

## 2020 Nurturing Faith Ideas

*The hope of the Nurture Committee is that you will share these with your congregation through bulletins, newsletter and other ways you communicate. They are intended to connect worship with faith formation at home for all ages. Please feel free to edit as you desire.*

### **January 5: Read Matthew 2:1-12 Epiphany of the Lord**

Following a star, three Magi journey to Bethlehem bearing gifts fit for a king. Finding the child, they knelt and proclaimed God's praise. The radiance of God's love evoked wonder and awe. What works of God would evoke wonder and awe for you? What gifts do you bring?

### **January 12: Read Matthew 3:13-17 Baptism of the Lord**

Jesus is baptized in order to fulfill all righteousness. The baptism of Jesus portrays God's promise to set aright creation. When priorities are askew, Jesus shows the way to God's kingdom. Consider which of your priorities needs the hope of peace available.

### **January 19: Read John 1:29-42**

John bears witness to Jesus as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Innocence, the cleansing power of water, and the Spirit – God's merciful gifts! These gifts from God are for each of us. How do these gifts play a role in your life?

### **January 26: Read Matthew 4:12-23**

With a call for repentance, Jesus bids others to follow him. The message is urgent – the kingdom of heaven is at hand. How do you respond to this call to make fishers of people and to follow Jesus as he spreads the love of God?

### **February 2: Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-31**

In 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, we learn that Christ's power is revealed through weakness. How have you witnessed this paradox play out in other places in the Bible? In the circumstances of your life or the lives of others? How can you display it in your life?

### **February 9: Read Matthew 5:13-16**

In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus calls us the salt of the earth and the light of the world. What are the qualities of salt and those of light? Why does Jesus compare his followers to salt and light? How can you display such qualities this week?

### **February 16: Read Matthew 5:21-24**

In Matthew 5:21-24, Jesus warns us about anger. With whom are you angry? How does the weight of Jesus' words move you? How can you move toward forgiveness with someone in your life so that you both can come before the Lord to worship in the freedom and love he provides?

### **February 23: Read Matthew 17:1-9**

In Matthew 17:1-9, during Jesus' transfiguration, Moses (Old Testament deliverer & lawgiver) and Elijah (representing the prophets & the promised restoration) speak with Jesus about his coming death (Luke 9:30). What is the significance of this moment? How can it bolster your faith this week?

**March 1: Read Matthew 4:1-11**

**Question:** What is one scripture that you would quote to counter the temptations of the devil?

**Activity:** If you don't have one on the tip of your tongue, pick one of the verses in this story and memorize it. It might come in handy.

**March 8: Read Matthew 17:1-9**

**Questions:** How do you capture a holy moment (like seeing the shining face of God) without getting stuck in that moment? What have been such moments for you? How have you carried them with you? Have they helped you face faith-shaking events (like the cross)?

**March 15: Read John 4:5-42**

**Question:** Do you think Jesus was really thirsty or was this just a way to start a conversation?

**Activity:** Offer someone a literal drink of water this week. If you are feeling bold, tell them this story in your own words, and then ask them what they make of it.

**March 22: Read John 9:1-41**

**Activity:** Take a little dirt in the palm of your hand; add water, and make a muddy paste. Feel the grittiness, the glueyness, the griminess. This is the stuff of creation, according to Genesis.

**Questions:** Jesus uses mud to heal the man born blind. Why? Why not just proclaim him healed?

**March 29: Read John 11:1-45**

**Questions:** When Jesus delays, he is essentially refusing to heal Lazarus immediately. When has God not answered one of your prayers? Garth Brooks sings, "Some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers." Is that true? What's the deeper prayer Jesus is answering here?

**April 5: Read Psalm 31 Liturgy of the Passion**

The passage from Psalm 31 tells of a person in distress, one who is wasting away from grief.

Their life is full of sorrow and sighing. They are miserable and can't go on living this way.

They are a broken vessel. How do you handle times of despair? How could reading the Psalms help? Where do you find hope?

**April 12: Read John 20:1-18 Easter**

A new word that really defines Mary Magdalene's unconscious response to holding onto Jesus is

that she "glomped" him. It is defined as "...the action of one person lovingly and dramatically

attacking another with a hug." It's a lot more than a touch, but Jesus tells Mary to let him go.

Their relationship would no longer be material in nature, but it would be a spiritual

communion. He is reminding Mary and all of us to walk by faith and not by sight.

**April 19: Read 1 Peter 1:3-9**

The author of 1 Peter says we have a "living hope" in Christ. Essentially, this means through

faith we can entrust everything to God's care. What are some examples from your life that reveal

this "living hope," this trust in God?

**April 26: Read Luke 24:13-35**

In Luke's gospel, Jesus puts aside all doubt for the two disciples who broke bread with him at Emmaus. They immediately return to Jerusalem to tell the others. What causes you to doubt? Think of examples of when someone's doubt has had a positive result.

**May 3: Read Acts 2:42-47**

The first Christians shared all they had with each other so that nobody was hungry. How do we share our food so that nobody has need? Help plan and prepare a meal for your own family, then take the same ingredients to a local food pantry. Use only ingredients that may be used by the food pantry.

**May 10: Read John 14:1-14**

Jesus says, "If you know me, you will know my Father." What adjectives or descriptive words describe Jesus? Make a list of Jesus' personality traits. Realizing that these show us what God is like, think of how you copy Jesus in how you act and care for all God's people.

**May 17: Read Psalm 66:8-20**

Psalm 66 reminds us that God is with us through hard times. The psalmist praises God when times are bad and when they go well. Think of times when you have struggled through bad times, then think how you know God was with you. Give a prayer thanking God for God's steadfast love.

**May 24: Read 1 Peter 4:14:12-14, 5:6-11**

Here we are told to humble ourselves under God and to cast our anxiety on God who cares for us. What anxieties are you hanging on to? Make a list of the things on which you have been worrying. Pray to God to take care of each item, then tear up the list knowing that God will care for you.

**May 31: Read John 3:13-17**

Scripture tells us that "all who hate a brother or sister are murderers." How might we "lay down our lives for one another" without physically dying? Search through the newspaper or listen to the news for a story of someone who is a victim of hate. How might you show them love?

**June 7: Read Genesis 1:1-2:4a Trinity Sunday**

In this first story of creation, God looked on the creation and each day "saw that it was good." If you are able, take a walk and look around you. What is your favorite part of God's creation? Share with a friend or family member.

**June 14: Read Genesis 18:1-15**

When Sarah overheard their visitors say that she was going to have a son, she laughed. She knew Abraham and she were too old to have children; it just wasn't possible. But they did have a son, Isaac. When has God surprised you so that you laughed? Share with someone else, and ask them when God surprised them.

**June 21: Read Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17**

Trusting in the goodness and love of God, the psalmist prays to God for help, asking for God to save their life and to answer them in the midst of trouble. What is troubling you that you might ask for God's help, trusting God is listening and will answer?

**June 28: Read Psalm 13**

Psalm 13 is a psalm of lament in which the psalmist feels forgotten by God and calls upon God to answer their cry. As is common in psalms of lament, the psalmist also affirms God's presence and love. In the psalmist's cry, we are reminded that we can bring our whole selves and all of our emotions to God, who knows what we're thinking and feeling before we even speak. Thank God for God's love that surrounds your every moment.

**July 5: Read Psalm 145:8-14**

In the Psalm for today, the Psalmist expounds on some wonderful aspects of God. They continue on, and tell us of how creation does its' part to show the world God's glory. God's Kingdom endures, and God is faithful. How are you showing the world the God that has given you eternity?

**July 12: Read Genesis 25:19-34**

Today, we read the beginnings of the story of Jacob and Esau. There are many lessons to learn from these two, but today I would like you to think of Esau. Esau sold his birthright for a cup of stew. How have you responded to your birthright in Christ?

**July 19: Read Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43**

In this parable, we see Jesus giving a rare explanation to the disciples. I am often envious of their ability to ask Jesus to explain in person. What questions would you ask Jesus if you had the opportunity? Does your answer change if the number of questions or amount of time is limited?

**July 26: Read Romans 8:26-39**

As we hear from Paul, we are reminded that God hears our prayers, even when we do not have words. Paul goes on to tell us nothing in all creation can separate us from God. Have you felt distant and separated from God? What did you do to reconnect?

**August 2: Read Matthew 14:13-21**

Matthew 14:13-21 tells the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 with just five loaves of bread and two fish, all because he saw the need of the many and felt compassion. What are the needs of those around you? How can you help? Volunteering at a local soup kitchen, donating to a food bank, giving a homeless person a meal – how can you show compassion?

**August 9: Read Matthew 14:22-33**

There are times when everyone doubts. Maybe we doubt ourselves, our faith, or each other. It's a normal part of humanity. Peter doubted Jesus in Matthew 14:22-33. Even though Peter saw Jesus walking on water with his own eyes, he started doubting Him, and when he did, he started sinking in the water. What are some things you doubt? How can you look to God for help in overcoming those doubts?

**August 16: Read Genesis 45:1-5**

Forgiveness is not something that's easy to give. However, Genesis 45:1-15 tells us how Joseph forgave his brothers for selling him into Egypt. He even tells them to go back to their father and bring everyone back to live with him because he knew God had meant for him to be taken there. Who is it that you need to forgive? Do you need to ask forgiveness for something? Talk about ways that you can achieve this and what ways God works to bring you where you need to be.

**August 23: Read Psalm 124:1-8**

The Book of Psalms can provide us with inspiration, motivation, consolation, ways to praise, and so much more. Psalm 124:1-8 is no exception. It tells of praises to God, who delivered the people of Israel, affirming God was on their side. If God hadn't been, it would have been perilous. Reflect on times of trouble in your life. Where have you seen examples of God being by your side even when you didn't know it at the time?

**August 30: Read Exodus 3:1-5**

In Exodus 3:1-15, God calls to Moses through the burning bush and tells him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. What a sight that must have been! To witness a bush engulfed in flames but not burning to ash. But God doesn't always use extraordinary ways to call to us. What has God called you to do? How have you answered?

**September 6: Read Psalm 119:33-40**

This is part of the longest chapter of all the Bible! It celebrates God's Law. Each section contains eight lines beginning with the same Hebrew letter. Write brief prayers for each member of your family that begin with the first letter of their first name.

**September 13: Read Matthew 18:21-22**

In Matthew 18: 21-22, Jesus says we are to forgive 70 x 7 times – that's 490 times! Find something you have a lot of – pennies, dried beans, grains of rice, Legos. Count out 490 of them. Was that hard? Do you think Jesus just wants us to keep track or to always be forgiving?

**September 20: Read Psalm 145:1-8**

Psalm 145: 1-8 says, "Generation after generation stands in awe of your work; each one tells stories of your mighty acts" (The Message). Ask someone of an older generation to share a story with you of a time when God helped them, or share your stories together.

**September 27: Read Psalm 25:1-9**

Psalm 25:5 says, "Take me by the hand; lead me down the path of truth" (The Message). Take a walk down a path, and think/talk about places where you could get lost if you left the path. What does it mean for God to take you by the hand and lead you down the path of truth?

**October 4: Read Exodus 20:1-20**

This section of Exodus contains the 10 Commandments that God gave to Moses. They are rules that help us to live in relationship with God and with each other. Because these commandments were given to an ancient people, some of the words might not mean the same thing to us today. Rewrite the commandments in more modern words that make sense for us in 2020.

**October 11: Read Philippians 4:1-9**

The apostle Paul urges people to be joyful. Isn't it a little odd to urge people to be joyful? The next time you are at worship at your church, consider the ways that joy is shown. Is your worship joyful? Why or why not? We should always be filled with joy, especially when we remember that we are children of God.

**October 18: Read Matthew 22:15-22**

The people asked Jesus, "Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor or not?" The passage reminds us of the differences that exist for us as citizens of the world and as citizens of heaven. We must maintain our identity as Christians while still following the laws enacted by our government, but sometimes, what the government says is not very Christian. What do you do when you disagree with the government because it doesn't seem like something with which Jesus would agree?

**October 25: Read Matthew 22:34-46**

A lawyer asked Jesus, "Which commandment in the law is the greatest?" Jesus said there are only two commandments: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind," and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." What are ways that you follow these commandments?

**November 1: Read Matthew 5:1-12 All Saints Day**

In Matthew 5:1-12, Jesus teaches his disciples the joyous thrill and radiant gladness of the Christian life described in the Beatitudes. On this All Saints Day, remember saints you have known who have faithfully served the Lord as Christians.

**November 8: Read Psalm 78:1-7**

Psalm 78 instructs us to "tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done." Can you remember stories your parents or grandparents told you about how God was active in their lives? Will you pass these stories on to future generations?

**November 15: Read Matthew 25:14-30**

The Parable of the Talents teaches us to use our God-given gifts, be they little or great, in service to God. What are your gifts, and how can you use them in your church and to help others?

**November 22: Read Matthew 25:31-46**

Christ the King Sunday is celebrated on the last Sunday of ordinary time, the Sunday before Advent. Read Matthew 25:31-46, and reflect on Jesus's commission to help others with a loving heart. Think of ways you or your church can show love by feeding, clothing, visiting and welcoming God's children.

**November 29: Read First Sunday of Advent**

"Advent" means "coming" or "arrival." During the season of Advent, we celebrate Christ's coming into the world and watch with expectant hope for his coming again. As we journey through Advent, remember God's promises of "hope, peace, joy, and love," and think of ways you will keep Christ as the center of your Christmas preparations.

**December 6: Read Mark 1:1-8**

Unlike the other synoptic gospels, Mark has no account of Jesus' birth. Instead, he begins with a revealing title and introduction, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"(1:1). Then, Mark moves to introduce us to the one who will introduce us to Jesus. This may seem an odd passage to read for the second Sunday of Advent – after all, there is no mention of angels, shepherds or a young couple looking for a place to spend the night – and yet, Advent signifies the coming of Jesus into human history, and Mark 1:1-8 is clearly an announcement about the coming of the Lord.

**December 13: Read John 1:6-8, 19-28**

The first verse of John's prologue echoes the language of Genesis 1:1. But instead of simply repeating the opening words of the Old Testament book, John identifies God's creative associate as "the Word," a rich term that can also be translated as "reason" and "wisdom." The author of John also points out that "life" and "light" are found in the Word (vv. 4-5) and that "a man sent from God, whose name was John" testified on behalf of the one who was "the light, so that all might believe through him" (vv. 6-7). According to the Gospel of John, these words introduce the purpose of Jesus – to be light. Reflect quietly on how Jesus gives light to you, and perhaps write, draw or journal your thoughts.

**December 20: Read Luke 1:26-38, 46b-55**

This passage, commonly referred to as "The Annunciation," prepares the reader for the birth of Jesus and the message of salvation that will weave throughout Luke-Acts. It is a passage that reveals a glimpse of what God is doing to manifest God's kingdom. Somehow, Mary understands what the reader of Luke's gospel should know by now: God is at work. Her song reveals her faith that God has chosen the lowly in order to manifest God's glory, power and salvation, especially verses 46-49. What song would you sing to proclaim your faith?

**December 27: Read Luke 2:22-40**

Jesus comes to us as a small vulnerable baby, the Child of God. In response to Jesus Christ, who comes to the world as a baby, a child, consider the renewed commitment you can make today to serving all children. Love is born at Christmastime in the infant Jesus Christ. Consider dedicating some of your time and presence to playing with, reading with, creating with or serving a child today in some special, meaningful way. What child needs the care of your presence today to experience the real love of God?