

**JOURNEY
TO THE
CENTER**

JOURNAL OF

JOURNEY TO THE CENTER

What the heck is it?

Suppose we were to take a compass and insert the point and draw the outline of a circle. The center point is the same distance from any point on the circumference...Let us suppose that this circle is the world and that God is the center; the straight lines drawn from the edge to the center are the lives of human beings. The closer they come to God, the closer they become to one another, and the closer to one another, the closer they become to God. This is the essence of the Christian life.

Abba Dorotheos of Gaza

One day I was fiddling with a couple of copper wire circles that were linked together. I held them together so that they were at right angles with one another. Anna pointed to one of the circles. "I know what that is," she said, "that's me." Then she pointed to the other circle and said "And that's mister God. Mister God goes right through my middle and I go right through Mister God's middle."

from the book [Mr. God, this is Anna](#)

This course is an invitation on a journey. Its destination is THE CENTER. Your "middle." The Center of all creation. God's "middle." The destinations are all the same.

This course has three fundamental guiding beliefs. **One:** In the story of the People of God--the people who call upon YHWH as God, upon Abraham as ancestor, and upon Jesus as Messiah--we come to know the very heart and soul of the Universe, THE CENTER of all creation. **Two:** As we journey towards THE CENTER, we also journey towards our own center, the truest selves that we can be. **Three:** As we journey toward THE CENTER and our own center, we journey closer to other human beings. As we move closer to THE CENTER, we approach the place of unity: with God, with ourselves, and with one another. This course hopes to be a time of refreshment for you in that lifelong journey.

The course has a basic shape. On page three, you will find a copy of the baptismal covenant. In the Episcopal Church, one enters this covenant upon baptism. When a person reaffirms his/her baptismal covenant, in the rites of confirmation or reception, he/she renews this covenant in the presence of a bishop of the Church. This covenant is the loose blueprint of "Journey to the Center."

The first half of the baptismal covenant is the Apostles' Creed. The Creed is the whole biblical story in miniature. The first half of **Journey to the Center** will take us on a rapid tour of that biblical story. Hopefully, by the end of the first seven weeks, you will be able to say with integrity the "I Believe" of the Creed.

The second half of the baptismal covenant is a set of questions. Because we trust the story beneath the Creed, we live that trust out in concrete ways. The five questions represent the actions that issue from our trust. These become promises you make to God, “with God’s help.”

The hope of this course is for you to say the words of the baptismal covenant as your own deep truth. You will be able to embrace for a first time, or embrace anew, your solemn baptismal covenant with God.

There is one cardinal rule of this course: **It is okay for you to have doubts!** Name and claim them. Faith is not faith without questions and doubts. The point of “Journey” is not to indoctrinate you or banish questions from your mind. Indeed, you are likely to have MORE questions at the end than you have at the beginning!

However, if at the end of this process you cannot say “I believe” and “I will” with a personal sense of integrity and truthfulness, then in an odd and backwards sort of way this course will have done its job. The point is for you to feel “right” about what you do and say.

There is a time commitment you will have to make. For the first thirteen weeks, we will meet for weekly sessions lasting two hours. During these weeks, you’ll work through this guided journal. Journal work will require at least 15 minutes each day. You will also be asked to make Holy Week a time of special commitment by attending liturgy every day.

If after the first thirteen weeks you decide to continue on towards baptism or one of the forms of baptismal renewal, you embark upon a second journey. You will spend time doing “projects” with a companion/sponsor. This period will last from June until November. The whole group will meet every four to five weeks during this time.

“Journey” is a significant commitment of time and energy, but I’m convinced you will find yourself being energized by what you do. I pray you will enjoy your “journey to the center.” I know that I will enjoy journeying with you.

Keith

The Baptismal Covenant

Celebrant: Do you believe in God the
Father?

People I believe in God, the Father
almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Celebrant Do you believe in Jesus Christ,
the Son of God?

People I believe in Jesus Christ, his only
Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the
power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the
Father.
He will come again to judge the living and
the dead.

Celebrant Do you believe in God the Holy
Spirit?

People I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

Celebrant Will you continue in the apostles'
teaching and fellowship, in the breaking
of bread, and in the prayers ?

People I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you persevere in resisting
evil, and, whenever you fall into sin,
repent and return to the Lord?

People I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you proclaim by word and
example the Good News of God in
Christ?

People I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you seek and serve Christ in
all persons, loving your neighbor as
yourself?

People I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you strive for justice and
peace among all people, and respect the
dignity of every human being?

People I will, with God's help.

JOURNEY TO THE CENTER

2011 Program Outline

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|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| 2/27 | 1. Getting started. From Avram to Me. 40 centuries in 40 minutes | |
| 3/6 | 2. Foundations: The Bible, Creation, and Sin | |
| 3/13 | 3. Foundations: I will be your God, you will be my people | |
| 3/20 | 4. The New Covenant: Jesus the man | |
| 3/27 | 5. The New Covenant: Jesus the teacher | |
| 4/3 | 6. The New Covenant: Jesus the Christ | |
| 4/10 | 7. The Church: Community of the New Covenant | |
| 4/17 | Make up or movie night | |
| Holy Week | Monday – Wednesday | Holy Eucharist at 6:00 p.m. |
| | Thursday night | Maundy Thursday Liturgy and Prayer Vigil |
| | Friday | Good Friday liturgies |
| | Easter Sunday | Easter Liturgies |
| No meeting on Easter Sunday evening | | |
| 5/1 | 8. Life after Jesus: The Holy Spirit | |
| 5/8 | 9. Life in the Covenant: Sacraments | |
| 5/15 | 10. Life in the Covenant: Prayer | |
| 5/22 | 11. Life in the Covenant: Proclamation | |
| 5/29 | Night off | |
| 6/5 | 12. Life in the Covenant: The Vocations of God's People | |
| 6/12 | Pentecost Sunday: All participants are celebrated during liturgies.
Those going on to baptism/confirmation/reception/reaffirmation will be commissioned as "candidates." | |
| 6/12 | First meetings between candidates and sponsors | |

From this point until the Liturgy of Re-Affirmation, candidates and companions meet regularly and complete “projects” together. Meetings of all candidates and companions will occur about every 6-8 weeks.

The Bishop of Ohio, the Rt. Rev. Mark Hollingsworth, Jr., will visit Saint Peter’s on **November 13**, at which time the Rites of Reaffirmation will be offered. Prior to that Sunday, likely on a weeknight in the two weeks before, there will be a three hour “retreat” with the Bishop. **USING THIS JOURNAL**

The best learning and experiences you will enjoy in your *Journey to the Center* will be in your private times of study and prayer, and in sharing times with your small group. This journal is meant to help you in both.

Each week, you will find in this Journal exercises and readings to prepare for our Sunday night sessions. You should plan to spend at least 15-20 minutes each day working on your journal. What you write in the journal is strictly yours. You will not be forced to share anything, though it is hoped some of what you write and think you will want to share.

If you are already a person who keeps a journal or diary, please feel free to use this as your journal for the next 13 weeks. If you do not now keep a journal, consider using this opportunity to begin one. Journaling is one of the most excellent spiritual disciplines, and a wonderful way to see God at work in your life over time.

The material in each session is intended to prepare you for Fr. Keith's talk on Sunday evening. As you study and pray, questions will arise. Fr. Keith's talks will typically deal with those questions. So, in order to be prepared for Sunday evenings it is most important that you give some time to the assigned readings and exercises.

Most important of all:

ENJOY THE JOURNEY!

SESSION 1

GETTING STARTED

SMALL GROUP TIME: SESSION ONE

Each week, we will spend time in small groups. Hopefully, groups engage in lively and enjoyable conversations. Hopefully, the people in your small group will become friends and important companions in your “journey.”

Tonight’s task is simply to come to know one another. Use the questions below to introduce yourselves to one another. Don’t feel bound by the questions. Let your conversation go wherever it wants to!

It is ALWAYS acceptable to say “pass.” Sometimes, folks in a group will not feel quite ready to share thoughts or feelings. That is OKAY! Some folks, particularly the more introverted among us, need time to process thoughts before they speak them. It is important to give that permission.

By the same token, monitor yourself to make sure your thoughts and feelings don’t dominate the conversation! We are not here to debate, argue, or preach. We are here to practice the most noble ministry of all: listening to one another with care and respect.

1. Come up with a one sentence answer to finish this statement:

I’m taking part in “Journey to the Center” because.....

2. Share with the group one moment from your own personal history that was very important in making you who you are.

3. Share with the group a question that you hope might be answered in the course of taking “Journey.”

4. Share with the group your response to tonight’s talk.

SESSION 2

FOUNDATIONS: THE BIBLE, CREATION, AND SIN

MONDAY:

EXPLORING YOUR BIBLE

Your work this week is to open up that lonely, neglected Bible sitting somewhere in your home and become familiar with it! If you do not have a Bible, now would be a good time to purchase one. I suggest that you visit any bookstore and purchase a copy of the “Good News” Bible. This is a good translation in contemporary American English. If you wish to embark on serious Bible study, I suggest the Oxford Annotated Study Bible.

You will note quickly that the Bible is not a book as we know such things. It doesn’t have a “beginning, middle, and end.” It is, more accurately, a collection of “books.” The Bible contains many different kinds of writing: songs, poems, sermons, lists, histories, fables, letters, and much more. No one person sat down and wrote the thing front to back. The Bible came together over twenty centuries. It was put in its final form, believe it or not, by ancient committees meeting in atmospheres of reverent prayer.

This week you look at the Bible in its basic literary types. You will find a brief explanation of each major piece of the Bible and suggestions to help you read it. As you read the guide, have your Bible next to you. Thumb through each section of the Bible as you read the explanation of it. Better yet, linger and read a few verses.

Rare is the person who will begin reading the Bible at Genesis 1 and go straight through to the end of Revelation. By all means, do this if you can. You will have an amazing experience. More likely, you will read one book at a time. This is perfectly fine. The Holy Scriptures speak to us in both their particularity and totality.

Don’t be concerned if at first you “don’t understand.” Coming to know this great collection takes time and the company of other seekers. The greatest scholars of Scripture will quickly admit that they do not fully understand it either! Nor will we ever! You, your Bible, and fellow pilgrims will spend a lifetime on the journey to Truth. Give yourself time and space. Above all, before you begin reading, pray God to speak to you. I often use this verse from Psalm 27:

You speak in my heart and say, “Seek my face”

Your face, LORD, will I seek.

1. Find a copy of the Holy Bible. Figure out what translation it is and jot it down here. You will discover this information on the title page.

(for example: New Revised Standard Version, New International Version, King James, etc.)

2. Scan quickly the first book of the Bible: “Genesis.” Read chapters 1 – 11. As you read the chapters, jot down your questions and impressions:

TUESDAY:

THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

I. The Torah:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

These five books are the Holy Scriptures of Judaism. The Torah tells the story of the people Israel as the people chosen by God. The Torah begins in primordial chaos, out of which God orders the cosmos. Sin enters this marvelous creation through the disobedience of human beings, and then quickly corrupts all of creation. God acts to restore the goodness of creation by choosing a single childless couple, Abram and Sarah, to become a “blessing” to all peoples. God promises to give Abram and Sarah offspring and a homeland. The Torah tells the story of Abram’s descendants as they are first enslaved in Egypt, then freed from slavery. We hear of their wanderings in the wilderness. Most importantly, the Torah records for us the holy Law delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Law is the heart of the covenant between God and the people of Israel. When we come to the end of the book of Deuteronomy, the people of Israel, now numbering in the thousands, stand at the edge of the land God promised to Abram hundreds of years before. God has kept the promise God made to Abram and Sarah. Now, we wonder, will the people Israel keep the promises they made to God? The entire rest of the Bible, the entire history of Israel and the Christian Church, are the unfolding answer to that question!

This is difficult but fascinating reading. You will find hard going in the genealogies and the elaborate lists of laws. Remember, you are reading about a nomadic people 3500 years in the past. Some of these laws won't make a bit of sense to you! Nor will some of their customs and presuppositions. That's okay. Simply dwell on the "spirit" of the Law where you can discern it.

II. The Histories:

A. The Deuteronomic History:

Joshua, Judges, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings

This is not "history" as we understand such things. The writers do not attempt to tell us everything that happened in an objective way. This is a selective re-telling and interpretation of events. What actually happened is not as important as why it happened. The "D" History reviews the story of Israel from the vantage point of the covenant code found in the Book of Deuteronomy.

Joshua and Judges recount the conquest and settlement of the Promised Land. Many people find these books disturbing because they are incredibly violent. Again, remember, you are reading about people 3000 years distant in an incredibly violent place and time.

I and II Samuel recount the establishment of the Israelite monarchy. The books focus closely on the life and times of King David, the "George Washington" of Israel. Prepare yourself for narrative that is almost soap operatic in quality!

I and II Kings recount the history of the divided kingdoms (Israel and Judah split in a civil war at the death of David's son Solomon). Keeping track of all the different kings is difficult. Some Bibles, and most Bible commentaries, will have a chronology of the kings. The "D" History culminates with the destruction of Samaria and the northern (Israel) kingdom in 722 BC, and the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem in 587.

You will note an interesting pattern in these books. The People of Israel are regularly described as falling away from the Law, and from the worship of God. When this happens, disaster invariably ensues. The People then repent, call to the Lord for deliverance, and are restored. The Deuteronomic History describes the events of 700 years in light of how faithful or faithless the People and their leaders were to the covenant God made with them in the Sinai desert.

B. The Chronicler's History

I and II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah

This is the same basic story as the "D" History, but assembled with a different interpretive angle and about 100 years later.

I and II Chronicles are in many ways virtually identical to the "D" History, only with more genealogies and a concern for "priestly" matters.

Ezra and Nehemiah detail the period after the return of the exiles from Babylon, the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple, and fierce struggles among the returned exiles.

WEDNESDAY:

III. Songs

The Psalms, Lamentations, the Song of Solomon

The Psalms have been called Israel's hymnal. There is no story line here, just a varied collection of poems. There are praises, curses, lamentations, liturgical songs, and many others. The Psalms have been the primary source of Jewish and Christian prayer for 2500 years! Indeed, most of the prayers and hymns ever composed, including our own Book of Common Prayer and Hymnal, take their inspiration and texts from this magnificent collection. Every range of human emotion can be found in the Psalms.

Lamentations is a collection of poems of anger, despair, and pathos over the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, and a second attack by the Edomites.

The Song of Solomon is an erotic poem. One scholar has speculated that it was an oratorio sung at weddings to get the newly married couple "in the mood." Many have wondered why it is in the Bible since it never explicitly mentions God. Over the centuries, some have interpreted it as an allegory describing the relationship of the soul to God, or of Christ to the Church. Whatever its original intent, the Song of Solomon is a lovely song about the love between a man and woman.

IV. The Prophets

A. The Major Prophets

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel

These were the great poet/preachers who called/cajoled/threatened the people of Israel to remain faithful to God. They were the great interpreters of the disasters of 722 and 587.

The Book of Isaiah, scholars believe, is actually the work of three different prophets sharing a common viewpoint, but in different times. The original prophet Isaiah (chapters 1 - 39) preached around 725. A second "Isaiah" (chapters 40 - 55) preached near the end of the exile (525?). A third "Isaiah" preached after the return of the exiles (500?).

Jeremiah preached shortly before and after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587.

Ezekiel was a priest carried away in the exile. He preached to the exiles in Babylon.

When you read these three books, remember you are reading the words of highly imaginative poet/preachers. They were visionaries whose oracles are alternately messages of hope and messages of doom. Material in these books is not arranged in any kind of thematic or chronological order. They are, essentially, collections of poems and sermons. It is best to read these books as you would a collection of poetry. Savor each poem or sermon on its own.

B. The Lesser Prophets

Amos, Hosea, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

These, too, were poet/preachers. Their ministries occur between 750 and 450 BC. We simply don't have quite as much material from them as we do from the "great" prophets.

C. Daniel

Daniel is an odd book, and the last book of the Old Testament to be assembled. Though much of it is set in Babylon during the exile, scholars are almost unanimous in placing its composition during the period around 200 BC, when the Hellenistic (Greek) empire was persecuting Judaism. Daniel contains the earliest examples of the strange, symbolic form of writing known as "apocalyptic."

THURSDAY:

V. The Wisdom Literature

Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job

These are marvelous books that preserve for us a great tradition in ancient Israel and the Middle East. We call this the “Wisdom” tradition because it sought to observe and understand the mysteries of the world and human life. One of the intriguing features of this literature is that “Wisdom” (greek word=Sophia) is personified as a female figure who is the consort of God.

Proverbs is simply what the name implies, a book full of pithy little sayings designed to be memorized by students. A steady theme throughout is that the righteous prosper and the unrighteous suffer.

Ecclesiastes is a brooding meditation upon the apparent futility of life. Its appearance immediately after Proverbs is clearly intended to balance that book's "do good - get good" assumptions. Ecclesiastes is an ancient book that wrestles gamely with “theodicy:” why does God allow bad things to happen?

Job is a long poem, almost like an opera. The book is a long poetic conversation among Job, several "comforters" and God. Job is a good man upon whom utter disaster falls. Job demands to know why. It is an amazing meditation upon suffering and sin and the unquestionable sovereignty and mystery of God. It is NOT, as in some popular misinterpretations, about patience in suffering.

VI. Fables and Parables

Ruth, Esther, Jonah

These are short, extremely clever stories intended to make a point.

Ruth is intended to counter a strong xenophobic movement among the returned exiles. The story establishes that the grandmother of the great King David was a Moabitess (Moabites were despised as "foreigners" by the returned exiles). It is placed after Judges in the canon because that is roughly the time the events would have happened.

Esther is the story of the first "pogrom" against Jews. It is the story behind the Jewish festival of "Purim."

Jonah is intended to counter the same xenophobic streak as Ruth. Jonah is sent by God to show compassion to the most horrific enemies Israel ever had, the Ninevites. It is a loathsome task that Jonah attempts to shirk. The events that follow are some of the most memorable, and kind of funny, in all of the Bible.

Should you desire to study the Old Testament in depth, the very best possible help (in my humble estimation) is Understanding the Old Testament by Bernhard W. Anderson. Now in its fourth edition, it is considered a classic. It is easy to read.

FRIDAY:

THE NEW TESTAMENT

I. The Synoptic Gospels

Matthew, Mark, Luke-Acts

These three writers all drew from remembered stories that circulated among Jesus' followers in the decades after his death and resurrection. Each Gospel writer has different emphases, because each wrote for the sake of different communities of followers. Most scholars believe Mark was assembled first, around 70 A.D. Matthew and Luke seem to have had Mark at their disposal, as well as some other sources of stories. Scholars date their assembly at around 85 A.D. Acts is included here because it is the second part of a two-part work by Luke. It tells the story of the first generation of Christians.

A wonderful way to study these three is to get Ernest Throckmorton's Gospel Parallels, which places the three gospels side-by-side. This enables you to see the subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, changes in emphasis the three authors give to the same stories.

II. The Johannine Literature

Gospel of John, the three letters of John

The Gospel of John is thought to be the work of a specific community of early Christians who clustered around the "beloved disciple." John preserves a very different set of remembrances of Jesus than do the Synoptic Gospels. The Gospel is rich in imagery, and makes much more forceful claims about Jesus' divinity than do the Synoptic Gospels.

The Letters of John seem to be instructions to the same community written about a generation later. The letters give us a picture of a community struggling with conflict, but also a community rich in a spirit of love that will be the defining value of future generations of Christians.

SATURDAY:

III. Paul's Letters

Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, I and II Thessalonians, Philippians, Philemon, Ephesians?, Colossians?

The Book of Acts describes Paul as a man who was at first a persecutor of Christians. But, after a dramatic conversion experience, Paul becomes the greatest missionary of the infant church. Paul's letters were written to some of the churches he founded in his missionary journeys. They address concerns and issues raised by the new Christians in those communities. Of particular importance is his handling of the Jewish Law and its claim on new gentile Christians. Many elements of later Christian theology can be found in embryonic form in Paul's letters.

Paul is sometimes difficult to read. He tends to run on his sentences. He is sometimes downright contradictory. But remember, he is writing letters. He is not trying to be a systematic theologian. He is usually answering questions and addressing problems. Unfortunately, we do not always know exactly what the questions and problems were!

Nevertheless, in Paul's work we have the earliest literature of the nascent Christian movement. We have in primitive form the theological issues that will come to define and dominate Christian thinking for 2000 years. Finally, in Paul we see the greatest example of the missionary fervor that launched the Christian movement on its trajectory from tiny Palestinian sect to worldwide religion.

IV. Pauline Letters

I and II Timothy, Titus, Ephesians?, Colossians?

These are letters ascribed to Paul, but possibly not of his hand. They may have been written by later disciples of Paul, perhaps a decade or two after his death (approximately 65 A.D.). The letters are concerned with community practices and discipline. We begin to see in these letters the first signs of the institutional organization of churches.

V. Apostolic Letters

Hebrews, I and II Peter, James, Jude

These are letters written to specific communities who may have gathered around some of the earliest apostles. The letters are generally addressed towards specific issues of concern in those small early churches.

VI. Revelation

A truly fabulous book, much misused and misunderstood in modern America. This is “apocalyptic” (meaning “to reveal”) literature. Using numbers, animals, symbols, codes, and visions, the author tries to give hope to Christians suffering persecution. The language used is the imperial language of the Roman Court. Using it to describe Jesus and his court in heaven was an act of pure political sedition!

Much of the coded meaning of the symbols in Revelation is lost to us. Today, Revelation is often used in absurd ways by TV evangelist types and tract sellers to scare people into believing these are the end times. Please ignore such people! Revelation is poetic, metaphoric, and lyric. It is meant to bolster people suffering for their faith. Read it that way.

THE APOCRYPHA:

Many Bibles will include books under this heading. In Roman Catholic Bibles, these books will appear as part of the Old Testament. Apocryphal books were written largely in the three centuries prior to Jesus’ ministry, and tell us important things about that time. They were included in the Septuagint, a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek. When the Septuagint was eventually translated into Latin, these books were kept in the Old Testament. During the Reformation, protestant theologians removed the books because the Jewish canon of the Old Testament never included them.

LITURGICAL READING OF
GENESIS 1:1 – 2:4

All: At the beginning of God's creating of the heavens and the earth
when the earth was wild and waste,
darkness over the face of Ocean,
rushing-spirit of God hovering over the face of the waters—

Narr: God said:

God: Let there be light!

Narr: And there was light.

Wom: God saw the light: that it was good.

Narr: God separated the light from the darkness.
God called the light:

God: Day!

Narr: And the darkness he called:

God: Night!

Men: There was setting, there was dawning: one day.

Narr: God said:

God: Let there be a dome amid the waters, and let it separate waters from waters!

Narr: God made the dome and separated the waters that were below the dome from the waters
that were above the dome.

It was so.

God called the dome:

God: Heaven!

Men: There was setting, there was dawning: second day.

Narr: God said:

God: Let the waters under the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land be seen!

Narr: It was so. God called the dry land:

God: Earth!

Narr: And the gathering of the waters he called:

God: Seas!

Wom: God saw that it was good.

Narr: God said:

God: Let the earth sprout forth with sprouting-growth,
plants that seed forth seeds, fruit trees that yield fruit, after their kind,
in which is their seed, upon the earth!

Narr: It was so.
The earth brought forth sprouting-growth,
plants that seed forth seeds, after their kind,
trees that yield fruit, in which is their seed, after their kind.

Wom: God saw that it was good.

Men: There was setting, there was dawning: third day.

Narr: God said:

God: Let there be lights in the dome of the heavens,
to separate the day from the night,
that they may be for signs—for set times, for days and years,
and let them be for lights in the dome of the heavens,
to provide light upon the earth!

Narr: It was so.
God made the two great lights,
the greater light for ruling the day
and the smaller light for ruling the night,
and the stars.
God placed them in the dome of the heavens
to provide light upon the earth,
to rule the day and the night,
to separate the light from the darkness.

Wom: God saw that it was good.

Men: There was setting, there was dawning: fourth day.

Narr: God said:

God: Let the waters swarm with a swarm of living things,
and let fowl fly above the earth, across the dome of the heavens!

Narr: God created the great sea-serpents
and all living beings that crawl about, with which the waters swarmed,
after their kind,
and all winged fowl after their kind.

Wom: God saw that it was good.

Narr: And God blessed them, saying:

God: Bear fruit and be many and fill the waters in the seas,
and let the fowl be many on the earth!

Men: There was setting, there was dawning: fifth day.

Narr: God said:

God: Let the earth bring forth living beings after their kind,
herd-animals, crawling things, and the wildlife of the earth after their kind!

Narr: It was so.
God made the wildlife of the earth after their kind, and the herd-animals,
and all crawling things of the soil after their kind.

Wom: God saw that it was good.

Narr: God said:

God: Let us make humankind, in our image, according to our likeness!
Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the fowl of the heavens,
animals, all the earth, and all crawling things that crawl upon the earth!

Narr: So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God did he create it,
male and female he created them.
God blessed them,
God said to them:

God: Bear fruit and be many and fill the earth
and subdue it!
Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the fowl of the heavens,
and all living things that crawl about upon the earth!

Narr: God said:

God: Here, I give you
all plants that bear seeds that are upon the face of all the earth,
and all trees in which there is fruit that bears seeds,
for you shall they be, for eating;
and also for all the living things of the earth,
for all the fowl of the heavens, for all that crawls upon the earth
in which there is living being—
all green plants for eating.

Narr: It was so.

Wom: Now God saw all that he had made,
and here: it was exceedingly good!

Men: There was setting, there was dawning: the sixth day.

All: Thus were finished the heavens and the earth, with all of their array.
God had finished, on the seventh day, from all his work that he had made.
God gave the seventh day his blessing, he hallowed it,
for on it he ceased from all his work, that by creating, God had made.
These are the begettings of the heavens and the earth: their being created.

This is adapted from the incredible work of Professor Everett Fox, **The Five Books of Moses: The Schocken Bible, Volume I**, (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1997).

SMALL GROUP TIME: SESSION TWO

1. Each person complete this statement:

Up to now, the Bible's place in my life has been.....

2. Share your reactions to the reading material for this past week.
3. Share your reactions, questions, "light bulb moments" aroused by tonight's talk.

SESSION 3:

**FOUNDATIONS:
I WILL BE YOUR GOD,
YOU WILL BE MY PEOPLE**

MONDAY:

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

For session three, we will be looking at the theme of “covenant.” The theme of covenant is the core of both the Old and New Testaments. The point of this whole course is carefully to consider your own “baptismal covenant.”

To prepare for our next gathering, your journal work this week is to reflect upon the heart of the “older covenant,” the Ten Commandments.

1. Write down here from memory as many of the 10 Commandments as you can recall. Order isn't important, just try to get 10.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

2. If you can't name all 10, then round up friends, family, co-workers, and try to complete the list with their help. **NO BOOKS, INTERNET, OR SUCH, ONLY MEMORY!** List here who helped you.

TUESDAY:

Read Chapters 19 – 24 of the Book of Exodus. This is the description of the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai.

1. Can you find the 10 Commandments in this reading? Check them against the 10 Commandments you listed yesterday. How did you do?
2. You'll note there are not just 10 Commandments. There are quite a few more. Chapters 21 – 24 are made up entirely of Commandments. Read these over.
3. Jot down your thoughts, questions, or confusions about “The Law” as it was given to Moses. How do you make sense of this stuff?

WEDNESDAY:

On the next few pages, you will find the 10 Commandments as listed in the Book of Deuteronomy 5: 1-18 . To the right of each commandment is a modern interpretation from the “Outline of the Faith,” pages 847-8 in our Episcopal Book of Common Prayer.

One thing you’ll notice in this work is the Holy Name of God. In the Hebrew Scriptures, God’s name is spelled YHWH. In Judaism, the Holy Name is never pronounced. It is considered too holy to speak. It has not been spoken by observant Jews since the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D.. Even then, it was only whispered once each year by the High Priest when he crawled into the Holy of Holies of the Temple on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). When Jews encounter the Name in reading scripture, they say “ha Adonai,” which translates as “the lord.” In many English translations, you will encounter “lord” spelled in all capitals (LORD) to indicate the Divine Name. Other English translations will provide “Yahweh.” Sometimes you will encounter the inaccurate German rendering: Jehovah.

I prefer to respect the Jewish approach, and find it very prayerful. Thus, I suggest that when you encounter YHWH in the text that follows, remember to say THE LORD.

1. Read each of the 10 Commandments on the next two pages. Beside each is an interpretation of the commandment from the Book of Common Prayer. Jot down your thoughts, impressions, and questions about each one.

Moshe called all of Israel and said to them:
 Hearken, O Israel,
 to the laws and regulations
 that I am speaking in your ears today!
 You are to learn them,
 you are to take-care to observe them!
 YHWH our God cut with us a covenant at Horev.
 Not with our fathers did YHWH cut this covenant,
 but with us, yes, us here today,
 all of us alive!
 Face to face did YHWH speak with you on the mountain,
 from the midst of the fire
 saying:

1. I am YHWH your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of a house of slaves. You are not to have other gods beside my presence.

To love and obey God and to bring others to know him.

2. You are not to make yourself a carved-image of any form that is in the heavens above, that is on the earth beneath, that is in the waters beneath the earth. You are not to prostrate yourselves to them, you are not to serve them, for I, YHWH your God, am a jealous God, calling-to-account the iniquity of the fathers upon the sons to the third and to the fourth generation of those that hate me, but showing loyalty to thousands of those that love me, of those that keep my commandments.

To put nothing in the place of God

3. You are not to take up the name of YHWH your God for emptiness, for YHWH will not clear him that takes up his name for emptiness!

To show God respect in thought, word, and deed.

4. Keep the day of Sabbath, by hallowing it, as YHWH your God has commanded you. For six days you are to serve and do all your work; but the seventh day is Sabbath for YHWH your God—you are not to do any work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your servant, nor your maid, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your animals, nor your sojourner that is in your gates—in order that your servant and your maid may rest as one-like-yourself. You

To set aside regular times for worship, prayer, and the study of God's ways.

are to bear-in-mind that slave you were in the land of Egypt, but YHWH your God took you out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm; therefore YHWH your God commands you to observe the day of Sabbath.

5. Honor your father and your mother, as YHWH your God has commanded you, in order that your days may be prolonged, and in order that it may go-well with you on the soil that YHWH your God is giving you.
6. You are not to murder!
7. You are not to adulter!
8. You are not to steal!
9. You are not to testify against your neighbor as a lying witness!
10. And you are not to desire the wife of your neighbor; you are not to crave the house of your neighbor, his field, or his servant, or his maid, his ox or his donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor!

The Five Books of Moses: The Schocken Bible, Volume I

To love, honor, and help our parents and family; to honor those in authority, and to meet their just demands.

To show respect for the life God has given us; to work and pray for peace; to bear no malice, prejudice or hatred in our hearts; and to be kind to all the creatures of God.

To use all our bodily desires as God intended.

To be honest and fair in our dealings; to seek justice, freedom, and the necessities of life for all people; to use our talents and possessions as ones who must answer for them to God.

To speak the truth, and not to mislead others by our silence.

To resist temptations to envy, greed, and jealousy; to rejoice in other people's gifts and graces; and to do our duty for the love of God, who has called us into fellowship with him.

The Book of Common Prayer, pp. 847-8.

THURSDAY AND FRIDAY:

Ten Commandments Self-Assessment

What follows is meant to be sort of fun, yet sort of challenging. Its purpose is to help you reflect privately, and in your small group, upon the Ten Commandments. These commandments are the heart of the Covenant offered by YHWH, a Covenant that the people of Israel freely embraced. The Covenant became the way the People were molded into YHWH's people.

In our society today we often hear calls for the public reading, posting, and legislation of the Ten Commandments. Yet, if you're a typical Christian person, you would likely have a tough time listing the Commandments off the top of your head. Several years ago, in nationwide pre-ordination exams, the average graduating Episcopal seminarian could only list seven!

You won't be asked to memorize them (though that would be a great thing for you to do!). But you do need to reflect upon this ancient foundation stone of our Faith. You do well to consider the character God is trying to shape in you by giving these commandments.

"I will be your God, and you will be my People" God says. What kind of people ought we to be?

Read carefully each of the Ten Commandments on the preceding pages. For each Commandment you are also given an interpretation found in the Outline of the Faith in the Prayer Book. For each Commandment give yourself a "grade" according to this scale:

A = You are perfect on this one. You have never broken this commandment. You've never even thought about breaking it.

B = You've never actually broken this commandment, but you've thought about it.

C = You've broken this commandment once or twice, or you think about breaking it alot. You're sorry for it.

D = You've broken this commandment more than a few times in your life. You feel some nagging guilt about it.

F = You do this on a fairly regular basis. You're not convinced it's really such a big deal.

Your Grades:

I.	II.	III.	IV.	V.
VI.	VII.	VIII.	IX.	X.

Your overall average:

In your small groups next time, be prepared to share what you feel comfortable sharing.

SATURDAY:

Re-read the Fourth Commandment in Exodus 20: 8-11, Deuteronomy 5: 12-15, and in the Outline of the Faith in the Prayer Book.

The commandment to observe the Sabbath is perhaps the most cherished part of the covenant for the Jewish people. Observant Jews do nothing that could be considered “work” from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday. For some, this includes not driving or using electricity. It is a day set aside only for worship, rest, study, and time with family or friends. Though it may seem extreme to us, Jews will speak in rapturous tones about how wonderful a true observance of Shabbos can be.

Give it a try. Spend this day in complete rest. Meditate. Read your Bible. Talk with your friends or family. Walk. Eat only leftovers. Hang up the phone, turn off the TV. Just be. See how it goes.

Then, on Saturday night (shabbos ends at sundown), consider this question: why does God command a Sabbath rest?

SMALL GROUP TIME: SESSION THREE

1. Share your reactions to tonight's talk.
2. Share together your "10 Commandments Self-Assessment"
3. Share your experience of Sabbath.

SESSION 4

JESUS: THE MAN FROM NAZARETH

JESUS: THE MAN FROM NAZARETH

Your journal work this week is to try to get a glimpse of Jesus, the man from Nazareth. To do that, we'll read of encounters Jesus had with typical people in his day and time. What follows are six vignettes from Jesus' life. Each day this coming week, read and reflect upon one of these vignettes. I've provided you with some questions for reflection, but don't feel limited to those. Write down your reflections, and be prepared to share some of your thoughts at our next meeting.

A note. I have provided you these stories out of different translations, according to the translation I like best (teacher's prerogative!). I've noted the translation I used. You might find it interesting to look at each story in your own Bible to see how it is similar and different.

Use these questions to enter each story:

1. What is Jesus like in this story? Stern? Funny? Playful? Angry? Sad? Happy?
2. How do you feel about Jesus in this story? Is he someone you would like to know, or someone you'd want to avoid?
3. What questions about Jesus does this story arouse in your mind?

MONDAY: Luke 4: 15-30 (New Revised Standard Version)

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'" And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

1. What is Jesus like in this story? Stern? Funny? Playful? Angry? Sad? Happy?
2. How do you feel about Jesus in this story? Is he someone you would like to know, or someone you'd want to avoid?
3. What questions about Jesus does this story arouse in your mind?

TUESDAY: Matthew 26: 6-13 (New International Version)

While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor." Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

1. What is Jesus like in this story? Stern? Funny? Playful? Angry? Sad? Happy?
2. How do you feel about Jesus in this story? Is he someone you would like to know, or someone you'd want to avoid?
3. What questions about Jesus does this story arouse in your mind?

WEDNESDAY: Mark 10: 17-27 (King James Version)

And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

1. What is Jesus like in this story? Stern? Funny? Playful? Angry? Sad? Happy?
2. How do you feel about Jesus in this story? Is he someone you would like to know, or someone you'd want to avoid?
3. What questions about Jesus does this story arouse in your mind?

THURSDAY: John 2: 1-11 (New Revised Standard Version)

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the cheaper wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

1. What is Jesus like in this story? Stern? Funny? Playful? Angry? Sad? Happy?
2. How do you feel about Jesus in this story? Is he someone you would like to know, or someone you'd want to avoid?
3. What questions about Jesus does this story arouse in your mind?

FRIDAY: John 2: 13-17 (New Revised Standard Version)

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

1. What is Jesus like in this story? Stern? Funny? Playful? Angry? Sad? Happy?
2. How do you feel about Jesus in this story? Is he someone you would like to know, or someone you'd want to avoid?
3. What questions about Jesus does this story arouse in your mind?

SATURDAY: Mark 5: 22-43 (New International Version)

Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." So Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" "You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'" But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher any more?" Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe." He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

1. What is Jesus like in this story? Stern? Funny? Playful? Angry? Sad? Happy?
2. How do you feel about Jesus in this story? Is he someone you would like to know, or someone you'd want to avoid?

3. What questions about Jesus does this story arouse in your mind?

SUNDAY:

Today, in church, you heard a Gospel reading. You hear a reading from the Gospels, the books of the Bible that tell the story of Jesus' ministry, every time you attend the Holy Eucharist. Write down here what you recall of today's Gospel story. Then use the same reflection questions you used with the other assigned passages.

1. What is Jesus like in this story? Stern? Funny? Playful? Angry? Sad? Happy?

2. How do you feel about Jesus in this story? Is he someone you would like to know, or someone you'd want to avoid?

3. What questions about Jesus does this story arouse in your mind?

SMALL GROUP TIME: SESSION FOUR

1. Complete this statement:

Right now, in my life Jesus is

2. Look back over the scripture passages you read this past week. Share with the group which passage most interested/bothered/delighted you. Share why it did.
3. Share one question aroused for you in the readings or in tonight's talk.

SESSION 5

JESUS: THE TEACHER

JESUS THE TEACHER

Thomas Jefferson, writer of the Declaration of Independence and third president of the United States, was not a particularly religious man. He distrusted much of the doctrine and dogma of Christianity. He expressed little but scorn for the “superstitions” he believed to have corrupted human history. He dismissed notions of Jesus’ supernatural powers, miracles, and divinity. He did, however, hold Jesus in extremely high regard as a teacher. Jefferson believed few teachers in history could match Jesus. Jefferson, in fact, cut up his own copy of the New Testament, leaving out miracles and keeping the many teachings Jesus offered. You can still see that cut and pasted book when you visit Monticello.

Over the centuries, many folks have had the same reaction to Jesus, particularly non-Christians. Whether one accepts him as the Son of God or not, it is hard to argue with the assertion that Jesus was perhaps the most influential teacher in history.

It has often been said that Jesus’ teachings have a way of “comforting the afflicted, and afflicting the comfortable.” Let’s see what his teachings do in us! Each day this coming week, you’re asked to reflect upon two of Jesus’ teachings. One will be a teaching that “comforts the afflicted,” and the other will be a teaching that “afflicts the comfortable.” For each story, use the three questions below to enter into the text. All of the passages are taken from the New International Version of the Bible.

1. How does this teaching make you feel?
2. Do you resemble anyone in this teaching?
3. Finish the teaching. What is the passage teaching YOU?

**BRING YOUR BIBLES WITH YOU SUNDAY
NIGHT!!!!**

MONDAY:

Comfort the Afflicted: Luke 18: 9-14

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Afflict the Comfortable: Matthew 25: 14-30

"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So

you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. "Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

TUESDAY:

Comfort the afflicted: Luke 15: 1-10

Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Afflict the comfortable: Luke 16: 19-31

"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not

also come to this place of torment.' "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' "'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

WEDNESDAY:

Comfort the afflicted: Mark 12: 28-34

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

Afflict the comfortable: Matthew 25: 31-46

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me

in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

THURSDAY:

Comfort the afflicted: Luke 14:15-24

Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.' "The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' "'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"

Afflict the comfortable: Matthew 20: 1-16

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. "About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. "He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' "'Because no one has hired us,' they answered. "He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.' "When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.' "The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 'These men who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the

burden of the work and the heat of the day.' "But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?' "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

FRIDAY:

Comfort the afflicted: Luke 12: 22-34

Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? "Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Afflict the comfortable: Matthew 5: 38-48

"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet

only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

SATURDAY:

**For today, here is one passage that both comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable:
Matthew 18: 21-35**

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

BRING YOUR BIBLE TOMORROW NIGHT!

SMALL GROUP TIME: SESSION FIVE

1. Complete this statement and share with the group:

The most memorable teacher I ever had was..... because.....

2. Review the Scripture passages you read this past week. Complete these two statements and share with the group:

Jesus' teaching that most comforted me was....., because.....

Jesus' teaching that most afflicted me was....., because.....

3. After meeting Jesus the man, and Jesus the teacher, how are you feeling about Jesus tonight?

SESSION 6

JESUS:

THE CHRIST

JESUS: THE CHRIST

In our next session, we move from experiencing Jesus the man and Jesus the teacher to considering the claims made about him by the Christian community ever since.

Jesus' earliest followers, who knew him personally, struggled to understand who and what he was. The power of his personality made him deeply attractive and deeply perplexing. Jesus was frustratingly vague in saying what he believed about himself. When his followers called him "son of God," or "messiah," he would frequently admonish them to keep it a secret.

Many people outside Jesus' circle considered him a mad man, a religious charlatan, and a sinner. Others wondered if he was a prophet after the manner of other Old Testament prophets. Jewish and Roman authorities believed him to be a dangerous rabble-rouser. In the end, he was captured and executed as a common criminal.

The story should have ended there but, of course, it did not. The earliest Christians began making audacious claims about Jesus. Later generations of Christians expanded upon those claims. Christians came to believe that Jesus was not merely a man, but God Almighty in human flesh: fully and completely God, fully and completely human.

Each day this week, you're asked to read and reflect upon one such claim. All biblical passages are from the New Revised Standard Version. The Friday and Saturday assignments are taken from the Book of Common Prayer..

MONDAY: John 1: 1-18 (6-8, 15 omitted)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God
All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.
In him was life, and the life was the light of all people.
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.
The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.
He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.
He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.
But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,
who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.
And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.
From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.
The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

1. What do you think this means?

2. What are your feelings about this passage?

3. How does this work with your own image of Jesus?

TUESDAY: Philippians 2: 5-11

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-- even death on a cross.
Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

1. What do you think this means?

2. What are your feelings about this passage?

3. How does this work with your own image of Jesus?

WEDNESDAY: Colossians 1: 11-23

May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers--all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him--provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven.

1. What do you think this means?

2. What are your feelings about this passage?

3. How does this work with your own image of Jesus?

THURSDAY: Hebrews 4:12 – 5:10

Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account. Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek." In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

1. What do you think this means?

1. What do you think this means?
2. What are your feelings about this passage?
3. How does this work with your own image of Jesus?

If interested, you might also want to read and reflect upon the second half of the Athanasian Creed, which you can find on page 864-5 of the Prayer Book.

SATURDAY: From the “Outline of the Faith,” Book of Common Prayer, pg. 849.

God the Son

Q. What do we mean when we say that Jesus is the only Son of God?

A. We mean that Jesus is the only perfect image of the Father, and shows us the nature of God.

Q. What is the nature of God revealed in Jesus?

A. God is love.

Q. What do we mean when we say that Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and became incarnate from the Virgin Mary?

A. We mean that by God’s own act, his divine Son received our human nature from the Virgin Mary, his mother.

Q. Why did he take our human nature?

A. The divine Son became human, so that in him human beings might be adopted as children of God, and be made heirs of God’s kingdom.

Q. What is the great importance of Jesus’ suffering and death?

A. By his obedience, even to suffering and death, Jesus made the offering which we could not make; in him we are freed from the power of sin and reconciled to God.

Q. What is the significance of Jesus’ resurrection?

A. By his resurrection, Jesus overcame death and opened for us the way of eternal life.

Q. What do we mean when we say that he descended to the dead?

A. We mean that he went to the departed and offered them also the benefits of redemption.

Q. What do we mean when we say that he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father?

A. We mean that Jesus took our human nature into heaven where he now reigns with the Father and intercedes for us.

Q. How can we share in his victory over sin, suffering, and death?

A. We share in his victory when we are baptized into the New Covenant and become living members of Christ.

1. What do you think this means?

2. What are your feelings about this material?

3. How does this work with your own image of Jesus?

SMALL GROUP TIME: SESSION SIX

Tonight, you heard about the two different kinds of “Christ Event.” Let’s reflect and share about each of those “events.”

1. The original “Christ Event” was Jesus’ resurrection. What does the resurrection of Jesus mean to you?

2. The second kind of “Christ Event” happens when an individual encounters the Risen Christ in his or her own life. Share with the group, if you feel comfortable, a time in your life when you experienced a “Christ Event?” If you don’t believe you’ve experienced a “Christ Event,” how does that make you feel?

3. After three weeks of “meeting” Jesus, who is he for you tonight?

SESSION 7

THE CHURCH: COMMUNITY OF THE NEW COVENANT

THE CHURCH: COMMUNITY OF THE NEW COVENANT

In our next session, we will reflect upon the community Jesus left behind: the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. In preparation for that session, spend some time exploring what that word, CHURCH, has meant to you in the past, and what it means to you now.

MONDAY:

Read and meditate upon these descriptions of the very earliest Christian Church. How are they similar to “church” as you have come to know it? How are they different?

Acts 2: 42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the

apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Acts 4: 31-35

When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness. Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

TUESDAY:

Draw a timeline of your childhood (birth to 12). Identify the times in your childhood when you were involved in a church or some kind of religious activity. Try to remember important events. Describe how you felt during these times.

WEDNESDAY:

Draw a timeline of your youth (13 to 21). Identify the times in your youth when you were involved in a church or some kind of religious activity. Try to remember important events. Describe how you felt during these times.

THURSDAY:

Draw a timeline of your adult years (22 and up). Identify the times you were involved in a church or some kind of religious activity. Try to remember important events. Describe how you felt during these times.

If you haven't had any adult years yet, interview one or both parents and draw a timeline of their adult life in the Church. What do you learn about the Church from them? What do you think your future "church timeline" will look like?

FRIDAY:

Imagine you have been asked, by someone totally un-churched, to write a brief description of what a “church” is. Help them see and feel what you see and feel when you hear the word “church.”

SATURDAY:

Write a “church wanted” ad. Imagine you are looking for a new Church and you have 100 words to describe what you’re looking for. Write it down here.

SMALL GROUP WORK

1. Share with your group some portion of your timelines. What was the most significant moment (good or bad) of your “church life?”
2. Each person share the “Church Wanted” ad you wrote.

HOLY WEEK

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

Over the last several weeks, we have raced through the Holy Scriptures. In the next seven days, the holiest season in the Christian year, we will relive the story we have heard. In the liturgies of Holy Week we hear and enact the most important stories of Holy Scripture. The whole story, in a sense, is spread before us this week. No other time in the church year is as full of visual and sensual images.

I hope you will do everything possible to attend liturgy every day during Holy Week. Pay close attention to the emotional movement of the liturgies. Use the journal questions I've suggested if you wish.

If you do Holy Week "right", you should arrive at Easter afternoon exhausted but elated.

PALM SUNDAY:

1. The liturgy began in one mood and ended in a totally different mood? How did that feel?
2. What was it like for you during the reading of the Passion play? What was it like to shout “Crucify him!”?

MONDAY:

This is the holiest week in the Christian calendar. Does Holy Week seem to change the day-to-day functioning of your world?

TUESDAY:

How are stores and businesses behaving this week? Notice any Holy Week sales? What do you think about this?

WEDNESDAY:

Did you see anything on TV today that mentioned Holy Week?
Optional: View the movie "The Passion of the Christ" Reaction?

MAUNDY THURSDAY:

The liturgy tonight was overflowing with images. How did each make you feel?

Footwashing:

Eucharist:

Stripping of the Altar:

Prayer Vigil:

GOOD FRIDAY:

Traditional observance of Good Friday includes a fast. Try it. Eat nothing solid all day. Drink juice if you must. Above all, tell no one you're doing it.

How is this day being observed in the surrounding world?

What was liturgy like for you today?

SATURDAY:

Jesus is dead. Find a graveyard. Sit in it. Think about being dead. You will be someday.

EASTER SUNDAY:

It's over, yet it's just begun. Does this Easter feel different than Easters past?

WHAT MOMENTS/EXPERIENCES/THOUGHTS STAND OUT FOR YOU FROM THIS PAST WEEK?

SESSION 8

LIFE AFTER JESUS: THE HOLY SPIRIT

LIFE AFTER JESUS: THE HOLY SPIRIT

In this week's session, we come to an important point in our time together. In your journal time during the first part of this week you will "meet" the Holy Spirit, the third and perhaps most intriguing member of the Holy Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

In the second half of the week, you will review the major clauses of the Apostles' Creed. With our session this week we come to the conclusion of our consideration of the beliefs of the Christian faith.

MONDAY:

Read these two passages from the Gospel of John. The first is Jesus' promise to send the Holy Spirit. The second is John's story of the gift of the Spirit to the disciples.

John 14: 12-27

Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me. "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

John 20: 19-23

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

REFLECTION: What/Who is the Holy Spirit for you?

TUESDAY:

Acts 2:1-13. The event of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit.

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia,

Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs--in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

REFLECTION: Have you ever had an experience like this?

WEDNESDAY - Here are two of Saint Paul's meditations upon the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8: 9-27

But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you. So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh--for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children,

then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ--if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

I Corinthians 13

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

REFLECTION: What does the Holy Spirit do in the Church? What does it do in our personal lives?

THURSDAY:

This is the description of the Holy Spirit from the "Outline of the Faith" in the Prayer Book

The Holy Spirit

Q. Who is the Holy Spirit?

A. The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity, God at work in the world and in the Church even now.

Q. How is the Holy Spirit revealed in the Old Covenant?

A. The Holy Spirit is revealed in the Old Covenant as the giver of life, the One who spoke

through the prophets.

Q. How is the Holy Spirit revealed in the New Covenant?

A. The Holy Spirit is revealed as the Lord who leads us into all truth and enables us to grow in the likeness of Christ.

Q. How do we recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

A. We recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit when we confess Jesus Christ as Lord and are brought into love and harmony with God, with ourselves, with our neighbors, and with all creation.

Q. How do we recognize the truths taught by the Holy Spirit?

A. We recognize truths to be taught by the Holy Spirit when they are in accord with the Scriptures.

Reflection Questions:

1. Review Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesdays reflections. For you, Who and What is the Holy Spirit?
2. Have you ever experienced the Holy Spirit? Describe the experience.

FRIDAY:

Now that you have “met” the Holy Spirit, you have now encountered the “Holy Trinity.” Today, Saturday, and Sunday, we will review the “believe” promises of the Baptismal Covenant. These questions are taken from the Apostles’ Creed. Each day, sit down and prayerfully read a few times the clause appointed.

Do you believe in God?

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

This is the first question of the Baptismal Covenant.

1. Write down your thoughts and feelings.
2. Write down any questions you have, or any doubts that bother you.
3. Do you feel like you can answer this question honestly?

SATURDAY:

This is the second question of the Baptismal Covenant. Sit down and prayerfully read it a few times.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

1. Write down your thoughts and feelings.
2. Write down any questions you have, or any doubts that bother you.
3. Do you feel like you can answer the question honestly?

SUNDAY:

This is the third question of the Baptismal Covenant. Sit and read it prayerfully a few times.

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

**the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.**

1. Write down your thoughts and feelings.
2. Write down any questions you have, or any doubts that bother you.
3. Do you feel like you can answer the question honestly?
4. Read the “Creed of Athanasius” on the following page.

The Doctrine of the Trinity

From the Creed of Saint Athanasius. Page 864 in the Prayer Book

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith.
Which Faith, except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish

everlastingly.
And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity,
neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance.
For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost.
But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one, the Glory
equal, the Majesty co-eternal.
Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost.
The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate.
The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost
incomprehensible.
The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal.
And yet they are not three eternal, but one eternal.
As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated, but one uncreated, and
one incomprehensible.
So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty.
And yet they are not three Almighties, but one Almighty.
So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God.
And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.
So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord.
And yet not three Lords, but one Lord.
For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by
himself to be both God and Lord,
So are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion, to say, There be three Gods, or three Lords.
The Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten.
The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten.
The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten,
but proceeding.
So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three
Holy Ghosts.
And in this Trinity none is afore, or after other; none is greater, or less than another;
But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together and co-equal.
So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be
worshipped.
He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.

CHOOSING A COMPANION/SPONSOR

We are now nearing the end of the “classroom” portion of *Journey to the Center*.
Beginning in June, we will stop meeting weekly. Instead, we will meet once every four weeks or
so. Between those gatherings you will be working with a spiritual “companion” as you reflect
further upon the commitments you will renew in November. This companion is simply a person

who will share with you in a process of conversation and prayer. You will have simple “projects” to complete with your companion that you will report upon at our meetings. At the end of the process, this person(s) will present you to the Bishop for your rite of reaffirmation.

There are three possible ways you can approach this:

1. If you have a godparent or godparents who live close enough to participate, these would be the ideal person(s).
2. If there is a particular Christian friend or person you admire, you may ask them. They need not be members of this parish or of the Episcopal Church.
3. Father Keith could suggest a member of the parish to you and, with your permission, he would take the initiative of asking this person and introducing you.

You need to make this decision this week. Please pray and think on this. Then, fill out the information below and return this page to me next week.

THE FIRST MEETING WITH COMPANIONS IS ON SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 12. MAKE SURE WHOMEVER YOU ASK TO BE YOUR COMPANION PUTS THIS ON THEIR CALENDAR.

COMPANIONS WILL BE FORMALLY COMMISSIONED INTO THIS MINISTRY ON PENTECOST SUNDAY, JUNE 12, AT WHICHEVER LITURGY YOU NORMALLY ATTEND.

Your name:

Name, address, and phone number of person(s) you would like to have as your companion:

If you would like Keith to find a companion for you, check here _____

SMALL GROUP WORK: SESSION EIGHT

1. Can you think of a recent moment when you were “in the Spirit?” Share it with the group.

2. After eight weeks of thinking about “beliefs,” how are you feeling about yours?

SESSION 9

LIFE IN COVENANT: SACRAMENTS

LIFE IN COVENANT: SACRAMENTS

MONDAY:

From the Outline of the Faith

The Sacraments

Q. What are the sacraments?

A. The sacraments are **outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace**, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace.

Q. What is grace?

A. Grace is God's favor towards us, unearned and undeserved; by grace God forgives our sins, enlightens our minds, stirs our hearts, and strengthens our wills.

Q. What are the two great sacraments of the Gospel?

A. The two great sacraments given by Christ to his Church are Holy Baptism and the Holy Eucharist.

Your journal work this week involves looking for some "sacraments" in your daily life. Each day, you are asked to find an object that is "sacramental" of something specific in your life. For example, a wedding ring is a sacrament of being married to someone. A specific piece of jewelry left by a grandmother could be sacramental of that relationship. A soccer ball or cleats could be sacramental of a love of soccer. The basic meaning of a "sacrament" is "**an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible**" reality.

For each of these "sacraments" write a few words explaining its meaning for you. Write clearly, so others might read what you write. Bring the objects with you to our next session for a "show-n-tell" time.

At the end of this section are the teachings about Sacraments from the Outline of the Faith. Spend a few minutes reading through this before you come to the next session.

TODAY: Find a "sacrament" of the most important relationship in your life.

TUESDAY: Find a "sacrament" of a great joy in your life.

WEDNESDAY: Find a “sacrament” of a great sorrow in your life.

THURSDAY: Find a “sacrament” with important religious significance for you.

FRIDAY:

From the “Outline of the Faith” in the Prayer Book

Holy Baptism

Q. What is Holy Baptism?

A. Holy Baptism is the sacrament by which God adopts us as his children and makes us members

of Christ's Body, the Church, and inheritors of the kingdom of God.

Q. What is the outward and visible sign in Baptism?

A. The outward and visible sign in Baptism is water, in which the person is baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Q. What is the inward and spiritual grace in Baptism?

A. The inward and spiritual grace in Baptism is union with Christ in his death and resurrection, birth into God's family the Church, forgiveness of sins, and new life in the Holy Spirit.

Q. What is required of us at Baptism?

A. It is required that we renounce Satan, repent of our sins, and accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

Q. Why then are infants baptized?

A. Infants are baptized so that they can share citizenship in the Covenant, membership in Christ, and redemption by God.

Q. How are the promises for infants made and carried out?

A. Promises are made for them by their parents and sponsors, who guarantee that the infants will be brought up within the Church, to know Christ and be able to follow him.

Reflection:

Describe what you remember about your own baptism. If you can't remember it, try to talk to someone who was there (parent, godparent, sibling, etc.). What did it mean to you then to be baptized? What does it mean to you now?

SATURDAY:

From the "Outline of the Faith" in the Prayer Book:

The Holy Eucharist

Q. What is the Holy Eucharist?

A. The Holy Eucharist is the sacrament commanded by Christ for the continual remembrance of

his life, death, and resurrection, until his coming again.

Q. Why is the Eucharist called a sacrifice?

A. Because the Eucharist, the Church's sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, is the way by which the sacrifice of Christ is made present, and in which he unites us to his one offering of himself.

Q. By what other names is this service known?

A. The Holy Eucharist is called the Lord's Supper, and Holy Communion; it is also known as the Divine Liturgy, the Mass, and the Great Offering.

Q. What is the outward and visible sign in the Eucharist?

A. The outward and visible sign in the Eucharist is bread and wine, given and received according to Christ's command.

Q. What is the inward and spiritual grace given in the Eucharist?

A. The inward and spiritual grace in the Holy Communion is the Body and Blood of Christ given to his people, and received by faith.

Q. What are the benefits which we receive in the Lord's Supper?

A. The benefits we receive are the forgiveness of our sins, the strengthening of our union with Christ and one another, and the foretaste of the heavenly banquet which is our nourishment in eternal life.

Q. What is required of us when we come to the Eucharist?

A. It is required that we should examine our lives, repent of our sins, and be in love and charity with all people.

Reflection:

Describe the first time you remember taking Communion. What did it mean to you then? What does it mean to you now?

The other five "sacramental acts" are on the next page. How have these sacraments affected you in the course of your life?

Other Sacramental Rites

Q. What other sacramental rites evolved in the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

A. Other sacramental rites which evolved in the Church include confirmation, ordination, holy matrimony, reconciliation of a penitent, and unction.

Q. How do they differ from the two sacraments of the Gospel?

A. Although they are means of grace, they are not necessary for all persons in the same way that Baptism and the Eucharist are.

Q. What is **Confirmation**?

A. Confirmation is the rite in which we express a mature commitment to Christ, and receive strength from the Holy Spirit through prayer and the laying on of hands by a bishop.

Q. What is required of those to be confirmed?

A. It is required of those to be confirmed that they have been baptized, are sufficiently instructed in the Christian Faith, are penitent for their sins, and are ready to affirm their confession of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Q. What is **Ordination**?

A. Ordination is the rite in which God gives authority and the grace of the Holy Spirit to those being made bishops, priests, and deacons, through prayer and the laying on of hands by bishops.

Q. What is **Holy Matrimony**?

A. Holy Matrimony is Christian marriage, in which the woman and man enter into a life-long union, make their vows before God and the Church, and receive the grace and blessing of God to help them fulfill their vows.

Q. What is **Reconciliation of a Penitent**?

A. Reconciliation of a Penitent, or Penance, is the rite in which those who repent of their sins may confess them to God in the presence of a priest, and receive the assurance of pardon and the grace of absolution.

Q. What is **Unction of the Sick**?

A. Unction is the rite of anointing the sick with oil, or the laying on of hands, by which God's grace is given for the healing of spirit, mind, and body.

Q. Is God's activity limited to these rites?

A. God does not limit himself to these rites; they are patterns of countless ways by which God uses material things to reach out to us.

Q. How are the sacraments related to our Christian hope?

A. Sacraments sustain our present hope and anticipate its future fulfillment

SMALL GROUP WORK FOR SESSION NINE

1. Each person share one of the "sacraments" you brought with you.

2. Share your responses to tonight's talk.

3. What questions remain for you regarding THE Sacraments?

SESSION TEN

LIFE IN COVENANT: PRAYER

LIFE IN COVENANT: PRAYER

After nine weeks of heavy lifting in your journals, this week's activity should be more fun. Your journal work this week is a "scavenger hunt" through the Book of Common Prayer. Each day you are given a question, the answer for which will be found in some of the less traveled parts of your Prayer Book. For some of the questions there is also a further bit of reflection for you to do. You are encouraged to work together, or with family members, on this project. Your best first step for each question is to scan carefully the Table of Contents.

On the next page is a set of hints, but try not to use them!

Monday: Where could you find an "official" church teaching on Prayer and Worship. Find it, read it, and comment upon it.

Tuesday: A very important question is asked in the service of Baptism. A variation of this question is asked in each of these other services: confirmation, matrimony, ordination (all three), and celebration of a new ministry. What is the question? What is its significance?

Wednesday: What will the Gospel reading for the coming Sunday be? What is important about this part of the Prayer Book?

Thursday: What is a "Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral 1886, 1888?" How might this part of the prayer book be helpful to you?

Friday: What is the "Daily Office?" What could you do with it?

Saturday: You, as a layperson, may administer three of the seven sacraments. Which ones, and under what circumstances?

Sunday: Find a prayer in the prayer book that would be appropriate in time of a drought.

HINTS: IF YOU NEED THEM!

Monday: Outline of the Faith

Tuesday: The question is asked of the congregation

Wednesday: This past Sunday the was the 3rd Sunday of Easter

Thursday: You'll like this section if you like studying history.

Friday: Morning, noon, and evening

Saturday: The seven are: Eucharist, Baptism, Reconciliation of a Penitent, Healing, Matrimony, Confirmation, and Ordination.

Sunday: Look for "Prayers and Thanksgivings" in the Table of Contents

SMALL GROUP WORK FOR SESSION TEN

1. Each person share how prayer happens in your life right now.

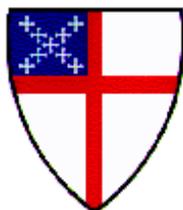
2. Review together the “Prayer Book Scavenger Hunt”

SESSION ELEVEN

LIFE IN COVENANT: PROCLAMATION

LIFE IN THE COVENANT: PROCLAMATION

This week, your journal work is simple. It is also probably the most challenging work you will have done in this course. Each person in the group will be given a small lapel pin which is the shield of the Episcopal Church. Your mission, if you are bold enough to accept it, is to wear that pin visibly every day this week. Each day record some of the reactions, or non-reactions, to that symbol by people in your daily life. More importantly, record YOUR OWN feelings about the reactions of others.



Shield of the Episcopal Church

This shield was adopted in 1940 as the symbol for the Episcopal Church USA. The shield brings together some of the Episcopal Church USA's history, offering a brief history lesson through its design.

The Episcopal Church was founded in 1789 as a separate group from its parent Church of England, from which the churches in the colonies found themselves divided by the American Revolution. The red white and blue colors are the colors of the American flag. Many of the founders of this nation, including George Washington, were Episcopalians.

The white field with a red cross is St. George's Cross, the patron saint of the Church of England. This remembers the Episcopal Churches roots in the Church of England.

There are nine miniature crosses on the field of blue symbolizing the nine dioceses that met in Philadelphia in 1789 to ratify the initial constitution of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. The crosslets are formed after the St. Andrews Cross. St. Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland. This remembers the Scottish Episcopal Churches part in our history as it was their bishops who ordained Samuel Seabury as the first American Bishop in 1784.

The Episcopal Church today remains a part of the Anglican Communion, the name for all those churches around the world which trace their origin to the Church of England. As such, Saint Peter's is part of a worldwide denomination with more than 72 million members.

SMALL GROUP WORK FOR SESSION ELEVEN

1. Each person share something about what it was like to wear the Episcopal shield pin this past week. Any interesting experiences?

2. Each person share the story of an “evangelist” in your own life.

SESSION TWELVE

LIFE IN COVENANT: VOCATION

LIFE IN COVENANT: VOCATION

Most people think that “religion” is about behavior. If you do enough good things and you avoid doing too many “bad” things, you get your seat in heaven. In fact, the great religions are, first and foremost, frameworks for understanding all of reality. From these frameworks of understanding we then construct manners of living holy lives.

Christians understand Creation through the framework of God’s actions in history, and especially in the life, teachings, ministry of Jesus. Christians also seek the continuing guidance of God through the Holy Spirit who leads us as individuals and as the Church. In all this, God is inviting us, leading us, and forming us to take our part in healing God’s good creation. Our Baptismal Covenant begins with this belief framework, then concludes with life commitments that grow out of the beliefs. We call these life commitments our VOCATION.

For Episcopalians, our vocational and moral understandings can be summed up in the three last questions of the baptismal covenant. Those questions are:

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and whenever you fall into sin, will you repent and return to the Lord?

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

In your journals for this, our final week together, you are asked to reflect upon what these questions mean for your own life.

MONDAY:

Read this passage from the Gospel of John (13:1-15). Then, carefully read through the local section of today's newspaper. Can you find an example of the kind of behavior Jesus commands in today's local news?

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord--and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

TUESDAY:

Read this scripture passage from the Gospel of Matthew (20: 20-28). Then read the front page of today's newspaper. How might Jesus' teaching confront an exercise of political or economic power that you find in today's news?

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favor of him. And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom." But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said to him, "We are able." He said to them, "You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." When the ten heard it, they were angry with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

WEDNESDAY:

Spend a short period of time in prayer. Read prayerfully the questions of the baptismal covenant.

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and whenever you fall into sin, will you repent and return to the Lord?

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

Ask of God: If I make these three promises to you, how will I be a sexual person?

THURSDAY:

Spend a short period of time in prayer. Read the questions of the baptismal covenant.

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and whenever you fall into sin, will you repent and return to the Lord?

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

Ask of God: If I make these promises to you how will I make decisions about money?

FRIDAY:

Spend a short period of time in prayer. Read the questions of the baptismal covenant.

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and whenever you fall into sin, will you repent and return to the Lord?

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

Ask of God: How will my promises to you affect the way I vote?

SATURDAY:

Spend a short period of time in prayer. Read the questions of the baptismal covenant.

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and whenever you fall into sin, will you repent and return to the Lord?

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

Think of a moral/ethical/political question or issue that is important to you. With these questions in mind, what do you consider to be the “Christian” answer?

SMALL GROUP WORK FOR SESSION TWELVE

1. Each person share something from one of your journal reflections this past week.
2. Take your final exam together. So, how'd you do?

**GOING OUT
TWO BY TWO
WORK WITH SPONSORS**

JOURNEY TO THE CENTER

Going out two by two

The “classroom” part of our time together is now over. For the next several months, our task is to do some work in the “laboratory” of the Christian faith. The “lab” is your life! The work you will be doing in the lab has two basic elements: first, looking for God’s hand at work in the world, and second, representing Christ to the world.

Over the next few months be on the lookout for events and people through which God quietly speaks and acts. Keep your eyes and ears open, in the news, in music, in nature, on Facebook, Twitter, and You Tube, so that you might now and then witness the ways God’s love breaks in among us.

Over the next few months, think about how YOU might be God’s partner in the world. As we’ve heard over and over again during the course, God hopes for us each to be a partner in renewing creation. This is the whole point of being in COVENANT with God. How you and I do that is called our “vocation.” Some people have a vocation to the ordained ministry, but the vast majority do not. Some have a vocation to marriage and parenthood, but many do not. We all have to do something for a living, but is it possible to do that AND to serve God’s world at the same time? These are all questions of vocation.

As you continue your journey, a companion will accompany you. When Jesus sent the apostles out, he sent them out in twos. Christians have repeated that pattern through the centuries in the wisdom that we work and think better when we are in community with others. Your companion/sponsor is meant simply to accompany you, to share his/her story with you, and even to learn from you. He/she will pray for you regularly. They are here simply to provide spiritual friendship.

I ask that each companion/candidate pair schedule at least one get-together each month between now and January. Those get-togethers can be to accomplish the tasks below, or share a meal, or take a walk. The point is to get together and talk about how God is, or perhaps isn’t, moving in your life.

Below is our meeting schedule for the remainder of the course. The accompanying pages explain in more detail the “projects” you will do with your companion. As in the first part of **Journey**, you are encouraged to keep a journal of your thoughts and experiences. It is these thoughts and experiences that we will all share together when we gather.

Sunday evening, June 12, 6:45 p.m.

Our first gathering with the companion/sponsors. Bring your “Journey” journals!

Sunday evening, July 31, 6:45 p.m.

Before this meeting you should view and discuss together two movies. The first, which we will all watch, is *Romero*. The second is any movie of your choice (theaters or video).

Sunday evening, August 28, 6:45 p.m.

Sometime this summer, you should attend together a worship service in a non-Episcopal congregation. The further you go from Episcopal the better. It would be great if you attended a non-Christian service.

Sunday evening, September 25, 6:45 p.m

Before this meeting, you should visit together a significant servant outreach ministry in the area. Ideally, you will have worked in that ministry somehow. Fr. Keith can give you ideas of ministries to visit.

Sunday evening, October 29, 6:45 p.m.

Sometime between June and November, you should attend together and observe a parish Vestry meeting. Vestry meetings will occur on: June 20, September 19, October 17 (all Monday nights at 6:45 p.m.). Please call Leslie Hannan, Parish Administrator, to let her know you are coming.

Gathering with Bishop Hollingsworth

A final time of reflection and sharing with Bishop Mark Hollingsworth

Liturgy of Reaffirmation

Saturday, November 12, 10:00 a.m. – Rehearsal for next day

Sunday, November 13, 10:00 service

In between all these meetings, in addition to your “projects,” candidates and companions are strongly encouraged to meet and talk. The main topic of conversation: “how have you seen God at work in the world and your life lately?”

ENCOUNTERING GOD

At the Movies

Preparation for July 31 meeting

The arts are an incredible place of encounter with God. Music, painting, sculpture, and literature literally burst with religious images. Artists ask the same questions that we have been asking in **Journey**. Some of the greatest theology ever done has been done by artists.

We are fortunate to live in an incredible epoch in art history. Film, a medium that barely existed a century ago, is now not only a vibrant art form, but a huge industry as well. The same is true of video. In the last few years we have arrived at a point where virtually all the art ever created can now be accessed with a few clicks of a mouse, or taps of a finger. It is overwhelming how much is available to us.

Of course, as with all art, a pretty large proportion of what's available is junk. There are, however, jewels to be found. There is great theology to be found in film. Some of it is overt, where film makers deliberately tell religious stories (De Mille's *The Ten Commandments*). Some of it is covert, where film makers deal with religious themes without being obviously religious (*The Spitfire Grill*, *Star Wars*). And many, many films take a critical stance towards religion (*Jesus of Montreal*, *The Missionary*).

For this "project," you are asked to view together two films. The first is *Romero*, the true story of a controversial modern Christian, Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador. I have one tape and one DVD copy available. Some local libraries have it. It is available on Netflix as a DVD, but not instant view.

The second movie is any one you together choose. Below is a list of possibilities for you to consider, but anything currently playing in the theaters is appropriate too. The film you choose need not be overtly "religious." On the next page are some reflection questions to use in thinking about the films you view.

Some Suggestions:

Dead Man Walking (drama)	Babette's Feast (drama)
Oh God (comedy)*	Agnes of God (mystery)
The Mission (drama)*	Mass Appeal (comedy)
Witness (mystery/romance)*	The Missionary (comedy)
Jesus Christ Superstar (musical)*	Grand Canyon (drama)
The Spitfire Grill (drama)	Contact (drama)*
The Last Temptation of Christ (drama)	The Apostle (drama)
Jesus of Montreal (drama)	Star Wars (adventure)*
Chocolat (drama/comedy)	The Passion of the Christ (drama)
The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe (fantasy)	The DaVinci Code (mystery)

The Secret of the Cave (fantasy/scary)*

*Might be more enjoyable for teens

REFLECTING ON FILMS

Romero

This is a true story. As part of the re-affirmation liturgy, you will “reaffirm your renunciation of evil” and “reaffirm your commitment to Jesus Christ.” Making these promises is not likely to place us in serious danger. Some Christians, however, pay a dear price for their commitment to Christ. Persecution is a reality for some Christians in the world today, and a possibility for us all.

Oscar Romero was the reluctant Archbishop of El Salvador from 1977 until his death in 1980. This film about him is largely true to his story, though artistic liberties have been taken. This is a disturbing film.

As you watch the film, consider what it truly means to renounce evil and be committed to Christ. Ask yourself: would I do this? Discuss together your reactions to the film, and what such a story means for you as a Christian.

Reflecting upon other films

1. What religious themes do you sense at work in this film? Is it obviously religious, or is it dealing with religious questions indirectly?
2. Is the film critical of religious faith? Of Christianity and Christians? How do you respond to the criticism?
3. What do you think is the image of God in this film?

4. Does this film build you up in your faith, or does it threaten your faith? Talk about that.

ENCOUNTERING GOD
Somewhere other than my Church
Preparation for August 28 meeting

Your project is to attend together a service of worship in a tradition apart from the Episcopal Church. The further afield you get from what is familiar to you, the better! If you can, try something non-Christian.

Prior to attending the service, attempt to contact the leader of the group. Request some time before or after the service to ask questions. Try to find out what makes this particular religious movement “tick.”

Use these questions to enter into and reflect upon your experience of worship.

1. How did this service make you feel? Positive impressions? Negative impressions?
2. What words or actions seemed similar to what you are familiar with at Saint Peter’s?
3. What were some significant differences from what is familiar at St. Peter’s?
4. Is there anything you want to bring back to St. Peter’s? Any practices or programs we could use?
5. Did you speak with the community leader? What did you learn about this group?

6. What kind of image of God did you leave with? Angry? Loving? Remote? Fun? ???

ENCOUNTERING GOD

In ministry to the poor, the sick, the outcast

Preparation for September 25 meeting

For this “project” you are asked to visit a social ministry program. Hopefully, you will be able to do some “hands-on” participation in the work being done. The idea is for you to explore how other people of faith put their faith into action.

Simply record answers to the following questions, talk about the ministry together, and be ready to report at our next meeting.

Name of the Ministry:

What does the ministry do?

Who does the ministry serve? How do they feel about it?

How is the ministry financed?

Who works in the ministry? How do they feel about it?

What are your feelings and thoughts about it?

How does this ministry embody the teachings of Christ?

ENCOUNTERING GOD
In, of all places, a business meeting
Preparation for October 29 meeting

For this reflection, you and your companion will attend together a normal business meeting of the Parish Vestry. You are invited to participate in discussion and ask questions.

You will hear a great deal of talk about money, bricks and mortar, money, gripes and complaints, and of course, money. For many people, this kind of stuff seems a long way from the teacher of Nazareth.

This kind of work, however, is so important to the life of Christ. It is where our high ideals come face to face with concrete realities. It is the place where we learn the sometimes hard lessons of what it means to live in authentic community, to be a people who love one another as Christ loves us.

Come with an open mind. Prepare yourself not to be overwhelmed by excitement! But be alert. For God does indeed quietly lurk in, beneath, and throughout our Vestry proceedings. If you pay close enough attention, you will catch a glimpse.

Write down your impressions of the meeting, and schedule a time with your companion when the two of you can talk about what you experienced.

