

The background is a dark grey-blue textured surface covered with a repeating pattern of white line-art icons. These icons include: two people silhouettes, question marks, shaking hands, a church with a question mark, a globe, a heart with a lightning bolt, an open book, a closed book with a cross, a hand, a cloud, a heart with radiating lines, a cross with radiating lines, and a hand holding a cross.

confirmation

THE STORY OF GOD

14 Session Confirmation Curriculum



This Journal Belongs to

My Confirmation Mentors



© The United Church of the Resurrection, rezlife Student Ministries, 2020
Developed by Shannon Greene. Contributions by Chris Abel,
Ashley Morgan Kirk, and Taylor Ogden Thomas.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.



The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us, not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.



The Wesley Covenant Prayer

I am no longer my own but yours.
Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed for you or laid aside for you,
exalted for you or brought low for you.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure
and disposal.

And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy
Spirit,
you are mine and I am yours.
So be it.
And the covenant now made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven.
Amen.



Confirmation Curriculum Overview

"The Story of God"

introduction

Meet Your Bible - 2 Timothy 3:15-17

The Story of God - various passages

creation

Holy Trinity - Genesis 1:26-27 and Matthew 28:19-20

fall

Relationship: Broken - Genesis 3:1-13 and Genesis 6:5-6

chosen

Israel: God's Chosen People - Genesis 12:1-3 and Genesis 17:1-8

Jesus

Jesus: God With Us - John 1:1-18

Relationship: Restored - Luke 15:11-32

The Promise of the Resurrection - John 20:1-18

new creation/restoration

What's Yet to Come? - Revelation 21:1-8 and Luke 23:43

church/mission

What is the Church? - Acts 2:42-47

Prayer: Talking with God - Matthew 6:5-13

Partnering with God's Mission - Matthew 25:31-40 and Romans 12:4-8

Inviting Others into God's Story - John 4:4-30, 39-42

Why the Church? (Retreat Night) - John 17:20-23 and Acts 4:32-33

*All Scripture passages quoted are from the Common English Bible (CEB)
unless otherwise noted.*

Confirmation

Weekly Small Group Overview

main point – This is the key theme or major point of the lesson for the day.

activity – This is an interactive activity, icebreaker question, or object lesson to help you get engaged with the lesson.

teaching topics – These are definitions, clarifications, additional scripture references, and fun facts that explain the Main Point. These points will add on to what you heard from our speaker.

discussion opener – Each week, you'll begin by reciting the Apostle's Creed together as a small group. Then you'll spend a few minutes sharing about what you heard from our speaker that day.

bible connection – This connects the lesson topic to a particular story or passage in the Bible. Be sure to look up the passage in your CEB Navigation Bible!

discussion questions – These are a few challenging discussion questions to help guide your small group's conversation. Be sure not to rush through these questions, but spend time reflecting on them as a group.

challenge – This is something for you to do on your own at home during the week. It may be a spiritual practice, a journaling assignment, or conversation prompt to talk with your friends or family members.

joys/concerns and prayer – Close by sharing joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and praying together. Start with joys first and then move on to concerns. Pray for one another throughout the week.

for extra study – These are extra recommended Bible passages if you want to learn more about the session's topic or dive deeper into Scripture on your own throughout the week. Your Confirmation mentor may even have you read and discuss a few of these verses together as a small group.

journal pages – This is a space for you to complete your weekly Challenges, write down joys and concerns from the group, and jot down notes from the speakers' sermons.

MEET YOUR BIBLE



main point

The Bible is God's inspired Word written in the words of humans. It points us to God and gives us guidance on how to live our lives.

activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1: WHO CAN FIND IT FIRST?

This is a fun and competitive way to get more familiar with the Bible! Race against one another to look up the assigned Bible reference, and the first one to find it will stand up and read it out loud. (Confirmation Mentors: The list of Bible references for students to look up and additional instructions can be found in your **TEACHER'S GUIDE**)

OPTION 2: OLD OR NEW?

Before class begins, use notecards or scraps of paper to create small slips of paper, enough for everyone in the group to have two or three slips each.

Give everyone two or three slips of paper and have them turn to the Table of Contents in their Bibles. Have them write the name of one book of the Bible on each piece of paper. Challenge them to write books they don't think others will write, or books of the Bible that are less popular.

Put all of the small sheets of paper into a bag or bowl. Divide the class into two teams. One at a time, students from each team will come up and pull a paper from the bowl. They will then have to guess whether that book of the Bible comes from the Old Testament or New Testament. If they guess incorrectly, no points are awarded. After all of the sheets have been drawn, the team with the most points wins.

For an added round of challenge, students can also try to locate the book in their Bible within 10 seconds without checking the Table of Contents first!



BIBLE STRUCTURE

The Bible is a collective library of ancient books (66 in total) that were written and compiled over hundreds of years.

To help us navigate the Bible more easily, each book has been divided into chapters and verses. When you read a scripture reference (such as John 3:16) the number before the colon ("3") is the chapter, and the number after the colon ("16") is the verse.

Anytime you see a number in front of a book name (such as 1 John or 2 Samuel), it is referring to the first, second, or third book in a series. So, you would say, "First John" not "One John."

OLD TESTAMENT - contains 39 books; also called the Hebrew Bible

5 books of the Torah (meaning "law"), also called the Pentateuch (meaning "5 books") - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

12 Historical books - Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

5 Wisdom/Poetry books - Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon (also called Song of Songs)

17 Prophetic books - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

NEW TESTAMENT - contains 27 books

4 Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

1 Early Church Account - Acts

21 Letters or Epistles - Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude

1 Apocalyptic book - Revelation

BIBLE FACTS

- Two books of the Bible are named after women: Ruth and Esther
- Psalms is the longest book of the Bible.
- The shortest book is 3 John.
- Paul wrote most of the books in the New Testament (13 books are attributed to him), but Luke wrote more content since the Gospel of Luke and Acts are two of the longer books in the New Testament

WHAT THE BIBLE IS

The Bible is God's revelation to us. We consider the Bible to be holy because God "breathed life" into it, causing it to have more meaning or value than other books or writings. Over many years, God inspired human authors to record and write down their interactions with God.

As Methodists, we do not believe that God literally "dictated" every word of the Bible to human authors. The Biblical authors wrote in their own voices and they incorporated their own perspectives, cultures, and contexts into Scripture. We might say that the Bible is the Word of God in the words of humans. So the answer to the question, "Who wrote the Bible, God or humans?" is BOTH!

We believe that the Bible includes all the instructions and guidance necessary for us to have a relationship with God. It also shows us how we should be in relationship with other humans and with the world around us. Ultimately, the Bible points us toward God and shows us how God is present and active in our lives and in the world.

What the Bible IS NOT

Unfortunately, because the Bible was written by human authors living in a particular place at a certain time, it doesn't answer *all* of our questions. While it does give us very important information on how to live our lives, it is not a comprehensive manual to all of life's problems.

It is also important to know that while the Bible contains history, it is not primarily a history book. While the Bible contains passages that talk about creation and nature, it is not a science textbook either.

discussion opener

Recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group.

Briefly discuss as a group, "What is one thing you heard from our lesson today?"

bible connection

- Read together our passage for today, found in **2 Timothy 3:15-17**.

discuss



- Does your family have a Bible at home? How often does your family read the Bible?
- How does the Bible connect us to God and point us toward God?
- According to this passage, in what ways does the Bible help us? Because of this, why is it important for us to read and study the Bible?
- Do you think the people who wrote the books in the Bible knew their writings would be considered “holy” and “inspired?” Why or why not?
- Can you read the Bible in a wrong way? How so?
- How can we deal with difficult Bible passages that don't seem to make sense today?
- What other questions do you have about the Bible? (These might be good questions to submit for our Q&A Session with Pastor Adam!)

challenge

LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is an ancient way of reading the Bible and meditating on Scripture. The words *lectio divina* are Latin for “divine reading.” It can be a great way to learn something new from Scripture as we open up our hearts and minds to hear from God. Use your journal pages to complete the following Lectio Divina activity this week.

Lectio Divina on Psalm 119:9-16

1. Start by silently praying, “God, show me what you would like me to hear from you today.”
2. Find the passage Psalm 119:9-16 in your Bible and read it out loud slowly and carefully. Underline or write down what words or phrases are speaking to you.
3. Read the passage out loud a second time. This time, write down the answer to this question: “What does my underlined word or phrase mean to me?”
4. Read the passage a third time. Now write down the answer to the question, “How is God calling me to respond to this passage?”
5. Read the passage a fourth and final time. Silently reflect on the words for a few minutes before ending your time in prayer to God.

joys, concerns & prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.

Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you’ve encountered God this week.

Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.

Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

for extra study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages:

Psalm 19:7-11

Psalm 119:105-106

Romans 15:4

Hebrews 4:12

[illegible]



A series of horizontal lines for writing, spanning the width of the page. The lines are evenly spaced and extend from the left margin to the right margin.

THE STORY OF GOD



main point

The Story of God is one of God constantly reaching out to humans. Much of the Story of God is recorded in the Bible, but this Story is still being written as God continues to reach out to us.

activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1: ONE WORD STORY

As a group stand or sit in a circle facing one another. Go around the circle and tell a story. The catch? You can only tell the story one word at a time! Each person can only add one word to the story before it moves on to the next person in the circle. Go until your story has ended, someone gets stuck, or your leader calls time.

OPTION 2: FAVORITE STORIES

What is your favorite story? Go around the circle and allow everyone to briefly name their favorite story. This might be a book, a movie, a video game, a legend or parable, or even a comic series. Then, as a group, answer the questions, "Why do we like these stories? What makes them so great?"

teaching topics

Even though the Bible contains 66 individual books, there is a single grand narrative throughout: That God longs to be in relationship with each and every one of us. This is the Story of God.

OVERVIEW OF THE STORY OF GOD:

CREATION - God created the world and everything in it, including humans. God called creation "very good." Humans are created in God's image and we are to be God's representatives in the world. We were made to be in relationship with God and with one another.

FALL - Even though God created humans and loved them very much, since the beginning of human history, people have chosen to reject God and follow their own ways. This caused us to have broken relationships with God, with our fellow humans, and even with creation itself.



CHOSEN PEOPLE - God chose a certain group of people to be in direct relationship with: the descendants of Abraham, also known as the Israelites. They were God's representatives on earth and they were blessed by God so that they could be a blessing to others. Unfortunately, they didn't always get it right.

JESUS/KINGDOM OF GOD - Because humans on their own couldn't fix the broken relationships we have with God and others, God the Father sent his Son Jesus to show us how to be in true relationship with God. Jesus showed us how to live and provided the way to fix our broken relationships with God and others through his life, death, and resurrection. Jesus also came to usher in the Kingdom of God here on earth.

CHURCH/MISSION - Jesus gave his followers a mission: to continue building the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. As Christians, we are now the ones invited to act as God's representatives in the world and we are called to invite others into this beautiful story.

NEW CREATION/RESTORATION - This is the part of the Story that is "yet to come." We are promised that one day, Jesus will come again to restore everything back to the way it was at the time of Creation, when everything was "very good."

Although the stories in the Bible took place a long time ago, we still find ourselves within the Story of God. Humans that lived then weren't all that different from us today, and there is much we can learn from their stories and from how they interacted with God in the past.

The story isn't over yet! Even though the Bible is no longer being written, the Story of God continues today! We get to be a part of the Story of God when we choose to follow Jesus and be God's representatives in the world today.

discussion opener

Recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group. Briefly discuss as a group, "What is one thing you heard from our lesson today?"

bible connection



Because the Story of God takes place throughout all of Scripture (and beyond!), today we have one verse for each section in God's Story. Read together the following passages:

CREATION - Genesis 1:1-4

FALL - Romans 3:23

CHOSEN PEOPLE - Genesis 12:1-2

JESUS/KINGDOM OF GOD - John 3:16

CHURCH/MISSION OF GOD - Ephesians 1:22-23

NEW CREATION/RESTORATION - Isaiah 65:17-18

discuss

- Who are the main character(s) in the Story of God?
- What do you think the Story of God is ultimately about?
- What "genre" would you use to classify the Story of God (comedy, horror, drama, romance, tragedy, fantasy, etc.)?
- How would you tell someone else about the Story of God?
- Which (if any) of these verses had you heard before? In what context?
- Why do we sometimes think that the Bible doesn't apply to us today?
- How does reading the stories of people in the Bible help us live our lives now?

challenge

FAMILY STORIES

Take some time this week to talk to your parents or family members about stories that have shaped and defined your family. Interview them and ask these questions:

- What are your favorite stories of me as a little kid?
- Are there any funny or embarrassing stories about our family?
- What stories about our family got passed down from older generations?
- How has God or the church been a part of our family's story?

After you have talked to your family members about their defining stories, journal your answers to the following questions:

- Why are stories so important to families and individuals?



Two horizontal lines for a title or header.

Twenty horizontal lines for the main body of the page, providing space for writing.



Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal lines. The first two lines are slightly shorter than the rest, leaving a margin for a title or drawing. The remaining 18 lines are of equal length and spaced evenly down the page.

HOLY TRINITY



main point

As Christians, we believe that our God is a Triune God: a God that is Three-Beings-in-One. We call this belief the "Trinity."

activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1 - GROUP SIT

The goal of this activity is to get the whole group in a sitting position by only using each other as chairs! Here's how you should do it:

1. Everyone should stand in a circle, and then turn and face to their right.
2. Put your hands on the shoulders of the person in front of you.
3. Everyone should slowly sit down to form one sitting circle.
4. Now raise your hands above your head and try to keep up the Group Sit!
5. For added challenge, try to walk in a circle as a group while still sitting.

- After completing the Group Sit, discuss the following questions:
- In this activity, did we all have the same goal? What was that goal?
- When we were sitting together, was there one person that bore all the weight? Or did we all hold it up equally?
- What were the struggles of working together as a group? How did you overcome these challenges?

OPTION 2 - TRINITY DANCE

Many of you probably played the game "Ring Around the Rosie" as little kids. Join hands in the circle and play a few rounds. This may seem childish or awkward, but try to embrace the silliness!

As a refresher, here's how you play "Ring Around the Rosie":

1. Form a circle and join hands facing inward.
2. Walk in a circle while singing together this song: "Ring around the rosie. A pocket full of posies. Ashes, Ashes, we all fall down!"
3. When you get to the end of the song, everyone needs to quickly sit down on the ground. The last one to sit down is out of the game and has to leave the circle.

- After playing "Ring Around the Rosie" for a few rounds, discuss the following questions:
- In the game, did we all have the same goal? What was that goal?
- When we were dancing in the circle, was there someone leading the dance? Or were we all equal partners?

- Can you play the game “Ring Around the Rosie” by yourself? Why or why not?
- Do most dances happen individually, or with other partners?



In both of these activities, we were all equal partners and equal participants. Similarly, in the Trinity, God is three equal Persons. No part of the Trinity is greater than the others. Additionally, just as these activities could not be done with one person, God could not exist in isolation or as only one part. It takes all three Persons of the Trinity to make God whole and complete!

teaching topics

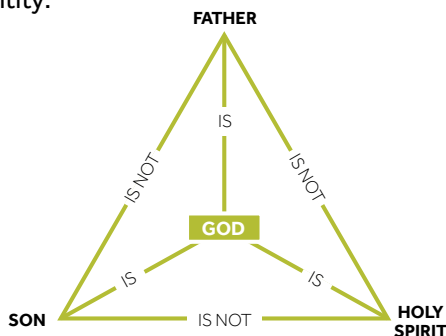
GOD CAN BE DEFINED BY THE PERSONS OF THE TRINITY:

God the **Father**

God the **Son (Jesus)**

God the **Holy Spirit**

One illustration that helps us better understand the Holy Trinity is the **Shield of the Trinity**. It shows how each Person of the Trinity is related and connected to one another, while still maintaining their unique identity:



GOD CAN ALSO BE DEFINED BY THE ROLES OF THE TRINITY

God the Father acts as **Creator** of the world by bringing everything into being in partnership with the Son and Holy Spirit

God the Son acts as **Redeemer** of the world by making a way for us to be in relationship with God

God the Holy Spirit acts as **Sustainer** of the world by holding everything together until Jesus comes again

Because God is a Triune God, and because we are created in God's image, we were made for relationships. We were designed to be in community with God and with one another.

THE TRINITY AND THE BIBLE



The word "Trinity" is never used in the Bible, but we can clearly see how God is viewed as a Trinity by various Biblical authors:

Matthew 28:19 - Jesus instructed his followers to baptize new believers "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

2 Corinthians 13:13 - Paul closed his letter to the church in Corinth by saying, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

1 Peter 1:2 - Peter wrote, "God the Father chose you because of what he knew beforehand. He chose you through the Holy Spirit's work of making you holy and because of the faithful obedience and sacrifice of Jesus Christ."

METAPHORS OR ANALOGIES FOR THE TRINITY*:

H₂O: water can be found in three states: as a solid (ice), as a liquid (water), or as a gas (steam). However, all three states have the exact same chemical makeup: two molecules of hydrogen and one molecule of oxygen.

The Sun: there are three aspects to the sun: the fire that it is made of, the heat that it emits, and the rays of its lights. No part of the sun can be separated from the others; fire doesn't exist without heat or light either. No individual component is entirely the sun, but they all work and operate together.

Logos: Logos is Greek for "Word," and it is a common name for God (see John 1:1). In this metaphor, God the Father is the Speaker of the Word, Jesus the Son is the sound of the Word, and the Holy Spirit is the breath of the Word.

*It is important to note that all metaphors or analogies for the Trinity are imperfect and incomplete. Ultimately, the belief that God is a Three-in-One God is a mystery that cannot be fully understood or explained!

discussion opener

Recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group. Briefly discuss as a group, "What is one thing you heard from our lesson today?"

bible connection

Read together our passages for today, found in **Genesis 1:26-31** and **Matthew 28:19-20**.

discuss



- On a scale of 1-10, how confident do you feel in your understanding of the Trinity? Why did you pick that number?
- How would you explain in your own words what the Trinity is?
- How do you understand God as Father?
- How do you understand God as the Son (Jesus)?
- How do you understand God as the Holy Spirit?
- Why do we use the phrase, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" at baptisms?
- How does the Trinity show us the importance of community and relationships?
- What are some other ways that you might describe God as a Trinity?

challenge

ACCEPTING IN FAITH

There are a lot of things in life that we don't fully understand, but we accept them to be true. For example, most of us wouldn't be able to explain how gravity works, but we know that gravity exists because we aren't floating off into space! We can also see the effects of gravity by how it influences the tides of the ocean and pushes and pulls planets in space.

Take some time this week to journal on the following questions:

- What are two or three things that you don't fully understand, but you accept anyway?
- Read Hebrews 11:1. What does this verse say about faith?
- Why do we need faith to believe in the Trinity?
- What other areas of our life or Christian walk require faith and trust in God?
- What questions do you still have about the Holy Trinity?

joys, concerns & prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.

Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.

Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

for extra study

100

Matthew 28:16-20

Ephesians 4:2-6

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



A series of horizontal lines for writing, spanning the width of the page.

RELATIONSHIP: BROKEN**main point**

When we choose to reject God and follow our own path, we break God's heart and we cause a broken relationship between ourselves and God, ourselves and others, and even between ourselves and creation.

activity (pick one!)**OPTION 1: HUMAN KNOT**

Sometimes our sins create knots or tangles that are hard to undo. This activity shows us what that looks like.

1. As a group, stand in a circle, facing inward.
2. Everyone should reach their right arm towards the center and grab someone else's hand. Make sure you don't grab the hand of the person right next to you!
3. Next, everyone should reach their left arm in and grab someone else's hand. Again, make sure it's not the person right next to you.
4. Now, the fun begins! You'll need to work together to untangle the human knot without letting go of any hands. The goal is to end up in a perfect circle again. You can go over or under each other's arms, or through legs if needed! Do whatever you need to do to untangle the knot, as long as you don't break the chain in the process.

The "human knot" can also describe what free will does to humanity and to our own lives. We can easily make decisions that get us all knotted up—and takes a lot of time and effort to undo.

OPTION 2: THE SIN CHASM

Give everyone in the group a blank sheet of paper. Go around the group and have everyone name a different sin (either a Personal Sin or a Systemic Sin) and write it on the piece of paper in large letters.

Have two people from the group volunteer to stand up in front of the group. One by one, everyone should bring their Sin Paper to the front and share how that sin causes a "break" or a "chasm" in the relationship between people. For example: "If Joey lies to Ben, then Ben no longer trusts Joey." Then, they should place that Sin Paper ("Lying") on the ground between the two up-front volunteers, moving them farther apart from each other.

As each person comes up front and shares their Sin Paper, the gap or “chasm” between the two up-front volunteers will grow larger and larger showing how sin divides and causes a separation from the people around us.



teaching topics

Every human sins. We use our free will to hurt God, others, and ourselves.

God gives each of us **free will**, which is the ability to make our own choices in our thoughts and actions. Free will is important because it allows us to truly love God on our own, not because we are forced to do so. Unfortunately, many people use their free will to do harm instead of good. The wrong things that people choose to do create a ripple effect that moves throughout the rest of the world.

The word “**sin**” comes from a Hebrew phrase that means “to miss the mark.” Like an archer shooting an arrow but failing to hit the target, often our actions fall short of the ideals God has for us. If the bullseye is what God wants for us, when we do things that hurt ourselves or others, it’s like we’re shooting our arrows into the ground or into the air behind the target.

There are two kinds of sins in the world: **Personal and Systemic**.

PERSONAL SINS are the decisions we make that go against God’s will for us and hurt those around us. It’s the kind of mistakes we make that involve ourselves and those immediately connected to the situation.

SYSTEMIC SINS are sins we make as organizations, societies, countries, or any group of people. An obvious example would be slavery. A large group of people thought it was acceptable to own other human beings and treat them like objects. While personal sins were involved, the cultural acceptance that existed for hundreds of years would be considered a systemic sin. Even when we sin, God doesn’t give up on us. God is heartbroken because God loves us so deeply. This is why the Story of God continues for thousands of years. God continues to invite us to be in relationship.

discussion opener

Recite the Apostles’ Creed together as a group. Briefly discuss as a group, “What is one thing you heard from our lesson today?”

bible connection

Read together our passages for today, found in **Genesis 3:1-13** and **Genesis 6:5-6**.

discuss

- How would you describe free will? Why do you think God gave us free will?
- Why did Adam and Eve go against God's will?
- How did they feel after they disobeyed God?
- What are examples of personal sins?
- What are examples of systemic sins?
- How does God feel when we sin? How do you feel when you sin?
- Does God give up on people who sin?

challenge

OFFER AN APOLOGY

We all make mistakes. We all sin. But the key is to admit our mistakes and try to do better next time. Your challenge this week is to apologize to someone. All of us have said or done something that's hurt someone in our lives. Maybe it was a friend or one of your parents, or maybe it was someone you don't even know that well! Take a moment and think of who you need to apologize to. Then write their name in the space below.

This week I will apologize to _____.

After you have had a chance to apologize to that person, reflect on these questions in your journal space:

- Why did I do that in the first place?
- What was the hardest part about apologizing?
- How did the person respond?
- How did I feel after?

joys, concerns & prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.

Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.

Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

1 John 1:8-9

[illegible]



Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple horizontal lines for text entry.



A series of horizontal lines for writing, spanning the width of the page.

ISRAEL: GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE



main point

God chose to be in a special relationship with the descendants of Abraham. They were blessed so that they could be a blessing to others and show God's love to the world.

activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1: BLESSINGS SHOWDOWN

In this activity, we are going to "count our blessings," competition-style!

Divide the group up into two equal teams. Have each group select a Writer who has somewhat legible handwriting. Give the Writer a blank piece of paper and a pen.

Set a timer for 30 seconds. (There will be three rounds of 30 seconds each.) During each round, each team has to come up with as many blessings they can think of in the selected category. The Round Categories are:

- Round 1: **Foods** that Bless Us
- Round 2: **Items/Objects** that Bless Us
- Round 3: **People** that Bless Us (either specific names of people or categories like teachers, coaches, parents, etc.)

After each round, have each team count up their points. They get 1 point per blessing. Keep track of the score after each round. The team with the most blessing points after three rounds is the winning team!

OPTION 2: SHARED STORIES

Jews and Christians both trace our roots back to the story of Abraham, and we have a common history and heritage. While we have some differences in our beliefs, we have many things in common as well. See if as a group, you can list some of the similarities we have with our Jewish brothers and sisters.

teaching topics

A **COVENANT** is a type of contract or promise that God makes with humans. This is more than a simple agreement; it is a spiritual bond and is meant to be taken seriously.



However, God knows that as humans, we may not always fulfill our end of the bargain and we fall short. God entered into a covenant relationship with Abraham and Abraham's descendants (the Israelites) knowing that they wouldn't always get it right (**Genesis 15:13-14**). They would sin and mess up and fall back out of relationship with God. But, just like with the Israelites, God always forgives us and allows us to re-enter back into the covenant relationship once again.

God's Covenant with Abraham consisted of several parts:

- The Promised Land of Canaan that would eventually become Israel
- Many descendants and heirs that would become a great nation
- Protection and safety ("I will curse those who curse you," **Genesis 12:3**)
- Blessings such as prosperity, wealth, respect, and material possessions

God chose Abraham's family to receive a special blessing. But this didn't get them off the hook! Instead, this gave them an extra challenge: because they were God's chosen people, they were now charged to bless the whole world. They were God's messengers and blessing-bringers, and they were chosen to be a blessing to others.

As Christians, we too are now God's people and we are given that same charge and calling: to be a blessing to others and to show God's love to the whole world.

discussion opener

Recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group. Briefly discuss as a group, "What is one thing you heard from our lesson today?"

bible connection

Read together our passages for today, found in **Genesis 12:1-3** and **Genesis 17:1-8**.

discuss

- What is one thing new you learned about Judaism from our lesson today? What is one thing that you still have questions about?
- In **Genesis 17:1-8**, God made a **covenant** with Abraham and Abraham's future descendants. What was that covenant?
- Did Abraham have to make any sacrifices to uphold his end of the covenant?

- Did Abraham have to make any sacrifices to uphold his end of the covenant?
- What did it mean for Abraham and his family to be chosen by God? What does it mean for us today to be chosen or called by God?
- In what ways does our church bless those around us, in our community and our city and in the world?
- How can we as a group or individuals bless others in our lives?
- How does better understanding the Jewish faith help us better understand our own faith?

challenge

RANDOM ACT OF BLESSING

We've all heard of spreading Random Acts of Kindness. This week's challenge is very similar: look for ways you can bless other others through big and small ways. Maybe you can offer to cook dinner for your family one night this week or make a dessert as a sweet treat. Offer to rake leaves for your neighbor or mow their lawn. Look for chores to do in your home outside of your regular responsibilities. Are there any service or giving projects going on at the church that you and your family can connect with?

After you've participated in a couple Random Acts of Blessings, reflect on these questions using the journal space provided below:

- In what ways have you personally been blessed in your own life?
- Was it easy or hard to look for ways to bless others around you?
- How did blessing others make you feel? What was their reaction to being blessed by you?

joys, concerns & prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.

Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.

Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Genesis 15:7-20
Exodus 19:4-6
Deuteronomy 6:6-9
Isaiah 42:6-7

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.





A series of horizontal lines for writing, spanning the width of the page.

JESUS: GOD WITH US



main point

Jesus came to earth to remind us that God deeply desires to be in relationship with us, to give us new life, to show us how to live, and to invite us into an exciting purpose.

activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1: SIGNS

Stand in a circle as a group with one person in the middle. Each person should come up with their own "sign," such as tugging their ear, waving a hand, showing the peace sign, giving a thumbs up, or scratching their cheek. These should be physical movements that don't make noise. Go around the circle and demonstrate your sign to the group so everyone knows what each other's sign is.

The person in the middle will close their eyes while the rest of the group decides who will start the game by showing their sign first. The goal of game is to silently pass their signs along without the person in the middle "catching" the sign. You pass a sign by doing your sign first and then the sign of the player you are passing to. Pay attention, because the signs move quick!

The game continues until someone is caught passing the sign by the player in the middle, and then the person caught becomes the guesser in the middle.

Just like we copy one another's "signs" in this game, we are to model our lives after Jesus and how he taught us how to live!

OPTION 2: DIVINE AND HUMAN

Jesus is described in scripture as both "The Son of God" and "The Son of Man." This activity shows both his humanity and his divinity through several passages from the Gospel of Luke.

To start, everyone should stand in line (shoulder to shoulder) in the center of the room. One side of the room will be labeled "Jesus as Human" and the other side of the room will be labeled "Jesus as God." When the teacher reads each passage from Luke (found in the **TEACHER'S GUIDE**), students will have to decide whether that verse better represents Jesus' humanity or Jesus' divinity, and then walk to that side of the room.

Once you complete the activity, discuss the following questions as a group:



- In what ways does the Bible show us Jesus Christ as a true human being?
- In what ways does the Bible show us Jesus Christ as divine, as the Son of God, or God in the flesh?
- Which verses did you have the hardest time choosing one over the other? (Remember, although we played it this way, Jesus is BOTH human and God all of the time.)

teaching topics

Often, it's easier to show someone something than to tell them.

Because of this, God came to us, as one of us, to show us these things:

1. **God is real and active among us:** Many people in the Bible were able to see, hear, and touch God. For us, God is often unseen, and because of that, hard for us to understand. By looking at the life of Jesus, it is easier for us to see and understand what God is like.
2. **God madly and deeply loves each one of us:** God came in human form as Jesus to live among us. It would have been easier to stay distant and removed, but by coming to earth, God showed just how much we are loved.
3. **We can live a life for more than ourselves:** Jesus gave his life to serve and care for others. He demonstrated compassion and helped those who were in need. He spoke up for those who did not have a voice in society and challenged those who were in power. He suffered rejection and death at the hands of people, but he still loved them.
4. **We can bring God to earth through our everyday words and actions:** We are invited to continue the work that Jesus started while he lived and walked on the earth. With our very lives, we can help make the earth look a little bit more like God intended it.

Jesus is "**The Incarnation**," meaning "God in the flesh." God came into our world through the human person of Jesus. Because of this, Jesus is the perfect image of the unseen God.

Jesus is both **fully God** and **fully human**. Jesus is not 50% God and 50% human. He is 100% of both. So, perhaps you could say that he is 200% altogether: 100% God, 100% Human.

discussion opener

Recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group.

Briefly discuss as a group, "What is one thing you heard from our lesson today?"

bible connection

- Read together our passage for today, found in **John 1:1-18**.

discuss

- What inspires you from this passage of scripture? What stands out as good news to you?
- What specific parts from this passage help you see God as human and God as divine?
- What questions do you still have about Jesus being both human and God?
- We believe that Jesus is BOTH fully God AND fully human, not "either/or." Is there anything else you can think of that is also "both" rather than "either/or"?
- How does knowing that Jesus was a human like us encourage you?

challenge

GOD SIGHTINGS

God is still showing up for us in human and divine ways. Jesus came as God in the flesh, but since we continue Jesus' work on earth, we can see God working through other humans too. God can even work through us to speak to or help other people!

Choose three days this week to watch out for "God Sightings." Make sure to pick one of your favorite days and one of your least favorite days. On those days, keep an eye out for where God is at work. Look for God at work while you're at home, at school, at practice, on social media... wherever! Look for God when you wake up, when you go to sleep, and everywhere in between.

In your journal make three columns. In the first column, note **where you saw God at work**. In the second, note **what God was doing**. In the third, decide whether that reminded you **more of God at work through humans or God doing something more divine**.

Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.

for extra study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages:

Luke 2:1-20

Hebrews 4:14-15

1 John 4:10

[illegible]



Two horizontal lines for a title or header.

Twenty horizontal lines for the main body of the page, providing space for writing.



A series of horizontal lines for writing, starting from the top right and extending across the page.

RELATIONSHIP: RESTORED**main point**

Through Jesus, we can be in right relationship with God. This happens because we are given God's forgiveness and grace.

activity (pick one!)**OPTION 1: LOST SHEEP**

Have someone in your group volunteer to be the "Lost Sheep." This person will be blindfolded. Pick someone else in your group to be the "Shepherd."

After you blindfold the "Lost Sheep," quickly set up a short obstacle course in your meeting space using chairs, books, coats, or anything else available.

The Shepherd has to safely guide the Lost Sheep around and through the obstacle course using only their voice to lead them. The Shepherd cannot touch the Lost Sheep, and no other members of the group can help out. Will the Lost Sheep be able to follow the instructions of the Shepherd and make their way back home?

OPTION 1: WOULD YOU RATHER?

Discuss the following "Would You Rather?" questions before you dig into today's lesson:

- Would you rather have cake at every meal or never have to eat vegetables again?
- Would you rather keep your siblings or be an only child?
- Would you rather have hair that always smelled like manure or always have dirty, messy clothes?
- Would you rather have to share a room with your sibling for the rest of your life or never have to do chores around the house again?
- Would you rather be rich but have no friends, or be poor but have friends and family?
- Would you rather throw a party for someone else or have a surprise party thrown for you?
- Would you rather be a sheep or be a pig? OR, Would you rather be a shepherd or a pig farmer?
- Would you rather lose something valuable to you or be lost in the wilderness?



SALVATION is how God forgives our sins and delivers us from our sinful desires. Just as God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, God offers us this same deliverance from our sins through salvation.

ATONEMENT means that we can be “At-One-Ment” with God again, or in “one accord” with God. Even though our sins have caused a break in our relationship with God, through God’s love and Christ’s atonement, we can be in harmony with God once again.

GRACE is the undeserved kindness and love that God gives all of us. We didn’t do anything to earn God’s grace, and there is nothing we can do that will take away God’s grace. Grace is what allows us to be in relationship with God. It is a free gift from God that we can choose to accept or reject.

In Methodism, we recognize that there are three different forms of grace:

1. **Prevenient Grace** comes to us before we are even aware of God. Before we have accepted the invitation to be in relationship with God, prevenient grace is how God calls out to each and every one of us, inviting us to join God’s family.
2. **Justifying Grace** is the grace that comes when we choose to be in relationship with God. It makes it “Just As If I’d” never sinned or had a broken relationship with God.
3. **Sanctifying Grace** is the grace that draws us deeper into a relationship with God. Salvation is not meant to be a one-time thing. Through sanctifying grace, we become more and more like Christ each day as we choose to follow God’s will for our lives. Another word for this is “holiness,” because we have been set apart by God and made whole and complete once again.

discussion opener

Recite the Apostles’ Creed together as a group. Briefly discuss as a group, “What is one thing you heard from our lesson today?”

bible connection

- Read together our passage for today, found in **Luke 15:11-32**.

discuss

- What is your first memory or awareness of God?
- Which of the two sons in the story do you relate to more: the younger son who went away or the older son who stayed behind?

- How did the younger son sin against his father and cause a break in their relationship?
- In what ways did the father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son show grace to his two sons?
- Do you think the father in the story was fair? Is grace fair?
- Is asking for God's forgiveness a one-time thing or an ongoing process?
- Do you ever feel like you are not worthy of God's love?

challenge

WRISTBAND CHALLENGE

Throughout the Bible, we are told to show grace and extend forgiveness to others since God forgave us. Colossians 3:13 says, "Be tolerant with each other and, if someone has a complaint against anyone, forgive each other. **As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other.**"

But sometimes it is really hard to give grace to those around us. Who are the people who get on your nerves the most? Maybe it is a younger sibling. Maybe it is an annoying classmate or a bully at school. Make an effort this week to extend grace to those people, even when they don't deserve it!

To help you do this, wear a rubber band or wristband on your wrist, and every time you choose grace, even though it is easier to choose annoyance or anger, switch the band to the other arm. Count how many times you switch the band during the week. At the end of the week, take some time to reflect on this question: **How did showing grace to others teach you more about God's grace for us?**

joys, concerns, & prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.

Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.

Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

for extra study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages:

Psalms 103:8-13

Luke 15:1-10

Ephesians 3:8-9

Titus 3:3-7



A series of horizontal lines for writing, spanning the width of the page.





A series of horizontal lines for writing, spanning the width of the page.

THE PROMISE OF THE RESURRECTION



main point

Because Jesus rose from the dead, we believe that death is not the end. Christ defeated death once and for all through his resurrection.

activity (pick one!)

UNBELIEVABLE!

Divide into smaller groups of three or four people. In your groups, play the game "Two Truths and a Lie." Everyone has to come up with three statements about themselves: two will be true statements, and one will be a lie. (For example: "I have been to Hawaii." People have to guess if that is true or false!) After each person makes their three statements, try to guess which one was the lie.

After everyone has had a chance to share their Two Truths and a Lie in their smaller groups, come back together as a big group and answer the following questions:

- Was it easy or hard to figure out which statements were true and which ones were false?
- Were there any statements that seemed unbelievable, but ended up being true?
- Were there any clues that you used to figure out the false statements?
- How do we figure out truth from fiction in real life?

Sometimes there are truths in life that seem outlandish or unbelievable. The resurrection of Jesus is one of those truths. Many people have a hard time accepting the resurrection of Jesus because it seems too good to be true! Even Jesus' disciples (like Mary in our story today) didn't believe at first that he had really risen from the dead.

OPTION 2: RESURRECTION TAG

This game is a modified version of "Freeze Tag." One person will be "It." If you are tagged by the player who is "It," then you must fall down on the ground as if you are dead. But if someone else who is not dead touches you, then you are "resurrected," and can continue playing until you are tagged out again.



Sometimes, Christians spend a lot more time talking more about Jesus' death on the cross than they do about his resurrection. But at the same time, we sometimes want to skip past Jesus' death and jump ahead to the resurrection. While our faith is founded on Jesus' resurrection, we do not want to forget that Jesus also died for us on the cross. Without the crucifixion on Friday night, we wouldn't have the resurrection on Sunday morning.

Because of Jesus' resurrection, we know these things:

- **Death is not the end.** We don't have to fear death, because we know that Jesus has conquered death once and for all. As the Apostle Paul states, "Death has been swallowed up in victory!" (1 Corinthians 15:54)
- **We can trust that God will keep God's promises.** The greatest promise in the Bible is that Jesus would be resurrected from the dead, and we believe that promise has already come true. While he was still alive, Jesus promised: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though they die. Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25-26)." This promise was fulfilled when Jesus rose from the dead back to life.
- **Resurrection is the ultimate destination for Christians.** Like Jesus, one day we too will be raised from the dead—being brought back the way Jesus was brought back into a similar but different body. We too get to experience the awesome resurrection of Christ!

The belief in Jesus' resurrection is often a hard one for people to understand.

- We are told in the gospels that Jesus appeared to multiple people after he was raised to life again; Paul writes that he appeared to 500 people! (1 Corinthians 15:5). We also know that Jesus talked with people, ate and drank, and allowed others to touch him, proving that he was not just a ghost (Luke 24:30, 37-43; John 20:27). But even some of his own disciples still had trouble accepting that the unbelievable had happened and that Jesus had come back to life.
- Like many aspects of our Christian faith, **the Resurrection of Jesus is something that takes faith to believe in**, and we may never fully understand it in this lifetime.

discussion opener

Recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group. Briefly discuss as a group, "What is one thing you heard from our lesson today?"

bible connection

- Read together our passage for today, found in **John 20:1-18**.



discuss

- How do you imagine Mary felt when she first arrived at the tomb? How did her feelings change when she saw Jesus?
- Why do you think Mary didn't recognize Jesus at first? What caused Mary to eventually realize the "gardener" was actually Jesus?
- Have you had a friend or family member die? What sort of feelings or emotions did you have after their death?
- How does Jesus' resurrection give us hope even after the deaths of people we love?
- Does knowing Jesus was raised back to life change the way you think of your own life?
- Besides the promise of the resurrection, what are other promises God has made to us?

challenge

GOD'S PROMISES

Over and over in the Bible, God made promises. The good news for us is that God always keeps God's promises, and God's promises are still true for us today! 2 Corinthians 1:20 says, "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ" (NIV).

Take a few minutes to read through these promises from God in the Bible:

- **Deuteronomy 31:8**
- **Psalms 34:17**
- **Isaiah 40:28-29**
- **Isaiah 41:13**
- **Matthew 11:28-29**
- **1 John 1:9**

In your journal, write your answers to the questions below:

- Which of these promises from God is most helpful for you today?
- Which of these promises do you have a hard time believing today?
- How have you seen God's promises come true in your own life?

joys, concerns, & prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.

Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.

Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

for extra study



To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages:

Luke 24:1-35

1 Corinthians 15:3-7, 20-22

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.





A series of horizontal lines for writing, spanning the width of the page.

WHAT'S YET TO COME?



main point

Christians don't just believe in heaven. We also believe in heaven coming to earth when we live out the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven.

activity (pick one!)

DESCRIBING WITHOUT WORDS

Give each student three small pieces of paper. Have them write a person, place, and thing (one on each piece of paper) that everyone in the room would know. (For example: Harry Potter, Hogwarts, and magical wand.) Put them all in a bowl, then split your group into two teams. Each person has one turn where they pull out a piece of paper, and they try to get their team to guess the word without saying the word on the paper. (This game is played like "Charades"!)

Go through as many slips of paper as you can in 1 minute, then switch to the other team. After you have emptied the slips in the bowl, end the game and count which team had more correct answers. They are the winners!

The point of this game is to show how words can fail sometimes. When it comes to the afterlife, we do our best to explain something that hasn't yet been revealed to us.

OPTION 2: DANCE OFF

Some people imagine heaven or the fulfilled Kingdom of Heaven to be like a giant dance party! Divide your group into two "Dance Crews." They then have five minutes to prepare a choreographed dance routine. After their time limit is up, bring the two groups back together to perform their dances. The leaders can judge which Dance Crew is the winner, or they may declare that everyone is a winner in the Kingdom of God!

teaching topics

What is heaven like? A lot of people think of heaven as a cartoon: we'll have harps and halos and float around on clouds. But the Bible doesn't describe it like this. The Bible doesn't actually say a lot about heaven at all! Instead, most of the references to heaven talk about being with God, but not much about what that will be like. The closest hint we have is that Jesus calls this place "paradise" when he was dying on the cross (Luke 23:43).



Instead, the Bible spends a lot of time talking about the **Kingdom of Heaven** (or the **Kingdom of God**), which is different than “heaven.” The Kingdom of Heaven is one of the main things that Jesus talked about when he was on earth.

- “Kingdom of Heaven” is a way of describing the world as God desires it to be. It is a perfect world where everything broken is fixed, and everything is as it should be. Through the Kingdom, God will bring together heaven and earth and unite them as one.
- Our job as followers of Jesus is to help bring the Kingdom of Heaven to earth even now! In fact, we pray this each week during the Lord’s Prayer when we say, “Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

The Bible also talks about a **New Heaven** and a **New Earth**.

- Ultimately, God will re-create our world and make everything whole and beautiful and perfect again—just like it was back in the Garden of Eden.
- Isaiah 65:17-18 says, “Look! I’m creating a new heaven and a new earth: past events won’t be remembered; they won’t come to mind. Be glad and rejoice forever in what I’m creating.”
- So, what about hell? We don’t know who will be invited into this new, perfect heavenly world, but most Christians believe God will draw the line somewhere. Belief in hell has a complicated history but is traditionally understood as an afterlife separated from God. For God, what’s yet to come isn’t about winners and losers, it’s about unity between God and humanity.

discussion opener

Recite the Apostles’ Creed together as a group. Briefly discuss as a group, “What is one thing you heard from our lesson today?”

bible connection

Read together our passages for today, found in **Revelation 21:1-8** and **Luke 23:43**.

discuss

- What have you been taught about heaven?
- What’s the difference between “going to heaven” and “bringing heaven to earth”?

- If heaven is ultimately coming to earth, what do you think God thinks about the earth?
- Why did Jesus spend so much time talking about the Kingdom of Heaven? How is the Kingdom of Heaven different than what we normally think about heaven?
- If you could request God to change something in the “new earth,” what would you ask for?



challenge

HEAVEN VS. KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

- Think about the different ways that heaven is shown or talked about: in books, on television or movies, in art, or even among your friends. Then, journal your answers to these questions:
 - How is heaven shown in pop culture?
 - What words or images are usually used to describe heaven?
 - Is this the kind of heaven you would want to go to?
- Then, look up and read the following passages on how Jesus describes the Kingdom of Heaven:
 - Matthew 5:3 ■ Matthew 5:10
 - Mark 10:14-15 ■ Luke 13:18-21
 - Luke 17:20-21
- Journal your answers to these questions:
 - How is the “heaven” of pop culture different from Jesus’ Kingdom of Heaven?
 - Would you want to be a part of the Kingdom of Heaven that Jesus describes?
 - What is still confusing to you about the Kingdom of Heaven?
 - How can you work even now to bring the Kingdom of Heaven to earth?

joys, concerns, & prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.

Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you’ve encountered God this week.

Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

for extra study



To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages:

Isaiah 65:17-18

Luke 13:29-30

John 14:1-7

Philippians 3:20-21

[illegible]





A series of horizontal lines for writing, starting from the top left and extending across the page. The lines are evenly spaced and cover most of the page area.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?



main point

Jesus gave us the Church so we could be in community with other believers as we grow deeper in our faith and serve the world.

activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1: HANDS AND FEET

This activity will challenge you to work together as a team! Divide into groups of three or four students. Set up a “starting line” and a “finish line” about 10 feet apart.

Have a race to see which group of 3-4 students can cross the finish line first, with only the following body parts touching the ground each round (Hint: groups may have to lift one another up or support each other!):

- Round 1: 6 feet only
- Round 2: 5 feet and 2 elbows
- Round 3: 5 feet and 1 hand
- Round 4: 5 feet and 2 hands and 1 elbow
- Round 4: 4 feet and 3 hands
- Round 5: 3 feet and 1 nose
- Round 6: 2 feet and 4 hands and 1 nose
- Round 7: Leader's Choice!

The Church is sometimes called the “Hands and Feet of Jesus” in the world as we do God’s work and serve those around us. As brothers in sisters in Christ, we lift one another up in the Church just like we did in this activity!

OPTION 2: CHURCH MEMORIES

Pass out blank pieces of paper and writing utensils (crayons, colored pencils, or markers). Everyone should think back to their earliest memory of church. On your paper, either draw what that memory looks like or write down words about what that memory feels like.

After a few minutes, come back together as a group and answer the following questions:

- Does anyone want to share about their earliest memory of church?
- Do you remember being baptized? (Or, if you were baptized as a baby, have you watched a video or seen pictures of your baptism?)

- Do you remember the first time you participated in communion? What was that experience like?



teaching topics

After Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, the earliest Christians continued to meet together for prayer, fellowship, teaching, preaching, sharing, and growing. These first believers established the Church, which we still participate in today!

The early church established **Sacraments**, or outward practices that point us toward God's presence in our lives and in the world. The two sacraments that we practice as Methodists are Baptism and Communion.

- **Baptism** marks the moment we become a part of God's family, the Church. The water represents God's saving grace that cleanses us from our sins. As Methodists, we believe you can get baptized as a baby, as a kid or teenager, or as an adult. Even if you don't remember your baptism, God remembers the moment you were born into new life in Jesus.
- **Communion (also called the Lord's Supper)** is a way for us to remember Christ's death and resurrection. When we participate in communion by eating the bread (which represents Jesus' body) and drinking the juice (which represents Jesus' blood), we are sharing in a feast with other believers all over the world. As Methodists, we believe that anybody who wants to be united with Christ can share in the Communion table.

John and Charles Wesley were two brothers living in England in the 1700s. They were both ministers in the Church of England (or Anglican Church), but they believed that there was a better way of doing church. Together, they came up with various "methods" to help other Christians grow in their faith, such as meeting together in small groups, studying Scripture, and singing hymns together. Through the Methodist movement came our own denomination, the United Methodist Church.

One contribution that John Wesley made to Christianity was the **Wesleyan Quadrilateral**. This is a tool we can use to better understand faith and life as we make decisions and try to figure out God's will. It involves looking at the situation or question through four different lenses:



- **Scripture:** the Bible, which is our foundational source for Christian belief and living
- **Tradition:** our heritage, faith traditions, and those things that Christians have done and believed throughout history
- **Experience:** our individual interactions and encounters throughout life; often, we can also lean into the experiences of others.
- **Reason:** the use of our God-given logic and intellect as we think rationally and logically

Through the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, we recognize that God created our emotions/feelings (experience) **and** our minds (reason). We do not have to check our brains at the door of the church, and we do not have to stifle our emotions either.

God also gave us others in our faith community (tradition), **and** God gave us the Bible to read and study (Scripture). We don't have to do things on our own because we have others around us and the Bible to help us out!

discussion opener

Recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group. Briefly discuss as a group, "What is one thing you heard from our lesson today?"

bible connection

- Read together our passage for today, found in **Acts 2:42-47**.

discuss

- What do you think is the purpose of the Church?
- What did the early church look like? How is it the same or different from church today?
- In what ways did the members of the early church help one another out? In what ways did they help out those who were not a part of the church?
- In what ways does our own church help out its members? How does our church help out those in our greater community?
- How has the church been a place of community for you personally?
- When you are an adult, do you think you will be a part of a church?

challenge

BE THE CHURCH

As we learned in our lesson, the Church is more than a building or a denomination. The Church is the people of God, made up of anyone who chooses to be in relationship with Jesus. We as the Church are now the ones who act as Jesus' hands and feet in the world today.



This week, **take some time to write a note or send a text message to 3 people in the Church who have made an impact on your life.** Think of those people that have been the hands and feet of Jesus to you! They could be your small group leaders, Sunday school teachers, Confirmation mentors, or even other students. In your note or message, thank them for making a difference in your life by being like Jesus.

joys, concerns, & prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.

Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you’ve encountered God this week.

Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Before our Confirmation Session on “Partnering with God’s Mission,” please complete the Spiritual Gifts online assessment.

The link can be found at cor.org/confirmation or directly at umc.org/what-we-believe/spiritual-gifts-online-assessment.

It should only take about 10-15 minutes to complete, and after finishing the assessment, there is an option to email the results to yourself. (Or, you can take a screenshot of the results page.) Bring the results of your Spiritual Gifts Assessment with you to confirmation when we talk about Partnering with God’s Mission.

for extra study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages:

Acts 2:1-4 (Birth of the Church at Pentecost)

1 Corinthians 12:24-27 (The Church as the Body of Christ)

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (Sacrament of Communion)

1 Peter 3:21 (Sacrament of Baptism)



Two horizontal lines for writing, followed by 24 additional horizontal lines for writing.



A series of horizontal lines for writing, spanning the width of the page.

PRAYER: TALKING WITH GOD



main point

In order to grow closer in our relationship with God, we should spend time with God through prayer and other spiritual disciplines.

activity (pick one!)

INTERRUPTING PARTNER

Everyone find a partner. At the same time, tell each other about your favorite holiday. Why is it your favorite holiday? What season is your favorite holiday in? What traditions does your family do to celebrate this holiday? Do you travel anywhere or get time off school as a part of this holiday? Take 2-3 minutes to talk with your partner about holidays before coming back as a group and answering the following questions:

- What happened when you both tried talking at the same time? Were you able to really listen to each other?
- What was the problem with your conversation?
- How is this sometimes like our prayers, when we talk to God?
- When you pray, do you spend more time listening or talking? How does God “talk back” to us?

OPTION 2: TELEPHONE PRAYERS

Sit in circle. Someone will start out the Telephone Prayer by whispering a phrase or sentence into the next person's ear. Pass along the phrase or sentence to by whispering it to next person until it goes all around the circle. See if the phrase ends the same way it started! Then, discuss the following questions as a group:

- What happened to our Telephone Prayer along the way as it got passed around the circle?
- Does it ever feel like our prayers get jumbled or mixed up before they get to God?
- Do you believe that God knows what we need, even when our prayers seem to come out wrong?



Prayer is how we communicate with God. It should involve both **talking** to God as we lift up our prayers and thanks, as well as **listening** to God and seeking to hear God's voice.

We are promised in 1 John 5:14-15 that God always hears our prayers.

The **"ACTS"** format is one useful way of structuring prayer:

- **Adoration:** This means praising God. For example, "God, you are an amazing and powerful God. You are awesome!"
- **Confession:** This is simply saying "I'm sorry." Confession is when we acknowledge that we have done things to hurt God and to hurt those around us. It may look like, "Please forgive me for...." or "I'm sorry that I...."
- **Thanksgiving:** This is saying "Thank you!" to God and naming all the things that you are grateful for.
- **Supplication:** This is asking God to supply all your needs. It is the time of your prayer that you lift up any requests and concerns that are on your mind.

Intercessory Prayer is praying on behalf of others. This means lifting someone else up to God when they are sick or going through a difficult situation. It is why we share joys and concerns with one another each week, so we can lift one another up in prayer!

Sometimes we don't know what to say when we pray. Sometimes our prayers sound more like sighs of disappointment or groans of frustration. We are promised in **Romans 8:26** that the Holy Spirit intervenes on our behalf when we don't have the words to say to God: "In the same way, the Spirit comes to help our weakness. We don't know what we should pray, but the Spirit himself pleads our case with unexpressed groans."

Spiritual Disciplines (or Spiritual Practices) are other ways we can connect with God. Just like athletes work to discipline and train their physical bodies, Spiritual Disciplines help strengthen your spiritual life and bring you closer to God. Besides prayer, other spiritual disciplines include:

- **Solitude and Silence:** Solitude means spending time alone so that you can be with God without distraction. This may look like turning off our phones, spending time in nature, or going to a quiet place in your house. Practicing silence helps us to better listen to God's voice.

- **Sabbath:** Sabbath is actually a commandment from God where we are to stop working and take time to rest in God's presence. It could include setting aside time where you refrain from doing homework or chores to spend time with God.



- **Fasting:** To fast means to go without food or something else for a set period of time. Fasting takes our focus off of material things and helps us rely fully on God. You might fast from certain foods (like chocolate) or from certain habits (like logging on to social media).
- **Worship:** This is the practice of taking time to go to church and worship God alongside other Christians.
- **Study:** This means spending time studying the Bible or reading other Christian books to help you grow in your knowledge and faith.
- **Meditation:** Focusing on a certain passage of Scripture (like in *Lectio Divina*) or silently repeating a certain prayer over and over again are both forms of meditation.
- **Accountability:** Meeting with other Christians one-on-one or in a small group and challenging each other to become more like Christ in your words, thoughts, and actions.

discussion opener

Recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group. Briefly discuss as a group, "What is one thing you heard from our lesson today?"

bible connection

- Read together our passage for today, found in **Matthew 6:5-13**.

discussion

- How often do you speak (or text) with your best friend? Why do you spend so much time talking with your friends?
- How often do you set aside time to talk with God? Why do you think prayer is important?
- In the Scripture passage from today, what things does Jesus say NOT to do when we pray? What things should we do when we pray?
- Do you think God knows what we need before we even ask it? If so, then why should we pray?
- What are some potential challenges or roadblocks to prayer?
- Look at the list of spiritual disciplines in the TEACHING TOPICS section. Have you ever engaged in any of these spiritual disciplines? How do

they help us grow closer to God? Which one(s) would you want to try out?



challenge

ANCIENT PRAYERS

Sometimes praying to God can be hard because we don't know what to say or which words to use. Throughout the history of Christianity, many others have written prayers that we can use to talk to God. For example, you are already familiar with the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer written by John Wesley (the founder of Methodism) that we have been praying together as a confirmation group. During this week, pick one or two of these other famous prayers of the church and offer them up as your own prayer to God.

A PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me bring love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

ST. PATRICK'S BREASTPLATE PRAYER

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 where I lie, Christ where I sit, Christ where I arise,

Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,

Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks to me,

Christ in every eye that sees me,

Christ in every ear that hears me.

Salvation is of the Lord.
Salvation is of the Christ.
May your salvation, Lord, be ever with us.



A PRAYER BY ST. TERESA OF AVILA

Govern everything by your wisdom, O Lord, so that my soul may always be serving you in the way you will and not as I choose. Let me die to myself so that I may serve you; let me live to you who are life itself. Amen.

SERENITY PRAYER BY REINHOLD NIEBUHR

God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time,
enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;
taking, as Jesus did,
this sinful world as it is,
not as I would have it;
trusting that You will make all things right
if I surrender to Your will;
so that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with You forever in the next.
Amen.

A PRAYER BY THOMAS MERTON

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, I will trust you always, though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.

Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages:

Mark 6:31-32

Luke 11:1-13

Romans 8:26-28

James 5:13-18

[illegible]



Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple horizontal lines for text entry.



A series of horizontal lines for writing, starting from the top and extending down the page.

PARTNERING WITH GOD'S MISSION



main point

When we were created, God gave us each unique gifts so that we can contribute to closing the gap between how the world is and how God wants the world to be.

activity (pick one!)

SPIRITUAL GIFTS SCRAMBLE

- Make sure everyone has completed the Spiritual Gifts Assessment. If you didn't complete the assessment ahead of time, take a few minutes to do it on your phone or borrow your leader's laptop using this link: umc.org/what-we-believe/spiritual-gifts-online-assessment.
- Give everyone in the group a blank piece of paper and have them write their name and then list their top five Spiritual Gifts on it.
- Have everyone stand up with their piece of paper held out in front of them.
- When the teacher says, "Go!" you have to find a partner as quickly as possible based on the topic of each round.
 - **Round 1:** Find someone with a spiritual gift
 - **Round 2:** Find someone that has the same first letter of any spiritual gift of yours
 - **Round 3:** Find someone with a same spiritual gift as you
 - **Round 4:** Find someone with a spiritual that you would want to have
 - **Round 5:** Find someone with spiritual gifts completely different than yours

OPTION 2: WEIRD GIFTS

- Go around the circle and have each person tell about the strangest or weirdest gift they have received, maybe for their birthday or Christmas.
- Next, go around and share about a favorite gift that you have received.
- As a group, discuss these questions:
- Do some of the Spiritual Gifts in the list under the "Teaching Topics" seem weird or strange? If so, which ones?
- What was so meaningful or special about the favorite gift you received? Did you say thanks to person who gave you that gift?
- Do you trust God to give you good, meaningful spiritual gifts?
- Is there a gift from the spiritual gifts list you wished you had?



Spiritual Gifts are the ways the Holy Spirit empowers us to serve God and serve others in the world. No two gifts are exactly alike, but all are equally important! Not everyone has the same spiritual gifts, but we all have the same challenge: to use our spiritual gifts to serve God and bring God's kingdom to earth as it is in heaven.

- Here is the full list of spiritual gifts and their meanings (as found at <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/exploring-your-spiritual-gifts>):
 - **ADMINISTRATION:** The gift of administration allows a person to organize people and resources for greater efficiency, effectiveness, and success.
 - **APOSTLESHIP:** The gift of apostleship compels people to reach out to new and unfamiliar groups and individuals to invite them into relationship with God and community.
 - **COMPASSION:** The gift of compassion moves people to action on behalf of those in need or who are hurt or rejected.
 - **DISCERNMENT:** Discernment is a gift of deep intuition and insight.
 - **EVANGELISM:** Those with the gift of evangelism are comfortable speaking about their faith and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ to everyone they meet.
 - **EXHORTATION/ENCOURAGEMENT:** The gift of exhortation is present in people who offer encouragement, wise counsel, unflagging support, and empowerment.
 - **FAITH:** The gift of faith is more than belief in Jesus Christ, but an abiding confidence that God works all things together for good, and that the people of God can rise above any obstacle.
 - **GIVING:** The gift of giving is the deep commitment to provide whatever resources are needed to support God's will and plan.
 - **HEALING:** The gift of healing is not about transferring spiritual power to eliminate suffering and disease, but the ability to channel God's grace and healing love to those who suffer physical, emotional, or spiritual pain.
 - **HELPING:** Helping is a gift of support and behind-the-scenes effort that make groups, families, and congregations more effective.
 - **INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES:** Those who are gifted to interpret tongues help build bridges across cultural, generational, and language divides.
 - **KNOWLEDGE:** The gift of knowledge allows people to automatically convert facts, data, and information into useful and important knowledge.
 - **LEADERSHIP:** The gift of leadership is a visionary, and forward-looking gift that enables people to stay focused on where God

might be leading us as individuals, congregations, and communities at any given time.



- **MIRACLES:** Those gifted with miracles never doubt the power and presence of God in creation, and are able to help others see and believe in God's power.
- **PROPHECY:** The gift of prophecy is the ability to speak God's word to others, or more appropriately to be open for God to speak God's word through us.
- **SERVANTHOOD:** Servanthood is the gift of doing for others, sometimes to the exclusion of meeting personal needs.
- **SHEPHERDING/PASTORING:** The gift of shepherding is the gift of mentoring and providing spiritual guidance to others to help them develop in the discipleship and faith formation.
- **TEACHING:** The gift of teaching allows people to transform data and information into life changing knowledge.
- **TONGUES:** The gift of tongues is a communication gift that allows people to speak foreign languages and convey concepts they never formally studied.
- **WISDOM:** The gift of wisdom allows people to understand deeper meaning and apply knowledge, beliefs, and experience to everyday situations.

Missio Dei is a Latin phrase that simply means "the Mission of God." In simpler terms, this mission is the challenge or charge that God has given each of us to help bring the Kingdom of God to earth as it is in heaven. When we participate in God's mission (using our unique spiritual gifts), we help close the gap between the way the world is now and the way that God wants the world to be.

discussion opener

Recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group. Try to do it from memory! Briefly discuss as a group, "What is one thing you heard from our lesson today?"

bible connection

- Read together the first passage for today, found in **Romans 12:4-8**.

discuss

- What inspires you from this passage of scripture? What stands out as good news to you?
- Where do you see your own spiritual gifts in this passage?
- Where do you see the gifts you don't have, the ones that others have, in this passage?

bible connection

- Read together the second passage for today, found in **Matthew 25:31-40**.



discuss

- What questions do you have about this passage? What do you think it means?
- We don't just have spiritual gifts for our own use. We have them for a larger purpose, to change the world! What does this scripture tell us about loving and serving Jesus in our world?
- Are there any changes that seem to be asked of you from this scripture?

challenge

CLAIM YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

In your journal, create a column for each of your top 5 spiritual gifts. At the top of each column, write the name of your gift. Then, write down words or phrases from the description of it that you strongly connect with. Then write down ways you have seen that gift show up in your life.

Once you have completed your five columns, answer the following questions in your journal:

- When have your gifts helped you in the past?
- What is one way you could start using your spiritual gifts more intentionally tomorrow?

joys, concerns, & prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.

Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.

Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

for extra study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages:

John 21:15-17

Ephesians 4:11-13

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

1 Peter 4:10-11





A series of horizontal lines for writing, spanning the width of the page. The lines are evenly spaced and cover most of the page area.

INVITING OTHERS INTO GOD'S STORY



main point

Once we have accepted the invitation to be a part of God's ongoing mission in the world, we are to invite others into God's story by sharing our faith with them.

activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1: SHARE YOUR FAVORITE

Pick a topic where people might have strong opinions about which one is the best or their favorite (such as a TV show, movie, food, restaurant, book, song, band, or superhero).

Each student will have 30-45 seconds to convince the others as to why their favorite is the best option and everyone else should make it their top choice as well.

When we have found something that we love—whether it's a new restaurant, a television show or movie, or the latest band or YouTube star—we can't help but want to share that thing with the world! We want to tell everyone about our new favorite thing and have them share in our joy. It's the same with sharing our faith: we should want to share our love with Jesus with the whole world, just like the Samaritan woman at the well from our story for today.

OPTION 2: SEVEN WORD GOSPEL

How would you tell someone about God's Story in seven words or less? In 2011, the publication *Christian Century* asked this question to both Christian theologians and their everyday readers. Here were some of the responses they come up with:

- God, through Jesus Christ, welcomes you anyhow.
- We are who God says we are.
- Christ offers new life for all.
- Jesus loves me, this I know.

So, how would you share the good news of the Christian message in seven words or less? **As a group, come up with your own "Seven Word Gospel."** Try to think of an easy way to explain God's Story to someone who has never heard it before.



Evangelism comes from a Latin word (*evangelium*) that means “good news.” Practicing evangelism is as simple as telling others about the good things God has done in your life, or how your life has changed for the better because of your relationship with Jesus.

Just as we are still in the middle of the Story of God, our own individual stories are still being written. You don’t have to be perfect or have all the right answers or use big “churchy” words to tell others about Jesus. Sharing your story is as easy as telling others about what God has done in your life in the past or how God is working in your life now.

One way to invite others into God’s story is to follow the formula “**Pray, Care, Share.**”

- First, **pray** for those around you that do not yet know about Christ: your friends, your family members, your classmates or teammates. Ask that God will be revealed in their lives.
- Then, show that you **care** for them. This could be through kind words, acts of service, or even through a smile. There’s a famous quote from Theodore Roosevelt that says, “Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care.” Before sharing your story with others, they need to know that you care for them.
- Finally, when the time is right, **share** your story with them. Tell them about who Jesus is to you. Let them know that Jesus cares for them as well and longs to be in a relationship with them too.

Another famous quote that is often credited to St. Francis of Assisi says, “**Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words if necessary.**” There are other ways to share your story with others beyond using words and conversation. Most of the time, people want to know that we are listening to them and that we won’t judge them. We need to show that we are safe and caring people before we invite those around us into God’s Story.

discussion opener

Recite the Apostles’ Creed together as a group. Try to do it from memory! Briefly discuss as a group, “What is one thing you heard from our lesson today?”

bible connection

- Read together our passages for today, found in **John 4:4-30, 39-42.**

discuss



- Do you talk to your friends about God? What are those conversations like?
- How has being in a relationship with God changed you or made a difference in your life?
- How did the woman at the well respond to her encounter with Jesus? What did she do after talking with him?
- What are some of the challenges or obstacles to sharing your faith with others? What challenges or obstacles did the Samaritan woman face when she shared her story with the rest of her village?
- How did the people in the woman's village respond when she shared her story with them?
- Why is it important to tell others about our own encounters with Jesus?
- In what ways can we share our faith with those around us without using words?

challenge

SOCIAL MEDIA SHARE

Sometime this week, share on social media one thing that God has shown you through your confirmation journey. Or maybe you want to talk about a new commitment you've made to the Church or something you have learned about the Bible. If you are not on social media, share one thing you have learned from confirmation this year with a friend in person or on a text message. This may feel hard and scary, but allow others the chance to celebrate the cool things God is doing in your life because of your season in confirmation!

joys, concerns, & prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.

Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.

Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

for extra study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages:

Micah 6:8

Acts 1:8

Acts 22:3-16

2 Corinthians 2:18-21



A series of horizontal lines for writing, starting from the top and extending down the page. The lines are evenly spaced and cover most of the page area.





A series of horizontal lines for writing, starting with a double line at the top and followed by single lines.

WHY THE CHURCH? RETREAT NIGHT



main point

We are each given the invitation to become a part of God's mission and join in with God's Story. Will you choose to be part of the Story of God?

activity (pick one!)

LETTER TO GOD

Pick a space where you will be comfortable and not distracted by your friends. Before you begin writing your letter to God, spend a few moments in prayer. Thank God for being with you always and for helping you through your Confirmation journey. Ask God to show you something new about yourself.

After you finish praying, take a few minutes to write a letter to God. Some things you might want to include in this letter are:

- What things you have learned through Confirmation
- How you have grown deeper in your faith through Confirmation
- What commitments you want to make to God or the church after Confirmation
- What concerns or questions you might have Any obstacles or challenges in your faith
- How you want to continue to grow closer to God

After you have completed your Letter to God, please fold it up and place it in the addressed envelope provided to you. DO NOT SEAL THE ENVELOPE! Your mentor will mail your letter back to you sometime in the future.

SACRAMENT REFLECTION

See if a pastor in your church can lead your group through a remembrance of baptism and/or a time of communion. This can be a very memorable opportunity to share in a time of prayer and reflection as you end your confirmation journey together.

teaching topics

Everyone chooses a path to go down, whether they mean to or not. Faith is something you choose for yourself. YOU are the only person who can decide if this is a path you walk down.

- As Christians, we believe the path of Jesus is the best possible path you can choose.
- Ironically, it's a path you can only walk with others—which is why Jesus left us the church. We are meant to walk this journey in community alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ.



We hope that through confirmation, you not only choose to follow the path of Jesus, but you choose to commit to the church. You can commit to the church in the following ways:

- **WORSHIP:** Worship each weekend, in person when possible.
- **STUDY:** Grow in your faith outside of worship through personal time with Jesus and through a small group.
- **SERVE:** Serve by using your gifts and talents both inside and outside of the church walls.
- **GIVE:** Give back to God of your time, talents, and resources.
- **SHARE:** Share your faith with others in your words and actions.

discussion opener

Recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group. Do it from memory!

bible connection

- Read together our passages for today, found in **John 17:20-23** and **Acts 4:32-35**.

discuss

- Why do you think the church exists?
- How did Jesus pray for the church? What do you think Jesus wants the church to look like?
- For Jesus, being his follower meant being in community with other followers. Why do you think he made this a priority?
- What does the church mean to you? Why is the church important in your life?
- As you wrap up your confirmation journey, what commitments do you want to make to be a part of the church?

challenge

ONE-ON-ONE WITH MENTOR

During this final confirmation session, set aside time for each student to have the chance to meet one-on-one with one of their confirmation mentors. Students, this is a great time for you to ask any questions you still might have or to name the commitments you want



joys, concerns, & prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.

Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.

Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

End your time by praying together the Wesley Covenant Prayer.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple horizontal lines for text entry.



GLOSSARY of terms & definitions

ATONEMENT: “At-One-Ment with God;” through Jesus, we can be united in relationship with God

BAPTISM: the sacrament that marks the moment we become a part of God’s family, which is the Church

COMMUNION (OR THE LORD’S SUPPER): the sacrament that helps us remember Christ’s death and resurrection and our place in God’s family

COVENANT: a type of contract or promise that God makes with humans

EVANGELISM: “good news;” telling others about the great things God has done in your life and in the world

FREE WILL: our God-given ability to make our own choices in our thoughts and actions

GRACE: the undeserved kindness and love that God gives every one of us

HOLINESS: being set apart for God’s purposes and being made whole again

IMAGO DEI: “Image of God;” the belief that humans were created in the divine image of God

INCARNATION: “God in the flesh;” the belief that God came to earth through the human form of Jesus

INTERCESSORY PRAYER: praying for someone else

JUSTIFYING GRACE: the grace that comes when we choose to be in relationship with God

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN (OR KINGDOM OF GOD): a way of describing how God desires the world to be

LECTIO DIVINA: “divine reading;” an ancient way of reading the Bible and meditating on the words of Scripture

MISSIO DEI: “Mission of God;” the challenge we have to bring the Kingdom of God to earth as it is in heaven

PENTATEUCH: “five books;” another name for the first five books of the Old Testament (the Torah)

PERSONAL SINS: the individual decisions we make that go against God’s will for us and that hurt those around us

PRAYER: how we communicate with or talk to God

PREVENIENT GRACE: the grace that God gives us all before we are even aware of God

RESURRECTION: the belief that Jesus defeated death and rose again from the grave

SACRAMENTS: outward practices that point us toward God’s presence in our lives and in the world

SALVATION: how God forgives our sins and delivers us from our sinful desires

SANCTIFYING GRACE: the grace that helps us grow closer to God and become more like Jesus

SIN: “to miss the mark;” anytime our words, thoughts, or actions fall short of God’s desires and standards for our lives

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES (OR SPIRITUAL PRACTICES): ways that strengthen our spiritual life and bring us closer to God

SPIRITUAL GIFTS: ways the Holy Spirit empowers us to serve God and serve others in the world

SYSTEMIC SINS: sins we make as organizations, societies, countries, or any group of people, such as the sin of slavery

TORAH: “the Law;” the first five books of the Old Testament that form the basis for the Jewish religion

TRINITY: the belief that God is Three-in-One; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit

WESLEY QUADRILATERAL: a tool we can use to make decisions that includes Scripture, Reason, Tradition, and Experience

Old Testament Bookshelf

The Books of Law

GENESIS

EXODUS

LEVITICUS

NUMBERS

DEUTERONOMY

The Books of History

JOSHUA

JUDGES

RUTH

I SAMUEL

II SAMUEL

I KINGS

II KINGS

I CHRONICLES

II CHRONICLES

EZRA

NEHEMIAH

ESTHER

The Books of Poetry

JOB

PSALMS

PROVERBS

ECCLESIASTES

SONG OF SONGS

The Books of Major Prophets

ISAIAH

JEREMIAH

LAMENTATIONS

EZEKIEL

DANIEL

The Books of Minor Prophets

HOSEA

JOEL

AMOS

OBADIAH

JONAH

MICAH

NAHUM

HABAKKUK

ZEPHANIAH

HAGGAI

ZECHARIAH

MALACHI

New Testament Bookshelf

The Gospels

MATTHEW

MARK

LUKE

JOHN

History

ACTS

Letters Attributed to Paul

ROMANS

I CORINTHIANS

II CORINTHIANS

GALATIANS

EPHESIANS

PHILIPPIANS

COLOSSIANS

I THESSALONIANS

II THESSALONIANS

I TIMOTHY

II TIMOTHY

TITUS

PHILEMON

General Letters

HEBREWS

JAMES

I PETER

II PETER

I JOHN

II JOHN

III JOHN

JUDE

Apocalyptic

REVELATION

OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE BY BOOK

Old Testament - 39 Books

GENESIS

Contains the story of creation, accounts of humanity's rebellion against God, and the narrative of a worldwide flood. Also includes the stories of God's covenant with Abraham and Abraham's descendants, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

EXODUS

Tells of Israel's enslavement in Egypt, the call of Moses, the deliverance of Israel from slavery, and their "exodus" from Egypt. Includes God's covenant with the Israelites at Mount Sinai and the Ten Commandments.

LEVITICUS

A book of priestly instructions, rules, and laws relating to worship, sacrifices, festivals, feasts, offerings, and codes of behavior.

NUMBERS

Includes the accounts of Israel's wandering in the wilderness for forty years, God's call to take possession of the land of Canaan, and the census (numbering) of the 12 tribes of Israel.

DEUTERONOMY

A retelling of God's covenantal relationship with Israel and Israel's great confession of faith. It is primarily comprised of three speeches Moses made to the Israelites near the end of his life.

JOSHUA

The story of Israel's invasion and capture of the land of Canaan led by Joshua.

JUDGES

Tells of the men and women who led the 12 tribes of Israel in Canaan after Joshua's death until the Israelite tribes were united under King Saul.

RUTH

The story of a humble foreign woman who lived during the time of the Judges and ultimately chose to follow the God of Israel. Ruth was King David's great-grandmother.

1 AND 2 SAMUEL

Covers the stories of Israel's transition from loosely connected tribes to a united nation under the leadership of King Saul and then King David. Named for the prophet Samuel, an advisor to Saul and David.

1 AND 2 KINGS

Recounts the history of the Israelites from David's son King Solomon until the invasion of Israel first by Assyria then by Babylonia and the Israelite's exile into foreign lands.

1 AND 2 CHRONICLES

A more positive and hopeful retelling of Israel's history and the stories of King David written to encourage Israelites returning from exile after captivity in foreign lands.

EZRA

Describes the resettlement of the Jewish people in their homeland of Israel after their long exile. Ezra was a priest who helped rebuild society and led the Israelites to recommit their lives to God.

NEHEMIAH

Tells of the rebuilding of the city walls around Jerusalem as led by Nehemiah, a Jewish servant and cupbearer to the King of Persia who used his influence to repair the city.

ESTHER

The story of a Jewish woman living in Persia who is chosen to become the next queen of Persia. She used her position to save the Jewish people from destruction and death.

JOB

The story of a wealthy man who undergoes great suffering and tragedy. Written largely in the form of poetry, Job deals with issues such as why righteous people suffer and how to trust in God even in the midst of painful circumstances.

PSALMS

The original worship and prayer book for the people of Israel. Contains songs of lament, prayers of petition, and poems of praise, thanksgiving, and adoration to God.

PROVERBS

A collection of wise sayings and advice on how to make good choices in life through common sense and obedience to God.

ECCLESIASTES

A collection of wisdom poetry that reminds us that following God is the true purpose of life and everything else is meaningless and fleeting.

SONG OF SONGS (ALSO CALLED SONG OF SOLOMON)

A poem about human love—both physical and emotional—and an allegory of God's unconditional and everlasting love for us.

ISAIAH

A book of prophecy written to remind Israel to remain faithful to God even in the midst of violence and chaos. Includes many Messianic Prophecies: passages that point to the birth and life of Christ.

JEREMIAH

Prophecies of the destruction of Israel and the new covenant that God would make with God's people. Reminds us to follow God even when it seems like all is lost.

LAMENTATIONS

A collection of laments (poems of mourning) written after the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem.

EZEKIEL

A prophetic book with vivid, symbolic language and descriptions of strange encounters and visions. Written to Jewish exiles living in Babylon to give them hope.

DANIEL

The first half of this book includes the stories of Daniel and his friends—Israelites who were captured and taken to Babylon but remained faithful to God. The second half contains apocalyptic literature that looks forward to the day when the people of God would be restored.

HOSEA

The writings of a prophet and the story his marriage to a prostitute, which became a metaphor of God's unwavering love for the often unfaithful Israelites.

JOEL

A book of prophecy that emphasizes God's power and predicts the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all people.

AMOS

A call to take care of the poor and downtrodden and to not practice empty, ritualistic worship. A reminder for us to put faith into action.

OBADIAH

A brief prophetic book that announces God's judgement against the Edomites, the descendants of Jacob's brother Esau.

JONAH

Contains the story of Jonah, who was called to go to the Israelite's enemies in Nineveh and tell them to turn to God and repent of their evil ways.

MICAH

Condemns the rich and their exploitation of the poor and calls us to confront injustice in society. Also includes the prophecy that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

NAHUM

Tells of the sins of Nineveh and the destruction of Assyrian Empire.

HABAKKUK

A prophetic book that discusses the problems of evil and human suffering.

ZEPHANIAH

Gives a warning of destruction to come and urges the people to repent. Describes the relationship between God and people as that of a shepherd and his sheep.

HAGGAI

A prophetic book that urges the returned Israelite exiles to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.

ZECHARIAH

A prophetic book that encourages the people of Israel who had returned to their native land after their captivity in Babylon.

MALACHI

Rebukes the people of God for doubting God's love and reminds them to trust in God through their lives and worship practices.

New Testament - 27 Books

MATTHEW

Tells the story of the life of Jesus by emphasizing that Jesus was the promised Messiah and Savior of the Jewish people.

MARK

Tells the story of the life of Jesus through a fast-paced, constantly moving narrative. Considered to be the first recorded gospel.

LUKE

The story of the life of Jesus as written by the Gentile physician and historian Luke. Contains several accounts of Jesus reaching out to the marginalized of society.

JOHN

The story of the life of Jesus written to show who Jesus really was; contains unique accounts of Jesus' life not included in the other gospel narratives.

ACTS

The historical accounts of first Christians and the growth of the early church as it broadened to include Gentile believers. Includes the narratives of Paul's conversion and missionary journeys.

ROMANS

Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome that explained the message of the gospel; considered to be Paul's theological treatise.

1 AND 2 CORINTHIANS

Two of Paul's letters to the church in Corinth to help them work through internal church conflicts on a wide range of issues.

GALATIANS

Paul's letter to churches in the region of Galatia that reminds them that we are saved by faith alone and not through the Law of Moses.

EPHESIANS

Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus that shows the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church as the body of Christ.

PHILIPPIANS

Paul's letter to the church in Phillippi that was meant to encourage and uplift them even though he wrote it from prison.

COLOSSIANS

Paul's letter to the church in Colossae to remind them that Jesus Christ is the Lord and is able to meet every need.

1 AND 2 THESSALONIANS

Letters written to the church in Thessalonica for the purposes of encouragement, instruction, and thanksgiving as they await the return of Jesus Christ.

1 AND 2 TIMOTHY

Letters written to a young pastor to encourage him and instruct him as he leads a community of believers.

TITUS

A letter written to a church and its leaders to warn against false teaching and to lift up sound doctrine and teaching.

PHILEMON

A letter written to Philemon, the owner of the runaway slave Onesimus, in which Paul appeals to Philemon and urges him to accept Onesimus back as a brother and not as a slave.

HEBREWS

Written by an unknown Christian to show how Jesus Christ fulfilled the Jewish Law and to encourage believers to hold fast to Christ as their great High Priest.

JAMES

A letter filled with practical advice about how to live for Christ and participate in God's work in the world through our good deeds and actions.

1 AND 2 PETER

Letters written to early Christians as they were being persecuted for their beliefs.

1, 2, AND 3 JOHN

Letters that emphasize the great love of God and remind us to reflect that same love within Christian community.

JUDE

A letter written to warn against false teachers and other negative influences that attempt to destroy the Church.

REVELATION

Includes letters to seven early churches and apocalyptic visions and metaphors of God triumphing over evil. It is meant to give hope to Christians that Jesus will have the ultimate victory.

