

LEADER

Building the Christian Church

REVISED EDITION



To Know, To Live,
To Grow

Series Overview

To Know, To Live, To Grow

To Know, To Live, To Grow is a holistic approach to confirmation. With Christian education as a key component, this material



helps youth integrate their faith with their families and into their congregational lives.

This curriculum is designed for groups of up to 10 youth participants and one leader. The leader

engages youth in their personal faith searches—walking with them, staying in dialogue with them, and encouraging them to be open about their questions and concerns. Leadership can come from young adults, parents, lay leaders, or clergy.

In addition to serving as confirmation curriculum, this series can be adapted for use with retreats, camp experiences, service opportunities, and other small-group activities.

Foundations

1. Confirmation is a ministry rather than religious education. This ministry is a joint effort of confirmands, parents, lay leaders, and church staff.
2. Confirmation ministry is Christ-centered, a place for people who need a Savior.
3. Confirmation ministry is not only about gaining knowledge but also about creating experiences in Christian community and serving others.
4. Confirmands exist within a family community. The family bears the primary responsibility for the faith development of the confirmand.
5. It is essential to meet young people's needs for acceptance, self-worth, and community as they prepare for the adult world by testing boundaries and questioning values while learning the message of the gospel.

To Know

Confirmands:

- understand how to read and interpret the Bible.
- learn about important people and events in the Bible.
- learn the central teachings of the Lutheran church.
- discuss the Scriptures and faith-related topics in small groups.
- complete in-class and homework assignments.

To Live

Confirmands:

- see the relevance of biblical events in their lives today.
- understand the church as the body of Christ, which functions by helping people.
- discover appropriate service opportunities in the church and the community.
- accept responsibility for serving God.
- express a willingness to confess the Christian faith.

To Grow

Confirmands:

- discover that Christian growth is a lifelong process.
- understand that Christian growth takes place through worship, prayer, education, and service.
- integrate the Bible and the Christian traditions into their daily lives.
- see how faith affects personal decision-making and the way we treat others.

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Format

The To Know, To Live, To Grow confirmation curriculum is designed for use with up to 10 participants and one adult leader. This material is intended for use over several 60-90 minute sessions. The flexible format allows you to make adjustments to fit your situation.

Many of the activities can work during your time together as a group or as homework assignments. The questions in each session often promote discussion rather than finding a specific answer. Some sessions may require more direction than others. Be prepared to spend extra time on topics of particular interest to your group.

Materials

Each participant should have a Participant book, writing materials, and a Bible. The Participant books follow the same format as this Leader guide—but with writing space instead of answers and without many of the margin notes that appear here. Some activities suggest additional items (maps, videos, outside reading materials). Review the sessions in advance to see what you will need.

May God bless you in your ministry!



Augsburg Fortress
MINNEAPOLIS

LEADER

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REVISED EDITION

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Session 1

Who Will Be Our Guide?

Scripture Text

Matthew 28:16-20

Luke 24:50-53

John 14:18-27

Acts 1:1-8

Acts 2:1-13

Main Points

- Jesus returned to heaven and left us with the Great Commission, our call to baptize, preach, and teach.
- Jesus promised us a gift, the Holy Spirit, to come be our guide. With Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes and the Christian church begins.

Leader's Note

These sessions focus on the New Testament, the history of the church, Martin Luther, and how these topics relate to our lives today. The main points of each story are highlighted through discussion questions. Old and New Testament verses are cited, but telling of the story has been left to you. Help participants understand these stories as real events in the lives of real people.

Open with prayer.

Where Am I?

Leader's Note: Have enough atlases or maps on hand for every two participants. Clues and answers are on page 34.

Form pairs for this activity. The leader will give clues, while the participants guess the location described. Each pair gets a map or atlas. Five points are given to the first pair to name the correct location; one point is given for each pair that guesses correctly.

Starter Questions

- Have you ever been lost? What did you do? How did you find your way home? Do you like to read maps? Why or why not?
- Who has acted as a guide for you? Maybe he or she taught you something new or pointed you in a different direction.
- Name one person who has taught you about Jesus. What did he or she teach you? Why do you remember that person?

Read Aloud

After Jesus died, his followers felt lost. They had come to rely on his guidance, but suddenly they were left without him. At times, many of us feel lost, just like Jesus' followers. But Jesus did leave us with guidance, through his teachings and through those he sent to begin the Christian church. In the coming sessions, we are going to look at the leaders who emerged to guide the people. But first, we will focus on who Jesus sent to guide us.

Background Information and Context

After Jesus rose on Easter, he appeared many times over the next 40 days. He first appeared to the women at the tomb, then a group of disciples saw him twice. He joined friends on the road to Emmaus, and he helped some of the disciples who were fishing. After those 40 days, Jesus was taken up (ascended) into heaven.

- What challenge did Jesus give to the disciples? These were some of the last words Jesus said. How important do you think they were? See Matthew 28:16-20. **He told them to go and baptize in the name of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. They were to teach others everything Jesus had taught them. These words summed up the calling of the disciples and our calling as well.**
- Describe what happened to Jesus. See also Luke 24:50-53. **This is what we call the Ascension. Jesus lifted up his arms, blessed the people, and was taken up into heaven.**
- Why did Jesus appear to these people after he rose from the dead? What instructions did he give them? See Acts 1:1-8. **Jesus' appearances were proof of the resurrection. Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem for the power of the Holy Spirit.**

The day of Pentecost was 50 days after the Passover feast. (The Last Supper took place as Jesus and his disciples were celebrating the Passover feast.) At Pentecost, people came from all nations to Jerusalem. This is the day that God chose for the Holy Spirit to come to earth. See Acts 2:5.

- Describe this event in your own words. If you had been in the room, what would you have thought? See Acts 2:1-4. **Individual answers.**
- List the images described. **Wind, fire, tongues, and so forth.**
- What promise did Jesus give the disciples before he died? What role would they have? See John 14:18-27. **Jesus promised not to leave them as orphans; he told them the Holy Spirit was coming to comfort them, teach them, and give them peace.**
- What did the disciples do after they were filled with the Holy Spirit? What power did it give them? See Acts 2:5-13. **They were able to speak many languages; they could tell many people about Jesus.**

Leader's Note

Included in the margins of each session:

Main Points gives a few nuggets of important information.

My Faith raises personal faith questions.

Tools connect the story with the life of participant, equipping them to put their faith into action.

Options for Learning

- **Skit: "Lost Traveler."** Act out being lost in a foreign country. You can't find someone who speaks your language. Then someone finds a bilingual dictionary, and you find a way to communicate. Like the bilingual dictionary, the Holy Spirit is a tool to help us understand how to live as Christians in this world.
- Read the Apostles' Creed. Memorize this creed as a summary of what the church believes about the triune God.

My Faith

- Reread Jesus' last words found in Matthew 28:16-20. How are you fulfilling this in your life? How is *confirmation* helping you learn how to do that?
- At baptism, we receive the Holy Spirit. How do you "live your baptism" or live as one filled with the Holy Spirit?

Tools

Choosing a guide:

Who do you ask?

- A good guide points to the truth.
- His or her words stand the test of time.

Where can you find help in choosing a guide?

- Read the Bible.
- Ask trusted friends.
- Pray to God.

After the Holy Spirit filled the apostles, they went into the streets and began preaching in different languages. On that day, 3,000 people were baptized and believed. It was the beginning of the Christian church. Notice the difference between a *disciple* and an *apostle*. A *disciple* is one who is a follower or student of a teacher. This was the name given to the Twelve who followed Jesus very closely. An *apostle*, on the other hand, is one who leads or is an advocate for a new cause. The disciples of Jesus were also apostles, but there were many other apostles as well.

Discussion Questions

- If you heard these stories today, would you believe them? Why or why not?
- How are you living the command Jesus gave to his disciples?
- Do you believe the resurrection and ascension of Jesus is true? Why or why not?
- What makes Jesus' life so amazing?
- What did you learn today? How does it change your idea of Jesus' life?

Jesus walked this earth for about 30 years, spending only a few of them as a teacher. When Jesus left, he did not leave us alone. Jesus promised to send a guide or advocate to be with us so that God's presence would continue in the world. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came in full force and has been alive in the world ever since. This is good news for us! And so the Christian church was born and continues today.

Challenge Questions

- How is God revealed in the world today? As a group, make a list. Your challenge this week is to look for God in your world. Take a camera and shoot some pictures, write a story and share it with someone, or say a prayer of thanks to God.
- Who are people you know who are apostles today? What are they advocates for? How can you be an advocate for God? Your challenge this week is to do one thing on God's behalf in the world. Ideas: Invite someone to church or a church activity, reach out to someone who needs a friend, give something to a person in need, or write a letter to someone you've not talked to in a long time.
- Sometimes God asks us to be in places we don't want to be. When has this happened to you? This week, spend five quiet minutes each morning or evening listening to God's voice. At the end of the week, do one thing God has asked you to do.

Close with prayer.

Session 2

Do You Love Me?

Open with prayer.

Nicknames

Give each person a small piece of paper on which to write her or his nickname. Participants should not put actual names on the paper. Ask for the papers back, and then read the nicknames. Have the group vote on who each nickname belongs to. Keep a tally of the votes. A correct guess earns a point. Another twist: Pass out nicknames of famous people and do the same thing.

Starter Questions

- Why are names important? Who calls you by a nickname? Who do you call by a nickname?
- How do you show affection for your friends or family members?
- How much do you trust your best friend (with a secret, a snack, your life)? How much does he or she trust you?

Read Aloud

We express affection for our friends in different ways. Maybe a light punch on the arm is a sign of being a pal, or teasing a friend in the lunch room is cool. Maybe playing a trick on a friend at school is funny or sharing a locker is a sign of being good friends. But when it comes to needing a true friend, who you can trust? How do you know who to turn to? How do you build strong friendships? In the same way we try to build good friendships, Jesus built relationships with his disciples. Jesus was close to several of the disciples, but it seems one disciple stood out from the rest: Peter. Today, we look at what kind of relationship Peter and Jesus had, how Jesus challenged Peter, and how Peter acted as a leader in building the Christian church.

Background Information and Context

Peter was not what many would consider a prime candidate to lead the church. Prior to following Jesus, he was a fisherman. His brother Andrew, who had followed John the Baptist, convinced Peter to come along and follow Jesus. His weaknesses included being hot-headed and speaking before thinking things through. Jesus challenged this rough man to define his beliefs and stand up for what he believed in. Read Matthew 16:13-20.

Scripture Text

Matthew 16:13-20

John 18:15-18, 25-27

John 21

Acts 2:14-47

Main Points

- Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ.
- Peter denied Jesus; Jesus forgave him.
- Jesus named Peter “the Rock” and he became one of the first leaders of the church.

Options for Learning

- Map out the route of Peter's journey.
- Create a "Peter Profile," including important dates, facts, and so forth.

- Why might Jesus have asked his disciples this question? **Individual answers; he was challenging them to speak clearly about their beliefs.**
- Peter was the first to respond to Jesus. What did Jesus say to him in return? Was this good or bad news for Peter? **Peter was nicknamed "the Rock" by Jesus because he would be one of the first leaders of the church. Jesus was offering Peter a great opportunity, but the road would be hard and dangerous.**

The Bible is clear that when Jesus met alone with a smaller group of the disciples, Peter was always present. Although we do not know for certain, Peter was probably the closest disciple to Jesus. We do know Jesus had big plans for Peter to help carry out Jesus' mission for the church. But despite Peter's bravery and his close relationship with Jesus, when it came to the hard times, Peter became a coward. See John 18:15-18, 25-27.

- In these verses, what did Peter do when asked about Jesus? Why do you think he did this? Have you ever done a similar thing? Explain. **Peter denied Jesus three times. He was scared, worried that he would be taken prisoner or even killed for knowing Jesus. Individual answers.**
- Did this encounter change his relationship with Jesus? If so, how? **Individual answers; he may have felt guilty, confused, ashamed.**
- Jesus worked to restore their relationship. Read John 21. What was Peter doing? What did Jesus do? What command did he give Peter? **Jesus appeared to some of the disciples while they were fishing (returning to their old jobs). He asked Peter if he loved him, not once but three times (one time for each denial). He told Peter to "feed my lambs," to go ahead and do the work for which he was trained by Jesus.**
- What does Peter do next? Who is the first to begin preaching on the day of Pentecost? See Acts 2:14-47. **Peter did what Jesus asked; he began preaching after being filled with the Holy Spirit. He gathered people together for worship and acted as the first leader of the Christian church.**

Peter's life changed once he began preaching. From that moment on, Peter dedicated his life to spreading the good news of Jesus. In addition to being given the gift of preaching, Peter was also given the power to heal in Jesus' name (see Acts 3). Peter started several churches and is credited as the author of two letters in the New Testament. But he was also the first of Jesus' followers to be beaten and imprisoned for his beliefs, and eventually he was crucified. He didn't have a glamorous lifestyle, but he did have a life filled with mission and purpose. What changed for Peter? We may never know, but once Peter confessed his love for Jesus, he'd given Jesus his heart and he never turned back.

Discussion Questions

- If Jesus asked you, "Who do you say that I am?" what would your answer be? Why?
- What is your relationship with Jesus? How does it compare with other relationships you have?
- What did you learn in this session about how to restore friendships that have been broken or damaged?
- Did Peter live up to the name "the Rock"? Why or why not?

Regardless of whether you are called to be a leader in the church, Peter's story does raise the question of how you view Jesus. It is this ultimate question, "Do you love me?" that is at the heart of the issue. If you answer yes, Jesus does not ask for perfection, but rather action to take seriously your relationship and to follow his example in this world. This call to love and action is one key characteristic we need to keep in mind as we live as Jesus' disciples today.

Challenge Questions

- If Jesus were to give you a nickname, what would it be? Could that nickname challenge you to change your behavior? Explain your answer. Pick a nickname for yourself that Jesus might choose for you. This week remind yourself of that nickname every day. See if it changes your behavior.
- What gifts do you have to "feed my lambs"? Make a list of things you like to do. Pick three things from that list that you would be willing to share this week to "feed my lambs." For instance, if you like to read, offer to read Bible stories in the church nursery. If you like to cook, bake some cookies and bring them to an elderly person in your neighborhood.
- Peter did not live alone, but rather with a community of believers. Who can support you as you work on your relationship with Jesus? Ask a friend or family member to pray for you this week and you can pray for him or her.

Close with prayer.

My Faith

- **What have you learned in confirmation that will prepare you to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20)?**
- **How does the church help prepare you to "feed my lambs" or tell others about Jesus?**

Tools

How to act out your faith:

- **Use your gifts to "feed my lambs."**
- **Make sure you have the support and encouragement of other Christians. Gain strength from God through prayer, worship, and praise.**
- **Be certain that obeying God comes first. See Acts 5:29.**

Session 3

Change of Heart

Scripture Text

Acts 9:1-31

The letters of Paul

Main Points

- **God can transform lives and change hearts. (God can use sinners.) Look at Saul's persecution of Christians versus Paul's leadership in the Christian church.**
- **Paul was a leader to the Gentiles (non-Jews) and was willing to give his life for the church.**

Open with prayer.

Gossip Chain

Play "Telephone." Sitting in a circle, whisper a message from one person to the next. See how it changes once it's gone completely around the circle. Example: "Jim does not like sitting next to John in math class because John talks too much while Jim is trying to listen to the teacher."

Starter Questions

- How do messages about people at your school spread?
- Why do people share information about other people? Is it mostly good or bad news?
- Can people change their image? If so, how? If not, why?
- How do you decide what other people are like?

Read Aloud

Some people have bad reputations. Some bad reputations are based on people making repeatedly poor choices. Some bad reputations are based only on hearsay. Regardless of how a reputation gets started, it's hard to change. Unfortunately, people make poor choices from time to time, but that does not mean they cannot change their behavior. This session looks at a person with a very bad reputation, at least among the early Christians. Look at the story of Saul and see how God worked in his life and changed his heart.

Background Information and Context

- Why was Saul going to Damascus? What were his views on Christians or people of "the Way"? See Acts 9:1-2. **Saul thought the Christian people were wrong and that they needed to follow the old ways or else be thrown into prison or even killed. He was on his way to Damascus to continue persecuting Christians.**

- What changed Saul's attitude? What did he do instead? **Jesus spoke to him through a very bright light. Afterward, he was blinded, led to Damascus, and there he waited for someone to come to him. Saul changed his original plan; he spent a great amount of time in prayer and waited for God's new plan to take shape.**
- Who came to Saul with God's message in Damascus? Did he want to go see Saul? Why or why not? See Acts 9:10-19. **Ananias was sent by God to Saul. He did not want to go because he was afraid of Paul.**
- What did Saul do after Ananias visited him? How was he accepted by people? By the Jews? By the apostles? See Acts 9:20-31. **Paul began to preach about Jesus. The Jews were upset and planned to kill him. Many asked if he was the same man who had tried to kill Christians before. At first the apostles did not believe him, but eventually they took him in and together they helped the church grow.**

Paul, first known as Saul, was a Jew, a Pharisee, and also a Roman citizen. These were definitely strikes against him for being a leader in the Christian church. He was raised in a very religious home and had the best training available. He was an expert in the Old Testament and mastered several languages, which later helped him communicate to different populations. Paul trained many leaders in the early Christian church: Timothy, Silas, Titus, and Luke were a few. Paul was also trained as a tentmaker, a skill he used later in his life.

- Paul wrote the first 13 letters in the New Testament. The first is Romans and the last is Philemon. Make a list of the 13 books. All but four of Paul's letters were written to cities. Name the four written to people. Then locate the cities on a map. **Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1 & 2 Thessalonians. The last four were written to people: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.**
- Pick one letter of Paul and list the issues Paul discussed with these people. **Individual answers.**

Options for Learning

- **Create a "Paul Profile."**
- **Skit: "Paul's Conversion"** (see page 11).

Materials

Have a map of the cities of the New Testament available, or ask participants to use the maps in their Bibles.

My Faith

- **What is God asking you to do at church this year?**
- **Name some people of faith who are challenging you.**

Tools

What does it take to change your heart?

- **Eyes to see the problem clearly.**
- **A willingness to change behavior.**
- **Just do it! Act!**
- **Carry a cross as a reminder of God's presence in your life.**

Discussion Questions

- Why was God able to use Paul, a known enemy of the Christians? What does that say about God?
- What would it have felt like to be Ananias? Would you have trusted God and gone to Paul?
- If Paul lived today, how would he have communicated with people?
- If you heard a message like this today, what would you think?
- Are the issues of Paul's time similar to ours? Why or why not?

Whether we like it or not, God can use anyone as a leader in the church. Our history is not important. What is important is our willingness to open our hearts to God. Paul, once an enemy of the Christians, became a key leader in the development of the early church. He went so far as to risk his entire life to spread God's Word. Paul used his background, what he had been taught, and the skills he had developed to aid him in his leadership. What are you doing right now to prepare yourself to be a leader for God? Are you opening your heart to God? Are you learning about God's Word? Are you willing to help people around you? Whatever your gifts and skills, God has a place for you.

Challenge Questions

- How can you open yourself to God this week? How can you develop one of your gifts and use it in the church? Make a list of things you can do, then after each gift, write one way you can use that gift in the church. This week, do one thing to either develop that gift or use your gift for God. If you like kids, teach Sunday school. If you can play soccer, volunteer to help at an after school program. If you are a good listener, practice listening to your family this week.
- Who do you need to forgive? Today, go to a person you're holding hard feelings against and offer your forgiveness. Then write the issue on a piece of paper and burn that paper. Now let it go!

Close with prayer.

Paul's Conversion

Characters: Narrator, Saul, God, Ananias, Saul's three friends (non-speaking parts)

Narrator: *(As Saul walks on stage, dressed for traveling)* Saul was a very well-educated man of the Jewish faith. He was raised in a Jewish home and was considered an expert in the Jewish Bible. Holding strong to his Jewish beliefs, Saul was convinced that the Christian movement should be stopped, so he worked aggressively against it. Today we meet Saul on his way to Damascus to arrest Christians. *(Saul is joined on stage by three friends.)* Saul was in a hurry, for he was eager to capture the Christians and bring them back to Jerusalem to be put to death. Although his body was walking on the path, his mind was already making plans for the Christians he would capture. *(A spotlight blinds Saul.)* Suddenly, a bright light pierced through him and he fell to the ground. *(Saul falls.)*

Saul: Whoa, that was something! *(Still stunned.)*

Narrator: Before he could move, he heard a rumbling.

God: Saul, what are you doing?

Narrator: Barely able to comprehend the words, Saul answered.

Saul: What? Who are you?

God: Saul, I am God. Why are you against my people?

Narrator: Still wondering if this was a dream or reality, Saul continued to listen.

God: Saul, I want you to get up and continue on your way. But when you get to Damascus, wait for further instructions.

(Turn off light.)

Narrator: And with that, the light and voice vanished, leaving Saul helpless on the ground. As he rose, he looked for his traveling companions and realized he was blind. This was no dream; something or someone had indeed interrupted his journey. Not knowing what to do next, Saul's friends led him to Damascus. For three days Saul went without food or drink. Saul sat and prayed and waited for the next sign.

(Clear stage and enter Ananias.)

Narrator: Meanwhile, God spoke to a Christian named Ananias.

God: Go to Straight Street and find the man of the house and ask for Saul of Tarsus. He will be waiting for your arrival.

Ananias: But I have heard of this man. He certainly is not our friend. In fact, rumors are that he has come to capture Christians. Why would I want to visit him?

God: Do not worry, my friend. I have answered his prayer and told him you are coming in peace. He will not harm you. Trust me, I will protect you.

(Ananias exits to find Saul.)

Narrator: So off he went and to his surprise, things were just as God had said.

(Ananias and Saul on stage.)

Ananias: The Lord, the one you met on the road, has sent me to pray with you, filling you with the Holy Spirit and returning your sight.

Narrator: Saul's sight was returned. Expecting him to quickly return to his anti-Christian attitude, Ananias was surprised by Saul's reaction. Saul was convinced that this was the true God and he asked to be baptized as soon as possible. *(Ananias baptizes Saul.)* After being fed and gaining back his strength, Saul was a new man. He headed for the temple, not to capture Christians, but to preach the good news of Jesus Christ. Saul changed his name to Paul and began working as a leader of the Christian church, especially among the Gentile people.

Session 4

Many Gifts

Scripture Text

Genesis 2:23

Acts 21:9

1 Corinthians 12:4-13

Main Points

- **Our common ground:**
We are joined into one community through our baptism, when we receive the Holy Spirit.
- **We all have gifts; the gifts are many and diverse, given to benefit the church and glorify God.**
- **The stories of women in the Bible provide illustrations of people using their God-given gifts.**

Open with prayer.

Famous Women

Match the women listed below with the gift they have given our society.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <u>c.</u> Rosa Parks | a. First woman mentioned in the Bible |
| <u>e.</u> Betsy Ross | b. Old Testament judge |
| <u>a.</u> Eve | c. Challenged discrimination on a bus |
| <u>d.</u> Amelia Earhart | d. First woman to attempt to fly around the world |
| <u>i.</u> Marilyn Monroe | e. Made the first U.S. flag |
| <u>h.</u> Florence Nightingale | f. Former Prime Minister of England |
| <u>b.</u> Deborah | g. Former Prime Minister of India |
| <u>j.</u> Mother Teresa | h. Red Cross nurse |
| <u>f.</u> Margaret Thatcher | i. Actress and singer |
| <u>g.</u> Golda Meir | j. Worker in Calcutta, India, among the poor |

As a group, list 20 people who have made significant contributions to our society. List their gifts after their contribution.

Starter Questions

- Name several people who have impacted your life. Describe how.
- Do men and women each have unique gifts? If so, why is this important?
- Does society define our roles in our culture or do we have the freedom to make choices?

Read Aloud

Historically, it's been easier for some people to hold important offices or positions in our society. Yet people who don't fit that pattern have overcome many obstacles to make their mark in our culture. This session focuses on our gifts, our God-given abilities to share with those around us. Some of us may have an easy time sharing our gifts, while others may have to overcome great odds. We will use stories about women in the Old and New Testaments to highlight this point.

Background Information and Context

- Paul wrote to the people of Corinth about gifts. In your own words, summarize his teaching. See 1 Corinthians 12:4-13. **God gives us many different gifts, but all of these gifts have the same source. We are united in Christ through our baptism and are given gifts to serve the church.**
- In the beginning, God created man and woman. How do you think God intended for these people to work together? See Genesis 2:23. **From the very beginning, men and women have been connected. God created us to work together and to support one another.**

In the Jewish culture at this time, women were often treated as second-class citizens, but Jesus crossed those boundaries and treated all people equally. The role of women in the history of the church is often overlooked, but women were active in the early Christian church. Women were creative in using their gifts to help the church grow. This session highlights some of these women and the gifts they shared.

Many of the women in the Bible are noted for being the mother of an important figure. This truly is a gift, but there are other gifts as well. Look up the following verses and list the gifts these women shared with the world.

Strong Mothers

- Exodus 1:5-16; 2:1-10; Numbers 26:59: **Jochebed—Moses' mother was clever and creative. She not only saved his life, but was able to take care of him, too.**
- 1 Samuel 1; 2:21: **Hannah—She wanted a child so badly that she promised God her child in service. She was gifted with the birth of Samuel, who became a great leader.**
- Luke 1:26-38: **Mary—She accepted willingly her place as Jesus' mother. She carried out her role as a servant of God.**

Prophets and Teachers

- Judges 4:4-9; 5: **Deborah—She led people to God and into battle.**
- Luke 2:36-38: **Anna—She was a prophet who spent her time in prayer, waiting for the return of God.**
- Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Romans 16:3: **Priscilla—She acted as a missionary.**
- Acts 21:9: **Unmarried women—They had the gift of prophecy.**

Other Gifts

- Joshua 2: **Rahab—She saved Joshua and others.**
- Ruth 1:16: **Ruth—She showed loyalty and devotion.**
- Acts 16:13-15, 40: **Lydia—She gave hospitality to Paul.**

Options for Learning

- Create a profile of one female character from the Bible. Focus on her gifts.
- Create a timeline for the women in the Bible. Include as many women as possible.
- Complete a gifts inventory.

My Faith

Name women who have been important in your faith life. How have they influenced you?

Tools

How to discover your gifts:

- Try many things. Don't be afraid of failing. How will you know if you are good at something unless you try?
- If you find something you like to do, practice it over and over again. Remember, practice makes progress.
- Ask others what they think your gifts are. You might be surprised what someone else sees in you.
- Ask God to help you find your gifts and how you might share them with others.

Discussion Questions

- Who among these women was familiar to you? Who was not?
- Are these women important to our history? Did their gifts add to the church?
- Are women role models important in the church? Name two or three women you know who are leaders in the church today.
- From this session, what did you learn about giving your gifts to the church?

This session touched on only a few important gifts and women of the church. The Bible is filled with characters who played key roles in leading the church to where it is today. Some of these characters devoted their entire lives to helping the church, while others gave only a few hours or days, but all were changed by their giving. A short encounter with Joshua and his leaders challenged a prostitute to change her life. Moses' mother gave up parenting her son so he could free her people from slavery. The challenge for you is to look for opportunities to share your gifts with those around you to continue to advance the church. We can all use our gifts to serve God. What will you do?

Challenge Questions

- What gift or gifts is God asking you to share with the body of Christ? How can you use your gifts to add to the whole? This week, tell someone about God by living your faith, telling someone about what you did at church, praying for a friend, or asking someone at school what they believe about God.
- Who is a person of faith you respect? Why? Talk with that person this week or write him or her a letter. Find out more about that person's life.
- How can people in our family influence our faith? Name one family member whom you have been challenged by in your faith. Let that family member know that she or he is important to you by writing a special note, calling that person, or bringing him or her flowers.

Close with prayer.

Session 5

Issues of the Church: Past and Present

Open with prayer.

Real-Life Issues

Make a videotape of (or read through) the following situations. Discuss what you would do in the situation and what resources you would use for help.

- Your friends have been going to parties and using alcohol. Some are stealing it from their parents, others are getting older kids to buy it for them, and one is even hiding it in her locker at school. You have hung around these people for many years and consider them good friends. They invite you to join them at one of their parties this coming weekend and you want to say no.
- Your parents keep on you about going to church and want you to get involved in the church youth activities. You are not interested. You believe in God, but see no need to be a part of a group that talks about it. It's become a huge issue between you and your parents.
- You have been involved in a church most of your life and consider yourself a Christian. Lately, however, school activities, sports, and friends seem to take up most of your time and you haven't been going to church for the past year or so. Some friends at school who also go to your church have noticed your behavior is starting to change. They confront you about it and challenge you to rethink some of your choices.

Starter Questions

- What issues do you face in your life? What part does your faith play in those issues?
- Who or what are the resources you use when you are faced with hard choices? Do you ever use the church, the Bible, or prayer as resources? Why or why not?
- Does it make a difference in your everyday life that you believe in God? Explain.

Starting a New Church

Your group is given the charge of starting a new church. What will you do first? Who will be your leader? How will decisions be made? Make a list of issues you will face and ideas about how you will address them. What problems might come up? How will you deal with them?

Scripture Text

New Testament letters

Main Points

- **We are sinful.**
- **God is gracious.**
- **The Bible (God's Word) was a resource tool in the past and still is today.**
- **Issues of the church fall into three main areas: relationships, Christian community, and behaviors.**

Options for Learning

- **Write letters about issues facing the church today. Give the letters to a pastor or church leader and ask for his or her response.**
- **Using the real-life situations on page 15 and a concordance or index, find out what the Bible says about these situations.**

Read Aloud

Imagine for a moment that you had access to a time machine and the opportunity to visit the early Christian church. What do you think you would find? What main issues would the people be facing? Now, think about what's real in your world today. What issues are common here? Amazing as it may seem, there have always been hot topics in the church, and there probably always will be. Equally amazing is that the Bible did and still does speak to the issues people of the church face. This session explores what the Bible, and in particular the New Testament, has to do with the issues we face today.

Background Information and Context

In the Old Testament, God lived somewhere “out there.” The people had God-given laws to help them understand how they should live. That worked for a while, but soon the people got caught up in the details of the law and began to miss the spirit of it. Jesus came into the world to clarify how we as God's people are to live; the law received new meaning. When Jesus died, the Holy Spirit came to be our guide. We are filled with the Holy Spirit. God is no longer “out there;” God lives in us and wants to be a part of our lives.

- Humans are sinners. Read Genesis 3 and Romans 1:20-32 and write about what it means to be human. **Sin is a part of our lives. There are consequences for our sin that affect our relationship with God.**
- How did sin become a part of our lives? Is sin about God or about us? **Humans chose sin and continue to do so. God allows us to make our own choices.**
- God loves us no matter what. Look up the following verses to see what they say about God's part in our relationship.

Romans 8:35: **No matter what we do, God continues to love us.**

Ephesians 2:14, 19-22: **Christ came to join us together as God's people.**

1 Corinthians 12:13: **We are joined together in the sacrament of Holy Baptism.**

1 John 4:7-10: **We are called to love one another because God loves us.**

- But how can God love us no matter what? Why would God love us even when we walk away? See Romans 5:6-8 and Galatians 3:26; 4:6-7. **God sent Jesus to earth to live as a human being, to experience the things we experience, to teach us a new way of life, and to die in our place. Jesus' resurrection is our resurrection; it is the restoration of our relationship with God in which we will experience eternal life.**
- What part does faith play in all this? Look up the following verses and see what each says about faith.

Galatians 5:6: **Having faith in Christ crosses boundaries and backgrounds. We live out our faith by loving others.**

Ephesians 2:8-10: **We are saved by our faith, not by the things we do. Faith is a gift from God.**

Hebrews 11:1, 6: **Faith is being sure of the things we cannot see.**

My Faith

How has confirmation and/or Sunday school equipped you to face the real issues in your life?

How We Are to Live: The Real Issues

After each of the following categories, list issues you face. Pick one and use a concordance to see what the Bible says about that issue.

- Relationships _____

- Christian community _____

- Behaviors and attitudes _____

Materials

Bible concordances

Discussion Questions

- What did you learn from the Bible about a particular issue that you didn't know before?
- Do the words of the Bible speak to you today? Why or why not?
- What issues are common for all Christians, past and present?
- How can you learn more about how God wants you to live?
- Why does God want you to live in a certain way?

Tools

Ephesians gives us ideas to help us prepare for life.

Read Ephesians 6:11-18.

Spiritual tools:

- *Truth:* We can rely on God's Word.
- *Righteousness:* We can use God's Word as a guide for behavior.
- *Gospel of peace:* We can use Christ's actions as an example of speech and action.
- *Faith:* We can ask for God's help to see clearly and for God's reassuring presence.
- *Salvation:* We can live in the knowledge that we are saved by our faith, not by our actions.
- *Spirit:* The Holy Spirit walks with us through life.
- *Prayer:* We can communicate with God.

Copy these tools and post them where you can see them each day.

God loves us no matter what and wants us to live lives that are worthwhile. But we are sinners and we live with other sinners in this world. It is sometimes hard to understand how we are to live. Living a life of faith is not easy and it is not a one-time decision. It starts with God's love in our lives and God's presence with us every day. Philippians 3:12-14 reminds us that we press on toward the goal and the reward is far beyond what we can understand in this world. There's nothing greater than living a life of faith and making a difference in the world we live in.

Challenge Questions

- How can you acknowledge God's presence in your life? Would acknowledging God change your decisions or actions? Make a commitment to acknowledge God's presence in your life each day this week.
- How important are goals in our lives? How do goals help guide us in our decisions? Make a list of goals you have for your life right now and for the next year. After each goal, name one or two ways your faith connects with that goal.
- If we acknowledge God's presence in our lives, does that mean our lives are easier? What difference does it make to acknowledge the presence of God in your life? Interview two or three people (preferably older than you) and ask them these questions.
- How do the Ten Commandments fit into how we live? What connection do they have with the ways of life suggested in the New Testament letters?

Close with prayer.

Session 6

Come One, Come All

Open with prayer.

Forms and Functions

Bring several items that would be useful to someone at different stages of life (for example, shoes: booties, toddler shoes, youth tennis shoes, dress shoes; or books: picture books, easy reader books, short novels, text books, harder novels). Show participants these items in a random order. Ask what they might be used for and by whom. Ask if these items would be of any use to them now. If so, how? Place the items in chronological order. Then review the items and see how life has changed over the years and predict how it will continue to change.

Starter Questions

- What were your favorite toys when you were young? Do you play with them today? Why or why not?
- How is your neighborhood different now from when you moved in? What's changed? How long have you lived there?
- What was church like when your parents or grandparents were young? How is it different now? Has it changed since you've been involved? How?

Read Aloud

Models, forms, and structures are only good if they serve a function. Certain forms worked for us when we were younger. Think about your elementary school. Maybe you were in a class with a certain number of students and one teacher for the whole day. You had recess and maybe even had to hold hands when going to the lunch room. Imagine your school day now and how much has changed. Your classes are harder, you have more teachers, and you have more choices. School is just one example of how our forms change as we change. The church has changed over time as well. This session focuses on reforming the church, highlighting Martin Luther and the time of the Reformation.

Scripture Text

Isaiah 40:6-8, 28-31

Luke 5:36-38

Romans 1:16-17

Revelation 21:1-5

Main Points

- Look at the reformation that has taken place in the church: in Jesus' time, in Martin Luther's time, and today.
- We need leaders today! The apostles were leaders in the early church. Martin Luther was a leader in his time. The message is still the same: Who are our leaders today?

Materials

Bring items that are used at different stages of life. Participants will also need resource materials (books, articles, pamphlets, and so forth) about Martin Luther for this session.

Background Information and Context

After Paul and Peter's time, the church continued to grow and spread to many parts of the world. As it grew, more formal structures were created. Certain leaders were given the role of overseeing the churches. During the same time period, rulers, kings, queens, and other political leaders were going through stages of change. The population was increasing and the needs of the people were also changing. Many crises arose and structures were put into place to deal with them. Christianity, once a small Jewish sect, became the official religion of the Roman Empire. In many areas, church leaders were even chosen for political reasons and made decisions based on their political bias. This was the atmosphere in Europe in the 1500s.

Options for Learning

- Read an article or other material about Martin Luther.
- Look at a copy of Luther's Seal and learn about its meaning.
- Invite someone to talk to your class about what church was like when they were young, highlighting both the similarities and differences.

Who Is Martin Luther?

Using your resource material about Martin Luther, complete the following information on Luther, as well as the timeline in the column on page 21.

Luther was born in the year **1483**. He studied **law** at age 18, because his father wanted him to become a **lawyer**. At age 23, he became a **priest** and at age 28 a doctor of **theology**. Luther was married to **Katharina von Bora**. She was a former **nun**. Together they had **six** children and they took in many orphans as well.

Luther was concerned about how the church had moved away from a focus on the Bible and God's grace and had gotten caught up in "good works." Worship and Scripture had become foreign to the general public because worship was in Latin and priests were the only ones who could read the Bible. So, on October **31, 1517**, Luther nailed **Ninety-five Theses** to the door of Castle Church in Wittenberg. This was Luther's attempt to reform the Catholic church. These ideas centered on three areas:

- Protesting against the abuse of the pope's authority.
- Challenging the pope on the issue of purgatory.
- Denying the sale or use of indulgences and focusing instead on the gospel.

What resulted was not a reform of the Catholic church; instead, Luther was excommunicated from the church, and the Protestant movement began. Pick two of Luther's reforms and explain them below:

- Church and state: **Luther wanted them separated.**
- Sacraments: **Two instead of seven; those that Luther claimed Jesus directly initiated.**
- German Mass: **Instead of Latin, so the people could understand.**
- Bible as primary authority: **True salvation through faith rather than actions or good works.**

- Priesthood of all believers: **We can seek connection with God on our own, with the help of the Holy Spirit. We can minister to each other; a priest does not have to act on our behalf.**
- Augsburg Confession: **States what Lutherans believe.**

Finally, what resulted from Luther's challenges became the Lutheran church, just one of the many churches to come out of the Protestant movement. In addition to the above reforms, Luther wrote more than 400 works, including commentaries, catechisms, sermons, and a German translation of the Bible.

Luther also wrote hymns, many of which we still sing today. And just as we do today, Luther wanted all people to have access to God's Word and worship. Luther contributed to the formation of our church and his example still leads us to ask hard questions about what needs to be reformed in our church today.

- Read Romans 1:16-17. How are these verses a summary of Luther's life? What do these verses say to us in the church today? **Salvation is open to all who believe and have faith. Luther focused on what we have in common rather than our differences.**

What Needs Reforming Today?

Read Isaiah 40:6-8, 28-31; Luke 5:36-38; and Revelation 21:1-5 and answer the following questions.

- Why would someone tear a new garment to repair an old one? Why doesn't that work? **Not wanting to let go of the old thing or way. Change is hard. But if we do that, the new garment will be ruined and the old one will not be strong. This is like holding too much to the laws instead of keeping the spirit or intent of the laws.**
- What are some examples of people trying to put new wine in old wine-skins? **Discuss things like communications and teaching (via the Internet, for example), music, roles of men and women, and so forth.**
- What are the promises God makes to us on earth? **God promises us eternal life and that the things happening on earth will not always matter. When we receive eternal life, our focus changes. God has a new place for us where there will be no more tears, death, pain, or mourning.**

Timeline

- 1483: Luther born
- 1501: Luther studies law
- 1507: Luther becomes a priest
- 1512: Luther becomes a doctor of theology
- 1517: Luther nailed Ninety-five Theses to the door of Castle Church
- 1521: Luther excommunicated
- 1523: Luther translates the Bible into German
- 1525: Luther marries Katharina von Bora
- 1526: Masses are celebrated in German rather than Latin
- 1546: Luther dies
- 1580: *Book of Concord* published (contains the Augsburg Confession, Small and Large Catechisms, as well as other writings used by the Lutheran church)

My Faith

How does the church need reforming today? What can you do to become a reformer?

Tools

Martin Luther based his life on three concepts: Scripture alone (2 Timothy 3:15-17), grace alone (Ephesians 2:8-9), and faith alone (Romans 1:17). Read the verses for each of these concepts and think about how to use this as a tool for your life. Use “Bring It Home” on pages 23-24 as a tool this week.

- What is one area the church of today needs to reform? **Individual answers; encourage discussion about worship, teaching, music, and so forth.**

Discussion Questions

- What was similar in Jesus’ and Luther’s cultures?
- What was similar in the early church culture and Luther’s culture?
- What promise is constant throughout the ages in our church?
- What does it take to change the form through which we present God’s message?
- How do you make the invitation to God’s house open to all people?
- What does it take to be a reformer?

Just like in the days of Martin Luther, our church is continually in need of reforming. Luther wanted to make God accessible to all people and he gave us some tools to do that. Who is reforming the church today? How are we living out Luther’s challenge to keep our focus on Scripture—studying our Bibles and inviting others into Christian community? These are the keys to keeping our church alive and active in the world today.

Challenge Questions

- Who can you welcome into God’s family? How can you make God’s Word available to others? Make a list of people you can welcome into the church. This week, make God’s Word available to one person on your list.
- What does it take to be the kind of leader Martin Luther was? What are some key characteristics he had? This week, do something to develop your skills as a reformer. Ideas include learning more about Scripture, asking questions of some church leaders, or making your faith alive in your actions.

Close with prayer.

Bring It Home

Day One—Dreams for the Future: Dream about your life in five years. Where will you live? How will you spend your time? Who will be the important people in your life? What things from your present will be a part of this future? Read Jeremiah 31:31. God has promised each of us a new future. This week reflect on what future God is challenging you to live. Write down your image of your life in five years. Place it on a mirror in your house, reviewing it each day.

Day Two—Reviewing the Past: Make a list of family traditions you experienced growing up, then add an emotion describing how you felt about those traditions. Reflect on how these traditions influence your life today. Read Jeremiah 31:32. We, as Christians, have a history. The Old Testament stories do have something to do with us today. Pick one story from the Old Testament and read it. It could be an old favorite or one you have never heard. After reading the story, find one thing from that story that might be a lesson for your life today.

Day Three—Reflecting in the Present: What one thing or person in your life right now gets you excited? To whom or what do you give the most energy? This day is here only once; how will you choose to live it? Read Jeremiah 31:33. Each day is a gift from God. Each day God invites us to live life to its fullest. In Jeremiah, God promises to write this message in our hearts. How are you doing at paying attention to God's message? Today your challenge is to share this verse with someone else. Some ideas: write it on a piece of paper and give it as a secret note, share a smile at school or work, or give a special surprise gift to someone you love.

Day Four—Reforming the Future: Look at your dream paper from Day 1. In light of what you have read and talked about these past few days, what are your feelings about that dream? We are challenged to dream big—big enough to reflect God's vision for our lives, not our own visions. Is your dream big enough? Read Jeremiah 31:34. This is one of God's dreams for us, one that would reform our future. Consider your dream for the next five years. Write out your dream and carry it with you today.

Day Five—Word Alone: The world is filled with many messages about what reforming our lives might look like. Martin Luther was a reformer who spent most of his life challenging Christians to take seriously the call to live their faith every day. Read 2 Timothy 3:15-17. God's Word is made available to us to show us how to live. Today, add to your dream from yesterday: list two tangible ways you can use God's Word in your life. Ideas include: start each day with reading the Bible, take a Bible class, read through a book of the Bible, or use the Bible as a guide to answer some of the questions you may have about life.

Materials

You will need a notebook or journal to complete these activities.

Challenge

Reforming our lives and our dreams is an ongoing process. Save what you have written. Six months from now, go through the process again.

Day Six—Grace Alone: Working harder will not increase the amount of love God has for each of us. Read Ephesians 2:8. Nothing we do can change the fact that God has given us this gift called grace. Add to your dream: how will you work less and love more? Practice today letting love rule your decisions.

Day Seven—Faith Alone: Ultimately, reforming our lives comes down to an issue of faith. Does God rule in your heart and direct your decisions? Will you dream God's dream? Does God lead your ways? Read Romans 1:17. These words changed Martin Luther forever: "The one who is righteous will live by faith." End your dream with a commitment to live by faith. Write down what that means to you. Then do an act of faith today. Try something new, reach out to meet a new friend, offer help to someone on the street, or pray for God to change your heart.

Session 7

A New Day of Grace

Open with prayer.

Starter Questions

- What religious rituals does your family celebrate? How did they get started? Who participates?
- How were you welcomed into God's family? How old were you? What do you remember?
- Have you ever been forgiven for something really big? What was that like?

Read Aloud

Humans tend to want laws and rules to live by, to know what's fair or just, or what they need to achieve. Think about it. What would the world be like if everyone could do whatever he or she wanted and then ask for and be granted forgiveness? What if everyone was invited to be a part of one group with no distinction between "good" people and "bad" people. Suddenly all are the same. Keep this concept in mind as you explore the sacrament of Holy Baptism. See how baptism changed the world!

Why Sacraments?

One of the things humans have had throughout history is rituals. Individuals have rituals, families have rituals, societies have rituals, and religions have rituals. Individuals have certain ways they prepare for a sporting event; families have special meals to celebrate special occasions; society has ceremonies marking significant events like marriage or birth; and churches have their own ways to commemorate important times.

One thing rituals give us is a sense of order. A ritual is a form for a ceremony or a customary procedure. Throughout the Jewish and Christian traditions, rituals have played a key role. Some rituals are decided by individuals, while others are agreed upon by a group of people. Churches have rituals that they hold in high regard, but they also have something called *sacraments*. Sacraments are more than rituals in that they are sacred, or "of God." They have earthly or tangible aspects and divine aspects, and Jesus initiated them here on earth.

Scripture Text

Genesis 17:9-14

Matthew 3:11, 13-17; 28:19-20

Luke 2:21

Galatians 5:6

Main Points

- Define *sacraments* as rituals initiated by Christ that have both earthly and divine elements.
- Look at the sacrament of Holy Baptism, its origin in the Jewish tradition, and both the similarities and differences from its Jewish roots.

- Read Galatians 5:6. What ritual is named here? What do these verses say about this ritual? What changed the importance of it? Who is invited to be a part of God’s family? **Circumcision is a ritual of the Jewish faith in which all males participate; it marks their membership. Christians believe that having faith in Jesus Christ is the mark of “membership.” Everyone is invited to be a Christian.**

Options for Learning

- Show a video of or watch an actual baptism. Notice the words used, the blessing, the people present, the symbols, and the actions of the person being baptized.
- Why are we baptized? Create a video of the group describing the significance of Holy Baptism. Include the characteristics of the water, the words used, and the promises given.

Leader’s Note

Use Luther’s Small Catechism for this section. *Lutheran Book of Worship* or your church’s baptismal service would be good to have as you talk about baptism and reaffirming your baptismal vows.

Why Baptism?

God’s Spirit is hard to see or touch or feel without something tangible added. So God gave us two ways to access that Spirit of unconditional love. The first way is through baptism. In the Jewish tradition, male babies are welcomed into the faith when they are circumcised and then blessed on the eighth day. This began in Abraham’s time. Circumcision is an outward sign of a family’s inner faith. See Genesis 17:9-14 and Luke 2:21.

- See Matthew 3:11, 13-17, and 28:19-20. If all are welcomed, and circumcision is not needed, why be baptized? What changed? **We receive the Holy Spirit in baptism, and the Holy Spirit’s job is to equip us for life. Jesus participated in baptism and instructed us to do so, too.**
- How is baptism different from circumcision? How is it similar? **Both are a welcome or initiation ritual into a family of faith. But in baptism, the Holy Spirit enters us. It is not about anything we do, but about what God does. It is a gift.**

What’s Baptism?

- According to Luther’s Small Catechism, what is baptism? **Baptism is not water only, but it is water used together with God’s Word and by God’s command.**
- What benefits are offered through baptism? **We inherit eternal life, our sins are forgiven, and we are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.**
- What is the earthly element? What is the divine element? **Water is the earthly element; God’s Word is the divine.**

Water

Water has great significance in the Bible. Listed below are several Bible verses about water. Read them, then write in your own words what importance water has and why it might be used for baptism:

- Genesis 6:13, 17: **A flood will destroy the earth.**
- Exodus 7:14-17: **The Nile is turned to blood.**
- Psalm 42:1-2: **Like a deer needs water, we thirst for God.**
- Isaiah 32:2: **Water in the desert.**

- Matthew 3:1, 5-6: **John baptized people to cleanse them of their sins.**
- Mark 9:41: **A cup of water given in Christ's name.**
- 1 Peter 3:20-22: **Water, through baptism, saves us.**
- Revelation 21:6; 22:1-2: **River of life, new day.**

Word

God's Word is also important. Look at *Lutheran Book of Worship* to see what words are spoken in the sacrament of Holy Baptism.

- What words or promises of God are spoken? **We are freed from sin and death; we inherit eternal life. We are baptized in the name of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.**
- What promises are made by the sponsors and/or the person being baptized? **Bring the child to attend worship, teach/learn the Lord's Prayer, creed, and Ten Commandments, give/receive a Bible, and teach/learn about the Christian faith.**

Discussion Questions

- What importance does your baptism have for you today?
- What difference does it make if someone is baptized?
- Why would parents baptize their children?
- Why is water an important symbol in baptism?

Yes, a new day is here! Jesus Christ came to offer life to all people. Baptism is significant because it equips us to live a life of faith, filled with the Holy Spirit, cleansed of our original sin. In baptism, we are joined with Christ to be heirs to the kingdom of God and receive eternal life. Water is powerful stuff; joined with God's promises, nothing can overcome it!

Challenge Questions

- How is your life influenced by having been baptized? What freedom does that give you? Today, write out Matthew 28:19-20 and place it on a mirror in your room. Every time you see these words, remember that you are an heir to God's kingdom.
- Why are sponsors important in baptism? What is their role? Who are your baptismal sponsors and how have they influenced your faith journey? Today, write a note of thanks to your baptismal sponsor(s). Include some of your thoughts about what it means to live your baptism every day and why you want to reaffirm your baptismal promises on Confirmation Sunday.

Close with prayer.

My Faith

What happened to you at your baptism? Why reaffirm your baptismal vows?

Tools

How to live your baptism every day:

- **Each morning, dip your finger in water and make the sign of the cross over your chest.**
- **Say, "In the name of the Creator, the Savior, and the Holy Spirit, I will live this day."**
- **Close this ritual in prayer, asking God to be with you throughout your day, in your decisions, in your friendships, and in your attitude.**

Session 8

Remembering, Reverence, and Responsibility

Scripture Text

Exodus 12:1-30

Luke 22:7-20

1 Corinthians 11:17-32

Main Points

- Sacraments unify Christians of the past, present, and future.
- In Holy Communion, we remember what Jesus did for us, we connect with the holiness of God, and we receive the forgiveness of our sins.

Open with prayer.

Remembering and Working Together

Form a circle, close enough to toss a ball across it. Give one person a ball and have her or him toss it to another; that person tosses it to another, and so on, until everyone in the group has caught the ball once and tossed it once. Then, do it again in the same order. Repeat the exercise many times, each time going faster. Time the group and see how quickly they can do this.

Starter Questions

- What was hardest about the opening activity? Easiest?
- What helped you work as a team?
- What helps you remember things? What things do you easily forget?
- Make a list of key events you want to remember in your life.

Read Aloud

Each of us has key memories from childhood. They may be happy memories or painful ones. Regardless of what our past holds, it helps shape our present and our future. Jesus wanted to remind his friends of the past they shared, not only the past few years, but the faith history they shared as he had his last meal with them. This session focuses on the meal Jesus gave us to remember what his time on earth was all about. We'll look at the human and holy side of the sacrament we now call Holy Communion.

Remembering

- From Luke 22:7-20, why were the disciples gathered together? What instructions did Jesus give them? **They were celebrating the day of unleavened bread, or the Passover feast. Jesus asked them to prepare as they normally would. He told them where to find a room and who would help them.**
- What happened at this meal? What did Jesus tell them was to come? **They ate bread and wine, as normal, but Jesus added the idea that the bread and wine were his body and blood. He told them he would suffer and would leave them soon.**

- What specifically did Jesus say about the bread and the wine? What are we to remember about this meal? **“This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”**
- Why do you think Jesus used this meal to make a new covenant with us? What is the history of the Passover? See Exodus 12:1-30. **This meal signified freedom; God delivering the people. It was familiar to them and holy.**

The Passover is a very special time for the Jewish people. It reminds people of their years as slaves and that God was the one who led them out of their slavery. Passover is also a time of expectation: a time when God is revealed. The years between Moses’ time and Jesus’ time were many, yet each Passover the people were still hopeful that it might be this meal that God would come and once again save the people. It was not an accident that Jesus used this meal of remembrance to reveal himself and remind us of his role here on earth. This meal brought together the history, the present, and the future all in one, unifying God’s people. We remember that communion does this for us today.

Reverence

- *Reverence* means “holy” or “of God.” What parts of this sacrament are holy? **Jesus’ words and presence mark the bread and wine as his body and blood.**
- What does God promise in this sacrament? How does it help us touch God? **Our sins are forgiven because Jesus came to earth, died, and was resurrected for us. We touch God when we drink the wine and eat the bread.**

Responsibility

It wasn’t long after Jesus’ death that people were forgetting why communion was important to them. Instead of focusing on remembering Jesus’ death and resurrection and the holy part of what this meal is about, the people of Corinth were using it as a time for partying, drinking too much, feasting on the bread, and fighting among themselves. Paul reminds these people, as he does us today, what our part is in participating in communion.

- In 1 Corinthians 11:17-32, what does it say about our participation in communion? Why participate? **We need to become unified with one another. This is not a drunken party, but rather a time to remember and be forgiven for our sins. It is a time to focus on God’s actions on our behalf and receive forgiveness.**

Leader’s Note

Use Luther’s Small Catechism, *Lutheran Book of Worship*, or your church’s communion service.

My Faith

How important is communion in your faith life? Why do you want to be confirmed or reaffirm your baptism? Write it out!

Tools

When we celebrate Holy Communion:

- we remember our faith history.
- we revere/praise God.
- we accept our faith responsibilities.

- How do we prepare ourselves today for the sacrament of Holy Communion? What in our worship helps us to prepare our hearts? See *Lutheran Book of Worship* for assistance. **We pray and offer our sins to God for forgiveness. We mend relationships before we commune. We acknowledge God by saying the creed and we pray the Lord's Prayer.**

Discussion Questions

- Why is communion so important that we participate in it not only once in our lives, but many, many times?
- How does communion help us live our baptism?
- Why do you need communion?
- Are you keeping the reverence in communion?
- Do you practice your part of communion? Why or why not?

A sacrament is sacred; that is, of God. It's tangible, and it's initiated by Jesus. Jesus gave us two sacraments as tools for helping us live lives of faith. Jesus, having walked on this earth himself, made the ultimate example of giving our lives over to God, to God's wonders, to God's promises, and for God's purposes. Are you ready to live by faith? Will you let Christ be your example? Many have given up their lives to God, not to lose them, but instead to find life in its fullest. It is our challenge as Christ's church to continue to build the church today, starting with our own lives.

Challenge Questions

- What does it mean to live life by faith? What have you learned about living by faith from these last few sessions? This week, do one thing to live by faith. Ideas include: promise to read your Bible each day, pray on a regular basis, let God help you make decisions in your life, or invite someone to come to church with you.
- How does communion bring people together for Christ? How can you practice this characteristic of Jesus in your life? Repair a damaged relationship by offering or accepting forgiveness, or start a new relationship and try to live out what Christ modeled.

Close with prayer.

Session 9

Review

Open with prayer.

Begin by going around the group, sharing one thing you learned about the history of the Christian church, and one hope you have for living out your faith.

Love Notes

Participants start with a pad of blank paper. Ask each person to write his or her name on the cover and pass it to the person on the right. Have everyone write affirmations about the person whose name is on the notebook on the next blank sheet of paper, focusing specifically on growth seen in his or her faith life. As each person finishes, close the notebook so the name is visible, and pass the notebook to the right. Continue doing this until everyone has had a chance to write in each person's notebook. Give the participants some time at the end of class to review the writings in their book.

Read Aloud

This session ends our study of *Building the Christian Church*. We have covered much history, almost 2,000 years, highlighting key times in the Christian church and specifically within the Lutheran tradition. Pentecost and the Reformation were key events we learned about. Peter, Paul, and Martin Luther were influential leaders who impacted the church. Some things have changed over those years and other things have not. Scripture has been constant. God's forgiving message continues today as it did in Jesus' time. Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, the sacraments, continue to be part of our worship life together. So, while this is a reforming, changing church, this is also a church that holds to certain beliefs and practices.

Let's Review

Form pairs. Assign each pair one or two sessions to review. Give everyone 10-15 minutes to look over the assigned sessions and then ask the participants to present the highlights of their session(s). Ideas for presentations: question and answer, top ten list of important facts, a timeline of events, or interviewing a character from their story. If the participants need focus, create a grading system (having participants grade each other) and reward them with different levels of candy. (For example: A = large candy bar; B = mini candy bar; C = piece of gum.)

Main Points

- Review the main points from the previous sessions.
- Personalize the material you have learned in *Building the Christian Church*.

Options for Learning

- Host a talent show, with participants preparing something to present to the group on one of the previous themes. Ideas: sing a song that shares the meaning of Holy Communion, make a drawing about Pentecost, or do a drama on Luther's life.
- A trivia game is a great way to review.

Materials

A blank pad of paper for each participant.

My Faith

Write a statement about what you believe the Christian or Lutheran church is about.

Challenge Questions

- What questions do you have for the church—about its history, the future, or our specific church?
- If you were a leader in the church today, what areas would you want to work with? What concerns would you have? What would you change and what would you keep the same?

Close with prayer.

Building the Christian Church Trivia Game

This is a game like the game show *Jeopardy!* Place signs on the wall with the category headings. Below each category have papers with 100, 200, 300, 400, and 500 written on them. Under these papers, have the answer to a question in that category. Remember, players have to state their answer in the form of a question.

Players ask for the category and must choose the lowest amount available in that section. If they get it right, they may choose another question. If they get it wrong, others may “steal” by answering the question correctly. You may play this as individuals or teams. The winner is the person or team with the most points. Use the answers and questions on page 33, or create your own.

"Building the Christian Church" Trivia Game

	Sacraments	Church Leaders	Events	Issues of the Church
100	<p>Holy Baptism and Holy Communion.</p> <p>What are the two sacraments?</p>	<p>Born in 1483, this man is credited with founding the Lutheran church.</p> <p>Who is Martin Luther?</p>	<p>This occurs 50 days after Passover.</p> <p>What is Pentecost?</p>	<p>Jesus died for this.</p> <p>What is forgiveness?</p>
200	<p>Earthly and divine elements make up this.</p> <p>What is a sacrament?</p>	<p>This church leader fought against the early Christians before he helped start new churches.</p> <p>Who was Paul?</p>	<p>When Jesus went up into heaven.</p> <p>What is ascension?</p>	<p>Being sure of things we cannot see.</p> <p>What is faith?</p>
300	<p>Communion began while Jesus was eating this meal.</p> <p>What is the Passover meal?</p>	<p>This early church leader was a disciple of Jesus who wrote several letters in the New Testament.</p> <p>Who was Peter?</p>	<p>Event when Saul was blinded by a bright light on the road to Damascus.</p> <p>What is Saul's conversion?</p>	<p>Human nature that separates us from God.</p> <p>What is sin?</p>
400	<p>This Jewish tradition is the origin of baptism.</p> <p>What is circumcision?</p>	<p>Someone who is a follower or student.</p> <p>What is a disciple?</p>	<p>When people renew their baptismal vows.</p> <p>What is confirmation?</p>	<p>God's Word to us to help make decisions.</p> <p>What is the Bible?</p>
500	<p>Inheriting eternal life, the forgiveness of sins, and being filled with the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>What are the benefits of Holy Baptism?</p>	<p>On Oct. 31, 1517, these were nailed to the door of Castle Church to reform the Catholic church.</p> <p>What are the 95 Theses?</p>	<p>This former nun was married to Martin Luther.</p> <p>Who was Katharina von Bora?</p>	<p>Word alone, grace alone, and faith alone.</p> <p>What three things did Luther highlight in the reformation?</p>

Where Am I? Clues and Answers for Session I

Leader's Note

Use this page with the
“Where Am I?” activity
on page 2.

1. You'll find me at Old Faithful, the geyser you can trust. I'm not in Montana, but it's nearby. Yellow stones can be found here. Where am I?

Answer: Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming.

2. On Monday morning, I left Minneapolis, Minnesota, and drove south on Interstate 35. In Iowa, I took a right on Interstate 80 at Des Moines and spent the night there. Tuesday, I continued through Grand Island, Nebraska, and ended my journey in the Mile High City on Interstate 76. Where am I?

Answer: Denver, Colorado.

3. I started at the Gulf of Mexico at Gulfport. I drove north to Hattiesburg, west to Natchez, and ended up north in Jackson. What state am I in?

Answer: Mississippi.

4. The Windy City hosts the Bears and the White Sox. You can find it at a latitude of 42 degrees and a longitude of 88 degrees. The Motor City hosts the Tigers and the Pistons. You can find it at a latitude of 42 degrees and a longitude of 84 degrees. I'm in the state between these two cities. Where am I?

Answer: Michigan.

5. Kentucky, West Virginia, and Virginia all share this mountain range. Interstate 81 runs through this area. What mountain range am I in?

Answer: Appalachian Mountains.



To Know, To Live,
To Grow

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Jesus of Nazareth
Lord's Prayer
Meaning of Service: Living in Love
My Faith
New Testament
Old Testament
Ten Commandments
What Is a Lutheran?

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