

# *Prepare the Way*

## For Baptism and Membership

### Leader's Guide

#### How To Unpack *Prepare the Way*

Good news! There are young people in your congregation who are considering confessing their faith, being baptized, and becoming members of your congregation! And you are considering using *Prepare the Way* to help them come to that basic faith decision on which so much of the rest of their lives may be based!

What next? How do you use this resource?

First, look at the three components.

Start with this book, the *Leader's Guide*. Glance over the Contents to see what it offers—help on planning and scheduling, resources, and session plans for six units (up to twelve sessions) of class sessions, plus a separate lock-in design. As you review the way the material is organized, and as you reflect on the size, age-range, and personality of the group you will lead, you will be able to plan the best kind of schedule for your setting. Pick and choose.

The *Discovery Book* is for the learners. Its activities, study helps, and articles tie in with the session plans in the *Leader's Guides*. Inside each *Discovery Book* is a *Faith Partner's Guide*, with its own separate cover, and held in by a single staple.

To separate the two books, carefully bend open the staple, pull out the *Faith Partner's Guide*, and either fold the staple back down or pull it out from behind.

The *Faith Partner's Guide* is a handbook that mentors and students can use in a mentoring program. We call it a Faith Partners program because that's what it is—an adult mentor and a young person working together in a faith partnership. They share their stories, they learn together, they become friends. For more information on setting up a Faith Partners mentoring program, see p. 4.

The *Discovery Book* and the *Faith Partner's Guide* are combined because both are integral to the program. In most instances you will want each young person to have both books.

You may also purchase the *Faith Partner's Guide* separately. That way, you don't have to buy both books for the adult faith partners—just the Guide they need.

If you aren't conducting a Faith Partners program at this time, you can either

- pull out the books and save them for another time
- keep the books together and use the *Faith Partner's Guide* as a supplemental resource for your learners. Both books cover the same general themes, but in different ways.

If you only have one or two candidates for baptism in a given season, use the mentoring model instead of the classroom model. Then the *Faith Partner's Guide* will be your primary resource, and you can pull in extra material from the *Leader's Guide* and *Discovery Book* as you see fit.

There's a lot here. It's flexible, and adaptable to your situation. You'll find a lot of Bible study and Disciples heritage sprinkled throughout. As you work with the young people, you will be helping them prepare the way for that great moment in their faith journey when they say, "I believe in Jesus as the Christ, the son of the living God."

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Portions of the course have been adapted from previous membership curriculum series published by Christian Board of Publication: *Community of the Called* by Narka K. and James S. Ryan (1981) and *Called to Be Disciples: Worshiping, Witnessing, Serving* by W. Alan Smith.

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# Involving Mentors in the Membership Class Process

In Matthew 28:18–20 we read: “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”

We know it takes more than six weeks to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Not all of our children and youth are dedicated and raised in the church. Most have very little Christian education or experience in the Christian faith. Many of us have had these young people in pastor’s classes, baptized them, and watched their families become inactive again.

Some of us have discovered that children and youth who have contact with a mature adult as a mentor to walk with them toward their baptism and beyond feel more a part of the church and are more likely to grow in faith and service. Search Institute discovered that mature Christians (those with a deepening relationship with God and those who reach out with compassion to others) had parents who talked to them about God. Another contributing factor was having an adult other than a parent share their faith.

It is encouraging to children and youth to know other adults at worship and in other aspects of the Christian life. Worship becomes more welcoming and enjoyable for them when they are greeted by an adult friend; and they have a model for Christian living in and outside of the church.

There are many ways to integrate mentors into the baptism process. Many of us are indebted to William Willimon’s *Making Disciples* program, designed for confirmation. Many pastors have used mentoring in various ways for the membership process. You may have found

something that works for you. The flexibility of this material encourages you to establish a system that best meets the needs of your congregation and youth. Some suggestions include:

- 12 week pastor’s class; meet with mentor each week as well (you will need to pick and choose from the materials so the youth and mentors are not overwhelmed.)

## OR

- Begin mentor process 6 months to 1 year before baptism (this offers more flexibility for mentors and youth to schedule meetings, and gives them greater opportunity to get to know each other.)

## AND

Begin 6–12 weeks of membership classes right before baptism.

## OR

- Have 2–3 sessions of learning centers throughout the year in conjunction with mentor process (Schedule 2 Saturdays where youth meet with the pastor(s).) Use the materials you consider most important from the pastor’s class curriculum. Close the process with an overnight retreat to discuss baptism and church membership. It’s nice to have mentors join the youth for a meal and worship.

## OR

- Begin with a pastor’s class and baptism, then assign a mentor for the year following baptism to help integrate the youth into the Body of Christ.

The longer the mentors and youth have to work through this process, the more flexible it becomes. Those with a full year may get together once or twice a month and skip a month in busy times. Those with less time will need to meet more often. You may wish to pick and choose sessions to emphasize if you plan to meet for 6 weeks only. We encourage you to do what works best for your congregation and setting.

When extending a call to mentors, please do so prayerfully. These people will be role models to young people and witnesses to the Christian faith. They will need to be open to questions that the youth have. We are more aware than ever of people who misuse their positions and authority with young people. Be careful to follow your child-protection policy, and encourage pairs to meet in public places or with a spouse or friend nearby.

We realize that youth of various ages will use this material. You will need to consider the age and maturity of each baptism candidate in choosing activities and discussion questions. This material is to serve as a guide in the process.

This process may seem like a great deal of effort; but both mentors and youth grow and benefit from such relationships. It’s a model for all aspects of the church where relationships are made, gifts are discovered and developed, and both grow as disciples of Jesus Christ.

This author encourages you to call mentors to ministry on a one-on-one basis, based on maturity, gifts, and matching them with particular youth, rather than extending a request to the entire congregation. Once all your mentors are called, then invite them to a meeting to go over the materials and to lay out a vision for the process. Another way to call mentors is to invite several people who you believe would be strong mentors to an initial meeting to look at curriculum and the mentor process. At the end of the mentor meeting, ask them to prayerfully consider whether they can make this commitment this year and whom they might serve as mentor. The Spirit has moved as it will throughout history. I dare not limit it in this process!

The next page includes a possible agenda for your initial meeting with mentors.

(Continued on p. 80)



# Prepare the Way

*Prepare the way* were the words of a prophet who called an exiled people to hope—God would lead them on a great highway through the desert wilderness, a highway to home (Isaiah 40:4–11).

*Prepare the way*, cried John the Baptist in another wilderness, as he called Judeans to repent and be baptized, so their sins might be forgiven. He challenged the people to act mercifully and justly, for the Messiah was coming, and God's new reign was at hand.

*Prepare the way*. In another wilderness, on the American frontier, pioneer evangelists tried to carry the gospel message to a mostly unchurched population. Walter Scott, one such evangelist, would ride into town and engage the children in conversation. He would teach them a simple version of what God required, in words similar to those of John the Baptist, using the five fingers of his hand. Then he would invite them to bring their parents to hear more. The five fingers can be summarized as Faith, Repentance, Baptism, Forgiveness, and Receiving the Holy Spirit.

*Prepare the way*. This theme helps shape this series of resources to help pastors and others equip young people and adults for baptism and church membership. A vital ministry of the church today is to help children, youth, and adults hear and respond to the gospel message, to accept Jesus as the Christ, to be baptized, and to become part of the faith community. This faith commitment will be a first major step on their faith journey.

As a leader, you, too, have a way to prepare. How will you design a program of preparation for baptism and membership that will best fit your needs? Nobody teaches in a vacuum. What adaptations have to be made for the age level, skills, abilities, and personalities of those who will come to learn? What scheduling decisions will have to be made? What commitments of time and energy will be devoted to the task—both for the pastor/leader and for other leaders and mentors?

*Prepare the Way* has these major components:

- Six units that offer a basic teaching-learning plan for a baptism/membership class. After an introductory unit, the next five units follow the “Five-Finger Exercise” of Walter Scott. Each unit is designed to be taught in two sessions, for a twelve-

session class. Each unit contains instructions on how to condense the unit into a single session.

- A lock-in design. A retreat or lock-in offers rich possibilities for intensive teaching/learning and community building. This covers different material than the regular units.

- “Faith Partners,” a mentoring program, with a handbook that both mentors and participants can use. Ask elders or other church leaders to work with the candidates on an informal basis. There is material here, too, for twelve sessions. One copy of the *Faith Partner's Guide* is included in each *Discovery Book*. Individual copies for adult mentors are available for purchase separately.

- Ideas for year-around scheduling. If we take to heart the church's ministry of evangelism, what more can we do during the year to prepare a candidate for making a decision? What happens after the candidate makes his or her confession of faith? Here are suggestions on how the process of welcoming new members continues through the service of baptism and beyond.

- A *Discovery Book* for children and younger youth to use during sessions and in between sessions, as well. A copy of the *Faith Partner's* mentoring guide is sandwiched in the middle of each *Discovery Book*, and can be easily removed by opening a single staple.

*Prepare the Way* is the product of the faith, efforts, and creativity of many people. At Christian Board of Publication, we were aware of the need to produce new resources for baptism and membership. We of the editorial staff sought out through phone interviews and the Internet what ministers wanted and what they were already doing to prepare people for baptism and membership. In the process of gathering lots of data, we discovered that a group of pastors in Kansas was developing resources for their own use in Lent of 1997, following Scott's five-finger exercise. Contacts were made, and a decision was made—we could combine efforts. Christian Board of Publication would receive the offerings of the grassroots project (tall grass with deep roots—it's from the central Kansas prairie), and organize and adapt it to a larger audience. Many thanks go to Neil Engle, Rick Gates, Ed Linberg, Jim Lorensen, Robin McGonigle, Lee and Jane Parker, Kim Blakley Rea, and Barb Runge for bringing this to birth.



## Who is the leader?

A course such as this is often called a pastor's class, and usually it is accurately named. We call this a baptism/membership class, to put the focus on the goal and direction of the class, rather than on the leader.

In multiple staff churches, associate pastors or Christian education directors are "naturals" for leading this course. Or the staff may work as a team, using a shared leadership approach. This can provide a good model of collegiality to the youth, with each staff member contributing from his or her areas of skill and talent.

Some congregations do not have full-time pastoral leadership, and others are "between" ministers, and without a full-time interim minister. In such a case, an elder or a team of elders who relate well with young people can certainly lead this course! In such settings, emphasize the Faith Partners part of the program, mixed with group sessions as the size of the group allows.

## Scheduling membership classes

Studies show that congregations in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) most frequently schedule church membership classes during Lent, a season in which the themes of preparation and commitment are prominent in the life of the church. The Lenten season, being nearly seven weeks in length and culminating in the celebration of Easter, also provides an adequate period of time in which to conduct the classes and prepare those persons who will desire to be baptized on Easter Sunday.

Other times in the church year are also appropriate for scheduling membership classes. Eastertide, the weeks between Easter Sunday and Pentecost Sunday, ties in well, with its emphasis on the resurrection to new life and the Holy Spirit. Advent, the season of preparation for the coming of Christ into the world, could be a meaningful time to focus on personal preparation. Your congregation may have its own traditional times, as well, in which such classes have been conducted.

Although there may be more traditional seasons when church membership classes have been scheduled, any time there are persons seeking to understand what it means to follow Christ as his disciples is an appropriate time to use these materials.

## Models for scheduling

### FOR TWELVE SESSIONS

*Prepare the Way* is designed as a twelve-session course, adaptable to six. We also recommend a lock-in at or near the end of the course, as a celebration and summary of the work done earlier.

For a twelve-session course, plan to begin ten weeks before the Sunday that the young people will be confessing their faith. The lock-in can occur the weekend they will make their confession. Unit Six, the final two sessions, can come as a follow-up experience to being baptized. The schedule, then, would look like this:

The class is commissioned in Sunday worship

Unit One, Session One

Unit One, Session Two

Unit Two, Session One

Unit Two, Session Two

Unit Three, Session One

Unit Three, Session Two

Unit Four, Session One

Unit Four, Session Two

Unit Five, Session One

Unit Five, Session Two

Lock-in, followed by worship, with confession

Baptism (may be on same Sunday as above, or next)

Unit Six, Session One

Unit Six, Session Two

The schedule can be altered so that all the baptism/membership class units are taught before the time of confession of faith and baptism.

### FOR SIX-TO-TWELVE SESSIONS

While twelve sessions is the preferred model for church membership classes, adaptations can be made to fit the needs of your congregation. Each session plan contains advice on how to condense a two-session unit into a single session. If twelve sessions seems too long and six not enough, review the session plans and see which units would work best as single sessions in your context. Then set up a seven-to-eleven session schedule that works for you.

When scheduling only six sessions, be selective in the number of activities suggested in each of the twelve sessions in this Leader's Guide. Read through each session carefully, keeping in mind the developmental levels and interests of the group members as you plan.



Again, we recommend five units be taught before confession/baptism, and Unit 6 as a follow-up experience.

The units of this course have been organized to lead the students through a process designed to help them learn about what it means to accept the call to follow Christ and live a life of discipleship. In your planning for six meetings, try to respect the design of the material as much as possible.

The brief worship experiences at the end of each session have been included to help the church membership class time serve as a time of spiritual preparation for discipleship. As you adapt the suggested session plans, include intentional worship times.

This course celebrates our heritage as Disciples. We are a church with a rich heritage that deserves attention. At the same time, a major portion of our heritage has been our consistent witness to the unity of the body of Christ. We who see ourselves as disciples as well as Disciples are a people of unity. You will find opportunities here to learn about other faiths, as well.

## A retreat model

Many congregations have conducted church membership classes in a retreat setting either at the church, a camp, or another site away from the church. The benefits of a retreat for building community and establishing an environment for effective learning are well documented. The material in this course lends itself to a retreat model.

The following design suggests a way to organize a two-day weekend retreat using this material.

### First day

|          |                            |
|----------|----------------------------|
| 2 hours  | Group-building and Unit 1  |
| 1/2 hour | Supper                     |
| 2 hours  | Unit 2                     |
| 1 hour   | Group recreation and snack |
| 1/2 hour | Closing worship            |

### Second day

|          |                                |
|----------|--------------------------------|
| 1 hour   | Breakfast and cleanup          |
| 2 hours  | Unit 3                         |
| 1/2 hour | Group recreation and free time |
| 1/2 hour | Lunch                          |
| 2 hours  | Unit 4                         |
| 1/2 hour | Break                          |
| 2 hours  | Unit 5                         |
| 1 hour   | Supper and cleanup             |
| 1/2 hour | Closing worship                |

Confessions of faith and baptism would occur sometime after the retreat, and Unit 6 would be held after the baptisms.

A three-day retreat would make it possible for the participants to complete the entire course in one weekend, by adding selected activities from the lock-in.

If you choose to do the baptism/membership class in a retreat, consider making the event a “family retreat.” Parents/caregivers and mentors or faith partners play an important role in the whole process. Since faith partners serve as a link between the students and the congregation, their sharing what their faith has meant to them would be a valuable element of the retreat.

## Mini-retreats

Holding two or three events scattered throughout the year is another option. These events could incorporate most of a Saturday, or a Sunday afternoon and early evening. One of the writers of this course set up learning centers around the themes selected for each mini-retreat. Or the retreat schedule could be adapted. At any rate, plan a special session to cover baptism and communion just before the time when the young people might make their confessions of faith.

## Individualized instruction

Sometimes there may be only one or two candidates in a given season. The session plans in the *Leader's Guide* assume larger groups, of at least three or more. This is where the combined *Discovery Book/Faith Partner's Guide* comes in handy! In essence, we recommend that the pastor act as mentor or faith partner. Of course, the leader should follow the safe-church policies and meet in public places or with other adults nearby.

In addition to or in place of some of the activities in the *Faith Partner's Guide*, the leader can pull in activities from the *Leader's Guide* and the *Discovery Book* as well.

It is a different style of teaching/learning than that which happens in a group, but it can have special depth and meaning to the one or two candidates to become “faith partners” with their minister.



## A year-long program

Membership training can be a year-long effort. As noted in the Faith Partners section, mentoring can be a long-term process. You can also include other short courses. Here's an example, based upon an Easter confession/baptism.

*Pentecost*—Faith Partners program begins for next year's candidates. This is noted in church.

*Midsummer*—The candidates (and perhaps new members, as well) have a work-day to experience Christian service, or go on a field trip to visit and learn about an N.B.A. ministry, Homeland Ministries site, or regional program.

*Fall*—six-to-twelve weeks on *Heritage Trek* or other study.

*Late winter, spring*—six-to-twelve weeks using *Prepare the Way*, culminating with confession of faith and baptism.

Or, schedule membership training one Saturday or Sunday afternoon a month through the year, utilizing the mini-retreat model above, and adding field trips, mission projects, and other short courses.

## Recruiting participants

Participants will likely be children and youth who have been associated with the congregation through the church school program, vacation Bible school, youth fellowship, friends or family members. Begin identifying interested persons in this age group by examining the church school rolls for those children in grades four and above. List those who are not now baptized members of the congregation but have expressed an interest in the church through their regular attendance and participation in church activities. While checking the membership rolls, look for any other family members at home who might be prospects as well. Invite church members, especially church school teachers, music directors, or youth fellowship sponsors, to suggest the names of persons who might be interested in the classes.

For several weeks before the classes begin, put announcements in the church newsletter and worship bulletins giving the dates and times of the classes and the content of the course. Use a registration form to help you plan for the class size. Also include in the newsletter requests for the congregation's prayers for the classes.

After potential candidates have been identified, the pastor can send a personal letter to each person. Describe the goal of the membership class and invite each person to join in exploring his or her personal response to follow Christ. Other helpful information to

cover in the letter: the beginning date of the classes, the number and length of sessions, and a brief statement of the course content and how it will be approached.

Send a separate letter to the parents/caregivers and family members of these potential candidates. The entire family is important in these membership classes. Informing the family about what is to be expected of the candidates, as well as the family's role during this time of preparation, may help develop a supportive community at home as well as at church.

Show the importance of this part of the church's program by a personal visit from the pastor or other person(s) involved in planning for the membership classes. These visits personalize the general invitation in the letters and newsletter. They suggest that participation in the membership classes is the beginning of a relationship with other persons, thus making becoming a part of the body of Christ (at least in a formal way) more inviting.

Plan a meeting with the parents/caregivers, the students, and the faith partners to describe the details of the classes. All these persons will become partners in the learner's growth in the Christian faith over the next few weeks, indeed, over the next few years. Use this meeting as a time to establish a relationship that can become an important part of the faith development of the participants and the congregation. Distribute the *Discovery Books*. Discuss the Rite of Commitment, page 77.

## Accommodating a variety of learning styles

People learn in different ways! Traditional, verbal reading, studying, and discussing works fine for some people. Others learn better through art, music, or bodily movement. *Prepare the Way* offers a mix of activities to appeal to a wide variety of learning (and teaching) styles.

Keep this in mind as you plan your sessions. What works well for one group might be a disaster in another. Adapt activities to help them fit the needs, interests, and abilities of the candidates. Consider making learning centers, where, for example, Kevin and Megan can do computer Bible study, Sarah and Jacob work on a banner, and the rest of the group can rehearse a skit.

Also keep in mind your own talents and interests, and the methods of teaching you most enjoy. Go with your strengths, as well as the strengths of the learners. They will catch your enthusiasm as you teach them to harmonize a song, write in Greek, or create a video.



## Using the personal computer as a teaching tool

Several activities in this course suggest the use of a personal computer (either a PC or a Mac) as a tool to help in the teaching process. Obviously, if you don't have one available, skip those activities. But if you do, some exciting opportunities await.

First of all, assess your class size and the computer resources available to you. A computer becomes less effective as a teaching tool as the size of the group grows, if it is used in a total group activity. However, a larger group can still use it effectively in a learning center approach. Have the computer oriented activity available for individuals or groups of two, three, or four, while other learners participate in other activities. Or, set up multiple learning centers to involve the whole class. Only a few congregations will have multiple computers available on an ongoing basis. But it is possible to borrow computers (and the expertise of their owners) for one or two sessions.

When you decide the best way to combine kids and computers, what next? How do the computers become tools to teach discipleship? Here are some ways:

- Educational games. Use care in selecting games that are interesting, suitable for the age level, or theologically or biblically appropriate. There are some out there, either oriented around a specific Bible story, or reviewing biblical knowledge. Christian Board of Publication publishes a listing of software it distributes.

- Educational programs that provide "tours" of areas of biblical knowledge, such as explorations of biblical Jerusalem. Again, check with Christian Board of Publication for titles.

- Bible research programs that you may use in your own Bible study and sermon preparation. Using such programs with youth can make concordance work much more lively and powerful. Programs that include multiple translations and original languages can offer fascinating new glimpses into the diversity and complexity of the Bible.

- The Internet, or World Wide Web. Whether you're visiting Disciples offices in Indianapolis or want to see the art in the Vatican, or going to local congregations in Kentucky or Australia, monasteries in New Mexico, or mission projects in a great urban center, colleges and seminaries, or National Benevolent Association facilities, the Internet can offer a field trip almost at the speed of light. WWW.Disciples.org is the place to start (unless your own congregation has a site, and you want to start there), but linking from there can take you far.

Because Web addresses may change from time to time, be sure to connect with particular sites before the class session. Then store them as "favorite places" or "bookmarks" for quick access.

## Making storyboards

Several sessions suggest the use of storyboards—framed sheets of poster board that include a scripture passage with words left out. The words are written on separate cards that can be held in place by magnetic tape.

Here are basic instructions on how to make a storyboard:

Supplies needed: 1 sheet of heavy cardboard (24" x 36" or 60cm x 1m); 2 sheets of poster board (24" x 36" or 60cm x 1m); stapler; 20' (6m) of colorful cloth tape; magnetic tape; markers.

Before the session, mount the pieces of poster board onto the cardboard with staples around the edges. Cover the staples with cloth tape. Write the scripture on the poster board, leaving blank spaces for the italicized words.

Write the italicized words on separate poster board and cut out each one. Place a strip of magnetic tape on each word and a strip on the big board in the blank where it belongs.

You can make a simpler version by using just the poster board and self-adhesive posting notes, but the first version is more durable and looks better. (This activity was created by Frank Everett and is used with permission.)





# Unit One: Let's Get Acquainted

by Neil Engle

## Reflections

The gospel of Jesus Christ has a personal as well as social dimension. Indeed, our lives as Christians are combinations of individual study and public witness, of individually being the body of Christ, and also being a part of Christ's body. Our faith is always personal, but never private.

Participation in a baptism/membership class such as this one offers candidates an opportunity to explore both the personal and social aspects of following Jesus Christ. Through discussions, homework, learning activities, service projects, games, and worship, members of the class will discover more about God and themselves than they would studying on their own. They will be called upon to look inward as well as outward.

As we study the "Five-Finger Exercise" of Walter Scott, both faith dimensions will emerge. While each student will be able to personally "carry" the five fingers, the message of those five fingers is meant to be shared. In a biography of Walter Scott, we are told that after riding into a village, Scott proceeded to address a group of children. After detailing each of the five fingers, he had them repeat and repeat, "Faith, repentance, baptism, remission of sins, gifts of the Holy Spirit." We are told "he continued until they all could repeat it in concert, like a column of multiplication table.... He then said: 'Children, now run home—don't forget what is on your fingers, and tell your parents that a man will preach the gospel tonight at the schoolhouse, as you have it on the five fingers of your hands.' Away went the children, in great glee, repeating as they went...—and soon the story was rehearsed in nearly every house of the village and neighborhood...."<sup>1</sup>

We hear the gospel of Jesus Christ in the context of the church, yet we believe at a deep and personal level. Repentance involves introspection, yet many of the sins of which we repent are social or relational in character. We enter the waters of Christian baptism alone, yet we emerge from those waters as members of the body of Christ. God's forgiveness touches the dark corners of our lives—corners known only to us—yet we live as a community of the forgiven. The Holy Spirit empowers us as individual Christians, yet it is also the life force of our corporate experience.

Grab hold of these five fingers. Let them "do the walking" through the personal and social lives of the youth and the leaders.

**Prayer of Preparation:** Eternal God, as we begin our study together, bless us with your presence, and guide us through your Holy Spirit. Instill in the students and leaders a renewed desire to discover the joys and the challenges of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> William Baxter, *Life of Elder Walter Scott*. Bosworth, Chase & Hall, 1874, p. 185.



**During this session participants may:**

- begin to develop a sense of community within the class
- review basic facts about and names of the books of the Bible

## Let's get acquainted with each other

### 1a Taking pictures

Greet the participants and welcome them to a journey that will take them toward a very important decision—the decision about confessing Jesus as the Christ, being baptized, and becoming a member of the church. Take a picture of each participant with an instant camera. Later, mount the pictures on poster board or a bulletin board, to be displayed in a prominent place in the church, such as the narthex or foyer.

### 2a Taking a tour of the course

Make sure that everyone has a schedule of when the sessions meet. Give a brief overview of the course, and offer “sneak previews” of some of the more interesting activities. State any expectations about homework or special projects. Be sure everyone is clear about how this course fits into the process of becoming a church member. Help them realize that the process is not an automatic one—they will have an opportunity to make a choice, and it will be their choice to make. Be sure they know where their possible confession of faith and baptism fits into your local congregation's worship calendar.

### 3a Making name tags

Distribute supplies for making name tags, such as construction paper, yarn or pins, and markers. Invite each student to make a name tag that includes a symbol that describes him or herself.

### 4a Meeting ourselves

Distribute the *Discovery Books*, and have the participants put their names on them. Explain that the books will help guide their work together and will serve as faith journals that they can keep. Have them find “Who Am I?”, p. 6, and write their answers. Invite them to discuss their answers as a group. What are some interests, insights, and physical traits that people have in common? What makes each one unique?

## Let's get acquainted with the Bible

### 5a Surveying biblical knowledge

Still using the *Discovery Book*, go to “What's in the Bible?” p. 7. Read the questions, fill in the answers, and discuss them together. What is the level of the group's basic biblical knowledge?

### Tips for the Leader

Ahead of time, make photocopies of “Bible Rap,” p. 16. Gather and cut lumber (or other material) for Activity 7a. Plan a route for the Bible tour for Activity 8a.

During the session, pay attention to what the candidates know and don't know, and use that information to shape future lessons.

**Key Scripture: John 3:16**

### SUPPLIES:

- 1a instant camera, film
- 2a course schedule
- 3a construction paper, yarn or pins, markers
- 4a *Discovery Book: Who Am I?*
- 5a Bibles, *Discovery Book: What's in the Bible?*
- 6a photocopies of “Bible Rap,” p. 16
- 7a blocks of wood, markers, stopwatch





# Session 1a

## Combining Sessions 1a and 1b

- Omit 3a, 6a, and 7a
- Put the names of biblical books on index cards, and have the students arrange them in order
- Combine 9a and 9b at the end of the combined session
- Omit 3b or 4b
- Condense the mission fest
- Assign *Discovery Book* pages on “Hear” and “Believe” as homework for Session 2

## 6a Doing a Bible rap

Distribute photocopies of “Bible Rap,” p. 16. Read through it together to get the sense of flow, then experiment with doing it as a rap. If the group gets into it, divide lines for different people to deliver, appoint somebody to make sound effects, and maybe even tape it on an audiocassette or video!

## 7a Shuffling the New Testament

This activity is best done with lumber. Start with 14 feet (4 meters) of 2” x 4” (5 cm x 10 cm) lumber. Ahead of time, saw it into twenty-seven 6” (15 cm) blocks, and sand down really rough edges. Bring the blocks to the class and have the students write the name of one New Testament book on each of the twenty-seven blocks. Have them write vertically on the narrow side—if there’s a spelling error, just have them write it correctly on the other side. (If making the wooden blocks is too big a project, you can have them write the books of the Bible on pieces of cardboard or posterboard—but it isn’t nearly as much fun.)

When all the twenty-seven blocks have been labeled, place them on a table with all the titles right side up. Scramble the order of the blocks.

Using a watch or stopwatch, time the students as they work to place all twenty-seven books of the New Testament in correct order. On their first attempt, let them use the contents page of their Bibles for a guideline.

As the weeks progress, challenge the young people to better their time. You may want to try forming teams that can compete with one another. This will be a good physical activity to plug in when students get restless.

## 8a Taking a Bible tour

As a group (or in two smaller groups with another adult leader) tour the church to look for the places and ways that Bibles are used. Visit Sunday school classrooms and note how different classes may use the Bible differently. Stop in the library or church office and have the young people look at various translations and Bible reference works. Plan the tour to end in the sanctuary, and gather around the pulpit Bible. Ask someone to find John 3:16, and have everyone read it aloud in unison.

## 9a Praying together

Help the young people recognize that prayer is friend-to-friend conversation with God, and that thanksgiving is a major element of prayer. Work together to generate a prayer, by saying, “We thank you, God, for...” and pointing to class members to have them respond with things or people that they appreciate. Then hold hands in a circle, and offer a prayer of thanks for each student by name, and for the Bible.



**During this session participants may:**

- review knowledge of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ
- be able to recite Walter Scott's "Five-Finger Exercise"

**Let's get acquainted with Jesus Christ**



# Session 1b

## 1b Focusing on God's love

Recall the use of John 3:16 last session and ask the young people to find the passage in their Bibles. Discuss different ways the passage could be paraphrased or restated, but still contain the same essential meaning. Have them each choose a way of expressing the passage that they like, and say it aloud, substituting their names for "the world."

## 2b Reviewing what we know about Jesus

Arrange candidates into groups of two or three and assign each group at least one of the questions in "Meeting Jesus Christ" in the *Discovery Book*.

Ask the groups of two or three to share answers to their questions with the rest of the class.

## 3b Introducing Jesus to a space alien

Announce that a flying saucer has landed in a nearby field, and a representative from Vega IV has come to your church to learn about the faith and beliefs of the earth people who gather there. The alien wishes to interview the membership class about who Jesus Christ is or was.

If possible, have a visitor with an alien mask come in to ask questions. If not, you can interview the group so that you can deliver a message to the alien. Ask (or have the alien ask): *From your review earlier, what are the most important things you would say about Jesus? What were some key events in the life of Jesus? What makes us think that Jesus came from God? How is Jesus Christ real to us today?*

## 4b Creating a gospel

Building upon the alien's visit, challenge the young people to name what they would include if they had to write their own gospel to send back to Vega IV. Mark four categories on newsprint or chalkboard: Birth and Early Years, Ministry of Teaching and Healing, The Last Week, and Death and Resurrection. (You may choose to divide the four categories among two or four teams.) Ask the young people to tell what stories they remember in each category, without using their Bibles for reference. List on the newsprint or chalkboard the stories they recall.

**Key Scripture: Acts 1:8**

### SUPPLIES:

- 1b Bibles
- 2b Bibles, *Discovery Book*: Meeting Jesus Christ
- 3b Bibles, intergalactic visitor (optional)
- 4b newsprint or chalkboard, marker
- 5b globe or world map
- 6b *Discovery Book*: Jeremy and His Five Fingers, paper, pens or markers





# Session 1b



Let's get acquainted with the Disciples of Christ

## 5b Tracing the spread of the church

Use a globe or a world map to illustrate where Christianity first started and how it spread to different parts of the world. Mention Pentecost as a starting point of the church in Jerusalem, and read Acts 2:8. Be sure to explain that the early church spread in many directions—through the Near East into Africa, India, and eastern Europe, as well as western Europe. Follow the story of how Christians carried the gospel with them when they came to new lands, and how our church, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), began as a new church in North America.

## 6b Reading a story

Read together “Jeremy and his Five Fingers” in the *Discovery Book*. (Ask for volunteers to read aloud, but be sensitive to those with reading difficulties.) Discuss the questions at the end of the story.

Some groups may want to act out the story.

Give out sheets of paper, and have the candidates trace around their hands and fill in “five fingers” categories from the story. Explain that the future sessions of this baptism/membership course will explain what each step means.

Repeat and practice the Five-Finger Exercise.

## 7b Having a mission fest

Make resources available that interpret who we are as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). These can include excerpts from interpretive videos, brochures, and posters from the different units of the denomination, a current *Yearbook & Directory*, and maybe guest leaders who can tell about their involvement with the larger church. Be sure the young people know where their regional (and area, if any) offices are, and where people from your region hold their summer camping program.

Either you or a guest can then describe the mission of your congregation. In what special ways does it minister and witness to your community? What opportunities are there for young people to get involved in the mission of your congregation? (This is a good lead-in for planning and promoting an optional field trip to learn more about your congregation's involvement in the community, or to engage in service and mission.)



## 8b Looking ahead

Remind the young people of the time and place for the next session. Encourage them to discuss what they are learning with their parents or caregivers. Invite them to ask questions of family members or church members about what the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) means to them. If you are combining units into single sessions, assign the pages “Hear” and “Believe” in the *Discovery Book* as homework.

## 9b Praying together

Form a closing circle. Say together the Lord’s Prayer as it is customarily recited in your congregation. Or learn and sing the West Indian version of “Our Father, Which Art in Heaven,” (*Chalice Hymnal* 308).

### *For next time*

Are you planning homework assignments, or will there be time in class to do the work?

Arrange for any guest leaders you might select to help tell the story of your congregation’s heritage and mission.



## Old Testament Bible Rap

Genesis tells us how the world began.  
Exodus, the story of when Israel ran.  
Leviticus: do this, don't do that.  
Numbers, tells you where the people were at.  
Deuteronomy. What? (*soft, then louder each time*)  
Deuteronomy. What?  
Deuteronomy. What?  
Deuteronomy! Oh!

Joshua and Judges, they're laying down the truth.  
And then there is a story of a lady named Ruth.  
First and Second Samuel, First and Second Kings,  
First and Second Chronicles, let the history ring!  
Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Job.  
If you want to know the Lord, all you got to do is probe:  
The B-I-B-L-E. (*loud*)  
The B-I-B-L-E. (*softer*)

Psalms and Proverbs, let the poetry roll,  
Ecclesiastes tells about a troubled soul.  
Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations,  
tell about the history of the ancient nations.  
Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, and Amos.  
They are "minor" prophets, but their words are famous.  
Obadiah. What? (*soft, then louder each time*)  
Obadiah. What?  
Obadiah. What?  
Obadiah! Oh!  
Oh my! Obadiah!

Jonah got swallowed in the belly of a whale.  
Micah and Nahum, their stories make us pale.  
Habakkuk, Zephaniah,  
Haggai, Zechariah,  
Malachi, and we'll say 'Bye.

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