

DISCIPLE 3
Remember Who You Are
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

Orientation Meeting

SCRIPTURE

...Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.
Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." ---John 8:31

GATHERING AND PRAYER : "Open the Eyes of My Heart Lord"

GETTING ACQUAINTED: Name, where did you live when you were 7?

FOLDERS: Orientation Meeting Agenda, Calendar, Roster,
Principles of Bible Study, Faith Story, Bookmark

ATTENDANCE, SNACKS & PRAYER SIGNUPS

MISSION PROJECT & SOCIAL EVENT

INTRODUCTION TO *Remembering Who You Are*

Prophets: We will study the prophets in their historical sequence. The prophets spoke to their kings, nations, power struggles in the context of their historical events. In some cases, more than one prophet spoke to the same king. Much of the literature is in the Hebrew poetic form. The big backdrop for the prophets is God at work in history....watch for these clues.

Letters of Paul: We will study Paul's letters in the sequence they were written. (You will find the Bible arranges the letters in accordance with the longest first and the shortest last). As you read, take time to think about Paul's language and tone of his letters to the fledgling churches. These churches faced many challenges in learning to live the Christian life in a pagan world.

Questions to keep in mind during this journey of *Remembering Who You Are*:

- What are the questions I have?
- Have I discovered some of the answers? If so, what?
- Now, so what?
- Now what am I asked to do?

WE SET THE SCENE FOR THE STUDY OF THE PROPHETS:

VIDEO: Ray Vander Laan, teacher and historian - "The Wages of Sin"

What did you hear about the impact of cultural trends or "straying" from God's will?

How does this apply to our 21st century?

Northern Israel survived 200 years, then fell to Assyria
Southern Judah survived 400 years, then fell to Babylonia, Jerusalem was destroyed in 586
B.C.....and so, we begin next week with *Lamentations* (Hebrew title is '*ekah* or "How.....!")

HUMAN CONDITION AND MARK OF FAITHFUL COMMUNITY

We will concentrate on **Remembering Who We Are**.....are there signs we have lost or are losing some of the biblical memory that gives us identity and purpose? In what ways can our faith community remember the biblical foundation that defines it?

CLOSING AND PRAYER *How Can We Pray for One Another? (Prayer lists)*

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Week 1: God's People Weep

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 6)

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Return**

Theme Scripture: *"Let us test and examine our ways and return to the Lord."*

---Lamentations 3:40

How Can We Pray for One Another?

Jerusalem was completely destroyed and the Temple razed in 587 B.C. The Israelites were either slaughtered or carried off into captivity. Sometimes it is hard for us to fathom the devastation of war since we have not entirely encountered it on our national soil. Only the events of 9-11 or Katrina can give us an insight. In what ways have the events of WW II, Vietnam, Desert Storm and Iraq allowed us to understand what Israel was experiencing?

VIDEO PRESENTATION

Presenters: Elyse D. Frishman and Cecil D. Jones, Jr.

1. What was remembered and why is remembering necessary?

2. How are remembering and redemption connected?

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

We begin Disciple 3 by reading the Scriptures portraying a disobedient people; a people who had strayed from their faith in God. Take a few moments to explore and discuss the relationship between faith in God and obedience to God. Can a person have one without the other? Why or why not? What part does covenant between man and God play?

(Covenant, in a biblical sense, is more than a contract or simple agreement which always has an *end date and generally involves one part of a person, such as a skill*. A covenant is a permanent arrangement which involves a person's total being).

In groups, find 4-5 sentences which illustrate the chapter theme:

PUNISHMENT FOR DISOBEDIENCE

- Lamentations 1 – Jerusalem’s misery and desolation
- Lamentations 2 – Lord’s anger against his people
- Lamentations 3 – Judah’s complaint
- Lamentations 4 – Contrast of Judah’s past and present
- Lamentations 5 – Judah’s appeal for God’s forgiveness

Consider these passages to contrast/compare parents’ anger with a child for disobedience (eg. child: guilt, fear of discovery, denial; parent: anger, punishment).

REMEMBERING AND OBEYING: God Teaches

- Deuteronomy 6: What actions show we love the Lord?
- 7: Why are we set apart from pagan nations?

Deuteronomy 12-13: What precautions should we take about worship practices?
About false prophets?

- Deuteronomy 15: What should our attitude be toward the poor?
- 18: What are the pagan practices God finds detestable?

Deuteronomy 23: Which areas of man’s life are affected by carefully following
God’s commands or willfully disobeying them?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Lamentations 3:1-39 (*The Message*)

Read aloud, each person reading 3 verses or one stanza:

Read Lamentations 3:1-18; then discuss: What does the writer intend to communicate?

Read Lamentations 3:19-39; then discuss: What do I say to this text?

In response to suffering, what is a “keeper” for you in these passages?

HUMAN CONDITION

We go our own way until we hurt. Then in shock and confusion we ask: What happened? With guilt we wonder: Where did we go wrong? We want to blame others. But confronted by the outcomes of our actions, we ask, where can we turn for relief?

How do you understand the idea that the God who judges us, causing us pain, is also the God to whom we go for relief from that pain? What is your experience with this God? (See page 13 of the Study Manual).

MARK OF OBEDIENT COMMUNITY

The community of faith relies on the trustworthiness of God's word.

Remember Who You Are: (These statements, at the end of each lesson, are structured to help you shape and define a statement of your faith. Record your ideas so you may return to these ideas to help you write your Statement of Faith at the end of Disciple 3).

This week, look for a way to reach out to someone who is hurt or in need. What can you do to bring comfort, love, and compassion to that person? Next week, don't tell the group your action; share how God blessed you through blessing another person.

CLOSING AND PRAYER

A Prayer for Restoration

I love you, Lord. Help me to love you more.

Forgive my sins. Heal my brokenness. Restore me, O God.

Help me to honor you today and everyday.

Help me to know your will, and grant me the strength to do it.

Search me and test my thoughts. Lead me in the way everlasting.

You are my Potter and I am the clay.

Mold me into the person you want me to be.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

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Week 2: God Sent Messengers

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 14)

Opening Prayer (Psalm 19 from *The Message*)

Theme: **Hear**

Theme Scripture: “*Hear O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart.*” --Deuteronomy 6:4-6

How Can We Pray for One Another?

VIDEO PRESENTATION

Presenter: William J. A. Power

Listen for three related ideas:

- the influence of Deuteronomy in Samuel and Kings
- the prophets’ explanation for the Exile
- what was learned from the Babylonian triumph

How did the prophets and exiles answer the question: *why did this happen to us?*

What was the message in the Babylonian triumph? What hope did the prophets offer?

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

In groups of 3-4 and discuss the questions:

1. Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9; 12, 14, 18-19, 24-25
2. What can we do to remind ourselves of our religious identity?
3. What can we do to cultivate a sense of religious identity in the next generation?

Israel divided into the Northern Kingdom (10 tribes) and the Southern Kingdom (2 tribes – Judah and Benjamin). Read the following passages and establish the record of the Kings of Israel and Judah:

<u>Scripture</u>	<u>King</u>	<u>Evil (-) or Right (+)</u>
2 Kings 12:1-2	_____	_____
2 Kings 13:1-2	_____	_____
2 Kings 13:10-11	_____	_____
2 Kings 14:1-3	_____	_____
2 Kings 14:23-24	_____	_____

Scripture King Evil (-) or Right (+) continued

2 Kings 15:1-3	_____	
2 Kings 16:2-4	_____	
2 Kings 17:2	_____	read v. 16-18
2 Kings 18:3	_____	
2 Kings 21:1-2	_____	read v. 3-6
2 Kings 24:18-19	_____	

The prophets understood God is in control of history, human action has consequences, and some consequences we suffer are God’s judgment and punishment of sin.

1. What is troubling about that understanding?
2. What is comforting about it?

Turn to page 20 in the Study Manual. Read aloud “Called to be Messengers”.

1. Do we confront the signs of our times or excuse and explain away? Give examples to support your thoughts.

ENCOUNTER THE WORD 1 Kings 18:20-40

- What did this miraculous event mean to those who were present?
- What does this mean to us?
- What is God saying to us in this story?
- What gods from the surrounding culture do we adopt and allow to dilute our loyalty to God

HUMAN CONDITION

We are drawn to the promises and practices of the culture that surrounds us. We try to walk in two worlds. We choose compromise---surely small compromises won’t matter. A single loyalty asks too much. We look away; we don’t want to hear.

If you agree with any of these statements, why?

MARK OF OBEDIENT COMMUNITY

The obeying community chooses loyalty to God as its first commitment.

Remember Who You Are: what does this statement mean in my life?

CLOSING AND PRAYER

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Week 3: Starved for the Word of the Lord

GATHERING AND PRAYER (page 22)

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Famine**

Theme Scripture: *“The time is surely coming, says the Lord God,
When I will send a famine on the land;
Not a famine of bread, or a thirst for water,
But a hearing of the words of the Lord.” ---Amos 8:11*

How Can We Pray for One Another?

AMOS

Amos was not a man of the court like Isaiah or a priest like Jeremiah; he earned his living from the flocks and sycamore-fig grove. Whether he owned land or flocks or only worked as a hired hand is not known. His skill with words and the broad range of his general knowledge of history would preclude his being an ignorant peasant. Though the Southern Kingdom (Judah) was his home, he was sent to the Northern Kingdom (Israel) to preach God’s judgment.

VIDEO PRESENTATION

Presenter: P. Kyle McCarter, Jr.

Listen for evidence of understanding the writings of 8th century Israel and Judah give on Amos’s time and prophecy.

- What clues to Amos’s time and prophecy do we get from knowing where writing appeared and how it was used in the 8th century Israel and Judah?
- What does this evidence of writing tell us about 8th century understanding of kings and prophets?

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

In groups, search Amos for the types of sin he condemns in Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah, Israel. Look for clues on pages 25-26 of the Study Manual. Make a list:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Whole group discussion: Contrast and compare our culture today with Ancient Israel.

What would the prophet Amos say to us today:

- What are some of the economic devices that steal from the poor?
- In what ways do you see people in need of God's word? As a church community, what can we do to feed this need?
- How do we, today, fall short in the worship of God?
- What is a "plumb line"? What would the "plumb line" measure in our lives?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Apostate: a person guilty abandoning their belief or faith. A people or nation who has abandoned their faith is said to be in "apostacy."

Read: Amos 5:11-14

- What does this passage say about God?
- Can you give examples of how this passage might be true even today?
- What is God calling us, as believers, to do?

HUMAN CONDITION

We are drawn to the promises and practices of the culture that surrounds us. We try to walk in two worlds. We choose compromise---surely small compromises won't matter. A single loyalty asks too much. We look away; we don't want to hear.

If you agree with any of these statements, why?

MARK OF OBEDIENT COMMUNITY

The obeying community chooses loyalty to God as its first commitment.

Remember Who You Are: What may be blocking my obedience to God's word?

CLOSING AND PRAYER

Gracious Heavenly Father,

Today we come to you remembering those who lost their lives on 9-11, the tsunami of 2004 and Hurricane Katrina. With heavy hearts, we ask you to comfort the families and friends. We remember, knowing that freedom is not "free" and for the heroes during those days, we give thanks for their courage and sacrifice. We ask that you give us wisdom as we face those issues in our society and culture that would dishonor you. Help us to be strong in our faith and courage also; to be those beacons of light for those around us, that they will know we are Christians by our love, conduct and belief. We give thanks for the blessings you have poured out in our lives; help us to always be mindful and thankful for your gifts. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

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Week 4: God's Faithfulness

GATHERING AND PRAYER

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Redeeming Love**

Theme Scripture: *"I will take you for my wife forever; I will take you for my wife righteous and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will take you for wife in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord. ---Hosea 2:19-20*

How Can We Pray for One Another?

HOSEA

Hosea prophesied about the middle of the 8th century B. C., shortly after Amos. It is thought Hosea prophesied for at least 38 years, although almost nothing is known about him outside his book. He was the only one of the writing prophets to come from the Northern Kingdom and his prophetic activity was directed at that country. When considered as a whole, Hosea preaches the same message of Amos: broken judgment, oppression of the poor, pointing to the broken commandments and calling for a return to covenant fidelity and obedience to God. Hosea lived in a time of crisis...watching little by little as the Assyrians conquered and deported parts of the kingdom until the capital itself went down in flames in 722 B.C. ---*Reading the Old Testament* by Lawrence Boadt

VIDEO PRESENTATION

Presenter: B. David Napier .

Pay attention to the place of covenant in the parallel stories of God/Israel and Hosea/Gomer :

- In what ways do you see parallels in the story of Hosea/Gomer and God/Israel?
- Look up the definition of "covenant"? Describe our "covenant" with God.
- How is the covenant relationship restored and redeemed?

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Resources: Charts, Maps

1. Who were the baals and how were they worshipped?
2. In what ways did people rationalized their idolatry with worship of God?
3. What are the baals in our culture and society today?

4. What excuses do we make by combining baals worship and God worship today?
5. What are the consequences of infidelity to God? How are we to react to punishment?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD Hosea 14

1. Read Hosea 14 aloud
2. What does this passage tell us about God?
3. What do we know about the response of the hearers?
4. What “keepers” can we take from this lesson in Hosea to make our relationship with God stronger?

HUMAN CONDITION

We desire harmony, order, relationship, but we are divided in our loyalties. Cover all bases. Make the necessary compromises. See the right connections. We are drawn to pursuits that promise power, success, control.

In what ways could we compromising our Christian beliefs in today’s society?

MARK OF OBEDIENT COMMUNITY

Obedience in community declares the winsome, forgiving, redeeming love of God calling people back to God.

Remember Who You Are: Look for an opportunity to share something of your faith with another person this week. Bless another person!

CLOSING AND PRAYER

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Week 5: God's Requirement

GATHERING AND PRAYER

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Obey**

Theme Scripture:

"He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" ---Micah 6:8

How Can We Pray for One Another?

MICAH OF MORESHETH

Although Micah and Isaiah preached at the same time, Micah's town of Moresheth-gath was probably quite small and more concerned with the agricultural year and the weather than with the affairs of state. His charges are leveled against the landlords who take advantage of the poor, and he foresees the same divine judgment coming against them and their leaders as Isaiah did. Both prophets were close in their understanding of what was happening in Judah. Micah's prophecy ends with a vision of a new day of the Lord, when God will rebuild the walls of a fallen city and repopulate the empty ruins of the land. ---

Reading the Old Testament by Lawrence Boadt

VIDEO PRESENTATION

Presenter: Kathleen A. Farmer

Listen for the distinction between *envisioning* and *predicting* the future.

What does Micah's message tell us about the nature and will of God?

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Micah can be divided into thirds: 1/3 exposes the sin of Israel; 1/3 pictures the punishment; 1/3 has the vision and hope of restoration.

Group I: **Scan Chapters 1 & 2.** How are the patterns of sin similar to what we have read to date? (Read section headings for clues and see page 43 of the Study Manual). What sins does Micah identify?

Group II: Scan Chapter 5. What is the promise and hope of restoration foretold by Micah? Share the passage that foresees the Messiah, Jesus.

Group III: Scan Chapter 6 (See page 44 of the Study Manual). Discuss the cycle of Israel: Egypt – Exodus – Exile. In what ways do you see Israel as the cause of the events which triggered their destruction and exile? What is God’s requirement?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD Micah 7:14-19

Read the passage aloud. Then discuss the following ideas:

1. What do you think Micah was trying to say for God?
2. What is the heart of his message about God’s standards?
3. What is the hope in all this disaster?

HUMAN CONDITION

When confronted with our injustice in our daily dealings, we defend it or explain it away by comparing it to other injustices. We offer extravagant promises to change our ways and rely on our belief that our actions will be forgiven, not punished.

We can look at our children and see evidence of this statement: “He did it first!” “Mine! She took it!” “But I want it!” In the adult world, how do we see these attitudes played out?

MARK OF OBEDIENT COMMUNITY

The community of faith recognizes that no actions or decisions of individuals or groups are taken in isolation and that obedience to God requires just actions and decisions.

Remember Who You Are: What unjust conditions or situations exist in my own community? What steps could I take to work toward correcting those injustices?

CLOSING AND PRAYER: Silent Prayers using A.C.T.S.:

A – adoration/knowledge of God; **C** – confess shortcomings; **T** – thank Him for a blessing; **S** – ask for God’ healing, comfort, provision.

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Week 6: God Pleads

GATHERING AND PRAYER

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Judgment**

Theme Scripture:

“They have rejected the instruction of the Lord of hosts, and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.” --- Isaiah 5:24

How Can We Pray for One Another?

ISAIAH OF JERUSALEM

While Amos and Hosea prophesied in the north, Isaiah, son of Amoz, was active in the kingdom of Judah (southern kingdom). Isaiah began his ministry sometime after 740 and continued until at least the year 700. His is the largest work of prophecy in the Bible and its 66 chapters grew over several centuries. The original work of Isaiah of Jerusalem lies in the first 39 chapters of the present book. Isaiah was passionately involved in the political life of his day. He seems to have had direct access to the king and may well have been from a noble family himself. The pleas of Isaiah to avoid any involvement with Assyria fell on deaf ears, and the result was a worse situation than before.

--- *Reading the Old Testament* by Lawrence Boadt

VIDEO PRESENTATION

Presenter: Wolfgang M. W. Roth

1. What does the holiness of God have to do with human behavior?
2. What are the people tempted to trust instead of trusting God?

Play “*I Did It My Way*” by Frank Sinatra. How do these lyrics express the Human Condition?

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Locate Isaiah, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in the geographical and historical context on the *Rulers and Prophets of Israel and Judah poster*, the *Prophets: Eighth, Seventh, Sixth Centuries* map and the *Historical Contest* chart.

Group I: Using daily reading notes, review Isaiah 6 and discuss:

- How does this text help us understand the holiness of God?
- Verses 9-10 were quoted by Jesus on the Parable of the Sower in Mark 4. What does this say about the human condition?
- What does it suggest about worship?

Group II: Using daily reading notes, review Isaiah 1:11-14 & 3:8-9 and discuss:

- What specific wrongdoing is mentioned?
- We have tried to draw parallels between the prophets' day and our present society. What in our society do you see that God finds to be a burden; what practices weary Him?

Group III: One theme that runs through Isaiah is the plea for absolute trust in and dependence upon God. Read Isaiah 30:1-18:

- In whom or what did the leaders and people of Judah place their trust?
- What was the result?
- Where do we, *as a nation*, place our trust? God? Power? Money? Fame? Ourselves? Our government? What could be the result of this placement of trust?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD Isaiah 5:1-23 (from *The Message*)

- What was God's original intention for Israel?
- Search verses 8-23: look for passages that begin with "Doom to..."
- What do these warnings have to do with us?
- What do we need to change?

HUMAN CONDITION

Generally we block out all mention of judgment. We don't want anyone pleading with us to change our ways. We've had enough of instruction in how to live.

Today, wearing a big sign or shouting "repent!" seems ineffective. What are ways to help people turn to God?

MARK OF OBEDIENT COMMUNITY

The faithful community repents of its failure to hear and to respond to God's pleas for justice and righteousness.

Remember Who You Are: How can I have the insight, the integrity to see myself as I really am? In what ways can I respond to God's plea to remain faithful?

CLOSING AND PRAYER

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Week 7: God Rules the World

GATHERING AND PRAYER

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Divine Purpose**

Theme Scripture:

“Look at the nations, and see! Be astonished! Be astounded! For a work is being done in your days that you would not believe if you were told. Habakkuk 1:5

How Can We Pray for One Another?

OVERVIEW

We have read 5 prophets and today we discuss 3 more. So many sent by God to warn the people of their sins. Yet, the sins of idolatry, profaning the Temple, greed, dishonesty, disregard of others, and brutality continues. How much will God allow?

Let’s review. We begin with Lamentations, a foreshadowing of what becomes of Israel; then we flashback to the prophets sent by God:

- Lamentations** The writer is anonymous, although ancient Jewish and early Christian Traditions ascribe it to Jeremiah. The Hebrew title is ‘*ekah* or “How……!” The writer poignantly expresses the people’s overwhelming sense of loss at the destruction Jerusalem and the Temple.
- Amos** A man of Judah in the Southern Kingdom, he was sent to the Northern Kingdom to announce God’s judgment. At this time, Israel was secure, prosperous, a military power, but soon Assyria would conquer the Northern Kingdom.
- Hosea** Hosea began his ministry shortly after Amos, and prophesied during the last days of the Northern Kingdom. Intrigue and assassination in the royal line and rebellion led to Israel’s downfall through Assyrian power.
- Micah** From the Southern Kingdom, Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah and Hosea. He predicted the fall of Samaria in the Northern Kingdom; piece by piece the entire kingdom fell to Assyria.
- Isaiah (Chpts.1-39)** Isaiah wrote during the stormy period marking the expansion of the Assyrian empire and the decline of the Northern Kingdom. Against Isaiah’s advice, King Ahaz tried to form an alliance with Assyria. Isaiah’s message was delivered in Jerusalem (capital of the Southern

Kingdom) and predicted the kingdom's fall. But Isaiah also included a message of hope with the foretelling of the coming of the Messiah.

Now we look at three additional prophets:

Zephaniah Zephaniah was probably related to the royal line since his prophecies show a much greater familiarity with court circles and current political issues. He prophesied during the reign of King Josiah who brought back God's order of worship to the Temple. Because pagan armies were encroaching on the Canaan territory, he warned of destruction which came at the hands of Babylonia.

Nahum Judah was threatened by the brutally cruel Assyrians, but Nahum predicted the fall of Nineveh (Assyria). Nineveh's wickedness, cruelty and brutality reached its peak under Ashurbanipal, the last great ruler of the Assyrian empire.

Habakkuk A contemporary of Jeremiah who lived shortly after Nahum, Habakkuk ministered in a time when Babylon was taking over the Near East from the fallen Assyrians. After King Josiah's death, the people had fallen back into evil ways. The prophet was inspired by God to deliver a message that both condemned evil and asked for trust in Yahweh's saving power.

VIDEO PRESENTATION

Presenter: Elizabeth Achtemeier

What is sinful about pride? How do these prophets understand the "day of the Lord"?

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL

Group I: Read Habakkuk 1:1-11. What is Habakkuk's complaint? What is God's answer?

Group II: Read Habakkuk 1:12-13; 2:6, 12, 15, 18. What is Habakkuk's complaint? What is God's answer?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD

Read Zephaniah 3:18-20. Discuss the promise of hope offered by the prophet. What part of this promise would bring comfort to you? In what do you find assurance?

HUMAN CONDITION

Things don't make sense. Wickedness and evil seem rampant. Who is accountable? Are we? How do we hold on to a belief that behind life is a grand purpose, a plan?

Identify things in today's culture that seem wicked or evil. Who is accountable?

MARK OF OBEDIENT COMMUNITY

The community of faith, moved by compassion, weeps over a broken, unheeding world.

Remember Who You Are: What makes me weep in today's world? What can I do about it?

Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you. Psalm 55:22 (TNIV)

CLOSING AND PRAYER

A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt
Put me to doing, put me to suffering
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
Exalted for thee or brought low for thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things
To thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Thou are mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
Let it be ratified in heaven. AMEN.

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Week 8: God's Anguish

GATHERING AND PRAYER

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Lament**

Theme Scripture: "O that my head were a spring of water, and my eyes a fountain of tears, so that I might weep day and night for the slain of my poor people! ---Jeremiah 9:1

How Can We Pray for One Another?

JEREMIAH

King Manasseh had kept peace in Judah by "licking the boots" of the Assyrian masters. The price was accepting worship of Assyrian gods into Jerusalem. Under the young king Josiah, there was talk of religious reformation. During repairs to the Temple, a book was discovered - probably Deuteronomy - and after reading this scripture, Josiah reinstated the observance of Passover. After Josiah's death, Judah moved backward toward destruction.

When other nations perish, their gods tend to disappear. When Judah perished, new faith rose from the ashes - it was the Lord's doing; His agent was Jeremiah. Despised and persecuted by his countrymen, Jeremiah combines tears with prophecy. Although this book is difficult to arrange chronologically or topically, his sermons indicate he faithfully declares that surrender to God's will is the only way to avoid calamity.

VIDEO PRESENTATION

Presenter: B. Davie Napier

Why does Jeremiah feel such intensity about his role? What does he mean by *repentance*?

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL: A Walk Through Jeremiah

- Jeremiah 1:5 God knows us before we are born!
2:7 God gifts trashed!
2:11 God's people "exchanged" their gods - do we?
2:18 Israel went to other lands (Egypt, Assyria) to seek alliance rather than putting trust in God - are we guilty of this also?
2:27 When trouble comes - we call out "save us"
3:1 Israel lived as a prostitute. Where have we heard that metaphor before?
3:19-20 God's pain: a betrayed husband; a disappointed, anguished parent.
Can we feel that pain?
4:1-2 God's promise upon return

Question: Does it matter what we call God or how we worship him so long as we are religious at heart?

To Jeremiah and Old Testament prophets, it does matter. All religions are not the same with respect to who God is or in terms of impact which worship and belief make upon life of a worshipper. ---Robert Davidson, *Daily Bible Studies – Jeremiah*

- 4:22 Parent/child motif – as parents, one of the most painful things is to watch a child make a dreadful mistake and nothing can be done.
- 5:1 Refrain of God’s promise to Abraham regarding Sodom: Genesis 18:27-32
- 5:15 Babylon’s conquest predicted
- 5:19 “serve foreign gods, you will serve foreigners.” This message is repeated, so perhaps it was delivered in various places.
- 6:6 Siege ramps: a way to conquer a walled city.
- 7:22-23 God’s reminder of the covenant
- 8:2 Punishment!
- 8:6 Excuses, excuses.....
- 10:1-5 Futility of idols
- 11:7-8 Israelite rebellion is nothing new
- 12:1 Jeremiah’s complaint regarding the ancient belief: the wicked do not prosper, and catastrophes are caused by sin.

Question: Do they? Are they? Why or why not?

- 12:14 God’s answer
- 13:17 Picture of broken-hearted parent

**Question: What feelings are brought to mind?
At what point does sin require the sinner to “pay” for mistakes?
What is the legal position regarding “sin”; when does absolution occur?**

- 17:10-12 What we do impacts and reflects on others. Why? How?
- 18:6 God is the potter, we are the clay
- 20:2 Jeremiah beaten; put in stocks. He was not to preach in the Temple; people were not listening. Despair begins to seep into Jeremiah. He had lambasted the entire population: rich, poor, high, low.

ENCOUNTER THE WORD A “Jeremiah” Time of Life

1. Have you experienced a difficult challenge which spiritually exhausted you or physically overwhelmed you? What helped you get through that time? What would you share with someone who is going through such experience?
2. Sometimes we have to do something because we think it is right even though there may be a cost involved. Where can we find courage to continue? What is the “rock” we can cling to? Is there a Scripture which comforts you?
3. What in our society/culture causes God to weep today? What causes you to weep?

HUMAN CONDITION

The community of faith, moved by compassion, weeps over a broken, unheeding world.

MARK OF OBEDIENT COMMUNITY

The obeying community remembers and is confident that God is working out God's purposes, and repents of its actions that contradict God's purposes.

Remember Who You Are: What makes me rejoice even when seemingly surrounded by sin and indifference?

A little *Heavenly Humor*: Many churches are now serving coffee after the sermon. Presumably this is to get the people thoroughly awake before they drive home.

CLOSING AND PRAYER “Spirit of the Living God”

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me,
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me,
Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me. AMEN

DISCIPLE 3
Remember Who You Are
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

Week 9: God Will Not Abandon

GATHERING AND PRAYER

Opening Prayer

Theme: **New Covenant**

Theme Scripture: “I will set my eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up, and not tear them down: I will plant them, and not pluck them up. I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.” Jeremiah 24:6-7

How Can We Pray for One Another?

(As a silent prayer, listen to a recording of “*Lord, I Lift Your Name on High*”)

JEREMIAH

Poor King Zedekiah! He was in a tough spot. He had already joined forces with the Egyptian rebellion against Babylon before he called Jeremiah for advice. Jeremiah’s advice to Zedekiah: Babylon was at this moment doing God’s bidding; yield to the Babylonians. Really??

VIDEO PRESENTATION

Presenter: Richard B. Wilke and James Fleming

What are some of the key historical events leading up to the time of Jeremiah?

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL: A Walk Through Jeremiah

- Jeremiah 23:14-15 By default, the prophets and religious leaders were responsible for the ungodliness. Do these have more responsibility? Why? Why not?
- 23:23 Just how close is God?
- 25 **Israel was in captivity for 70 years – about 2 generations**
- 25:29-26 God’s own judged first; roster of nations with Egypt and Babylon first
- 26 **Jeremiah is threatened with death; the Lord says, “Stand in the courtyard.” What do we know about the gates of the city?**
- 26:7-8 Priests and people seize Jeremiah
- 26:16 Why the change of heart ?
- 26:20-24 Other prophets were killed
- 27: 2 Jeremiah assumes yoke. **What does this represent? What yokes do we assume in life?**
- 28:1 Hananiah, false prophet, declares God will return all that has been taken; will break the yoke of Babylon....within 2 years. He died within in 2 months.
- 29:1 Jeremiah writes to the surviving elders and priests.

- In partners: what does he advise in vs 1-9; 10-14; 15-19; 20-23?**
- 31:1, 5, 8, After 70 years, God promises restoration
- 31:10 We see the shepherd motif again; **what would this promise have meant to the exiled Israelites?**
- 31:30 Rephrase. (From *The Message*: *When that time comes you won't hear the old proverb anymore.; Parents ate the green apples, their children got the stomachache. No, each person will pay for his own sin. You eat green apples, you're the one who gets sick. What is your understanding?*
- 32:2 Jeremiah imprisoned; Babylonian army is closing in on Jerusalem.
- 32:6 Jeremiah buys a field? You have got to be kidding! **Why?**
- 33:6,7 Promise!
- 33:11 **In what ways might this passage be of comfort to us in times of darkness and despair?**
- 34:2-3 Warning to Zedekiah. He had joined forces with Egypt against Babylon. Jeremiah prophesied that Babylon was doing God's will. Who to believe? Zedekiah ignored him.
- 34:12-16 The Lord says covenant is broken and grants "freedom." **When is freedom not really free?**
- 34:17 Results
- 36:22-24 Jeremiah's scroll is torn and burned. Contrast with King Josiah who tore his clothes and wept when part of The Law was found in the Temple.
- 36:15-16 Jeremiah beaten and put into prison
- 38:6 Jeremiah removed to a cistern
- 38:11-13 Rescue!
- 38:17-20 Zedekiah plea bargains with Jeremiah.
- 38:20 Prophecy fulfilled.
- 40:1-4 Jeremiah survives. **Do you find this remarkable after all he had been through? Why or why not?**

ENCOUNTER THE WORD: 70 Years of Exile

1. We often hear, "What I decide for me will have not effect on anyone else." Is this always true? What circumstances might falsify this statement?
2. Seventy years in exile is a long time. Children were born and grown before Israel was allowed to return to Jerusalem. In our own experience, Katrina created a sort of fallen city. People were displaced and relocated. Consider your own emotions and response to such a personal catastrophe: how would you think? Feel? React?
3. Overall, the experience of exile was an act of divine discipline. No matter how dire the predictions, the prophets did not speak without hope. How can we, as the Christian community, foster hope in today's world?

HUMAN CONDITION

We prefer to hear positive things even if they are false. Though our families and our communities may be falling apart, we ignore the warning signs and reject the messages we don't like.

MARK OF OBEDIENT COMMUNITY

The faithful community knows that its hope springs from its willingness to hear the word of the Lord and to trust that God will not abandon God's people.

In Romans 8:26-28: Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Remember Who You Are: Today, I will begin in these ways to rely on and rest in God's Spirit coming alongside me whenever I feel anxious or fearful:

A little *Heavenly Humor*:

The seven last words of the church: We never did it that way before.

CLOSING AND PRAYER

The season of thankfulness is upon us. We will close today with thankfulness for those things we hold near and dear. At the appropriate time, respond with your own blessing: family, husband, church, etc.

DISCIPLE 3
Remember Who You Are
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

Week 10: The Day of the Lord Has Come

GATHERING AND PRAYER

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Doom**

Theme Scripture: Your doom has come to you, O inhabitants of the land,
The time has come, the day is near –
Of tumult, not of reveling on the mountains....
See, the Day! See it comes! Your doom has gone out.
---Ezekiel 7:7, 10

How Can We Pray for One Another?

EZEKIEL

Judah was a small country and its educated and skilled citizens could not have been many. Tens of thousands were carried away in the attacks of Nebuchadnezzar – the great majority of all leading persons in the nation. The exiles were settled in villages and rural areas near Babylon itself. By modern standards their fate would have been easy. Unlike refugee camps where modern governments keep today's escapees and exiles imprisoned and under strict control, the Israelites were allowed to live normal lives and run their own small towns as long as they did not try to return to their homeland. Most of their children never knew any other home than that of exile! This great movement of the Israelites from the Promised Land was forever known as the "Diaspora" or "scattering." Despite the normal limits to movement, however, there was one interesting example of Jewish migration from Israel that seems to have been by choice. A number of documents have turned up in Southern Egypt.

Thus in the century after the exile, there were at least two major centers of Jewish life outside of Palestine itself. One was in Babylon and the other in Egypt. It would never again be possible to identify God's covenant and promise just with the land of Israel, or religious practice just in terms of loyalty to the temple in Jerusalem. A newer and more personal side of faith that looks beyond the temple, kingship, and land was needed. It is Ezekiel who begins this process among the exiles of Babylon.

The Prophet Ezekiel moved and spoke with a great deal of freedom and seemed to have been very well informed about what was going on back in Jerusalem. Most likely, he received word through travelers plus a first-hand knowledge of the temple from the days before he was exiled. He demonstrated strong tendencies toward psychic powers which includes dreams, trances, ecstasy and fantastic visions. He was not crazy, but skillfully tried to *recreate a sense of trust that God still worked as he always had*. God had been confined to the Temple, but Ezekiel now learns God can go wherever God wants to go. God can see anything; God sees everything!

---*Reading The Old Testament* by Lawrence Boadt

VIDEO PRESENTATION

Presenter: Katheryn Pfisterer Darr

What reason does Ezekiel give for God's refusal to destroy Israel? What is the basis for hope in the long run?

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL:

In groups, discuss the following Scriptures:

Ezekiel 8:1-5, Exodus 20: 1-4: Check Bible commentaries on the verses in Ezekiel. In what ways was the covenant broken?

Ezekiel 8:7-12, Exodus 20:1-4: Check Bible commentaries on the verses in Ezekiel. In what ways was the covenant broken?

Ezekiel 8:14-18, Deuteronomy 4:19 Check Bible Commentaries on the verses in Ezekiel. In what ways was the covenant broken?

Ezekiel 15:1-8, John 15:5-8 Explain the vine-branch connection. Why did Ezekiel proclaim Israel a "useless vine?"

ENCOUNTER THE WORD: Ezekiel 18: The Soul Who Sins Will Die

Ezekiel 18:5-9 What does this passage tell us about God?

Ezekiel 18:10-13 What does this passage tell us about God?

Ezekiel 18:14-18 What does this passage tell us about God?

Ezekiel 18:20 What does this passage tell us about our relationship with God?

HUMAN CONDITION

With tears and pain we discover our own ways judge us. We can't buy our way out. We can't blame anyone else. We are accountable.

What does this statement say about personal accountability?

MARK OF OBEDIENT COMMUNITY

The faithful community heeds the deep moral and religious warnings built into the fabric of the universe.

Remember Who You Are: In today's world there are wars and rumors of war. Fear saps our courage! To what can we cling? What will bring hope?

CLOSING AND PRAYER Read: Psalm 31

DISCIPLE 3
Remember Who You Are
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

Week 11: God Cleanses and Renews

GATHERING AND PRAYER

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Promise**

Theme Scripture:

“Mortal, can these bones live?” I answered, O Lord God, You know.” Then he said to me, “Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you and you shall live”
---Ezekiel 37:3-5

How Can We Pray for One Another?

EZEKIEL

It is interesting to note that God called Abram and Sarai to go from Ur to a promised land He would show them. Abram packed up his family and possessions and traveled to a land he did not know, where he knew no people, all because of his faith in God. There the promised was fulfilled, Abram and Sarai had a son and his descendants became “as numbered as the stars.” Now Abram’s descendants are carried back to the birth land of Abram – back to the Babylonian Empire, the land of Ur – but this time they are captives of a conquering country!

VIDEO PRESENTATION

Presenter: Katheryn Pfisterer Darr

What had Jerusalem’s inhabitants done that Ezekiel believed defiled the city and Temple? What was the prophet convinced had to happen before Jerusalem would be restored?

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL:

Ezekiel 33:12; 17-20

When we grieve, as the Israelites were doing, we often deny reality, express anger, blame God and others. Healing requires accepting reality. God never closes the door to turning back to him. When have you consciously redirected your life?

Ezekiel 37: 1-11

The Jewish people are scattered throughout the nations with no homeland and no hope. There can be several interpretations of what this vision means: Israel united as a national and a people (fulfilled with the reestablishment of the state of Israel in 1948), or this might be the fulfillment of the future national conversion of Israel to its Messiah when Jesus returns. What is your impression

of this passage? What does it say of God's power to forgive, to cleanse, to restore?

Ezekiel 8:40-48

Ezekiel's message dramatically changes to one of hope and resurrection. But, the temple described so carefully by Ezekiel has never been built. (Review Solomon's Temple) No Jewish temple meeting Ezekiel's specifications has ever been constructed on the temple mount. It is suggested this is a future Temple; yet why would its priesthood offer sacrificial animals? Discuss the OT purpose of sacrifices and their meaning. How is the practice of sacrifice symbolized in the NT with Christ's coming?

Look at Ezekiel's vision of Tribal Allotments on page 92 of the Study Manual. What would this promise of the rebuilt Temple and allotment of land mean to the exiled Israelites?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD: Ezekiel 34:1-3; 6; 9-11;

Again, we see the Shepherd-Sheep motif. We live in an uprooted society; some have been relocated to new places. We all have been transported into new life experiences. We cannot go home; we are exiles. What in our faith gives us moorings?

In our society we are surrounded by people who feel marginalized, cut-off, exiled. What can we do to help these exiles feel at home? To know of God's love and power?

When have you felt God's love and power lift you up or restore you? What can we do to help others feel the health and restorative power of that grace?

HUMAN CONDITION

How do we cope in exile? We didn't want to come. We don't feel at home. Sometimes we complain, sometimes we repent. No sense putting down roots or making friends. We plan to go home soon.

MARK OF OBEDIENT COMMUNITY

Obedient community turns exile into remembering. We rehearse our traditions. We claim our identity. We declare the God to whom we belong.

Remember Who You Are: What traditions help me remember the God to which I belong?

CLOSING AND PRAYER

DISCIPLE 3
Remember Who You Are
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

Week 12: God Will Save

GATHERING AND PRAYER

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Redeemer**

Theme Scripture: Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint. ---Isaiah 40:31

How Can We Pray for One Another?

ISAIAH

Since the great book of Isaiah covers nearly two centuries, this book covers perhaps three prophets: Isaiah of Jerusalem (1-39); Isaiah of the Exile (40-55) and Isaiah after the Exile (56-66). In this lesson we will look at Isaiah of the Exile: the bearer of good news to Judah that God is returning with the exiles. They have suffered long enough.

VIDEO PRESENTATION

Presenter: Hugh C. White

How would you define the word “servant”?

How would you define the concept of “servant-leader”?

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL: Isaiah 40-55: Book of Comfort

Isaiah 40:25-26	How would you answer these questions?
40:28:31	God answers
41:10	Do not fear...
42:10	Sing...
44:6	Who is the Lord?
44:15-19	Why idols are worthless
44:28	Cyrus, God’s shepherd, Persian King, a pagan, a fair and just man who is part of God’s plan. What do you find interesting about this?
46:4	God saves
46:9	God is God!
48:13	God’s power
48:17-19	If only.....
49:6	What charge is given Israel for the rest of humankind?
49:13	Provision for comfort
49:22	Grace extended to Gentiles

50:1 In the parent/child relationship, what is necessary to help children understand why some behavior is wrong? What about punishment? Does this cause the parent pain? Does it make the parent love the child any less? Why or why not? Is there a time a parent must step back and let the child learn through experience?

How can we contrast/compare “God the parent” and “we the child” and the hard lessons we learn in life?

What Scripture gives you comfort?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD: Isaiah 53:2-12

Read the passage aloud. Look for pictures and descriptions which prophesy Christ’s crucifixion.

What role does suffering play in emotional growth? In relational growth? In spiritual growth?

Is suffering necessary? Why or why not?

HUMAN CONDITION

We’ve lost everything. We’re suffering. No one seems to care. What is there to wait for? How can we trust that our circumstances will change?

MARK OF OBEDIENT COMMUNITY

The obeying community finds comfort in knowing God is never without new possibilities and trusts even while waiting for those possibilities.

Remember Who You Are: Have you had the experience of waiting for an answer to a problem or a situation which troubled your heart? What happened? How might God have been involved in the resolution?

CLOSING AND PRAYER

All things are possible to him who believes. ---Mark 9:3

DISCIPLE 3
Remember Who You Are
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

Week 13: God's Vision for a New World

GATHERING AND PRAYER

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Vision**

Theme Scripture:

And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord,
To minister to him, to love the name of the Lord,
And to be his servants,
All who keep the Sabbath, and do not profane it,
And hold fast my covenant ---
These I will bring to my holy mountain,
And make them joyful in my house of prayer.
---Isaiah 56:6-7

How Can We Pray for One Another?

ISAIAH

This Isaiah, the Third Isaiah, is the source of our knowledge of conditions in the land of Palestine after the return from exile in the last part of the book (chapters 56-66). The viewpoint of the writer is no longer that of someone in Babylon but one already back in the promised land. This writer continues to remind and admonish Israel about idols and sin, while urging the people to hope in the restoration of Jerusalem to its former glory and to make a new home not only for the exiles but for all peoples. There would no longer be a king; the priestly line took on governing concerns. The exiles, who only represented a handful return, to find a land where strangers lived, where the social and religious structure had totally collapsed. Those left behind had occupied the abandoned property and set up their own organization. Friction was inevitable!

VIDEO PRESENTATION

Presenter: Jin Hee Han

Listen to the presenter's message and consider how the Israelite's expectations of returning to Jerusalem would have changed from the promises they had received in exile. Where does the fault lie? With the receiver? With the one who gave the promise? In what ways do we expect more from God and are "disappointed" with what we receive?

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL: Isaiah 55-65: Book of Promise

HOLY FAST: Isaiah 56:1-2; 57:16-18; 58:6-7, 13-14

Describe the call to action given the people by the Prophet. How is this word still relevant to us even today?

SPIRITUAL INSIGHT: Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Proverbs 23:22;
Isaiah 58:12

Describe the spiritual insight encouraged by the Prophet by revisiting the Torah (Exodus and Deuteronomy), one of the books of Wisdom (Proverbs) and the charge given by the Prophet himself in Isaiah. How does this speak to us even today?

END TIME VISIONS: Isaiah 60:1-3; 10; 17-18; 66:22-23

Describe the vision presented by the Prophet of the coming future of Jerusalem. What is required of the people to bring this about? Does this have a message for us even today?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD: Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:16-21; Matthew 11:1-5

Jesus said the promise within the Scripture was fulfilled within the hearing of those in the synagogue that day. In what ways can we continue to live out the fulfillment of Jesus' words:

- In our group?
- In our church?
- In our community?
- What would be required of us? Prayer? Reconciliation? Hard work?
- How would this vision affect our daily lives?

When the heart harbors hope, the human spirit can achieve great things. **Remember Who You Are:** in what ways can you contribute toward this work of achieving God's vision for the future:

HUMAN CONDITION

When reality falls short of our expectations and our dreams are shattered by disappointment, we lose our balance and fall victim to despair.

MARK OF OBEDIENT COMMUNITY

The obedient community, fueled by vision and sustained by hope keeps the long view in mind but is faithful in the present.

Easy said! How is this to be accomplished? What advice would you give someone who is struggling to maintain hope? Is there a "lifeline" to grab?

CLOSING AND PRAYER

I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust." --- Psalm 91:2

DISCIPLE 3
Remember Who You Are
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

Week 13: God's Vision for a New World

GATHERING AND PRAYER

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Vision**

Theme Scripture:

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And to be his servants,
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CLOSING AND PRAYER

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DISCIPLE 3
Remember Who You Are
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

Week 14: God's City of Peace

GATHERING AND PRAYER

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Courage**

Theme Scripture:

My people, why should you be living in well-built houses while my Temple lies in ruins? Don't you see what is happening to you?....Now go up into hills, get lumber, and rebuild the Temple; then I will be please and will be worshiped as I should be. ---Haggai 4:4-5, 8

How Can We Pray for One Another?

HAGGAI

Haggai was a prophet, who along with Zechariah, encouraged the returned exiles to rebuild the temple. In 538 B.C. the conqueror of Babylon, Cyrus king of Persia, issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. Led by Zerubbabel (governor of Judah) about 50,000 Jews journeyed home and began work on the temple. Their success aroused the Samaritans and other neighbors who feared the political and religious implications of a rebuilt temple in a thriving Jewish state.

ZECHARIAH

Zechariah was not only a prophet but also a priest. He was born in Babylonia and was among those who returned to Judah in 538 B.C. under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua. Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai, but continued his ministry long after him.

VIDEO PRESENTATION

Presenter: David L. Peterson

We remember the Israelites were in exile for about 70 years. Judah is now not an independent nation but a precinct in the Persian Empire. What is the promise that comes with the rebuilding of the Temple? (Review the theme scripture). Why or why not is it strange for the Persian king Darius to provide some of the funds for rebuilding the Temple?

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL:

In pairs, read the following verses in Zechariah. Check your Bible commentary and the Study Manual (page 114) for additional information. Discuss with your partner the question and be ready to share with the whole group:

- 1:7-17 Who was the man standing in the myrtle trees and what did he represent?
What was the purpose of the measuring line (plumb line)?
- 1:18-21 What did the four horns represent?
- 2:1-5 Again we have the measuring line – why?
- 3:1-10 What does the removal of the filthy clothes mean? What is the Branch?
- 4:1-14 What did the lamp stand and two olive trees represent?
- 5:1-4 What was the flying scroll?
- 5:5-11 What does the basket measure?
- 6:1-8 Four chariots going each direction – what does this mean?

List the meaning of the visions on a white board; then discuss the overall message presented by the prophet. What meaning can we take from these visions for our lives today?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD: Zechariah 8:1-17

What does this passage tell us about God?

What does this passage tell us about God’s purposes and wishes for his people?

Reread verse 16-17: what message does this have for our world today?

HUMAN CONDITION

Faced with competing priorities, we tend to hedge: Times are not good. We have our own responsibilities. This is not the time to do for others. But the right word from the right leader might get our cooperation.

Competing priorities – we all have them! How do we decide?

MARK OF OBEDIENT COMMUNITY

The obedient faith community accepts the task God gives us for today as our immediate faith response.

Sometimes within the Disciple class, these statements may seem like we are “preaching to the choir” !

REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE: In what ways can I take my faith task outside the walls of the church? How can I serve my neighbor who may not know or understand God’s loving promise to us?

CLOSING AND PRAYER

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ---Romans 3:23

DISCIPLE 3
Remember Who You Are
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

Week 15: God Will Restore Zion

GATHERING AND PRAYER

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Restoration**

Theme Scripture: See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight – indeed, he is coming.
Malachi 3:1

How Can We Pray for One Another?

OBADIAH, JOEL, MALACHI

Obadiah means “servant (or worshipper) of the Lord.” Date of this writing is disputed, but most probably written during the Babylonian attacks on Jerusalem.

Joel, a common name, contains no references to datable historical events, but a good case can be made for being written in the post-exilic period after the rebuilding of the temple in 516 B.C. Joel speaks of the land *once before* (the exile?) being totally destroyed (2:17-19, 27; 3:19) Joel sees the massive locust plague and severe drought devastating Judah as a foreshadowing of the “great and dreadful day of the Lord.”

Malachi means “my messenger.” It most probably was written during the post-exilic period around the rebuilding of the temple. Malachi condemns the imperfect and careless performance of service in the temple, the marrying of pagans and taking divorce lightly. He warns of swift punishment by God.

VIDEO PRESENTATION

Presenter: Thomas L. Hoyt, Jr.

The writings of Obadiah, Joel, Malachi, Zechariah have influence on New Testament teaching. What did the New Testament writers see in their prophecies to help them explain their beliefs about Jesus?

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL:

In groups, read the assigned prophet and look for answers to the question. Be prepared to share your answers with the whole group.

- Group 1** **Obadiah.** Date: perhaps during the time of Jeremiah, during the attacks on Jerusalem by Babylon.
Resources: Study Manual pg. 118, study Bible, Obadiah 12:1-4, 15; Ezekiel 35:5-6.
Question: Give reasons for why God’s wrath against Edom was so great.

Group 2 **Joel.** Date: written during the post-exilic period. God hears our pleas, but what is he most interested in? Our ritual of worship? Our true inner attitudes?
Resources: Study Manual pg. 118-119; Joel 1:1-4, 6, 13; 3:17-18; 6:17
Question: We still suffer natural calamities just as did Israel. What is God's promise to Israel for the faithful? To us today?

Group 3 **Malachi.** Date: The Temple has been rebuilt.
Resources: Study Manual pg. 120-21; Malachi 1:12-14; 2:7-8; 3:6-9
Question: In what ways do leaders, pastors, teachers have greater responsibility? How might God declare the church is "robbing" him today?

Group 4 **Zechariah 9-14.** Date: A priest who wrote during the post-exilic period.
Resources: Study Manual pg. 122-23; Zechariah 9:9, 12; 12:10; 13:6
Question: What messianic images do you see in these verses? Zechariah 11:12 mentions thirty pieces of silver (the price for a slave). How is this prophesy fulfilled?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD: Zechariah 14:8-11

MARK OF OBEDIENT COMMUNITY

The obedient community lives hope-filled, Spirit-filled, vision-guided because God is faithful.

1. In what ways does this passage of Zechariah confirm the mark of obedient community?
Hope-filled _____
Spirit-filled _____
Vision-guided _____
2. Mother Teresa said to preach the Gospel everyday, to all you can, and if necessary, use words. How can we effectively offer the source of our hope to others?

REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE: If God sent a prophet to call His people back to faith, what might the prophet say to me? What do I need to do to repair this area of my relationship with God?

CLOSING AND PRAYER

"Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty. Malachi 3:7

DISCIPLE 3
Remember Who You Are
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

Week 16: God's Mission for Israel

GATHERING AND PRAYER

Opening Prayer

Theme: **Witness**

Theme Scripture:

"Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you"

--- Jonah 3:2

How Can We Pray for One Another?

JONAH

What would you consider "sin city": New York City, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, 15th & Prospect in Kansas City, MO? How would you respond to a call to take the Gospel to one of these places? Jonah was given such task: Assyria, a great evil empire.

VIDEO PRESENTATION

Presenter: David Noel Freedman

Review the relationship between Israel and Assyria. What is a prophet's primary obligation and how did Jonah violate it? What was the function of the miracles of the big fish and the bush?

SCRIPTURE AND STUDY MANUAL:

In groups, review Jonah's story, then retell the story to the whole class:

Group 1 Jonah 1 - Ordered to Nineveh – Runs to Tarshish

Group 2 Jonah 3 - Preaching in Nineveh

Group 3 Jonah 4 – Anger at the Lord's Compassion

Questions for whole group: What does Nineveh represent in God's plan for mankind?
We want revenge; we are angry when it doesn't come. Jonah was angry with God --- why?

Read verse 4:10: What is God's message?

ENCOUNTER THE WORD: What do the Prophets teach us?

- God's laws are sacred; they are *not* "suggestions."
- God judges sin
- God is more merciful than we can imagine
- God expects purity of faith though we experience "peer pressure."
- God challenges us to share His word

Question: How can we start a conversation about faith with another person?

- Ask, "Do you ever think about spiritual things?"
- Talk about your relationship with Christ and what it has meant to you.
- Make it personal without preaching. Use "I" and "we," not "you."
- Keep Christ central. They need to follow Him, not you!
- Suggested Prayer of Commitment to Jesus Christ:

Lord Jesus Christ,

I am sorry for the things I have done wrong in my life. [Ask forgiveness for anything particular that is on your conscience]. Please forgive me. I now turn from everything which I know is wrong.

Thank you that you died on the cross for me so that I could be forgiven and set free.

Thank you that you offer forgiveness and the gift of your Spirit. I now receive that gift.

Please come into my life by your Holy Spirit to be with me forever.

Thank you, Lord Jesus. Amen.

HUMAN CONDITION

It's hard to think kindly of those who have treated us cruelly, caused us misery. And to be asked to be bearer of a message that will result in their forgiveness – unthinkable. We don't want to go.

MARK OF OBEDIENT COMMUNITY

The obeying community offers the compassionate, forgiving love of God to all persons, and leaves the judging to God.

How can it be that we who have experienced God's forgiveness might not want others to know the compassionate forgiveness of God?

REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE: In what ways can I be a "Jonah" ?

CLOSING AND PRAYER

END OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES FOR DISCIPLE 3