom on what is the right thing to do when they have problems and the strength to do it by God's grace and mercy, etc.). As members of the church, help us to rejoice by (joyfully living our lives in harmony with others, gladly helping each other in times problems and difficulties, coming to you in prayer with thanksgiving, etc.).
2. Tell each student to write in their journal why they need to thank God for everything.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You" (HFJ # 9)
3. Closing prayer: "We have realized O God that you are the source of genuine joy. Teach us to acknowledge your goodness even in the hardest and painful experiences of our lives. Grant us the joy amidst our problems and difficulties—that when everything's gone, you will be there with us to comfort and supply us with all our needs. This we ask and pray in Christ's wonderful name. Amen."

September 10, 2017

3rd Sunday in Kingdomtide

Peace as a Kingdom Value

Old Testament:

Isaiah 32:16-18 (NRSV)

The Peace of God's Reign

¹⁶Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field.

¹⁷The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust for ever. ¹⁸My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places.

New Testament:

Matthew 5:9 (NRSV)

⁹Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.'

General Concept: The Church participate in peace building by uncovering the roots of injustice and pursuing peace.

Key Concept: The church advocates equality and fairness in building peace.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Isaiah is a book that unveils the full dimensions of God's judgment and salvation. God is "the Holy One of Israel" (1:4; 6:1) who will certainly punish the rebellious people (1:2) but will afterward redeem them (41:14,16). Israel is a nation who has become so blind and so deaf to God's instructions. In all these, they have experienced the awful judgment of God yet God will have compassion on God's people, and will rescue them from both political and spiritual oppression. Their restoration is like a new exodus as God redeems them and rescues them. That day will be marked by peace and safety when a king will descend from the line of David who will reign in righteousness and God's people will no longer be oppressed by rulers and Jerusalem will truly be the "City of the Lord" (60:14). Isaiah's idea of peace is like that of the rest of the prophets, when justice is served to the needy and the oppressed and the wicked are punished and destroyed.

These particular passages in Isaiah 32:16-18 are one of the many visions of Isaiah for God's shalom (Eirene in Greek, which means peace). This is the kind of peace and safety in a Messianic age wherein little children will be unharmed as they play with previously ferocious animals. This is a vision of an extraordinary peace and prosperity that will come to Israel under a just and righteous ruler.

Matthew's main purpose is to prove to his Jewish readers that Jesus is their Messiah. He does this primarily by showing how Jesus in his life and ministry fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures. Although all the Gospel writers quotes the OT, Matthew includes nine proof texts unique to his Gospel (1:22-23; 2:15; 2:17-18; 2:23; 4:14-16; 8:17; 12:17-21; 13:35; 27:9-10) to drive home his basic theme: Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament's predictions of Messiah. To accomplish his purpose, Matthew also emphasized

Jesus' Davidic lineage right from the very first chapter of the Gospel.

Matthew 5:9. This verse comes from the Sermon of Jesus Christ on the Mount, wherein Jesus was somehow delivering an address that serves as the inauguration of his ministry, explaining what he expects of the members of his kingdom. The exhortations discussed here may look so demanding, difficult seen in moral and ethical standards but this is for us to realize that we can only do it with the help and guidance of our God. This verse gives us an idea of the future of the one who chooses to be a peacemaker. The text calls the peacemaker blessed. Blessed here means more than just being happy because normally, happiness is an emotion often dependent on outward circumstances. Here blessed refers to the ultimate well-being and distinctive spiritual joy of those who share in the salvation of the kingdom of God. It's not just being "masaya" usually identified with plain merry-making, having parties and so on. It's having "kagalakan" "na hindi kayang burahin ng anumang mapait na karanasan dahil sa may ganap na kapayapaan ang kalooban." Peacemakers remain resolute, steadfast and unwavering in their conviction in spite and despite of what they may be going through because they know and believe that they are holding on to the way of the only God of their lives who remains in control of everything happening around them. Because of this inner peace, they become committed and passionate peacemakers. These peacemakers are the ones who promote peace. In so doing, they reflect a character of their heavenly father and are fittingly called "children of God".

These passages urge the church to become the peacemakers of today. The church being the representative of God and the body of Christ is given the task to continue the mission and ministry of Jesus for genuine peace to be real in the midst of so many unfavorable and unjust circumstances we may encounter along the way. Remember, we have been redeemed by the Messiah, now it is our chance to embody that Messiah in our living as children of God.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Whereas the empires of history are built on terror, the kingdom of God is founded on genuine and lasting peace. In God's kingdom there is a cessation of all struggles for domination and monopoly control of the earth's resources. As soon as peace based on justice prevails, the false gods and idols of power and wealth will topple down and people will come to worship God alone. Here lies the connection between worship and the pursuit of peace. The story of the Exodus depicts the Hebrew people's departure from slavery and the worship of false gods. They were in a journey to a land of freedom where peace dwells and where God alone reigns.

The biblical concept of peace includes both an end to warfare and the establishment of justice. The prophetic vision of turning swords into plowshares is an apt metaphor for the cessation of hostilities and the building of a new society. There is no shortcut on the road to genuine peace. A judicious combination of truce and a gradual dismantling of structures of injustice require an extended process that allows time for healing and for the conflicting sides to gain mutual trust and capability to hammer out a new order. Other than that, a peace process will only be used to gain tactical advantage and propaganda mileage.

In these days of wars and rumors of wars, the church has been at the forefront in peace processes involving the warring parties. The pursuit of peace has become a venue where

churches of differing doctrinal persuasions come together in unity. Although they have yet to forge a common agenda for peace, the church is known as a vigorous peace advocate the world over.

Objectives:

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

1. tell that peace comes from God, is made known by Christ, and is made available by the Holy Spirit;
2. affirm that a peace advocacy is anchored on justice, equality and fairness;
3. conclude that the effect of righteousness is true peace;
4. explain why the church advocates peace in its ministries and programs; and
5. participate in church activities that promote peace as believers who abide in Christ.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), song/verse charts, manila paper or cartolina, pentel pens

Learning Experiences:

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time:
2. Opening prayer: We come into your presence, dear Lord, humbly asking for your wisdom. Teach us to be instruments of your peace, willing and dedicated to do your will. This we pray in Christ's mighty name. Amen.
3. Opening song: If available, use YouTube presentation of "Lord, Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace" or choose an appropriate song of peace. Inform the class that this poem was written not by St. Francis of Assisi but by an unknown person. It is, however, now called "Peace Prayer of St. Francis".

B. Getting Ready

1. Write the word **PEACE** on the board. Provide each student a **K** (Know)- **W** (Want) - **L** (Learned) chart. Tell the class to fill in the first and second columns only. The third column will be completed after discussion of the lesson. Have the materials available and accessible to the class.

What I Know About

What I Want to Know About

What I Learned About

PEACE

PEACE

PEACE

2. After the activity, set aside the work of the students for later use.

C. Learning Time

1. Present the following story to the class.

Perfect Peace

Author: Unknown

There once was a king who offered a prize to the artist who would paint the best picture of peace. Many artists tried. The king looked at all the pictures, but there were only two he really liked and he had to choose between them.

One picture was of a calm lake. The lake was a perfect mirror for peace. There

were towering mountains all around it. Overhead was a blue sky with fluffy white clouds. All who saw this picture thought that it was a perfect picture of peace.

The other picture had mountains, too. But these were rugged and bare. Above was an angry sky from which rain fell, with lightning and thunder playing along with the heavy rainfall. Down the side of the mountain tumbled a foaming waterfall. This did not look peaceful at all. But when the king looked, he saw behind the waterfall a tiny bush growing in a crack in the rock. In the bush, a mother bird had built her nest for her birdlings. There, in the midst of the rush of angry water, sat the mother bird and her birdlings on her nest in perfect peace.

Which picture do you think won the prize?

The king chose the second picture. Do you know why?

"Because," explained the king, "peace does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. Peace means to be in the midst of all those things and still be calm in your heart. That is the real meaning of peace."

2. Let the class read in unison Isaiah 32:16-18. Say: "God emphasizes that his kingdom is built on genuine and lasting peace. God wants us to do what is right (being just, fair, and promote equality for all), and to trust in God so that we may live in peace."
3. Present Matthew 5:9. Discuss the blessing of being a peacemaker and the promise of God to peacemakers in the here and now and in the future kingdom. Other related biblical verses explain the meaning of peace of God and the significance of seeking and pursuing peace.
 - a. Contrary to the world view of peace which is the absence of conflict, the Bible speaks about the peace in the midst of conflict and turmoil. John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you." This peace is making relationships whole again. It is more than making peace with others but more of making people make peace with God. We can only be peacemakers if we first make peace with God and share this peace to others.
 - b. Romans 5:2-5: "through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us"
 - c. Romans 12:18: "If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'"
 - d. Ephesians 2:13-17: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and

- proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.”
- e. Hebrews 12:14: “Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”
 - f. 1 Peter 3:10-12: For those who desire life and desire to see good days, let them keep their tongues from evil and their lips from speaking deceit; let them turn away from evil and do good; let them seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Relate the perfect peace in the story with Isaiah 32:16-18.
2. What does Isaiah prophesy regarding peace as the effect of righteousness?
3. The following statements talk about peace. Which one do you agree the most and explain your choice.
 - a. Shalom is much more than the absence of conflict. It is the presence of everything good.
 - b. True peacemaking involves more than standing between two opposing parties and preventing them from killing each other. It is the work of reconciliation itself.
 - c. God charges us to be vessels of God’s peace.
4. As young people, what do you think are the ways to promote peace?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Say: The church is called upon to build and promote God’s peace. Ask: How can the youth become advocates in the call of seeking and pursuing peace?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Discuss the KWL chart that has been prepared earlier. Discuss what the class know about peace and want to know about peace. Compare their answers to the biblical texts (Isaiah 32:16-18, Matthew 5:9, John 14:27, Romans 5:2-5, Romans 12:18, Ephesians 2:13-17, Hebrews 12:14, and 1 Peter 3:10-12:).
2. Let the class complete the third column in the KWL chart. Call on students to share their answers.

3. Tell the class to read the Peace Prayer of St. Francis. Then ask them to write their own peace prayer and commit themselves to be peace advocates. Present a sample prayer as a guide of the students in writing their own prayer of peace.

Dear God, we know that we make you unhappy when we fight others or when we are in conflict. It is really difficult to be a peace advocate. We know God’s peace. We are aware that Jesus Christ lived it out. Please send your Spirit to live in our hearts so that we can make peace with God and share this peace in our hearts with others. May we be like Jesus in our peace advocacy. Amen.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: “Let There Be Peace On Earth”

Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.

With God as our Parent, children all are we.

Let me walk with each other in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now.

With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow.

To take each moment and live each moment

With peace eternally, let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.

3. Closing prayer: "Dear God, you know us very well. We humbly ask that you will continue to inspire us to live the kind of life advocating what is equal, fair and just. Help us to do all these things so that we may live in peace with God and our fellow human beings. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."



September 17, 2017

4th Sunday in Kingdomtide

Patience as a Kingdom Value

Old Testament:

Isaiah 40:28-31 (NRSV)

²⁸Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. ²⁹He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. ³⁰Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; ³¹but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Lamentations 3:26 (NRSV)

²⁶It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

New Testament:

Luke 8:15 (NRSV)

¹⁵But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance.

General Concept: Patience means not falling into despair, nor giving up hope in the coming of salvation.

Key Concept: The hope of the church comes from waiting patiently for the coming of Jesus.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Isaiah 40:28-31 signifies the power and concern of God towards the people of Israelites. Unfortunately, they failed to recognize and rely on His power and on what God can do for His people especially in the time when they were thrown into exile in Babylon. In this situation of being uprooted from their homeland, they felt so confused, disoriented were beginning to lose hope and even their faith in Yahweh as they began to be tempted to think of the Babylonian god Marduk as probably a more powerful deity, than their Lord. This has become a time of real crisis that could mean the survival or extinction of their own faith and identity as a people in a foreign land. It is easy to understand how their faith seems to be fainting in these times of trouble. And now the Isaiah 40:28-31 signifies the power and concern of God towards the people of Israelites. Unfortunately, they failed to recognize and rely on God's power and on what God can do for God's people especially in the time when they were thrown into exile in Babylon. In this situation of being uprooted from their homeland, they felt so confused, disoriented were beginning to lose hope and lose faith in Yahweh as they began to be tempted to think of the Babylonian god Marduk as probably a more powerful deity, than their Lord. This has become a time of real crisis that could mean the survival or extinction of their own faith and identity as a people in a foreign land. It is easy to understand how their faith seems to be fainting in these times of trouble. And now

they seem to be forgetting all about the saving grace of God that has been demonstrated already in the past in the event of the Exodus in Egypt when they were rescued and liberated from the oppressive, enslaving hands of slavery of king Pharaoh. The text however tries to reiterate the undiminished power and commitment of God to God's own people even in such times of great crisis. The prophet reassures the people of God's never ending mercy and everlasting love and that God has never forgotten God's chosen Israel. It is this love and gracious power of God that will sustain those who wait on the Lord with constant and persistent patience with a faith that never gives up, who walk according to the will of God. God's promises never fail to those who trust in God, but God gives strength to those who wait patiently on God's saving grace.

The book of Luke chapter 8 verse 15, is part of the parable of the sower, and talks about the seeds that fall on good soil. The good soil can mean the good heart which absolutely trusts and waits patiently on the Lord. Those hearts that patiently wait for the Lord's salvation will receive of God's promises at the perfect time.

Everything we do will never be in vain, if we do God's ministry and serve others with cheerful hearts. If we will never surrender whatever the circumstances and difficulties but trust in the Lord's power and saving grace, God will never fail us nor forsake us. Just like good soil, all seeds planted in our hearts will bring good fruits and we will never faint in times of trouble for we know completely that God who brings justice and peace to the world will never forget God's promises.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Waiting for the coming of salvation from God is the quintessence of the biblical faith. In anticipation of the Lord's return upon which the kingdom will reach its fullness, the church exists "in the meantime," a period of waiting. In this regard, the greatest of kingdom virtues is patience.

But what does patience in waiting for the fulfillment of the kingdom of God mean? First, patience that is grounded on faith exists in a tension between doubt and certainty. There is certainly an element of doubt present in faith. Doubt indicates serious concern for holding on to the faith in the face of uncertainties. In other words, doubt prevents waiting from being overtaken by apathy and cynicism. Doubt was a familiar visitor to prophets like Jeremiah who in some moments questioned God's justice.

Second, patience is fueled by eagerness enabling it to continue. Sooner or later, patience will run out when the energizing power of eagerness is gone. Rather than passive, waiting in the faith is an active stance that keeps one always on the edge, scanning the horizons for signs of the kingdom's arrival and getting ready for its arrival. The active nature of waiting in the faith is demonstrated by the early Christians who went about the vast expanse of the Empire in anticipation of the Lord's return. This was also shown by the early Protestant converts who founded one church after another preaching the good news of the coming kingdom of Christ.

And third, patience in waiting for the kingdom to arrive is constantly being replenished by hope. The horizon seems to recede at every forward step and nothing seems to appear above it. But patience in the faith is not merely a subjective commitment to an unknown quantity. There's a reality more vivid than the eye can see that looms transparent behind

the events of history. The Old Testament prophets project this reality against the backdrop of Israel's colonial history. Jesus paints it in the frame of the experience of the poor of his time. This reality continues in the present to reveal new images to inspire patience among those who hope in the coming of God's kingdom.

Objectives:

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

1. explain the hope of all believers in the Lord's promise of salvation;
2. emphasize the need for patience and perseverance in understanding God's word, will, and timing;
3. realize that the church is called to sustain the hope of salvation of God's believers by patiently waiting for Jesus' coming again; and
4. participate actively in the ministry and program of the church in disseminating God's word, will, and timing as the church patiently waits for the Lord's salvation.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), worksheets

Learning Experiences:**A. Opening Worship**

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: "Mighty and loving God, we put our hope and trust in you in all the days of our lives. Live in us every day so we may always have the patience to follow you as our Way, Truth, and Life. Amen."
3. Opening song: "The Hands of God" (HFJ # 295)

B. Getting Ready

1. Present this information taken from the Philippine Eagle Foundation website about the Philippine eagle, formerly called the Monkey-eating Eagle.
Philippine eagles are one of the rarest eagle species in the world and as one of the most endangered animals (estimated that there are fewer than 250 eagles as of January 2015). Their height is one meter and their wingspan is 2 meters wide, the broadest in the world. Their sight is eight times the distance than that of humans. They live on the islands of Mindanao, Leyte, Samar and Luzon. They can live to be 60 years old. Philippine eagles keep one mate for life. Parent eagles wait for their offspring to make it on their own (usually within two years) before producing another.
2. Lead the class to realize the strength and freedom of eagles.

C. Learning Time

Divide the class into three groups and assign each group a particular biblical text.

1. Isaiah 40:28-31: "28Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. 29He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. 30Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; 31but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they

shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." Tell the first group to do the following:

- a. Underline the words that describe God. (Everlasting God, Creator of the ends of the earth, Does not faint or grow weary, Unsearchable understanding, Gives power to the faint and wary, Strengthens the powerless)
 - b. Describe what God will do to those who wait upon God. (God will renew their strength. God will enable them to mount with wings like eagles. God will enable them to run and not get weary. God will enable them to walk and not faint.)
2. Lamentations 3:26. Tell the group to paraphrase the verse.
26 "It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD."
(Expected answers: The Lord is good to those who wait quietly for him. It is good for the soul to patiently seek and wait for the Lord.)
3. Luke 8:15. "But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance." Let the third group say the phrases in their own words.
- a. *but as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word*
(These are the hearers of God's word.)
 - b. *hold it fast in an honest and good heart*
(They believe in and keep God's word because their hearts are honest and good.)
 - c. *bear fruit with patient endurance*
(These believers do good things according to God's will while patiently waiting for God's promise of salvation.)

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Discuss the lesson.

1. What is common to the three biblical texts? (The three texts talk about **God's promise of salvation** to God's people. Believers must sustain their hope in this promise of salvation by waiting patiently for it.)
2. Why do you think God used an eagle to illustrate strength and freedom that God promised to give all God's children? (God promises the strength and freedom of eagles to those who wait upon God, and trust God to provide all of their needs. While believers wait patiently for this promise, God promises **strength** like that of an eagle to those who are tired to go on, **freedom** like the eagle, that has the longest wingspan, to continue facing life's challenges (grief, pain, hunger, sickness, and failure), **encouragement** to serve God and God's people without worrying about anything but continue to trust in God's providence.)
3. At the time Jeremiah wrote the lament (Lamentations 3:26), the people were discouraged and felt abandoned by God. What is the formula offered by Jeremiah to God's people during this critical and dreadful time of being subdued by foreign powers? (Jeremiah offered that the best option for the Hebrew people is to humble themselves before God, restore their repentant hearts, and wait quietly for God's providence and salvation. For God is their help and guide to survive.)
4. Luke mentioned the presence of honest and good hearts by the hearers of God's

word. What makes an honest and good heart? (An honest and good heart **hears** God's word, **keeps** God's word in his/her heart and soul, patiently **waits** for God's word and perseveres in the word, and **uses** God's word, will, and timing in serving others and thereby producing a good fruit.)

5. How can the church encourage good hearts to persevere in producing good crops for God? (The church must be proactive in her ministries to sustain the good hearts in producing good crops for the Lord by strengthening the faith of the believers in their understanding of God's word, will, and timing.)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Say: As church members, we are likened to those in 'good soil' and with 'good hearts'. Ask: As church members, how can we sustain the hope of God's believers that comes from waiting patiently for the coming of Jesus? (The church must focus on the word of God, strengthen her members by building up their capabilities, and reorient mission consciousness among her members.)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Say: Patience is a kingdom value that believers must possess while waiting for God's providence and deliverance. Let the class answer these questions to assess one's patience in preparing oneself to participate in the church programs. (A **Yes** answer is an indicator of patience. A **No** answer means patience is to be developed further.)
 - a. Am I ready to accept God's will and timing?
 - b. Am I ready to endure challenges along the way?
 - c. Am I ready to accept personal weaknesses and faults and humble myself before God?
 - d. Am I ready to be flexible in my decisions if the results are counterproductive to my aim?
 - e. Am I contented to be an instrument of God and patiently follow God's leading?
2. Ask the class to choose any program (teaching, preaching, ushering, mentoring, outreaching) that they can get involved.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "Work in Your Kingdom" (HFJ # 302)
3. Closing prayer: "As we continue to work in your kingdom, we ask you O God to give us a patient heart to stand through hard times. Use us to be living witnesses for others to walk in good soil. Amen."

September 24, 2017

5th Sunday in Kingdomtide

Kindness as a Kingdom Value

Old Testament:

Micah 6:8 (NRSV)

⁸He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

New Testament:

1Timothy 2:1-7

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. ³This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, ⁶who gave himself a ransom for all-this was attested at the right time. ⁷For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Luke 10:25-37 (NRSV)

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

²⁵Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' ²⁶He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?'

²⁷He answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.'

²⁸And he said to him, 'You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live. ²⁹But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'

³⁰Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.

³¹Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³²So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he

saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend."

³⁶Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?' ³⁷He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'

General Concept: The church is compassionate and sensitive to the needs of the people and acts to address their situation.

Key Concept: Kindness is demonstrated by accepting everyone.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Micah 6:8 signifies God's sole demands on God's people: "to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God." The whole chapter 6 of Micah is actually addressed to the ruling elite of Judah in the 8th century BCE, to those who are in the position to prevent and rectify acts of injustice and to maintain and preserve justice towards their own people. They are those who are in the position to spend so much lavish and generous amounts for sacrifices and offerings at the altar of Yahweh as their mode of expressing their worship and thanksgiving to God. Micah, however, witnessed the sad reality that the very class of people entrusted to lead justly in the name of the God of Israel had been corrupted by the ways of power. He witnessed the enormous amount of abuses done to the poor and powerless people of the land by those who have power and privilege (cf. Mi. 2:1-2; 3:1-3). The small landowners suffered massive and systematic confiscation of their lands due to indebtedness imposed by the usurers and heavy taxation coming from the state apparatuses of the king. Massive deprivation and impoverishment of the common people of the land became a widespread phenomenon in the time of Micah. At the same time, this class of the ruling elite would always try to delude themselves into thinking that things in the land remain well especially in their relationship with God by assuming that they can always win God's favor by making abundant offerings of the most expensive and numerous amount before the altar of the Lord. They had assumed that God's favor and God's blessings can be won or bought with expensive offerings intended to erase whatever wrongdoing or transgression that may have been committed by them (v.7). This is where Micah makes the crucial rebuttal of these people's distorted religious assumptions. The only thing God requires of his people is something very basic and fundamental in the building of a peaceful and prosperous community: the doing of justice always, the passion for kindness towards the people and the attitude of humility towards God. This is the non-negotiable requirement of God for the building of a true and alternative kingdom where the only Lord and king is the only God of justice.

Luke 10: 25-37 (the parable of the 'Good Samaritan') begins with a lawyer trying to put to test Jesus, asking him about how to inherit eternal life. Jesus replied by asking the lawyer with a very basic question: "Well, what is written in the Law?", to which the lawyer replied by reciting the great commandments based on Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind ; and your neighbor as yourself" to which Jesus replied: "Ok, good! Just do this and you will live. The lawyer however, pursued further, wanting to justify himself: "But who then is my neighbor?" Jesus answered by simply relating the story of the Samaritan who came to the rescue of a victimized and seriously wounded Jew. This Jew fell into the hands of robbers on the highway from Jerusalem to Jericho. After being bypassed by a priest and then a Levite, a Samaritan passed by and saw the victim. The Samaritan immediately had deep compassion on the person, treated his wounds and brought him to an inn. The deep historical animosity and hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans are well known already. They look at each other as enemies and people who cannot be trusted as a neighbor. Jesus however called the Samaritan, the one hated by the Jews, as the

neighbor. The teaching on “loving one's neighbor” is actually reversed here by Jesus. The hated one, the one considered as the historical enemy can actually be the neighbor to us who consider ourselves as the good guys, being the people of God. We who consider ourselves as the good guys may become victims ourselves. And people who we hate, who we consider as enemies, can actually be a source of rescue, kindness and deep compassion, in acts that transcend political, racial and ideological boundaries. It is time to break the walls and the barriers that separate peoples into enemies and strangers. It is time to practice kindness and compassion even unto people we hate and consider as enemies for as Jesus himself said, they themselves are capable of becoming a compassionate neighbor to us. This is the way to really live and enjoy the life in the kingdom of God being offered to us by God in and through Jesus. Kindness and compassion are very essential virtues of people who are to become citizens of the kingdom of God.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

For people who are used to walking along the corridors of power, kindness is a mark of weakness. On the other hand, the gospel regards kindness as a trait of God. Nations that are constantly on a war path against their perceived enemies have no right to call upon God to prosper their march to war. Kindness is a non-negotiable condition in building up the kingdom of God.

Only those who “love kindness” (Micah 6:8) may be admitted citizens of God's kingdom. But how may people learn kindness in a world that lives by the rule of “survival of the fittest?” This Darwinian principle of evolution has been appropriated by establishment social thinkers to justify the evolution of a brutish human character. It stands in direct contradiction to the values of the kingdom.

The church has been called to be a school for making people kindly. Kindliness is learned not only by means of the church's formal instructions but even more effectively by example in the way the church conducts itself within and outside its walls. Church leadership, for example, follows Jesus' model of leadership by servanthood. Towards the outside, the church shows a kindly face that is inviting to people in need to come for help and succor. The church does not choose whom to be kind. Against its adversaries, the church seeks their redemption by transforming them from being enemies into friends.

Being kindly to all may not be possible or appropriate in the real world. This is a real challenge because educating the people according to the values of the kingdom is not backed by concrete realities. But the world may not learn it unless it is taught by those who actually practice this virtue, namely, the church.

Objectives:

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

1. define and compare kindness and acceptance of others;
2. observe church activities that develop kindness;
2. demonstrate acts of kindness as young people of the church; and
3. express one's appreciation for being recipients of kindness and for given chances to show kindness.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), worksheets, song charts, compliments box, a small bulletin board for kindness wall

Learning Experiences:

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: "Nurturing God, we lift our hearts to you as we acknowledge your presence with us today. Teach us with the wisdom of your Word that we may walk humbly with your people. This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen."
3. Opening song: "When We're Kind"

Words and Music: MRD Garingalao

When we're kind to others, we speak words of kindness

Then we show how loving is our God.

Let's be kind and care for others, day by day, in work or play

Altogether, gladly sharing singing praise to God always.

B. Getting Ready

1. Tell the class to play the compliment game. Provide each student a card and let them choose a classmate. Let them write the name of their choice and list five good characteristics of that person. Encourage the class to list behavior and traits rather than physical characteristics.
2. Have the class put their compliment cards in a bowl. Call a student to get a card and read the compliments given to the student. The student being described will thank the one who wrote the compliments and the one who wrote them will accept the thanks.
3. Discuss the effects of saying kind compliments to other persons.

C. Learning Time

1. Divide the class into two groups. Assign the first group to read Micah 6:8 and the second group, Luke 10:25-37.
2. Provide the following outline for each group.
 - a. Micah 6:8. What does God require of us?
 - 1) To do justice (Do what is right.)
 - 2) To love kindness (Be merciful and compassionate to others.)
 - 3) To walk humbly with God (Do everything according to God's will.)
 - b. Luke 10:25-37
 - 1) Question # 1: What must I do to inherit eternal life?
Answer: Refer to Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18
 - 2) Question # 2: Who is my neighbor?
Answer: Anyone whom I can help.
3. After the group work, tell the class to read the biblical texts in unison. Then let each small group share their insights to the big group.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Doing justice means being fair to everyone. Does this mean helping others to have enough to live well? How can the church help those who are unjustly treated? (The church will make sure that what they do is fair to everyone.)
2. To love kindness and mercy is to help others be well cared for by their families in our communities. Can mission work help those who are not well cared for? How? (Being compassionate to others even though we do not know them is made possible by helping mission work.)
3. How can we walk humbly with God? (Study God's word in the Scriptures. Live a prayerful life. Do what God wants us to do and is pleasing in the sight of God.)
4. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, why do you think the Samaritan was the one who did what Micah said?
5. Can kindness and acceptance of others be compatible with each other? Why? As young people, how do you demonstrate kindness on the issues of bullying, peer pressure, labeling and LGBT?
6. Read the following poem and choose the lines that you like best and explain why.

Smiling

Smiling is infectious; you catch it like the flu.
When someone smiled at me today, I started smiling too.
I passed around a corner and someone saw my grin.
When he smiled, I realized I had passed it on to him.
I thought about that smile and then I realized its worth.
A single smile, just like mine, could travel around the earth.
So if you feel a smile begin, don't leave it undetected.
Let's start an epidemic quick and get the world infected.

*Author Unknown**E. Discovering the Biblical Truth*

Say: As members of the church, we are called to be kind to all and not to choose whom to be kind. Ask: How can the church through young people demonstrate kindness by accepting everyone?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Recall the first activity. Paste the compliment cards on the kindness wall or kindness zone in the classroom. Tell the class to continue posting messages about kindness.
2. Ask the class to create kindness slogans or posters that they can share with others.
Here are sample slogans.
 - a. Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see. Mark Twain
 - b. Be kind to unkind people - they need it the most. Ashleigh Brilliantc.
 - c. To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children...to leave the world a better place...to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. Ralph Waldo Emerson
 - d. Forget injuries, never forget kindnesses. Confucius
3. Tell the students to complete the table.

As young people, how do you do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with:

Peers	Parents	Elderly	God

G. Closing Worship

1. Memory Verse: "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)
2. Offering
3. Closing song: "Give of Your Best to The Master"

Give of your best to the Master
 Give of the strength of your youth
 Throw your soul's fresh, glowing ardor
 Into the battle for truth
 Jesus has set the example
 Fearless was He, young and brave
 Give Him your loyal devotion
 Give Him the best that you have.
 Refrain: Give of your best to the Master
 Give of the strength of your youth
 Clad in salvation's full armor
 Join in the battle for truth.
4. Closing prayer: "We give to you our best, dear God, our strength and our devotion. Make us brave and loyal to do your will. Remind us always to be kind to everyone we meet. Make us instruments of your will - to be bearers of kindness especially to the weak, marginalized, poor and powerless in our society. In the Mighty name of Jesus, we pray. Amen."

October 1, 2017

6th Sunday in Kingdomtide

Goodness as a Kingdom Value

Old Testament:

Psalms 23:6, 31:19 (NRSV)

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

¹⁹O how abundant is your goodness that you have laid up for those who fear you, and accomplished for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of everyone!

New Testament:

Romans 12:2 (NRSV)

²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God-what is good and acceptable and perfect.

General Concept: Goodness is found in the church that chooses right from wrong, truth from falsehood, and justice from injustice.

General Concept: Goodness is found in the church that chooses right from wrong, truth from falsehood, and justice from injustice.

Key Concept: The church demonstrates goodness by choosing what is right, true and fair.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

We have learned that The Book of Psalms is attributed to David. As a collection, it contains a variety of emotions from a settled conviction and orientation in life and faith to one of disorientation due to painful contradictions in reality. There are efforts towards a faith reorientation of a people expressed mostly in the context of worship.

This particular verse (Psalm 23:6) belongs to the whole poem that most of us love to memorize: an utterance of a profound trust in the Lord as the good Shepherd-King. It is actually a concluding statement that summarizes the whole of the poem. Here, two important words are uttered: goodness and love. Both words refer to the covenant benefits that are personified here. Clearly, David here was expressing that the goodness and love of the Shepherd-King will follow him, or will pursue him not with hostile intent but will attend always to him. Thus, he shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever not as a priest but as God's welcome guest in Yahweh's holy, royal house, the temple.

This passage in Psalm 31:19 is part and parcel of David's prayer of deliverance when confronted with conspiracy so powerful and open that all of David's friends abandoned him. This particular verse then is an expression of a confident anticipation of God's saving help that will restore goodness and hope in him.

Paul's primary theme in Romans is the basic gospel, God's plan of salvation and righteousness for all humankind, Jews and Gentiles alike. Paul firmly believes that restoration and reconciliation of this world is achievable when Christians will open their door

to the real gospel so that they become immovable and unashamed bearers of that gospel proclaiming and not condemning others who have become sensitive and have opened their doors to the righteousness of God. The gospel proclaimed by Paul is not just about personal and individual gain and salvation but rather a kind of transformation that would bring all of the cosmos to a reality that God hoped it would really be. Even in the midst of so much persecution and in the midst of a great majority of Gentile audience who could easily mock and make fun of his message, Paul strongly holds on to his conviction to stand firm and not be ashamed of the gospel he is proclaiming for all people to hear and eventually manifest. The gospel proclaimed is not only for a few but for all people who have faith.

Romans 12:2 is a call for all believers that we should not be conformed to the patterns of this world. This world, with all its evil and corruption has indeed been characterized by and imbued with wickedness, therefore we should all be transformed. Here, Paul was not only talking about one single event but a process: first the mind, the thought and will as they relate to morality for we know that intent precedes the act. Then, after the person's transformation just described has taken place, the believer can now carry out what God wants the believer to do here and now... things that are good, pleasing to God and perfect.

These verses in the Old Testament and the New Testament are manifestations of the church's role in the realization of God's kingdom. Having been saved we were given the responsibility and the accountability to make known that salvation is for all the people who need it. Those who are still in search for what is right from what is wrong must be given the gift and the will to discern that God chooses God's people as bearers of God's goodness. Goodness here, is not a mere passivity but a wisdom discernment of what is right and wrong, what is true and false and of what is just and unjust. For the God of justice will not allow for all who remain in faith to just perish and succumb to the easy way out- to compromise one's faith principles, values and basic convictions. Goodness then is marked by a believer's will power to bring out God's goodness by leading the way to real salvation for all not just of the self but of the whole cosmos.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Jesus is often addressed as good teacher, to which he would respond that "no one is good but God alone" (Mark 10:17). This implies that when God's reign comes to prevail, citizens of the kingdom will be exhibiting God's goodness. In the meantime, God's goodness is the absolute and unchanging norm of what is good in any ethical situation.

The church exists to show God's standard of goodness in the kingdom but under the conditions of a fallen world. In such a state, good is real but only in the relative sense, that is, in relation to certain realities that are manifestly evil. Thus, injustice is the lack of justice which is good; falsehood is the opposite of truth which is good; wrong is a deviation from what is right which is good. The Spirit of truth is there to teach the church to separate one from the other.

It makes good sense for the church not to burden itself with making definitions of the ideal good. Rather, it is called to make a judgment on actual, concrete, historical things and then establish by inference what is justice, truth and righteousness. In this way, the church will be spared from making universal statements that have no bearing at all to the concrete realities of the time.

This is evident in the biblical understanding of justice, truth and uprightness. When the prophets spoke of justice they made specific reference to farmers who were robbed of their ancestral land, of merchants who cheated with their weighing scales, or of farmer-debtors whose working tools were confiscated as pledge. Jesus' Nazareth Manifesto was addressed to the real poor of his time, to the captives of war, the infirmed and those who lived in ignorance. That's the reason why they won the hatred and fear of people who prospered at the expense of others.

The church today has only to follow the lead of Jesus and the prophets in order to identify what is good so as to escape being mired in endless debates and procrastination.

Objectives:

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

1. recall church activities that promote goodness by doing what is right and being true and just to others;
2. compare injustice with justice, falsehood with good, and wrong with right; and
3. list ways by which one can participate in the church ministries that promote goodness.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), worksheets, resolution form

Learning Experiences:**A. Opening Worship**

1. Welcome time: Smile and greet the children as they come. Check the attendance.
2. Opening prayer: Compassionate God, we are indeed thankful for always reminding us of your goodness so that we can overcome temptations each day in our lives. This is our prayer in Christ's name. Amen.
3. Opening song: "Oh Give Thanks unto The Lord"
Oh give thanks unto the Lord, Oh give thanks unto the Lord
Oh give thanks unto the Lord for He is good.

B. Getting Ready

1. Prepare index cards and write different characters in the Bible (David, Deborah, Paul, Miriam, Esther, Micah). Divide the class into six groups. Give each group a card and instruct them to read the character and describe him or her using one or two adjectives. Encourage them to refer to the Bible for a more accurate description of each character.
2. After the activity, ask the following questions:
 - a. Which character is hardest to describe?
 - b. Which character is easiest to describe?
 - c. Which character can you relate with and why?

C. Learning Time

1. Ask the class to study the operational meaning of the following words and phrases used in the biblical references:
 - a. *Kindness or mercy*. Being kind or merciful means having the willingness to do

that which is right or good. Being kind is being compassionate towards those who needs help and those who seek it.

- b. *Goodness*. Being good means (1) upholding the truth and righteousness (Ephesians 5:9, 2 Timothy 4:2); (2) teaching by admonishing, warning, or exhorting (Romans 15:14); producing good works for the benefits of others (Ephesians 2:10); glorifying God in our lives by serving others (2 Thessalonians 1:11); and opposite of evil (3 John 1:11).
 - c. *Kindness and goodness as twin fruit*. A kind person is a good person; a good person is by nature a kind person. Kindness is compassionate love and goodness is ministering love.
 - d.. *Fear of God* means doing the will of God. *Taking refuge* is trusting God for everything.
 - e. *Conform*. Paul warns the people of God not to follow the ways of the world but the ways of God.
 - f. *Transformed*: To transform is to change ways into something different. Through the Holy Spirit, we are changed to be more Christ-like. To be transformed is to be renewed in heart and mind.
2. Form three groups. Assign each group with one of the biblical references.
 - a. Group 1. *Psalm 23:6*: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.
 - b. Group 2. *Psalm 31:19*: O how abundant is your goodness that you have laid up for those who fear you, and accomplished for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of everyone!
 - c. Group 3. *Romans 12:2*: Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. King David affirms the goodness of God who promised to give him goodness and mercy all his life. What do you think God wants us to learn from God to receive this promise? (To trust that God will always be with us through good times and tough times, just as the whole of Psalm 23 says.) If we follow God, can we also sing of God's goodness and mercy all our life? (When we do God's will, we will know and experience God's goodness and mercy, not only towards us, but towards others who need God's goodness and mercy the most.)
2. King David sings of the abundant love for those who fear God and take refuge in God. How may we reciprocate God's abundant love? (One way by which we could respond to God's goodness and love is by ensuring that others experience God's goodness and love in their lives too. We should be channels of God's goodness and love.)
3. Paul's stern warning for us not to conform to the world but be transformed in mind. Why is this transformation significant? (When a follower of Christ starts becoming more like Christ (transformed), he or she discovers that God's will is the very best for his or her life which is pleasing to God (1 Corinthians 2:9 and Isaiah 64:4). What

does it mean to do God's will? What is the difference between injustice and justice, falsehood and good, wrong and right?

4. Reflect on this paragraph from the biblical exegesis: "These verses in the Old Testament and the New Testament are manifestations of the church's role in the realization of God's kingdom. Having been saved, we were given the responsibility and the accountability to make known that salvation is for all the people who need it. Those who are still in search for what is right from what is wrong must be given the gift and the will to discern that God chooses God's people as bearers of God's goodness. Goodness here, is not a mere passivity but a wisdom discernment of what is right and wrong, what is true and false and of what is just and unjust. For the God of justice will not allow for all who remain in faith to just perish and succumb to the easy way out, to compromise one's faith principles, values and basic convictions. Goodness then is marked by a believer's willpower to bring out God's goodness by leading the way to real salvation for all not just of the self but of the whole cosmos." As a transformed youth, how can we make a difference in this world and make an impact to those around us? (Be good by speaking the truth, doing what is right and just, and glorifying God by serving others for their benefit.)

6. What is the biblical understanding of justice, truth and uprightness? (Read the Companion Guide for the Teachers and other End-users.)

7. God promised presence in our lives. Read and analyze the following prayer and find out if truly Christ is with us always.

The Prayer of St. Patrick, An Irish Prayer

(Anonymous)

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
 Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
 Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
 Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,
 Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
 Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks of me,
 Christ in the eye that sees me,
 Christ in the ear that hears me.

8. Sing this song. Choose a song leader.

Song: Psalm 23 (Surely Goodness, Surely Mercy) Artist: Shane and Shane

Key: B Time: 4/4 Capo 4

Intro:

C G C D G

Verse 1:

C D G C D G

The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want. In green pastures He makes me lie down

C D G D/F# Em C D

He restores my soul and leads me on for His Name, For His great Name

Chorus:

C G C G

Surely goodness, surely mercy Right beside me all my days

C G C D G

And I will dwell in Your house forever And bless Your Holy Name

Verse 2:

C D G C D G

You prepare a table right before me In the presence of my enemies

C D G D/F# Em C D

Though the arrow flies and the terror of night is at my door 'I'll trust you Lord

Chorus:

Bridge: (x2)

C G

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil C G

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death You are on my side

Chorus:

Outro:

C G C D G

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: What programs does the church offer to help the youth to be good?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

Based on the discussion about being good, tell the class to make their resolutions to produce good works.

G. Closing Worship

1. Memory Verse: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:2)
2. Offering: Ask the class to offer their resolutions during the offertory prayer.
3. Closing song: "Surely Goodness, Surely Mercy"
4. Closing prayer: "Dear God, help us to discern what your will is so that we may follow you and do what is good, acceptable and perfect. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."

October 8, 2017

7th Sunday in Kingdomtide

Faithfulness as a Kingdom Value

Old Testament:

Ruth 1:16-17 (NRSV)

¹⁶But Ruth said, 'Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. ¹⁷Where you die, I will die—there will I be buried. May the LORD do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!'

Hosea 2:19-20 (NRSV)

¹⁹And I will take you for my wife for ever; I will take you for my wife in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy.

²⁰I will take you for my wife in faithfulness; and you shall know the LORD.

New Testament:

Mark 8:34 (NRSV)

³⁴He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'

General Concept: A faithful church is loyal and obedient to Christ.

Key Concept: The church shows faithfulness by being obedient and loyal to Jesus.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

The text of Ruth 1:16-17 signifies the depth of commitment of Ruth to Naomi, her mother-in-law and to the God of Naomi, Yahweh, and her people. The terminology of verse 16 is reminiscent of marriage vows and covenant making in the Old Testament. It is a statement of total and unconditional loyalty to Naomi and her faith tradition. Ruth made a very crucial decision that will determine the shape and future of her life to follow Naomi and not to return anymore to her own country Moab. She absolutely made a decision that will change the rest of her life. This marks a critical turning point that will fix her destiny in the ensuing history of Israel. As she declares with full loyalty to Naomi, "Entreat me not to leave you or to return from following you; for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God; where you die I will die, and there I will be buried," she has then cast her lot and entrusts her whole fate and future in following the great God of Israel, completely abandoning whatever connection, whatever roots she still has in Moab. Out of her loyalty and faithfulness, she has become a truly transformed being. Her loyalty and faithfulness have provided for her and Naomi. These have a redeeming and transforming impact on her life and on the life of Naomi, and eventually, the life and future of Israel. Loyalty and faithfulness to a relationship produce its redemptive, transforming impact even on a nation. This is itself one of the clear signs of living the life in the kingdom of God.

In the text of Hosea 2:19, the word "betroth" refers to "take a wife forever..." the verb refers to a legally binding agreement to be in a relationship of trust and commitment to each other which precedes the wedding. In this text God commands Hosea to marry a harlot woman to signify the wickedness of the people Israel. For in God's eyes the people had engaged in harlotry by going after other gods like the Baals that were worshipped all over the land. This is why Hosea was given a mission to marry the harlot woman, because Israel was judged as having become a harlot in God's eyes. The word betrothed refers to one being in a relationship of loyalty to God's will and commitment to follow and submit oneself to God.

Here emerges our calling as Christians today. We are called to a relationship of loyalty and commitment to the will of our God. In this light we need to submit ourselves with all our hearts and souls, with all our strength and mind to our God in loyal and committed service. In Mark 8:34, Jesus says, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." The model to follow therefore of such loyalty and commitment is no less than Jesus himself. To be part of God's mission and ministry involves a total commitment in the pursuit of Jesus' own mission here on earth even if it will entail costly sacrifices even of one's life. This is what it means to be a loyal partner in a divine-human covenant relationship. This is to enter into God's mission with that mode of selflessness displayed by Jesus himself.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

One of the key concepts in the Old Testament is God's faithfulness. Israel is betrothed to Yahweh in faithfulness, and to reciprocate Israel ought to be faithful to Yahweh. In the New Testament, the church is portrayed as the bride of Christ. The closest of human intimacies is a biblical metaphor for faithfulness.

The kingdom represents the full unfolding of God's faithfulness to creation and the perfection of its response to the Creator. In the meantime, the church is where people learn and mature in faithfulness to God and to the church under the tutelage of the Spirit. Because those who have been redeemed in Christ continue to exist in a sinful state they still bear the marks of sinful nature but under God's grace. Hence, the church's faithfulness to the Lord is still on the way to achieving perfection under the discipline of the Spirit.

Learning to be faithful is accomplished by practice and learning from it. Constant and consistent acts of obedience to the commands of the Lord make a faithful church. Loyalty is equivalent to active faithfulness as it is loaded with strong affection and a readiness to take action. A loyal church takes offense when the cause of the kingdom suffers injury and is ready to take action to advance its course. The church's loyalty to Christ is tested by outside forces that seek to hinder and counter its mission as well as from within by members who have succumbed to the lure of the Tempter. The church's loyalty is purified and strengthened each time it overcomes testing.

Objectives:

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

1. use the story of Ruth, Hosea, and Jesus to describe faithfulness and loyalty to God;
2. explain how the church promotes faithfulness to God by obeying God;

3. describe one's faithfulness as the fruit of belief; and
4. demonstrate ways that they can show obedience and loyalty to God in their relationships, at home, and involvements in church and in schools.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), worksheets on ways that they can show obedience and loyalty to Jesus

Learning Experiences:

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: As the learners enter the room, greet them.
2. Opening prayer:
3. Opening song: "Trust and Obey" (HFJ # 312) first three stanzas

B. Getting Ready

1. Have the class form pairs. The first person will make a movement or facial expression. The second person will mirror the first person. Let the first person do three movements or facial expressions, then the pair reverse the roles.
2. After the game, ask the children:
 - a. How do you feel when you're following the other person?
 - b. What was the most important factor to successful following?
 - c. How is this like following Jesus as Christians?
3. After hearing their answers, tell them that one of the values of God's kingdom is faithfulness.

C. Learning Time

1. Unlock the meaning of the following underlined words:
 - a. The character of a person tells who he or she is; what that person does, feels, and thinks; describes all the choices made by a person.
 - b. Faithfulness is shown by being obedient and loyal to Jesus Christ who is the head of the church. Being obedient and loyal is what Jesus wants from His disciples. The value of faithfulness is taught by Jesus to His first disciples.
 - c. Unfaithfulness is the act of a person who breaks his or her promises; not being true or loyal; not being someone that others can trust or count on.
 - d. Spiritual adultery is done when a person breaks his or her promise to love and serve God with all their hearts and souls and minds and bodies; when a person puts other things in life before God; when a person loves other things more than his or her love for God.
 - e. Grace is God's gift of mercy to us.
 - f. A disciple is a follower. A Christian disciple is a person who accepts and assists in the spreading of the good news of Jesus Christ.
 - g. Christian discipleship is the process by which disciples grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ and are equipped by the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, Christian disciples overcome the pressures and trials of this present life and become more and more Christ-like.

2. Tell the class to read in unison Ruth 1:16-17, Hosea 2:19-20, Mark 8:34. Discuss each set of verses using the given points of study
3. **Ruth 1:16-17. Ruth made a noble choice. God rewards her for her faithfulness.**
 - a. Ruth, a Moabite woman, leaves her homeland in Moab after the death of her husband to go and live with her mother-in-law. This act shows her *devotion and faithfulness to Naomi and Naomi's God*. This noble decision converted Ruth to Judaism.
 - b. God calls certain persons by which God uses to show God's great love for God's people. Ruth is one such person.
 - c. The heartwarming story of Ruth is one of the best examples of how God rewards those who make wise spiritual choices, like showing genuine and steadfast loyalty to one's family.
 - d. Every choice we make has consequences whether good or bad. Ruth made a noble choice. She *refrained from spiritual adultery*. When Ruth chose God and Ruth became the great-grandmother of a king of Israel, David, and in the course of time, became an ancestor of Jesus, the Christ, Son of the Living God.
4. **Hosea 2:19-20. God used the story of Hosea and Gomer to powerfully show God's love for God's people even when they fall into sin.**
 - a. God uses the idea of marriage to show how God wants to be close to God's people.
 - b. The story is not actually unfaithfulness to marriage but *unfaithfulness to God*.
 - c. The Israelites were able to see God's faithfulness better when they saw Gomer's faithfulness to his wife.
5. **Mark 8:34. This verse shows "Christian discipleship".** A Christian disciple is characterized with the following convictions.
 - a. A Christian disciple *puts Jesus first in all things*. To be a Christian disciple is to be set apart from the world.
 - b. A Christian disciple *obeys and does Jesus Christ's teachings*.
 - c. A Christian disciple is aware that being a follower of Christ, our job is not to produce fruit but to *abide in Christ*. In the process of abiding by Christ, the Holy Spirit will produce the fruit and this fruit is the result of our faithfulness, obedience, and loyalty to God.
 - d. A Christian disciple *loves other disciples*. Love for other disciples is not a feeling but an action. In doing so, the attitude of a Christian disciple becomes the same as that of Christ.
 - e. A Christian disciple does evangelistic works to *make disciples of others*. Through the intervention of the Holy Spirit, disciples are made.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Ruth chose Naomi's God. Hosea chose to follow God by taking back his unfaithful wife. Why is choosing God a wise and noble decision? (Refer to Matthew 6:33 and John 12:48.)
2. What should we remember when we make spiritual choices? (Our choices may result in good or bad consequences. The choices we make now can impact not only

our eternal destiny, but also the eternal destiny of our family. Choosing God is an Choosing God serves as our guide in doing what is right.)

3. How are the youth warned about faithfulness and obedience? (Young people are warned not to follow the example of a father or a mother who does NOT choose to live a godly life and faithfully follow God.)
4. Have some church members fallen away by being unfaithful and disobedient to God? (Given that situation and as members of the youth group, get involved in church programs in Christian discipleship to strengthen the faith of members and show in your little way, the kind of grace and mercy that God has taught you.)
5. Describe obedience and loyalty in your own words. Complete these sentences.
 - a. Obedience is to _____.
 - b. Loyalty is to _____.

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Discuss the memory verse: "If anyone want to become my followers, let them deny themselves, and take up their cross and follow me." (Mark 8:34)
2. *Think-Group-Share*. Divide the class into two groups. Assign the first group to discuss their ideas and answers on the ways they can obey Jesus. The other group is assigned to discuss ways they can be loyal to Jesus. Give them 10 minutes to talk and discuss their answers. Let both groups use the same table.
 - a. First Group. Ways to show obedience to
 - b. Second Group: Ways to show loyalty to Jesus Christ Jesus Christ.

Areas	Your Actions
1. Relationships (with your parents, peers, church leaders, and pastors etc.)	
2. Church Involvements (e.g. Worship, Bible Study, Sunday School, Evangelism)	
3. School/Home	

3. Conclude by coming back together as a whole group and have each group share their answers.

G. Closing Worship

1. Memory verse: "...If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." (Mark 8:34b)
2. Offering
3. Closing song: "Trust and Obey" (HFJ # 312) last two stanzas
4. Closing prayer: "Dear God, we commit to you our lives with the desire to obey and be loyal to you in all the days of our lives. Help us. Strengthen us. Fill us with Your Spirit. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."

October 15, 2017

8th Sunday in Kingdomtide

Humility as a Kingdom Value

Old Testament: Proverbs 11:2 (NRSV)

²When pride comes, then comes disgrace; but wisdom is with the humble.

New Testament: Mark 10:35-45 (NRSV)

The Request of James and John

³⁵James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, 'Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.' ³⁶And he said to them, 'What is it you want me to do for you?' ³⁷And they said to him, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.'

³⁸But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?'

³⁹They replied, 'We are able.' Then Jesus said to them, 'The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; ⁴⁰but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.' ⁴¹When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. ⁴²So Jesus called them and said to them, 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. ⁴³But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

General Concept: The church governs by humble service.

Key Concept: The church shows humility by not feeling proud, superior and inferior.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Although ascribed to Solomon in the beginning of the Book of Proverbs, it is clear from later chapters that he was not the only author of the book. Proverbs was written to give "prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young" (1:4) "and to make the wise even wiser" (1:5). Its emphasis is on instructing the young and guiding them in a way of life that yields rewarding ends. Although Proverbs is a practical book dealing with the art of living, it bases its practical wisdom solidly on the fear of the Lord imbued with knowledge and lessons acquired from experience and observation on the realities and truth about life. Throughout the book, reverence for God and reliance on God are set forth as the path to life, prosperity, and security.

The two-line saying in Proverbs 11:2 clearly gives us an idea of the kind of end result that yields from two different traits. Pride will surely result to disgrace and that humility would result to wisdom. Here, the humble acknowledgment of one's worth in the face of the Giver of all that we are would result to wisdom. Indeed, humility even among the wisest and most educated and most powerful has been acknowledged as the trait that really result to

true wisdom. The truly wise are the ones who remain humble before the giver and source of such gift and would never manifest any tinge of pride and arrogance before his or her own fellows right in the community.

One important emphasis in the gospel according to Mark is on discipleship wherein Jesus would usually predict His own passion and death. His disciples would then contradict Him and so He would usually follow it with either direct or lengthy discussion on discipleship.

This material in Mark 10:35-45 is part of a narrative that took place after Jesus predicted His death. Earlier, (vv. 32-34) he tells us of an occasion wherein as they journeyed to Jerusalem, Jesus predicted His eventual suffering and death and His resurrection-this was actually the third time that Jesus predicted His death. This passage, parallel to 9:33-34, deals with true greatness and both follow a prediction of Jesus' suffering and death. Both also show how spiritually undiscerning the disciples were. Verse 45 is a key verse in Mark's gospel. Jesus came to this world as a servant-indeed, the Servant-who would suffer and die for our redemption as Isaiah clearly predicted (Isaiah 52:13-53:12). The son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as ransom for many. Thus, Jesus suffered and gave his life to release us from the bondage to sin and death.

As a Church, we have been given the opportunity to humbly discern our worth as God's children and God's representative on earth. It is therefore our task to embody that humility in doing service for the rest of God's people. If we truly believe and follow Christ, then we are to embody Christ's humility in living and in doing and most of all, in serving the people whom Jesus had always cared for.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

As a human virtue, humility shines most brightly in the context of a world that worships power. But it suffers abuse when it is perceived as a posture of subservience to the powerful. On the other hand, the kind of humility implanted by the Spirit already manifests something of the emerging kingdom of God-the taming of human powers in the service of the little ones. All power is from God, but it is used either to dominate others or to serve the lowly. Genuine humility is characteristic of those who use power to lift up the lowly and to bring down the high and mighty.

Humility is not a monopoly of those with high status but is equally a virtue of the lowly. The example of Christ who stooped to the level of a slave to be in solidarity with humankind in the state of sin is addressed to members who wanted to carry over to the church the privileges they enjoy in society. They ought to follow Christ's example cited by Paul in the Philippians. On the other hand, the declaration of Mary, the humble peasant girl whom God chose to be Jesus' mother, is directed to members whose low self-esteem hinders their full participation in the church.

Humility is a self-regard and an attitude towards others. Feelings of inferiority does not produce humility. On the contrary, people with a low self-regard tend to overcompensate by thinking of themselves too highly and projecting an arrogant air. Neither is humility condescending and patronizing towards those perceived to be inferior. Rather, it is not a particular trait that one tries to cultivate or force upon one's self. For humble persons are

not self-conscious in relation to others but are focused on responding to a situation without regard to their position, status or standing in society. In other words, being humble or proud is a matter of indifference to them. Genuine humility is exemplified by Jesus who looked at his enemies in the eye and regarded children and marginalized people as natural heirs of the kingdom.

Objectives:

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

1. retell the story about humility that Jesus taught to His disciples;
2. discuss disgrace as the effect of pride and wisdom as the effect of humility;
3. enumerate ways that can show humble acts of believers; and
4. commit to the church's programs of humble service to others.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), worksheets, printout (Proud vs. Humble)

Anticipating the next lesson: Prepare for each learner a list of all the nine Kingdom values as fruit of the Holy Spirit and the corresponding biblical references for each Kingdom value.

Learning Experiences:*A. Opening Worship*

1. Welcome time: As the learners enter the room, greet them with a BIG SMILE.
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, thank you for the gift of life. Thank you for teaching us to obey you. We pray for your blessing and your help to enable us to serve others. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen."
3. Opening song: "Be Now My Vision" (HFJ # 275) first two stanzas

B. Getting Ready

1. Divide the class into three groups. Give each group a Bible, a hymnal or song book, strips of paper, markers or crayons. Prepare paper cutouts of nine fruits with each of the Kingdom values (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility or gentleness, self-control or discipline) written on them.
2. Flash the fruit cutouts and let each group write as many songs that they know that show the Kingdom values or words similar to it. Examples: love, lovely, loveliest; joy, joyful, joyous, jolly, enjoy, rejoice; peace, peaceful; patience, patiently; kindness, kind, kindred, kind-hearted; goodness, good, better, best, good-hearted; faithfulness, faith, faithfully; humility, humble, humbly; and self-control, discipline.
3. Assess the songs listed by each group. Count the songs and the biggest number of songs listed is declared the winner.
4. Tell the class to share how they felt as they did the exercise. Was each group proud of their work or are they humbled by what the number of songs that they have listed?

C. Learning Time

1. Let the class read in unison the two biblical references. Present the themes being

expressed in the two scriptural references.

a. *Proverbs 11:2. God promises to resist the proud and give grace to the humble.*

b. *Mark 10:35-45. If we want to be great in God's kingdom, we must serve others.*

2. Form three groups. Distribute to each group a copy of any one of these short notes. Let the members talk about it and write some insights on the notes that they have Received

a. *Pride results in disgrace and humility results in wisdom.* Pride is defined as a conceited opinion of one's qualities, talents, assets, or accomplishments that result to a feeling of superiority over others. Related verses are: Daniel 4:37; Job 40:11-12; Proverbs 6:16-17; and Psalm 39:11; 68:2. Today pride is called self-esteem or self-confidence that helps persons help solve their problems. Pride causes folly that lead to shame. Proud persons presume to be always right so they reject counsel to correct them and show disrespect for those in authority. When pride prevails in the hearts and minds of persons, they find it difficult to serve others.

Humility leads to wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to think and act utilizing knowledge, experience, understanding, common sense, and insight. A humble person does not trust his or her own knowledge but relies on God's word. Humble persons esteem the advice of others, cheerfully accept correction, quickly confess his or her sins, and change their lives accordingly. Related biblical references are: Matthew 11:25-27; Proverbs 16:5; I Peter 5:5-6; and Luke 14:11.

Jesus Christ is the classic example of having the greatest humility and wisdom when Jesus obeyed God's will. When we abide in Christ, we will benefit from his hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3).

b. *Wisdom, as a result of humility, should be sought for.* There are ways of finding wisdom.

- 1) Read Proverbs 8:10-11 and Proverbs 4:3-8, 17:24. Finding wisdom is a conscious effort.
- 2) Read Proverbs 1:7, 9:10. We find wisdom from God.
- 3) Read again Proverbs 11:2. When we are proud, we do not feel dependent on God.
- 4) Read Proverbs 19:20. We are wise when we are willing to be transformed by God.
- 5) Read Proverbs 18:15. To be wise is to study the word of God because we can be aware how little we know.
- 6) Read Proverbs 13:2. We need to fellowship with each other as we live in community.
- 7) Read 1 Corinthians 1:30. God is the road to wisdom. Listening to and studying God's word will lead us to the truth.

c. *To be great is to serve others.* Jesus is our model of greatness because Jesus came to serve and not to be served. Everything we can do to serve others has

been given to us by God.

One way to serve others is to encourage them. Saying kind words about others is a good way of building them up. Thinking about ourselves less and thinking of other people more can help us as we encourage others. Identify somebody you intend to encourage this week.

Read Mark 10:35-45 again. Discuss the request of James and John in terms of pride and humility. James and John wanted to be great in the wrong way. Discuss the response of Jesus in terms of humility, gentleness, and dependence on God. Jesus taught his followers that a person who serves others is an indicator of greatness. Focus on the concept that anyone who meets others' needs is great in the sight of God.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Call on each group to share their insights. Discuss these insights as they relate to humility as a Kingdom value.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: How can the church show humility in its programs? (The church shows humility by not feeling proud, superior and inferior.)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Present the following table excerpted from "Proud, Unbroken People and Humble, Broken People" by Nancy Leigh DeMoss.

Characteristics of Proud, Unbroken People	Characteristics of Humble, Unbroken People
1. Focus on the failure of others	1. Overwhelmed with a sense of their own spiritual need
2. Self-righteous Have a critical, fault-finding spirit Look at own life faults through a telescope but at others with a microscope	2. Compassionate Forgiving Look for the best in others
3. Look down on others	3. Esteem all others better than self
4. Independent/self-sufficient spirit	4. Dependent spirit Recognize need for others
5. Have to prove that they're right	5. Willing to yield the right to be right
6. Desire to be served	6. Motivated to serve others
7. Driven to be recognized/appreciated	7. Sense of unworthiness Thrilled to be used at all
8. Wounded when others are promoted and they are overlooked	8. Eager for others to get credit Rejoice when others are lifted up
9. Think of what they can do for God	9. Know that they have nothing to offer God

10. Feel confident in how much they know	10. Humbled by how much they have to learn
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2. Tell the class to evaluate themselves using the table above. Let them answer these questions.
 - a. Which of the qualities of proud, unbroken people do you think are present in you?
 - b. Which of the qualities of humble, broken people that you need to work it out?
3. List at least three activities that can show humble acts of believers using as your reference the characteristics of humble, unbroken people.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "Be Now My Vision" (HFJ # 275) last two stanzas
3. Closing prayer: "Dear God, we want to grow in you. Teach us be humble by serving you and your people. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."



October 22, 2017

9th Sunday in Kingdomtide

Discipline as a Kingdom Value

Old Testament:

Proverbs 29:11 (NRSV)

¹¹ A fool gives full vent to anger, but the wise quietly holds it back.

1 Samuel 21:1-8 (NRSV)

David and the Holy Bread

¹David came to Nob to the priest Ahimelech. Ahimelech came trembling to meet David, and said to him, 'Why are you alone, and no one with you?' ²David said to the priest Ahimelech, 'The king has charged me with a matter, and said to me, "No one must know anything of the matter about which I send you, and with which I have charged you." I have made an appointment with the young men for such and such a place. ³Now then, what have you at hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever is here.' ⁴The priest answered David, "I have no ordinary bread at hand, only holy bread—provided that the young men have kept themselves from women." ⁵David answered the priest, "Indeed, women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition; the vessels of the young men are holy even when it is a common journey; how much more today will their vessels be holy?" ⁶So the priest gave him the holy bread; for there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence, which is removed from before the LORD to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away. ⁷Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD; his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's shepherds. ⁸David said to Ahimelech, 'Is there no spear or sword here with you? I did not bring my sword or my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste.'

New Testament:

1 Corinthians 9:25 (NRSV)

²⁵Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable garland, but we, an imperishable one.

General Concept: The church adheres to values and principles rather than personal interests to prevail.

Key Concept: The church teaches us to abide by the rules by acting accordingly.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

In 1 Samuel 21:1-8, we see David fleeing to the house of God in Nob where the high priest Ahimelech is in-charge. David had to flee from the presence of King Saul because of conflict. Jonathan the son of Saul who was the best of friend of David came to help David flee for he knew that Saul has planned to kill David. When David arrived at the temple, he and his men were hungry, but there was no food in the temple except the holy bread at the altar. David and his men were given the holy bread because there was no other food to eat.

In this story, we see how David thinks primarily of the needs of his people more than the need to observe the ritual obligations of his religious tradition. He also puts the welfare and interests of his own people more than his own personal needs in his search for food to feed them. He exercises a great measure of freedom in decision-making for the sake of ensuring that the people who follow him will not go hungry. In this sense, he exudes a measure of spiritual discipline that is primarily focused on the welfare of others, even at the cost of breaking the law.

David's act of seeking food for his men at great risk to his own personal reputation is a bold act of selfless disciplined leadership that truly cares for others.

Conflict in our Church is a very well-known reality and leadership most often is at the heart of the matter. When leadership does not manifest qualities of being selfless, of caring and attending first to the needs of those who are depending on such leadership, conflict will only escalate instead of being resolved. The church today needs leaders who would reflect the qualities of such kind of spiritual discipline, putting aside one's own interests and prioritizing first and foremost the concerns, needs, and interests of those who placed him or her in such position. This is the mark of discipline of a true disciple of our Lord, one who cares and would always think of the people being led before ever thinking of one's own concerns and even of one's own future. Like David, for the sake of the people who are hungry, she/he would be willing to bend the rules, reinterpret traditions in the spirit of freedom just to meet their needs and improve their welfare.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Like the widely diverse Hebrew people that went out of Egyptian slavery to become one nation, the church is an assembly of people coming from many different backgrounds. What keeps the church united as a community is church discipline, which Calvin calls the sinews that bind the church. Every member must learn to submit to the care, teachings, judgment, command, and leadership of the church.

Christian spirituality increases as self-interest loses the power to control behavior. This is accomplished through church discipline in which members gain strength in suppressing and eventually displacing self-interest from being the decisive determiner of action, which would be a turning point in the journey towards spiritual perfection.

The church's spiritual maturity may be gauged to the extent that the members subordinate personal interests in order to achieve unity for the support of the institutional and organization goals of the church. Hidden agenda and vested interest are brought to light and set aside to allow an objective and honest discussion of issues. Another mark of growth in spiritual maturity is seen in the way differences and conflicts of opinion are handled and resolved. Differences in perception and reasoning are often unavoidable but where there are fair and participatory mechanisms of sorting out the differences, the right judgment would eventually come to light. Exercise in church discipline serves as a rehearsal for citizenship in the kingdom.

Objectives:

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

1. define discipline and self-control;

2. tell the importance of truth as a form of discipline;
3. explain that self-control is the result of discipline; and
4. make a self-assessment of one's degree of discipline based on their personal disciplined acts.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), worksheets of the nine Kingdom values as fruit of the Holy Spirit and the corresponding biblical references for each Kingdom value, commitment pad

Learning Experiences:

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: Dear God, thank you for the gift of life. Thank you for teaching us to obey you. We pray that you bless and help us to be able to serve others. This we ask in your Son's name, Jesus. Amen.
3. Opening song: "Living for Jesus" (Hymnal of a Faith Journey, # 289, first two stanzas)

B. Getting Ready

1. Discuss the following underlined words:
 - a. Anger and rage. Anger is a normal emotion. Rage is a result of anger that may lead to destructive acts such as screaming, cursing, breaking objects or hitting.
 - b. Discipline is a form of training that molds, corrects, or perfects the moral character. It is a behavior that shows willingness to obey rules and orders. Discipline comes from the root word 'discipulus', the Latin word for pupil. The word discipline connotes education (study, governing one's behavior and instruction). A disciple of Jesus is a follower of Jesus. The fruit of discipline is self-control.
 - c. Self-control is the ability to stop and think before acting. It is the ability to remain goal-oriented in the face of temptation. It is gained by obeying rules or orders. It is a form of training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character. Someone said, "The wise person is self-controlled."
 - d. Winning a race. Purpose and discipline are requirements for winning a race. The apostle Paul likens Christians to athletes in a race running toward the heavenly reward. He says that Christians need to do hard work, practice self-denial, and do grueling preparation to win the race.

C. Learning Time

1. Tell the class to read Proverbs 29:11 and 1 Corinthians 9:25 in unison.
2. Divide the class into two small groups to discuss the verses using the given points of reference under each.
3. After the discussion. let each group study and analyze the verse, lists down their life experiences related to their study, and their personal commitment related to the verse.
4. Assign the first group Proverbs 29:11: "A fool gives full vent to anger, but the wise quietly holds it back."

- a. The Bible seems to distinguish between anger and rage. It considers anger not sinful in and of itself (Ephesians 4:26: "In your anger, do not sin."). There are cases in the Bible where anger is illustrated (God causing the Great Flood and getting angry with the Israelites who built the golden calf and Jesus driving away the money changers out of the temple). But when a person is unable to control his or her anger, it becomes rage which has the tendency to do destructive acts. So King Solomon advises us to be **wise** (translated as managing one's temper, doing things consistently, and sticking to spiritual devotions); and not to give in to anger and **to hold anger back** (translated as having self-control).
- b. Self-control benefits from good habits of **wisdom forming** (disciplined acts of prayer, Bible study, and worship) that Christians develop even at an early age. **The disciplines of a Christian result in a blessed life.** When we give up doing something we want in order to do what God wants, God is glorified and we are blessed. If our motive is to please ourselves and not God, our discipline becomes self-punishment. **A Christian who is disciplined and has self-control makes good choices in life.**
- 5. Assign the second group 1 Corinthians 9:25: "Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable garland, but we, an imperishable one."
- c. Paul exhorts us to be **spiritually mature**. He says that we should train ourselves or be trained to win. To act accordingly, Christians must have discipline. These are some spiritual practices that can discipline us in order to win the heavenly reward: Bible study (studying the Word of God that will help us to do what God wants and to enable us to face life and conquer temptations); Fellowship together with the members of the Body of Christ (expression of one's faith and love to God); Prayer (a powerful weapon of following Christ's example); Service (serving others especially the least of the least).
- d. Christians focus on a **Spirit-led life** by practicing meditation or silence before God; by practicing secret generosity; by living simply; and by complete obedience to God's will. Remember that we are not alone in our race because **God is always there for us in our faith journey.**

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Ask each group to present their work before the class. Remind them to talk about the verse, discuss their study and analysis, give examples of their life experiences including that of their church involvement; and their personal commitment. Then let the class write their resolution in the commitment pad.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

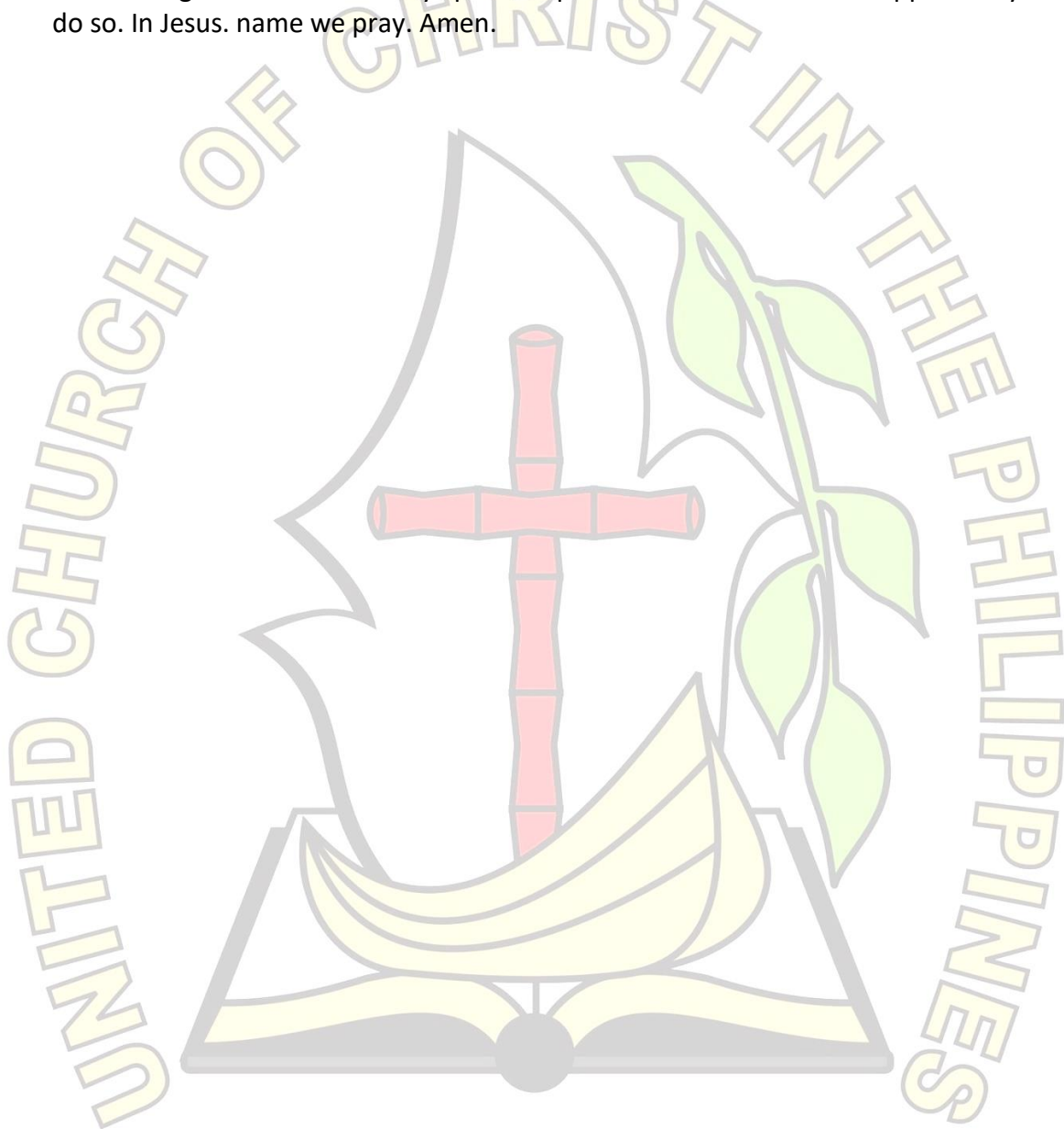
Ask: How does the church teach us to abide by God's rules?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

Since this Sunday marks the end of the study of the nine Kingdom values as fruit of the Holy Spirit, tell the class to study the table on pages 124 to 125 and make their personal comments on it.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing songs: "Living for Jesus" (Hymnal of a Faith Journey, # 289) last two stanzas and "Time to Change"
3. Closing prayer: Lord, we pray for strength and wisdom to live our lives by manifesting the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Help us to commit to take the opportunity to do so. In Jesus. name we pray. Amen.



October 29, 2017

10th Sunday in Kingdomtide

Continuing Transformation of the Church as a Kingdom Value

Old Testament:

2 Kings 22:11-20; 23:1-3 (NRSV)

¹¹When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes. ¹²Then the king commanded the priest Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Achbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the secretary, and the king's servant Asaiah, saying, ¹³'Go, inquire of the LORD for me, for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our ancestors did not obey the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.' ¹⁴So the priest Hilkiah, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to the prophetess Huldah the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; she resided in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter, where they consulted her. ¹⁵She declared to them, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Tell the man who sent you to me, ¹⁶Thus says the LORD, I will indeed bring disaster on this place and on its inhabitants—all the words of the book that the king of Judah has read. ¹⁷Because they have abandoned me and have made offerings to other gods, so that they have provoked me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore my wrath will be kindled against this place, and it will not be quenched. ¹⁸But as to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall you say to him, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Regarding the words that you have heard, ¹⁹because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the LORD, when you heard how I spoke against this place, and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and because you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, says the LORD.

²⁰Therefore, I will gather you to your ancestors, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring on this place.' They took the message back to the king.

Josiah's Reformation

¹Then the king directed that all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem should be gathered to him.

²The king went up to the house of the LORD, and with him went all the people of Judah, all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests, the prophets, and all the people, both small and great; he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD. ³The king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD, keeping his commandments, his decrees, and his statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. All the people joined in the covenant.

New Testament:

Romans 14:17 (NRSV)

¹⁷For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

General Concept: The UCCP as heir of the Reformation believes in the continuing transformation of the church.

Key Concept: The church continues to teach us about our reformed faith.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

1 and 2 Kings were actually one literary book called in Hebrew simply as "Kings". There is no clear statement of purpose or theme. Although a reflection on its contents reveals that it seemed to have been arranged as a sequel to the history that we can read in 1 and 2 Samuel - a story of kingship regulated by covenant. Now, these books suggest that it was written to explain to a people in exile that the reason for their condition of humiliation was their stubborn persistence in breaking their covenant with God.

2 Kings 22:11-20, 22:1-3 would tell us of a narrative wherein the king (Josiah) took heed of the call to repent and be transformed from being sinful in breaking the covenant that their fathers before them have done. As a symbol of his remorse, he tore his kingly robe and gathered everyone to renew the covenant. The response of the Josiah by tearing off his robe as an expression of repentance was a step for them to be spared from the wrath of God that awaits his people. And God saw the repentant heart and allowed renewal in their covenant making between God and His people (Kings 23:1-3). This event was followed by a nationwide movement for reformation and renewal of the covenant faith in Yahweh alone. This is in reaction to the growing influence of foreign gods and idols that had proliferated all over the land of Judah. The faith of Israel had actually been quite compromised with the entry of other religious traditions coming in from more advanced nations and civilizations that had imposed colonial domination upon them for many years already including the current superpower then, Assyria.

In reality, the call to reform in the time of Josiah may be seen as a radical step towards a major renewal movement that has also a strong political implication. In reasserting their original covenant faith in Yahweh as the only God for Israel to worship and serve, the nation in effect, was launching a strong nationalist movement led by the king, a movement popularly participated in by the people intending to reclaim their freedom from colonial masters from any religious and even political control of any superpower. A new religion or religions representing foreign gods and deities with distinct and different religious traditions and assumptions have sprouted and have become popular with the people in Judah. Such religions may actually be serving as representatives of more powerful and dominant nations or civilizations giving and proclaiming very impressive messages that may actually be distorting the very message of the original faith of the people leading them to divert their attention away from the real issues of life and concrete issues about survival, justice and righteous and ethical living to a rather different focus and direction towards a more abstract, ritualistic, materialistic and personal understanding of religion. This has been called and denounced by the prophets as plain idolatry, the worship of or giving allegiance to deities other than Yahweh and adopting perspectives and values in life contrary to the original Yahweh or covenant ideals. This has always been a major threat to any society being dominated by more powerful and more advanced cultures and civilizations. This is what the prophets, priests and leaders of the faith always to guard always in leading their people

towards real faith renewal even and especially in times like these.

The Letter of Paul to the Romans. Paul in this letter begins to survey the spiritual condition of all people. He sees the Jews and Gentiles alike are sinners and in need of salvation. But salvation from being condemned has been provided by God through Jesus Christ and his redemptive work on the cross. This, however can only be achieved and received through faith—a principle with which God has always dealt with humankind starting with Israel. And thus, receiving and experiencing salvation must be seen in practical ways, both in the church and in the world. As we have learned in the previous lesson, Paul in this letter aims for all the believers to know that restoration to God's graciousness and reconciliation of this world with its creator God is achievable when Christians will open their doors to the real gospel, be immovable and unashamed bearers of that gospel proclaiming and not condemning others who also opened their doors to the reality and power of the righteousness of God.

Romans 14:17 gives us an idea of the kind of kingdom that Paul was talking about. This kingdom (which may now also be reinstated as "kingdom") of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, for to be concerned with those trivial matters is to miss completely the essence of Christian living - righteousness and justice in living one's life and in relating with others. Paul's concern for moral and ethical dimension of the Christian life stands out in all his letters: righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

These passages remind us as a church that the road to real transformation is the acceptance of our weaknesses and limitations as mere creatures and from there, to move on to the realization of our creator God's aim for real and holistic transformation. The Church, being God's representative here on earth then, has the responsibility to take the first step in the call for transformation having caught sight of this gospel of transformation and redemption through Jesus Christ and is now being given the opportunity to do better as it strives to be continuously reformed and live as a truly reforming and transforming church.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

The Spirit renews life. The Spirit vivifies everything that suffers from corruption and decay. The Spirit is God's power to transform the church of Jesus Christ into a new creation. Although the church is a spiritual community, it is a human institution that's given to weaknesses and will remain so until Jesus' return in glory. Like everything earthly, the church is also subjected to corruption and decay. The Spirit's presence in the church is a given but it must constantly breathe in the power of the Spirit in order to constantly revitalize itself.

The Reformation motto, "The church reformed, always reforming" has both a historical and theological explanations. Underlying the medieval church's corrupt practices and moral bankruptcy was a grievous fundamental error in its doctrines of faith. The protest movement to cleanse the institutional church attacked the theological roots of its very existence. The reactionary church countered that the church does not err when it speaks from its chair as teacher of the faith, *ex cathedra*, because it is the holy body of Christ. The split became inevitable when the Reformers developed a doctrine that totally rejected the church's claim of infallibility and replaced it with the idea that the church, like an individual Christian, is both just and sinner, *simul justus et peccatur*. Hence, the church's journey in sanctification

requires continuing reform and renewal.

This Protestant teaching has served as a perpetual critique to check the church from veering away from the norms set by Christ himself. Christ has sent his Spirit, the Paraclete, to the church to intercede for God's forgiveness and to guide it to truth. In response to the Spirit, the church should install practical mechanisms that would forestall the fossilization of its institutions and the subordination of freedom to hierarchical arbitrariness. If and when this happens, the Reformers' revolutionary and iconoclastic fervor should be released to set the church free from a self-imposed bondage.

Objectives:

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

2. explain the meaning of the Reformation motto, "The church reformed, always reforming";
3. infer the changes that happen to a person when he or she has a new life in Christ; and
4. formulate a personal motto as having a renewed life in Christ in one's faith journey

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), worksheets

Learning Experiences:*A. Opening Worship*

1. Welcome time: As the learners enter the room, greet them.
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, we praise your name. We thank you for the new life you have given to all of us. We thank you for the church for teaching us Your truth. Help us now, as we learn from Your words through this Sunday school class. In Your name, we pray. Amen."
3. Opening song: The Church's One Foundation (HFJ # 242) first two stanzas

B. Getting Ready

1. Divide the class into triads. Give each group jumbled letters and have them rearrange these letters to form the three words: TRANSFORMATION, RENEWAL, and REFORMATION. The first group to complete the work is the winner:
2. Process the activity and talk about how each group was able to decipher the words. Call each group randomly and ask them what they think about any of these words.
3. Remind the class that this Sunday is Reformation Sunday and the theme is the continuing transformation of the Church.

C. Learning Time

1. Tell the class to read the biblical references responsively.
2. After discussing Josiah's reformation program for Judah, present the high points of the Reformation movement using the following points of discussion.
 - a. The Protestant Reformation was initiated by Martin Luther and continued by John Calvin, Huldrych Zwingli, and other early Protestant Reformers in 16th century Europe. Before Luther, there were other attempts to reform the Catholic Church by the reformers Jan Hus, Peter Waldo, and John Wycliffe. However, it

was in October 31, 1517 when Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses at the Cathedral of Wittenburg, Saxony that started the Reformation Movement.

- b. Among the notable issues were the selling of indulgences, the infallibility of the Pope wherein the Pope has no authority over purgatory, and that the Catholic doctrine of the merits of the saints had no foundation in the gospel.
- c. The Protestant position is the incorporation of the following statements that sum up what lies at the heart of Protestant belief:
 - 1) By **Grace** alone (*Sola Gratia*). The salvation of human beings is a free gift from God, by God's grace alone and not through any merit done by a Christian (Ephesians 2:8-9).
 - 2) Through **Faith** alone (*Sola Fide*). We are judged righteous in the sight of God purely on the basis of our faith. The atoning sacrifice of Christ leads to righteousness being imputed to us as sinners through a legal declaration by God (Galatians 3:11).
 - 3) In **Christ** alone (*Solus Christus*). Christ is the one Mediator between God and human beings and our salvation is accomplished only through His death and resurrection (1 Timothy 2:5). Every believer is a priest before God, with immediate access to him for the forgiveness of sins (1 Peter 2:9)
 - 4) According to **Scripture** alone (*Sola Scriptura*). Scripture alone is the only infallible source of divine revelation and the final authority for matters of faith and practice. This tenet does not mean that all truth is contained in the Bible but all people need to know about salvation planned by God for all believers that is found in the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
 - 5) For **God's Glory** alone (*Soli Deo Gloria*). The Christian life is seen in accordance to God's will and for God's glory (1 Peter 4:11).
3. Tell the class to read Romans 14:17. Encourage the students to see its significance in the light of the continuing transformation of the church.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Call on some students to share their thoughts on the following:
 - a. "The church reformed, always reforming"
 - b. "The Holy Spirit is God's power in transforming the church. Though the church is community of faith, but it is also subject of corruption and decay. The Spirit of God gives breath in the life of the church for continued transformation."
2. During Josiah's reformation of the people, he was guided in the significance of the Word of God found in the Scriptures. Tell the class to comment on how the church today reforms her members using the principles in the Josiah model.
 - a. God's Word is Light.
 - b. God's Word cleanses.
 - c. God's Word is Eternal.
 - d. God's Word requires a response.
3. Read Paul's description of the kingdom of God. What are the chief characteristics of the kingdom of God?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

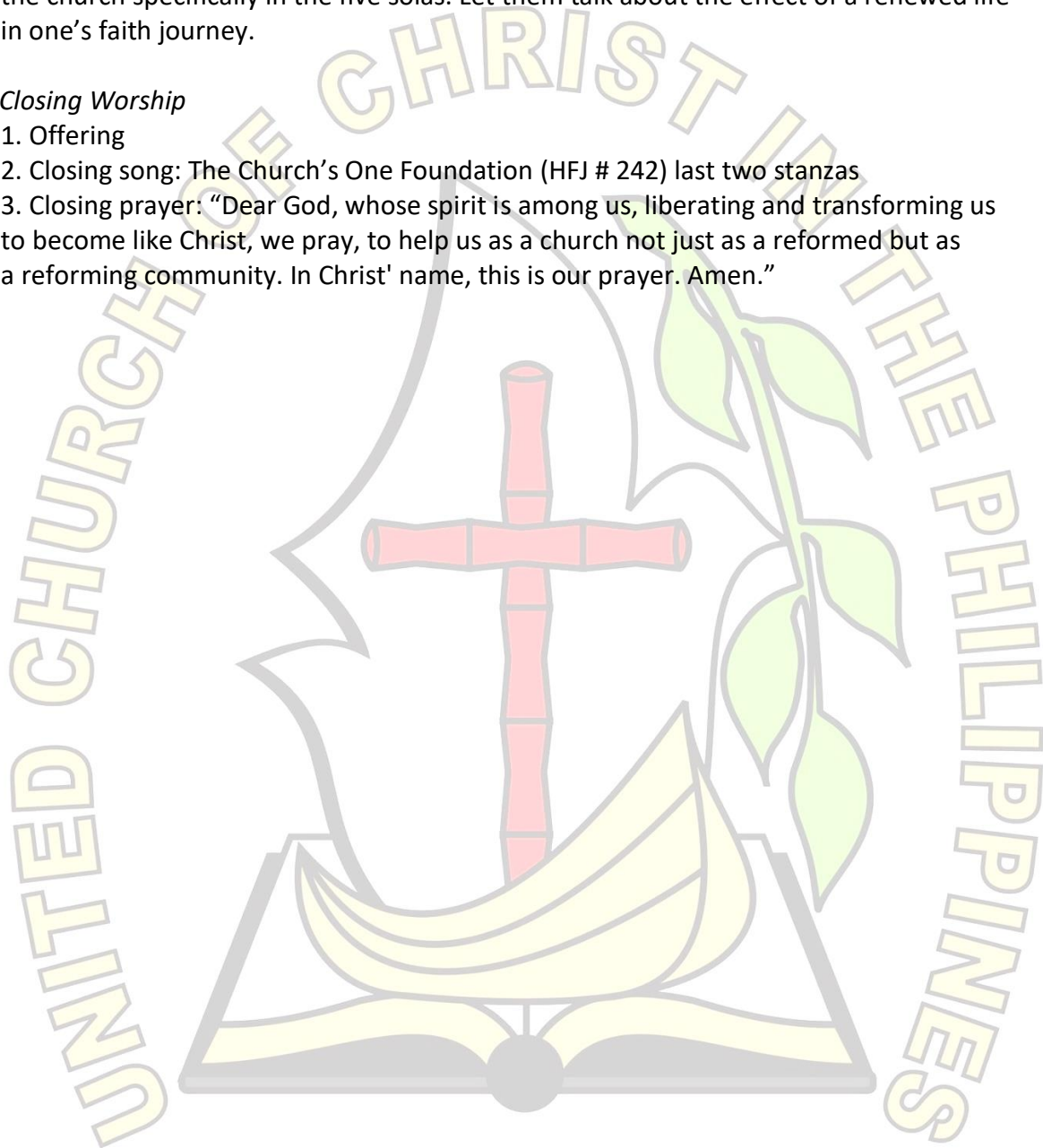
Ask: How does the church continue to teach her members about our reformed faith?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

Ask the class to formulate their personal motto related to the reformed tradition of the church specifically in the five solas. Let them talk about the effect of a renewed life in one's faith journey.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: The Church's One Foundation (HFJ # 242) last two stanzas
3. Closing prayer: "Dear God, whose spirit is among us, liberating and transforming us to become like Christ, we pray, to help us as a church not just as a reformed but as a reforming community. In Christ' name, this is our prayer. Amen."



November 5, 2017

11th Sunday in Kingdomtide

Pastoral Formation: Its Role in Kingdom Building

Old Testament:

1 Samuel 3:1-19 (NRSV)

Samuel's Calling and Prophetic Activity

¹Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread. ²At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; ³the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. ⁴Then the LORD called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' and he said, 'Here I am!' ⁵and ran to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call; lie down again.' So he went and lay down. ⁶The LORD called again, 'Samuel!' Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call, my son; lie down again.' ⁷Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. ⁸The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. ⁹Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, "Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening."' ¹⁰So Samuel went and lay down in his place. ¹¹Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.' ¹²Then the LORD said to Samuel, 'See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. ¹³On that day I will fulfil against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. ¹⁴For I have told him that I am about to punish his house for ever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. ¹⁵Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever.'

¹⁶Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. ¹⁷But Eli called Samuel and said, 'Samuel, my son.' He said, 'Here I am.' ¹⁸Eli said, 'What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you.' ¹⁹So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, 'It is the LORD; let him do what seems good to him.' ²⁰As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.

New Testament:

2 Timothy 1:11-14 (NRSV)

¹¹For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, ¹²and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him. ¹³Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

General Concept: The church is served by a ministry that grows with the congregation under the guidance of ecclesiastical leaders.

Key Concept: The church does the ministerial task through teaching, healing, and preaching under the guidance of the pastors.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

1 Samuel 3:1-19 narrates the calling of the young boy Samuel who was then under the supervision of Eli, at that time, the priest in charge of the sanctuary in Shiloh. The monarchy was yet to be set up under Saul, c. 1020-925 B.C. At this time Eli was already not physically well, because of his old age, his vision was already getting dim but still he continues to perform his duties as a priest and judge, and the little boy Samuel was serving as his assistant. Samuel was called by God, through a call—a vision many times that evening, a voice was calling out his name but he could not grasp what it meant. This is why every time he hears the voice calling his name, he would run to Eli asking if he had called him. However, Eli the priest eventually discerned that Samuel was being called by God. Samuel had to accept the call and obey the voice no matter how difficult was the task given to him, to be the one to replace his ageing and weak teacher Eli. He had to be stronger as a leader than Eli in spirit and in his faith in leading his people Israel for the rest of his life.

Christians, too, are recipients of a calling from God which we have to take seriously and obey with all our hearts. We need to heed and follow the voice of God according to His purpose and plan, and whatever gifts of the Spirit we do have, we should use it to serve and glorify God. Then, we too, can become stronger and effective in our ministry just like Samuel who walked and obeyed the will of God for his life even if he had to be involved in a radical replacement of leadership in his own community.

2 Timothy 1:11-14 is a letter of Paul to Timothy which emphasizes the need for the disciple to remain faithful in holding on the "standard of sound teaching," guarding well the "good treasure" entrusted to him and to others who will follow Timothy for the proper nurturing, equipping and empowering of the people of God, enabling them to respond in faith and obedience and in a way that is fit to the needs and demands of their context, encouraging them always to remain faithful to their calling. It is a reminder to pastors, lay workers, lay leaders and members of the church who are all called to remain faithful as a household of God. Considering that we are called by God and not men, we ought to follow the standard ordinances and statutes of God as proclaimed and taught in His church. It is required for those in the household of God even if they believe they are already doing the will of God, we always need to be faithful to Him even in the little things that are entrusted to us in doing the ministry, work, and mission of the church.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and other End-users

The Spirit pours out spiritual gifts, charismata, to the church to be apportioned to the members for building up the body of Christ. Among the various gifts is that of leadership which is exercised by members who are set-apart for that special ministry. There are distinctions in roles and functions within this special ministry (refer to the UCCP Manual for

Church Workers).

The clergy constitutes the leading aspect of the special ministry. Members of the clergy provide leadership to individual congregations in all aspects of their life and work. The clergy is set apart so that they may be able to devote their mind, time, and energy in the service of the congregation. On the other hand, the members have the duty to provide for their material security so that their pastors may not be distracted to the material cares of the world. Both sides must aim for a full extent of this reciprocal relationship. Furthermore, the relationship between pastor and congregation yields mutual benefits at another plane: the pastors grow in faith and in their capacity to serve as they lead and care for them. The older members have a vast reservoir of experience for the pastors to learn from. The members' generous willingness to bare their hearts to the pastor opens up windows to the soul that reveal the mysteries of life, thereby enhancing their pastoral capabilities.

Objectives:

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

1. retell how Samuel was called by God;
2. relate the calling of Samuel with the calling of the church workers;
3. identify the church workers in their local church and describe how church workers prepare themselves in relation to Paul's instruction to Timothy as they play their role in the lifeworks of the church; and
4. Demonstrate one's appreciation to the church workers through creative ways.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), worksheets, piece of paper, pen, pencil

Learning Experiences:

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, thank you for bringing us into this place of worship. Today, we celebrate Church Worker's Sunday. We pray to bless your word as we listen and learn from it together with our teacher. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen."
3. Opening song: "Here I Am, Lord"

I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard My people cry.
 All who dwell in dark and sin, My hand will save.
 I, who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.
 Who will bear My light to them? Whom shall I send?
 Chorus: Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord? I have heard You calling in the night.
 I will go Lord, if You lead me. I will hold Your people in my heart.
 I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have born my peoples' pain.
 I have wept for love of them. They turn away.
 I will break their hearts of stone. Give them hearts for love alone.
 I will speak My word to them, Whom shall I send?
 Repeat chorus.

B. Getting Ready

1. Prepare the class to play the "Mirror" game. Let the class form dyads.
2. Tell the pairs that one will play mirror and the other one will do what the mirror exactly does. If the second one makes a mistake in doing the same thing as the mirror, their turn is over. Instruct each pair to stand face-to-face about 4 feet apart.
3. After all the dyads had a chance to play the game, process the activity. Ask the class which role is easy to do, being a mirror, or imitating the mirror. Let the children share their experiences.
4. Elicit from the class the difficulty of being someone that they are not. Have them recognize that God made us different for a purpose in our lives. Encourage them to discern their life purpose by studying and meditating on God's word and living it out in accordance to God's will.

C. Learning Time

1. Tell the class to read the biblical references silently. Divide the class into two groups and assign the first group to discuss I Samuel 3: 1-19 and the second group 2 Timothy 1:11-14. Tell each group to use the following outline when discussing the biblical references.
2. **I Samuel 3: 1-19. The Calling of Samuel**
 - a. Verses 1-3. Samuel works in the Temple.
 - b. Verses 4-10 God calls Samuel four times. In the Biblical times, God calls people to serve in God's temple.
 - c. Verses 11-19. God instructs Samuel on what to do.
3. **2 Timothy 1:11-14. Paul's Christian Legacy to Timothy**
 - a. Verses 11-12. Paul talks about his attitude towards the Gospel.
 - b. Verse 13. Paul emphasizes the importance of sound teaching in the faith that is in Christ Jesus that Timothy heard from Paul.
 - c. Verse 14. Paul instructs Timothy to guard the good treasure of the Gospel through the intervention of the Holy Spirit.
4. Ask each group to share to the big group what they have discussed.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. God called Samuel. How did Samuel respond to God's calling? (Samuel listened. He was willing to obey God. He obeyed God.)
2. God still calls us today. What are ways to hear God's call? (Reading the Scriptures, listening to Bible stories, talking to parents or teachers about God, listening to Christian music, praying, meditating)
3. Through Paul and Timothy's family, Timothy learned about God. What were the specific instructions of Paul to Timothy? (Read 2 Timothy 1:13-14.) Emphasize the phrases **sound teaching in the faith and love of Jesus Christ** and **good treasure with the help of the Holy Spirit**.
4. Pastors and other church workers are called by God and set apart to serve God and to be faithful to this calling. How can these church workers make use of the sound teaching and good treasure as a **Christian legacy** instructed to Timothy by Paul in

the lifeworks of the church? (Sound teaching should come from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is learned and studied continuously. It is done by listening to advice and instruction. Good treasure represents the wisdom and strength from God, enabled by the Holy Spirit and applied by the church workers in building the Kingdom.)

5. As a young person, is it wise to invest in the learning of our rich Christian heritage as we live out our daily lives? Why or why not? (Answers may vary.)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: How do pastors perform their ministerial tasks to serve the church? (Through teaching, healing, and preaching)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the memory verse: "Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us." (2 Timothy 1:13-14)
2. Divide the class into four groups. Tell them to make an acronym of the word pastor using words that describe the work of their pastors in their local church (in the areas of teaching, healing and preaching).
P -
A -
S -
T -
O -
R -
3. Call each group to present their work. Discuss the acronyms made by each group.
4. Encourage the class to music rap or write poems about their expression of respect, love, and appreciation to the church workers who are set apart to serve God. Let them share it to the class.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "Here I Am, Lord"
I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them. My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give My life to them. Whom shall I send?
Chorus: Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord? I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if You lead me. I will hold Your people in my heart.
3. Closing prayer: "Dear God, who called your people to work with you, we thank you. Thank you for sending your workers to be the messenger of your word. Empower, our pastors, lay preachers, curriculum writers, evangelists, Sunday school teachers, deaconesses and other church workers whom you have called to guide and lead God's people in the church. Help us also, as members of your vineyard, to care,

love, and assist the church workers as we help build God's Kingdom. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."



12 November 2017

12th Sunday in Kingdomtide

Lay Formation: Its Role in Kingdom Building

Old Testament:

I Kings 17: 8-16 (NRSV)

The Widow of Zarephath

⁸ Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, ⁹ “Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you.” ¹⁰ So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, “Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink.” ¹¹ As she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” ¹² But she said, “As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die.” ¹³ Elijah said to her, “Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son.” ¹⁴ For thus says the Lord the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth.” ¹⁵ She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days. ¹⁶ The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah.

New Testament:

Luke 10: 25-37 (NRSV)

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

²⁵ Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶ He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” ²⁷ He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” ²⁸ And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.” ²⁹ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰ Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” ³⁷ He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

General Concept: Empowered lay leadership helps the church grow as it serves God’s people.

Key Concept: The church grows and does its ministerial tasks of teaching, healing, and preaching through empowered church leaders like the youth.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

I Kings 17: 8-16. This text tells about the story of a woman of Zarephath in the time of Elijah the prophet. The rains had not come and there was drought and famine in the land. Very soon, the food supply of the widow's family would run out but despite this she shared the last of what they had with Elijah. The Zarephath widow, belonging to the poorest of the poor segment of society, gave all of what she had out of faith. The promised steady supply of meal and oil surely did not run out and her family survived the drought until finally the rains came. This story is a very good example of how God empowers people to be of service in God's ministry.

Luke 10: 25-37. Jesus is asked by a lawyer what he must do in order to inherit eternal life. Jesus asks the lawyer what the Torah says. The lawyer gives the correct answer: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." Jesus commands the lawyer to do just this so he will live. Still, the lawyer needed to justify himself and had more questions: he wanted to know who his neighbor was. Jesus replies through a parable that highlights the reciprocity of being a neighbor: our neighbors are the people who are in need and the only way to respond to them as a neighbor is through compassion, mercy and kindness.

These two stories show how it is in the Reign of God. Under God's reign, people share, people think of others first, people care. Under God's rule, the modus operandi is serving others. This is how it is to be church. In the church, the lay people take leadership. They are empowered to be leaders of the church as they do the three-pronged tasks of the church, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Let us be empowered members of the body of Christ, the church, doing God's mission, from the youngest child to the most senior citizen.

Objectives:

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

- Articulate that the church is the gathered people of God
- List the different ministerial tasks that they can be involved in as young people
- Demonstrate what they can do as empowered church youth leaders

Materials: Holy Bible, song chart, *Hymnal of a Faith Journey*

Learning Experiences:

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, thank you for today as we gather as a community, a church, in Sunday School. Guide us as we strive to help your church, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, grow. Empower us as youth leaders to participate in its ministerial tasks of teaching, healing and preaching. Teach us what

we need to do as members of the body of Christ. Teach us, your church, how to serve others. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."

3. Opening song: "We are the Church Together"

The church is not a building, the church is not a steeple,

The church is not a resting place, the church is people.

I am the church, you are the church, we are the church together

All who follow Jesus all around the world, yes, we're the church together!

B. Getting Ready

Ask the learners what they think the song means. Discuss with them what church means. Encourage them to share their previous assumptions of what church is. Let each one articulate their answers. Remind them that the church is not just the building; it is importantly the people that comprise the church. Stress that everyone is part of the church: you, me, all of us.

C. Learning Time

Have the class read the two biblical references.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Discuss the biblical texts.

1. Who are the characters in the story from I Kings?
2. How did the faith of the woman of Zarephath help her to share of her dwindling resources with the man of God?
3. Who are the characters in the Lukan story?
4. What can you say about the lawyer?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

1. What must we do in order to inherit eternal life?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

Ask:

1. How can we emulate the Zarephath woman?
2. Who among the three people in the Lukan story should we emulate? Why?
3. Discuss the three-pronged ministry of the church.
 - The teaching ministry includes all programs of the church that seek to nurture believers in their faith, educate them in the teachings of the church, and empower them to live out their faith and principles as they serve God and God's people.
 - The healing ministry of the church includes all programs that promote healing and wholeness for everyone.
 - The preaching ministry of the church seeks to spread the good news of God's Reign of love and peace with justice.
4. On the board have the class fill out this chart:

How can the youth of the church serve the people through the		
Teaching Ministry	Healing Ministry	Preaching Ministry

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering

2. Song: "Ang Imong Iglesia, O Dios/The Church is Your People, O God" HFJ 301

Ang imong iglesia O Dios, katilingban nga balaan
Katuyuang pagpalampos ug sa ngalan mo mag-ambahan.

The church is your people, O God, and a holy community
In fulfillment of your purpose, we give praise to your holy name.

The church is your people, O God, a united community
Whose hearts are bound together, overflowing in your love and grace.

The church is your people, O God, a redeeming community
To the naked and the captives, all the help is extended to them.

The church is your people, O God, and a sharing community
Every burden gladly bearing, one and all actively take their share.

The church is your people, O God, a sustaining community
Who obeys the Lord Christ Jesus, the only foundation of faith.

3. Closing Prayer: Lead the class in saying a sentence prayer of thanks for what each one has learned today. End the prayer with: "Thank you for teaching us who we are as a church and guiding us what to do as the body of Christ. May we emulate the Zarephath woman and the good Samaritan. Lead us to serve your people. In Jesus' name, our Companion and Savior, we pray. Amen."

November 19, 2017

13th Sunday in Kingdomtide

Ministering to the Migrant Workers and their Families

Old Testament:

Psalms 137: 1-6 (NRSV)

Lament over the Destruction of Jerusalem

¹By the rivers of Babylon-there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion.

²On the willows* there we hung up our harps. ³For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!'

⁴How could we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land? ⁵If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! ⁶Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy.

New Testament:

Acts 28: 2 (NRSV)

²The natives showed us unusual kindness. Since it had begun to rain and was cold, they kindled a fire and welcomed all of us round it.

General Concept: The church undertakes special ministries to the migrant workers and their families.

Key Concept: The church responds and ministers to the needs of the families of the migrant workers.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

The Book of Psalms is for the most part a book of prayer and praise. Here, individually or collectively, the psalms speak to God in prayer and in praise. But there are also psalms that are clearly instructional passages that teach the way of godliness. This would only suggest that the main purpose was instruction in the life of faith. It speaks as well of Israel's faith journey as they express it in prayers and praises without forgetting their experiences both joyful and sorrowful.

The whole chapter of Psalm 137 is actually a plaintive song of lament of the exile, expressed when they have just been brought back from Babylon. Even as they are back in Jerusalem there still lingers the bitter memory of the years in a foreign land and of the cruel events that led to their enforced stay. Verses 1-3 relate to us the remembered sorrow that is beyond measure and the painful, traumatic torment in the face of the mocking and jeering of their captors, while vv.4-6 is an oath of total commitment to Jerusalem and the people's unwavering devotion to worshipping their God only in their holy city. These lines are expressions of deep mourning in a foreign land where they had lived as captive foreigners and treated as second class citizens without any rights and their constantly intense burning desire to be back in their homeland and be vindicated by the power and grace of their God before their enemies. For a people who have become foreigners in a land where they need to survive even as second-class citizens, surviving even in the midst of a foreign and

intimidating culture becomes a real struggle to maintain one's sanity, integrity, and even one's faith. To be uprooted and forced by circumstances to leave one's loved ones and homeland can be a very traumatic and disorienting experience. Without any strong spiritual foundation to hold on to, a people can succumb to the wiles of religious and cultural temptations. It is the role of the community of faith to ensure that its people remain rooted in the very foundations of their faith which have been bequeathed to them by their ancestors.

One of the purposes of The Acts of the Apostles apparently is to depict the triumph of Christianity in the face of bitter persecution. Acts 28:2 is a clear manifestation that the Holy Spirit uses even the natives of foreign lands who were commonly called as "barbarians". Kindness and a welcoming spirit can also be experienced even from other peoples who may not actually be sharing the faith of the believers in Jesus. The natives of the island of Malta have built a fire to keep warm the prisoners including Paul who were stranded there when their boat sunk in the midst of the storm, and it was raining and cold then.

As a church entrusted with a special ministry to the migrant workers and their families, we should realize the migrant workers' situation in foreign lands and the loneliness and worries that the families go through in enduring the longing and painful absence of their loved one. It is a sad reality sometimes that the church would even put pressure on the migrant workers by asking too much from them monetarily as contribution to certain church projects. They may just be assuming that they have acquired wonderful lives already in such foreign lands, and because they were paid higher, they must be rich. They, however, are forgetting the church's pastoral responsibility to care for them and their families. To live a life away from each loved one is not easy: it is not all the time that one parent's presence alone would be enough for the children to fill their needs in their growing years. They would always need the guiding presence of both father and mother through those years. Thus, the church must be there to give that comfort and spiritual nurture that would somehow provide the warmth and pastoral presence that they need. Just like what happened to Paul and the rest of the prisoners in Malta who may not be directly related and could even be strangers to the families of concerned migrant workers, we can be the islanders who would provide fire and warmth for the family of the migrant workers and a more sympathetic understanding of the situation of the migrant workers who have been working in foreign lands just to provide for their respective families.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Migrant workers and their families compose a unique sector in Philippine society. Having found employment in foreign lands, they have opportunities to experience the best and the worst conditions in life. They are able to give a measure of prosperity to their families they never had before. The new circumstance affords them economic security and a higher social status in the future. At the same, it brings in new perils that are destructive of family cohesiveness, stability, and loyalty. All the while, the migrant worker-provider suffers from untold loneliness, insecurity, powerlessness, and loss of identity. This state of mind makes migrant workers gravely vulnerable to acts of indiscretion, misconduct, and even crimes of opportunity.

In this unusual state of vulnerability, the church should discover new ways of providing pastoral care to migrant workers and their families. In addition to traditional means of care,

new programs such as support networks for OFW families, counseling, financial advice, etc. need to be set up.

More than that, however, the church is needed in contribute to an on-going wider critique of the government's development strategy that fosters overseas employment as a major locomotive of economic development. It is a strategy prescribed by powerful foreign governments to resource-rich but underdeveloped countries, which in reality serves the greed of giant transnational capital at the expense of the local populations. This strategy drives landless and small farmers to the cities where job-generating local manufacturing industries are abandoned in favor of the more lucrative economic activities like infrastructure projects, import-export, finance and banking, information and communications and entertainment. These types of industries may raise the nation's Gross National Product but makes only a minimal dent on a populous nation's massive problem of unemployment. This is the basic reality behind the mass exodus of Filipinos to find employment overseas.

Justice for the nation, for all sectors of Philippine society and for the OFWs in particular is for the church a matter of faith and loyalty to the Lord.

Objectives:

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

1. describe the Israelites who were exiled in other countries;
2. identify the families with parents or relatives working abroad;
3. compare the lament of the Israelite captives in Babylon with what workers abroad suffer when far from their loved ones;
4. tell ways initiated by the church by which the families left in the country can continue to respond and minister to their needs and those of their families left behind in the country.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), worksheets

Learning Experiences:*A. Opening Worship*

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: Choose a youth who will lead the class in their prayer. Remind the class to include in their prayer the fruit of the Holy Spirit and its effect on their lives.
3. Opening song: "By the Rivers of Babylon"
By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down.
Ye-eah we wept, when we remembered Zion.
When the wicked carried us away in captivity, required from us a song.
Now how shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land.
Let the words of our mouth and the meditations of our heart,
Be acceptable in thy sight here tonight.

B. Getting Ready

Technology use. Ask the class to research on advocacy programs of government organizations, non-government organizations and other religious groups in the country that

their local church can collaborate with in relation to basic rights of OFWs and corresponding programs to the migrant workers and family members left behind in the Philippines.

C. Learning Time

1. Divide the class into two groups and assign the first group the reading and discussion of Psalm 137:1-6 and the second group, Acts 27:1-6, 39-44, 28:1-2. Provide the following information to guide each group in their discussion.
2. Psalm 137:1-6. Tell the class that this psalm is an imprecatory psalm that invokes judgment, calamity, or curses, upon one's enemies or those perceived as the enemies of God.
 - a. *Verses 1-4.* The captives of Israel refuse to sing their sacred songs in a foreign land despite the demands of their Babylonian captors.
 - b. *Verses 2-6.* The psalmist makes an oath to offer the works of their hands to God and their tongues to exalt God always as their highest joy.
 - c. The group may make a creative presentation of the song "By the Rivers of Babylon"
3. Acts 27:1-6, 39-44, 28:1-2.
 - a. *Acts 27:1-6.* Paul and the other prisoners are handed to Julius, the centurion, who shows kindness to Paul. Paul and his companions are transferred to Rome.
 - b. *Acts 27:39-44.* The ship gets wrecked because of a strong typhoon and big waves. The officer of the ship wants to kill all the prisoners but Julius forbids the captain not to kill the prisoners in order to save Paul. Everyone in the ship reaches Malta safely.
 - c. *Acts 28:1-2.* The natives of Malta welcomes Paul and his companions. They give them food and lights a fire to keep them warm. They show kindness even to strangers.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Tell each group to present their work before the class.
2. After the report, discuss the lesson and ask the following questions:
 - a. What similarity exists between the Israelite captives in Babylon with migrant workers in foreign lands? (The Israelites longed to go back to Jerusalem similar to the migrant workers who long to go back to their families back home. The Israelites could not even sing their sacred songs to the Lord in Babylon and the migrant workers could only cry out their homesickness for their loved ones.)
 - b. How can the church address the longings and pain of migrant workers in their community? (Refer to the advocacy programs that the class has researched on and have the students plan for possible collaboration.)
 - c. Comment on the kindness shown by Julius, the centurion and the natives of Malta to Paul and his companions.
 - d. Expand your imagination on how God addresses the problem of the Israelite captives and the prisoners, including Paul, during the strong typhoon and when they landed at Malta. How can we show kindness to new acquaintances or strangers? (Let the class list down all possible ways of showing kindness to

others, especially to family members left behind by migrant workers.)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: How does the church respond and minister to the needs of the families of the migrant workers?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the memory verse: "How could we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy." (Psalm 137:4-6)
2. Tell the class to react to the following quotations and explore how these quotes can guide them in showing kindness to others.
 - a. Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see (Mark Twain).
 - b. Be kind to unkind people—they need it the most (Ashliegh Brilliant).
 - c. To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children...to leave the world a better place...to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived (Ralph Waldo Emerson).
 - d. Forget injuries, never forget kindnesses (Confucius).
 - e. Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around (Leo F. Buscaglia).
 - f. Kindness is never wasted. If it has no effect on the recipient, at least, it benefits the bestower (S. H. Simmons).

G. Closing Worship

1. Tell the class to express their thoughts on the memory verse.
2. Offering
3. Closing song: "By the Rivers of Babylon"
4. Closing prayer: "Dear Lord, as your stewards of the Gospel, help us to show kindness similar to how Julius, the centurion showed kindness to Paul and how the natives of Malta welcomed strangers in their land. As we are kind to others, may they find us as their "place of refuge" and may they appreciate how you have placed in our hearts the reason for caring for others and may they realize this as a blessing from you. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen."

November 26, 2017

14th Sunday in Kingdomtide

Gathering the Fruit of the Spirit

Old Testament:

Isaiah 57:14-16 (NRSV)

A Promise of Help and Healing

¹⁴It shall be said, 'Build up, build up, prepare the way, remove every obstruction from my people's way.' ¹⁵For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite. ¹⁶For I will not continually accuse, nor will I always be angry; for then the spirits would grow faint before me, even the souls that I have made.

New Testament:

Ephesians 5:17-21 (NRSV)

¹⁷So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, ²⁰giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian Household ²¹Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.

2 Peter 1:5-7 (NRSV)

⁵For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, ⁶and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, ⁷and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love.

1 Corinthians 12:1-11 (NRSV)

Spiritual Gifts

¹Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. ²You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. ³Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says 'Let Jesus be cursed!' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit. ⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another, the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

General Concept: The ministries of church reflect the presence of the Spirit in its life and work.

Key Concept: The ministries of the church manifest the fruits of God's Spirit.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

The text of Isaiah 57:14-16, a text from the post exilic era, signifies God's assurance to the contrite and the humble in spirit. The text reiterates the truth of God's steadfast compassion and love for His people always showing mercy to those who remain humble and contrite even in the face of various temptations they have experienced in their history. Verse 16 says; "For I will not contend for ever nor will I always be angry; for from me proceeds the spirit, and I have made the breath of life." God's compassion and graciousness will always overrule divine anger and even the demand for divine justice for those who fall short of God's expectations. For how could God contend with His own creation and remain angry with His own people whom God created from His own image and likeness?

God created all of creation and have blessed it all and described it all as good. Creation, including humanity are all bearers of the mark of the divine creator having been blessed by God. However, because of the gift of freedom given also by the creator, the human being has been tempted on major occasions to decide in favor of what is wrong and lived lives that are completely against the will of the creator. Thus, the spirit of wickedness and self-centered stubbornness of God's people emerged and the people led by their ruling elite started committing evil against each other and forgot and ignored their ethical covenant obligations before God.

The people become unholy and ungodly before the presence of God with acts of injustice and social abuse especially against the poor and the powerless of the land and idolized the wealth and politics of foreign powers. They then suffered the consequences of their wicked ways and went through the pain and agony of the exile experience. There in Babylon they became so desperate and began to realize the gravity of what they have done, how far they have strayed from the way of the Lord, and with the help of their religious leaders who were exiled with them, they began the arduous task of humbling themselves in deep repentance and contrition, returning to the faith of their ancestors, pleading once more to their God for forgiveness and restoration.

On the other hand, God who remains holy and merciful remembered His promises to their ancestors who had also shown weaknesses in various ways but have learned to humble themselves before God and have always tried to walk according to God's just and righteous will. Being faithful to His covenant promises to them God would always remain compassionate to those who indeed humble and contrite themselves before the Lord, for our God is a God of life and love and not a God of cruel vengeance.

Ephesians 5:17:21 reminds us therefore, in response to what God has done for us not to be foolish in the way we live our daily lives, but to live always in accordance with the ethical and moral demands of a life transformed and forgiven by God, to always discern and know the will of God for the good of the community, to be filled with the spirit of God in everything we do as a body united by one faith and to always give thanks to the Lord with

hymns and spiritual songs whenever and wherever we worship God. This will be our distinct witness before the rest of the world as we carry on with our mission as a household, a fellowship called by God. According to 2 Peter 1:5-7, we are to exert every effort to manifest our faith with all the virtues that will shape the life of the community as one that has been molded ultimately by the spirit of love, God's love for all of us and our love for each other as fellow children of one creator. This is what will make us strong as a body of believers, able and empowered to carry on the task of continuing Christ's mission for the transformation of our society and of the whole creation itself.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

The various ministries display a rich harvest of the fruit of the Spirit from the orchard of a church which is faithful and loyal to Christ. The Greek word ministry, *diakonia*, means service. The forms of service will vary according to the social circumstances where the church or a congregation is located. The needs in a rural context, for example, may be few but very basic. Due to a severe lack of cultural opportunities in the area, the task of educating and equipping the members to effectively respond to the needs of the members and the community should be a top priority. At the other end, highly urbanized areas pose a different set of challenges to the church, such as the diminished physical presence of parents aggravated by the pervasive influence of computer gadgets on the minds of children and youth. The integral functions of the church—worship, preaching, teaching, pastoral care, fellowship, stewardship, community service, social concern—should take into account the particularities of the social context.

The various ministries of the church introduce to the wider society futuristic images of the reality of the kingdom that is to come. The church's witness to the wider world is its life and work which is sustained, animated, and governed by the Spirit.

More than that, however, the church is needed in contribute to an on-going wider critique of the government's development strategy that fosters overseas employment as a major locomotive of economic development. It is a strategy prescribed by powerful foreign governments to resource-rich but underdeveloped countries, which in reality, serves the greed of giant transnational capital at the expense of the local populations. This strategy drives landless and small farmers to the cities where job-generating local manufacturing industries are abandoned in favor of the more lucrative economic activities like infrastructure projects, import-export, finance and banking, information and communications and entertainment. These types of industries may raise the nation's Gross National Product but makes only a minimal dent on a populous nation's massive problem of unemployment. This is the basic reality behind the mass exodus of Filipinos to find employment overseas.

Justice for the nation, for all sectors of Philippine society and for the OFWs in particular is for the church a matter of faith and loyalty to the Lord.

Objectives:

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

1. explain how the ministries of the church reflect the fruit of the Holy Spirit;
2. describe the spiritual gifts received from God and express one's gratitude for these gifts;
3. explain how the spiritual gifts given to each believer help in serving others; and

4. commit to thank God for these gifts and use them to serve others.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), worksheets

Learning Experiences:

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, we thank you for the many talents and gifts that you have given to each of us. Give us the wisdom to understand your purpose in each of us and the willingness and ability to use these gifts in serving you and others. This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen. "
2. Opening song: "Ipakig-ambit Mo/To Others Share Your Many Gifts" (HFJ # 299)

B. Getting Ready

1. Prepare the class to do the activity "Every Job is Important!" Tell the class to list the things they do at home and in school. Make sure that each learner has listed at least two jobs. Let them read what they have written.
2. Ask the pupils what could happen if they fulfill the job or fail to do the job assigned to them. Encourage them to talk about the importance of fulfilling one's responsibility.

C. Learning Time

1. Divide the class into four groups. Assign each group with anyone of these references (Isaiah 57:14-16, Ephesians 5:17-21, 2 Peter 1:5-7, and 1 Corinthians 12:1-11). Tell each group to brainstorm what they understand with each text. Have them share their insights to the big group.
2. After the reports, discuss the insights. Expect the following from the discussion.
 - a. God lives in high places. God lives in humble hearts. When we have humble hearts, God will revive us. (Isaiah 57:15). When we trust God and humble ourselves before him, the best is yet to come.
 - b. God gives each person different gifts and talents. The nine spiritual gifts are freely given by God through the Holy Spirit. Expected reaction: We cannot boast or take credit for our talents and spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-8). God gives us gifts to use in serving others (1 Corinthians 12:7).
 - c. Christians are known by their fruit (2 Peter 1:5-7). Peter sets forth a **"deliberate, disciplined approach to spiritual growth."** Since God has given spiritual riches to us in Christ through the Holy Spirit, it is our responsibility to grow in godliness.
 - d. Paul, in his letter to the Church at Ephesus tell Christians to be wise (Ephesians 5:15-21) and not to be fools. God helps the wise to develop their spiritual gifts. God gives us opportunities to use them to serve others.
 - e. All the spiritual gifts are activated by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:11) and that these gifts are to be used to serve God and others (Ephesians 5:21). When

each person uses the gifts God has given him or her, the body of Christ works properly.

- f. The Greek word ministry, diakonia, means service. The forms of service will vary according to the social circumstances where the church or a congregation is located.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Isaiah used the words high and humble. Compare them in terms of position of God and human beings. (God is supreme. Human beings can never reach the supremacy of God. But God, though almighty, lives in the lowly hearts of people as long as they have humble hearts.) Is this too good to be true?
2. Peter mentioned the need for Christians to grow in godliness.
 - a. How can a right motivation help us to grow in godliness? (Right motivation in the Christian life is essential! God's grace as shown to us in Jesus Christ is the right motivation to grow spiritually. While it is right to desire God's blessing on our life, our family, and our work, the right motivation behind that desire should be, "God, I want your blessing so that my life will bring glory to your name! You set your love on me and saved me when I was in the gutter of sin. You called me out of darkness into your marvelous light. Now, Lord, I want to grow in godliness so that my life proclaims your excellencies (1 Pet. 2:9)!")
 - b. How can diligence help us to grow in godliness? (To be diligent in Christ, one has to be eager, earnest, zealous, persevering, and struggling in doing his work. Peter tells us to make every effort to consider our faith in Jesus Christ as our foundation in serving God and to use God-given gifts in serving others. God has given us the necessary provisions and is working powerfully in us. For our part, we need to will and work for his good pleasure, especially in godly relationships.
3. Paul reminded the Ephesians to live wisely since Christ is in us and through the Holy Spirit, God gifted us with spiritual gifts. Read the following and share your thoughts on how these things can help us live wisely.
 - a. Using the time for good purpose instead of wasting it on shallow exercises
 - b. Using one's understanding of God's will to do things that will please God
 - c. Being filled with the Spirit to bear his fruits
 - d. Singing spiritual songs, making melody to the Lord with our hearts
 - e. Giving thanks to God recognizing how he blesses our lives and walks with us
 - f. Submitting to one another, and respecting other's gifts rather than scrambling for supremacy
 - g. Having reverence for Christ rather than blaspheming God
4. Why does God care so much about the downtrodden and the contrite?
5. Do you and your congregation care for the downtrodden and contrite with the same intensity?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: How do the ministries of the church manifest the fruits of God's Spirit?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the memory verses: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.” (1 Corinthians 12: 4-6, 11)
2. Draw from the class the uses of quilts (table runner, curtain, blanket) Some quilts are decorative in nature and some are used to keep persons warm. Tell the class that they are making a quilt, God's service quilt. Let them think of how they can use their spiritual gifts to serve others. Prepare some cloth material cut into squares of the same size. Let each student get as many squares as they need and paste their plan of service on each square. After the squares are prepared, assign someone who will sew the squares to form God's service quilt. Let the class evaluate their output and share how they felt as they were doing it.
3. Ask the class to assess themselves and find out what ministry they think God is leading them to do to serve God and others. Present the following ministries and let the class choose on the basis of their faith and willingness and ability to use their gifts.
 - a. Sunday School/Vacation Bible School
 - b. Outreach Ministries
 - c. Childcare
 - d. Visitation
 - e. Music Ministry
 - f. Drama/Acting/Painting/Sports Ministry
 - g. Bus/Van Ministry
 - h. Building and Grounds Ministry/Garden Ministry
 - i. Food Preparation Ministry
 - j. Missions Ministry

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: “To the Work” (HFJ # 324)
3. Closing prayer: “Gracious God, we thank you for giving us the gift of Jesus. Thank you for letting the Holy Spirit give each of us the special gifts and abilities. Inspire us, guide us, and strengthen us as we use these gifts for your glory, for unifying your Body, and for helping build God’s kingdom according to your will. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.