

Teaching Aids

SESSIONS 1–4

Tenebrae Spiritual Practice

Use this guide to introduce and lead the Tenebrae Spiritual Practice during Connect to God.

Introduction

Tenebrae is Latin for “darkness.” Christians hold special Tenebrae services where the Passion story is told while gradually extinguishing candles, ending the service in darkness. While darkness has historically been a symbol for sin and death, it is also a powerful metaphor for times when we face our fears or receive insight difficult to see by daylight, and it is where resurrection (the birth of new life) begins.

Overview

- **Candles:** Arrange five candles on a table as a central altar in the room. Begin with all five lit for session 1; four lit for session 2; three lit for session 3; two lit for session 4; and one lit for session 5. Each week an additional candle is extinguished after the prayer.
- **Confessional Prayer:** Confessional prayers allow us to think about how we might change to follow God’s commands and Jesus’ example more closely. They are prayers that say we are sorry for the ways we fall short and we are looking for ways to do better. The way we pray will vary each session.
- **Assurance of Pardon:** The practice closes with an Assurance of Pardon offered by the teacher. These words offer an assurance of our forgiveness and of the love of God for us.



Script

1. Offer an introduction to the Tenebrae practice, drawing from the Introduction and Overview above.
2. Dim lights and invite youth to quiet their minds and bodies.
3. Engage in a prayer of confession (may be aloud, may be a silent action youth do individually or together) as described in Connect to God.
4. Ask a volunteer to extinguish one candle.
5. Offer the Assurance of Pardon by reading the last three lines from the Psalm 86 Teaching Poster. Then say:
Friends, believe the good news of God’s love and forgiveness. Thanks be to God! (Youth may join you in saying “Thanks be to God!”)

SESSION 1
Hosanna Sign

Make a copy for each youth to use during Explore (Respond).



HOSANNA

SESSIONS 1–6

Franciscan Benediction

May God bless you with discomfort

at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships
so that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger

at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people
so that you may work for justice, freedom, and peace.

May God bless you with tears

to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger, and war
so that you may reach out your hand
to comfort them and turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness

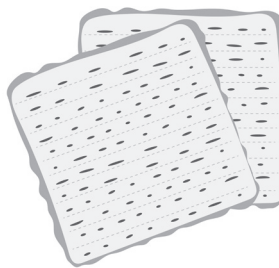
to believe that you can make a difference in the world
so that you can do what others claim cannot be done—
to bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor.

SESSION 3

Unleavened Bread Recipe

Ingredients

- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup / 73 g shortening (packed well)
- 3 cups / 660 g flour
- 1 egg
- 2 tsp / 10 ml baking powder
- 1 cup / 201 g sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp / 2.5 ml salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup / 120 ml milk



Directions:

Mix shortening, flour, egg, and baking powder, and then add sugar, salt, and milk (similar to making cookies). Divide into four parts. Roll out each part and put on a greased and floured baking sheet. Score lightly ($\frac{1}{2}$ in / 1.27 cm squares will yield about 80 pieces). Bake at 350° F / 175° C for 8–10 minutes. Cool and break apart.

SESSION 9

"Israel Versus Samaria" History

Read during the Explore (Peace Pursuit).

It is hard to say exactly how and when the disagreement began. It seems that as long as the two kingdoms existed, conflict existed between them. Once upon a time, they were all part of the same group—the 12 tribes of Israel brought into the Promised Land. The people of God. But after King Solomon died, the kingdom of Israel split in two: Judah in the south, Samaria to the north.

Judean Jews looked down on Samaritan Jews because their kings were lenient with marriage outside the faith. They sometimes allowed worship of idols along with worship of God. When Samaria was conquered by another country, Judah was not sympathetic. The two kingdoms developed different ways of worshiping. The temple (the dwelling place of God) was in Jerusalem, in the southern kingdom. But the northern kingdom decided to build their own temple. Samaritans said the northern temple was the dwelling place of God, not the temple in Jerusalem. By Jesus' day, this conflict had been going on for hundreds of years. They seemed doomed to disagree and dislike one another forever.

SESSION 3

Last Supper Readers Theater

Make a copy for each youth. Ask for volunteers for Narrator and Jesus. The rest of the group can read the Disciples part together.

Narrator: The day of the Passover feast had arrived. Jesus' disciples asked him,

Disciples: Where do you want us to prepare the Passover meal?

Jesus: *(to two of the disciples)* Go into the city, where you will meet a man carrying a jar of water. Follow him, and when he goes into a house, say to the owner, "Our teacher wants to know if you have a room where he can eat the Passover meal with his disciples." The owner will take you upstairs and show you a large room furnished and ready for you to use. Prepare the meal there.

Narrator: The two disciples went into the city and found everything just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover meal. While Jesus and the 12 disciples were eating together that evening, he said,

Jesus: The one who will betray me is now eating with me.

Disciples: You surely don't mean me!

Jesus: It is one of you 12 men who is eating from this dish with me. The Son of Man will die, just as the Scriptures say.

(Jesus takes some bread in his hands, blesses it, breaks it, and then gives it to his disciples.)

Take this. It is my body.

(Jesus picks up a cup, gives thanks to God, and gives it to his disciples. They all drink some.)

This is my blood, which is poured out for many people. From now on I will not drink any wine until I drink new wine in God's kingdom.

Narrator: Jesus and the disciples sang a hymn and went to the Mount of Olives.



SESSION 4

In Their Shoes

Cut into eight cards for use in Explore (Collaborate). Let each group choose one to three cards, the number depending on the number of groups in your class, so that all cards are used. Ask youth to read the scripture referenced on the card and then answer the three discussion questions.

<p>Peter Mark 14:29, 66–72</p> <p>SHINE LIVING IN GOD'S LIGHT</p>	<p>Barabbas Mark 15:7–11, 15</p> <p>SHINE LIVING IN GOD'S LIGHT</p>
<p>Man with Sword Mark 14:47–48</p> <p>SHINE LIVING IN GOD'S LIGHT</p>	<p>Simon Mark 15:20–22</p> <p>SHINE LIVING IN GOD'S LIGHT</p>
<p>Women at the Cross Mark 15:40</p> <p>SHINE LIVING IN GOD'S LIGHT</p>	<p>James and John Mark 13:3, 32–37; 14:37–41</p> <p>SHINE LIVING IN GOD'S LIGHT</p>
<p>Judas Mark 14:6–11, 43–46</p> <p>SHINE LIVING IN GOD'S LIGHT</p>	<p>Joseph Mark 15:42–43, 45–46</p> <p>SHINE LIVING IN GOD'S LIGHT</p>

SESSION 4

Theophilus Wilson Article

Make a copy for each youth to read during Explore (Peace Pursuit).

January 23, 2024

Daily News

FREE AFTER 28 YEARS

Imagine walking out of prison for the first time after not seeing the outside world for 28 long years. The last time you were free, you were a teenager; now you're almost 50 years old. And the worst part: you spent all these years incarcerated while knowing you were innocent.

This is the story of Theophilus Wilson, who was accused of killing three people in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, as a teenager. He was found guilty of murder and spent nearly 30 years in prison. Deeper investigation found that misconduct by prosecutors, an inadequate defense team, and false testimony given by witnesses combined to cost Wilson almost three decades of his life.

After many years, the witness who testified against Wilson admitted he had provided false testimony. He'd done this as part of a deal to dodge the death penalty and possibly gain his release. Forensic specialists confirmed that evidence contradicted

his testimony, and Wilson's conviction was overturned.

Wilson is the twelfth person declared innocent and released because of the work of the Philadelphia Conviction Integrity Unit (CIU). The CIU investigates and reviews convicted offenders' claims of innocence and wrongful conviction. CIU chief Patricia Cummings called upon the court not just to free Wilson, but also to offer him a full apology. "No words can show . . . what we put Mr. Wilson through. What we put his family through," Cummings lamented.

When the judge declared Wilson free to go, cries of joy filled the courtroom. Wilson's many family and friends rushed to embrace him and one another. His mom declared it a beautiful day, expressing her gratitude to God. Wilson, meanwhile, had others on his mind: **"Now we've got to go back and get the other guys," he declared. "There's a lot of innocent people in prison."**

Source: *The Digital Wise*, with help from Aman Tiwari

SESSION 4

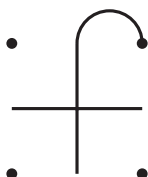
How to Draw a Labyrinth

Have copies available for youth to use during Connect to God.



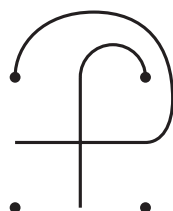
Step 1

Draw a cross and add four dots, one on each imaginary corner of a square.



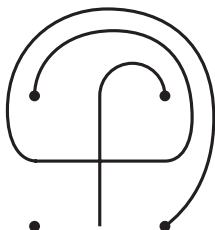
Step 2

Connect the top of the vertical line with the upper right dot with a curved line.



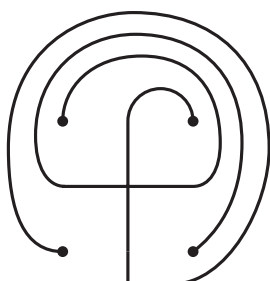
Step 3

Connect the right tip of the horizontal line with the upper left dot using a curved line that goes above the first one drawn.



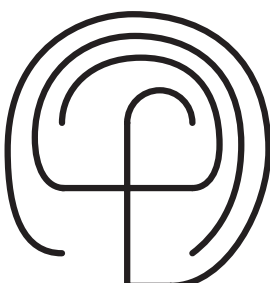
Step 4

Connect the left tip of the horizontal line to the lower right dot using an even larger curved line.



Step 5

Extend the bottom of the vertical line to make it longer. Connect the tip to the dot on the lower left, using an even larger curved line.



Step 6

Trace with marker to make lines bold.

SESSION 6

"Jesus' Ascension Story" Scramble

Copy and cut along solid lines to create strips for use in Encounter (The Story). Shuffle the strips and have each youth draw one, read it, and then work with others to put the story into the correct order.

For 40 days after Jesus had suffered and died, he proved in many ways that he had risen from the dead.
He appeared to his apostles and spoke to them about God's kingdom. While he was still with them, he said:
"Don't leave Jerusalem yet. Wait here for the Father to give you the Holy Spirit, just as I told you he has promised to do. John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."
While the apostles were still with Jesus, they asked him,
"Lord, are you now going to give Israel its own king again?"
Jesus' followers still wondered if Jesus had come to make them a mighty nation. But Jesus said that they need not worry about such things. Instead he told them:
"The Holy Spirit will come upon you and give you power. Then you will tell everyone about me in Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria, and everywhere around the world."
After Jesus had said this and while they were still watching, he was taken up into a cloud. They could not see him, but as he went up, they kept looking up into the sky.
Suddenly two men dressed in white clothes were standing beside them. They said,
"Why are you men from Galilee standing here and looking up into the sky? Jesus has been taken to heaven. But he will come back in the same way that you have seen him go."
Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem. They met often for prayer along with Mary, mother of Jesus; his brothers; and a group of other women and men.
They waited for the Holy Spirit to come.

SESSION 7

Pentecost Readers Theater

Provide each youth with a copy for use in Encounter (The Story). Assign roles of Narrator 1, Narrator 2, Pilgrim 1, Pilgrim 2, Pilgrim 3, and Peter to volunteers. In a smaller group, roles can be combined (just have one narrator, for example), or youth may read more than one part if necessary. The whole group can be the Crowd.

Narrator 1: When the Feast of Pentecost came, the disciples were all together in one place. Without warning, there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force—no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building.

Narrator 2: Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks, and they started speaking in a number of different languages as the Spirit prompted them.

Narrator 1: There were many Jews staying in Jerusalem just then, devout pilgrims from all over the world. When they heard the sound, they came on the run. Then when they heard, one after another, their own mother tongues being spoken, they were thunderstruck. They couldn't for the life of them figure out what was going on, and kept saying,

All Pilgrims: Aren't these all Galileans? How come we're hearing them talk in our various mother tongues?

Pilgrim 1: Parthians, Medes, and Elamites;

Pilgrim 2: visitors from Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia,

Pilgrim 3: Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia,

Pilgrim 1: Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene;

Pilgrim 2: immigrants from Rome, both Jews and proselytes;

Pilgrim 3: even Cretans and Arabs!

All Pilgrims: They're speaking our languages, describing God's mighty works!

Narrator 2: Their heads were spinning; they couldn't make head or tail of any of it. They talked back and forth, confused.

All Pilgrims: What's going on here?

Narrator 1: That's when Peter stood up and, backed by the other eleven, spoke out with bold urgency:

Peter: Fellow Jews, all of you who are visiting Jerusalem, listen carefully . . .

Narrator 2: Peter went on preaching for a long time, teaching with authority about how what was happening was connected to the words of the prophet Joel. He testified about Jesus, finishing by saying these pointed words to the crowd:

Peter: All Israel, then, know this: There's no longer room for doubt—God made him Master and Messiah, this Jesus whom you killed on a cross.

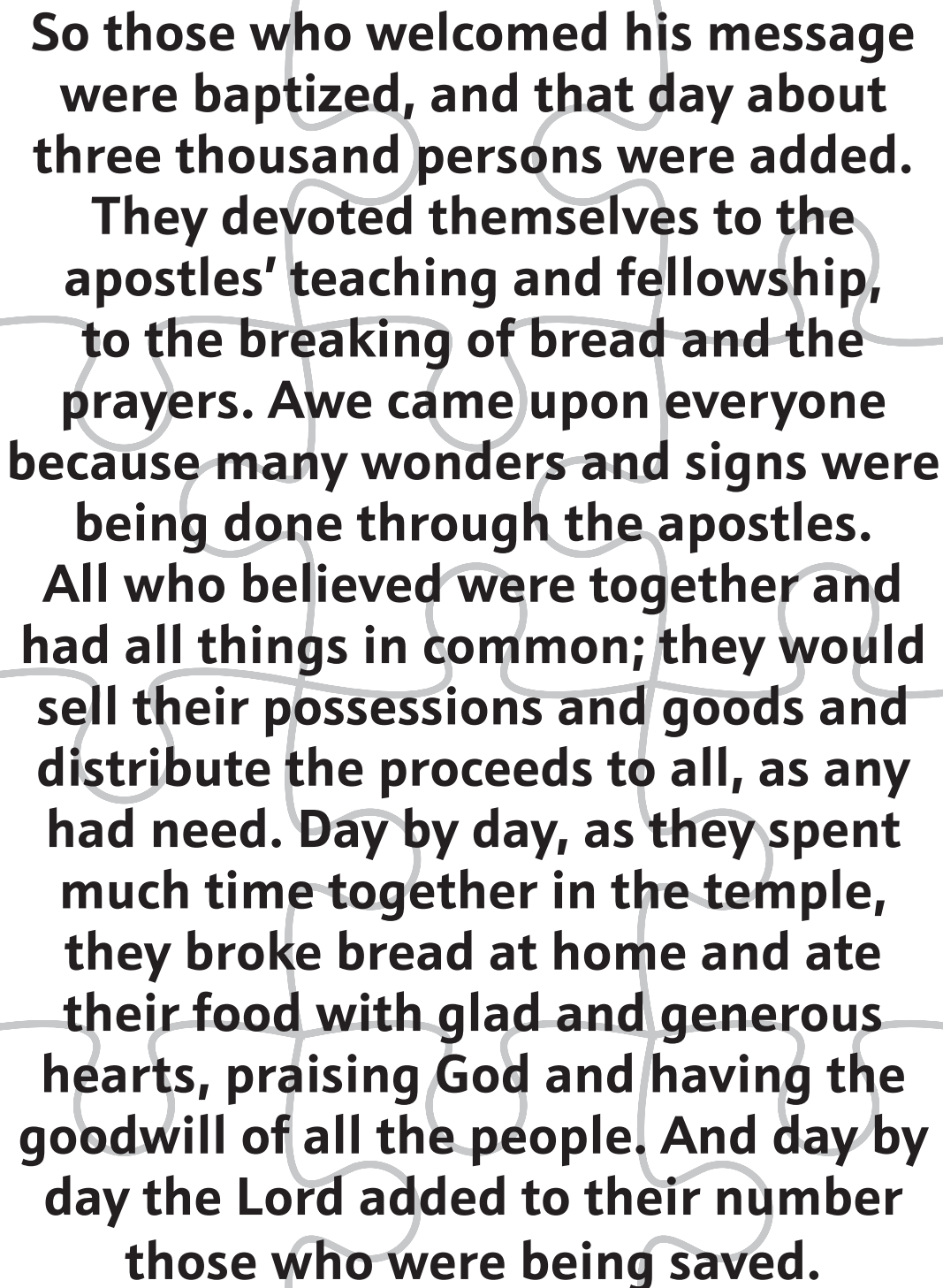
Narrator 1: Peter's words cut them to their core.

Crowd: (*to Peter and the apostles*) Brothers! Brothers! So now what do we do?

Peter: Change your life. Repent. Turn to God and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, so your sins are forgiven. Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is given to you and your children, but also to all who are far away—whomever, in fact, our God invites.

SESSION 8
Scripture Puzzle

Cut apart the puzzle outline for use in Encounter (The Story). Distribute different pieces to different youth. Work together as a group to assemble the puzzle and then read the scripture passage.



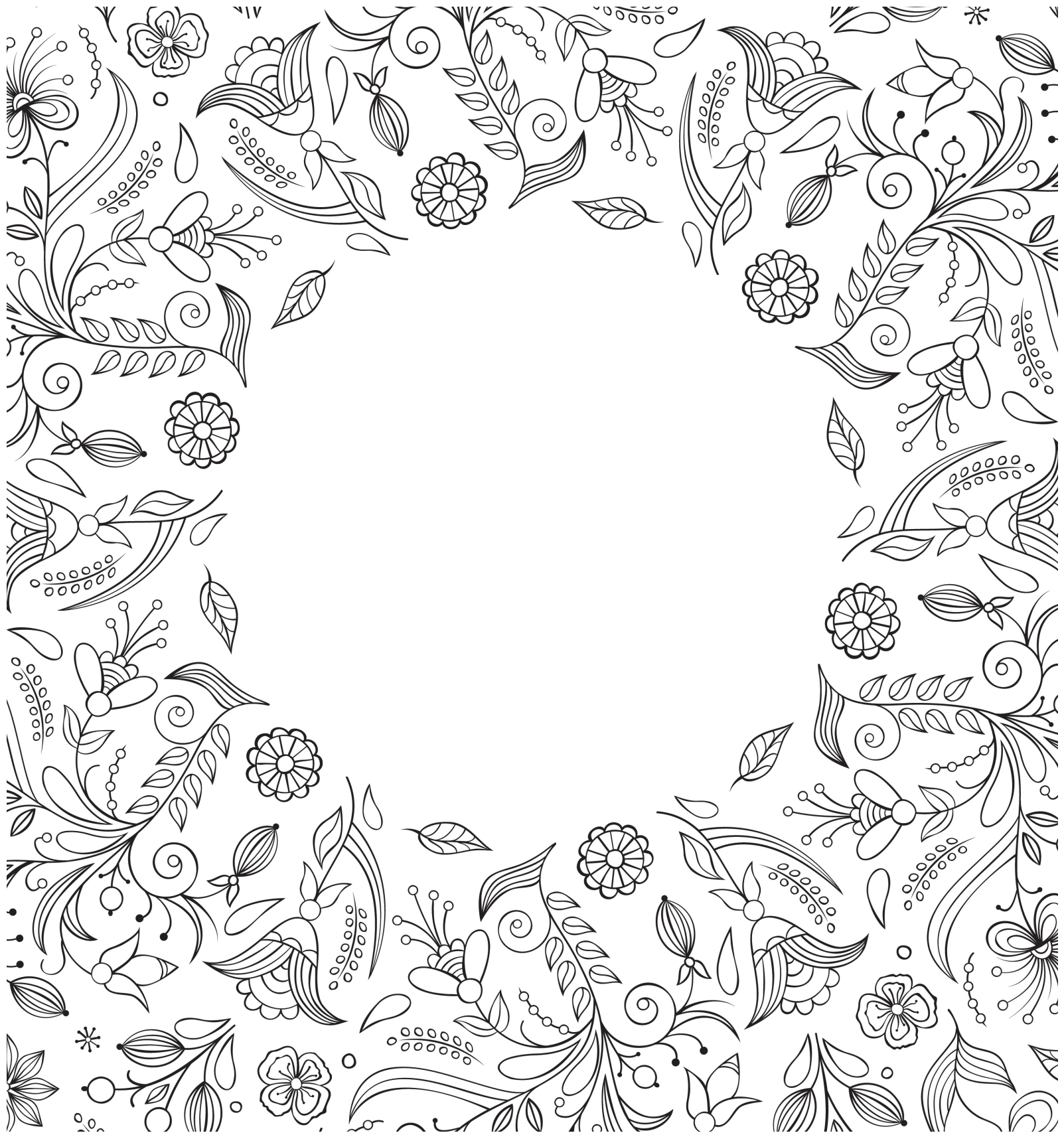
So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

—Acts 2:41–47 (NRSVue)

SHINE
LIVING IN GOD'S LIGHT

SESSION 11
"Included" Coloring Sheet

Provide one copy for each youth to use with the Explore (Peace Pursuit) activity.



SESSION 12

Hospitality Scenarios

Read to the whole group or cut apart and distribute to different small groups of youth to discuss as part of Encounter (Live It). If you break into smaller groups (advisable if your group is bigger than 10–12), bring youth back together to share their scenarios and ideas with the larger group.

Imagine you are on a sports team or part of a music ensemble and a new player/musician joins the team/group. Their first language is not English. They are struggling to understand, and it is impacting their participation. What might you do to show hospitality to this new participant?

Your church is participating in a program that houses people experiencing homelessness in your building during a cold week in the winter. Twenty-five men and women who've been moving from church to church every week for months now will be arriving at your church tomorrow. What things could you do to show hospitality to these guests?

Imagine that another group has started sitting at the table your group always sits at for lunch. What response would honor the practice of hospitality?

SESSION 13

"Paul and the Corinthians" Readers Theater

Print three copies, one for each reader.

Reader 1: Paul went from Athens to Corinth to share the good news about Jesus.

Reader 2: There, he met Aquila and Priscilla. They were tentmakers, like him. So he stayed and worked with them.

Reader 3: His friends Silas and Timothy came to Corinth from Macedonia. Then Paul spent all his time in the synagogue talking about Jesus.

Reader 1: The Jewish people there opposed him,

Reader 2: so he preached only to the Gentiles.

Reader 3: Many who heard Paul speak believed in Jesus, and they were baptized.

Readers 1 & 2: We believe!

Reader 3: After Paul left Corinth, he wrote letters to encourage the church.

Reader 1: (*opening an imaginary letter and reading*) Brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given to the churches in Macedonia. They have suffered a great deal. But in their suffering, their joy was more than full.

Reader 2: Even though they were very poor, they gave very freely. I tell you that they gave as much as they could.

Reader 3: In fact, they gave even more than they could.

Reader 2: Do you really want to give? Right now you have plenty in order to take care of what they need. Then they will have plenty to take care of what you need.

Reader 3: The goal is to even things out. Here's something to remember:

Reader 1: The one who plants only a little will gather only a little. And the one who plants a lot will gather a lot.

Reader 2: Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give.

Reader 3: You shouldn't give if you don't want to.

Reader 1: You shouldn't give because you are forced to.

All Readers: God loves a cheerful giver!