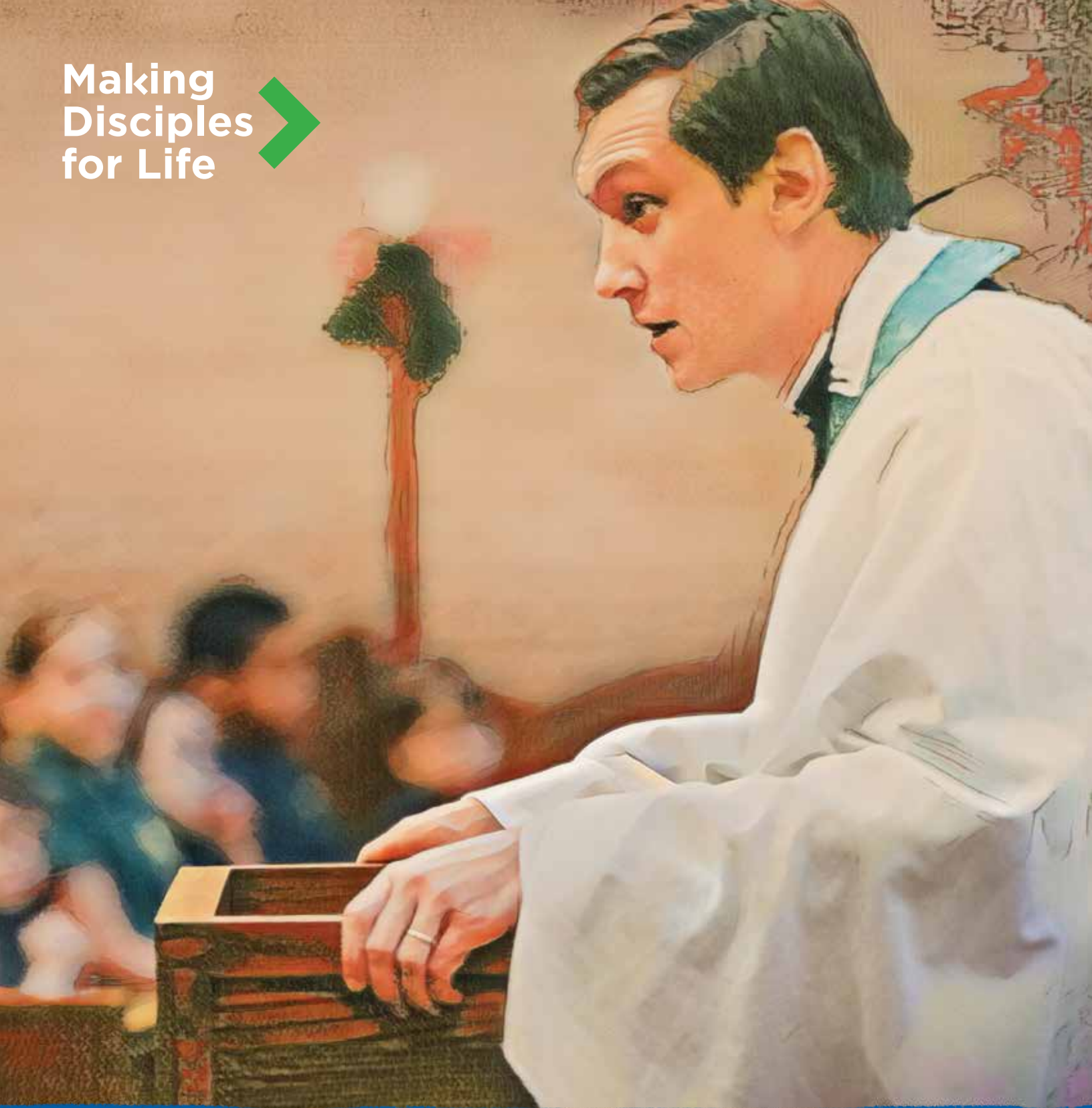


Making
Disciples
for Life



2022-2023

CHAPEL TALKS FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOLS

By Rev. Bob Riggert

**Making
Disciples
for Life**



2022–2023

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About the Author

Rev. Bob Riggert was made a disciple through his infant Baptism at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Bremen, Kan. Lutheran schools (rural elementary school; Concordia University, Nebraska, Seward, Neb.; Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne) were instrumental in his discipleship training. Pastor Bob has been privileged to “make disciples” as a teacher and principal in Lutheran schools in Ohio and Indiana, in pastoral ministries in Iowa District West and as Executive Assistant for Education, Youth and Family Life in Iowa District West. Bob and his wife, Diane, live in Manning, Iowa and rejoice that their four children and 13 grandchildren are also disciples of Jesus. They pray that their family and all disciples will be so “for life.”



THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
MISSOURI SYNOD
School Ministry



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THE THEME

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD GATHERS AROUND the “Making Disciples for Life” triennium theme. Historically and presently, Lutheran schools are integral to “Making Disciples for Life.” The theme unites Lutheran schools in worship, witness and life together.

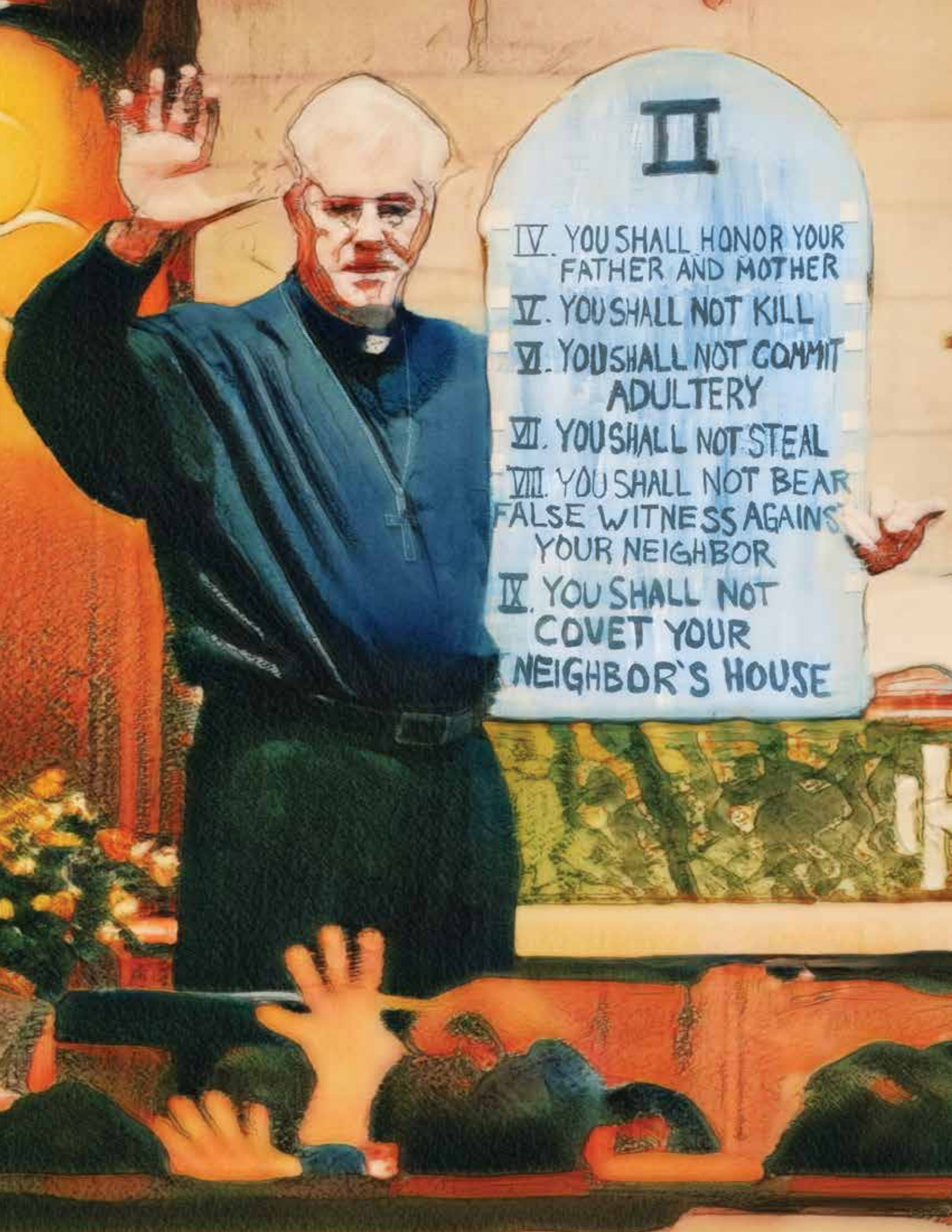
The text, Matthew 28:19–20, first commissioned Jesus’ disciples to make disciples. The theme and text together commission Lutheran schools to make disciples of children. Claimed as God’s children “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (v. 19) in the waters of Baptism, children hear and learn God’s Word to grow as disciples for life. Lutheran schools are also commissioned to make disciples of families and friends as the chapel worship invites and includes the congregation and community.

Many of the Chapel Talks follow the Gospel of Matthew texts assigned for the church year. Jesus invited the fishermen to “Follow me” (MATT. 4:19). The discipleship journey of Jesus’ followers becomes a major focus of Matthew’s Gospel. (There are more than 70 references to disciple in this Gospel.) While many rabbis of the day assembled a following of disciples, Jesus’ invitation meant that His would follow Him to His cross. The disciples’ journey would not end in disappointment or despair as the angel directed the women at the tomb, “Go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead”

(MATT. 28:7). The theme invites chapel leaders to take Lutheran school children, staff, parents and partners to the cross and empty tomb.

Following in faith, Jesus’ disciples were promised eternal life: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (JOHN 3:16). “Making Disciples for Life” shares the Good News of Jesus that all who believe in Him will have eternal life. Lutheran schools make an eternal difference. “Making Disciples for Life” also emphasizes that every aspect of life in Lutheran schools focuses on learning and living as disciples of Jesus. Chapel Talks encourage discipleship conversations and actions in the chapel setting, classroom, playground and every school context. Lutheran school disciples also follow Jesus from the school to the home and community. The mission outreach of Lutheran schools brings opportunities to “make disciples of all nations” (MATT. 28:19).

Jesus’ commission concludes with His promise: “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (MATT. 28:20). We rejoice that, through His Word, He continues to dwell with disciples as they gather for worship. May the “Making Disciples for Life” Chapel Talks bless Lutheran school disciples.



II

- IV. YOU SHALL HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER
- V. YOU SHALL NOT KILL
- VI. YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY
- VII. YOU SHALL NOT STEAL
- VIII. YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOR
- IX. YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE



USING CHAPEL TALKS

LIFE IN LUTHERAN SCHOOLS FOCUSES ON WORSHIP TOGETHER.

Those baptized “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (MATT. 28:19) gather as disciples of Jesus to worship Him in classrooms, sanctuaries and other settings. Chapel Talks is a resource for chapel leaders so that, guided by the Spirit, they may make disciples for life.

“Making Disciples for Life” includes two key nouns: *disciples* and *life*. The first weeks of the Chapel Talks will introduce worshipers to Jesus’ 12 disciples (MATT. 10:2–4). The first disciples in this diverse group are taught by Jesus, follow Him to the cross and witness His resurrection. Jesus then commissions them to “make disciples of all nations” (MATT. 28:19). Numerous other weekly themes are organized around discipleship. Disciples of Jesus are called to confession and are assured of Jesus’ forgiveness. Disciples are called and commissioned to follow Jesus always.

The resurrection of Jesus brings life to His disciples. *Life* is a focus of other weekly Chapel Talks. Lutheran schools deal with temporal realities. There is life in classroom lessons and extra-curricular activities. There is life in church, school, home and neighborhood contexts. “Making Disciples for Life” addresses the reality of life in school, home and beyond. Jesus’ desire is life eternal for disciples of all ages. Jesus calls chapel leaders to always focus on life eternal.

The theme of *disciples* organizes the weekly chapel focus. The “Text” and “Theme” are based on the weekly Scripture reading. A song selection supports the theme or season. Songs have been chosen from *Lutheran Service Book (LSB)*, *All God’s People Sing*

(AGPS) and *One and All Rejoice (OAR)* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006, 1992 and 2020, respectively). “Gathering Disciples” provides an introductory thought or activity which connects the children to the week’s theme. “Teaching Disciples” shares Law and Gospel exploration of the text and, most importantly, brings Christ and His redeeming work to the students. “Praying Disciples” responds to the disciples’ plea, “Teach us to pray” (LUKE 11:1). “Growing Disciples” provides opportunities for the pastor, teachers and parents to continue exploration and explanation of the theme beyond the chapel setting. A suggested section of the “Six Chief Parts” of Luther’s Small Catechism is included with many of the Chapel Talks.

The weekly Chapel Talk is intended to be a chapel service outline. Chapel leaders are encouraged to more deeply study the text and expand or adapt the theme and text to best fit their school and worship context.

Children welcome liturgical structure in worship. The extent and format of that structure may be determined by the preferences and practices of the school and congregation. Some settings prefer the Chapel Talk in the context of a Divine Service. Others may use a more informal worship style developed by the local pastors or from other resources.

Chapel Talks were written visualizing an assembly of elementary students. The weekly message may be adapted or expanded for younger or older students. Chapel Talks may also be a helpful resource for Sunday school openings, Sunday children’s messages, home-school devotions or other worship and devotional settings. Disciples of various contexts worship together to make disciples for life!

HYMN

“Once, a Long, Long Time Ago”

A NATIONAL LUTHERAN SCHOOLS WEEK HYMN FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN
Based on the 2022–2023 NLSW theme: “Making Disciples for Life” and Matthew 28:18–20

“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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”

BY JEFFREY E. BURKART

Sung to WEIL ICH JESU SCHÄFLEIN BIN — “I Am Jesus’ Little Lamb” (LSB 740)

Once, a long, long time ago,
Jesus told His students, “Go! *Matthew 28:18*
Tell all people of all nations
That I’m King of all creation! *Colossians 1:16–20*
Tell them I came from above
To this world to show God’s love.” *John 3:16–17*

Jesus said, “Trust what I say.
Make disciples ev’ry day! *Matthew 28:19*
In the name of God the Father,
Son, and Spirit baptize others
So they come to faith in Me
And from all their sins are freed.” *Acts 2:38*

“Tell Good New, proclaim God’s Word *Matthew 28:20*
To all nations so it’s heard
In all times and in all places
To all people of all races.
Teach the world about God’s grace
Till, in heav’n, they see My face.”

Jesus said, “I am with you! *Matthew 28:20*
To you I am always true.
In those times when you are cheerful,
And whenever you are fearful,
You are Mine and I will be *Isaiah 43:1*
With you through eternity!”

Once, A Long, Long Time Ago
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WEIL ICH JESU SCHÄFLEIN BIN
Meter: 778 877

2/8/22 – Revised 3/15/22

HYMN

“To His Disciples, Jesus Said”

THE 2022-2023 NATIONAL LUTHERAN SCHOOLS WEEK HYMN

Based on Matthew 28:18-20 and the NLSW theme: “Making Disciples for Life”

BY JEFFREY E. BURKART

Sung to ALLEIN GOTT IN DER HÖH (“All Glory Be to God on High,” LSB 947)

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”

1. To His disciples, Jesus said,
“All pow’r on high to Me is giv’n. *Matthew 28:18*
Now go forth, as Good News you spread,
To all of those so riven *Riven: torn apart, broken*
By sin, despair, and lack of love,
Who seek salvation from above,
Yet know not of their Savior.”

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...”

2. “Go, therefore, and proclaim My Word *Matthew 28:19*
To ev’ry nation freely.
Make new disciples who are stirred
To live in Me completely. *Galatians 2:20*
With Word and Sacraments you’ll go; *Ephesians 6:10-20*
By grace, through faith, My love they’ll know
And trust in Me, their Savior.”

“...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”

3. “Baptize them in the name of God, *Matthew 28:19*
The Father, Son, and Spirit!
In faith, they’ll speak God’s truth abroad *John 6:14*
Till all the nations hear it.
Then they will baptize others who
Will spread God’s Word in all they do; *1 Corinthians 10:31*
And glorify their Savior.” *Romans 6:4*

“...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

4. “Then teach God’s children, young and old, *Matthew 28:20*
To keep all I’ve directed.
Teach them to love, to serve, to hold *John 13:34-35*
The faith, as they’re connected *Ephesians 3:14-19*
To all the saints in heav’n and earth,
Through words of grace that grant new birth
To all who know their Savior.”

“And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

- Δ 5. “Remember, I am with you now; *Exodus 3; Matthew 28:20; John 14:6*
I’ll stay with you forever.
I walk with you, and this I vow,
No pow’r can end or sever *Romans 8:38-39*
The love of God, the Father, Son,
And Holy Spirit, Three in One!
You are My own forever!” Amen. *Isaiah 43:1*



OPENING SERVICE

WELCOME DISCIPLES!

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 28:16–20

TEXT

“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” (MATT. 28:19).

SONGS

“Listen, God Is Calling” (LSB 833, OAR 305)

“Listen! You Nations” (AGPS 164)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Introduce the school’s teachers.

We are blessed to have a wonderful group of teachers in our classrooms again this school year. They will teach us reading, math, science, social studies (different settings will have different subjects) and, best of all, they will teach us about Teacher Jesus.

Jesus’ followers called Him Rabbi or Teacher. Teachers in Jesus’ day had followers or pupils that were called disciples. This year we will learn much more about a group of 12 followers of Jesus called His disciples. We will also celebrate that, in our Baptism, Jesus has called us to be His disciples.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

God’s Word to us from Matthew 28:19 is our theme text for this school year. We will see and hear this verse often this school year. Jesus spoke these words to His disciples shortly before His ascension. The earlier verses of Matthew Chapter 28 tell us the Good News of Jesus’ resurrection. On Good Friday, Jesus had been crucified. Through His death on the cross, Jesus had sacrificed Himself for our sins and the sins of the whole world.

Jesus’ body had been put in the grave, but, three days later, the women who went to the tomb and later the disciples who followed them heard this good news: “He is not here, for he has risen, as he said” (MATT. 28:6). Jesus’ resurrection assured His disciples and us that His victory over sin, death and the grave was theirs and ours.

Jesus wanted the Good News of His saving life, death and resurrection to be shared with others. The resurrected Jesus commissioned His disciples to “make disciples of

all nations” (MATT. 28:19). Many people hear and follow teachers who don’t share the truth of sin and salvation. The world has many false teachers who lead us away from the true God. The perfect and risen Teacher, Jesus, wants others to believe in Him so that they can be with Him now and forever. He wants the world, all nations, to be His disciples.

We are glad that your parents enrolled you in this school. As students here, you will all be disciples of one or several teachers. You will learn many important things from them. You will follow them into the lunch room, out to the playground, into chapel and many other places. We are thankful that your teachers will also follow Jesus and lead you to Him.

When your parents brought you to be baptized “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (MATT. 28:19) you were enrolled into God’s family, the Church, and you, too, became a disciple of Jesus. Like Jesus’ first disciples, we, too, have the privilege of making disciples for Him. As teachers and students may we all have a wonderful year learning from Teacher Jesus and being His disciples.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, thank You for calling us to be Your disciples. Bless us as we listen to Your Word in our classrooms, chapel services, Sunday worship and other times and places as our pastors, teachers and parents share Your Word with us. Bless us as we follow as Your disciples during this school year and for life. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- › Invite all students to memorize the theme verse (the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19).
- › Share the significance of the invocation. Where and when do we hear “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”? Why are these words important as we begin our school day and worship time together?

WEEK 1: PROPER 16

MAKING DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 66:18–23

TEXT

“For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory” (ISAIAH 66:18).

SONGS

“Spread the Reign of God the Lord” (LSB 830)

“This Little Light of Mine” (OAR 306)

“Go into the World” (AGPS 101)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Share some examples of the variety of people in the school setting. We thank God that we have different ages and groups in our school (perhaps from preschoolers to eighth-graders; boys and girls; experienced teachers and new teachers; perhaps the school setting includes different nationalities and cultures; there will be a variety of family backgrounds and structures).

God has made each of us a unique and special member of His creation.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

While we are all different, we are all alike in some ways. Every human, including each of us, is a sinner. God’s wonderful and varied creation was ruined when Adam and Eve disobeyed God (GENESIS 3). God’s Word tells us “For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (ROM. 3:22–23).

God immediately (GEN. 3:15) promised Adam and Eve that He would send a Savior for them and for the whole world. This year, as we hear God’s Word, we will learn of God’s promises throughout the Old Testament and the fulfillment of His promises in the New Testament. Jesus came to be our Savior from sin. Jesus died and rose again so that we and the whole world could be His children forever.

Our Bible passage for today shares the Prophet Isaiah’s words that “all nations and tongues” (ISAIAH 66:18) would see the glory of God through Jesus. Jesus would come through the family of Israel, but He would come to save the whole world.

This year, we will often hear the words of Jesus from Matthew 28:19, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” Jesus gathered His disciples and told them to “make disciples of all nations.” No matter the color, culture, family background, age or anything else that demonstrates the variety of who we are, God wants us all to be part of His family, the Church. Our theme passage shares that God brings us together through our Baptism “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (MATT. 28:19).

This year, we will learn about a variety of people around the world. We may meet different people in our school and community. Everyone needs the Savior, Jesus. We pray that God would use us to make them His disciples.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, bless all nations so that the truths of Your Word will be heard, believed and lived. Bless the missionaries who take Your Word to countries and cultures around the world. We pray that all nations will receive Your Word so that they, too, will be Your disciples forever. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- › Celebrate the diverse mission field that God may have brought to your church and school.
- › Share how chapel offerings will be used to make disciples of all nations.
- › The chief parts (Baptism, Commandments, Lord’s Prayer and Apostles’ Creed) of Luther’s Small Catechism will be introduced in subsequent Chapel Talks. Introduce the Small Catechism and the chief parts.

WEEK 2

DISCIPLE SIMON PETER

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 10:1-4; 4:18-19; 16:13-18

TEXT

"Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'" (MATT. 16:16).

SONGS

"By All Your Saints in Warfare" (LSB 517:1, 10, 3)

"They Cast Their Nets" (OAR 307)

"Come, Follow Me,' Said Christ the Lord" (AGPS 85)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

In school, we learn about numbers. As we increase in age and grade level, we go from starting to count numbers to using numbers in some challenging ways in mathematics classes. Numbers are interesting and important.

Numbers are also important in the Bible. One of the Bible's favorite numbers is the number 12. Jacob had 12 sons who became the 12 family groups of the children of Israel. There were several times when God's leaders and prophets set up monuments of 12 stones or offered 12 sacrifices.

How many disciples did Jesus first choose to follow Him? 12! In the next 12 weeks, we are going to meet each of those 12 disciples and learn how God used them to make other disciples. Matthew's list of disciples begins with "Simon, who is called Peter" (MATT. 10:2).

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Jesus called disciples from different backgrounds and different places. Jesus chose common people to be His disciples. Peter was a fisherman when Jesus called him. Jesus said that Peter would no longer catch fish, but he would now follow Jesus to invite others to follow Him.

All of the disciples were sinful human beings. Peter's bold and brash personality sometimes got him into trouble. Peter almost drowned when he looked away from Jesus and saw a wave coming toward him. Peter fell asleep in the garden when Jesus asked him to stay awake and pray. Peter said he would never deny Jesus, and then he denied Jesus three times. When Jesus was on the cross, Peter was among the disciples who were hiding because they were afraid that they also might be arrested for following Jesus.

Peter also listened to Jesus and saw Jesus' miracles. Peter believed that Jesus was the Messiah that had been promised (MARK 8:29). Peter was one of three disciples who saw the glory of Jesus at His transfiguration. Peter was one of the disciples who saw that Jesus' tomb was empty. Jesus showed Peter and the other disciples that He was indeed alive.

Peter was chosen to be the spokesperson for the disciples when the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost. Peter followed Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations. Peter preached about Jesus in Jerusalem and other places. The Holy Spirit inspired Peter to write a letter to suffering Christians that is part of the Bible. Peter was a martyr — he was killed for being a disciple of Jesus and a proclaimer of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Baptized to make disciples of all nations, we, too, can be willing to suffer for Jesus and tell others about the Jesus we know from the Bible.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, thank You that the forgiveness given to denying Peter is also the forgiveness given to us. Thank You that the proof of the resurrection given to Peter is also given through Your Word to us. Give us the boldness of Peter to confess You as our Savior and to be Your disciples for life. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Explore other examples of "12" in the Bible.
- Review the listing of the disciples in other texts: Mark 3:14-19; Luke 6:13-16; Acts 1:13.
- Explore what it was like to be a fisherman in Jesus' time.
- Older students may be challenged to learn the names of all 12 disciples.
- Find out about other experiences Peter had as a disciple of Jesus.
- Introduce: The Sacrament of Holy Baptism, "What is Baptism?"

WEEK 3

DISCIPLE ANDREW

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 10:2-4; John 1:35-42; John 6:8-14

TEXT

"One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which means Christ)" (JOHN 1:40-41).

SONGS

"By All Your Saints in Warfare" (LSB 517:1, 5, 3)

"In Christ Alone" (OAR 241)

"Jesus in the Morning" (AGPS 143)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Show a map/picture(s) of the Mississippi River. The Mississippi River is more than 2500 miles long. In many places it is more than a mile wide. It travels through and along 21 states. Every day it spills trillions of gallons of water into the Gulf of Mexico. Barges of grain go down the river; supply barges and ships carry goods up the river.

The Mississippi River starts as a little spring in northern Minnesota. At its humble beginning you can almost step across the stream. The message of Jesus' life, death and resurrection first witnessed and then shared by the disciples is like the beginning of a small stream that becomes a river flowing to the world.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Andrew was one of four fishermen who were called as the first disciples. Andrew was the brother of Simon Peter whom we met last week. Andrew wanted others to meet Jesus. Andrew had been a disciple of John the Baptist. John the Baptist introduced his disciples to Jesus as the Lamb of God. John the Baptist knew that Jesus was sent to be the sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Andrew, who now followed Jesus, found his brother Simon and immediately shared, "We have found the Messiah" (JOHN 1:41). The Holy Spirit gave Andrew the faith to believe in the Savior and the desire to tell about Him.

When the crowd following Jesus was hungry and the disciples were challenged by Jesus to find bread to feed them, Andrew was the disciple who brought a boy with five

loaves and two fish to Jesus. Jesus took the boy's lunch, blessed it and shared the lunch so that 5,000 people were fed.

Sometimes we may feel jealous of a brother, sister, friend or classmate. We may not be as good of a student, athlete or musician or have some skill that someone else has. In those times, we can think of Andrew. Andrew is not as popular as his brother Simon Peter. What was important to Andrew is that others got to meet Jesus. Andrew wanted his family to meet and follow Jesus. We certainly want the members of our family to learn about Jesus and believe in Him. Andrew wanted a little boy to meet Jesus. We certainly want other children to learn about Jesus and believe in Him. In meeting Jesus, we meet the same Jesus that Andrew met and followed. Andrew met the Messiah, the Christ, who came as the Lamb of God to be the sacrifice for our sins and the sins of the whole world.

Be a disciple, like Andrew, and bring others to meet Jesus. Who can you bring to church, school or Sunday school so they can be Jesus' disciples for life with us?

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, thank You for Christian parents, teachers and others who have invited us to be Your disciples. Give us the mission desire of Andrew so that we can tell our family and friends about the Savior who suffered, died and rose for us and for all nations. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- What else does the Bible tell us about Disciple Andrew?
- Early church traditions shared some facts (and legends) about the disciples. Where was Andrew a missionary and how did Andrew die as a martyr?
- Introduce: The Sacrament of Holy Baptism, "Which is that word of God?"

WEEK 4

DISCIPLE JAMES

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 10:1-4; Mark 1:19-20; Acts 12:1-2

TEXT

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and ... even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple" (LUKE 14:26-27).

SONGS

"By All Your Saints in Warfare" (LSB 518:1, 16, 3)
"Lord, Work in Me a Cheerful Heart" (OAR 293)
"Brothers and Sisters in Christ" (AGPS 78)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

What does it cost? We think about and ask that question often. We may tell our parents about a new toy, electronics or item of clothing we think we need, and they may ask, "What does it cost?" If we use our own money to buy something, we think of the cost of the item. Do we have enough money? Do we want to use our money to buy the item?

There were no qualifications or charges for being a disciple of Jesus. All the cost was paid for by Jesus through His sacrifice on the cross. However, Jesus warned that His disciples would have to make some sacrifices in their life choices. Being a disciple could even cost their life.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

James was one of the four fishermen called to be disciples. James and his brother, John, were the "sons of Zebedee" (LUKE 5:10). Their father owned several fishing boats and had servants to help with the business. Most likely James and John were from a financially successful family. Part of the cost of their discipleship was leaving the family business to follow Jesus.

The mother of James and John wanted the best for her boys and wanted places of honor for them in Jesus' kingdom. Part of the cost was not having an earthly kingdom with important positions, but being humble in the kingdom of Jesus. Jesus did not come for earthly positions and power. Jesus came to make it possible for us to be part of His eternal kingdom. In that kingdom of grace, everyone has equal glory.

While James did not have any earthly treasures as Jesus' disciple, he did have some special experiences. James got to hear Jesus teach about the kingdom of God. James got to see Jesus perform miracles showing that He was the true Son of God. James got to see Jesus transfigured on the mountain. James, along with his brother, John, and fellow disciple Peter, got to have some special experiences with Jesus. James got to see that the Jesus who was crucified rose again from the dead. James knew Jesus was risen, and James was a messenger of that resurrection.

King Herod hated Jesus and hated the messengers who told about Jesus' resurrection. James was the first disciple who was killed (martyred) for preaching and teaching about Jesus.

Still today there are places in the world where Christians are put in prison, tortured and even killed for sharing that Jesus is the only Savior from sin. We pray for the courage to speak boldly about Jesus and to even be willing to suffer for Him.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Jesus, our salvation cost You Your very life, and we give You thanks and praise for making complete payment for our sins. Give us the courage of James to be disciples who are willing to count the cost and risk everything, even our very lives, to be faithful followers for life. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- › James' mother was Salome. What does the Bible tell us about her?
- › What are some of the costs of being a disciple for Jesus today?
- › Introduce: The Sacrament of Holy Baptism, "What benefits does Baptism give?"

WEEK 5

DISCIPLE JOHN

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 10:2-4; John 13:21-25; John 19:25-27; John 20:1-10

TEXT

"In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 JOHN 4:10-11).

SONGS

"By All Your Saints in Warfare" (LSB 517:1, 8, 3)
"Loving Father, You Have Made Me" (OAR 231)
"Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service" (AGPS 172)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Display Valentine's Day cards, decorations and gifts. It's not February, and you may be wondering why we have Valentine's Day items on display in September. Today's chapel emphasis is on love. We show love in all times of the year. As we continue our discussion of Jesus' 12 disciples, we will meet the disciple of love: Disciple John.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

We have heard John's name mentioned several times the past weeks. John was one of the first four fisherman called to be disciples. John was the brother of James, one of the sons of Zebedee. Along with Peter and James, John was one of the small group of three disciples who were with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and at His transfiguration.

While Jesus loved all His disciples, He had a special relationship with Disciple John. John is called, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (e.g., JOHN 21:7). Like all of the disciples and us, John was a sinner. Along with his brother James, John was called one of the "Sons of Thunder" (MARK 3:17). John may have had a thunderous, quick-tempered personality. John's mother selfishly wanted her son to have a special place in Jesus' kingdom.

Jesus loved John and all of His disciples enough to die on the cross for their sins. John is the inspired Gospel writer who tells us that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (JOHN 3:16). From the cross, Jesus lovingly asks John to care for His mother, Mary, and asks

Mary to treat John as her son.

John not only saw the love of Jesus from beneath His cross. John also was one of the disciples who went to Jesus' tomb on Easter Sunday morning and saw it was empty. Along with the other disciples, John saw his resurrected Savior and Friend. After the Pentecost, John went with Disciple Peter to the streets of Jerusalem and boldly shared that Jesus was alive. Jesus' love was for everyone!

John, who saw the love of Jesus from the cross, told about that love in his missionary travels. John wrote about Jesus' love to the early churches. In the last book of the Bible, Revelation, John described what it will be like to be with the loving, victorious Jesus when He comes again on the Last Day.

Many people think about love occasionally — on Valentine's Day and other special occasions. We celebrate that Jesus loves us every day, and as Jesus' disciples, we have the privilege of loving others in His name for life.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Jesus, You loved Disciple John and You loved us enough to suffer and die for us. Because of Your love, we are called to love others. Bless us as we live and share Your love in school, at home, with our friends and even with our enemies, so that others will come to love You and follow as Your disciples. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- › Find out more about the disciple John.
- › Review and memorize that "Gospel in a nutshell" (JOHN 3:16).
- › Review the New Testament books that John was inspired to write. What is the message of each book?
- › Introduce: The Sacrament of Holy Baptism, "Which are these words and promises of God?"

WEEK 6

DISCIPLE PHILIP

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 10:2-4; John 1:43-46; John 12:20-26

TEXT

"Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.' Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see'" (JOHN 1:45-46).

SONGS

"By All Your Saints in Warfare" (LSB 518:1, 16, 3)
"One in Christ and One in Spirit" (OAR 314)
"Life Is a Journey" (AGPS 160)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Share an example of an invitation with the assembly. The invitation may be to a birthday party or some other special event.

We all enjoy getting invitations to birthday parties or other special events. We love to be included and we look forward to being with friends or family and having a great time. Disciple Philip shared an invitation with his friend Nathanael. He invited him to come and see Jesus.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

We have learned about the first four disciples that Jesus called: Peter, Andrew, James and John. The day after they were called to follow Jesus, Jesus found Philip and said to him, "Follow me" (JOHN 1:43). Philip immediately shared with Nathanael the excitement of meeting the One whom Moses and the prophets had written about.

We may have an interesting or important discovery to share with a friend. If they doubt our message, our response may be, "Come and see for yourself." Nathanael doubted Philip's message.

Like Nathanael, we may sometimes have doubts about Jesus and His Word. We remember Philip's invitation, "Come and see" (JOHN 1:46). We come to God's Word to see that Jesus is the message of promise in the Old Testament. We come to God's Word to see Jesus' miracles and hear His teaching in the New Testament. We come to God's Word to see Jesus dying on the cross. We come to God's Word to see Jesus risen from the dead. We are thankful for our times

of worship and our times of studying God's Word together where we can "come and see" the Jesus who called Philip and now, through our Baptism, calls us to be His disciples.

Philip was blessed to continue to see Jesus feeding the 5,000 and performing other miracles. Toward the end of Jesus' ministry (JOHN 12:20-22), Philip was the messenger for some Greeks who wanted to see Jesus. Philip wanted everyone to see his Savior. Jesus shared with Philip and the Greeks that through His death came the promise of eternal life.

As Jesus' disciples today, we can be like Philip and say "come and see" to our family members and friends who may not have met Jesus. Through our mission offerings, we can say "come and see" to people all over the world who haven't met Jesus. With us, we want all to be disciples who "come and see" Jesus.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Jesus, thank You for the "come and see" invitation from Philip. Through Your Spirit, Your Word has invited us to come and see Your cross and empty tomb. Give us the same Spirit that led Philip to invite others to come and see the salvation You have for everyone. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Philip was from Bethsaida. Find a map of the lands where Jesus lived and traveled. What other disciples were from this town?
- To whom could you say "come and see," and what would you tell them about Jesus?
- Introduce: The Sacrament of Holy Baptism, "How can water do such great things?"

WEEK 7

DISCIPLE NATHANAEL BARTHOLOMEW

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 10:2-4; John 1:43-51

TEXT

“‘You will see greater things than these.’ And he said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man’” (JOHN 1:50B-51).

SONGS

“By All Your Saints in Warfare” (LSB 518:1, 23, 3)
“Someone Special” (OAR 319; AGPS 217)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Share some interesting travel brochures or pictures. The brochures share some exciting travel possibilities. Perhaps you have traveled to some beautiful and interesting places. Would you rather see pictures of some travel possibilities or would you rather actually go to those places? Obviously we would rather be there in person to see and experience the destination.

Disciple Bartholomew is called to be a disciple of Jesus. Jesus promises that by following Him, Bartholomew would see even greater things.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

We are commonly known by our first and last names. Today's disciple is one of the few of whom we are given a clear first and last name. The disciple is Nathanael Bartholomew. In the Bible's listings of the disciples we have the first name in some lists and the last name in other lists.

As we learned last week, Disciple Philip introduced Nathanael to Jesus. Nathanael was under a fig tree when Jesus personally came to him. The first interaction indicates that Nathanael had been studying the Old Testament and was expecting the promised Messiah to come. He greeted the Rabbi, Teacher Jesus, “You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” (JOHN 1:49).

Nathanael and the disciples were sinful human beings. Before his confession of faith, Nathanael had expressed his doubt and prejudice, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (JOHN 1:46). Sometimes our previous experiences and our personal preferences cause us to judge and criticize

others. Jesus saw through Nathanael's sinful judgment and invited him to follow Him and see “greater things.”

As Nathanael followed Jesus, he saw great things. He saw the amazing miracles of Jesus. He saw the greatest demonstration of love the world has ever seen. He saw Jesus die on the cross. Nathanael saw the greatest demonstration of God's power ever shown, the resurrection of Jesus.

Because Nathanael saw the crucified and risen Jesus and believed in Him, He saw the greater display of Jesus' glory. Jesus would ascend into heaven. Jesus would return to glory but He would come back and welcome Nathanael and all disciples to be with Him and to see the angels of God adoring Jesus at His eternal throne. Nathanael saw Jesus and saw great things. We, too, will see the great glory of Jesus as we gather at His throne when He comes again.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, like Nathanael we, too, have times of doubt. In those times, lead us to the proof and power of Your Word so that we, too, remain faithful to You for life and like Nathanael will be blessed to praise You on Your eternal throne of glory. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Nathanael's first statement about Jesus, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” is an example of prejudice. What examples of prejudice can you think of today? As disciples of Jesus, how do we respond to prejudice?
- Introduce: The Sacrament of Holy Baptism, “What does such baptizing with water indicate?”

WEEK 8

DISCIPLE THOMAS

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 10:2-4; John 20:24-29

TEXT

"Then he [Jesus] said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!'" (JOHN 20:27-28).

SONGS

"By All Your Saints in Warfare" (LSB 517:1, 6, 3)

"Give Me Jesus" (OAR 280)

"I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus" (AGPS 126)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Do any of you have a nickname? (If appropriate, share some of the nicknames of students in the assembly.) People get nicknames for several reasons. "Bob" is a common shortened nickname for "Robert." "Joe" is often a nickname for "Joseph." Someone may be nicknamed "Speedy" because he is a fast runner.

Today we will learn about Disciple Thomas who had two nicknames.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Thomas is called "the Twin" (JOHN 20:24) most likely because he had a twin brother or sister. The disciples came from various human families. As we have shared, James and John were brothers as were Peter and Andrew. In the Bible, we find out that Peter had a mother-in-law which means that he had a wife. Jesus called common people from common circumstances and families to follow Him.

While this nickname is not in the Bible, Thomas has often been given the nickname, "Doubting Thomas." The women who visited Jesus' tomb on Easter morning saw that the stone was rolled away and heard the angel's announcement that Jesus was alive. Peter and John had also seen the empty tomb. The message was out that Jesus was alive.

To prove to His disciples that He had risen from the dead, Jesus came to 10 of the disciples on Easter evening. The disciples were still hiding because they were afraid that Jesus' enemies would also come to capture them. Thomas was not with the group at Jesus' first appearance. Thomas doubted the disciples' message of Jesus' resurrection.

Thomas said he would only believe if he saw the risen Jesus himself.

Jesus did not disappoint Thomas. He came again to the disciples. This time the doubting Thomas was with the group. Jesus showed the wounds from the nails on His hands and the wound from the spear that had been pushed into His side. Thomas saw the risen Jesus and he confessed, "My Lord and my God!" (JOHN 20:28).

There are times when we might be called, "Doubting Bob," "Doubting Sarah," "Doubting ..." Even though we have heard the Good News of Jesus' death and resurrection, we may doubt whether God loves us or whether His promises are true for us. We take our doubts to the risen Jesus. We hear God's word to Thomas and to us, "Do not disbelieve, but believe." God's Word gives us the facts of Jesus' wounds on the cross and the facts of Jesus' resurrection for us. We are blessed to be among those whom Jesus described to Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (v. 29). In the promises of our Baptism, we never need to doubt that we are God's children, and He is real and His love is for us. We are His confident and believing disciples for life.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, the scars from Your crucifixion and the reality of Your resurrection took away all doubt from Disciple Thomas. Thank You for Your Word which assures us that You truly are risen for us and are with us. Help us to believe and to confess You as Your disciples for life. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- The history of the early church indicates Thomas may have been the first missionary to India. Find out about mission work in India today.
- What description of Himself does Jesus have for Thomas in John 14:1-6?
- Introduce: The Sacrament of Holy Baptism, "Where is this written?"

WEEK 9

DISCIPLE MATTHEW

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 10:2-4; 9:9-13

TEXT

“For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (MATT. 9:13).

SONGS

“By All Your Saints in Warfare” (LSB 518:1, 25, 3)

“Amazing Grace” (OAR 279; AGPS 63)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Give students opportunities to make choices between an attractive or obvious choice and a less popular choice.

“Would you choose a snack of vegetables or a snack of chips and candy?”

“Would you choose this nice team jersey or an old shirt?”

“Would you choose to spend 15 extra minutes at recess or studying math?”

Some choices are fun and easy. Other choices may be more difficult and even surprising.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Jesus made a surprising and unlikely choice when He chose Matthew to be one of His 12 disciples. In his own inspired Gospel, the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew describes himself as a tax collector. Matthew was a Jew who worked for the Roman government collecting taxes. The Romans had taxes on almost everything so they could pay for their army, to build roads and buildings and to operate the government. Besides working for an unpopular government, the tax-collectors had a reputation of cheating their fellow citizens by adding to the tax and putting the extra money in their own pockets.

The Bible often put the groups “tax collectors and sinners” together (e.g., MATT. 9:10). Jesus makes an unlikely choice and comes to Matthew, the tax collector, and says, “Follow me” (MATT. 9:9). The Gospel next tells us “And he rose and followed him.” Matthew followed Jesus throughout His earthly ministry. Matthew followed Jesus all the way to the cross and saw that Jesus had risen again from the dead. The Holy Spirit used Mathew to write the Gospel of Matthew, sharing especially with his fellow Jews that Jesus

was indeed the Savior who had been promised to Abraham and all his descendants. Disciple Matthew shares the Good News of Jesus and gives all to follow Jesus’ commission that he and the other disciples were to “make disciples of all nations” (MATT. 28:19).

God’s Good News to us is that Jesus still makes unlikely choices. The Apostle Paul wrote that he was the worst of sinners, but yet God called him to share the message of Jesus with the Gentiles. God made the unlikely choice of choosing us to be His disciples. We were all born in sin. We have all committed sins of thoughts, words and deeds. Yet Jesus chose us to follow Him. God used our parents and other disciples to bring us to the waters of Baptism so that we could follow Him for life.

God may have other unlikely choices to be His followers. We are privileged to “go into all the world” (MARK 16:15) and make disciples. God’s grace is for everyone!

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, like Matthew we come to You as sinners. Yet, in Your grace You have also called us to follow You. We may not write books about You, but with our spoken and written words, we can share the Good News of a Savior with others. Send Your Spirit to direct us, even to unlikely people in unlikely places. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Explore the unique audience and message of the Gospel according to Matthew.
- Find out more about tax collectors in Jesus’ time. When and how did Jesus welcome a tax collector named Zacchaeus?
- Introduce: Psalm 46 (In preparation for Reformation observance).

WEEK 10

DISCIPLE JAMES, SON OF ALPHEAEUS

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 15:40; 16:1

TEXT

"There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome" (MARK 15:40).

SONGS

"By All Your Saints in Warfare" (LSB 518:1, 21, 3)
"Jesus Loves Me" (OAR 250; AGPS 144)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

"You're too little!" Have you ever heard or made that statement?

A little brother or sister wants to join us in some activity and we discourage or prevent them from participating because they are "too little." A child may approach a ride at the amusement park and see the height or weight minimums, and the message is "You're too little."

No one is ever "too little" to be a disciple of Jesus!

TEACHING DISCIPLES

James, son of Alphaeus, is one of the men named James in the Bible. We may be more familiar with James, the brother of John, or James, the inspired author of the book of James.

Disciple James, son of Alphaeus, has no spoken words recorded in the Bible. While he participated with the other disciples in seeing Jesus' miracles and hearing Jesus' teaching, he is not given any special mention other than the listing of disciples and other than the presence of his mother at Jesus' cross and tomb.

James is also identified as "James the younger." Some Bible translations identify him as "James the less." The original Greek word that describes James is typically used to mean "young in age." James may have been younger than some of the other disciples. Some Bible scholars suggest that James may have been shorter than many other adults and disciples. We don't know for sure what the Gospel writers meant by James being "younger" or "less."

Disciple James provides us the opportunity to emphasize that age or size or any other human criteria did not disqualify James from being a disciple. That's good news for us! We don't need to think, "I'm too young to serve Jesus" or "I'm too little to be a witness for Jesus."

Jesus' command to go and "make disciples of all nations" means that Jesus suffered and died for all ages, sizes, colors and any other qualification or description we might make or imagine. God's love is for everyone! The waters of Baptism wash away the sins of all and robe everyone with Jesus' righteousness.

James, son of Alphaeus, went on to share the Good News of Jesus' resurrection. His mother had seen the empty tomb. James saw and heard the risen Jesus! Early Church history tells us that James even gave his life to share the Good News of Jesus. May we, too, be Jesus' faithful witnesses, no matter our age or our size.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, sometimes we, or others, dismiss our callings by thinking that we are too little or otherwise unimportant. You have chosen us to be Your disciples so that we can be Your witnesses. Through Your Spirit, give us the words and the will to confidently share Your love. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Read Hebrews 11:33-38 for the importance of other lesser known witnesses.
- Anticipating the celebration of the Reformation, introduce the hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" (LSB 656; OAR 262, 263; AGPS 50, 51).

WEEK 11: REFORMATION

JUSTIFIED DISCIPLES

SCRIPTURE

Romans 3:19–28

TEXT

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (ROM. 3:23–24).

SONGS

“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” (LSB 656, 657; OAR 262, 263; AGPS 50, 51)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Set up a courtroom scene (with words or actors). A student is brought before the principal or teacher and the facts of disobedience are shared. The accusations are presented valid and verifiable. As the sentence is about to be given, the pastor (or another person of authority) steps forward and declares “I find this student NOT GUILTY!”

TEACHING DISCIPLES

The Book of Romans, and especially Romans Chapter 3, was important and powerful to Martin Luther. God’s Word says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” God’s inspired author, the Apostle Paul, pictured a courtroom setting. Each of us, and every other person (other than Jesus), born on this earth is guilty. God is holy and we are not; therefore, we stand before God as the Judge and our sentence to death and eternal separation from God is certain.

However, Paul shared that Jesus steps into the courtroom and says, “NOT GUILTY!” When God’s Word says we are “justified by his grace,” the good news is that we are declared innocent not because we deserve or can earn that innocence, but because Jesus paid the price for all our sin. God’s Word says, “Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” who by His blood shed on the cross made the complete payment.

Martin Luther’s conscience told him, “You’re guilty!” The rules of the church in Luther’s time told him, “You’re guilty!” God’s Word told Luther, “You’re NOT GUILTY!” Luther received the “Not Guilty” statement simply by believing God’s Word. This statement was Luther’s by grace through faith.

Luther was God’s instrument to share this Good News with the church and world of his time. Luther translated the Bible from Latin to German so that more people could read and believe that they, too, were justified.

We are blessed to be part of a Lutheran church and school that teaches about justification. We hear “not guilty because of Jesus’ sacrifice” every day in school and every Sunday in worship. We want “all nations” to hear that Good News also.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, You make disciples throughout history. Thank You for calling Martin Luther to share the truth of Your Word in the church and world of his time. Help us to hold to the truth of Scripture in the church of our time and to be witnesses of Your grace. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- › Study the life and writings of Martin Luther.
- › Review the history of the Reformation. When did it take place? Where did it take place? What was the world like at that time?

WEEK 12

DISCIPLE THADDEUS/JUDAS, SON OF JAMES

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 10:2-4; John 14:22-27

TEXT

"Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, 'Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?' Jesus answered him, 'If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him'" (JOHN 14:22-23).

SONGS

"By All Your Saints in Warfare" (LSB 517:1, 4, 3)

"I Stand Amazed" (OAR 239)

"I Sing a Song of the Saints of God" (AGPS 131)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Share pictures or descriptions of an ocean's coral reef.

From the boat or shore, an explorer sees only the ocean surface. A swimmer with diving or snorkeling equipment can look below the water's surface and see the beauty of the ocean underneath. The coral reef is home to a colorful variety of fish, sea plants and other colorful living things.

Much of what we study about the disciples is looking only at the surface. This is especially true of the last few disciples in the Gospel listings. The Bible tells us very little about James, son of Alphaeus (previous disciple); Simon, the Zealot (next week's disciple), and Thaddeus/Judas, son of James (today's disciple).

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Several of the disciples have different names in different Gospel listings and contexts. Matthew and Mark tell us about disciple Thaddeus. Luke's listing and John's reference tell us about Judas, son of James. Although the names are different, they refer to the same person.

In John, Chapters 13-17, Jesus met with His disciples in the Upper Room. After Jesus washed their feet, He shared His final teachings with them before He left the Upper Room to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus faced the trial before the High Priest, the condemnation to crucifixion by Pontius Pilate and finally the cross of Calvary.

Jesus had shown His love to the disciples daily for three years. Jesus was about to show the depth of His love by

His death on the cross. "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (JOHN 15:13). Thaddeus and the other disciples were Jesus' students. They were also His friends. Jesus would lay down His life for these friends and for the world.

Church history tells us that Thaddeus also gave his life to share the Gospel. All of the disciples, except John, were martyrs — they were killed for sharing their faith.

Looking at Disciple Thaddeus is like looking at the surface of the ocean along a coral reef. We are blessed to see the depth of Jesus' love and to see the depth of the faith of the followers. When people look at us, they, too, see only the surface of who we are. As the Holy Spirit works through us, we pray that we can show others the faith that is deep inside of us. Our words and actions show the love of Jesus that God has placed in our hearts.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, thank You for sharing Your love and giving Your life for Thaddeus and for us. You may not call us to give our life in witness for You, but You do call us to live a life of witness and service so that others might see Your love in and through us. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Read Romans, Chapter 16. How many different names are listed in the chapter? How many of the names are familiar to us? They, too, were part of the beauty of the church beneath the surface. Who are some of the lesser-known but important persons in your church and school ministry?
- Introduce the Ten Commandments: the First Commandment.

WEEK 13

DISCIPLE SIMON, THE ZEALOT

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 10:2-4; Galatians 5:1

TEXT

"For freedom Christ has set us free" (GAL. 5:1A).

SONGS

"By All Your Saints in Warfare" (LSB 518:1, 28, 3)
"God Bless Our Native Land" (OAR 340;
AGPS 106)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Display the famous Patrick Henry quote: "Give me liberty, or give me death."

Who made this statement? What was the context?

The history of our country emphasizes the words and actions that led us to our freedoms and the sacrifices to keep us free. We call our dedication to our country patriotism.

In Jesus' time there were Jewish citizens who yearned for their freedom from the Roman rule. They were sometimes called Zealots. Today we will learn about Disciple Simon, the Zealot.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Just like there may be several with the name John or Mary (or others) in the classroom, there are several disciples with the same first name. We have met several with the name James. We have met several with the name Simon. Simon Peter is, of course, the most familiar Simon because there are several biblical stories that feature him. Simon, the Zealot, is among the least-known disciples. He is even near the end of the biblical list.

The only thing we know about this Simon is that he was a Zealot. This group wanted the Roman rule with the unfair taxes to stop. They wanted an earthly kingdom with Jewish leadership. Sometimes they were very aggressive in their fight for freedom. They were zealous!

Jesus has another kind of freedom for Simon and for us. While governmental harsh control and injustice is always unfair, more important is freedom from the control of the devil. We want freedom from the consequences of sin.

Paul wrote to the church at Galatia, "Christ has set us free." By His death and resurrection, Jesus set us free from the slavery of sin.

Simon learned of his freedom by following Jesus. Simon believed by Jesus' death and resurrection he was free from all the Old Testament Laws which he could not keep. Simon was present at Pentecost and received the power of the Holy Spirit. Simon, the disciple, was free to share Jesus with "all nations."

Through the Spirit, Simon could be bold and even zealous as Jesus' witness. We find ourselves zealous at times for things we believe in strongly. We can be zealous for the truth of God's Word against things that are illegal or dangerous. May we be zealous for Jesus and making disciples for Him.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, often we become zealous for things of this world — teams, activities, possessions. Help us put away the things of the world and focus on You as Savior and Lord. Direct us to follow You and boldly and courageously stand up for You in the places You send us so that others, too, may be Your disciples and be zealous for You. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Find out about the Zealots and other political groups at the time of Jesus.
- What does it mean to be patriotic and zealous Christians today?
- Introduce the Ten Commandments: the Second Commandment.

WEEK 14

JUDAS ISCARIOT

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 10:2-4; 26:14-16, 47-50; 27:3-10

TEXT

"And he [Judas] came up to Jesus at once and said, 'Greetings, Rabbi!' And he kissed him. Jesus said to him, 'Friend, do what you came to do.' Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him" (MATT. 26:49-50).

SONGS

"Today Your Mercy Calls Us" (LSB 915, AGPS 249)
"From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee" (OAR 356)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Depending on the age and experience of the children, share a list of bad guys: Benedict Arnold, John Wilkes Booth, Jesse James and so on. The bad guys may even be cartoon or video/game characters.

Ask: What do you know or how do you feel about the individuals on this list?

For the past 12 weeks we have been studying the 12 disciples. It's a great list of faithful followers of Jesus. However, the last name on the list might be referred to as the bad guy of the list. Matthew's list (10:4b) concludes, "and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him."

TEACHING DISCIPLES

The 12 disciples had followed Jesus, their Teacher, for three years. All the disciples had seen Jesus' miracles and heard His teaching. From the beginning, Jesus had taught them that the Father's (and His) mission was to come to earth to die for the sins of the world and rise again after three days. Jesus was their friend, and they were hoping that Jesus was still going to set up an earthly kingdom. The disciples hoped that they would be part of Jesus' ruling team. The disciples did not always understand Jesus' teaching and mission. Even Peter had said, "This shall never happen to you!" (MATT. 16:22).

All sin starts in our evil, sinful hearts. Like all of us, Judas had a sinful heart. Judas was sometimes greedy, stealing from the group's treasury and even being willing to sell Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Judas was perhaps disappointed

when Jesus did not come to be an earthly ruler. Judas may have been fearful of being discovered as a thief. We don't know all the evil in Judas' heart, but he sold and betrayed Jesus.

No matter how bad our sins, Jesus is always willing to forgive us. Jesus died for the sins of Judas. However, rather than repent from his sins and trust in Jesus' sacrifice, Judas refused to repent and took his own life. It's a tragic story.

God was still at work through Judas. Jesus allowed Himself to be betrayed and to be taken to the cross. Jesus died for all the sins of the whole world.

Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, there is forgiveness for all the sins of our heart and all the things that we do to betray Jesus. We rejoice that in our Baptism God has claimed us as His children. We read and study His Word so that our faith is strong and we may never betray our Friend and Savior. May the Spirit give us strong and consistent faith to be His faithful disciples for life.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, sin begins and grows in our hearts. Create in us clean hearts as our evil thoughts, desires and actions are taken to Your cross. Through Your Spirit spare us from any betrayals that might tempt us. Lead us to follow faithfully as Your disciples for life. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Read Peter's review of Judas' act in Acts 1:15-20. Read the next verses to find out how the group of 12 was filled again.
- Reflect and confess how greed can complicate lives and destroy relationships (even with Jesus).
- Introduce the Ten Commandments: the Third Commandment.

THANKSGIVING THANKFUL DISCIPLES

SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:42-47

TEXT

"They received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people" (ACTS 2:46-47).

SONGS

"Gracious God, You Send Great Blessings"

(LSB 782; OAR 292)

"God Is So Good" (AGPS 107)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Explore and discuss historic Thanksgiving celebrations. What did the Thanksgiving celebration look like to the Pilgrims and the Native American people of Plymouth in 1621? When did our country officially designate a day of National Thanksgiving?

What do Thanksgiving celebrations look like today? It may depend on your family traditions and circumstances. Perhaps it is a special family gathering and meal. Perhaps it's some other tradition: traveling, watching football games, shopping and so on.

Today we are going to visit a thanksgiving celebration for the first disciples.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Obviously the disciples did not have a national Thanksgiving holiday. However, they gathered as thankful disciples.

Our Bible reading takes place following the disciples' Pentecost Day experience. The disciples had seen Jesus alive for 40 days. They had seen Jesus ascend into heaven and leave them with His blessing. Now, 10 days after the ascension, they gathered and received the power of the Holy Spirit. (We will learn more about that later in the year.) The disciples were sent to be witnesses to "all nations" of everything that they had heard and seen about Jesus. Jesus' disciples would tell the world that He had died and rose again.

When Peter shared this message with the group gathered in Jerusalem, the Church baptized and welcomed 3,000 people! The Great Commission was already happening.

The Book of Acts (2:42-47) describes a church of thankful disciples. They worshiped together; they celebrated the Lord's Supper together; they sang hymns and prayed; they helped those who were in need. They were a church of "glad and generous hearts."

We gather this Thanksgiving as thankful disciples. We are thankful for all the earthly blessings that God has given us: food, family, friends, country, school and so on. We are most thankful that the Holy Spirit has worked through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, made us disciples of Jesus and given us thankful hearts. (If there is a church Thanksgiving service, share that opportunity and invite the children and families to participate.)

No matter how we celebrate Thanksgiving Day, we do so not only as students of our school and members of a family, but also we do so as members of Jesus' Church. May we, like the first disciples, live with thankful hearts, gathering to praise and thank God.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, we count our blessings every day, but especially at this time of Thanksgiving. Most of all, we are thankful for the blessings of life, of forgiveness of sins and of salvation. Bless our family celebrations. Bless the celebration of the family of the Church as they gather in Your name. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Share and sing some favorite Thanksgiving hymns. Explore the history of the hymns.
- Show generous hearts by sharing food baskets or other items with families in need or a local food pantry or homeless shelter.

WEEK 15: FIRST WEEK IN ADVENT

OBEDIENT DISCIPLES

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 21:1-11

TEXT

"The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them" (MATT. 21:6-7).

SONGS

"Savior of the Nations, Come" (LSB 332; OAR 171; AGPS 205)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

"You better be good or you won't get anything for Christmas." While parents, teachers and others always encourage obedience, there is an added emphasis this season. A familiar secular Christmas song advises, "You better watch out, you better not cry."

We are beginning the Advent season of the church year. All the promises of the Old Testament lead to the coming of Jesus. Jesus is perfectly obedient and our response to His coming is to be believing and obedient disciples.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Advent means "coming." The church celebrates Jesus' coming as the Baby in Bethlehem, His coming to be the Savior of all nations and His coming on the Last Day. In today's Bible reading, Jesus was near the end of His earthly ministry. Jesus was coming into Jerusalem.

Jesus asked two of His disciples to help prepare for His entry into Jerusalem. The disciples obeyed their Master. They carefully followed His instructions. Jesus rode on the donkey into Jerusalem and was welcomed as the "Son of David" (MATT. 21:15). Jesus was welcomed as the One promised to the people of Israel.

Jesus perfectly obeyed His heavenly Father's plan. Jesus followed every detail of the prophecy of Zechariah (MATT. 21:4). A king would come, and the King was Jesus. During this season, most Christians are thinking mainly of Jesus' coming as the Baby in the manger in Bethlehem. While it's important to review and remember Jesus' birth, we are blessed to know and believe the rest of the story. The Baby in Bethlehem was the Son of David who went on to be

designated the King of the Jews as He hung on the cross to suffer and die for us.

Jesus came and obeyed all the Old Testament prophecies so that the plan of salvation would be perfectly fulfilled. We are blessed to be baptized into Jesus' life, death and resurrection. We are blessed to see Jesus coming again on the Last Day.

Even as Jesus' disciples obeyed His directions, we are blessed to obey His commands. We obey our parents, teachers and others whom God has placed over us. We obey not in order to get presents, but because Jesus is the Present as our Savior and King. He is always present with us. The best present we can give is the Good News of Jesus as Savior. He has bought the present of salvation for us to share.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, we are blessed through our Baptism to be part of Your kingdom. We confess that there are many times when we are disobedient subjects in the kingdom. We celebrate Your perfect obedience and rejoice this Advent season and always that we can come to Your throne because You have come to us. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- › Share the significance of the Advent season in the church: the colors, the wreath and candles, the hymns and other traditions.
- › Introduce the Ten Commandments: the Fourth Commandment.

WEEK 16: SECOND WEEK IN ADVENT

REPENTANT DISCIPLES

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 3:1-12

TEXT

"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (MATT. 3:11).

SONGS

"The King Shall Come" (LSB 348; AGPS 228)
"Advent Canon" (OAR 175)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Display and share the words "I'm sorry."

Have you ever said those words? To whom did you say them? When did you (or were you asked to) share them? (Share several "I'm sorry" situations that might take place in school or at homes.)

TEACHING DISCIPLES

One of the important Advent voices is that of John the Baptist. John the Baptist came to prepare for and announce the coming of Jesus. In today's Bible reading, we read of John's message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (v. 3).

John the Baptist was telling the people to say "I'm sorry." They were to be sorry for more than not getting homework done, saying a bad or hurtful word or some other failures. They were to say "I'm sorry for all my sins." "I'm sorry for not believing God's Words of promise." "I'm sorry for not obeying the commandments." John's audiences had often said the right words, but they did not do what God had told them to do.

John's message was that Jesus was coming as their Savior. Jesus was coming to suffer and die for every sinful thought, word and action for which we could ever be sorry. Jesus would come to be baptized by John the Baptist. Jesus would come as the beloved Son sent from the Father. In Jesus' Baptism He would prepare the way for our Baptism.

Our theme verse (MATT. 28:19) shares that we are made Jesus' disciples through our Baptism "in the name of the

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." In his Small Catechism, Martin Luther shared, "It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die" (Small Catechism, Baptism, Fourth Part). Baptism drowns all of our "I'm sorry, God" sins and brings us new life.

Advent is the new season of the church year. It's a time to again say "I'm sorry," believe in Jesus' coming, rejoice in being Jesus' disciples and live in the new life we have because of Jesus' coming.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, thank You for the Advent prophet, John the Baptist. May we, too, hear his call to repent from our sins. Because You have come, we hear Your voice assuring us of Your forgiveness. Bless us as we tell others about Your coming as the Savior to bring life to all. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Share more about the birth and life of John the Baptist.
- Review the importance of the words of confession and absolution in the Divine Services.
- Introduce the Ten Commandments: the Fifth Commandment.

WEEK 17: THIRD WEEK IN ADVENT

SEEING AND LISTENING DISCIPLES

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 11:2–15

TEXT

“And Jesus answered them, ‘Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them’” (MATT. 11:4–5).

SONGS

“Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers” (LSB 515; OAR 234)
“Rejoice in the Lord Always” (AGPS 203)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Invite students to share some sights and sounds of the season.

What are some things that we might see this season?
What are some sounds that we might hear? It’s a special time when there are sights and sounds that we experience only this time of the year.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Advent also brings us some special sights and sounds in our school and church. There is the sight of the Advent wreath and blue altar hangings; there is the sound of Advent hymns; there are the sights and sounds of rehearsals for Christmas concerts and programs.

The Advent sights and sounds of our church and school always lead us to the sounds of God’s Word and the faith sight to see Jesus.

In our Scripture reading, John the Baptist (whom we met last week) was confined to the sights and sounds of prison. King Herod did not want to hear the sound of “repent,” so he tried to keep the sight of John the Baptist away from himself and others. While John had preached about the coming of the Promised Messiah, from his prison cell he wondered if Jesus was really the One God had promised to send.

Jesus answered John the Baptist’s question by telling him to see the sights and hear the sounds. Jesus had shown by His miracles that He was the Son of God. Jesus had taught

about the coming of the Kingdom of God with His words. People had seen and heard what Jesus had done.

Because he was killed for being a faithful witness to the coming of Jesus, John would not see Jesus hanging on the cross nor would he hear the sound of “He has risen” from the Easter angel (MATT. 28:6). Because he had believed in the coming of Jesus, John would see Jesus on His throne of glory and hear the eternal praises of the saints and angels.

There are wonderful sights and sounds of the Advent and Christmas seasons on the television, in the malls, in the city streets and in the hallways of our school and rooms of our homes. While we enjoy many of these sounds, the most important sounds are the sounds of the Bible readings which tell of Jesus’ coming at Christmas and His coming again and the sounds of Advent and Christmas hymns which give praise to God for His coming to be our Savior.

May we be faithful and attentive to the sights and sounds of God’s Word and Jesus’ second coming.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, we see the colors and lights of the season. We hear the bells and carols. Help us to see beyond the earthly decorations to anticipate again the celebration of Your birth in Bethlehem. Lead us, our family and our friends to celebrate Your birth so that we might see and hear again the whole story of salvation for us and the world. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Advent teaches the final coming of Jesus on the Last Day. What does the Bible tell us about Jesus’ second coming?
- Introduce the Ten Commandments: the Sixth Commandment.

WEEK 18: FOURTH WEEK IN ADVENT

DIRECTED DISCIPLES

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 1:18–25

TEXT

“But as he [Joseph] considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’” (MATT. 1:20–21).

SONGS

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” (LSB 357; OAR 177; AGPS 186)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

It’s important to have good directions. Before you start an assignment, you want directions from the teacher or textbook. Before the family starts on a trip, the directions are entered on the phone or navigation device to assure arriving at the right destination. Before the Christmas gift is assembled or the game played, we read the directions.

In today’s Bible reading, Joseph got directions from an angel.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

There are several Bible stories about angels. Angels are God’s messengers. Jacob, Moses, Gideon, Isaiah, Daniel and other Old Testament believers received messages from angels. Angels are also Advent messengers. Zachariah and Mary received special messages from angels. Angels are part of the Christmas story. Angels appeared to shepherds with the good news of Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem.

In today’s Bible reading, an angel appeared to Joseph. Joseph was certainly disappointed that Mary, to whom he was engaged to be married, was expecting a Baby. Because Joseph knew he wasn’t the father of this Baby, he was going to cancel the marriage.

Joseph received a special message from an angel. The angel shared God’s plan for the sinful world. Mary’s child would be called “Jesus” because He would “save his people from their sins.” Mary’s conception was the work of the Holy Spirit. Mary’s Child was the perfect Son of God.

Mary’s Child would be “Immanuel” because He would be with Joseph, Mary and everyone who would come to believe in Him as their Savior.

The angel had other directions for Joseph. As we review the Christmas story, we will find Joseph going with Mary to Bethlehem. We will find Joseph with Mary at the manger where the Baby Jesus was resting. We will find Joseph helping to keep Jesus safe when others tried to hurt Him. We will find Joseph taking care of Mary and Jesus in Nazareth. Joseph followed the angel’s directions.

As disciples of Jesus we, too, follow directions. While God could also give us directions through angels, He gives us directions in His Word. In God’s Word, we find directions again this Christmas to Bethlehem where we see the Savior born for us. Through God’s Word, we find directions to the cross of Jesus where He died for us. Through God’s Word, we find directions to heaven as we believe in and follow Jesus as His disciples.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, Your Word directs us to Bethlehem and Your birth. Your Word directs us to Your cross and empty tomb. Your Word directs us to worship You this Advent and Christmas season. Bless our witness to our friends and family so that they, too, might find directions to the place of Your birth and ultimately be Your disciples for life. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- What else do we learn about angels from God’s Word?
- What’s your favorite Christmas song that includes the angels and their message?
- What does it mean when we confess in the Apostles’ Creed, “conceived by the Holy Spirit” and “born of the Virgin Mary” (Small Catechism, Second Article)?
- Introduce the Ten Commandments: the Seventh Commandment.

CHRISTMAS

WORSHIPING DISCIPLES

SCRIPTURE

Luke 2:1-20

TEXT

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased,' ... And the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them" (LUKE 2:13-14, 20).

SONGS

"Joy to the World" (LSB 387; OAR 187)
"Let Our Gladness Have No End" (AGPS 158)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Have students complete the sentence "Christmas is ... "

Christmas is presents, decorations, family, food, lights, songs, vacation and so on.

Christmas is lots of different things to many of us. Today's Bible reading (the Christmas story according to Luke, Chapter 2) teaches us that Christmas is worship. It was a time of worship for angels and shepherds.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

What an amazing announcement the angel had to share with the shepherds on the field near Bethlehem: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (LUKE 2:11). Since the fall into sin, faithful believers had been waiting for the fulfillment of God's promise of a Savior. The Promise had been born in Bethlehem.

What was the response of the angels? The "multitude of the heavenly host" praised God. All of God's creation rejoiced at the Good News of the Savior.

The shepherds followed the angel's invitation to go to Bethlehem to see "a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger" (LUKE 2:12). What was their response to what they saw? They "returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen" (v. 20). They praised God for the Savior born for them and "all nations."

A time away from school and our Christmas celebration will include lots of things to do for our families and our

friends. However, our most important activity is to follow the angels' example to worship our Savior. Jesus was born to save the world from sin and to save each of us.

When we receive Christmas gifts we respond with thank-you words or notes. We may give an appreciative hug to parents or grandparents who gave us a gift. How do we respond to the Gift that God has given to us? We give thanks to God with our words of praise. May God bless our worship together this Christmas time.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, as we give thanks for Christmas gifts that we receive, we say "thanks" to You for the greatest gift of all. We have been given the gift of salvation because You chose to come as a humble Baby to Bethlehem. May we share our thanks this Christmas by worshiping You and following You as faithful and joyful disciples. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- › Share a listing of Christmas worship opportunities for the children and families of the school.
- › What's your favorite Christmas hymn of praise?

WEEK 19: FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

FLIGHT FOR LIFE

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 2:13–23

TEXT

“An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.’ And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt” (MATT. 2:13–14).

SONGS

“Songs of Thankfulness and Praise” (LSB 394; OAR 188)

“When Christ’s Appearing Was Made Known” (APGS 265)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Show pictures of a Life Flight helicopter or airplane used to transport accident victims or others needing special emergency medical transportation and attention.

Perhaps we have seen (in person or on television) a medical helicopter come to an accident scene and fly away, taking a patient to a hospital. Those services are sometimes called a “Life Flight.” We thank God for this special equipment and the doctors, nurses and pilots who are used to help save lives.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Obviously there were no helicopters or ambulances available in the times when Jesus was a young child. Jesus was not an accident victim. However, His young life was in danger because the wicked king, Herod, wanted to kill Jesus. Herod thought Jesus had been sent to be an earthly king who would take away Herod’s throne and power. The jealous Herod made a decree to kill the little boys of Bethlehem hoping to kill his competition for the throne.

God had means to keep Jesus safe. God sent an angel to share the danger with Joseph. Joseph took Jesus and His mother, Mary, away to the country of Egypt where He would be safe. Their escape is sometimes called a “flight.” It was an emergency trip to save the life of the little Child Jesus.

It was important for the little Child Jesus to be protected so that God’s plan to save us from sin could be completed. Jesus would perfectly and safely grow up to call His disciples, perform His miracles, share His teachings and eventually go to the cross. Through Jesus’ life and death He would bring eternal life to all who believe in Him.

Sometimes accidents happen in our lives. We may even need ambulances and life-saving measures. Sometimes we or our loved ones face diseases and need the care of hospitals, doctors and nurses. We rejoice that God provides caregivers to help us and keep us safe.

God’s greater plan was to give us life eternal. Jesus came as the perfect Rescuer through whom we will be taken safely to heaven. That is a rescue that only Jesus could provide for His disciples and for us. We give thanks that we will always be safely in His care.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, we give thanks for Joseph, who, as Your earthly father, provided protection for You. We give thanks for our Heavenly Father, who, through our Baptism, provides us protection from the temptations of the devil and the world. Protect us as Your children. Protect children everywhere from those who would hurt them in body, mind or spirit. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- › School parents, grandparents or congregation members who work in health care and emergency care vocations could share their work with the school children.
- › Share a timeline of Jesus’ early life from birth to boyhood in Nazareth.
- › Introduce the Ten Commandments: the Eighth Commandment.

WEEK 20: BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

BAPTIZED FOR LIFE

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 3:13–17

TEXT

“And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased’” (MATT. 3:16–17).

SONGS

“Agnus Dei” (LSB 962, 963)

“Lamb of God” (OAR 243)

“Lamb of God, You Take Away” (AGPS 153)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Introduce children to the church’s baptismal font. Where is the font located? Where is the container for the water located? Why is the baptismal font important in the sanctuary? What happens at the font?

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Today’s Bible story takes us to Jesus’ Baptism and teaches us the importance of our Baptism. Jesus was not baptized as a baby, and He was not baptized at a church’s baptismal font. Jesus was not baptized by a pastor. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River when He was 30 years old.

Jesus had been preparing for His saving work since He came to earth as a Baby. It was now time for Jesus to begin His teaching and His journey to the cross. In our Scripture reading Jesus said, “It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” (MATT. 3:15). Jesus’ ministry began with His Baptism. God had chosen John the Baptist to introduce Jesus to the world of His time. God had chosen John to baptize Jesus.

Jesus was baptized as part of God’s plan for us to be baptized. Jesus had no sins that needed to be washed away. Jesus’ Baptism put Him on the way to the cross so that our sins could be taken away. Jesus’ blood shed on the cross would wash away our sins. Every blessing that Jesus would bring through the cross would be ours. Those blessings would be brought to us through Baptism.

God the Father spoke at Jesus’ Baptism, “This is my beloved Son” (MATT. 3:17). Jesus, God the Son, was present in His Baptism. God the Spirit descended like a dove at Jesus’ Baptism. We were baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Through the water and the Word, the same three persons present at Jesus’ Baptism were present at our Baptism.

We are Jesus’ disciples through Baptism. Our theme verse for the year tells us to “make disciples” through Baptism. Through Baptism, we journey to Jesus’ Baptism, Jesus’ death and Jesus’ resurrection. We want everyone, “all nations,” to go on His journey with us and to be in heaven with us.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, thank You for making us Your disciples through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. We give thanks that You bring us the blessings of Your death and resurrection through the water and the Word. Remembering our Baptism, bless us as we become Your messengers so that other disciples might be baptized “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Explain the worship order and responses for “Holy Baptism.”
- Have the children ask their parents about their Baptism: who are their sponsors? where and when were they baptized?
- What other customs are often associated with Baptism: white garments, candle and so on? What’s the significance of those customs?
- Introduce the Ten Commandments: the Ninth Commandment.

WEEK 21: SECOND WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY

THE LAMB FOR LIFE

SCRIPTURE

John 1:29–42a

TEXT

“The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’” (JOHN 1:29).

SONGS

“I Am Jesus’ Little Lamb” (LSB 740; OAR 275; AGPS 125)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Consider some introduction statements. If the president of the United States were to visit our school, how would you introduce that person? The governor of our state? The mayor of our community? Others?

Proper and accurate introductions are important. How did John the Baptist introduce Jesus?

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Jesus was beginning His earthly ministry. It was time for Jesus to be introduced to the world. John the Baptist introduced Jesus as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

While that introduction might sound strange to us, it would not be so strange to John’s listeners. Lambs were everywhere in the fields of the area. Lambs were also present in the temple and worship life of God’s people, Israel. Before the people of Israel left the slavery of Egypt (EXODUS 12), they were to take the blood of a lamb and paint it on their doorposts. The blood of the lamb saved them from the angel of death.

Throughout the Old Testament, people brought lambs to the temple for the priests to sacrifice. The sacrifices of the lambs were to remind the people that they needed the forgiveness of sins. The lambs were also a reminder that God would send a perfect Lamb as the sacrifice for the sin of the world.

Jesus was the perfect and final sacrifice. John’s audience did not need to look for another Savior. The one and only Savior was standing before John and his disciples. The one and only Savior had come not to be a sacrifice on an altar of stone but to be sacrificed on the cross for the sins of the whole world.

John’s introduction of Jesus is often sung in our worship. The “Agnus Dei” (Latin for “Lamb of God”) is often sung as part of the preparation for Holy Communion. Jesus, the Lamb of God, gives His body and blood for the forgiveness for all who in faith receive Him.

The sacrifice for “the sin of the world” means that the sacrifice is for each of our sins. There is no sin that we have committed for which Jesus has not paid. That Good News is for sharing. To whom can we introduce Jesus as their Lamb?

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, we hear the announcement that You are “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” Because You chose to be the sacrifice for us, we have the assurance that we have been called to be your “little lambs.” Bless us as we follow You so that we might be at the throne of the victorious Lamb when He comes again. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- › Find the “Agnus Dei” in the Divine Services in the *Lutheran Service Book* and other worship resources. Sing it!
- › Review the sacrifices of the Old Testament. When were they offered? Why were they offered?
- › Introduce the Ten Commandments: the Tenth Commandment.

WEEK 22: THIRD WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY

THE LEADER FOR LIFE

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 4:12–25

TEXT

“And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.’” (MATT. 4:19).

SONGS

“Christ Be My Leader” (LSB 861; OAR 316; AGPS 81)

to be His followers. Through our study of God’s Word, He also leads us to the places of His ministry. Especially this Epiphany season, we see Jesus’ miracles and hear His teaching. He ultimately invites us also to follow Him to His cross. Just like Jesus called fishermen, He calls students and teachers, moms and dads, pastors and factory workers and every other age and occupation. He invites us to be His faithful followers.

We follow our Leader Jesus. We invite others (even all nations) to get in line with us so that we might all follow Him to heaven. Let’s follow and go fishing for Jesus!

GATHERING DISCIPLES

The chapel leader or a designated student is chosen to be the leader. Several children are invited to join in the game follow-the-leader. The leader takes the children on a course around the sanctuary or chapel area.

Discuss the game. “How many of you have played follow-the-leader? Is it more fun to be the leader or a follower?”

We may think of follow-the-leader as a children’s game. In today’s Bible reading, Jesus is speaking to His disciples who are adults, and He is not playing a game with them. He is calling them to follow Him and make disciples.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

In today’s Bible reading, Jesus meets two sets of brothers. All of them are fishermen. While they would join Jesus at places where they might fish (rivers and lakes in the area), Jesus was not asking them to follow Him on the fishing trips that had once been part of their journeys.

For three years these disciples would follow Jesus. They would follow Him to homes, gardens, synagogues, meeting rooms, mountain tops, vineyards and many other settings. They would follow to listen, watch and learn. Jesus would ask them to follow Him all the way to Jerusalem and to the cross. They would leave behind their fishing nets and families to follow Him.

To follow Him as disciples, Jesus invited them and trained them to make disciples (fishers of men). They would not be using nets on this fishing trip; they would be using the words of Jesus.

In our Baptism, Jesus has made us His disciples. Like Simon and Andrew, James and John, we are not worthy

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, thank You for leading Your disciples to Your cross and tomb. Lead us also to faithfully follow You and then to also be Your “fishers of men.” Thank You for the Epiphany season and the times of seeing Your Light so that we might share Your glory with others. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- › Find out more about fishing in Jesus’ time.
- › Review what we learned about these four disciples in our Disciples series last fall.
- › Introduce the Ten Commandments: Close of the Commandments.

WEEK 23: FOURTH WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY

BLESSED FOR LIFE

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 5:1-12

TEXT

"And he [Jesus] opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

'Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

'Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.'" (MATT. 5:2-11).

SONGS

"Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus" (LSB 685)

"Blessed Are They" (OAR 267)

"Blest Are They" (AGPS 74)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Display the word "Blessed." (Home decorating stores and sites and other outlets frequently have various expressions, illustrations and artistic renditions of the word.)

Have you seen this word displayed in your home or some other places? What does blessed mean?

People may use or display this word because they are happy that they have a home, a family, friends or other blessings.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Long before this word was used as a decoration, it was said by Jesus. We remember that Jesus was a Teacher, a "Rabbi." Teachers in Jesus' time taught their followers,

their disciples. In today's Bible reading, Jesus was teaching His disciples on a mountain. Our Bible reading is often called the Sermon on the Mount.

Nine different verses (statements) all begin with Jesus saying "blessed." Jesus doesn't say we are blessed when we have a nice house, friends, family, trophies, electronics or anything else that we might include or think of as blessings.

Jesus says, "Blessed are." We are blessed when we are followers of Jesus. We are blessed when we have Jesus as our Savior. With Jesus as our Savior, we have the things He tells His disciples about: His comfort, righteousness, mercy and peace. We are blessed because Jesus the Teacher went to the cross of Calvary to give us the blessings of forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. We are blessed because Jesus' victory is ours through His resurrection.

We are blessed to be baptized children of God. We are blessed to learn about Him in our Lutheran school, to pray to Him with our Christian families and to worship Him in our Christian church.

When we see or hear the word blessed, we celebrate that we are blessed because of Jesus! We are blessed to be His disciples to make disciples! With whom can you share your blessings?

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, we are blessed! We are blessed in our families. We are blessed in our school. We are blessed in our country. Best of all, we are blessed to be Your children because You have called us to be Your disciples in our Baptism. Bless our worship. Bless our serving. Bless our sharing. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Jesus taught His disciples on the mountain. What are some other "classrooms" in which Jesus taught His disciples? Beside our classroom, where does Jesus teach us?
- What do you think it was like for the disciples to have Jesus as their Teacher?
- Introduce the Lord's Prayer: the Introduction.

WEEK 24: FIFTH WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY

SALT FOR LIFE

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 5:13–20

TEXT

“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?” (MATT. 5:13).

SONGS

“I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light”
(LSB 411; OAR 192)
“The Lord Is My Light” (AGPS 231)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Display salt shakers, containers of salt or other salt sources.

Discuss uses of salt: food, preservation, melting ice and so on.

We are all familiar with salt and some of its uses. Salt was especially important in Jesus’ day because it was used not only to give taste to food, but also to keep food from spoiling. In Jesus’ day they did not have refrigerators, freezers, insulated bags and other ways to keep food safe.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Today’s Bible lesson continues with Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. Jesus used several word pictures in our Bible reading to describe the role of a disciple. They were to be like lights, a city on a hill and lamps. They were also to be like salt.

In our sinful nature, we have no “saltiness,” sweetness or spice that adds any helpful or healthy flavor to the world. We are like food that is tasteless, sour, moldy or even rotting. There is nothing in us that can change or preserve our own condition or that of anyone else.

Jesus is the “salt” who comes to change our very being. Like salty ocean water splashes on the person wading into the ocean, the water of our Baptism brings the “salt” of Jesus to us not only to cover our body, but also to change our very being. Jesus’ “salt” brings the blessings of His death and resurrection to us. We are no longer like spoiled food that needs to be thrown away. We are new persons in Christ. We are spiritually salty.

As Jesus’ disciples, we have salt in our lives and bring the taste and preservation of salt to others. We continue to hear and learn God’s Word so that our faith is well preserved. When we hear a conversation gossiping about someone else, we sprinkle the salt grains of truth and kind words. We are the salt that melts hatred and anger and brings peace and kindness to our family and friends. We are the salt of kind and loving deeds for others. We make the world “tastier” with the message of Jesus.

We are salty through Jesus so that we can make disciples who bring the salt of life to others. Be “salty” in Jesus’ name.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, thank You for the sense of taste that gives us a sense of salty or sweet. We thank You that through the gift of faith we can “taste ... that the LORD is good” (PSALM 34:8). Bless our witness so that others might receive the favor and flavor of salvation. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Where in God’s creation do we find sources of salt?
What is the source of salt for disciples?
- Where and how can you be salt for Jesus?
- Introduce the Lord’s Prayer: the First Petition.

WEEK 25: SIXTH WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY

ALL OF LIFE

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 5:21–27

TEXT

“For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell” (MATT. 5:30).

SONGS

“Take My Life and Let It Be” (LSB 783, 784)

“Take My Life, O Lord, Renew” (AGPS 223)

“Lord, Work in Me a Cheerful Heart” (OAR 293)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Share several illustrations of having a part of something versus having the whole.

Would you rather have a piece of candy or the bag of candy? Would you rather play one inning (quarter) or the whole game? Would you rather have one food item on your lunch plate or the whole meal?

TEACHING DISCIPLES

When we believe in the Bible and the Good News of Jesus, we don’t just believe part of the story. Some people would say that the Bible is only partly true. All of the Bible is God’s inspired Word to us.

When it comes to the sacrifice of Jesus, He didn’t just go partway to the cross. Jesus completed the whole plan of salvation. All of Jesus’ body died for the sins of the world. All of Jesus’ body rose again three days later.

When it comes to receiving the blessings of faith, God doesn’t just give us a part. When we were baptized, we were baptized into all of Jesus’ death and resurrection. We learned that Baptism “works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe” (Small Catechism, Baptism, First Part). The whole story of salvation is for us and the entire world.

In Jesus’ time, some who heard Jesus thought they could follow Jesus only partway or with part of their lives. They certainly didn’t want to kill someone else, but thought it would be okay to hate them. They certainly didn’t want to be unfaithful in their marriage, but thought it would be okay to have lustful thoughts. They didn’t want to steal something, but thought it was okay to covet it.

Jesus gave all of Himself so that as His disciples we might have life in Him. Our response is to be faithful to Him all the time. We give Him our hearts to believe in Him, our eyes to see Him, our ears to hear Him, our hands to help others in His name. Every part of us was redeemed by Jesus so that every part of us might faithfully follow Him and serve Him as disciples as we make disciples.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, so often we give part of our time and attention to You in worship and other areas of our life. You have given Your whole self for our salvation. You have forgiven all our sins. Help us to respond by giving ourselves totally as Your disciples. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Read (or sing) “Take My Life and Let It Be” (LSB 783, 784). What does it mean that every part of our being serves as Jesus’ disciple?
- Introduce the Lord’s Prayer: the Second Petition.

WEEK 26: TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

STOP, LOOK AND LISTEN FOR LIFE

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 17:1-9

TEXT

"And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light" (MATT. 17:1-2).

SONGS

"Jesus on the Mountain Peak" (LSB 415, OAR 194)
"When Christ's Appearing Was Made Known" (AGPS 265)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Share pictures or describe scenarios of driving (bicycle or automobile) down a street and coming to a railroad crossing. When you approach the tracks, what actions do you take? You "Stop, Look and Listen." Those words are directions to assure that it is safe to proceed across the tracks.

The words "Stop, Look and Listen" can also describe the three disciples' experiences as they arrived at a crossroad in Jesus' ministry. Those words also direct our review of the Transfiguration and the journey to life that we are blessed to receive.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

The Transfiguration is an important crossroads in the church year. The Epiphany season follows the Christmas celebration. For the past weeks, the church has followed Jesus on His earthly ministry. The disciples have heard Jesus' teachings and seen His miracles. Jesus has revealed Himself to them as the Son of God. The church will now transition to the Lenten season of the church year.

Three disciples — Peter, James and John — were chosen to join Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. The disciples were privileged to have a special look at Jesus. Our reading tells us that "his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light." This was a look at the glory of God that few, like Moses and Elijah, had been privileged to see. They saw the full glory of Jesus.

The disciples were privileged to listen to the words about Jesus. The voice declared, "This is my beloved Son, with

whom I am well pleased" (MATT. 17:5). The Father's voice that had greeted Jesus at His baptism now spoke again, sharing the truth about Jesus at this intersection of His ministry.

The disciples were privileged to stop on the mountain with Jesus. While Peter wanted to stop on the mountain for a longer look, Jesus was making only a brief stop. It was an important stop before He went forward on the road to the cross. The words and deeds of Jesus would continue in the weeks ahead, but the destination He came for was now clearly Jesus' focus. There was no stopping Him on the road to Calvary. The glorious Son of God who had taken on human flesh was going to die for the sins of the world.

We often get busy with school and family activities. We have sports, music and dance, friends to see, conversations in person and on the phone and lots of other things that occupy our time and attention. More importantly, our worship time in chapel and in church, our Bible study time in our classroom and our devotions with our family give us the opportunity to stop and then look at and listen to Jesus. We do that with His disciples. We do that as His disciples traveling on the way to the cross.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, thank You for all we have seen of You this Epiphany season. Thank You for the visit to the mountain with the disciples Peter, James and John so that we, too, can see Your glory. We humbly go from the mountain with You and follow You to the cross. Bless our journey as Your disciples in all seasons and for life.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Review the significance of the Epiphany season.
- What transitions does the church make to the Lenten season?
- Introduce the Lord's Prayer: the Third Petition

WEEK 27: FIRST WEEK IN LENT

WORD OF LIFE

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 4:1-11

TEXT

"It is written ..." 'Again it is written ...' 'For it is written ...'" (MATT. 4:4, 7, 10).

SONGS

"O Lord, throughout These Forty Days"
(LSB 418; OAR 196)

"This Is He" (AGPS 239)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Invite the responses of students (or staff) who may be participating in martial arts or similar programs. Why do your parents have you enrolled in those classes? What do you learn? (Participants may even demonstrate some of the skills they have learned.) The classes teach participants how to defend themselves from someone who tries to physically hurt them.

In today's Bible reading, we read about Jesus defending Himself, and He teaches us how to defend ourselves from the attacks of Satan.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

When we began the Epiphany season, we saw Jesus at His Baptism. As we begin the Lenten season, we now follow Jesus and His disciples on His journey to the cross. The devil wanted to do anything and everything to keep Jesus from beginning and ending that journey. The first promise of a Savior (GEN. 3:15) said that the Savior would crush the head of the serpent, Satan. Satan certainly did not want his head crushed!

Jesus immediately encountered the devil as He began His ministry journey. For forty days, the devil constantly and intensely tempted Jesus. Matthew's Gospel tells us about three temptations. When the devil tempted the hungry Jesus to turn stones into bread, Jesus quoted the Old Testament words of Moses, "Man shall ... live by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (DEUT. 8:3). When Jesus was tempted to jump off a temple tower, Jesus quoted the words of a psalm. When Jesus was tempted to take earthly goods and glory, He again quoted words of Prophet Moses. Three times Jesus defended Himself from the temptations of the devil with the all-powerful words of the inspired Old Testament writers.

Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, the devil would continue to attempt to keep Jesus from the cross. Jesus, who defeated the devil in the battle in the wilderness, defeated the devil with the Good Friday battle on the cross and the victory of His resurrection on Easter Sunday. We confess Jesus' victory every time we say the Apostles' Creed. We confess, "He descended into hell" (Small Catechism, Second Article of the Creed). Jesus showed Himself alive to the devil. The devil was finally and forever crushed.

While we wait for Jesus' return, the devil still tempts Jesus' disciples. The good news is that we have a defense against the temptations of the devil. Our defense is more certain and powerful than any type of self-defense class. There are no moves that we can make to defend ourselves against the devil. Our defense comes from God. Our defense is the all-powerful Word of the Bible. Like Jesus, we can defend ourselves with His Word, "It is written ..." As His disciples, we continue to learn His Word, believe His Word and use His Word as our defense.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Jesus, through the Word, You defended Yourself from the temptations of the devil. Through Your resurrection, You forever defeated the power of the devil. Thank You for the Word to us that defeats Satan and brings life to Your disciples now and eternally. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- What else does the Bible say to us about the devil and his temptations?
- What are favorite words of the Bible that help you defend yourself against the devil?
- Introduce the Lord's Prayer: the Fourth Petition.

WEEK 28: SECOND WEEK IN LENT

ETERNAL LIFE

SCRIPTURE

John 3:1-17

TEXT

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (JOHN 3:16).

SONGS

“God Loved the World So That He Gave”
(LSB 571, OAR 246; AGPS 108)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Display a perfect circle. Where does the circle begin?
Where does the circle end?

It's impossible to tell the beginning and end of a circle. There is no beginning and there is no end because the circle is constant and continuing. One of the characteristics (attributes) of God is that He is eternal: without beginning or end.

In Christ, God's plan for His disciples is that they would have an unending, eternal life with Him.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

God's plan was that everything He created would be eternal. Adam and Eve were to live with God forever in the perfect Garden of Eden. With the fall into sin (Genesis 3), creation faced decay and Adam and Eve and all their descendants were sentenced to death. They (and we) have received the just sentence for our disobedience of God's commandments.

John 3:16 (perhaps the most familiar and loved passages in all of the Bible) tells that in His love (another attribute of God) He shared a plan of salvation for Adam and Eve and all their descendants. God loved them, all the world, you and me. God lovingly sent Jesus, His only Son, to pay the price for all sin. A previous verse (JOHN 3:14) describes how Jesus would be “lifted up” on a cross to make it possible for us to have eternal life.

All of our lives have a beginning (our conception) and an end. We will all die. But because “God so loved the world” that He sent Jesus, He made it possible for us to have eternal life again. This eternal life is God's gift to us through faith. We can't earn this eternal life. We don't

deserve eternal life. God gifts us with eternal life through faith that Jesus came to be our Savior from sin and that He alone paid the price for our sin.

Risen from the dead, Jesus reigns through all eternity. His rule over the world and His Church will never end. Through faith in Jesus, given to us in our Baptism, we are His disciples now and for all eternity.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, we give thanks for the blessings of earthly life that we receive every day. We especially give You thanks for the assurance of eternal life that we have because of Your suffering and death. Continue to bless our Lenten journey and bring us to eternal life. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Review Question 93 in Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation for other attributes of God.
- Memorize John 3:16. Why is it sometimes called the “Gospel in a Nutshell”? Why is this Bible passage often displayed at professional sports events or other contexts?
- Introduce the Lord's Prayer: the Fifth Petition.

WEEK 29: THIRD WEEK IN LENT

WATER OF LIFE

SCRIPTURE

John 4:5-26

TEXT

“Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (JOHN 4:14).

SONGS

“My Faith Looks Up to Thee” (LSB 702)

“O Come, Let Us Fix Our Eyes on Jesus” (OAR 198)

“My Faith Looks Trustingly” (AGPS 175)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Share some facts about water. What percent of the earth is covered with water? What percent of our body mass is water? Why is it important for us to drink plenty of water? Where do we find salt water? fresh water?

We need water for physical life. Plants need water. Animals need water. Our bodies need water. In today’s Bible reading, we learn that more important than water for physical bodies is the water of life in Jesus.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

As true man Jesus needed water to live. Jesus asked the woman at the well, “Give me a drink” (JOHN 4:7). Jesus’ appearance at the well was not accidental and it was more than having a refreshing, life-sustaining drink. Jesus came to the well so that His presence and words might be a blessing to a woman of Samaria who came to the well.

Jesus knew that the woman needed more than a cup of refreshing well water. The woman was thirsty for Jesus’ forgiveness. The all-knowing Jesus knew everything about the woman’s life. She had not been faithful in her marriages. She had not been faithful to God. The water in the well could not take care of the woman’s physical thirst forever. She would have to come back to this well and others again and again.

The woman might go to other “wells” to try to take care of her thirst for a relationship with God. She might go on to other marriages or relationships. She might try to find her identity as a citizen in Samaria. Everything would leave her still thirsty for forgiveness.

Jesus came as the water of life. Believing in Jesus would be like taking a refreshing, life-giving drink of everything He had to offer. On the cross, Jesus said, “I thirst” (JOHN 19:28). Jesus thirsted, suffered and died physically so that by believing in Him we might drink of the forgiveness that He alone can give.

Our bodies need good, clean water frequently so that we stay alive. In the waters of our Baptism, we have received the water of life. The water of our Baptism satisfies our thirst for God’s grace. We continue to hear and believe God’s Word so that our thirst for forgiveness is quenched. The water of Jesus not only satisfies us now; it gives us eternal life.

Thank God for the waters of life. Thank God for the water of eternal life in Jesus.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, we confess that we are spiritually thirsty. Thank You for the water of Baptism which first brought us life. Thank You for the promises and power of the water and Word of our Baptism that nourishes us to eternal life. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Review “What is Baptism?” What’s the significance of water in Baptism?
- Why was it significant that Jesus spent time with the woman of Samaria?
- Find out about mission projects where wells are drilled in poor countries.
- Explore providing physical water bottles to shelters or other settings and also introducing people to the water of life.
- Introduce the Lord’s Prayer: the Sixth Petition.

WEEK 30: FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

LIGHT OF LIFE

SCRIPTURE

John 9:1-7, 13-17, 34-39

TEXT

“As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (JOHN 9:5).

SONGS

“Jesus, Refuge of the Weary” (LSB 423)

“There Is a Green Hill Far Away” (OAR 204; AGPS 235)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

If possible, darken the worship setting. (If the setting cannot be effectively darkened, describe the feeling of a darkened room, cave, etc.) Have you ever been in a darkened room or building? Maybe the electrical power went off in a storm. How does the darkness make you feel? Were you scared?

Bring light into the setting or turn the lights on again. The light makes us feel safe and comfortable again.

Our Bible story for today shares more than a darkened room. Jesus healed a man who had been born blind. He had never seen or experienced light. Jesus brought the light of the day to the blind man. Most importantly He brought the light of life.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Jesus did many miracles that brought hope and healing to people. He healed them from diseases like leprosy and helped a paralyzed man walk again. Jesus helped the deaf to hear. He helped the blind to see. Jesus brought the light of sight to a man living in the darkness of being blind.

Some people thought that people had diseases or disabilities as punishment for their sins. Jesus taught “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents” (JOHN 9:3). All our diseases and problems are because of a sinful world, but not because of a specific sin.

Jesus came to the man so that the man might be healed from blindness. The man saw God’s creation in the light of the day. He saw his family for the first time in the light of their home. He saw the light of Jesus.

Jesus came to be the light of the world. The God of creation made the light to rule the day and created the lights in the

sky. However, the fall caused darkness of sin and death to cover all creation and to affect all lives. Jesus felt the darkness of all sin on Good Friday. Jesus hung on the cross as the earth turned dark. The body of Jesus was put into a dark tomb.

But the darkness could not hide the Light. As the Light, Jesus overcame the darkness of sin and death. Jesus more than opened the eyes of the blind man. When the man was later questioned by Jesus, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” (v. 35), the man confessed “Lord, I believe” (v. 38). The man saw Jesus with his eyes. The man saw Jesus as His Savior with the eyes of faith. He would see Jesus for eternity.

We thank God for the eyes to see the light of the day and all the blessings that God has given us. We thank God for giving us faith in our Baptism to see the light of Jesus as our Savior now. May we be blessed in His light and for the life He gives now and forever.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, we live in a dark world. Our sinful thoughts and actions add to the darkness. In the dark season of Lent, we hear again that You experienced the darkness of death to bring us light. We believe in the light of Your resurrection and the light and life that are ours eternally. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Find out about the Church’s mission to the blind. How do they hear about and read God’s Word?
- The Scripture lesson also includes a discussion about Jesus performing this miracle on the Sabbath Day. Why was Jesus criticized for this action?
- Introduce the Lord’s Prayer: the Seventh Petition.

WEEK 31: FIFTH WEEK IN LENT

RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

SCRIPTURE

John 11:1-45 (especially vv. 17-27)

TEXT

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?'" (JOHN 11:25-26).

SONGS

"Christ, the Life of All the Living" (LSB 420; AGPS 82)

"How Deep the Father's Love for Us" (OAR 203)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Make a listing of or describe sad times. Invite student responses: "When have you been sad?" "What makes you sad?"

The list may include a wide variety of instances and responses: when my pet died, parents got divorced, grandparent died, we moved, friend lied to me and so on.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Because it's a sinful world, it is sometimes a sad world. Sadness is an emotion that every human being feels. Even though Jesus never sinned, as true man, He also felt sadness. The Bible tells us that when Jesus' friend Lazarus died, Jesus cried (JOHN 11:35).

In today's Bible lesson, Jesus' disciples are sad because they also were friends with a family in the small town of Bethany. Mary and Martha were sad because their brother, Lazarus, had died. Jesus and His disciples went to be with the family in their sad time. Lazarus' sister Martha met Jesus and shared her sorrow. Knowing that Jesus had done many miracles, Martha suggested that Jesus could have stopped her brother from dying.

It had not been Jesus' purpose to stop the physical death of Lazarus. Jesus had a great purpose in His coming. Jesus had come to experience physical death Himself. Jesus would die on the cross. Jesus would die and be buried in the tomb. Jesus would rise again. Jesus announced that He is "the resurrection and the life. Whoever believe in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die."

Jesus would perform another amazing miracle and raise Lazarus from the dead. The sadness of the family and disciples would go away. However, at some point, Lazarus would die again and there would be sadness again. But because Lazarus, Mary and Martha believed in Jesus' death and resurrection, they would live again. When Jesus comes on the Last Day, He will raise them, His faithful disciples and all who believe in Him as the "resurrection and the life."

We are still in the Lenten season. We are still following Jesus through His passion to the cross. However, we already know the Good News at the end of the story. Jesus would rise from the dead and so will we.

There will be sad times in our lives. We are sad at the death of those we love. However, our sadness is only temporary. We will have life eternal through Jesus' resurrection.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, even as You stood at the tomb of Your friend Lazarus, we have stood at the graves of family members and friends we love. Thank You for Your resurrection and the assurance that You are the Life. Continue to bring life to us as Your disciples. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Find out about the burial and grief practices at the time of Jesus. Perhaps a Christian funeral director can share information on funeral and burial practices today. Perhaps the pastor can share what happens at a church funeral service.
- Introduce the Lord's Prayer: the Conclusion.

WEEK 32: HOLY WEEK

LIFTED FOR LIFE

SCRIPTURE

John 12:27-43

TEXT

“‘And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.’ He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die” (JOHN 12:32-33).

SONGS

“Were You There” (LSB 456)

“The Lamb” (OAR 242; AGPS 229)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Display a lifting bar and a set of weights (manageable for age and size of students) or an assortment of items to lift. Perhaps have student volunteers (safely) demonstrate their lifting abilities.

How much can you lift? When are you asked to lift things?

Today’s Bible verse has a lifting demonstration and lesson for us.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

As the all-powerful Son of God, Jesus could have lifted anything He wanted. As a helper in Joseph’s carpenter shop, Jesus may have lifted wood or a hammer. As the Friend of children, Jesus lifted children into His arms. Jesus lifted a lunch of loaves and fish and gave thanks to His heavenly Father.

However, Jesus did not come for any physical lifting demonstrations. Jesus came to be lifted onto the cross. Jesus prophesied His death by saying, “when I am lifted up from the earth.” On the way to the cross, Jesus was asked to lift His own cross until it got too heavy for Him and the soldiers volunteered the help of Simon of Cyrene.

We are worshiping in Holy Week. Jesus’ life on earth was about to end. Jesus’ three years of preaching, teaching and working miracles were about to end. The purpose of Jesus’ coming was to be lifted up on the cross.

Sin is like carrying heavy, heavy weights around with us all the time. We may try to carry them, but they are far too heavy for us. We would be crushed by the weight of our sin. However, God the Father took on the weight of

sin from us and puts it on Jesus. Jesus carried a really, really heavy load to the cross.

This week we may hear Jesus’ seven statements from the cross. One of Jesus’ statements was “It is finished” (JOHN 19:30). Jesus’ life was done. Jesus’ mission was accomplished. The load was lifted from us and put on Jesus.

With the load of sin taken from us, we are free to worship and serve Jesus as His disciples. It’s a special week in our church and school. It’s the week where we especially think of Jesus’ suffering and death for us. When we see pictures of Jesus on the cross, we can think, “He lifted my load of sin.” As His disciples, we thank and praise Him this week and always.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, You came to be lifted to Your cross. During this Holy Week, take our eyes and our hearts to Your cross so that we might see and receive the blessings of forgiveness, life and salvation through the cross. Bless us and all Your disciples in this Holy Week of worship. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- › Consider setting up stations of the cross to learn more about the places Jesus stopped on the way to the cross.
- › Review the seven statements that Jesus spoke from the cross.
- › Read (and sing) Holy Week hymns. What is the mood of the hymns? What’s the message of the hymns?

WEEK 33: EASTER

JOY-FULL LIFE

SCRIPTURE

John 20:1-18

TEXT

"Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'—and that he had said these things to her" (JOHN 20:18).

SONGS

"I Know That My Redeemer Lives" (LSB 461; OAR 218; AGPS 127)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Make the worship setting joyful: bright colors, "joy" balloons, banners, streamers, Easter decorations and so on.

Explore and discuss the setting and decorations. What do you think of today's decorations? Why would these decorations be displayed?

Explain the joys of the Easter celebration. What joyful things were part of your celebration?

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Things were not joyful as the first Easter Sunday began. Matthew, Mark and Luke tell of a group of women visiting Jesus' tomb to complete the burial. John's Gospel highlights the visit of Mary Magdalene. It was not a joyful time for Mary. Her Lord and Friend, Jesus, had died, and she was visiting His tomb. When Mary found the stone rolled away from the entrance and the tomb empty, it only added to her sadness and panic, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him" (JOHN 20:2). Even the presence of two angel messengers brought no joy to Mary.

Mary was not comforted by a voice she assumed belonged to a cemetery gardener. Again, she assumed Jesus' body had been stolen and hidden. There was no joy for Mary until she heard the voice of Jesus calling her name. Now she knew that Jesus was alive and Jesus was personally greeting her. Jesus, who had died on the cross on Good Friday and who had been in the tomb for three days, had risen from the dead. Mary heard Jesus and saw Jesus. We can imagine Mary's excited and joyful response, "I have seen the Lord" (v. 18).

In spite of joyous Easter gatherings and decorations, perhaps not everything about our Easter break or Easter day was joyful. Like Mary, we sometimes come to Easter and other times sad, frustrated or confused. Perhaps our family was not able to get together. Perhaps not everyone got along because of divorce or disagreement. Perhaps we missed a loved one who had passed away the last year. Perhaps our family didn't have the money for new clothes or full Easter baskets. Not everything about the trimmings of Easter is joyful.

Jesus is alive. The Jesus who stood outside the tomb and called Mary's name has called our name in our Baptism. We are baptized into His death and resurrection. The Easter Gospel tells us about Jesus who is alive and who shows Himself to us again and again in His Word. Jesus, who is alive, brings us the joy of His victory and gives us life in His Name on Easter and every day.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, thank You for the joys of our Easter celebrations (family gatherings, community celebrations, worship). Thank You for the life giving joy of Your resurrection from the dead. Give all Your disciples joy in our hearts, home and school in all seasons. May Your Spirit give us opportunities to share our joy with others so that they, too, might receive joy eternally. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Compare the Easter events as told in the four Gospels.
- What else do the Gospels tell us about Mary Magdalene?
- Find (and sing) favorite Easter hymns that share the joy of Jesus' resurrection and life through Him.
- Make a list of Jesus resurrection appearances. To whom did He appear? What was the purpose of His appearances?

WEEK 34: SECOND WEEK OF EASTER

MESSAGE OF LIFE

SCRIPTURE

John 20:19–31

TEXT

“These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (JOHN 20:31).

SONGS

“Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia” (LSB 466; OAR 222)
“This Joyful Eastertide” (AGPS 243)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Share and discuss a variety of types of writings:

Biography — Explain the purpose of this writing.
(To tell about someone’s life)

Drama — Explain the purpose of this writing.
(To involve characters in a story)

Thank-You note — Explain the purpose of this writing.
(To express thanks)

Letter to a friend — Explain the purpose of this writing.
(To connect with a friend)

Different writings have different audiences and goals. Today’s Bible verse tells us the purpose of writing God’s Word and especially the purpose of John’s writing in his Gospel.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

The Bible is God’s writing to us. God the Holy Spirit inspired people to share different kinds of writings at different times in history. The Old Testament tells us about God’s promise of a Savior. The Gospels tell us about God fulfilling His promise and the saving work of Jesus. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were God’s authors to record the life and work of Jesus. The past few weeks we have heard God’s Word from the Book of John. John was a disciple of Jesus and spent three years with Jesus.

In the Gospel story, John told many things about the life of Jesus. John shared (JOHN 20:30) that he and others could have written many more books about Jesus. The Bible doesn’t tell us everything that Jesus said or did during His earthly journey.

John told his first readers and us why the Spirit directed him to share the message of Jesus. It is a message of life “so that by believing you may have life in his name.” Disciple John wanted to make more disciples. God’s Word is the message that makes disciples. God’s Word brings life.

We are born with a physical life. We breathe, eat, drink, sleep and so on. Yet, we know that we are born lifeless in sin. Martin Luther described us as blind, dead and enemies of God. The emergency response team comes with special equipment and gets the stopped heart of a patient going again. More than our heart stopped. Everything stopped and died in sin. God’s Word comes and brings life.

The life-giving Word may come through water and the Word in Baptism. The Word may come in a Bible story lesson in school. The Word may come in the pastor’s sermon in worship. God’s Word is shared in a variety of ways and it comes to bring life. The blessings of the Word then become ours personally in the water and Word of Baptism.

The Jesus who is alive brings His life to us. We are blessed to bring that Word of life to others so that they, too, might be His disciples. May God bless our hearing, living and sharing His Word.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, You are alive. Through the inspired writers like John, You bring the Word of life eternal to us. Help us to hear that Word in worship. Help us believe Your Word. Help us to live Your Word daily as we anticipate eternal life. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Review the books of the Bible. What kinds of literature do we have in the Bible? What’s the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament?
- Jesus came to the disciples and said, “Peace be with you” (JOHN 20:26). Where in the Divine Service do we share the peace of Jesus?

WEEK 35: THIRD WEEK OF EASTER

SIGNS OF LIFE

SCRIPTURE

Luke 24:13–35

TEXT

“O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” (LUKE 24:25–26).

SONGS

“Who Are You Who Walk in Sorrow” (LSB 476)

“I Want Jesus to Walk with Me” (OAR 200)

“Stay with Us” (AGPS 221)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Display several types of traffic signs. What happens if you don’t see or obey a stop sign? What happens if you don’t see or obey a speed zone sign? (Possible responses: accident, ticket, etc.)

What happens if you miss an exit marker or street sign? (Possible responses: get lost, delayed, etc.)

It’s important to see and obey the signs.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Today’s Bible reading tells us about two disciples traveling to Emmaus, a town a few miles from Jerusalem. Most likely they had traveled on the road a number of times and didn’t need to follow any directional or other signs to get back to their home.

However, they had missed the signs (or messages) about some events in Jerusalem. They were still saddened because they thought Jesus was still dead. With His death, their hopes of a Savior were also dead.

From the beginning of time, God’s Word had posted signs that a Savior would be sent into the world, that He would suffer and die and that He would rise again. Jesus Himself had often reviewed the signs and, with His miracles and messages, He had put out additional signs. Many before Jesus’ time, and even during Jesus’ time, had missed the signs or refused to believe in them.

Jesus came to the disciples on the road and He posted a new sign: His risen presence. The disciples heard Jesus’ Word; the disciples saw Jesus’ risen body; the disciples ate

a meal with Jesus. The message on the signs to them was this: Jesus is alive! During the Easter season of the church year, we read again and again of the times that Jesus came to His disciples and showed them that He was alive. Many were blessed to see the signs and believe.

There are people who don’t believe in Jesus or don’t follow Him because they have never seen the signs in God’s Word. There are people who have seen the signs, but they refuse to believe them or follow them. We thank God for the signs in His Word that we see every day in our school, the signs that we see when we worship as a church, the signs that we share as a family in our Bible reading together.

Like the disciples on the way to Emmaus, we continue to travel as Jesus’ disciples. May we see and believe His signs and help others to read and follow His signs as His disciples.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, throughout the Old Testament prophets posted signs of Your coming. The Gospel writers posted signs of Your human and divine being. The apostles posted signs of Your resurrection. Direct our eyes to those signs and to believe their message. As Your disciples, help us to put up signs giving witness and glory to You. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

➤ Introduce the explanation to the Apostles’ Creed: the First Article.

WEEK 36: FOURTH WEEK OF EASTER

ABUNDANT LIFE

SCRIPTURE

John 10:1-11

TEXT

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (JOHN 10:10B).

SONGS

"Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won" (LSB 490)

"Easter Canon" (OAR 213)

"Alleluia! Sing to Jesus" (AGPS 60)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

The cartoonist shows Dennis the Menace surrounded by many gifts that he has been privileged to open. The cartoon shares the question of Dennis: "Is that all there is?"

Have you ever not been satisfied? Perhaps you have gotten gifts for Christmas or for your birthday and you really didn't get what you wanted or as much as you wanted. Perhaps you would have liked more candy in your trick-or-treat bag. Perhaps the restaurant menu didn't have food items that you liked.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

We all confess the sin of selfishness. We praise the God who so generously gives us food, clothing, family and everything we need. (We remember the explanation to the First Article of the Apostles' Creed and the explanation to the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer.) While we are thankful for all blessings, we especially give thanks for an abundant life in Jesus.

Today's Bible reading is a favorite description of Jesus. Jesus described Himself as the "good shepherd" (v. 11). There were many shepherds in the area where Jesus lived and taught. Good shepherds took care of their sheep. They made sure they had plenty of grass to eat and water to drink. Good shepherds made sure the sheep were protected from wolves and other predators. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, makes sure His disciples have an abundant earthly life.

The abundance that Jesus has to give is greater than any earthly needs. Jesus said, "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (JOHN 10:11). Only by giving His life could the Good Shepherd provide abundant life. The

Good Shepherd was also the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Because of the Shepherd's sacrifice and because of the Shepherd's resurrection, we, by faith, have an abundant life. We have our sins forgiven. We have the promise of eternal life with Jesus. No matter how abundant our life is in things and comforts, no matter how sparse our life is in things and comforts, we have an abundant life now and forever in Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

Having received an abundance of God's grace, we are commissioned to share His abundant life with others. There is plenty of grace from the Shepherd to be shared!

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Jesus, we confess that often we think and live in the poverty of our selfishness rather than in the abundance of Your grace. Through our Baptism the promises of an abundance of spiritual blessings have been given to us. As Your disciples may we share the abundant life with others so all may share in Your eternal blessings. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Read about the Shepherd in Psalm 23.
- How can we share some of our earthly abundance with those who need food, clothing, a place to live and other basics?
- Introduce the explanation to the Apostles' Creed: the Second Article.

WEEK 37: FIFTH WEEK OF EASTER

THE WAY AND THE LIFE

SCRIPTURE

John 14:1-14

TEXT

"Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (JOHN 14:5-6).

SONGS

"You are the Way; through You Alone" (LSB 526)

"Day by Day" (OAR 278)

"I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus" (AGPS 126)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Show and share various directional devices: atlas, maps, phone apps and so on.

Imagine your family taking a trip to someplace where they have never been before. How would you find out how to get to your destination? You, or your parents, might use one of the devices that I shared with you.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Jesus was describing a special destination to His disciples. "In my Father's house are many rooms ... If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (vv. 2-3). On behalf of Jesus' disciples, Disciple Thomas asked the question, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" (v. 5).

Jesus had a special conversation with His disciples. In the last hours before He went to the cross, He gathered with them in a room in Jerusalem. Jesus, the Servant, had washed their feet, and now He shared some final thoughts with them. Jesus explained that He was going away. Jesus would go to the cross. He would rise from the dead, and then He would ascend into heaven.

Jesus wants these disciples and all disciples with Him. In spite of the facts that these disciples haven't always listened to Him or understood His teaching, that a disciple will deny Him and that many disciples would hide rather than be at His cross, Jesus wanted them with Him in His "Father's house." Jesus wants disciples with Him surrounding His throne of glory.

Jesus explained that there is no earthly map to His "Father's house." We cannot find our own way there. The only way there is through Jesus. Jesus who came to walk in the ways of our life, Jesus who went the way of the cross, Jesus who was the way out of the tomb — Jesus is the way to eternal life.

Since the beginning of time, people have tried to develop their own devices to find God. None of our human devices work. There is no map or app for heaven. There is only one way and that is through believing in Jesus. Jesus pointed out that way to Thomas and the disciples. Jesus points out that way to us. Jesus went the way of the cross so that there is the Way to be with Him forever. We are blessed to share the Way with others so that they, too, might be His disciples for life eternal.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Jesus, when we were not able to find our way to You, You brought us on the way to Your cross and empty tomb. You have blessed us on the way to eternal life. Keep us safely on the path to salvation and use us to bring others on the way to life as Your disciples now and eternally. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Review the "I am" statements of Jesus found in the Gospel of John.
- Introduce the explanation to the Apostles' Creed: the Third Article.

WEEK 38: SIXTH WEEK OF EASTER

HELP FOR LIFE

SCRIPTURE

John 14:15-21

TEXT

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth" (JOHN 14:16-17A).

SONGS

"Creator Spirit, by Whose Aid" (LSB 500)

"Breath of the Living God" (OAR 228; AGPS 77)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Invite the students to assist you in developing a list of helpers. The list may include helpers at school, in the community and even beyond. Share the importance and necessity of various helpers. Give thanks for helpers.

In today's Bible reading, Jesus is a Helper for His disciples.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Jesus was a Rabbi (Teacher) for His disciples. Near the end of His earthly life, Jesus was still teaching them. As we described last week, Jesus was teaching His disciples in a room in Jerusalem, only hours before He goes to the Garden of Gethsemane to be betrayed, to the court rooms to be tried and sentenced to death and then to the cross to die for the sins of the world.

Jesus had also been the Helper for His disciples. Jesus helped them when they thought they were going to die on the stormy sea. Jesus helped them when they were hungry. Jesus helped them when they grieved the death of their friend Lazarus. Jesus helped them with their questions.

Most importantly, through His teaching and miracles, Jesus helped them see and believe that He was the Savior that had been promised. In the hours and weeks ahead, Jesus would help them see that by His death the sacrifice was complete and that by His resurrection He had conquered death and the grave.

Jesus shared with His disciples that His mission on earth was about to be completed and that He would be leaving them. If Jesus was no longer with them, who would be their helper?

Jesus promised that He would send the Holy Spirit as "another Helper" (JOHN 4:16). The Spirit would continue to help them see and believe in the sacrifice of Jesus. The Spirit would help them to remember and believe in Jesus' resurrection from the dead. The Spirit would help the disciples to continue to faithfully follow Jesus.

While we thank God for all the helpers He gives us, we, too, are thankful for the Spirit Helper. The Spirit helps us remember our Baptism and God's promises through our Baptism. The Spirit helps us remember the truth of God's Word. The Spirit helps us remember the importance of learning and living God's Word. The Spirit helps us invite others to see Jesus, the Helper for all disciples.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, thank You for the helpers in our lives — parents, teachers, community leaders, health workers and many others. Thank You for sending the Holy Spirit as our salvation Helper. Through the Spirit we count the blessings of Baptism. Thank You for the Word which helps us live as Your disciples. Use us to help others. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- › When have you needed help in following Jesus? How has the Spirit been your Helper?
- › When did the Helper first come to us? How does He continue to help us?
- › Read Psalm 124:8. Have you heard those words in the Divine Service?

WEEK 39: SEVENTH WEEK OF EASTER

PRAYING FOR DISCIPLES

SCRIPTURE

John 17:1-26

TEXT

"I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours" (JOHN 17:9).

SONGS

"What a Friend We Have in Jesus" (LSB 770; OAR 287; AGPS 261)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Share an illustration or example of Jesus praying. (There is the classic painting of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, stained glass windows may display Jesus in prayer, etc.)

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Jesus prayed. Before Jesus fed bread and fish to the 5,000, He offered a prayer for thanks. Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus even prayed on the cross.

Jesus prayed for His disciples. The past few weeks, our Bible readings have taken us with Jesus and His disciples in Jerusalem. We have heard His last conversations with them before He went to the cross. Jesus concluded the conversation with a special prayer.

We pray for forgiveness of our sins. We pray for help in trouble. As the holy Son of God, Jesus did not need to pray for forgiveness. Since He was all powerful, Jesus did not need to pray for food or for rescue. Jesus prayed because He had the privilege and joy of talking to His heavenly Father.

Often the disciples were disobedient and even denying students. However, Jesus loved His disciples. He loved them enough to die for them. While some had seen Jesus' glory on the Mount of Transfiguration and all had seen His power in His miracles, Jesus' full and final glory would be shown on the cross. Through His suffering and death, Jesus would make it possible for His disciples and all disciples to be with Him forever. The disciples would see the glory of Jesus through His resurrection.

The disciples had been with Jesus for three years. Following His resurrection the disciples would be with Jesus for

another 40 days. Jesus prayed that the disciples would be with Him forever. Jesus not only offered the prayer for them, but Jesus was also the answer to the prayer. By faith in Him, the disciples would know and believe in the words of Jesus (v. 8).

Jesus goes on to pray for all disciples who would follow Him (vv. 20-26). Jesus prays for us! Jesus prays that we, too, would follow Him, believe in Him and be with Him forever. Picture Jesus praying ... for you! Thank Jesus for His prayers and offer your prayers of thanks!

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, thank You for praying with and for Your first disciples. Thank You for praying for us. Teach us to pray, seeking Your will and trusting in Your mercy. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Share the significance of the title "The High Priestly Prayer" for this section.
- Why is prayer an important part of our school activities? Why is prayer an important part of our worship together in church? Why is it important for families to pray together?
- Jesus prayed for you. Who are you praying for?

WEEK 40: PENTECOST

SPIRIT OF LIFE

SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:1-21

TEXT

“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (ACTS 2:17).

SONGS

“Holy Spirit, Light Divine” (LSB 496; OAR 226; AGPS 120)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Have students complete these “I can’t wait for ...” statements:

“I can’t wait for my birthday/Christmas/recess/lunch/summer vacation/trip to ...”

If Jesus’ disciples had an “I can’t wait for ...” list, it may have included “the Holy Spirit.”

TEACHING DISCIPLES

The disciples couldn’t wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament prophet Joel had shared God’s promise of the Spirit hundreds of years before Jesus was born (2:28). Jesus had promised that when He physically left the disciples, He would send the Holy Spirit (JOHN 14:1-17, 25-26). Shortly before Jesus’ ascension, He promised again, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (ACTS 1:8).

God always keeps His promises. Pentecost is the celebration that God kept and keeps His promise of the Holy Spirit. Today’s Bible reading (Acts, Chapter 2) tells the story of the Spirit’s coming with a rushing wind, tongues of fire and unfamiliar languages.

The Holy Spirit used Disciple Peter to share the Pentecost sermon. Peter’s message was, “I can’t wait to tell you about Jesus.” Peter told about the unfair treatment of Jesus and the cruel condemnation to crucifixion. Peter shared that Jesus had died even for those who had crucified Him. Peter preached that Jesus rose again to bring new life to all who believe in Him.

The disciples were blessed to see and receive everything that they had waited for since they began to follow Jesus. The Holy Spirit brought all of God’s gifts to them.

We don’t have to wait for God to keep His promise of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit who came to the disciples came to us in our Baptism. The Spirit didn’t appear to us with wind and fire. The Spirit came to us in the water of Baptism. The Holy Spirit comes to us in God’s Word and gives us faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Because the Holy Spirit has come to us and because He continues to bring God’s Word to us to keep us in faith, we can trust in all of God’s promises. We can say, “I can’t wait to be with Jesus in glory.”

With the power of the Holy Spirit, we, too, are Jesus’ disciples and witnesses. Complete this statement: “I can’t wait to tell (names) ... about Jesus.”

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, we are thankful that You keep all Your promises. Thank You for sending the promised Spirit to the disciples in Jerusalem. Thank You for sending the Holy Spirit to us in our Baptism. Continue to send the Spirit to us so that we might make disciples who know of Your saving work and follow You for life. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Explore and sing Pentecost hymns.
- How is the Festival of the Pentecost observed in the church? Why is the color red prominent in Pentecost celebrations?
- What are the symbols of the Holy Spirit?

WEEK 41: FIRST WEEK AFTER PENTECOST (TRINITY SUNDAY)

PATH TO LIFE

SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:14a, 22–28

TEXT

“You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence” (ACTS 2:28).

SONGS

“Holy, Holy, Holy” (LSB 507; OAR 229; AGPS 119)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Invite the students to share a favorite path — local park, family hiking path, around the neighborhood, vacation adventure and so on. Where does your favorite path take you?

Other gathering options:

- Take a small group on a path through the worship area or even on the school property.
- Show pictures of various paths: through the woods, mountain path and so on.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

There are many kinds of paths through many different areas. There are paths through a garden or forest, steep and winding paths up a mountain or other nature routes. There may be the favorite neighborhood path to the library or to the park. There is only one path to life with Jesus.

Today’s Bible lesson continues with Peter’s Pentecost sermon. Peter shared the inspired words of King David, “You have made known to me the paths of life” (ACTS 2:28). King David had walked the paths of Bethlehem’s hills as a shepherd boy. King David had walked the paths of the king’s courtyard. King David had walked on paths away from God as he had lied, cheated and committed adultery. God, in His grace, had shared the promise of the Savior who would come from the family of David. Believing that promise, David was also put on the path to life eternal.

Apostle Peter had walked with Jesus on the path of His earthly ministry. Peter had walked on paths of denying Jesus and doubting Him. Peter was blessed to see Jesus who was crucified and alive again. Through the Holy Spirit, Peter was put on the path to life.

Peter’s audience had been on paths of unbelief and some even on the path to murder Jesus. Peter’s proclamation of Jesus’ resurrection invited them to the path of life. Those who believed in Jesus and who walked in faith with Jesus to His death and resurrection would be on the path to life with Jesus forever. There is only one path and only one way onto the path with Jesus.

This week, the church celebrates that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are blessed to celebrate that we were put on the path to life in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in our Baptism. The three persons of the Trinity keep us on the path so that we can faithfully stay on the path to eternal life. We invite others to be disciples on Jesus’ path.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Holy Jesus, we rejoice in Your unity with the Holy Father and Holy Spirit. Thank You for bringing the work of the Trinity to us in our Baptism. May we praise the Holy Trinity in our worship now and with the three persons for all eternity. May we continue to make disciples in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- › Explain the significance of the Athanasian Creed.
- › Find other Bible passages that describe paths (PSALM 16:11; 23:3; PROV. 3:6; ISAIAH 26:7).
- › Consider constructing a Bible story path: life of Jesus, Passion of Jesus, prayer path.
- › Why do we begin our worship and school day in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

WEEK 42: SECOND WEEK AFTER PENTECOST (PROPER 5)

HEALING FOR LIFE

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 9:9-13

TEXT

“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (MATT. 9:12-13).

SONGS

“Beautiful Savior” (LSB 537; OAR 237; AGPS 70)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

Have the students help develop a list of diseases.

Talk about physical illnesses. Have you ever been sick? Do you have a family member or someone else who is sick? Why are we concerned about them? How can we show our concern?

It’s no fun to be sick. Sometimes it’s even scary when we or those we love are sick.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

Jesus healed the sick. Matthew’s Gospel tells of Jesus healing Peter’s mother-in-law when she was sick. Jesus healed some who were sick with leprosy. Jesus had the power to heal any and all illnesses.

Jesus called Matthew to be one of His disciples (we learned about Matthew as a disciple early in the school year.) Before he became one of Jesus’ disciples, Matthew had been sick. Matthew and other tax collectors were not sick with leprosy or any other diseases of Jesus’ day. Matthew and others were sick in sin.

While all diseases are a result of a sin coming into the world, sin doesn’t necessarily affect our mind, skin, bones or other parts of our body. Sin affects our whole being. There is no human cure for the disease of sin. The disease of sin always leads to death.

Matthew and many of his friends knew they were sick with sin and came to Jesus to be forgiven and healed. Jesus was saddened that many others thought that they didn’t need Him to be cured of sin.

We thank God for doctors, hospitals and clinics that help

heal our bodies. However, there is only one Physician (Doctor) who can cure us from sin. Jesus is the cure. Jesus brought healing by paying for our cure with His death on the cross. Jesus, who brought healing and life to Disciple Matthew, brings healing and life to us.

Even as disciples we will still face diseases during our earthly life. We look forward to being cured from all diseases when we and all disciples are with Jesus eternally.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, we confess that we were born with the sickness of sin and continue to feel the effects of the disease of sin. You came to cleanse us from our sin and have made us pure and righteous disciples through Your blood. Help us to be witnesses to Your work as the perfect Physician. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- › Explore ways to reach out to the physically sick in the school and congregation: get-well cards, notes and so on.
- › Invite parents or members who are health professionals to share their work in providing physical care and healing.
- › Send thank-you notes to doctors, nurses and others who work to cure diseases and bring healing and comfort in hospitals, nursing homes and other places of healing and care.

CLOSING SERVICE

PRESENT FOR LIFE

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 28:16–20

TEXT

“And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (MATT. 28:20B).

SONGS

“Go, My Children, with My Blessing” (LSB 922; OAR 329; AGPS 102)

GATHERING DISCIPLES

What will you especially miss when you leave your classroom or the school grounds on the last day of school? (For some, “What will you miss when you graduate from our school?”) Answers might include favorite school activities, favorite teachers, friends and so on.

Perhaps share a farewell gift with a copy of the words of Matthew 28:19.

TEACHING DISCIPLES

This year, we have been blessed to frequently hear Jesus’ words of Matthew 28, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (v. 19). We have gone with Jesus and His disciples through His earthly ministry, to the cross and out of the tomb.

We have also learned that Jesus called us to be His disciples. Jesus’ words “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” were first spoken to us in our Baptism. We, too, became children of God. We, too, became disciples following Jesus.

Jesus invited us to follow Him as we heard His Word. We have been blessed to follow Jesus through our classroom Bible stories and studies, in our chapel worship and in our Sunday worship. Jesus, who called us to follow Him, continues to lead us every day.

We have also been blessed to hear and obey Jesus’ words, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (MATT. 28:19). Through our chapel offerings, we have been able to support missionaries who “make disciples.” Perhaps we have been able to invite family or friends to church so that they might be disciples with us.

We remember many of the blessings of the past year. There will be many things we will miss when the school year ends.

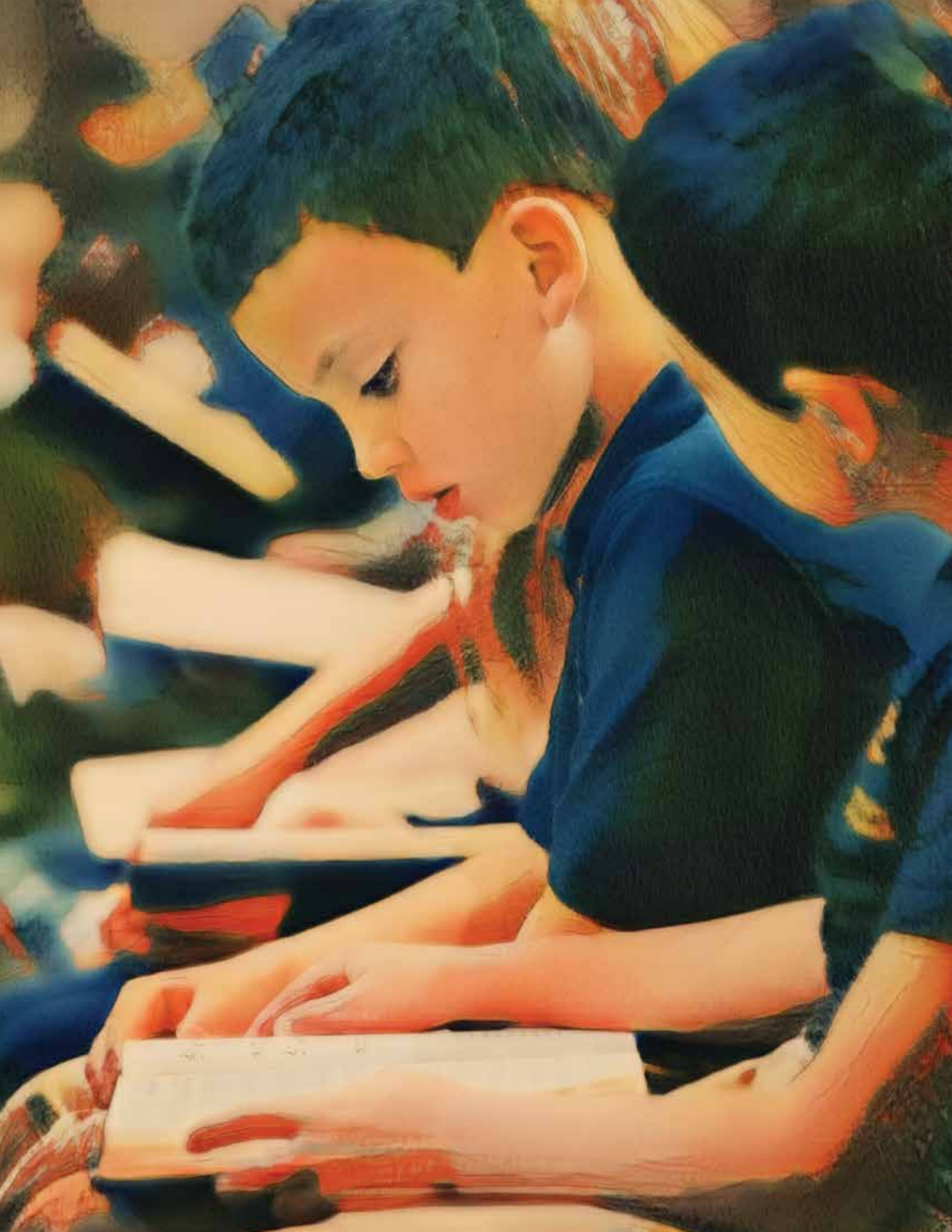
However, we won’t miss the presence of Jesus. When Jesus first shared the commission with His disciples, He also gave them a promise: “Behold, I am with you always” (MATT. 28:20). Jesus’ promise continues to His disciples today. Jesus is with us always. He is with us in the power and promises of our Baptism. He is with us in the power and promise of His Word. Jesus, who was present with us during the school year, is present always giving us life through the water and Word. Jesus assures us that we will be present with Him forever. We are blessed to be His disciples and to make disciples so that Jesus’ presence will be known by everyone.

PRAYING DISCIPLES

Dear Jesus, through Your Word You have been present in every aspect of our school year. Thank You especially for Your presence in our weekly worship together. We know You go with us from school to our homes, community and many summer activities. Thank You for making us Your disciples, and keep us faithful for life. Direct us through the Spirit to continue to make disciples in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

GROWING DISCIPLES

- Share summer worship and learning opportunities with children and families: worship schedule, Vacation Bible School and so on.
- Share memories and blessings of the school year.
- Celebrate the mission support and other offering blessings of the school year.



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