

Community of Christ

Mission Initiatives

Lessons for Adults



Invite People to Christ

Christ's mission of evangelism



Abolish Poverty, End Suffering

Christ's mission of compassion



Pursue Peace on Earth

Christ's mission of justice and peace



Develop Disciples to Serve

Equip individuals for Christ's mission



**Experience Congregations
in Mission**

*Equip congregations for Christ's
mission*

by Jan Marshall

Mission Initiatives

The purpose of this resource is to understand that Christ's mission is our mission by exploring the five mission initiatives.

Lessons for Adults

© 2011 Community of Christ
1001 W. Walnut St.
Independence, MO 64050-3562 USA

	The Mission Matters Most! Poised to fulfill Christ's mission	page 3
	Invite People to Christ Christ's mission of evangelism	page 5
	Abolish Poverty, End Suffering Christ's mission of compassion	page 8
	Pursue Peace on Earth Christ's mission of justice and peace	page 12
	Develop Disciples to Serve Equip individuals for Christ's mission	page 19
	Experience Congregations in Mission Equip congregations for Christ's mission	page 27

The mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead.

—Doctrine and Covenants 164:9

Mission Initiatives

Lessons for Adults

by Jan Marshall

The purpose of these lessons is to understand that Christ’s mission is our mission by exploring the five mission initiatives. Built upon our mission statement, the foundation of *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 2nd edition, and the enduring principles, the mission initiatives are at the heart of what we mean when we say, “We proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love, and peace.”

Jan Marshall is an executive minister for Community of Christ. A member of Integrated Formation Ministries, her primary assignment is pastor formation ministries. She also collaborates with the Priesthood Faithfulness and Leadership Development teams, and is a liaison with the *Herald’s* editorial team. She holds the priesthood office of high priest.

Note to facilitator:

These lessons are built around segments of the video of President Stephen M. Veazey’s April 2011 address to the church. Although his message is in the May 2011 *Herald*, viewing the video will heighten the experience of the class members.

Beloved children of the Restoration, your continuing faith adventure with God has been divinely led, eventful, challenging, and sometimes surprising to you. By the grace of God, you are posed to fulfill God’s ultimate vision for the church.

—*Doctrine and Covenants 164:9a*

Intro

The Mission Matters Most!

Poised to Fulfill Christ's Mission

Session Focus

This lesson is an introduction to the five mission initiatives.

Focus Scriptures

Doctrine and Covenants 164:9a, d, and f or Luke 4:16–19

Objectives

The learners will...

- reflect on the focus scriptures Doctrine and Covenants 164:9a, d, and f or Luke 4:16–19.
- listen to President Veazey introduce the five mission initiatives (or read the print version).

Materials

- Flip chart or whiteboard
- Markers
- DVD player with TV or screen and projector

Resources

“The Mission Matters Most!” President Stephen M. Veazey’s April 2011 address to the church. Different formats are available:

- Download video or audio—www.CofChrist.org/broadcast/2011/archive.asp#mission
- DVD—contact your pastor, congregational financial officer, or mission center president for a copy
- Print copy—have people bring their May 2011 *Herald* or make copies of the article found on pages 10–18

Bible (NRSV)

Doctrine and Covenants, including Section 164
Hymns of the Saints (HS)

1 Gather

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson.

Have someone offer a prayer.

Allow approximately 10 minutes for this activity, including the scripture reading. Tell the class members you will read Doctrine and Covenants 164:9a, d, and f two times.

9a. Beloved children of the Restoration, your continuing faith adventure with God has been divinely led, eventful, challenging, and sometimes surprising to you. By the grace of God, you are poised to fulfill God’s ultimate vision for the church.

9d. If you truly would be Community of Christ, then embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ.

9f. The mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead.

After the second reading, ask:

- What are the action words that attracted your attention?
- What are the action words or images calling us to do?

You might want to write the words on a flip chart or whiteboard. Here are some suggestions, with definitions, to help begin the discussion.

Eventful—exciting, meaningful, important, momentous

Challenging—demanding effort

Surprising—feel sudden wonder or amazement; make an unexpected gift

Poised—ready to act: fully prepared or in position and about to do something; ready to move

Fulfill—live up to, bring about, make happen, follow through

Embody—represent, stand for, make tangible

Or, you may want to use Luke 4:16–19 as the scripture for the Gathering activity.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

You might want to write the words on a flip chart or whiteboard. Here are some suggestions, with definitions, to help begin the discussion for the Luke 4:16–19 scripture.

Proclaim—to announce something publicly or formally; to make something clear

Release—to set free a person or animal that is imprisoned, trapped, or confined in some way; to free from obligation

Recovery—to return to health or normal state; gaining back of something lost

Oppressed—to subject a person or people to a harsh or cruel form of domination

2 Engage

Invites exploration and interaction.

Have the class members view President Veazey’s April 2011 address to the church; stop the video at time counter 32:50 (about 33 minutes). The remaining part of his address will be played in another lesson.

3 Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing.

To close this session, ask the class members to give one-word responses to President Veazey’s message. Write them on the flip chart or whiteboard so the responses can be used for later sessions.

4 Send

Explores how the lesson might be lived out.

Sing “Lord, I Want to Be a Christian” *HS 464*, verses 1 and 4; “This God Is the God We Adore” *HS 481*; or “Now in This Moment” *HS 58*.

5 Bless

Prayer of blessing, praise, thanksgiving, and hope.

What an amazing adventure God is calling us toward. By the grace of a loving God, we will respond to make Christ’s mission, *our mission!*



Mission Initiative: Invite People to Christ

Session Focus

Invite People to Christ is sharing the peace of Jesus Christ with those who are waiting to hear the redeeming words of the gospel.

Focus Scriptures

Matthew 16:13–20

Doctrine and Covenants 162:3b and 163:2b

Objectives

The learners will...

- reflect on their own witness of Jesus Christ.
- become familiar with three goals of the mission initiative Invite People to Christ.
- pray for guidance.

Materials

- DVD player with TV or screen and projector
- Internet access if you wish to download the video or audio file from the church's website
- print one copy of the nation list for each person from www.CofChrist.org/pr/countries.asp

Resources

"The Mission Matters Most!" President Stephen M. Veazey's April 2011 address to the church. Different formats are available:

- Download video or audio—www.CofChrist.org/broadcast/2011archive.asp#mission
- DVD—contact your pastor, congregational financial officer, or mission center president for a copy
- Print copy—have people bring their May 2011 *Herald* or make copies of the article found on pages 10–18

Bible (NRSV)

Doctrine and Covenants, including Sections 162 and 163

Sing a New Song (NS)

1 Gather

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson.

Divide the class into groups of three or four. Have someone in each group read Matthew 13:16–20. In those small groups have them share:

1. Who do you say Jesus Christ is?
2. How did you become a member or friend of Community of Christ?

End this section by singing, as a prayer, "Jesus, Name above All Names" NS 25.

Or have the class respond to this question: When you think of evangelism or witnessing, what words or phrases come to mind?

2 Engage

Invites exploration and interaction.

As a whole group view the video clip or DVD of President Veazey's address, from time counter 22:35—27:50 (5 minutes, 15 seconds).

Discuss Together

1. What intrigued you about President Veazey's comments?
2. How are your experiences in Community of Christ an important part of your testimony?
3. What opportunities do you and your congregation have to be invitational (hospitable and welcoming to those attending congregational experiences)?

3 Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing.

Baptize and confirm many new members are strategies for inviting people to Christ. Tell or summarize the following story adapted from Jane Watkins, “Invite People to Christ—Christ’s Mission of Evangelism,” *Herald*, July 2011, 17.

We all live in a busy, fast-paced world where our weekends are precious times to catch up on personal work, run errands, mow the lawn, shop for groceries, or enjoy a little down time to bolster our energy for the Monday that looms ahead.

For all these reasons it is difficult to get full participation from congregational leaders when we plan workshops for the Florida USA Mission Center. But two years ago a surprising event occurred at MissionFest, a weekend workshop for congregational leaders.

The new pastor from Jacksonville came. For many of us it was the first time to meet Leonard Dantzer. It was his first gathering with other pastors and leaders within the mission center. Imagine our astonishment when he brought two guests! The people with him were neighbors he brought along so they could experience sacred community with leaders from the mission center. Knowing how difficult it is to recruit members to attend, we were delighted and amazed that someone would think to invite visitors to a weekend leadership retreat.

Cindy and Dick Duplessis enjoyed the weekend, their new friends from all over Florida, and the invitational community that is a hallmark of our times together. Six months later Pastor Dantzer called me with a question. “Jane, I don’t know if this is OK, but I would like to ask Cindy to be our congregational financial officer (CFO). She’s not a member, but I just know she will be some day. Can we have a CFO who is not a church member?”

Cindy began to help with the financial responsibilities. Several months later, Cindy and her husband, Dick, committed themselves to

discipleship through baptism and were confirmed as members of Community of Christ.

As we consider the scripture from Luke 4:18 where Jesus reads: “He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives,” I wonder at times if the captives are us, captive to programs and events, when invitation means something much more? What would happen if we were released to invite our neighbors and friends into relationship with Christ through sacred community at activities, church services, and workshops? Let’s find out by setting the captives free. Amen? Amen!

Discuss Together

1. What would happen if we were released to invite our neighbors and friends into relationship with Christ through sacred community at activities, church services, and workshops?
2. How can we develop an invitational attitude, spirit, and personality, rather than merely inviting people to attend a program or event?

When we create the spirit of invitation, people will come to Christ and new congregations will be opened. Listen to Linda Read’s story “New Congregation Provides a ‘Welcome Home’,” *Herald*, June 2011, 6.

“Welcome home” is a phrase that often evokes warm and cozy thoughts: memories of time spent with loved ones, great home cooking, time to catch up on the lives of family, a place at the table where we experience a true sense of belonging. This is the experience we seek to offer our new friends at Welcome Home Congregation—a Community of Christ ministry in Covina, California.

Our young congregation is growing steadily, going from our group of six to a regular participation of nearly 30 in three months. We are so blessed by our new “family,” with whom we worship at 4:00 p.m. every Sunday, followed by table fellowship at 5:00. Our tagline is “Come as you are, all are welcome!” Our new members share that to them, it feels like home.

Discuss Together

1. How could seeing and doing “church” differently be helpful for your community?

Launching the church in nations new to Community of Christ is another way of inviting people to Christ.

Ask your group to guess how many countries currently have a Community of Christ presence, or are working to establish a recognized presence. Go to the church's website www.CofChrist.org/pr/countries.asp and print the list.

Share this example of launching the church in a nation new to Community of Christ, based on "The Start of Something Great in Spain" by John S. Wight, *Herald*, May 2011, 9.

The people had prayed for six years for a Community of Christ congregation in Madrid. Apostle Richard James and missionary coordinator Keith McMillan responded to a sense of call to go to Spain. A new fellowship of both members and friends has been meeting in Madrid since November 2010. "God is doing great things here, and we need to be more open where the Spirit will lead us. It is our testimony that if we step in faith, God will lead us to people."

4 Send

Explores how the lesson might be lived out.

Ask class members to engage in an open-ended group prayer to help in being aware of *opportunities* to _____.

How can we as individuals and as a congregation develop an invitational attitude, spirit, and personality?

5 Bless

Prayer of blessing, praise, thanksgiving, and hope.

Read aloud Doctrine and Covenants 162:3b and 163:2b:

That Spirit is even now touching alive the souls of those who feel the passion of discipleship burning deeply within. Many others will respond if you are persistent in your witness and diligent in your mission to the world. Generously share the invitation, ministries, and sacraments through which people can encounter the Living Christ who heals and reconciles through redemptive relationships in sacred community. The restoring of persons to healthy or righteous relationships with God, others, themselves, and the earth is at the heart of the purpose of your journey as a people of faith.

Christ's Mission...Our Mission...YOUR Mission!



Mission Initiative:

Abolish Poverty, End Suffering

Session Focus

We are called to be Christ's hands and feet, reaching out through compassionate ministries that serve the poor and hungry and stop conditions that diminish the worth of persons.

Focus Scriptures

John 21:15–17, Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a

Objectives

The learner will...

- hear Jesus' instruction to "feed my sheep."
- hear stories of congregations living out this mission initiative.
- identify how their congregation brings ministry to the poor and suffering.

Materials

- DVD player with TV or screen and projector
- Internet access if you wish to download the video or audio files from the church's website
- Flip chart or white board
- Markers

Resources

"The Mission Matters Most!" President Stephen M. Veazey's April 2011 address to the church. Different formats are available:

- Download video or audio—www.CofChrist.org/broadcast/2011archive.asp#mission
- DVD—contact your pastor, congregational financial officer, or mission center president for a copy
- Print copy—have people bring their May 2011 *Herald* or make copies of the article found on pages 10–18

Bible (NRSV)

Doctrine and Covenants, including Section 163

Sing a New Song (NS)

Sing for Peace (SP)

1 Gather

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson.

Have someone read John 21:15–17 as a meditation.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

After a period of silent reflection, ask the class to share any images of "feeding my lambs" that come to mind. For example: prayer support, volunteering with Meals on Wheels or local food banks.

Have someone read Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a, adapted as a prayer affirmation:

God, the Eternal Creator, you weep for the poor, displaced, mistreated, and diseased of the world because of their unnecessary suffering. Such conditions are not your will. Open our ears to hear the pleading of mothers and fathers in all nations who desperately seek a future of hope for their children. Do not let us turn away from them. For in their welfare resides our welfare. In Christ Jesus we pray. Amen.

2 Engage

Invites exploration and interaction.

View the video clip of President Veazey’s address, from time counter 22:35—28:44 (about six minutes). Ask the group for any initial reactions. Then lead the class in exploring the several goal statements.

Help Those Who Hurt

Tell this story that describes a Colorado congregation living out the mission initiative: Abolish Poverty, End Suffering.

Mark “Red” Johnson was chronically homeless. He was not known to have any family, so there was no one to claim his body when he passed away. There was, however, a grieving community with no place to gather to celebrate his life.

When the Fort Collins, Colorado, Community of Christ was asked to host his memorial service, they quickly agreed. Posters with pictures of Red and his beloved companion, a dog named Sable, were hung where homeless people camp out.

People streamed into the church, some over an hour early. Many were grateful to enter a sanctuary reserved for them, the friends of someone whose absence they would feel. As the organ played, people began to hug each other and share their sorrow. Many shared memories of how Red had offered them kindness, mercy, and encouragement.

By God’s grace and Spirit, we celebrated the life of a man who knew great hardship. Despite his alcoholism and personal suffering, Red brought hope and goodness to many.”

—*Power of 10 Mission Stories* (giveyour10.org)

Discuss Together

We don’t know the rest of the story—what happened to those who attended the memorial service? For a brief time, the Fort Collins Congregation helped people grieve for their friend. It wasn’t money or time they needed; it was the presence of people who cared. How does this story affect the way you think about helping those who suffer?

Feed the Hungry

Share this story:

For Larry Drury, the call to respond was unexpected. He was retired, completing a master’s degree. While driving to school he heard a radio report stating the poverty rate for children in East St. Louis, Illinois, had surpassed 50 percent—double most areas of the state. In one instant, the call was clear: Feed my sheep—care for hungry children.

Larry responded. With his wife, Vickie, he began to piece together agencies and faith-based groups to feed the children. He also began working on a request for an emergency World Hunger Grant for Gateway USA Mission Center, the first time he’d ever applied. In June 2010, he mailed the proposal to Community of Christ International Headquarters. On June 21, he received a generous grant and started feeding children. “Feed the Hungry” provided more than 6,000 meals THAT summer. Volunteers also gave haircuts, tutored, installed air conditioners in houses, picked up kids for lunch, and bought tennis shoes for the children.

Two small, scuffed, dirty tennis shoes—one missing a sole—sit in Larry’s home. They constantly remind him of the voice on the radio—and the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit that led him to a seemingly insurmountable call.

Discuss Together

Larry uses scuffed tennis shoes to remind him of his call. What symbol does or could inspire and remind you of your call to ministry?

Support Compassionate Ministries

Read this testimony adapted from “Pursue Peace on Earth—Christ’s Mission of Justice and Peace” by Kathy Sharp, *Herald*, July 2011, 19.

What happens to divided families when social services judge the parents as unfit?

While they work on their individual problems, parents are separated from their children. Often they can see their kids only weekly, in cold, bureaucratic offices among the same social workers who removed the children from the home. Of course, parents and children feel conflicted during these reunions.

This became important to Jammie Apodaca, a Co-Missioned Pastor Initiative (CPI) pastor, and her mother, Donna Garner. They engaged in serious discernment for their tiny, aging, and shrinking Ellensburg Congregation in central Washington. Jammie learned at CPI that dying congregations could reinvent themselves—but only if they threw away the rule book of BIG CHURCH, assessed their members' passions and callings, and then sought to learn what mission God was calling them to.

At the time, six people typically attended Ellensburg's weekly services. Jammie and Donna knew they had a passion for family ministry—so they made an appointment with representatives from the Department of Social and Human Services, the agency that works with hurting families. "What can we do to help you?" Jammie and Donna asked.

The representatives were flabbergasted! No churches ever had come to them to ask how they could help! The agency quickly came up with a request to benefit their family clients.

"Can you offer your church...to allow for a neutral, supervised visiting space for our families? A place where parents and children can safely maintain their bonds and learn to become a family again?" Jammie and Donna said yes. They began to clear out the "church furniture" and turn the area into a warm and inviting living room for families that need to heal.

Out went the pulpit on the raised rostrum. In came a comfy sofa, love seat, and end tables. Out went church chairs, lined up like soldiers in rigid rows facing frontward. In came round tables, seating in the round, and a wipe-board easel for preaching and teaching. Encouraging, inspirational art—the kind you might hang in your own homes—covered the freshly repainted, soft-blue walls.

Today, the congregation serves families working their way from crisis back to unity. Members offer parenting classes—often for mothers and dads working through addiction issues. They preach the gospel of Christ in Thursday-night church. The café-style church houses newly confirmed members and an ever-changing group of families and children, all working their way back to wholeness.

The peace of Jesus Christ is shared, and peace and justice for broken families is restored!

Discuss Together

Which of your sacred spaces might you think of using differently? Sketch on a flip chart how that sacred space might look.

Respond in Times of Crisis

Community of Christ partners with Outreach International and other international organizations that provide assistance following natural disasters.

Rebuilding schools, churches, and communities in Haiti after the January 2010 earthquake continues to be hard work. Resources for adequate shelter and food are still scarce. After the church in Bas Lavoute was destroyed, Oblation funds were used to purchase a large tarp to protect people from the sun when they gathered for worship.

"When the tarp first arrived so many people came, and there was great joy," said Pastor Wilner Deluxe. "We continue worshiping God, and we have hope that a permanent church will eventually be built."

In another part of Haiti, "The Croix de Bouquets Congregation has several large cracks in the building, so we are extremely thankful for the tarp purchased with Oblation funds," said Pastor Faustin Charlestin. "The rainy season has been difficult, but people continue to praise the Lord, and more than 450 people come each week to worship."

Amidst the challenges of rebuilding, thousands of people gather around Haiti each week to worship in makeshift churches and offer prayers of thanksgiving and hope to a gracious, loving God.

—*Power of 10 Mission Stories* (giveyour10.org),
adapted

Discuss Together

1. Has a natural disaster affected you personally? If so, how did you respond?
2. What can the hope and positive attitude of the Haitian people teach us?

3 Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing.

God calls us to give caring ministry and offer humble service to those in poverty or who are suffering. How might this inform or “reform” the plans and focus of congregational ministries, worship, and fellowship to more fully represent the mission of Christ? Use flip chart paper to make a list of your congregation’s opportunities for worship, relationship building, generosity, learning, serving, and witness. Label those that bring ministry to those in poverty or who are suffering. What “Aha!” moments does this list reveal?

4 Send

Explores how the lesson might be lived out.

Sing together “Brothers and Sisters of Mine” *HS* 388 or “This We Can Do” *SP* 32.

5 Bless

Prayer of blessing, praise, thanksgiving, and hope.

Spiritual Practice

Shalom for Those Who Are Dispossessed

Ask class members to put away any books or materials, sit in comfortable positions, close their eyes and listen to these words:

Let your mind be drawn to places in the world where people have no home. Think of those who are refugees from their homeland, those whose homes were destroyed by war or natural disaster, and those who are homeless and wander the streets or live in shelters. Let the images fill your mind. Offer a silent prayer for those who are suffering.

[Pause for silent prayers]

And now, O God, may we be aware of your love for us and all your creation as we seek to make Christ’s mission come alive—one person, one neighborhood, one town at a time. In Christ Jesus we pray, Amen.



Mission Initiative: Pursue Peace on Earth

Session Focus

The hope of Zion will become reality when we live Christ's peace and generously share it with others.

Focus Scripture

Doctrine and Covenants 164:9b

Objectives

The learners will...

- be introduced to four goals (strategies) for pursuing peace on Earth.
- hear stories of ministries already happening that support this mission initiative.
- connect this mission initiative to their life and congregation.

Materials

- Flip chart paper listing the goals for pursuing peace: Engage Children in Peacemaking; Seek Justice, Create Peacemakers; Unite with Others to Make Peace; Establish the Temple as a Center to Promote Peacemaking
- One copy for each participant of Pursue Peace on Earth Stories (at end of this lesson)
- One note card or piece of paper and pen or pencil for each participant

Resources

"The Mission Matters Most!" President Stephen M. Veazey's April 2011 address to the church. Different formats are available:

- Download video or audio—www.CofChrist.org/broadcast/2011archive.asp#mission
- DVD—contact your pastor, congregational financial officer, or mission center president for a copy
- Print copy—have people bring their May 2011 *Herald* or make copies of the article found on pages 10–18

Bible (NRSV)

Doctrine and Covenants, including Section 164

Sing a New Song (NS)

1 Gather

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson.

Read Doctrine and Covenants 164:9b:

When your willingness to live in sacred community as Christ's new creation exceeds your natural fear of spiritual and relational transformation, you will become who you are called to be. The rise of Zion the beautiful, the peaceful reign of Christ, awaits your wholehearted response to the call to make and steadfastly hold to God's covenant of peace in Jesus Christ.

Read aloud, "We are called to restore Christ's covenant of peace, even the Zion of our hopes. The hope of Zion will become reality when we live Christ's peace and generously share his peace with others."

Invite the group to look at the previously prepared chart paper listing the goals for pursuing peace. Ask them to reflect on times they have seen or participated in any of the listed goals. Invite those who would like to share their experiences with the group.

Sing together or recite as a prayer, "Instruments of Your Peace" NS 21.

2 Engage

Invites exploration and interaction.

View the video clip or DVD from time counter 27:08—29:57 (approximately three minutes) or read the portion of the written text on Pursue Peace on Earth from President Veazey's address.

Divide into four groups. Assign each group one of the Pursue Peace on Earth goals. Ask each group to read and consider one of the stories at the end of this lesson that tells about ministries that support the mission initiative. As time allows, ask one person from each group to summarize their story and discussion for the larger group.

Goal #1

Engage Children in Peacemaking

Read aloud, "Teaching children how to resolve conflicts, respect others' viewpoints, and see the sacredness of creation extends the hope of Zion. The following story represents one way to develop young peacemakers who are dedicated to Christ's mission of justice and peace. Inspiring, motivating, and teaching children to become peacemakers provides hope for the future, deepens children's discipleship, and helps them make a difference in the world."

Ask the first group to read and consider Story #1—"The Peace Mobile."

Consider:

- How might the Atlanta congregation's Peace Mobile relate to children's needs in your neighborhood, town, or city?
- How could you or your congregation get involved?
- What might be some risks and rewards for you or your congregation in starting a peace ministry similar to the Peace Mobile?

Goal #2

Seek Justice, Create Peacemakers

Read aloud, "The need to help people seek justice and pursue peace is universal. The following is one person's story of achieving peace and reconciliation

within her family. As these ministries find expression in people's lives, individuals and congregations will be empowered to become sanctuaries of Christ's peace, a voice and action for justice."

Ask the second group to read and consider Story #2—"Peacemaking at Work."

Consider:

- What does reconciliation mean to you?
- How could building conflict-resolution skills benefit you, your congregation, neighborhood, town, or city?

Goal #3

Unite with Others to Make Peace

Read aloud, "Already many mission centers and congregations have joined organizations and movements that recognize the worth of persons and are committed to bringing Christ's ministry of peace and justice to others. Joining and serving with others who are committed to peace and justice ministries strengthens our own commitment and extends Christ's mission of peace into an ever-widening circle of peacemakers. Leaders and members can share Community of Christ's unique understanding of the peaceable kingdom with other faith communities who are also dedicated to peace."

Ask the third group to read and consider Story #3—"Midtown Mamas."

Consider:

- Is your congregation or mission center currently working with other faith communities and organizations that are dedicated to the pursuit of peace and justice? If yes, how has that had an impact on your congregation? If not, how might your congregation get involved with others?
- What connections do you see between this story and your neighborhood, town, or city?
- How could this effort contribute to other faith communities' appreciation of Community of Christ's understanding of the peaceable kingdom?

Goal #4

Establish the Temple as a Center to Promote Peacemaking

Read aloud, “The Temple is an instrument of God’s continuing revelation and symbolizes Christ’s mission to bring justice and peace to the world. The sacred ministries of the temple will spring forth as rivers of living water as we help people resolve the brokenness and pain in the world.”

Ask the fourth group to read and consider Story #4—“Dedicated to the Pursuit of Peace.”

Consider:

- Briefly share your experience of visiting the Temple or another place whose purpose is peacemaking.
- How has your congregation included peace as a part of individual and congregational life?

3 Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing.

Give each participant a note card or piece of paper. Ask them to think of someone they know who exhibits qualities of a peacemaker. Invite them to write a note of appreciation for their gifts and ministry given. Suggest they offer a prayer of gratitude as they mail or deliver the note.

OR

Invite participants to write a prayer for peace and submit it for possible use in the Daily Prayer for Peace. Write the prayer around three points: peace within, peace between people, and peace among nations or groups. See www.CofChrist.org/prayerpeace/guidelines.asp for guidelines and submission information, or send to Community of Christ, Daily Prayer for Peace, 1001 W. Walnut St., Independence, MO USA 64050-3562.

4 Send

Explores how the lesson might be lived out.

This time reflecting your new understanding or resolve, once again sing together or recite as a prayer “Instruments of Your Peace” in NS 21.

5 Bless

Prayer of blessing, praise, thanksgiving, and hope.

Stand in a circle as you read aloud this “sending forth” blessing:

Community of Christ is called to restore Christ’s covenant of peace, even the Zion of our hopes. The hope of Zion will become a reality when we live Christ’s peace and generously share Christ’s peace with others. May God continue to bless your efforts to make Christ’s mission your mission. We are not alone!

Pursue Peace on Earth Stories

Story #1:

Engage Children in Peacemaking

The Peace Mobile

By Brenda Lenfestey, "Pursue Peace on Earth—Engage Children in Peacemaking," *Herald*, August 2011, 18, adapted

Children are great invitational people, and they're great missionaries. They are also great peacemakers. Jim and Andi Melham, from the Atlanta North Congregation, had a vision long ago to provide peacemaking ministry in the Southeast USA Mission Center.

They retired early from their jobs and traveled to congregations, areas, and schools that invited them to share peace. Now, their vision has been mobilized. Within the last year or two, funds became available for their vision of sharing Christ's peace using a 30-foot trailer.

Their peace mobile ministry is fantastic. The children learn about environmental issues and how to take care of the environment. It also has hands-on exercises for resolving conflicts.

Last year I invited Andi and Jim to bring their trailer to our mission center family camp (reunion). I asked if they would be able to share that ministry, not just with children, but with adults. They participated in the evening all-ages-together worship. The couple sitting next to me told me something. During this activity, they realized they had been practicing poor communication skills in their 40 years of marriage.

They sat across from each other. The goal was to communicate what each had on a board they held. They couldn't do it. They experienced more challenges during an all-ages-together activity. The goal was to create a form to share with your small

group, answering questions with only a nod for yes or no. Although they weren't supposed to talk to directly to one another during the activity, the man called his wife on his cell phone to tell her "he got it." He wanted to share his success with her.

It was a wonderful experience for the children and adults. Jim and Andi have taken the peace mobile to schools, festivals, malls, shopping areas, and family camps (reunions). They have kicked-off vacation Bible schools and taken it to campgrounds. Bible school registrations increased because kids got excited about what would happen that week.

Jim and Andi are on fire to share the peace of Christ where they live. And they are willing to travel. They love sharing Christ's mission, our mission—with children and adults, helping them develop communication skills that bring peace.

Discuss Together

- How might the Atlanta congregation's peace mobile relate to children's needs in your neighborhood, town, or city?
- How could you or your congregation get involved?
- What might be some risks and rewards for you or your congregation in starting a peace ministry similar to the peace mobile?

Pursue Peace on Earth Stories

Story #2:

Seek Justice, Create Peacemakers

Peacemaking at Work

By Susan, Midwest USA (from a letter written to Sandee Gamet, International Headquarters Peacebuilding Ministries)

The course I took with you became very practically useful when my family traveled to from the Chicago area to Phoenix, Arizona, a couple of years ago. My husband Rob's daughter Heather (from his first marriage) was 32 years old and dying of an extended illness. She was in hospice. Her life expectancy was measured in months. Rob and Heather had not been in contact for years. There was hurt on both sides and we were bringing our 18-year-old quadruplets to see their half-sister, who they hadn't seen since they were 8 years old. The kids had been in touch over the Internet but Heather and Rob were long-estranged. I remember knowing that I needed to bring the peace of Christ to the situation so I prayed about it as we prepared for the trip.

I don't know how the idea occurred to me to contact you but that's what I did. Sandee, you listened to the very complex situation and were able to give me counseling time over the phone. I wrote down the pointers you gave. They became the framework for the reunion and meeting between Rob, Heather, me, and the hospice social worker. I enlisted the social worker's help because I wanted a professional there who could provide backup if we needed it.

We started with prayer. I set the tone by saying that Rob was to listen to what Heather needed to say first without responding or defending himself. He was able to do this but it never would have happened if I had not been able to prepare him in advance. Your help and guidance made my role in the meeting more effective than it would have been. I am eternally grateful that you were there to guide me. The Lord blessed us with divine presence. Heather needed to know she could count on Rob to be there as she

faced death. He was anxious about committing to that but they were able to agree to e-mail each other and talk on the phone. They set up a certain number of contacts per week. As it turned out, they exceeded this number. Heather contacted both of us to say good-bye just before her death.

The uniting of two branches of a family who had never met one another was an amazing thing to see. Our kids met Heather's mother, her husband, their daughter, and her fiancé. We felt like a family and are still in touch.

I know the peacebuilding program offered through Community of Christ made the difference and allowed me to learn and share skills that my family needed so desperately. The peacebuilding skills I learned blessed beyond expectation what otherwise might have been a negative situation.

There are many ways that I have applied the skills I learned in the peacebuilding classes on a daily basis as I deal with my patients and co-workers in a geriatric psychiatry unit. The listening skills and clear communication that I learned from your workshops contribute greatly to what I am able to offer.

I feel blessed by God as I endeavor to share Christ's peace with others.

Discuss Together

- What does reconciliation mean to you?
- How could building conflict-resolution skills benefit you, your congregation, neighborhood, town, or city?

Pursue Peace on Earth Stories

Story #3:

Unite with Others to Make Peace

Midtown Mamas

By Barbara Carter, "Abolish Poverty, End Suffering—Unite with Others to Make Peace," *Herald*, August 2011, 17, adapted

Some people in Community of Christ congregations work in soup kitchens, food banks, and clothing ministries, and provide roving shelters for homeless people. Others write letters, make phone calls, and visit representatives, senators, and council members on behalf of people who have no voice. Those who are poor often have no voice. When we feed them, we feed their minds, as well as their bodies. When we clothe them we give them dignity. That leads to empowerment for justice.

Ecumenical work does not happen by congregations. It happens by people who sense a kick in the gut or a story that calls them to join others who believe in Christ's mission; who believe we are called to take care of one another, especially those silenced by poverty or injustice.

A few weeks ago, I attended Ecumenical Advocacy Days, a conference for global peace and justice in Washington, D.C. I sat at a table with people who believe it is Christ's mission to alleviate poverty and bring justice to all. I learned of a group called Midtown Mamas. They live in one of the most-impooverished areas of St. Louis, Missouri. A person from a faith community went to them and said, "If we gave you a \$5,000 grant, how would you start micro-lending in your neighborhood?"

Most everybody would say micro-lending would not work in the USA. It wouldn't work because we live in a culture of entitlement. We live in a culture of receiving handouts and walking away. But this person said, "I think it can work."

She went to a group of women in midtown and said, "If we were to give you a \$5,000 grant, what would you do with it? How would you set it up?" Six women started the group. They said, "The biggest cripples of our neighborhood are the things that are unexpected, such as your car brakes going out."

That's a big one because the car gets them to the job that brings the paycheck. If their brakes go out, they don't have money to pay for new brakes. But,

they can pay \$35 a month. So these women set up micro-lending.

Over the last two years they've made 36 loans. They don't charge interest. They do charge a processing fee. But if you pay the loan back in 11 months instead of 12, the fee is waived. Of the 36 loans, six defaulted. Four were paid through the seventh month; two walked away after receiving the money. The women laughed and said, "Oh yeah, we learned about that." Those two loans were among the first 10 they granted.

Amazing things are happening within this community because people now have a voice to empower people. They created a community garden. They go to empty lots and plant whatever will grow. And if you live in midtown, you can go and pick.

They harvest the rest and take the food to shut-ins. The six women have grown to 20 women because the neighborhood has stabilized. Now developers want to buy property. These 20 women said, "No way, we are the developers of our neighborhood." They are working with an architect to build affordable housing.

These women are amazing. Somebody went to them and believed in micro-lending, believed in building relationships, gave them the power to stand up, the power for voice. That's God's vision of justice. When we join others who believe in the mission of Christ, this is what happens.

Discuss Together

- Is your congregation or mission center currently working with other faith communities and organizations that are dedicated to the pursuit of peace and justice? If yes, how has that had an impact on your congregation? If not, how might your congregation get involved with others?
- How could this effort contribute to other faith communities' appreciation of Community of Christ's understanding of the peaceable kingdom?

Pursue Peace on Earth Stories

Story #4:

Establish the Temple as a Center to Promote Peacemaking

Dedicated to the Pursuit of Peace

The group, visiting the Temple in Independence, Missouri, for the first time, walked up the marble staircase and drew close to a wall featuring 18 names and faces. Each of the 18 people had received the Community of Christ International Peace Award.

A hush spread as the group scanned the pictures. Their eyes fell on a beautiful bronze-and-glass sculpture of two hands holding a world globe. They each stepped closer and began to read the short biographies...

- (2011) Terry Tempest Williams—a visionary author, naturalist, and activist taking a stand on behalf of life, land, and people
- (2010) Greg Mortenson—school builder and director of the Central Asia Institute
- (2009) Dr. Halima Bashir—advocate for the health and safety of women and children in Darfur
- (2008) Bren Dubay and Norris Harris, Koinonia Community—exemplary peacemaking signal community
- (2007) Dolores Huerta—non-violent advocate for farm workers' rights
- (2007) Father Virgilio Elizondo—parent of US Hispanic theology affirming inclusion of all
- (2006) Howard Zehr—pioneer in restorative justice
- (2005) Craig Kielburger—founder of Free the Children (youngest recipient at age 22)
- (2004) Rev. James Lawson—civil rights activist who helped desegregate Tennessee through lunch counter sit-ins
- (2003) Dr. Jean Vanier—founder of L'Arche, an international movement that creates communities for adults with developmental disabilities
- (2002) Ela Gandhi—non-violent opponent of apartheid in South Africa who was under house arrest for nine years
- (2001) Dr. Swanee Hunt—founder of Women Waging Peace; works with women and children in Bosnia
- (2000) Dr. John Paul Lederach—international mediator and founding director of the Conflict Transformation Program at Eastern Mennonite University, USA
- (1999) Dr. Jane Goodall—primate researcher, international environmentalist, and educator
- (1998) Dr. Marie Fortune—minister, founder, and director of the Seattle, Washington, Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence
- (1997) Senator Juan M. Flavio—senator, medical doctor, and development worker among the poor; former secretary of Department of Health in the Philippines
- (1995) Marian Wright Edelman—national advocate for disadvantaged children through the Children's Defense Fund
- (1994) Dr. M. Scott Peck and Lily Ho Peck—founders of the Foundation for Community Encouragement; M. Scott Peck is the author of *The Road Less Traveled* and other titles
- (1993) Dr. Jehan Sadat—social reformer; advocate of emancipation projects for women in Egypt

"I didn't know your church was involved in this kind of work." "It's amazing."

Bestowing a Community of Christ International Peace Award is only one way the church shares the peace of Jesus Christ, one way the church seeks to establish the peaceable reign of Christ. What the visitors saw and felt as they toured the Temple was the connection of people living out the mission of bringing the peace of Christ to all nations and all peoples.

Discuss Together

- Briefly share your experience of visiting the Temple or another place whose purpose is peacemaking.
- How has your congregation included peace as a part of individual and congregational life?



Mission Initiative: Develop Disciples to Serve

Session Focus

Equipping men, women, and children to be true and living expressions of the life, ministry, and continuing presence of Christ in the world.

Focus Scriptures

Doctrine and Covenants 164:3a–c

Objectives

The learner will...

- be introduced to four goals (strategies) for developing disciples to serve.
- hear stories of ministries already happening that support this mission initiative.
- connect this mission initiative to his or her life and congregation.

Materials

- Chart paper listing the goals for developing disciples to serve: Help All Ages Deepen Their Discipleship; Empower Priesthood for Mission; Grow Pastors and Leaders for Mission; Train and Send Ministers throughout the World
- One copy for each participant of the Develop Disciples to Serve stories and the “I believe in congregational life” sheet (at the end of this lesson)
- One piece of paper and pencil or pen for each participant

Resources

“The Mission Matters Most!” President Stephen M. Veazey’s April 2011 address to the church. Different formats are available:

- Download video or audio—www.CofChrist.org/broadcast/2011archive.asp#mission
- DVD—contact your pastor, congregational financial officer, or mission center president for a copy
- Print copy—have people bring their May 2011 *Herald* or make copies of the article found on pages 10–18

Doctrine and Covenants, including Section 164
Hymns of the Saints (HS)
Sing a New Song (NS)

1 Gather

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson.

Read Doctrine and Covenants 164:3a–c:

- a. All church members are urged to examine the depth of your baptismal commitment. Having been baptized and confirmed, become fully immersed in the servant life of Christ.
- b. Live the meaning of your baptism daily as you grow in the skills and qualities of discipleship. Actively and generously support the ministries of the church, which was divinely established to restore Christ’s covenant of peace, even the Zion of your hopes.
- c. The Eternal Christ invites those who have yet to experience the blessings of baptism to “Follow me in the way of righteousness and peace.” Be baptized of water and the Spirit and discover your spiritual home as a fully functioning member of the body.

Invite the group to look at the previously prepared chart paper listing the goals for developing disciples to serve. Ask them what they remember about their baptism, confirmation, or other commitment experience. Invite those who would like to share their memories with the group.

Sing together, “According to the Gifts That God” *HS* 363.

2 Engage

Invites exploration and interaction.

View the video clip or DVD from time counter 29:57—32:50 (2.9 minutes). This covers both Develop Disciples to Serve and Experience Congregations in Mission, or read the portion of the written text on Develop Disciples to Serve from President Veazey’s address.

Divide into four groups. Assign each group one of the Develop Disciples to Serve goals. Ask each group to read and consider one of the stories about ministries that support the mission initiative Develop Disciples to Serve. As time allows, ask one person from each group to summarize their story and discussion for the larger group.

Story #1: Help All Ages Deepen Their Discipleship

Read aloud, “Developing disciples means learning—and practicing—a new way of life that extends Christ’s mission of evangelism, compassion, and justice and peacemaking ministries into the world. Holistic discipleship is foundational to achieving God’s divine purposes. Your leadership will help grow disciples that are equipped and sent in Christ’s mission.”

Ask the first group to read and consider Story #1—“Fulfill God’s Ultimate Vision.”

Consider:

- Who was a significant person who helped deepen your discipleship?
- What did they say or do that made a difference?
- What common threads are found among your group’s memories?

Story #2: Empower Priesthood for Mission

Read aloud, “Priesthood is a sacred covenant that involves the highest form of stewardship of body, mind, and spirit. As priesthood continues to magnify their callings through spiritual growth, study, generosity, and fully-accountable ministry, the Spirit

will expand their capacity to receive and give God’s grace.”

Ask the second group to read and consider Story #2—“Discipleship Studies.”

Consider:

- How does your congregation support the lifelong learning of your priesthood members and leaders?
- How can priesthood members in your congregation explore ecumenical participation and interfaith relationships?
- In what ways can priesthood members “receive and give God’s grace” through understanding Jane Gardner’s statement that “we are all teachers and learners”?
- How do you as a priesthood member keep in touch with where the church is moving? How do you help interpret the church’s message to the members of your congregation and those who are seeking?

Story #3: Grow Pastors and Leaders for Mission

Read aloud, “Becoming a pastor or congregational leader means bringing spiritual leadership, relationship-building skills, and guidance to support the servant ministry of others. Inspired leadership is critically needed and can equip all ages to become part of a new creation that takes on the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.”

Ask the third group to read and consider Story #3—“Pastors and Leaders Project.”

Consider:

- What are the leadership development needs and opportunities for your congregation’s pastor, pastoral team, and congregational leaders?
- What is the future for your congregation? How has your pastor or congregational leadership team shared “a sense of call to be shaped” for the future of your congregation?
- In what ways have you been “disturbed by God’s vision”? How can you invite others on a journey to be shaped, formed, and changed by God’s vision?

- What are the opportunities for engaging and including young adults in leadership within your congregation?

Story#4: Train and Send Ministers for Mission throughout the World

Read aloud, “Disciples of Jesus Christ are sent into their schools, work places, neighborhoods, towns, and cities to share their witness and invitation, compassionate ministries, and justice and peace. As more individuals receive education and training, many more vibrant witnesses will be sent to share Christ’s peace and embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ.”

Ask the fourth group to read and consider Story #4—“World Service Corps.”

Consider:

- What is one place or one cause in the world where your gifts and interests could make a real difference?
- In what ways do you approach learning with a sense of anticipation for what you want to experience? How has this anticipation enhanced your experience?
- Describe a time when you were anxious to share about what you learned. How was your life changed by that learning and sharing? How did it touch someone else’s life?

3 Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing.

Remind the group of Ron Harmon’s statement, “I believe in congregational life. I’m here because a small group shared with me about Jesus Christ in powerful and transforming ways on the west side of Cleveland, Ohio. If not for them and how they lived out the gospel, I wouldn’t be here.”

Distribute the “I believe in congregational life” sheet (next page). Allow time for the group to individually list on their sheet how their congregation helps form disciples to serve. Invite groups of two or three to share their lists with one another. Offer a prayer of gratitude for the blessing that is your congregation.

4 Send

Explores how the lesson might be lived out.

Read aloud, “Called to Be Filled and Share”:

As disciples of Jesus we feel called to respond to many people and needs. Remembering the call to the inward journey can restore us in times of physical or spiritual depletion. Imagine or feel an empty vessel at the center of your being (a clay jar, a crystal vase, a metal bucket or other container). Imagine drawing something out of the bucket to share with another person, but as you reach down inside you find only a tiny pool of stagnant liquid. You are very thirsty and dry; empty. Listen prayerfully to the words of Psalm 42:1–2 NRSV: “As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.”

—Disciple Formation Guide (www.CofChrist.org/dfg/ad_called_continued.asp#calledtobe)

5 Bless

Prayer of blessing, praise, thanksgiving, and hope.

Stand and sing together “As the Deer” in NS 2.

Amen.

“I believe in congregational life.”

List below how the congregation helps form disciples to serve.

Develop Disciples to Serve stories

Story #1

Fulfill God's Ultimate Vision

By Andrew Fox, "Develop Disciples to Serve—Equip Individuals for Christ's Mission," *Herald*, July 2011, 20, adapted

"Why don't you travel home in Uncle Andrew's car?" my sister, Amanda, said to my 9-year-old niece, Cara. Amanda then turned to me with a knowing smile and said, "She's got some questions she wants to ask you."

Shortly into the journey the first question came. "I'll start with an easy one," Cara said, "Can angels fly?"

I looked to my wife, Cheryl, sitting beside me in the passenger seat. She offered no help, so I mumbled some vague answer of my own. More questions followed, including, "Can you get married in heaven?" and "If we are all God's children, are we as closely related to God as Jesus?"

I shared my personal beliefs to some of the questions. To others I responded, "I'm not sure; what do you think?" Finally Cara got to the end of her questions, and I breathed a sigh of relief.

Then she said, "Oh, I've got one more. What is God?"

I've thought a lot about that journey and Cara's questions over recent weeks. The questions children ask as they ponder spiritual matters are important, and we should encourage them. We help children develop their discipleship as we engage them in discussion about the wonders of the world and its Creator. No question should be laughed off as trivial. Our responses hopefully will help them to continue the journey of discipleship.

Jean, a loyal and dedicated member of the church for more than 50 years, never desired or expected to be a priesthood member. About two years ago I had the joyful experience of presenting Jean with a call to the office of priest. Following the first reaction of shock, she spent several weeks in prayer and discernment

before contacting me to say, "If this is how God wants me to serve, then I am willing to accept."

My heart leaped with joy.

Jean's congregation has only a handful of members. Before her ordination, Jean's husband, Roy, was the only active priesthood member.

Shortly after Jean's ordination I visited in the homes of some members with Roy. Returning to Roy and Jean's home we found Jean sitting at a table, surrounded by Bibles and other books.

"I'll preach on Sunday, if it will help," Jean said to Roy. I knew this was a leap of faith for Jean, one of the humblest people I know. This was stepping from her comfort zone to help her husband, and serve her congregation and God.

A major goal of the mission initiatives is to "fulfill God's ultimate vision as we help all ages deepen their discipleship."

Cara and Jean are at very different points in their lives. I am thrilled to be part of a church that acknowledges the discipleship journeys of the young and not-so-young are of value and need to be supported and encouraged.

Discuss Together

- Who was a significant person who helped deepen your discipleship?
- What did they say or do that made a difference?
- What common threads are found among your group's memories?

Develop Disciples to Serve stories

Story #2

Discipleship Studies

By Judith Yager, Community of Christ Leadership Formation Ministries

Attendance at the Ministerial Education and Discipleship Studies (MEADS) session, held August 1–5, 2011, at the Temple in Independence, Missouri, hit a record high. Seventy students gathered from several places across the United States to attend the five-day formational experience. Several of the class members were from denominations other than Community of Christ. This ecumenical participation enriched the discussions, allowing us to share worship practices and experiences from many traditions. Apostle Dale Luffman, ecumenical and interfaith officer, expressed his hope that the MEADS program would continue to develop these interfaith relationships and networks.

Nine students were honored for the completion of their MEADS certificate. With a minimum of three years and 12 courses of study, each student read numerous books, completed research papers, absorbed new information, ideas and applications. They learned about the broader Christian tradition, scriptures, church history, polity, and public ministry. Even more important, they shared as a community of learners who journeyed together.

Young adult Scott Blair, a current student, added, “MEADS always leaves me with hope, excitement, and a desire to become a vivid reflection of Christ in the world.”

Becky L. Savage, of the First Presidency, in her remarks to the graduates said, “This group was blessed with participants who were church employees, participants supported by grant funding for African American leaders, and women and men who chose to attend to expand their capacity for ministry and discipleship. The First Presidency is thrilled to honor each one and grateful for each one’s dedication and commitment to lifelong learning. We know the church will be blessed through your preparation and expanded ministries.”

Jane Gardner, instructor of the worship course, summarized her experience. “We tried an experiment—offering an elective that goes beyond the basic MEADS curriculum. I made the assumption at the outset that all 30 of the students were motivated to learn more about worship and ready to go deeper. I was not disappointed! What a great group of students! The opportunity to work with people who are passionate about improving congregational worship was an unforgettable treasure. We were all teachers *and* learners.”

Elaine Adams from Albuquerque, New Mexico, had this to say, “I think it is important for those of us who live away from International Headquarters to experience courses like the worship course because it keeps us in touch with where the church is moving and helps those of us who are leaders to interpret the church’s message to our congregations.”

Discuss Together

- How does your congregation support the lifelong learning of your priesthood members and leaders?
- How can priesthood members in your congregation explore ecumenical participation and interfaith relationships?
- In what ways can priesthood members “receive and give God’s grace” through understanding Jane Gardner’s statement that “we are all teachers *and* learners”?
- How do priesthood members in your congregation keep in touch with where the church is moving? How do they help interpret the church’s message to the members of your congregation and those who are seeking?

Develop Disciples to Serve stories

Story #3

Pastors and Leaders Project

By Ron Harmon, Council of Twelve Apostles, “Develop Disciples to Serve—Grow Pastors and Leaders for Mission,” *Herald*, August 2011, 19, adapted

I’m privileged to co-chair with President Dave Schaal a wonderful steering committee. The members are able to serve because of the vision created through the Co-Missioned Pastor Initiative (CPI). The foundation laid there was because someone stepped forward and said, “I want to be involved,” helping fund that vision.

Well, there’s a desire to expand that vision. As President Stephen M. Veazey announced at the 2010 World Conference, another donor has contributed \$4 million to expand CPI in the United States fields.

We want to take what we learned from CPI and look at how we can expand pastor and leader education, primarily throughout the US, but also in other parts of the world.

I believe in congregational life. I’m here because a small group shared with me about Jesus Christ in powerful and transforming ways on the west side of Cleveland, Ohio. If not for them and how they lived out the gospel, I wouldn’t be here.

So, I believe there’s a future for congregations. We’ve heard stories of how God’s vision can disturb congregations as they sense a call to be shaped. In some cases it even calls them to leave their building and move where they sense God calling them.

In all those stories we find a common element. It’s leadership. It’s someone who began to be disturbed by God’s vision and invited others on a journey of being shaped, formed, and changed by that vision.

That’s what we’re about with pastors and leaders education. This isn’t about training people to heroically swoop into a struggling congregation and turn everything around. This is about training leaders to journey alongside people. This is about training leaders to cultivate congregational environments where God’s vision and what God wants can disturb our lives. Not only the lives of people in our congregations, but in our neighborhoods; in all places where Community of Christ has presence.

The pastors and leaders project has two dimensions. The first is providing a training guide for pastors and leaders.

Phase two is expanding the CPI emphasis and asking, “How do we help pastors and congregational leaders discern, lead, and sustain mission in their local context? How do we journey with them in doing that?”

So it’s not just about training and development. It’s about how we then apply what we’ve learned in leading and discerning mission in the congregation and neighborhood. We will partner with mission centers and their leaders in both phases.

We look forward to expanding pastor and leader education so we might have congregations where people’s lives are disturbed, enlivened; so people will sense the call to embody the five mission initiatives. And we’re looking forward to partnering with you.

Finally, this project will bring an important connection with young adults. We’ll look for opportunities to partner with Community of Christ leadership programs at Graceland University that will create opportunities in the field.

Discuss Together

- What are the leadership development needs and opportunities for your congregation’s pastor, pastoral team, and congregational leaders?
- What is the future for your congregation? How has your pastor or congregational leadership team shared “a sense of call to be shaped” for the future of your congregation?
- In what ways have you been “disturbed by God’s vision”? How can you invite others on a journey to be shaped, formed, and changed by God’s vision?
- What are the opportunities for engaging and including young adults in leadership within your congregation?

Develop Disciples to Serve stories

Story #4

World Service Corps

By Jeanette Hicks, program specialist, World Service Corps

They come to the USA from all over the world. And each year they share testimonies with visitors to Community of Christ historic sites in places like Kirtland, Ohio, and Nauvoo, Illinois.

This year's World Service Corps volunteers were Issac Bennet Joshua Prince Daniel from India, Natalia Deyanira Martinez Rosales from Nicaragua, and Euralie Heiarri Fatitiri from French Polynesia.

On arriving in Independence, Missouri, in late March, each spent a week with my husband and me. We helped them adjust to life in the USA, adapting to our food and customs. They spent their days in class at the Temple, expanding their understanding of church history, the sacraments, and the enduring principles.

Although the international volunteers always come with anticipation of what they will find, they also come with a list of things and places they want to do and see. This year was no different.

They were excited to tour the Temple, Auditorium, and various locations in the Kansas City area. Among their requests was to see a working farm. So as we explored our early history in Far West, Missouri, we detoured slightly to a farm outside Kingston, Missouri. Gathering eggs and feeding calves also can be a learning experience.

All three volunteers then safely settled in Kirtland. They spent their remaining time working with Ron Romig, the site director, to share with visitors the story of the Kirtland Temple. Each volunteer touched

lives. And they were touched by others who shared their own testimonies. In turn the volunteers go home and share their testimonies with their families and congregations.

Since the beginning of World Service Corps in 1999 many young people have had the opportunity to share with members around the world. The International Guide Program is just one of the opportunities available. We also have a short-term program between June and August and a long-term program available at various times.

What a special way to make a difference to our members in many cultures. I know I have been blessed by the people I've met during my time with World Service Corps.

Discuss Together

- What is one place or one cause in the world where your gifts and interests could make a real difference?
- In what ways do you approach learning with a sense of anticipation for what you want to experience? How has this anticipation enhanced your experience?
- Describe a time when you were anxious to share about what you learned. How was your life changed by that learning and sharing? How did it touch someone else's life?



Mission Initiative: Experience Congregations in Mission

Session Focus

Congregations that are the true and living expressions of Jesus Christ are woven together by the Spirit and are sent into the world as evangelistic witnesses, compassionate ministers, and justice and peacemakers.

Focus Scriptures

Doctrine and Covenants 164:9a–d

Objectives

The learners will...

- be introduced to four goals for experiencing congregations in mission.
- hear stories of ministries already happening that support this mission initiative.
- connect this mission initiative to their lives and congregation.

Materials

- Chart paper listing the goals (strategies) for experiencing congregations in mission: Nurture Congregations of Christ's Love and Peace; Enter God's Presence through Worship; Become a People of Peace, Reconciliation, and Healing of the Spirit
- One copy for each participant of the Experience Congregations in Mission Stories found at the end of this lesson
- Several candles to light and matches for the "respond" part of the lesson

Resources

"The Mission Matters Most!" President Stephen M. Veazey's April 2011 address to the church. Different formats are available:

- Download video or audio—www.CofChrist.org/broadcast/2011/archive.asp#mission
- DVD—contact your pastor, congregational financial officer, or mission center president for a copy
- Print copy—have people bring their May 2011 *Herald* or make copies of the article found on pages 10–18

Bible (NRSV)

Doctrine and Covenants, including Section 164

Hymns of the Saints (HS)

Sing a New Song (NS)

1 Gather

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson.

Invite the group to look at the previously prepared chart paper listing the goals for experiencing congregations in mission.

Read Doctrine and Covenants 164:9a–d:

9 a. Beloved children of the Restoration, your continuing faith adventure with God has been divinely led, eventful, challenging, and sometimes surprising to you. By the grace of God, you are poised to fulfill God's ultimate vision for the church.

b. When your willingness to live in sacred community as Christ's new creation exceeds your natural fear of spiritual and relational transformation, you will become who you are called to be. The rise of Zion the beautiful, the peaceful reign of Christ, awaits your wholehearted response to the call to make and steadfastly hold to God's covenant of peace in Jesus Christ.

c. This covenant entails sacramental living that respects and reveals God's presence and reconciling activity in creation. It requires whole-life stewardship dedicated to expanding the church's restoring ministries, especially those devoted to asserting the worth of persons, protecting the sacredness of creation, and relieving physical and spiritual suffering.

d. If you truly would be Community of Christ, then embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ.

Pause for one minute of silence. Then as a prayer, sing or read the words to "Beloved Community of God" HS 414.

2 Engage

Invites exploration and interaction.

View again the video clip or DVD from time counter 29:57—32:50 (2.9 minutes). This covers both Develop Disciples to Serve and Experience Congregations in Mission, or reread the portion of the written text on Experience Congregations in Mission from President Veazey's address.

Divide into three groups. Assign each group one of the Experience Congregations in Missions goals. Ask each group to read and consider one of the stories about ministries that support the mission initiative Experience Congregations in Mission. As time allows, ask one person from each group to summarize their story and discussion for the larger group.

STORY #1: Nurture Congregations of Christ's Love and Peace

Read aloud, "Congregations are called to grow in the skills and qualities of discipleship that will deepen their love for the world and their dedication to share Christ's peace. As congregations engage in spiritual practices and training, they will deepen their devotion to God and experience God's direction in powerful ways."

Ask the first group to read and consider Story #1—"A Dozen Girls."

Consider:

- Are there members of your congregation who wonder where they fit in and are looking for ways to serve?
- How might your congregation's response help deepen their dedication to share Christ's peace?

STORY #2: Enter God's Presence through Worship

Read aloud, "Gathering to worship makes us aware of God's abundant grace that is with us in worship and in each moment of living. Through worship and the sharing of sacraments, congregations become sacramental offerings for the blessing, healing, and peace of creation."

Ask the second group to read and consider Story #2—"Taizé Ministry."

Consider:

- What is your strongest memory of a worship experience where you were keenly aware of God's abundant grace? How does it continue to influence your discipleship?
- In what ways does your congregation use the church's *Worship Resources* to guide their planning?

STORY #3: Become a People of Peace, Reconciliation, and Healing of the Spirit

Read aloud, "As congregational members become ensigns of Christ's peace, ambassadors of reconciliation, and ministers of healing, they express the living presence of Christ in their congregations and in the world. Restoring people to healthy or righteous relationships with God, others, themselves, and creation is at the heart of why congregations exist."

Ask the third group to read and consider Story #3—"Mission in Neighborhoods."

Consider:

- Reflect on the calendar that keeps your congregation busy. Which activities found there focus on restoring people's relationship with God, others, and themselves?
- How might preparing for and receiving a congregational blessing help focus the giftedness of your congregation?

3 Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing.

Dim the lights in your space and light several candles. Remind the group of Kris Judd's story of a congregation in Canada that hosted a Taizé worship service in their community. Ask if there is someone in the group who has participated in Taizé worship and might be willing to share their experience. Point out that two of the songs in the *Sing a New Song* hymn book are Taizé songs: "Eat This Bread" (#8) and "Jesus, Remember Me" (#26). Select one of these and sing it together several times. Remind the group to use this repetition to aid their meditation and prayer.

4 Send

Explores how the lesson might be lived out.

Read aloud Romans 14:19, "Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding." How is God calling you to share loving community with others? How are you being called to extend the blessings of community to others?

5 Bless

Prayer of blessing, praise, thanksgiving, and hope.

Stand together for this sending forth, "May we be open to the many ways we are called to create and share sacred community. May the Holy Spirit continue to bless you as you respond to the Spirit's promptings. Shalom!"

Experience Congregations in Mission Stories

STORY #1

A Dozen Girls

By Jane M. Gardner, High Priest Quorum president, "Experience Congregations in Mission—Equip Congregations for Christ's Mission," *Herald*, July 2011, 21, adapted

In a small factory town there was a Community of Christ congregation that counted it a good Sunday when 25 attended worship. At one point in the not-too-distant past, this congregation was blessed with a dozen girls within a five-year age range.

The congregation decided to make these kids *the* priority—programmatically and budget-wise. It put on hold, deferred, or vacated other expenditures to fund this priority. For example, the congregation:

- Made money from the budget available for every kid to go to camp, including friends they wanted to bring. Going to family camp was a tradition, and the congregation found ways for all the kids to be present, even if their families couldn't attend.
- Conducted special fund-raising to help pay for charter bus trips to Nauvoo, Illinois, and to the Temple in Independence, Missouri.
- Provided transportation for the kids to attend the mission center's Young Peacemakers Club every month.

In addition, weekly worship services purposefully involved all ages. These kids were important to the annual Christmas service, starting at the church in worship and traveling to all the care facilities in town to bring ministry and sing Christmas carols.

One Sunday at an afternoon business meeting, my husband Bob, the pastor, noticed more voting-age kids were present than adults. He commented to me that the kids could out-vote the adults!

During the election of congregational officers, a 10-year-old raised her hand and asked Bob, "What does a secretary do?" Bob launched into a description, but the girl quickly lost patience and said, "Oh, never mind." On our drive home, we both returned to her question and realized deeper questions rested under the surface. Questions like: What can I do in the congregation? Where do I fit in?

Her question birthed the idea to apprentice each kid to a congregational leader. For three months, we assigned each girl to work with a particular person (pastor, financial officer, worship planner, pastoral care, etc.). We rotated the assignments each quarter for about two years.

Fast-forward several years. At World Conference, Bob and I were in the Conference Chamber when we heard our names shouted from the balcony. We saw a group of young women from that small congregation—attending World Conference! One had been to Korea with World Service Corps for a summer; another recently had been ordained; another went to Bolivia with World Service Corps for two years.

When she returned, this last woman found the factory town now had a large Spanish-speaking population. Building on her World Service Corps experience, she started an English as a Second Language program at the church. The congregation couldn't help teach, but it committed to babysit for the children of students.

Within a few weeks, the congregation also decided to organize a Young Peacemakers Club. It was well-received by the kids and their parents.

What an interesting journey in mission for these young women and the congregation. The prioritization of these youth impacted the World Church, mission center, and the congregation's mission. Most importantly, in that town and around the globe, it transformed lives.

Discuss Together

- Are there members of your congregation who wonder where they fit in and are looking for ways to serve?
- How can your congregation respond to deepen their dedication to share Christ's peace?

Experience Congregations in Mission Stories

STORY #2

Taizé Ministry

By Kris Judd, missionary coordinator, Canada and Pacific Mission Field, "Wiarnton Extends Taizé Ministry," *Herald*, July 2011, 7, adapted

The Wiarnton Congregation in Ontario, Canada, opened itself to the community in a meaningful way during the Easter season. Pastor Linda Porter took a class on Taizé worship during World Conference 2010 and wanted to share the blessings with others. Following discussion and participation in Taizé worship, the congregation held a workshop for members of the congregation and community.

The congregation invited anyone interested to join in weekly worship. Congregation members joined with people from other denominations and those not associated with a church home in sharing sacred space, meditation, prayer, and music. The Wiarnton Congregation members blended invitation, worship, and ecumenical relationships as they and their community journeyed through the Lenten season.

What is Taizé worship? This is the worship style of the Taizé Community, founded in 1940 in France. Taizé music emphasizes simple phrases, usually lines from Psalms or other parts of the Bible, repeated and sometimes also sung in canon. The repetition is intended to aid meditation and prayer.

Because they are repetitive and quickly learned by the congregation, Taizé chants often are sung without printed words. Depending on the setting and congregation, a vocal leader or a choir may introduce the chant and then invite the congregation to join.

Attention must be given to the worship setting. Subdued lighting and candles may help create a sacred space. This style of worship service is more powerful when the people learn of it beforehand.

Information on the Taizé Community and worship resources can be found at www.taize.fr. Audio samples of Taizé songs are at www.taize.fr/en_article681.html?var_recherche=audio+sample.

Discuss Together

- What is your strongest memory of a worship experience where you were keenly aware of God's abundant grace? How does that experience continue to influence your discipleship?
- In what ways does your congregation use the church's *Worship Resources* to guide their planning?

Experience Congregations in Mission Stories

STORY #3

Mission in Neighborhoods

By Keith McMillan, president of seventy, "Experience Congregations in Mission—Nurture Congregations of Christ's Love and Peace," *Herald*, August 2011, 20, adapted

I have been fortunate to see how mission transforms the lives of people in congregations as we nurture, support, empower, and help them recognize their giftedness to do mission in neighborhoods.

So I am excited to tell you how a congregation recognized its own potential. Several years ago I was in the pastorate of Village Heights Congregation in Independence, Missouri. It was a good congregation—probably like the one you attend—of people who worship and do things within the church walls that are very, very fulfilling. But we recognized the giftedness of our people was being underutilized.

How do we, as leaders, empower congregations to do things in their neighborhoods? That was our question as a leadership team. We came up with a simple phrase to help us get to that stage: pray, discern, and act.

We began to pray as a congregation. We decided one of the best ways to recognize our giftedness was to have a congregational blessing. Over a six-week period with an evangelist we began a visioning project, knowing we had the gifts to do what we were called to do in our neighborhood.

A scripture says "... seek and ye shall find, knock and the door shall be opened, ask and it shall be given." You better be careful if you're asking because God's going to tell you what you need to do in your neighborhood or in your field. So you better be willing to act. We discerned what we thought God was calling us to do. And then we courageously, sometimes timidly, moved forward.

Now 100 kids come on Tuesday nights to the Jesus and Me program. Tom Cochran has taken it to a new level in the mission center, with the effort spreading to Boys & Girls Clubs.

I cannot tell you the transformation that happened in the lives of young people, who never would've experienced Community of Christ had we not prayed, discerned, and then stepped into an impoverished neighborhood right across the street from our church building. That was scary for a middle-class, white congregation.

When for the first time I walked into the office of the woman who ran the Boys & Girls Club, I said I was from Community of Christ. She said, "You know what? I've heard your church's name. Nobody from your church has ever darkened our door before."

I said that was going to change. And it did. I'm encouraged as we talk about mission because your congregation, your mission center, is exactly like Village Heights was for me.

Gifted people need to unleash the power of their witness and testimony of Jesus Christ and what we can do in this world. So as we continue to lift up the five mission initiatives, I can only imagine where we're going to go as a church. I'm excited because I think we're poised like never before to do something amazing.

Discuss Together

- Reflect on the calendar that keeps your congregation busy. Which activities found there focus on restoring people's relationship with God, others, and themselves?
- How might preparing for and receiving a congregational blessing help focus the giftedness of your congregation?