



We Are Church...
the Nebraska Synod ELCA.

**“WE ARE CHURCH”
CURRICULUM AND RESOURCES
LENT 2017**



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Introduction

One of the goals of the Nebraska Strategic Mission and Vision plan adopted at Synod Assembly 2015 was to unite congregations across the Nebraska Synod in common conversation during Lent of 2017 on what it means to be the church. The suggested starting point for this conversation is during your midweek Lenten worship services, but the materials are adaptable to other settings depending on your ministry context.

A group of volunteer curriculum writers has worked hard to facilitate those common conversations with the below materials. Included in this packet are:

- a theological framework with an overview of the five-week Lenten series, a short theme title, theological explanation, and scriptural references for preaching and teaching;
- an outline for a dinner worship model including prayers, songs, and group discussion starter suggestions; and
- hands-on intergenerational program activities that may be integrated into mid-week worship - encouraged as take-home activities, used during the Sunday school hour, etc. - to enhance your congregations' conversations.

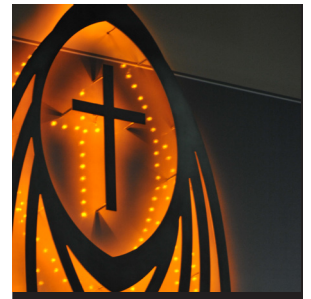
The materials provided are downloadable and reproducible. They may be obtained at NebraskaSynod.org/wearechurch.

May the Holy Spirit blow among your ministry participants as we explore more deeply what it means to be the Church.

In Christ,

The We Are Church Curriculum Team

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INTRODUCTION

The first of four convictions about the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) presented by Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton is “We Are Church.” The present document presents some guiding principles undergirding the preparation of the study materials for the Lent 2017 conversation around that first theme. The conversation will be organized around five themes – the overall theme “We Are Church” and the four classic “marks of the church” as confessed in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381 AD (commonly known as the “Nicene Creed”), which are as follows: “We Are One,” “We Are Holy,” “We Are Catholic,” and “We Are Apostolic.” Jürgen Moltmann treats these marks in three ways: as “statements of faith” (characteristics of the church derived from the character of Christ himself), “statements of hope” (signs of God’s promised future breaking into our world through the church), and “statements of action” (goals for our life together as the church, or, as Ted Peters describes them, “dispositions of moral resolve that should characterize the various members of the body of Christ.” (Moltmann, 338; Peters, 304) Through this study, we hope to invite conversation about how we are called to live together as church in light of who we are in Christ and who we are becoming by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Theme 1 – We Are Church

The Church is a gathering of people

“The church is the historical arc between two terminals, Easter and the consummation. The church has been given the charge of brining light to the world in this period while we await the full shining glory of God when even the sun will be surpassed in radiance. In the partial darkness of the present aeon, however, we must push on, following the path that the lamp of God’s word illumines, a word made audible in the church’s preaching, made visible in the celebration of the sacraments, and made tangible in the ministry of reconciling love.” (Peters, 267)

The English word “church” comes to us from the Germanic “kirche” (derived from Celtic “kyrk”), which referred originally to things “belonging to the house of the Lord.” The Greek word often translated as “church” in the NRSV and other English translations, however, is ecclesia, a word which refers to a gathering or an assembly of people, and is related to the verb meaning “to be called.” Both of these meanings inform our English word, but one has tended to take prominence: the “church” as “place” or “building.” In response to that trend, it is critical for us to place emphasis on the “Biblical” origins of this phrase, and to think of the church primarily as an assembly of people. This is the understanding assumed by Martin Luther in the Augsburg Confession, when he defined the church as “the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel.” (CA VII, 42.1) Church, then, is not a static entity, but a dynamic event taking place as Christians gather around the means of grace and are sent out to participate in God’s mission for the life of the world. (ELW, Holy Baptism, p. 227) At the same time – as we’ll see in subsequent sessions – the church is also imbued with a permanence granted both by the promise of Christ (Matthew 28:16-20) and the knowledge that this church also includes those who have lived and died in faith, that “cloud of witnesses” who still participate in

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worship and who continue to inspire us to live lives of faith, hope, and love in Christ. (Hebrews 12:1; 1 Corinthians 13:13)

Scriptures (NRSV)

Colossians 1:15-20

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.”

1 Peter 2:9-10

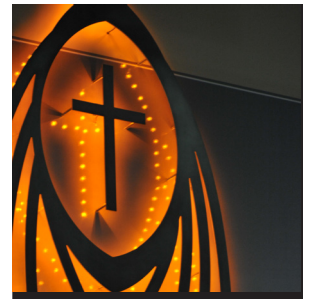
“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

Theme 2 – We Are One: in Christ

Unity is not uniformity

“The unity of the church is not primarily the unity of her members, but the unity of Christ who acts upon them all, in all places and at all times. Consequently the unity of the church lies in his uniting activity. The result of his gathering activity is the unity of believers in Christ (Galatians 3:28) and their unity of mind in the Spirit (Ephesians 4:1ff).”

In a world of increasing polarization both within and outside of the church, we confess with Christians throughout the centuries that we are one in Christ. This unity has not always been evident because of the visible divisions among Christians, but it nonetheless exists. The apostle Paul once asked “Has Christ been divided?” (1 Corinthians 1:13), a rhetorical question that sure anticipates a negative answer. Indeed, Paul argues unceasingly for the unity of the church throughout his letters. The enduring image that has captured the diversity and unity of the church is the “body of Christ,” a Pauline metaphor which illustrates the folly of breaking fellowship and the indissolubility of this community that bears the name of Christ. Luther later commented on the church’s unity when he wrote, “... it is enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by human beings be alike everywhere.” (CA VII, 43.2) Unity does not equal uniformity, and is not, in the end, established by us



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– though we can work to make visible the unity we already share in Christ. (Moltmann, 338)

Scriptures (NRSV)

John 13:34-35

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 14:18-21

“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

John 17:20-26

“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

“Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

Romans 12:3-8

“For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.”

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Ephesians 4:1-6

“I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.”

Theme 3 – We Are Holy

Holiness isn't just sinlessness

“The holiness of the church is not initially the holiness of her members or her cultic assemblies; it is the holiness of the Christ who acts upon sinners. Christ sanctifies his church by justifying it. Consequently the holiness of the church lies in his sanctifying activity. The result of his justifying activity is ‘the communion of saints.’” (Moltmann, 338)

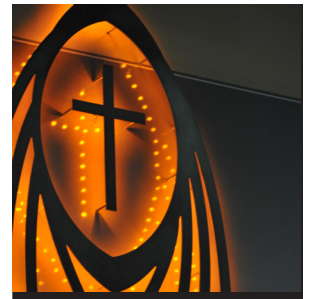
“Holiness” is a term whose fullness is often neglected. We often hear it and associate it with “purity” or “sinlessness”, and that, of course, is true. As Lutheran Christians, we live with the knowledge that we are simul iustus et peccator (“at the same time righteous and sinners”). We do well not to forget the iustus in this formulation, because we believe that God has made us holy in Christ by the power of the Spirit (SC, Explanation of the Third Article, 355.6). This does not mean, of course, that we never err as believers or as the church, but that we are regarded by God as holy for the sake of Christ, and that this knowledge frees us from the power of sin and the fear of the Law so that we can live for others.

“Sinlessness” isn't the whole story, however. “Holiness” also has to do with being set apart, with being called to a particular set of tasks or being used for a particular purpose. In this sense, we are decidedly a holy people. God has called us through the Gospel of Jesus Christ to bear witness to the grace and love of God. Jesus described his disciples as living “in the world” but not “belonging to” the world. (John 17:11-16) We live in this tension of being vitally committed to the life of the world and the reconciliation of all people (and things!) to God, while not being governed by the world's standards or expectations. We share this holiness with Christians throughout the world, who in every place and throughout time have known themselves to be God's “holy” saints.

Scriptures (NRSV)

1 Peter 1:13-16

“Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who



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called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”

2 Timothy 1:8-10

“Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

2 Corinthians 5:19

“that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.”

Theme 4 – We Are Catholic

We are a small piece of the bigger picture

The catholicity of the church is not initially her spatial extent or the fact that she is in principle open to the world; it is the limitless lordship of Christ, to whom ‘all authority is given in heaven and on earth.’ Where, and so far as, Christ rules, there, consequently, the church is to be found. She acquires her openness to the world in the breadth of his rule. ‘She is catholic on the strength of the catholicity of her Lord, which is imputed to her.’ (Moltmann, 338)

The word “catholic” is not the exclusive property of the Roman Catholic Church. It derives from the Greek word *katholikos*, which means “universal” or “general.” Some Lutheran Christians proudly describe themselves as “evangelical catholics,” an attempt to express their both identity as part of the whole church and as part of the “evangelical” movement that broke out during the European Reformations of the sixteenth century [German Lutherans, for example, still describe themselves as “evangelical” rather than “Lutheran”.] We are catholic because we belong to the whole church, and because we confess that the gospel of Jesus Christ is a universal message. When we say, “all are welcome,” we are making a statement about the catholicity of our congregations and of the gospel itself: that the gospel we proclaim is for everyone, and that all are invited to be part of the one church that exists in unity with Christ across the world. (Ephesians 4:4-6; Galatians 3:27-28) In a time when we are divided by so many things, this confession of the catholicity of the church represents both a promise and a challenge – a promise that God’s word is truly for everyone, and a challenge to make our communities places where all people can be themselves and find fellowship with one another and communion with the one Lord of creation. [The old practice of replacing the word “catholic” with “Christian” in the wording of the creed predates Luther, but “catholic” is by far the most authentic rendering of the original Greek of the creed.]



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Scriptures (NRSV)

1 Corinthians 1:10-31

“Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you should be in agreement and that there should be no divisions among you, but that you should be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, ‘I belong to Paul,’ or ‘I belong to Apollos,’ or ‘I belong to Cephas,’ or ‘I belong to Christ.’ Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.

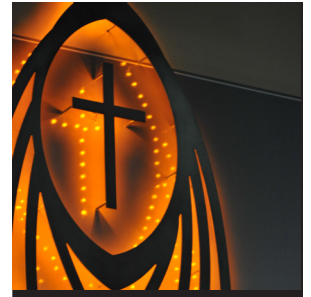
“For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

“Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength. Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, in order that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’”

Galatians 3:26-29

“for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise.”



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1 Corinthians 12:12-14

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many.”

Ephesians 2:19-22

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God.”

Theme 5 – We Are Apostolic

We build on the foundation of the apostles and prophets

[The church’s] ‘apostolic character’ is also to be understood in the framework of the mission of Christ and the Spirit. Founded by Christ’s apostles in the Spirit, her charge is the apostolate in the world.” (Moltmann, 338)

Following the resurrection, Jesus appointed 12 people to begin the work of sharing the gospel he had proclaimed throughout his earthly ministry. Scripture calls them “apostles,” a title that refers to “one sent out (with a commission).” In some Christian communities, apostolicity is a historical reality, and leadership can be traced more or less directly to the apostle Peter through a “succession” of bishops. As Lutheran Christians in the United States, we are not a part of this “historic” succession, yet we undoubtedly and unabashedly regard ourselves as “apostolic.” Why? Because we believe and confess that our teaching and preaching is a continuation of the preaching and teaching of those first twelve apostles themselves. We have received from them the testimony concerning Jesus, the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, the liturgy, prayers, and teaching, all aspects of our life together that transcend time and connect us with those saints who have gone before us. On the other hand, we also teach that the church is apostolic because we, like those first twelve apostles, are a “sent” people. We are given the task of proclaiming the good news of Jesus to all the world, baptizing, making disciples, and teaching. (Matthew 28:16-20) Though we don’t often use the term to describe ourselves, we are all, in a sense, apostles of Jesus Christ, called through the gospel to bear witness to God’s grace and love by the Holy Spirit.

Scriptures (NRSV)

Mark 16:15

“And he said to them, ‘Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.’”



Summary

Luke 10:1-12

“After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’ And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the labourer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.’ I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.”

Matthew 28:16-20

“Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”

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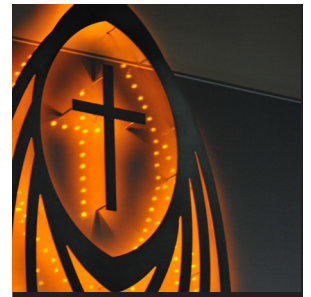
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SUMMARY

Lesson One: We Are Church

Gather and Share

Invocation

Called into God's church through the gospel of Jesus Christ, we gather in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Collect/Table Grace

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, for you give us food to sustain our lives and your word to nourish our souls. Be present with your church as we break bread together, and strengthen us to serve you and to spread abroad the good news of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

The Meal is Served

Conversation around Faith Starter Questions

1. How do you define "church?"
2. What is the first word that comes to mind when someone asks you where you go to church?
3. What do you hope the church looks like in 10 years? 20 years?
4. Do you go "to church" or "from church?"

Transitional Song

What Is This Place? [ELW 524]

Read and Reflect

Scripture Reading

Acts 2:42-47

Common Reflection [Sermon/Homily/Testimony]

Talk and Listen

Table Discussion/Reflection

Transitional Song

Come, Let Us Eat [ELW 491]

Pray and Eat

Prayers of Intercession

Gathered into Christ's Church by the Holy Spirit, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

Mighty God, you have called us through the gospel and joined us into your beloved community. Fill us with your grace, and grant us the knowledge of your presence as we gather in your name. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

WE ARE CHURCH

Lesson One: We Are Church

Life-Giving God, you have made this world to reflect your glory and love, and given us the responsibility of caring for the work of your hands. Open our eyes to every place that needs healing, and empower us to respond with compassion and wisdom. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Righteous God, you have announced through the prophets your will for justice and peace in all the world. Open our hearts to the cries of your people in every place, that your church might be an instrument of restoration and healing. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Compassionate God, you have sent your Spirit to bring comfort and healing to those who are bowed down. Hear our prayers for all who suffer in mind, body, or spirit, especially _____. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Faithful God, you have planted your church in many different places to extend the reach of your good news. Bless this ministry site/serving arm/organization/congregation with the vision to see our neighbors, the courage to reach out in love, and the grace to receive you in the face of those we are sent to serve. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Eternal God, you have surrounded us with a great cloud of witnesses who have shown forth your love and grace in life and in death. Inspire us by their example, and bring us at the last to share with them the joy of your promised presence. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Into your hands, God of grace, we commend ourselves and all for whom we pray, trusting in your abundant and abiding mercy made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, by your Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The Great Thanksgiving
The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and call to mind that on the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and give it to his disciples, saying:



WE ARE CHURCH

Lesson One: We Are Church

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

These are the gifts of God for the people of God. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Distribution

Bless and Go

Sending Song (if desired)

Around You, O Lord Jesus [ELW 468]

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace to be the church in the world.

Thanks be to God.

Worship service is patterned on the practice of FAITH5. For complete details, please go to www.FAITH5.org.

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WE ARE CHURCH

Lesson Two: We Are One

Gather and Share

Invocation

Called to be one church through the boundary-breaking love of Jesus Christ, we gather in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Collect/Table Grace

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, for you give us food to sustain our lives and your word to nourish our souls. Be present with your church as we break bread together, and fashion us into one people, united in following your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

The Meal is Served

Conversation around Faith Starter Questions

1. How many churches have you belonged to in your life?
2. What unifies the church? [Note the small “c”.]
3. What unifies the Church? [Note the large “C”.]
4. Do we have to agree to be “one”?

Transitional Song

All Are Welcome [ELW 641]

Read and Reflect

Scripture Reading

Romans 12:3-8

Common Reflection [Sermon/Homily/Testimony]

Talk and Listen

Table Discussion/Reflection

Transitional Song

As the Grains of Wheat [ELW 465]

Pray and Eat

Prayers of Intercession

Gathered into the one body of Christ by the Holy Spirit, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

God of unity, in the face of human division and brokenness you have made us one people in your Son, Jesus Christ. Fill us with your grace, and grant us the courage to break down the barriers that continue to divide us from our brothers and sisters. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.



WE ARE ONE

Lesson Two: We Are One

God of unity, your creation thrives when balance and interdependence are preserved. Teach us to temper our human desires with the knowledge of the needs of your whole creation, and grant us the wisdom to preserve the work of your hands for future generations. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

God of unity, your Son prayed that your people would be one, just as you and he are one. Where we are divided, grant wholeness and peace; where unity is already apparent, inspire us to share the good news with joy and celebration. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

God of unity, we join our voices with those who are in need of healing in mind, body, or spirit, especially _____. Send your Holy Spirit to grant relief and comfort in the face of affliction. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Faithful God, you have called us to serve in a variety of ways so that all the world might know you. Bless this ministry site/serving arm/organization/congregation with every good gift, that we might be empowered to reveal your presence to those we serve. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Eternal God, you have united us with your saints of every time and place in the fellowship of the gospel. Inspire us by their example of faithful obedience to you, and bring us at the last to join with them in praising your name forever and ever. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Into your hands, God of unity, we commend ourselves and all for whom we pray, trusting in your abundant and abiding mercy made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, by your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Offering

The Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,

WE ARE ONE

Lesson Two: We Are One

we praise your name and call to mind that on the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

These are the gifts of God for the people of God. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Distribution

Bless and Go

Sending Song (if desired)

We All Are One in Mission [ELW 576]

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace, united in Christ.

Thanks be to God.

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WE ARE ONE

Lesson Three: We Are Holy

Gather and Share

Invocation

Called to be God's holy people through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, we gather in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Collect/Table Grace

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, for you give us food to sustain our lives and your word to nourish our souls. Be present with your church as we break bread together, and purify us by your grace, that our lives might reflect the holiness of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

The Meal is Served

Conversation around Faith Starter Questions

1. What does it mean to be holy?
2. Who, or what, makes us holy?
3. What are the benefits of a holy life?
4. Who benefits from our holy lives?

Transitional Song

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty! [ELW 413]

Read and Reflect

Scripture Reading

1 Peter 1:13-16

Common Reflection [Sermon/Homily/Testimony]

Talk and Listen

Table Discussion/Reflection

Transitional Song

You Are Holy [ELW 525]

Pray and Eat

Prayers of Intercession

Gathered into Christ's holy community by God's Holy Spirit, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

Mighty God, by the death and resurrection of your Son, you have cleansed us from sin and set us apart to be your people in the world. Renew us in your grace, that our lives might show forth your work in our lives and your will for all people. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.



WE ARE HOLY

Lesson Three: We Are Holy

Life-Giving God, in Christ you have imbued the most ordinary things with the extraordinary ability to reveal your glory. Open our eyes to the glimpses of your glory that are present throughout creation, and help us to live with gratitude for your abundant blessings. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Righteous God, you desire that we live holy lives as individuals and as your people, spread throughout the earth. In the face of injustice and conflict, grant us the strength to pursue your will for justice with peace in our families, our communities, our nation, and our world. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Compassionate God, you have sent your Spirit to bring comfort and healing to those in need. Hear our prayers for all who suffer in mind, body, or spirit, especially _____. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Faithful God, you have set us apart to serve in many and various ways for the sake of your name. Bless this ministry site/serving arm/organization/congregation as we gather to hear your word and are sent out in mission to a world in need. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Eternal God, you have surrounded us with a great cloud of witnesses who lived in holiness and now rest in you. Inspire us by their example, so that we might remain firm in faith and
hear our prayer.

Into your hands, Holy God, we commend ourselves and all for whom we pray, trusting in your abundant and abiding mercy made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, by your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Offering

The Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,



WE ARE HOLY

Lesson Three: We Are Holy

we praise your name and call to mind that on the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

These are the gifts of God for the people of God. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Distribution

Bless and Go

Sending Song (if desired)

Praise the Lord, Rise Up Rejoicing [ELW 544]

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Walk in the holiness of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

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WE ARE HOLY

Lesson Four: We Are Catholic

Gather and Share

Invocation

Called to fellowship with the saints of every time and place through the pleading of Jesus Christ, we gather in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Collect/Table Grace

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, for you give us food to sustain our lives and your word to nourish our souls. Be present with your church as we break bread together, and open our eyes to the wideness of your mercy and the beauty of your people, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

The Meal is Served

Conversation around Faith Starter Questions

1. Have you ever wondered what the word “catholic” in the creeds actually means?
2. What do you suppose “catholic” means to most people?
3. What do you think “catholic” means when it appears in the creeds?
4. How can we be “more catholic?”

Transitional Song

The Church’s One Foundation [ELW 654]

Read and Reflect

Scripture Reading

Galatians 3:26b-29

Common Reflection [Sermon/Homily/Testimony]

Talk and Listen

Table Discussion/Reflection

Transitional Song

I Come with Joy [ELW 482]

Pray and Eat

Prayers of Intercession

Gathered into community with Christians of every nation and tongue by the Holy Spirit, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

Mighty God, at the command of your Son, the good news has spread to the ends of the earth. Make us mindful of the connection we share with your children across the globe, and strengthen the bonds of unity and peace that are your desire for the church. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.



WE ARE CATHOLIC

Lesson Four: We Are Catholic

Life-Giving God, just as each of us are part of your one body, so are we part of your whole creation. Grant us the wisdom to recognize our place in the community of life, and the strength to preserve it for generations to come. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Righteous God, the nations cry out for justice and peace to reign on earth. Grant discernment and compassion to those who govern, that they might serve all people by pursuing your will, rather than their own interests. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Compassionate God, your Holy Spirit brings comfort to the afflicted. Hear our prayers for all who suffer in mind, body, or spirit, especially _____. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Faithful God, through our varied ministries, your word is spoken and your grace made manifest. Bless this ministry site/serving arm/organization/congregation, that we might be faithful in all that we do and say. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Eternal God, you make us one with your saints of every time and place through the powerful presence of your Son. Renew in us the memory of your faithful witnesses, that we might be strengthened in our own witness to your majesty and might. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, God of all, we commend ourselves and all for whom we pray, trusting in your abundant and abiding mercy made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, in the unity of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Offering

The Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and call to mind that on the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.



Lesson Four: We Are Catholic

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

These are the gifts of God for the people of God. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Distribution

Bless and Go

Sending Song (if desired)

One Bread, One Body [ELW 496]

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is with you.

Thanks be to God.

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WE ARE CATHOLIC

Lesson Five: We Are Apostolic

Gather and Share

Invocation

Called to be church and sent to all the world by the command of Jesus Christ, we gather in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Collect/Table Grace

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, for you give us food to sustain our lives and your word to nourish our souls. Be present with your church as we break bread together, and ground our witness in the teaching of your holy apostles, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

The Meal is Served

Conversation around Faith Starter Questions

1. How many times have you used the word apostolic in a conversation?
2. What is an apostle? What do you think it means to be apostolic?
3. How can you be “more apostolic”?
4. Imagine you were one of the first apostles. What would your life have been like? Do you think you would have answered the call?

Transitional Song

In Christ Called to Baptize [ELW 575]

Read and Reflect

Scripture Reading

Matthew 28:16-20

Common Reflection [Sermon/Homily/Testimony]

Talk and Listen

Table Discussion/Reflection

Transitional Song

Lord, You Give the Great Commission [ELW 579]

Pray and Eat

Prayers of Intercession

Gathered around the teaching of Christ’s apostles by the Holy Spirit, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

Mighty God, you gather us in to teach us your ways and send us out to make your ways known to the world. Keep us steadfast in your word and grounded in the faith of the apostles, that we might preach and teach in obedience to your command. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**



WE ARE APOSTOLIC

Lesson Five: We Are Apostolic

Life-Giving God, you call humanity to keep and till the garden of your creation. Give us hearts that yearn for the healing of all living things, and hands that work to make that healing manifest in the world around us. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Righteous God, you are the hope of every nation and the strength of those in need. Grant us the vision to seek after justice and peace for all people, that your will might be done throughout the earth. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Compassionate God, you promise to hear us when we cry out to you. Receive our prayers for all who suffer in mind, body, or spirit, especially _____, and grant them the knowledge of your presence with them in their affliction. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Faithful God, you send us into all the world with the good news of your Son. Bless this ministry site/serving arm/organization/congregation as we study your word, discern your will, and carry out the calling to make disciples. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Eternal God, your apostles show us what it means to be faithful in the face of affliction. Inspire us by their example, that we, too, might live each day with trust in you alone, and, at the last, be united with you in your eternal kingdom. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Into your hands, God of truth, we commend ourselves and all for whom we pray, trusting in your abundant and abiding mercy made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, in the unity of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Offering

The Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and call to mind that on the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and give it to his disciples, saying:



WE ARE APOSTOLIC

Lesson Five: We Are Apostolic

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

These are the gifts of God for the people of God. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Distribution

Bless and Go

Sending Song (if desired)

Go, Make Disciples [ELW 540]

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is with you.

Thanks be to God.

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WE ARE APOSTOLIC

Resources

Scriptures

- We Are Church - The Church is a gathering of people - Acts 2:42-49
- We Are One in Christ - Unity is not uniformity - Romans 12:3-8
- We Are Holy - Holiness isn't sinlessness - I Peter 1:13-16
- We Are Catholic - We are a small piece of the bigger picture - Galatians 3:26-29
- We Are Apostolic - We build on the foundation of the apostles and prophets - Matthew 28:16-20

Suggestions for Dinner Worship, Wednesday Programs or Small Group Gatherings

Three Creative Arts Activities

The *Blessing Bowl* is an “add to” project. The first week participants create a Blessing Bowl and take it home. Each following week, the participants would add one more item to their bowl. This project allows any number of family members to participate. Each person could have a Blessing Bowl or participants could make one Blessing Bowl for the household.

The *Cross Project* is a “build on it” each week project. The cross stays at the church and each week something is added. The project is taken home the last time you gather.

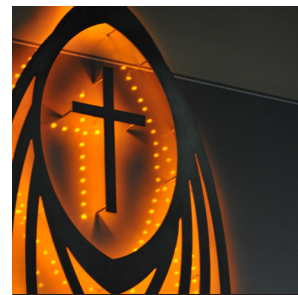
The *Craft Stick Project* is a “stand-alone” project. Each week's project is completed and taken home that night. The projects are connected through theme but do not build on each other in their construction.

Blessing Bowl Project

The Blessing Bowl can be used beyond the Lenten season. It is a way to focus on the many blessings we have each day and can be a tool for prayer. Participants are invited to add other items that represent blessings in their lives as they continue to use the Blessing Bowl in their home. The “gathering” is key as the Blessing Bowl connects with the scripture lesson, Acts 2:42-47. The people gathered and were a blessing to each other as they spent time together, broke bread together and shared their resources. The Blessing Bowl serves as a gathering place for tangible items, teaching tools, placed in the bowl. The Blessing Bowl encourages conversation at home and with others beyond the gathering time at the church.

First night: We are Church – The Church is a gathering of people - Create A Blessing Bowl

A few diverse samples might help the participants get started. Don't limit designs but encourage creativity. Conversation while decorating the



RESOURCES

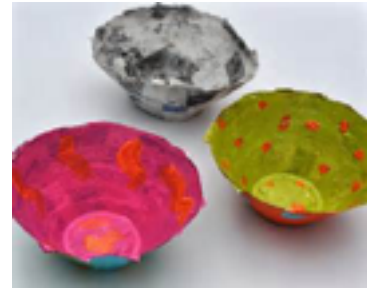


RESOURCES

Resources

bowl could include the choice of colors and design, where to put the bowl, what do we mean by “blessings,” how have they been blessed today or how have they been a blessing today.

- Paper bowls and markers: This would be the easiest. Look for paper bowls that will absorb the markers but not bleed. Permanent markers would be best as they will not smear if the bowl gets wet but water based markers will wash off clothes and skin!
- Other bowl ideas:

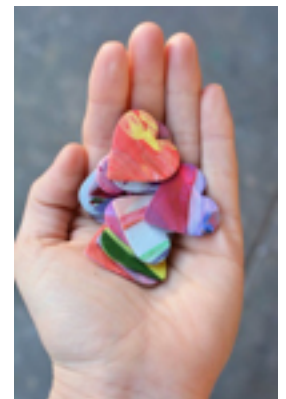


- Paper mache bowl - will need to dry before you can decorate - consider using a plastic bowl as a mold or make your bowl using a balloon as the mold
- Air dried clay bowl - there are air dried clays available that do not require firing in a kiln – you could mold a bowl or use the coil pot design
- Greenware clay bowl - purchase greenware clay bowls that participants can decorate then have them fired and ready for pick up the next week. (Paint Yourself Silly or similar store might work with you.) This would be a more expensive option but something that might endure beyond Lent.
- Origami bowl - instructions can be found online



Second night: We are One – Unity is not uniformity – Add a rubber band or heart

The focus is on unity versus uniformity. We do not all look alike, think alike, function alike or even pray the same way yet God loves us all. Our unity is in Christ and the fact we are all children of God. Avoid using the “melting pot” idea when talking about diversity. Unity does not require one to go away like chocolate chips melting in a pot with peanut butter. Consider using the analogy of a tossed salad. The tomato, lettuce, cucumber slices come together to make a salad but you still have cucumbers, tomatoes and lettuce.



Romans 12:3-8 speaks of us being One Body. We are one body with many members and our gifts vary, which means our assignments in the Kingdom vary.

Resources

A rubber band is a bit abstract, but there is a lot to learn from it about diversity and unity. Use a strong, wide rubber band. You can stretch it into various shapes and you can pull it tight and pluck it like a string on a violin or guitar to make noise. The tension will create a variety of sounds. No matter how you stretch it, it will return to the same round shape. A rubber band is a circle, the symbol of unity.

A heart reminds us of God's love and the call to love our neighbor. A heart may be a more visual item to add to the Blessing Bowl because we are drawn to the idea of God's love and grace.



Considering making hearts with salt dough, Sculpey clay, sparkly paper or paper mache. You could paint a heart on a rock, use a stamp pad and make a thumbprint on a piece of cardstock and then draw a heart on it or use a round wooden disc or piece of wood.

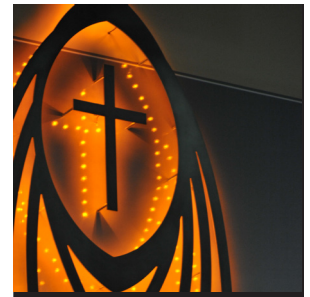
Conversation while you are working might include the diversity you see with your friends. We all have different interests like sports, music, dance, favorite foods, hair color and style, dress, skin tone, glasses, braces, etc. How do we honor and respect differences? When you think about your friends do you focus on differences or things you have in common? Why do you think some people see characteristics, skin colors or people with disabilities as not as good, smart or important as other people?

Third night: We are Holy - Holiness isn't sinlessness – Add a small cross

A cross can be made of clay, popsicle sticks, beads, nails, cardboard wrapped with foil, rolled paper, plastic cross stitch fabric and yarn, foam sheets or just about anything. Look for ways to allow for individual creativity and design. While working on the project, talk about the meaning of the cross. Why did Jesus die on a cross, why? What crosses do you have at your church? Do participants have a cross, or crosses, in their home? What do they look like? Why do people wear cross necklaces, rings and ear-rings?



The scripture for “We are holy” is I Peter 1:13-16. We are called to be holy in all we do. That means accepting the challenge of being holy in our conduct. Going along with the crowd is often easier than taking a stand or going down a different road. As disciples we are not called to just be part of the crowd. We are called to carry the cross, to be holy, to take a stand, to be disciplined and be people of hope grounded in grace. The cross is a reminder of the grace we receive through the death and resurrection of our Lord.



RESOURCES



RESOURCES

Resources

Fourth night: We are Catholic – We are a small piece of the bigger picture - Add a puzzle piece

A puzzle piece seems fits perfectly in the conversation about being a piece of the bigger picture. One way to do this would be to create a giant puzzle with plenty of pieces so each person can decorate a piece and then add to the big puzzle again. The message is you are just a piece of the picture but each piece is important. Have participants take their piece home to add to their Blessing Bowl.



Have participants at the tables share what piece they are in the big picture. Examples: serving as a reader, singing in the choir, helping others in Sunday School, sharing the peace, bringing food for the food pantry, giving Mrs. Jones a ride to worship, inviting a friend to come to youth group...

Fifth night: We are Apostolic – We build on the foundation of the apostles and prophets - Add a decorated rock

Most of us have a concrete foundation on our home instead of stones but people should be able to relate to the idea of a rock being the foundation. Have a variety of rocks and permanent markers. You could use paint pens or paint, but then you need to allow time for the paint to dry. Have participants design/ decorate their rock adding a cross or heart on it in some way. The heart is a reminder of God's love and also the love of the saints - the people who have provided a strong foundation for us as we have grown as disciples. The cross is a reminder of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for all of us and the faith of the apostles and prophets. Discussion at the table might center on "the saints" and what we mean when we talk about the "saints that surround us" and "the saints that have gone before". Who do you see in your daily life that you consider to be a saint? Who is your rock when it comes to support? What does it mean to have a strong foundation and what does that look like for you?



The Cross Project

This is an "add-to" project. Each week they will add something to the cross that will remind them of the theme "We are Church" and our call to be people of God. Find a basic cross you can use as the foundation for the project. This might be a cardboard cross, foam core or wood. You might have someone in the congregation with woodworking skills make blank crosses for you to use or order from someplace like S & S Crafts, Mi-

Resources

chaels, Hobby Lobby or Amazon. The cross will stay at the church and go home the last week you are gathering. Have plenty of creative tools available such as markers, paint and paint brushes, ribbon, beads, yarn, glitter, fabric scraps, leather strips, wire, magazines, glue, mod-podge and scissors.

This project is an open project. Instead of suggesting a symbol or having a specific craft in mind, participants will come up with their own way to share the message of “We are Church” keeping in mind the key points of this Lenten theme.

- We are Church - The Church is a gathering of people – Acts 2:42-47
- We are One in Christ - Unity is not uniformity – Romans 12:3-8
- We are Holy - Holiness isn't sinlessness – I Peter 1:13-16
- We are Catholic - We are a small piece of the bigger picture – Galatians 3:26-29
- We are Apostolic - We build on the foundation of the apostles and prophets – Matthew 28:16-20

The Craft Stick Project

This model provides five stand-alone activities that are linked by the theme but don't building on each other.

We are Church

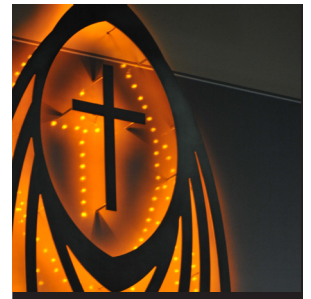
We want to stay away from the idea that the church is a building and focus on the church being the people. The people come together to form a community of disciples to worship, pray, serve and grow. Our community is diverse and there is always room for more.



We are going to create people with the craft sticks and use an invitation style envelope as the gathering place for our disciples. If you Google “craft stick people” you will get lots of ideas. We'd suggest using the wider craft sticks in contrast to popsicle stick narrow ones. Glue – you will need plenty of good glue. Decorating supplies might include markers, yarn, buttons, glitter (or no glitter!), fabric scraps, plastic eyes, paint and paint brushes, feathers... The envelope could be decorated to look like a church, but be sure to remind participants the church is not a building but a gathering place. Everyone can make as many people as they want to fit in the envelope, but leave room for one more because there is always room for more people to be the church.

We are One

Romans 12:3-8 talks about the various gifts we bring to the table. We are unique individuals created by God with gifts and talents that we are called to use in our everyday life. And we are called to honor, respect and support others as they discover and utilize their gifts.



RESOURCES

In Matthew 5: 16 we read “Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” Sometimes we struggle with identifying our gifts and learning to let our light shine. We compare ourselves to others and too often see their gifts and downplay what we have to share with the world. Unity is not uniformity calls us to be ourselves and let our light shine. God has given each of us special gifts that are unique and important.

You will need craft sticks, good glue, scissors, tissue paper or other light weight paper that will allow the light to shine through and a battery operated tea light candle. You also want some fine point markers for writing on the sticks or the paper. If you want to write on the frame or decorate the paper in some way, do that before you glue the frame together or glue the paper to the frame.

Make a cube with craft sticks. This is the lantern frame. Carefully glue the paper on the inside of the frame covering the bottom and sides but leaving the top open. Add the tea light and let the light of Christ shine. As you are working, discuss your gifts and how you can use those gifts for the Kingdom of God. How can you be an evangelist? How can you serve?



We are Holy

Of course, we are going to make a cross using craft sticks. Be sure to have some fine point markers available for more intricate designs or lettering. Have plenty of good, fast sticking glue available. You might consider assembling the crosses ahead of time and participants can use their time to decorate rather than construct. Other items might include paint and paint brushes, small tiles, glass beads with flat bottoms, yarn, buttons and fabric scraps. If time allows, you could tie dye your sticks.



As you work talk about the many different kinds of crosses you have seen. Consider a quick tour through the building to see the different crosses in your church or have a slide show running that shows a variety of crosses they might see in the community. Be prepared to talk about the empty cross versus Jesus on the cross seen in most Roman Catholic churches. Why do we have crosses in our churches? Do you have a cross in your house, in your room, in your school? What does it look like? How do you feel when you see the cross? Do you wear a cross?

We are Catholic

You are a piece of the bigger picture. So let's make a picture frame. Use craft sticks to construct the frame. Consider using puzzle pieces to decorate the



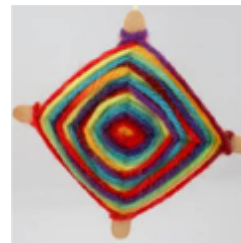
Resources

frame. Puzzle pieces could be left just the way they are with a variety of colors and designs or spray paint them a variety of solid colors and participants can decorate. Participants can take the frame home and add a picture or you could set up a photo booth and take pictures you quickly print and mount in the frame. Add a ribbon or piece of yarn as a hanger. As you work, consider people that have been a piece of your faith journey. Share names and stories. Ask age appropriate questions so everyone at the table can participate.



We are Apostolic

Since the beginning of time, starting in the book of Genesis, God's eyes have been upon us. God has been watching out for us, watching over us and walking with us. God's watchful eyes serve as the foundation for our faith and is the lesson we have been taught in scripture and through the apostles and all the prophets. To remind us of this, we are going to make God's Eyes.



You can stick with the craft sticks or vary the project a bit using skewers with the points cut off or sticks. You can find simple instructions on line. This is one example of what you can find for instructions - <http://www.auntannie.com/FridayFun/GodsEye/>.

Because we want to respect and honor the cultural heritage of our brothers and sisters in Mexico, it is important to share the story of Ojo de Dios (oh-ho-day-DEE-ohs) - Spanish for "Eye of God."

When the early Spaniards came to Mexico they encountered the Huichol (wet-chol) people who lived in the Sierra Madre Mountains of Mexico. The Sierra Madre Mountains are the large mountain range that you can see on the map running north and south. The Huichol Indians who lived in the mountains made God's eyes (or Ojos de Dios) to watch over those who prayed at their altars. They were woven on to criss-crossing sticks, joining in the center. The ends of the sticks represented the basic elements—earth, water, wind, and fire. The center of the eye stood for the power of seeing and understanding things we normally cannot see. Some say it represents the cross of Jesus Christ, but originally this was not so. The Huichol people focused their worship on nature and the earth rather than a specific divine being.

Other Indian tribes since have adopted the practice of making and using Ojos de Dios, and it has become a more Christian-centered item. They believe that when they make one, they are inviting the Eye of God to watch over them. Often they are made for little children as gifts. They accompany wishes of health, long life, and protection.



Other Project Ideas

Weavings – We are woven together



Puzzle Piece Picture Frames



Other Program Ideas

Videos

- What is Church? Steve Thomason - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UA0dbB-gosJA>
- This is Church – IgniterMedia - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qoM78TwJ34>
- What is the Church? An Explanation for Kids – PursueGod Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INsNTdaBIG8>
- We are Church Together – Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton - <http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=We+Are+Church+Together&view=detail&mid=E-A13E356FD4DFB29F803EA13E356FD4DFB29F803&FORM=VIRE>
- We are Church Together – Francis Chan - <http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=We+Are+Church+USA&&view=detail&mid=F9E09E-058A7A00ACC173F9E09E058A7A00ACC173&FORM=VRD GAR>

Books

- *Reclaiming the “L” Word: Renewing the Church from Its Lutheran Core* - Kelly A. Fryer
- *Reclaiming the “C” Word: Daring to Be Church Again* – Kelly A. Fryer
- *We Are Charleston: Tragedy and Triumph at Mother Emanuel* – June 14, 2016 - by Herb Frazier, Dr. Bernard Edward Powers Jr., Marjory Wentworth

Resources

- *Who do we say that we are?: Christian Identity in a Multi-Religious World (Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation Programme)* – February 15, 2016 - by World Council of Churches
- *Manna and Mercy: A Brief History of God's Unfolding Promise to Mend the Entire Universe* by Daniel Erlander

Devotions

Devotion books offer congregational members an opportunity to share their stories of faith. Invite members to write a devotion that connects to the “We are Church” theme. The usual devotion format would include a scripture, 200 words and short prayer. You could go with daily devotions or a weekly devotion. A nice perk with email devotions is you can print out the scripture so folks open the page and have the scripture and devotion together. When doing a printed format you may be more limited with space that only allows for a scripture reference.

Because Lent is a season when we focus so much on prayer, consider creating a prayer booklet instead of a devotion book. Ask people to write a prayer that goes with the theme and publish on your web site, through emails or a hard copy book.

Art Gallery

Invite congregational members to share their art and create a gallery for the Lenten season. This could be items created by members of the congregation, art from homes or works of a local artist. Find a place to display the art that will provide security for it. The art might include sculpture, carvings, photographs, paintings, weavings, textiles or other medium. Consider a resident artist for the entire Lenten season or highlighting an artist a week and having the artist share the stories behind their works or details on technique and inspiration.

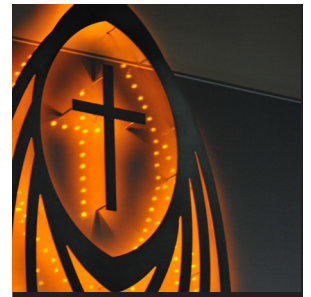


Photography

Several seminaries and congregations have used social media to share photos during Lent. Provide a word for each day of the season and invite people to take a photo that reflects the word in their mind. Share through Facebook or other social media formats. Or put together a slide show that can run at the church.



Consider ways for “not very tech oriented” people to also participate. Using the “We are Church” theme your word list might include gathering, unity, sin, sinless, piece of the puzzle, body of Christ, baptism, peace, suffering, power, death, light, life, calling, gift, free, slave, believers, division, teacher, giver, proph-



RESOURCES



RESOURCES

Resources

et, hope, discipline, prepare, conform, children, willing, written, holy, catholic, open, limitless, prayer, cross, all, belong, promise, sent, with you, always, worship, doubt, hurt, peace, anger, confront, conform, go, be, do, hear, love . . .

Or, invite people to bring photos that reflect the meaning of “We are Church” and let them use their imagination.

Coloring Sheets

Go online and download free color sheets. There are many available as downloads by searching “free Christian color sheets downloadable.” Or perhaps there is someone in the congregation that would create color sheets for you. You might consider a “We are Church” drawing that includes a symbol for each week. Distribute weekly coloring sheets and invite members to color at home and bring back to the church to display.



Vonda Drees has created coloring sheets for the Synod’s 2016 We Are Church Lenten theme. Her work includes a large drawing with symbols for each day as well as weekly coloring sheets. They can be downloaded at NebraskaSynod.org/wearechurch.

Thanks to First Lutheran Church in Lincoln for commissioning Vonda for this project.

Prayer Projects

Lent is a time when we focus a lot on prayer and reflection. Use this season to help the congregation grow in their prayer life.

- Prayer post – Have post-it-notes and writing utensils available for prayer that can be posted on a wall, door jams, support posts in the sanctuary, etc.
- Prayer wall – Use chicken wire to create a prayer wall. Have paper and writing utensils available. Prayers can be rolled and inserted in the holes in the chicken wire. Consider removing to add to your prayers with staff or council and burning them at the Easter Vigil.
- Prayer wall # 2 – Use a marker board, solid colored sheet, dry erase board or a wall you plan to paint as a graffiti prayer wall. The only rule is it is the wall is for prayers not just doodling.
- Light a candle – Use battery operated tea candles and set up a space for people to come and light candles. Yes, this is Roman Catholic style, but it is a powerful discipline to light a candle and pray for someone who is on your heart.
- Paper cross – make a paper cross frame and mount on a piece of cardstock or heavier paper. Prayers can be on any kind of paper, rolled and inserted into the cross.
- Outdoor prayers – Invite the community to share their prayers on an outdoor prayer wall. This might be 4 X 8’ sheets of plywood painted and posted or fabric. Or you could have a prayer drop box outside the church where folks can leave their prayers.