

## Christian Believer

United Methodist Church of the Resurrection

### LESSON 16: The Reach Toward God

#### OPENING WORDS SAID AND SUNG:

*Without faith it is impossible to approach God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*

-----*Hebrews 11:6*

How can we pray for one another?

#### PRAYER

Hold hands and pray silently for those we have discussed and for their needs to be met and fulfilled by God.

**SONG:** *Awesome God* by Rich Mullins, sung by Michael W. Smith

Our God is an awesome God; He reigns from Heaven above  
With wisdom, power, and love; Our God is an awesome God  
Our God is an awesome God; He reigns from Heaven above  
With wisdom, power and love, Our God is an awesome God.

#### VIDEO

Presenter: Young Ho Chun, Professor of Systematic Theology, St. Paul School of Theology

Listen for

- Ways of comparing the faith relationship with other human experiences
- The role of love in faith
- Faith explained as *act* and as *content*
- Mystery, fear, and doubt in faith
- Faith's need of life in the community

How are *act* of faith and *content* of faith related? How do you understand mystery, fear and doubt as part of faith? What is the result of faith nurtured in the community?

#### CONTENT OF FAITH:

Nothing is so common as faith, and few things are more mysterious. We exercise faith everyday in our daily lives. We have faith that flipping a light switch will produce light; we even continue to flip light switches even when the power is off! What other areas of daily life require some form of faith?

**Discuss faith at its most profound level – faith in God – in the following stories. What do you find most remarkable?**

- Cain and Abel offering sacrifices to the Lord
- Abraham leaving his home land
- Moses’ mother protecting her baby son
- Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego facing the fiery furnace

**If it is true that faith is as faith does, and that faith shows itself by our actions, then how are faith and works so different? Read Galatians 4:18-25. How does Paul answer this question?**

**If faith is so important, how do we get it, and keep it, and make it still stronger? Read Philippians 4:8.** Consider the computer world saying, “garbage in, garbage out.” How might we apply the Scripture and/or this saying to worldly encounters with untruths, injustice, impure actions or thoughts, and questionable experiences? How does this affect our ability to keep our faith intact?

**Are we judgmental if we say faith must be placed in Jesus Christ? Read Romans 3:23-24. How would you explain this to someone who is struggling with this question?**

**LANGUAGE OF FAITH:**

Review **Readings 173-183.** Compile a list of words or phrases used by the theologians to explain faith.

*Faith is.....*

A gift of grace

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Which phrase comes closest to describing your understanding of faith and why?

**FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS:**

A large percentage of professing Christians would define a Christian as “someone who believes in God” and do not understand that Jesus Christ becomes the issue in any discussion of Christian faith. Dallas Willard said, “Some people are Christian in name only. A Christian is a disciple...always learning about faith.” What books, sermons or habits have nourished your faith? What people? What are some hindrances that keep you from growing in faith?

**BELIEVING AND LIVING:**

Because we the church believe faith is essential to our salvation and to godly living, I will pursue faith in all of my thinking, speaking, and doing.

**CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER**

**Dear Lord Jesus: Thank you for the gift of eternal life. Thank you for teaching us of God’s love and the gift of faith which is ours only for the asking. Thank you for the leaders in this church who nourish and feed us spiritually. Thank you for the opportunity to gather together and to read your Word which feeds our souls. Give us the courage, strength and knowledge to make wise choices in our daily lives; to live lives through which your love shines and is seen by those we meet every day. In your name we pray. Amen.**

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**LESSON 17: God With Us**

**OPENING WORDS**

*Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.”  
-----Psalm 51:11*

**How can we pray for one another?**

**WORDS SAID AND SUNG**

Jesus said, “*I will ask the Father and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever---the Spirit of truth*” (John 14:15-16). The Holy Spirit is described as “wind” and “breath”. Listen prayerfully to the words of *Breathe* by Marie Barnett with bowed heads and hearts open to hear the Spirit speak:

This is the air I breathe / This is the air I breathe / Your holy presence living in me  
This is my daily bread / This is my daily bread / Your very word spoken to me

And I / I’m desparate for you/ and I / I’m lost with out you.

**VIDEO**

Presenter: Gordon D. Fee, Professor of New Testament Studies and Dean of Faculty, Regent College, British Columbia, Canada

Listen for

- the close connection between the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the doctrine of the Trinity
- The role of the Holy Spirit in salvation
- Early Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit as God and as personal
- The Holy Spirit as Spirit of God and Spirit of Christ
- New Testament use of Old Testament imagery for the Spirit’s presence in church and believer

**CONTENT OF FAITH:**

- Review Old Testament Scripture for this week: Describe your sense of the ministry of the Spirit. What effect does the Spirit have? What connection do you see between the Spirit and anointing?
  
- Review New Testament Scripture for this week: Describe your sense of the ministry of the Spirit. In what ways is there evidence the Holy Spirit has begun a broader, more inclusive work? What is your understanding of the relationship of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit?
- Review the Readings for this week: what statements or ideas in the readings did you find particularly meaningful or helpful? In what ways did a particular reading clarify the relationship of Christ and the Holy Spirit for you?

**LANGUAGE OF FAITH:**

The dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit that arises out of John's account of the baptism of Jesus (John 1:32). The flame is a symbol of Holy Spirit's power and illumination. Divided tongues of fire represent the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost according to the promise of Christ (Acts 1:8). The Methodist symbol is a cross with divided flame. How would you interpret this symbol?

St. Patrick used the common shamrock to teach his people of the mystery of the Trinity. How would you use this symbol to explain the Trinity?

**FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS:**

Refer to the Study Manual, page 173. Discuss the relationship of conscience and the Holy Spirit. Why is the Christian teaching on the Holy Spirit important to the church? To believers? To the world?

**BELIEVING AND LIVING:**

Because we the church believe God is present with us in the Holy Spirit, I will live with a sense of the wondrous nearness of God.

**CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER**

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**LESSON 18: Power to Live and to Serve**

## OPENING WORDS

*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses.*  
-----Acts 1:8

## How can we pray for one another?

## WORDS SAID AND SUNG

*Holy, Holy, Holy* sung by Paul Baloche. Let us sing this adoration and praise as our prayer.

## VIDEO

Presenter: Gordon D. Fee, Professor of New Testament Studies and Dean of Faculty, Regent College, British Columbia, Canada

Listen for

- Luke's view of the Spirit
- Importance of the day of Pentecost for the church
- Paul's teaching on the Spirit as God present in power
- Believers described as "people of the Spirit"
- The Spirit as key to true Christianity

Why is the day of Pentecost still crucial to the life and work of the church?

## CONTENT OF FAITH:

### Power to Live and Serve

The Scriptures present a kind of sequence in introducing the power of the Spirit:

- Jesus explains this Spirit
- Jesus promises the Spirit
- Waiting for Spirit power
- Coming of Spirit power
- Results of Spirit power

In what ways were the disciples so unequipped for the task assigned to them? (What clues do you find in **Acts 1:6 and Reading 198**)

In what ways did the Spirit enable the disciples to do miraculous things? (**Acts 2 and Reading 197**)

In what ways did the Disciples achieve success beyond human imagination? (**Acts 2:41; 46-47; 4:1-10; 4:12; Reading 195**)

The Study Manual on page 181 says, "*We can acknowledge something intellectually, recognizing its logic, yet have no real moral compulsion to change. We need some persuasion beyond logic if we are to*

*act upon the rightness we know. This compelling persuasion is the work of the Holy Spirit.”* How do you respond to this statement? How have you experienced this truth in your own life? How have you seen it working in other lives?

### **Fruits and Gifts**

**Fruits of the Spirit** (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control) are often held up as the essence of godly or Christlike living. In what ways have you experienced the Fruits of the Spirit in your own life?

**Gifts of the Spirit** are seen in acts of public ministry (wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, working miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues – **1 Corinthians 12-14**). **Review Readings 191, 192 and 196.** What gifts of the Spirit have you seen in operation? In what ways do these gifts work toward the *building up* of the church?

Read **Romans 12:4-8**. As a member of the body of Christ, what is your function as you understand it? In what ways are you serving in that function?

### **LANGUAGE OF FAITH:**

Turn to page 150-51 in the Readings Book. “The flame is a symbol of power and illumination.” Divided tongues represent the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Review the list of works on page 176 of the Study Manual: which of these phrases most closely describes the Holy Spirit for you? Why?

### **FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS:**

Share examples of where and how you see the Holy Spirit at work for the sake of the gospel in your church, community, city, state, country?

How would the church community be different if we did not have the teaching of the Holy Spirit?

### **BELIEVING AND LIVING:**

Because we the church believe the Holy Spirit gives power to live and to serve, I will expect and be open to the power of the Holy Spirit in my daily living.

### **CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER**

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**LESSON 19: The Mystery and Message of the Trinity**

**OPENING WORDS**

*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in  
the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
-----Matthew 28:19*

**How can we pray for one another?**

**WORDS SAID AND SUNG**

*Great Is The Lord by the Maranatha Singers*

For as high as the heavens are above the earth / So great is His mercy to me  
And as far as the east is from the west / So far are my sins from me  
Great is the Lord / His mercy endures forever, forever  
Great is the Lord / His mercy endures forever, forever.

**VIDEO**

Presenter: Paul J. DeHart, Assistant Professor of Theology, Vanderbilt University

Listen for

- The roots of the Trinity in the church's confession of Jesus Christ as God's Son
- The two fold character of Jesus Christ's oneness with God
- The church experience of the Spirit
- The unity and distinction that characterized the relationship of the Father, Son, and Spirit
- The Trinity as a way of reading the Bible as a single narrative of God's saving presence
- Points to consider in understanding the Trinity

How are we to understand the Trinitarian names, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

**CONTENT OF FAITH:**

**Use of the Trinitarian language:** What witness or declaration is made in the following Scriptures about the Trinity:

**Genesis 1:26-31; John 14; Romans 1:1-7**

**Defining the Trinity:** In what ways do the following theories or philosophies from the Readings help you understand the concept of the Trinity? What would you use to explain the Trinity to an inquiring person?

**Reading 200:** *“Every operation has origin in the Father, proceeds through the Son, perfected by the Spirit....”* Gregory of Nyssa

**Reading 201:** “...there are not three Gods, or three good, or three almighty, but one God, good, almighty---the Trinity itself.” Augustine

**Reading 204:** “...Father Who is the highest equity....Holy Spirit who is the kindler of the hearts of the faithful....and Son who is the fullness of virtue.....are inseparable in the majesty of the Divinity.” Hildegard of Bingen

**Reading 206:** “In the Father we have our protection and our bliss....in the second person, in wisdom and knowledge we have our perfection....the Holy Spirit we have our reward and our gift for our living and labour.....for first is nature, the second is mercy, and the third is grace.” Julian of Norwich

**Reading 210:** “the Trinity is one....the divine persons are really distinct from one another....the divine persons are relative to one another...” Catechism of the Catholic Church

### **The “Mystery” of the Trinity**

Reading 203 by Anselm discusses the danger of analyzing to the point of losing the wonder. What points does Anselm make in this reading?

In what ways has the Trinity become for you a “mystery” that inspires reverence and aids worship?

### **Trinity and Community**

Reading 205 by Richard of St. Victor says that “*sharing love cannot exist except among less than three persons.*” What does he mean by this statement?

What does the Trinity teach us about community and relationships?

### **LANGUAGE OF FAITH**

Review the list of words representing the Trinity on page 186 of the Study Manual. Which phrases or words has the most meaning for you? Why?

What difference does the message of the Trinity make?

What other teachings relate to or depend on the doctrine of the Trinity?

### **FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS**

In **Reading 208**, Christopher Mwoleka writes, “I think we have problems in understanding the Holy Trinity because we approach the mystery from the wrong side. The intellectual side is not the best side to

start with. We try to get hold of the wrong end of the stick and it never works. The right approach to the mystery is to *imitate* the Trinity.....”

What does this statement mean to you?

What about the doctrine of the Trinity troubles you? What blesses you?

**BECAUSE WE THE CHURCH BELIEVE** that one God is revealed in three Persons, I pray that the Trinity will be more fully at work in, and glorified by, my life.

### **CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER**

Read together the prayer by Julian of Norwich on page 195 of the Study Manual.

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**LESSON 20: God's Called-Out People**

**OPENING WORDS**

*I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you;  
I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations.”*  
-----Isaiah 42:6

**How can we pray for one another?**

**WORDS SAID AND SUNG**

*I Want To Be Where You Are* by Don Moen

I just want to be where you are / Dwelling daily in Your presence  
I don't want to worship from afar / Draw me near to where You  
I just want to be where You are / In your dwelling place forever  
Take me to the place where you are / I just want to be with You  
I want to be where You are / Dwelling in your presence  
Feasting at Your table / Surrounded by Your glory  
In your presence / That's where I always want to be  
I just want to be / I just want to be with You  
I just want to be where you are / Dwelling daily in Your presence  
I don't want to worship from afar / Draw me near to where You are (Chorus)  
O my God you are my strength and my song  
And when I'm in Your presence / Though I'm weak, Your're always strong

**VIDEO**

Presenter: William H. Willimon, Dean of the Chapel and Professor of Christian Ministry, Duke University.

Listen for

- The church as a form of the Jewish Synagogue
- The church as “called” and “called out”
- The church as a holy nation of priests
- The church as “in the world” but not “of the world”
- Why God has called the church

What does God call us out *from*? What does God call us out *for*? How can the church be *in the world* but *not of the world*?

**CONTENT OF FAITH:**

Review this week's assigned **Scripture passages** and discuss the following:

- What is said about holiness as a requirement of the faithful community?
- What elements of worship are represented?
- What does Matthew mean by reporting that Peter is the Rock upon which the church is built?
- Including the Gentiles within the church communities was a theological problem for the Jewish Christians. In what ways do we, the church, still struggle with inclusion of “others” today?

Review the **Readings** and discuss the following:

- The notion of *ekklesia*, called out from the world by God, is central to this lesson. Which Reading clarified this concept for you?
- In Reading 214, how is the “church” defined?
- In Reading 216, Richard Niebuhr discusses the *purpose of the church*. What points does he make? Do you agree? Why or why not?
- In what ways does Reading 221 define the community of faith as a people “called out”?

### LANGUAGE OF FAITH

List words which describe your understanding of the community of faith; the church as a “called out people.” Compare your list with the list on page 196 of the Study Manual. Discuss what distinguishes the church that takes seriously its role as a set-apart people in today’s culture?

Review the meaning of the wheat stalk as a symbol of the church and its members.

### FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS

- Why does the church teach that I can’t be a Christian all by myself? Do you agree?
- How does belonging to a group of believers help a person in believing?
- Do you feel most church members think of themselves as being called to a special purpose? If so why? If not, why not? In what ways do you feel “called out”?

**BECAUSE WE THE CHURCH BELIEVE** we are a people called out by God for mission in the world, I will gladly join that mission.

In what ways do you accept this claim on your life? \_\_\_\_\_

### CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER

# Christian Believer

United Methodist Church of the Resurrection

## LESSON 21: The Body of Christ in the World

### WORDS SUNG *One Bread, One Body*

One bread, one body, one Lord of all,  
One cup of blessing which we bless  
And we, though many throughout the earth,  
We are one body in this one Lord.

### WORDS SAID

*“Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind---yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish.”*

-----*Ephesians 5:25-27*

### How can we pray for one another?

### VIDEO

Presenters:

Gregory Mathewes-Green, Pastor Holy Cross Antiochian Orthodox Church, Linthicum Maryland;  
Frederica Mathewes-Green, free-lance writer, commentator on NPR's *All Things Considered*, and  
columnist for *Christianity Today*

Listen for

- Two concepts of the church as the body of Christ
- What it means to believe, to trust, and to have faith in the church
- What ideas contribute to the belief there is only one church on earth and in heaven

### CONTENT OF FAITH:

The New Testament metaphors for the church:

*Body of Christ, Bride of Christ, physical presence of Christ in the world,  
Communion of Saints, professing community, visible and invisible*

are terms with which a believer struggles. Using the Scriptures and the Readings for this week:

1. How would you explain this concept to a non- or nominally-religious person?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How would you explain the necessity of the church as a place for believers to join together?

3. Paul goes to great length to explain the positions with the Body of Christ in Ephesians 1:3-23. Why is some sort of organizational structure necessary within the body of Christ?
  
4. In what ways can we hold on to our common identity as Christian believers in the face of actual divisions between and within denominations and congregations?

### **LANGUAGE OF FAITH**

1. The Church can be described as a “mixed body.” Define the ways the Church can be used to administer to “sick souls.”
  
2. Our Symbols of Faith have included the wheat stalk and a bee hive. How would you use these symbols to explain the Church to a non- or nominally religious person? Can you think of a better symbol to use?

### **FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS**

- We have defined the church as the body of persons who profess faith in Jesus Christ. Should that definition be enlarged in any way, and if so, how would you change it?
  
- Where have you experienced the church at its best? Describe.
  
- What can we do to make our own Christian community more true to its calling?

**BECAUSE WE THE CHURCH BELIEVE** the church is the body of Christ in the world, I will try as a member of that body to be worthy of this high calling.

### **CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER**

# Christian Believer

United Methodist Church of the Resurrection

## LESSON 22: Signs of Sacred Things

### WORDS SUNG

#### *Meet Us Here by the Maranatha Singers*

Lord we have come to this house; Where we love to sing your praises  
We lift our hearts and our hands; To the King of all the ages  
Hear us Lord we Pray; Come Jesus come; Come fill this place  
Meet us here; Meet us here Lord; We are few but we are strong when you surround us  
Meet us here; Meet us here Lord; As we gather in Your name; Meet us here.

### WORDS SAID

*“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ?  
The bread that we break, it is not a sharing in the body of Christ?”  
-----1 Corinthians 10:16*

### How can we pray for one another?

### VIDEO

Presenters:

Susan J. White: Harold and Albert Lunger Professor of Spiritual Resources and Disciplines and Associate Professor of Worship and Spirituality, Brite Divinity School

Listen for

- What gives the sacraments their authority in the life of faith?
- What connections can we make between the Jewish Passover meal and ritual bathing and Christian Communion and baptism?
- What are the issues in the controversy of infant baptism versus believers' baptism?

### CONTENT OF FAITH:

In groups of 2 or 3, discuss the following questions and refer to the Scriptures and Readings for this week. Be prepared to share your ideas with the whole group.

1. If inner change by way of repentance has occurred, why is ritual necessary? Is it merely a formality? (See Reading 239; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34)
2. What authority do the sacraments of the church have? Which sacraments ought to be observed and why? (See Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 14:12-26)
3. What about Holy Communion, as you have experienced it, most surely conveys faith and grace to you? (See Reading 233; Mark 14:12-26)
4. If you have observed both immersion and sprinkling as forms of baptism, what has impressed you in each instance as especially meaningful? (See Reading 232, 235, Study Manual page 221)

5. Are other elements in lieu of the bread and wine an adequate celebration of the Eucharist? Explain. What minimal elements would you need personally, for an adequate celebration of Communion? (See John 6:25-39)
6. What merits do you find in the view that recognizes marriage, ordination, confirmation, etc. as sacraments? Why would these not be recognized as sacraments? (See Study Manual page 223)
7. Review Readings 240 and 241. In your experience of participating in the sacraments, what does the “Real Presence” mean? What meaning and understanding have you experienced in partaking of the sacraments?

### **LANGUAGE OF FAITH**

Sacraments are signs that speak a universal language of grace and the renewing presence of God. Look at the symbols of sacraments on page 174-175 in the Readings book. How do these symbols capture the meaning of the sacraments?

### **FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS**

Why does the church still consider the ancient rituals important even today?

What questions growing out of life and Christian experience find answers in the sacraments of the church?

What mysteries related to the sacraments does the church continue to live with? (See Reading 241)

**BECAUSE WE THE CHURCH BELIEVE** Christ has ordained special means of conveying grace, I will faithfully observe these ordinances, to the glory of God and to the nurture of my Christian life.

### **CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER**

Christian Believer

## LESSON 23: In Spirit and Truth

### WORDS SUNG

*Shout to the Lord* by Daralene Zschech

My Jesus, my Savior; Lord there is none like You  
All of my days I want to praise the wonders of Your mighty love  
My comfort, my shelter; tower of refuge and strength  
Let every breath, all that I am never cease to worship you:  
    Shout to the Lord, all the earth let us sing  
    Power and majesty, praise to the King  
    Mountains bow down and the seas will roar at the sound of Your name  
    I sing for joy at the work of Your hands, forever I'll love You, forever I'll stand  
    Nothing compares to the promise I have in You.

### WORDS SAID

*“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”*  
-----*John 4:24*

### How can we pray for one another?

### VIDEO

Presenter:

Don E. Saliers, Parker Professor of Theology and Worship, Candler School of Theology

Listen for

- The interrelatedness of worship and doctrine
- The purpose of worship
- Two definitions of Christian worship; five element structures in Christian worship
- The transformation of the ordinary in worship

### CONTENT OF FAITH:

1. As you think about your own experiences of public worship, how important are the following elements in the act of worship?
  - Nostalgia, emotion or aesthetics?
  - Your five senses: sight, sound, smell, touch, taste. What appeal to one or more of your physical senses is the most meaningful to you?
  - John 4:24 says we ... “those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” Review Readings 247, 248, 249. What is the essence of true worship in “spirit and truth” ?
  - The author of *Christian Believer*, J. Ellsworth Kalas, says although public worship is important, it is not a substitute for private worship, especially worship through prayer.

What have you learned about prayer that is most important to you in your own walk as a believer? What was Jesus' teaching about prayer in Matthew 6:5-18?

- What is the most fulfilling element in your own prayer life? What is the most frustrating?
- Describe a plan for public worship which has been the most meaningful to you. Explain why this approach has meaning.

### **LANGUAGE OF FAITH**

As we express our worship in language and actions, which of the following are important in your worship of God? Why?

- Music, singing, vocal praise
- Prayer, confession of sins
- Scripture, hearing the Word proclaimed
- Breaking bread

### **FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS**

- What does the Christian faith teach about corporate worship?
- In what ways would Christian faith be diminished if we had no doctrine of worship?

**BECAUSE WE THE CHURCH BELIEVE** God desires our worship in prayer, I will seek God earnestly, in spirit and truth.

### **CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER**

Christian Believer  
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## LESSON 24: Living the Christian Life

### WORDS SUNG

*I Surrender All* sung by Israel Houghton

All to Jesus I surrender; All to Him I freely give  
I will ever love and trust Him; In His presence daily live  
All to Jesus I surrender; Humbly at His feet I bow  
Worldly pleasures all forsaken; Take me Jesus take me now  
I surrender all, I surrender all  
All to Thee my blessed Savior  
I surrender all  
All to Jesus I surrender/ Make me Savior wholly Thine  
Let me feel Thy Holy Spirit  
Truly know that thou art mine. (Chorus)

### WORDS SAID

**“If any wants to become my followers, let them deny themselves  
and take up their cross daily and follow me.” -----Luke 9:23**

**How can we pray for one another?**

### VIDEO

Presenter:

Kyunglim Shin Lee, Vice-President for Church Relations and Student Development, Wesley Theological Seminary

Listen for

- Values, goals and lifestyles which distinguish Christian life from secular life
- What is involved in following Jesus?

What situations in our society most tempt us to act or think like those around us?

### CONTENT OF FAITH:

1. Review your notes for days 2 &3: Matthew 5-7
  - What should motivate our religious practices?
  - What sayings indicate that living according to Jesus' teaching is demanding?
2. Review Readings 257 & 261:
  - What do these theologians say about what we believe and how we actually live? Do you agree? Why or why not?
3. Review your notes on 1 Corinthians, Ephesians 4:17-5:21, James 2:14-3:12
  - How does love operate in the Christian community?

- James speaks of faith and works fitting hand in hand. Must one of these come first? Why or why not? Can you have one without the other? Why or why not?
4. Review Readings 253, 256, 258.
- Do you see yourself as an alien in the surrounding culture because you are a Christian? Why or why not?
  - How is the call to discipleship a call to heroic living?
  - How can a Christian live a truly godly, holy, ethical life in the modern or post-modern world?
  - In what ways does Reading 262 offer some answers for us?

### **LANGUAGE OF FAITH**

In the Readings book, turn to pages 208-209. Which symbol best expresses your understanding of the Christian life? Explain.

### **FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS**

At this point in your understanding and your aspirations, how would you describe the life of discipleship?

What particular guidance do you take from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) for your life?

**BECAUSE WE THE CHURCH BELIEVE** a distinctive way of living is demanded of the followers of Jesus Christ, I dedicate myself to being a disciple of whom my Lord never need be ashamed.

### **CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER**

Christian Believer  
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**LESSON 25: A Life Pleasing to God**

**WORDS SUNG**

*My Life Is In You Lord* sung by Joseph Garlington

My life is in You Lord; My strength is in You Lord

My hope in is You Lord, In You it's in You

I will praise You with all of my life

I will praise You with all of my strength

With all of my life, with all of my strength

All of my hope is in You.

**WORDS SAID**

*“For I am the Lord your God; sanctify yourselves there, and be holy, for I am holy.”*  
-----*Leviticus 11:44*

**How can we pray for one another?**

**VIDEO**

Presenter:

Scott J. Jones, McCreless Assistant Professor of Evangelism, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University.

Listen for

- What happens in justification?
- What happens in sanctification?
- How does holiness call us to set ourselves apart?

**CONTENT OF FAITH:**

**Sanctification in the Old Testament**

- Describe the Old Testament approach for holiness: the meaning in being set apart, characteristics of holiness; results of holiness  
(See Study Manual page 249 and Scripture Readings for Day 1 & Day 2)

**Sanctification in the New Testament**

- Jesus added a special dimension to the issue of holiness:  
What part does baptism play?



## LESSON 26: Ending With a Beginning

### WORDS SUNG

*Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus* sung by Michael W. Smith

Turn your eyes upon Jesus; Look full in His wonderful face  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim  
In the light of His glory and grace.

### WORDS SAID

*“Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure” -----1 John 3:2-3*

**How can we pray for one another?**

### VIDEO

Presenter:

Will Coleman, Associate Professor of Theology and Hermeneutics, Columbia Theological Seminary

Listen for

- Eschatology - what is your understanding ?
- Jesus as the center of both history and eschatology.

### CONTENT OF FAITH:

#### Genesis 1:1-2:3:

- How does the story of creation contribute to shape the Christian hope about the end of time?

#### Jesus’ Teachings Revisited in the New Testament.

- Man tries to put the vast stretch of time on a time line or on a calendar. How did the New Testament writers respond to the idea of **time**? (Review Matthew 24:1-44; John 14: 1-14; 2 Peter 3). How does this prospective of time play a part in shaping your faith?
- The *Christian Believer* says, “we ought to realize the ‘signs of the times’ are more general than specific” (Study Manual 261). What was Paul’s admonition in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12? What is the keeper in his message?
- **Christian Hope as the beginning.** In the Study Manual page 263, we read “The Christian hope understands all such endings are only beginnings.” If persons cannot find hope in the world, how would you explain this statement?

- **Christian Hope is grounded in Christ as Savior.** What questions or difficulties do you find on the doctrine of the second coming? What do the theologians say about a “new heaven and a new earth” Readings 278 and 279?
- **Hope for the Kingdom.** The disciples expected Jesus to set up a political Kingdom on earth and continued this expectation even after the Resurrection. What hope do you personally see for the Kingdom of God to come on our earth? In what ways can we as Christians contribute to this earthly Kingdom? What hope do you find in Revelation 22 for the “new heaven and the new earth”?

### LANGUAGE OF FAITH

*Webster’s New World Dictionary* : (an’ker) 1) a heavy object, usually an iron weight with flukes, lowered from a vessel, as by a cable, to prevent drifting. 2) anything giving stability *vt* 1) to hold secure as by an anchor 2) to be or become fixed.

- The anchor has long been a symbol for hope and safety. Why is the anchor a fitting symbol for Christian hope? For Jesus?

### FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS

Christian hope is the foundation of assurance and peace in the turmoil of human life. Develop 3 or 4 statements which explain the idea of Christian hope to someone who doesn’t have this assurance. Draw from your own ideas, experiences, Scripture and/or the Readings for this week. Share with the group.

**BECAUSE WE THE CHURCH BELIEVE** in the certainty of the Christian hope, I will pursue God’s kingdom on this earth, and I will rest secure in my contemplation of the future.

### CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER

### HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT:

Begin work on the Personal Credo. Use the handout as a guide to organize your thoughts and ideas. Be ready to share ideas from your Personal Credo during the Session 30 of Christian Believer.

# CHRISTIAN BELIEVER

## LESSON 30: The Difference Believing Makes

### Writing Your Personal Credo – I Believe Statement

The word believer is often caught somewhere between naiveté on one hand and fanaticism on the other. Think about your perception of the word *believer* when you began this study and how you perceive it today. Write a brief statement of that perception:

The Scriptures encourage us to examine our lives in order that we may grow in righteousness and to examine it to judge whether we have grown. So, what difference has this study of Christian Believer made in my life ?

We call ourselves Christian believers. Such identification doesn't mean we will never have questions. Instead, questioning brings more perception, more depth, and more fortitude. During this year, I have gain a greater perception in the following area:

More depth in the following area:

More fortitude when I am faced with:

In what area of belief have I seen my greatest growth over the last nine months?

What area of my belief has been most confirmed during this study?

Write a personal credo -- "I believe" statement building it entirely on the areas that currently stand out in your mind as the most important elements of your believing. The statement need not be lengthy. Be concise but try to capture the beliefs you feel most strongly about:

***I Believe...***

## Christian Believer

United Methodist Church of the Resurrection

### LESSON 27: A Time of Reckoning

#### WORDS SUNG *Pass Me Not* sung by Fernando Ortega

Pass me not O gentle Savior; Hear my humble cry  
While on others Thou art smiling; Do not pass me by  
Let me at the throne of mercy; Find a sweet relief  
Kneeling there in deep contrition; Help my unbelief  
Savior, Savior hear my humble cry;  
While on others Thou art calling; Do not pass me by.

#### WORDS SAID

*“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?” --- Genesis 18:25*

#### How can we pray for one another?

#### VIDEO

Presenter:

Ted A. Campbell, Professor of the History of Christianity, Wesley Theological Seminary.

Listen for

- Affirmation about judgment in the creeds
- Nonbiblical ideas that have influenced understandings of judgment
- What Christian teachings do affirm about judgment

#### CONTENT OF FAITH:

**Understanding Judgment:** Look at the following Scripture passages and share your understanding with others:

**Jeremiah 15:15-38** (Cup of Judgment) and **Amos 5:18-6:14** (Day of the Lord)

By what standards will God judge? What principles about judgment can we draw from these passages? Is there a message in these passages for us still today?

**Matthew 15:14-46** (Parable of the Talents). In what way is this passage about judgment?

In what way is this passage about achieving personal spiritual potential? In what way is this passage about responsible action on the part of a Christian?

**Read Matthew 25:34-46** (Sheep and Goats). Jesus gave the Great Commission to his disciples just before his ascension in Matthew 28:19-20 to go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Do you find another “commission” in the Matthew 25 passage for Christians? If so, what?

**Romans 2:1-16** (God's Righteous Judgment). How is repentance an issue in judgment? What is the significance of Jesus as our judge?

**Readings 287-290.** Share ideas from your notes that relate, explain, enlarge or give insight to the meaning of judgment. Which idea(s) most helped your understanding of judgment?

**Exodus 20:5-6** teaches us that judgment may be delayed....person(s) initiating sin don't always suffer the consequences:

*"You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments."*

In Reading 290, C. S. Lewis stated judgment is an absolute or complete verdict; a critique of what we have done in life.

The Study Manual, page 269, says, "So many instances of judgment—biblical, historical and personal—are as clear as fourth-grade arithmetic. We do wrong, and we suffer. Life adds up."

**Putting it all together:**

How would you explain the meaning and purpose of the Christian doctrine of judgment in general to a person who objects to the doctrine of final judgment?

**LANGUAGE OF FAITH**

**"In Biblical teaching, judgment requires justice and justice requires judgment."**

Is God's judgment always just? Why or why not?

Review words on page 266 of the Study Manual. In what ways do the words or phrases contribute or belong to the doctrine of judgment?

**FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS**

If God is a forgiving God, why does he judge us? In what ways would Christian teaching be diminished without the doctrine of judgment?

**BECAUSE WE THE CHURCH BELIEVE** in divine judgment, I will remember that the God who judges us is the very same God who loves us, and I will live a life motivated by that love.

**CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER**

## Christian Believer

United Methodist Church of the Resurrection

### LESSON 28: Resurrection of the Body

#### WORDS SUNG

*Blessed Assurance* sung by Bob Fitts, Integrity Singers

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine; O what a foretaste of glory divine  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.  
Perfect submission, all is at rest; I in my Savior am happy and blest  
Watching and waiting, looking above; filled with His goodness, lost in His love  
This is my story, this is my song  
Praising my Savior all the day long  
This is my story, this is my song  
Praising my Savior all the day long.

#### WORDS SAID

*“So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable.  
It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness,  
it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.”*  
---- 1 Corinthians 15:42-44

**How can we pray for one another?**

#### VIDEO

Presenter: Richard B. Hays, Professor of New Testament, Duke Divinity School

Listen for

- The reasons resurrection of the body was at the heart of the early Christian preaching and faith
- The difference between the resurrection of the dead and immortality of the soul
- The connection between the doctrine of Creation and the doctrine of the resurrection of the body
- The distinctively Christian focus on the resurrection of Jesus
- Five issues at stake in the doctrine of the resurrection of the body

#### CONTENT OF FAITH:

**Value and concern for the body in the Old Testament --- look for the value given human beings, awareness of mortality, assertions of trust, hope and faith in God:**

- What do you understand about the attitude of the Creator in Genesis 1:25-26?
- What is the relationship of God with man as seen by the Psalmist in Psalm 25:12-15, 20?
- In his misery, what does Job have to say about the God-man relationship in Job 14:1-4; 13-15

### **Value and concern for the body in the New Testament----**

- What do Matthew 6:25-30 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 say about the body in relation to God the Creator?
- In 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, Paul argues for the validity of resurrection after death. What is the keener idea in these passages for you?

### **Reading 299 – John Wesley**

- Summarize the ideas used by John Wesley to explain some of the implications of resurrection. Do you find his ideas comforting? Why or why not?

### **Reading 301 – C. S. Lewis**

- C. S. Lewis claims that Jesus' resurrection was the "first fruits." What does he mean by this term?

### **Bringing It All Together**

If the promise of resurrection is true, in what manner should we conduct ourselves? (Romans 12:1)

Does the worth of the body as expressed in the promised resurrection of the body have profound repercussions on human life and conduct? If so, in what ways?

We have read about "resurrection of the body and spirit" in several of the Scripture passages and several Readings. How would you explain this concept to someone who is skeptical or a non-believer?

### **LANGUAGE OF FAITH**

Turn to page 276 in the Study Manual and read the words and phrases associated with the concept of Resurrection. What Scripture(s) come to mind as you think of each phrase? How do you find comfort in these words or phrases?

### **FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS**

- What life experiences cause us to raise questions about life after death? How can the teachings of the Christian faith give answers to those questions?
- Why does the church teach resurrection of the body rather than immortality of the soul?

**BECAUSE WE THE CHURCH BELIEVE** in the resurrection of the body, I will treat my body as a sacred gift of God and as a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

### **CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER**

Christian Believer  
United Methodist Church of the Resurrection

**LESSON 29: World and Life Without End**

**WORDS SUNG**                    *“I Know That My Redeemer Lives”*

**WORDS SAID**

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.” -----1 John 3:16*

**How can we pray for one another?**

**VIDEO**

Presenter: Amy Plantinga Pauw, Henry P. Mobley Professor of Doctrinal Theology, Louisville Presbyterian Seminary

Listen for

- What the doctrine of eternal life says about life now
- What we do know about life after death because of God’s love
- The relationship of history and hope in the Christian teaching
- How eternal life is experienced in the present

**CONTENT OF FAITH:**

What do we know about life after this life? (List)

Solomon built the Temple in the first part of his life, wrote *Proverbs* during the middle of his life, and then *Ecclesiastes* near the end of life. Read the chapter headings for the first 5 chapters of *Ecclesiastes*. What message do you think Solomon was trying to convey?

**Psalm 16 and 49.** What sense of resurrection do you find in the Psalmist’s writing?

**Romans 6:4-10.** Read this passage in three parts: verse 4; verses 5-7; verses 8-10, discussing each part. What is Paul trying to teach the Romans about the concept of resurrection and eternal life?

**Reading 209.** How does Karl Barth encourage man to think of life eternal? What meaning can that concept have for life today?

**Reading 310.** C.S. Lewis says our notion of heaven has lots of no’s....in what ways does he encourage us to think of the fulfillment in heaven?

**Revelation 21, The New Jerusalem.** Read v. 1; 11-12; 23

In his book, *90 Minutes in Heaven*, Don Piper wrote of his incredible experience after his car collided with a semi-truck on a narrow bridge resulting in a horrific wreck after which he was pronounced dead for a ninety-minute period:

“Joy pulsed through me as I looked around, and at that moment I became aware of a large crowd of people. They stood in front of a brilliant ornate gate. I have no idea how far away they were; such things as distance didn’t matter.....As they surged toward me, I knew instantly that all of them had died during my lifetime.....The first person I recognized was Joe Kulbeth, my grandfather. He looked exactly as I remembered him, with his shock of white hair.....He embraced me [and] was once again the robust strong grandfather I had remembered as a child. [Another] person in that greeting committee was Mike Wood, my childhood friend....When he was nineteen, Mike was killed in a car wreck. It broke my heart and it took me a long time to get over it.....Everything I saw glowed with intense brightness. The best I can describe it is that as we began to move toward that light...everything seemed to grow taller – like a gentle hill that kept going upward and never stopped. I had expected to see some darkness behind the gate, but as far ahead as I could see, there was absolutely nothing but intense, radiant light....Then I heard the music.

I never saw anything that produced the sound....the most amazing [sound] was the angels’ wings. I didn’t seem them, but the sound was a beautiful holy melody with a cadence that seemed never to stop. ‘Hallelujah! Praise! Glory to God!’ Such words rang out ....a cacophony of noise that would drive us crazy. This was totally different; every sound blended, and each voice or instrument enhanced the others.

In those minutes --- and they held no sense of time for me--- others touched me, and their warm embraces were absolutely real. I saw colors I would never have believed existed. I never, ever felt more alive than I did then....I was home....” (pgs.21-32)

What interesting parallels do you see in Piper’s story and the Scripture from Revelation?

(If you would like to read of other “death” experiences, read *Life After Life* by Raymond A. Moody, Jr. M.D. New York: Bantam Publishers. 1975).

In **Reading 305**, Susanna Wesley quotes from Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

In **Reading 311**, C. S. Lewis writes, “When we see the face of God we shall know that we have always know it.”

As we examine the Scripture, these experiences and ideas, in what ways do they confirm your understanding of eternal life? What questions come to mind?

**LANGUAGE OF FAITH**

The Christian faith has its own language for talking about a way of life that leads to eternal life. Look at the symbols on Page 226-27 of the Readings. Which of these symbols has the greatest meaning for you and why?

## **FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS**

What would the church lose if the Christian faith had no teaching on eternal life?

## **PERSONAL CREDO**

During the last study, we will be sharing some of the statements from each personal credo. Remember to finalize your credo this week.

**BECAUSE WE THE CHURCH BELIEVE** in eternal life, I will live, love, and work, and pray each day with eternity in my soul.

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## **CLOSING WORDS AND PRAYER**

Christian Believer  
United Methodist Church of the Resurrection

**LESSON 30: The Difference Believing Makes**

**THE LAST SUPPER**

**WORDS SUNG**

*“Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow”*

Praise God, from whom all blessing flow;  
Praise all creatures here below;  
Praise him above, ye heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

**How can we pray for one another?**

**SCRIPTURE:**

“And he [Abram] believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness” Genesis 15:6

**CONTENT OF FAITH:**

1. Consider the elements of belief we have discussed this year. Which idea(s) have become part of or strengthened your foundation of faith? What ways could you share your faith to one who does not believe?
2. *Sometimes it seems there is a long stretch between what we believe and how we live. Or, perhaps we don't really know what we believe, so that our conduct is being shaped by what we truly but unconsciously believe rather than what we think we believe (Study Manual 296). How can we tell whether our conduct is shaped by what we believe or think?*
3. What are some ways we confess our beliefs every day, not necessarily in words?

**LANGUAGE OF FAITH – SHARING OF PERSONAL CREDO**

1. What are some of the most important elements of your believing?
2. In what ways has your personal creed changed from what it was when you began this study?

## **FAITH ASKS QUESTIONS**

1. How shall we pass on this legacy of belief we have received? What next ?

### **VIDEO**

J. Ellsworth Kalas, Beeson Senior Pastor-in-Residence, Asbury Theological Seminary and writer of the *Christian Believer* study manual.

(No discussion will follow video. This segment will prepare the group for confession of faith and Holy Communion.)

### **HOLY COMMUNION**