CONFIRM
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the story of God

RESURRECTION STUDENTS

STUDENT JOURNAL

RESURRECTION
STUDENTS

THIS JOURNAL BELONGS TO

_____

PHONE OR EMAIL:

_____

MY CONFIRMATION MENTORS:

_____

_____

_____

WELCOME to confirmation

// DEAR CONFIRMATION STUDENT,

I am so excited that you have decided to be a part of the Confirmation journey!

Confirmation is a season in your life when you can explore what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ and choose your next step of faith—joining the Church! With your small group, you'll have the chance to ask questions, dig deeper into the Bible, and discover what faith really looks like. I hope you will create space for you to encounter God in meaningful ways during your time in Confirmation. You'll have opportunities to do that through your small group conversations, the guidance of your Confirmation mentors, the words of the speakers, attending worship services, and through service projects and other activities.

I pray that you feel God's presence and love on this journey. Enjoy finding yourself in the Story of God!

Resurrection Students will create a safe, authentic and inclusive community where everyone belongs and has the opportunity to choose to grow and live out their faith.

WEEKLY SESSION overview

Each session will have a similar flow and rhythm to what is detailed below.

Main Point

Each session begins with a short overview so you will be able to focus on a single point.

Important Points

This section will explain most of what will be discussed each session. There may background information and other resources about the topic.

Bible Connection

Each week, there will be at least one Bible connection that the group will read together. Bring your Bible so you can read along, highlight or underline, and take notes.

Discuss

Every session includes discussion questions. Find the questions that are most interesting for you to answer. Ask more questions if you have them.

Challenge

Every session includes a challenge for the upcoming week. You may be able to complete some challenges as a group if you have time, but most of them are things to do during the upcoming week.

Joys, Concerns, and Prayer

Each week, you will end by sharing joys and concerns as a group, then close with the Lord's Prayer. Share joys first and concerns second. Be ready to volunteer to pray for the group. Write down the prayer requests others share so that you can follow up next week.

For Extra Study

Each week, additional scripture relating to the topic of conversation will be here. The verses provide further understanding and will add clarity to what was discussed. Read more and write down your thoughts.

CONFIRMATION sessions

Unless otherwise noted, Confirmation classes will meet weekly. The schedule is subject to change. Check with your location or Student Ministries director about Confirmation session times and meeting places.

UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION | PG 7
Session 1: Parent Meeting:
Check Location for Meeting Time and Details
Session 2: Welcome to Confirmation – Intro Apostles' Creed
Session 3: Meet Your Bible

UNIT 2 GOD THE FATHER | PG 31
Session 1: The Old Testament
Session 2: The Story of God
Session 3: Relationship Broken
Session 4: Prayer: Talking with God –Lord's Prayer

UNIT 3 GOD THE SON | PG 57
Session 1: The New Testament
Session 2: Jesus: God With Us
Session 3: Relationship Restored
Session 4: The Promise of the Resurrection

UNIT 4 GOD AS HOLY SPIRIT | PG 83
Session 1: The Holy Trinity – Spiritual Gifts Assessment
Seasonal: Advent and Christmas
Session 2: Partnering with God's Mission
Session 3: What's Yet to Come

UNIT 5 THE CHURCH | PG 109
Session 1: What is the Church?
Session 2: The United Methodist Church
Session 3: What is Resurrection UMC?
Session 4: Visit another Church
Seasonal: Lent and the Church Calendar
Session 5: John Wesley's General Rules and Doctrine
Session 6: John Wesley's Guidance
Session 7: Abrahamic Faiths and Christian Denominations

UNIT 6 THE JOURNEY CONTINUES | PG 157
Session 1: Review and Conversation with Mentors
Session 2: Inviting Others into God's Story
Session 3: What's Next?
Confirmation Weekend

CONFIRMATION expectations

You have made an important commitment to explore Christian faith more intentionally. We want you to get the most out of the experience. In Adam Hamilton's book "The Walk" he notes five essentials in faith: Worship, Study, Serve, Give and Share. Below are our expectations of you as you walk through these five essentials. You will want to keep track of your progress here as well. By the way, Share isn't listed here because it will become a natural result of the culmination of your experience.

Worship **resurrection.church/next**

Attending worship is important. During your time in Confirmation, we expect that you will attend **in-person** worship 12 or more times. Be sure to register when you attend. In addition, write the dates you attend below and list the sermon topic for the week. We also ask that you visit another United Methodist Church at least once during our confirmation season. We encourage confirmation groups to go together if possible.

1. 7.
2. 8.
3. 9.
4. 10.
5. 11.
6. 12.

Which other United Methodist Church did you attend? _____ date _____

Baptism **resurrection.church/baptisms**

All confirmation participants must be baptized before they can be confirmed. If you have not been baptized, please arrange your baptism or connect with your Student Ministries Staff or location pastor. Be sure to plan to be baptized no later than one month before the Confirmation ceremony.

When were you or do you plan to be baptized?

_____

Serve in Worship **resurrection.church/confirmationserve**

As an additional way to be a part of the church and participate in worship, we ask all confirmands to serve in worship as a Greeter, Usher, or in another serving capacity at least three times during their time in Confirmation. Sign up a few weeks in advance and show up on time to serve.

What did you do when you served in worship?

Service _____ date _____
Service _____ date _____
Service _____ date _____

Study resurrection.church/students

Our weekly confirmation sessions are one of the most important parts of the program! Come prepared to grow alongside your small group as you dig into the Bible and learn more about our Christian faith and the Church. Each week, you will need to bring your Bible, Confirmation Journal, and a pen or pencil.

All absences should be made up on your own time by watching the video and answering the coinciding questions to be sure you understand the conversation you will have missed. We want you there as much as possible. So, you are only allotted six total absences that will need to be made-up.

To be confirmed, you must also participate in one of the retreats either in the Fall or Spring and attend the Confirmation Ceremony. As a Confirmation Student, you will get $10 off your retreat experience.

Which retreat are you attending? _____

Serve resurrection.church/local

Serving others in big and small ways is a part of how we can share the love of Jesus with the world. **We ask all Confirmation students to participate in at least one service project** (food pantry, thrift store, etc.) **during their time in confirmation.** You can complete this service project on your own, through a student ministries service project, a church sponsored service project, or with a service project coordinated by your small group. Service projects are often a highlight for confirmation students and their parents too!

What service project did you do? _____ date _____

Give resurrection.church/give

One of the five essential practices is to give. Throughout confirmation, consider the ways you will give to the church as a response to your commitment to follow Jesus. Will you give 10% of your income (this is called tithing)? Will you give monthly or weekly? Will you give your time by serving in one of the church ministry areas? Will you give your talent by doing what you love or are good at? Your commitment of your time, talents, and treasure, along with the gifts from many others, allows your church to do incredible work in your community and world.
What, how much, and how often do you plan to give?

OTHER WAYS TO get involved

Youth Group: Wednesday Evenings

Youth Group is a time for faith, fun, friends, and food. Invite a friend and join us for high-energy games, worship, and a message from one of the Student Ministries staff members or a student! Check your location for Youth Group meeting times and details.

Discipleship Groups: Sunday Mornings

You are already in a Discipleship Group. That's what Confirmation is. When you complete this year, the next Discipleship Group is Lead. Enhance your leadership skills by discovering how God made you to lead in all aspects of your life. You may be surprised by what you discover. You will certainly be encouraged! You are a leader whether you know it or not.

Get Ready for High School with these events!

Converge – Our high school conference in February is open to 8th grade students, too! Get a head start on all things high school, have fun and continue growing in your faith!

Lead KC – Join high school students in planning next school year for youth group, retreats and events. Bring all of your good ideas and energy to this one-day March/April event.

Stay Connected to Resurrection Students

- Resurrection Student Ministries
- @rs.leawood | @rs.overlandpark | @students.west | @rs.bluesprings | @rs.downtown | @rs.leessummit
- Weekly Email Newsletter: resurrection.church/enews

FOR OTHER STUDENT EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES,
VISIT RESURRECTION.CHURCH/STUDENTS

UNIT 1

Unit 1: Introduction

Session 1: Parent Meeting
Session 2: Welcome to Confirmation - Intro Apostles' Creed
Session 3: Meet Your Bible

>> UNIT OVERVIEW

In these first three weeks you get an idea for the rhythm of each session and learn about the process of confirmation. The first session is one for parents and students to be oriented. The second session will be the first session where you will meet your mentors and other students in your group.

The Apostles' Creed will be the foundation for teaching confirmation. Each unit is organized to follow a part of the creed and expand on the specific statement that will be memorized throughout the year.

In addition to the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Wesley Covenant Prayer will be used to illustrate specific points in related sessions.

THE APOSTLES' Creed

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

And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead and buried;
the third day he rose from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth at the right hand of God the
Father Almighty;
from thence, he shall come to judge the
quick and the dead.

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

THE LORD'S Prayer

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

Matthew 6:9-13

WESLEY Covenant Prayer

I am no longer my own but yours.
Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed for you or laid aside for you,
exalted for you or brought low for you.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and wholehertedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.
And now, glorious and blessed God, Father,
Son, and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours.
So be it.
And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.
Amen.

BOOKS OF THE Bible Overview

Finally, it will be important for you to understand the books of the Bible and why they are in the order they appear in our Bible. This overview will be helpful as a reference.

Old Testament

Genesis
Genesis answers two big questions: "How did God's relationship with the world begin?" and "Where did the nation of Israel come from?"

Exodus
God ends Israel's enslavement in Egypt and then enters into a special relationship with them.

Leviticus
God gives Israel instructions for how to worship God.

Numbers
Israel doesn't trust and obey God and wanders in the wilderness for 40 years.

Deuteronomy
Moses gives Israel instructions (in some ways, a recap of the laws in Exodus–Numbers) for how to love and obey God in the Promised Land.

Joshua
Joshua (Israel's new leader) leads Israel to conquer the Promised land, then gives out land as territories to the twelve tribes of Israel.

Judges
Israel experiences times of closeness and distance with God over and over again. This book shares these stories during a time when Israel was led by "Judges."

Ruth
A story of two widows that lose everything but stick together and eventually find hope. Their stories lead to the eventual birth of King David.

1st Samuel
The Nation of Israel demands that God give them a king and it doesn't work out too well.

2nd Samuel
The story of David, a complicated, man who loved and served God and became the king of Israel. He made many harmful choices as king while still trying to be a man after God's own heart.

1st Kings
The kingdom of Israel has a time of peace and prosperity under King Solomon **(David's Son)**, but afterward splits, and the two different lines of kings that follow end up turning away from God.

2nd Kings
Both kingdoms ignore God and the messages from God's prophets, until they both fall captive to other empires in the world.

1st Chronicles
This is a brief history of Israel from Adam to David, culminating with David commissioning the temple of God in Jerusalem.

2nd Chronicles
David's son Solomon builds the temple, but after centuries of rejecting God, the southern Israelites are taken captive by the Babylonians who destroy the Israelite's temple.

Ezra
The Israelites rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, and a scribe named Ezra teaches the people to once again obey God's laws.

Nehemiah
The city of Jerusalem lies in ruins, so Nehemiah helps rebuilds the wall around the city.

Esther
Esther becomes the queen of a foreign nation. Meanwhile, someone hatches a genocidal plot to bring about Israel's extinction, and Esther must face the emperor to ask for help.

Job
Evil and tragedy attack a righteous man named Job, and Job and his friends argue about why terrible things are happening to him.

Psalms
A collection of 150 songs—some that Israel sang to God (and to each other)—kind of like a hymnal for the ancient Israelites. The lyrics tackle topics like gratitude, anger, depression, and prayers to God.

Proverbs
A collection of sayings written to help people make wise decisions that bring about justice.

Ecclesiastes
A philosophical exploration of the meaning of life—with a surprisingly nihilistic tone for the Bible.

Song of Solomon
A collection of love songs celebrating love, desire, and marriage.

Isaiah
God sends the prophet Isaiah with a message to warn Israel of future judgment—but also to tell them about a coming king and servant who will save everyone from that judgment and "bear the sins of many."

Jeremiah
God sends a prophet with a message to warn Israel about the coming Babylonian captivity, but they don't take the news very well.

Lamentations
A collection of songs and sayings expressing grief and sadness, lamenting the fall of Jerusalem after the Babylonian attacks.

Ezekiel
God chooses a man to speak on behalf of God to Israel, to tell them the error of their ways and teach them justice: Ezekiel.

Daniel
Daniel becomes a high-ranking wise man in the Babylonian and Persian empires and has prophetic visions concerning Israel's future.

Hosea
Hosea is told to marry a prostitute who leaves him, and he must bring her back: a picture of God's relationship with Israel.

Joel
God sends a plague of locusts to Judge Israel, but God's judgment on the surrounding nations is also coming,

Amos
A shepherd named Amos preaches against the injustice of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Obadiah
Obadiah warns the neighboring nation of Edom that they will be judged for plundering Jerusalem.

Jonah
A disobedient prophet runs from God, is swallowed by a large fish, and then finally preaches God's message to the city of Nineveh.

Micah
Micah confronts the leaders of Israel and Judah regarding their injustice, and prophesies that one day the Lord will rule in perfect justice.

Nahum
Nahum foretells of God's judgment on Nineveh, the capital of Assyria.

Habakkuk
Habakkuk pleads with God to stop the injustice and violence in Judah but is surprised to find that God will use the even more violent Babylonians to do so.

Zephaniah
God warns that Israel and the surrounding nations will be judged but also that they will be restored in peace and justice.

Haggai
The people have abandoned the work of restoring God's temple in Jerusalem, and so Haggai gives them a talking to.

Zechariah
The prophet Zechariah calls Israel to return to God, and records prophetic visions that show what's happening behind the scenes.

Malachi
God has been faithful to Israel, but they continue to live disconnected from God—so God sends Malachi to call them out.

New Testament

Matthew
This is Matthew's account of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, focusing on Jesus' role as the true king of the Jews.

Mark
This is Mark's brief account of Jesus' earthly ministry highlights Jesus' authority and servanthood.

Luke
Luke writes the most thorough account of Jesus' life, pulling together eyewitness testimonies to tell the full story of Jesus.

John
John lists stories of signs and miracles with the hope that readers will believe in Jesus.

Acts
Jesus returns to God the Father, sends the Holy Spirit to come to the church, and the gospel of Jesus spreads throughout the world.

Romans
Paul summarizes how the gospel of Jesus works in a letter to the churches at Rome, where he plans to visit.

1st Corinthians
Paul writes a disciplinary letter to a fractured church in Corinth and answers some questions that they've had about how Christians should behave.

2nd Corinthians
Paul writes a letter of reconciliation to the church at Corinth and clears up some concerns that they have.

Galatians
Paul hears that the Galatian churches have been led to think that salvation comes from the law of Moses and writes a (rather heated) letter telling them where the false teachers have it wrong.

Ephesians
Paul writes to the church at Ephesus about how to walk in grace, peace, and love.

Philippians
An encouraging letter to the church of Philippi from Paul, telling them how to have joy in Christ.

Colossians
Paul writes the church at Colossae a letter about who they are in Christ, and how to walk in Christ.

1st Thessalonians
Paul has heard a good report on the church at Thessalonica, and encourages them to keep excelling in faith, hope, and love.

2nd Thessalonians
Paul instructs the Thessalonians on how to stand firm until Jesus returns.

1st Timothy
Paul gives his protégé Timothy instruction on how to lead a church as a godly example.

2nd Timothy
Paul is nearing the end of his life and encourages Timothy to continue preaching God's Word.

Titus
Paul advises Titus on how to lead orderly, counter-cultural churches on the island of Crete.

Philemon
Paul strongly recommends that Philemon accept his runaway slave as a brother, and not as a slave anymore.

Hebrews
A letter encouraging Christians to cling to Christ despite persecution, because Christ is greater.

James
A letter telling Christians to live in ways that demonstrate their faith in action.

1st Peter
Peter writes to Christians who are being persecuted, encouraging them to testify to the truth about Jesus and live accordingly.

2nd Peter
Peter writes a letter reminding Christians about the truth of Jesus and warning them that false teachers will come.

1st John
John writes a letter to Christians about keeping Jesus' commands, loving one another, and important things they should know.

2nd John
A very brief letter about walking in truth, love, and obedience.

3rd John
An even shorter letter about Christian fellowship.

Jude
A letter encouraging Christians to contend for the faith in the face of ungodliness.

Revelation
John sees visions from God of things from the past, present, and future.

Summaries resourced from Overview Bible (https://overviewbible.com/books-of-the-bible/)

Unit 1 // Session 1

Main Point

You and your parents will be oriented to the confirmation curriculum, process and objectives.

Remember, Confirmation isn't a Christianity checkbox. This is another step in a life-long journey of faith. The staff and mentors of the church are here because they want to point you to Jesus.

Unit 1 // Session 2

Main Point

Today, we want you to get to know your group and mentors and gain an understanding of what this year in confirmation will look like.

Prayer

Each time the group meets, you will open and close in prayer. Along with your opening prayer, recite the Apostles' Creed. By the time of the Confirmation Ceremony, you should have the Apostles' Creed memorized so that they can say it without prompting during the ceremony. To start with, you can read it from the front of this journal.

Important Points

Expectations: The expectations to be confirmed are laid out in the front of this journal. They are modeled after our Five Essential Practices as outlined in "The Walk" by Adam Hamilton. Take a look at those with your group today, and ask your mentor any questions that you have. Be sure to use the checklists throughout the year so you can make sure you are keeping up with everything.

The Apostles' Creed is a statement of what we believe as Christians.
This statement of faith allows Christians worldwide to profess the same faith and set of beliefs as Jesus passed on to the apostles before ascending into heaven, leaving the apostles to continue His mission here on earth through the Church. He gave us all this mission and reciting this creed helps us to live it out in our lives. (Read Matthew 28:19- 21.)

The Creed is divided into three parts. The first part refers to God the Father and His wonderful work of creation. The second part refers to God the Son, His divinity, and His work of redemption. The third part speaks of God the Holy Spirit, His origin, and His relationship with the Father and the Son. This is called the Trinity, God three in one, which you will learn more about in a later session.

> **Apostles' Creed Keyword Definitions**
> **Creed -** From Latin Credo meaning "I believe"; summary of the Faith, professing our relationship with God as Father, Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit.
>
> **Pontius Pilate:** was a Roman governor of Judea (26–36 CE) who presided at the final trial of Jesus and gave the order for his crusifixion.
>
> **Quick and the dead:** original translations Laertes is "quick" (i.e., alive), and Ophelia is dead. This "quick" doesn't refer to someone being "fast" but being "alive". So, the phrase means "alive and dead."

Catholic: The word comes from the Greek meaning "through the whole," that is "universal," "world-wide," "all inclusive." This is the meaning when the word starts with a lower-case c as in "The holy catholic church" or "We need to become more catholic in our attitudes." The term "catholic" in the Apostles' Creed doesn't refer to only the denomination of Catholics but to ALL who believe in Jesus Christ throughout time.

Amen: Comes from a Hebrew word meaning, "believe;" expresses solidity, trustworthiness, and faithfulness.

The Lord's Prayer is an important prayer for our faith. It is something you will want to have memorized, not just for confirmation, but for your life. This prayer is the way Jesus taught us to pray. You may find some of the language hard to understand, because it is old and we don't really talk like that anymore. This should help.

Lord's Prayer Keyword Definitions
Art: This just means "are" or "is"—so when it says "Our Father, who art in heaven," it just means, "Our Father, who is in heaven."
Hallowed: This means holy, and "thy" is an old way of saying "your." So "Hallowed be thy name" means "Holy is your name."
Thine: This means "yours."
Trespasses: These are the things we do wrong—sins and other offenses.

Bible Connection

Read together the passage for today, found in **Matthew 11:25-30.**

Discuss

- Why did you decide to go through confirmation this year?
- What is one thing you hope to get out of Confirmation or to learn more about this year?
- What kind of a learner are you? Do you like reading, taking notes, and building projects, or is there another way you think you learn well?
- What is your favorite thing to do in your free time and why?

Challenge

Be sure to review the origins and keyword definitions of the Apostles' Creed found under Important Points and practice the Apostles' Creed every day this week.

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.
Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.
Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group.
Write – Use your journal to write down what others share as a prayer request. And then, follow up with them next week.

For Extra Study

Check out these Bible passages to learn more about our topic for the week or to delve deeper into Scripture.

Philippians 4:8-9
Romans 15:4-7
Psalm 32:8

Doodle, Write or Draw – This Space is For You!

Unit 1 // Session 3

Speaker

Main Point

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

Important Points

BIBLE STRUCTURE

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

To help us navigate the Bible more easily, each book has been divided into chapters and verses. When you read a scripture reference (such as John 3:16) the number before the colon ("3") is the chapter, and the number after the colon ("16") is the verse. These reference numbers work regardless of the version you have, so they allow a group of people with different Bibles to find the same verses quickly (unlike page numbers, which are usually different).

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

WHAT THE BIBLE IS

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

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

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

WHAT THE BIBLE IS NOT

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

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

USING YOUR BIBLE

As a Confirmation student, you received a Bible. We encourage you to use that specific Bible as you attend Confirmation sessions so that you and your fellow confirmands will be literally on the same page! Bring it every week—you'll be using it in class.

We encourage you to *write*, underline, and highlight in your Bible. This practice can be very meaningful, and when you turn back to a passage you have read before, you'll see what stood out to you last time, which may or may not be what stands out to you the next time. Marking in your Bible can be a meaningful way to better understand God's word, and we urge you to give it a try.

Sticky notes can also be a great way to mark important passages and indicate where you last left off reading. Tabs for each book of the Bible can be helpful when you need to flip quickly to a verse.

Bible Connection

Read together our passage for today, found in **2 Timothy 3:14-17**.

Discuss

- Does your family have a Bible at home? How often does your family read the Bible? (It's okay if you haven't done so before. Now is a fantastic time to start!)
- Do you have a favorite Bible story or Bible verse?
- How does the Bible connect us to God and point us toward God?
- According to 2 Timothy, in what ways does the Bible help us? Because of this, why is it important for us to read and study the Bible?
- Do you think the people who wrote the books in the Bible knew their writings would be considered "holy" and "inspired?" Why or why not?
- Can you read the Bible in a wrong way? How?
- What other questions do you have about the Bible?

Challenge

LECTIO DIVINA

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

Lectio Divina on Psalm 119:9-16

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

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina again. Write in your Bible!

Psalm 19:7-11
Psalm 119:105-106
Hebrews 4:12

UNIT 2

Unit 2: God the Father

Session 1: The Old Testament
Session 2: The Story of God
Session 3: Relationship Broken
Session 4: Prayer: Talking with God –Lord's Prayer

>> UNIT OVERVIEW

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

God is introduced in the beginning of the Bible. The question that this unit will answer is, "What kind of God do we believe in?" The idea of one god was a radical concept 4000 years ago. Prior to this people believed in many gods and each god had a distinct personality. Some were benevolent and some were not. Gods were used to explain how the natural world operated.

The monotheistic (single) God was a new concept. A God that was like a loving parent was not aligned with, what appeared to be, selfish deities of the Romans and Greeks.

In this unit we will explore, first, how the Old Testament (the Hebrew Bible) is organized. Then we will move into the story arc of the entire Bible and how this explains who God is and our relationship to God. This will include understanding that God intends to be in relationship with people. The Bible records how people have symbolically and actually broken that relationship time and time again. God, however, continues to pursue us and love us unconditionally. We wrap up this unit with the Lord's Prayer (taught by Jesus to his disciples). This embodies our continuing relationship with God the Father (our parent) and reminds us of what we aspire that relationship to be like.

Unit 2 // Session 1

Speaker

Main Point

The Old Testament tells the story of God and his followers. Reading it can bring us closer to God and help us to understand the people who followed him before Jesus.

Important Points

THE OLD TESTAMENT is comprised of 3 parts in Jewish tradition. We, too, can use these divisions to better understand the purpose of these books:

TORAH

- The First 5 books –
- Torah means "law."
- This section is also called the Pentateuch, or the Five Books of Moses.
- Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
- These books contain laws and guidance, telling the story of God's people up to the arrival of the Israelites in the Promised Land (Creation, Abraham and Sarah, Exile, Moses).
- They teach us about the human condition and share laws that were given to the Israelites to help them become better people.

NEVI'IM

- The Prophets
- These books can be further divided into two sections chronologically: the "former" and the "latter" prophets.
- The Former Prophets are the narrative books of Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 2 Kings.
- The Latter prophets include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.
- Prophets aren't fortune tellers. Rather, they are social critics who speak the truth to powerful people. They are advocates for marginalized people and sound the alarm about consequences for people's actions. They also talk about hope for a future Messiah. (Hint: that's Jesus!)
- These books do not appear in chronological order.

KETUVIM

- Writings
- These are the books of wisdom, poetry, history, and stories.

- These are very literary and considered the "heart" of the Old Testament.
- They aren't necessarily chronological, either.
- Ruth, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon (also called Song of Songs), Lamentations, Daniel.
- These books offer poems, songs, and wise sayings paired with stories of individual human struggles over the course of the Old Testament.

NOTES ON THE OLD TESTAMENT:

- The Hebrew Bible tells the story of Israel and its people. They are in close relationship with God, then turn away, then find their way back, and this cycle repeats throughout history. Nonetheless, God is always with them, wanting to be in relationship with his people.
- We understand the Bible is inspired by God but written by humans.
- Each book of the Old Testament was written in a very specific time and place for a specific culture. That culture is different than our culture today, so you may see some things in the Old Testament that are hard to relate to, or even shocking, for us in the present day.
- Because much of the Old Testament is stories about people, we see the characters making good, bad, or complicated choices.
- The characters are complex, just like real people today: Sometimes good people make mistakes. Sometimes bad or unfair things happen to good people.
- Ultimately, this is what makes these stories relatable. Living in a completely different time and place, we still understand that people make mistakes, and that bad things can happen to people who are good—and that God is there with us throughout it all.

WHY STUDY THE OLD TESTAMENT?

- The Old Testament teaches us about God and humanity's relationship with God. Reading it connects us to God and to people who followed God long ago. We see people who love God and people who turn away from God. We see people who get it right and people who get it very wrong. No matter what, God is there for God's people through all of it.
- It also brings us closer to Jesus. Remember, the New Testament was written after Jesus's death and resurrection. What did Jesus's Bible look like? It looked like the Old Testament! He preached about and prayed from The Old Testament.
- Studying the Old Testament is best when you do it with others. You can ask your questions and work through the hard parts together.

Bible Connection

Read together our passage for today, found in Joshua 1:5-9.

Discuss

- What do you think God means by saying "I won't desert you or leave you" in today's Bible passage?
- God says things like "Don't be alarmed or terrified" throughout the Old and New Testament, so it seems like God definitely means it! What makes this difficult?
- What is something you struggle with regarding the Old Testament?
- What is something that surprised you from what you learned today?
- What is something you would like to know more about regarding the Old Testament?
- Do you have a favorite story or verse from the Old Testament?

Challenge

MEMORY VERSE: OLD TESTAMENT CHALLENGE

- This week choose a verse from the Old Testament to commit to memory. Choose a verse you do not already have memorized.
- There are many good options; ask your mentors if you need help selecting a verse or use the internet (search "verses about _____," or "verses for when you feel _____," etc.). You can also flip through your Bible and see what stands out to you or pull a verse from some of the passages we have read so far this year.
- Write out the full verse here, then say it out loud before you go to bed and when you wake up in the morning. Next week, share it with your group!

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. We learned it last week. Write notes in your Bible so you can be reminded of your thoughts.

Psalm 23
Psalm 119:105-110
Proverbs 3:1-6
Deuteronomy 11:18-21

Unit 2 // Session 2

Speaker

Main Point

The Story of God is one of God constantly reaching out to humans. Much of the Story of God is recorded in the Bible, but this Story is still being written as God continues to reach out to us. But what exactly is this story? And where do we fit into it?

Important Points

OVERVIEW OF THE STORY OF GOD

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bible Connection

Because the Story of God takes place throughout all of Scripture (and beyond!), today we have one verse for each section in God's Story. Read together the following passages. Be sure to use your Confirmation Bible!
CREATION - Genesis 1:1-4
FALL - Romans 3:23
CHOSEN PEOPLE - Genesis 12:1-2 JESUS/KINGDOM OF GOD - John 3:16 CHURCH/ MISSION - Ephesians 1:22-23 NEW CREATION/RESTORATION - Isaiah 65:17-18

Discuss

- Who are the main characters in the Story of God?
- Do you have a favorite Bible character, or one you remember learning about as a little kid? It's okay if you don't—maybe you'll discover one during Confirmation!
- What do you think the Story of God is ultimately about?
- What "genre" would you use to classify the Story of God (comedy, horror, drama, romance, tragedy, fantasy, etc.)? Why?
- How would you tell someone else about the Story of God?
- Which (if any) of these verses had you heard before? In what context?
- Why do we sometimes think that the Bible doesn't apply to us today?
- How does reading the stories of people in the Bible help us live our lives today?

Challenge

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

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

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

- Why are stories so important to families and individuals?
- What stories do I want to pass on to my future family? How has God been a part of my own life's story so far?

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, re-read the passages from the Bible Connection section and check out these additional Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. Write in your Bible!

Galatians 3:23-24
Ephesians 1:9-12

Unit 2 // Session 3

Speaker

Main Point

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

Important Points

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sin causes a separation between us and God. Sin breaks apart the relationship between us and God, or even between us and other people. Sin creates a divide or "chasm" that we cannot cross without God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness. (Don't worry, we'll get back to God's grace in the "Relationship: Restored" session!)

Bible Connection

Read together our passage for today, found in Genesis 3:1-13.

Discuss

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

Challenge

OFFER AN APOLOGY

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

This week I will apologize to:

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

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

Remember to register for the Fall Retreat!!!

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. Write in your Bible!

Proverbs 6:16-19 (Seven Deadly Sins)
Isaiah 59:1-2
Romans 5:12-14
1 John 1:8-9

Unit 2 // Session 4

Speaker

Main Point

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

Important Points

Prayer is how we communicate with God. It should involve both talking to God as we lift up our prayers and thanks, as well as listening to God and seeking to hear God's voice. We are promised in 1 John 5:14-15 that God always hears our prayers.

ACTS is a format useful in structuring prayer:

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

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

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

Understandably, Jesus' disciples struggled with the idea of how to pray as well. They asked Jesus how they should try talking with God and Jesus' answer to them was an example we now know as The Lord's Prayer. In this prayer, we see Jesus practice the elements of prayer we've been talking about: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, and even intercession. Studying this prayer and praying this prayer whether out loud or in your head is a great way to communicate with God and learn how to continue talking with God.

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

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

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

Fasting: To fast means to go without something for a set period of time. Fasting takes our focus off of material things and helps us rely fully on God. You can fast from certain foods (like chocolate) or from certain habits (like logging on to social media).

Worship: This is the practice of taking time to go to church and worship God alongside other Christians.

Study: This means spending time studying the Bible or reading other Christian books to help you grow in your knowledge and faith.

Meditation: Focusing on a certain passage of Scripture (like in Lectio Divina) or silently repeating a certain prayer over and over again are both forms of meditation.

Accountability: Meeting with other Christians one-on-one or in a small group and challenging each other to become more like Christ in your words, thoughts, and actions.

Bible Connection

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

Discuss

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

Challenge

ANCIENT PRAYERS

Sometimes praying to God can be hard because we don't know what to say or which words to use. Throughout the history of Christianity, many others have written prayers that we can use to talk to God. For example, the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer found in the front of your journal was written by John Wesley (the founder of Methodism). During this week, use the Wesley Covenant Prayer or pick one or two other famous prayers of the church listed below and offer them up as your own prayer to God.

A PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me bring love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

ST. PATRICK'S BREASTPLATE PRAYER

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me,
Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ where I lie, Christ where I sit, Christ where I arise,

Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks to me, Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.
Salvation is of the Lord.
Salvation is of the Christ.
May your salvation, Lord, be ever with us.

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

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

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

Remember to register for the Fall Retreat!!!

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. Write in your Bible!

Mark 6:31-32
Luke 11:1-13
Romans 8:26-28
James 5:13-18

UNIT 3

Unit 3 God the Son

Session 1: The New Testament
Session 2: Jesus: God With Us
Session 3: Relationship Restored
Session 4: The Promise of the Resurrection

>> UNIT OVERVIEW

And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead and buried;
the third day he rose from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence, he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

In this unit we will explore God's choice to come to the world in human form and the significance of this choice as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. It will be important to note that God has not changed in continuing to pursue a relationship with people. In fact, God continues to amp up the pursuit. In Jesus, God is not only with us, but God has restored the relationship. Because of the resurrection, the relationship cannot be broken by people. This is significant in how we continue to understand how God relates to the entire world and to us individually.

Unit 3 // Session 1

Speaker

Main Point

The New Testament explores Jesus's life, death, and resurrection, and then provides many accounts of the early Christian church.

Important Points

NEW TESTAMENT – Hundreds of years after the last part of the Old Testament was written, Jesus was born. The New Testament begins with the stories of his birth, ministry, death, and resurrection (the Gospels), which are followed by stories of the early Christian church.

> **4 Gospels -** Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. These books each tell the Good News: the story of Jesus's life and resurrection.
>
> **1 Early Church Account –** Acts. This book tells the story of the early Christian church. Because Acts was written by Luke, it is sometimes included in "The Gospels." It's essentially the sequel to the Gospel of Luke.
>
> **21 Letters or Epistles -** Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude. These books consist of letters written to and from ancient Christians containing advice and explanations regarding the Christian faith and its implications for our lives. Many of these were written by Paul.
>
> **1 Apocalyptic Book –** Revelation. This book, written by a man called John, describes a series of visions he had. It follows the conventions of apocalyptic literature of its time and can be difficult for modern readers to comprehend without an understanding of its context.

NOTES ON THE GOSPELS

The stories of Jesus's life were written down decades after they happened. They were passed down by word of mouth before that. Because they started as stories the early Christians told each other out loud (rather than in writing), some details of the stories can be a little different from gospel to gospel. The writers of each Gospel also had different intended audiences and emphasized different parts of Jesus's life. However, the big parts line up, which is how we know we can trust the big message: Jesus lived, died, and was resurrected, and because of him we know the worst thing is never the last thing.

Jesus was the son of God. He was also a Rabbi, or a Jewish teacher. He was also a prophet who led by example. He showed God's radical love for all people and all types of people, regardless of their status in society, and ultimately, that's why he was put to death. But he rose again in victory over the grave as the Messiah, showing us that not even death can stop God's love for us.

NOTES ON THE EARLY CHURCH

- Jesus instructed followers to go live out his teachings and spread the Good News about God's love.
- These early Christians were originally a sect of Judaism, but they welcomed non-Jews, too, and eventually became a separate religion: Christianity.
- To understand the letters to and from early church leaders, it can be helpful to know the historical context. What was going on in the church, and the world, that can help us to understand each book? A study Bible will often provide that context for us.

NOTES ON REVELATION

- Revelation stands out, as it is very different from the other books in the New Testament. There was a genre (a category) of writing at the time called Apocalyptic Literature, and Revelation is an example of that genre. Apocalyptic literature was often a written account of someone's wild dream or vision.
- The authors and readers of Apocalyptic Literature do not necessarily believe everything in each vision is 100% going to happen but instead are trying to figure out what it means. What's the truth underneath a vision, and what can we learn from it?
- It's helpful to keep all this in mind when we read Revelation. The book is meant to be wild to catch people's attention. Then it encourages believers to hold onto their belief even when it's difficult, because in the end, Jesus wins. Revelation ends in hope: Jesus comes back and restores things to the way they should be.

Bible Connection

Read together our passages for today, found in Luke 24:44-49 and 1 Corinthians 15:55-58.

Discuss

- Imagine the lives of those who followed God in the time between the Old and New Testaments. For four hundred years, God seemed silent and far away. Then suddenly, a savior was born. How would that be? Would it have been hard to believe? Why or why not?
- What do you think life was like for Jesus's followers during his life?
- What do you think life was like for the early Christians?
- How does the New Testament fit with the Old Testament?
- Do you have a favorite story about Jesus?
- Do you have a favorite Bible verse in the New Testament?
- What surprised you from what you learned today?
- What is something you would like to know more about regarding the New Testament?

Challenge

MEMORY VERSE: NEW TESTAMENT CHALLENGE

- This week, choose a verse from the New Testament to commit to memory. Choose a verse you do not already have memorized.
- There are many good options; ask your mentors if you need help selecting a verse or use the internet (search "verses about _____," or "verses for when you feel _____," etc.). You can also flip through your Bible and see what stands out to you or pull a verse from some of the passages we have read so far this year.
- Write out the full verse here, then say it out loud before you go to bed and when you wake up in the morning. Next week, share it with your group!

Remember to register for the Fall Retreat!!!

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. Write in your Bible!

Romans 1:16-17
Philippians 1:9-11
Colossians 3:16-17
2 Timothy 4:17-18

Unit 3 // Session 2

Speaker

Main Point

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

VERSES FOR THE ACTIVITY

"DIVINE AND HUMAN"

Luke 1:32-33 - "He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom." [Jesus as God - "Son of the Most High" refers to God's Son, and this kingdom he will be given is infinite, unlike every kingdom on earth that has boundaries]

Luke 2:7 - "She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger." [Jesus as Human - he was born, as all humans are]

Luke 3:23 - "Jesus was about 30 years old when he began his ministry. People supposed that he was the son of Joseph son of Heli." [Jesus as Human - he had parents and aged]

Luke 4:2 - "There he was tempted for forty days by the devil. He ate nothing during those days and afterward Jesus was starving." [Jesus as Human - human bodies require nourishment and experience hunger and thirst]

Luke 4:34-35 - "Hey! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. You are the holy one from God." "Silence!" Jesus said, speaking harshly to the demon. "Come out of him!" The demon threw the man down before them, then came out of him without harming him." [Jesus as God - he had power over the demon]

Luke 5:13 - "Jesus reached out his hand, touched him, and said, "Be clean." Instantly, the skin disease left him." [Jesus as God - God heals]

Luke 7:36 - "One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to eat with him. After he entered the Pharisee's home, he took his place at the table." [Jesus as Human - humans eat!]

Luke 8:24 - "So they went and woke Jesus, shouting, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" But he got up and gave orders to the wind and the violent waves. The storm died down and it was calm." [Jesus as God - he commanded creation]

Luke 9:29 - As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes flashed white like lightning. [Jesus as God - unexplainable events]

Luke 19:41 - As Jesus came to the city and observed it, he wept over it. [Jesus as Human - he experienced human emotions and responses to those emotions]

Luke 22:14 - When the time came, Jesus took his place at the table, and the apostles joined him. [Jesus as Human - humans eat!]

Luke 24:51-52 - As he blessed them, he left them and was taken up to heaven. They worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem overwhelmed with joy. [Jesus as God - unexplainable events, joined God the Creator in heaven]

Discuss

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

Important Points

Often, it's easier to show someone something than to tell them. Because of this, God came to us, as one of us, to show us these things:

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

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

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

Bible Connection

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

Discuss

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

Challenge

GOD SIGHTINGS

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

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

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

Remember to register for the Fall Retreat!!!

For Extra Study

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

Hebrews 4:14-15
1 John 4:10
1 John 5:11-13
Colossians 1:15-19

Unit 3 // Session 3

Speaker

Main Point

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

Important Points

Jesus provided a way for us to be in right relationship with God. Although our human inclination may be to choose selfishness and to follow our own paths; through Jesus, God forgives our self-centered actions and shows us how to follow in Christ's footsteps, leaving behind our self-centered ways. Through Jesus, our broken relationship with God can be restored and made whole once again. We didn't do anything to earn or deserve this invitation to be reunited with God. Instead, God freely gives us this extraordinary love. We call this undeserved or unconditional love or grace.

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

ATONEMENT ("At-One-Ment") means that we can be "at one" with God again. Even though our sins have caused a break in our relationship with God, through God's love and Christ's atonement, we can be in harmony with God once again.

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

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

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

Remember our session on sin called "Relationship: Broken"? Grace provides the path to closing the chasm or separation that sin had caused between us and God. Through Jesus, we can be in right relationship with God, and the divide between us and God is overcome.

Bible Connection

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

Discuss

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

Challenge

WRISTBAND CHALLENGE

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

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

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

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. Write in your Bible!

Psalm 103:8-13
Luke 15:1-10
James 1:2-3
Psalm 1:1-3

Unit 3 // Session 4

Speaker

Main Point

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

Important Points

Can you imagine the pain, desperation, and hopelessness that the disciples felt after Jesus was crucified and buried? They had left their homes, their jobs, their families, and their lives to follow after Jesus. But now he was dead, and they didn't know where to go or what to do. John 20:11 tells us that Mary Magdalene, one of Jesus' friends and followers, stood outside his tomb and wept.

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

Because of Jesus' resurrection, we know these things:

- Death is not the end. We don't have to fear death, because we know that Jesus has conquered death once and for all. As the Apostle Paul states, "Death has been swallowed up in victory!" (1 Corinthians 15:54)
- We can trust that God will keep God's promises. The greatest promise in the Bible is that Jesus would be resurrected from the dead, and we believe that promise has already come true. While he was still alive, Jesus promised: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though they die. Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25-26)." This promise was fulfilled when Jesus rose from the dead back to life.
- Resurrection is the ultimate destination for Christians. Like Jesus, one day we too will be raised from the dead—being brought back the way Jesus was brought back into a similar but different body. We too get to experience the awesome resurrection of Christ!
- We are told in the gospels that Jesus appeared to multiple people after he was raised to life again; Paul writes that he appeared to 500 people! (1 Corinthians 15:5). We also know that Jesus talked with people, ate, and drank, and allowed others to touch him, proving that he was not just a ghost (Luke 24:30, 37-43; John 20:27). But even some of his own disciples still had trouble accepting that the unbelievable had happened and that Jesus had come back to life.

You may have heard Pastor Adam Hamilton, or another pastor say, "The worst thing is never the last thing." (This quote is attributed to Frederich Buechner.) What that means is that because of God's promises and Jesus' resurrection, death is not the end. Death does not have the final word. Because of this truth, we can have hope even in the face of death and pain and sorrow.

The belief in Jesus' resurrection is often a hard one for people to understand. Like many aspects of our Christian faith, the Resurrection of Jesus is something that takes faith to believe in, and we may never fully understand it in this lifetime.

Bible Connection

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

Discuss

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

Challenge

GOD'S PROMISES

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

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

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

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

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

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. Write in your Bible!

Luke 24:1-35
1 Corinthians 15:3-7, 20-22
1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

UNIT 4

Unit 4 God as Holy Spirit

Session 1: The Holy Trinity – Spiritual Gifts Assessment
Seasonal: Advent and Christmas
Session 2: Partnering with God's Mission
Session 3: What's Yet to Come

>> UNIT OVERVIEW

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

Well, here we are at the most difficult concept (other than the resurrection) to fully understand, the Holy Spirit. While the Apostles' Creed is pretty clear about God the Father and God the Son, the Holy Spirit gets lumped in with the catholic (universal) church, saints, forgiveness and the resurrection, some of which we have already covered in previous units. That is to say, there is some overlap when considering the Holy Spirit and the other parts of the Trinity. While Jesus is resurrected, and God forgives our sins, the Holy Spirit is also at work within us for us to be able to forgive others and to experience resurrection as well. The Holy Spirit is that part of the Trinity within us. It is how we express our Christian conviction to the world through the spiritual gifts we are given. It is how we carry out our mission. It is how we look for hope in the future. The Holy Spirit is a motivator, an encourager and an inner voice that counsels us when we are searching for answers. In this unit, we will explore these concepts and, quite possibly more as it relates to how God moves in us and through us in this world.

Included in this unit is a session on Advent and Christmas and how we are reminded annually of Jesus being born into our lives. Even though the resurrection is celebrated at Easter, Christmas can also be a time when we can fully appreciate the newness of the gift of the baby Jesus and how the freshness of God's love can continue to shine in our lives.

Unit 4 // Session 1

Speaker

Main Point

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

Important Points

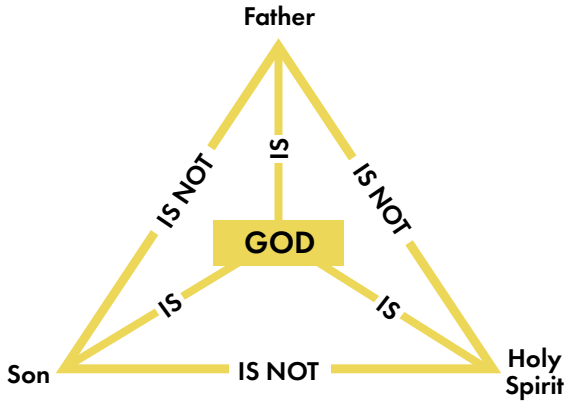
GOD CAN BE DEFINED BY THE PERSONS OF THE TRINITY
God the Father
God the Son (Jesus)
God the Holy Spirit

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

FATHER
SON
HOLY SPIRIT

GOD CAN ALSO BE DEFINED BY THE ROLES OF THE TRINITY
God the Father acts as Creator of the world by bringing everything into being in partnership with the Son and Holy Spirit.

God the Son (Jesus) acts as Redeemer of the world by making a way for us to be in relationship with God.



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

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

God the Father sent us Jesus the Son, and Jesus the Son gave us the Holy Spirit, and The Holy Spirit gives each of us gifts, talents, and skills that help us to be in community with God and one another in the way we were designed to do so. Those gifts, talents, and skills are known collectively as Spiritual Gifts. We will talk more about Spiritual Gifts in the next session, but first, it's important to take a Spiritual Gifts Assessment so that you know what your gifts are during next session's discussion.

You can find the assessment here: https://www.umc.org/en/content/exploring-your-spiritual-gifts or search "spiritual gifts" at UMC.org.

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

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

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

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

METAPHORS OR ANALOGIES FOR THE TRINITY*
H2O: water can be found in three states: as a solid (ice), as a liquid (water), or as a gas (steam). However, all three states have the same chemical makeup: two hydrogen molecules and one oxygen molecule.

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

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

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

Bible Connection

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

Discuss

- On a scale of 1-10, how confident do you feel in understanding the Trinity? Why did you pick that number? Don't worry if it's low—this is a difficult concept for people who have spent lifetimes studying!
- How would you explain in your own words what the Trinity is? How do you understand God as Father?
- How do you understand God as the Son (Jesus)? How do you understand God as the Holy Spirit?
- Why do we use the phrase, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" at baptisms?
- How does the Trinity show us the importance of community and relationships?
- What are some other ways that you might describe God as a Trinity?

Challenge

ACCEPTING IN FAITH

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

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

Remember to take the Spiritual Gifts assessment before next week at:
https://www.umc.org/en/content/spiritual-gifts

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, re-read the passages from the Bible Connection section and check out these additional Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. Write in your Bible!

Genesis 1:1-31
Matthew 28:16-20
2 Corinthians 1:21-22
Ephesians 4:2-6

Unit 4 // Seasonal Session

Speaker

Main Point

During the season of Advent, we look forward to the coming of Christ.

Important Points

ADVENT

For the four Sundays (and the weekdays between them) before Christmas, we celebrate the season of Advent. Advent comes from the Latin word for "arrival." During this time, we reflect and prepare for the arrival of Christ.

Because Advent is before Christmas, we often think of it as a season of looking forward to Christmas, but that is only partly true. Advent is also when we look forward to Christ's second coming, which will bring about a renewed creation with freedom from sin and death. Advent is marked by the hope of what's yet to come. We look forward to that in addition to the annual celebration of Christ's birth.

An Advent Wreath can mark the progression from week to week using Advent candles. A new candle is lit each week until they are all burning. The wreath has four candles around the outside and one in the center. (In some traditions, the candles are in a row instead.) Each outer candle represents something different: hope, love, joy, and peace. The center candle, lit to mark the celebration of Christ's birth, is called the Christ candle.

THE CHRISTMAS STORY

Even many non-Christians are familiar with the nativity story. ("Nativity" means birth, and in this case, the birth of Jesus.) However, only two of the gospels narrate the story of Jesus's birth: Matthew and Luke. Both gospels tell the nativity story as a continuation of Israel's story, framing Christ as the Messiah, born in Bethlehem during King Herod's reign. He was the divinely conceived son of Mary, who was married to Joseph, and Joseph was descended from King David. Matthew's telling focuses more on Joseph, and Luke focuses more on Mary.

THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

A piece of Jesus's early life as detailed only in Matthew involves King Herod of Judea. Herod met with the Magi while they looked for the child born King of the Jews. Herod asked the Magi to report back to him once they had found the child, but instead they returned home by a different route. When Herod couldn't find Jesus, he ordered the death of all children in and around Bethlehem under two years old. Joseph was warned in a dream to flee to Egypt, so the baby Jesus avoided this terrible fate.

GOOD TO KNOW

- December 25? Jesus's actual birthday is unknown. Scholars think he was born between 6 and 4 BC and probably not on December 25, but the culturally convenient date was chosen in the 4th century and has been celebrated ever since.
- The Christmas Season is officially the thirteen days from sunset on Christmas Eve through Epiphany on January 6.
- Epiphany is when we commemorate the visiting of the Christ Child by the Magi with their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. We don't truly know how many wise men there were.
- The people of Bethlehem in Jesus's day would keep their sheep and other animals in caves next to their homes. While many retellings of Jesus's birth involve the family being told there is "no room at the inn," the likely scenario is that Mary and Joseph stayed with extended family, but it was very crowded, so the baby had to be laid in a manger instead of in the guest room of the house.
- Although most Nativity scenes are not historically accurate, they are filled with symbols that tell the tale of Jesus's birth visually, in a way that is condensed, yet effective, and often quite pretty.

Bible Connection

Read together our passages for today, found in Luke 1:26-45, Matthew 1:18-24, Luke 2:1-20, and Matthew 2:1-12.

Discuss

- What similarities and differences did you see jumping from Luke to Matthew and back again?
- God could have come into the world as a powerful king, forcing everyone to worship and love him the way he wanted, but instead, God sent Jesus as a baby, reliant on other humans, who would spend his life teaching. Why do you think God did it that way?
- Why do you think the authors of Luke and Matthew wanted readers to know who was part of Jesus's community before and after his birth?
- Think about the people closest to you and your family. What kind of impact have the people around you had on you in your life?
- With what communities do you celebrate Christmas (and/or Advent)? What sort of Advent and Christmas traditions do you have?

Challenge

Talk to your parents/guardians about serving together for one of church's Christmas Eve Services!

For Extra Study

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

Luke 1:46-55
Luke 2:25-38
Matthew 2:13-23
Isaiah 9:6-7

Unit 4 // Session 2

Speaker

Main Point

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

Important Points

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

Here is the full list of spiritual gifts and their meanings (as found at https://www.umc.org/en/content/exploring-your-spiritual-gifts):

ADMINISTRATION: The gift of administration allows a person to organize people and resources for greater efficiency, effectiveness, and success.

APOSTLESHIP: The gift of apostleship compels people to reach out to new and unfamiliar groups and individuals to invite them into relationship with God and community.

COMPASSION: The gift of compassion moves people to action on behalf of those in need or who are hurt or rejected.

DISCERNMENT: Discernment is a gift of deep intuition and insight.

EVANGELISM: Those with the gift of evangelism are comfortable speaking about their faith and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ to everyone they meet.

EXHORTATION/ENCOURAGEMENT: The gift of exhortation is present in people who offer encouragement, wise counsel, unflagging support, and empowerment.

FAITH: The gift of faith is more than belief in Jesus Christ, but an abiding confidence that God works all things together for good, and that the people of God can rise above any obstacle.

GIVING: The gift of giving is the deep commitment to provide whatever resources are needed to support God's will and plan.

HEALING: The gift of healing is not about transferring spiritual power to eliminate suffering and disease, but the ability to channel God's grace and healing love to those who suffer physical, emotional, or spiritual pain.

HELPING: Helping is a gift of support and behind-the-scenes effort that makes groups, families, and congregations more effective.

INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES: Those who are gifted to interpret tongues help build bridges across cultural, generational, and language divides.

KNOWLEDGE: The gift of knowledge allows people to automatically convert facts, data, and information into useful and important knowledge.

LEADERSHIP: The gift of leadership is a visionary, and forward- looking gift that enables people to stay focused on where God might be leading us as individuals, congregations, and communities at any given time.

MIRACLES: Those gifted with miracles never doubt the power and presence of God in creation and are able to help others see and believe in God's power.

PROPHECY: The gift of prophecy is the ability to speak God's word to others, or more appropriately to be open for God to speak God's word through us.

SERVANTHOOD: Servanthood is the gift of doing for others, sometimes to the exclusion of meeting personal needs.

SHEPHERDING/PASTORING: The gift of shepherding is the gift of mentoring and providing spiritual guidance to others to help them develop in discipleship and faith formation.

TEACHING: The gift of teaching allows people to transform data and information into life-changing knowledge.

TONGUES: The gift of tongues is a communication gift that allows people to speak foreign languages and convey concepts they never formally studied.

WISDOM: The gift of wisdom allows people to understand deeper meaning and apply knowledge, beliefs, and experience to everyday situations.

Missio Dei is a Latin phrase that means "the Mission of God." In simpler terms, this mission is the challenge or charge that God has given each of us to help bring the Kingdom of God to earth as it is in heaven.

When we participate in God's mission (using our unique spiritual gifts), we help close the gap between the way the world is now and the way that God wants the world to be.

Bible Connection #1

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

Discuss

- What are your top spiritual gifts?
- What do you think of the gifts the assessment revealed about you?
- What inspires you from Romans 12:4-8? What stands out as good news to you?
- Where do you see your own spiritual gifts in this passage?
- Where do you see the gifts that others have in this passage?
- Based on the verses, what are you supposed to do with your gifts?

Bible Connection #2

Read together the second passage for today, found in Matthew 25:34-40.

Discuss

- What questions do you have about this passage? What do you think it means?
- We don't just have spiritual gifts for our own use. We have them for a larger purpose, to change the world! What does this scripture tell us about loving and serving Jesus in our world?
- What is this scripture asking YOU to do?

Challenge

CLAIM YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

In your journal, create a column for each of your top 3 spiritual gifts. At the top of each column, write the name of your gift. Then, write down words or phrases from the description of it that you strongly connect with. Then write down ways you have seen that gift show up in your life.

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

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

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina!

John 21:15-17
1 Corinthians 12:4-11
Ephesians 4:11-13
1 Peter 4:10-11

Unit 4 // Session 3

Speaker

Main Point

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

Important Points

Typically, when it comes to the afterlife, people believe something along the lines of this:

- You die.
- You go to heaven or hell.
- The earth stops existing at some point.

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

The Bible spends a lot of time talking about the Kingdom of Heaven (or the Kingdom of God), which is different than "heaven." The Kingdom of Heaven is one of the main things that Jesus talked about.

"Kingdom of Heaven" is a way of describing the world as God desires it to be. It is a perfect world where everything broken is fixed, and everything is as it should be. Through the Kingdom, God will bring together heaven and earth and unite them as one.

Our job as followers of Jesus is to help bring the Kingdom of Heaven to earth even now! In fact, we pray this each week during the Lord's Prayer when we say, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

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

Ultimately, God will re-create our world and make everything whole and beautiful and perfect again—just like it was back in the Garden of Eden.

Isaiah 65:17-18 says, "Look! I'm creating a new heaven and a new earth: past events won't be remembered; they won't come to mind. Be glad and rejoice forever in what I'm creating."

So, what about hell? We don't know who will be invited into this new, perfect heavenly world, but most Christians believe God will draw the line somewhere. Belief in hell has a complicated history but is traditionally understood as an afterlife separated from God. For God, what's yet to come isn't about winners and losers, it's about unity between God and humanity.

Bible Connection

Read together our passages for today, found in Luke 23:39-43 and 1 Corinthians 13:12.

Discuss

- What do you think heaven is like? What have you been taught about heaven before?
- What's the difference between "going to heaven" and "bringing heaven to earth?"
- If heaven is ultimately coming to earth, what do you think God thinks about the earth?
- Why did Jesus spend so much time talking about the Kingdom of Heaven? How is the Kingdom of Heaven different than what we normally think about heaven?

Challenge

HEAVEN VS. KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Think about the different ways that heaven is shown or talked about in books, on television or movies, in art, or even among your friends. Then, journal your answers to these questions: How is heaven usually pictured in movies or tv shows? What words or images are usually used to describe heaven? Is this the kind of heaven you would want to go to? Then, look up and read the following passages on how Jesus describes the Kingdom of Heaven:

Matthew 5:3
Matthew 5:10
Mark 10:14-15
Luke 13:18-21
Luke 17:20-21

Journal your answers to these questions:

- How is the "heaven" of pop culture different from Jesus' Kingdom of Heaven?
- Would you want to be a part of the Kingdom of Heaven that Jesus describes?
- What is still confusing to you about the Kingdom of Heaven?
- How can you work now to bring the Kingdom of Heaven to earth?

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. Write in your Bible!

Isaiah 65:17-18
Luke 13:29-30
John 14:1-7, 28
Philippians 3:20-21

UNIT 5

Unit 5 The Church

Session 1: What is the Church?
Session 2: The United Methodist Church
Session 3: What is Resurrection UMC?
Session 4: Visit another Church
Seasonal: Lent and the Church Calendar
Session 5: John Wesley's General Rules and Doctrine
Session 6: John Wesley's Guidance
Session 7: Abrahamic Faiths and Christian Denominations

>> UNIT OVERVIEW

the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,

While a belief in Jesus represents the entry point to becoming Christian. And following Jesus defines our discipleship. The church represents the full communal expression of what it means to be Christian. The community of believers and followers of Jesus continue to interpret and reinterpret what it means to be the church. In fact, we can look to the original Abrahamic faiths to begin to get the full picture of what it means for groups of people to follow God.

This unit will cover the spectrum from our origins as the church to the present time. Through it all, we believe that the church, even though there are many parts, is holy. We strive to be a community that does our best to follow Jesus.

Unit 5 // Session 1

Speaker

Main Point

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

Important Points

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

Pentecost marks the day that followers of Jesus were called by the Holy Spirit to speak God's word to others, described in Acts 2. We mark this occasion yearly on the seventh Sunday after Easter. We think of this as the birthday of the Christian church.

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

- **Baptism** marks the moment we become a part of God's family, the Church. The water represents God's saving grace that cleanses us from our sins. As Methodists, we believe people can be baptized as a baby, as a child or teenager, or as an adult. Even if you don't remember your baptism, God remembers the moment you were born into new life in Jesus.

- **Communion** (also called the Lord's Supper) is a way for us to remember Christ's death and resurrection. When we participate in communion by eating the bread (which represents Jesus's body) and drinking the juice or wine (which represents Jesus's blood), we are sharing in a feast with other believers all over the world. As Methodists, we believe that anybody who wants to be united with Christ can share in the Communion table.

The Apostles' Creed is a statement of faith for the Christian church. It is meant to serve as a brief summary of the teachings of the apostles and is recited by Christians worldwide.

Bible Connection

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

Discuss

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

Challenge

BE THE CHURCH

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

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

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. Write in your Bible!

Acts 2:1-4 (Birth of the Church at Pentecost)
1 Corinthians 12:24-27 (The Church as the Body of Christ)
1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (Sacrament of Communion)
1 Peter 3:21 (Sacrament of Baptism)

Unit 5 // Session 2

Speaker

Main Point

Our church is part of the United Methodist Church, a denomination of Christianity that seeks to put our faith into action both in our communities and across the globe.

Important Points

Resurrection is a United Methodist Church (UMC), and the UMC is a **denomination**, or branch, of the Christian Church. There are many denominations of Christianity, and among those denominations there is a lot of overlap (we are all Christians, after all!), but there are also things that make each one special.

KEY BELIEFS OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

- The UMC slogan is "Open hearts, open minds, and open doors."
- The UMC practices "open Communion," meaning that anybody can choose to receive Communion. God's grace is for everyone.
- The UMC believes God's salvation is a gift for everyone. Each person has the free will to choose to accept that salvation.
- We consider ourselves to be a "big tent" denomination—that means we allow and even encourage discussions about faith and even disagreement. We encourage *asking questions* and *thinking* about our faith.
- We follow the beliefs listed in the **Apostles' Creed**:
- There is one God, the creator and sustainer of the universe.
- There is one God in three persons: the Father, the son, and the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus Christ, the son of God, is both fully human and fully divine.

KEY HISTORY

- The Methodist movement started way back in the 1700s by John and Charles Wesley, two brothers who began by gathering a group of students at Oxford University. They met weekly and sought to live a holy life.
- They were called "methodists" because they had established a "method" to actively live out their beliefs.
- Eventually they sought to share the ideas of methodism beyond this group—it wasn't easy, and they faced many setbacks at first.
- A key step in the early Methodists' successful spreading of their faith was for their ministers to preach not just in churches, but also in fields, coal mines, and yards to people who didn't typically go to church. They reached out to people who felt disconnected from church and helped them to become deeply committed to their faith.

TODAY

- Many denominations can trace their origins back to the early Methodist movement, including our own.
- The UMC is a global denomination with churches all over the world in over 130 countries and millions of members in those churches.
- United Methodists strive to be active in our communities as part of our faith. We have local and global mission projects, advocate for justice, and address issues of inequality where we see them.
- Check out umc.org. for more information!

Bible Connection

Read together our passages for today, found in **Romans 12:1-2** and **Isaiah 6:8**.

Discuss

- What is one thing you learned today about the United Methodist Church?
- Have you heard of any other denominations of Christianity? Have you ever been to a worship service at another church? What was that like? (Consider both similarities and differences.)
- Have you ever volunteered somewhere? What was that like? What are some ways you could volunteer this year?
- What do you think being a "living sacrifice" means in Romans 12?
- Why do you think Methodists care about serving the community around them?
- How does Resurrection fit into the United Methodist Church as a whole? What aspects of methodism do you see in our church?

Challenge

Just like the early Methodists talked to others about their faith, this week, tell one of your friends that you are participating in a confirmation program at your church. Consider inviting them to youth group for a deeper challenge!

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. (Remember: You can write in your Bible!)

1 Corinthians 15:58
Philippians 4:12-13
Psalm 96:1-3
Titus 3:3-7

Unit 5 // Session 3

Speaker

Main Point

This week, we're learning about our church, Resurrection, A United Methodist Church, and what makes it unique.

Important Points

This week, we're learning about our church, Resurrection, A United Methodist Church, and what makes it unique. Perhaps you were baptized at Resurrection as babies, or maybe you are pretty new. Either way, you may not know that much about this church, so this week is an opportunity for them to understand what makes our church unique. You likely have reasons YOU like Resurrection—share those in your group.

FAST FACTS:

- Resurrection was founded in 1990 by Pastor Adam Hamilton.
- Resurrection is a United Methodist Church.
- Resurrection has several campus locations around the city, plus services online and on TV.
- The Resurrection logo is in the shape of an ancient baptismal font with the varying shades of blue representing all people.

GUIDING STATEMENTS:

(These guide us as we make decisions as a church.)
Our Purpose is to build a Christian Community where non-religious and nominally religious people are becoming deeply committed Christians. ("Nominal" means "in name only"—"nominally religious people" are those who would say "Sure, I'm a Christian," but don't really practice their faith.)
Our Vision is to be used by God to change lives, strengthen churches, and transform the world.
Our Journey is to know, love, and serve God.

KEY DISTINCTIVES:

We strive as a church to have these characteristics: outward-focused, bridge-building, thought-provoking and hope-radiating. If these are how our church is defined, then we are on the right track.

COMMON SAYINGS

You may hear these statements in sermons and from our church members:
"The worst thing is never the last thing." Bad things happen. But part of being a Christian means we know God is with us through good and bad. We know, because we believe in Christ's resurrection, that the worst thing is never the last thing.

"Not only do I believe it; I'm counting on it!" Sometimes as Christians we are asked, "Do you really believe this stuff?" This is a good response. We are counting on God and his grace.

VISION 2030: Closing the Gap

We strive to close the gap between the way things are now and the way we would hope them to be, making this world look more like God's Kingdom. We believe God actively calls us to do this work, and we have identified 4 areas to focus on between now and 2030.

Close the Spiritual Gap – We want to deepen the faith of everyone at Resurrection.

Close the Generational Gap – We want to create a church community where all generations are valued, respected, and cared for, and we want to connect people across generations.

Close the Kindness and Justice Gap – We want to address injustices across our community and model for our community and world what it looks like to truly love our neighbors.

Close the Opportunity Gap – We hope to break the cycle of poverty for children in Kansas City by providing access to education, food, housing and healthcare.

Bible Connection

Read together our passages for today, found in **Micah 6:8 and 1 Corinthians 1:4-9.**

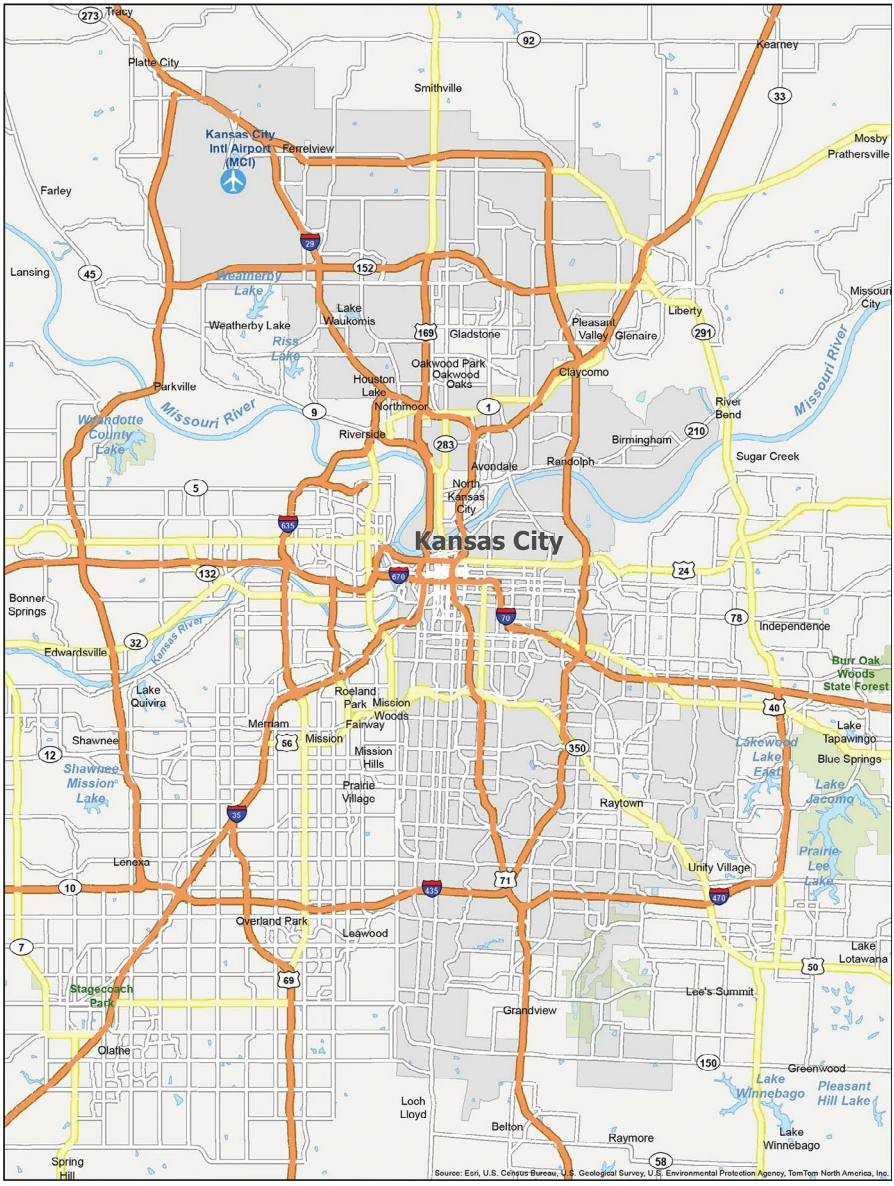
Discuss

- What is one thing new you learned about Resurrection today?
- What is your favorite part about our church community?
- What are some of the ways our church is involved in our city and around the world?
- Do you want to start getting involved in a new way this year at Resurrection? How?
- What is one thing you care about having in a church community?
- How can we make our church community and our student ministry a place of welcome and belonging?

Challenge

GET TO KNOW YOUR CHURCH

Spend some time this week learning some of the programs our church has to offer. Click around our church website (resurrection.church) and/or spend some time on Sunday at the Connection Point looking at the different groups, events, and projects. If you are looking at the website, go beyond the sermons—you'll want to click on "join a group" or "next steps" to find more options. Just spend some time exploring and be ready to report back next week about what you found!


Kansas City
Tracy
Platte City
Smithville
Kearney
Kansas City Intl Airport (MCI)
Ferrelview
Mosby
Prathersville
Farley
Lansing
Weatherby Lake
Weatherby Lake
Riss Lake
Lake Waukomis
Gladstone
Pleasant Valley
Glenaire
Liberty
Missouri City
Parkville
Missouri River
Houston Lake
Oakwood Park
Oakwood Oaks
Claycomo
Northmoor
Riverside
Wyandotte County Lake
Avondale
Randolph
Birmingham
River Bend
Sugar Creek
North Kansas City
Bonner Springs
Edwardsville
Kansas River
Independence
Burr Oak Woods State Forest
Lake Quivira
Roeland Park
Mission Woods
Fairway
Merriam
Mission
Mission Hills
Prairie Village
Shawnee
Shawnee Mission Lake
Lake Tapawingo
Blue Springs
Lakewood Lake East
Lake Jacomo
Raytown
Lenexa
Unity Village
Prairie Lee Lake
Overland Park
Leawood
Lake Lotawana
Stagecoach Park
Lee's Summit
Grandview
Olathe
Greenwood
Lake Winnebago
Pleasant Hill Lake
Looh
Lloyd
Belton
Raymore
Lake Winnebago
Spring Hill
Source: Esri, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, TomTom North America, Inc.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. (Remember: You can write in your Bible!)

John 13:14-17
1 Corinthians 3:16
2 Corinthians 9:6-8

Unit 5 // Session 4

Main Point

This week, a favorite of both students and mentors, you will be visiting another United Methodist Church with your small group. It is a great way to see that we are a part of a larger denomination beyond our local church. It demonstrates the great variety and diversity that exists within Methodism.

Suggestions Of UMC Churches To Visit In KC

(you are not limited to this list, but these are a few places if you don't know where to go!):

- St. James United Methodist, Kansas City, MO - sjumckc.org
- Woods Chapel United Methodist, Lee's Summit, MO - www.woodschapelchurch.org
- Grace United Methodist, Olathe, KS - graceumc.church
- Bonner Springs United Methodist, Bonner Springs, KS -bonnerspringsumc.com
- Stilwell United Methodist, Stilwell, KS - stilwellumc.org
- Heritage United Methodist, Overland Park, KS - heritageumc.org

A full list of other United Methodist churches in our area can be found at
www.greatplainsumc.org/kansascitydistrict (Kansas UMCs)
https://www.moumethodist.org/churchlocator?topic=Northwest (Missouri UMCs)

Discuss (during or after your visit)

- What did you notice that was different than worshipping at your church?
- Was there anything about your visit that you had not seen or experienced before?
- How did you feel as a visitor? Is this how you want others to feel when they visit Resurrection?

Unit 5 // Seasonal

Speaker

Main Point

Christian Churches follow a year-round calendar designating the dates of important celebrations in our faith. The highlights of the calendar are the Christmas and Easter cycles.

Important Points

THE CHRISTIAN CALENDAR

The Christian year, also called the liturgical year, is made up of two main cycles—the Christmas cycle and the Easter cycle. Both start with a time of preparation and anticipation followed by celebration. The in-between time is called Ordinary Time.

THE CHRISTMAS CYCLE

- Advent-Christmas-Epiphany: The start of the Christian year.
- This cycle begins with Advent, which starts on the 4th Sunday before Christmas. The date changes year to year but will always be between November 27 and December 3.
- Christmas includes the twelve days from sunset on Christmas Eve, December 24, through Epiphany on January 6, celebrating the Magi visiting the Christ child.
- After Epiphany there is a cycle of Ordinary Time from January 7 until Ash Wednesday called The Season After Epiphany.

THE EASTER CYCLE

- Lent-Easter-Pentecost
- The Easter Cycle begins with Lent, starting on Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday is 40 days, not counting Sundays, before Easter.
- Easter moves between March 22 and April 25 depending on the year. The timing of Easter is tricky: it's the first Sunday after the first full moon that comes after March 21 (the first day of spring). Easter Season lasts fifty days, ending with the Day of Pentecost.
- The long period of Ordinary Time between Pentecost and Advent is called The Season After Pentecost.

LITURGICAL COLORS

- Liturgical Colors - In many churches, colors used in the altar cloths, pastors' vestments, and other key areas of worship correlate to the cycle of the calendar.
- Ordinary Time is designated by green, representing growth.

- Lent and Advent are purple, which is considered a preparatory color and symbolizes both royalty and penitence.
- Sometimes Advent is blue, symbolizing hope.
- Christmas, Epiphany, and Easter are gold or white, symbolizing joy and festivity.
- Holy Week and Pentecost are red, symbolizing the blood of Christ and the fire of the Holy Spirit.
- Red and white are also used for other holidays and ceremonies.

LENT AND ASH WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday marks the start of Lent. During Ash Wednesday service, ashes may be used to remind us of our sinfulness and mortality. We focus on our humanity and remember that sin and death have been triumphed over by the resurrected Jesus Christ.

Lent represents the forty days Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness after his baptism, being tempted and preparing to begin his ministry. During this time, the church focuses on repentance, fasting, and preparation for Easter. Lent is a time of self-examination and reflection. Sundays during Lent are not counted as part of Lent; instead, each is considered a "mini-Easter." A little joy is appropriate each Sunday in anticipation of the Resurrection.

Bible Connection

Read together our passages for today, found in Matthew 3:13-17 and Matthew 4:1-10.

Discuss

- Jesus was perfect. Why would he ask to be baptized?
- John the Baptist was Jesus's cousin, and almost exactly the same age. They probably knew each other growing up and were likely close to one another. How do you think their relationship affected them in this moment of Jesus's baptism?
- Why did Jesus choose to go into the wilderness after he was baptized but before he officially began his ministry?
- Why do you think the temptations came after Jesus had fasted for forty days and not immediately after his baptism?
- There are three temptations named in this passage. Which, if any, are relatable to you, and how?
- Even though Jesus did not give into the temptations, he was still tempted. How does this passage speak to you?

Challenge

LENTEN FASTING

Fasting is practiced by people throughout the Bible, including Jesus, as a way to grow closer to God. Traditionally, fasting means going without food for a period of time, but in the present day, it may mean going without a particular type of food or abstaining from a bad habit. While it does not have to be relegated to the time of Lent only, Lent is a good opportunity to practice this spiritual discipline.

Consider something you could give up for Lent: maybe chocolate, soda, shopping, video games, or social media. Alternatively, you might consider adding something: praying an extra time each day, reading an additional daily scripture, completing a devotional, volunteering, etc. Be specific and make a plan so this practice can become a habit, at least temporarily. Write out your plan in the space that follows.

If you have a hard time keeping this commitment, use the difficult moments to reflect on the meaning of Lent and your relationship with God. Remember Jesus's temptation in the wilderness and his ultimate sacrifice for us. And remember, we are only human!

If you struggle with eating habits, instead of subtracting food from your diet, add a spiritual discipline unrelated to food, and have a conversation about it with a trusted adult.

In the space below, make one commitment, either to give up or to add something to your daily routine, during the season of Lent.

For Extra Study

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

Luke 2:39-52
John 1:19-34
1 Corinthians 5:6-8

Unit 5 // Session 5

Speaker

Main Point

Through reading and studying scripture, John Wesley identified key points and general rules to help summarize what United Methodists believe about salvation and how we should interact with the world.

Important Points

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

Living into our Methodism means we should reflect on our "theology" and think deeply about it.

Theology is just a big word for how we think about God and our faith. John Wesley's insights can help us with our own. As Methodists, his work guides us and gives us focus as we figure out what we believe and why. "Wesleyan Doctrine" gives us a starting point to understand what we, as Christians and Methodists, believe about salvation and how it works.

John Wesley's work focused largely on salvation and how grace, faith, and holiness were all related. What we now refer to as the "Wesleyan Doctrine" includes these concepts:

Humans can't save themselves based on good deeds. We are not capable, no matter how much we do, of saving ourselves without divine help. This doesn't mean we can do whatever we want, though! Doing good is still good. It's just not what ultimately saves us.

Salvation comes through faith alone. This is where the "divine help" comes in. Regardless of our own actions, we need God's mercy and grace. We need Jesus. It is through our faith that we are saved. We cannot do it alone.

Genuine faith produces inward and outward holiness. That is to say, if we have real faith, then our morals and our actions will reflect that faith. We will become holy. By loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, we also love our neighbors as

ourselves, and our entire being will reflect that love in our daily lives. That means we will do those good deeds—we won't be able to help it, we will be compelled to do good things because we love God—even though the deeds are not what saves us.

One key way that John Wesley identified as the best way for our actions to reflect our faith is through what he called the Three General Rules:

- DO NO HARM is all about making sure that who we are and what we do is not harming other people. God showed loving kindness to ALL humans. That means we don't get to pick and choose whom we harm and whom we don't. Across the board, if we do no harm, we are breaking the cycle of sin.
- DO GOOD is about taking action, making wise choices, and doing things that actively bring good into the world. It's not passive. It doesn't happen by accident. We can't just sit around and be "doing good;" we must actually get up and do it.
- STAY IN LOVE WITH GOD helps us to accomplish rules one and two. When we love something or someone, we're less likely to do harm and more likely to do good. When we love God, and we know that God loves us and wants to shower us with kindness and grace, then we will also choose not to harm the other people God loves, and we will want to do good in this world that God loves.

By following these three rules, we'll be living out our faith in this world.

We aren't the first Christians to study the Bible, and we certainly aren't the first Christians to ask questions about it. Looking at what other Christians have written and said throughout history is good and useful. John Wesley is one of those Christians who spent a lot of time studying scripture, faith, history, and theology, and we use the work he did to inform our lives as Christians and as Methodists.

Bible Connection

Read together our passages for today, found in Ephesians 2:4-10, Matthew 22:34-40 and Romans 3:21-28.

Discuss

- When was a time you were given something just because--not because you worked for it or because it was a holiday-but just because?
- In what ways do you feel like it can be difficult for you to rely on God?
- Why do you think faith is key to our salvation?
- Why are good deeds not enough to save ourselves?
- Based on Romans 3:23, what do you think about the rules God has for us?
- If we all fall short of God's standards, why does it matter whether or not we try to meet them?
- How can we move forward knowing we will mess up, but that through Jesus we get to be forgiven?
- What do you think each of John Wesley's three general rules actually look like in our lives today?

Challenge

Think about what each of John Wesley's three general rules would look like in your life this week, specifically.

Choose one rule and one specific thing you can do this week to follow that rule. Be very specific. Not "I will talk to God more" but "I will pray X number of times each day." Not "I will be nicer to people" but "I will not yell at my little sister when she makes me mad, and I will invite her to do one thing with me this week." Write out what you plan to do below, then report back on your results next week!

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. Write in your Bible!

John 15:1-8
Matthew 5:43-48
Galatians 5:13-14
Ephesians 1:3-10
John 3:14-18
Mark 12:28-34

Unit 5 // Session 6

Speaker

Main Point

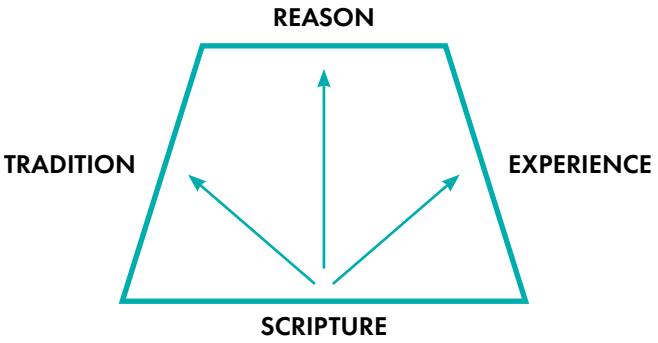
John Wesley's guidance can help us to live out our lives as Christians. We can better understand issues of faith using scripture, tradition, experience, and reason, and we can strengthen our faith through community.

Important Points

Faith is Personal, but it's not Private. When we are tiny kids, we can't go places on our own, but the older we get, the more we want to make our own choices and do our own things, without parental supervision. This development is normal and understandable: 4-year-olds shouldn't be walking through the store alone, but at some point, in our lives, it becomes perfectly acceptable to do so.

One of the biggest contributions Wesley made to Christianity was to use various tools to grow in our faith or make decisions about life. Rather than just looking at the world through one or two lenses, we use the four lenses of Scripture, Reason, Tradition, and Experience to shape our perspectives. Together, these four lenses are called the **Wesleyan Quadrilateral**. This 4-part tool helps us better understand our faith, make decisions, and try to determine God's will. It involves looking at a situation or question from four different perspectives:

Scripture: The Bible, which is our foundationa l source for Christian belief and living.
Tradition: our heritage, faith traditions, and those things that Christians have done and believed throughout history.
Experience: our individual interactions and encounters throughout life. We can also lean into the experiences of others.
Reason: the use of our God-given logic and intellect as we think rationally and logically. This can include thinking about scripture within its historical context.



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

God also gave us other people in our faith community (tradition), and God gave us the Bible to read and study (Scripture). We don't have to do things on our own. We have others around us and the Bible, too.

Speaking of other people, one of John Wesley's core beliefs was that a true faith in God happens best in community. He encouraged societies, bands, and covenant groups to ensure that people in his church could live out their faith in smaller communities. We continue to live out our faith in community today in small groups.

FAITH IS PERSONAL, BUT IT'S NOT PRIVATE.
We make a personal choice to be Christians, have faith, and live that out in our daily lives, but we live those lives with other people. Here are 3 ways to do that better:

Participate – Sharing our thoughts and actively listening to others' perspectives is important to building community.

Be Consistent – Showing up regularly makes a big difference to the group. (Imagine if a baseball player only went to practice once a month!)

Encourage – Each of us can make a difference in the lives of those around us. We should encourage our peers to share, be there for them when they are having a hard time and celebrate their joys with them.

Bible Connection

Read together our passage for today, found in Hebrews 10:24-25.

Discuss

- How do your friends help you to improve or to accomplish things?
- What is the greatest thing you have done with a team or group?
- How can small groups help you to better understand God?
- What are some other benefits of having a small group at church?
- How do the 4 parts of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral help you to understand God? (Answer this question for each of the 4 parts.)

Challenge

THE WESLEYAN QUADRILATERAL

Think of a question you have or a decision you are making. Then work through the Quadrilateral to help you (maybe) find an answer.

1. Scripture: What does the Bible say about this topic? Think generally: the Bible might not say something specific on this topic, but Jesus is pretty clear about what is important. What insights can you glean from Jesus?
2. Tradition: What advice do you think a wise and mature member of your church (a mentor?) would give you about this question?
3. Experience: What life events could help you think through this decision? What can you learn from others' experiences here?
4. Reason: Use your God-given logic and ability to think rationally. What else do you know that could factor into this question?

If you've come to an answer, great! If you haven't, or if your answer still feels incomplete, don't worry. Some answers take a long time to find. Give it time and talk to God about it. You can also talk to your mentors or another trusted adult!

For Extra Study

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

Proverbs 2:1-6
Luke 6:1-11
Matthew 18:20

Unit 5 // Session 7

Speaker

Main Point

In scripture we read how God chose to be in a special relationship with the descendants of Abraham. Through Abraham, the Christian faith shares an origin with the Jewish and Islamic faiths, but Christianity believes that Jesus is the Messiah. That belief in Jesus is central to all of the Christian denominations that have developed over thousands of years.

Important Points

The roots of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity stem from one family, fathered by Abraham. We find his story in the book of Genesis.

FATHER ABRAHAM

- Abraham was a devout follower of God, but he was frustrated because he had no children to inherit his name and property, and he was getting old. God told Abraham he would have as many descendants as there are stars, he could see in the sky.
- But Abraham was impatient. Instead of waiting for his wife Sarah to become pregnant, Abraham had a child with his wife's servant, Hagar. Nonetheless God still kept his promise (he always does!), and Sarah had a baby, too.
- Hagar's baby was named Ishmael. Sarah's baby was named Isaac. The Jewish faith traces its ancestry back to Isaac, and the Muslim faith traces its origin to Ishmael.
- Christianity is ultimately a continuation of the Jewish faith, so we, too, trace our history to Isaac. But remember, both Isaac and Ishmael are sons of Abraham. That's why he's sometimes referred to as "Father Abraham."

ISLAM

- Islam is the religion of Muslims. They worship one God, known as Allah (Allah means "God" in Arabic).
- They believe the word of God was revealed to the "final prophet" Muhammad, who shared those revelations with his followers. Muhammad's words were written in the Quran, Islam's holy book.
- Muslims believe in many other prophets, including several from our Old Testament. They believe Jesus was one of the most important prophets, but they do not believe he was the Son of God.
- Muslims follow The Five Pillars of Islam: Profession of Faith, Prayer (5 times a day), Charity to the Poor, Fasting during Ramadan, and Pilgrimage to Mecca.

JUDAISM

- Judaism is the world's oldest monotheistic religion. Jews believe in one God who revealed himself through the ancient prophets.
- Abraham's son, Isaac, had a child named Jacob, who later took the name of Israel. His descendants became known as the Israelites.
- Jews believe God made a covenant, or promise, with his followers. Christians believe this, too. But here's where we differ: Jews believe the Messiah will come one day but has not yet arrived. They consider Jesus to be a rabbi, or teacher, not the son of God. As Christians, we believe Jesus is God's Son, the long-awaited Messiah.
- Their scripture is the Hebrew Bible, also known as the Tanakh. This is the same as the Old Testament in the Christian Bible. We can learn much about the Jewish faith by studying the Old Testament, though they also have holy texts on how it should be interpreted.

ALL OF US

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

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

CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS – A BRIEF HISTORY

Over the years Christianity has developed what we call "denominations" which are different branch of Christianity. Different Christian denominations have varied traditions and different stances on some concepts within the Christian faith. While these different denominations sometimes disagree on specifics of faith, ultimately, they have more in common than not because all Christian churches believe Christ is the Son of God.

The Orthodox Church: As the earliest form of Christianity, it is one of the oldest surviving religious institutions in the world.

The Catholic Church split from the Orthodox Church in the 11th century due to disagreements about church authority and organizational structure as well as a few other items, such as the nature of the Holy Spirit. The Catholic Church has a global structure of organization and authority headed by the Pope.

The Protestant Reformation: In 1517, Martin Luther posted a list of 95 Theses explaining what he believed was wrong with the Catholic Church. The 16th-century Church and many of its leaders were seen as greedy or corrupt. Luther believed the Church had too much power and did not need to be an intermediary between people and God. Instead, Luther thought people could form their own relationships with God independently and with personal responsibility. This church split was the Protestant Reformation.

The Anglican Church: In 1534, the Anglican Church split from Catholicism. The split happened when the Pope wouldn't let the English King end his marriage to his first wife. The Anglican Church's beliefs remained in line with Catholicism at first, but the King was considered the head of the Church instead of the Pope. Over the years the Anglican Church adopted more Protestant beliefs. Today it has traits of both Catholic and Protestant faiths.

The Methodist Church split from the Anglican Church in the 18th century. The United Methodist Church is considered to be a "Mainline Protestant" church today.

AREAS OF DIFFERENCE AND SIMILARITY

Tradition – Orthodox and Catholic churches place a heavy focus on tradition. While Protestants also value tradition, Orthodox & Catholic churches tend to emphasize it more.

Creed – A creed is a statement of faith. The Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, and many Protestant churches (including the UMC) believe and often recite versions of the Nicene Creed. The Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant churches use the Apostles' Creed as well, but the Orthodox Church does not. Both the Nicene and the Apostles' Creed mention the "holy catholic church." This is not referencing the big-C Catholic church. In this case, "catholic" means the universal Christian faith—that all Christians are of one faith in Christ.

Communion – Christians use communion to remember Christ's body and blood, shed for us and the forgiveness of our sins; for Christians, this is how we commemorate the Last Supper.

Orthodox and Catholic Beliefs – Forgiveness of sins is obtained through communion. Christ becomes present in the bread and wine, which become the actual body and blood of Christ, though the two churches disagree on how exactly that happens.

Protestant Beliefs – Communion is a symbol of grace and a way to remember Christ's sacrifice for us. It is typically believed by Protestants that the bread and wine don't transform into Christ, but they represent him. However, there is a wide array of thought on this topic within different Protestant denominations.

Confession of Sins – All Christians believe we are forgiven through Christ, but the way we experience that can be different.

- The Orthodox and Catholic Churches both practice the confession of sins to a spiritual leader or priest, who will often respond by prescribing ways the individual can make amends.
- Protestants believe the individual does not need an intermediary to receive forgiveness and are instead encouraged to confess their sins to God directly, often during the worship service (collectively and/or in silent reflection).

Saints – Most Christians believe anyone in heaven is a "saint," but there are some key differences.

- Catholic and Orthodox churches canonize or glorify particularly holy individuals as Saints. They believe these Saints may intercede with God on someone's behalf, and therefore they may pray directly to a Saint. Mary, mother of Jesus, is given special status by the Catholic and Orthodox churches. She is venerated above Saints, but below God. She is not worshipped, but she is often prayed to and mentioned in worship services.
- Protestants believe all Christians are saints and are called to imitate Christ, but Christ is the only one who can mediate between God and humankind. Therefore, our prayers go to God or Christ, not to a Saint.

This list is just a small sampling of areas of difference and similarity. If you visit other churches, you may notice other things, perhaps in their music, the way they practice baptism, etc.

ONE CHURCH

Because we are Christ followers, the Holy Spirit shows up and creates a temple within each of us. There are many denominations of Christianity, but regardless of denomination, the Christian church begins with its followers. We are all responsible for making our lives align with Jesus. Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, Protestant, or otherwise, we are all part of the Church, and that is a miracle—a divine, extraordinary event—we get to participate in every day.

Bible Connection

Read together our passages for today, found in Genesis 15:1-5, Genesis 17:1-8 and John 17:20-23

Discuss

- We learned a lot today! What stuck out to you? What is something you want to learn more about?
- What do you think God was saying when he told Abraham to look at the stars?
- What did it mean for Abraham and his family to be chosen by God? What does it mean for us today to be chosen or called by God?
- In what ways does our church bless those around us, in our community and our city and in the world? How can we as a group or as individuals bless others in our lives?
- How does understanding other faiths better help us understand our own faith better?
- What is significant about these 3 Abrahamic faiths being so closely related? How are these three faiths being closely related similar to Christian denominations also being closely related?
- Today's Bible passage contains words spoken by Jesus in prayer at the end of the Last Supper. He prayed this in front of his disciples during his last evening with them. What was Jesus talking about and why do you think it was so important for him to speak this specific message?
- Have you ever been to a worship service at a church that was a different denomination? What similarities and differences can you remember?
- What do you think makes our church, Resurrection UMC, unique?
- In what ways does our church bless those around us, in our community and our city and in the world? How can we as a group or as individuals bless others in our lives?

Challenge

RANDOM ACT OF BLESSING

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

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

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

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina! Write in your Bible!

Genesis 15:9-22
Exodus 19:4-6
Deuteronomy 6:6-9
Isaiah 42:6-7
Romans 10:9-13
John 14:15-21
Matthew 16:13-19

UNIT 6

Unit 6 The Journey Continues

Session 1: Review and Conversation with Mentors
Session 2: Inviting Others into God's Story
Session 3: What's Next?
Confirmation Weekend

>> UNIT OVERVIEW

This is not the end. This is actually the beginning. While confirmation is winding down, this is meant to be a life-long launch into the exploration and enactment of Christian faith. In this unit we will review the year, prepare for the confirmation ceremony and begin to consider what the next steps will be.

Unit 6 // Session 1

Main Point

Instead of new topics, today we explore what we've learned so far.

Activity

ONE-ON-ONES

You will have the chance to meet one-on-one with one of your confirmation mentors today. Together, review the confirmation requirements and see what you need to prioritize during this second half of confirmation. This is a great time for you to ask any questions you have.

REVIEW

While your other group members are having their one-on-ones, review with a partner or small group.

Unit 1 Introduction

- Session 1: Parent Meeting: Check Location for Meeting Time and Details
- Session 2: Welcome to Confirmation – Intro Apostles' Creed
- Session 3: Meet Your Bible

What are the important parts of the Apostles' Creed?
What are some important things to remember when using the Bible?
How many books of the Bible can you name?
What is Lectio Divina?
How much highlighting/underlining/sticky notes/etc. have you used in your Bible?
What is one Bible verse that has stuck with you? Why?

Unit 2 God the Father

- Session 1: The Old Testament
- Session 2: The Story of God
- Session 3: Relationship: Broken

Session 4: Prayer: Talking with God –Lord's Prayer
What is the story of the Old Testament?
What is the overall story of God?
Why study the Old Testament?
What does it mean to "sin"?
What are the two kinds of sin?
Why do people sin?
What is the consequence of sin?
What is the ACTS format for prayer?
What are some ways to connect with God other than prayer?

Unit 3 God the Son

- Session 1: The New Testament
- Session 2: Jesus: God With Us
- Session 3: Relationship Restored
- Session 4: The Promise of the Resurrection

What is the story of the New Testament?
Why study the New Testament?
What are some of the reasons God sent Jesus to us?
How is Jesus 100% divine and 100% human?
What does "the Incarnation" mean?
What do we have to do to earn God's forgiveness? (A trick question!)
What are the three forms of grace recognized in Methodism?
What is Jesus's role in forgiveness? (We'll learn more in a few weeks!)
What promise(s) did God make to us with Jesus's resurrection?
What does Jesus's resurrection mean to you?
What does it mean for all people?
Where does the Resurrection appear in the Apostles' Creed?

Unit 4 God as Holy Spirit

- Session 1: The Holy Trinity – Spiritual Gifts Assessment
- Seasonal: Advent and Christmas
- Session 2: Partnering with God's Mission
- Session 3: What's Yet to Come

What is Advent?
Can you remember what the four Advent candles represent?
When is the Christmas season (officially)?
What can you remember about the nativity story?
What is the Trinity? What are the roles of each of the 3 parts?
Can you remember any metaphors for describing the Trinity?
Why does it matter that God is three-in-one?
How does the Trinity relate to the Story of God and the structure of the Bible?
What is your favorite spiritual gift that you have and why?
How can your spiritual gifts help you to partner with God's mission for the world?
Why is it important for us as Christians to serve others?
What is the difference between Heaven and the Kingdom of God?
What is our job, as Christians, regarding the Kingdom of God?
What is the relationship between grace, atonement, and the Kingdom of God?

Unit 5 The Church

- Session 1: What is the Church?
- Session 2: The United Methodist Church
- Session 3: What is Resurrection UMC?
- Session 4: Visit another Church

Seasonal: Lent and the Church Calendar
Session 5: John Wesley's General Rules and Doctrine
Session 6: John Wesley's Guidance
Session 7: Abrahamic Faiths and Christian Denominations

What are the two sacraments Methodists recognize?
What are some key beliefs of the United Methodist Church?
How many church locations does Resurrection have? How many can you name?
What does "Closing the Gap" mean to Resurrection?
Who are John and Charles Wesley?
What are Wesley's Three General Rules?
What are the 4 parts of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral?
What are we supposed to do with the Wesleyan Quadrilateral? How can it help us?
What did John Wesley think about small groups?
If "faith is personal, but not private," what does that mean to you?
What are the different cycles during the Christian year?
What is Pentecost?
What is Lent?
What do you remember about Judaism? How is it similar to and different from Christianity? Who is Abraham in the Bible? What is his importance? Can you remember the names of any of the other members of his family?
What's one thing all Christian denominations have in common? (Hint: It's the thing that distinguishes Christianity from other religions like Judaism or Islam.)
What are some areas of difference among Christian denominations?

Bible Connection

Read our passage for today, found in John 6:26-51.

Discuss

Even when Jesus was right in front of them, many people still did not believe or understand that he was the Son of God and asked him to perform a miracle for them. Ultimately, he did perform the miracle of all miracles, but in this passage, he tries to use words and logic to convince them.

- Why do you think he chose this tactic?
- Are you good at convincing people using words?
- Do you feel like you are a person who is swayed by logical arguments, or do you usually require physical proof before you believe something?
- How is confirmation going for you so far? What has been the best thing, and what has been more difficult?
- Which confirmation session(s) do you feel like you remember best and why?
- What are you still hoping to learn as we complete the second half of Confirmation?

Challenge

ANOTHER CONVERSATION

In your meeting today with your mentor, you looked at the confirmation requirements. How are you doing with those?

Your challenge for this week is to go over that checklist with a parent or guardian. Share what you still need to do to be ready for the confirmation ceremony, and make sure you're set up for success!

Make sure they have the ceremony on the calendar and talk about the people you would like to invite to your ceremony so that they can get it on their calendars, too.

For Extra Study

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

Hebrews 12:1-3
John 14:25-26
1 John 2:24-25

Unit 6 // Session 2

Speaker

Main Point

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

Important Points

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

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

One way to invite others into God's story is to follow the formula "Pray, Care, Share."

First, pray for those around you that do not yet know about Christ: your friends, your family members, your classmates, or teammates. Ask that God will be revealed in their lives.

Then, show that you care for them. This could be through kind words, acts of service, or even through a smile. There's a famous quote from Theodore Roosevelt that says, "Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care." Before sharing your story with others, they need to know that you care for them.

Finally, when the time is right, share your story with them. Tell them about who Jesus is to you. Let them know that Jesus cares for them as well and longs to be in a relationship with them too.

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

Bible Connection

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

Discuss

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

Challenge

SOCIAL MEDIA SHARE

Sometime this week, share on social media one thing that God has taught you through your confirmation journey. If you are on Instagram, be sure to tag your Student Ministries location! If you are not on social media, share one thing you have learned from confirmation this year with a friend in person or on a text message. You might even consider using this as an opportunity to invite your friends to attend the Confirmation Ceremony so that they can celebrate your confirmation and your commitments to God!

For Extra Study

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

Acts 22:3-16
Acts 1:8
2 Corinthians 2:18-21

Unit 6 // Session 3

Main Point

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

Activity

LETTER TO GOD

Take a few minutes to write a letter to God. Some things you might want to include in this letter are:

- Things you have learned through Confirmation
- Ways you have grown deeper in your faith during Confirmation
- Commitments you want to make to God or the church after Confirmation
- Concerns or questions you might have
- Any obstacles or challenges in your faith
- How you want to continue to grow closer to God

Important Points

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

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

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

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

Bible Connection

Read our passage for today, found in Acts 4:32-35.

Discuss

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

Challenge

LETTERS TO MENTORS

If you have time, either today or some other time in the next week or two, it would be so nice to write your mentors letters thanking them for helping you and your class on this journey.

RESURRECTION
STUDENTS