

## **2024 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 7: 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. Share a story about what you remember about your own baptism.

### **January 14: 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 21: 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 sit in silence, then pour out your heart to God. Tell God what brings you joy today. Tell God what isn’t going well in your life. Thank God for the fact that God loves you and has great plans for you.

### **January 28: Read Mark 1:21-28**

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

### **February 4: 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 11: Read Mark 9:2-9**

Jesus orders the disciples to not tell anyone what they had seen. Reflect on why he would order this of the disciples. 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?

### **February 18: 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, be reminded that you are God’s beloved child. Hear God

tell you, “With you I am well-pleased.” Notice your feelings, both emotional and physical, as you rest in God’s love for you.

**February 25: 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? 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 3: 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 10: 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 17: 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 24: Read Mark 1:1-11**

On the Sunday before Easter, we remember Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem on the back of a colt, over a carpet of cloaks and leafy branches, to the shouts of the people’s Hosannas. By the end of the week, Jesus will be put to death on a cross. Over the course of the week, read Mark 14:1-15:47 which tells the story of the last days of Jesus’ life before his crucifixion. What are ways we praise and betray Jesus in our lives today?

**March 31: 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.” 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 7: 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 14: 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 a 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 21: 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 are in danger, the shepherd uses a staff and rod to protect and rescue them. The psalmist sings of God as the shepherd of the psalmist. Think of yourself as one of God's sheep; how has God cared for you?

**April 28: 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 5: 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 12: 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 you willing to take to speak truth to those who would rather not hear it?

**May 19: 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 26: 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 2: Read 1 Samuel 3:1-10**

June is National Children's Awareness Month. Children are important to God and a blessing and gift to us. Hannah knew this and entrusted her son, Samuel, to God. Adults, consider the

children in your life, talk with them about how God might be calling them to serve. Children, talk with an adult you trust about where you think God is calling you to serve the church.

**June 9: 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 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 16: Read Mark 4:26-32**

Jesus compares the growth of the Kingdom of God to that of a mustard seed. 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 23: 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 of worry, sorrow, fear? In the presence of Jesus, we can have peace even in the wildest storms.

**June 30: 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 7: 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? Jesus was not well received by the people of Nazareth. How would you react if you saw his healing powers with your own eyes?

**July 14: 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 21: 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 David and shown through David. How do these promises affect us now? How do we live our lives in light of these promises?

**July 28: 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. When have you ever felt distant and separated from God? How do you reconnect and get back on the right path?

**August 4: Tenth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 13: Read John 6:24-35**

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." In saying, "I am the Bread of Life," Jesus is claiming to not only be divine, but also the only one who can truly satisfy our soul! What are some things besides Christ we hope will satisfy us?

**August 11: Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 14: Read John 6:35, 41-51**

How do the crowds misunderstand the meaning and purpose of Jesus' words? In what ways do people misunderstand Jesus today? If you were to help someone see Jesus clearly, what would you say or do or not say or do?

**August 18: 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 25: 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.

**September 1: 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 8: 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 neighbor as self. Where do you do this in your life? What action(s) can you take to remedy this situation?

**September 15: Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 19: Psalm 116:1-9**

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 22: 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 29: 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 6: 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 13: 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 20: 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 27: 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?

**November 3: Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 26: Read Mark 12:28-34**

The command to love God and others can be really bad news because we are so bad at it. How does the gospel of Jesus make it so that the commandment to love God and others is no longer bad news but good news? How can you meditate on this good news this week?

**November 10: Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 27: Read Mark 12:38-44**

Imagine this woman's poverty: Consider a contemporary application: a laborer today working an 8-hour day for \$10/hour, 1/64 of that pay would be \$1.25, and it would represent "everything she had, all she had to live on." Is your contribution to gospel ministry best described as being out of your excess (i.e., you only give after you have taken care of your wants & needs) or out of your poverty (i.e., you give of your first fruits no matter the circumstance)?

**November 17: 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 you encounter in our lives? Create a plan to counteract this temptation.

**November 24: 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?

**December 1: 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 8: 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 15: 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 22: 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 God's 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 29: 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!

**Contributors:**

Nellie Howard, Mary Quick, Chris Kilbert, Susan Sharp Campbell, Sue Chenoweth, Jessica Leech, Sue Hollandsworth, Rick McLaughlin, and Claire Butler-Bass