

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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JUSTICE ISSUE: RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE/ LECTIONARY WEEK:	Matthew 18:15-20
SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES:	2020/2024 Social Principles ¶164C. Restorative Justice
OBJECTIVE:	Introduce restorative justice practices and sample restorative questions
SUPPLIES NEEDED:	None

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Ask students to stand in a circle.

Say: We’re going to open today with a sharing activity. In order to find our partners for the activities, we are going to find out sole-mates.

Everyone look at the bottom of your shoe. To find your partner you need to find someone who has a similar bottom of their shoe.

Say: Now that you found your sole-mate, I want you each to share a time when you had a fight or argument with a close friend or family member. What was that fight like and how did you communicate with the other person?

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say: Matthew chapter 18 focuses on humility, forgiveness and restoration within the Christian community. In today’s scripture, Matthew 18:15-20, Jesus addresses how we should handle conflicts and restore relationships within the church community laying out a map for us to follow as we address conflict and pursue reconciliation after wrongdoing.

NOTES

Not all students may match, students can match sandals to sandals, boots to boots, etc.

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Read Matthew 18:15-20

Ask:

- What are the steps Jesus outlines for addressing someone who has sinned against you?
 - Private Confrontation
 - Involving Others
 - Church Involvement
 - Treated as Outsider

Say: Jesus describes a process that moves from the personal to the communal.

Ask:

- Why does Jesus instruct us to bring one or two witnesses?
- How can a third party be helpful in conflict resolution.

Say: Sometimes we are unable to resolve conflict and separation, or distance may be necessary to prevent harm.

Ask:

- What are the potential barriers that might prevent us from addressing conflict or disagreement in a productive way?
- How can we create a culture of accountability and restoration within our church community?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say: According to the UM Social Principles, “The Gospels place a premium on the restoration of right relationships.” Because of this commitment to restoration, the United Methodist Church supports systems to emphasize restorative justice.

NOTES

Students may review text to identify steps.

If students struggle to differentiate steps, provide an example of an individual caught stealing from the donation plate.

1. I speak to the person privately—they reject reconciliation
2. I speak to the person and their parents—they reject reconciliation again
3. I inform the Church- and still they reject reconciliation
4. A plan is put in place to ensure this person isn't near any collection.

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Restorative justice seeks to examine the harmful impact of a hurtful act or crime and then determines what can be done to repair that harm while holding the person who caused the harm accountable for their action.

Restorative justice is used in criminal justice systems to allow people who have committed crimes to make amends for their offense and allows victims to share with offenders how they have been impacted. “Restorative Justice seeks to prioritize the victim and the victim’s family. It also seeks to repair damages, right wrongs, and bring healing to the victim, the offender, families, and the community.”

Today we are going to practice responding to a wrong act with some restorative questions for both those who caused harm and those who experienced harm. In groups we will come up with an imagined conflict or wrong act and see if we can practice communicating and finding opportunities for restoration. (ex: Brother borrowed car without permission, friend broke my laptop, Classmate made fun of others, etc)

Directions:

1. Divide students into groups of 3-4
2. Direct students to come up with a conflict or wrong act for their role-play
3. Direct students to identify role (person harmed, person causing harm, 3rd party).
4. 3rd Party students will facilitate discussion by asking series of restorative questions.
 - a. We will pretend that the 3rd party individual is speaking with each person involved in the conflict separately
 - b. Only the person being asked may answer
 - c. No cross talk is allowed.
5. If time allows, the 3rd party can share what they heard in each section and provide suggestions for finding common ground or opportunities to make things right.

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Questions for those who experienced harm:

1. What happened?
2. How did you feel at the time?
3. How do you feel now?
4. What do you need to make it right?

Question for those who caused harm:

1. What happened?
2. What were you thinking about at the time?
3. How do you feel about it now?
4. How can you begin to make it right?

Closing discussion

Ask:

- What was that like?
- Was your group able to find common ground?
- Did anyone's perspective or needs change after hearing about the perspectives or experiences of others?

Sometimes it is easy to find opportunities for restoration, while other times it can be really hard. It's ok if your group couldn't find common ground in our time together. Sometimes we just need more time to find common ground while others might require more help as we seek to find healing.

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN.)

Say: As United Methodists, we will continue to fight for restorative justice to be incorporated into our legal and disciplinary systems, but we also incorporate restorative justice into our everyday lives and conflicts.

- Ask:**
- How might we use these restorative questions to help us navigate conflict in our everyday lives?
 - How can we practice restorative justice when we have disagreements within our community here together?

Prayer

God of mercy and second chances
Thank you for your eternal presence.

You see us completely
With all of our mistakes and our potential
Thank you for never giving up on us
And help us do the same for others.

Give us the courage to face our mistakes,
And the grace to seek healing instead of revenge.
Teach us that justice doesn't always mean punishment,
But connecting, forgiveness, and trust.

Show us how to be peacemakers,
Help us choose understanding over anger
And love over shame.

May we be brave enough to tell the truth and kind enough to believe in the potential others.

Amen.