



FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Find time to explore these questions as a family after each session.

Session 1

What is a sign?

- Do you think God sends signs to show us how to live and what to do with our lives?
- Have you experienced extraordinary signs? Like what? What about ordinary signs?
- Acts 2:42 records the daily routine of the early church: from devotion to the apostles' teaching (Bible study) and fellowship, to the breaking of bread (eating together) and the prayers. In what ways are these ordinary actions signs of God's grace?
- If these ordinary signs are God's message to us, what do we need to change in our lives to demonstrate God's purpose and meaning?

Session 2

- If baptism is a sign from God, what does it signify?
- How does baptism tell us who we are and who we belong to?
- How does our church's baptismal practice convey the grace and love of God? How does it not?

Session 3

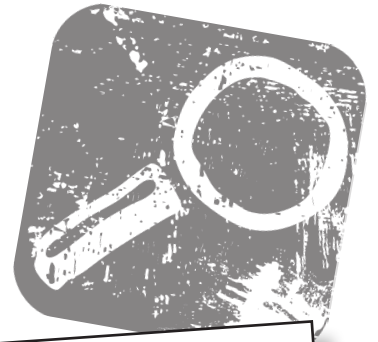
- Why do you think Jesus used bread and wine to talk about himself?
- What do you think Jesus meant by a "new covenant"?
- Why do you think the early Christians remembered and told this story about Jesus?
- How does communion tell us who we are and to whom we belong?
- How does the way our church celebrates the Lord's Supper convey the grace and love of God? How does it not?

Session 4

- What activities interest you and seem to fit your skills?
- What gifts do you have that help build other people up? What skills might you need to develop to improve your contributions to the lives of other people?
- Who is God calling you to be right now? Who is God calling you to be in the future?
- Can you do ministry if you're not working for a church or Christian organization? If you are not a pastor? Why or why not?



SIGNS SCAVENGER HUNT



How many signs of God's grace are in your church sanctuary? *(Name them.)*

How many signs of God's grace did you find in the remainder of the church building? *(Name them.)*

What is the most interesting sign of God's grace you found? What does that most interesting sign tell you about God's grace?

What is the biggest sign of God's grace you found in the church building?



SCRIPT

Welcome to First Church of Jerusalem. Every day is a full one here for us baptized Christians in the life of God's Spirit.

We baptize new Christians. (Team 1 performs.)

We study together what it means to be Christian. (Team 2 performs.)

We have fellowship together. We don't go off by ourselves. (Team 3 performs.)

We join together in communion. (Team 4 performs.)

We pray together. (Team 5 performs.)

This is one day in the life of the church at Jerusalem. See you tomorrow.





JERUSALEM DAY PLANNER

Member of The First Church

HOURS

ACTIVITY

8:00

9:00

10:00

11:00

12:00

13:00

14:00

15:00

16:00

17:00

18:00

19:00

20:00

21:00

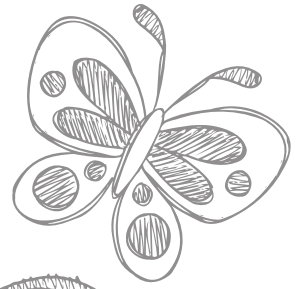
Member of My Church

HOW/WHEN





UNISON PRAYER



God of the Church, we praise you for all we can do and be together as your people.

Lord of Love, we thank you for all the people through whom we have known your love and care.

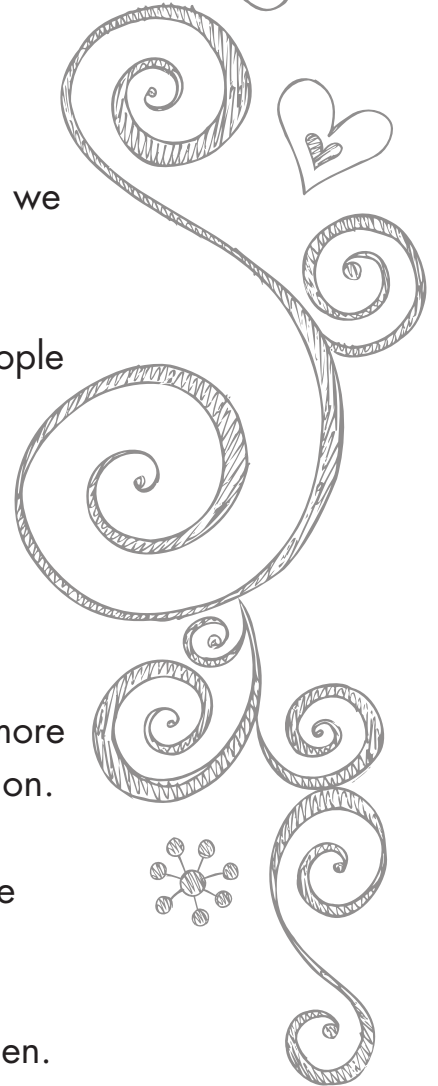
(Appropriate prayer contributions may be offered by participants.)

Guiding Spirit, help us participate ever more fully in the common life of the congregation.

(Appropriate prayer contributions may be offered by participants.)

We offer our prayers in Jesus' name. Amen.

LOVE

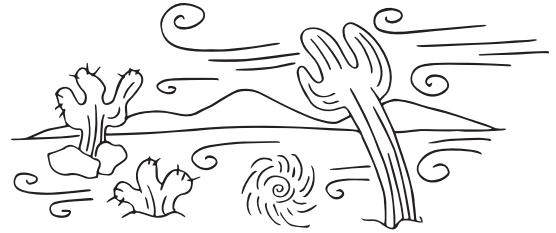
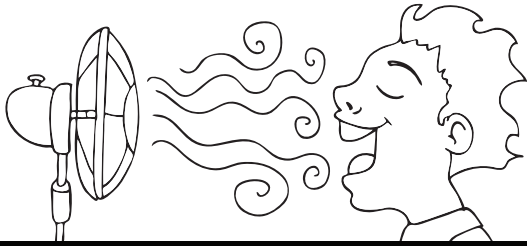




BREATH OF GOD

Instructions: In Acts 2 God's Spirit moves through the community and transforms ordinary persons into powerful messengers of God's love. It also empowers them to live in new ways. Examine the challenging situations below and rate how strongly the Holy Spirit's breath of transformation is moving throughout your own life. Where are you finding new life and energy? Where do you wish the Holy Spirit would bring a fresh breeze?

Rate each situation with the following scale (1=hardest to change; 5=easiest to change):



1
Somebody turn
on a fan; I'm
suffocating in
this dead air.

2
Is it my
imagination
or do I feel a
breeze?

3
Ah yes, Mother
Nature's AC.

4
Your hat, dude!

5
Was that a
tumbleweed
or your little
brother?

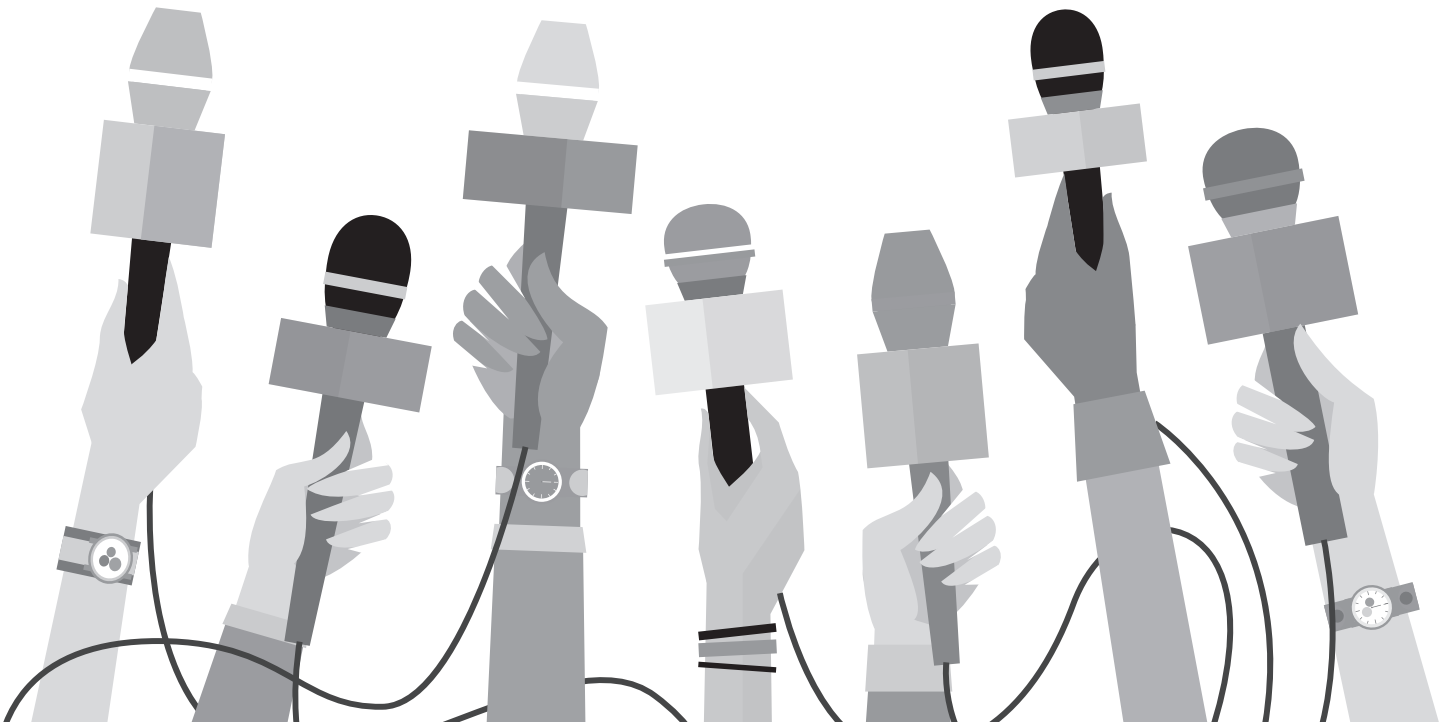
Situations

- _____ 1. Sharing money, time, talent in ministry with the church
- _____ 2. Eating healthier foods
- _____ 3. Balancing school with the rest of my life
- _____ 4. Cultivating a loving attitude with peers and adults
- _____ 5. Gossiping and putting others down
- _____ 6. Making responsible decisions
- _____ 7. Helping others to trust me
- _____ 8. Solving problems with others peacefully
- _____ 9. Imagining my future
- _____ 10. Spending money



CONDUCTING AN INTERVIEW

1. Ask the interviewees to introduce themselves by telling what they do for a living and for fun. Ask them to tell something about their families.
2. Ask questions such as the following:
 - How do you participate in the life of our congregation now?
 - Why do you do what you do?
 - Which of the ways that you participate in the church are most important to you?
 - As you look back over your life, what experiences in the church have been most important to you?
3. Ask the interviewees to tell about one or two people in the church who have been important to them and why.





GUIDED MEDITATION

You are at a river. Picture the river in your mind. What does your river look like? Are there grassy banks beside it? Is it a river that cuts through a canyon? What does it look like?

What kinds of sounds does your river make? Is it a quiet river? A river with rapids? A flowing river?

What does it smell like? Can you smell fish? Does it smell fresh like after a rain? Picture your river. (*pause*)

Imagine you are standing at the banks of the river. There are people around you. Some are on the banks of your river.

Some are in the river. There is a man standing in the water. As you watch, he lays his hands gently on a person's head, and the person goes under the water.

You hear him say, "Your sins are forgiven." He removes his hands, and the person comes up out of the water. There is a look of joy on the person's face. (*pause*)

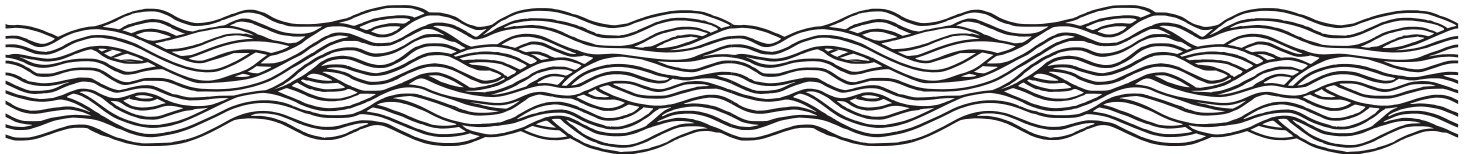
You want to feel that kind of joy. You look at the man, and he holds his hands out to you. You go into the water. It swirls around you, tugging at your legs. You go deeper until you reach the man. He lays his hands on your head, and you slowly sink under the water. (*pause*)

The sounds underwater are muted. You can hear the sounds that the river makes. You feel his hands leave the top of your head, and you come up out of the water.

You feel different, clean, renewed. You hear a voice saying, "You are my beloved, and with you I am well pleased," and you know your life is different. (*pause*)

You look around at the people on the banks of the river and in the river, and they seem different. Before, they were just other people and now they are God's people—people for whom you will care and love and to whom you will minister.

Before, you were just one alone, and now you are part of a community. You feel joy!





RENUNCIATION AND PROFESSION



Through baptism we enter the covenant
God has established.
Within this covenant God gives us new life,
guards us from evil,
and nurtures us in love.
In embracing that covenant, we choose
whom we will serve,
by turning from evil
and turning to Jesus Christ.

*The minister then asks the following
questions of the candidates for baptism
and/or the parents or guardians of children
being presented for baptism.*

As God embraces you within the covenant,
I ask you
to reject sin,
to profess your faith in Christ Jesus,
and to confess the faith of the church,
the faith in which we baptize.

RENUNCIATIONS

Trusting in the gracious mercy of God,
do you turn from the ways of sin
and renounce evil and its power in the
world?

I do.

Do you turn to Jesus Christ
and accept him as your Lord and Savior,
trusting in his grace and love?

I do.

Will you be Christ's faithful disciple,
obeying his Word and showing his love?

I will, with God's help.

PROFESSION

The minister continues:
With the whole church,
let us confess our faith.

The people may stand.

*All present profess their faith in the words
of the Apostles' Creed.*

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come 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 minister asks the following question of
those being baptized on profession of their
faith:*

Will you devote yourself to the church's
teaching and fellowship,
to the breaking of bread and the prayers?
I will, with God's help.

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THANKSGIVING OVER THE WATER

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We thank you, almighty God, for the gift of water.

Over water the Holy Spirit moved
in the beginning of creation.

With water you destroyed evil in the days of Noah.

Through water you led the children of Israel
out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise.

In water your Son Jesus received the baptism of John
and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Christ,
that he might lead us
through his death and resurrection,
from the bondage of sin into everlasting life.

We thank you, loving God, for the water of Baptism.
In it we are buried with Christ in his death.
By it we share in the resurrection.
Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore in joyful obedience to your Son,
we receive into the community of faith
those whom you have called and justified.

Pour out your Holy Spirit,
that as N. and N. [or, these persons]
are made a new creation through these baptismal waters,
they may preach good news to the poor,
proclaim release to the captives
and set at liberty those who are oppressed.
To Christ, to you, and to the Holy Spirit,
be all honor and glory,
now and forever.

Amen.



Adapted from the *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), pp. 424-425. Used by permission.





GREAT THANKSGIVING

This prayer may be used when serving communion in the home or hospital or in other informal situations.

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 thanks and praise.

Holy God, we praise you.
Let the heavens be joyful,
and the earth be glad.

We bless you for creating the whole world,
for your promises to your people Israel,
and for Jesus Christ in whom your fullness dwells.

Born of Mary, he shares our life.

Eating with sinners, he welcomes us.

Guiding his children, he leads us.

Visiting the sick, he heals us.

Dying on the cross, he saves us.

Risen from the dead, he gives new life.

Living with you, he prays for us.

With thanksgiving we take this bread and this cup
and proclaim the death and resurrection of our Lord.

Receive our sacrifice of praise.

Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us

that this meal may be

a communion in the body and blood of our Lord.

Make us one with Christ

and with all who share this feast.

Unite us in faith,

encourage us with hope,

inspire us to love,

that we may serve as your faithful disciples

until we feast at your table in glory.

We praise you, eternal God,
through Christ your Word made flesh,
in the holy and life-giving Spirit,
now and forever.

Amen.



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Web Resource 3a

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COMMUNION WITH THE HOMEBOUND

Planning

Plan for youth to participate in one or two services with homebound persons. Persons to be visited should enjoy young people and should be persons whom the young people are likely to enjoy. Ask their permission to have youth and elders visit them. Explain clearly why you are coming.

Gather the youth, elders, and minister(s) together. Organize small visitation groups of a few youth and at least one elder. Ask the participants to close their eyes while they think about the following questions:

- Remember the first time you participated in communion. What was most memorable about that experience?
- Remember your most recent celebration of communion. What, if anything, do you remember about it?
- Remember a communion service from the past. What made it significant for you?

Ask everyone to open their eyes and tell one another about one of their experiences.

Distribute copies of “Communion with the Homebound Service” (Web Resource 3c) or the order of worship that is to be used. Review the order of worship and other details of the visit with the group. Make sure the homebound members know when the teams are to make their visits. If you are going to gather at the church afterward to share experiences, be sure the teams know when they are to meet.

Return from Visits

It may be easiest to let the teams draw conclusions and share insights they have gained on their own and then to go home from their visit(s). Some teams may enjoy the fellowship of stopping for a snack together. If there is a time to gather to reflect on the communion visits to the homebound, serve a light snack.

Ask people to call out words and phrases that come to mind as they think about the visit(s). Then invite people to share new ideas they have encountered about the Lord’s Supper. Listen to stories any groups want to share. Be open to questions that may arise because of what happens or is said.

As the discussion winds down, remind the youth that the Sacraments are mysteries and that their understanding of them will change and grow as they do. Point out that those who seem to appreciate the Lord’s Supper most are those who worship regularly, study the Scriptures faithfully, and enjoy participating in the common life of the church. Encourage youth to do these things.

Close with a prayer.



COMMUNION WITH THE HOMEBOUND SERVICE

This service is for the celebration of the Lord's Supper with those who are homebound, in a hospital or nursing home, or in other circumstances that prevent them from attending public worship. The service may be used with individuals or with groups of persons, and may be expanded or abbreviated depending upon the circumstances.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Jesus says:
Come to me,
all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me;
for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.

CONFESSION OF SIN

Merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you
with our whole heart and mind and strength;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

In your mercy forgive what we have been,
help us amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be,
so that we may delight in your will
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your holy name.

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

The mercy of the Lord
is from everlasting to everlasting.
I declare to you, in the name of Jesus Christ,
you are forgiven.
May the God of mercy,
who forgives you all your sins,
strengthen you in all goodness,
and by the power of the Holy Spirit
keep you in eternal life.
Amen.



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SCRIPTURE READING AND BRIEF SERMON

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S SUPPER

According to Luke, when our risen Lord was at table with his disciples, he took the bread, and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him. (Luke 24:30–31)

GREAT THANKSGIVING (see Web Resource 3a)

LORD'S PRAYER

As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray:
Our Father, ...

COMMUNION

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray:
We thank you, O God,
that through Word and Sacrament
you have given us your Son,
who is the true bread from heaven
and food of eternal life.
So strengthen us in your service
that our daily living may show our thanks,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

BLESSING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
Amen.





MEMBERS OF THE BODY

What characteristics do these members of the body of Christ need to have?
Who do you know who plays these roles?

Apostle: Plants Christianity
in new territories

Prophet: Speaks God's truth

Evangelist: Brings other
people to Christ

Pastor: Leads a local
community of faith

Teacher: Instructs the faithful

Your Role: ???

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. . . .

—Ephesians 4:11–12





YOUR GIFTS

Take a moment to read the following passage of Scripture:

There are different spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; and there are different ministries and the same Lord; and there are different activities but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. A demonstration of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good. A word of wisdom is given by the Spirit to one person, a word of knowledge to another according to the same Spirit, faith to still another by the same Spirit, gifts of healing to another in the one Spirit, performance of miracles to another, prophecy to another, the ability to tell spirits apart to another, different kinds of tongues to another, and the interpretation of the tongues to another. All these things are produced by the one and same Spirit who gives what he wants to each person.

—1 Corinthians 12:4–11, CEB



You may or may not feel that you have any of the gifts Paul lists, but what do you see in yourself that's a gift from the Holy Spirit?



How do you believe you're meant to use the gifts, skills, abilities, and so on, that God has given you?

Now read these additional verses from Scripture:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against things like this.

—Galatians 5:22–23, CEB



You may have never thought of these qualities as gifts from God, but which of them do you see in yourself?



How might you grow the ones you lack and use the ones you have in service to God and others?





SPIRIT-FILLED LIVING

"Spiritual practices" are activities that bring us closer to God. Spend a few moments thinking about the ways and places that you feel God's presence and the ways that help you connect to God's Spirit in your life. Answer the following questions on your own (you won't be asked to share your answers):

1. Circle all of the words that are most appealing to you:

God, Jesus, Faith, Spirit, Nature, Creator, Divine, Silence, Dance, Helping, Moving, Party, Open, Praying, Talking, Singing, Breathing, Reading, Writing, Making art, Walking, Drawing, Sharing, Bible, Listening, Trusting, Teaching, Dark, Light, Wisdom, Family, Tears, Laughter, Happiness, Sadness, Routine, Newness, Stillness, Compassion, Mercy, Hope, Ancient, Stars, Earth, Fire, Water, Air, Drama, Candlelight, Poetry, Gratitude, Beauty, Quiet.

2. How might these words/activities help you to experience God's Spirit?

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES IDEAS

People down through the ages have used many different activities to help them feel close to God's Spirit. Here are some ideas that you can try:

Creating — Sit with an empty piece of paper and think about some of the things you are experiencing in your life. Take some pastels and begin drawing. Notice what God's Spirit may be saying to you through this kind of prayer.

Praying the Scriptures — Choose a passage from the Bible and read it slowly, aloud or silently. Read it again, noticing words that seem to be saying something about your life now. Listen to what God's Spirit may be saying to you through this kind of prayer.

Candle prayer — Sit quietly in front of a lit candle. Notice the light. Breathe in the stillness of the moment. Repeat a phrase such as: "The light of God's Spirit fills me. Thank you, God."

