

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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JUSTICE ISSUE: SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE/ LECTIONARY WEEK:	Genesis 45:1–15 (NRSVUE)
SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES:	Book of Resolutions #5106 Call to the Churches for the Renewal of Rural Ministries.
OBJECTIVE:	Participants will be able to distinguish between short term relief and long-term sustainability in Genesis 45.
SUPPLIES NEEDED:	A way to play music from YouTube loud enough for the group to hear; a flipchart/whiteboard/way to display the “Justice Word Cloud”; bibles for participants; Shark Tank Pitches (handout); copies of Book of Resolution #5106

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Say: Today, we will be taking a look at the difference between short-term relief and long-term sustainability.

Say: We will center ourselves today with a breath prayer. In a moment, I will press play on this song and invite us to take a deep breath in on a short word or phrase and breathe out on another short word or phrase and repeat that process a handful of times, internally. Then, I will show you a word cloud with a variety of different words on it, and I will ask you to think about and name what words on it are resonating with you today. Then, as the song is ending, we’ll close this time of centering with another iteration of our breath prayer.

(Press play on the video and keep it softly playing in the background during this section.)

Say: I’m now going to invite us to start our breath prayer. As you inhale, breathe in

NOTES

This is a multi-sensory, experiential centering moment. It will work best if you explain the “instructions” before actually beginning the exercise. As this exercise has a YouTube audio component, pre-load the video before your session begins to ensure that you don’t have a false start with an ad. And, be aware to hit pause on the video right at the end, so that the mood your group has cultivated during the exercise isn’t shattered with an ad.

For the “Word Cloud” portion of the exercise, consider having your group break off into partners or trios if necessary for everyone to participate. If you are using a white board/flip chart for the word cloud, you can construct the word cloud during the 30-60 seconds that the group is doing the first round of the breath prayer.

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“STRENGTH FOR TODAY”. As you exhale, breathe out “BRIGHT HOPE FOR TOMORROW”.

INHALE: Strength for Today

EXHALE: Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Say: Let's do this slowly and silently together.

(Pause for 45 seconds. Repeat phrases a few times.)

Display/draw your participants' attention to the JUSTICE WORD CLOUD.

Say: Now, take a look at these words on the screen/table. These are words connected to justice, need, and provision. Take a look at the words here. These are all words connected to justice, need, and provision. What word or words are resonating with you today?

(Participants share what words are resonating with them today.)

Say: Let's close this time with our breath prayer one more time. Breathe in: Strength for Today, and breathe out: Bright Hope for Tomorrow.

End the video/song.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say: Today's story comes from Genesis 45:1-15.

Ask: Who was Joseph in the book of Genesis?

(Pause for responses)

Ask: Who remembers the story of Joseph's story? (Fill in gaps as needed: betrayal, slavery, rise to power in Egypt.)

(Pause for responses)

Say: The passage we're going to look at today is the moment Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers, forgives them, and outlines how he's set up a system that has allowed everyone in Egypt to survive the famine. Joseph could have sought revenge.

NOTES CONT'D

The JUSTICE WORD CLOUD is a grouping of words on one space. The words should be big/clear enough for each of your participants to read them. Use these words to construct your word cloud:

Emergency, Long-term, Fair, Just, Enough, Future, Sharing, Survival, Trust, Plan, Famine, Wisdom

'Great is Thy Faithfulness' - Uplifting LoFi Hymn | Music for Study and Devotion from YouTube Channel Lofi Praise.

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CiK2DOL7jFY&list=RDCiK2DOL7jFY&index=1>

NOTES

Joseph – Eldest son of Jacob by his preferred wife, Rachel. Jacob had twelve sons with two wives (Leah and Rachel) and his wives' maids (Zilpah and Bilhah).

Benjamin – Youngest son of Jacob by Rachel.

Story's Context: Joseph was Jacob's favorite son. His brothers were jealous of him and sold him into slavery in Egypt years earlier. As a slave, he rose to power in Pharaoh's court by interpreting Pharaoh's dream and preparing the nation for a coming famine.

Pharaoh's dream foretold that there would be seven years of abundance in the land followed immediately by seven years of famine. Joseph oversaw the administration of collecting and storing the excess food produced during the years of abundance and distribution of food during the years of famine.

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But instead, he becomes a provider. He interprets God's action not just as saving *him*—but saving *many*. What kind of saving are we talking about here? Let's look closer. As you listen to the story, pay attention to where you notice or don't notice examples of short-term relief and long-term sustainability

(Read Genesis 45:1-15.)

Reflection Questions

- What in this story surprised you?
- What speedbumps did you encounter in the story—moments in the story that made you stop and slow down?
- What kinds of questions came up for you as you were hearing this story?
- What emotions do you notice in the room in this story?

Select 3-5 questions from each topic based on your group's size.

Short-Term vs. Long-Term

- What was the short-term need in this story?
- What did Joseph do that was sustainable—something that would help beyond today?
- Why didn't Joseph just send his brothers home with food?

Justice Lens

- Was Joseph thinking only about his family, or about a wider community?
- Who else benefits from Joseph's long-term planning?
- Does justice sometimes mean helping someone now, and sometimes mean creating a system that helps later?

Personal Connection

- Have you ever had to choose between helping someone right away vs. planning something better for later?

NOTES CONT'D

When the famine hit Joseph's family, they didn't have sufficient food, so Jacob sent Joseph's brothers to Egypt to ask for help. Joseph's brothers didn't recognize Joseph when they saw him, and Joseph tricked them by framing Benjamin for theft.

During the "Investigate the Text" portion, consider playing atmospheric music. Find a playlist of lo-fi arrangements of hymns. There are a bunch of these kinds of playlists on Spotify/Apple Music, and there are long-play full videos of this on YouTube. Find one you like and play it as background music to set the mood.

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- Which is harder to do—short-term help or long-term change?

Systems Thinking

- What systems or structures does Joseph use or build?
- How can we see God working through Joseph's ability to plan?

Ask: Now that we've looked closely at the passage—how would you describe the difference between short-term relief and long-term sustainability in this story?

(Pause for responses.)

Say: This is the heart of what we're exploring today. In God's justice, both kinds of help matter—but sustainability asks: *How can everyone thrive, not just survive?*

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say: Before we jump in, let's set the stage.

In Genesis 45, Joseph doesn't just hand out food—he sets up a system to sustain Egypt and neighboring regions for the long haul. This reflects Sustainable Development Goal #12 from the United Nations: *Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*. This goal asks how we can build systems that don't just help people once, but help whole communities live well, in balance with the earth, for a long time.

Our United Methodist Church speaks to this too, especially in Resolution 5106: A Call to the Churches for the Renewal of Rural Ministries. It challenges us to care for the land, support small farmers, resist harmful corporate practices, and lift up justice for rural communities facing climate change, debt, displacement, and hunger.

Today, we're going to imagine we are funders who care about these things—and decide together what kinds of help we want to support.

Shark Tank: Justice Edition (20 min)

Divide the Group into 3–4 small teams. Each team is a “Shark” with \$10,000 to invest.

NOTES

This activity is inspired by the popular show *Shark Tank*, but with a justice-centered twist. Participants will take on the role of funders—or “sharks”—who must decide how to wisely spend limited financial resources on justice-related projects. Each pitch will relate to short-term relief or long-term sustainability needs raised in Resolution # 5106: Call to the Churches for the Renewal of Rural Ministries.

This activity invites participants to wrestle with real-world justice decisions and learn the difference between meeting an immediate need and supporting systemic transformation.

This activity reinforces the learning objective: *Participants will be able to distinguish between short-term relief and long-term sustainability* by asking them to consider what kinds of responses to food and farming needs are immediate versus systemic—and how both are part of God's justice.

Consider the description of these pitches a springboard for improvisational practice. As you or someone else is delivering the pitches to your youth, they should be fledged out pitches that your youth would want to spend their limited \$10,000 on. This is your/your lead team's chance to have fun. There are 45 sample pitches that span various price-points, seriousness, and location on the spectrum of “Short-term relief vs. Long-term sustainability”. You will not use all 45 in one session—pick out a handful of them that time will allow for ahead of time and flesh out the pitch. If you have a lead team (youth or adult) or adult helpers, assign pitches to your support and have them develop the pitch.

Resolution 5106 calls The United Methodist Church to stand in solidarity with rural communities—both in the U.S. and globally—as they face increasing marginalization due to the globalization of food systems and corporate-dominated economic policies. It critiques international trade agree-

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Say: You are now going to become ‘Sharks’, investors who decide how to fund projects that help people.

Explain the Rules:

- One at a time, pitches will be presented (by the facilitator or multiple leaders/volunteers).
- After each pitch, the “Sharks” must decide if they want to invest in that pitch—and how much.
- Once a team spends money, it’s gone! They won’t know what future pitches will be, so they need to make wise and just choices.
- Their goal: invest in pitches that reflect long-term sustainability, as much as possible.
- If more than one shark wants to fund a pitch, they will have to convince the person making the pitch why they should be the one to fund the project—sharks may choose to join forces and go in on any given project together, but the person making the pitch must decide whether to accept these “joint ventures” or not.

Present Pitches:

- Choose 6–8 pitches from the attached Shark Tank Pitch Deck Table (across a variety of price-points, tone, and short-term/long-term) to use during your session, balancing across price ranges and relief/sustainability types.
- Use light-hearted pitches strategically for laughter or energy boosts.
- Visually keep track of how much each Shark has spent/has left for all to see
- The person making the pitch should not tell the sharks outright where their project falls on the sustainability spectrum. The persons making the pitches are earnestly trying to convince the sharks to fund their project, regardless of where it falls on the spectrum.

NOTES CONT'D

ments (like NAFTA and FTAA) and global institutions (such as the WTO, World Bank, and IMF) for fostering systems that displace small farmers, erode rural cultures, harm the environment, and exacerbate poverty, suicide, and substance abuse among rural populations. The resolution affirms the vital role of rural people and communities in cultivating just, sustainable alternatives and urges the Church to accompany them in this work. It calls for moral and prophetic leadership from United Methodists at every level—pastors, institutions, and congregations—including partnerships with land-grant universities, support for sustainable agriculture, advocacy for public audits of corporate impact, and accompaniment of farm workers and indigenous landholders.

Much of Book of Resolutions # 5106 addresses a lot of the problems anyone producing and distributing food in ways that promote long-term sustainability must consider, so, even if you are not in a rural context nor are in deep partnerships with rural contexts, this resolution addresses the learning objective for this session.

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Optional: Shark Commentary

- After each pitch, invite a brief reflection from one or two Sharks: Why did you fund or not fund this? Was this short-term or long-term?

Debrief Questions:

- How much did your group spend and on what?
- Which investments do you think will matter most in 10 years?
- Were you more drawn to short-term help or long-term solutions? Why?
- What does this tell us about how God might be calling us to care for people and the land?

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN.)

Say: Let's return to our breath prayer.

(Play the same lo-fi arrangement of "Great is Thy Faithfulness" that was used in the opening.)

Say: Inhale: Strength for today. Exhale: Bright hope for tomorrow.

(Repeat twice slowly.)

Ask: What's one idea from today that you want to carry with you this week?

(Pause for response)

Ask: What's one way you might make a difference—for the land, for food, or for justice?

(Pause for response)

Pray:

Close with this prayer or your own:

Creator God,
You formed the earth in wisdom, and called us to tend it with care.

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Thank you for voices that cry out for justice—for the soil, for the seed, and for the soul.

Help us plant what brings life. Help us choose what sustains.

Give us strength for today, and bright hope for tomorrow.

In Jesus' name, Amen.