



PULPIT

PROJECT

Volume 3 | Fall 2025

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A MESSAGE FROM THE DESIGN TEAM

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In August 2024, two dozen clergy from the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church gathered at the Orlando Science Center. They were invited to pilot a new, untested workshop called “The Pulpit Project.”

For three days, guided by a spirit of creativity and collaboration, these preachers worked together to produce a collection sermon series as a gift to the Church.

Too often, we do this work alone. But we found that when you fill a room with people who are committed to the Gospel, who take the responsibility of preaching seriously, and who are willing to give and receive feedback, you not only leave with greater quantity but quality as well.

This document is the product of the Holy Spirit inspired work of the third cohort, which met in Fall 2025.

Some of these series are more fully-formed, and some are more conceptual. All of them are meant to be jumping-off points that you can adapt for your context. In that way, you join us in the creative collaboration.

Please visit ThePulpitProject.org for more information and to access previous collections.

NOTE: Any referenced URLs were accurate and active at time of publishing. Things may have changed since then.

“If I could do this all day every day, I would. I feel really rejuvenated. It’s exciting to think about doing this in my context, perhaps with my laity.”

Andy Whitaker-Smith, Pulpit Project participant

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GOD IS NOT A BIG JERK!

SERIES TYPE

Discipleship, Seeker Sensitive

SERIES DESCRIPTION

I believe angry God theology has pushed a generation out of the church and away from the Christian faith. The goal of the series is to challenge this popular black and white view of God and to proclaim God's radical love for us and for the world.

FIRST SERMON

Hope Not Fear

Genesis 15:1-6

God continually invites us to "be not afraid." From Abraham to Mary, literally dozens of times throughout the Bible, God implores us to live in hope and not fear. And yet, church after church in America tries to scare people into faith. God is presented as angry, mean, fearsome... well, as a big jerk. God is NOT a big jerk. God is a God of world-changing hope.

SECOND SERMON

Invitation Not Coercion

Matthew 28:16-20

Authentic faith must be freely chosen. Jesus invited the Disciples to reach out to every nation and invite everyone into the joy of faith in God. And yet, church after church in America is trying to coerce people into their religion through legislation and government control. Christian nationalism is both un-American and un-Christian. They preach a controlling God... well, a God who is a big jerk. God is NOT a big jerk. God is a God of

gracious invitation.

THIRD SERMON

A Gift Not a Test

Matthew 22:34-40

What is the purpose of life? Life is a gift from God, and our purpose is to love God and love one another. And yet, church after church in America teaches that life is a test and if you pass (think like they do) you go to heaven; if you fail (don't think like they do) you go to hell. They have turned God into the judge of some sinister game of survivor... well, a judging God who is a big jerk. God is NOT a big jerk. God is a God of the beautiful gift of life.

FOURTH SERMON

Humility Not Arrogance

Philippians 2:1-11

Jesus is the Son of the Living God, and he washed the feet of others. Jesus could have strutted around Jerusalem talking big smack and asking everyone, "Do you know who I am?!" The most powerful human to ever live chose humility over arrogance. And yet, in

church after church in America Christians are arrogantly lifted up as the only privileged people God could possibly love. They present a God who does not love everyone, they present a God who is... well, a big jerk. God is NOT a big jerk. God is a God of deep humility.

FIFTH SERMON

Relational Not Transactional

John 17:20–26

Trinitarian theology is inherently relational. We are called to be in relationship with God and one another the way God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are in relationship. And yet, in church after church in America faith in God has been reduced to a black and white transaction of acceptance or condemnation. They present a very harsh God that is only interested in you reciting the right words. They present a shallow God who is... well, a big jerk. God is NOT a big jerk. God is a God of life-giving relationship.

SIXTH SERMON

Mercy Not Vengeance

Matthew 5:43–48

God created the whole world and everyone in it as an act of love. All people are children of God and loved deeply by God. And yet, in church after church in America they present a God who only loves people like them. And their God burns everyone else in a fiery hell for eternity. This is the pinnacle of a God who is a big jerk. God is NOT a big jerk. God is a God of mercy.

RESOURCES

Series artwork: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1gYqsFbw9WObNXj5Kf7MXPvd5JWRUBQza>

Lead Creator: Mark Holland

THE MIRACLE IS YOU

SERIES TYPE

Discipleship, Seeker Sensitive

SERIES DESCRIPTION

As Christians, most of us are aware that spiritual gifts are divinely given for the betterment of the body of Christ. Understanding them can provide us with such empowerment and clarity. And yet, it is easy to form our own ideas of what constitutes a good and useful gift, and which gifts are less valuable. Using the Disney movie *Encanto*, we'll look at four members of the Madrigal family as examples of certain larger perceptions of gifts in general.

FIRST SERMON

Shimmering Gifts

Romans 3:21-23

Character focus: Isabella (sister, idolized because of beauty, but really longs to be her imperfect self)

Spiritual Gifts: Apostleship, Evangelism, Faith, Miracles, Tongues

Sometimes, using our gifts will lead others to think we have it all together, and that our lives are perfect. It's often those moments that remind us that God made us uniquely ourselves. The best way to serve others is to be authentic...even when that means showing imperfections.

SECOND SERMON

Heavy Gifts

1 Peter 4:8-11

Character focus: Luisa (sister, bears physical responsibility for being the strong one)

Spiritual Gifts: Administration, Healing, Leadership, Shepherding, Teaching

Sometimes, we can feel pressure to bear the

weight of others or outside situations. These moments actually show us how reliant we must be on God to shoulder our burdens.

THIRD SERMON

Uncomfortable Gifts

Joshua 1:6-9

Character focus: Bruno (hidden figure, almost mythical, and yet stayed in the walls holding everything together)

Spiritual Gifts: Discernment, Interpretation of tongues, Knowledge, Prophecy, Wisdom

Sometimes using our gifts may make folks uncomfortable. These moments often reveal to us and others how needed those gifts are after all!

FOURTH SERMON

Insignificant Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:14-27

Character focus: Mirabel (main character, didn't get a gift and secretly is bitter about it - in the end, her ability to hold the family together IS the gift)

Spiritual Gifts: Compassion, Exhortation, Giving, Helping, Servanthood

Lead Creator: Ryan Frack

Sometimes our gifts will seem less significant or important than others. These moments reveal the uniqueness of each gift for the betterment of the whole. It's often the gifts that are most overlooked that are actually most necessary.

RESOURCES

The series uses the Disney movie *Encanto* as an illustration for the larger spiritual gift theme, as well as for each of the specific perceptions of gifts. This movie is certainly a necessary resource for the series.

The UMC spiritual gifts inventory is a helpful tool for people to find out their own spiritual gifts. It is found here: <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/spiritual-gifts-inventory/en>

The discussion of “us versus them” thinking in the Brian McClaren book *Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammad Cross the Road* was really helpful in the third sermon (“Uncomfortable Gifts”).

ALL THE FEELS

SERIES TYPE

Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Together, we will explore the often challenging and complex emotions that inhabit our lives, starting with feelings of envy and jealousy. Through the stories of the Bible, we will delve into how these emotions can impact our relationships and our spiritual journey. Come ready to reflect and be encouraged as we uncover the path toward finding peace and contentment in God's love and grace. Be encouraged as we learn together and embrace the transformational power of faith to turn our hearts toward kindness, patience, and love.

FIRST SERMON

Envy

Genesis 37:3–11, 18–20

Envy can lead to deeper feelings of discontentment that can affect our relationship with God and others. Using the story of Joseph and his brothers, examine what it looks like when envy (and its close emotion cousin jealousy) drive our actions. Consider what it looks like when we cultivate a sense of contentment and gratitude for being God's "beloved creation," as God has made us exactly the way God intended us to be.

SECOND SERMON

Fear

1 Kings 19:1–8

Fear is often cited as being the opposite of faith, but that's not always true. When life circumstances put us in situations where we feel vulnerable or afraid, how do we discern when fear is appropriate and when fear needs to be surrendered to faith? Using the story of Elijah on Mt. Horeb, explore the "thin places" where we encounter God's

presence in the midst of our most frightening moments.

THIRD SERMON

Guilt

Luke 22:54–62

Guilt is defined as "feeling responsible or regretful for a perceived offense, real or imagined." Shame, on the other hand, goes to the core of who we are and can be one of our most destructive emotions. Using Peter's denial of Jesus, examine the difference between guilt and shame and how Jesus calls us beloved in the midst of our brokenness and failures.

FOURTH SERMON

Anger

Mark 11:12–19

Jesus getting angry at the temple challenges the idea that anger is always "bad" or destructive. What does it look like when anger is righteous? What does it look like when anger becomes destructive? How do we discern the difference, and when anger arises, how do we channel it in ways that bring about healing and justice?

FIFTH SERMON

Grief

Luke 19:41-44

Grief is love with nowhere to go. When we experience loss - whether it be death, divorce, dreams not realized, broken relationships, etc. - we are often encouraged to “move on” or “get over it”. But Jesus shows us a different way. In this passage, as Jesus approaches Jerusalem knowing what will happen, he weeps over the city. What does it mean to honor our grief instead of dismissing it?

SIXTH SERMON

Joy

Luke 2:8-20

Joy is different than happiness. Happiness is often dependent on our circumstances, while joy comes from a deep, abiding sense that we are loved by God no matter what. Using the story of Jesus’ birth and the shepherds’ response, explore what it means to live with joy - the kind of joy that endures through all of life’s ups and downs.

*Lead Creators: Rachel Williams and Mark
“Charlie” Charles*

PETER ROCKS (AND SOMETIMES DOESN'T)

SERIES TYPE

Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Peter often rocks in his faith, and he often falls short. And this is the rock Jesus chooses to build his Church upon. This series follows Jesus' faithfulness during Peter's ups and downs. Jesus uses us wherever we are, whether we rock it or get it wrong.

FIRST SERMON

You Are the Christ... To Me.

Mark 8:27-33

Peter's answer to who Jesus is becomes the rock and foundation of Jesus' church. And Peter rocks.

Then he tells Jesus not to fulfill the call to the cross and doesn't rock, becoming a stumbling block to the mission. Which Jesus are we willing to follow?

SECOND SERMON

From "Call Me Out" to "Help me Out"

Matthew 14:22-42

Peter rocks by volunteering Jesus to call him to the water as an act of faith... and then doesn't when he sinks and pleads Jesus to help him in his fear. Do we want what Jesus has to offer?

THIRD SERMON

The Yeses and the Nos

John 21:15-17

Peter promises to lay down his life for Jesus (John 13:36), then denies him 3 times (John

18:17, 25, 26), and then says yes to Jesus 3 times (John 21:15-17).

Peter is exhausting. Jesus stays with him, and even backs up to meet him where he is (agape vs. phileo).

FOURTH SERMON

Build a Rockin' Dwelling? Build the Church instead.

Mark 9:2-8 and Acts 2:14(15-36)

Peter's knee-jerk reaction to God's glory contrasts with his later ability to proclaim the transformative power of the gospel in the midst of God's Spirit.

In the Transfiguration story, we see Peter blurt out a desire to hold onto the moment.

On Pentecost, Peter preached his first sermon, calling on the scriptures and calling people to step into faith in Christ together.

FIFTH SERMON

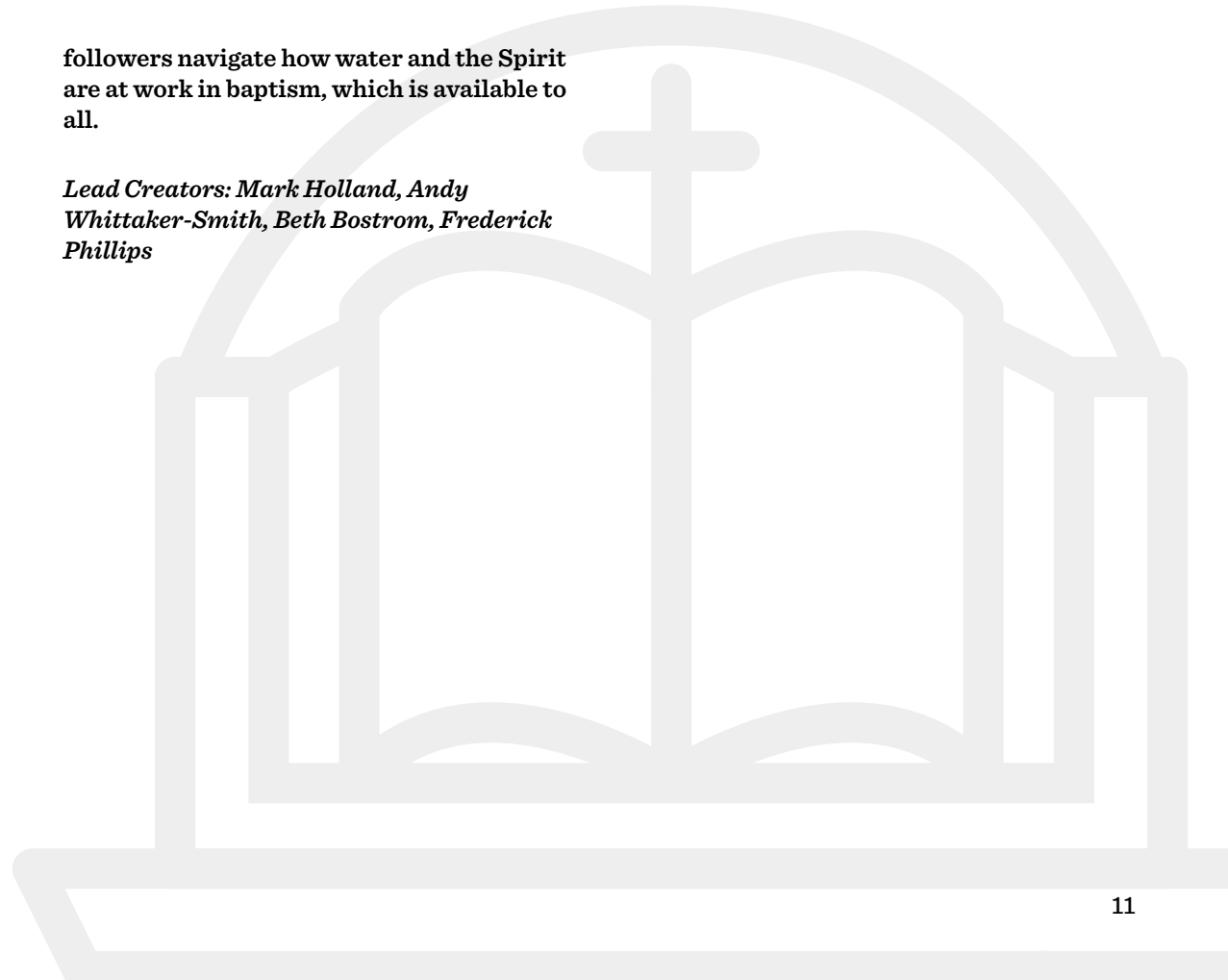
Gentiles Rock! (Peter's boat)

Acts 10:38-48

Peter rocks his own faith and learns that God meets us where we are and works with us directly in our walk. Peter and the Gentile

followers navigate how water and the Spirit are at work in baptism, which is available to all.

Lead Creators: Mark Holland, Andy Whittaker-Smith, Beth Bostrom, Frederick Phillips



DEVIL'S TOOLBOX

SERIES TYPE

Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

The seven deadly sins, while not ever listed directly in the Bible, originated from the Desert Fathers and were later formalized by Pope Gregory I. How do these continue to be an undercurrent within our culture today and how can the church offer a countercultural narrative? How do we find ways to break free of their grasp in our lives?

FIRST SERMON

Pride

1 Corinthians 12:12–31, 1 Corinthians 3:6–8

Part of the mythos of the United States is rugged individualism, which denies the fact that we all need a helping hand and that we have all had help at some point in time or another. The passage on the body of Christ illustrates our interconnected nature and that we cannot view our gifts as any more (or less) important than anyone else.

SECOND SERMON

Envy & Lust

1 Samuel 12:1–7a, Genesis 37:1–11

Both envy and lust seem to center around the worry over what our neighbor has and the desire to possess it for ourselves. It further divides community by separating us based on who has and who wants. There is the challenge of envy as well as the desire of the person who is the object of envy to lean into flaunting what they have. Joseph is the object of envy and, at times, leans into the envy. David and Bathsheba is a story of leaning into lust and Nathan is the one who

confronts and corrects. How can we have our eyes opened, as Nathan did for David, to the areas where we envy or lust over what others have?

THIRD SERMON

Sloth

Exodus 20:8

What is the difference between sloth and Sabbath rest? When is rest healthy, necessary, and helpful? Why do we feel that rest, in any form, is laziness? How can we release ourselves from sloth and laziness to allow true Sabbath rest?

FOURTH SERMON

Greed & Gluttony

Luke 12:13–21

If sin is having too much or too little of a good thing, greed represents the desire to hoard the good gifts God provides. This is exemplified by the rich fool who built storehouses to hold onto his wealth or Ananias and Sapphira holding back instead of sharing with others. It's opposite is a life of sharing and celebrating God's abundance.

FIFTH SERMON

Anger

James 1:20, Mark 11:15–18

Anger can drive us to action. Sometimes it is anger at the things that work against the kingdom of God. This anger can drive us to work for justice. It can also be an anger that worries about our own ego or self. This can become a destructive form of anger that causes us to lash out at others. How can we differentiate between the two and use anger to help drive the work of the kingdom.

RESOURCES

“No Man is an Island” by John Donne;
Sinning Like a Christian by Will Willimon
Could be paired with a discussion on the seven cardinal virtues.

Lead Creators: Session 3, Group 1 - Brett DeHart, Danny Bennett, Chandra Snell, Todd Hurley

ROADSIDE ADVENTURES

SERIES TYPE

Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Important things happened on the roads of the New Testament—encounters, healings, revelations, and life-changing calls. In this six-week series, we'll walk the roads of the Gospels and Acts, where Jesus met people in their need and where disciples were formed in motion. From Emmaus to Damascus and beyond, these sacred roads still speak to our journey today.

FIRST SERMON

The Road to Emmaus

Luke 24:13–35

Jesus meets us in our disappointments, sadness, overwhelm, defeats, heartbreaks.

Jesus meets us in the Scriptures.

Jesus meets us around the tables of our lives.

Jesus meets us at the Communion Table.

SECOND SERMON

Jesus Heals Bartimaeus

Mark 10:46–52

I find it helpful to look at this story in three parts:

- (1) We have Bartimaeus reaching out to Jesus
- (2) Then, Jesus healing Bartimaeus
- (3) And finally, Bartimaeus following Jesus

Response: Let me encourage you to persistently Cry Out to Jesus. Shout if you have to. Invite Jesus to usher forth healing and wholeness in your life.

And then have faith, that Jesus will arrive to meet your needs. (God's grace keeps pace

with what we face.)

And then as Jesus works actively in your life, be willing to do as Bartimaeus did... follow Jesus on the way (v52).

THIRD SERMON

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Luke 10:25–37

The normal takeaway of this most famous parable is that everyone is our neighbor. But this parable goes beyond just the WHO and provides a lot of HOW teaching, about how we are to care for, to love, our neighbors.

I can count 8 actions that the Samaritan took in caring for the wounded man:

- Saw him
- Moved with pity
- Decides to help
- Went to him
- Met immediate need
- Next level of care
- Long-term care
- Promised to return

As we consider these eight advanced actions of care, the depth of the Samaritan's love for his neighbor, let us ask ourselves: does this

resemble the depth of our own missional engagement, individually and as a church?

Jesus calls his followers to care for our neighbors like the Samaritan did- not stopping when we see the problem, not passing on the other side, but going 3-4-5 or even 8 levels deep.

So let us get off our... donkey. Dismount, get in the ditch, get down and dirty, show mercy, and "Go and do likewise."

FOURTH SERMON

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

Acts 8:26-40

Philip offers a beautiful demonstration of several effective evangelism techniques that can be helpful for us:

Follow the Spirit... and the other person

Focus on the One

Get Close

Be a Guide

Point People to Jesus

FIFTH SERMON

Paul's Damascus Road Experience

Acts 9:1-22

God is in the redemption and transformation business, first and foremost.

God often involves others in the process.

Our redemption and transformation are for a missional purpose.

Kingdom work is not without cost.

SIXTH SERMON

The Hard Road

Matthew 7:13-14

It's important to name and understand what is stressing us out. This is our real-world playing field. This is our hard, difficult road.

Our Biblical heroes are people who took the hard road; waded into the difficult as they obediently leaned into the Kingdom.

Embrace this moment as an adventure: Wade into the Difficult. Take the hard road. And then hold on for the ride of your life.

The gateway to life is open... don't miss it just because it's disguised as a hard, difficult

road. Wade into the difficult, lean into the Kingdom.

RESOURCES

A series logo is available by emailing blesrev@gmail.com

Lead Creator: Brett DeHart

FROM JOY TO DISGUST: EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT PSALMS

SERIES TYPE

Book of the Bible

SERIES DESCRIPTION

The psalmists express the breadth and depth of human emotion, relating their cares and concerns to God's work in the world. Using the Disney movie *Inside Out*, this series explores our most commonly identified emotions as depicted in the psalms thousands of years ago. These connections show the timeless nature of God's faithfulness through all the twists and turns of human life.

FIRST SERMON

Joy

Psalm 100 (alt. Ps. 98)

Throughout the Psalms, human emotions are set alongside God's steadfast love and righteousness. It can be easiest to praise God when we feel happy, but God's love is constant through all the ups and downs of our lives. Joy is not dependent upon a whim or experience, and is a deep sense of God's peace and love.

SECOND SERMON

Sadness

Psalm 130 (alt. Ps. 13, 22, 23)

Like the character Sadness in *Inside Out*, our sadness is important and holds meaning. God does not leave us or forsake us in challenging or grief-filled times. Instead, God remains with us ready to forgive, comfort, and guide us.

THIRD SERMON

Anger

Psalm 10 (alt. Ps. 94)

When we see people being mistreated or

exploited, our hearts can be filled with righteous anger. God hears even those prayers, and God's justice, care, and mercy rest on the side of the vulnerable. Like the Anger *Inside Out* character, our anger can be productive when it is justified and works for the good of those who are suffering.

FOURTH SERMON

Disgust

Psalm 26

If we follow Christ, the things that bother and disgust us are the things that would disturb Jesus. As we draw closer to God, we draw closer to God's children and their concerns become ours as well. How can we channel our disgust into productive action to care for our neighbors and heal the brokenness?

FIFTH SERMON

Fear

Psalm 91

The world is full of danger, from disease to disaster (natural and human-made). Fear is natural, and can even help our bodies keep us

safe. God is with us and keeps us close in the midst of the storms.

Lead Creator: Beth Bostrom

SIXTH SERMON

Joy Endures

Psalms 30 (alt. Ps. 103)

As in the movie, we return to joy and look for the lessons all our emotions can teach us. Joy makes the other emotions endurable, and can co-exist with the other emotions. Even when we feel overcome with anger, sadness, disgust, or fear, we can find centering peace in the joy of the Lord. Joy is not merely fleeting happiness, but is a deep and sustaining force that ties us to God and others.

RESOURCES

Resources:

Inside Out (movie)

Emotional Intelligence by Daniel Goleman

Braving the Wilderness by Brené Brown (and many of her other books)

Emotional Intelligence 2.0 by Dr. Travis Bradberry & Dr. Jean Greaves

ANTI-HEROES

SERIES TYPE

Discipleship, Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

In comic books, anti-heroes are characters who are flawed, broken, often wish to do the right thing, but regularly use the wrong methods to achieve those aims. In current popular culture the characters of Venom and Deadpool exemplify this trait. But there are also anti-heroes in the Bible. Paul called himself the “chief among sinners. This series is designed to offer encouragement when we feel as though our best is not good enough, or when we are too broken to be of use to the Kingdom of God.

FIRST SERMON

What Is an Anti-Hero

Acts 9

The series feels like it needs a first sermon to explain the idea and notion of an anti-hero. One of the best examples here is Saul / Paul. Here was one who was known to be an enemy of the early followers of Jesus. Even after he became the great evangelist, there are instances where Paul fell short. If God can use Paul, he can use me.

SECOND SERMON

More Than Meets the (Critical) Eye

John 20:24–29

No one person is monolithic. There is depth in each biblical character. Yet, we often reduce a person down to one singular act, or one flaw. Brené Brown has pointed out that, in the absence of evidence, we fill in the missing information with the worst case scenario. And yet, there is something redemptive in everyone. This is just as true of us as it is of Thomas, who is vilified as the doubter. We need to be reminded that we are more than one event or one aspect of our

lives.

THIRD SERMON

How We See the Other

Matthew 8:5–13; 15:21–28

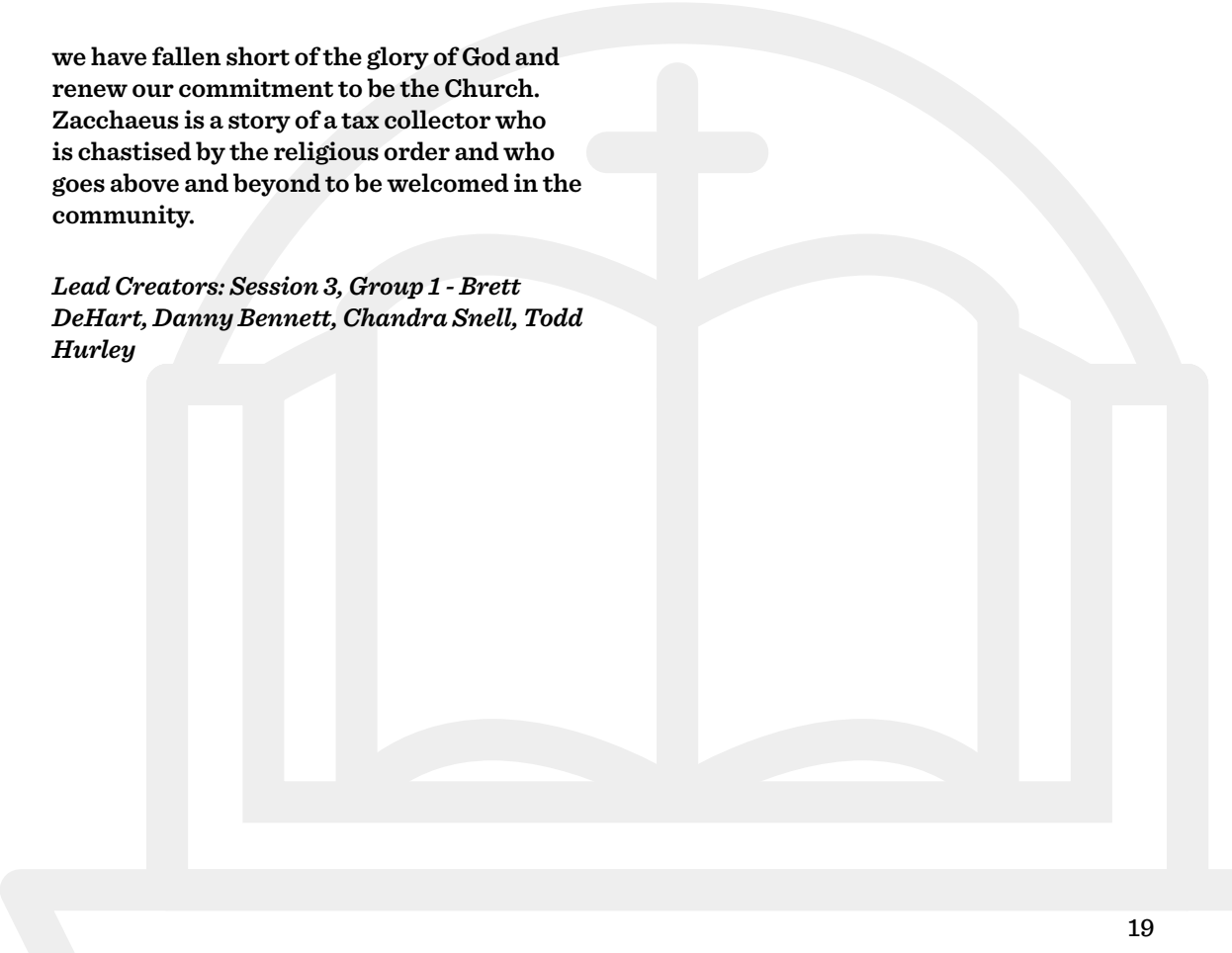
Matthew’s Gospel is very concerned with the other or the outsider. In two separate instances, Jesus is struck by the faith of an outsider to the Jewish faith. The Canaanite woman proclaims that even dogs receive the crumbs that fall off the table. The Centurion soldier proclaims his belief that Jesus can heal his servant without ever entering his house. Jesus is so impressed by both of their faiths that he proclaims that he hasn’t met anyone with their strength of faith. We must be careful in how we see the other or the outsider in our midst.

FOURTH SERMON

It’s Us. We’re the Problem. It’s Us.

Luke 19:1–10

This week the focus on the ways in which the religious order is often the anti-hero. We are broken, imperfect, and flawed. And we need to lift up as a confession the ways in which



**we have fallen short of the glory of God and
renew our commitment to be the Church.
Zacchaeus is a story of a tax collector who
is chastised by the religious order and who
goes above and beyond to be welcomed in the
community.**

***Lead Creators: Session 3, Group 1 - Brett
DeHart, Danny Bennett, Chandra Snell, Todd
Hurley***

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

SERIES TYPE

Leadership, Vision

SERIES DESCRIPTION

A 5-week leadership and vision series centered on Esther 4:14, exploring God's perfect timing and our shared calling as a congregation enters a new season of ministry. This is an invitation to join in the Spirit's movement with bold love, joyful service, and courageous leadership. Like Esther, we find ourselves placed here, together, for a reason. Each week unpacks a dimension of that calling, aligning with the UMC vision to Love Boldly, Serve Joyfully, and Lead Courageously, and invites us to discern how we can embody God's mission for such a time as this.

FIRST SERMON

For Such a Time as This

Esther 4:1–17

Theme: Embracing divine timing and calling.

Key Points:

Introduce the series and its big idea — God's perfect timing.

Esther's story as a model of courage and divine purpose.

Mordecai's challenge to Esther: "Who knows if you have come to this position for such a time as this?"

Our call to courage in this season of transition.

Sermon Application:

Invite the congregation to consider their own "royal position" — what roles God has given each person for this moment?

Encourage boldness to step into new roles and responsibilities in the church community.

Call to trust God's timing even when the future is uncertain.

Illustration Ideas:

Use stories of people stepping into unexpected roles or moments of divine timing.

Personal testimony of transition or trust in God's timing.

SECOND SERMON

Love Boldly

1 John 4:7–21

Theme: Letting love be our defining witness.

Key Points:

God is love — the source and model of all love.

Love drives out fear; perfect love is fearless.

Our identity as God's children is lived out in love for one another.

Bold love requires risk and sacrifice.

Sermon Application:

Challenge the church to examine where they need to love more boldly — in family, community, church.

Encourage practical acts of sacrificial love and forgiveness.

Emphasize love as a witness to the world.

Illustration Ideas:

Real-life examples of radical love in action.
Jesus' love demonstrated on the cross and in daily ministry.

THIRD SERMON**Serve Joyfully**

Philippians 2:1-11

Theme: Humble hearts and joyful service reflect Christ's mindset.

Key Points:

Jesus as the ultimate servant leader, humbling himself to the point of death.

Service is not just duty but joy in partnership with God's work.

Humility opens the door to authentic joy and community.

Sermon Application:

Encourage the congregation to find their place in ministry with joy.

Highlight the importance of serving not for recognition but out of love.

Call for unity and humility as the church moves forward.

Illustration Ideas:

Stories of joyful volunteers or leaders.
Personal reflection on how serving has transformed your life.

FOURTH SERMON**God Behind the Scenes**

Romans 8:28; Genesis 50:20

Theme: Trusting God's providence even when unseen.

Key Points:

God works all things together for good, even hardship and betrayal.

Joseph's story as a testament to God's sovereign plan.

Encouragement to trust God's unseen work in our lives and church.

Sermon Application:

Reassure the congregation that God is at work behind the scenes during transitions.

Encourage patience and faith in God's timing and plan.

Call to release fear of the unknown and walk by faith.

Illustration Ideas:

Testimonies of God's providence in difficult times.
Biblical examples of God turning trials into blessings.

FIFTH SERMON**Our Moment, Our Mission**

Acts 1:6-11; Matthew 28:18-20

Theme: Owning our call and mission as a community.

Key Points:

Jesus commissions His followers to go make disciples.

The Spirit empowers and equips us for this mission.

Mission is ongoing — not just gathering but going.

Sermon Application:

Call the church to embrace their mission in the community and beyond.

Challenge each person to identify how they will participate in God's mission.

Emphasize reliance on the Holy Spirit for

courage and power.

Illustration Ideas:

Stories of mission and outreach
transforming communities.

Personal testimonies of Spirit-empowered
boldness.

Lead Creator: Rev. Peytyn Tobin



ABUNDANT LIFE

SERIES TYPE

Book of the Bible

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Christ came that we might have life abundant and full (John 10:10), and James tells us how to live that abundant life. Come learn James' practical advice for a Christian life well lived.

FIRST SERMON

Faith is Action

James 1:22-25

When we look into a mirror, it is to be able to do our hair, get spinach out of our teeth, or make sure that everything is just so. James says we should be looking at scripture like this—it compels us to DO our faith. The Bible is not meant to be studied like Shakespeare's works, it is meant to be lived. Our Bibles should not be collecting dust on our shelves, they're meant to be used, known, and acted upon.

If we want the abundant life that Christ offers us, we cannot merely read or hear scripture, we must live it, do it, experience it fully.

Homework: Reflect on how you are currently doing your faith, reflect on how you want to be doing your faith, take steps to move toward how you want to be living your faith.

SECOND SERMON

Tame Your Tongue

James 3:2-12

James says if we do “just one thing” we will be perfect - Tame Your Tongue! This is simple to say, but hard to do. Using bits and rudders, James shows us other worldly examples that make it easy to see how small parts of us control or direct all of us. Consistency is the name of the game - we can't curse God's creations while trying to bless God.

Homework: Stop cursing others (and the blessing/curse mixes our culture accepts) and start using your tongue to (honestly, genuinely) create and build up with God.

THIRD SERMON

No Favorites

James 2:1-13

James says when we treat some people better than others we are sinning, and when we sin it is sin no matter the degree. Our society talks about this in the negative rather than the positive - prejudice rather than favoritism, both words can be used in the sermon to help people understand. When we practice favoritism or prejudice, we are not living into abundance, we are living into the world's scarcity.

Homework: Identify who we treat better (favorites) and who we treat worse (answers like “enemies” are not acceptable, who are you afraid of? who are you angry at?). When we find ourselves getting riled up, pray and ask God how we can love them.

FOURTH SERMON

God Longs for Faithfulness

James 4:1–12

James is super practical and points us toward our responsibility this week. The world often tries to distract us by telling us an actual problem, but giving us someone to blame for that problem rather than pointing toward a solution. James says we are the problem *and* we are the solution—through our faith in Christ.

According to the scripture, these are the causes of our pain in this world:

Jealousy

Greed

Cravings (momentary, not long term)

We don’t ask (God and/or others)

When we do ask it is often for the wrong

reasons.

If we put our faith in Christ, our laughter becomes mourning and our joy becomes sadness because what once made us happy won’t any more. Our worlds will feel like they’re turned upside down if we allow Christ to clean our hearts and change our lives. We’ll be recreated, and changed from the inside out.

Then we can ask for what we need with good motive - we should ask God and the church. God will provide for needs.

Homework: Notice when we are tightening inside and stop, pray. Ask God to help us (either with motive or need). Ask for help if needed.

FIFTH SERMON

Pray, Always Pray

James 5:13–18

James says we should pray no matter what is going on around us. But, prayer is often intimidating for Christians. This sermon should include practical tips from the pastor on *how* to pray - little one sentence prayers to larger, longer prayers. Encourage people

to pray out loud even when alone (if they are unfamiliar with their own voices praying, they’ll be much more self conscious of it in front of others). Take away the intimidation factor by acknowledgement, practice, and example. Prayer leads to abundance because it draws us closer to God, closer to the source of our love and strength.

Homework: Set a time or a trigger for prayer this week. Talk to God, and not just about need or want.

Lead Creator: Bethany Douty

THINK SMALL

SERIES TYPE

Discipleship, Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Think Small is a four-week journey into God's blueprint for real, life-giving community. In a world obsessed with thinking bigger, achieving more, and going faster, Jesus calls us to slow down, live connected, and let transformation happen in circles, not crowds. Together, we'll discover that life is better—and faith is stronger—when we walk with God and each other.

FIRST SERMON

Why?

Genesis 1:24–28, Acts 2:42–47

God created us for community because God exists in perfect community—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This message invites us to step away from the shallow connections of modern life and rediscover the depth, joy, and power found in authentic, Christ-centered relationships.

SECOND SERMON

Being – A Small Group

Mark 3:13–19

Before sending His disciples to change the world, Jesus simply called them “to be with him.” This sermon shows how small groups create a place of togetherness, support, and transformation—helping us persevere through life's challenges and grow in faith.

THIRD SERMON

Together – We Can Do More.

Ecclesiastes 4:9–12

God never intended for us to do life alone. In Ecclesiastes, we're reminded that two are

better than one because they help each other succeed, stand firm in difficulty, and offer warmth and encouragement when life grows cold. Small groups embody that truth—providing the support, accountability, and shared mission we need to grow in Christ and impact the world.

FOURTH SERMON

Against the Grain

Romans 12:1–2

Living for Christ means resisting the pressure to conform to the world's mold and instead offering our whole selves to God. This sermon challenges us to resist the trends toward individualism and isolation and let the Holy Spirit transform us through worship, obedience, and the encouragement of like-minded believers.

Lead Creator: Steve Carleo

LOVING LIKE THE SAMARITAN

SERIES TYPE

Discipleship

SERIES DESCRIPTION

This is a 3-week sermon series that focuses on the actions of the Samaritan in the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. In our Christian journey, Jesus teaches us through this parable that being a Christian is more than just showing up to worship service on Sunday and hearing about God, it is about having compassion, self-sacrifice, and following through with love to our neighbors as Jesus modeled for us in his ministry and through the illustration of the Samaritan.

FIRST SERMON

Passion in Compassion

Luke 10:30-33

The first thing that the Samaritan does is have pity or compassion. How amazing would this world be if we modeled the compassion of Jesus on a daily basis? We are called to love like the Samaritan in throwing away all preconceptions and choosing love and compassion first.

SECOND SERMON

It's Not About Me

Luke 10:33-34

We often forget that the Samaritan was on a journey of his own in this parable. And instead of continuing on like the Priest and the Levite, the Samaritan chose to give up self and focus on love of neighbor. In our journey of following Christ, there are going to be times where we are asked to sacrifice our time, talents, and treasures to show the love of God. The Samaritan could have gone on with his plans but sacrificed them to take care of the beaten man.

THIRD SERMON

To Infinity and Beyond

Luke 10:35

There was compassion and self-sacrifice, but the love did not end there. The Samaritan, after bandaging wounds and taking the beaten man to the inn, chose to go even further. Loving our neighbor is not just a one-time deal. We should also follow through and go further in making sure people are taken care of.

Lead Creator: Michael Moxley

BIBLICAL FESTIVALS AND PARTIES

SERIES TYPE

Discipleship

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Throughout the scriptures, people have held their faith together in community with one another in a variety of ways. And yes, the people of faith in the Old Testament and New Testament knew how to throw a party. Over the next several weeks we are going to see how these acts of celebration empowered and sustained their life of faith.

FIRST SERMON

Everything Old is New Again

Exodus 20:1–2; Luke 7:7–8; Acts 2:1; Leviticus 23:15–17, 21–22

During this week, you will unpack the Old Testament festivals of Passover and Pentecost, connecting them to the ways we see them impacting the gatherings found in the New Testament. These celebrations represented freedom, salvation, and Divine grace. We shall see how they are still with us today, and the impact they still have on our life of faith.

SECOND SERMON

“Happy New Year” and “Lord please forgive us”

Leviticus 23:23–25, 26–32

“Happy New Year” and “Lord please forgive us” are two phrases common to our ear today. This week, we will look at two Jewish festivals from the Old Testament that are still practiced in Jewish culture today (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur). As we go back and look at the scriptures, we can see how God worked through these festival season to

draw the people together and in realignment with the Divine.

THIRD SERMON

Sabbath Rituals and Celebrations

Leviticus 23:3, 25:1–13

As we explore the Sabbath rituals and celebrations, each one can help us identify how God might be working into the natural rhythms of our life today. In looking at each day/season we might find a new awareness of how we stay connected to God, creation, and each other in meaningful ways.

FOURTH SERMON

The Early Church Celebrates too!

Acts 2:42–47

The life of the early church found ways to stay connected to God and each other through special gatherings as well. And when they did, it resembled some of their Old Testament celebrations; there was food, worship, prayer, sharing, and teaching. As we wrap up this series, we will explore some of the ways we continue in the celebration of God among us, drawing us deeper into our

relationship with Christ.

RESOURCES

The book *Celebrating Biblical Festivals* by Martha Zimmerman has some fun ideas to spark your application of these text and festivals for today!

Lead Creator: Debbie Casanzio

FREEDOM: GALATIANS 1-6

SERIES TYPE

Discipleship

SERIES DESCRIPTION

This series is a survey of some of the primary issues and correction the apostle Paul addresses with the churches of Galatia. The series deals with the gospel, law, grace, and of course... freedom.

FIRST SERMON

People Got it Wrong

Galatians 1:6-14

The Judaizers misunderstood the gospel.

SECOND SERMON

People Still Get it Wrong

Galatians 2:11-14

People still misunderstand the gospel.

THIRD SERMON

Words and Meanings

Galatians 2:15-21

Let's define some terms and basic concepts.

FOURTH SERMON

The Man of Faith

Galatians 3:3-9

Emphasis on how grace transforms our faith.

FIFTH SERMON

The Freedom of Faith

Galatians 5:1-6, 13-14

Fear of Freedom

SIXTH SERMON

In Step with the Spirit

Galatians 5:16-25

What does FREEDOM really look like?

Lead Creator: Travis Taylor

SENT BY JESUS TO LOVE, SERVE, AND WORSHIP

SERIES TYPE

Lectionary Based, Discipleship

SERIES DESCRIPTION

A series focusing on the familiar passage of Luke 10-11, when Jesus teaches by example what it means to be a disciple. Each week will focus on a different piece of the central theme.

FIRST SERMON

Sent by Jesus

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

Jesus commissions seventy-two of his followers to go into the community ahead of him, and they return joyfully after completing their mission.

Main point: Jesus sends us – we can trust that he is with us as we share his love.

Pastor also shares personal testimony of calling and being sent.

SECOND SERMON

Sent by Jesus to Love

Luke 10:25-37

The familiar parable of the Good Samaritan.

Main point: The Greatest Commandment: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.” (Luke 10:27)

This verse is a command and an invitation: you never know who is your neighbor and can provide you with salvation.

THIRD SERMON

Sent By Jesus to Serve

Luke 10:38-42

The familiar story of the sisters Mary and Martha.

Main point: Service with Jesus is not just about doing – it’s also about resting and renewing our spirits with God’s presence.

FOURTH SERMON

Sent by Jesus to Worship

Luke 11:1-13

Jesus teaches his disciples the Lord’s Prayer.

Main point: Though the words of the Lord’s Prayer might be familiar to us, they have deep meaning for Christian faith. Far beyond a prayer, it is a way to offer ourselves in an act of worship to God.

Lead Creator: Tiffania Icaza Willetts

TRUE NORTH: FINDING DIRECTION IN JAMES

SERIES TYPE

Book of the Bible

SERIES DESCRIPTION

In this series, we'll look at the directions James gives us. It's a good time to check that our compass points to the truth of who God calls us to be as individuals and as a community.

FIRST SERMON

Trials & Trust

James 1

When we're in trouble, and when we cry out to God for help, our faith must be strong enough to sustain us. Our ability to remain faithful—to persevere with confidence and humility—supports us during times when we're scared and unsure. What we proclaim with our lips should be evident by our lives. We need to trust in God and live like we believe what we claim to believe.

SECOND SERMON

Favorites & Faith

James 2

Any kind of discrimination is against the law of love. We have to be careful in our striving to be faithful that we do not fall victim to judging others, especially those who are different than ourselves. We need to avoid partiality, prejudice, and passivity. It's also important to understand that our own faithfulness is lived out through our actions. Faith is not dependent on works, however, what we do is evidence of what we believe.

THIRD SERMON

Words & Wisdom

James 3

Our words have power—they can give life or they can take it away. We need to be aware of how our words affect others and use them for good—to bless one another and to point to God. We also need to embrace God's words of wisdom over our own limited understanding of wisdom.

FOURTH SERMON

Struggles & Submission

James 4

There is a distinct difference between the love of the world and the love of God. It can be a constant source of conflict if we don't surrender our will to God's will. The more that we draw near to God, the more that God gives us the strength to live according to his law and his love.

FIFTH SERMON

Patience & Prayer

James 5

When we don't put our love of God before all other things in our lives, we may prosper but we will not please God. Often, we become impatient with God, and take matters into our own hands, living as if we don't need God. We have to trust in God's promises. God knows our hearts and will rejoice in our return if we ever wander away. God's grace will always welcome us home.

Lead Creators: Nicole Logan, Gary Logan

FOOTPRINTS IN THE SAND

SERIES TYPE

Leadership, Vision

SERIES DESCRIPTION

In all the wonders God worked in the Exodus escape and journey to the Promised Land, God revealed the truth of Himself and gave the Israelites all the signs and information they would need to secure their eventual Salvation through Jesus Christ. In this series, we will uncover just how God has been trying to give us and show us the complete story and guidance of how we can free ourselves from bondage and challenge ourselves to move from spiritual ignorance, past unbelief, and finally to fully embrace the full Truth of God's undying love for us in Jesus Christ.

FIRST SERMON

Fear of Faith

Exodus 14:10-14

We experience many kinds of fear responses in our lives, from “fight”, to “flight”, and even moments of paralyzation from great fear. We all have our personal worst fears in life, and yet we are assured in God's word that His perfect love drives out fear. Perhaps our greatest fear as humans is mortal death itself, and in the scriptural account of how God delivered the Israelites from bondage in Egypt we see that doubt and fear were present in the people's minds and hearts, but Moses reassures them with God's promise and reminder to us to be still, and know that God will deliver us from all fear, and God is in control and will make a way where there seems to be no way.

SECOND SERMON

Walking in Circles

Exodus 16:9-12

As we first come to give our lives, and to live our lives with God, we will all experience the phenomenon of “getting a little lost” at

times. As humans we have an instinct to walk in circles, and in a spiritual sense we can also get caught up in a sense of repetition with little or no real progress forward in our walk with God. Like the Israelites in the desert, we too can feel like we have become lost in a vast desert that does not give us a lot of visual clues to navigate by, but if we remember to look up to the Light of Christ, to navigate by the light of the stars God placed in the night sky, we can find our bearings again and move in the direction God is leading us. Even as we may experience a life with plenty of food to eat, and water to drink, we could be spiritually starving and thirsting to death.

When we are struggling to find our way in our new walk of faith, we need to be sure to feed our souls spiritually by seeking His mercy and grace in His word, which is fresh and new every morning just like the Manna he provided to the Israelites every morning in the desert. God also gives us a visual of Jesus Christ as The Rock of our faith, upon which we should build our faith, and from which the fount of the living waters of Baptism and new Life are flowing.

THIRD SERMON

You Can Go Home Again!

Joshua 3:14–17

God ends the wandering of the Israelites in the desert with a very similar miracle as at the beginning of their escape from Egypt, as this time He re-directs the flow of the swiftly moving Jordan River to allow them to follow the Ark of the Covenant and walk across the dry river bed and into the Promised Land of their ancestors. It is a homecoming of sorts to a place that they had never been to, and it is strange how our coming to God and beginning a walk with Jesus also gives us an uncanny feeling of being home.

There is also a recurring theme, one that we see even in Jesus as He begins His ministry, that we will be subject to a time in a “desert” place where we will need to learn how to recognize the temptations of Satan, and to rely on the protection of God’s word to ward off his attacks. The lessons we learn in the desert will only serve to solidify our faith in God, and our trust in Him, and through the power of His Prevenient, Justifying, and Sanctifying grace. No matter what mistakes

we have made in life, or what sins we may have committed, God is our Father and He will never turn away any penitent heart from His Forgiveness. Like the Prodigal son, we can go home again, into Our Father’s open arms, to the promised Land of God’s Heaven!

RESOURCES

I have just moved to a new assignment in Perry, Florida, and I feel that these sermon ideas will be helpful for anyone who is in the process of getting to know a new congregation and trying to find that connection in mind, Spirit, and purpose that brings a church into a shared motion and mission together.

Lead Creator: Frederick (Rick) Phillips

THEY CHANGED THE WORLD

SERIES TYPE

Discipleship, Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

This series highlights women biblical figures.

Besides the better known, we will also explore lesser-known biblical women who nevertheless have something to teach us.

Although generally adaptable and relevant, this series may be especially useful for Women's History Month (March).

FIRST SERMON

Deborah: General, Judge, & Prophet

Judges 4 & 5

Largely defying gender norms, Deborah exemplified leadership as a judge, general and woman of God.

SECOND SERMON

The Wise Woman of Endor

1 Samuel 28

The Wise Woman of Endor—better known as “The Witch of Endor”—used her gift in service to Saul, despite personal risk. Throughout history, “wise women”—whether medicine women or otherwise—have been viewed with suspicion and/or as threats to the larger culture. They are examples of “the outsider,” and our treatment of them has often been problematic. For instance, while the Wise Woman of Endor is largely known as a “witch,” the “Three Wise Men”, though astrologers, in contrast are revered. Our gendered treatment of others—especially those who are also deemed “different” in other ways—is worth examining.

THIRD SERMON

Anna: The Prophet

Luke 2:36–38

The elderly, widowed Anna is among the first to identify Jesus as savior to all in the temple who would listen. She used all she had for God, despite her likely marginalization.

FOURTH SERMON

Lydia: Wealthy Business Owner & Early Christian Benefactor

Acts 16:14–15

Lydia, a wealthy seller of purple, responded to the gospel and was pivotal in the spread of the Christian message to Europe. No matter who we are and what we do, God always has a purpose for us.

RESOURCES

The Invisible Women by Sandra Makowski

Women of the Bible: The Victorious, the Victims, the Virtuous, & the Vicious by Peter Dehaan

The Gospel According to the Un-named Women by Claralice Hanna Wolf and Robby Charters

Lead Creators: Session 3, Group 1 - Brett DeHart, Danny Bennett, Chandra Snell, Todd Hurley

DIFFERENT THIS YEAR

SERIES TYPE

Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

With a new year approaching, many are faced with the age old dilemma of whether or not to make New Year's Resolutions. Studies show a declining number of people make and keep resolutions each year, with various reasons cited. What if, however, the practice of making resolutions could translate towards a stronger faith? This series takes a deep dive into the four most popular resolutions made in previous years, and looks at how each can translate into a stronger faith for us in the coming year.

FIRST SERMON

What's The Plan?

2 Corinthians 5:16-21 - key verse 5:17

As the old saying goes, "the road to hell is paved with good intentions." Wishing for change and positive outcomes isn't enough. If we want to do things differently, we need a plan. Failure to plan is a plan to fail.

NOTE: This would be good for the Sunday between Christmas and New Years.

SECOND SERMON

What Goes In?

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Resolution: Eat healthy

Living differently requires us to take a serious look at the things we take in. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, designed to serve particular functions. Like an athlete who closely monitors his/her food intake to ensure they have the fuel they need to compete, we must ensure we're taking in the proper things to ensure we can reach our goals in faith.

THIRD SERMON

Are We Being Stretched?

Hebrews 12:9-14

Resolution: Work out/exercise

Living differently demands that we stretch and exercise the spiritual muscle we are building. The writer of Hebrews focuses on the discipline that can come out of adversity. And, while we hold that God does not cause painful or bad thing, we do believe that God can use all things for building up. Some of the most important growth in our lives comes when we are pushed to our limits, be it physically, emotionally, or spiritually.

FOURTH SERMON

What Stays Out?

Colossians 3:5-11

Resolution: Drink less

Living differently calls each of us to examine the things that have no place in our lives as people of faith. While the resolution speaks specifically of drinking, we can expand the definition to include anything that can cause harm and compromise our ability to reach

our goals. There's a reason this resolution comes later, as it requires the hard work of culling things from our routines. But, at some point, we must take seriously the realization that following God's call on our lives means that there are some things that are incompatible.

FIFTH SERMON

What About When It All Falls Apart?

Proverbs 3:5-6

Resolution: Manage stress

Stress is a pretty common experience for all of us. Chuck Swindoll was credited with saying that life is 10% of what happens to you, and 90% how you react. It is precisely when unexpected, unpredictable, unmanageable circumstances arise that we feel outmatched. So leaning on the words from Proverbs 3:5-6 allows us to call forth our identity in God, especially in moments of greatest vulnerability.

RESOURCES

2024 Pew Research Study entitled "New Years Resolutions: Who Makes Them and Why"

<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/01/29/new-years-resolutions-who-makes-them-and-why/>

2023 Cleveland Clinic article entitled "8 Common New Years Resolutions and How to Keep Them"

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/common-new-years-resolutions>

Lead Creator: Ryan Frack

BROTHERS AND SISTERS

SERIES TYPE

Book of the Bible, Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

A 4-week series on Romans 12-15 focusing on the calling for the church to be a diverse community who truly welcomes one another despite various differences.

Paul has never been to Rome, and yet sends greetings to 26 people in the final chapters. From these greetings, we see the composition of the community of this church – there are Jews and Gentiles, some who are wealthy and some who are poor, leaders who are men and women.

FIRST SERMON

In Need of Renewal

Romans 12:1–8

In this introductory sermon, we note some of the challenges of division and factions that are present in our world. After noting that Paul is writing to a community struggling to get along with each other, we consider his words, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.” Our lives, our neighborhood, our church, is in constant need of renewal by God’s Spirit!

In verses 3–8, Paul is beginning to lay out a vision of the church, working together in cooperation. The first steps in this journey of restoration are to embrace humility (‘do not think of yourselves more highly than you ought’), and recognizing the diversity of the body of Christ.

Possible Story: (I opened this series on the 60th anniversary of MLK’s ‘I have a dream’ speech; this led me to use this speech as an example of a dream of renewed community.)

Dr. King lamented that day that, 100 years after the emancipation proclamation,

African-Americans were still experiencing injustice, discrimination, and deep poverty. He identified some of the struggles that people were facing – and then he said, “Even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream.” His dream was that our nation would move forward to be a place where people would not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character, a place where all cultures would be able to join hand in hand as brothers and sisters. It is a vision based on Biblical faith, and he shared, “with this faith, we will be able to hew out of a mountain of despair - a stone of hope.”

SECOND SERMON

Genuine Love

Romans 12:9–21

Romans 12:9 says, “let love be genuine”, or literally – “let your love not be hypocritical.” There are many examples of practical love in this passage, which includes associating with the lowly and blessing even those who are enemies. How is any of this possible?

One focal point for reflection could be the phrases – “Rejoice in hope, be patient in

suffering, persevere in prayer.” We have incredible grounds for hope because of the love and forgiveness offered by Jesus. Because of this hope, we can remember the conviction shared in Romans that any suffering is temporary. In challenging moments, we keep asking God for strength and help.

THIRD SERMON

Brothers and Sisters: The Weak and the Strong

Romans 13:8–10, 14:1–4

In the opening verse of Romans 14, Paul introduces two different groups in the Roman church that he calls the ‘weak’ and the ‘strong’. As Paul thinks about how groups in the church should relate, he writes that love is the only thing we ‘owe’ one another, and the center of God’s law.

When we encounter difference in the body of Christ, rather than judgment, comparison, or competition, we are called to welcome one another. The good news is that God has welcomed all of us and seeks to guide us to love one another.

Possible story:

Karl Barth was a 20th century German theologian who, along with Dietrich Bonhoeffer and others, boldly challenged the actions of the Nazi party. He was a prolific writer, whose most well known work, “Church Dogmatics” totals over 9,000 pages in length. One day, after a lecture in Chicago, a student asked him, “Dr. Barth, could you summarize your work in a few sentences?” Karl Barth went to the microphone and said, “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”

Possible Quote:

“We can give lip service to the idea of love, but we do not usually reflect on how to do it.”
N.T. Wright

FOURTH SERMON

With One Voice

Romans 14:13–17, 15:1–6

With Jesus’ command to love one another is at the center of our understanding, care for brothers and sisters is more important than ‘getting it right’. This involves refraining from judgment and learning to watch out for

each other. As we learn to have compassion and consideration for one another, our life together can ring out as praise to God (“together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”)

Possible Quote:

“A call to holiness has always been a central theme in our Methodist tradition. What makes holiness in the Wesleyan way unique, however, is a clear emphasis on a holiness of love – love of God and love of neighbor. Other traditions have often defined holiness in terms of adherence to the law or to particular instructions, but this is not the Wesleyan vision. Holiness is all about love.” - Paul Chilcote, *Multiplying Love*, p.9

Lead Creator: Britt Gilmore

PRAYERS WE SING

SERIES TYPE

Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

The songs in a worship service can be chosen in a way that the words we sing augment the message that is offered, and the songs themselves become a prayer. Music has a way of moving and driving our emotions, sometimes more effectively than words alone. How powerful can these prayers be when we pay attention to what we sing? And can the songs we sing outside of church, the secular songs, be used to direct our attention toward God? Finally, as the Psalms were written and used as songs in many instances, the biblical basis for this series will seat itself in Psalms.

FIRST SERMON

“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” by Charles Wesley

Psalm 150

Charles Wesley is reported to have written over 6,000 hymns in his lifetime. If John was the head of the Methodist movement, then his brother, Charles, was the soundtrack. Of the many songs Charles wrote, this one is among the favorites and has stood the test of time as it reflects the glory of the Triune God and invites us to direct our attention to God in our worship. This is a perfect song to introduce the series and its call to pay attention to the words we sing as prayers to God.

SECOND SERMON

“Black Sheep” by Ben Fuller

Psalm 34:17–18

There are times when all of us feel as though we have fallen short of God’s plan for our lives. We feel a bit like a black sheep, run away from the fold. And yet, when we cry out, God hears and rescues us from our troubles (Psalm 34). We may feel lost, but through

this song we are reminded that we are never abandoned.

THIRD SERMON

“I Will Wait” by Mumford & Sons

Psalm 40:1–3

The lyrics offer a vision of an individual who feels broken and longs to fall heavy into someone’s arms. Among the lyrics is a line proclaiming, “You forgave and I won’t forget,” reflecting the gratefulness we feel over God’s loving forgiveness in our lives. The chorus proclaims a desire to wait for one. In our church, could this one we are waiting on be God? Psalm 40 offers imagery of kneeling and being lifted up, of waiting in struggle and being set on solid ground.

FOURTH SERMON

“I Thank God” by Maverick City

Psalm 103:2–4

A psalm of gratitude over God’s faithfulness and forgiveness is echoed in Maverick City Music’s “I Thank God.” We can give thanks for all that God has done, continues to do, and will do in our lives and in creation. This may

be a chance to dive into God's justifying and sanctifying grace in a sermon.

FIFTH SERMON

“Be Thou My Vision” by Eleanor Hull

Psalm 16:7–8, 11

Through the Holy Spirit, God is our vision, our guide, and our steadfast comfort. Both “Be Thou My Vision” and Psalm 16 offer up these viewpoints of God as our guide. It's a good place to end the sermon with the final hymn offering a prayer that we might reach heaven's doors with God always as our vision and ruler of all. You could take time to reflect on how we can ensure that God is and continues to be our vision.

ALTERNATIVES

This series could be shortened to 3 weeks, highlighting one traditional hymn, one contemporary worship song, and one secular song. Or, it could be lengthened to whatever degree you wish. One additional idea would be to poll the congregation a few months before the sermon on their favorite worship songs and tailor the series to meet your context.

RESOURCES

Then Sings My Soul: 150 of the World's Greatest Hymn Stories by Robert J. Morgan (there are several volumes in this series)

Link to YouTube video of “Black Sheep” song performance: <https://youtu.be/yTCdrfyzUfg?si=LiEhlcIlcvVedNRI>

Link to YouTube music video of “I Will Wait”: <https://youtu.be/rGKfrgqWcv0?si=QrmH7mFqnsDXtAoO>

Link to YouTube music video of “I Thank God”: <https://youtu.be/3wYwcqZgq1o?si=wQJxk8F5hjXQ5EFZ>

Lead Creators: Session 3, Group 1 - Brett DeHart, Danny Bennett, Chandra Snell, Todd Hurley

BUILDING TOGETHER

SERIES TYPE

Books of the Bible, Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

This four week series will follow the story of the Israelites giving what they had to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem as a model for how we can come together as a church to give what we have to support the ministry of our church.

FIRST SERMON

Called to Build

Ezra 1:1-11

Starting with the call of the Israelites to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple, we will learn how we are all called to work together to use our gifts to build up the church. Instead of building a physical building, we are building up a place where love, belonging, and transformation can be found. This sermon lays the foundation - no pun intended - for the biblical background of the series.

SECOND SERMON

Offering Our Gifts

Ezra 2:68-69

In Ezra, everyone gave what they could, from the Persian king to the Israelites returning, so that the Temple could be at its best. We, too, are called to give of our time, talents, and treasure to support the work of God through the church. This week will explore the gifts the congregation has already demonstrated to encourage them to grow in their generosity.

THIRD SERMON

Overcoming Obstacles

Ezra 4:4-6, 8, 12-16, 24

The Israelites faced a number of obstacles in their journey and in trying to rebuild the Temple. We, too, may face obstacles to our generosity with the church. This week explores some possible obstacles to generosity your church and community might be facing and how faithfulness and steadfastness allow us to move through them to fulfill our calling to be generous.

FOURTH SERMON

Building a New Vision

Zechariah 8:3-17

The prophet Zechariah, prophesying during this time, offers the people of Israel a new vision for Jerusalem as a place of salvation and peace. We can be part of this vision of the church as a place of salvation and peace for a broken world when we support the church with our gifts. This would be the final "Commitment" Sunday where people would turn in pledge cards.

RESOURCES

The entire series should include stories from the congregation, whether they are pre-recorded or shared in person. This helps to bring the idea to life of what is being built - not a physical building, but a place of salvation and safety for all people through the gifts of the entire congregation.

Lead Creator: Tiffania Icaza Willetts

FACING JERUSALEM: WHEN FAITH BECOMES INTENTIONAL

SERIES TYPE

Discipleship, Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

When our faith becomes intentional, we move from passive acceptance to a deliberate choice to align ourselves with God's calling on our lives. Our intentionality shows through spiritual practices, identification, time and energy, and service. God's intentional grace is the ultimate example.

FIRST SERMON

An Intentional Journey: Jesus

Luke 9:51-56

Theme: Spiritual Practice

Jesus sets his face to Jerusalem. Highlight his unwavering determination to complete his journey to Jerusalem despite knowing what will happen when he arrives, in order to complete his mission on earth. He will face suffering, crucifixion, and ultimately resurrection and ascension. Jesus's journey, a fulfillment of prophecy, was not just a physical journey, it was also mental and spiritual.

SECOND SERMON

Intentional Identity: Moses

Exodus 2:14-15, Hebrews 11:24-27

Theme: Spiritual Identity

Moses could have lived as an Egyptian prince, but he chose to reject that life. Instead, he aligned himself with God's people, even sharing in their suffering. He valued God's promises more than Egypt's wealth and chose what was better. When Pharaoh tried to kill him, Moses fled,

separating himself from Egyptian life and preparing for God's call at the burning bush. His choice showed he was no longer divided—he intentionally set his heart with God's people.

THIRD SERMON

Intentional Care: Daniel

Daniel 1:8-17

Theme: Spiritual Care

Daniel's Diet – Daniel chose not to defile himself on the king's rich food and chose a simpler diet honoring God's intentions. We can do this in our daily lives, not just with food, but also with our time and energy. Daniel too would intentionally turn his own face to Jerusalem. (Daniel 6:10)

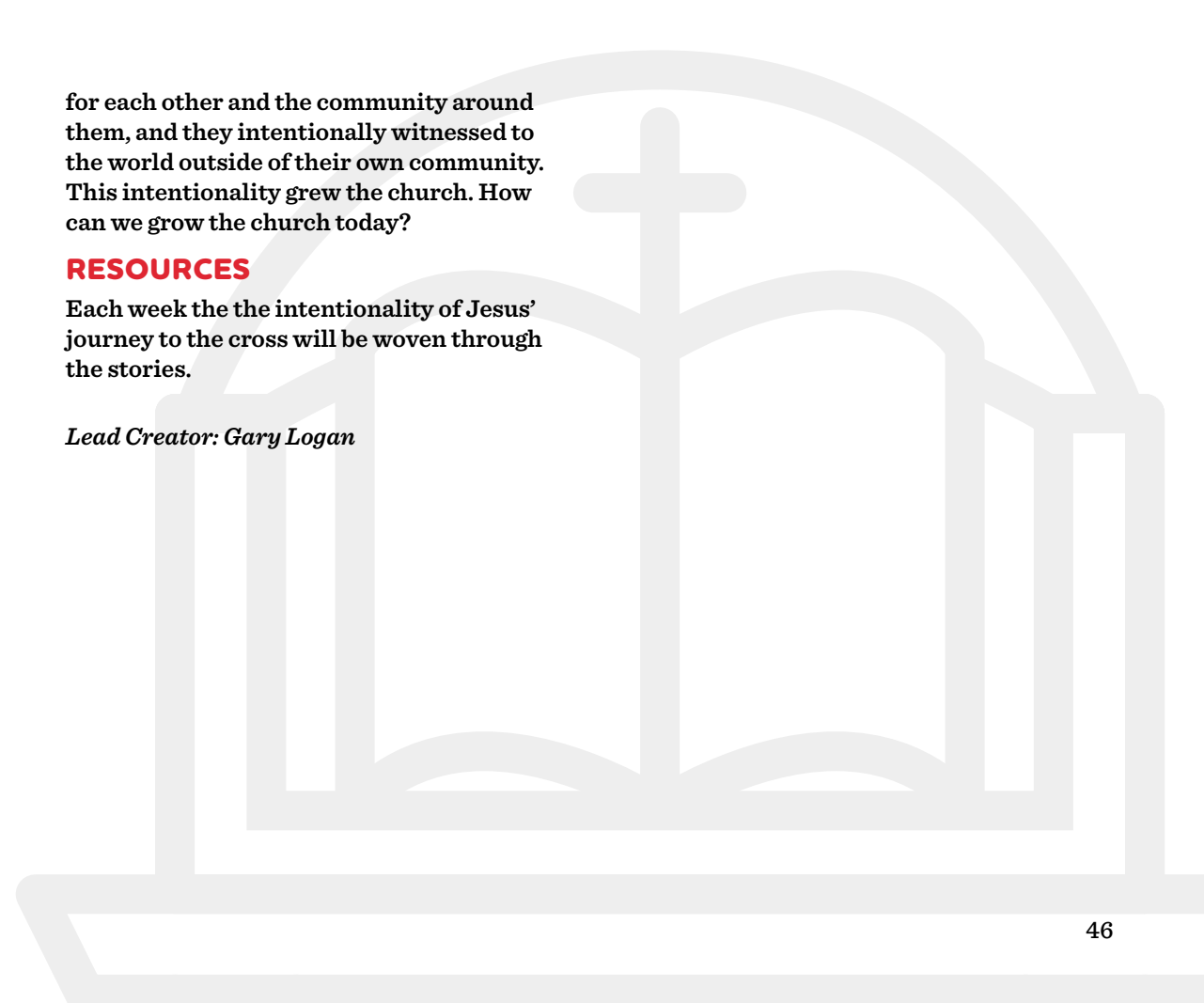
FOURTH SERMON

Intentional Together: The Early Church

Acts 2:42-47

Theme: Spiritual Fellowship

Early church devoted themselves to fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer. They intentionally devoted themselves to spiritual practices, they intentionally cared



for each other and the community around them, and they intentionally witnessed to the world outside of their own community. This intentionality grew the church. How can we grow the church today?

RESOURCES

Each week the the intentionality of Jesus' journey to the cross will be woven through the stories.

Lead Creator: Gary Logan

WHY THE CHURCH?

SERIES TYPE

Leadership, Vision, Seeker Sensitive

SERIES DESCRIPTION

The different sermons will serve to explore the original evangelical mission of the Church from the very first Christian congregations of “The Way,” and help define the role and responsibility of the Modern Church to lead a return to the original highest commandments given by Jesus himself: To illustrate and exemplify the mission of love and hope, mercy and tolerance that is the essence of the Agape Love of God, and can be accomplished only through the Holy Spirit of God working through ordinary people with extra-ordinary faith and focus in Jesus Christ.

FIRST SERMON

Why Did The Church Begin?

Luke 24:44–53

The Church began in obedience to the Great Commission given to the first disciples by Jesus to help feed “The Lambs and Sheep” a Spiritual diet of the Gospel. Jesus compels Peter to reach out to new believers following “The Way”, addressing the need of Spiritual guidance, nurturing and teaching.

The Church came into existence to start and sustain new communities of faith in order to establish places of Worship and Teaching to further expand the reach of the Great Commission, and make it possible for the Gospel message to be given and received and practiced right where those new to the faith live and work and make their lives.

In contrast, The Church did not begin for any ulterior or selfish motives other than to preach, teach, and spread the Love of Christ, and the Church always has need to be aware of, and to beware of, becoming more inwardly focused than outwardly focused in ministry and purpose.

The early Christian Church was the only

place a person could go to hear the truth of Christ and what his Life, Death, and Resurrection mean to us and to our life on Earth, and Life everlasting.

Perhaps the Christian Church came into existence as an eternal answer for the question all who live must ponder and face: “What happens when we die?” Only with Jesus can we have a hopeful answer.

SECOND SERMON

When Did The Church Come to be?

Acts 2:38–47; Acts 2:17–22, 25–35

After the raising of Jesus from the dead, He began to appear to the Apostles and to outline their mission and their role in the building of His Holy Church here on earth.

Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to guide them after He has ascended into Heaven.

The arrival of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost marks the beginning of The Holy Christian Church, although they were known at first as followers of “The Way” of Christ.

Peter and the original Apostles were empowered by the Holy Spirit to preach,

teach, heal, and baptize new believers into the Christian belief based on the Gospel of Christ, not yet in written form.

With the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, the earliest Christian churches became agents of change, bringing back a return to a traditional belief and trust in God, and ushering in the implementation of God's plan of the redemption of mankind through the blood of "The Lamb" of Passover, shown in Christ's Sacrificial gift to us all.

The establishment of New Churches was critical to further the Great Commission of Christ by bringing the Good News of the Gospel in ever – increasing, far reaching, and always expanding circles of Christian Faith.

THIRD SERMON

What is The Church's Purpose Today?

Acts 28: 20–28

Times and circumstances may change as History rolls on, but the age old struggle between the perfect goodness of God and the imperfect carnal nature of mankind really never changes. Sin may be seen in a more modern form in today's world, but the basic

function of Sin never changes: It separates God's beloved sons and daughters from God's eternal Love. The Love of Christ is always relevant and timeless.

Life is being with God eternally; death is the absence of that connection; death in sin is eternal separation from God's goodness and love, and through Jesus we are forever saved from sin and death.

The purpose of the Church today is first and foremost to bring the central message of Hope to a world in need, the Good words of the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Church is not here to police and persecute those who do not follow God's word and statutes.

The purpose of the Church is to help bring the message of God's love through Christ and to help others feel empowered and free to pursue a relationship with Christ with the help and support of the Church.

FOURTH SERMON

Where is Christianity Now?

Romans 5: 12–17

Sin is still with us, and where sin is

multiplied, God's Grace abounds all the more; enough to cover it all.

Paul tells us that Grace now rules, and Sin is dead.

Much of modern Christianity has become worldly and watered down and resembles more the world around it than the Kingdom of God, making the need for Christ in a person's daily life less of a priority to them.

Christianity has become edited and re-worded to the point that the power of the Word of God is no longer a clear and concise invitation to the Grace of God through Christ, and the need to worship and grow together with each other in Christ is no longer embraced as a necessity of life.

We need to resurrect the Gospel of Christ in its original and un-edited form, and allow the power of the unfiltered promises of God's Grace through Jesus Christ be clearly seen and felt, and that message of God's Love through Christ be first and foremost in our hearts, minds, and motives.

FIFTH SERMON

How Do We Become “The Church” Again?

1 Peter 2: 11–17

We do not need to fight “Fire with Fire” against those who persecute the Church and its beliefs, but instead graciously stand up for our beliefs and stick by the Word of God, and the challenge he gives us to Love first, last, and everywhere in between.

We need to show kindness and fairness in the face of persecution and deceit so that the Grace of God may shine through our actions. We need to always remember to pray for our enemies as Christ commands.

We need not fear appearing to be counter-culture because there will never be a perfect marriage between our faith in God’s Kingdom, and the norms and mandates of the Kingdoms of earth. Stand with God always.

We must put our full trust in God’s word and His ways, and lovingly preach and teach the way of Christ as it was taught by the first Apostles. We rely on the Holy Spirit to give our words a universal meaning of God’s Love as the very meaning of Life, and the power that binds us all together as one family of

God.

Most importantly, we must show that we are trying to live what we believe so that we may preach the Gospel of Christ with our actions as well as our words.

Preach The Gospel - Use words only when necessary – St. Francis of Assisi.

Lead Creator: Frederick Phillips (and Group 4)

WE BELIEVE

SERIES TYPE

Discipleship, Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

The Social Principles are a United Methodist global call to social action and an attempt at capturing the Wesleyan spirit of social holiness and ethical action. This four-week series was delivered prior to General Conference 2024 focusing on the new revised social principles that were discussed and voted on during General Conference in 2024. It was an attempt to discuss our theological positions and how our beliefs should inform our actions.

FIRST SERMON

What Are the Social Principles?

Isaiah 58:6–7

In 1908 the Methodist Episcopal Church adopted the Social Creed at its General conference. This was the first official statement from the Methodist church meant to address social issues including labor justice, fair wages, safe working conditions, and offering opposition to child labor. Since that time the Methodist and then the United Methodist Church has adapted these into the Social Principles. These principles offer guidance on a wide range of ethical and social concerns and are updated every 8 years. The Social Principles serve as a teaching and guiding document for all United Methodist church members to help live out their call to faith and justice in the world.

SECOND SERMON

Community of All Creation

Psalms 19:1–6

If the earth and skies proclaim the work of God's hands, should we not act to be good stewards of those works?

THIRD SERMON

The Economic Community

John 2:13–22

Part of our call as Christians is to care for the livelihood of others, to ensure a fair and just society where all may flourish. This includes advocating for societies in which all may earn livable wages and be able to find affordable housing. This story in John 2 focuses on Jesus' outrage at the usury tactics of the money changers in the Temple who were making it difficult for individuals to afford to make proper sacrifices. If Jesus shows his anger at economic injustice, what should our response be?

FOURTH SERMON

The Social Community

Philippians 2:3–8

As humans, we were made and created to be in community with one another. We live out our lives, grow in the faith, and engage in acts of discipleship and witness in the context of our communities. We are called to be a nurturing community both for those within the walls of the church and those outside,

putting our needs after the needs of others.

FIFTH SERMON

The Political Community

Mark 11:1–11

Make no mistake, the message of Jesus was one that was political in nature. He was called a Savior, greeted as a king, and allowed to be crucified because Rome understood others might rally around this “king.” When Jesus talked about the kingdom of God, it was against the kingdoms of this world that he spoke. His message was strong enough that others sought to kill him either to silence him or to ensure he did not inherit the kingdom.

RESOURCES

<https://www.umcjustice.org/documents/124>

Danny Bennett

UNREASONABLE WELCOME: WHEN LOVE MAKES SPACE

SERIES TYPE

Leadership, Vision, Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

A true welcome is more than friendly—it's making space for others in our church, hearts, and lives. Unreasonable Welcome: When Love Makes Space invites us to practice the radical love of Christ by opening ourselves fully to those God sends our way. Together we'll explore three life-giving aims of gospel hospitality—creating a safe place, affirming that every person matters, and embodying joyful energy—so that everyone who walks through our doors can truly feel at home in the family of God.

FIRST SERMON

Safe Place

Matthew 13:24–30

Be a place of grace. A judgment-free place where people can be known, accepted, and loved even with messy, imperfect lives. A place where they can openly share their hopes and heartaches, their dreams and disappointments. A place where they can be their real selves. We don't feel the need to be the sin police.

Respect the pace of grace. Different people participate with God's prevenient grace at different paces. Walk alongside people as they encounter Jesus at their own pace. Let God work. We don't feel the need to be the theology police.

SECOND SERMON

People Matter

Isaiah 43:14; 1 John 4:20

Every person is of sacred worth. Yet many walk through life feeling invisible, isolated, and incomplete. That's why we ask our church family to connect personally with each guest—to let them know two essential

truths: (1) they matter to them, and (2) they matter to God.

The greats of modern secular hospitality are often better at this than the church, and they are winning people over. Might we learn something from them about creating moments and individual attention? (see resources).

THIRD SERMON

Joyful Energy

1 Peter 1:8–9

We desire to let people experience the glorious joy that comes from abundant life in Christ. In some ways, our joy is indescribable. Not everyone is good putting it into words, but we people with Christ in us should all be able to embody this indescribable and glorious joy. Smile, walk around with a spring in your step, be delightful.

Nobody is doing this better right now than the Savannah Bananas and they are selling out stadiums across the country (see resources).

NOTE

These are my church's three aims, but you are welcome to identify your own. While it can be tempting to train people on many different goals, most of us can only remember and practice about three things well. Choose your top three and then repeat and reinforce them consistently.

The Aims are two words each so they are easy to remember and can be repeated over time in church life without great explanation.

RESOURCES

Sermon 1: *Kingdom Influence: Three Proven Keys to Revealing Jesus in a Skeptical and Suspicious World* by Steven L. Barr

Sermon 2: *Unreasonable Hospitality: The Remarkable Power of Giving People More Than They Expect* by Will Guidara

Sermon 2: *The Power of Moments: Why Certain Experiences Have Extraordinary Impact* by Chip Heath and Dan Heath

Sermon 3: *Fans First: Change The Game, Break the Rules & Create an Unforgettable Experience* by Jesse Cole (Owner- Savannah Bananas)

Lead Creators: Session 3, Group 1 - Brett DeHart, Danny Bennett, Chandra Snell, Todd Hurley

A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS

SERIES TYPE

Topical, Justice

SERIES DESCRIPTION

God raises voices in the wilderness, shapes us through the wilderness within, and calls us into a communal life of justice together.

Anchor Scripture: Amos 5:24 – “Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”

FIRST SERMON

A Voice in the Wilderness

Amos 5:21–24, Mark 1:1–8, Exodus 3:1–12

God raises voices in the wilderness to call His people back to faithful justice. Explore whose voices are missing in your community.

SECOND SERMON

The Wilderness Within

Matthew 4:1–11, 1 Kings 19:1–18, Genesis 32:22–32

Justice work begins within: confronting fears, idols, and temptations. Let God shape your heart to be resilient and humble.

THIRD SERMON

Just Us – Justice Together

1 Kings 19:9–18, Genesis 1, Acts 2:42–4

Justice is communal. The church lives differently together, extending justice beyond “just us” toward God’s vision for all creation.

FOURTH SERMON

Justice for All Creation

Genesis 1, Stories from the Exodus Journey, Romans 8

God’s justice includes all creation. Caring for others and the earth is discipleship, part of the long, generational journey of justice.

Lead Creator: Peytyn Tobin (Group Session 3)

FORGED IN THE FIRE

SERIES TYPE

Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Life can sometimes bring trials that feel like walking through the flames—but God promises to stand in the fire with us. With God, the fires of life can be transformative: a place to be refined, strengthened, and formed for God's glory.

FIRST SERMON

Approaching the Flames with Curiosity

Exodus 3:1–9

After fleeing Egypt to escape the fiery conflict with Pharaoh, Moses settled into an ordinary life in Midian—until an extraordinary flame caught his eye. A bush burned without burning out, and Moses's curiosity drew him close enough to hear God's voice. That holy curiosity opened his eyes to God's compassion and his ears to God's calling. In the same way, our curiosity in the midst of trials can lead us beyond fear, into God's presence, and toward God's purposes of freedom and hope.

SECOND SERMON

Faith in the Face of Fire

Daniel 3:19–30

Faith is not proven in comfort, but in the fire. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood firm when threatened with the flames, refusing to bow to false gods. In their faithfulness, God revealed God's power—not by keeping them out of the fire, but by standing with them in it and bringing them

out unharmed. This sermon will encourage people to remain steadfast in the face of trials, trusting that God can use even our most difficult moments to display God's presence and power to save.

THIRD SERMON

The Refiner's Fire

Ezekiel 24:1–14

Just as intense heat draws out impurities, so too God, the Refiner, allows fiery circumstances to reveal what is hidden and to burn away what does not belong. This sermon will explore how God uses seasons of trial not to destroy us, but to purify us, make us more faithful, holy, and aligned with God's purpose.

Possible illustration: In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Eustace, having been transformed into a dragon, experiences a painful process of shedding his dragon skin as Aslan helps him return to human form. Eustace initially tries to peel off the layers himself, but finds that new scales replace the old. Aslan then intervenes, tearing off the dragon's skin with his claws, which is a painful but necessary step for Eustace's

transformation.

FOURTH SERMON

Fire Bearers

Acts 2:1–13

On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit descended as tongues of fire, igniting the church with God's presence and power (Acts 2). The church is not called to keep this fire hidden but to bear it—burning with God's love, truth, and holiness—in a world often cold and dark. This sermon explores how the Spirit's fire empowers and sends us out as living torches of God's kingdom.

Possible Illustration: Talking about the Peace Light that is transferred from the grotto of the Church of the Nativity to all around the world. (<https://www.peacelightnorthamerica.org/about/history>)

Lead Creator: Steve Carleo

LIVING WATER

SERIES TYPE

Discipleship

SERIES DESCRIPTION

What is it about Jesus and water? In this 6-week sermon series, we will focus on John 7:38-39 where Jesus said, "All who are thirsty should come to me! All who believe in me should drink!" As followers of Jesus, how does Jesus lead us with illustrations of water and how does Christ continue to nourish us with living water?

FIRST SERMON

Resurfacing

John 1

In this sermon, we focus on how Jesus models for us the cleansing power of the water and how, in this act we also start our journey of faith with God and are led to ministry and missions. God allows us to start anew.

SECOND SERMON

Alchemy of Water

John 2:1-11

In this sermon, we highlight that Jesus is in the transformation business, and he transforms us. Not only does he transform the water into wine, but he also transforms the wine into the best wine. God transforms us into the best that we can be.

THIRD SERMON

Rolling in the Deep

Matthew 14:22-33

What or who do we depend on when the waters get rough and it's dark? This sermon focuses on Jesus walking on water amidst

darkness, rough seas, and wild wind. We can trust that Jesus is there for us even when things gets scary.

FOURTH SERMON

Water Break

John 4:1-26

Jesus knows us and loves us. In this sermon, we talk about how Jesus wants to have a relationship with us. So often, we are our biggest judges, but Jesus knows us and knows our hearts. Are we open to a relationship with the one who gives us living water?

FIFTH SERMON

Hot Water

Luke 22:39-46

Jesus prays so hard that his sweat became like great drops of blood. Are we this dependent on Jesus? Do we have this deep of a connection with God? This sermon focuses on us being completely dependent on God and connected to God.

SIXTH SERMON

Bath Time

John 13-1-15

Jesus models for us how to love us, by service. He washes the disciples's feet to show us that service is at the forefront of discipleship. How are we to love like Jesus? With service.

Lead Creator: Mike Moxley

THE BIG DAY

SERIES TYPE

Advent/Christmas

SERIES DESCRIPTION

A 4-week advent series that likens the coming of and birth of Jesus Christ to a big football game. The series follows the order in which a big game is prepared to be played. Jesus' birth and a big game are both prophesized/promoted, they are both hyped up or talked about to gain extra attention, then there is the warmup before the actual birth/game, and finally there is the perfect formation of all things that had to happen for Jesus to be born and for the big game to actually begin.

FIRST SERMON

Promo

Isaiah 9:2–7, Luke 21:5–36

Focus on the foretelling of Jesus' coming to Earth through the prophecy of Isaiah and Jesus' own prophetic words of his second coming. The “promos” of Jesus' birth number in the 300's in the Old Testament which gives credence to God planning for the Big Day of Jesus' coming to dwell on earth in flesh. With all the “promos” of Jesus' coming again a second time, the question is posed as to whether we are ready or not, are we excited about it even though we don't know the time.

SECOND SERMON

Pre-Game Hype

Isaiah 40:1–11

This message takes on the auspice of two sports reporters getting ready for the big game with a scripted back and forth banter. It walks through how “The Coach's” (God's) team messed up not listening to the coach's play calling, how The Coach levels the playing field despite His team's losing record,

how Coach will bring in a special team leader (Jesus), and that the Coach's playbook reveals that God's team will win and will be cared for after the big win. It ends with a “statement” from The Coach for everyone to join the team (altar call).

THIRD SERMON

Warm Up

Isaiah 60:1–4

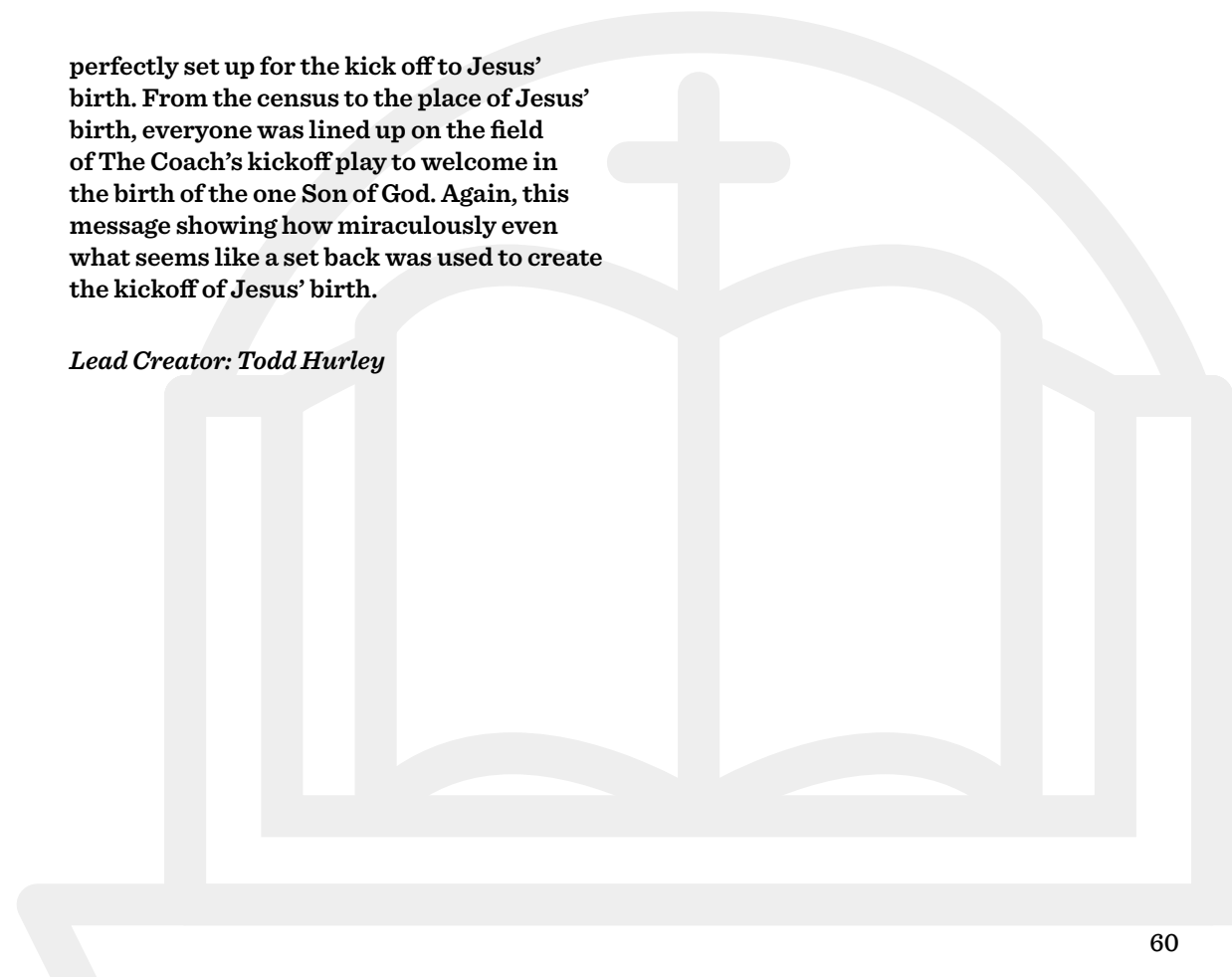
Isaiah and John the Baptist provide a warmup for the coming of the Messiah. Isaiah specifies what the Messiah will do to, which we are called to model until Christ comes again. We are to: care for those who are materially impoverished, offer radical hospitality, help to clothe those who need clothing, visit those who need companionship, and to remember to share the good news about the Big Day.

FOURTH SERMON

The Kick-Off

Luke 2:1–7

This sermon wraps up all the pregame activities to show how everything was



perfectly set up for the kick off to Jesus' birth. From the census to the place of Jesus' birth, everyone was lined up on the field of The Coach's kickoff play to welcome in the birth of the one Son of God. Again, this message showing how miraculously even what seems like a set back was used to create the kickoff of Jesus' birth.

Lead Creator: Todd Hurley

THE TRAVELING NATIVITY: A JOURNEY THROUGH ADVENT

SERIES TYPE

Advent/Christmas

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Every place tells a story. Like the tradition of the traveling nativity, where members of the holy family are moved around the house, the church, or even from house to house on their journey toward Bethlehem and the birth of the Christ child, allow this series to lead you on a geographical journey through Advent, Christmas Eve, and into the Christmas season to learn more about how different places within the Christmas narrative shape our understanding of the Good News of Christ's birth.

FIRST SERMON

A Voice Crying out in the Wilderness (Hope)

Isaiah 40:1–8, Luke 3

As Advent begins in darkness, be reminded of all those who have wandered in the wilderness, searching for liberation. Even as the wilderness represents our trials, our despair, and our struggles we know that we can encounter the divine and live into the hope of salvation.

“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of God stands forever.” -Isaiah 40:8

SECOND SERMON

Can Anything Good Come from Nazareth? (Peace)

Luke 1:26–38, Luke 4:16–30, Matthew 1:18–25, John 1:46

Nazareth often gets a bad rap, with a reputation that questions the quality of the people who live there. But Nazareth is vital to the story, as it is the place in which we find Mary and Joseph, but where we also hear of the fulfillment of the Word. In Jesus' coming, the worldly order is turned on its head; the

oppressed are set free.

THIRD SERMON

A Town in the Hill Country of Judea (Joy)

Ruth 4:11–17, Luke 1:39–56

Ruth and Naomi find joy and sustenance in the birth of Obed, whose birth establishes the lineage that leads to Christ. Likewise, Elizabeth's acknowledgement of Mary and the child she bears as a blessing is cause for the baby within her womb to leap for joy. Here is the fulfillment of the Lord's promises.

FOURTH SERMON

“Let's Go to Bethlehem and See This Thing That has Happened” (Love)

Luke 2:1–20, Micah 5:2–4

In a shift from what has come to be the traditional Christmas Eve text in many churches, the Bethlehem narrative is offered in week 4. The love of God has come in the form of the Christ child, offered to the ends of the Earth, including the lowly shepherds and those who have long yearned for a savior.

FIFTH SERMON

What Does the Birth of Christ Mean for You in Your Own Context? (Christmas Eve)

Psalm 97, Titus 2:11–14, Luke 2:1–20

While the traditional Christmas narrative in Luke may be used, consider using one of the alternate texts offered in the Lectionary for the Nativity of the Lord to proclaim what the good news of Christ's birth means for your specific context- whether you consider that for the 21st Century world, your nation, your state or your town. How does the birth of Christ bear on your witness in the world today?

SIXTH SERMON

Jerusalem (Christmas)

Luke 2:25–40, Luke 19:28–40

The fullness of light is upon the world with the birth of Christ. Simeon and Anna's words of praise are an acknowledgement of hope realized through Christ's redemption.

Lead Creators: Rachel Williams, Steve Carleo, Britt Gilmore, Gary Logan, & Bethany Douty

LIGHTEN THE LOAD

SERIES TYPE

Advent/Christmas

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Advent is a season that celebrates gift-giving. This year, we're focusing on a different kind of giving: specifically, the lessening of the burdens that others carry. Together, we'll discover how preparing for Jesus means that we help lighten the load of others in the name of Jesus.

FIRST SERMON

The Weight We Carry

Galatians 6:1-5

We all bear burdens, be they emotional, financial, spiritual, or others. Jesus came into the world to carry our burdens, and we have a charge to do the same.

SECOND SERMON

The Gifts We Give

Luke 10:38-42

Especially during the season of Advent, it is easy to focus on tangible gifts we can give to others. There are countless opportunities for us to take stock of the people around us, making a point to embrace the moment. Jesus' coming was an act of presence, not extravagance.

THIRD SERMON

The Space We Offer

Luke 2:1-7

There was no room in the inn for Mary and Joseph. Someone did make room in a stable, however. When we create space for others, God can fill it in miraculous ways.

FOURTH SERMON

The Strength We Summon

Matthew 11:28-30

Carrying our own weight can be overwhelming enough. Similar to how weightlifters remind us to "lift with your legs, not with your back," faithfully bearing the burdens of others requires a strength not of our own. Where do we draw our source for caring for others? If it's anything other than the power of Jesus Christ, we will fail.

FIFTH SERMON

The Love that Carries Us

John 1:14; Philippians 2:5-11

Jesus didn't hold back in the way He lived. He gave himself fully, bearing our burdens to the cross. While we are to have the same attitude that was in Jesus, we don't have to do that alone. He continues to sustain us in lightening the load of others.

Lead Creator: Ryan Frack

JESUS: SEASON ONE

SERIES TYPE

Lent/Easter

SERIES DESCRIPTION

A Lenten series focused on encountering the story of Jesus like we would a new TV series. How can we try to look at Jesus as though we were encountering this story for the first time, and how would that help us share the story?

FIRST SERMON

Episode 1: “The Beginning and the Baptism”

Mark 1:1; Matthew 3:13–15

We are introduced to Jesus. The beginning of Mark makes a clear declaration of WHO and WHAT Jesus is, and what Jesus offers. Jesus’ baptism in Matthew shows the beginning of his ministry coming out of what he experiences, himself.

SECOND SERMON

Episode 2: “The Wilderness”

Luke 4:1–13

Jesus answers a call and a pull to go out into the Wilderness, as we discover more of the inner character of who Jesus is in a trial he undergoes. It is through our tests that we discover more about ourselves. How does Jesus’ responses to this testing reveal who he is and his knowledge of his purpose? How do we respond when we are tested?

THIRD SERMON

Episode 3: “The Call of the Fishermen”

Matthew 4:18–22

The main character is introduced to the side characters—the fishermen who will become his first disciples. What causes them to drop their nets and follow; do they realize what they’re doing? Do they realize what they’re truly dropping? What would we do if this was the way we first met Jesus? What would we need to drop?

FOURTH SERMON

Episode 4 “The Return Home”

Luke 4:16–30

Jesus returns home to Nazareth and participates in worship, not only reading the scripture for that day, but saying it’s been fulfilled. The reaction of what Jesus continues to say turns people he’s known since childhood against him. Who has Jesus become in their eyes? What happens when someone we know and love challenges the way we see things? Would we react in the same way?

FIFTH SERMON

Episode 5: “The Compassion

Mark 1:40–45

Jesus reveals the compassion he is so famously known for, today. But what does this encounter with the leper also reveal about who Jesus is? Are we willing to be just as compassionate, even to the Stranger, or the Afflicted?

SIXTH SERMON

Episode 6: “The Defiance”

Matthew 10:32–39

On this Palm Sunday, we are reminded of words Jesus shared that cause us discomfort and confusion. How can Jesus say he didn’t come to bring peace if he’s the Prince of Peace? Why is Jesus talking about Division if we’re supposed to be United? Is scripture wrong, inconsistent? Have we taken the time and allowed ourselves to be confused? As we approach Holy Week, who is the Jesus we have met during Lent, and who are we preparing to celebrate at Easter?

SEVENTH SERMON

Episode 7: “The Resurrection”

Luke 24:13–32

In this Series Finale, we begin with the summary of Jesus’ ministry through the story of the travelers to Emmaus—telling the story of Jesus to Jesus, himself. How would we tell the story to someone, if they asked? Do we count on people asking? Wouldn’t we share this experience, the way we’d share wrapping up the season of a great TV series? Now that the story has been shared with us, how do we share it with others?

*Lead Creators: Rev. Andy Whitaker Smith,
Rev. Nicki Taylor*

HOMELESS: EXILED FROM FAMILY, FAITH, AND GOD

SERIES TYPE

Lent/Easter

SERIES DESCRIPTION

We examine what it means to be exiled—from home, from life, even from God. This may also cause us to think of stories in our own time, and maybe even our own story. Through biblical characters and their stories of isolation, where do we find redemption, resurrection, and a new home?

FIRST SERMON

LENT 1: Adam and Eve

Genesis 3:20–24

The first story of humanity includes Exile, God banishing Adam and Eve from Paradise. As we examine our relationship with God, now, in the beginning of Lent...do we think of times God has sent us away?

SECOND SERMON

LENT 2: Moses and the Israelites

Exodus 15:22–27

Moses begins the journey with the Israelites into the Wilderness. A journey that first seems exciting can soon fade by reality, and all the obstacles. When the excitement and allure of our faith meets the hardship of life, how do we keep going?

THIRD SERMON

LENT 3: Israel and Babylon

Jeremiah 29:4–14

God tells the Israelite captives that they are to make their new homes in the very place they've been exiled. Have we felt exiled, even when we're around others? What do we do

when we realize we're not leaving any time soon?

FOURTH SERMON

LENT 4: Hagar and Ishmael

Genesis 21:9–21

When the family we have lived with no longer want us, and we have someone we must protect in our exile, where does our strength come from? Why would God want something like this to happen?

FIFTH SERMON

LENT 5: Joseph and Mary

Matthew 2:13–18

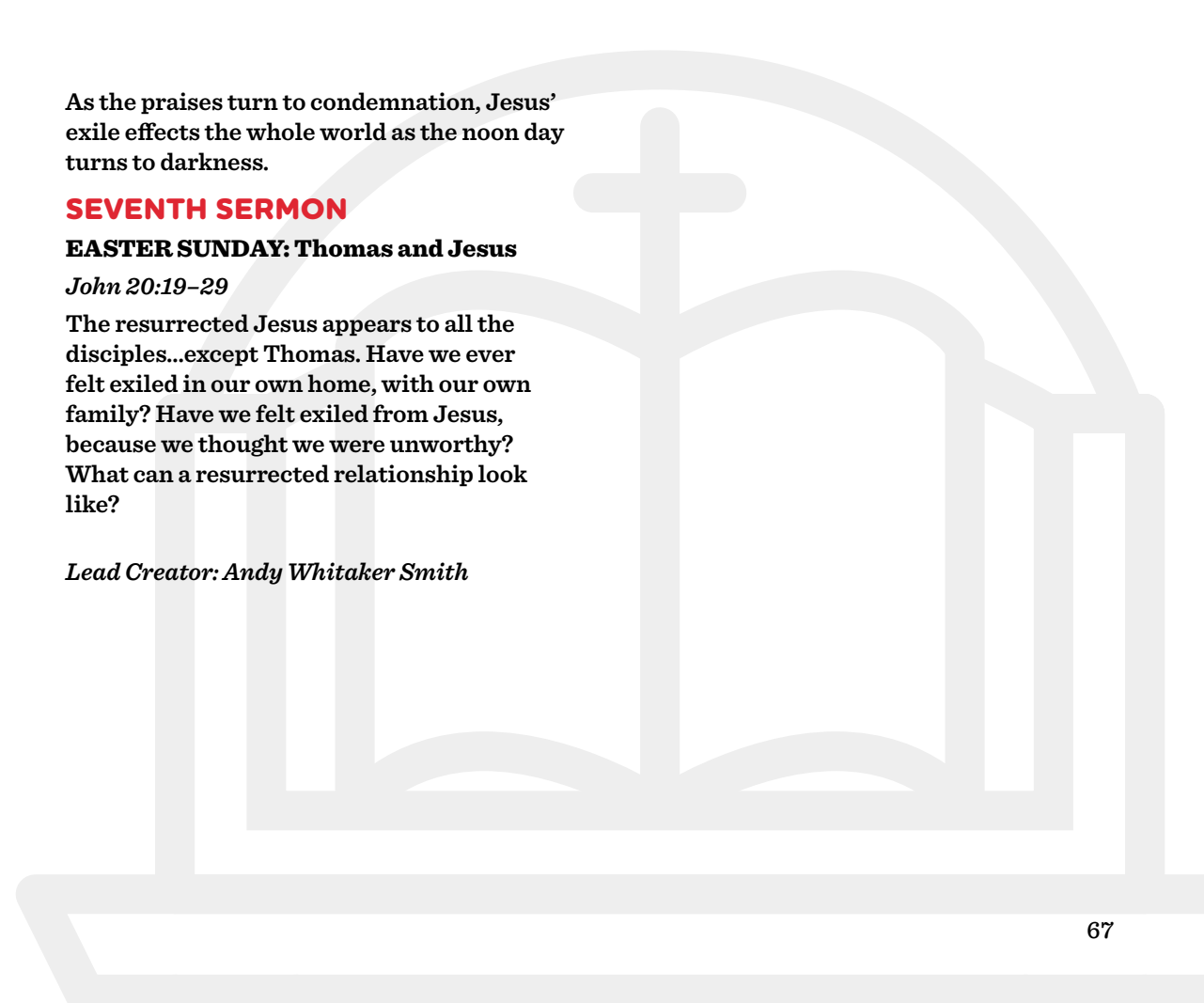
Jesus and his parents celebrate his birth by having to flee to Egypt, in danger from the King. How might we imagine what it's like to take our family to a strange land, to seek sanctuary away from our home?

SIXTH SERMON

PALM SUNDAY: Jesus and the Cross

Mark 11:8–11, Luke 23:44–46

Jesus experiences a kind of exile even in the midst of those praising him in Jerusalem.



As the praises turn to condemnation, Jesus' exile effects the whole world as the noon day turns to darkness.

SEVENTH SERMON

EASTER SUNDAY: Thomas and Jesus

John 20:19–29

The resurrected Jesus appears to all the disciples...except Thomas. Have we ever felt exiled in our own home, with our own family? Have we felt exiled from Jesus, because we thought we were unworthy? What can a resurrected relationship look like?

Lead Creator: Andy Whitaker Smith