

2021 Nurturing Faith Ideas

The hope of the Nurture Committee is that you will share these with your congregation through bulletins, newsletters, 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 3 – Second Sunday of Christmas: Read Psalm 147:12-20

¹Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem! ... ¹⁶“He gives snow like wool...” Whether we have “snow like wool” or have no snow at all, January can feel like a cold, dark time. But the psalmist calls us to “Praise the Lord.” Where can you see light right now, and how might you give praise to God?

January 10 – Baptism of the Lord: Read Acts 19:1-7

The apostle Paul “baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus...the Holy Spirit came upon them.” Pour a glass of water into a small bowl and think about your own baptism. What will you do this week to witness to others that the Holy Spirit has come upon **you**?

January 17 – Second Sunday after Epiphany: Read 1 Samuel 3:1-10

The Lord called to Samuel in the night. Samuel responded, “Here I am!” Read the lyrics to the hymn “Here I Am, Lord” written by Dan Schutte. Find them on the internet or in your hymnal. How has God called you? How might God call you this week? How will you respond?

January 24 – Third Sunday after Epiphany: Read Psalm 62:5-12

The Psalmist calls us to trust God at all times, to pour out our heart before God for God is a refuge to us. Take a moment to wait in silence then pour out your heart to God. Tell God what isn’t going well in your life. Tell God what brings you joy today. Sit a moment longer in silence as you remember that God loves you and has great plans for you.

January 31 – Fourth Sunday after Epiphany: Read Mark 1:21-28

Jesus taught with authority. What are some teachings of Jesus? Write down some of the things Jesus taught us. Which mean the most to you? How might you teach others what Jesus taught you?

February 7 – Fifth Sunday after Epiphany: Read Mark 1:29-39

As Jesus begins his ministry, his life takes on a rhythm of action (teaching and healing) and prayer and solitude. His time by himself in prayer perhaps confirms his calling: “This is why I have come.” Reflect on your own life. How does it have a rhythm to it? Do you find time to be nurtured by God in solitude and silence so that you can engage with the world from a place of centered Presence?

February 14 – Transfiguration of the Lord: Read Mark 9:2-9

Jesus orders the disciples to not tell anyone what they had seen. Reflect on why that would be. Why would he not want others to know about this experience? What is most important to Jesus? Have you ever had an amazing experience of God? Did you tell anyone about it? Why or why not? Say a prayer of thanks to God for your experiences of God.

February 21 – First Sunday in Lent: Read Mark 1:9-15

Jesus' life and call are affirmed and confirmed through his experience of baptism. Reflect on what your baptism means to you. Every time you encounter water this week, perhaps as you wash dishes or pour yourself a drink, listen for God to affirm you as God's beloved child. Listen for the statement, "With you I am well-pleased." Notice your feelings, both emotional and physical, as you rest in God's love for you.

February 28 – Second Sunday in Lent: Read Mark 8:31-38

Lose your life. That's what Jesus says here. We don't like to be "losers," but we do lose ourselves sometimes. We lose ourselves in our work, in our hobbies, in music, in a book or movie, and in other things we love. What does it mean for you to lose yourself in Christ? How would that save your life, as the scripture says? Say an honest prayer, asking God to help you lose yourself in Christ. Tell God what is hard about that, what scares you about it. Then sit in silence in God's presence.

March 7 – Third Sunday in Lent: Read John 2:13-22

After clearing the temple, Jesus is asked to prove his authority to do such a thing. He responds, "Destroy this temple; I will raise it again in three days." How do these words make you marvel at Christ's authority and how he would display it through his death and resurrection?

March 14 – Fourth Sunday in Lent: Read John 3:14-21

We hear that the Light has come into the world, but people loved the darkness instead. What are some ways that we choose the darkness or hide from the Light? What are ways that we can set our gaze on the One who was lifted up to deliver us from the darkness?

March 21 – Fifth Sunday in Lent: Read: John 12:20-33

What does Jesus mean when he says, "Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life"? How can we avoid the self-love that he describes? How can we pursue the self-denial that we are called to model?

March 28 – Palm/Passion Sunday: Read John 12:2-11

Mary displays extravagance by pouring perfume worth a year's wages on Jesus' feet, then wiping them with her hair. Have you ever looked upon someone's extravagant acts in bewilderment, even objection? How can we display our love for Christ in extravagant ways?

April 4 – Resurrection of the Lord/Easter: Read John 20:1-18

Each gospel tells the story of Jesus' resurrection differently. In John's gospel, the risen Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene as she stood near the empty tomb. Mary didn't recognize Jesus until he spoke her name; after that encounter, she went and told the disciples, "I have seen the Lord." Mary didn't expect to see Jesus and didn't. Are you open to hearing Jesus speak to you when you don't expect it? What might you do to be more open to that possibility?

April 11 – Second Sunday of Easter: Read John 20:19-31

Thomas has gotten a bad rap through the centuries, often being referred to as "Doubting Thomas" because he wouldn't believe it when the other disciples told him Jesus was alive and

had visited them. When he did see Jesus, Thomas believed. We all have our doubts at times, but that doesn't stop Jesus from coming to us. Jesus meets us where we are and invites us to believe. What doubts make it hard for you believe that Jesus is alive and with you, meeting you where you are? Celebrate the good news that God in Christ meets and accepts us where we are.

April 18 – Third Sunday of Easter: Read 1 John 3:1-7

The children's song "If Anybody Asks You Who I Am" contains the words, "If anybody asks you who I am, tell 'em I am child of God." The concluding verse changes it a little bit to "If anybody asks you who are you, tell 'em you're a child of God." The author of the first letter of John reminds us that we are all children of God, not because we are always good and loving, but because God loves us. As God's child, how might you share God's love with others?

April 25 – Fourth Sunday of Easter: Read Psalm 23

Shepherds take care of their sheep by seeing that the sheep have the food and water they need. When the sheep are threatened or in danger, the shepherd uses a staff and rod to protect and rescue them. The psalmist sings of God as his/her shepherd. Think of yourself as one of God's sheep; how has God cared for you?

May 2 – Fifth Sunday of Easter: Read 1 John 4:7-21

God is love and commands us to love one another. We live in love rather than fear because God abides in us. Are there fears or anxieties that hinder you from loving freely and boldly? In what specific ways are you called to show the love of God to someone else this week?

May 9 – Sixth Sunday of Easter: Read John 15:9-17

Jesus commands the disciples to love one another sacrificially. How much would you give up for the sake of a friend? What does the 'complete joy' of Christ mean to you, and how do you share it with someone else?

May 16 – Seventh Sunday of Easter: Read John 17:6-19

Jesus prays that God would protect the friends that he is sending into the world. Are these impulses at odds with one another – staying safe and serving in the wider world? What risks are we willing to take to speak truth to those who would rather not hear it?

May 23 – Read Ezekiel 37:1-14

Ezekiel prophesied to the dry bones, and the Holy Spirit swept over the valley to breathe new life where there had been none. Is there a part of your faith life that feels dry? How are you praying the Holy Spirit would renew your church community?

May 30 – Trinity Sunday: Read Psalm 29

This psalm describes the voice of the Lord like a powerful storm that blows over the land and inspires the people to worship. When did you last simply sit in stillness and listen to the rain? What do you hear the voice of the Lord saying to you right now?

June 6 – Second Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 5: Read Mark 3:20-35

Jesus' own family thought he had lost his senses. He left the security of a carpenter's business to become a wandering preacher. No one, they thought, could take on the Scribes and Pharisees and come out a winner! And, he could not care less about "What will people say?" Sometimes the voice of our neighbors is louder than the voice of God! What risks are you willing to take for the sake of building God's kingdom?

June 13 – Third Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 6: Read Mark 4:26-32

Jesus compares the growth of the Kingdom of God to that of a mustard seed. There is nothing so powerful as growth. Just as the smallest of seeds grows into a great bush, we, too, can sow seeds that help God's kingdom to grow. Think of "seeds" you or your church family have planted that have produced amazing results in your church or community.

June 20 – Fourth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 7: Read Mark 4:35-41

The disciples were afraid and worried when the storm threatened to overtake their boat on the lake. They asked Jesus, "Teacher do you not care that we are perishing?" In response to their fears, Jesus calmed the storm. What are the storms in your life? Worry, sorrow, fear? In the presence of Jesus, we can have peace even in the wildest storms.

June 27 – Fifth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 8: Mark 5:21-43

The Ruler of the Synagogue and the woman with a hemorrhage, when all else failed and they were at their wits' end, turned to God. These stories, found in Mark, give us hope in times of despair. Many years ago, during VBS, there was a song with the words "With God, all things are possible." Five-year-old Chloe heard the words "With God all things are Popsicles!" What brings more happiness and excitement to a child than a popsicle? Can you feel that excitement knowing that God is there for you when you reach out in faith?

July 4 – Sixth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 9: Read Mark 6:1-13

Jesus and his disciples go to his hometown of Nazareth, where he preaches at the synagogue. The people were amazed; they couldn't figure out where the miracles and wisdom had come from. How could a carpenter heal all of these sick people? Where did he get this wisdom from? So why wasn't he well received by the people of Nazareth? How would you react if you saw his healing powers with your own eyes?

July 11 – Seventh Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 10: Read Ephesians 1: 3-14

God created us all in God's image. We have redemption through God's son, Jesus the Christ, having been forgiven for our sins because of God's grace! How does your life show your gratitude and thanks for this amazing gift of God?

July 18 – Eighth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 11: Read Psalm 89:20-37

Today, we read about God's covenant, or promise, to David. God promises to protect David from the enemy; God's love will forever be with, and show through, David. How do these promises affect us now? How do we live our lives in light of these promises?

July 25 – Ninth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 12: Read Psalm 14

In this passage, we read how human beings have turned away from God and God's teaching. We are reminded that when we become overwhelmed, all we have to do is be still and know God is with us. How does life change when we go against God? Have you felt distant and separated from God? How do you reconnect and get back on the right path?

August 1 – Tenth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 13: Read John 6:24-35

Jesus said, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the bread of life. I am the bread of life." How do you and your family work for the spiritual food available to all of us?

August 8 – Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 14: Read John 6:35, 41-51

The Jews complained about Jesus, not believing he could come from heaven. He assures them he comes from God and has seen God. Who do you turn to when things are not what you want, God or one another?

August 15 – Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 15: Read Ephesians 5:15-20

Paul warns the Ephesians to have wise lives and understand the will of God. He reminds all of us to give thanks to God at all times for everything. Make a list of what you are thankful for and how you give God thanks always.

August 22 – Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 16: Read Ephesians 6: 10-20

Paul reminds us to be strong in the Lord and put on the whole armor of God, to withstand the wiles of the devil. As you read this passage, ask yourself how you live out Paul's instructions.

August 29 – Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 17: Read Psalm 15

This Psalm of David asks the question, who shall be admitted to the temple, the worshipping community? The answer given is: those who do what is right and speak the truth, who honor and fear (meaning respect and worship) the Lord, and who are trustworthy. As you read the Psalm, ask yourself if you do these things, and, if not, what might you do differently in your life?

September 5 – Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 18: Read James 2:1-10

When we treat people based upon their appearance or how much wealth they have, we fail to follow the command to love our neighbor as ourselves. Where do you do this in your life? What action(s) can you take to remedy this situation?

September 12 – Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 19: Psalm 115: 1-9

The psalmist gives thanksgiving for his/her recovery from illness after describing his/her supplications to God. How often do we receive the benefits of prayer, yet forget to give thanks in return? Begin or continue a practice of thanksgiving for prayers answered, whether small or large.

September 19 – Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 20: James 3: 13 – 4: 3

James tells us when good works are done with wisdom and not selfish ambition, we will sow a harvest of righteousness and peace. Conflicts and disputes arise when we want it all

our own way. What can you do to become more gentle, honest, and merciful in a world filled with conflict?

September 26 – Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 21: Read Mark 9:42-50

Mark warns us of all the ways we are tempted to sin or cause others to stumble due to our actions. What do you think it means when he says, “Have salt in yourselves?” How can that give you peace with one another?

October 3 – Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 22: Read Mark 10:2-16

Jesus told the disciples that whoever does not receive the kingdom as a little child will never enter it. We must disregard our goals of fame and fortune and turn to God as powerless children. How do you need to change your thinking to make this happen?

October 10 – Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 23: Read Mark 10:17-31

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God. Wealth and honor will not get you into the kingdom. How do you prioritize your need for wealth and your desire to enter the kingdom of God?

October 17 – Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 24: Read Job 38:1-7

Job has suffered greatly, and his friends give advice. Elihu puts Job in his place, so to speak, declaring his unworthiness to question God. God’s response is a rebuke to Elihu and friends who speak without knowledge. Job, in his anguish, yells at God; do you ever do the same? How does God respond?

October 24 – Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 25: Read Mark 10:46-52

Jesus heals Bartimaeus’ eyesight because of the faith with which he shouted out to Jesus, and he becomes a follower of Jesus. Bartimaeus did not fear the rebukes of the disciples but continued to call out in faith. How can you and your family work to strengthen your faith, considering your trials and suffering, so you call upon Jesus for help?

October 31 – Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 26: Read Mark 12:25-34

Although Jesus is often critical of scribes, this one agrees with the most important commandments necessary to be a follower: Love God and your neighbor. How do you live out these commandments in your everyday life?

November 7 – Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 27: Read Mark 12:38-44

This month, we turn our thoughts to giving thanks and stewardship. Jesus reminds us of the importance of giving not out of our abundance, but out of our poverty. What does this mean to you, and how will this affect your offerings to the church?

November 14 – Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 28: Read Mark 13:1-8

These verses are warnings of things to come, and false leaders are of concern. Jesus said, “Do not let them lead you astray.” How are you led astray by the leaders we encounter in our lives? Create a plan to counteract this temptation.

November 21 – Christ the King/Reign of Christ: Read John 18:33-37

On this Christ the King Sunday, we find Jesus confronted by Pilate, who wants to know if Jesus is indeed the king of the Jews. How do you answer this question in your own life? Is Jesus your King? If so, how do you honor your King?

November 28 – First Sunday of Advent: Read Luke 21:25-36

As we enter this Advent Season, our Scripture passage speaks of signs of the coming of the Son of Man in a cloud with power and glory. How do you visualize this scene depicted in the Scripture passage? Draw a picture with your family to depict His coming.

December 5 – Second Sunday of Advent: Read Luke 3:1-6

As John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way for Jesus, so must we prepare ourselves for Jesus. This is a time of hope and preparation. During Advent, reflect on what preparations you are making in your life and in your heart for the coming of Jesus. The way must be prepared in your heart for Jesus' coming; only then will you see the true salvation of God.

December 12 – Third Sunday of Advent: Read Isaiah 12:2-6

December is a wonderful time of year, but it is also a very busy time, with shopping to do, presents to wrap, trees to decorate, and more. During all of this, we must remember, first and foremost, that Jesus, the Son of God, is coming soon to bring joy and salvation into this world! Salvation is the gift for all of us! So, despite all the other distractions of this season, remember to put the coming birth of our Savior at the top of your priority list.

December 19 – Fourth Sunday of Advent: Read Luke 1:39-45

When Mary greets Elizabeth, her unborn child recognizes that Mary is pregnant with Jesus and leaps for joy in her womb. Do you know Jesus? Do you recognize when Jesus enters your presence, and if so, do you leap for joy? Jesus was sent because God loves each of us, and His mission is to bring hope and salvation to a troubled world. Take some time and reflect on our world and how Jesus gives you hope even during our bleakest moments.

December 26 – First Sunday of Christmas: Read Colossians 3:12-17

Christmas is here. Christ has come! Now, we must take the time to think about what that means: to love one another; to forgive; to be compassionate, kind and faithful; in short, to live our lives following the example Jesus set to the best of our abilities. So, this Christmas, put away old grudges; forgive those who have wronged you; be compassionate and kind to all, especially those less fortunate; and remember to always give thanks to God through Jesus for all these gifts this Christmas!

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