



UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST in the PHILIPPINES



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND NURTURE MONTH
SEPTEMBER 2020

CELEBRATION GUIDE

THEME: “BRINGING GOOD NEWS TO THE MASSES IN THESE CHANGING TIMES”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It's Christian Education and Nurture Month, once again! The year 2020 has been very challenging for all of us. The pandemic caused by COVID19 brought fear, anxiety and turmoil to all aspects of our lives. Moreover, we have to contain ourselves to the safety of our homes to prevent infection while on the other hand, we need to continue our economic activities to sustain our needs and of the whole community.

The challenge of this time is so enormous that even our faith and mission as a church is tested. The church must strengthen its conviction and amplify its call for a healthy, peaceful and abundant life for all. It is during these situations that the cause of Jesus Christ can be best exemplified by taking care of the sick, feeding the hungry, making the blind see and setting the captives free.

We have more reasons to celebrate than grieve. For one, we need to celebrate our faith in God that helps us go through these depressing times with hope. We need to celebrate life that opens to opportunities of selflessness and compassion for others. We need to celebrate relationships that help us cope and made us realize our interconnectedness with other creatures and the rest of the world.

To help us celebrate life and faith, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines come up with the production of a celebration guide for Christian Education and Nurture Month. We are fortunate to have tapped people to help us in this endeavor. We express our gratitude to our church workers who shared their talent, time and dedication so that this material may be made available for church use.

For preparing the meditations:

Bishop Ligaya F. San Francisco - Bishop assigned to Northwest Mindanao Jurisdiction (NWMJ)

CL. Lalaine S. Castillo - Church Worker from Agusan District Conference (ADC), Southeast Mindanao Jurisdictional Area (SEMJA)

For preparing the liturgies:

Rev. Bernadette S. Curan - Church Worker from Central Mindanao Annual Conference (CMAC), Northwest Mindanao Jurisdiction (NWMJ)

Rev. Renee Rose Isaac - Church Worker from North Eastern Leyte Biliran Conference (NELBICON), East Visayas Jurisdiction (EVJ)

We hope and pray that though things and situations may seem abnormal, our celebration can still bring us together in spirit. May we all gracefully adapt to the "new normal" situations that we find ourselves into. With God's help we will overcome!

LLCDM-CEN

LITURGIES

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION SUNDAY

September 6, 2020

WORDS TO PONDER

"Christian Education is a process of handing down the faith and enabling the members to grow and help transform the world in response to the mission of the church. Thus, its foremost task is in equipping women and men, children and youth, in local churches, in the development of critical, moral and religious attitudes rooted in indigenous creative values of a Filipino cultural heritage and proclaimed by the good news of Jesus Christ."

CEN Report During GA 1990

PRELUDE

(Gong or Budyong sound Three (3) times)

PROCESSIONAL OF THE WORSHIP FACILITATORS

THE ENTRANCE OF THE SYMBOLS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION and NURTURE

(Bringing the symbols to the worship center by the Board of Christian Educators/SS Teachers while flute or Kubing is played)

- A flute/kubing** - for breath and music
- A pot of soil** - for space for everyone in the world for cultivation
- A pitcher of water** - for source of life
- A pot of plant** - for life itself to be nurtured
- The Bible** - the word of God
- The cross** - God's love and mission
- Christ candle** - Christ's presence

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

CALL TO WORSHIP (based in Psalm 149)

Leader: Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the faithful.

People: Let Israel be glad in its Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King.

Leader: Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre.

People: For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with victory.

Leader: Let the faithful exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their couches.

People: Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands,

Leader: to execute vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples,

People: to bind their kings with fetters and their nobles with chains of iron,

Leader: to execute on them the judgment decreed. This is glory for all his faithful ones. Praise the LORD!

**PRAYER OF ADORATION

(Unison)

Still-speaking God, we have come here today for many reasons, each with our own story. May these reasons and stories be immersed in your Sacred Story, finding ourselves caught up in the drama and beauty of Jesus' teachings, life and ministry. Through your Holy Spirit, enable us to move boldly into the future and to fulfill the hope of love that Jesus taught, even as we pray the prayer he taught us saying, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Do not put us to the test but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

**A HYMN CELEBRATING CHRISTIAN EDUCATION "We Thank You, God, For Teachers"

Text: Copyright © 1999 by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette (Tune: "I Sing the Mighty Power of God")

We thank you, God, for teachers, who help us learn your Way,
Who show by their example, how we can serve and pray,
Who find great joy in worship, who listen with concern;
For in their loving witness, they help us want to learn.

We thank you, God, for children, and older people, too,

Who value times of learning, and want to grow in you,
Who seek your precious kingdom, and wisdom from above.
For wise ones of all ages, still seek to learn your love.

We thank you, God, for families, of every kind and size,
Who keep the vows they spoke when, their children were baptized,
Who pray and read the Bible, who love and serve the poor.
They teach, by what they value, the way of Christ our Lord.

We thank you, God, for churches, that welcome one and all,
That nurture every person, in answer to Christ's call.
So, fill us with your Spirit, and give us life anew,
That we may help each other, live faithfully in you.

We Thank You, God, for Teachers

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, 1999

Ellacombe

German melody, 18th cent., alt. 1868

The musical score is written for piano and voice. It features a treble and bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is simple and hymn-like, with the piano accompaniment providing a steady harmonic foundation. The lyrics are arranged in four lines, each corresponding to a line of the melody. The lyrics are: 1. We thank you, God, for teach-ers who help us learn your Way, 2. We thank you, God, for child-ren and old - er peo - ple, too, 3. We thank you, God, for fam - ilies of ev - ery kind and size, 4. We thank you, God, for chur-ches that wel-come one and all, Who show by their ex - am - ple how we can serve and pray, Who val - ue times of learn - ing and want to grow in you, Who keep the vows they spoke when their child-ren were bap - tized, That nur - ture ev - ery per - son in ans - wer to Christ's call. Who find great joy in wor-ship, who lis - ten with con - cern, Who seek your pre - cious king-dom and wis - dom from a - bove; Who pray and read the Bi - ble, who love and serve the poor; So fill us with your Spi - rit, and give us life a - new, For in their lov - ing wit-ness, they help us want to learn. For wise ones of all a - ges still seek to learn your love. They teach, by what they val - ue, the way of Christ our Lord. That we may help each oth - er live faith-ful - ly in you.

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E-mail: bcgillette@comcast.net | New Hymns: www.carolynshymns.com

CALL TO CONFESSION

Leader

“I have made a watchman for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, O wicked, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way; he shall die in his iniquity, but you will have saved your life. Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?’ Say to them, As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways (Ezekiel 33:7-11)

LITANY OF CONFESSION (based on Psalm 119:33-40 and “Breathe on Me, Breath of God”)

All (Singing): *Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life anew,
that I may love what thou dost love and do what thou wouldst do.*

Leader: Teach us, O LORD, the way of your statutes, and we will observe it to the end. Give us understanding, that we may keep your law and observe it with our whole heart. Lead us in the path of your commandments, for we delight in it.

All (Singing): *Breathe on me, Breath of God, until my heart is pure,
until with thee I will one will, to do and to endure.*

Leader: Turn our heart to your decrees, and not to selfish gain. Turn our eyes from looking at vanities; give us life in your ways.

All (Singing): *Breathe on me, Breath of God, till I am wholly thine,
till all this earthly part of me glows with thy fire divine.*

Leader: Confirm to your servant your promise, which is for those who fear you. Turn away the disgrace that we dread, for your ordinances are good. See, we have longed for your precepts; in your righteousness give us life.

All (Singing): *Breathe on me, Breath of God, so shall I never die,
but live with thee the perfect life of thine eternity.*

ASSURANCE GOD’S PARDON

Minister: All of us have been created and called to be in community. Know this, but more importantly, live this: As God’s children we are loved and equipped for great ministry to continue the mission of Jesus Christ. Follow Jesus’ commandment to love boldly as you are held in the grace and love of God.

**** CHORAL ACCLAMATION “Halle, Halle, Hallelujah!” Words: Caribbean Traditional**
Halle, halle, hallelujah! Halle, halle, hallelujah!
Halle, halle, hallelujah! Hallelujah, hallelujah!

SHARING OF CHURCH AND COMMUNITY CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYER

****GLORIA PATRI**

****SCRIPTURE READING**

ANTHEM

MESSAGE

THE CELEBRATION OF THE HOLY COMMUNION

The Invitation

Minister: Let us hear the word of Jesus saying; “All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. "Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. "Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS....

(SINGING) “COME AND SHARE THIS MEAL” HYMNAL OF FAITH JOURNEY, 252

Come and share this meal together,
Share the bread that’s broken for you and me
Rememb’ring the broken body of Jesus Christ,
To nourish our faith and our belief in God.

Come and share in drinking the wine now,
From the cup to taste of the heav’nly wine
Rememb’ring the blood and death of Jesus Christ,
Who saved us from sin and all our brokenness.

Come and share this meal together
Strengthening our spirit in fellowship;
The word of Christ gives guidance and light to all,
This bread of life will then be our daily food.

Come and share this meal together
Wine that’s poured to quench our thirsty souls,
Your spirit is filled with Christ’s ever flowing stream
Of life with God for all eternity.

The Bread and the Wine

Minister: The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Therefore, we proclaim the mystery of our faith: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

Blessing of the Elements

Minister: God, may this bread connects us more closely with you and with our neighbors near and far.

People: Bless this bread, we pray.

Minister: May this fruit of the vine reminds us of the inter-connectedness with people around the world.

People: Bless this cup, we pray.

Minister: May this simple meal brings us into union with you, your people and your world in the One Body of Christ.

Sharing the Elements

Minister: We break this bread and drink from this cup to share in the body of Christ. Though we are many, we are but one body. Draw near with faith. Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which he gave for you, and his blood which he shed for you. Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you, and partake of him in your hearts with faith and thanksgiving. *This is the Lord's Table. Let all who love the Lord participate freely, and with joy.*

Prayer of Thanksgiving (After the communion)

Minister: With thanksgiving, let us celebrate our new life in Christ giving thanks to God our Creator and Sustainer:

All: Loving and gracious God, thank you for this holy meal. Thank you for Jesus and his all-encompassing love for humanity. Thank you for the assurance that we partake also of your kingdom. Amen.

CALL TO OFFERING

Leader: Today we call upon you as children of God to share in the love and work of Jesus. As the gathered community of faith- the Body of Christ, let us continue to bear witness and do the work on behalf of our Lord by giving our gifts, talents, and resources through our offerings.

THE ACT OF OFFERING

OFFERTORY MUSIC

****DOXOLOGY**

****OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Unison

May these gifts, O God, become action and intention, fulfilling Christ's commandment to love. Amen.

THE SYMBOLIC ACT OF DEDICATION TO CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND NURTURE PROGRAM

(You may invite representative/s from various ages to do the symbolic planting. Each representative shall take part in the planting using the pot, soil, plant & water)

Chairperson- BCE: *The **clay pot** of soil in the center represents human beings. It symbolizes our relationship with God; we are the clay and God is our potter, and all of us are the work of God's hand (Isaiah 64:8). The Pot in the Bible represents and serves as containers for truth. It must be filled to serve any use and must be filled with truth to serve God's purpose.*

*The **soil** in the second Genesis creation story (Genesis 2:7) reminds us that we come from earth, the actual soil. The Latin word for soil is "humus," from which comes "humility." The Hebrew meaning of "Adam" is "earth." Soil deserves our reverence and care because of the divine presence living and acting within it, its life-giving properties. The soil as life source- symbol of God's generosity and the unity of all creation.*

*The **plant and water** represent the unending commitment to **Christian Education and Nurture** ministries of the church- carrying the seed of love of Jesus to be sown, watered and cultivated*

with genuine commitment and dedication to reap a rich harvest and be stored in God's fold. Each day is an opportunity for a new plant to grow, blossom, flower, and bear fruits. Through Christian Education we nurture what has been sown, and water it with teachings guided by the examples of Jesus life and work.

ACT OF COMMITMENT

Minister: We need to take this moment to rededicate and consecrate these people called by God, committed in the pursuit of fulfilling the Christian Education and Nurture program. Please be reminded of your duties and take them seriously as the Board of Christian Educators articulated in the amended Constitution and By-laws of the United Church of Christ, Article III section 22:

- a. To serve as models of spirituality, moral rectitude, and faithfulness to growth and development of persons.
- b. To develop and supervise the over-all Christian education and nurture program of the Local Church.
- c. To ensure that the education, nurture, discipleship, and leadership development programs for all groups are carried out in the Local Church.
- d. To encourage and challenge the members, especially the youth, to a calling in the varied ministries and mission of the Church.

Board of Christian Educators and Sunday School Teachers: We, the Board of Christian Educators and the Sunday School Teachers, stand in the presence of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and in the presence of His church, having been called as Board of Christian Educator/Sunday school teacher, profess our dedication and commitment to work and continue the teaching ministry of Jesus. We believe that we have been called by God to offer our lives and life's work in the service of the Lord for the Church and for the world.

Minister: You have been called to the ministry of teaching, consecrated to nurture and uphold the sanctity of the human spirit so that you may aspire to its height a dignified life-work to serve for the glory of God. Will you honor and commit yourself to Jesus' ministry of teaching to the best of your ability and strength?

Board of Christian Educators and Sunday School Teachers: We take seriously our responsibility of serving as stewards of the Christian Education Ministry.

MINISTER'S PRAYER

Enabler God, we ask for your help today to enable and join us together in this important ministry of teaching. Guide our actions, direct our thoughts, and inspire our hopes, for we believe that with Your help, we could serve just as Jesus served and teach just as Jesus taught. Amen.

****HYMN OF FAITH "I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry" Hymnal of Faith Journey,45**

I was there to hear your borning cry, I'll be there when you are old;
I rejoiced the day you were baptized, to see your life unfold.
I was there when you were but a child, with a faith to suit you well;
I'll be there in case you wander off and find where demons dwell.

When you found the wonder of the Word, I was there to cheer you on;
You were raised to praise the living God, to whom you now belong.
Should you find someone to share your life
And you join your hearts as one.
I'll be there to make your verses rhyme from dusk till rising sun.

In the middle ages of our life, not too old, no longer young;
I'll be there to guide you through the night, complete what I've begun.
When the evening gently closes in and you shut your weary eyes,
I'll be there as I have always been with just one more surprise.

I was there to hear your borning cry, I'll be there when you are old
I rejoiced the day you were baptized, to see your life unfold.

****BENEDICTION**

Minister

As you are called by God to continue the healing, preaching, and teaching ministries of Jesus, now go back into the world from which you have come and let love be true and freely given. And may you be

****RESPONSE**

(sung to the tune of Edelweiss)

God of Light, God of Light, hold our life in your keeping,
Let us find peace of mind, guard us waking and sleeping.
Father of Light guide us every day, all the way, forever.
God of Light, God of Light, lead us onward, forever.

POSTLUDE

RECESSIONAL

<https://newchristianbiblestudy.org/exposition/translation/pot/>

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY

WORDS TO PONDER

“We are guilty of many errors and many faults, but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life. Many of the things we need can wait. The child cannot. Right now is the time his/her bones are being formed, his/her blood is being developed. To him/her we cannot answer *“tomorrow”*. His/Her name is *“today”*.”

PRELUDE

LIGHTING OF CHRIST'S CANDLE

†INTROIT “Jesus Loves the Little Children”

†CALL TO WORSHIP (Responsive Reading)

Leader: Come, children, all of you, let us worship our God!

People: ***We are here to listen to the teachings of our Redeemer Jesus Christ, the great and good teacher.***

Leader: Be joyful always in obeying God's commandment and study it day and night.

All: ***O God, how glorious is your name! Our righteous and powerful God, showed us the right path that we should follow.***

♪“Thousands & Thousands of Song”♪ Hymnal of Faith Journey, 13

- Refrain : Hallelujah, Hallelujah ! Sing Hallelujah for the Day,
Sorrow's night gone, sorrow's night gone,
Joy arrives announced by the dawn.

3. All times of year, every season and mood,
Spirit of holiness capture for love ;
Search out the longings of all humankind
Join them to Christ's songs of Zion above.

Aayirem, Ayirem Padelgellei

Thousands and Thousands of Songs

1 Aa - yi - rem, aa - yi - rem pa - del - ge - llei Aa - vi - yil ma - gil - n - dhee
 2 Pu - dhi - ye, pu - dhi - ye pa - del - ge - llei pu - nein - dhee pann - ge - llum
 3 Thou - sands and thou - sands of songs full of praise, Spir - it of ho - li - ness,
 4 Now for the sake of this age and its hopes, Spir - it of ho - li - ness,
 5 All times of year, ev - ery sea - son and mood, Spir - it of ho - li - ness,

pa - dung - ge - llee. Ya - ve - rum thee - mo - lzi pa - del - ge - llal
 see - rung - ge - llee. Thu - dhi - gel ni - rei - yum ga - nang - ge - llal
 draw from our hearts; may each one add to the glo - ry of Christ,
 teach us Your ways; coax our best mu - sic and words in - to flame
 cap - ture for love; search out the long - ings of all hu - man - kind,

Ye - su vei pa - di - de va - rung - ge - llee.
 Tho - lzu - dhee i - rei - va - nei ka - nnung - ge - lee.
 so form a sweet ho - ney - comb rich in art.
 light myr - iad can - dles of wor - ship and praise.
 join them to Christ's songs of Zi - on a - bove.

Refrain
 Al - le - lu - ya, Al - le - lu - ya, en - drel - la - rum pa - di - du - vom,
 Hal - le - lu - jah, Hal - le - lu - jah! Sing Hal - le - lu - jah for the Day,

All - el - il - lei, all - el - il - lei, a - nan dhe - mai pa - di - du - vom.
 Sor - row's night gone, sor - row's night gone, joy ar - rives announced by the dawn.

3 Endhe naallum kalengellum. Ireivenei pottrum neerengellee

May we all feel your presence now, O God. We humbly submit ourselves to you so that we may know what you want us to be and what you want us to do. Help us learn from you so that we may grow in your love and be empowered to serve your people. Prepare us now through your Spirit, and make us listen to what you want to say to us. We worship you with joy and thanksgiving. In the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Response

♫“Gloria Patri” ♫
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,
World without end, Amen, Amen.

CALL TO CONFESSION

Leader: People of God, we have walked the path that separated us from our Creator. We have made decisions and plans of our own that keep us away from doing the will of God. We fail in serving the least of our brethren, the widows, the inflicted and most of all the children. Let us therefore confess our shortcomings and weaknesses and ask for forgiveness before God.

SONG OF CONFESSION ♫“If I have Wounded Any Soul Today” ♫ Hymnal of Faith Journey,66

*If I have wounded any soul today,
If I have caused one foot to go astray,
If I have walked in my own willful way,
Dear Lord, forgive!*

*If I have uttered idle words or vain,
If I have turned aside from want or pain,
If I offended others thru the strain,
Dear Lord, forgive!*

If I Have Wounded Any Soul Today 66

(Ab) G C

1 If I have wound-ed an-y soul to-day,
2 If I have ut-tered i-dle words or vain,
3 When you have giv-en me some fort to hold,
4 For-give the sins I have con-fessed to you;

D7 G

If I have caused one foot to go a-stray,
If I have turned a-side from want or pain,
Yet I have longed for shel-ter in your fold,
For-give the se-cret sins I do not know

C

If I have walked in my own will-ful way,
If I of-fend-ed o-thers thru the strain,
And I have been per-verse, or hard or cold,
O guide me, love me, where 'er I go,

Gdim G D7 G

Dear Lord, for-give!
Dear Lord, for-give!
Dear Lord, for-give!
Dear Lord, my God!

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Minister: Take heart. God’s Spirit empowers us to move from the ways of death to the ways of new life. Our sins are forgiven. Let us forgive one another in the joyful community of the risen Christ. God’s readiness to forgive far exceeds our love of sinning. For God’s life-giving grace in Jesus Christ reaches out to us and embraces us with the blessings of salvation.

Response

♫“Jesus Loves Me” ♫
*Refrain: Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.*

PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE

Response *“O Lord, Hear Our Prayer”*
O Lord, hear our prayer, O Lord hear our prayer, When we call, answer us.
O Lord, hear our prayer, O, Lord, hear our prayer. Come and listen to us.

O Lord, Hear My Prayer

1 O Lord, hear my prayer. O Lord, hear my prayer
2 Gott, hör mein Ge - bet, Gott, hör mein Ge - bet:
3 En - tends ma pri - ère, en - tends ma pri - ère:

when I call ans - wer me. O Lord, hear my prayer. O
Komm und er - hö - re mich. Gott, hör mein Ge - bet, Gott,
Seig - neur viens, é - coute-moi. En-tends ma pri - ère, en -

Lord, hear my prayer. Come and li - sten to me.
hör mein Ge - bet. Komm und er - hö - re mich.
tends - ma pri - ère, Quand j'ap-pelle, ré - ponds-moi.

†SCRIPTURE READING

ANTHEM

SERMON

AN AFFIRMATION (Unison)

We believe that children are a new beginning, one filled with hope and the promise of a better tomorrow. Each child is a whole person with body and spirit undivided, his/her entire being actively participating in the making of history in accordance with God’s laws. Children are God’s greatest gift to us. They are with us to show us the way to God’s kingdom, not to be molded and shaped by our own world. As we face a new beginning and as we promote peace, we do so not only for them, but also with them, so that together, we can build the world that they want, the world that they need: a world that is theirs.

SPECIAL PRAYER FOR THE CHILDREN

Minister

(The minister may ask the children to come forward and instruct the elderlies to raise their right hand while praying for the children)

CALL TO OFFERING

Leader: God has abundantly blessed us and called us to be in community with others, to share our love and material possessions. Let us rejoice in what we have been given and in what is ours to give.

OFFERTORY

†DOXOLOGY/ PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

†HYMN OF DEDICATION ♪ “We Want to Learn to Live in Love” ♪ *Hymnal of Faith Journey, 188*

*We want to learn to live in love, To follow what is good and true
Through friends at church, at home, at play,
We find what God would have us do.*

*When we are sad and feeling mean and fail to love or to be fair
Our friends at church, at home, at play,
Can help us know that God does care.*

*When others are unkind to us and make us want to cry or fight
We can reach out to be good friends
And help them know that love is right.*

188 **We Want to Learn to Live in Love**

The image shows a musical score for the hymn 'We Want to Learn to Live in Love', numbered 188. It is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The score consists of three systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first system includes three verses of lyrics. The second system continues the lyrics. The third system concludes the hymn with a final cadence. Chord symbols (G, D7, C, D) are placed above the treble staff at various points.

1 We want to learn to live in love to
2 When we are sad or feel - ing mean and
3 When oth - ers are un - kind to mean us and

fol - low what is good and true Through friends at church, at
fail to love or to be fair Our friends at church, at
make us want to cry or fight We can reach out to

home, at play, we find what God would have us do.
home, at play, can help us know that God does care.
be good friends and help them know that love is right.

BENEDICTION

Minister: Go now in peace. Be joyful in the love of God, empowered by God’s word, renewed by God’s promises, strengthened to obey and bear witness to Christ’s instructions. And may the blessing of God, the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer be upon you all this day and forever. Amen.

†Response ♪ “May the Lord Mighty God” ♪ (Tune: Edelweiss)

*May the Lord Mighty God bless and keep you forever;
Grant you peace, perfect peace, courage in every endeavor;
Lift up your eyes and see God’s face and God’s grace forever.
May the Lord Mighty God bless and keep you forever.*

†POSTLUDE

(The liturgy for Children’s Sunday was prepared by Rev. Reneee Rose Isaac from NELBICON, East Visayas Jurisdiction)

Meditations

“Christian Education: A Continuing Process of Nurturing the Faith”

Bishop Ligaya F. San Francisco, NWMJ

Biblical References: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 28:16-2; Titus 2:11-12

Introduction

It's September month once again. It's the Christian Education and Nurture Month of the UCCP. As we can recall, teaching is the primary task of every Hebrew family. Due to trainings and instructions, the Hebrew people were equipped to become one of the most resilient people like the Filipinos. This was then carried out to the Jewish family. Education became the sole means of perpetuating their way of life and at the same time, to instruct their young ones of the implications of being the chosen people of God.

Teaching has been emphasized throughout the Bible. Deuteronomy 6 tells of God's command to grab every opportunity to teach the children about the “fear of the Lord” and the decrees and statutes of God. What goes with it is the assurance that keeping the laws will make them live a long life in the Promised land. The family was called to the task of nurturing the children of the faith. Teaching is a way of handing down the faith through mouth and ears. It's a task that is not negotiable. They have to hand down to the next generation all the laws that God requires of them. They had to tell the young ones of all that God has done to them since the time of their ancestors. They make sure to tell that there was not a single time God is not part of their daily lives. With God's demand to nurture the children, it only impresses on us the necessity of the teaching ministry.

So, it became an imperative task for Christians as it was exemplified by Jesus in the gospels, to carry out with intensity the teaching ministry. Jesus in his engagement with the people has spent most of his time teaching them. Even in the most seemingly untimely situations and unlikely places, Jesus grab every opportunity to bring his message to the people who are hungry of care, attention, compassion and knowledge.

Christian Education for discipleship

Jesus in Matthew 28:16-20 gives the command to teach the people alongside the task of baptizing them. Jesus was in a way imposing the task of multiplying himself by making them his disciples. His command goes with the assurance that he will be with them. It points out that Jesus will be working with them, making the task easy and bearable for them. Engaging in Christian education can be very taxing in such a way that it is physically and emotionally draining as it takes a lot of planning, strategizing and engagement with people. Jesus knows it all having experienced it personally that's why he assured them that his presence will abide in them constantly. Jesus here was obviously empowering his disciples to teach those whom God would send them. He believed in the disciples' capacity to continue all that he has started. The great task was left for them to carry on. The mission was given. The mission for the salvation of the world lies on their faithfulness to the task. The church is privileged to take part in that mission through its ministry in Christian Education. The mission can only be realized through continuous nurturing of the faith which every Christian in the church should be involved in.

It is hoped that through constant Christian instructions people will embody the life and teachings of Jesus. Jesus did not waste any time taking care of the people's needs even in the most tiresome times when he and his disciples need to have a break. He took every challenge of the teachers of the Law and impress upon the people an interpretation of the Law that is both life giving and spirit lifting.

Christian Education is for Life's transformation

One of the main goals of Christian Education is the transformation of life. Paul had emphasized this in his letter to Titus. With God's grace they have to live a life worthy of emulation by living it with self-restraint. God's grace transformed them to become worthy teachers, capable of living a godly and righteous life. A life that has been transformed by grace will shine through and will draw people's participation in the community. Christian Education activities become vibrant if people seek to live the life of faith. In the words of Jack L. Seymour, "our meanings, our identities and vocations are always the result of connecting with others, the transcendent reality we experience, and the heritage that forms us in the midst of a historical moment and circumstance". This means that Christian Education must see to it that people will live theologically in their relationships and daily conversations, a discerned life to the point of seeing every place in every moment God's fingerprints in all circumstances as Barbara Brown Taylor puts it on the life of Joseph in Pharaoh's palace. In the words of Daniel Schipani, "social transformation as a frame of reference to Christian Education. Transformation becomes both the goal and process of education until God's kingdom of justice and love is fully embodied".

Christian education is for Spiritual Development

I found the insights of Maria Harris and Gabriel Moran so enriching when they emphasize that the goal of Christian Education is spiritual development that calls persons into relationship, friendship, care and justice with others and the creation, and that the starting point for education is the person. They both emphasize that persons possess that inward capacities for inwardness, yet is outwardly related to others and the world. They further said that Christian education should focus on both dimensions. Persons, according to them has been formed through silence, listening, Sabbath, study and service. And that person is guided to a fuller and richer connection with all of life, carrying the resources of the faith tradition, practicing the presence of God and engaging in partnership with others in the midst of the world. Moreover, they denote that through Christian education persons touch their own deepest centers of meaning and value and are connected to other persons and the creation in meaning, care and justice. The task of Christian education is to enable persons to draw that meaning and translate it in the most tangible expressions of faith to action as participants in establishing the reign of God.

In closing, Christian education is quite challenging taking into consideration our context and struggle amidst this pandemic. But as a church we cannot set this task aside as this is our calling to nurture the faith of our people. Instructions in our churches need to be intentionally carried out in and out of seasons so that the church as the community of faith will truly become the disciples of Jesus to carry on all that Jesus initiated and has done in obedience to God. As emphasized by Seymour, Christian education will be a vehicle for the transformation of life that truly embodies a spiritually developed life in the midst of challenging vicissitudes of life. He said that education in faith must answer how we can be faithful in the midst of perplexing and ever-changing world; and how we can contribute in the healing and justice of God in the midst of life.

Source:

Seymour, J. L. (1997). Mapping Christian Education, Approaches to Congregational Learning (ed.), (pp. 9-20) Nashville, Abingdon Press.

“Through the Children's Lens”

Pastor Lalaine Saluta Castillo, ADC- SEMJA

Text: Exodus 14: 19-31

Every time the animated musical movie production of DreamWorks, “The Prince of Egypt” in 1998 is played—children always want to skip into scenes they prefer. Children's eyes roll in awe with Moses on the river inside the basket while Miriam singing, Moses sees the burning bush, to his staff transforms into a snake, grasshoppers/ locusts everywhere, and when Moses raises his staff and surprisingly the sea divides...

WHY?

Because these scenes are magical, far beyond reality and something children would've wanted to experience. The writer presents Moses a hero and someone with special powers, he is something or someone children always prayed to have and crave to be. This is a powerful endowment of God to children that is worth celebrating and reveling. Children are God's instruments for us to see great things and see God's work around us. For whether we like it or not, adults' interests are so much in opposite with children's, and so there's indeed a need to have (children's) eyes to see the most magical and compelling power of God.

The text tells of how a writer should be: creative, imaginative, and a wide thinker. The Bible lets us see things beautifully and pushes us to see the children's kind of innocence, thinking, appreciation and attraction to awesome things around us for us to be led in believing that indeed God's ways are higher than human ways. We need to see through the children's lens to see God's saving acts in the life of the chosen people in a different way.

To understand the story using the lens of children, the writer suggests to consider three things. These are: IMAGINATION, CONNECTION, and LEARNING.

IMAGINATION

Very evident in the narratives of Exodus 14:19-31 are the dramatic moves or moving words used to declare a powerful and victorious God. The writer presents God flying as an angel above the weary people and very lightly and smoothly, God is seen in cloud-like pillar moving from one direction to another that offers safety and protection among the confused people.

Looking at the text through the lens of the children, my belief in God's gracious act of saving the Israelites is once again affirmed. Deeper reflections would come out as I think of children's love and exposure to action movies and many characters/heroes. I can see the beaming 'Alab' (My youngest son's name) in particular while listening to the proceeding presentations and descriptions of God's power having his favorite movies and characters in it. The way children relate and understand God's powerful and empowering nature can be reflected in their simple child-like imaginations:

“...the cloud like ‘toothless’ of ‘How to Train Your Dragon’ movie lit up the night only in one side”, “...the strong east wind like Bumble Bee or Optimus Prime made the sea dry land with the waters divided”, the waters being a wall like in the ‘mine craft’ to them on their right hand and on their left.” “In the entire night, like Arlo the Good Dinosaur, God overthrew the Egyptian forces into panic.” and “like the speed of Lightning McQueen the Lord clogged the chariots wheels so that they drove heavily into defeat.”

Notice that with the touch of children-like language in the narratives, teaching children becomes easier and at the same time counters the way we teach them that makes it difficult for them to understand God and God's saving acts. The use of words and volume of words can be very heavy for children being in the receiver's end and in worse scenario, these are bound to be taken for granted or “deadma”. The

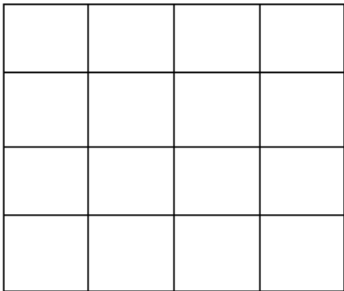
Bible has brought us into realization that children easily adopts and adapts. Words are something we should carefully choose especially when talking to and discuss about children. We need to be creative enough to choose the language that would impact the imagination of our children.

CONNECTION

Aside from being creative and of making children see things beautifully and colorful—let us make our declaration of God’s truth relatable and believable, to bridge the gap between fiction and reality. Conflicts perhaps could be of great help. Gain their interests! Make them ask HOW, WHAT, and WHY? “What is that?” “Is that even possible?” What made them run?” “Who are they running from?” “Why are they shouting? Crying?” “How could they run from those people with horses?” “There’s no other way! How can they escape from those cruel people?” then suddenly, give the solution—**“²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided.”** This could make them happy.

The telling should meet with the writer’s challenge. For many times, my 7-year-old son would ask me “Nay, when will this COVID-19 virus thing end?” Then my older son would answer, “Just pray Alab and everything will be fine soon.” During this pandemic, I really don’t know if the answer satisfied the younger one, yet I was amazed when he said, “Okay. But, I want to be a virus protection (scientist and/or medical worker) someday, to get rid of this virus.” That was all to youtube’s credit, but this made me realize a thing. Children don’t just rely on something they only imagined, they also thought of ways—practical ways that they believe can be done and is visible to them. COVID-19 was made visible to them through their restricted time to play outside, their online or modular class, and of the things youtube made them see. Just like reading the text, we seemed to be the Israelites at the end of the dry land and can’t pass through the waters in front of us, with all those armed men in chariots—we need to have solutions! And in this pandemic, we need an opening, we need dry land—to walk between waters and be on the other side of the land.

Just recently, my older Son, Bayan shared his learnings and experiences as participant of the Bible In Context (BIC) Seminar initiated by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines. He introduced me to this so called “the surprise SQUARES”. I happened to reflect on it and thought of asking a 7 year old child, “How many squares do you see?” 97% he/she would probably answer, SIXTEEN (16). Which is true and correct. But as years were added to his/her age, the child can now identify other squares, and starts seeing 17 squares—18, 19, 20, and so on.



The child was not asked “HOW MANY SQUARES ARE THERE” but was instead told to answer “HOW MANY SQUARES DO YOU SEE?” The key is the question. It is not, how many squares are there? If it is so, then there's only one answer--30. But I asked, how many squares do you see? Thus, the child was right.

Rev. Revelation Velunta, the BIC speaker (with which Bayan attended) according to Bayan said that “many times we (and/or children) operate on first impressions. When we are asked, "How many squares do we see?" most would answer, 16. And we stop there. Then, somebody else says, "17," and we realize there are more squares. There are actually more squares! More often than not, this is how we live our lives. We operate on first impressions. We do not stop to think. We jump into conclusions. We think everything is 16 squares. It is not. It never is. “

This is telling us that we must never, ever, underestimate any person if you’ve only seen his/her 16 squares or situations. Just like what happened on the first weeks of this COVID-19 outbreak, we were told to relax and just boost our immune system. We heard a leader and/or a department head once said, “We are winning against COVID-19, for we only have few numbers of deaths and of children infected”. This is merely seeing 16 squares.They (the leaders) were not able to see the other squares—squares that are saying, “THESE ARE NOT JUST NUMBERS, THESE ARE LIVES! Lives of children, parents, and or siblings, LIVES OF GOD’S PEOPLE!”

As the people during exilic times were reminded by the writer of God’s saving nature, at this time of pandemic, may we also see the other squares of each day that God has given us. May we be reminded of lines from the movie, *Kung Fu Panda*: "Yesterday is history; tomorrow is a mystery; today is a gift,

that's why we call it present." Don't forget the surprise of the Squares. We believe in a God of Surprises. Always be ready to discover more "squares" in others, in yourself, and in every breath of life from above. Always be ready to be surprised! (Bible in Context Seminar 2020; Rev. Revelation Velunta)

LEARNING

Reading other versions of the text, there were parts that Moses' staff had played a role: to prove God's presence, the staff turned into a snake, turned the river into blood, and that God told Moses to raise his staff in order to divide the sea. The "staff" in children's eyes was either an instrument to protect themselves just like ninjas or an instrument to discipline them. A staff at some point symbolizes violence, "pampalo", for combat, and/or authority of mostly—oppressors, yet the staff in this story has been a symbol of hope—an instrument of protection and solutions at times of crisis. But as I read and read, and read again, I've been seeing other squares—that all of those- everything happened through God's command, through God speaking to Moses. God gave orders, and used God's voice for Moses to obey and to save the Israelites from the chains of slavery.

In every story, there needs to be a lesson—the impact to the readers, and ultimate call in the ending part of the chapter which affirms that those deeds, actions and situations of people, had made them feared and believed in the Lord.

God has been always good and merciful to them, yet it took them a long time to have witnessed to God's display of power over nature and rulers of nations before they fear and believe in God. The experience of being carried away, amazed and even surprised of the truth of God is and only possible when we embrace the "children-be-like" in each one of us. This rings a bell to some if not all in remembering a quote, "TO FEAR IS TO BELIEVE" which for me sounds incorrect—a maxim in which we all can relate to even during this time of pandemic, and of our government national leaders. Yet with the children's eyes and ears, this text is telling, "TO SPEAK IS TO BELIEVE". It teaches children to speak, for God's voice is heard to free the Israelites from captivity.

Let us always be reminded and empowered by God –given gifts – our children and the child in every one of us. May we continue to reflect and celebrate in God's truth through the children's language of awe, innocence, interest, thinking, appreciation and attraction to God's WILL. To God be all the glory! Amen.